Military-political cooperation between the U.S. and Central Asian States

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Abstract

Central Asian region became one of the important regions in international relations. The states of the region faced a number of problems after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The geopolitical situation and neighborhood with great powers mainly affected on the policymaking and the security issues of newly independent states. In this article the military-political cooperation between the U.S. and Central Asian states in different dimensions is examined. First of all, we analyze the dynamic of military-political cooperation of the U.S. with each state of the region in the context of regional security. In this regard it is examined one of the important issues – the interests of the U.S. around the Soviet nuclear weapons located on the Kazakhstani territory. The author analyzes the relations between states in the context of struggle against terrorism. After the events of September 11 the U.S. proclaimed a war against terrorism. The struggle against terrorism became one of the major challenges of the U.S. foreign policy. Afghanistan became a state number one for antiterrorist drive. The Central Asian states mentioned as a “front-line states”. Region’s location on the crossroads between West and East makes this territory significant for transit routes. The cooperation in military-political field between states develops also on a structural level. We consider the relations in this field between the U.S. and Central Asian states in the framework of NATO. The author of this article discusses how the above-mentioned issues influence on international relations in the region.

Keywords: Military-political cooperation, military-technical cooperation, geopolitical situation, Central Asia, NATO;

1. Introduction

After the Soviet Union collapse the newly independent states had to make their own foreign policy. The geopolitical situation and neighbourhood with great powers like Russia and China mainly affected on the policymaking and the security issues of Central Asian states. The United States of America has one of the important places in Central Asian states’ foreign policy. The U.S. has a direct impact on the geopolitics of Central Asia. This
factor was of importance in formulation of the Central Asian states’ foreign policy in relation to the U.S. One of the important aspects of bilateral relations between the states is a military-political cooperation. A deep level of interaction characterizes the military sphere of relations. An example of this can serve high-level visits, according to the results of which were adopted number of documents. Each state of the region has its own features of relations with the U.S. in this field. The relations in the sphere of military-political relations begin from the 1990-s when the U.S. was interested in nuclear disarmament and nowadays continues in the context of regional security, mainly on Afghanistan issues.

2. Kazakhstani-U.S. cooperation in the military-political field

2.1. Cooperation in the field of nuclear disarmament

Kazakhstan voluntarily renounced the fourth largest nuclear arsenal in the world. In 1995, Kazakhstan acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and received strong international warranties from the leading nuclear powers among which was the U.S. Kazakhstan made a significant contribution in providing both regional and international security. The Administration of George W. Bush recognized the achievements of Kazakhstan in this direction. American administration feared of possible incidents of leakage of radioactive material, and was aimed at preventing any unauthorized using of the materials. This thesis was confirmed in a joint declaration of the two countries leaders in December 2001. Presidents of two states called for a policy of accounting and physical protection of materials needed for the production of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons (Erekesheva, 2002). U.S. leaders highly appreciated the participation of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the Cooperative Threat Reduction program, better known as “Nunn-Lugar”, which was initiated by two U.S. Senators (Sultanov, 2008).

In April 2010, during the Global Nuclear Security Summit President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev and the U.S. President Barack Obama made a joint statement. In the statement were noted the close cooperation in reducing nuclear threats in Kazakhstan and around the world, as well as the decommissioning of a nuclear reactor BN-350 in Aktau. The President of Kazakhstan in his interview mentioned that the government of the Republic of Kazakhstan recognized the inalienable right of Iran to peaceful nuclear power for peaceful resolution of all issues related to its nuclear program. President Nazarbayev also spoke at the Summit with the initiative to host nuclear fuel bank in Kazakhstan. The U.S. side supported this idea.

2.2. Military-technical cooperation between Kazakhstan and the U.S.

In 2003, Kazakhstan signed a five-year plan with the United States on military cooperation. The plan aims to implement such tasks as combating international terrorism, the development of peace processes, improve the combat capability of air defense units of the Armed Forces of Kazakhstan, the improvement of the military infrastructure of the Caspian region, etc. (Nurgaliyev, 2007). During the implementation of the plan the U.S. provided two programs – “Foreign Military Financing” and the “International Military Education and Training”. On the first program have been remodelled several military facilities in Kazakhstan. Under the second program, the U.S. military schools have trained more than 220 Kazakhstani military officers who have been trained in such educational institutions in the USA as the National Defense University, Command and General Staff College, West Point Academy, etc. (Nogayeva, 2012). Along with the exercises within the framework of NATO, Kazakhstan and the U.S. make their joint exercises of armed forces of two sides. Thus, in March 2005 on the territory of Kazakhstan was organized exercise “Balance-Zhardem-2005”.

2.3. Kazakhstan and NATO

Kazakhstan cooperates with NATO in the framework of the program “Partnership for Peace” (since 1994). With a view to maintain a dialogue with NATO countries on current security issues Kazakhstan involved in the Euro Atlantic Partnership Council. In addition, within the framework of the Council Kazakhstan participates in the program “Process of planning and analysis” (PAP), aimed at promoting of transformation of the armed forces of Kazakhstan in the field of planning and preparation of units to participate in peacekeeping operations. Participation in this program will allow Kazakhstan to undergo adaptation to the standards of NATO forces. The program consists
of three phases during which a member state has the opportunity to participate in joint operations with NATO countries including language training, study of the principles of operation and management staffs of NATO. The final stage of PAP provides direct training of military units of NATO partner countries to participate in joint peacekeeping operations outside the direct responsibility of the Alliance (Nurgaliyev, 2007). Kazakhstan is the only country in a Central Asian region that has deepened its cooperation with NATO, by developing an individual plan of partnership with NATO, aiming at the development of different mechanisms of cooperation with NATO countries and assistance to the armed forces of Kazakhstan in achieving Western standards (Laruelle, 2013).

For the implementation of the initiatives in military-political sphere cooperation two parts conduct regular meetings at the level of defense ministers and their deputies. In 2003 and 2004, high-ranking officials of the North Atlantic Alliance paid visits to Kazakhstan. Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) is one of the major programs in the Partnership for Peace program and it was adopted in 2006 following a meeting of the Military Committee, the political leadership in the format “NATO plus Kazakhstan” (Ministry for foreign affairs of RK).

In the framework of cooperation between Kazakhstan and NATO conducted peacekeeping exercises. Thus, in the period from 2003 to 2013 took place ten exercises “Steppe Eagle” with Kazakh peacekeeping battalion Kazbat. A distinctive feature of the exercise in 2013 is that this year the Kazakh peacekeeping battalion “Kazbat” will be judged on the first level of the program “The concept of operational capacity” (Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Kazakhstan).

Kazakhstan's cooperation with NATO is the most intensive in comparison with the other countries of Central Asia. This is evidenced by the intensity of contacts and activities within the organization. The United States through NATO try to strengthen their position in the region of Central Asia. Such approach can raise concerns of such Kazakhstan's neighbor as Russia, because these states cooperate in the framework of CSTO.

2.4. Kazakhstan and the U.S. and the struggle against terrorism

Kazakhstan condemned the 11 September terrorist attack and supported the anti-terrorist campaign in Afghanistan. Events of 2001 gave a new impetus to the development of military-political cooperation between Kazakhstan and the United States. As part of "Operation Enduring Freedom" Kazakhstan has agreed to the use of air routes and rail links with bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, and has provided the U.S. aircraft the right to land in the emergency situations at the Almaty airport (Trotskiy, 2009). This was enshrined in the Memorandum of Understanding between the two governments on the terms of the Almaty international airport as a substitute for the U.S. military aircraft between Kazakhstan and the United States on June 10, 2002.

3. Uzbekistan-U.S. military-political cooperation

After the events of 11 September 2001 the U.S.-Uzbekistan relations obtained a particular importance. Uzbekistan got the role of Americans main partner in the region. In October 2001 the U.S.-Uzbekistan agreement was concluded. According to this agreement the U.S. was accorded the right to use the airspace of Uzbekistan and the air base in Khanabad. Uzbekistan's status as a priority state for the U.S. government was enshrined in the Declaration on the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation, which was signed in March 2002 during the visit of President Karimov to the U.S. (U.S. Embassy in Uzbekistan).

Uzbekistan regarded the existing situation as an opportunity to strengthen the status of a key U.S. partner in the region and to support its own ambitions to the leadership in Central Asia. Uzbekistan’s proposals of maintaining the operation in Afghanistan explained the direct interests of the Uzbek authorities on the outcome of the conflict, because “Taliban” and “Al Qaeda” provided comprehensive assistance to the IMU (Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan). IMU lost a fight against Tashkent, as a result of an international anti-terrorist coalition received an enemy more powerful than the government of Uzbekistan.

In the middle of 2000’s the reorientation of Uzbekistan’s foreign policy observed. The main reason of this changing was the “color revolutions” in some post-Soviet countries. These events increased the doubts of official Tashkent in ensuring security and stability of Uzbekistan from the U.S. part. Washington condemned the actions of the Uzbek authorities in the suppression of riots in Andijan on May 12-13, 2005. The U.S. and European countries did not recognize the version of the events in Andijan that Uzbek authorities set out. June 29, 2005, Uzbek authorities demanded the closure of the U.S. military base within six months. This fact led to the closure of offices of U.S. NGO-s, a number of American companies and the U.S. military withdrawal from the base of Khanabad
Military-political cooperation of the U.S. with Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan

Military-political cooperation of the U.S. with Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan has its own features.

In 2000s Turkmenistan became a new platform for rivalry between the U.S. and Russia. At this period the state also had a great importance for the U.S. in the transport and transit corridor. The highlight officials noted the importance of Turkmenistan in providing humanitarian aid to Afghanistan and for constructing rail and energy links to the country, including the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline (Nichol, 2012). The events of September 2001 also influenced on Turkmenistan's foreign policy regarding the U.S. After these events President Niyazov gave his agreement to locate the transport and flights for the coalition forces. So the U.S. led antiterrorism efforts in Afghanistan have an opportunity to use the states territory for transportation jet fuel and privileges for humanitarian flights to Afghanistan (Nichol, 2012). Turkmenistan does not seek an approach to the United States and make some close ties with the U.S. The new president of Turkmenistan has proved itself quite active in foreign policy, he made his first visit to NATO headquarters in Brussels, where the parties have agreed to deepen ties in several key areas.

The U.S. military-political relations with Tajikistan develop in the context of Afghan issue. Tajikistan faces many challenges because of a long and vulnerable border with Afghanistan. Tajikistan also is described as a “key U.S. partner” in Afghanistan operations. For Dushanbe the military cooperation with the U.S. has several aspects. One of them is the creation of training camp close to Dushanbe to prepare the Tajik military with the help of the U.S. military. For America, the airfield “Ayni” could be very beneficial to the transfer the base “Manas” in Kyrgyzstan and to ensure the coalition forces in Afghanistan. Taking this into consideration that the operation in Afghanistan was to expand, the key of this action scheme for the United States and NATO countries became Tajikistan and at this stage the state is favorable for the U.S. not only as an object for profitable investments but namely as a strategic foothold in Afghanistan. The U.S. provides substantial economic assistance to Tajikistan, including building two bridges over the border river Pyandj, which connects Afghanistan and Tajikistan. For Tajikistan which was transport blockade by Uzbekistan, the availability of direct transport links across Afghanistan to the shores of the Indian Ocean is the most important issue. The U.S. offered Tajik leadership wide range of assistance, and Dushanbe under the extremely scarce of financial resources the Republic cannot refuse it. At this stage, the total amount allocated by America loans and aid to Tajikistan has already exceeded $ 1 billion, and this assistance can be further increased (Syroezhkin, 2011).

Military-political relations between the U.S. and Kyrgyzstan recently connected with the Manas Transit Center. Kyrgyz authorities offered an airbase at the international airport Manas to the U.S. and it opened on December 2001. Later the airbase renamed Transit Center and it was a major transport and logistics hub for the transportation of goods and transfer of anti-terrorist coalition in Afghanistan. In 2009 President Bakiyev declared his intention to close the airbase. Then Kyrgyz government decided to conclude the annually renewable “intergovernmental agreement with the United States on cooperation and the formation of a transit center at Manas airport”. According to this agreement the rent payment for the use of this base was increased from $17.4 million to $60 million per year (Indeo, 2010). Now the U.S. began redeployment of its forces from the Manas Transit Center in Kyrgyzstan and plans to transfer it to local authorities by July 2014. Kyrgyz authorities found that the agreement on the deployment of the U.S. troops in the country, which expires in 2014, do not need to extend the decision of U.S. leadership in 2014 to complete the withdrawal of the main contingent of coalition forces from Afghanistan.
5. Conclusion

In the 90-s the U.S. policy in Central Asian states was aimed at preventing the domination of Russia and China in the region, preventing the transformation of Asia for deployment of extremism forces, preventing the Central Asia for a corridor for illegal drug trafficking; provisioning American companies access to energy resources, promotion the development of Central Asian states in civil society. After the events of September 2001 the U.S. activation in the region observed. The U.S. tried to use profitably the geopolitical location of the region, its proximity to Afghanistan in promoting the U.S. led antiterrorism efforts in Afghanistan. Nowadays, the U.S. interests in military-political field in the region.

The cooperation between the U.S. and Central Asian states develops not only on bilateral level. There is intensive cooperation at the structural level in the framework of NATO. The states of the region are active participants in the programs, projects, and exercises in the framework of NATO.

References


