Section 8. Political science

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GEOPOLITICAL PROCESSES OF CENTRAL ASIAN STATES

Abstract.

Keywords:

After getting the independence the young Central Asian states have found themselves in the center of the geopolitical and geo-economic interests of many modern powers of the developed countries of the world. This was due to rich natural resource endowments and a favorable location in the middle of the Eurasian continent. Such advantages haven't remained outside the interests of current main geopolitical player – the United States of America. In the 90s, American intelligence officer and analyst Graham E. Fuller – a former vice-chair of the National Intelligence Council, who also used to be a head resident of the CIA unit in Kabul, formulated the concept of main goals of USA in Central Asian region as follows: to prevent a return of Russia to the region; to stop the escalation of Islamic radicalism and fundamentalism; to complete the nuclear disarmament of Kazakhstan and establish strict control over the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; to lay the foundations to control Caspian oil; to stabilize the region by influencing the governments [1].

The main feature of the situation in this region is that the interests of the United States, Russia and China collide there. The latter player implementing so called “silkworm” strategy seeks to integrate as much as possible into the economies of the Central Asian states and strengthen Chinese diasporas there, considering them as a “fifth column” in the future.

In turn Russia is interested in providing stability and security on its southern borders. Protection of national interests manifests itself particularly in the joint utilization of natural resources and in developing a joint defense potential. How-

ever, the Russian position is not always consistent and carefully selected, which is confirmed by the attempt to displace the US military base from Kyrgyzstan through providing a loan, as well as by an alternate support of the positions of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in matters of water use. All this does not enhance the authority of Russia and forces the Central Asian countries to seek a solution to their problems without Russia. Other political players in the region are the European Union, Iran and Turkey. It should be noted that European interests increasingly diverge from American ones. First of all, in terms of Caspian oil, which could become the “energy rear” of the European Union, but there is no unified approach among the European states to the strategy of economic and military policy.

Iran, striving to the role of a regional leader, is trying to extend its influence in opposition to the United States, using primarily on religious motives. Iran uses Tajikistan as its outpost as the most ethnically close country in Central Asia. However, a weak economy does not allow it to seriously influence the political situation in the region. Therefore, Iran is building the political axis Iran-Afghanistan-Tajikistan, which basis is Iran, not as a sponsor state, but as a fraternal country with a similar ideology, language and mentality. This approach allows Tajikistan and Afghanistan to hope for a more significant role in the region in the future. In addition, Iran is trying to influence an energy policy between the East and the West.

Turkey intensively revives the ideas of Pan-Turkism, but the lack of economic capabilities significantly reduces its po-

tential to spread its influence. Under these conditions, Turkey is striving to become a transit country for fuel and energy resources. At the same time the Arab Spring has had a significant impact on the development of the regional situation. It resulted in the islamization of the states, the growth of identity and political activity of Shia, internal political instability, the economic crisis.

Most of the key political players have a strong military potential and usually can use it to achieve their goals. Russia and China are two countries that able to defend their national interests at all levels and have the biggest influence and efficiency in the Central Asian region.

In the process of getting independency by the Central Asian countries and Kazakhstan in particular, four main periods can be distinguished. Each country has its own characteristics, but generally they can be united by common world events and processes. The Republic of Kazakhstan, which is on the 9th place in the world in terms of the territory, with rich natural resources endowment and a fairly small population has built its statehood practically from scratch. In general, the period of independent development was not easy, and in some years even extremely difficult. However, the results achieved by 2019 prove the accuracy of the course chosen by Kazakhstan people (Table 1).

Table 1. – The periods and results of the formation of the Kazakh statehood

	Timing	General features of world political process	The results for Kazakhstan
1 period	2 nd half of 80 th – 1991	Seeking of new forms in international relations in the conditions of the collapse of the USSR and the bipolar world.	Proclamation of independence, the deepest economic and political crisis.
2 period	1991 – march of 1999	The undisputed world leadership of the United States, redraw the political map of the world; a series of interethnic armed conflicts in the post-Soviet states, a massive manifestation of political and religious extremism; war in Yugoslavia.	The construction of statehood, the reform of all spheres of livelihood; the choosing of a development path, the formation of a national security system, a non-nuclear status; border demarcation, settlement of disputes with neighboring countries; avoidance of internal conflicts; adoption of the Constitution (1995).
3 period	March of 1999 – February of 2009	The approval of the «law of force» of the United States in international relations; the weakening of international security control institutions; the growth of world military spending; the formation of new centers of power, the economic expansion of leading states; world economic crisis of 2008.	Formation of an effective state apparatus, development of national state cadre; the dynamic development of the economy, the development of hydrocarbon deposits; the growth of role in the international scene; building of the Armed Forces and the military-industrial complex.
4 period	February of 2009 – current time	The new US administration, the final formation of alternative centers of power; the resumption of the arms race; increasing the number of wars and conflicts; the crisis of the international security system, the growth of terrorist activity; uncompromising struggle for resources.	Stable development; extension of international activity; rebuilding of economy of the principles of intensification; development of the science, education and technology; development of conceptual directions of statehood on long term.

Kazakhstan, despite the complex international situation, has managed to find its own way of development, avoiding internal unrest and building an independent distinctive state, defending its right for self-determination. At the same time, current threats to the national security of the country are: terrorism, export of religious extremism, drug addiction and drug trafficking, problems associated with oil and gas deposits in the Caspian Sea [2]. All these act as factors of possible destabilization of the situation in Kazakhstan [3; 4].

After the Soviet Union collapse and acquiring its sovereignty Kazakhstan found itself in a completely new situation forcing it to pursue a rigid position in the global policy, eco-

nomical and financial markets, and independently establish external economic relations. All this put national security issues at the forefront, demanding guaranteed protection of its people's interests.

Western states have always closely monitored over the development of the situation in Central Asia and the Caspian Sea region. Immediately after Kazakhstan gained its independence, there were attempts of foreign investors to privatize the largest oil-gas and mining enterprises, as well as direct lobbying of interests of international corporations at the state level. The territory of Kazakhstan, referred to as the one of the “world treasure”, attracted the attention of the leading states

of the world. According to the experts estimate, the proved oil reserves of Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan are more than 16.5 billion barrels, and the proven gas reserves, including Uzbekistan, are 202 billion m³, which puts the region on a par with the Persian Gulf. At the same time, the President of Kazakhstan had a firm position, clearly set the priorities, declaring “first – the economy, then – politics. Our state and people are becoming stronger thanks to the growth of the economy and the welfare of the population than through hasty democratic transformations” [5]. This position allowed stabilizing the situation in the country. The state welcomed the attraction of investments in the development of industrial enterprises, but did not sell them completely, leaving substantial stakes under control. This approach resulted to direct the profits from oil production to the development of the national economy, improving people’s livelihood.

The global financial crisis and the attempts of world leading countries to get out of it at the expense of other countries exacerbate the possibility of escalation of tension in any part of the world. In a special “risk group” there are states with have rich hydrocarbon deposits, which forces them to develop institutions in order to ensure their military security.

According to the views of some foreign experts, today’s priorities in the armed conflict are shifting towards the minimum involvement of military units to solve combat tasks. Modern military thoughts of the leading world powers are

concentrated on solving global problems without wars by preventing conflicts and resolving crises and conducting indirect actions [6; 7; 8].

Indirect actions are commonly understood as an art of complex effects aimed at destabilizing society internally, creating externally controlled local conflicts, legitimate use of multinational forces contingency in order to bring the country into a state consistent with Western geopolitical interests [9].

American political scientist J. Sharp and politician Z. Brzezinski in their works presented the above mentioned theory in a simpler and more appropriate form of perception [10; 11]. For the last 20 years this theory has been successfully tested in the forms of so called “color revolutions” in many regions of the world.

In recent decades, there has been a progressive development of military security and views on its provision, which is reflected in the military doctrines of states. Kazakhstan clarified its conceptual positions in this area in 2017.[12]. In conclusion, it should be noted that the existing security structure in general allows neutralizing most of the threats to national security for the state in the military sphere. However, the development of military thought does not stand still, the ways to achieve military-political goals are constantly transforming and improving, which requires a prompt response to changing the views of the leading states on the use of military force in interstate confrontation.

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