Contents

Foreign Policy of Central Asian States

Kyrgyzstan: Economic Needs Shape Foreign Policy 3

Turkmenistan: Turkmenistan’s Regional Energy Initiatives 6

Uzbekistan: The US-Uzbek relationship: A call for a new security discourse 8
A question “Who are you with?” still exists in the rhetoric of onlookers when they talk to locals about foreign policy of Kyrgyzstan. The ambiguity of Kyrgyzstan’s foreign policy remains relevant after 24 years of independence despite the country’s orientation toward Russia as the main strategic partner. Although attempts to devise foreign policy doctrines have been taken, Kyrgyzstan still forms its foreign policy based on financial and economic needs of the country.

The first Kyrgyzstan’s president, Askar Akayev, attempted to devise a foreign policy doctrine in 1998. The ‘Great Silk Road Doctrine’ revealed Akayev’s desire to turn Kyrgyzstan into an economic and cultural bridge between the West and the East. He wanted to revive the Great Silk Road through building road and railway networks in Kyrgyzstan which could have connected Europe and South East Asia.1 “This great way from the coast of China to the western and southern coasts of Europe, to Asia Minor, and even to North Africa is not only a huge economic communication, but also a spiritual idea, connecting the East and the West and refuting the concept of artificial locally closed civilizations,” he told in an interview to a Russian journalist in 2001.2 However, the first project of this doctrine, the roads connecting Kyrgyzstan and China and the railroads connecting China, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan,3 have not been built because of investments shortage and ousting of the project’s ideologist, Akayev, from power in 2005.

The sparse foreign policy of the second president, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, was based on deriving self-interest from regional actors rather than promoting national interests. Bakiyev decided to increase the rent fee which the US government paid to use for the Manas airport located 30 km away from Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan’s capital. The requested sum was to grow from USD 17 million to USD 60 million per year in 20094. Meanwhile, a few month before that, Bakiyev promised Kremlin to evict the American base from Kyrgyzstan5 and received a substantial loan from the Russian authorities, allegedly not related to the decision regarding the airbase. Such contradicting foreign policy moves create not only a cognitive dissonance but reveal that Bakiyev simply utilized rent-seeking opportunities.

Comparing to his previous colleagues, current president Almazbek Atambayev made a step toward tight economic relations with Kyrgyzstan’s historical partner, Russia. Despite the rhetoric of previous pres-
idents on multi-rectroral foreign policy, Kyrgyzstan has chosen Russia as its main strategic partner by entering the Eurasian Economic Union. Furthermore, Kyrgyzstan considers the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization as the main guarantee of the country’s military security. The economic benefits of entering the Eurasian Union in terms of the promised price slowdown of food products did not occur. Additionally, it entailed a decrease of Kyrgyzstanis purchasing power to buy real estate and cars due to depreciation of the Kyrgyz currency followed after the economic crisis in Russia. A leap of the US dollar composed 22 per cent from 58.9 Kyrgyz soms for 1 USD dollar in January to 75.9 Kyrgyz soms in November 2015. The cooperation with Russia also promised investments into Kyrgyzstan’s hydropower industry. Russian private companies agreed to invest in “Kambar-Ata 1” hydro power station and four small hydropower station on Naryn River in 2009, but the construction has not started yet. Bolot Junusov, the Kyrgyz ambassador to Russia says to local media that Russian private companies cannot invest now because of economic challenges in the country. In these circumstances, Kyrgyzstan started its search for a new main investor. A visit of the U.S. State Secretary, John Kerry, on October 30 served as an opportunity for Kyrgyz authorities to do it. A local political scientist, Marat Kazakpayev, said to the Conway Bulletin British newspaper prior to Kerry’s visit that Kyrgyzstan hoped to reap benefits off this high-ranked meeting. “Our government would like to see American investments in constructing “Kambar-Ata-1” hydro power station, Kyrgyzstan’s national project, and it would like to receive a political support in its construction because of water tensions with Uzbekistan.” He added that Kyrgyz authorities hoped to receive this support on the “C5+1” (five Central Asian states plus the United States of America) summit in the Uzbek city of Samarkand on 2 November, where foreign ministers of all five Central Asian countries gathered to meet John Kerry to discuss cooperation, but this support was not publicly announced. Despite public rhetoric on economic assistance by Russia, Kyrgyzstan still seeks investments to support hydropower industry. This conditions place Kyrgyzstan into a position where it forms its foreign policy based on the economic needs of country caused by its geopolitical location, rather than political thinking and desires of the leaders of the state. As a local policy analyst, Valentin Bogatyrev, said foreign policy is a continuation of the domestic one. Kyrgyzstan is dreaming now about American investments despite political misunderstandings. The State Department’s human rights award given to an ethnic Uzbek, who is said by Kyrgyz authorities to incite conflict between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in 2010, now is not a subject matter of Kyrgyz-American talks. Kyrgyzstan now prefers to neglect its public rhetoric on dissolving diplomatic relations between Kyrgyzstan and the USA because of this award. It is safe to assume that the Kyrgyz authorities now prioritize an opportunity of American investments. Although many Kyrgyzstanis would answer the question “Who are you with?” with
Russia, there is a room for concerns about real economic partners of Kyrgyzstan. This uncertainty intimidates, and pushes to shape Kyrgyzstan’s foreign policy choices based on economic needs of the country. This situation reveals a sparse foreign policy and puts the country into a vulnerable situation, where stakeholders who might bring investments to Kyrgyzstan, also draw the foreign policy of the country.

______________________________


5 Toktomushev, “Regime security, base politics and rentseeking: the local and global political economies of the American air base in Kyrgyzstan, 2001-2010.”


7 Daily currency rates from 2010 to 2015, the National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic website, http://nbkr.kg/index1.jsp?item=1562&lang=RUS.


Turkmenistan: Turkmenistan’s Regional Energy Initiatives

By Graduate of the University of St. Andrews.

While some claim that the policy of positive neutrality allowed Turkmenistan to stay aside of regional and international politics, this paper argues that in fact Turkmenistan promotes its long-term foreign policy objectives through pursuing energy interests and projects in the region of Eurasia and has already achieved several successful results. Thus, the overarching foreign policy goal for Turkmenistan is to diversify its energy export routes and the country applies various tools and tactics in achieving this goal. To demonstrate the argument, this paper presents three case studies as an evidence of proactive as well as reactive position of Turkmenistan in regards of its foreign polices objectives in establishing energy trade relations with various actors.

Being a landlocked country with the need to rely on foreign partners, Turkmenistan understands the importance of safe transit of its energy resource. One immediate result, as well as the tactics of pursing long-term energy interests as a foreign policy tool is adoption of the UN Resolution A/RES/63/210 on Reliable and Stable Transit of Energy on December 19, 2008 which led to a series of events held in Ashgabat on Reliable and Stable Transit of Energy in Eurasia with participation of international and regional actors.

The first case study is TAPI pipeline.

TAPI would become Turkmenistan’s largest and unique project on transportation of natural gas to the market of South Asia. The need for an independent export route of energy products was always one of the priority topics on the agenda on Central Asian energy producers such as Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. In this regard, TAPI becomes more and more relevant, as it is seen as an alternative route connecting Central and South Asia, allowing avoid Russian and Western political interests and also diversify energy export routes of major Central Asia’s producers. The tool that Turkmenistan uses to achieve this foreign policy objective it through energy delivery to South Asia. However, the objective is impossible to achieve without stabilization of Afghanistan. Therefore, stabilization of Afghanistan is the tactics that Turkmenistan uses to promote delivery of Turkmen energy to South Asia.

The second example is the Trans-Caspian project.

Trans-Caspian project has strategic geopolitical importance. The project would benefit to the maximum number of partic-
participants including supplier, recipients and transit states and solving a number of inter-state tensions throughout the region. However, if delivery of the Turkmen natural gas to Europe is put into the core of the project, there are alternative routes that Turkmenistan has been considering and selecting. Similarly to the TAPI, the core idea of the Trans-Caspian pipeline is leading independent economic and trade politics which came with independence and was one of the priorities of Turkmenistan’s foreign policy. Importantly, the project received new push every time when regional dynamics in relations between West-Russia, West-Iran, Russia-CIS changed to negative. Some of the obstacles to implementation of the project include disputed gas site between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, Russia’s and Iran’s opposition to the project, and EU’s reluctance or on and off expression of the support to the project. In the discussion of the Trans-Caspian pipeline project, Turkmenistan took semi active/reactive position, as there is a number of geopolitical issues around the Trans-Caspian pipeline project that Turkmenistan seeks to resolve collectively. Meanwhile, the country actively pursues alternative routes of delivery through territories of the friendly nations, such as Iran.

The third case study is regional initiative of TUTAP.

TUTAP is an interregional cooperation project that Turkmenistan joins as part of the Eurasian integration program. Complimentary to Turkmenistan’s TAPI initiative, TUTAP offers alternative connection to South Asia and also promotes the energy export goals of Turkmenistan. In this case, Turkmenistan takes more of a reactive position where it can demonstrate its ability to participate in the regional projects that originate from external source such as the Asian Development Bank. TUTAP is not a priority on the foreign policy agenda of Turkmenistan, because the project creates an energy hub in Afghanistan connecting it with Central Asia rather than creates new energy route. However, the project is complimentary to Turkmenistan’s tactics of stabilization of Afghanistan and therefore, Turkmenistan takes the position of friendly neighbor continuing to supply energy resources to Afghanistan and supporting international initiatives.
Uzbekistan: The US-Uzbek relationship: A call for a new security discourse

By Zaynab Dost, Master of Arts degree from the University of Westminster (2007)

Post 9/11, the US military campaign in Afghanistan brought US-Uzbek relations to the new level. Uzbekistan, a post-Soviet Central Asian country, became a strategic ally for Washington in its war on terror. The cooperation was not always smooth, it encountered setbacks after the Andijan events of 2005 and it took several years for the parties to restore their relationship. This article suggests that US-Uzbek relations cannot be explained solely by the neorealist theory of International Relations (IR) which focuses on structural constrains that shape the decision making in IR. Alternative theories are needed to understand the cooperation dynamics and regional security concerns. Currently, the US is expected to disengage from Central Asia given its withdrawal from Afghanistan. And yet, Washington repeatedly stresses its commitment to the region and highlights the importance of security cooperation. The end of military phase in Afghanistan allows the US-Uzbekistan partnership to tackle non-traditional security threats. Some cooperation in this direction is already present. If sustained, it can spread to other areas, including those where the dialogue is strained.

Troubled relationship

During his 01 November 2015 visit to Uzbekistan, US Secretary of State John Kerry tweeted that Uzbekistan is an important partner in bringing peace and prosperity in Central Asia, adding that he had a good discussion with President Islam Karimov1. The media were quick to notice that Kerry’s visit prioritized regional security, energy and economy but did not pay enough attention to human rights and democracy2. In Kerry’s defense, the Secretary said he wanted to discuss “the human dimension, the issues of individuals and their participation in society”3 with the authorities. However, all the discussions were held behind the closed doors, therefore, their content remained unknown.

Human rights is a sensitive issue for the US-Uzbek relationship. After 9/11, Uzbekistan agreed to host the US military base (K2) in October 2001 to support its actions in Afghanistan. The K2 base was an important logistics unit for the military operation against the Taliban. In 2012, the parties signed a Declaration on Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework, which also demanded democratization from Uzbekistan. However, in May 2005,
The clash between the government forces and armed protesters in Andijan, eastern Uzbekistan, eroded the partnership. A series of events: allegedly unfair trial of 23 businessmen, armed crowd’s breaking into prison and massive anti-government demonstration led to a major crossfire killing hundreds, including civilians⁴. Following the US State Department’s critique of what was seen as an indiscriminate use of force and the department’s call for an open international investigation, Uzbekistan accused the US of interfering into its domestic affairs. The tension resulted in a tit-for-tat reaction. The U.S. cut military assistance to Uzbekistan, the latter expelled K2 and shut down US-sponsored NGOs⁵.

The US-Uzbekistan relationship improved around 2009-2010 as the US had to rely on Tashkent’s cooperation on transit to and from Afghanistan. The cooperation was restarted due to importance of Uzbekistan’s rail infrastructure in sustaining the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) - a transportation system for the US activities in Afghanistan. For the NDN to take place, the US visibly reduced its democratization rhetoric.

Theories of IR

Two theories of IR help analyse the US-Uzbek relationship. The first one is Neorealism, the dominant theory in the IR discipline. Unlike Classical Realism prioritizing selfish human nature to explain state behaviour, Neorealism focuses on structural constraints⁶ such as anarchy i.e the lack of authority in international system. According to Kenneth Waltz, the anarchical nature of the system compels the states to gain power to ensure survival. Neorealism views states as rational and downplays the influence of a human factor in IR. A cooperation between the states is possible, but rare.

Another theory is the Constructivist account of IR, as outlined by Alexander Wendt⁷. All variables in IR including military power, trade, international organisations and domestic preferences are important because of the meanings they carry for the states⁸. Wendt asserts that “anarchy is what states make of it”⁹. In this view, state behaviour can be explained by looking at the meanings that are constructed from a mix of history and beliefs. Unlike neorealists, constructivists say that cooperation is possible and it also affects IR.

Different theories have varying implications on the understanding of security concept. For neorelists, security of the state is equated to power and is seen in a narrow military term. For constructivists, security can be broader than that. This was particularly elaborated by the so-called Copenhagen school of security studies which leans towards constructivism¹⁰. Known as critical security studies theory, it argues that states/ elites are concerned with anything which presents an existential threat¹¹. Security is, thus, divided into several sectors: political, economic, military, societal and environmental¹².

Limits of neorealism

From the neorealist perspective, the
US intervention in Afghanistan helped Washington to establish its presence in post-Soviet Central Asia, which is traditionally the sphere of Russian interests. Similarly, a decision to host the US military base answered Tashkent’s national interest in stabilising war-torn Afghanistan, its long-term security concern. Despite neorealism’s strength viewing structure and power pursuit as the rationale for state behaviour, subsequent events showed that ideas and human perceptions affect state behaviour too. While cooperation with the US against the Taleban mattered, Uzbekistan’s internal destabilization threat became a bigger priority. Uzbekistan saw the Andijan uprising as an episode of “color revolutions”, popular movements against leaders in post-Soviet Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan in 2004-2005. Furthermore, Tashkent interpreted the uprising as evidence of a U.S. plot against Uzbekistan’s government and acted accordingly.

The US withdrawal?

Today, as active US military involvement in Afghanistan comes to its end, analysts predict a US disengagement from the region. Mathieu Boulegue from the French Institute of International Relations writes that the US Central Asia policy lacks substance and no longer seems a priority. Luca Anceschi, University of Glasgow, argues that the US is looking for a safe exit strategy from Afghanistan adding that human rights fall by the wayside. Arkadiy Dubnov, Carnegie Moscow Center, suggests the withdrawal from Afghanistan and irrelevance of NDN will allow Washington to speak freely about democracy and human rights.

A withdrawal, however, does not mean abandonment. In October 2015, Washington confirmed that 9500 US troops will remain in Afghanistan throughout 2016. Earlier this year, Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Washington will remain committed to the region and cited three objectives: strengthening partnerships to advance mutual security; forging closer economic ties; and advancing for improved governance and human rights.

A more inclusive security

Central Asia’s regional security challenges include many non-military threats, calling for a more inclusive understanding of security. The regional stability is undermined by threats such as drug trafficking, lack of economic opportunities, environmental challenges and terrorism. It can be argued that a reduced US military presence in Afghanistan and a “disengagement” could give way to reconsideration of security definition.

While the US and Uzbekistan differ in their perceptions and governance methods, their cooperation in tackling non-traditional security challenges is one platform where they interact without irritating each other. The states already cooperate in tackling drug trafficking, an unorthodox security threat. The joint position resulted in the 2012 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Ministry of Internal Affairs...
of Uzbekistan. In 2014, DEA and the Financial Intelligence Unit of the Office of the Prosecutor General also signed a MoU for joint counter-narcotic and terrorist-related financial investigations as well as exchange of intelligence\textsuperscript{22}. Uzbekistan law enforcement agencies use the US-funded equipment and training to upgrade their ability to combat drug trafficking\textsuperscript{23}.

The drug trafficking from Afghanistan has societal and economic consequences for Uzbekistan. More importantly, this threat overlaps with another important security issue. Martha Brill Olcott, a leading Central Asia expert, points at a direct link between certain organised crime groups and terrorism\textsuperscript{24}. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, for example, is one of such groups benefitting from the drug trade\textsuperscript{25}. Taking into account the correlation between drug trafficking and strengthening of terrorist groups, US and Uzbekistan will continue countering drug trafficking as part of their counter-terrorism strategy.

Other non-military challenges in the region, where increasing effort could benefit the parties include, but are not limited to water use, trade and environment including the Aral Sea disaster.

A possible spillover?

If the US-Uzbek security cooperation succeeds in the years to come, it could “spill-over” to other areas\textsuperscript{26}. Undoubtedly, Washington and Tashkent agree in principle that societal and economic aspects of security matter. In 2009, Karimov acknowledged in the address to Andijan officials, that poor economic conditions and popular resentment played a role in the tragedy\textsuperscript{27}. The US-Uzbekistan partnership does not exclude human rights albeit declarations outweigh the real initiatives. With a successful cooperation in areas where interests overlap, the countries could eventually incorporate other elements including the “human dimension”.

It will not happen overnight. The problem is a difference in understanding of how democracy should be implemented, and the risks that it may bring. According to Farkhod Tolipov, Uzbekistani political scientist, democracy does not switch on or off by the rulers, but ripens in a specific historical context\textsuperscript{28}. The utmost challenge for countries like Uzbekistan is social and economic development. A constructive cooperation in respective security matters could be a way for the US to assist the process.

\begin{itemize}
\item 1 John Kerry via Twitter on 01.11.2015 available at https://twitter.com/johnkerry/status/660810056678678528
\item 3 Matt Spetalnick, “Central Asia, Kerry raises rights but tempers public criticism”, Reuters on 01.11.2015, available at http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/11/01/us-centralasia-usa-kerry-idUSKCN0SQ1JC20151101#k322p1TJT Ud


13 Uzbekistan has long been fighting the terrorist group called Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Hiding in the Taleban-run Afghanistan, the group carried out attacks in Afghanistan’s northern regions near the Uzbek border. The Uzbek government also blamed the IMU in 1999 Tashkent bombings. See Mathew Stein “Uzbekistan’s view of security in Afghanistan after 2014”, Military Review, May-June 2012, available at http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Uzbekistans-view.pdf


23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.


26 Proposed by the neofunctionalism theory of the European integration, the “spill-over” implies that an initial decision by governments for one sector of policy leads to an expansion into other policy areas. See Schmitter, P. C. (2005), ‘Ernst B. Haas and the Legacy of Neofunctionalism’, Journal of European Public Policy, 12(2), p. 256.


28 Farkhod Tolipov, “Grand Strategy of Uzbekistan in terms of geopolitical and ideological transformation of Central Asia”, 2005, p.121