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GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS OF UZBEKISTAN IN CENTRAL ASIA

Abstract: This article is devoted to the analysis of the geopolitical strategy of Uzbekistan in the region, according to which the Republic of Uzbekistan bears special responsibility for the integration of the countries of Central Asia. This issue requires a deep study of the elements of the "geopolitical strategy" of the state.

Keywords: geopolitics, interest, strategy, integration, region.

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ГЕОПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЕ ИНТЕРЕСЫ УЗБЕКИСТАНА В ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ АЗИИ

Аннотация: Данная статья посвящена анализу геополитической стратегии Узбекистана в регионе, согласно которой, Республика Узбекистан несет особую ответственность за интеграцию стран Центральной Азии. Данный вопрос требует глубокого исследования элементов «геополитической стратегии» государства.

Ключевые слова: геополитика, интерес, стратегия, интеграция, регион.

The term "strategy", which originally had a purely military meaning, acquired a broader interpretation in the 20th century. Strategy can be presented as

the integration of forces and means based on a single plan of political actions aimed at achieving specific goals, taking into account the time, place and conditions (environment) of these actions, as well as possible benefits.

The highest level of strategy is the so-called “grand strategy” (which is, in essence, a national security strategy), which implies the highest level of political decision-making and mobilizes all necessary means to achieve them, covering virtually all key areas of state activity: military power, economic potential, trade opportunities, technological base, intelligence resources, diplomatic levers, ideological means, etc. [1]

As B.G. Liddell Hart noted, a grand strategy “must not only combine various instruments, but also regulate their use in such a way as to prevent the deterioration of the future state of the world – for the sake of security and prosperity” [2].

The development of a "grand strategy" requires a fundamental study of the above issues. Here we will limit ourselves to a brief analysis of some of them.

First of all, it is necessary to determine the issue of vital and strategic interests related to the physical, cultural and political survival of the nation, without the protection of which the country may be threatened by chaos, uncontrollable negative processes, the collapse of the political and economic system, etc. This category mainly includes the interests of national security, for the protection of which the state maintains a sufficient level of military power and mobilization readiness, strengthens state institutions and takes care to build up the economic potential of the country.

Strategic interests can be equated to vital interests in many ways, but they have their own characteristics. In particular, having an independent meaning, they play a “parallel”, in some ways supporting role in relation to national interests of other types. Thus, cooperation with the USA contributes to the economic growth of Uzbekistan; therefore, it works for the implementation of the vital interests of the Republic of Uzbekistan (and, of course, is beneficial to the USA). Cooperation may develop to the point of establishing a strategic partnership between them.

However, the absence of a strategic partnership will not yet mean a dangerous vulnerability of vital interests. On the other hand, by realizing its strategic interests - in our example, in the form of cooperation with the United States - a nation can receive greater benefits and take a better position in the world community. This is why the future status of a nation in the international system depends on achieving strategic interests. And, although strategic guidelines are defined for the medium and long term, they always remain a priority.

The strategic interests of Uzbekistan include the construction of highways and railways leading from Central Asia to Europe, China, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, as well as the construction of oil and gas pipelines through the territory of these countries in order to transport Central Asian energy resources to world markets. The implementation of various projects will not only help solve the problems of economic growth in Central Asian countries, but will also contribute to strengthening stability and order in the macro-region and eliminating threats to the national security of states, and will also provide them with more advantageous political and economic positions in the new world order of the 21st century.

The sphere of strategic interests of Uzbekistan (which complement vital interests and also have independent significance) undoubtedly includes the establishment and development of strategic partnership with the USA, the leading countries of the EU, Turkey, Russia, India, Japan, China, Central Asian states, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, etc. Of great importance is active participation in the activities of the UN, OSCE, EU, NATO, CIS and OIC. The national and regional security of Uzbekistan, the creation of a network of transport and electronic communications, the transportation of energy and other resources, the attraction of investments and high technologies, as well as participation in the creation of a new world order depend to a decisive extent on these key subjects.

By strategic partnership we mean a high level of interstate relations, in which cooperation, firstly, covers a fairly wide range of different areas (economics, politics, military sphere, culture, etc.), secondly, is calculated for the long term,

thirdly, serves the interests of national security of each of the parties and, fourthly, determines the unity or closeness of their positions on the most important problems of world politics, including a certain correlation of their foreign policy actions. Such cooperation indicates a high degree of mutual trust and reliability of relations.

The changing status quo in the region.

The independence of the Central Asian states (which turned them into subjects of international relations) led to a geopolitical transformation of the region and marked the beginning of the establishment of new strategic relations.

From the point of view of the systemic approach, it is appropriate to consider the changing status quo in Central Asia in the context of the emerging new world order (NWO). True, the process of the NWO formation itself is assessed by different politicians and experts in a very ambiguous and contradictory way, but consensus on this issue is hardly achievable in principle.

It seems that any model of the NWO based on the idea of an N-polar world will be vulnerable, since it is a priori considered within the framework of the power component of world politics, and it is becoming increasingly blurred (and the power itself is becoming increasingly diffuse).

Thus, even the system of a unipolar world order, which implies the global hegemony of the United States, is unable to set for other “elements” some fundamental parameters of political existence, to which they would have to adapt; it is no coincidence that Zbigniew Brzezinski could not admit that the United States would become the last empire in the world [3]. Thus, the position of a “monopoly” – in particular, the status of the United States as a pole of a unipolar world – can only serve as a concept appropriate in describing a transitional model. It is hardly possible to consider today’s real status of the United States as the “crown of the end of history” and a determinant of world order.

Of course, the power and values of the United States are indisputable, but neither is American global hegemony nor the Pax Americana doctrine indisputable:

the establishment of a new world order requires that the world community simply recognize the global leadership of the United States. After all, even by the standards of the United States itself, this would contradict the idea of necessary pluralism.

If we talk about a multipolar world order, it would most likely be a mess. The poles of the world, representing different civilizations and socio-political systems, would most likely compete with each other, pursuing their own interests (as was the case during the bipolar order). A multipolar order would be, so to speak, a unipolar world “inside out” — all the pluralism of such a world would be limited exclusively to the “magic number” N , expressing the number of poles in the world at a given moment.

In addition, multipolarity is not yet ipso facto a sign of democratization of international relations, although the supporters of this concept justify their ideas precisely by its democratic nature. It seems that the most democratic formula of the NWO could be the currently discussed project "Pax Democratica". At first glance, it seems indisputable that only expanding democracy can claim the right to determine the content and character of the NWO: no world power will object to such an idea. But this concept is based on many idealistic ideas, while the model of a multipolar world is distinguished by realism.

Meanwhile, the idea of international democracy (which is easily extrapolated into the idea of regional democracy) is extremely important for the Central Asian countries. For the states of the region, national and regional democracy seem to mutually condition each other.

It is also very interesting that the concept of regional democracy can play not only an integration role, but also a geopolitical one, since it is the most important prerequisite and guarantee of conflict-free relations between the Central Asian states, each of which forms its own foreign policy strategy.

The presence of the United States in the Central Asian region and its strategic partnership with Uzbekistan has put the issue of political subjectivity

(joint and individual) of the Central Asian states on the agenda. Against the backdrop of the emerging NMP and the changing status quo, the American presence in the region is gaining unprecedented geopolitical significance.

This is why the Uzbek-American partnership is acquiring not only a purely bilateral but also, due to its implications, a regional dimension. It can also be seen as a strong impetus for regional integration. And if the strategic presence of the United States in Central Asia reflects the systemic geopolitical transformation taking place there, then the historical responsibility of all five states in the region (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) is to turn this transformation into a centripetal integration process. And Uzbekistan has a special role in this process.

The concept of Uzbekistan's special responsibility for Central Asia.

The parameters of power, strategic importance and political potential of Uzbekistan indicate that this state objectively bears special responsibility for the Central Asian region. Uzbekistan should become the initiator and leader of integration. This does not at all exclude the responsibility of other Central Asian states for the course of integration processes: the centripetal regional policy of each of them is certainly valuable in itself. In addition, the concept of special responsibility in no way assumes and even absolutely denies any dominance, expansion or hegemony that could give rise to a certain irresponsibility.

Having transformed from an object of superpowers' claims into a subject of international relations and geopolitics, Uzbekistan can choose the only possible and correct path, which consists of reconciling extra-regional rivals through rapprochement with each of them. It should be noted that, although the implementation of such a strategy begins with "balancing", it is not based on the principle of the so-called multi-vector foreign policy.

The policy pursued by Uzbekistan should acquire a regional dimension, and it should be linked to the prospects of strategic partnership with the United States.

If we take as a basis the four basic goals declared by the United States in Central Asia (strengthening independence, ensuring regional stability and security, conducting market and democratic reforms, developing regional cooperation), then we can see that all of them, to one degree or another, depend on the situation in the region as a whole.

Uzbekistan needs to ensure that the strategic partnership with the United States “works” in the integration direction as well: only this direction can have democratic content both at the national and regional levels, that is, be in harmony with the idea of “Pax Democratica”.

In one of his books, the President of Uzbekistan I. Karimov emphasized: “This integration has always been and remains popular in its essence... Let us note that the integration of the peoples of Central Asia is not a dream or a project for the future, it is a given, it is a reality that only needs organizational and political forms” [4].

In Uzbekistan's place, any other Central Asian state would probably choose exactly this strategy. Therefore, there is no point in suspecting Uzbekistan of hegemonic ambitions, or of any missionary work or attempts at inadequate leadership. The real leadership of the Republic of Uzbekistan lies in its special responsibility for the state of affairs in Central Asia. Moreover, this special responsibility is derived both from one or another form of Uzbekistan's participation in regional affairs, and from its non-participation in them.

Elements of the "grand strategy" of Uzbekistan.

The presented idea of the essence of strategic partnership and the nature of changes in the status quo in the region, as well as the concept of Uzbekistan's special responsibility, allow us to propose the following elements of the state's "grand strategy".

The presented idea of the essence of strategic partnership and the nature of changes in the status quo in the region, as well as the concept of special

responsibility of Uzbekistan, allow us to propose the following elements of the "grand strategy" of the state.

1. Selection of strategic partners. The process of developing relations, up to the establishment of strategic partnership, was mutual: the initiative came not only from Uzbekistan, but also from those states that are now considered strategic partners of the republic. The parties managed to overcome "cool" relations, assess prospects and reliability and, finally, achieve friendly rapprochement and trust.

2. Regional cooperation. Central Asia is undoubtedly "its" region for Uzbekistan. As already noted, the Central Asian states have been strategic partners by nature from the very beginning. The once united Turkestan, which to a large extent represented a single Oikumene (from the Greek word oikumene – the part of the Earth inhabited by humans), but was divided into five parts during the Soviet era, began to reunite in 1991. The predictions of many Western and Russian analysts about the supposedly inevitable conflicts (interethnic, territorial, etc.) between the states of the region did not come true; on the contrary, almost simultaneously with the liquidation of the USSR and the creation of the CIS, the "Central Asians" (as they are called in the West) began regional integration. This integration was perhaps the most significant foreign policy achievement of Uzbekistan in the 1990s. [5]

The diversification of strategic guidelines of the newly independent Central Asian states instead of their exclusively pro-Russian orientation is predetermined by at least four factors:

- 1) the acquisition of independence;
- 2) the multiplicity and geopolitical diversity of countries involved in the "Great Game";
- 3) the actualization, mutual dependence and indivisibility of national and regional security of the Central Asian states;
- 4) the scale of the tasks of modernization and sustainable development.

Conclusion

With the inevitability of diversification of the foreign policy strategy of the Central Asian countries, it would be inappropriate to continue to view the region exclusively through the prism of Russian-American rivalry. Using the above-mentioned designation of strategic partnership, we can say that with a linear approach to the issue, strategic rapprochement with one state means strategic distance from another. However, ensuring the vital interests of Uzbekistan requires a non-linear approach: only in this case will it be possible to solve the problems of national and regional security.

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