What does Washington want from the Countries of Central Asia?

Due to its location, Central Asia (CA) is an important geopolitical region, particularly in terms of ensuring stability in the CIS, as well as in several other countries in the region. The interests of many countries, not only natural geographical neighbours, but also NATO countries, and in particular the US, collide in the struggle for expansion into Central Asia.

The Ukraine crisis has dramatically changed the CIS region, and accelerated many political processes. The deterioration of relations with the West is pushing Russia to accelerate the integration processes within the CIS framework (the Customs Union, the Eurasian Economic Union, CSTO) and expand cooperation with Central Asian countries willing to participate in the integration processes. However, Washington, in the face of these circumstances, and in pursuit of world domination, in recent years is increasingly struggling to maintain its presence in Central Asia, with the purpose of countering the expansion of Russian and Chinese influence in the region, and the development of Eurasian integration.

The increased attention of the US to Central Asian governments is due to many reasons, mainly, their considerable natural resources and also their geostrategic position in the region, which allows for direct influence on the politics, economics, and security of China, Russia, Iran, India, and a number of other states. President George W. Bush, in August 2004, stated the intention of gaining a foothold here on a long-term basis, without specifying any time limits for US presence, and thus began building a security system in the region that was not only most consistent with the interests of the White House, but would also provide temporary advanced military bases in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, as well as access to airspace, with the possibility of using military bases in Kazakhstan and even in Turkmenistan.

The interest towards the region of Central Asia, manifested during the last decade by the US and its NATO allies, is based not only on plans related to access to the oil and gas resources of the region, but also in preparation for a possible confrontation, especially with China and, in a likely turn of events, with Russia and Iran. Implementation of these plans requires the use of a wide arsenal of tools and techniques, including military-political, financial and information and propagandistic infiltration into the region through increased cooperation with the countries of Central Asia, in particular through the Partnership for Peace program.

For Washington, a very important tool for infiltration into the region of Central Asia is the use of various non-governmental organizations, which not only coordinate the socio-political processes in Central Asia, but also by means of “velvet” coups or “colour revolutions” try to dislodge political regimes that are unwanted or not completely loyal to the US. This, in particular, confirms the attempts to erode the social and political situation during the events in March 2005 and April 2010 in Kyrgyzstan, the mass riots in Andijan, Uzbekistan in 2005, and in Kazakh Zhanaozen in 2011. Because of inspiring protests in the region through the "International Crisis Group," (a very large American NGO in Central Asia, located in the city of Osh in southern Kyrgyzstan), information is being collected on the Andijan, Namangan, Ferghana regions of Uzbekistan, in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan, and in other countries in the region. The information obtained, particularly on the Kyrgyz-Tajik and...
Kyrgyz-Uzbek, Kyrgyz-Chinese and Tajik-Uzbek relations, and on the situation in the border areas, is closely watched in Washington and is used in the promotion of various types of local and interstate social and political controversies.

Most of the countries of Central Asia today are focused on Russia. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are part of the CSTO, Kazakhstan has already joined the Eurasian Economic Union, as should Kyrgyzstan shortly, and negotiations are being held with Tajikistan.

However, the US does not intend to completely lose control of the region. And in this regard, Washington chose Uzbekistan as the most convenient base for spreading its influence; the largest state in terms of population in the region, whose relations with Moscow are not as warm as those of neighbouring countries; it was twice included in the CSTO and both times left the organization. In addition, Tashkent has rather strained relations with its neighbours, and the US is very interested in aggravating tensions on Russia's southern borders.

In order to strengthen its influence in Uzbekistan, the United States intends to deliver to this country the following military equipment: 308 armoured MRAP vehicles and 20 armoured maintenance vehicles, as stated by the US Department of State, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Central Asia, Daniel Rosenblum. The cost of the proposed American technology is unprecedented for Central Asia, and is estimated at $150 million. By handing over such equipment, the US is counting on simultaneously securing the territory of Uzbekistan "for servicing of the equipment" with a significant number of US military personnel. Individual experts believe that such a "gift" may come with a price for the opportunity of opening a US military base; near the city of Termez, at Kakaydy military airfield, in Uzbekistan there was an American base until 2005; in Khanabad, after the events in Andijan, when Washington supported the anti-state rebellion, the US base was closed.

Washington is also concerned about Moscow and Dushanbe becoming closer, and the outlined course for integration of Tajikistan into the Customs Union (CU) – Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). Two representatives from the US State Department recently arrived in Dushanbe for a discussion of these issues, and their impact in terms of US interests. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Central Asia, Daniel Rosenblum, and his colleague, an expert on democracy, human rights and international religious freedom Steven Feldstein. A little earlier, and for the same purpose. Toivo Klarr, the head of the Central Asian Division of the European External Action Service also visited Tajikistan. Experts attribute the visit of US officials first of all with the upcoming 1 March parliamentary elections in Tajikistan, and with Washington's desire to strengthen its position in the country and prevent it from its continued rapprochement with Moscow.

To achieve significant strengthening of its influence in Kyrgyzstan and its separation from Moscow, the White House expects the early appointment of a new US ambassador to the country, Richard Miles, whose official activity of recent years led to the forced overthrow of governments and splits in governments and territories of the CIS and Eastern Europe, where he had been sent by Washington. Especially as this objective has not managed to be met by the previous US ambassador in Kyrgyzstan, Pamela Spratlen, who in a report to fellow colleagues-diplomats openly shared her failures, and as a result, has been transferred by the State Department to a "less-complicated country" – Uzbekistan.

Thus, it is not worth hoping that Washington will, in the near future, abandon the course to create a pro-US alliance in the region, aggravate interstate conflict between Central Asian countries in the areas of religion, energy, water and land use, especially between Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, the US will undoubtedly seek to strengthen this activity on the background of the Ukrainian crisis, and in relation to this, the deteriorating Russian-American relations, in order to create additional problems for Russia on its southern borders, as, for that matter, in other regions.

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