

US Engagement with Central Asia (1991-2021)

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Saima A Kayani *

Abstract: *After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, US interests in the newly independent states of Central Asia were somewhat limited. However, with new developments, the region strategically became important for the US. The main reasons are the energy resources of Central Asia, the region's strategic geographical location, US involvement in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and post NATO/US army exit situation in the region and Afghanistan and the threat of reemergence of Taliban. It seems that the US followed a policy of democracy, human rights, the rule of law and development but at the same time had military bases in CARs to keep an eye over Afghanistan and neighbouring regions. However, there is a shift in regional dynamics, which will not allow the US to keep its hold over the region. This research work divided the US policy in the Central Asian region into different periods, which are the post-Soviet era, post-9/11, post-2014 and post-US army exit from Afghanistan 2021.*

Key Words: US, Central Asia, Afghanistan. Comprehensive policy, Limited Intervention

Introduction

The region of Asia bordered by Afghanistan, China, the Caspian Sea, and Russia is termed Central Asia. It consists of five countries:

Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.



Figure1:

Source: Ben Ale- Ebrahim. Food in... Central Asia. October 22, 2014.

<http://www.jayhawksabroad.dept.ku.edu/general-info/uncategorized/food-in-central-asia/>

* Chairperson, Department of International Relations, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan. Email: drsaimakayani@gmail.com (Corresponding Author)

The independence of the five regional states of Central Asia in 1991 gave an opportunity to the US to establish its relations, and by 1992 US maintained its diplomatic relations with all five countries of the region. Initially, the region was not on the top priority list of the US. The main reasons were its remoteness, landlocked status and complex domestic socio-economic and political structure of the comprising states of the region. Although the regional states manage their independent status as a nation-state and manage their national and international obligations; but still their economies are weak, ethnic issues are ready to catch fire, corruption, poverty, narcotics, and terrorism is on the rise with autocratic policies of the ruling elites. All of this made Central Asia more vulnerable and required the support of the US for its survival and development.

After the incident of 9/11 and Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, the region immediately became the most important area for US foreign policymakers and strategic planners. The main priorities for the US in Central Asia are:

1. To maintain the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the CARs
2. To develop more transit routes for CARs. The reemergence of the New Silk Road
3. To strengthen the institutional capabilities of regional states.
4. To integrate the region into the global economy ([Feigenbaum, 2011](#)).
5. To strengthen democracy in the region.
6. Increase regional integration.
7. To counter-terrorism.

However, the main focus of the US is on Afghanistan, and the Central Asia region is just second to it. The US see CARs through the prism of the emerging situation in Afghanistan.

The US and Central Asia: Post Soviet Era (1992-2000)

Prior to 1991, the US had no relations with Central Asia. After establishing its diplomatic relations, the US supported these countries to get membership in western organizations like

Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The main policy concern areas for the US at that time were to promote democracy, a free-market economy, denuclearization and human rights observance. Further US's main concern was to check any anti-American and anti-west rhetoric in Central Asia. For this US always supported the Turkey model in Central Asia in order to counter Iranian influence ([Nichol, 2002](#)). The main goal for the US was to integrate the region into the international system and also link Central Asian energy resources to Europe to avoid Russia in order to diminish Europe's energy dependence on Russia. However, deal differently with each CARs keeping in view the requirement of a particular country.

"US interests in Kazakhstan include the security and elimination of Soviet-era nuclear and biological weapons materials and facilities. In Tajikistan, US aid increasingly focuses on economic reconstruction. US energy firms have invested in oil and natural gas development in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan" ([Nichol, 2002](#)).

Thus the main concern for the US in this period was related to democracy, human rights, the market economy, ethnic issues, economic development and anti-west feelings ([Nichol, 2002](#)). The FREEDOM Support Act 1992 outlines US policy towards Russia and the Central Asian States. Three levels are identified for US policy towards Central Asia during this period.

1. Russia and Newly Independent States (NIS)
2. Central Asia.
3. Individual Central Asian States. ([Hsu, n.d., pp.128-130](#))

At the first level, US-supported transformational policies like democracy and free-market initiatives in Russia and NIS. It encouraged people to people contact, trade and investment in the region. To integrate the region with the west US-supported regional states' membership to OSCE, NATO and other organizations. US strengthen its relations with NIS.

At the second level, the main emphasis has been given to those policies which help the Central Asia region to be integrated with the international community. With this US aimed to minimize any threat to the US or west or, as a matter of fact, to international stability. By promoting democracy, denuclearization, free-market economies and human rights standards, the US made an effort to develop a sense of regionalism and internationalism among the Central Asian States.

At the third level, the US deal with each state as an individual entity. Kazakhstan is given importance for denuclearization, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan oil and gas development projects are given importance, and civil liberties in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan are under observance. Further independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of each state have been given top priority ([Hsu, n.d.](#)). In 1999 Silk Road Strategy Act was passed, which is about the economic and humanitarian assistance, development of civil societies, countering terrorism, and developing of means of transportation and energy resources to Central Asia and the South Caucasus countries ([Helms, 1999](#)).

US and Central Asia: Post 9/11 (2001 - 2014)

The 9/11 incident immediately made the US administration give top priority to the countries of the Central Asian region. The main reason is the geographical proximity of these countries to Afghanistan. However, the US concerned about terrorist threats, the sovereignty of CA states, bilateral and multilateral conflicts among the states and the recurrence of neo great game. US policy in Central Asia can be divided into three spheres that are: security, energy and domestic reforms. ([Nichol, 2002, P.2](#)).

Security in this period became the top priority for any government in Washington DC. This security is mostly related to terrorism and how to prevent these states not to "becoming breeding grounds for extremism and terrorism" ([US Policy in Central Asia, 2002](#)). The US didn't want to repeat the mistake of the 1990s when it disengaged itself from Afghanistan, and this

resulted in the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban. The main goal is to prevent the citizens of CARs from joining any terrorist network. To counter terrorism US intensified its efforts to engage militarily in counter-terrorism cooperation and diplomatic engagement. All CARs supported US efforts to win the war against terror. Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan provided spaces for US military basis.

The diplomatic engagement leads toward domestic reforms so that these countries are able to become a member of the international community. To be accepted as a respectful member of the international community, domestic social, economic and political reforms are required. This led to democratic values, respect for human rights and the rule of law, political pluralism, independent media, and a vibrant civil society. All this further enhances the collective approach toward regional issues ([US Policy in Central Asia, 2002](#)).

Access to CARs' energy resources is another goal of the US. It's a known fact that the region of CA is rich in energy resources like oil, gas and coal, few to mention. Hydrocarbon resources are found in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. US wanted to reduce its dependency for energy resources on OPEC countries, reduce regional states' dependence on Russian energy supply routes and support Turkey and Afghanistan rather than Iran as an alternative route. It also wants to keep a check on China's energy policies and projects in the region of Central Asia. Consequently, the US has planned to be present in the region for a long period of time. In 2006 US State Department created Central Asia and South Asia Bureau, thus detaching Central Asia from the Bureau of Europe and Eurasia. ([Laruelle, 2012, p.2](#)).

US and Central Asia: Post 2014

US involvement in Central Asia during the war against terrorism revolved around Afghanistan. That is mostly related to US military bases in Central Asian states and non-stop delivery of military equipment, weapons and daily use items to ISAF troops in

Afghanistan in order to achieve success in Operation Enduring Freedom. During this period, the US never emphasized: "...the endemic problems of governance and corruption, as well as serious human rights violations" ([Mankoff, 2013, p. v](#)). From 2001 to 2014 US mostly view central Asia from the lens of Afghanistan.

Strategic Partnership Agreement between US and Afghanistan, signed in June 2012, did provide a framework to station some US military troops in Afghanistan after 2014. The US decision to exit from Afghanistan by the end of 2014 has generated a debate regarding US policy towards Central Asia. Three options are available to the US as far as its Central Asia policies are concerned. Firstly comprehensive entry, secondly limited intervention and thirdly, phasing out ([Huasheng, 2014](#)). All policy options are interlinked with US interests in the region of Central Asia.

As far as US comprehensive entry in Central Asia is considered, it all depends on how the US view the region after it pulls out its forces from Afghanistan. US interests that still are of much importance to the US are:

1. Location/ geo strategic importance of the region
2. Afghanistan
3. Energy Resources and supply routes.
4. New Silk Road or Trade routes
5. Threat of Terrorism

Obama administration also mentioned six priorities for the Central Asian States. These are NDN, Silk route, respect for human rights, competitive market economies, counter-narcotics and people trafficking and following the policy of nonproliferation. ([Nichol, 2014, p.4](#))

Geographically the land-locked region of Central Asia is located in such a position where its immediate bordering countries are China, Russia, Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey and Pakistan. This makes it strategically important for the world as no one can deny the role of China and Russia in the world and regional politics along with emerging future scenarios where these powers will lead the world. This forced the US not to abandon the region of Central Asia. Further, neighbouring countries like Pakistan,

Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkey are important players in the chess of world politics. Not only this, but the region is also well known for its energy and natural resources, which resulted in the New Great Game in the region.

"Together, Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have the world's second-largest reserves of oil and gas. Alone, Kazakhstan has double the oil reserves of the North Sea (the government estimates total reserves to be three times higher), whilst the gas reserves of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are believed to be respectively the 5th and 8th highest in the world. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have significant quantities of uranium, the former being the world's third-largest producer of uranium, and a major supplier to the EU"(Central Asia Energy, n.d.).

Realizing the growing world energy consumption in the future, it is believed that this need can be fulfilled by the energy reserves of the Caspian Sea and Central Asia. To satisfy the growing domestic demand for energy consumption, the US, China, and Russia favoured and supported divergent and somewhat contradicting energy supply pipelines. US supported the energy supply routes that pass through Afghanistan, Turkey, the Black sea, Europe, Georgia, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan(BTC and TAPI) and tried to avoid the routes that diverge towards China or Russia.

Leaving aside the historical importance of Afghanistan for Alexander the Great, the Russian and British Empire, the Soviet Union, Taliban, currently, the geostrategic importance of Afghanistan lies in the fact that it shared its borders with Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan (Central Asia), China (East Asia), Pakistan (South Asia) and Iran (West Asia). Thus Afghanistan provides connectivity between different important regions of the world. Afghanistan is "a crossroad of routes in Asia" ([Analysis Document, 2011](#)). This is the country which provides a route to the energy-rich Central Asia region, a route to avoid dependency on Russia and the Middle Eastern countries. Further from Afghanistan, the US can keep a check over all the neighbouring countries.



Figure 2:

Source: Trade Analysis Sets Afghan Direction <http://www.usaid.gov/results-data/success-stories/trade-analysis-sets-afghan-direction>

Historically the US considered Afghanistan as an area which does not fall in the orbit of its strategic interests. The further US considered Afghanistan as an area under the influence of the British Empire and Germany. The US at that time was following the policy of isolation in world affairs. Thus efforts by the Afghan government to establish relations with the US were not welcomed in Washington DC. Diplomatic relations between the two countries were established in 1942 (Jabeen et al., 2010, p.p 143-145). The US started economic investment in the field of energy, irrigation, agriculture, and education and continued its economic assistance. During the cold war, being the neighbouring country of the Soviet Union, the importance of Afghanistan increased, but still, strategically, Pakistan was more important to the US. Afghanistan realizing the US inclination towards Pakistan established its security relations with the Soviet Union (Jabeen et al., 2010, p.p 146-151). However, for the US, "The strategic location of Afghanistan was important for the US due to its neighbouring states of Central Asia and Indian sub-continent" (Jabeen et al., 2010, p.152). Soviet invasion in Afghanistan in 1979 changed the scenario, and the US, keeping in mind its defeat in Vietnam War, fought a proxy war with the help of Pakistan. Once the capitalist victory over communism was achieved in the shape of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, the US started ignoring Afghanistan once again. However, this time US considered Afghanistan as an area which could

facilitate pipeline projects from Central Asia, but the scenario changed after the 9/11 incident.

Now Afghanistan, with the Taliban in power, became the focus of US policy, and it launched its war against terrorism. This war immediately brought Central Asian states into the orbit of the US and played a vital role in ISAF operation in Afghanistan in the following way:

- Provided alternate transit routes for ISAF to Afghanistan in the form of North Distribution Net Work NDN since 2009.
- Provided military bases to US troops.
- Supported diplomatically Afghan government.
- Facilitated developmental international projects in Afghanistan (Mancoff, 2013, p.2).

US assistance to the Central Asian States is vital for support for US policy in Afghanistan. In contrast, the Central Asian states showed their concerns about the regional security and instability in Afghanistan and the spillover effect in Central Asia regarding the withdrawal of ISAF from Afghanistan. For the Central Asian States, the presence of ISAF forces in Afghanistan is the guarantee of peace and stability in the Central Asian region.

The US developed strategic relations with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan (the neighbouring Central Asian states of Afghanistan). US-developed relations with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. To be effectively

involved in the region, in 2009, the Obama administration launched Annual Bilateral Consultations with regional states. This covered consultations with regional states "...on counter-narcotics, counter-terrorism, democratic reforms, the rule of law, human rights, trade, investment, health, and education". ([Nichol, 2014, p.4](#)). This also facilitates the US to keep a vigilant check on Russia and China's growing role in the region.

The US strategy to provide political stability in Afghanistan revolves around developing central Asia's economy (Free market economy) and infrastructure (new Silk Road). The new Silk Road initiative is supported by the US in order to link south and Central Asia in four key areas, regional energy markets, trade and transport, customs and border operations and businesses and people-to-people contacts ([US Department of State, n.d.](#)). Afghanistan is the centre of the New Silk Road strategy. The State Department mentioned the New Silk Road project in the following words.

The New Silk Road initiative was first envisioned in 2011 as a means for Afghanistan to integrate further into the region by resuming traditional trading routes and reconstructing significant infrastructure links broken by decades of conflict. Today, Afghanistan and its neighbours are leading the way in key areas, creating new North-South transit and trade routes that complement vibrant East-West connections across Eurasia. The region is reducing barriers to trade, investing in each other's economies, and supporting international development and cross-border projects ([US Department of State, n.d.](#)).

This New Silk Road initiative by the US is considered a symbol of US interest in the region of Central Asia beyond 2014. With this initiative, the main idea is to link Afghanistan's economy with the Central Asian States. Afghanistan has less than 9 per cent of trade with the Central Asian States. The thought behind such an initiative is that the economic integration and benefits will wean the citizens of Afghanistan and the Central Asian region away from extremism and terrorism, and this will bear fruits for the entire region. The US feared that once the US left Afghanistan, the extremists' elements would reappear and spillover effects in the neighbouring regions of

South and Central Asia and terrorist organizations like TTP, IMU, HT and IJU would reorganize themselves. There are incidents when these organizations received support from the Taliban from Afghanistan. There are terrorist activities like bombing, suicide attacks, targeting security forces, kidnapping, and attacks on government officials, target killing in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. It is believed that these groups received training, funds and support from countries like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan. However, the fertile ground for these terrorist organizations has been provided by the existing situation of poverty, illiteracy, corruption, authoritarian regimes' and the inability of the security forces to handle the menace of terrorism ([Nichol, 2014, p.p. 21-31](#)).

It is believed by the majority of policymakers and scholars that the Afghan government is not capable enough to resist the resurgence of the Taliban, as in the September 2015 Taliban takeover of Kunduz in the north of Afghanistan. This alarmed the Central Asian states that the Taliban would develop terrorist training camps near the Afghan Central Asia border and terrorist networks in Central Asia. ([Kassenova, 2014, p.p. 69-70](#)).

To counter the threat of terrorism, the US promoted free-market economic reforms in the region of Central Asia. Central Asia Regional Economic Co-operation (CAREC) connected 10 countries based on the vision of Good Neighbors, Good Partners, and Good Prospects. The main aim of the CAREC program is to reduce poverty and to improve the living standard of the people of the member countries. The priority areas for CAREC are energy, transport or infrastructure and trade policy and facilitation. According to Nisha Desai Biswal, "CAREC is developing six transport corridors linking Asia, Europe, and beyond through 7,800 kilometres of road and 3,800 kilometres of rail by 2020. These transport links will build upon 3000 kilometres of roads in Afghanistan and 1000 kilometres of roads in Pakistan the United States has built or improved, including the five main trade routes into Afghanistan" ([Biswal, 2015](#)). Now the region of Central Asia and Afghanistan are connected by electricity from Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to Afghanistan, rail links

between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have been established, while TAPI and CASA 1000 are considered an initiative for New Silk Road ([Fedorenko, 2013, p.6](#)). Further, it is envisaged that this strategy will also reduce the Central Asian states' dependency and influence on Iran, Russia and China ([Mankoff, 2013, p.p.20-22](#)). Although it is expected that the economic gains will reduce the threat of terrorism, still it's a long way to end.

US and Central Asia equation is mostly drawn due to the situation and presence of ISAF and NATO forces in Afghanistan. Once the US withdraw its forces from Afghanistan, the US involvement in the region would mostly be related to democracy, human rights, drug trafficking, terrorism and energy resources of the region. According to Zhao Huasheng US involvement in the region started diminishing and has mentioned the following reasons for US limited intervention in the region of Central Asia.

- US war in Afghanistan is over.
- North Distribution Network is not as important as it was during the war.
- For the US, the regions of Asia Pacific, West Asia, South Asia and North Africa are more important.
- US internal economic issues.
- Role of other actors like Russia and China (economic and political).
- The clash between American values and Central Asian states' realities. ([Huasheng2014](#)).

US and Central Asia: Post US withdrawal from Afghanistan 2021

US armed forces withdrawing from Afghanistan in August 2021 marks the end of twenty years of war in Afghanistan (2001-2021). This raised serious concerns related to the security situation in Afghanistan, with its implications for South and Central Asian regions. The US Secretary of State, in the C5+1 meeting with foreign ministers of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan in April 2021, provided a guideline for the Central Asian region after the US exit from Afghanistan. C5+1 discussed the following points. Sovereignty and territorial integrity of five CA states, bilateral relations, Afghanistan

peace process, COVID-19 recovery and climate change, Women and Girls Empowered (WAGE) Program, economy, energy, environment and security ([Secretary Blinken's Meeting with the C5+1, 2021](#)).

Biden administration's foreign policy agenda emphasizes collective security, climate change, human rights, democracy and Covid 19 recoveries. For Central Asian countries, the Biden administration has the following policy agenda for the Central Asian region:

Support for Afghan Refugees (who supported the US in Afghanistan)

Military bases in CARs

Regional connectivity

CARs' role in Peace and stability in Afghanistan

Counter-terrorism mechanism ([Mackinnon, 2021](#))

However, for the US, it is important to get some military bases in neighbouring countries of Afghanistan to use them for surveillance over Afghanistan and terrorist activities. For them, it's important to keep an eye on the reemergence of Al Qaeda and Islamic State-Khorasan in Afghanistan, which can have implications for South and Central Asia. For the US presently, it's imperative to enter into an agreement with Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to get bases in these states. However, to date, the US is not successful in convincing the CARs to allow the US to use their territory for any military operations.

Its almost thirty years of independence of CAR, and much has been changed. Now Central Asian states are much more stable and confident as compared to 1991. Complete withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan meant security threats, and CAR leaders started seeing their country's role in the peace process and mediator in Afghanistan rather than party in conflicts like Uzbekistan, and some countries entered into military cooperation and security agreements with the Afghan government like Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. These states, other than Tajikistan, entered into dialogue with the Taliban also. Further, they are confident that Russia will provide them with boarder security vis-a-vis Afghanistan. As compared to 1991, these states are militarily stronger and well equipped. They are ready to meet any security threats from their

borders. For these states, Afghanistan is important as a transit route to South Asia and the world for trade and economic activities ([Taiebet al., n.d.](#)). Russia entered into a trade agreement with the Taliban government in Afghanistan in June 2022 and also wanted to take Iran on board which is also facing sanctions from the US. After Russia's attack on Ukraine, CAR is leaning more towards China. Also, there is a growing realization that the US presence in Afghanistan for 20 years brought instability and violence, and the US lost its credibility as a superpower and reliable partner.

Still, US policy for the region CAR is spinning on territorial integrity, democracy, the rule of law, political pluralism and corruption, regional connectivity and the role of Russia and China. But presently, CA is important for the US from an Afghanistan lens. CA countries are willing to play their role in peace and stability in Afghanistan. Uzbekistan is keen to play its role in the peace process in Afghanistan.

The emerging patterns for US policy for CAR from 1991 till 2021 are:

To make the region more democratic and have political pluralism

Regional states must follow western principles of democracy

CARs must join institutions in the west

Counter-terrorism mechanism

Check the growing influence of Russia and China in the region

Calculated involvement in the region to avoid any clash with Russia and China

As neighbouring states of Afghanistan

In order to achieve its long-term goals and commitment in Central Asia, the US is required to concentrate, first, on its short-term goals in the region. The first priority is to keep its engagement intact and try to build its relations bilaterally with all the countries of the Central Asian region. Annual Bilateral Consultations must remain active, and bilaterally the US has to discuss the issues pertaining to energy, terrorism, human rights, democracy, and security. However, the US is supposed to be very selective in its interventions in the region. Although security and terrorism are the first and top concerns for the US administration but for, this US has to concentrate on economic development and help to provide economic

opportunities to the countries of the region. For this US has to take into consideration the following possibilities:

- Build partnerships with China and Russia to play their role in building the Central Asian region as these states are the neighbouring states of Central Asia and are in a more advantageous position because of geographical proximity with CARs. Try to avoid competition either with Russia or China.
- Adopt a multilateral approach and try to work with the partners like regional organizations SCO, EU, and CIS and international organizations like WTO, IMF, and UNDP.
- Not to be involved in any political adventure in the region.
- Give priority to economic investment.
- Develop a mechanism that reduces intraregional rivalries and builds cooperation.
- Avoid seeing CARs through the prism of Afghanistan. CAR has its own dynamics and affairs.
- Focus on the development of the youth of the CARs through education and training programs.
- Try to avoid the use of military means in taking care of its national interests. CBMs and diplomatic means must be given priority.

However, it is recommended that the US carefully plan its strategies for the region of Central Asia. It is observed that the US rely too much on its military means, which is creating rifts and panic among states like Russia and China, especially related to US military bases in Central Asia. It must give civilians to play their role. The role of civil society and religious organizations can be structured carefully. The US must concentrate on building the capacity of the CARs institutions like financial institutions, democratic institutions, security institutions and

Judicial institutions. The US give priority to making CARs strong enough to shoulder their responsibilities. It must not interfere in the internal affairs of any CARs because it will face backlash. US has to admit the fact that every Central Asian state has its own dynamics, culture, traditions and societal mosaic, which it must not try to change. It has

to accept the ground realities of the region of Central Asia. The US make it clear to the CARs and the neighbouring states about its interests in the region and that it has no imperialistic motives for the region. It has the option to phase out from the region by achieving its goals of building institutions related to security, economy and governance.

Conclusion

US policy for central Asia can broadly be divided into different phases, pre 9/11, post 9/11, post-2014 and now after 2021 US army exit from Afghanistan. Soon after the independence of the region, US policy aimed at bringing CA states into the orbit of the civilized world by promoting democracy, human rights, and economy and trying to bring the region out of the influence of Russia. However, the event of 9/11 immediately brings the Central Asian region into the main security policy of the US, which revolves around Afghanistan. The new phase of US policy towards CAR started after the exit of NATO forces from Afghanistan. In this phase, the US is trying to adopt a comprehensive policy for CAR and show its sustained commitment to the region of Central Asia. Now US does not view CAR from the prism of its war strategy related to Afghanistan. It is viewed from the context of the new Silk Road and a region rich in energy resources. Further, it is perceived as a region near China, Russia, Pakistan, Iran and Turkey.

The further US have to adopt a policy of cooperation with Russia and China as far as

energy pipelines and counter-terrorism mechanism are considered. US opposed south, north and east word energy pipelines and is in favour of TAIP, which is still not materialized. Moreover, Central Asian countries are following independent foreign policy, and they are sceptical about US involvement in the region militarily. Also, the US exit from Afghanistan made the US an unreliable friend, and they are moving closer to China and Russia and prefer to go for regional connectivity with peace in Afghanistan as central to Central Asian countries' development and prosperity. Central Asian states opt for a diplomatic solution to the Afghanistan issue. Further, China and Russia will not welcome the presence of the US in their neighbouring region of Central Asia.

The US, keeping in view the changed scenario, have to reevaluate its commitment and foreign policy towards Central Asian states. It is recommended that the US just concentrate on helping the countries to develop economically and build their security-related infrastructure and organizations. US must not interfere in the internal affairs of any Central Asian States because in the region, the US is perceived as an imperialist state, and this perception can easily be exploited by anti-US forces. The further US has to make a strategy to start phasing out of the region by trusting regional states to shoulder their responsibilities and give priority to non-military means to build their relations with the regional states.

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