

The Real Purpose of the American March into Central Asia

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As the War on Terrorism continues in Afghanistan, U.S. military presence in Central Asia has become a reality. However, the United States will never be satisfied with this reality. All signs indicate that the United States is striving to expand and make permanent its military presence in Central Asia. As part of its strategic plot of dominating the entire world, the United States is trying to use its military presence to introduce total U.S. political and economic presence in Central Asia. Of course, even the Americans themselves are not entirely confident about whether this strategic plot will be successful.

Leased Military Bases as Permanent Fixtures of Military Presence

The United States has so far leased military bases in three Central Asian republics. In October of last year, the United States first leased the Hanabad airfield from Uzbekistan. Today, the U.S. has deployed 1500 troops of the 10th Mountain Division and stationed more than 30 helicopters there. Soon after leasing that airfield, the United States went on to lease the Manas airfield in Kyrgyzstan with a total deployment of more than 2000 troops and 20 fighter aircrafts. This year, Tajikistan has agreed to let the United States and its allies use the Kuliab Airfield. Military transport planes from the United States, France, and Italy have used this airfield to transport troops, munitions and various other materials to Afghanistan. Thus, with the exceptions of Turkmenistan, which has remained neutral, and Kazakhstan, which is relatively far away from Afghanistan, all the Central Asian Republics now have an American military presence.

Now the question is, is the American military presence in Central Asia a temporary phenomenon necessary for the War on Terrorism or is it Washington's long-term strategic goal? Initially, the United States announced that American military presence was purely for supporting war effort in Afghanistan. As soon as the war is over, the U.S. would pull out its troops from the region. But now, the United States is saying that the war in Afghanistan will be a protracted one, thus indefinitely delaying the troop pullout. The truth is that the U.S. military presence is not diminishing; on the contrary, it has been robustly increasing. It is reported that the Americans plan to spend \$500 million on modernizing the runways, lighting system, communications and warehouse facilities at the Hanabad Airfield in Uzbekistan. They also plan to deploy 50 to 60 fighter planes; the Americans have already put in \$6 million to build military barracks, hospitals and other facilities in and around the Manas Airfield in Kyrgyzstan where the U.S. troops will soon increase to 3000. There is also a report saying that the Americans are planning to

establish a wireless center in the mountains near the airfield to collect intelligence from Afghanistan, Pakistan and the entire Central Asia region; the Americans are also negotiating with Kazakhstan to lease its airfields and related facilities. In addition, although the United States originally signed one-year leases with Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, some reports state that once the term is due, it is certain that these leases will be extended or continued. The military cooperation agreement reached between the United States on one side and Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan on the other is likely to continue for as long as 25 to 30 years. All this indicates that once the American troops have entered Central Asia, they will not easily go away. Since the beginning of the anti-terrorist campaign, Saudi Arabia has from time to time hinted at its desire to ask the American troops to remove the military bases on its soil. This has further pushed the Americans to enter Central Asia on a permanent basis. American public opinion indicates that the American military presence in Central Asia represents “a historical breakthrough” of the U.S. global military strategy, becoming an important component of the grand plan for “the American omnipresence in the world. ”

The Deliberate Attempts to Make the U.S. Omnipresent in Central Asia

It has long been a dream of the United States to enter Central Asia. Before the Cold War, Central Asia was part of the Soviet Union, making American influence impossible in this area. After the Soviet Union disintegrated, Russia inherited the traditional preponderance of influence in this area. Repeated American attempts to penetrate into Central Asia through economic and military means did not bear desirable fruits. On the 10th anniversary of independence of these Central Asian countries, the anti-terrorist war in Afghanistan broke out, thus providing the United States what seemed like a God-given opportunity to enter Central Asia. With the acquiescence from Russia, the United States has used the excuse of leasing military bases as a way to pave the path toward Central Asia, and is now fully engaged in creating an American military, political and economic omnipresence in Central Asia.

First of all, by leasing military bases, the U.S. has strengthened the mutual military cooperation between Washington and the Central Asian countries. The United States has already provided Uzbekistan a grant of \$25 million to be used for the purchase of weapons and other military facilities; the U.S. has signed a cooperation agreement with Kyrgyzstan to help this Central Asian country collect military intelligence and train military personnel; the U.S. has conducted anti-terrorist training and military exercises with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. As the Deputy Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz said, these actions have military significance, but they have even greater political significance. The American news publications interpret that these actions aim not only to strengthen the anti-terrorist alliance with these countries in Central Asia, more importantly, but also to shape the future of these countries through influencing their military forces, so that the United States can “gain some control from the Russian suzerainty.”

Secondly, the U.S. has stepped up its economic aid to Central Asian countries, which are

all small and plagued with economic problems. The Americans have relished this situation, thinking “miraculous results will occur out of tiny alms.” The U.S. was extraordinarily generous when signing the leases for airfields from various Central Asian countries. It is reported that the United States paid \$270 to \$300 million to lease the Hanabad Airfield in Uzbekistan. Deals like this have made some Central Asian countries “ecstatic beyond belief,” rushing to offer airfields and other facilities for American use. In the meantime, U.S. financial aid to Central Asian countries has increased from last year’s \$270 million to this year’s \$408 million. Among these packages, the United States announced last December that the Congress had appropriated \$100 million to aid Uzbekistan as a reciprocal “package” for Uzbeks’ actions in allowing the Americans to use their airfield and air space. Soon afterwards, the U.S. Bank of Import and Export provided to Uzbekistan a loan of \$100 million to help the country overcome its current economic difficulties. This year, the United States is planning to give \$52 million to Kazakhstan as economic aid. In addition, the U.S. has reached agreements with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan on helping these countries in developing energy and hydro projects, “further enhancing the U.S. influence on the crucial fields of petroleum and natural gas.”

Next, the U.S. has increased its political interactions with these Central Asian countries. U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Commander-in-Chief of the War in Afghanistan General Richard Myers and other top military, political and Congressional officials, have one after another visited Central Asian countries, and have been received at the very high levels. In return, the leaders and top government officials from these Central Asian countries have also been invited to visit the U.S., and most of them came home “with substantial gains.” In order to curry favor with the Central Asian countries, the United States has for several years stopped criticizing and attacking the human rights conditions in these countries. While the United States propagandizes western values, urge these countries to conduct “democratic reforms,” Washington has stepped up, openly or covertly, contacts with the political oppositions within these countries. The American newspapers preach that to have a firm foothold in Central Asia, the United States must consider who the successors will be after the “current dictators.” For this purpose, these newspapers disclose that the United States is currently contemplating a long-term plan to look for different yet reliable political partners in Central Asia to guarantee the gained interests of the U.S. in this region will not be lost in the future.

Lastly, the U.S. has been involved in regional organizations. The United States is afraid of not having enough influence there due to geographical distance and strength deficiency; as a result, it has planned to establish a series of multilateral mechanisms in Central Asia to engage these countries in military, economic, and environmental cooperation. It actively involved itself with the Central Asian Peace Keeping Corps consisting of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, while continuing to push for the membership for these countries and other regional countries in NATO’s Partnership For Peace program. Then the United States threw its support behind the Commonwealth of the Central Asian Nations established last December by Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, specifically excluding Russia, in an effort to make this

organization capable of coordinating projects in energy, agriculture, hydroelectric and transportation so that the influence of Russia can be reduced.

Entrance into Central Asia Serves U.S. Grand Strategy for Global Domination

Central Asia is the connecting part of the Euro-Asian landmass. Its strategic position is very important, with rich resources in petroleum and natural gas. The entrance to Central Asia by the Americans functions as an important part of Washington's overall strategy of suppressing Russia, containing China and dominating the entire world.

First, U.S. entrance into Central Asia has formed a line of containment to the north, which serves to squeeze and press Russia, to prevent Russia from becoming a big power again. Among all the republics of the former Soviet Union, the countries in Central Asia are an integral part, forming a soft belly of Russia. If the Americans "wave their saber and cut through this region, Russia's central nerve system will be damaged." In the meantime, NATO will soon expand to include the three Baltic states. While making a military presence in Central Asia, the United States has dragged some NATO member states such as France and Italy into Central Asia, has dispatched military personnel to Georgia, and is planning to establish military bases in Azerbaijan. Consequently, the U.S.-led NATO has achieved a "Soft Eastern Expansion" into Central Asia and the outer Caucasus, which is united with the Baltic region. Therefore, an arc of military defense and offensive is formed against Russia running southwest to northwest. The arc line was first proposed by the American military during World War II known as "the snake rope to subdue the polar bear" strategy. That strategy is finally being realized today. The purpose of the United States and NATO for taking such action is to tie up the hands and feet of Russia, cut off Russia's any outlet of expansion, minimize Russia's strategic space and finally stifle Russia to death in Russia's own territory.

Secondly, U.S. entrance into Central Asia is an encirclement that seeks to deal with Iran and Iraq and to control the Middle East. According to the American newspaper reports, the United States has so far established 13 military bases in the 9 countries near or around Afghanistan. The American troops in these areas have increased from 25,000 before the War on Terrorism to 80,000. As a result, the United States has established a line of encirclement around the Middle East, running from Turkey to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar, from Pakistan to Afghanistan to Central Asian countries. In the near future, this encirclement line will be the frontline of the next U.S. move, i.e. to attack the two countries that belong to the Axis of Evil, namely, Iraq and Iran; in the long run, this is an indispensable chain of mutual support in the U.S. effort to dominate the Middle East.

Thirdly, the U.S. entrance into Central Asia has connected a vast area of land in order for the U.S. to control South Asia and march all the way down to the Indian Ocean. Central Asia is the heartland of Eurasian landmass, without access to the ocean. If the U.S. can connect Central Asia with Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, then the United States can control all of South Asia, opening the air and land corridor toward the Indian Ocean. This

is beneficial to the Americans not only in terms of “establishing a deterrent force against Russia along its southern borders” through the American aircraft carriers cruising in the Indian Ocean, but also in terms of controlling Central Asia as world’s second largest (next only to the Middle East) source region of energy supply. The Americans have always desired to gain control of the rich supply of petroleum and natural gas in Central Asia, and have spent some money in production of these resources. But transporting the petroleum and natural gas from Central Asia has always been a headache for the Americans. At present, the transportation facilities and rights are by and large under the control of Russia. To break the Russian monopoly in transportation, the United States has been contemplating a pipeline from Central Asia through the Caucasus to Turkey. But the construction of such pipeline will be very costly. But if the transportation line is opened between Central Asia and India, the U.S. can transport petroleum and natural gas from Central Asia to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and finally to the sea ports by the Indian Ocean. This will be a cheaper and shorter route to transport fuel, ensuring constant supply of inexpensive petroleum and natural gas.

Finally, the entrance of the United States into Central Asia serves as a springboard from which to contain the rise of China. Various countries in Central Asia have been good neighbors of China. Currently, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have solved their border disputes with China. Tajikistan has come close to solving its border dispute with us. China has signed mutual trust treaties with regard to border regions with these neighboring countries. China has constantly strengthened its political, security, economic and trade and cultural relations with Central Asian countries. To this, American officials seem mute, but are perfectly aware of these developments. The American press explains it this way: China is the “potential enemy” of the United States; and Central Asia is China’s great rear of extreme importance. The penetration of the United States into Central Asia not only prevents China from expanding its influence, but also sandwiches China from East to West, thus “effectively containing a rising China.”

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