



The Khazar region; How much Trouble for Iran?

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Received: 10 Feb 2015 ; Accepted: 20 Sep 2015

Abstract: Khazar provide Iran with an excellent geopolitical position, while Iran's "ant domination policy" not only deprive it from these privileges but also bring some serious security challenges for it. U.S. engagement in vast economic, military and political undertakings in this region is one of major threat for Iran's vital interests. I'm going to argue here that major difficulty in the way of consisting some firm regional security coalitions and organizations, which in its turn relates to discrepancy in powers of nation states of the region, entails calling non regional powers to the region. U.S. effort to isolate Islamic republic of Iran is one of consequences of non-regional western power presence in the region.

Keywords: The Khazar region, Western power, Antidomination policy, IRI

Introduction

Khazar as a geopolitics region

Khazar as a sea because of its energy reserves and as a region for its geostrategic position, which stands along geostrategic corridor joining Mediterranean region to west china is considered as an important geostrategic region. This situation draws non regional powers like US to region. Now powers such as USA, Russia, China, India and Britannia contest to have a say in various affairs of Caspian region. Some observers think that this realities threats region to conflict (Torbakor, 2005). After collapse of Soviet Union the geopolitical region of Caspian Sea faced Power vacuum and this fact motivated some regional and non regional powers to seek new chances for influence in the region.

What invokes outside powers to engage in Caspian region and which facilitates their active presence in the region is disability of state of region to form some sort of regional rigid security coalition or security alliances that relives small nations from outside powers. As will be seen below there are some obstacle on way of founding a powerful regional alliance which free small states of the region from international players. Let first look at same international Political development after soviet breakdown and then seek reasons that reduce small states of region to recourse to world powers.

US as major player in Khazar region

Power vacuum that occurred after Soviet Union breakdown opened the way for US new ambitions in a region that once was its

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rival superpowers territory. However US planned its entrance in the region first with some caution. US policy toward former Soviet South developed through three stages. In the first years after breakdown of Soviet Union US policy centered on consolidating Yeltsin's position and helping him overcome the difficulty of transition stage (Dekmejian and Simonian, 2001, 137). During this stage which lasted to mid 1990s US refrained from any action that might seem as threatening to Russian security. US policy toward former Soviet South in this stage was:

- 1- To promote the new state's independence and sovereignty;
- 2- To promote the stability of the region and help to settle disputes between new independent republics.
- 3- To promote new state's transition to market economy

In 1994, when Nazarbayf, the president of Kazakhstan, in his visit to US asked American officials help them in a Pipeline project from Kazakhstan to Turkey they told him that it is better to use Russian route to pipe oil to Europe. (ibid, 137) in this stage US diplomacy have been taking advantage from Turkey and Pakistan influence in this region to contest Iran's influence.

US approach to Khazar region in second stage specified with concerns for strengthening the independence and territorial integrity of new republics. In this stage US refrained from any action that might harm sovereignty and independence of new independent states. In 1994 Clinton administration in a diplomatic poses asked Russia to respect the independence of republic states of former Soviet South (Nichol, 1995, 3).

New stage in US strategy in the region took shape since 1997, what assessed as US

"great game" in the region. In this year Strobe Tabott, vice president of US state department declared that former Soviet South is "Strategically vital" region and counts as a part of Euro-Atlantic community which US would not disregard its important situation (Winter, 1997). Strop formed a committee composed of individuals from energy, commerce department national Security Council and CIA to advance the US policy in the region. One of first plan of this committee was to prevent Azerbaijan Pipeline to Europe to pass from Iran (Hiro, 1997, 19).

Major US Strategic Line in Khazar Basin

On the whole, main line of US strategy in former Soviet South includes:

1. Holding all initiations in planning production and transportation of Caspian oil and gas in its hand;
2. Promoting American values of market economy, human right and confronting Islamic fundamentalist movement;
3. Isolate Islamic Republic of Iran and preventing any coalition between Iran, Russia and China;
4. Taking advantage from of regional crisis's to extend its presence in the region;
5. Baring Iran from access to technical resources that help it to proceeds its nuclear projects;
6. To reinforce the position of its traditional friends like Turkey, Azerbaijan and Israel in the region.

Each part of this strategy contains some serious challenges for Islamic republic o Iran, though they are not challenges sole for Islamic republic of Iran. USA is far from Iran territorially, while, and in fact has surrounded Iran from all side, north and south, east and west. 11 September provided US

with new excuses to engage in Caspian region with new impetuous. For preceding this strategy, US stepped to new stage as:

1. To sign various economic military and security contracts with states in the region and extending its influence by granting them economic and technical aids.
2. Signing military agreements with Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan to settle its military force and military installation there;
3. Installing a separate commandary for American forces in Central Asia from Pacific commandary.

Isolation Challenges Facing Iran

Isolating Iran is one of the strategic aim of US in the region Iran is one of the natural Transit route to world market for most of states of the region that has not access to open sea. Iran is one of good option for exporting oil and gas of this states that wish to diversity their Pipeline routes. However, US insistence to isolate Iran is one of main barrier in Iran's way to profit from its privileged position.

Russia's situation gaining from exportation infrastructure lefted from Soviet era as well helps US plans to isolate Iran in the region. Presently main part of this region energy goes to Europe from Russia route.

Russia takes advantage of this situation to gain control on energy exportation of these country (Katz, 1997). These countries depts. to Russia, reaching some five billion dollar, is another source of influence for Russia. All of this helps Russia to take advantage from its position as a main energy export route for those countries.

This in its part makes the problem of energy exportation and many other economic choices a political and not an economic problem for the states of the region (Ebel,

1997, 6). The natural and the most economical transition route for Azerbaijan oil Pipeline to Europe is Iran. However, US opposition to such project overturned all rational consideration except the political one which forced by US. Baku-Cyhan Pipeline project that would transfer Azerbaijan oil to Europe forced by US isolation project against Islamic Republic of Iran. In 1995 US pressure resulted to Iran's prevention to enter a project named "The Contract of the Century". This project takes Azerbaijan oil to Europe via tow route Passing Georgia and Turkey (Decmejian and Simonian, 2007, 134). In 1997, too, Tow American company were banned from transporting Kazakh and Turkman Caspian oil to Europe via Iran.

One of the main factors those facilities outside powers presence in the region is divergence among the states of the region. Disability of states of region to make regional agreements and alliances makes ripe situation for non regional powers domination on the region. Divergence, in its turn, relates to power dissimilarity among states of the region in one hand and disputes that turns apart this states on the other. Power dissimilarity on one hand makes small states to depend on Russia and on the other hand, reduce them to recourse to outside powers to balance Russia's domination.

In tow recent decades there has been set up alliances and organizations for some security and economic goals, but their overall outcome cannot be consider satisfactory. A glance at net results of these organizations and alliances show that this region has a long way to forming some firm security as well as other coalitions that could free them from outside security dependence and non regional interferences.

Central Asian cooperation organization, consisting Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uz-

Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which was to form a common market yet, has not succeeded to form even a free trade zone. Eurasia Economic Council consisting of Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan is entangled by protectional tariffs and anti dumping interdictions. Similarity of export products and insistence on the export substitution policy instead, of trade promotion, are among important obstacle on the way of development of commercial exchanges among these states.

The other regional alliances, which relate to collective security concerns, as well are not more successful. One of these organizations is Shanghai organization that Iran is its observing member and yet is not successful to get to its full membership. Shanghai organization has been founded in 2007 by Russia, China, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. In its 2005 session Iran, India, and Pakistan were accepted as its observing members. The aims of this organization are to promote reliance among members by developing political, economical and cultural cooperation. Shanghai organization enjoys considerable potentials, such as vast territorial expansion, human and natural resources, and exceptional diversified climate and products. Yet Shanghai organization has not achieved considerable progress. Shanghai's agenda mainly is determined by Russia and China. In 1999 the organization failed to perform its task to combat religious extremism in Kyrgyzstan when Islamist partisans raised a riot.

NATO encroachment on Caspian region

Inability of Caspian state to establish some regional security regimes paves the way for non regional powers to enter security

arrangements in this region. After breakage of Soviet Union NATO arranged to extend its presence in Eastern Europe and former Soviet South North Atlantic Cooperation Council and Partnership for Peace Plans in 1992 their membership to CIS. So these states began to cooperate with NATO in some security fields. Partnership for peace signifies mutual agreement between NATO and other states. By various mutual agreements with the states of the region, US succeeded to build a security belt around Russia by these devices (Berdzei Shivil, 1998). The concern to balance Russian power in the region is main reason for these developments, which, as has been said, relates to power divergence in the region. Divergence in power leads small states of Caspian turn to non regional powers to balance Russian powers instead of founding regional security arrangements. Russia's numerous resources of influence allow it to extend its dominance upon these small states (Johnson, 2009, 153-154). Russia in its part don't wish to bar all American influence in the region because benefits US share to bar extremist movements such as Islamist partisans (Torbakov, 2005). All of this, anyway, eventually goes against Iran's security and economic interests.

Legal regime problems

Caspian legal regime problem is another challenge facing Iran's. Before Soviet collapse, Khazar considered as an interior sea shared by Soviet Union and Iran. After Soviet collapse there arose five states in Caspian coast, each with its proper claim of share to this closed sea, which counts, as is a lake. From the two ways to exploiting Khazar energy reserves, one by dividing the sea territorially and the other by partnership,

the latter favors Iranian and Russian interest, and former benefits other three littoral states, for energy reserves is rich in Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan territorial waters than in Iranian and Russian water. Formerly Russia shared with Iran in their position defending common exploitation of energy reserves, but recently Russia has departed its former position and left Iran alone. In 1994 Azerbaijan enjoy considerable reserves of energy in its territorial waters began negotiation, with western companies to exploit Caspian energy reserves. Initially Iran was to have a share in consortium that set up to exploit oil reserve in Caspian waters bordering Azerbaijan coast. Pipeline that would carry this oil to Europe was to pass Iran. But US opposition to Iran's partnership in consortium deprived this country from both a share in consortium and benefit from transition of Pipeline via Iran (Herzig, 2002).

Iran's share in consortium could mean deflate acceptance of a legal regime for Caspian Sea that favored territorial division of the sea. However, deprivation from a share in consortium severed. Iran's position once again, while Caspian legal regime yet unsettled.

Summery

Iran enjoys distinguished position in Caspian region, while deprived from advantages of this position. US server combat to isolate Islamic republic of Iran because its anti dominance struggle prevent Iran from enjoying its geo-strategic and geo-economics privileges position including its advantaged transition situation. The main difficulty in this area turns to divergence among littoral states, which calls for non-regional powers to enter in the region and gain dominance position in security arrangements. There is many things that diverges this states, including ethnic, religionist, and border dispute,

and most important of all power asymmetry. All of this costs Iran dearly, including its relative isolation.

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