

BALANCE OF POWER IN CENTRAL ASIA AFTER THE US-LED INTERVENTION IN AFGHANISTAN 2001

Selçuk DENEK*

Abstract

After Cold War, the USA felt that a new enemy and target had to be found. For that reason US started to invade Afghanistan by using the 9/11 as a cause to reach its goals. With these incidents, it is declared that Afghanistan is the house of terrorism and this terrorism had to be destroyed. But the main reason is to control Central Asia and the region. As a result, this study tries to explore the US-led intervention in Afghanistan, the balance of power in Central Asia, Georgian War and Shanghai Cooperation Organization which are related to this balance.

Key words: Afghanistan Intervention, 9/11, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Central Asia, Georgian War and Balance of Power.

ABD Önderliğinde 2001 Yılında Yapılan Afganistan Müdahalesi Sonrası Orta Asya'da Güç Dengesi

Özet

Soğuk savaş sonrasında, ABD kendisine yeni bir düşman ve hedef bulmak zorunda olduğunu hissetmiştir. ABD 11 Eylül olaylarını da bahane ederek bu hedefini gerçekleştirmek için Afganistana müdahalede bulunmaya başlamıştır. Bu olaylarla birlikte Afganistan terörün yuvası olarak lanse edilmiş ve bu terörizmin yok edilmesi gerektiği dile getirilmiştir. Fakat burada temel amacın Orta Asyayı kontrol etmek olduğunun ifade edilmesi gerekmektedir. Bu varsayımdan hareketle bu çalışmayı ortaya koyma ihtiyacını hissettik.

* Arş.Gör., Aksaray Üniversitesi, İİBF, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü
(selcuk.denk@gmail.com)

Çalışmamızda 11 Eylül sonrasında gerçekleşen ABD önderliğindeki Afganistan müdahalesini, bu müdahale sonrasında Orta Asyadaki güç dengesini ve bu dengeyle yakından ilişkisi olduğunu düşündüğümüz Gürcistan Savaşını ve Şangay İş Birliği Örgütünü inceleyeceğiz.

Anahtar kelimeler: Afganistan Müdahalesi, 11 Eylül, Şangay İş Birliği Örgütü, Orta Asya, Gürcistan Savaşı, Güç Dengesi.

Introduction

After cold war, the USA (US) had to find a new target or a new enemy to invade any region or country with a strong reason. Terrorism is one of these reasons to invade or attack any enemy. With 9/11, US declared that Afghanistan is the house of terrorism. Soon after 9/11, US invaded Afghanistan to destroy terrorism which is a threat for US citizens and which is responsible for 9/11 and any other terrorist attacks.

Actually, invasion of Afghanistan is the main reason for entering the Central Asia to gain power in the region which is controlled by Russia. The balance in the region (Central Asia) changed after 9/11 and invasion of Afghanistan because there is another power (US) except regional powers. The invasion is not only about Afghanistan, it is also about the other countries such as Russia, Iran, Pakistan, China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and etc. Soon after invasion of Afghanistan, there were some colorful revolutions, demonstrations, and change in the countries of that region. These things also changed the power balance of the region.

This study tries to describe US invasion in Afghanistan, balance of power in central Asia, power struggle between Russia and US in the region, Russia and US in Georgian war, and the role of Shanghai Corporation about the power balance. Consequently, this study tries to

answer that “has the US-led intervention in Afghanistan 2001 changed the balance of power in Central Asia?” because the balance of power in Central Asia and US-led intervention in Afghanistan has relevant. If any power invades the region, the regional powers such as Russia have to respond this invasion to protect its power and the balance of the region so that US invasion affected the balance of power in the region.

1.The US-led Intervention in Afghanistan 2001

As soon as 9/11 occurred, US led intervention in Afghanistan started. While Afghanistan intervention was continuing, after President Bush declared that struggle with terrorism is necessary and obligatory; Bush invited all the countries to be a member of the coalition which is constituted for destroying terrorism and fighting against terrorism (Ayhan, 2004). However, President Bush also announced the new foreign policy doctrine within the frame of “Preventive War” and the purpose of this policy is fighting against the groups, organizations, and countries which support terrorism and terrorist groups (Ayhan, 2004). The D.C. started the war in Kabul and while the invasion was happening, US sent 1000 soldier to Uzbekistan and 3000 soldier to Kyrgyzstan (Ayhan, 2004). In the wake of these developments, US made military exercises with Kazakhstan, US started intervention in Iraq and after the Rose revolution in Georgia, US supported Mikheil Saakashvili’s will which claims that Russian military forces must withdraw from Georgia’s land (Kellog, 2003: 75-76).

After cold war, US had to find a new enemy instead of Russia to show a concrete reason for US’s expansionist aims and then Islam was declared as new enemy but it does not look rational (Ulku, 2002: 39-40). The US invasion in Afghanistan could be described rationally by considering the new world order and balance. The reasons of invasion could be explained that:

-Afghanistan has an important role to enclose Iran. Appearing of Taliban created a situation to build a buffer Sunni region in the border of Iran. This situation is coherent with US strategy because Iran has a great power on trade roads in that region and with this strategy, US could build an alternative way for trade and pipe lines by controlling the Afghan region. (Buyukbas, 2006: 165).

-US could implement a pressure policy on Taliban because Taliban support terrorism and Usame bin Ladin (Buyukbas, 2006: 165).

US radically changed its old policy which was uninterested in central Asia but the new US policy about central Asia noticed that Central Asian states must be democratic; their energy resources are rescued from Russian control; US based companies should be supported in Central Asia (Efegil, 2000: 190-191). The change of US policy on Central Asian aims to establish a new world order which is Caspian centered (Efegil, 2000: 190-191).

Actually, the reasons of the US intervention in Afghanistan were already manifested in a report nine months ago before the 9/11 attacks (Erol and Tunc, 2003: 17). According to this report, with having a control on Afghanistan, the regional powers who has nuclear power and Iran which is working on nuclear energy could be controlled easily; the geo-cultural dynamics could be triggered when the US would like to do; the entrance from Central Asia to south could be controlled; by controlling the energy resources of the region, the dependence on middle east oil could be decreased; the central Asian oil and natural gas could be transported to the world market (Buyukbas, 2006: 165).

On the other hand, according to Ayub and Kouvo (2008: 641):

'The US-led invasion in Afghanistan was not constructed as a humanitarian intervention, but conceived as an act of self-

defense in response to the attacks on New York and Washington DC in September 2001. The war in Afghanistan was initiated with no clear strategies for long-term stabilization, state-building or development. In the context of previous policy declarations from the Bush administration, Afghanistan was a target and concern within the context of counterterrorism, not humanitarianism.'

Consequently, US led intervention in Afghanistan is not only related to humanitarian concerns, bringing democracy, or self-defense of US, it is also associated with controlling the energy roads (pipe lines), trade roads, and the region. In the meaning of long term strategy, although US did not have any important plan on Central Asia in the past, US aims to control Central Asian resources and politics as a super power of the world against Russia, China, and Iran which are the regional powers of Central Asia. Afghanistan has a geo-strategic importance to reach these goals of US.

2. Balance Of Power in Central Asia after Afghanistan Intervention

Until intervention in Afghanistan, US was not interested in Central Asia too much but after invasion of Afghanistan US tries to control Central Asia to get power more than before in the region. However, in the region, there are also other regional powers such as Russia, China, Iran, Turkey, and etc. With invasion, US have to struggle with these regional powers to get a share of that region's resources.

Role of Central Asia in US foreign policy was reshaped after 9/11 with G.W. Bush (Öğün, 2011). As a result of this change, US convinced the international actors to fight global terrorism in Afghanistan but Russia and regional powers in the Central Asia reacted to this intervention because with invasion of Afghanistan, US also set up bases

in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (Öğün, 2011). US concentrated on these issues with some of Central Asian countries:

-With the frame work of cooperation about terrorism, US declared that Central Asian countries are the closest allies of US and then US increased the aids in the region (Amanov, 2011: 149).

-US started the assistance programs about economic and political reforms for Central Asian countries and the relations between US and Central Asian countries about democracy, human rights and basic freedoms kept on the agenda (Amanov, 2011: 149).

-The projects about Caspian energy resources were supported to drill oil and natural gas and then transport these materials to global market but Iran and Russia were excluded from these projects (Amanov, 2011: 149).

However, with Afghanistan invasion, US wanted to decrease the influence of Russia, Iran, and China that's why US improved the relations with Central Asian Countries (Öğün, 2011). Furthermore, US think that US have to stay in the region physically to control the energy resources and to fight against global terrorism (Ari and Pirincci, 2010: 302).

9/11 attacks caused that on the one hand US could make military operations to different parts of the world such as Afghanistan intervention and on the other hand US could collaborate with a lot of countries which are particularly Central Asian countries (Buyukbas, 2006). Firstly, US started to benefit from Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan's air space such as Uzbekistan's Termez and Khanabad; Kyrgyzstan's Manas; Tajikistan's Kurgan-Tyube and Hokand air base, and these could be used by US and coalition forces when they need

(Buyukbas, 2006). However, there was an agreement with Kazakhstan to use Almaty airport if there is an emergency (Erhan, 2004: 143).

After 9/11, US deployed its troops in Afghanistan's Bangram and Kandahar, Uzbekistan's Khanabad, Kyrgyzstan's Manas, and Tajikistan's Kulyab military bases by improving the political, economic, and military relations with the Central Asian countries (Efegil, 2011: 63). US assisted increasingly these countries to support their economy and army (Eurasia Insight, 2002). US did military exercises with Kyrgyz military troops to practice against guerilla operations and however US granted 4 million \$ to Armenia to use in military needs but US also granted 140.5 million \$ to Tajikistan to use in border security and reform activities (Efegil, 2011: 63). US improved the relations with Georgia about education and equipment program in the frame work of military (Efegil, 2011: 64). US secretary of defense set up a navy which costs 100 million \$ to provide security in Caspian Sea for Kazakhstan (Khachatryan, 2002).

For Afghanistan invasion, Russia did not act with US but US started intervention with confirmation of Russia by announcing struggling with terrorism to reach its goals without any problem (Buyukbas, 2006). Russia thought that if Russia allows US to invade the Afghanistan, Russia could get more benefit to control of the region in the long term process because Russia was also fighting with Muslims in Chechnya; Russia could get agreements with US companies to increase the investment of these companies about energy in Russia; Russia could solve the problem with western countries and also Russia could prevent the rising of China in the region (Buyukbas, 2006). However, when Russia noticed that US could not be controlled in the region, Russia changed the policy and Russia tried to cooperate with the countries in the region but Russia could not be successful about that, thus Russia showed its reaction by not supporting US in the Iraq invasion (Erhan, 2004: 144-145).

The Central Asian countries were afraid of inflowing of refugees from southern of the region which are full of civil war things which cause security, economy, and health problems because after the Afghanistan invasion, the terrorist attacks and radical Islamic elements could start to inflow towards the central Asian countries (Erol, 2001: 26-28). With these concerns, Central Asian countries think that settling down of the US to the region is a balance factor against China and Russia to protect themselves (Erol and Tunc, 2003: p.19). After 9/11, the leaders of Central Asian countries who opened their areas for US to use in the Afghanistan invasion would like to get rid of accusations which are related to human rights, democracy, and corruption of their governments' systems by cooperating US to decrease the pressure of Russia on their states (Erhan, 2004: 145-146).

According to Menon, Russia protected its domination and outstanding power in the Central Asia because of its geo-strategic place in the region (Menon, 2003). Although Russia has a number of troubles, Russia could not be come down in the Central Asia (Menon, 1995). Russia was the prevailing power in the Central Asia until US started to intervene the region (Menon, 2003).

Russia changed its traditional foreign policy considerably because of incidents after 9/11 and Putin was elected (Yilmaz, 2007). With Putin, Russia revised its goals to be a global power (Yilmaz, 2007). Although Russia, with Putin, followed a policy to improve better relation with US and to integrate with western countries, Russia was disappointed about US policy (Yilmaz, 2007). Putin thinks that US would like to destabilize Russia, for that reason Russia took measures to prevent effects of foreign countries on Russian civil society and Russia broke IMF's connections at the first opportunity (Yilmaz, 2007). In the beginning of Afghanistan intervention, Russia did not show any strict reaction against US which gained military bases in the Central Asia and

Caucasus because Russia did not want to damage western relations but then Russia tried to block rise of US in the region by using and activating Shanghai Corporation (Yilmaz, 2007). Russia also worried about US activity and relations because US deployed in Georgia and then in Azerbaijan to control Central Asia (Yilmaz, 2007).

On the other hand, Russia tries to balance the power sharing in the Central Asia by activating Shanghai Corporation with China as the third power to block rising of US (Cinar, 2008). In the Central Asian history, US was not an important power for the region but it was the first time that a power (US) out of the region would like to be effective in Central Asia (Cinar, 2008). It was considerably interesting that in the World War II when Hitler and Stalin tried to reach an agreement to share Eurasia, they tried to keep US out of the region (Atay, 2002). But present, US would like to keep Russia and Germany cooperation out of Central Asia (Atay, 2002).

After 9/11, the effort of US to play an important role in Central Asia caused the reactions of China and Russia (Degimencioglu, 2007). As the results of that reaction, Shanghai Corporation's efficiency has been considerably increasing gradually (Degimencioglu, 2007). In the last Astana Summit, there was a decision which declared that the US should decide the withdrawal date of its military bases in the region and then it was ensured that US evacuated the Khanabad military base in Uzbekistan (Degimencioglu, 2007). This incident is the most efficient strike on US interests in terms of showing the success of the Moscow and Beijing coalition in the region (Degimencioglu, 2007). The failure of US in Afghanistan is considered by means of the coalition between China and Russia (Degimencioglu, 2007). Degimencioglu claims that this withdrawal from Uzbekistan results that US could have to withdraw from Central Asia and maybe Middle East because this situation could

cause a daisy chaining in the other parts of the world for US (Degimencioglu, 2007).

The countries which are close the region such as Pakistan and Turkey collaborate with US and also India has a nuclear energy cooperation with US but the important impact on Central Asia was that US invade Afghanistan under the color of fighting with terrorism to settle down the region by toppling the regime in Afghanistan and however US acquired a base in Uzbekistan (Cinar, 2008). On the other hand, Central Asian countries give up the agreements and cooperation with US but they come close to Russia to secure themselves (Cinar, 2008). In Afghanistan, with these developments, the conflict does not look good to reach a resolution moreover it is going worse (Cinar, 2008).

Today, Russia is the most important actor to transport energy resources from Central Asia to global markets because Putin, in the case of supervision and transportation of natural gas, is the primary actor for transporting Central Asian natural gas to great energy market of Europe by means of his long and short term steps (Cinar, 2008). With the contract for natural gas in 2007, Russia carries authority of selling the Kazakhstan's and Turkmenistan's natural gas to Europe (Cinar, 2008). However, with this contract, Russia eliminates Turkey which has the similar geo-politic place (bridge between Europe and Central Asia) with Russia to transport natural gas (Cinar, 2008). On the other hand, NABUCCO project which will build to transport Turkmenistan's natural gas over Turkey to Europe got difficult because of the contract between Russia, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan (Cinar, 2008). With these explanations, it could be claimed that Turkey which is an ally of US meets barriers because Russia is working on foreign policy to eliminate profit of US by blocking its allies and projects (Cinar, 2008).

Russia decreased the Chechnya problem that's why Russia could focus on Georgia and Azerbaijan which are affected by US (Cinar, 2008). However, thanks to Shanghai Corporation, Russia improves the relations with Central Asian countries and China (Cinar, 2008). Furthermore, Russia enchained Iran by transferring the technologies which are crucial for Iran (Cinar, 2008). With all of these information, it could be assert that Russia was stalemated by US after Afghanistan invasion but gradually Russia develops new policies to get rid of US manipulation in the region by blocking allies of US such as Turkey and by supporting the enemies of US such as Iran.

On the other hand, Russia implemented a diplomatic pressure on the region's countries (Efegil, 2011: 71). Furthermore, Russia threated Tajikistan about Tajik workers in Russia because US had a military base in the country (Efegil, 2011: 71). Russia also threated Kyrgyzstan to re-configure the debt because of improving the US relations (Efegil, 2011: 71). Within the framework of Collective Security Treaty Organization, Russia and member countries which are Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia performed military exercises (Efegil, 2011: 71). However, emergency military unit and Russian air force troop were deployed in Kyrgyzstan and 250 staffs who are from Kazakhstan were trained and educated in Russian military schools (Efegil, 2011: 71). Russia reached an agreement with Uzbekistan to export Uzbek cotton and to support Russian companies' activities in Uzbekistan about natural gas, and oil (Efegil, 2011: 72). On the other hand, Kazakhstan government approved that 15 million tons of Kazak raw oil will be transported with Baku-Novorossiysk pipelines per annum (Blagov, 2004). Russia deployed its troops in Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan and also Gazprom and Lukoil had an agreement with Uzbekistan for oil and natural gas (Torbakov, 2005). To found a military organization with Central Asian countries, Russia started to sell modern weapons to the

region countries (Blank, 2007). Russia granted modern navigation systems and air defense weapons to Uzbekistan and then Russia gained permission to use Uzbek air base (Blank, 2008). Russia will construct small and heavy tonnage military ships for Kazak navy and then will sell S-300 and S-400 tactic rockets to this country (Blagov, 2008).

On the other hand, in Ukraine, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, and Uzbekistan, the attempts named colorful revolutions to change the governments which have good relations with Russia were not successful except Georgia and Moldova (Kok, 2011: 106).

Consequently, with Afghanistan invasion, US would like to control Central Asia and its energy resources by supporting the regions' countries as financially, strategically, politically, military based to reach an agreement with all of the Central Asian countries against Russia. But Russia did not stay inactive and did not just watch the developments, Russia tried and is still trying to control the region and to keep away US from the region by supporting enemy of US and Central Asian countries. It could be claimed that Russia is winning the fight against US by cooperating with the other regional powers such as China and Iran and even Turkey which is an ally of US is trying to be a member of Shanghai Corporations.

3.Georgian War

In 2008, there was an election which was won by Saakashvili in Georgia but as soon as the results of election was announced, Russia claimed that the election was not transparent and with this Russia showed its idea about new Georgian government (Karabulut, 2011: 193). Shortly after election, Saakashvili went to US to discuss with Bush about South Ossetia and Abkhazia and US absolutely supported the new Georgian government against Russia (Karabulut, 2011: 193). With these backing, Georgia behaved provocative against Russia but US

warned the Georgia not to do anything provocative (Karabulut, 2011: 194). In 7 August 2008, Georgian forces started to bomb South Ossetia but Russia counteracted against Georgian forces one day later than bombing (Karabulut, 2011: 194). Russian Forces easily control the region in a few days and Georgian forces withdrew to Tiflis (Treisman, 2011: 153). Moreover, Russia captured some of the Georgian cities such as Zugdidi and Gori (Celikpala, 2010: 107).

Consequently, US could not do anything to stop Russian invasion but EU intervened the war for negotiation with Russia (Celikpala, 2010: 107). With these, US lost its reputation in the region against Russia and other Central Asian countries because US was the most important supporter for Georgia but US could not stop to the war by doing anything (Karabulut, 2011: 195). As a result, South Ossetia and Abkhazia were recognized by Russia as independent countries and thus Georgian territorial integrity was damaged (Karabulut, 2011: 195). NATO, UN and EU lost their own reputations and also Azerbaijan and Armenia lost their hopes about being a member of NATO or EU (Karabulut, 2011: 197). Russia showed that Russia is the only great power in the region and the message was understood by US and EU (Karabulut, 2011: 197).

4. Shanghai Cooperation Organization

In 5 July 2005, there was a decision which announced that US have to withdraw its forces from Central Asia in Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit (Dikkaya and Bakir, 2011: 318). In the summit, Pakistan, India and Mongolia attended the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as observer status (Dikkaya and Bakir, 2011: 318). Particularly, in the summit the colorful revolutions which are supported by US and which are against to Russia, in the Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan, was discussed and this situation accelerated the relation process between Russia and China (Dikkaya and Bakir, 2011: 319). The

other topic of the summit was about Uzbekistan which was supported by US in the beginning of 9/11 process but not supported during the Andijan Massacre and for that reason Uzbekistan turned its face to Shanghai Cooperation Organization (Dikkaya and Bakir, 2011: 319). With this, Uzbekistan declared that US have to evacuate the US troops and forces which are in Uzbekistan (Dikkaya and Bakir, 2011: 319). In 14-15 June 2006, there was another Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Iran attended this summit as an observer status (Dikkaya and Bakir, 2011: 319). Although western countries were preparing to impose sanction against nuclear activities of Iran, Russia and China supported Iran in the summit but this situation got reaction from US and EU and thus cooperation of Russia and China started to affect global balance in the framework of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (Chang, 2007: 24-29). In the 2007 summit, Shanghai Cooperation Organization announced that the organization should cooperate more efficiently against US and then Putin told that the cooperation substructure was built about security, energy, education, banking sector, and transportation and thus this circumstance contributes the global order to improve the justice in international atmosphere and to provide economic development for all the countries in the world (President Rossii, 2007).

As a result, with Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Russia and China act together against US and Western countries about Central Asia after 9/11 and Afghanistan Invasion and this situation showed that Russia and China look more effective in the Central Asia (Dikkaya and Bakir, 2011: 320).

Conclusion

After 9/11, US determined a policy to attack terrorism by invading the countries which support the terrorist organizations. In the

beginning, US-led intervention in Afghanistan started but this intervention was not only about terrorism, it was also about controlling the region and the resources of Central Asia. Firstly, US policy looked fine because the countries in Central Asia were willing to be an ally of US but Russia which is one of the most powerful actors in the region felt anxious about US activities in the region against its position. Russia started to change its foreign policy against US action. Even though, US could control the region for a while, Russia was improving its strategy to block US control in the region. However, Russia supported the enemies of US such as Iran by defending its policies which were dangerous for US policy and also Russia prevented the activities of allies of US in the region. Russia also threatened the ally of US by using a trump. Furthermore, Russia decreased the reputation of US and other western powers in the Georgian war. Moreover, the most effective factor for Russia is China and Shanghai Cooperation Organization to balance the power of the region by getting closer to them against US.

Consequently, just after Afghanistan invasion, US showed its power by affecting the Central Asian countries and using their territories. On the other hand, Russia took the control of the region again by acting strategically. Particularly, in Georgian case, Russia showed of force to demonstrate its power in the region against western world. Furthermore, Russia controls the energy resources in the region and US had to withdraw its military forces which were deployed in the region. It could be claimed that Russia is still the only great power in Central Asia. It could be suggested that the countries in the region should have good relationship with Russia for their benefit.

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