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THE IMPORTANCE OF RUSSIAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN CENTRAL ASIA FOR RUSSIA'S REGIONAL SECURITY*

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Abstract

This article aims to evaluate the Russian military presence for Russia's regional security in Central Asia. In order to achieve this, the importance of Central Asia will be contextualized with major regional problems that determine the Russian security policy. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian policy towards Central Asia has been mainly shaped by security issues, especially after military intervention of the United States in Afghanistan in 2011. The multilateral military-security relations between Russia and the five regional states should be understood by dividing two aspects. They are the military bases of Russia in Central Asia and the multilateral co-operation tools which are led by Russia: The Commonwealth Independent States (CIS) and its military alliance the Collective Security and Treaty Organization (CSTO). The cooperation mechanisms of those organizations will be underlined in the study. In order to understand the Russian security perception in Central Asia, the recently approved versions of the foreign policy concept, the military doctrine, and the national security strategy of the Russian Federation as official discourse will also be evaluated to demonstrate military security priorities of the Russian Federation.

Keywords: Central Asia, Military Bases, Regional Security, Russian Foreign Policy, Territorial Integrity

ORTA ASYA'DA BULUNAN RUS ASKERİ VARLIĞININ RUSYA'NIN BÖLGESEL GÜVENLİĞİ AÇISINDAN ÖNEMİ

Öz

Bu çalışmada, Rusya'nın Orta Asya'daki askeri varlığının, Rus bölgesel güvenliği açısından değerlendirilmesi amaçlanmaktadır. Bunun için Orta Asya'nın Rusya'nın güvenliği açısından önemi, bölgesel güvenlik problemleriyle birlikte ele alınacaktır. Sovyetler Birliği'nin yıkılmasından sonra, Rusya'nın Orta Asya politikası özellikle ABD'nin 2011 yılında Afganistan'a askeri müdahalesinden sonra güvenlik sorunları etrafında şekillenmiştir. Rusya'nın Orta Asya devletleriyle güvenlik temelinde geliştirmiş olduğu çok taraflı askeri-güvenlik ilişkileri anlamak için, meselenin iki gruba ayrılması gerekmektedir. Bunlar; Rusya'nın Orta Asya'daki askeri üsleri ve Rusya'nın önderliğinde kurulan çok taraflı organizasyonlardır: Bağımsız Devletler Topluluğu ve bu örgütün askeri ittifakı olan Kolektif Güvenlik Anlaşması Örgütü.

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Çalışmada, çok taraflı ortaklık mekanizmaları bu çerçevede ele alınacaktır. Ayrıca, Rusya'nın Orta Asya'daki güvenlik yaklaşımını anlamak için, son olarak onaylanmış olan Rus Dış Politika Doktrini, Askeri Doktrin ve Ulusal Güvenlik Stratejisi, devletin resmi söyleminin araçları olarak ayrıca Rusya'nın siyasi öncelikleri göstermek için ele alınacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Orta Asya, Askeri Üsler, Bölgesel Güvenlik, Rus Dış Politikası, Bölgesel Bütünlük

Introduction

Central Asia has a top priority for Russian regional and national security policy. Today the region has significant problems, which specify Russian security agenda because the majority of the problems in Central Asia are potential threats to Russian national security, economic stability, and territorial integrity. It is clear that Russia's own national security depends on its regional security in the near abroad. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the relationships between Russia and the regional states were shaped by several political turmoils such as Tajik Civil War, the military intervention in Afghanistan, the Tulip Revolutions in Kyrgyzstan and the Andijan Events in Uzbekistan. At the same time, the region has become an area for non-traditional cross-border crimes as extremism, terrorism, drug trafficking and illegal immigration.

In order to ensure stability in Central Asia, Russia uses bilateral and multilateral security cooperation models. In terms of the developed bilateral relations, it can be said that all regional states are dependents on Russia; however, they change according to the states. The Commonwealth Independent States (CIS), the Collective Security and Treaty Organization (CSTO), and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) are the most important cooperation models in the former Soviet Union by including Central Asian states not only for the stabilization of the region but also for economic stability. As a result, all relationship ties necessitate the other international activities in the region today.

Russia has military bases in three states; in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In this regard, is the Russian military presence in Central Asia a guarantee for regional security? Is it possible that there will be any internal and external conflict areas in near future? It should be thought that the Russian military bases and the political situations of the Central Asian states against the regional problems depend on each other. In that perspective, it is clear that the Russian military presence in Central Asia is of great importance. In this study, it will be clear that the critical security problems of Central Asia demand Russia to take some bilateral and multilateral measurements to ensure decentralization of the region.

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF CENTRAL ASIA FOR RUSSIAN POLITICS

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Central Asia has become one of the key actors in the Eurasian region with its economic features and political challenges to international and regional order. The influence of the region is observed in the

areas of the economy, energy, security, and military politics. In other words, today, the region is 'an integral part of the global system of security and the economy (Karimova, 2010). At the same time, more than two decades demonstrated that Central Asia is a substantial geopolitical arena of regional and global powers. During the 1990s, the newly independent states confronted many problems. As they were trying to establish state structures, the new bilateral and multinational relations were also shaped under the shade of that perspective. Practically, the region became a conflict zone with the Civil War in Tajikistan, the ethnic tension which erupted in the Fergana Valley and the activities of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (Fiona, 2002). After the military intervention of the United States in Afghanistan in 2001, security problems of the region have given a new sphere; the most significant result is that the Afghan issue has been seen a threat to Russian regional security.

At that point, the problems of Central Asia for Russian security can be divided into three categories: internal, regional, and external ("Russia's Interests", 2013:31). Namely,

- * Security issues (energy, terrorism, separatism Afghanistan, and Islamic extremism),
- * Drug trafficking and narcotics,
- * Weak state institutions, democratization and human rights,
- * Territorial disputes in Central Asia,
- * The status of the Russian compatriots,
- * Internal territorial and ethnic problems,
- * Unstable economic situations of the regional states and corruption,
- * Illegal immigration and labor migrants.

Within Central Asia, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are the most powerful states in terms of relatively strong economies and the number of population. Uzbekistan has a strategic position as a result of its geographical location. Kazakhstan is the most independent state of Russia; moreover, it is largely a pro-Russian state. Furthermore, the states try to balance their relations between Russia and other international actors. Turkmenistan has tried to decrease its dependency on Russia in terms of the energy field; as a result, China has become the most important actor of Turkmen energy policy. In contrast, the relations between Russia and Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are determined by their total dependency of the Russian military, economic and security assistance. Therefore, the framework of Russian interests in Central Asia and the dependency level of Central Asian states on Russia should be explained by three factors: "1) their structural dependence on Russia, 2) the level of Russia's insistence on conformity to its policies, 3) their interests with other states and powers" (Scott, 2016). In other words, the Russian interests in Central Asia can also be explained by four main aspects: Geopolitical, economic, security, and humanitarian.

Russia has several advantages more than other external actors in the region. First of all, the geopolitical position of Russia is one of the most significant factors of those advantages. It has more than 7000 km state border with Kazakhstan

and 12 regions of Russia are located on that border (Oliphant, 2013). Secondly, the region still mainly depends on Russia in terms of economy, military, security assistance. Especially, in order to protect national territories against the spillover from Afghanistan, regional states especially, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan do not have enough military powers to protect state borders. Thirdly, Russia and Central Asia have common historical and cultural ties. For instance, the Russian language is still used as a multinational language. When the situation is thought with the great population of the Russian compatriots accounting for more than 6.5 million, the importance of the region becomes more understandable for Russian policy; Russia uses its soft power tools successfully in order to protect the rights of them on the humanitarian basis.

For Russian foreign policy, the majority problems of the region are potential threats to Russian national security, economic stability, and territorial integrity. 'Territorial integrity' or 'national security' is the major priority of foreign policy stated in all official foreign policy and security documents. Russia sees that it is impossible to solve the problems or to prevent their negative effects without regional and global cooperation. Therefore, it has enhanced several cooperation models on security, military and economic fields after the collapse of the Soviet Union, such as not only the Commonwealth Independent States (CIS) in 1991 and its military alliance the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), (1992-1999 and it was renewed in 2002) (Haas, 2010:40), but also other organizations like Eurasian Economic Community (EEC) in 2001, Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2001, Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO) (between 2002 and 2005), the Customs Union (2010), the Common Economic Space (2012), and lastly, the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in 2015.

The stability of Central Asia ensures Russian national security at the same time. Therefore, "the threats of drug trafficking, the risk of Islamist penetration, and uncontrolled labor migration flows have to be tackled" (Laurelle, 2014) are the main security problems that should be taken measures immediately. In this framework, Russia is the most powerful state in order to solve regional security problems. That role is also perceived by Russia and it is seen in the official documents of the Foreign Policy Concept, the Military Doctrine, and the Security Strategy of the Russian Federation.

2. IMPORTANCE OF RUSSIAN REGIONAL SECURITY IN THE OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS INCLUDING CENTRAL ASIA

The Russian foreign policy, its military, and national security are determined by the official strategic plans, which are approved by the president. As a way, it was followed by the former president Boris Yeltsin with three documents which are the Concept of Foreign Policy, the Military Doctrine, and the National Security Strategy. The last versions of them were signed in 2016, 2014 and 2015 respectively. They include the main international, regional and national priorities of the Russian Federation. In this study, they will be evaluated in terms of the importance of regional security of Russia by including Central Asia.

The first document is the Foreign Policy Concept, which was approved on 30 November 2016 ("Russian Foreign Policy Concept", 2016). It emphasizes that Russian national security, its sovereignty, and the territorial integrity of the state are the main priorities of the Russian foreign policy. In order to achieve them, Russia aims to prevent new hotbeds of tensions in neighboring countries, and it cooperates with them on bilateral and multilateral agreements. On the other hand, the soft power is also the main political tool for achieving the foreign policy priorities. The CIS, the CSTO, and the EAEU are the most important multilateral cooperation tools in the former Soviet Union. In terms of the military security area, it is emphasized that the CSTO is one of the key elements of the security framework in the post-Soviet region. At the same time, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is the other significant intergovernmental organization. All of them have a great importance to cooperate against regional and international challenges defined as international and regional terrorism and extremism, drug trafficking and narcotic drugs, transnational crime, and illegal migration. In order to solve them, Russia aims to use multilateral negotiating mechanisms effectively by respecting the sovereignty of the partners.

Secondly, the Russian Military Doctrine, approved on 25 December 2014 ("Voyennaya Doktrina", 2014), consists generally of the military policy and economy, the measurements to solve the regional problems, and the major threats to Russia. According to the document, the main external threats for Russian national and regional security are territorial claims, the use of military forces against Russia and its allies, the growing extremism, using information technologies for the military-political purposes against regional and global security. At the same time, the internal threats are also listed as provoking inter-ethnic tensions, extremism, and the religious conflicts. Additionally, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is mentioned in the document. Moreover, Russia participates in solving conflicts under the United Nations and the regional organizations. If there is a military action against any CSTO member states, it perceives that as a threat to all member of the cooperation, and therefore Russian takes measures in accordance with the treaty. At the same time, Russia gives support to create regional defense systems and it can participate in peacekeeping operations under the CIS and CSTO cooperation.

Lastly, the Russian National Security Strategy that was approved on 31 December 2015 ("Strategiya Natsional'noy Bezopasnosti", 2015) has a complementary role of priorities of the foreign policy concept and the military doctrine. The strategy includes all security aspects of the state from the military to the environmental areas. In relation to the topic, the document aims taking measures for strengthening Russian national, regional and global security, and strategic national priorities which are enumerated according to their significance. At the same time, the Russian Federation is focusing on strengthening the country's defense capability and their military security and sovereignty. Moreover, the national and territorial integrity, the economic growth and culture, its strategic stability and the equal strategic partnership are underlined in the document. As it was stated in other two

documents, the CIS, the CSTO, and the EAEU are the most significant integration and cooperation areas by creating political, economic, military-technical cooperation. Practically, according to the strategy document, the most significant threats to the Russian national and regional security are the radicalization that includes extremist and religious movements, and the provocation of 'colour revolutions.' To sum up, the official foreign policy, military, and strategy concepts demonstrate that Central Asia has a national and regional security priority of Russia. Generally, the region is emphasized under multinational political, economic, military cooperation fields as the CIS, its military cooperation the CSTO and the EAEU.

For Central Asian states, it should be noted here, when Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan are members of almost all pro-Russian organizations, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are also members of the CIS. At that point, the Russian military presence will be examined in Central Asia as a practical role of official discourse.

3. RUSSIAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN CENTRAL ASIA

Central Asia is not only a significant region where significant security challenges to regional and national security of Russia could be seen, it is also a military cooperation area of the state. The military implementations of Russia in Central Asia can be divided into five main aspects: the multilateral military cooperation on the regional level, the military bases in three regional states, the border security of the states, the trade of military equipment exporting to the region, and the training of military personals of Central Asian states. Depending on the subject matter of the study, two of them, the Russian military bases and the multilateral military cooperation under the leadership of Russia, will be examined by underlining some statistics, the military activities, and the regional security interpretations.

3.1. The Russian Military Bases in Central Asia

The Russian military bases in Central Asia are situated in three countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The official status of them has come to bilateral agreements. The majority of the bases were established in the Soviet times. Practically, Kazakhstan is the most important state for Russian military presence in the region. Russia has seven military bases in different regions of the country, which is more than 11 million hectares (Aliyev, 2016). One of them is the Baikonur Cosmodrome -the Fifth State Testing Range that is the first space station in the world was established in Soviet times. According to the agreement signed in 26 December 2016 ("Why Russia", 2016), Russia will continue to use it and cooperate at Baikonur with Kazakhstan until 2050. Moreover, the other military bases are 20th Test Station and IP-8 and IP-16 Measuring Points, Sary Shagan Anti-ballistic Missile Testing Range, Balkhash-9 Radio-technical Center, Chkalov Flight Center and the military unit of the Russian Armed Forces (Aliyev, 2016).

In Kyrgyzstan, there are four military bases that are the military centres and facilities, which are the Kant Air Base, the Torpedo Testing Range in Karakol, the Communications of the Russian Navy Fleet near Chaldovar village, the Seismic Station near Mayлуу-Suu town ("Russian Military Base", 2017). The Kant Air Base

is the first military base established after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 2003 in Central Asia. When the first agreement ended in 2009, it was renewed in 2012 as Russia will use it until 2032. At the same time, the airbase is a part of Collective Rapid Reaction Force of the CSTO (“Russian Military Will”, 2017).

Tajikistan is the third state which has Russian military bases in Central Asia. The biggest Russian army outside of the Russian territory, named as 201st Motor Rifle Division and Federal Guard Service, is located nearby Dushanbe with three units. According to the agreement, Russia will use the base until 2042. Moreover, the optical-electronic of the space control system known as ‘Okno’ is the second military centre of Russia in Tajikistan. After the Tajik Civil War, the status of the military base was determined by the agreement signed in 1999 until 2042 (Aliyev, 2016). On the other hand, the Russian troops controlled Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border during the 1990s. In 1999, they left the two states (Huasheng, 2017). However, the Russian troops were responsible for protecting Tajik-Afghan borders until 2005 (Oliphant, 2015).

The case of Russian military bases is also related with the economic dependency of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan on Russia. For example, Russia forgave the debt of Tajikistan that was accounted for \$242 million in 2004 and it provided a military aid package at \$1.5 billion to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in 2012 (Huasheng, 2017). The importance of military presence in Tajikistan will keep its key role for the next decades. It confirms that Russia would plan to increase its troops from 5.900 to 9900 by 2020 (Gottesman, 2015). Furthermore, during the official visit of President Putin to Tajikistan in February 2017, the current situation of 201st Motor Rifle Division and Federal Guard Service remained on the agenda. During the talks, it was stated that the military base will remain the most significant part of the regional security (“Russia, Tajikistan”, 2017).

There are not any Russian military presence in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Two of these countries follow an isolationist foreign policy towards Russia than other states. They become a member only one pro-Russian organization in the region as the CIS. Conversely, the approach of Uzbekistan towards the CSTO agreement was skeptical during the administration of Islam Karimov. In 2002, it refused to become a member of the organization, and it returned between 2006 and 2012 (Kilner, 2012). It withdrew from the agreement the second time in 2012. The reason is that I. Karimov was using the maneuvering foreign policy. Even if they keep their natural status about the becoming the membership of the CSTO today, they have military and technical relationships with Russia. It demonstrates that the military and defense cooperation continues on a bilateral level. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are interested in Russian military products in order to modernize their armies. For example, when Uzbekistan is interested in the Russian defense systems and the anti-tank rockets, Russia plays an important role in creating a new Navy of Turkmenistan (Alikin, 2014).

3.2. The Multilateral Military Cooperation under the CIS

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has developed some multinational cooperation models. The most significant cooperation is the CIS. It is a security belt

around Russia (“Populates on Russia”, 2012). At the same time, the cooperation is working actively for solving regional security problems. It has the CIS Anti-Terrorism Centre, which was established in 2000 (“About the CIS”, 2017). The main goals of the mission are cooperating to combat international and regional terrorism, developing special data-bank of international terrorism and other extremist organizations, participating and assisting common military exercises. Furthermore, the Military Cooperation Concept of the CIS was adopted until 2020 during the CIS summit in Kazakhstan in 2015 (“CIS Leaders”, 2015). According to the concept, the member states will struggle against crises on the borders of the CIS sphere and it aims that the cooperation will be strengthened in the years to come. Moreover, the Joint CIS Air Defence System was established in 1995 by 10 CIS members. Turkmenistan ceased from the cooperation in 1997. The agreement renewed in 10 February 2017 (Plopsky, 2017). The defence system consists of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Tajikistan (“Russia to Supply”, 2017). The Air Defence System is one of the most significant priorities of Russia. According to the former commander Aerospace Forces of the Russian Federation Viktor Bondarev, the program aims to supply anti-aircraft missile system to Kazakhstan, the modern communication systems to Kyrgyzstan, and the aircraft and anti-aircraft missile technology to Tajikistan (“Russia busy at work”, 2017). Thereby, the main goals of the system are included to protect the airspace of the member states, to coordination and to prevent missile attacks against potential air threats (“Russia builds unified”, 2015). In addition, the concept of A United Aerospace Defence in the Post-Soviet Space as a complementary part of the defense system that was also approved by the members’ Defence Ministers in 2016 (“Russia Busy at Work”, 2017)

Under the CIS umbrella, the collective security cooperation as a military alliance, which is known as the Tashkent Agreement or the Collective Security Treaty was signed for five years from 1994 by belonging to the CIS states except for Turkmenistan in 1992. It legalized the Russian military presence in the CIS states (Jackson, 2003:63) According to the text of the agreement, if there are several threats against the member states, the other states will assist by using their military forces (Gottesman, 2015). In 2002, the agreement was renewed and named as the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). The member states are Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Russia. In principle, the organization focuses on preserving territorial integrity, and developing cooperation with other multilateral institutions such as the United Nations (UN), the SCO and NATO (“Collective security treaty”, 2017) (at the same time, the CSTO is construed as a NATO-style military alliance of Russia according to the reviewers). Moreover, ‘the strengthening of peace, international and regional security and stability, the collective protection of freedom, territorial integrity, and sovereignty of its member-states’ (“Collective Security Treaty”, 2017) are the main achieving targets of the alliance. Under the cooperation, there are two types of military forces which are the Collective Rapid Reaction Force and the Collective Rapid Deployment Force (2001). According to the statistics, two of them have 17.000-22000 and 5000 men, respectively (“Russian NATO”, 2017). Most importantly, the CSTO member states

decided to established the CSTO Collective Rapid Reaction Force in order to “protect member states’ territorial integrity and sovereignty, guarantee their security, and respond to large-scale crisis in member countries” (“The cooperation 2009”, 2009) Practically, the military exercises have taken place since 2009 almost every year. Lastly, the Strategy of CSTO Collective Security for the Period Through 2025 was signed in Armenia in October 2016. According to the document, it is included to improve collective security mechanisms and to offer guidelines on further developments by including maintaining peace and stability in the region (“CSTO Leaders Adopt”, 2016).

4. THE ROLE OF RUSSIAN MILITARY PRESENCE FOR RUSSIAN REGIONAL SECURITY IN CENTRAL ASIA

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, several political turmoils were seen in the region: Tajik Civil War (1992-1997), the military intervention in Afghanistan, the Tulip Revolutions in the Andijan Events in Uzbekistan (2005). Kyrgyzstan (2005 and 2010). At the same time, as a result of destabilization, the region has become an area for non-traditional cross-border crimes as extremism, terrorism, drug trafficking and illegal immigration. Practically, Russia played a peacekeeper role during the Civil War under the collective peacekeeper mission of the CIS in Tajikistan. After this military assistance, the Russian troops were not used in any conflicts directly. The measurements have taken place on regional multilateral negotiations.

Practically, Central Asian states have only the Russian military bases in their countries. The military bases of the US which were established after the military intervention in Afghanistan, in Kyrgyzstan (Manas) and Uzbekistan (Khanabad is known as K2) were closed in 2014 and 2005, respectively. The Russian military bases are located in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan; Kazakhstan is more economically and politically independent from Russia compared to the other two states. In that respect, the pro-Russian regional organizations have great importance for Russian regional security. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are the members of all pro-Russian organizations. This situation gives a more advantageous position than those of the other actors in Central Asia. As an illustration, during the official visit of President Putin to Kyrgyzstan, the situation of the military bases came into question. The response of Putin (“Russian Military Will Leave”, 2017) is important for understanding Russian security policy towards Central Asia:

“When Kyrgyzstan decides that it has strengthened its armed forces so that it no longer needs this base, we will pull out immediately. We did not discuss expanding the Russian military group here. If Kyrgyzstan decides that this is necessary, we will discuss this issue, but you should know that this will entail additional spending for us.”

It means that the Russian military bases are in the region in order to minimize regional security risks. In other words, it is a necessity, if there are several military conflicts, they can potentially affect the Russian national and the regional security directly. Especially, the extremism of religion is the main threat to all states, considering the Syrian Civil War. On the other hand, the Russian military cooperation

is about the economic situation of Russia. In 2010, Russia announced the military modernization program until 2020 in order to develop equipment, weapons of Russian troops of 70% by including military presences in both in the country and abroad; the estimated cost is about 20 trillion roubles (“Russia’s Defence Minister”, 2016). However, as a result of the annexation of Crimea, and the Ukrainian Crises, the economic sanctions affected the budget negatively. For example, the 20 trillion roubles were equal about \$700 billion in 2011, it demonstrates less than \$300 billion in March 2016 (DeGhett, 2016).

As it is illustrated, Central Asia has a top priority for Russian regional and national security policy. It uses bilateral and multilateral cooperation models in order to take measurements against security problems. At the same time, “Russia is the most powerful security actor” in Central Asia (Oliphant, 2013). Moreover, it is a significant geopolitical arena of Russian politics. After 2000, Russia has started to use more active military and security role in the region. Because of the fragile security structure of the region, the states need military and security assistance. At that point, the assessments will be listed by dividing significant results.

Today, the Russian military presence in Central Asia is a guarantee for regional security. That strong position prevents other global powers’ activities on a multilateral level. In other words, Russia is a state party of the situation of the region. As a result of this, the probability of the high-density conflict will have a low-level in the near future. The main reasons for this situation are the Russian military bases and the political structures of Central Asian states. Therefore, it can be said that the Russian security policy on bilateral and multilateral levels has a great success. When the situation is evaluated with the military-security dependency of the region to Russia, it can be understood clearly.

On the other hand, the security challenges for the CIS cooperation mean the security alarm for Russia. Therefore, the relations between Russia and the regional states always engage in a dialogue, there is not any probability of crises on the multilateral level. As a result of this, even if Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have different foreign policy agendas from those of the other regional states, they generally need Russian political-military security assistance in order to take measurements against regional security problems. For the next decade, the cooperation on the military-security bases is always possible for border security, against the Afghan issue, the drug trafficking with the northern route, passing through Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Russia and Europe. Significantly, the possibility of the Colour Revolutions has been perceived as the common threat on the regional security level. As it was stated in the Russian official documents, it is not only a threat to national security, but also it results in the destabilization of Central Asia.

In this regard, to understand the Russian role in regional security, the agreements of the using the military bases are significant illustrations. Russia will use the military bases until 2050, 2032, and 2042 in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan respectively. It means that the multinational cooperation tools such as the CIS and the CSTO will keep their importance. Even if the cooperation seems to be on a multinational level, Russia is playing the leading role in the region with its strong

political, economic, and military superiority. Moreover, the areas with the risk of conflict in the Russian periphery as Armenia-Azerbaijan, the South Ossetia, and the Afghan issue will be a top priority for Russian security in the foreign, security and military policy towards Central Asia.

To sum up, the issue of the Russian compatriots can be emphasized here to demonstrate it as a part of the regional security perception of Russia. Today, more than 6.5 million Russian compatriots live in five Central Asian states, the majority of them live in Kazakhstan about 4.3 million. The issue is generally emphasized in official documents. According to Russian foreign policy agenda, Russia is responsible for protecting their rights, freedoms by developing policies. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, there has not seen any ethnic or religious conflicts between the Russians and local nationalities. However, the regional problems are also the main threat to that population. In other words, if some crises arise in the region as a threat to the population, it means that Russia can take several measures by using hard power tools in order to protect its compatriots. That aspect should be evaluated for Russian regional security policy in Central Asia.

Conclusion

There are five important points to mention. Firstly, the Russian military presence in Central Asia is a guarantee for its own security theoretically. However, it also ensures the national and regional security of the Central Asian states. As an illustration, there is not a hotbed conflict area in the region even if it is still a possibility, the exception of the Civil War in Tajikistan after the collapse of the Soviet Union. When the economic and political situations of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are evaluated, it is not possible to avoid negative effects of security problems without the Russian military, security and economic assistance, because the regional states have not strong armies for solving the problems themselves.

Secondly, the Russian military bases in Central Asia are a guarantee for regional security practically. The agreement of using military bases in three states shows that Russia will play a leading role at least until 2050. As a result of this, it is not possible to say that there can be seen several ethnic or religious conflicts including extremism. At that point, the authoritarian regimes of Central Asian states are in cohesion with the Russian government.

Thirdly, the problems of the region are the common threats of Russia and regional states. The cooperation on the military-security perception of Russia is seen as a necessity. Therefore, multinational organizations which are the CIS and the CSTO have a great importance. Russia will use them for broadening new mechanisms in order to continue its peacekeeper, security maker role in the region. The relations between Russia and Central Asian states continuously show Russia aims to control not only the military-security level but also economic, political and humanitarian aspects.

Fourthly, it is possible that the agreements of the bases can be broadened by including common military activities with Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. This is because the Afghan issue will continue to have the security alarm for regional

stability. Therefore, multilateral cooperation organizations and common military activities are the most significant parts of Russian security policy towards Central Asia. Finally, the Russian compatriots are a part of relationships with regional states. The greater number of the population is living in Kazakhstan. Even if they do not have enough political rights in all states, the possibility of changing any standards in terms of economic and humanitarian levels, the Russian government can use the role of keeping their rights. Therefore, the Russian military presence in the region ensures their security at the same time.

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