CHAPTER VI
INFLUENCE OF EXTERNAL ELEMENTS

6.1. Introduction

Since the formation of modern governments, existence of competition among governments has always been one of the decisive factors in diplomatic relationships. This competition was usually on issues which led to empowerment of one nation and weakness of the other. One of the elements which have frequently led to competitions between governments is specific geographic location. It was because geopolitics was considered as an element of power for governments. Dominance and control over important geographical regions by a government could increase power of that specific government which in turn would lead to increased insecurity of that government against its rivals.

Specialists of geographical politics have always provoked politicians to dominate and gain authority over certain important regions in the world so that the government could have superiority over other governments. Diplomatic history of great powers includes numerous examples in which great powers have had competitions, conflicts and eventually wars to win dominance over these important geographical regions. Therefore we could say that: geography has turned governments of ECO into historical network for trade, competition and in some cases for conflicts. Traditionally, the foreign powers have considered the region as an economic and strategic gateway for other regions of the world. Since the time of independence in some of these powers and their gaining ability to produce energy, they have laid a new foundation for foreign interests in them.

It is apparent nowadays that foreign competition over energy is only one component of the complicated balance in short-term and long-term economic and strategic objectives. Therefore, there is the possibility of competition between foreign powers in the coming years as well, and strategic and economic interests will cause foreign governments to increase their diplomatic and economic as well as military activities in the region.
6.2. Political, Economic and Military Capabilities in ECO

6.2.1. Crude Oil

Most countries of ECO are known to have reserves of huge quantities of crude oil. Even at Present production of crude oil is increasing in the region. In this perspective, it is estimated that only in the Caspian Sea which is part of ECO region 3% to 4.5% of world crude oil and 6% to 9% of non-OPEC crude oil is produced. This estimation does not include Russian and Iranian parts of the Caspian Sea.

According to predictions based on new discoveries, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan in 2010 to 2015 will have the highest quantity of oil production in the region. Iran, as the third producer of oil in OPEC has an exceptional position in the region.

6.2.2. Natural Gas

According to current discoveries and ongoing projects, between 2010 and 2015 production of gas will reach its highest in the region. Turkmenistan will be the first exporter of gas and the share of Uzbekistan will also increase in future. Iran also, as it is known, is one of the biggest producers of gas in the world.1

6.2.3. Strategic Situation

ECO includes three sensitive and strategic spots of the world in it, each one of them has splendid value in all the elements mentioned above.

- Middle Asia
- Parts of Caucasia
- Parts of Middle East

Today, these three spots have remarkable roles in political and power-related equations in geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic dimensions and this importance is apparent and clear to all.2 Some aspects of this importance in the region will be mentioned here:

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1 Rafee, Hussein. Central Asia: A Potential Region for Security Workers, ‘Central Eurasian Studies, Faculty of Law and Political Science, Second Year (winter and Spring 2009), Vol. 3, pp. 61-76.
2 Mojtahed Zadeh, Pirouz. Security of Southerastern Asia in 21st Geopolitics, Central Eurasian Studies, Center of International Academic Studies, Faculty of Law and Political Science, Second Year (Summer and Fall 2008), Vol. 2, pp. 103-122.
6.2.4. Nearness to Russia and China

Russia and China are among the great and main powers in the world that have rivals and opponents. Since one of the elements of power is geographical situation, it is natural that geopolitical and geographical conditions of these two countries are very important in terms of political, economic and military power, for these countries themselves and also for others. ECO region for China and Russia could be both a region to provide them with defense and national security and also a source of threat, pressure and danger in case it is penetrated by other rival powers.

From this perspective one must say that considering the situation of neighboring countries has always been important in diplomacy of governments. Importance of India and its neighboring regions for British Empire was also of this kind. Rivals of Britain also were looking for ways of penetrating to regions neighboring India and weakening Britain. United States also in the 19th century because of the importance and sensitivity it regarded for its neighboring region i.e. south America, prevented other nations from interfering there through Monroe Doctrine.\(^1\)

6.2.5. Transferring Fossil Fuel to Global Markets

As it was mentioned earlier, existence of great resources of oil and gas in the region was one of the most important elements which attracted powers of the world. Another important element for these powers was the routes of transferring these resources to global markets which if not as important as the resources themselves, were no less important.

Although producers of oil and natural gas are facing problems such as low internal demand and high expenditures of transfer to internal as well as external markets, in order to transfer these resources, they have to choose among different options for transfer in which they are not the only choosers.

Nowadays, except for some big markets with land routes like China, development of oil transfer is usually carried out in ports with high capacities in the Black Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Mediterranean Sea and probably the Indian Ocean.

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\(^1\) Ahmadian, Ghodratollah. Central Asia and Caucasus, Battlefield of Confrontation between Interests of Russia and the West, Central Eurasian Studies, Center of International Academic Studies, Faculty of Law and Political Sciences, Second Year (Summer and Fall 2009), Vol. 4, pp. 1-20.
On the contrary, pipelines of natural gas are directly connected to regional markets because without liquidizing factories, which need great expenditure, its transfer through sea is impossible.¹

6.2.6. **Radical Islam and Violence in the Region**

The theory of social movements could be a starting point for evaluating radical Islam in ECO region. This theory studies structural elements such as poverty and inequality, access to resources as well as political and ideological opportunities which have paved the way for development of radical Islam in the region. Islamic radicalism bloomed after the revolution in Iran and developed in Middle East after the dissolution of Soviet Union. This development became one of the reasons for civil war in Tajikistan. The emergence of secret groups in Uzbekistan and its neighboring regions in Kazakhstan was the reason for the development of Islamic radicalism.

Establishment of Taliban could be called as the climax to formation of radical groups which influenced the destiny of the region as well as destiny of the world.² The September 11 attacks which were mainly carried out by this group became a reason for greatly increasing foreign forces, war and terror all over the region and in this aspect; irreparable damages were wrought on different economic, political and cultural sections of the region.

On the other side, Central Asian countries provoked by the United States and for maintaining their own security requested for establishing military bases of America in their countries.

The defeat of Taliban also led to more massacre, killings and violence in Pakistan. These factors altogether brought different regional and global powers to play their roles and enter a competition to reinforce peace and establish stability and to influence changes in the region.

¹ Olga. The conflict faults in central Asia and South Caucasus, the cultural studies and international research institute, p. 181.
6.3 Perspectives of Foreign Elements

6.3.1 Russia

In order to understand the perspective of Russia on ECO we need to understand the important strategic and historical elements which influence decision-making of Russians.¹

According to realists and neo-realists, weakness and fragility of a country results in a viewpoint according to which there is more threat in this situation than in a chaotic political system. Since the more powerful governments have the ability to damage, they are considered as threats against weaker countries and their interests. Russia has certain strategic reasons to consider ECO as a vital region for its security interests. Historical struggles of Russia in order to control the region have been originated from this perspective that domination over the region would give many strategic and economic benefits for Russia. Authority of Russia over Turkistan and beyond the Caspian Sea was confirmed in the late 19th century and internal Asia also became a realm of penetration for Russia and China.² Moscow kept this control during the period of Tsars and Soviet Union; governments of the region were also considered as important sources for successive empires. For many years, a number of Russians considered this imperialistic feature as a part of Russian identity and as a reason to prove the importance of this country as a major power. Even after separation of republics in Soviet Union it is still difficult for many Russians to accept these independences; because they considered the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union as synonymous.

Apart from strategic and historical benefits, economic reasons were also important motives for Russians to maintain their dominance over the region. Moscow believes that if it gains the previous power, its economic modernization would be indispensable. Development of energy resources in the Caspian Sea has provided a real opportunity to have access to economic benefits and Russia hopes to play an important role in it. Although Moscow and ECO countries both would benefit from developments in the Caspian Sea, area economic benefits of Russia has not always

² Olga. The conflict faults in central Asia and South Caucasus, the cultural studies and international research institute, p. 227.
been equal to those of its neighbors. As one of the main energy exporting nations, Russia tries to keep the expenses of oil transfer through its own soil at high rate, to buy products of other countries to keep the prices high, and to prevent the neighboring countries from effective exportation of Fossil fuels. The network of pipelines which has been designed and established at the time of Soviet Union and exporters of the Caspian region use for their energy exportation is a network that includes all pipelines of the region. This has made other exporters reliant on Russia and since fossil fuel is the only export product of these countries, it makes economic reliance of these countries on Russia a permanent one. This makes Russia interfere with exportation of energy in the region to benefit its own economy and also use it as a political means over ECO countries. Therefore, Russia sees this network as an element for reliance of these countries on itself and refuses the setting up of any other route in the region for energy transfer.

Russia also considers Islamic political and radical movements which started after the decline of secular governments in Middle Asia as threats for this country. With a considerable population of Muslims (who are mostly settled in Northern Caucasia, Tatar Republics and Bashkir) Russia is worried about radical Islamic movements which might penetrate into neighboring countries if they succeed in Central Asian countries and that they might use Chechnya as a base and bring more instability and terrorist attacks into the soil of Russia. Separatist movements (religious or others) in Central Asia and in Caucasus are also reasons for worry for “Russia especially in Northern Caucasia.1

Drug business and crime are also real reasons of worry for Russia. The routes of drug traffic start from Central Asia, pass through Central Asia and then enter Russia where in addition to problems, drug use is also increasing. Criminal bands have close relationships in Russia and in ECO region. Increase of their power and influence has been a threat to governmental control and social order all over Russia and the whole region, and they even have influences beyond this region through activities in Europe, Israel and the United States. In the meantime, Russian leadership is well aware that these threats would weaken governments of the region and would

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make them more reliant on assistance and support of Russia and as a result would make them more subservient to political and economic demands of Russia. This has created paradoxes in political goals of Russia in the region. Russians want prevention of chaos and violence, removal of crime and drug, and survival of secular governments but these interests are contrary to their tendency to maintain dominance over the countries of the region which depends on the political weakness of these governments and their greater reliance on Russia. Moreover, Russians intend to benefit from development of energy in the Caspian Sea which is a sign of economic modernization and development in the region which, of course, will decrease dependence of these countries on Russia (unless Russia keeps its restrictions over routes of energy exportation).

During recent years, Russia has been trying to follow its aims in ECO region with multiple policies through which it has tried to attract local governments towards itself. These policies have been applied by Russia to penetrate these countries and reduce threats in them. Their plans include economic, political and military relations as well as provision of assistance for them. Russia has been trying to make the best use of fear from instability and conflicts in the region through giving assistance and security commitments. (Even some believe that Russia has supported rebellious movements to increase insecurity in Central Asia.\(^1\) Military assistances also include selling weapons, establishment of troops for assistance, joint anti-rebellion trainings, formation of regional anti-terrorist base which is in Bishkek and formation of joint rapid-reaction units.

Russia’s achievements in formation and provision of relationships and military assistances have been different. Tajikistan and Armenia have welcomed Russian forces, Kirgizstan has accepted some assistances and Kazakhstan also intends to maintain its military and political relations with Russia (e.g. through Shanghai Cooperation Organization consisting of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan since June 2000). Turkmenistan, on the other hand, has still maintained non-committal (and somehow secluded stand), Georgia is still demanding withdrawal of Russian forces from its territories (and it has also made

\(^1\) Olga. The conflict faults in central Asia and South Caucasus, the cultural studies and international research institute, p. 280.
objections against attacks of Russian forces on rebellions in Chechen). Azerbaijan also complains about presence of Russian forces on its soil and has recently rejected Russian efforts to establish close relationships. Uzbekistan also insists on refusing help from Russia. On the other hand, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Georgia, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan have been trying to establish close relations with the U.S and they have succeeded to some extents. Ultimately, although remarkable efforts for multilateral cooperation have been carried out on paper by Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Shanghai Cooperation Organization, few of these efforts have been put into action.

In any case, different reactions could be expected on the Russian side. And as it was mentioned earlier, Russia will keep on following its benefits which are mostly somehow convergent with goals of its neighboring countries. Although previously Russia could dominate and control Central Asia through force, nowadays, the most powerful threat of Russia over these countries is through economic and political pressures rather than military invasion. Although there is a shadow of doubt over military power of Russia, routes of pipelines are certain realities. That is why it is not surprising that efforts of Russia for pressure are mostly based on economic issues. Previously, this country used to make countries of the region ally themselves with Russia through dominance and through reminding them of the presence of its forces; nowadays, it includes economic affairs as well. An example in this relation is competition between Russian corporations supported by government to make investments in neighboring countries, especially in fields related to energy. This increasing ownership of Russia in industries of most ECO countries has given Russia more strength to impose economic pressures on these governments and it has been a substitute to loss of exclusive Russian authority over routes of energy exportation. Therefore, it is not important at all that pipelines will go through which routes; because Russian corporations exist in these countries and influence of Russia will remain. As in military relations, there have been certain different achievements in economic relations.

Oil producing countries like Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan as well as the transit country hope that through supporting multiple routes of oil pipelines, they could reduce the influence of Russia through these economic mechanisms. Additionally,
they expect that despite economic pressures issued by Russia, these routes will be established. Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Kirgizstan also hope that political, military and economic relations with other countries will give them strength to resist against the pressures of Russia. On the other side, Turkmenistan whose major export is natural gas transferred to customers through Russian pipelines, has been seeking to reduce its vulnerability under Russian pressure through following political, economic and social seclusion policies. Eventually Tajikistan, who is dependent on Russia because of security problems, intend to maintain their close relations with Russia.

Background of Russia in political and economic affairs could not only be attributed to its imperial history, but also it can be found in nature of Russia’s threatening ability in freeing itself from its commitments. Regarding inability of Russia in settling civil disobedience and execution of rules inside itself, it does not seem possible that this country could assist Central Asian countries in fighting against religious radicals, organized crime and against smugglers. The main reason for decades of poverty, divergence, conflicts and economic dependence of the region was dominance of Russia over these countries. There is no doubt that even now Russia will not be able to handle this situation and its interference will make the conditions worse. Of course, this fact that others can do something for these disorders, has created more complications. Since most parts of the region have been dominated for a long time by Russia, the region is still under the dominance of Moscow, and Russia considers all foreign movements near its borders as threats; since 1990s, this country has regarded all efforts of other countries in this part of the world as offensive aggression. This is true especially about perspectives of Moscow on bilateral or multilateral relations of the U.S with Central Asian or Southern Caucasian countries. These activities have been regarded as efforts to bring natural allies of Russia out of its dominance. Moreover, interference of the U.S in some parts of ECO has been interpreted by Russian leaders as parts of American efforts (with some plans for a national missile defense and development of NATO) to decrease Russian influence and to weaken this country. This understanding has made Russia more alert to maintain its influence in the region. In this way, Russia could display its power and
importance and could prove that the U.S and its allies have not been able to diminish the power of this country.¹

From neo-realistic point of view, this could be analyzed as a form of creating balance by Russia (increasing one’s power against more powerful enemies i.e. the U.S and its allies in this case). At least, influence on close foreign countries, despite political and economic weakness of Russia, could prove that Russia is still a big power, because it has some governments under its dominance. Even if military and economic achievements are small, the ability of Russia in attracting allies will show that this country is still a big player in the global field. Having a role in developing economy and energy of these countries could increase benefits for Russia and could also help Russia maintain its dominance over these countries.

It could be said of Russia that the difficulty of precise evaluations on the abilities of this country along with a tendency to keep its influence and dominance over ECO region could lead to a military adventure. In fact, the role of Russian peacekeeping forces in Tajikistan and interference in internal conflicts of Georgia could be mentioned as examples of such a desire for development in a declining power. Practicality of Russian peacekeeping forces and their success in controlling borders is suspect and arguments which mention them as useful are based on the idea that if Russia were not present the situation would be much worse.

Moreover, as it was mentioned elsewhere, the region itself is an area which includes most dangerous political changes. Political and economic interests of Russia in the region, tendency of this country to keep and demonstrate its supremacy and presence of Russian forces in the region all reveal that in case of any conflict, Russia will also play its own role. Since Russia itself is in the process of deep political and economic changes which will probably continue in the coming decade or two, weakness of Russia along with these changes would create a dangerous future situation. If Russia fails in its efforts to control conflicts, then not only will these conflicts increase, but also other countries will be drawn into the conflicts. If these interferences happen without the coordination of Russia, they will be regarded by

¹ Ibid, p. 283.
Moscow as intrusion, then, it might lead to hostility and even conflicts between Russia and the interfering country. Moreover, interests of Russia in the region means that if Russia, in order to demonstrate its abilities and to show that it is still powerful, embarks on an external war, Central Asia and Southern Caucasia which are regarded as regions of ECO, would be in great danger of this war. Additionally, weakness of Russia, especially regarding its remarkable economic recession, might encourage other countries to enter the region in order to prevent conflicts and follow their own goals. A mixture of these scenarios could be another possibility. For example, a foreign power which is waiting to take advantage of Russia’s weakness and follow its own regional interests through military forces could enter the region under the guise of humanitarian mediation to bring peace. Since there is the possibility of conflicts by provocation of Russia -that regards interference of more powerful countries in its neighboring region as a kind of hostility- it seems that if Russia changes this perspective, then, the possibility of conflicts would reduce. This is a hard task, but cooperation with the West in the region for reciprocal objectives like economic development and creation of stability could play important roles in this regard. Anyway, in order to put this into action Russia must gain good economic and political achievements most of which, of course, are against the interests of possible partners and countries of the region.1

Military conflict in Afghanistan has led Russia to reevaluate the situation, although its amount and time is not yet clear. It seems that leaders of Russia have come to this conclusion that acceptance of the U.S in Central Asia and Caucasia and cooperation in the long-term war against terrorism would have more benefits for Russia than that rejection of U.S presence. It has been stated that any kind of interference by the U.S would lead to discontentment over American imperialism among elites of Russia.

In any case, if this is maintained, cooperation between the U.S and Russia in order to tackle threats of terrorist groups could be an important mechanism in changing the attributes of Russia. As long as the two countries U.S and Russia regard

1 Billington, James H. Russia in Search of itself, Trans, Mehdi Sanaee, iras perss, Tehran, 2006, p.72. & Olga. The conflict faults in central Asia and South Caucasus, the cultural studies and international research institute, p. 285.
the danger of terrorist threats as great dangers for their own governments and people, Russian attribute towards the U.S as an intrusive power would decrease. So far, this has enabled the U.S to gain achievements in using airspace of Central Asian countries and settling its troops in their territories without damaging relations of Central Asian countries with Russia. But ambiguity of the reaction by Russia reveals discussions in Russian Federation about benefits and disadvantages of cooperation with Russia; and it must not be assumed that Russia too, will regard terrorism as a great enemy in the region. In fact, if the U.S does not fulfill its commitments regarding Russia and does not prove that America is a real partner of then cooperation between these two countries will not be sustainable.

Moreover, even if the common objectives in war against global terrorism decrease distrust of Russia in the U.S, sustaining and effective cooperation needs agreement of both sides, a compromise which will have great influences on governments of the region. As an example, one of the ways that the U.S can show Russia which is not a threat for this country is that the U.S creates no turmoil in its development of relations with ECO countries and lets Russia share this advantage in a common effort. This can influence the efforts of Russia in putting pressure on these countries in all cases including Chechen refugees in Georgia as well as pipelines. Anyway, inability in finding groundwork of compromise with Russia might lead to increase of pressure over these countries by Russia and also increase of hostility with the U.S, and as a result, the U.S will face difficulties in following its objectives.

6.3.2 European Union and Its Members

The influence of European countries especially England and France started a long time ago since the beginning of colonial competition in the world. These countries, on the one hand in order to plunder properties of countries and on the other hand to weaken their own enemies, played with the destinies of people in different countries.
Africa, Asia and America were the regions to which these exploiters entered and changed the flow of events in these regions according to their own policies, benefits and desires.\footnote{Palmer. Robert Roswell. A History of the Modern World. Vol.2, Trans. A. Taheri. Amir Kabir press, Tehran, 1907, p.1508}

Present day ECO region is one of those areas which had a similar destiny. Whenever the exploiters thought it necessary, they used to impose their influence on the region. In some cases they used to allow their rivals to act freely, like freedom of Russia in old Turkistan and in new Middle Asia, or division of Iran and Afghanistan between Russia and England into regions of penetration, and also giving one region to the rival in order to compromise their own position in the wars of European competition. These are all instances of destructive interference of these powers and the only thing which was not important was destiny, development and growth of people in these regions.

These destructive competitions were going on until the end of WWI and WWII but because of proportional weakness of European powers in the two world wars, the events took another turn. Due to the Cold War, the world was influenced by competition between Russia and America. ECO is one of the regions which experienced a lot of changes because of this competition. As Soviet Union was dissolved the flow of events changed again and underwent influences of bilateral policies carried out by America. Naturally, the role of European countries also changed due to that.

With active presence of the U.S in the region, European governments preferred to wait and watch the changes in the region. They sent economic and humanitarian aids after natural disasters but their diplomatic presence is very much restrained. As the advantage of energy resources was realized, many of the European countries also came to this region. Although their governments are still very cautious, interference of these corporations will definitely change the benefits of Europe in this region. Moreover, with sustaining development of Europe, probably the European governments will be customers of oil and gas (although high transfer expenditure makes it unattractive) in the Caspian region. At the moment, European corporations
are present in full force at Caspian oil projects and are cooperating with Russia (e.g. water-flow pipeline through Turkey) and also with Central Asian countries and Southern Caucasus. Therefore, it seems that their benefits and to a greater extent, benefits of their governments are based more on economic benefits rather than strategic benefits of EU (and before that European society).\(^1\) And the member governments have extended many economic and technical assistance, food and commercial aid to countries of the region. Agreements of cooperation and partnership of EU have also been signed and accepted by most countries of the region except Tajikistan. In the assessment of EU business with this region has the least benefits (although in the view of countries in the region some of these cases are very important) and is mostly related to import of energy from them. It is on this basis that Azerbaijan is the biggest business partner of EU in Southern Caucasus and Kazakhstan is the biggest business partner in Central Asia.

Anyway, some of the countries in EU have extensive reciprocal activities with countries of this region. Cooperation of Germany with Kazakhstan is still continuing on a large scale because of the large population of Germans in Kazakhstan (almost 40,000 or 2.4% of Kazakhstan population). In fact military cooperation of Germany with Kazakhstan in recent years has been much more than that of the U.S with Turkey. France (along with the U.S and Russia) has also had an influential role in international efforts to settle the crisis of Nagorno-Karabakh and has established strong relations with Armenia. Recently France also, in cooperation against war on terrorism in Afghanistan, has based its airplanes and military personnel in Tajikistan and is developing a plan for military cooperation in future which includes training and information exchange with Tajiks.

Through expansion of EU foreign policies and discovery and utilizing of energy resources in Caspian region, perspective of European Union also regarding the region will change. This depends, to some extent, on provision of energy for Europe by the region and also on the routes of energy transfer. If these routes pass through Russia, European governments separately or as parts of EU will probably follow their present policies regarding provision of aids, economic cooperation and private sector investment, along with avoiding efforts to take strategic policies to penetrate in the

region. Anyhow, if the routes do not pass through Russia, then Europeans would be more active in the region.

In any case, it is unlikely, that in the coming decade or two we would see interference of EU in the conflicts of the region; apart from NATO, led by the U.S or in any other international framework. Perhaps, European governments will attend as part of the multinational peacekeeping forces in the region and this possibility is also likely that in case conflicts occur in one or between some governments of the region, they may ask NATO to interfere, since all of them are members of NATO Cooperation for Peace. Eventually, the U.S response for terrorist attacks of September the 11th might lead European allies of this country to carry out anti-terrorist efforts and settle some of their forces around Central Asia.

6.3.3 China

China has also ethnic commonalities with Central Asia and hopes to benefit, like before, from development of energy resources and also business development in other goods.

Majority of the population in Sin Kiang Province in Northwestern China is Uyghur which is a Turkic tribe and some of them live in Kazakhstan and Kirgizstan (like Kazaks and Kirgizes living in China). Government of China, having a multi-ethnic country, is afraid that Islamic and radical separatist movements might penetrate from Central Asia to Sin Kiang and that Central Asian countries might turn into a refuge for Uyghur revolutionists or that military aids might be transferred to them from these countries. Anyway, the range of expansion in these affairs is not much clear. At present, the separatist movement of Uyghur in Sin Kiang Province is visible and has apparent relations with Al-Qaida and there are also reports of the presence of the Uyghur Chinese citizens in Chechen War. Altogether, this movement is small and their area is under intensive military control of China. China, as the second consumer of energy in the world with its rapid development of industries, is extensively worried about its long-term provision of oil and natural gas for its economic development.

Development and economic, industrial and military modernization in China has worried some countries in recent years. Powerful governments consider a powerful China as a potential rival; whereas, weak governments are afraid of its power but in the meantime they look at China as a powerful ally against more powerful governments. Developing economy of China also represents a huge
profitable market. In the opinion of China itself, most important threats for national security originate in the country itself and in the dangers of separatism.

Economic development is the utmost priority in internal and external policies of China. Elimination of separatist ideologies is also in the canon of its internal policies. In ECO region, China is focusing on development of economic relations with its neighbors, such as purchase of energy and construction of pipeline routes for transfer (although these routes will be very long and their construction seems unlikely to happen).\(^1\) Good relations and cooperation with these governments to prevent separatist movements of Uyghurs will also make China reduce its military presence in western areas. China is also increasing its relations with Russia and buys weapons from this country; they share common opinions on some important foreign policies such as opposition to the development of national missile defense of America. The two countries of China and Russia hope that cooperation between them would be a balance against the power of U.S and against what leaders of these countries call “Hegemony” or “Unipolarity”.

In the past, China had cold relations with Kirgizstan because China did not agree to officially accept settlement of the borders (regarding previous claims of China over Kirgizstan) and because the two countries of Kirgizstan and Kazakhstan were afraid of powerful existence of China near their borders. Some of the Kirgiz and Kazakh people live in China. China is also afraid that rebellion of radical Islamic movements might threaten control over Sin Kiang (an important element for Chinese support of war against terrorism in autumn 2001 led by the U.S); whereas, Kazakhstan and Kirgizstan are worried that separatist movements in Sin Kiang might produce problems for them.\(^2\)

A negotiation of Kirgizstan with China over borders has had some developments. Relationship of China with these two countries is friendly at the moment and even it might lead to establishment of railway and business routes like pipelines through Kazakhstan. China is one of the important commercial partners of Kirgizstan and this country has agreed with the request of China regarding suppression of Uyghur dissidents in Kazakhstan. Additionally, China has provided a financial aid of $ 600,000 for Kirgizstan which includes tents and military equipment.

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In June 2001, defense ministers of Kirgizstan and China agreed that Kirgiz soldiers be trained in the training center of Guangzhou in China.

Therefore, although it is possible that ethnic conflicts in Western China might produce problems for Kirgizstan and Kazakhstan and vice versa and that it might lead to interference of China in Central Asia, it seems unlikely that China itself would create conflicts in Central Asia. Anyway, there is this possibility that if Russia (or the U.S) cannot resolve the conflicts, China will interfere which is true especially about Kirgizstan. Under these circumstances it is certain that China prefers that before taking any action near its borders it is discussed with this country and it might react if its interests are threatened. As an example, Head of Common Staff in China stated about anti-terrorist operations in Afghanistan that the presence of American military in Kazakhstan would be a threat to the security of China. Of course, it was not a statement regarding that the presence of the U.S is threatening, but it represents that China is still one of the countries benefitting in the region.¹

6.3.4 The United States

The role of America with regard to ECO region could be discussed in two periods of time. One is when ECO started its activities under the name R.D.C and the other is the period after dissolution of Soviet Union and decline of global blocs. Opposition of interests between the Eastern and the Western blocs in the years of Cold War caused America to establish R.C.D organization consisting of the three countries of Iran, Turkey and Pakistan, for more cooperation among them, in order to control communism. But as the Soviet Union declined and the new republics appeared, this became superfluous and the flow of events took on another direction in the region. On the one side, Russia tried to revive its own role in the region, and another development was the radical movements in the region which led to September the 11 attacks. These were the results of such changes and movements.²

Nowadays, there is no doubt that interests of the U.S in ECO region is influenced by this country’s reaction against September 11 attacks. Before we deal with the type of relations the U.S will have in the coming months and years, it is

¹ Salimi, Hussein Security-Political Considerations of China in Central Asia, ‘Central Eurasian Studies, International Centre of Academic Studies, Faculty of Law and Political Science’, First Year, (Summer and Fall 2008), No. 2, pp. 87-102.
better that we analyze benefits and policies of the U.S in this region before autumn 2001 so that we can have a better groundwork for analyzing the changed or unchanged situations.

In the decade after Cold War, the U.S was trying to identify threats in a smaller scale; it was also following goals and interests. These interests did not concern security goals but they were based on ideological and humanitarian goals such as democratization, peacekeeping, etc. In the meantime, the U.S was following certain economic goals as well and it was trying to find ways to decrease ultra-national and indirect but worrying threats which threatened interests and welfare of this country. This included farfetched threats as well, such as missile threat of rebellious countries, ultra-national terrorism and organized crimes.

Difficulty in anticipating the rising area of threats could lead to a vast range of goals and interferences all over the world which ultimately might turn into subjects that do not have much importance regarding threats on national security. Activities of the U.S in most parts of ECO region in 1990s could be studied from this perspective. Policies of the U.S in this period included assisting Kazakhstan to become a non-nuclear country, low-level military connections (both reciprocal and through partnership with NATO in policies for peace) and various forms of democratizing and economic aids. Anyway, despite strategic worries in relation to Russia and moral issues regarding independence of countries in the region, interests of the U.S in the region has been based on development of energy resources.

Although it is not likely that the U.S itself becomes the customer of oil and gas in the region, but more production of oil will definitely affect its price, a subject in which the U.S will have benefits. Oil and gas of Central Asia could help the U.S to increase its allies in Asia and Europe who are at present dependent on energy resources of Russia and the Middle East.

Although a number of leading persons in the U.S have supported a network of multiple pipelines, but the best way to reduce dependence of producers and consumers on Russia (or Iran) would be the establishment of routes through Turkey.

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Political activities of the U.S also have focused on this subject. The U.S hopes to reduce influence of Russia in the region, although the need to maintain good relationships with Russia has made it difficult to follow these two aims simultaneously.

As it was mentioned, if the pipelines do not pass from Russia, it will lead to reduction of this country’s power and will influence its neighbors. In any case, the U.S is very cautious not to stand against Russia. Therefore, although cooperation of America with countries of the region has increased, this country has avoided acceptation of any kind of security guarantee. The U.S is also trying to increase influence of Turkey in the region, because supporting the pass of pipeline through this country is regarded as part of this policy and moreover, with the help of Turkey, it can organize military aids and cooperation in southern Caucasia (although it is still in low level) and Central Asia.

More apparently, the aids provided by the U.S for parts of the countries in the region before September 11 include joint training of mountain fighting units of the U.S and armed forces of Uzbekistan. Also provision of non-military equipment for this country has reached the sum of $10 million till the year 2000 (in addition to offering some assistance regarding the innovative security policies in Central Asia). Kirgizstan also has received a sum of $4 to $64 million non-destructive equipment such as radio telephones, ultra-violet binoculars, etc. from America.

In the U.S perspective, energy and Russia are the only concerns, although this region is geographically a vast area, its events would have great influences on the interests of the U.S. Weakness of the government, armed conflicts, and major economic and political instabilities in this region increases crime and violence as well as drug traffic and they might lead to civil wars as we witnessed in Afghanistan after the exit of the forces of the Soviet Union. If this area, like Afghanistan, turns into a refuge for terrorists and criminals, apart from security threats, it would make it impossible to extract resources of energy in this region. Additionally, although long distance might somehow make the U.S indifferent in the case of drug traffic, it would not lead to indifference of European and Asian partners and allies. Organized crimes after the period of Soviet Union, despite the long distance, have had their effects on
the U.S and they might increase, too. Eventually, as September the 11th attacks showed, terrorist threats are not much affected by long distances, since a terrorist group in one part of the world from a base can carry out terrorist attacks in other distant parts.

Terrorist attacks against the U.S created a peak point in strategic ideology of the U.S and turned this country from a safe country into a country that faces apparent threats. Dangers facing the U.S from the radical groups through utilizing different terrorist tactic are threats that arise from other governments. These groups are not threats for dominance or survival of America, but they are threats for lifestyle, welfare and liberties. The U.S is trying to create military allegiances and to eliminate sources of threat in different ways in order to fight against these threats.

Since Afghanistan was supporter and refuge to terrorist groups, especially Bin Laden who led the September 11 attacks, central Asia became crucially important for the U.S for war against terrorism.¹ In this regard, most governments of the region, for humanitarian missions, and some of them under any condition have allowed the U.S to use their airspace. At present, the U.S has forces, equipments and bases in Uzbekistan, Kirgizstan and Tajikistan and Kazakhstan has also agreed to offer such aids in case it is necessary. Although the U.S claims that its military presence would not be permanent and has not given any security guarantee to these governments, it has promised Uzbekistan through a treaty that the U.S would take serious considerations against any foreign threat regarding Uzbekistan and it also has made promises to provide financial aid to Uzbekistan. As it was mentioned earlier, the U.S provides Georgia with equipment and training in order to support the efforts to flush out chiefs related to Al-Qaida in Pankisi region.

The U.S also has received unique cooperation from Federation of Russia in this case. Initial activities of this country regarding countries of the region have also been balanced by close cooperation of Russia. In supporting war against terrorism, these two countries have exchanged information and have made promises that they

¹ Shafiee, Nozar. Reproduction of Power in Afghanistan: Interpretation of Taliban Reinforcement, Central Eurasian Studies, International Center of Academic Studies, Faculty of Law and Political Science, Second Year, (Summer and Fall 2008), No. 4, pp. 107-118.
would have more cooperation in the long-term period, although many people in Russia are worried about the interference of the U.S in the “backyard” of Russia.

Anyway, sustainability of this cooperation and its practicality as a foundation for more cooperation between the two countries depend on their amount of understanding their common benefits.

Regarding the importance of these issues for ECO governments, there are some possibilities. Active role of the U.S in the region will make maintenance of cooperation with Russia difficult. Anyway, the higher priority in relations between the U.S and Russia demands that the U.S cooperates with Russia in order to achieve their common objectives in the region. In the meantime, presence of U.S forces in these countries or near their borders means that the more Russia cooperates with the U.S, the more penetration and interference will be by the U.S in internal affairs of governments in the region.

Before September the 11th, security cooperation of the U.S and its economic interference in some parts of the region meant that regional conflict would be regarded as a reason for thwarting the efforts of the U.S and it created this threat that possibly equipment and forces of America might be the target of attacks by regional armies. At present, this situation has become intensified because of active interference of the U.S in the conflicts close to this region. The U.S forces have committed themselves to help the regional leaders control and destroy terrorist groups. Along with physical presence of U.S, this issue increases the danger of America’s involvement in local conflicts.

Of course, the presence of the U.S might narrow certain gaps, differences and possibility of conflicts, but it must also be remembered that this presence might intensify conflicts and U.S forces themselves might become targets for rebels who are fighting against their own governments. Additionally, this issue is also important that how and under what conditions the U.S is going to leave the region and its conflicts. If the U.S remains active in the region, then it has to carry out both fighting against terrorist groups, drug traffic, crime and violation as well as efforts to establish peace and stability so that its forces could act securely and fulfill their commitments.
completely for the local governments. If before September the 11th it was a possibility that benefits of the allies would lead to interference of the U.S and ultimately NATO, now the U.S in reality has motivations and necessities to interfere. If this country comes out of the region, it might lead to anarchy and conflicts, there is also the possibility that this region might become a suitable bed for creation of terrorism and violence.

6.3.5 India

The Subcontinent of India has had an outstanding position in history of present ECO region. The Subcontinent has been able to greatly influence changes in ECO region directly and indirectly. Although, it must be mentioned that geographical position as well as natural and economic attractions have had more negative influences in development of ECO region than positive effects. Of course, neglecting positive aspects would not do justice to this issue as well.

If we consider improvements of trade in Asia because of Indian market and its products, and also if we regard scientific and cultural interrelations with parts of Asia including ECO region as parts of positive aspects, then we should consider immigration of scholars, poets and educated individuals especially from Iranian plateau. The presence and interference of imperialistic European powers including Russia, England and France in the affairs of countries in present ECO region and the plundering of their resources as negative aspects of these influences.1

Today, although the course of changes in the world is different, still India has its own position. Because on the one side, with lots of natural and scientific attractions, it has attracted many tourists and students from ECO region and on the other side, because of having interests in ECO region, this country tries to closely observe changes in the region and influences these changes. Today, if India neglects ECO, it would have many disadvantages to this country.

India calls this region as its own “vast strategic neighbor” because in order to penetrate in this region it has to compete with its old rivals i.e. Pakistan and China.2 It

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1 Panikar, K.M. Asia and Western domination, Trans, MohamadAli Mahmoud, Roz pers, Tehran, pp. 13-20
this regard, India has established trade relations including air transportation agreements with most countries of the region and has signed reciprocal agreements with Uzbekistan. As we witnessed in 2002, it seems that programs of India to assist training air force personal of Tajikistan and to help this country modernize and develop the Ayni Air Base are increasing. France had refused using this air base because of its poor conditions. India has also close relations with Russia which is one of the biggest exporters of weapons to this country. In the time of civil war in Afghanistan, along with Russia, Iran and others, it helped the forces of Northern Unity through Tajikistan.

6.4 Conclusion

There is a wide range of countries which have different degrees of benefits in ECO region. If these regional players ignore these benefits, it seems as if they have been left behind or been defeated in the field of competition.

Crude oil, natural gas, strategic situation, large population, vast territories, etc. are elements that make it almost impossible for these powers to ignore this region; and powers of the time, from long ago, have interfered in the affairs of the region according to their situation seeking to benefit from one or some of these elements. They have sacrificed welfare and destiny of people in this region to attain their own selfish desires and take plentiful benefits to their own countries. These elements are among the most important means of development for every country and nation.

Mongol invasion and reformation of all foundations of economy and politics in the region, playing with Iran and Afghanistan in order to protect India by Britain, and the same projects implemented by Russia and France in order to defeat Britain, presence of the U.S to weaken the position of Russians in Cold War and plundering wealth of nations, etc. are part of these interference.

Perhaps the only things which were not considered or were in later priorities were destiny of the people and future of the region; and this region in its historical background has suffered irrecoverable damages from these ominous presence; because powers of the time caused these countries to remain very backward in different fields. Tourist industry is also one of these cases that which have experienced irremediable damage due to these factors.