

Name of scholar : Javed Zafar
Name of supervisor : Prof. Mohd. Mazhar Ali Khan
Name of department : Geography
Title : Geopolitics of Energy of Central Asia

ABSTRACT

The academic development of Geopolitics started with the Organic Theory of State propounded by German scientist and geographer Friedrich Ratzel (1897). He introduced biological concept of geography and used biological terms and similes to discuss and define political geographical phenomena. In his classic masterpiece *Politische Geographie* (1896), he compared state with an organism and described seven laws of 'State Growth'. He gave the concept of state as 'Lebensraum' — the living space. According to this, state is like an organism (people or plants); it needs food and space for its growth. Ratzel maintained that "States, like organism must grow or die" (Glassener 1996). Until 1945, his theories played an important role in deciding German policies of territorial expansion and relations with its neighbours. Hitler used this theory to attack Russia and for resettlement programme in Eastern Europe. In his concept of living space, Ratzel gave two basic reasons for the expansion of living space.

After independence, the Central Asian Region (CAR) and Caucasus emerged to some extent as an alternative of Persian Gulf in terms of hydrocarbons production. Though, the available resources of Central Asia are limited in comparison to those of Persian Gulf, yet they are significant and can make difference in the China, India and Pakistan's oil and gas import equations. Apart from the neighbouring countries, the US and the EU have also rushed to this region to participate in the oil game, because many countries of Europe depend on Russian gas import, and Russia uses her gas supply as a political weapon to blackmail European gas importers. The US, in fact does not need central Asian oil for domestic uses, but by participating and coming in central Asian hydrocarbon arena the US got an opportunity to involve herself in the backyard of Russia. Moreover, US can also help their European allies to reduce their dependency on Russian energy.

Nine eleven (9/11) event and involvement of Al-Qaeda, supported by Taliban of Afghanistan gave an opportunity to the US and NATO to establish their military bases not only in Afghanistan but also in Central Asia. All Central Asian Countries (CACs) provided great help to the US and NATO in Afghan war. Russia too provided its air space to the US in the war against Taliban. China and India also declared their support to NATO. Therefore, through this war, the US successfully established her strategic military bases in the CAR which are very close to Iran, Russia and China the so considered rival countries. Thus, Central Asia's location and energy resources have emerged as most important features of new geopolitics after cold war. This region also became the symbol of the new geopolitical and geostrategic rivalry between the different centers of power.

The US also wants to play the new 'great game' to maintain its sole superpower status. The US political experts including former foreign secretary Henry Kissinger pointed out that there are three rival powers of the US i.e. Russia, China and fundamental Islam. All these powers surround the CAR. Therefore, its location is very important for the US to counter its all future rivals. The US also eyes on Central Asian oil and gas as a good option to

reduce its dependency on Middle East for oil supply. The US' European allies are also dependent on Russian gas and they too think it a viable option. To achieve these goals in this region, the US started to work in all dimensions. The US has established good economic relations with all the CAR members and provided economic aid and loans. The US companies have invested in this region; especially the US oil and gas companies took more interest in energy sector. The US has also established bilateral military relations with CACs and provided technical and financial help and training facilities to central Asian militaries.

Russia is the biggest stakeholder in new central Asian game. It is quite possible that the US, the EU and anti-Russian powers may use this region to contain Russia and central Asian hydrocarbons may play an important role in this regard. Therefore, in order to counter these challenges from central Asian side, Russia has defined her goals as are mentioned below.

1. Security of Russian ethnics living in the CAR.
2. Controlling central Asian hydrocarbon resources.
3. Controlling pipeline routes of central Asian energy export.
4. Support CACs politically and economically with Russian-oriented policies.
5. Crush the threat of religious extremists, especially Islamic militancy.
6. Block the drug trafficking through Central Asia from Afghanistan.
7. Counter the influence of the US and the EU.
9. Cooperation with neighbours such as Iran and China to minimise the influence of anti-Russian forces.
10. Save the Caspian Sea area from ecological disaster.

China signed its first oil agreement with Kazakhstan and within 9 years i.e. 2006 she established energy relations with all energy producer countries of the region. China avoided the US and the EU companies for energy cooperation and developed her own oil companies. China has also cooperated with Russian and Iranian oil companies to counter the US influence in energy sector. She started many pipeline routes e.g. Turkmenistan-China pipeline to import central Asian oil.

Pipeline is one of the important tools of hydrocarbon geopolitics because in a land-locked region like CAR, it is just impossible to transport oil and gas to international market without shared pipelines routed through the neighbouring countries. Presently, existing pipeline system, which was built in the USSR era, is not enough to transport oil and gas in international market. For energy transportation and to reduce their dependency on Russian pipeline network, all CACs have started separate pipeline projects.

There are four dimensions, which are generally responsible for the regional security of hydrocarbon producing countries. These four dimensions are foreign intervention, intra regional ethnic conflicts, militant activities against the government policies and border dispute among the neighboring countries.