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A new US foreign policy toward Central Asia?

After the Obama administration, the current US President Trump seems interested in the opening of a new phase of the national foreign policy toward the five post soviet republics, based on a reciprocal convergence of strategic interests in the security and geopolitical sphere.

Even if Trump foreign policy appeared originally inspired to the principle “America First”, the need to fight the so called Islamic State and to solve the North Korea dossier have pushed US to change approach undertaking an active role in the international scenario.

In the security sphere, US and Central Asia share the same concern: the return of foreign fighters linked to the IS and the resurgence of Taliban in Afghanistan, which always represent a serious challenge for the bordering countries - Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan – threatening to spread on a dangerous condition of instability.

Central Asia countries would warmly welcome the involvement of the United States as potential partner in the regional security and military field, mainly because Central Asian republics wary on Russian traditional role of security provider in the region - fearing its expansionist ambitions after the annexation of Crimea - while China has showed a limited engagement to enhance regional security. In spite of a geopolitical marginalization, the US has already implemented training program of elite military units in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan in the last two years.

Moreover, Central Asian states look at the US as a strong economic and trade partner which will be able to invest in the region in order to allow them to balance between the hegemonic inclinations that Russia and China are achieving in Central Asia through the Eurasian Economic Union and the Belt and Road geopolitical initiatives.

Following the new political course undertaken by President Mirziyoev - which aims to reform the country also maintaining a non-alignment position in foreign policy - Uzbekistan could play again the role of strategic partner in the new US regional policy similarly to the period 2001-2005.

Furthermore, the Uzbek political will to improve relations with the other Central Asian governments - reducing tensions with neighbouring Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to develop a wider regional cooperation - is another positive step which could allow Washington to adopt a most profitable regional strategy.

This renewed geopolitical interest of Washington toward Central Asia could be hampered by the Trump orientation to slash foreign aid, cutting funds for other U.S. military aid programs in Central

Asia. As a matter of fact, the military cooperation between US and Central Asia will be the backbone to develop political relations and to build an economic cooperation.

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