

Effect of NATO expansion into the Central Asia and the Caucasus and Russia's reaction to it

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Abstract: This study was conducted with the aim to investigate the impact of NATO expansion into Central Asia and the Caucasus and Russia's reaction to it. First, the objectives and impact of NATO expansion into the Central Asia and the Caucasus were investigated. Then the causes of Republics of Central Asia and Caucasus cooperation with NATO were analyzed and investigated. The results indicate that the factors such as fear of Russia re-domination, inability in providing the national security, potential disputes in the Caucasus and fear of political Islam are the reasons for the cooperation and relationship between NATO and Asia Central and the Caucasus. Finally, the reasons and rate of association of each of the countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus with NATO was investigated. In summary, it can be stated that Russia believes that the expansion of NATO into Russia has a mutual and direct effect on reducing the power of Russia in the international system.

[Iraj Mazarei. **Effect of NATO expansion into the Central Asia and the Caucasus and Russia's reaction to it.** *Life Sci J* 2012;9(4):2685-2692] (ISSN:1097-8135). <http://www.lifesciencesite.com>. 297

Keyword: NATO expansion, Central Asia, Caucasus ,Russia's reaction

1 - Introduction:

In the last decade of twentieth century, we have seen the dramatic and profound changes in the international scene and determining changes in the political, economic and military equations of the world. In fact, the end of twentieth century is considered as the end of an era and beginning of a new era in the international system. These changes and developments have totally disturbed the foundation and basis of former structure and are searching the criteria which have the ability to adapt to the new situations of the world. In this new situations, the all people around the world have seen the fragmentation of the Soviet empire, the collapse of bipolar system, end of Cold War, regional conflicts along with the emergence of nationalist extremism in the Balkans and Central Asia, reduction of military competition and changing the geopolitical strategy towards the geo-economic strategy and its importance in the international relations, so that the meaning and concept of power and security have been changed and led to software from hardware and the risk of nuclear war has been reduced. In these situations, which represent a transition era at the level of international system, the performance of international organizations and institutions was challenged as the result of several changes in the structure of international system. North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was established in a situation of international environment, in which the confrontation between the East and West was dominating, and in order to confront the threat of the Soviet invasion and prevent from the infiltration of communism to the West; as time passed these two treaties were considered as the main symbols of

confrontation between two mentioned blocks during the Cold War by making Warsaw Pact.

In this paper and in two main sections, we are seeking to study the effect of NATO expansion into Central Asia and the Caucasus and also Russia's reaction to NATO expansion.

2 – Evaluating the objectives and effect of NATO expansion into Central Asia and the Caucasus

Since the process of developments in the Republics of Central Asia depends partly on the foreign factors, predicting the outlook of process development in this area is extremely difficult. What is certain is that the Central Asia will remain as the center of attention by the domestic and foreign beneficiary groups. Among the republics, only Kazakhstan has been effective in determining the rules of play in this competition by its own relative political and economic consolidation, so it will become one of the major exporters of energy in the world in future. Despite the existence of facilities and also the high hopes, Uzbekistan will have no significant portion in this process.

Analysts believe that the Central Asia will be faced with close competition in near future among Russia, USA and China and these republics will effort to avoid dictating the foreign programs in the framework of this competition.

Process of developments may be continued in another way. On the one hand, the process of demanding Islam and Islam Orientation is developing in the region and the Muslims' unanswered requests in the region specially the active extremist group may be connected to the separation tendencies in the north Caucasus, autonomous province of "Xinjiang" in China, and make massive crises for the region.

Presence of foreign factor also intensifies the issues of region; and connecting the events in the Central Asia with Middle East may be proceeded unlike what is considered by the U.S.A major planners and may change the Political Geography of region under the Islamic globalization. For this reason the Central Asia and Caucasus countries, where are located in the Eurasian region, have no tendencies to limit themselves to the level of unities or organizations within the region in order to provide the national security. However, they are interested to become a member of Trans Regional Organizations in order to ensure their independence and national interests. As all countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus have been accepted as the members of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe or have started the cooperation with the military unions like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) within the framework of programs such as programs for participating in the peace which paves the way for joining in them in long term, so that the level of current relations of republics of Central Asia and the Caucasus is considered at the strategic level with NATO.

On the other hand, the members of NATO, leading by U.S.A, which is the pioneer of expanding the democratic systems into their West concept, have taken effort to impose the created power gap resulted from the Soviet fragmentation in Central Asia and the Caucasus to the region by advertising and development of their desired model and increase their own international power and influence by this way (Cornel, 1999). At conference on security policy in Munich (Germany) on Eighth to tenth February 2006 hosting and lecturing by Ms. Merkel, Chancellor of Germany and in the presence of 300 officials from forty countries including 34 Foreign and Defense Ministers of Countries around the world, Putin stated about the presence of NATO in the East: "On one hand, the conversion of North Atlantic Treaty to the political organization is declared and one the other hand, its military infrastructure is being close to the boundaries of Russia. With regard to this fact, we design our military theory and equip our armed forces according to it" (Moradi and Goudarzi, 2010).

Therefore, they have attempted to leave Russia, China and Iran behind within the framework of NATO expansion policy into the east in the guise of participation program for the peace. For this reason, it is interpreted that the emergence of new established countries in the Central Asia and Caucasus area in the field of international relations will recreate a kind of competition.

3 – Evaluating the causes of cooperation between the republics of Central Asia and the Caucasus with NATO

3-1 - Fear of Russia's re-domination

Fragmentation of the Soviet Union caused that the Russian Federation to be faced with a new set of its own surrounding countries. The term "Near abroad" is now completely common in the domestic and foreign policy of Russia in order to refer to these republics. For most of Russians, imagination of these republics as the national independent units is unacceptable (Koulai, 1997). Presence of 25 million Russian-born in the surrounding republics has made one of the major axes in relations of Russia with other survivors of Soviet Union Fragmentation and has intensified the importance of this region for Russia. Moreover, the political instability in Central Asia and the Caucasus and development of ethnic conflicts are among the main concerns of Russia. These Countries have multiple territorial and boundary disputes with each other and each of them can disturb the peace and security of region. Therefore, providing the security is one of the serious considerations of Russia in Central Asia and the Caucasus. This can prepare the background for development of foreign forces influence in the region, while Russia has considered the vital interests for itself around its own country (Koulai, 1997). On the other hand, the economic problems and widespread deficiencies in the republics have caused that they have no appropriate maneuver power against the great economic capacity of Russia. Security difficulties of republics have also revealed their reliance upon Russia for providing the security. These countries have taken considerable efforts to eliminate their own wide dependence on Russia and have developed their own commercial and economic relations with European countries and U.S.A in order to reduce the dependence on Russia (Moradi and Goudarzi, 2010). None of these countries can be compared with Russia in terms of military and they depend on it based on the weapons; for this reason, these countries have taken attention to the cooperation NATO members and its innovative programs such as membership in the "North Atlantic Cooperation Council" and the plan of "Partnership for Peace" in order to reduce the dependence and creating the balance of these countries.

3-2 - Disability to provide the National Security

Newly independent countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus have never had the independent political structure in its today meaning (National Government) during their own political life era (Shirazi and Majidi, 2000). One of the problems, which these countries were faced with after the fragmentation of Soviet, was the issue of security and defense arrangements. These republics were under political-military, security and economic domination of Moscow for a long time, thus this question was raised that how the new defensive structures and security arrangements can be achieved after the independence? (Afshordi, 2002) Furthermore,

these countries were faced with other problems like deep economic crises, lack of independent foreign policy, era of transferring to the market, weak governments, and lack of democratic conditions and civil elements (Roskin and Nicholas Berry, 1999). On the other hand, these countries tend to exaggerate the foreign threats for their own national security in order to hide their own security problems which are as the results of military, political, and economic weaknesses, ethnic nationalism and population heterogeneity.

3-3 - Potential Conflicts in the Caucasus

Before the Fragmentation of Soviet Union, the boundaries between the republics and political and administrative units of the Caucasus were mainly defined based on the ethnic and racial domains. Unlike the colony countries of Africa, where have been accepted the same boundaries of colonial era and minimized the boundary conflicts after the independence, the boundaries were one of the reasons for tension among the units in the Caucasus after the Fragmentation of Soviet. Ethnocentrism can be considered as one of the main factors of instability and crisis in the Caucasus (Alexander, 1997). According to the demographic structure in this region, the political ethnics and sects can be as the results of continuous crises in the region. It should be noted that new civil institutions, administrating the affairs with communist thinking, and the competition of regional and international powers are the other causes of instability. Another reason for the continuity and prolongation of crises in this region is that about 50 ethnic- sectarian groups from three large Caucasian, Indian and European families, who have numerous ethnic distinctions, live in the Caucasia (Vaezi, 2003). Conflict of Karabakh, which is considered as the longest ethnic wars in Soviet between Armenia and Azerbaijan (Vaezi, 2003), and also the crisis of separatism in Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions in Georgia have led to the instability and insecurity in the Caucasus (Nemati Zargaran, 2002). Given the above realities, the main subject in this region is the issue of stability and security. These republics cannot defend their own territorial integrity and the country ruling against the potential internal, intra-regional, or trans-regional threats (Russia) only by relying on their own financial resources. Problems of this "unsafe region" are considered as the stagnant conflicts, risk of assault by Russia, and a not so serious risk in the current status about the possibility of an Islamic movement. Therefore, the consistency with the Euro-Atlantic structures was a type of foreign policy objective in the region and the political elites think that Europe has something for the presenting in the region (Cohen, 2003).

3 -4 - Fear of Political Islam

Islam has been one of the potential important resources in the political instability of Muslim republics of Soviet after the independence. Most of the analysts believe that strengthening the Islamic fundamentalism among the Central Asian nations can lead to the establishment of new Islamic institutions (Shirazi, 2000). Leaders of republics are so afraid of political Islam influence (Edmund, 2000). Central Asia and the Caucasus elites are mainly secular, are absolutely opposed to the intervention of Islam in the politics, and consider the Political Islam as a threat for preservation and stability of political system of Central Asia and the Caucasus republics, because the Political Islam is a revealed movement which its control is difficult. Since there is the possibility of radical Islamist groups' ability to organize and preserve the traditional structure and they are ready to do violence in order to achieve their objectives, they are considered as the threat against the security and stability and can take the short-cut national boundaries quickly in order to affect the whole region (Menashri, 1999). Therefore, confronting with them is put on the agenda of some of the Central Asia leaders like Uzbekistan (Edmund, 2000). Thus the republics of Central Asia and the Caucasus leaders, who consider political Islam as one of the largest threats to the stability and security of region, have thought that the cooperation with West security-military organizations or unions like NATO (which is possible to become a member in them in future) is positive in order to control or deactivate the political Islam along with the consolidation of peace and stability.

4 - NATO relations with the republics of Central Asia and the Caucasus

By the fragmentation of Soviet Union, a condition was created and the NATO was able to expand its own security region; thus the NATO applied three methods; first through creating the North Atlantic Cooperation Council and second by implementing the plan of Partnership for Peace and finally by plan of individual cooperation of countries with NATO from the year 2005 (Shirazi and Majidi, 2000).

In general, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, three republics of South Caucasus and five republics of Central Asia have taken efforts based on the incomplete and limited concept of independence and consider it as the only way for getting rid of the Soviet Union domination, and some of these republics such as Azerbaijan and Georgia have considered the development and growth equivalent to become western and more compatible with Western structures (Shirazi and Majidi, 2000).

At the beginning of the Partnership for Peace program, the Russians first opposed this plan. In an effort to execute their opposition, they announced that they would send out their own forces from the Baltic

countries. Soon after, the pragmatic* policies of Russia changed the conditions and the advocates of Russia's strong tendency to the West changed the Russia's past position. With this new turn, Russia declared its willingness to join this program. After the NATO attack on Serbs' positions in Bosnia, Russia again showed reaction and delayed joining the Partnership for Peace program. However finally, Russia's foreign minister at that time, Kozyrev, makes Russia as the twenty-first partner for the partnership for Peace program by his own signature (Seifzadeh, 2004).

Overall objectives of developing the measures of partnership program, which are the consolidation of political consulting factor for responding within the framework of Euro-Atlantic participation, development of operational role and readiness for partners' greater involvement in decision making and planning, will contain a set of overall process of NATO expansion and will be facilitated by doing the measures such as common practices and final membership in NATO. Republics of Central Asia and the Caucasus have also attempted to move in this direction.

The relations of each of the Central Asia and the Caucasus countries with NATO are reviewed briefly as follows.

4 -1 - Turkmenistan

On 10 May 1994, Turkmenistan has joined the Partnership for Peace program. Turkmenistan has expanded the military communication and relations with NATO by joining the Partnership for Peace program and has received effective aid from NATO in order to reform its own military forces. Furthermore, this country has allocated a ship for research activities of NATO in Caspian Sea. Within the framework of this program, NATO evaluates the underground resources of Caspian Sea.

4 -2 - Kyrgyzstan

Compared to other republics of Central Asia and the Caucasus, Kyrgyzstan has been more willing to cooperate with NATO and has been the first regional country, which joined the Partnership for continuous Peace program on 1st June 1994 (Kubicek, 2000). On the other hand, it seems that NATO has considered interests for itself in Kyrgyzstan because Kyrgyzstan has border with China and by the presence in this country, NATO can effectively expand its own political influence into the borders of North West and North East China; moreover, both sides have common concern about the Islamic fundamentalism.

4 -3 - Kazakhstan

On 27th May, 1994, Kazakhstan joined the "Partnership for Peace"; this country is interested in extending its links with Western countries in order to get rid of Russia's domination. Relation of this country with NATO is more complicated because on the one hand it emphasizes on a political-military union with

Russian Federation and on the other hand, it is willing to cooperate with NATO simultaneously. Because of the common borders with China, this country has a strategic importance for the West. In 2005 AD., the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan stated that the cooperation with "NATO" is as the main priorities of foreign policy for this country.

4 -4 - Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan is probably the most active country among the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and has taken the responsibility for strengthening the cooperation between NATO and Eastern Europe countries and republics of Soviet through the joint training programs and military practices and has forced itself to implement this responsibility in 1994. Uzbekistan is seeking to play a regional role in order to get rid of influence of Russia. For this purpose, it follows a policy matched with policy of Turkey and Israel through the development of its own security relationship with the U.S.A and not stopping its own policy based on strengthening the influence in neighboring countries (Maleki, 1993).

4 -5 - Georgia

Due to the geographical, political and geopolitical position of South Caucasus region, Georgia is so important in playing the major role in implementation of oil and transit plans as well as the security aspect; for these reasons it has been the center of attention by NATO. Due to the specific geopolitical position of Georgia and being located in the middle of Caucasus region and also because it is as the entrance gate of the Caucasus and the most important part of it, this republic has become critically important for the whole region of Caucasus and NATO. Georgia welcomes NATO and its measures warmly and sees it consistent with its own interests based on every aspect. Emphasis of former Georgian president "Shevardnadze" on the inefficiency of existing security system in the world (inability of the UN in providing the security and ensuring the world peace) and insisting on the need to revise the existing mechanisms for establishing the world peace and resolve the ethnic conflicts by the force confirmed this matter. (Shirin, 2009)

4 -6 - Armenia

Armenia has joined NATO's Partnership for Peace program on 5th October 1994 (Edmund, 1999), but is not willing to endanger its own links with Russia. Thus, it has been treated more cautious than other Soviet republics. Armenia has less cooperation with Russia in this program due to the strategic and military participation. This situation is more caused by the security calculations by the leaders in these countries. This issue has been changed and developed specifically after the developments in the relations of Russia-NATO and the events of 11 September and the participation of regional countries especially

Kazakhstan has been dramatically increased in this program (Heidari, 2003).

4 -7 - Azerbaijan

Republic of Azerbaijan seeks its own security out of the zone of Russia influence and being separated from the regional structures and joining the Euro-Atlantic trans-regional structures. Since the independence of Azerbaijan, this country has been seeking to the integration with Euro-American (Euro-Atlantic) structures along with the South Caucasus republics and entered the NATO Partnership for Peace program on 4th May 1994. Azerbaijan has incentives to cooperate with NATO. Although these incentives are similar in three republics of South Caucasus, but Azerbaijan has considered the issue more seriously. The major issue is the security and stability. Azerbaijan has been convinced that NATO can play an important role in creating the peace and stability in this country. NATO has a powerful image in Azerbaijan due to its own success in the Balkans (Amir Ahmadian, 2003).

5 - Russia's reaction to NATO expansion into Central Asia and the Caucasus:

It should be stated that Russia took more attention to the security and position of its own newly independent republics and even called them the safe and near abroad regions, as a result, it did not permit the presence of out-of-the-region and even regional forces in these regions. Therefore, it has been shown numerous reactions to the expansion of NATO into the East and its entry to this region and considered it as a threat to security of Russia and an action to isolate this country.

Kremlin Leaders have taken any opportunities for expressing the opposition against the expansion of NATO into the East. Before the last threats, Boris Yeltsin raised three conditions for any kinds of expansion by re-expressing that the expansion of NATO might lead to the war and conflict:

1. Establishment of permanent references of consultation;
2. Not establishing the nuclear weapons in the lands of new members;
3. Utilizing the dispatch of foreign forces to the above regions;

Moreover, Russia Prior president had threatened that he would ratify a "small Warsaw Pact" in the Soviet environment in response to this expansion. This view, which was raised after signing the Yeltsin's instructions about the "Strategic doctrine" of Russia's relations with countries member in the Commonwealth of Independent States, made concerns among the allies' communities. Based on the military aspect of this document, since now the policy of Moscow should monitor the development of collective security system through encouraging the purposes of countries, which are the member of mentioned compliance, about

grouping in the defense unions on the basis of common military-political benefits and objectives. This document asks the third countries and international organizations to understand this reality that the discussed region (Environment of Soviet Union) is considered as a region covered by the Russian Federation interests more than anything else.

On the other hand, foreign minister's assistant of Russia at that time declared that Russia would strengthen its own close defense in case of NATO expansion into the countries of Baltic region and would take economic-defense measures. Mentioning that nowadays all people in Europe believe that there is no enemy any more, raised this question that who threatens the stability? Who is against the security of Czech, Poland, Hungary or Baltic republics? Furthermore, he adds: "NATO Bombardment in Bosnia reinforced the position of Russians, who were against the expansion of Atlantic Treaty, and most of the Russians still consider the NATO as an enemy". In this regard, White Russia (Belaya Rus) has also determined a defense line against the expansion of NATO and opposed any kinds of expansion into the boundaries of Soviet Union. While asking for strengthening the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the president of White Russia (Belaya Rus) has stated that we will not accept the threats of NATO about expanding its domain into the boundaries of White Russia.

Russia also felt threatened by the Participation for Peace Program and clearly revealed that would not allow NATO to enter its own republics. Emergence of these reactions caused that NATO leaders sought to take Russian leaders' attraction and trust. Signing the Charter of Russia and NATO in July 1997 was along with this regard. This charter was essentially written based on NATO raised proposal in December 1995 for developing a political framework in order to institutionalize the relations of Russia and NATO.

Originally, the expansion of NATO was started practically from July 1997 and after Madrid Summit and membership of three countries including Czech, Poland and Hungary was one of its consequences (Koulai, 1999).

Totally, it can be stated that despite the fact that Russia was against the expansion of NATO into the East and especially the membership of republics of Central Asia and the Caucasus at the beginning and in the form of CIS countries member in NATO, as time passed and after providing the plans and suggestions by Europeans- especially Paris and promise of entering Russia to the Group of Seven- the rate of opposition and sensitivity to it were reduced and flexibility was seen by it.

Issues like NATO Participation for Peace Program, which was created with the purpose to

strengthen the political and military cooperation of NATO with newly independent countries in 1994, resulted in Moscow's concerns, although the Russians accepted its membership in Participation for Peace Program with the hope to change it to an alternative institution for membership of Soviet countries. Despite the severe internal opposition, Moscow cooperated with NATO during the crisis in the Balkans from 1992 to 1995 in order to become a member of NATO, but when the membership conditions (including the establishment of democracy, respecting to the human right, market economy, Civilian control of armed forces, appropriate relations with neighboring states and resolving the domestic ethnic disputes) were declared in that organization, Russians became disappointed. Among the national, Westernization, and radical attitudes, there is a third attitude called Eurasian attitude. Based on this attitude, because Russia is a geopolitical country, which is located both in Asia and Europe, both strategies of considering the East and searching the national interests in West should be considered in the foreign policy. This view, which was the outcome of both previous views in Russia, not only does not believe in being member in NATO (as the target) and full cooperation of this country with this organization (and acceptance of NATO expansion), but also it does not know the cut of relationship with this organization in line with accessing to the national and security interests of Russia. Eurasians thought, which is a realistic approach to NATO, is based on this country activity in the international system in order to prevent from the expansion of this organization. Based on this approach, Russia believes that the expansion of NATO into Russia has a mutual and direct effect on reducing the powered of Russia in the international system.

6 - Conclusion:

The most important reasons for the expansion of NATO into the EAST include providing the security and stability in Euro-Atlantic region, establishment and consolidation of democratic systems in newly independent republics of former Soviet which lead to the America's strengthening and influence in the region. Other reasons include limiting the influence and controlling the countries such as Russia, China and Iran in the region and the world through imposing the surrounding strategic blockade of these countries. U.S.A is willing to continue the NATO for two reasons; first, Washington sees NATO as the military arm of policies and global hegemony objectives and even some people consider NATO as the toolbox of America's foreign policy. Second, disbanding NATO can severely destabilize the America's role and position in Europe. America has imposed its own leadership on Europe through NATO and has used Europe as a platform for strategic domination on the strategic regions of Eurasia, the Middle East and other regions.

European countries have also urged NATO continuity and its presence in Europe.

Given these facts, it seems that the views of central Asian governments compared to the republics of Azerbaijan and Georgia about the expansion of NATO into the East is different to some extent in the framework of Partnership for Peace program. Central Asian leaders still believe that they need Russia in order to provide the security for their own countries, but they do not deny the cooperation with NATO; while, by being member in NATO's Partnership for Peace program, Azerbaijan and Georgia leaders in the Caucasus asked for quitting the collective security system of CIS, sending out the Russian military forces from the Caucasus and establishment of NATO military bases and suggested the repetition of Bosnia and Kosovo model and NATO military action in order to resolve the conflicts in the Caucasus. It seems that the Caucasus republics join in the Partnership for Peace program is the first action and the cornerstone of NATO in military operation in the Caucasus. However, this issue is not taken seriously at the beginning, but as time passed the strategic importance of event becomes more evident. In other words, after the fragmentation of the Soviet Union and end of Cold War and also disbanding Warsaw Pact, it was expected that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which its existence philosophy was to overcome the communist threat, will have no incentive for the survival and become dissolved gradually. Because based on the theory of alliances; (alliances are created in response to the threat and when the threat is decreased, the alliance will not be also continued. "Kenneth Waltz", the famous neorealist, was among those who believed that NATO would lose its coherence and would be disbanded. But in practice it did not happen and after a short period of confusion at the end of Cold War for NATO, NATO's role began again and the West led the extensive effort, leading by U.S.A during the past decade, in order to strengthen and expand NATO and expanded it into Russia's borders.

Russia has considered the expansion of NATO as a risk against its own national security and considered it in line with minimizing the power of Russia in the international system, eliminating the Russia's retaining areas and not taking attention to this large country. On the other hand, Russia considers the expansion of NATO into the Eastern Europe countries as the reasons for the expansion of this organization into the Baltic countries and then the near abroad republics. Therefore, it opposes severely to the expansion of NATO (Ghaedi, 2001).

Russia acknowledges that the expansion of NATO into the East and membership of the Baltic countries will be the additional threat to the Russia's security and if the Baltic countries become the member

of NATO, this organization will expand right into Russia's boundaries, thus Russia cannot ignore these actions. New divisions in Europe are the major Russia's concern about the expansion of NATO. Russia is deeply sensitive to the political objectives of NATO and is worried that this organization is reducing the role of Russia in the issues of Europe. On the other hand, Russia seeks to influence the security issues of Europe according to the common decision-making about the role of NATO.

However, according to the change and development of international system, NATO is seeking to adapt itself with the historical developments of Europe after the Cold War, but obviously, not only the improvement of NATO relations with Russia requires the investment of the West in the Russia's Economy, but it also depends on considering the role and importance of Russia at the position of a main player in the Euro- Atlantic security.

On the other hand, this serious issue of NATO expansion into the East caused that Putin to declare the territory of The Soviet republics as the Russia's national security area. Therefore, he attempted to prevent the influence of these republics by the West political and security structures and even has applied the political, economic and military tools in this regard. Publishing the News related to the transfer of Russia's nuclear weapons Applications to Kaliningrad can be evaluated in this framework as a weapon for opposing the expansion of NATO. But the fact is that not only NATO is expanding into the East, but also the process of expansion and integration of these republics into the political and security structures is irreversible. However, NATO is faced with other barriers in addition to Russia's opposition to expand its influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia regions. Meanwhile, the widespread opposition of regional powers such as China and Iran can be mentioned as the main issues of financial strength and also the divergence in NATO.

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10/25/2012