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- ***Eurasia: Politics Today***
- ***Eurasia: Energy Policy and Energy Projects***
- ***China's Infrastructure Projects in the Black Sea-Caspian Region***

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REGIONAL POLICY

CHINA IN THE SOUTHERN CAUCASUS

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ABSTRACT

In antiquity, China was connected with the Southern Caucasus by the Great Silk Road, which helped develop trade, economic and cultural contacts. For many centuries, however, it had been practically absent from the region.

In the new geopolitical situation created by the Soviet Union's disintegration into independent states in the Southern Caucasus, in particular, China's great interest in the region is explained, primarily, by its geographic location and considerable energy offshore resources. It occupies a special place on the list of priorities held by Beijing, which spares no effort to consolidate its positions in the region and promote wide-scale projects there.

It goes without saying that while pursuing its aims, China should take into account the interests of states traditionally present in the region and their considerable influence. Specifically, these include Russia, Turkey and Iran. In the last decades, extra-regional actors, namely the U.S. and the EU, have been contributing to the region's political and economic transformations.

In the 1990s, in its search for stronger economic positions in Central Asia, China betrayed no geopolitical interest in the Southern Caucasus. Having confirmed its positions within its Central Asian neighbors, Beijing

turned its attention to the energy resources of the Southern Caucasus and its transportation and communication potentials. It tempted the local countries with adequately funded infrastructure projects, which helped it promptly move to the fore in the region's trade, economic and investment spheres.

In the last ten years, having formulated its foreign policy aims in the Southern Caucasus, China has been demonstrating its apparent intention to spread its influence far and wide across the post-Soviet space. This is confirmed by infrastructure projects, the most ambitious of them being Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that will allow the PRC to consolidate its positions in the post-Soviet space, the Southern Caucasus in particular. The local countries, in their turn, expect economic advantages from their closer relationships with China; they expect that the projects developed using Chinese money will improve their social and economic situation and diversify their trade and economic contacts.

The Southern Caucasus is yet another confirmation that China knows how to use soft power to its advantage. Its educational and cultural projects realized in the region are aligned with its geopolitical aims and economic interests to ensure Beijing's wider presence in the region.

KEYWORDS: *China, the Southern Caucasus, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Belt and Road Initiative.*

Introduction

In 1991, when the disintegrated Soviet Union was replaced with newly independent states, China came to the Southern Caucasus to begin the contemporary period of its policy in the region. At first, Beijing, like all other non-regional states, established diplomatic relations with the South Caucasian countries.¹ China and Armenia established diplomatic relations on 6 April, 1992; in July of the

¹ See: S. Zhiltsov, V. Shtol, V. Blishchenko, "The Geopolitical Situation in the Southern Caucasus: Russian Interests and the Policy of the Western Countries," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 18, Issue 2, 2017, pp. 7-17.

same year China opened its embassy in Erevan. Diplomatic relations with Azerbaijan were established on 2 April, 1992; the Chinese embassy in this country was opened in August 1992. On 3 September, 1993, Azerbaijan opened its embassy in China. Diplomatic relations between China and Georgia were established on 9 June, 1992,² yet the Chinese embassy in Georgia started working in 1997 because of the extremely complicated political situation in the country.

Having established diplomatic relations with the South Caucasian countries, China concentrated on founding bilateral economic relations with each of them. In 1992, it signed a trade and economic agreement with the Republic of Armenia; in 1993, similar agreements were signed with Azerbaijan and Georgia. Between 1992 and 1994, it has signed agreements on support and protection of investments and economic cooperation, yet the relationships with the local states were stalling because of the political unrest in the region: the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and political struggle for power in Azerbaijan, and the power struggle among different elite groups in Georgia.

Economic considerations dominated China's policy in the Southern Caucasus, where Beijing deliberately pushed aside all local political squabbles. Having established good-neighborly relations and consolidated its cooperation with the Central Asian states, China turned its attention to the CIS countries in Europe, the Baltic region and Southern Caucasus to widen the "good-neighborly" belt.³ In the mid-1990s, Beijing started the next stage of consolidating its positions in the economies of the South Caucasian countries.

China's Policy in Armenia

China was consistently widening its presence in Armenia in different economic sectors. In May 1996, the two countries signed a Joint Communiqué on the Principles of Friendly Relationships that widened their bilateral cooperation. On 5 May, 1996, the sides signed an Agreement on prevention of duplicate taxation and tax evasion; several months later, in August, Armenia opened its embassy in Beijing.⁴

However, in the 1990s, having established its presence in the region, China concentrated on Central Asia; the South Caucasian countries were not yet among China's political priorities, even if it paid considerable attention to the region.

As a result, China and Armenia demonstrated no breakthroughs in their bilateral relations. In 1994-1999, the trade turnover remained at a fairly low level. In fact, Armenian imports from China were more or less equal to the total trade turnover between the two countries (see Fig. 1), while China's share in Armenian exports and imports was insignificant (see Fig. 2). In 2000, their trade turnover was about \$5.98 million.

The situation has changed in the early 21st century. Having widened its presence in trade and economy in Central Asia where it had launched several energy projects, China turned its attention to the Southern Caucasus. In Armenia, the sides started a large-scale joint industrial project Shanxi-Nairit to produce synthetic rubber. In 2003, the Armenian plant Nairit and Chinese company Shanxi Synthetic Rubber Group Co. Ltd signed an agreement on building a plant in Datong (China) with an annual capacity of 30 thousand tons, which opened in 2010.⁵ Armenia owns 40% of stocks.

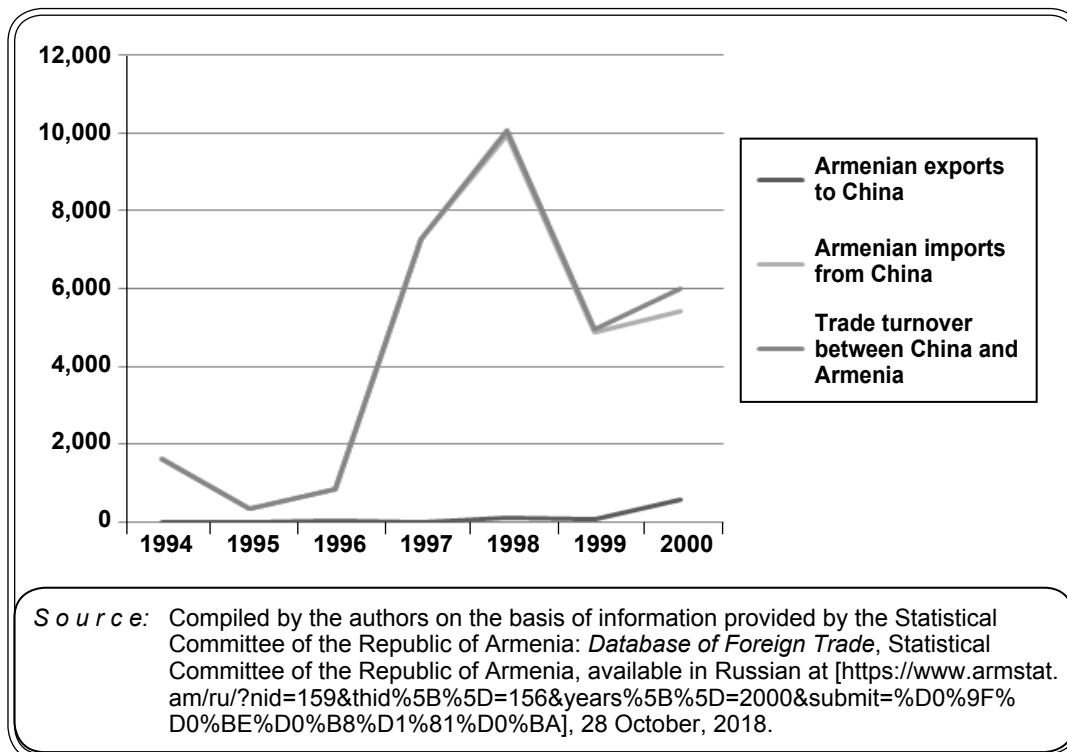
² See: "Embassy of Georgia to the People's Republic of China," available at [http://china.mfa.gov.ge/default.aspx?sec_id=1182&lang=2], 15 November, 2018.

³ T.S. Guzenkova, A.V. Vinogradov, "Strany SNG i Baltii v globalnoy politike Kitaa," *Problemy natsionalnoy strategii*, No. 1 (10), 2012, p. 12.

⁴ See: "China: Bilateral Relations," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, available in Armenian at [<https://www.mfa.am/hy/bilateral-relations/cn>], 28 October, 2018.

⁵ See: "V Kitae zadeystvovan besprezidentny proekt s uchastiem Armenii," *Panorama.am*, 14 May, 2010, available at [<http://www.panorama.am/ru/news/2010/05/04/shansi-nairit/1113482>], 9 November 2018.

Figure 1

Trade Turnover between China and Armenia in 1994-2000 (*thousand dollars*)

In September 2004, the two countries signed a Joint Statement on Cooperation in the Economic, Political and Defense Spheres,⁶ which deepened and widened their cooperation. By 2007, the trade turnover between them was nearly \$20 million (as was mentioned above, in 2000, it was about \$6 million).⁷

In 2008, the Chinese Puhai Corporation won the tender on delivering gas detectors to Armenia.⁸ In 2009 and 2010, China delivered 650,000 units and sent its maintenance and damaged equipment replacement experts. In 2011, China supplied Armenia with 88 and, subsequently, 200 ambulances. Chinese specialists came to Erevan to train 400 Armenian doctors, medical personnel and drivers.⁹

Chinese capital was widening its presence in the energy projects implemented in Armenia, in particular, in the reconstruction and maintenance of thermal power plants, including in Erevan. In Razdan, Chinese experts performed 80% of maintenance and reconstruction of the fifth block of the Razdan TPP, commissioned in December 2013.¹⁰

⁶ See: *The Joint Statement between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Armenia*, 28 September, 2004, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, available at [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zjjg_663340/dozys_664276/gjlb_664280/3130_664282/3131_664284/t163562.shtml], 1 November, 2018.

⁷ Imports by the country of origin.

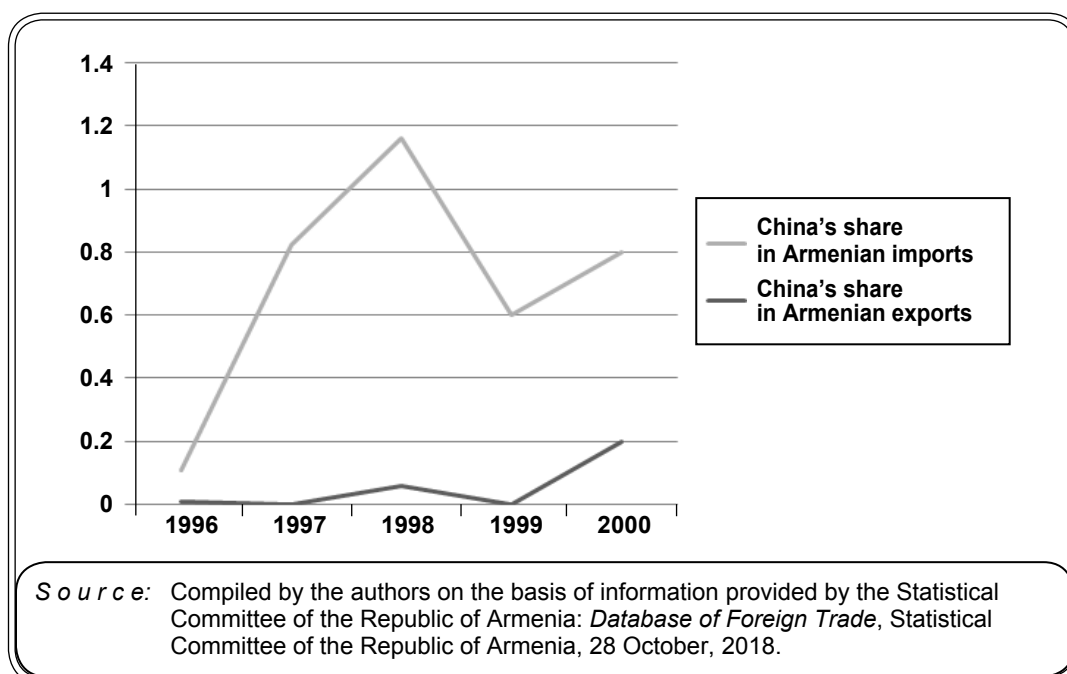
⁸ See: "Unprecedented Program on Establishing the Security System," AEGService, 13 November, 2008, available in Armenian at [<http://www.aegservice.am/index.php?al=news&pid=1&id=52&act=more&pid=77>], 11 November, 2018.

⁹ See: "Kitay podaril Armenii 200 machin skoroy pomoshchi," 24 mir, 17 October, 2018, available at [<https://mir24.tv/news/16331139/kitay-podaril-armenii-200-mashin-skoroi-pomoshchi>], 14 November, 2018.

¹⁰ See: "Piaty energoblok Razdanskoy TES sdan v polnomashtabnuu ekpluatatsiu," News.am, 2 December, 2013, available at [<https://news.am/rus/news/183535.html>], 4 November, 2018.

Figure 2

**The Share of China in Imports and Exports of
the Republic of Armenia in 1996-2000 (%)**



Active cooperation in the production sphere consolidated bilateral relations. In September 2013, the sides signed an Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation.¹¹

In the 2010s, the BRI Initiative added even more weight to Armenia: Armenia and Georgia are expected to serve as transit territories for freight transportation from Iran to Europe and back. Today, the Persian Gulf-the Black Sea transportation corridor is being discussed, with Armenia as one of the key transit countries.¹²

In March 2015, China and Armenia signed a Joint Statement on further development and deepening of their good-neighborly cooperation.¹³ It was agreed that Armenia would cooperate with China within the Silk Road Economic Belt initiative.

The integration of this corridor into the Chinese-Iranian transportation routes will help realize the China-Europe global project.¹⁴ Beijing is seeking firmer economic positions in Armenia to promote its geopolitical aims in the region. China is interested in Armenia as the only member of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) among the South Caucasian countries that can, therefore, provide

¹¹ See: "China: Bilateral Relations..."

¹² See: S. Zhiltsov, "The Great Oil and Gas Road: First Results and Prospects," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 16, Issue 3-4, 2015, pp. 63-73.

¹³ See: "V Pekine sostoiialis armiano-kitayskie peregovory vysokogo urovnia," Official Site of the President of the Republic of Armenia, 25 April, 2015 [<http://www.president.am/ru/press-release/item/2015/03/25/President-Serzh-Sargsyan-state-visit-to-China-day-1/>], 2 November, 2018.

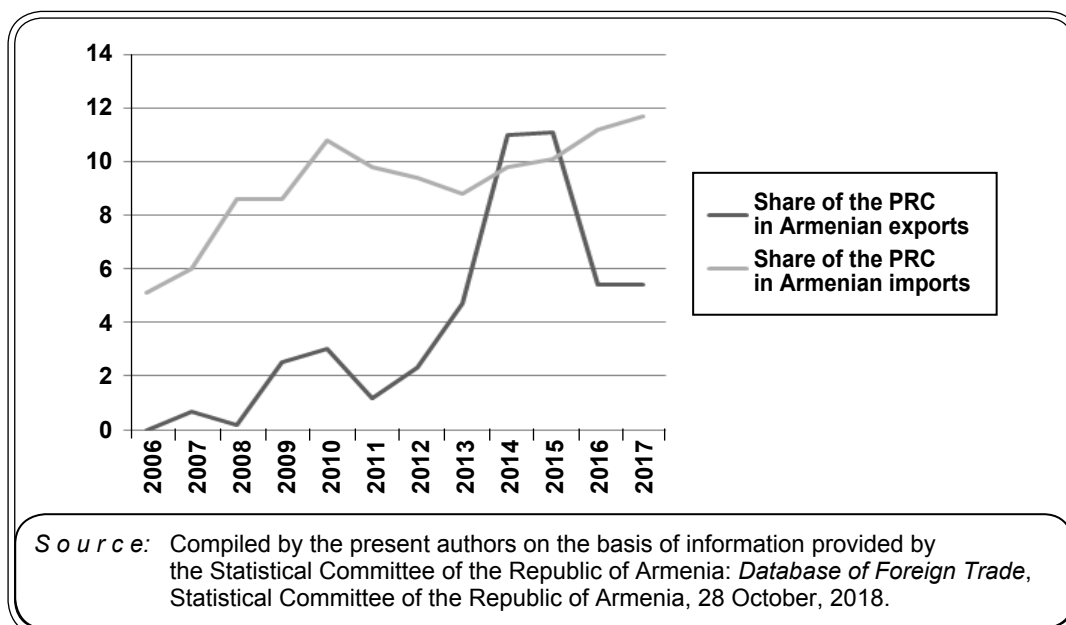
¹⁴ See: H. Kotanjian, "Participation in China's 'Belt and Road' Geostrategic Program as a Strategic Guideline for the RA Power Set Enhancement," *Working Notebooks. Strategic Guidelines of Armenia's Integration into China's "Belt and Road" Initiative*, No. 2 (46), 2018, p. 8.

more chances for China to widen the dialog between the EAEU and the BRI Initiative.¹⁵ China is building a new Chinese Embassy complex, the second biggest in the post-Soviet space, in Armenia as a visual confirmation of its great interest in this country.¹⁶ Armenia, in its turn, is treating its relationship with China as an absolute foreign policy priority, which has been repeatedly confirmed by Armenia's former President Serzh Sargsyan.¹⁷ Armenia needs China and its investments to improve its economic situation and diversify its economic ties. Its involvement in the BRI Initiative will give it a chance to overcome the blockade established by Turkey and Azerbaijan.

In the second decade of the 21st century, therefore, China became one of Armenia's biggest trade partners. In 2017, their trade turnover nearly reached \$597 million, of which Armenian imports comprised \$478 million and Armenian exports amounted to \$119 million (see Fig. 3). Armenia exports mineral raw materials (copper and precious metals) to China and imports electronic devices, clothes, machines, equipment, chemicals, construction materials, furniture, etc.

Figure 3

China's Share in Exports and Imports (by the country of origin) of the Republic of Armenia in 2006-2017 (%)



Despite Armenia's geopolitical importance, initially, China did not display any investment activity in the republic: in 2017, it invested \$542.4 million mainly into industry, services, wholesale

¹⁵ See: E.M. Kuzmina, "Bolshaia Evrazia": interesy i vozmozhnosti Rossii pri vzaimodeistvii s Kitaem," *Problemy postsovetского prostranstva*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2017, pp. 229-239, available at [https://doi.org/10.24975/2313-8920-2017-4-3-229-239].

¹⁶ See: "China Building New Embassy Complex in Armenia, 9 August, 2017," *Azatutyun Radiokayan*, available at [https://www.azatutyun.am/a/28667832.html], 28 October, 2018.

¹⁷ See: Prezident Serzh Sargsian prinal uchashtie v tseremonii otkrytia Vsemirnoy vystavki Shanghai Expo-2010," Official Site of the President of the Republic of Armenia, 29 April, 2010, available at [http://www.president.am/events/visits/rus/?visits=1&id=155], 27 October, 2018.

trade in foodstuffs, drinks and cigarettes, textile and footwear, restaurant business, production of household electric appliances and clothes.¹⁸

By the end of 2017, however, there were 48 companies with Chinese capital operating in Armenia,¹⁹ including the well-known ZTE and Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd., which specialize in telecommunications and equipment production.²⁰

China is interested in building an Armenia-Iran railway with a total estimated cost of \$1.5-1.8 billion to connect Armenia with the Persian Gulf ports and the Central Asian markets, China, etc. Beijing, in its turn, will be connected to the Southern Caucasus.

Chinese businessmen plan to invest \$50 million into the production of gas turbine generators in Armenia to save up to 30% of hydrocarbon fuels and earn hundreds of millions dollars every year.²¹

China and Armenia cooperate in the military-technical sphere. Back in 1999, China supplied Armenia with 8 missile Typhoon systems; Armenia sometimes buys weapons from China. Every year Erevan receives military assistance from Beijing. In late 2018, Armenia was expected to receive 10 million yuan worth of military equipment.²² According to Deputy Defense Minister of Armenia Gabriel Balaian, “relations between defense ministries of our countries have reached a high level and demonstrate a lot of dynamism.”²³

The Chinese-Armenian relations are developing in the humanitarian sphere as well. Both countries pay a lot of attention to educational and cultural projects. In 2009, the first Institute of Confucius in the Southern Caucasus was opened under the Agreement between the Embassy of the PRC and the Briusov Erevan State Linguistic University.²⁴

In 2016, the Institute, which actively promotes Chinese language and culture, was awarded the title of the Institute of Confucius 2016, the first among 511 institutes operating in 140 countries.²⁵ There are centers of Chinese studies at the Briusov Erevan Linguistic University, Erevan State University and the Russian-Armenian (Slavic) University. In 2018, an Armenian-Chinese Friendship School was opened in Erevan, the construction of which cost \$12 million.²⁶ Armenia realized joint educational programs with seven countries, including China;²⁷ both countries reciprocated with days of culture.

To sum up, starting in the mid-2000s and especially after 2010 the relations between the two countries are developing with a clearly positive dynamic. China is gradually expanding its economic

¹⁸ See: T.S. Guzenkova, A.V. Vinogradov, op. cit., p. 43.

¹⁹ See: “Accumulated Chinese Investments in Armenia are about \$1 Million,” Armenian Banks, 15 December, 2017, available at [<http://www.armbanks.am/en/2017/12/15/111661/>], 3 November, 2018.

²⁰ See: “ZTE Planning to Expand its Presence in Armenia,” ARKA TELECOM, 5 February, 2018, available at [http://www.telecom.arka.am/en/news/business/zte_planning_to_expand_its_presence_in_armenia], 4 November, 2018.

²¹ See: “Mnogomillionnye investitsii: kitayskiy biznes otkroet v Armenii novoe proizvodstvo,” Armenia Sputnik, 19 October, 2018, available at [<https://www.google.ru/amp/s/ru.armeniasputnik.am/amp/economy/20181019/15190768/kitajskij-biznes-hochet-investirovat-v-armenia-do-50-millionov-dollarov.html>], 11 November, 2018.

²² See: “Voenny attaché: otnoshenia mezhdú armiami Armenii i Kitaia stabilno razvivaiutsia,” News.am, 1 August, 2018, available at [<https://news.am/rus/news/464618.html>], 13 November 2018.

²³ Ibidem.

²⁴ See: “V Armenii otkrylsia Institut Konfutsia,” Posolstvo KNR v RA, 21 July, 2009, available at [<http://www.am.chineseembassy.org/rus/kjwh/t574351.htm>], 12 November, 2018.

²⁵ See: “Institut Konfutsia Erevanskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta udostoilsia zvania ‘Institut Konfutsia 2016 goda’,” *Segodnia*, 16 December, 2016, available at [<http://www.aysor.am/ru/news/2016/12/16/InstitutKonfutsia/11843447>], 15 November, 2018.

²⁶ See: “AztagDaily: Kitay vkhodit na Iuzhny Kavkaz cherez Erevan,” IА REGNUM, 5 September, 2018, available at [<https://regnum.ru/news/2475730.html>], 15 November 2018.

²⁷ See: “Armijskie studenty bolee vsego predpochitaiut uchebnye zavedenia Kitaia,” ARMENPRESS, 11 April, 2017, available at [<http://www.google.ru/amp/s/armenpress.am/rus/amp/886299>], 12 November 2018.

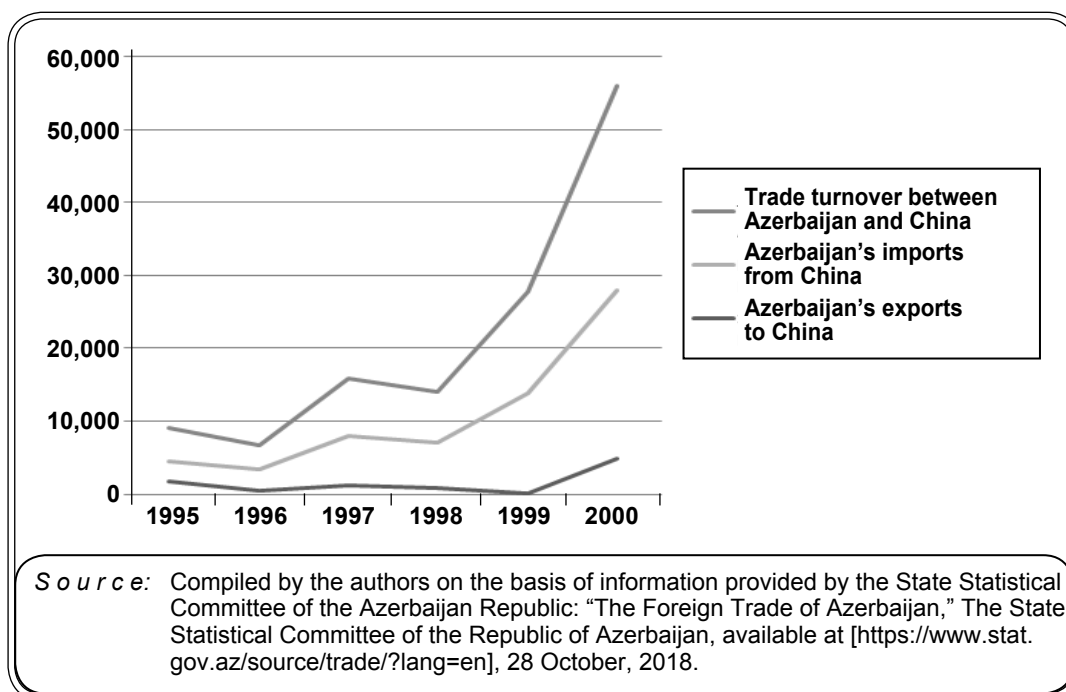
influence in Armenia, while the leaders of both countries have already exchanged about 30 visits and signed more than 65 documents.²⁸

China’s Policy in Azerbaijan

In the 1990s, the economic relations between China and Azerbaijan remained quite modest: in 1995, their trade turnover barely reached \$4.56 million; in 2000, \$27.96 million. On the whole, despite a certain increase of trade turnover (see Fig. 4) in the 1990s China’s share in the exports and imports of Azerbaijan remained low (see Fig. 5).²⁹

Figure 4

Trade Turnover between Azerbaijan and China
in 1995-2000 (thousand dollars)



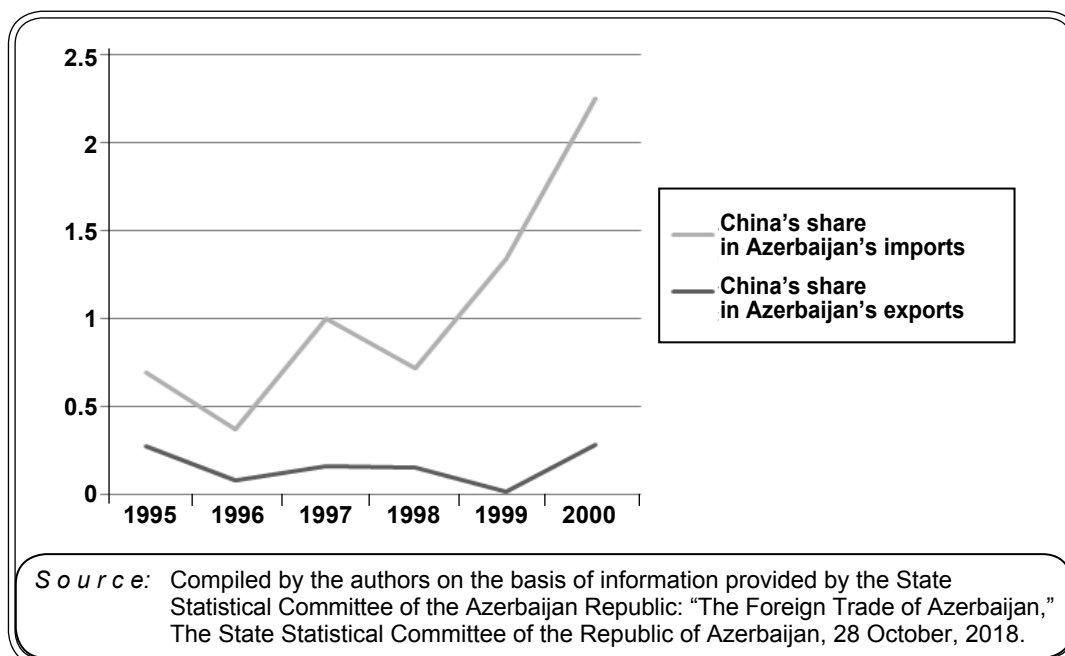
The visit of the President of Azerbaijan Ilkham Aliev to China in 2005 opened a new stage in the development of bilateral relations. The sides signed 13 documents on cooperation in politics, economy, trade, culture, tourism, technology, TV, etc., which gave a new lease on life to their economic relations: two years later, in 2007, the volume of trade turnover reached \$289 million, or 2.5% of the total foreign trade volume of Azerbaijan.

²⁸ See: "China: Bilateral Relations"...; *The Department of European-Central Asian Affairs, Armenia*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, available at [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zzjg_663340/dozys_664276/gjlb_664280/3130_664282/3132_664286/], 1 November, 2018.

²⁹ See: "Economic Statistics," The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, available at [<https://www.stat.gov.az/menu/13/?lang=en>], 14 November, 2018.

Figure 5

China's Share in Exports and Imports of Azerbaijan in 1995-2000 (%)



By that time, Beijing had been actively involved in power production in Azerbaijan. In 2007, the Chinese National Energy Engineering Corporation (CNEEC) won a contract on reconstruction of the Azerbaijan TPP that produced 45% of the country's electric power. In 2010, the same company won another contract on maintaining the Mingachevir and Varvara hydropower plants.³⁰

Thanks to Beijing's activity trade turnover between China and Azerbaijan increased. In 2010, it amounted to \$927.2 million, two years later—to about \$1.2 billion. In 2013-2015, the volume decreased, even though in 2014 China was the fourth biggest trade partner of Azerbaijan.³¹

The next stage of their relations began in 2015 following the state visit of the President of Azerbaijan Ilkham Aliev to China; the sides signed several documents, including a Joint Declaration on the Developing and Deepening of Friendship and Cooperation between the Azerbaijan Republic and the People's Republic of China. The Memorandum on Mutual Understanding in joint promotion of the Silk Road Economic Belt was another important achievement.³²

Starting in 2016, trade turnover between the two countries resumed its growth to reach the figure of nearly \$1.3 billion in 2017 (see Fig. 6). This made China one of Azerbaijan's biggest trade partners. On the other hand, the share of China in imports and exports of Azerbaijan remains low despite the sustainable development of trade and economic relations (see Fig. 7).

Azerbaijan exports products of its chemical industry, fuels and plastic to China and buys electrical devices, mechanical equipment, transportation means, clothes, ceramics, furniture, etc. from China.

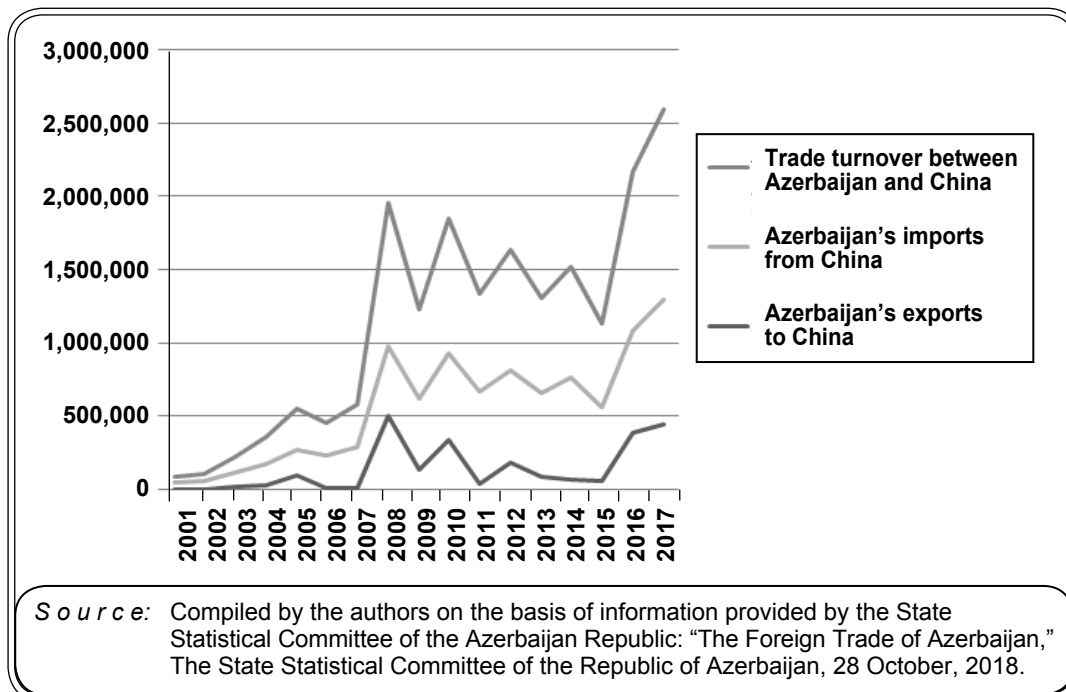
³⁰ See: D. Babayan, "Some Aspects of China's Policy in the Caucasus," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 12, Issue 1, 2011, p. 72.

³¹ See: "The Foreign Trade of Azerbaijan."

³² See: *Ibidem*.

Figure 6

Trade Turnover between Azerbaijan and China in 2001-2017 (thousand dollars)



China's investment policy in Azerbaijan is an important element of their bilateral economic relations. It has been investing in Azerbaijan since 2002.³³ By 2015, Chinese investments have reached about \$300 million; by 2017—\$770 million.³⁴ China invests in power production, tourism, agriculture, construction and banking. Chinese companies prefer oil infrastructure, modernization of hydropower plants inherited from Soviet times and the TV sector.³⁵ Today, there are over 110 companies with Chinese capital operating in the republic.

Realization of the BRI Initiative increased China's interest in Azerbaijan and its logistics and transportation potentials. The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, which was commissioned in 2017 and connects Azerbaijan with Turkey via Georgia, has attracted a lot of attention. Integrated with the Silk Road transportation corridor, it will become part of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route and, as such, will increase the potential of railway communications between Europe and Asia. China has appreciated it as a means of diversification of the routes leading to the European market. As one of the biggest consumer of energy resources, China wants to move gas from Azerbaijan across Central Asia to China; this is the main significance of the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline.³⁶ Azerbaijan, in its turn,

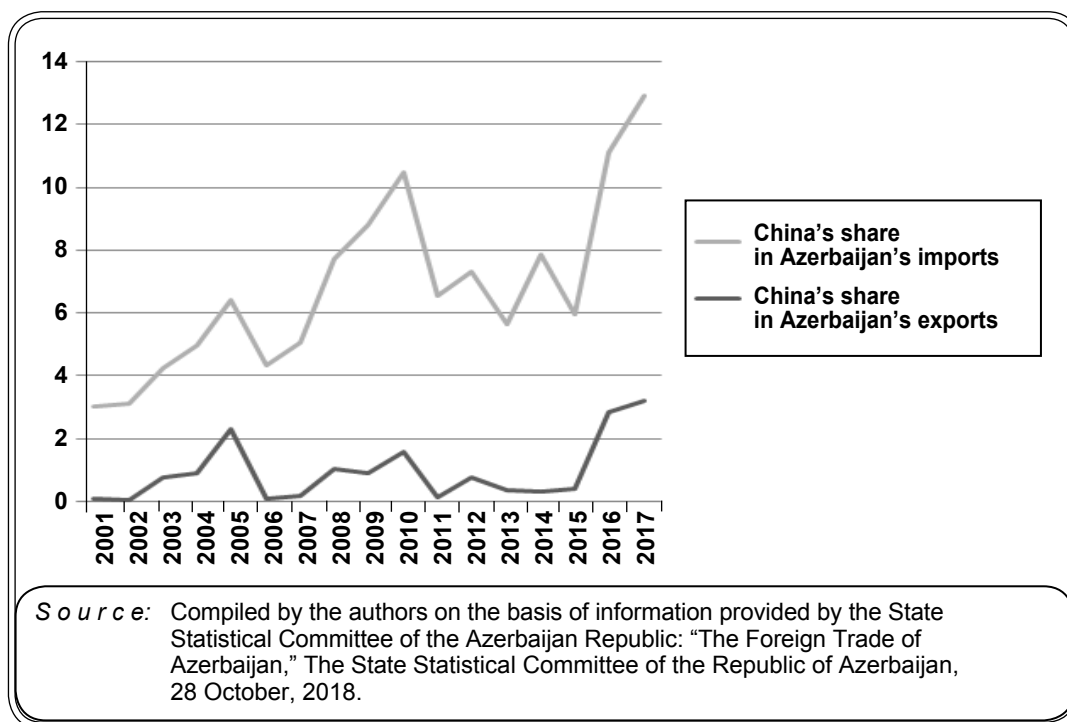
³³ See: "China's Investment Projects to Azerbaijan Reached 300 mln USD," China Invests Overseas, 25 February, 2016, available at [<http://www.china-invests.net/20160225/3968.aspx>], 14 November, 2018.

³⁴ See: "Economy Minister Talks on Chinese Investments in Azerbaijan's Economy," AZERNEWS, 19 November, 2018, available at [<http://www.azernews.az/business/127146.html>], 14 November, 2018.

³⁵ See: F. Shahbazov, "Baku-Beijing Relations and China's Growing Interest in the South Caucasus," *The Jamestown Foundation, Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 12 April, 2017, available at [<https://jamestown.org/program/baku-beijing-relations-chinas-growing-interest-south-caucasus/>], 14 November 2018.

³⁶ See: S. Zhiltsov, "Energy Flows in Central Asia and the Caspian Region: New Opportunities and New Challenges," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 15, Issue 4, 2014, pp. 69-79.

China's Share in Imports and Exports of Azerbaijan in 2001-2017 (%)



attaches a lot of importance to its relations with China: Baku is seeking the status of the transport-logistic hub in the BRI Initiative;³⁷ it needs Chinese loans to diversify its economic ties and improve its economic situation.

China, in its turn, is interested in Azerbaijan's energy sphere. Sinopec poured \$250 million into projects related to the oil and gas sphere.³⁸ Two other Chinese companies, CNODC and CNPC, acquired 50% of shares of the Salyan Oil operation company, which is engaged in testing and development drilling on land. In 2016, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, whose majority stake belongs to China, gave \$600 million to build TANAP that would connect Azerbaijan with Turkey and South Europe.³⁹ In 2017, the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan signed a memorandum with CNPC and the China Development Bank on mutual understanding on oil and gas processing project and the development of petrochemical complex.⁴⁰ China also invests in reconstruction and maintenance of thermal and hydropower plants.

It is active in the sphere of TV communications, which Chinese investors regard as a priority. Beijing cooperates with the Ministry of Transport, Communication and New Technologies of Azer-

³⁷ See: Yu.M. Borisova, "Politika Kitaia na postsovetском prostranstve," *Problemy postsovetского prostranstva*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2017, pp. 202-209, available at [<https://doi.org/10.24975/2313-8920-2017-4-3-202-209>].

³⁸ See: D. Babayan, op. cit.

³⁹ See: F. Shahbazov, op. cit.

⁴⁰ See: D. Yayloyan, F. Inan, "New Economic Corridors in the South Caucasus and the Chinese One Belt One Road," *TEPAV*, 2017, p. 66, available at [http://www.tepav.org.tr/upload/files/1523615843-0.New_Economic_Corridors_in_the_South_Caucasus_and_the_Chinese_One_Belt_One_Road.pdf], 15 November, 2018.

baijan in training IT specialists.⁴¹ The sides are working on Smart City projects to be realized in Baku and other Azerbaijani cities. It is realized within the Public Wi-Fi project designed to stir up the tourist sector of Azerbaijan.⁴² The permanent passenger communication between Baku and Urumqi (Western China) and simplified tourist visas for Chinese tourists help promote cooperation in the tourist sector.

China and Azerbaijan also cooperate in the military sphere. In 2010, their defense ministries signed an Agreement on Free Military Assistance to Azerbaijan with two protocols signed in 2011 and 2015.⁴³ In 2018, at a meeting with his Azeri colleague, the Defense Minister of China Wei Fenghe described the potential of cooperation in the military sphere as large.⁴⁴ Azerbaijan, in its turn, spoke of comprehensive cooperation with China as one of the country's foreign policy priorities.⁴⁵

Chinese soft power policy is highly successful, especially in culture and education. In 2011, under the treaty signed in 2010 by Baku State University and the Chinese Anhui University, China opened the Institute of Confucius in Baku that popularizes Chinese culture and language.⁴⁶

The Agreement on Cooperation for 2012-2015 and similar documents for 2016-2019 signed by the Ministries of Education of China and Azerbaijan promoted bilateral relations in the sphere of education.⁴⁷ These agreements stipulate for the exchange of lecturers and students. Chinese students prefer the State Oil Academy of Azerbaijan. Days of Culture of China in Azerbaijan and Days of Culture of Azerbaijan in China are highly popular and attract a lot of public.

The BRI Initiative added more vigor to the relations between the two countries. China is rapidly consolidating its positions in the economy and culture of Azerbaijan and has increased the number of official visits.⁴⁸ In the mid-term perspective, economy, transport and logistics will remain priorities of China's policy in Azerbaijan, which means that in the future China may increase its political influence in Azerbaijan.

China's Policy in Georgia

In the 1990s, the share of China in Georgian exports and imports was insignificant (see Figs. 8 and 9). Since the mid-2000s, trade and economic relations between the two countries have intensified. In 1995, the trade turnover between Georgia and China reached \$734,000, in 2000 the figure was much bigger—\$3.8 million; in 2005—\$52.3 million.

China's more active presence in Georgia is explained by the more stable political situation within the country, wider political interaction and economic cooperation between Georgia, the EU and the U.S. The Georgian side responded to China's interest with the opening of an embassy in China in 2005.

⁴¹ See: "Huawei to Help Azerbaijan in Training ICT Specialists," CBC, 31 May, 2017, available at [<http://cbc.az/en/en/news/huawei-to-help-azerbaijan-in-training-ict-specialists1496213698>], 16 November, 2018.

⁴² See: "China's Huawei to Build 'Smart City' in Baku," Azernews, 21 March, 2017, available at [<http://www.azernews.az/business/110500.html>], 15 November, 2018.

⁴³ See: "Dvustoronnie otnoshenia," Posolstvo Azerbajjanskoy Respubliki v Kitayskoy Narodnoy Respublike, available at [<http://beijing.mfa.gov.az/ru/content/3>], 11 November, 2018.

⁴⁴ See: "Azerbajjan i Kitaj dogovorilis o voennoy pomoshchi," Sputnik Azerbaijan, 27 April, 2018, available at [<https://az.sputniknews.ru/azerbajjan/20180427/415078129/azerbajdzhan-kitaj-ministr-gasanov-oborona-vooruzhenie.html>], 11 November, 2018.

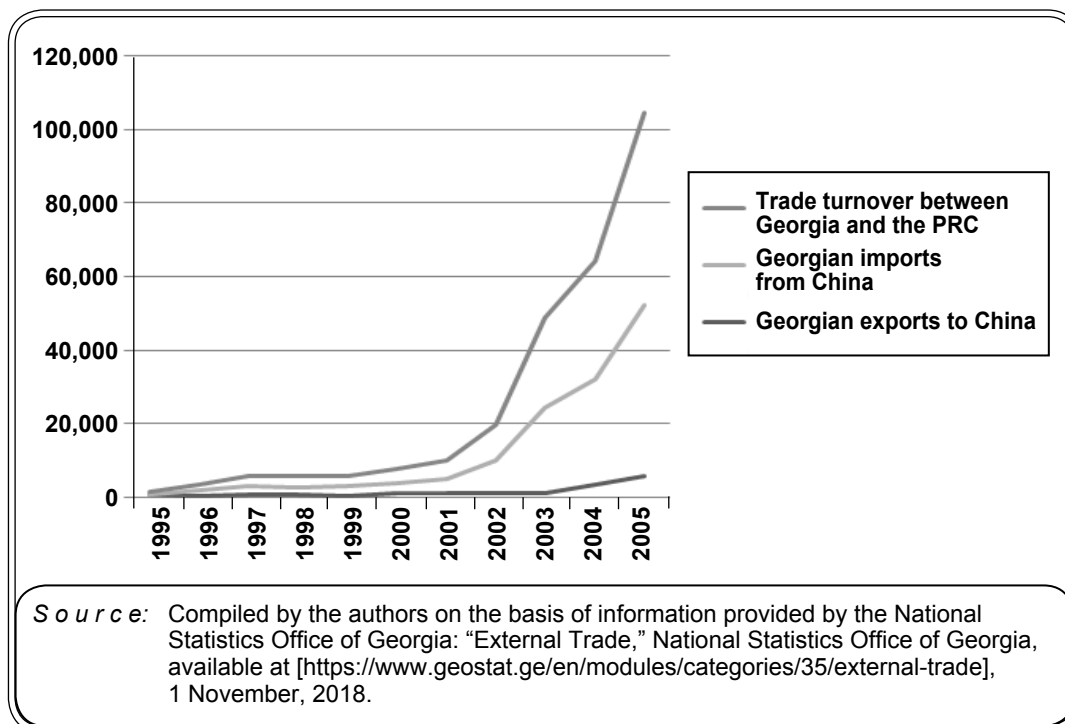
⁴⁵ See: *Ibidem*.

⁴⁶ See: "V Bakinskom universitete otkrylsia Institut Konfutsia. Interfax—Azerbaijan," 22 April, 2011, available at [<http://interfax.az/view/462618>], 16 November, 2018.

⁴⁷ See: "Dvustoronnie otnoshenia..."

⁴⁸ See: *Ibidem*.

Trade Turnover between Georgia and the PRC in 1995-2005 (thousand dollars)



Chinese investments in Georgia are an important component of the two countries' bilateral relations. Since 2002, China has been investing in Georgian economy. China's investments reached \$588,694 million⁴⁹ or 3.35% of the total volume of foreign investments in Georgia. China prefers to invest in infrastructure, power production, mining, health protection, financial sphere and agriculture.

A large share of investments in Georgian industry, banking and woodworking was made by Hualing Company (\$498 million) that came to Georgia in 2007.⁵⁰ China invested in construction and mining of mineral resources in the Kutaisi Free Industrial Zone.

Chinese investors that prefer to operate in free industrial zones are attracted by the investment climate in Georgia. Beijing treats such zones as industrial, logistics and trade hubs particularly useful for transporting Chinese goods to Europe. The China Energy Company Limited (CEFC) owns 75% of shares in the Poti Free Industrial Zone.⁵¹

China invests in Georgia's energy sector by contributing to the construction of hydropower plants. The Khadori HEP in Kakheti with the capacity of 24 MW was one of the biggest projects realized by Sichuan Electric Power Import and Export Company.⁵² Chinese State Dongfang Electric plans to build a hydropower plant in the Tkibuli region in the country's west.⁵³ In 2009, under the

⁴⁹ See: "Foreign Direct Investments," National Statistics Office of Georgia, available at [http://www.geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&p_id=2231&lang=eng], 16 November, 2018.

⁵⁰ See: D. Yayloyan, F. Inan, op. cit., p. 63.

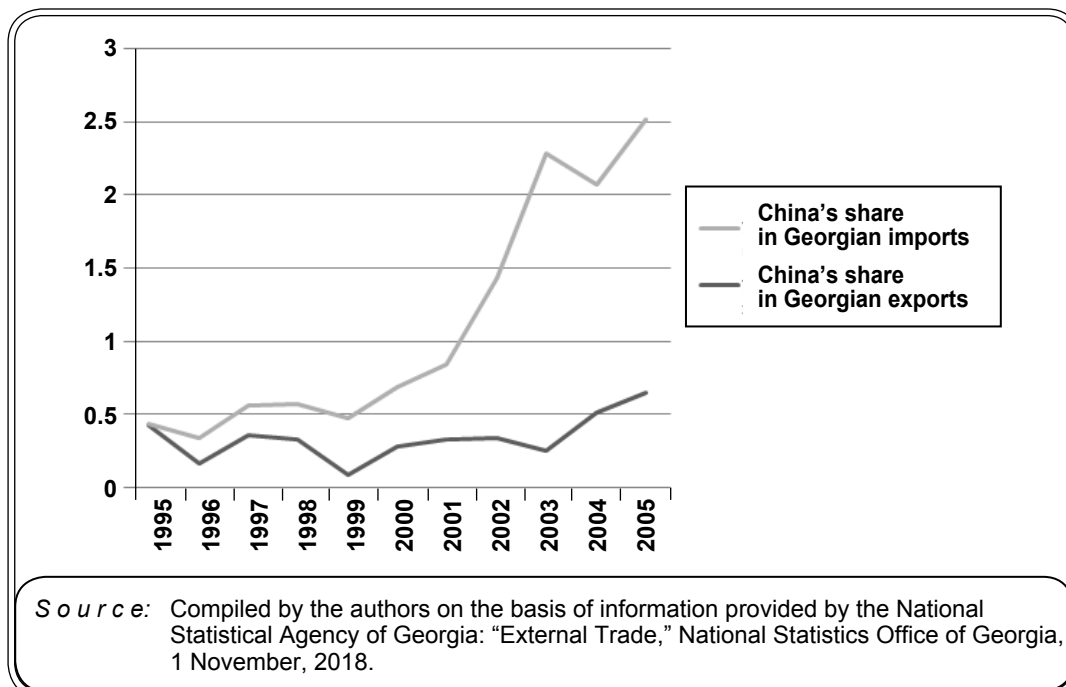
⁵¹ See: Ibid., p. 64.

⁵² See: "China' Hydropower Plant in Kakheti," *Chinese Business in Georgia, Special Magazine*, 2010, pp. 14-15.

⁵³ See: D. Yayloyan, F. Inan, op. cit.

Figure 9

China's Share in Exports and Imports of Georgia in 1995-2005 (%)



pressure of the world economic crisis the volume of trade turnover between the two countries dropped only to start rising in 2010 (see Fig. 10), when the volume of trade turnover reached \$362,210 million. An active development of bilateral contacts made direct air routes between Urumqi (China) and Tbilisi (Georgia) indispensable (the routes were opened in 2007).

Trade turnover was steadily increasing in 2011-2013; it dropped in 2014 and increased in 2015. The dynamics of the trade turnover signify that the countries plan to develop and widen their trade and economic relationships. Georgia sells mineral raw materials, copper and concentrates to China. China is the second biggest market for Georgian wine. In 2012, the first shop selling Georgian wines was opened in Urumqi.⁵⁴ Georgia buys engineering products, data processing devices, telephones, furniture, clothing, etc. from China.

Transport was the main sphere of Chinese investments in Georgia. Two Chinese companies—Sino Hydro Corporation and China Railway 23rd Bureau Group—plan to reconstruct the Rikoti Tunnel. In 2010, the China Railway 23rd Bureau Group and Khidmsheni, a Georgian company, launched a joint project to construct a railway to bypass Tbilisi.⁵⁵ In 2015, Georgia signed an agreement with the Asian Bank on building a highway to bypass Batumi. Georgia and China cooperate in the production of electric trains.

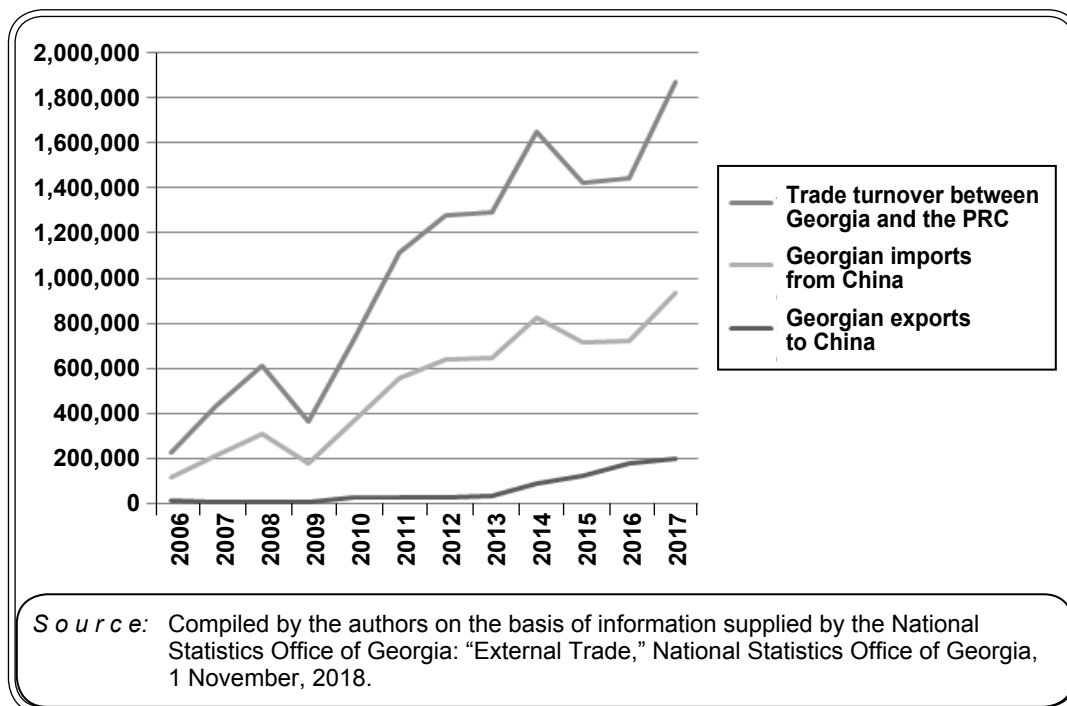
The next stage of their relations was opened by the BRI project which allotted Georgia an important place in China's foreign policy. In 2014, Georgia and the EU signed an Agreement on Association as part of the Agreement on a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area; additionally, there is a free trade treaty between Georgia and China signed in 2017. On the strength of these two docu-

⁵⁴ See: "V KNR proiavilsia magazine gruzinskogo vina," ALCONNEWS.RU, available at [http://www.alconews.ru/world/2012/03/20727.php], 10 November, 2018.

⁵⁵ See: T.S. Guzenkova, A.V. Vinogradov, op. cit., p. 48.

Figure 10

Trade Turnover between Georgia and the PRC in 2006-2017 (thousand dollars)



ments, China had acquired even better and wider access to the European market. China is especially attracted by Georgia's geographic location on the shores of the Black Sea (the ports of Batumi, Poti and Anakli) and the land border with Turkey, as well as the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, which has increased its transit potential. Moreover, Georgia has friendly relations with its neighbors (Russia being the only exception), belongs to several organizations (BSEC and GUAM) and is a member of the unofficial alliance between Turkey and Azerbaijan. These facts have supplied China with even more arguments in its discussion of the BRI Initiative with the South Caucasian countries.

Georgia is committed to developing its relations with China. Its leaders hope that the BRI Initiative and related Chinese investments will bring economic advantages. Georgia is treating the plan of transforming its territory into a transportation hub between the East and the West and between the North and the South as an absolute priority. On the other hand, China is acting as a counterweight to Russia's influence in the region.

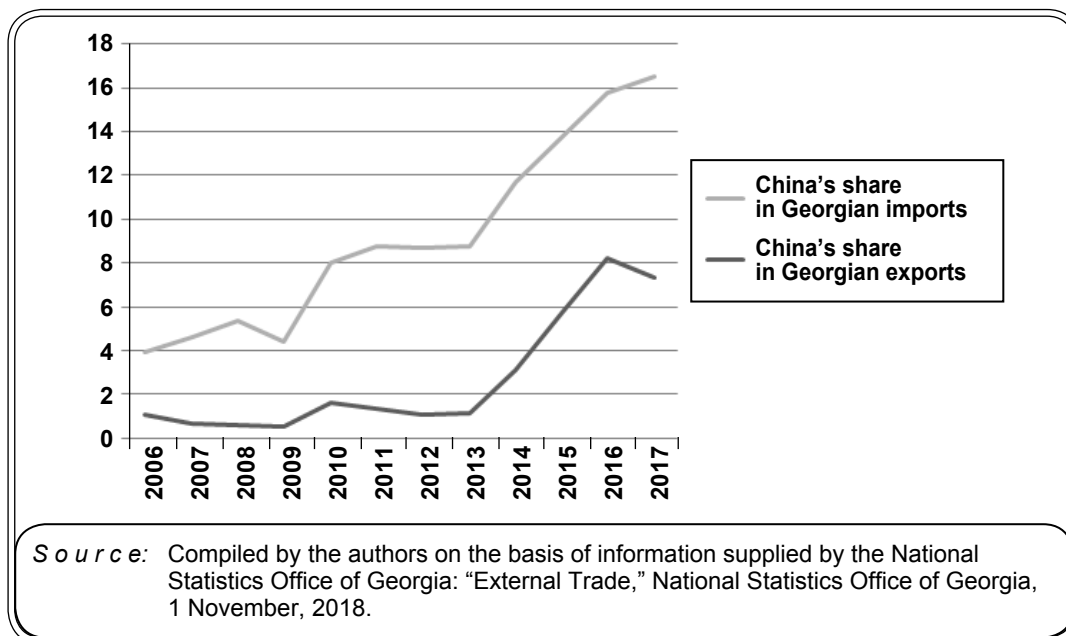
In 2017, the volume of trade turnover between the two countries was \$934,648 million, of which \$201,701 million were related to exports to China, while \$732,946 million—to imports from China. China's share in Georgian exports was 7.3%; in the structure of imports—9.2% (see Fig. 11). China is the third biggest trade partner of Georgia after Turkey and Azerbaijan.

Chinese investment policies in Georgia are accompanied by an increased number of Chinese citizens in the republic, which is especially obvious in Ajaria, where Chinese workers build roads and work in Chinese restaurants and shops. They are highly competitive on Georgia's labor market. In the future, the steadily growing number of Chinese in Georgia may help China promote its interests in this country.

The Chinese-Georgian relations are deepened by Beijing's policy in culture and education. The Georgian-Chinese Silk Road Center helps deepen and widen bilateral cultural relations, while the

Figure 11

China's Share in Exports and Imports of Georgia in 2006-2017 (%)



Institute of Confucius opened in 2010 at the Free University in Tbilisi plays an important role in education. Tbilisi plans to open a center for Georgian studies in China, where Georgian professors will teach Georgian culture and the Georgian language.⁵⁶

The relations between the two countries are deepening. China has already consolidated its positions in all spheres of the Georgian economy and is moving towards greater influence in Georgia through its soft power, that is, the cultural and educational spheres.

Conclusion

The South Caucasian countries have appreciated China as an important trade partner and a source of investments, which they acutely need. They are very interested in the BRI Initiative and want to become part of this new Eurasian trade, economic and energy artery. There are no negative factors that may have influenced their partnership: China has no demands related to human rights, investment climate or Eurasian integration⁵⁷; it would like to avoid problems that may interfere with its long-term relations with the South Caucasian countries.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ See: "V Kitae otkroetsia tsentr po izucheniu Gruzii," *Sputnik Georgia*, 13 May, 2018, available at [<https://a.ru/amp/society/20180513/240440647/V-Kitae-otkroetsja-Centr-po-izucheniju-Gruzii.htmlwww.google.ru/amp/s/sputnik-georgi>], 16 November, 2018.

⁵⁷ See: M. Ögütçü, "China in the South Caucasus: Not a Critical Partnership but Still Needed," *SAM. The South Caucasus: Between Integration and Fragmentation*, May 2015, p. 104, available at [<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/76807561.pdf>], 3 November, 2018.

⁵⁸ See: E.G. Garbuzarova, "Sopriazhenie Evraziiskogo ekonomicheskogo soiuzu i ekonomicheskogo poiasa Shelkovogo puti: preimushchestva, riski, dostizheniia," *Problemy postsovetskogo prostranstva*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2019, pp. 8-15, available at [<https://doi.org/10.24975/2313-8920-2019-6-1-8-15>], 3 November, 2018.

China's politics in the Southern Caucasus was further inspired by the project of the revived ancient Silk Road that connected Asia and Europe.⁵⁹ In 2013, China informed the world about its BRI Initiative and its two initiatives—the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road of the 21st Century—designed to help Beijing realize its ambitions. It stipulates for wider economic cooperation and cultural interaction between China, Europe and the Middle East. The Southern Caucasus is regarded as a single region comprised of three post-Soviet states.⁶⁰

In 2015, the BRI became a component part of China's foreign economic and foreign policy strategy. It was at the same time that Beijing specified the main routes of the Silk Road Economic Belt: Northern—from China across Central Asia and Russia to Europe; Central—from China across Central Asia and West Asia to the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean, and Southern—from China to Southeast Asia and South Asia to the Indian Ocean.⁶¹

The financial projects realized with the help of the Silk Road Fund with its \$40 billion and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank with authorized capital of \$100 billion made the Southern Caucasus part of China's geo-economic plan. The region is a new market for Chinese products, investments and access to raw materials, primarily, Caspian hydrocarbons. China is gradually penetrating regional economies, which in the future will increase its political positions in this strategically important part of the globe.

Beijing looks at the Southern Caucasus as a chance to oppose pan-Turkic ideology and Islamic fundamentalism that stir up many apprehensions in China and that are highly popular in the Southern Caucasus, which is home to millions of Muslims. The same fully applies to the separatist sentiments in the predominantly Muslim Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.⁶²

Beijing, on the one hand, insists on regional stability in the Southern Caucasus and, on the other, prefers to keep away from regional politics and problems. During the regional conflicts (Nagorno Karabakh, South Ossetia and Abkhazia) China called on the sides to remain within limits and resolve their disagreements peacefully. In April 2016, when tensions intensified in and around Nagorno Karabakh, the Foreign Ministry of China said that Beijing hoped that the conflict would be resolved peacefully.⁶³ This allowed China to preserve good relations with all the countries involved and establish the conditions for consolidating its positions and influence in the Southern Caucasus.

⁵⁹ See: M.H. Glantz, "Kitaiskaia initsiativa 'Odin poias—Odin Put': chto mozhet sdelat 'brend'," *Problemy postsovetsskogo prostranstva*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2017, pp. 8-19, available at [<https://doi.org/10.24975/2313-8920-2017-4-1-8-19>].

⁶⁰ See: "The European and Central Asian Region," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, available at [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/gjhdq_665435/3124_665443/], 4 November, 2018.

⁶¹ See: A.A. Kireeva, "Initsiativa poiasa i puti: sodержanie, tseli i znachenie," *Sravnitelnaia politika i geopolitika*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 2018, p. 62.

⁶² See: D. Babayan, op. cit., p. 71.

⁶³ See: "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hong Lei's Regular Press Conference on 5 April, 2016," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, available at [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/t1353164.shtml], 1 November, 2018.

RUSSIA AND CHINA: NATIONAL SECURITY AND ENERGY STRATEGY ASPECTS

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ABSTRACT

Amid global geopolitical chaos, Russia and China are resolved to preserve the global balance. The paper discusses the current stage of energy cooperation between the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China; it offers its forecasts in view of possible changes and the risks of bilateral political and economic relations and points out that in recent years

the two countries have signed several large-scale and long-term contracts in the energy sector and, therefore, reached a qualitatively new strategic level of energy cooperation. The authors have posed themselves a task of discussing Russia's energy policy and the impact of external and internal factors on the prospects of its energy cooperation with China.

KEYWORDS: *energy policy, Russian Federation, People's Republic of China, energy strategy, geopolitics.*

Introduction

The authors have posed themselves with the task to outline the scenarios of Russia's Chinese policy from the point of view of national security and energy strategy between 2016 and 2040. This corridor is not a fortuitous one. As a rule, ten years are required to realize major energy projects from scratch; the money poured into such projects is recouped during the first five years of operation. This explains the choice of the 25-year period.

All possible ways of forming Russia's energy strategy as part of its relations with China shaped by internal and external changes are described. There is a number of forecasts related to the development of the world's energy sector actively used in the practice of international relations, annual reports of the International Energy Agency, the U.S. Department of Energy, and OPEC standing apart by their high quality.

We relied on several analytical methods, the method of comparative analysis of Russia's external policy in the first place, to define the course of energy strategy as a whole and the Russian-Chinese relations within this strategy, in particular. This article can be seen as an attempt at a logical discussion of Russia's energy strategy and its possible impacts on Russia's energy policy in its relations with China in the energy sphere. In order to correctly assess the role of specific changes in Russia's energy policy, it is necessary to analyze each of the Kremlin's decisions. This was done using comparative, statistical and socio-economic methods.

Three scenarios of the general course of Russia's energy policy in its relations with China are delineated below. Our Baseline Scenario takes into account the global, demographic, technological and ecological changes and the international players' strategies on the energy market.

The Increased Supply Scenario assesses the increase in international energy supplies and looks at the possibility of global supply and demand of hydrocarbons moving away from the Baseline Scenario.

The third scenario is limited to the possible changes in external policy and the energy markets of China and other Asian countries. The term Developing Asia is used; it would be applicable if China's energy policy differs from the standard scenario.

Russia's National Security Strategy up to 2020 defines national security as "the protection of the individual, society and the state from domestic and foreign threats, which in turn ensures constitutional rights and freedoms, an appropriate quality of life for citizens, sovereignty, territorial integrity and stable development of the Russian Federation."¹ This means that in order to be sustainable, national security requires numerous concerted efforts in different spheres. The National Security Strategy has specified them as:

- (1) national defense;
- (2) security of state and society;
- (3) better quality of life for all Russian citizens;
- (4) economic development;

¹ *Russia's National Security Strategy until 2020*, available in Russian at [<http://kremlin.ru/supplement/424>].

- (5) science, technology and education;
- (6) health protection;
- (7) culture;
- (8) rational use of natural and energy resources;
- (9) strategic stability and rational strategic partnership.

The above suggests the following sectors of Russia's national security: external and internal political security, economic security, social security and energy security.²

All academic forecasts of the role of the oil and gas complex in national security that appeared after 2015 pointed to Russia's great dependence on energy resources. Gherman Gref, First Deputy Minister of State Property of the Russian Federation in Vladimir Putin's first cabinet never missed a chance to point to the importance of medium and small businesses, albeit with no tangible results. The Stabilization Fund set up in 2004 to invest excessive profits obtained from oil and gas export did not stabilize the money flows.³

In his November 2009 Presidential Address Dmitri Medvedev specifically pointed out that Russia's economy remained dependent on the development of the oil and gas complex and that the very much needed diversification had not been achieved as planned in the preceding period.⁴ Dmitri Medvedev's presidential term coincided with the global economic crisis; the role of Russia's energy sector did not change despite the reforms designed to overcome the monopoly of state companies in this sector.

In 2015, the Western economic sanctions negatively affected the Russian economy; the impact was further increased by the plummeting of world hydrocarbon prices, with the hydrocarbon resources responsible for 45% of Russia's federal budget. The lost share of incomes from oil and natural gas exports in the federal budget (from 50 to 45%) was not caused by diversification; it was the result of global changes in the energy sector.

The Baseline Scenario

In order to somewhat limit the range of variables in the energy sector, the following was placed in focus: the technological development level, energy strategies pursued by the state and other participants, the demographic structure and GDP.

We based our scenario on the data extracted from the *Forecast of the Development of Energy Production in the World and Russia until 2040*,⁵ published by the Energy Research Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences in 2014, as well as the technologies used today. It seems that new technologies will be used at all stages of production, processing and transportation. Priorities of international energy entities were registered by another variable used as a fixed one. When working on

² See: P. Moiseev, "Toplivno-energeticheskiy kompleks kak komponent natsionalnoy bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii," *Vestnik Tambovskogo universiteta, Gumanitarnye nauki* Series, Issue 3 (83), pp. 3-36, available at [<https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/toplivno-energeticheskiy-kompleks-kak-komponent-natsionalnoy-bezopasnosti-rf>].

³ See: *Diversifying Russia, Harnessing Regional Diversity, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development Report*, 2016, available at [<http://www.ebrd.com/news/publications/special-reports/diversifying-russia.html>].

⁴ See: Ph. Pan, "Medvedev Calls for Economic Changes," *The Washington Post*, Friday, 13 November, 2009, available at [<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/11/12/AR2009111208913.html>].

⁵ See: *Prognoz razvitiya energetiki mira i Rossii do 2040 goda*, FGBUN Institut energeticheskikh issledovaniy Rossiiskoy akademii nauk, FGBU Analiticheskiy tsentr pri Pravitelstve Rossiiskoy Federatsii, Moscow, 2014, available in Russian at [https://www.eriras.ru/files/forecast_2040.pdf].

this scenario, the premise that Russia and China would follow the priorities registered in their recent energy strategy documents was stipulated as the foundation. Since the world's population is growing by 0.9% every year, by 2040 there will be 9 billion people living on Earth. We have surmised that the world's GDP will be 2.8 times bigger than in 2010, since it is growing by 3.5% year by year.⁶

According to foreign sources, Russia relied mainly on the information supplied by the Energy Research Institute when working on its energy strategy, therefore particular attention was heeded to the possible changes on the international energy market up to 2040. According to the Forecast, the world will be using 46% more energy than in 2010 with the annual growth of energy consumption by 1.3%.⁷ The document forecasted higher energy consumption for 2014 than the previous documents published by the same institute, a result of higher growth rates in 2011 after the 2008 economic crisis.⁸

During that period, energy consumption will be concentrated in the developing countries. According to the Forecast, by 2040, energy consumption in the developed countries will grow by 4.6% due to the policy of energy efficiency. Energy consumption in the developed countries will reach its peak in 2030, to be subsequently stabilized. Today China consumes approximately as much energy as the United States. By 2040, however, it will consume twice as much; the greater part of this increase will occur in the current decade; later the growth rate will slow down from 10% in 2015 to 1% by 2040. After 2025, India with the yearly average growth rate of 2.8% and East Asia will lead in the demand for energy sources. By 2040, developing countries will use 1.5 times more energy than in 2015, however the overall increase in consumption in these countries will comprise 30% of the total world consumption growth. The Middle East and Africa will develop into major energy consumers.

According to the Forecast, and proceeding from the classification of consumption growth by type of energy sources, between 2010 and 2040 the demand for oil will grow by 19%; coal—by 36% (mainly prior to 2020), natural gas—by 64%, nuclear power—by 72% and renewable energy sources by 92%.

According to Forecast-2013 published by the Energy Research Institute, the share of renewable energy sources will probably reach 14.7% of the total (without hydropower); the share of nuclear power is expected to rise to 18% against 2010.

Forecast-2014 presupposed that oil and coal consumption accompanied by the growth of the use of natural gas and renewable energy sources would be observed in the developed countries. The developing Asian countries will use more energy sources of all types, while African countries and the Middle East will continue using hydrocarbons and bio-energy.⁹

The international events of 2008-2015 forced the Russian Federation to change its post-Soviet foreign policy course. Nobody expected a prolonged period of tension between the Kremlin and the West caused by the Ukrainian crisis. The sanctions revealed Russia's excessive dependence on the West where export of technologies, capital and energy was concerned.¹⁰ Under these conditions China became the best partner from the strategic and economic points of view.

⁶ See: *Ibidem*.

⁷ See: *Ibidem*.

⁸ See: A.A. Makarov, T.A. Mitrova, V.A. Kulagin, "Pervy rossiyskiy prognoz razvitiya mirovoy energetiki v aprele predstavili INEI RAN i REA," available at [<http://www.ras.ru/FStorage/Download.aspx?id=2da23a60-77b3-4a10-9bb1-91f054b9d66e>]; *Idem*, "Dolgosrochny prognoz razvitiya energetiki mira i Rossii," *Ekonomicheskij zhurnal Vysshey shkoly ekonomiki*, No. 2, 2012, available at [<http://ineiran.ru/articles/2012may-makarov-a-a-mitrova-t-a-kulagin-v-a-dolgosrochnyj-prognoz-razvitiya-energetiki-mira-i-rossii-ekonomicheskij-zhurnal-vysshey-shkoly-ekonomiki-tom-16-2-2012-s-172-204.pdf>].

⁹ See: S.Z. Zhiznin, *Osnovy energeticheskoy diplomatii*, Textbook in 2 vols., Vol. 2, MGIMO (U), MFA of Russia, Mezhdunarodny institut toplivno-energeticheskogo kompleksa, Moscow, 2003.

¹⁰ See: A. Gabuev, "Friends with Benefits? Russian-Chinese Relations after Ukraine Crisis," Moscow Carnegie Center, 2016, available at [https://carnegieendowment.org/files/CEIP_CP278_Gabuev_revised_FINAL.pdf].

The National Security Strategy considers the country's dependence on energy resources which is its main source of income, as one of the economic and national security threats. The most important reforms included a higher quality level of fuels to comply with international standards, greater efficiency of the national energy companies, their business availability, preservation of their capacities, accumulation of energy resources for strategic purposes and consistent improvement of corresponding technologies.¹¹ Higher efficiency of state administration in the oil and gas complex very much needed to achieve technological independence, as well as improvement of the level of administration in the energy sector are seen as a highly important aim.

When studied in detail, Putin's Doctrine is aimed at making Russia a strategic and economic power; announced in 2008, it criticized U.S. foreign policies and NATO expansion.¹² It spoke of the need to develop mechanisms of coercion in the strategically important sectors (energy production being one of them) to upgrade Russia's ability to stand opposed to outside pressure.

The energy strategy Russia followed up to 2016 generally relied on Putin's Doctrine. The principles of Putin's administration corresponded to the energy strategy that Russia followed from 2000 to 2015 in the following respects:

- (1) The hydrocarbon energy resources are an instrument of Russia's economic security.
- (2) Energy resources should be managed by state-controlled, vertically integrated firms to increase their contribution to national security.
- (3) The firms working in the energy sector should strive not only to maximize their profits, but also to promote the national interests of the Russian Federation.¹³

In full accordance with Russia's Energy Strategy until 2035, it is expected to continue exporting hydrocarbons until 2050,¹⁴ and to integrate into the energy intensive markets of East and Southeast Asia to avoid its excessive dependence on the Western market that threatens its independence.

Two very important events took place in the last 15 years:

1. China became an influential power both economically and politically, and
2. Russia returned to the international chessboard as an energy power.

According to latest information, China is the world's second biggest and dynamically developing economy (the IMF forecasts the growth of its GDP by 6.3%). In 2015, China's daily energy consumption was over 12 million barrels. Close relations between China and Russia seems hardly feasible despite their partnership in the energy sector, which gives China strategic advantages over energy imports from the Middle East and Africa.¹⁵ Political, economic and geopolitical priorities of both countries are very different, which makes the relations between them highly unstable and contradictory.¹⁶

¹¹ See: M. Mareš, M. Laryš, "Oil and Natural Gas in Russia's Eastern Energy Strategy: Dream or Reality?" *Energy Policy*, Vol. 50, pp. 436-448, available at [<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0301421512006325>].

¹² See: L. Golucci, "The Putin Doctrine in Action," *The Weekly Standard*, 26 September, 2015, available at [<http://www.weeklystandard.com/the-putin-doctrine-in-action/article/1036791>].

¹³ See: H. Balzer, "The Putin Thesis and Russian Energy Policy," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 2005, pp. 210-225, available at [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/250171761_The_Putin_Thesis_and_Russian_Energy_Policy].

¹⁴ See: *Prognoz razvitiia energetiki mira i Rossii do 2040 goda*.

¹⁵ See: A. Mahin, "China's Energy Strategy," Russian International Affairs Council, 20 June, 2012, available at [<https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/china-s-energy-strategy/>].

¹⁶ See: G. Mascotto, "Demystifying Russia's Energy Strategy toward China: Strategic Manipulation or Unwitting Vulnerability?" Centre d'études sur l'intégration et la mondialisation, Institut d'études internationales de Montréal, Université du Québec à Montréal, 2010, available at [http://www.ieim.uqam.ca/IMG/pdf/MascottoG_Russia2010.pdf]; R. Newnham, "Oil Carrots and Sticks: Russia's Energy Resources as a Foreign Policy Tool," *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2011,

According to the report of the United States Department of Agriculture and published by the Bloomberg News Agency, by 2030 Chinese economy will reach \$22.2 trillion to become the world's second. By the same time Russia will achieve the level of \$2.4 trillion (the world's tenth). In 2013, the share of China in Russia's foreign trade was 10.6%. However, in 2016, Russia took only 16th place among China's trade partners. This means that Russia has no levers to put pressure on China.

The Turn to the East strategy is a costly enterprise.¹⁷ After the financial crisis of 2008, when the oil prices and its credit rating unexpectedly collapsed, Russia lost a lot of foreign investments. Economic and political sanctions deprived Russia of access to the very much needed technologies indispensable for oil extraction and developing new oil fields. The oil fields in the Arctic and Eastern Siberia were used under technological agreements with the United States and Europe; today, Russia is working hard to draw China into the technological niche left by its former technological partners.¹⁸ Russia's Chinese policy can be summed up as follows:

- (1) seeking the key role in energy supplies to China;
- (2) promoting the economic development of Eastern Siberia and the regions of the Russian Far East;
- (3) drawing Chinese investors to the modernization of Russia's energy sector;
- (4) acquiring from China the very much needed technologies that are impossible to get from the U.S. and Europe due to economic and political sanctions.

Russia has already increased its share on the Chinese market within the realization of the ESPO (Eastern Siberia-Pacific Ocean) pipeline and the Power of Siberia gas pipeline. The oil moved along the former route made Russia the second largest oil supplier of China after Saudi Arabia. There are plans to increase the ESPO capacities and move up to the first place. Increased gas extraction is meaningless: China can cover 70% of its needs in natural gas extracted domestically, while Central Asia offers a much cheaper option.

China looks at its energy and national security as two aspects of the same concept, which explains why it diversifies its energy partners.¹⁹ This is why it is especially committed to continued stability in the North African and Gulf countries. The relations between China and Russia, likewise, can be described as a balancing policy. Russia's geographic proximity will play a great role in the regional system of energy security that China is planning to create in the near future.²⁰ Fully aware of China's plans, Russia is working hard to diversify its partners by ensuring demand and supply of energy from Russia. It has been moving oil and natural gas to Europe via pipelines. Economically efficient, this method is not free from shortcomings in the long-term perspective, namely,

- (1) fairly large initial investments and
- (2) pipelines cannot be directed elsewhere in case of a conflict between the sides.

pp.134-143, available at [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/241124600_Oil_carrots_and_sticks_Russia's_energy_resources_as_a_foreign_policy_tool].

¹⁷ See: Energy Information Administration. Russia, 2014, p. 1, available at [<https://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis.cfm?iso=RUS>].

¹⁸ See: M. Skalamera, "China Can't Solve Russia's Energy Technology Trap," *The Diplomat*, 13 February, 2015, available at [<http://thediplomat.com/2015/02/china-cannot-solve-russias-energy-technology-trap/>].

¹⁹ See: J.Y.S. Cheng, "A Chinese View of China's Energy Security," *Journal of Contemporary China*, No. 17, 2008, p. 297.

²⁰ See: S.V. Uianaev, "Rossiisko-kitayskoe energeticheskoe sotrudnichestvo: priznaki novogo 'urovnia,'" *Kitay v mirovoy i regionalnoy politike*, Issue XVIII, 2013, pp. 277-295, available at [<https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/rossiysko-kitayskoe-energeticheskoe-sotrudnichestvo-priznaki-novogo-urovnya>].

Well-aware of its European experience, Russia wants to build a pipeline that covers the entire APR.

China's energy policy follows a similar course. Putin's administration created state-controlled vertically integrated energy firms designed to supervise not only the energy sector²¹ but also all stages of negotiations. Gazprom's purchase of a plant of Italy's Chevron serves as a pertinent example.

Russia cannot reproduce its European policy when dealing with China, because,

- primarily, it does not depend on Russian hydrocarbons to the extent that will allow Russia to impose its own energy policy. An analysis presented in Forecast-14 shows that between 2015 and 2040 Russia has ensured and will ensure only 9-12% of China's demands for oil; 6% of its demand for natural gas in 2025 and 7% in 2040, as well as 1% of its demand for coal in the same period.²² These figures are insignificant when compared to Europe's dependence on Russia's energy supplies;
- secondly, Russia uses outdated equipment: the pipelines between Russia and Europe inherited from the Soviet Union are old and economically inefficient. In the framework of its Turn to the East policy, Russia will rely on the state-controlled energy firms that will lose their advantages in trading with China. The vertically integrated Rosneft and Gazprom will be unable to operate on the Chinese market because of competition with the Chinese firms CNPC and CNOOC.

To guarantee the steadily growing demand for power resources in China, Kremlin had arrived at the decision to establish cooperation between Russian and Chinese firms in extraction, processing and transportation of hydrocarbons with the aim of making China dependent on Russian energy supplies. In the recent decades, the balance between Russia and China has changed. Confrontation between Russia, on the one hand, and Europe and the United States, on the other, as well as lowering world oil and natural gas prices made it much harder for Moscow to insist on profitable conditions at the talks with Beijing. We cannot expect a sudden upsurge of oil prices at any time before 2025, which creates a dilemma for Russia. It may lower its prices because of the economic and political sanctions; this is more likely because the agreement of the Power of Siberia was signed in 2014.

In view of the fact that China covers 70% of its energy consumption and because in the latter half of 2016 its economy experienced a decline, China will sign a new gas agreement with Russia only on maximally favorable conditions.

Russia needs foreign investments and high technologies for extraction, processing and transportation. The country, however, has lost its attraction for foreign investors; it announced that it would open its energy resources to Chinese operators if the West continued to insist on sanctions. The first signs of this scenario can be seen in JVs of Chinese CNPC and Sinopec with Rosneft and Novatek of Russia.²³

R.L. Larsson has suggested that Putin might increase the 20% limit on the share of foreign firms in Russian energy firms.²⁴ The Baseline Scenario will bring Russia and China closer; Russia being the weaker side. Moscow's dependence on China will differ radically from Moscow's dependence on Europe in the 1990s and 2000s. Its relationship with Europe allowed Russia a certain leeway in the form of negotiations with individual countries. For apparent reasons, this is impossible with China.

²¹ See: "World Freedom Foundation. Vladimir Putin—Direct Speech Without Cuts: Russian Strategy for Winning the Geopolitical Game," Intel Business Publications, 2015.

²² See: T. Tang, *China's Natural Gas Imports and Prospects*, Duke University, Durham, 2014, available at [https://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/10161/8459/MP_Final_Tang.pdf?sequence=1].

²³ See: A.K. Izhbuldin, L.A. Platonov, "Analiz marshrutov postavok rossiiskogo truboprovodnogo gaza v Kitay," in: *Sbornik statey vserossiiskoy konferentsii "Energetika Rossii v XXI veke. Innovatsionnoe razvitiye i upravlenie*," 1-3 September, 2015, Irkutsk, Russia, pp. 156-161, available at [http://isem.irk.ru/publications/conference_paper2015000003126/].

²⁴ See: R.L. Larsson, "Russia's Energy Policy: Security Dimensions and Russia's Reliability as an Energy Supplier," Swedish Defense Research Agency, Aeronautics Division, Stockholm, 2006, available at [<https://ntrl.ntis.gov/NTRL/dashboard/searchResults/titleDetail/PB2007106453.xhtml>].

Table 1

Chinese Firms that Work in the Energy Sector of Russia

Chinese Energy Firm	Energy Resource	Russian Energy Firm	Type of Partnership
CNPC	Oil	Rosneft	Vostok Energy PLC; the right to geological prospecting in the Verkhneicherskoe and Zapadno-Chonskoe districts of Irkut (East Siberia)
	Natural gas	Novatek	20% in the Yamal LNG project
Sinopec	Oil	Rosneft	25.1% in the Sakhalin-3 project and geological prospecting in Veninskoe
	Oil	Rosneft	49% in Udmurtneft, 6.5 million tons of oil a year

The Increased Supply Scenario

Today, there is a lot of talk about oil prices that may go down as a result of oil supplies going up. This is confirmed by the slumped oil prices in October 2014.²⁵ New technologies that appeared in the last decade made oil extraction much cheaper, which increased oil supplies on the global oil market and pushed oil prices down. The Increased Supply Scenario presupposed that further lowering of oil prices will undoubtedly affect the talks between Russia and China.

According to Forecast-2014, Brazil, Iraq, and Iran might considerably increase power production in the next 25 years due to much lower extraction costs. According to Goldman Sachs, the price of Brazilian oil will drop below \$50 per barrel if new oil fields are discovered.²⁶ Iraq needs 5 or 6 years of political stability to considerably increase oil extraction. Having solved its conflicts with the United States and Europe, Iran may follow suit.

The Increased Supply Scenario will negatively affect Russia's positions at the negotiation table with China because of lower gas prices as one of the negative effects. It should not, however, last long.²⁷ In the short-term perspective, higher volumes of oil extracted in Brazil, Iran and Iraq will reduce the volumes of oil production in Russia, the United States, China, Mexico, Malaysia, Indonesia, Norway, Britain, Kazakhstan and Saudi Arabia. Half of the investments poured into geological prospecting will be spent in Russia and the U.S.

This scenario offers Russia's Chinese policy two different tactics:

- (1) to either cut down supplies of its hydrocarbons to China under the pressure of lower prices that will negatively affect the investments in energy projects, such as the Power of Siberia.
- (2) or steadily increase in hydrocarbon supplies to China to preserve its niche on the Chinese market at the expense of the Stability Fund.

²⁵ See: "Crude Oil Prices—70 Year Historical Chart," Macrotrends, 27 July, 2016, available at [<http://www.macrotrends.net/1369/crude-oil-price-history-chart>].

²⁶ See: "Goldman Sachs—Report '330 Projects to Change the World'," 2011, available at [<http://www.energyventures.no/goldman-sachs-report-330-projects-to-change-the-world>].

²⁷ See: *Prognoz razvitiia energetiki mira i Rossii do 2040 goda*.

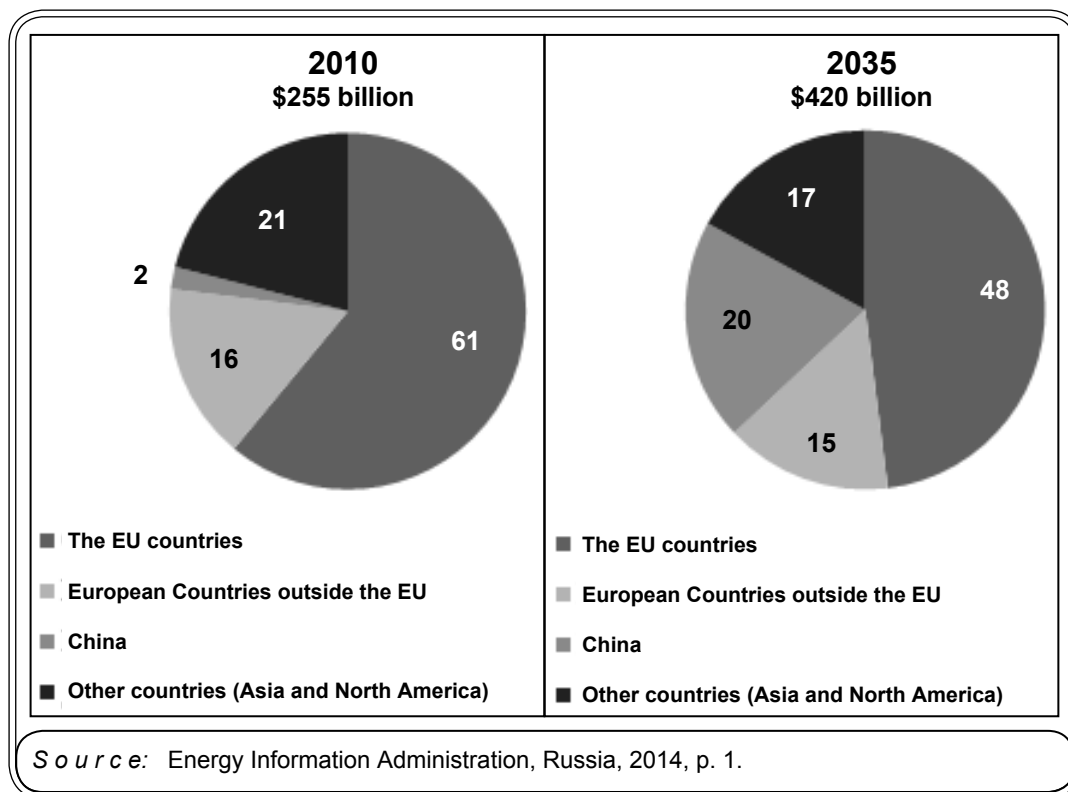
In the context of its Energy Strategy for the Period of up to 2035, Russia attaches great importance to its role of energy supplier to China: it creates short-term economic gains to be poured into the development of Siberia and the Russian Far East. It seems that in case of the Increased Supply Scenario Russia will opt for the second variant.

The Developing Asia Scenario

This is a more positive scenario than the previous two. Higher demand for Russia’s hydrocarbons on the Asian market will accelerate the development of the state-controlled energy complex. According to Forecast-2014, the volume of exported energy will increase by 20% against 2010. The gap between the volumes of oil exported according to the Baseline and the Developing Asia scenarios is not significant; natural gas exports, however, will grow by 75% in 2040. According to the Baseline Scenario, Russia’s export of coal will grow by 17% by 2025 against 2010; it will drop by 10% by 2040 because of the international situation. The Developing Asia Scenario offers a very different opinion about the demand for coal. Under this scenario, the volume of coal exported from Russia will grow by 87% because of the increased demand in the developing Asian countries.²⁸

Figure 1

Russia’s Incomes Created by Exports of Fossil Fuels, 2010 and 2035 (%)



²⁸ See: *Prognoz razvitiya energetiki mira i Rossii do 2040 goda.*

It is very likely that within this scenario Russia will change its partners. Our calculations based on Forecast-2014 show that the share of the Asian-Pacific market in Russia's energy exports will grow to 46% (8% more than under the Baseline Scenario). Despite the fact that Europe is Russia's main partner, China's share in Russia's energy exports will be steadily increasing.

In the Baseline Scenario we proceeded from the moderate growth of GDP in view of the negative international situation, Russia's low investment attractiveness and the stalling modernization of its economy. Within the Developing Asia Scenario, on the other hand, the growing demand for energy in the APR might attract investments to the Russian Far East and Eastern Siberia after 2025. According to Forecast-2014, by 2040 the Russian economy will grow by 2.7 times.

The share of oil in Russia's hydrocarbon trade is another important point. According to the Baseline Scenario, between 2010 and 2040 oil exports will drop from 245 to 185 million tons. According to the Developing Asia Scenario, the share of oil in Russia's exports of energy will drop from 73% to 50% in the same period. This scenario predicts that Russia will come to the Eastern markets and acquire new partners as an alternative to China, which is highly important.

Conclusion

In the last two decades, we have seen many changes in the national security concept, the growing role of its energy-related aspect being one of them. Energy security is an important aspect of Russia's foreign policy. It is important for the restoration of Russia's regional status, or even the preceding superpower status under Vladimir Putin's leadership. China with its population of nearly 1.5 billion and the growing energy requirements play an important role in Russia's energy policy.

The highly unstable and practically unpredictable energy market may prove useful for cooperation between Russia and China, which both countries are vested in and, in particular, invigorate their cooperation in the energy sphere. Their relations can be interpreted as cooperation of two Asian powers in the struggle against unipolarity and influence of the West in other Asian states.

Both countries are expected to preserve their relations with the West. As an important trade partner and energy importer, China occupies a much bigger place in Russia's policies than Greece, the Netherlands or Turkey. This cooperation, however, is too shaky to move to the fore. It merely balancing out today and will balance out in future Russia's relations with the West.

RUSSIA AND TURKEY: ENERGY PARTNERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines Russian-Turkish current cooperation in the context of energy diplomacy. The sides that present themselves as regional powers have to cope with current threats and challenges. The history of these countries' relations normally abounded with confrontations, which made cooperation a rare phenomenon. Today, the geopolitical interests of the two powers clash in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Middle East, however, their cooperation is obvious in many spheres of the economy: tourism, export of agricultural products, buy-

ing Russian armaments, as well as joint efforts to achieve peace in Syria and to settle the Kurdish question. It is no accident that the current warming is called the Golden Age of their bilateral relations, the basis of which is the energy factor. However, there are some issues where the countries do not see eye-to-eye on: they disagree on the status of Crimea, the future of Syria and Bashar Assad.

The research traces the ways in which the key issues in the energy strategies of both countries came to the fore and have been developing; it identifies the main fac-

tors that have contributed to the countries drawing closer together on many issues, including the Kremlin's efforts to diversify Russian gas supplies to Europe in circumvention of Ukraine.

This article focuses on economic interdependence and its impact on the political dialog between the two countries. It should be noted that the energy cooperation was not left outside the agenda at the crucial moment of extreme tension caused by the inci-

dent with the Russian Sukhoi Su-24 aircraft, which was shot down in November 2015 in Turkey and which elicited an asymmetrical response from Moscow.

The authors have analyzed the key points in and future of bilateral relations, as well as the greatest risks and threats stemming from the fact that Turkey as a NATO member has to comply with the bloc's unity; the status of Crimea and the Black Sea Straits issue are also placed in focus.

KEYWORDS: *Russia, Turkey, energy diplomacy, strategy, main gas pipeline, the Black Sea, asymmetrical relations, interdependence of economies, energy security, rapprochement factors, foreign policy, cooperation.*

Introduction

In the latter half of the 20th century, the economic factor has acquired more weight in world politics and increased its consequence as an issue that sets the pace of international relations.

Russia and Turkey are moving towards a new stage in their relationship: the recent events in world politics, Russia's isolation and the difficult relations between Turkey and Europe forced the two countries to rely on pragmatism in an effort to build a new cooperation format.

The debates around Nord Stream 2 main gas pipeline pushed Russia into a difficult situation, so, Moscow treats Ankara as a partner in its energy policy. Their common positions on certain issues may influence the contemporary architecture of international relations. Its confrontation with Kiev forced Moscow to minimize gas transit across Ukraine. It cannot and should not be completely discontinued for political and economic reasons and due to the two countries' cultural closeness.

For obvious reasons, Russia attaches great importance to energy geopolitics. Turkey is seeking leadership in the Middle East and the rest of the Muslim world; it tries to solve its issues with Europe by exposing it to the pressure of migrant flows. The opponents of Russia and Turkey call the frequent meetings between their leaders "an alliance of two dictators." It remains to be seen whether the partnership between these two countries will survive the change of their leaders or whether the political unity stems from the economic cooperation?

Our Aim and Tasks

We have set a task to analyze the prospects of the relationship between Russia and Turkey in the context of interdependence of their economies, the energy sector in particular, and to answer the following question: will the interaction of these two economies lead to strategic political cooperation in the contemporary world, or will the less dependent partner strive for asymmetrical interdependence?

Our Methods

We relied on comparative political and systemic functional analysis of international relations and the world economy as the methodological foundation of our studies in order to look closer at the mechanisms of realization of the states' national interests as an integral part of interaction between politics and the economy. We used the comparative analysis methods to identify the limits of application of foreign experience to ensure national state interests.

We have taken into account the historical methods, which permit a closer scrutiny of the emergence and development of bilateral relations and the energy diplomacy of both countries.

Economic interdependence and its impact on political relations between the countries involved is one of the major trends of the theory of international relations. Many schools of contemporary international relations thoroughly study the problems of interdependence of economies of two countries and the extent to which it affects their foreign policies, national security issues and geopolitics.

Realists are convinced that interdependence adds vigor to competition and inter-state conflicts; liberal theoreticians insist that interdependence may serve as the cornerstone of cooperation under certain conditions.

The political school of realism argues that dependence can be called "conditional," since in order for the dependence to be transformed into inter-dependence, the price of disrupted relations or contraction of mutual trade should be the same for the sides involved. Those who share this view claim that relative gains are much more important than absolute gains, and that the side that profits more from interdependence has a better chance to tip the political and military balance in its favor. Asymmetric interdependence that stems from this is a structural factor that creates the balance of power in the long-term and may come useful in the short-term perspective.

Liberal theoreticians, on the other hand, do not believe that dependence is an inevitable element of conflicts: under certain circumstances it may promote inter-state cooperation. Contrary to the realists' approach that relative gains are what matters most, the liberals place greater emphasis on absolute gains.

The steadily rising economic interdependence can survive amid political conflicts and geopolitical rivalry. The opposite positions of Turkey and Russia on the Syrian and Ukrainian issues, however, demonstrate that these conflicts do not undermine the seemingly close economic relations to any extent.¹

What Led to the Rapprochement between Ankara and Moscow?

The end of the Cold War marked the beginning of a new stage in the relations between the two states, yet their perception of a mutual threat and their geopolitical rivalry did not allow them to build a mutually advantageous relationship in the 1990s. It was a highly complicated situation because of Turkey's active pursuits in the Black Sea-Caspian region that Moscow regarded as a sphere of its exclusive interests. The Caucasus and the Black Sea were and still remain a region where the interests of Russia and Turkey have clashed many times.

Russia and Turkey do not agree on the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; Moscow's Chechen campaign late in the 20th century was another stumbling block in their bilateral relations.

¹ See: A.G. Ibragimov, "Turtsia i Rossia: vzaimodeystvie vopreki stolknoveniu interesov," *Postsovetskie issledovania*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2018, p. 75.

Mistrust and tension between them were fed by Moscow's suspicions that Ankara supported Chechen fighters in the 1990s.²

Normalization began in the latter half of the 1990s, mostly because of the altered balance of power (Russia was losing its status of a military power); the new leaders in both states and significantly more pronounced geopolitical threats (terrorism and U.S.'s stronger influence in the region consolidated by the Iraqi war of 2003) called for concerted efforts.

The Asian financial crisis of 1997-1998 and Russia's default forced Moscow to revise its attitude towards Ankara. Russia needed new partners to disentangle from the economic crisis. On top of that, Turkey no longer considered Russia a military and political threat.

Russia was extremely worried by NATO eastward expansion, while the 1999 campaign against Yugoslavia buried the remnants of Moscow's trust in the U.S., Europe and NATO. The Kremlin began revising its positions and foreign policy priorities.

Vladimir Putin's victory in the presidential elections of 2000 and his statements about establishing better relations with Ankara promoted a dialog between the two countries.³

In 2002, Ankara's failed attempts to join the EU and numerous internal problems brought to power the Justice and Development Party, geared at friendly relations with all neighbors, the position that positively affected the relationship with Russia.⁴

The Western coalition's 2003 Iraqi war caused a lot of disagreement between Moscow and Washington and between Ankara and Washington. In March 2003, contrary to expectations, the Turkish parliament refused to open an air corridor for the U.S. planes.⁵

Soon afterwards, Ankara and Moscow started drifting closer in their positions on Middle Eastern security. The Kremlin was determined to preserve the geopolitical balance in the region and tried to compensate its losses in Georgia after the events of 2003 and in Ukraine after 2004-2005. By drawing closer to Moscow, Ankara showed that it intended to move away from the U.S. policy fraught with chaos and instability, according to the Turkish leader.

In this manner, the two countries entered the era of cooperation in the early 2000s.

Turkey's Energy Strategy

Globalization and stronger interdependence have pushed the problem of energy security to the fore in the majority of countries. Turkey's energy security greatly depends on imports, which means that diversification of energy supplies through finding new suppliers figures prominently in its politics. Situated between the regions of extraction and consumption of energy resources, Turkey plays an important role in the world energy policy and diplomacy. The Middle Eastern and the Caspian countries are main producers of energy resources: about three-fourths of the proven natural gas and oil reserves are found in this region. Because of its geographic location, Turkey is seen as a natural bridge between the producers and users of hydrocarbons and an important actor involved in ensuring global energy security.

The increasingly complicated relations between Moscow and Brussels have added even more importance to Turkey's role in the world energy game. Today, the question of diversifying Russian

² See: D. Steshin, "V Turtsii 'vse vklucheno': i jihad, i turizm," available at [<https://www.kp.ru/daily/26462/3332924/>], 21 February, 2019.

³ See: S. Kiniklioglu, "Türk-Rus ilişkileri: Kasyanov ziyaretinin anatomisi" (Turkish-Russian Relations: Anatomy of Kasyanov Visit), *Avrasya Dosyası*, No. 6 (4), 2001, p. 159.

⁴ See: S.F. Larrabee, "Turkey's New Geopolitics," *Survival*, No. 52 (2), 2010, p. 176.

⁵ See: E. Gaber, "Turkey and the United States in the Caucasus: Prospects for Cooperation in Conflict Settlement," *The Caucasus & Globalization*, Vol. 7, Issue 1-2, 2013, p. 31.

natural gas supplies to Europe and supplying gas from the sources alternative to Russia cannot be solved without the active participation of Ankara.

Fully aware of the extreme importance of the problem, Turkey readjusted its foreign policy strategy in the 21st century by moving Neo-Ottomanism to the fore in its Strategic Depth doctrine. This is the ideological foundation of Turkey's new foreign policy and Turkey's future prominent role in the world economy. Today, Turkey can control practically all the transit routes by which fuel reaches Europe, with the exception of Russian projects.

Since the late 1980s, all Turkish governments have been trying yet failed to formulate a new energy strategy, which seemed like mission impossible in a country living amid political crises. At that time, Turkey obtained natural gas, primarily, from Iran, Greece (via the Trans-Balkan pipeline), and liquefied gas from Algeria.

In the early 1990s, domination in the Middle East was absent from the Turkish foreign policy agenda, while its relations with the Arab East were far from simple and fairly tense.

Tehran consolidated its positions when Saddam Hussein and his regime were liquidated and the predominantly Kurdish Iraq north became de facto independent. Turkey spared no effort to become a bridge between the Middle Eastern exporters and Western importers of natural gas to resolve the problem of bigger energy fuel supplies for its quickly growing economy in this manner. Despite its trumpeted "zero problems with neighbors" policy, Ankara moved against the Assad regime in Syria in expectation that it would be promptly replaced by pro-Western or Islamist groups. Under the influence of Russia and Tehran, Assad opposed the project of a gas pipeline to span from Qatar and the Arabian Peninsula to Europe across Syria: Tehran did not need stronger Gulf rivals, while Moscow did not want another rival on the European market.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union, due to which the former Soviet Turkic republics became independent states, gave Turkey a chance to revise its foreign policy doctrine. Ankara turned its attention to the culturally and linguistically close Central Asian republics and Azerbaijan.

The former Soviet republics, rich in hydrocarbons, were looking for oil and gas export routes alternative to the Soviet ones. As one of the priority directions of oil and gas transportation to the European market bypassing Russia, Turkey gave Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan a chance to get rid of Moscow's political and economic control.

The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline was one of the first large projects and an important component of the East-West energy corridor. On 4 June, 2006, the first cargo of oil was loaded on a tanker in Ceyhan; when Astana (now Nur-Sultan) joined the project on 16 June, 2006, the geography of exports and the number of countries involved in the project became even more impressive. This caused serious concerns in Russia.

In 2011, having carefully analyzed the prospects, Turkey preferred TANAP pushing the widely publicized Nabucco project into the background. Turkey treated its relationship with Russia as a priority in the context. It sided with Russia in the discussion about whether the South Stream was necessary per se or as Russia's anti-Ukrainian instrument.⁶

The South Stream project signed by Turkey and Russia gave Moscow certain advantages in its energy confrontation with Ukraine. According to the project, the South-European gas pipeline (with the annual capacity of 63 bcm) will enable Russia to sell natural gas straight to Europe through the Black Sea bypassing Ukraine. After the Ukrainian developments and annexation of Crimea by Moscow the relationship between the Russian Federation and the European Union became tense to the extent that the European Commission announced that it would suspend the project. President Putin responded annulling this project, increasing the carrying capacity of the Blue Stream and starting the TurkStream.

⁶ See: M. Çelikpala, "Turkey and the New Energy Politics of the Black Sea Region," *Neighbourhood Policy Paper*, No. 3, January 2013, p. 4.

Moscow's Energy Strategy

Russia is one of the world's leading energy powers; it satisfies its own demands and covers a great share of demands on the European market.

Forty percent of the proven world's gas resources, 13% of oil and about 30% of estimated coal reserves are found in Russia. Russia covers 80% of Ukraine's requirements in energy sources; 100% of the Baltic states and over 50% of the East European countries.⁷

After the Soviet Union's disintegration, rising hydrocarbon prices helped Russia become a global player in the world economy. Abundant energy resources added political stability to the domestic situation and promoted Moscow's ambitions on the international scene. This explains why energy is one of the important factors of Russia's foreign policy.

Since 1992, Russia's energy policy has covered a path leading from the very complicated period of transition to the contemporary state that can be described as pragmatic and very much different from the strongly ideologized Soviet politics. The priorities of its energy strategy were changing under the impact of certain factors that came to the fore at the time of cardinal changes at the turn of the 21st century. It was at that time that Russia, having restored its energy potential, launched a new course using the pragmatic and efficient energy trump card in attaining its foreign economic and foreign policy aims.

The difficult internal political situation of the 1990s did not allow Moscow to completely revise its energy doctrine. Even if in the first post-Soviet years Russia figured prominently on the European market, its weak economy, vanished military power and the frail political elite did not allow it to tap its energy potential to the full.

Gas-related disagreements between Kiev and Moscow became a habitual feature, since 95% of the gas pipelines inherited from the Soviet Union and used to export natural gas from Russia to Europe traversed Ukraine.⁸

The gas wars with Ukraine forced Russia to revise its energy strategy: persistent payment defaults of the mid-1990s developed into an acute political confrontation of the mid-2000s, aggravated by the dynamically developing APR countries. Russia looked at the former Soviet territory as a sphere of its exclusive interests; its ardent desire to preserve its domination in Ukraine increased the anti-Russian feelings despite the fact that at the end of his second presidential term, Putin invited Ukraine to set up a joint oil and gas consortium that would have allowed Russia to remain in control in Ukraine.

Russia's new energy doctrine up to the year 2020 was an obvious statement that it intended to use its natural resources to ensure its political domination on the continent.

In the late 1990s-early 2000s, Moscow commissioned several big infrastructural projects to diversify its export of energy resources to Europe and Asia. It launched the following gas pipelines into operation: Yamal-Europe (1999), the Blue Stream (2002), North Stream (2011), gas-liquefying facilities on Sakhalin (2009), the Baltic pipeline system—the 1st and 2nd lines (2002 and 2012, respectively), Eastern Siberia-Pacific Ocean oil pipeline with a branch to China (2009), oil export terminals on the Okhotsk and Pechora seas⁹ and started the construction of the Power of Siberia gas pipeline.

⁷ See: Iu.K. Shafranik, "Novaia energeticheskaia politika Rossii," available at [<https://shafranik.ru/publikatsii/-novaya-energeticheskaya-politika-rossii->], 23 February, 2019.

⁸ See: E.A. Metlenko, "'Gazovy' konflikt mezhdru Rossiei i Ukrainoy: opyt razreshenia v 1992-1999 gg.," *Nauchnye vedomosti Belgorodskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta; History, Political Science, Economics, Informatics Series*, Vol. 24, No. 19 (138), 2012.

⁹ See: Iu.V. Borovskiy, "Energeticheskaia politika Rossii na mezhdunarodnoy arene," *Vestnik MGIMO, International Relationships Series*, No. 6, 2012, p. 40.

Cooperation in the energy sphere between Russia/the U.S.S.R. and Turkey goes back to 1984, when the sides signed an agreement on natural gas supplies to Turkey. At that time, Turkey looked at the Soviet Union as a geopolitical adversary, while gas (0.4 bcm a year) was moved along the Trans-Balkan pipeline.¹⁰ The previously impossible close cooperation began with the gas pipeline from Russia to Turkey being laid on the seabed. Russia does not limit its attention to Turkey's energy sphere by gas supply only. It is building a nuclear power plant in Akkuyu on Turkey's Mediterranean coast.

Today, due to the fairly complicated relations between Russia and the EU, Turkey is Russia's only "window" on South Europe.

In 2018, the volume of gas Russia exported to Europe was twice as big as in 1991 and reached the figure of 201 bcm.¹¹

Sharper Confrontation as a Strength Test

The events of 24 November, 2015, divided the relationships between Russia and Turkey into "before and after" launching a new round of confrontation and putting the interconnection of the two countries to a strength test. Moscow responded to Ankara with asymmetrical measures: tourist agencies could no longer sell vouchers to Turkish resorts; the visa-free regime was suspended; the import of certain agricultural products was banned, Turkish guest workers were sent back to Turkey. NATO sided with Turkey, while Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan supported Moscow. The gas pipeline under construction, however, remained outside the anti-Turkish sanctions.

In Turkey the main question was whether it had been wise to shoot down the Russian plane. At first, the Turkish leaders refused to apologize to Russia; certain top Turkish officials even said that they had ordered to down the Russian Su-24. However, the Turkish business circles knew that the sanctions might cause many difficult repercussions; the media went even farther: they were wondering whether Russia would discontinue gas supplies.

The sanctions were not directly related to gas supplies and the perception of Turkey's energy security. Much was said about diversification of gas supplies, development of nuclear energy production and possible revival of gas supplies from the region's countries. The complicated relations with Riyadh and Doha and the success of the government troops supported by Russia in Syria made the prospects of the much desired projects of bringing Qatar gas to Europe via Turkey unrealizable.

On 3 December, 2015, Prime Minister of Turkey Ahmet Davutoğlu came to Baku to somehow accelerate the TANAP project. The sides discussed the normalization of relations with Israel, which were very much complicated by different approaches to the future of Palestine and the Gaza Strip.

Moscow perceived this as a painful "stab in the back," yet there was a clear understanding that the conflict should be settled no matter what. Russia could not permit itself the luxury of losing the promising market and suffering multi-billion losses. Economic interdependence served as the platform of political cooperation; geopolitical ambitions were pushed aside.

In 2017, Turkey was the second country in the volume of imported Russian gas after Germany. Italy was the third.¹²

¹⁰ See: P.E. Kalugin, "Istoricheskaia dinamika Rosiisko-Turetskikh vzaimootnosheniy v ekonomike i energetike," *Izvestia Irkutskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, History Series*, No. 12, 2015, p. 45.

¹¹ See: "Russia's Gas Exports to Europe Reach Record High," available at [<https://www.energymarketprice.com/energy-news/russia%E2%80%99s-gas-exports-to-europe-reach-record-high>], 28 February, 2019.

¹² See: "Dinamika realizatsii gaza v Evropu," available at [<http://www.gazpromexport.ru/statistics/>], 27 February, 2019.

Conclusion

Energy diplomacy, an important part of the relations between Russia and Turkey, is highly efficient in the region and in bilateral relations.

Russia's energy diplomacy has its specifics:

- first of all, Russia's energy companies are protected by the state;
- second, it is oriented towards the regions rather than states;
- third, Russia's comparative advantages in the energy sphere are developed into political and economic advantages.

Russia relies on its energy diplomacy to pursue its foreign policy. Its gas- and oil-pipelines, either functioning or at the planning or construction stage, are intended to increase its influence in the part of the globe that depends on fuel supplies from Russia. This means that in the absence of safety instruments, neither the European Union nor the United States will allow Russia to use Nord Stream 2 to its full capacity.

If the sanctions remain in place, in the near future Russia will start moving to the Asian market. Moscow profits from the complex relations between Ankara and Brussels, it demonstrates unity with Turkey on many foreign policy issues and expects the same from Ankara. So far, Ankara has opted for bloc unity rather than siding with its energy partner.¹³ As could be expected, this fact stirs up certain doubts in Moscow that might use the Tehran-Bagdad-Damask Shi'a triangle to force Ankara to alter its position.

Russia's and Turkey's actions in Syria are more or less aligned; this is not a partnership but a demonstration of the unity of intentions in the bilateral political respect since the future of Syria looks different from two capitals. Moscow prefers the status quo to dominate the European energy market for some time, while Ankara relies on pro-Turkish fighters to consolidate its positions in the north of Syria.

Russia is a reliable supplier of natural gas for the rapidly developing Turkish economy and a trump card in its relations with the EU and the U.S.

Turkey intends to diversify its gas suppliers: the 2015 events demonstrated that the balance in the bilateral relations may be tipped in Russia's favor. Today, Turkey needs 53 bcm of natural gas; Russia supplies 29 bcm, that is, more than a half of the required amount. When the gas pipeline from Azerbaijan is commissioned, Turkey will need 6 bcm less of Russian gas. This dependence may become even smaller when Turkmenistan joins the Trans-Caspian Pipeline.

Turkey does not want tension to arise between Russia and the EU. If this happens, or if NATO's eastward expansion comes to the fore, Turkey may stand in opposition to Washington.

Today, the relations between the two countries are mutually profitable, yet the asymmetry may be restored by Turkey. It has several instruments of pressure on Russia—Crimea and the Black Sea Straits. The Montreux Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits will expire in 2036, giving Turkey certain advantages in its potential disagreements with Moscow.

¹³ See: "Genassambleia OON priniala antirossiyskuiu resoliutsiiu po Krymu," available at [<https://ria.ru/20181223/1548509329.html>], 27 February 2019.

THE OSSETIAN VECTOR IN IRAN'S CONTEMPORARY FOREIGN POLICY

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between Russia and Iran is currently at the point of maximum convergence for the first time in a long historical period. The article discusses the prospects of socio-economic and cultural cooperation between Russia and Iran in the Caucasus, which occupies a special strategic place in the relations between the two countries. Iran understands the Russian Caucasus with its complex ethno-political,

social and religious mosaic and is interested in strengthening contacts and rapprochement with the peoples that are historically and culturally associated with Persians (North Ossetia, in particular). Mutual contacts of the Alans and their proto-ethnos, Scythians, with Iran are mentioned in many historical sources. A large number of Persians lived in Vladikavkaz in the 19th-early 20th centuries, and a Persian consulate

functioned in the city at that time. One of the main regional projects is the construction of the Trans-Caucasian Overpass Railway, designed as far back as the 19th century, but not yet implemented for various reasons. The economic expectations of the Ossetian authorities are largely related to the implementation of this project in the near future with the direct participation of the Iranian side.

For North Ossetia, as a border constituent entity of the Russian Federation, it is crucial that Russia and Iran share the strategic vision of the Southern Caucasus as a zone free of military conflicts and a region impervious to external presence. It places a particular emphasis on the fact that strengthening NATO's position in the region is not the optimal way to maintain regional stability. The Iran-Ossetian relations are currently experiencing a new long-awaited round of contact intensification. A special role in this process belongs to the North Ossetian State University (NOSU). University authorities have for a long time supported the study of

the culture and languages of Eastern countries, such as Iran and Turkey. It was at the NOSU that an Iranian cultural center was opened in 2014 at the Faculty of History.

In December 2017, an important Russian-Iranian forum/intergovernmental scientific and practical conference "Iran and the Northern Caucasus: History and Prospects of Cooperation" was held at the university, bringing together about 300 participants, including heads of Russian and Iranian government structures, representatives of the academic and business communities of the two countries. The Vladikavkaz conference served as a discussion platform for evaluating the ties between the Caucasus and Iran and strengthening Russian-Iranian trade and economic cooperation within the North Caucasian region. The cooperation between Iran and Ossetia is implemented largely through the support of the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Russia, Mr. Mehdi Sanai, who has repeatedly stated that "Ossetia is important to and cherished by us."

KEYWORDS: Northern Caucasus, Ossetia, Ossetian-Iranian cooperation, Trans-Caucasian transport route.

Introduction

The Caucasian region has traditionally been afforded an important strategic place in the relationship between Russia and Iran. The two countries have already reached a consolidated position on a number of Caucasus-related issues, including the inadmissibility of the penetration of terrorist organizations and radical ideologies into the Caucasian region, the unacceptability of intervention by external players, primarily the United States and NATO as a whole, in the affairs of the Southern and Northern Caucasus. We should now consider the historical need for cooperation between the Russian Northern Caucasus and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The peoples of the Caucasus and Iran have known each other for as long as they evoke their history. Judging from archeological artifacts and written sources, close cultural and historical ties have been traced as far back as the ancient times. The most complete written information for studying the medieval history of the peoples of the Northern Caucasus is contained in Muslim sources (including Persian), which are a part of the golden corpus of Caucasian studies.

The history of official bilateral relations between Russia and Iran spans five centuries. The specific terms of the neighborly relations between Russia and Iran in each historical period deter-

mined the place and role of the Northern Caucasus in the development of Russian-Iranian relations. Depending on their overall state, the region served either as a space for mutually beneficial cooperation and cultural communication, or as a conflict border zone.

Strengthening Iran-Ossetian ties at the present time is an important aspect of Iran's general policy in the Caucasus. The Southern Caucasus, as a source of opportunities and threats, occupies a central place in Iran's multinational foreign policy agenda. After ignoring the Caucasus for decades and excluding it from its geopolitical chess game, Iran is once again developing a relationship with the Southern Caucasus, including Georgia, in hopes of regaining the role of a regional power. Ossetian-Iranian relations are important in the global foreign policy of both Russia and the Islamic Republic of Iran due to the peculiarities of the mutual influence of their geopolitical interests in the Caucasus region.

Trans-Caucasian Transport Route

The Russian Federation is committed to developing economically viable transport links with the countries of the Southern Caucasus, Iran and Turkey. The special role of North Ossetia in establishing economic and cultural ties with these countries is linked to their geographical proximity and historical ties. Iran is pursuing a stable pragmatic foreign policy, which sets and realizes its own economic and strategic goals, expanding the country's regional influence. The strengthening of Iran's position in the Southern Caucasus, especially in Georgia (there is no visa regime between Georgia and Iran), may contribute to the implementation of the plan for the construction of the Overpass Railway, which was designed in the 19th century. This project has a great significance for North Ossetia. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the state border between Russia and Georgia was set to traverse the North Ossetia. Since the time of its foundation in 1784 as a fortress, Vladikavkaz has been a border city. The Georgian Military Road, an important international transport artery and a Eurasian corridor that has existed for several centuries, originates from it.

The first Overpass Railway projects emerged in the 1870s. The project proposed by Bolesław Statkowski, an engineer, was considered the best. It stipulated the railway to be constructed to the west of the Georgian Military Road. "On the northern slope, it was supposed to cut into the mountains of the Greater Caucasus along the Ardon River valley, traversed by the so-called Military Ossetian Road, and on the southern slopes, the roadbed was supposed to go down the Bolshaya Liakhvi River valley, cutting through the current autonomous region of South Ossetia,"¹ Sergey Anisimov reports. A large tunnel under the Dzomag Overpass was designed. Statkowski heeded great attention to the peculiarities of the local climate significant for the civil engineering work. In particular, he had personally studied mudslides and left a work on the peculiarities of this phenomenon on Caucasus Mountains roads (Statkowski is believed to have introduced the concept of "mudslide" into scientific terminology), and organized mudslide expeditions. The ministry had approved and supported the engineer's project, funds were allocated, but various economic and bureaucratic obstacles arose, and the Russian emperors did not manage to build the road in the 1870s-1880s.

Active railway construction in the Russian Empire at the turn of the 20th century had once again prompted the authorities to consider the construction of this strategically important road. The Vladikavkaz Railway Society was ready to take up the construction of the Overpass Road. In 1910, a special meeting at the Ministry of Railways approved the direction of the Overpass Road to the east of the Georgian Military Road, while several other projects were also under consideration. Among

¹ S.S. Anisimov, *Voенно-gruzinskaia doroga*, VTSSPS, Moscow, 1925, with maps and photographs (11 sheets), Series: *Ekskursionnyye knizhki chlena profsoiuza*, p. 46.

them was one by the famous French engineer Eiffel, who presented his own project for a railway through the Caucasus Mountains. Geological exploration required for this type of civil engineering work was carried out for all projects. The cost of the road, which spanned 181.36 km, was estimated at about 60 million rubles. In view of the need to lay tunnels, it was supposed to take 7 to 8 years to build the road.

The problem of the need for road construction in the Caucasus has always been relevant for Russian authorities, and it was supposed to be resolved as part of the modernization of the country's economy in the last quarter of the 19th century. "For the Caucasus, impassability is the main factor delaying its economic and cultural development. Therefore, the issue of the Overpass Road will be re-opened and resolved in one way or another. Without this road, many parts of the Transcaucasus cannot in any way be closely involved in the general economic turnover, and their economy was condemned to being based on sustenance farming until the Overpass Road is constructed."² The current global and regional economic and socio-political situation, and particularly that in the Caucasian region, is once again making relevant the construction of the Trans-Caucasus railway, which would connect Russia with the Southern Caucasus, Iran and Turkey. The implementation of this project will boost trade between these countries, both in physical and monetary terms, it will contribute to building an effective logistics scheme, reduce the transport expenditures of enterprises engaged in foreign trade, lower risks, accelerate customs clearance, leading to a general improvement in international cooperation.

An important step towards the project's implementation was the representational business forum held in Vladikavkaz in March 2014, called "Development of Cooperation among the Businesses of the South of Russia, the Caucasus and the Islamic Republic of Iran." The report by Mikhail Chernov, Deputy Director of the Moscow Center for Strategic Trend Studies "Iran - Armenia-Georgia-Russia Transport Corridor" was the conceptual core around which the event was structured. According to the expert, after the construction of 150 km of the Alagir-Tskhinval railway and the restoration of the Tskhinval-Gori section, the North Caucasian railway will obtain direct access to Armenia and Iran, which will sharply revive economic cooperation in the region.

The address received a wide response. The officials of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania and the Republic of South Ossetia, along with residents of Vladikavkaz and Alagir who were counting on new jobs, were waiting impatiently for a confirmation of information about the beginning of road construction from Moscow.³ The problem solution remains relevant to the situation in 2019: the general political and economic situation, delays in freight transport on the Georgian Military Road today command the speedy implementation of the long-awaited railway construction project.

Thus, the resolution of the transport problem at the border, including through the construction of the railway, is very important for North Ossetia, which is experiencing environmental problems from the hundreds of freight transit vehicles standing in the queue for customs. The checkpoint in Lars is the only available land route for Armenian citizens due to geopolitical conflicts with Azerbaijan.

For North Ossetia, as a border constituent entity of the Russian Federation, it is very important that Russia and Iran share the strategic vision of the Southern Caucasus as a military conflict-free zone and a region impervious to external presence, emphasizing the fact that strengthening NATO's position in the region is not the optimal way to maintain regional stability.

It is indisputably important for the Russian authorities that Iran was one of the few Muslim states that supported the integrity of Russia during the two Chechen wars, and shared the Kremlin's

² Ibid., pp. 47-48.

³ See: Ya.A. Amelina, "Vneshniaia politika Irana: osetinskoe napravlenie," in: *Kavkazskiy geopoliticheskiy klub. Sbornik materialov nauchno-prakticheskoy konferentsii "Geopolitika Bolshogo Kavkaza v kontekste blizhnovostochnogo i ukrainskogo krizisov"*, Vladikavkaz, 2014, pp. 14-16.

outlook on the sources of funding for jihadist movements from abroad (primarily from the Persian Gulf). Iran understands the Russian Caucasus with its complex ethno-political and socio-religious mosaic and is committed to strengthening contacts and rapprochement with the peoples that are historically and culturally associated with Persians (in particular, North Ossetia).

Ossetian-Iranian Relations in History

Mutual contacts between the Alans and their proto-ethnos, Scythians, and Iran are cited in many historical sources. Herodotus devoted *Melpomene*,⁴ the fourth book of his *Histories*, to this relationship, speaking in detail about the causes of the conflict between the Persians and the Scythians, and the campaign conducted by Darius I on the Scythian lands in the late 6th century BC. Fear of Turkish influence and a greater preference for Iran can often be traced in Ossetian history. Perhaps the reason is the Ossetians' genetic memory of the single Indo-European origin of the Persian people and the Ossetians themselves.⁵ In its modern policy in the Caucasus, Iran has repeatedly tried to either attract Ossetians as allies, or subjugate them by force of arms. Some of the Ossetians continued to focus on Iran as recently as in the first decades of the 19th century. Due to the ultimate consolidation of Russian positions in the Caucasian region, Ossetian-Iranian contacts were gradually minimized.

A large number of nationalities lived in the poly-ethnic Vladikavkaz at the turn of the 20th century. In 1863, Vladikavkaz became the center of the Terek region. Numerous seekers of a better life and small entrepreneurs rushed to Vladikavkaz from all over Russia, as well as from abroad (in particular from Iran). The Persian community was quite large, and its main occupation was commerce. Persian carpet stores, as well as tea shops and stalls selling local and colonial fruits and oriental sweets, were opened in Vladikavkaz; immigrants from Iran worked as water carriers. A large number of Persians worked in brick factories. Navruz, a Russian-Persian school, was opened in the city in 1903 to teach the Persian language.⁶ Iranians were granted a monopoly on the sale of textiles, as well as provision of postal services between Vladikavkaz and Tiflis. A material reminder of this period in the history of Vladikavkaz is the preserved building of a Shi'a mosque in the very center of the city, on the banks of the Terek. The number of arriving Persians was so great that it necessitated the opening of the Persian Consulate General in Vladikavkaz in the 1890s. The spouse of the Shah's consul Mirza Daut Khan was Aza Safarovna Tuganova, the sister of Makhharbek Tuganov, the national artist of Ossetia. The consulate was opened on Evdokimovskaya Street, currently Gorky Street. Unfortunately, the Persian Consulate building in Vladikavkaz, which was of architectural value, was damaged in a fire and subsequently rebuilt.

After the events of the 1917 revolution and the ensuing civil war, the Persian population of Vladikavkaz had decreased in size, the consulate was closed, and various organizations were subsequently located in the building. However, the currently increasing Ossetian-Iranian contacts have placed the issue of creating an Iranian representation in the republic, which would coordinate the cultural, social and economic ties between Ossetia and Iran, back on the agenda. To some extent, the Iranian Cultural Center at the Kosta Khetagurov North Ossetian State University serves as the Persian representation in the region.

⁴ See: Herodotus, *The Histories*, Transl. by George Rawlinson, Roman Roads Media, Moscow, Idaho, 2013.

⁵ See: N.M. Yemelianova, *Musulmane Osetii: Na perekrestke tsivilizatsiy*, Part 2: Islam v Osetii. Istoricheskaya retrospektiva, available at [http://lit.lib.ru/e/emelxjanowa_n_m/musulxmaneosetiinaperekrestkeciwilizacijchastxiislamwosetiis-toricheskajaretrospektiwa.shtml], 14 April, 2019.

⁶ See: Z.V. Kanukova, *Staryi Vladikavkaz. Istoriko-etnologicheskoe issledovanie*, Vladikavkaz, 2008, p. 200.

Today, the Northern Caucasus, due to its geographical location and historical and cultural heritage, has all the necessary resources to act as the economic, scientific, educational and cultural center of the multifaceted Iranian-Russian cooperation. The Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Russia, Mr. Mehdi Sanai, plays an important role in the development of bilateral contacts. His work is well known in the Northern Caucasus, where he enjoys deep respect and authority. A special attitude of the Iranians towards Ossetia was expressed by the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mr. Mehdi Sanai, during one of his visits to Vladikavkaz, where he had emphasized that he loves Russia and the Russian regions very much, but feels right at home in Ossetia.

Academic Cooperation between Iranian and Ossetian Universities

Iranian-Ossetian relations are currently experiencing a new long-awaited round of contact intensification. It is gratifying to note that North Ossetian State University has a special role in this process. The leadership of the university has for a long time supported the study of the culture and languages of Eastern countries, such as Iran and Turkey. An Iranian Cultural Center was opened in 2014 at the Faculty of History of the NOSU. Direct contacts with the Iranian embassy allowed young Ossetian scientists to go to Tehran for internships.

Universities today encounter both the problem of training new professionals and transforming into platforms that generate projects and regional development programs, which is the universities' key contribution to the government authorities. All of the above justifies the steps taken by the NOSU management and scientists in the framework of developing mutually beneficial cultural and economic projects with Iran.

The main emphasis in Iranian universities is placed on engineering and technical professions, however, humanities are also fairly well developed. In December 2016, the NOSU delegation led by Dean A.U. Ogoyev visited Iran at the invitation of Allameh Tabataba'i University in Tehran. It is the largest university that focuses on the humanities and social sciences in Iran. During the visit, a meeting was held with the leaders of the Iranian university, in the course of which the parties agreed on mutually beneficial cooperation in the framework of the signed agreement.

Tehran University had carefully analyzed the capabilities of North Ossetian State University in organizing the educational process and research work. According to Iranian colleagues, they found a worthy partner. During 2017, the parties began to implement the inter-university agreement. One of the important steps in the rapprochement with Iran and cooperation with Iranian universities is the Master's program "Iran in the Modern World," which was launched at the NOSU History Department, with the option of receiving a double diploma from NOSU and Allameh Tabataba'i University in Tehran. Specialists with knowledge of Iranian culture, history, language and politics are needed in various fields, including economy and education. North Ossetian University students have a unique opportunity to study the Persian language with a native speaker. Since recently, everyone with a desire to do so can learn the Persian language by taking Farsi courses at the Iranian Cultural Center at NOSU. The first Persian language course was successfully completed in 2017, and students received certificates confirming their level of language proficiency. The launch of courses at NOSU became possible in no small part due to the signing of a cooperation agreement between Kosta Khetagurov NOSU and Allameh Tabataba'i University in Tehran. The immediate plans are to attract even more specialists in various areas from the Iranian university.

Cooperation with Iranian linguists and ethnologists is important for the development of Ossetian philology and ethnology. The Ossetian language is part of the same language group as Persian, this fact also explains the interest of the Iranian academic community in Ossetia.

Another common point in the Ossetian and Iranian scientific research is the Caucasian studies vector. Ossetia is traditionally considered one of the centers of Caucasian studies. Caucasus Studies schools in the region have been around for over a century. Both North Ossetian and South Ossetian state universities have departments of Caucasian studies at their historical faculties. In 2006, Tehran University established the Caucasus Studies Institute, CSI (TU), which conducts research on the material and spiritual heritage of the Caucasian regions and their economic potential. This is the first specialized institute in Iran engaged in a comprehensive study of the Caucasus. During their visit to Tehran in December, the NOSU delegation visited the Caucasus Studies Institute, and a meeting was organized with the Iranian Caucasus Studies community. Cooperation in this direction in the scientific, design, expert and analytical vectors will also contribute to the implementation of cultural and economic projects in the Caucasian region.

“Iran and the Northern Caucasus: History and Cooperation Prospects” Conference

At the North Ossetian State University, which occupies a special place in the socio-economic and political life of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania, there is a full understanding that in the shifting foreign economic conditions, it is necessary to help attract financial investments to the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania. In December 2017, an important Russian-Iranian forum, an intergovernmental scientific and practical conference “Iran and the Northern Caucasus: History and Cooperation Prospects,” was held at the university, bringing together about 300 participants, including heads of Russian and Iranian government structures, representatives of the academic and business communities of the two countries. The conference was organized by the Ministry of the Russian Federation for North Caucasian Affairs, the Government of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania and Kosta Khetagurov North Ossetian State University, while on the Iranian side, it is the Institute for Political and International Studies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Al-lameh Tabataba’i University (Tehran).

As he opened the conference, Vyacheslav Bitarov, the head of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania, emphasized that Russian-Iranian relations currently occupy an important part of the country’s foreign policy, including meetings at the highest state level and fruitful cooperation in many fields, and noted with particular pleasure that Vladikavkaz was chosen as the venue for the event.

The head of the republic once again reminded the audience that Ossetia and Iran have important points of contact—their common historical roots and linguistic and cultural kinship. The Vladikavkaz conference acted as a discussion platform for discussing the ties between the Caucasus and Iran and strengthening Russian-Iranian trade and economic cooperation within the North Caucasian region.

The Minister of the Russian Federation for North Caucasian Affairs Lev Kuznetsov addressed the plenary meeting, expressing confidence that the conference would further strengthen the mutually beneficial cooperation between Russia and Iran. He pointed out that interregional cooperation has traditionally been given the most important strategic place in Russian-Iranian relations, while “the peoples of the Caucasus and Iran have known each other for as long as they evoke their history. And before the 1917 revolution, the Iranians constituted the largest diaspora in the Northern Caucasus, and consulates functioned in Vladikavkaz and Port Petrovsk (now Makhachkala).”⁷

⁷ A. Soboleva, “Iran i Severnyi Kavkaz—konferentsiia vo Vladikavkaze,” available at [<http://islamic-culture.ru/post/view/2045>], 14 April, 2019.

The Vladikavkaz forum/conference, held in December 2017, was a positive and important result of the development of Russian-Iranian and Ossetian-Iranian relations, as well as the interregional interaction of the Islamic Republic of Iran with the North Caucasian region as a whole.

During the Russian-Iranian forum in Vladikavkaz, representatives of the Russian authorities noted that the presence of common goals, challenges and threats determines the strategic importance of the Northern Caucasus in the framework of Russian-Iranian cooperation. Both sides have once again emphasized that the full-fledged revival of the Trans-Caucasian Transport Corridor, which had traditionally played a key role in the development of trade relations between Iran, Russia and Europe, remains the most important joint project.

The Iranian ambassador to Russia, Dr. Mehdi Sanai, noted in his speech that today is an unprecedented time in the relations between Iran and Russia, characterized by a fruitful dialog between the two countries and multivector relations. The Northern Caucasus plays a large role in this process. There are real, specific projects, such as the North-South corridor, which runs through the Northern Caucasus and connects Russia with Iran, India and the Gulf countries, which attracts Iranian business and Iranian structures to the region. This is not only of historical, cultural and traditional importance, but also of practical, concrete and economic significance.⁸

The work of the Iran and Northern Caucasus Forum was structured with the expectation that specialists of various profiles, officials, and business representatives could communicate in round-table and B2B formats and discuss poignant issues. Two sections worked: trade/economic and cultural/historical, which was divided into three blocks:

- Historical and political aspects of the Caucasian-Iranian ties
- Caucasian-Iranian cultural and linguistic contacts
- The educational direction of the Caucasian-Iranian relations.

A number of cooperation-related documents were signed during the conference. Among them is the Agreement on the Joint Implementation of the Master's Program "Iran in the Modern World," which was concluded by Kosta Khetagurov North Ossetian State University and Allameh Tabataba'i University and the Letter of Intent in the sphere of agricultural product supplies from the Russian Federation to Iran signed by the AGRO-IR Limited Liability Company and the Tavan Arvand Group of Companies.

Tamerlan Kambolov, Doctor of Philology, Professor of the Department of Ossetian Language and Literature of NOSU, noted that reports were presented delineating various historical stages of interaction, cooperation, contacts between Iran and the North Caucasian region at the meeting of the section "Caucasian-Iranian Cultural and Linguistic Contacts." At the same time, the level of interaction between various peoples of the Northern Caucasus and Iran has been different throughout history. Ossetians are genetically related to the Iranian people and belong to the same Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family. "In simple terms, five thousand years ago, the ancestors of modern Ossetians and the ancestors of modern Iranians were one nation that had since been divided and dispersed to different parts of the world. During this time, a significant circle of differences was formed, leading to a certain linguistic misunderstanding. However, a deep linguistic analysis shows that at its foundation, at its core, the Ossetian language belongs to the same Iranian language group as the Persian language."⁹

Iranian scientists have presented innovative research results—a comparison of the Ossetian heroic (Nart) epic and Ferdowsi's poem *Shahnameh*. Comparing and analyzing the folk epic and Ferdowsi's original work, the authors of the study concluded that cultural constants, i.e. the persistent

⁸ See: Ibidem.

⁹ Ibidem.

concepts and values that pass from generation to generation, remain unchanged and are preserved both in the Ossetian Nart epic and in the literary work *Shahnameh*, reflecting the mentality of the Iranian world. These findings allow us to talk about a unity of mentality, a unity of cultures. Professor Kambolov noted that the above provides an impetus to the formation and subsequent implementation of new research strategies in the field of Ossetian and Persian languages. In particular, we are referring to the plan to compile an Ossetian-Persian/Persian-Ossetian dictionary, and write a comparative grammar of Ossetian and Persian languages.

The Russian-Iranian forum in Vladikavkaz demonstrated that both the Ossetian and Iranian sides have a wonderful opportunity to study each other and to get to know themselves even better.

Iran-Iriston, a republican society of Iran-Ossetian friendship, was established in North Ossetia in 2018 with the participation of the Iranian cultural attaché, Mr. Reza Maliki. This cultural and educational project is aimed primarily at the cultural rapprochement of the two peoples that speak the languages of the Iranian group, as well as at the study of their common historical roots.

In 2019, Ossetia is celebrating the 160th anniversary of its great national poet Kosta Khetagurov. As part of the festivities, a monument to the poet should be erected on the Allameh Tabataba'i University campus in Tehran, and a monument to the great Persian poet Ferdowsi will be erected on the North Ossetian State University campus in Vladikavkaz.

Conclusion

The study of the centuries-old experience of mutually beneficial ties between the Northern Caucasus and Iran, a search for ways to strengthen and develop these ties in the difficult conditions of the contemporary world is undoubtedly a very pertinent area of science and practice.

The development of relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran is one of the key priorities of the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation. Only with Iran's participation can economic, ethnic, religious, military and political problems, issues of combatting separatism, terrorism and drug trafficking in the Near and Middle East, in the Caspian Sea, in Central Asia and, of course, in the Caucasus, be effectively addressed.

REGIONAL INTEGRATION

CONVERGENCE IN THE PERCEPTION OF EURASIAN INTEGRATION IN THE POLITICAL AND EXPERT COMMUNITY OF KAZAKHSTAN

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to analyze the perception of Kazakhstan's regional integration through a content analysis of government programs and expert opinions, as well as motivations that influence the country's position on regional

integration processes in Eurasia, particularly in the Eurasian Economic Union.

A study of the goals and objectives of integration through the prism of national strategies and expectations of state elites about the role the Union should play in

moving the country to a sustainable position in the system of global economic relations, combined with a study of expert opinions, is very important for an understanding of Kazakhstan's position on regional integration.

KEYWORDS: *Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), Kazakhstan, government programs, expert opinion, perception.*

Introduction

This article attempts to analyze the discourses of Kazakhstan's political and epistemological community regarding regional integration within the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). The establishment of the EAEU in 2015 by Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia (and its enlargement with the accession of Armenia and Kyrgyzstan) attracted considerable attention among both politicians and experts in Kazakhstan.¹ Compared to previous regional integration attempts in the post-Soviet space, the EAEU has more achievements in creating a common customs territory, common tariffs, trade policy institutions (such as the Eurasian Economic Commission of the EAEU).

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan was the most active advocate of a Eurasian union. He was able to show the importance of restoring trade routes and creating a single economic area with the former Soviet republics. Kazakhstan's leading role in the Eurasian Union has been acknowledged even abroad.²

The first part of the article focuses on the official discourses of high-ranking political elites (especially the president of Kazakhstan) and government programs (strategies, annual presidential addresses and plans), as well as official statements, such as newspaper articles, interviews, conference speeches, etc. The second part analyzes discourses created by the expert community within the same parameters based on various sources (research papers, publications in the media and on the websites of think tanks). Responses to the EAEU among Kazakhstan politicians and experts aim to protect and maintain the country's national interests. The organization is seen as a tool for deeper integration into broader projects that increase investment and transport opportunities for Kazakhstan.³ The reason for studying these responses is that they probably influence the state's political position and perception of the EAEU, as well as its choice of mode of interaction with the Union.

¹ See: N. Nazarbayev, *Izbrannye rechi*, Astana, 2010; D. Satpayev, "Yevraziiski ekonomicheski soiuz — poyezd ili podlodka?," available at [https://forbes.kz/process/expertise/dosyim_satpaev_evraziyskiy_ekonomicheskiy_soyuz_-_poezd_ili_podlodka/]; O. Suleimenov, "Kazakhstan davno opredelilsya—my v budushchem Yevraziiskom souuze," available at [https://forbes.kz/news/2014/03/24/newsid_54150/]; M.T. Laumulin, "Problemy i protivorechiya vnutri YeAES (na primere Kazakhstana i Belarusi)," available at [<http://isca.kz/ru/analytics-ru/2244>].

² See: L. Ancheschi, "Regime-Building, Identity-Making and Foreign Policy: Neo-Eurasian Rhetoric in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan," *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, No. 42 (5), 2014, pp. 733-749; H. Hale, "Cause without a Rebel: Kazakhstan's Unionist Nationalism in the USSR and CIS," *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, No. 37 (1), 2009, pp. 1-32.

³ See: Z. Shaukenova, "Postepenno prikhodit ponimaniye vygodnosti Yevraziiskogo ekonomicheskogo souiza," available at [<http://kisi.kz/index.php/ru/96-aktualnye-komentarii/shaukenova-zarema-kaukenovna/178>].

The Goals and Objectives of Eurasian Integration as Seen Through the Prism of Kazakhstan's National Programs

For the Republic of Kazakhstan, its main achievements are national independence and political sovereignty.

Under Art 91 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the state's independence established by the Constitution "shall remain unchanged."

According to the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy,⁴ the country's main goal is to create, by 2050, a welfare society based on a strong state, a developed economy, and opportunities for universal labor. The sixth of the seven priorities is a consistent and predictable foreign policy designed to promote national interests and strengthen regional and global security. One of the tasks here is to strengthen the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space. It is particularly emphasized that the country's political sovereignty must be respected.

The strategic goal today is to position Kazakhstan among the world's top 30 developed countries. This implies, among other things, an increase in the share of small and medium enterprises to 50% of GDP.

As noted in the Strategic Plan for the Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan Until 2025,⁵ participation in the Eurasian integration process is an effective tool in diversifying the economy, attracting investment to non-primary sectors, and expanding the export market. The Plan points out that it is important for Kazakhstan to take an active part in international integration processes, especially in the Eurasian region, through deeper integration into the New Silk Road project.

One of the priorities is a proactive foreign economic policy, which includes, among other things, promotion of national interests in the Eurasian Economic Union. Among the factors behind Kazakhstan's membership in the EAEU is an opportunity to ensure conditions for economic growth, improve living standards in the country, and gain access to foreign markets for Kazakhstan products.

It is emphasized that the only issues addressed by the EAEU are those of economic cooperation. The functioning of the Union's supranational institutions based on the principles of equality and consensus is a key condition for enhancing the efficiency of integration. Kazakhstan will continue working to maintain the EAEU's status as an international organization aimed only at economic integration.

One of the main principles behind the functioning of the Union's internal market is the absence of barriers to mutual domestic market access. Active work to identify and remove barriers, exemptions, and limitations will continue, thus helping to raise the level of cooperation and increase the competitiveness of the EAEU member countries' national economies.

As formulated in the Strategic Plan, the EAEU provides significant opportunities for realizing Kazakhstan's production and export potential in the energy sector, transport, industry, and agriculture. Broader cooperation between the Union and third countries in the form of trade agreements fully meets the interests of Kazakhstan when it comes to increasing its export potential.

⁴ See: "Poslaniye Prezidenta Respubliki Kazakhstan—Lidera natsii Nursultana Nazarbayeva narodu Kazakhstana 'Strategiya Kazakhstan-2050': novyi politicheskii kurs sostoyavshegosya gosudarstva," available at [http://www.akorda.kz/ru/events/astana_kazakhstan/participation_in_events/poslanie-prezidenta-respubliki-kazakhstan-lidera-nacii-nursultana-nazarbayeva-narodu-kazakhstana-strategiya-kazakhstan-2050-novyi-politicheskii-].

⁵ See: Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 636 of 15 February, 2018, "On Approval of the Strategic Plan for the Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan Until 2025 and Repeal of Certain Decrees of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan," available in Russian at [http://www.akorda.kz/ru/legal_acts/decrees/ob-utverzhenii-strategicheskogo-plana-razvitiya-respubliki-kazakhstan-do-2025-goda-i-priznanii-utrativshimi-silu-nekotoryh-ukazov-prezidenta].

The Foreign Policy Concept of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2014-2020 views Eurasian economic integration as an effective tool for moving the country to a sustainable position in the system of global economic relations. In this process, it is necessary to observe the following fundamental principles: inviolability of political sovereignty, economic validity of decisions, a phased approach, pragmatism and mutual benefit, equal representation of the parties in all integration bodies, and consensus at all levels of collaboration.⁶

According to the Concept for the Development of the Fuel and Energy Complex of the Republic of Kazakhstan Until 2030, one of the objectives in developing the country's electric power sector is to increase its export potential: to create conditions for export of electricity to neighboring countries, primarily to Russia and the Republic of Belarus via Russia. This implies the need to resolve the issue of equal access for Kazakhstan energy producers to the markets of neighboring countries under current agreements within the Common Economic Space and the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union.⁷

Considering the above, one can conclude that participation in the EAEU is a strategic priority for Kazakhstan. But there are clearly defined principles that set a limit to the development and deepening of integration: inviolability of political sovereignty, exclusively economic cooperation, pragmatism, mutual benefit, and consensus at all levels.

The top priorities of Kazakhstan's involvement in Eurasian economic integration include expansion of the export market, attraction of investment to non-primary sectors, and use of the country's transport potential.

Kazakhstan's Official Position on Eurasian Integration

Since the inception of the idea of Eurasian integration, followed by the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union, Kazakhstan's position on this issue has generally remained unchanged. This is confirmed by the official position of Kazakhstan, as represented by members of government, on some of the most relevant and problematic issues of Eurasian integration.

The implementation of the idea of Eurasian integration and the creation of the Union raises a number of problematic issues that need to be clarified by the official authorities. First and foremost, Kazakhstan's official position consists in emphasizing the economic nature of integration processes within the Union while opposing its politicization. For example, in his speech at a meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council on 24 December, 2013, Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev spoke out against politicizing the future Eurasian Economic Union, thus clearly stating the country's official position on Eurasian integration. He noted that the task of the Eurasian Economic Commission in this connection was to prevent the inclusion in the draft treaty of provisions going beyond economic integration. "Such matters as border control, migration policy, defense, and security, as well as health-care, education, culture, and legal assistance in civil, administrative, and criminal cases are outside the scope of economic integration and cannot be brought into the framework of an economic union."⁸

⁶ See: Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 741 of 21 January, 2014, "On the Foreign Policy Concept of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2014-2020," available in Russian at [http://www.akorda.kz/ru/legal_acts/decrees/o-koncepcii-vneshnei-politiki-respubliki-kazahstan-na-2014-2020-gody].

⁷ See: Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 724 of 28 June, 2014, "On Approval of the Concept for the Development of the Fuel and Energy Complex of the Republic of Kazakhstan Until 2030," available in Russian at [https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=31581132].

⁸ "Nazarbayev raskritikoval politizatsiiu Yevraziiskogo ekonomicheskogo soiuz," available at [<https://www.nur.kz/295894-nazarbaev-raskritikoval-politizacziyu-evrazijskogo-ekonomicheskogo-soyuza.html>].

Similarly, speaking at a meeting of the working group on the parliamentary dimension of the Eurasian economic organization back in 2012, two official representatives of Kazakhstan—Maulen Ashimbayev, Chairman of the Majilis Committee for International Affairs, Defense and Security, and Erlan Karin, Secretary of the Nur Otan Democratic People's Party—urged the participants to go slow on the “political component” and focus on questions of economic integration, whose number, as experience showed, was increasing every day. They emphasized that any integration projects were possible only “with observance of the main principle: respect for the sovereignty of the member states.” That was precisely why the Kazakhstan side said that the drafting of a memorandum on the concept of an inter-parliamentary body was premature and refused to make any political statements.⁹ In an interview with Astana TV on 18 September, 2013, in response to yet another initiative to create a Eurasian parliament, Maulen Ashimbayev expressed confidence that Kazakhstan would never support the establishment of a single political body: “This treaty should not contain a provision on the establishment of one supranational parliament. Kazakhstan's position on this issue, as repeatedly articulated by the country's leadership, is very clear: Kazakhstan will not support the establishment of supranational political bodies. At most, this treaty can only provide for an agreement on inter-parliamentary cooperation, which is actually what we have today.”¹⁰

A contentious issue of Eurasian integration requiring clarification of the country's official position relates to the introduction of a single currency in the Eurasian Economic Union. Analysis shows that the position of Kazakhstan's official representatives on this issue has not changed either. Timur Suleimenov, Minister of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, formulated his view as follows: “This issue is not negotiable... We see no need for this. We see the need for closer coordination of our monetary and financial policy... In this respect, coordination is necessary, and in introducing a single means of payment it is not.”¹¹ Timur Zhaksylykov, Vice Minister of National Economy, explained at a briefing of the Central Communications Service under the President of Kazakhstan on 22 April, 2015: “Kazakhstan has a clear and consistent position on excluding the possibility of introducing a single supranational currency within the Eurasian Economic Union. We do not discuss these issues... EAEU agreements do not provide for the establishment of a monetary union or the creation of a single supranational currency, and such work will not be conducted.”¹² Kazakhstan's official representatives take a similar position on the introduction of a common digital currency within the Union. “We don't support this proposal. This is both my personal position and my position as a politician. I think that the national currency is a symbol of our sovereignty, much the same as the national anthem, flag, and emblem. And we should protect, develop, and maintain it in every way, while preventing the emergence of any possible quasi, proxy, and other currencies,” said National Economy Minister Timur Suleimenov.¹³

Speaking before representatives of the world community, Kazakhstan's official spokesmen have repeatedly stated its position on integration processes in the Eurasian space, making it clear that the EAEU is not a political, but a purely economic union aimed at improving national welfare in the member countries. On 2 June, 2014, Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov met with the heads of diplomatic missions and representatives of international organizations to explain the meaning of

⁹ See: A. Sarym, “Naryshkin trud,” Internet journal *Vlast*, available at [https://vlast.kz/avtory/naryshkin_trud-835.html].

¹⁰ “Kazakhstan protiv sozdaniia Yevraziiskogo parlamenta,” available at [<https://www.zakon.kz/4577055-kazakhstan-protiv-sozdaniia.html>].

¹¹ “Suleimenov prokommentiroval vopros o vvedenii yedinoi valiuty YeAES,” available at [https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/suleymenov-prokommentiroval-vopros-vvedenii-edinoy-valyuty-323413/].

¹² T. Zhaksylykov, “Yedinoi natsionalnoi valyuty v YeAES ne budet,” available at [<https://www.caravan.kz/news/edinoy-natsionalnoj-valyuty-v-eaehs-ne-budet-tzhaksylykov-346836/>].

¹³ “Suleimenov—ob ideye vvedeniya yedinoi elektronnoi valyuty v YeAES,” available at [https://forbes.kz/finances/integration/suleymenov_prokommentiroval_ideyu_vvedeniya_edinoy_elektronnoy_valyuty_v_eaes/].

the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union. He said: “There is speculation about the political commitments of the EAEU participating countries. There is no reason for such fears. We have joined forces to create a much better future for our countries. The leaders (of the EAEU countries.—*Author’s Note*) have agreed that the economy is the main area that will ensure success in our joint efforts. This is why we have decided to focus on economic aspects.”¹⁴ Idrissov added that the leaders of the EAEU countries saw the future of the new association in close economic partnership with the European Union and China. Similarly, Bakhytzhan Sagyntayev, First Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, speaking at a meeting with the ambassadors of 18 EU countries and the head of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Kazakhstan, said that Kazakhstan, as part of the Eurasian Economic Union, “could become a kind of bridge between Europe and Asia, making it possible to open new production facilities to supply goods to the markets of EAEU partner countries.”¹⁵

Thus, analysis shows that Kazakhstan’s official position on Eurasian integration, clearly stated by the country’s official representatives in their public speeches, was first formulated in the early stages of the emerging Eurasian Economic Union and has remained unchanged throughout the following stages of integration. In light of the above, we can conclude that the official authorities will continue to adhere to their original position and to the “letter” of the EAEU Treaty, which also covers only the economic component of integration processes.

Kazakhstan’s Expert Position on Eurasian Integration

In order to identify shortcomings, make forecasts, and avoid risks to the regional organization, we need a constructive analysis of EAEU activities to date involving a study of public opinion and expert views on the matter. In this review article, we present the expert opinion of leading researchers studying the EAEU on a number of problems that have arisen since its establishment, as well as current problems requiring a solution.

Since the very idea of Eurasian integration was conceived by Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev, members of the Kazakhstan expert community—political scientists, economists, and media commentators—have always paid considerable attention to this issue. And with the signing of the EAEU Treaty and the country’s full involvement in the integration process, the expert community has become even more active, as confirmed by even a superficial content analysis of publications.

In their understanding of the goals and objectives of Kazakhstan’s participation in the EAEU, the country’s experts for the most part believe that Kazakhstan should take full advantage of integration and protect its interests in the Union. For example, according to Andrey Chebotarev, Director of the Center for Topical Studies “Alternative,” Kazakhstan takes a pragmatic approach to EAEU membership, hoping to reap economic and social dividends. In his view, the political factors of Kazakhstan’s participation in the Union should also be taken into account. The country continues its multi-vector foreign policy course, maneuvering between the leading geopolitical players and trying to find an optimal balance between them. Eurasian integration is seen by the authorities as a counterweight to the growing economic expansion of neighboring China. In a debate on this topic,

¹⁴ “Glava MID Kazakhstana: YeAES—eto ne sekretnyi plan Putina,” available at [<https://tengrinews.kz/other/glava-mid-kazakhstana-eaes-eto-ne-sekretniy-plan-putina-256335/>].

¹⁵ “Kazakhstan v YeAES mozhet stat mostom mezhd u Yevropoi i Aziyei—Sagyntayev,” available at [https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/kazakhstan-eaes-stat-mostom-evropoy-aziyey-sagintaev-272904/].

Daniyar Kosnazarov, head of Central Asian and Caspian Studies of the Geopolitics and Regional Studies Division at the Library of the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, notes that the EAEU before and after the Ukraine events is part of two different realities. Before the Ukraine crisis and sanctions against Russia, the EAEU was expected to develop in peacetime. In that period, ties between Russia and the European Union were not being reduced and the economy was more distanced from politics and geopolitics. The fallout for Moscow after the incorporation of Crimea was the first serious test for integration in the EAEU format. Contradictions within the Union after the Ukraine events and anti-Russian sanctions have strengthened the sense of national sovereignty in its member countries.¹⁶

Kazakhstan's vision of Eurasian integration, according to experts, is conceptually different from those of other members of the Union. For example, they comment on Kazakhstan's negative responses to the proposals of Russian politicians to establish a supranational body or introduce a single currency and argue the need for care and caution in assessing all risks associated with the EAEU in the changed geopolitical situation.¹⁷

In answer to the question about the EAEU's relevance to Kazakhstan, experts emphasize that the Union is an established reality and relate the EAEU factor to an expansion of the market and to the interregional projects of Kazakhstan and Russia. A separate task now is to "dock" the Eurasian Economic Union and the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative.¹⁸

There is a group of experts who are skeptical about the EAEU, viewing Eurasian integration as a kind of trap or an illusion that has not justified the country's hopes. For example, in summarizing the results of Kazakhstan's membership in the Customs Union, Gaziz Shaimerden points to the unpreparedness of its national economy for such a development path.¹⁹ In his words, Kazakhstan's trade balance with Russia and Belarus is worsening every year. The country's budget deficit is growing, the number of bankruptcies among small and medium businesses is increasing, and prices and tariffs are outpacing economic growth largely because of the country's participation in the Customs Union. Political analyst Dosym Satpayev, Director of the Almaty-based Risk Assessment Group, is of the same opinion. He thinks that the hopes and forecasts of the Kazakhstan authorities about access to a 170 million-strong market for Kazakhstan companies have not come true. Kazakhstan continues to sell raw materials to Russia and Belarus on a large scale, while importing finished products made from these raw materials.²⁰ The expert's own opinion is that Kazakhstan should pay more attention to Central Asian regional cooperation than to active engagement in the EAEU.

A point to note is that while individual independent experts either demonstrate a largely negative attitude to the EAEU or are inclined to discuss its positive and negative sides, discussions on issues of Eurasian integration held at think tanks are more positive or aim to solve a particular problem.

For example, the need to move away from a resource-based economy and matters of import substitution, exports, and competitiveness in the countries of the Eurasian Economic Union have been discussed at meetings of two expert clubs, "Alternative" and "World of Eurasia." During a meeting

¹⁶ See: "Polemika ekspertov Kazakhstana: "YeAES—soiuz konkurentov ili soiuznyi zastoi?" available at [<http://presidentlibrary.kz/ru/content/polemika-ekspertov-kazahstana-eaes-soyuz-konkurentov-ili-soyuznyy-zastoy>].

¹⁷ See: "Dosym Satpayev: Kazakhstan zagnal sebja v lovushku, vykhod iz kotoroi mozhnet stoit ochen dorogo," available at [<https://kaztag.kz/ru/interview/dosym-satpaev-kazakhstan-zagnal-sebja-v-lovushku-vykhod-iz-kotoroy-mozhet-stoit-ochen-dorogo>].

¹⁸ See: "Postepenno prikhodit ponimanie vygodnosti Yevrazijskogo ekonomicheskogo soiuzna," available at [<http://kisi.kz/index.php/ru/96-aktualnye-komentarii/shaukenova-zarema-kaukenovna/178-zarema-shaukenova-postepenno-prikhodit-ponimanie-vygodnosti-evrazijskogo-ekonomicheskogo-soyuza>].

¹⁹ See: "Evrazijskiy soiuz: Pro Et Contra," available at [<http://sarap.kz/jekspertnoe-mnenie/10-evrazijskij-sojuz-pro-et-contra.html>].

²⁰ See: "Dosym Satpayev: Kazakhstan zagnal sebja v lovushku..."

of the Center for Topical Studies “Alternative,”²¹ experts suggested options that might enable Kazakhstan companies to take advantage of integration in order to produce domestic products. Participants in a meeting of the “World of Eurasia”²² have similar opinions: they believe that the problem of the technological lag in the EAEU can be addressed by developing scientific and technical cooperation in the Eurasian space.

When speaking of social policy, many ordinary people compare the EAEU to the U.S.S.R. and pin their hopes on the policy followed at that time. In practice, however, the situation is somewhat different: in the nearly three decades since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, its former republics have constructed social policies that differ in content and scope. This creates some difficulties in the transition to single standards of social adaptation in the five independent EAEU states.

According to Kazakhstani political expert Eduard Poletayev, the Eurasian Economic Union lacks an integrated and consistent approach to addressing current social problems. At present, the expert notes, the EAEU Treaty includes articles (96, 97, and 98) related to social policy, but they apply to mutual recognition of diplomas (certificates of education) in connection with employment and work in the territory of the EAEU countries and to free medical services. But there is a very important problem that has long been discussed but remains unresolved: the problem of pension reform in the EAEU, that is, recognition of pensions in each member country so that a person working in one of them would be entitled to receive a pension while being a citizen of another state. As practice shows, the issue of pension reform has always been and continues to be particularly important in all post-Soviet countries.²³ In the expert’s opinion, the social issue is difficult to resolve because of the member countries’ different levels of the Human Development Index (HDI). Whether it is necessary to even out these levels in the EAEU countries is another matter.

Some leading experts in Kazakhstan believe that it is impossible to even out these levels, arguing that the construction of a “social state” hinders the economic development of countries.

Here is how Andrey Chebotarev, Director of the Center for Topical Studies “Alternative,” voiced the more or less general opinion: “There is no Eurasian social space because there is no single economic space, there is only visa-free movement. If we are talking about a common social policy, there will be none, because all countries have their own social standards.”²⁴

The only option open to the EAEU member countries, according to Chebotarev, is to unify their basic legislative acts that regulate, in particular, the labor market “so that people arriving from other member countries in search of work could actually use their diplomas.”²⁵

To summarize, we can draw the conclusion that today there is no single opinion in Kazakhstan’s expert community about the country’s prospects within the EAEU. Nevertheless, there are some general issues being discussed by experts related to both political and socio-economic problems of Kazakhstan’s participation in this integration union, which in turn make it possible to discuss the potential consequences for the country and its future prospects. In this context, we think it possible and necessary to provide a brief overview of the discussion on Eurasian integration in Kazakhstan among both skeptics and optimists and to identify the main positions of Kazakhstani experts regarding the prospects of Eurasian integration.

²¹ See: “Kto dolzhen pomogat eksportyoram otstaivat svoi prava?” available at <http://www.alternativakz.com/index.php?nid=294>].

²² See: “Yevraziiskaya zadacha: kak pereiti ot syryevoi ekonomiki k ekonomike znanii?” available at [<https://www.ritmearasia.org/news--2017-08-19--evrazijskaja-zadacha-kak-perejti-ot-syryevoy-ekonomiki-k-ekonomike-znaniy-3190>].

²³ See: “V stranakh YeAES do sikh por net yedinykh standartov sotsialnoi politiki,” available at [<http://wef.kz/monitoring/v-stranah-eajes-do-sih-por-net-edinyh-standartov-socialnoj-politiki/>].

²⁴ Ibidem.

²⁵ Ibidem.

Conclusions

Based on the findings presented in this article, we can draw a number of conclusions about Kazakhstan's position on the Eurasian Economic Union:

- participation in the EAEU is a strategic priority for Kazakhstan. But there are clearly defined principles that set a limit to the development and deepening of integration: inviolability of political sovereignty, exclusively economic cooperation, pragmatism, mutual benefit, and consensus at all levels;
- Kazakhstan's official position on Eurasian integration, clearly stated by the country's official representatives in their public speeches, was first formulated in the early stages of the emerging Eurasian Economic Union and has remained unchanged throughout the following stages of integration;
- at present, there is no single opinion in Kazakhstan's expert community about the country's prospects within the EAEU. Nevertheless, there are some general issues being discussed by experts related to both political and socio-economic problems of Kazakhstan's participation in this integration union, which in turn make it possible to discuss the potential consequences for the country and its future prospects.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the top priorities of Kazakhstan's involvement in Eurasian economic integration include expansion of the export market, attraction of investment to non-primary sectors, and use of the country's transport potential.

Considering Kazakhstan's official position in the previous stages of integration and today, one can conclude that it will remain unchanged in the future. In expert circles, there are both skeptics and optimists regarding the prospects of Eurasian integration.

Overall, in order to improve the image of the Eurasian Economic Union in Kazakhstan, we think it necessary to arrange closer cooperation between experts and agencies responsible for decision making on the Kazakhstan side within the EAEU so as to improve information and expert support.

YOUTH INTEGRATION PROCESSES IN EURASIA

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ABSTRACT

Building contacts between young people from different parts of one and the same state, groups of states, and across the world is a highly relevant area of youth policy. A solid basis for these contacts is provided by cooperation between the states

themselves. They are the ones who should see stronger ties between numerous, creative, and promising population groups called “youth” as an effective development tool.

This is why attention to young people and the establishment of an institutional framework for their cooperation should be among the top priorities in strengthening and creating new associations of states. Analysis shows a growing awareness of this need in today’s world, as indicated by a faster and more effective response to youth problems on the part of associations of states, both new and long-standing. The youth dimension is incorporated into the general integration mechanism of states, often with the establishment of special youth integration structures. This helps to increase interaction between young people, to seek and find new and more effective forms of such interaction. The form and weightiness of such integration structures depend on the

scale of the group of states and the level of relations between them.

This article examines issues related to international cooperation between young people from different countries. On a global scale, such cooperation is largely fostered by the United Nations. These processes are being actively developed and perfected at the regional level, in various groups of states. The author analyzes the work of associations such as the CIS, SCO, BRICS, CICA, and the Turkic Council, that is, associations of countries with large populations and significant influence in the world community. These countries have large youth cohorts that make a substantial contribution to social development. The article identifies the specific features of the emergence and improvement of youth integration structures and their direct connection with the promotion of international cooperation between states in general.

KEYWORDS: *integration, youth, youth policy, state, forum, festival, summit, council.*

Introduction

There are various factors that promote international youth cooperation. This includes globalization, integration of states into the world community, and development of diverse ties between actors in international relations. One should note the positive role played in these processes by international organizations, primarily the United Nations. The forms of its work vary widely: it aims to reflect cooperation issues in its documents, engage young people in large-scale events, and increase the organizing and coordinating role of its bodies and agencies, especially those whose specific activities are associated with individual countries or groups of countries. Wide opportunities for international cooperation are provided by the new U.N. Youth Strategy (Youth 2030), launched in September 2018. It outlines five priority areas, which cover the key youth-related issues: engaging young people in addressing current problems; supporting their greater access to quality education and healthcare; promoting their economic empowerment through greater access to employment; protecting and promoting their civil and political rights; and supporting young people in situations of conflict and crisis. The Strategy notes that young people constitute a tremendous and essential asset worth investing in, because this investment opens the door to an unparalleled multiplier effect. This is why it is necessary to partner with young people and ensure “they are not only heard but understood, not only engaged but empowered, and not only supporting but leading global efforts and processes.” As I see it, all these issues can be addressed more effectively by developing interna-

tional cooperation, identifying and adopting good practices while taking into account national interests and peculiarities.

The objectives formulated in the Strategy are underpinned by organizational measures, including the creation of a Youth Focal Point in each U.N. country team and mission to support system-wide country level coordination on youth. It would make sense, as proposed in the Strategy, to consider the possibility of establishing youth advisory boards within each relevant U.N. entity to provide a channel for input and feedback from young people in order to collect information and young people's views on U.N. work. Such mechanisms should be put in place in ways that reflect the diversity of young people and their organizations. It is also necessary to establish regular online and offline engagements between young people and U.N. senior managers, including the Secretary-General.¹

Regional Cooperation: Experience of the Commonwealth of Independent States

A study of the process of international cooperation shows that cooperation between countries and between young people at the regional level is an increasingly important component of this process. Active youth cooperation is underway in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and this has been the case practically since its creation. The heads of national youth agencies of the CIS countries first met back in 1993, and the Eurasian Student Association (ESA) was established in 1994 at the initiative of the Lomonosov Moscow State University Student Union. In January 2006, the First Forum of Student and Youth Organization Leaders, held at the Moscow State University, set up an inter-university non-governmental association called "Commonwealth of Student and Youth Organizations." It included representatives of more than 60 higher education institutions and youth movements, many of which were active participants in the ESA.²

On 25 November, 2005, the CIS states signed an Agreement on Youth Cooperation, which provided for the establishment of a Youth Council under the CIS Executive Committee. The Council is tasked to consider issues related to the implementation of the agreement, develop recommendations, provide assistance in implementing national programs, and sum up the experience of different states and international organizations in working with young people. The experience of the Commonwealth of Independent States clearly demonstrates that youth development processes and the development of states cannot be separated. Speaking at the 11th Congress of the Eurasian Association of Universities in March 2009, First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev said that work with young people was a special area of integration. "Without efforts in this area," he noted, "the new generation of our citizens may lose the binding thread that holds our peoples together. We should not allow this to happen... It is necessary to support, on a systemic basis, various forms of youth exchange between our countries and interaction between youth organizations and youth leaders."³ At the beginning of 2019, the CIS had nine members: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

¹ See: "Molodyozhnaia strategii OON 'Molodyozh—2030'," available at [un.by/images/news/2018/UN_Youth_Strategy-Russian.pdf], 23 February, 2019.

² See: "Materialy IV Foruma liderov studencheskikh i molodyozhnykh organizatsii stran SNG, 23-25 yanvaria 2009," *Voprosy molodyozhnoi politiki*, Issue V, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, 2009, pp. 18-20.

³ N.A. Nazarbayev, "Integratsiia—slishkom vazhnoye delo, chtoby doveriat yeyo tolko politikam!" in: *Kogda mysl—materialna*, Khudozhestvennaia literatura, Moscow, 2012, p. 90.

The CIS member states have adopted a Strategy of International Youth Cooperation to 2020. It is a set of agreed approaches to the key goals, objectives, principles, areas, forms, and mechanisms of the development of youth cooperation in the post-Soviet space. Its key goals include unlocking the educational, social, spiritual, and moral potential of the younger generation and strengthening friendship and cooperation between the CIS nations. These goals are realized through both cross-border and CIS-wide cooperation. For example, it has become standard practice for cross-border cooperation forums held by Kazakhstan and Russia to host various youth events.

In 2018, the Birlık-Edinstvo.KZ International Youth Forum of Cross-Border Cooperation was held for the eighth time in the Pavlodar Region of Kazakhstan. That year, the traditional challenge cup went to Zhangyru Zholy, the youth movement of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan (APK). This forum, organized by the regional APK, has already become something of a signature event for the Pavlodar Irtysh region. It was attended by more than two thousand young leaders from all regions of Kazakhstan and from border regions of other CIS and non-CIS countries: Russia, France, Germany, Poland, Nigeria, and Armenia. The topics presented for discussion are of current interest. In 2018, the issues raised related to patriotic education, mediation mechanisms, and the development of the volunteer movement. For the first time, the Forum was held not in the regional center, but in Bayanaul, a jewel of the Pavlodar Irtysh region. One of the Forum's main dialog platforms focused on the APK youth movement and its activities in fostering Kazakhstan patriotism and tolerance. Among the key events of the Forum was not only the presentation of the challenge cup to the APK movement, but also the conclusion of a cooperation agreement between the Coordination Council of Youth Associations of the Pavlodar Region APK and the Omsk regional branch of the Youth Assembly of the Peoples of Russia.⁴

One should also mention the Zhas Aktobe annual forum. In 2017, this international youth education forum, aimed at creating conditions for the realization of the creative, scientific, business, spiritual, and moral potential of young people, brought together representatives from various regions of Kazakhstan and neighboring regions of Russia: Ulyanovsk and Orenburg regions and the Republic of Bashkortostan. The main issues discussed related to diplomacy, integration into the international community, rhetorical and business negotiation skills, smart cities, and young people's contribution to national development.⁵

Youth problems are addressed at various CIS events. For example, the 13th Forum of Creative and Academic Intellectuals of the CIS Member States was held in Astana (Kazakhstan) in June 2018 on the theme "Dialog in the CIS: Prospects for Humanitarian Cooperation in the 21st Century" in the context of the Year of Culture in the CIS. Its participants discussed, among other things, concrete measures to engage young people in interstate cooperation.⁶

Development of cooperation between states generates new forms of contact between young people. Speaking at the Kazan Federal University during a working visit to the Republic of Tatarstan (Russia) in June 2018, the First President of Kazakhstan focused attention on the need to strengthen friendship between Kazakhstan and Russia and suggested holding a number of events designed to engage young people. It would make sense, he said, to organize a forum of young leaders of Kazakhstan and Russia so as to enable them to exchange ideas and put forward concrete proposals on the most relevant issues related to the development of the two countries. It is also necessary to increase cultural exchange by holding annual contests of young performers, artists, and musicians in order to support young talents in both countries, organize regular sporting competitions for young athletes, etc.⁷

⁴ See: Ye. Beskorsaia, "Vremia molodykh," *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 6 September, 2018.

⁵ See: Zh. Baiturin, "Zhas Aktobe sobral druzei," *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 1 August, 2017.

⁶ See: L. Syzdykova, "Oriyentiry gumanitarnogo sotrudnichestva," *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 20 June, 2018.

⁷ See: "Traditsii druzhby nasleduet molodyozh," *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 18 June, 2018.

Youth Cooperation in Central Asia

Cooperation between young people in Central Asia has become more active. The work of the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) deserves attention. It is a platform for dialog between parliamentarians, exchange of experience on population and development issues, and formulation of a common strategy on reproductive health and protection of women's rights. The Forum has three priorities: women's empowerment, investment in youth, and active aging. At a meeting in Astana in September 2017, the Forum's senior officers and the Kazakhstan side expressed an interest in further collaboration. In June 2018, the heads of international organizations, representatives of government agencies of Central Asian countries and NGOs, and experts met in Tashkent (Uzbekistan) at an International Conference on the Role of Youth in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization That Lead to Terrorism. Kazakhstan suggested considering the possibility of creating a Youth Council of Central Asian Countries as an effective mechanism for conducting systematic work.⁸

The importance of the Asian process was best demonstrated by a conference called "Investing in Youth. Leaving No One Behind," held in Astana in October 2018. It brought together parliamentarians, experts, and representatives of government agencies, international organizations, and youth-led NGOs from 35 countries. The event was organized by the Majilis (lower house of parliament) and the Ministry of Social Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan jointly with the Asian Population and Development Association (APDA). Its participants discussed issues related to the rights and interests of young people, problems preventing the younger generation from realizing its potential, and measures to overcome these problems. They also shared good practices in legislation and in the development and implementation of projects and programs aimed at young people.

Conference participants noted the important role of the younger generation in the world community in general and particularly in the regions, including Central Asia. Young people in this region make up more than 60% of the population. They are the most important population group, which can be strengthened by ensuring access to education and creating better employment opportunities for young people. Otherwise, this group could become the main source of social discontent and instability. This is why it is necessary to invest in youth in all regions, especially in youth education. As the U.N. Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth said in a video message to the Conference participants, young people are the ones who will play the key role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The moment has come, he said, when youth can actually be an agent of change as a powerful force for transformation. Today, young people have an opportunity to change the world.⁹

The United Nations also pays considerable attention to adjacent large groups of states. Among them, a prominent place belongs to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), whose members are Kazakhstan, China, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, and Pakistan. In November 2018, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres spoke at a special joint event on the theme "U.N. and SCO: Cooperation Aimed at Strengthening Peace, Security and Stability." He noted that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization "is a leading player in regional diplomacy promoting multilateralism and fostering cooperation" in addressing the most pressing peace and security issues in Eurasia. He emphasized that the SCO represents the largest combined population of any regional grouping in the world: over 3 billion women and men. Young people, he said, are a "vital constituency for all our efforts towards peace and stability, and there is a perfect alignment between the strategies of our two

⁸ See: N. Akopyan, "Chetvert veka partnyorstva," *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 20 September, 2017; Ye. Ivanova, "Razvivat potentsial molodyozhi," *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 21 September, 2017; idem, "Zadeistvovat potentsial molodyozhi," *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 14 June, 2018.

⁹ See: L. Tusupbekova, "Investirovat v nastoiashchee dlia budushchego," *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 22 October, 2018.

organizations in relation to youth. Our new strategy for young people, Youth 2030, aims to scale up global, regional, and national action to meet young people's needs, realize their rights, and tap into their abilities as agents of change."¹⁰

The SCO's youth policy aims to support the creative aspirations of young people. In May 2007, a meeting of representatives of the SCO heads of state supported the concept for the creation of an SCO Youth Council presented by the Russian Union of Youth and the Youth Public Chamber of Russia. In October of the same year, representatives of youth organizations of the SCO countries met in Moscow, where they signed a joint statement on establishing a Youth Association of the SCO. At a summit in Qingdao in June 2018, the SCO heads of state adopted a Joint Appeal to Young People. The first SCO Youth Assembly, which opened in the Chinese city of Dongfang on 9 November, 2018, was a response to that appeal and, at the same time, a new form of communication between young people, a platform for educating young political leaders and diplomats. Its theme was "SCO Youth against Terrorism and Extremism."

The SCO Secretary-General regularly meets with young people. Such a meeting with activists of the SCO Youth League, attended by students from SCO member states studying in Beijing, was held at the SCO headquarters in August 2018. The theme was "Knowledge as a Way to Success."

The SCO Youth Council was established in 2007 to consolidate young people. The Regulations on the Council define it as a body that coordinates the activities of its constituent youth organizations, associations, and movements in the areas of activity of the SCO member states. It functions in collaboration with the SCO Secretariat and other governing bodies. Its main tasks include promotion of effective regional cooperation between national youth organizations, associations, and movements, establishment of direct contacts between them, development of cooperation plans and programs, engagement of young people in humanitarian projects, and information exchange.

The founders of the Youth Council are national youth organizations, associations, and movements of the SCO member states: the Youth Congress of Kazakhstan; Zhas Otan, the youth wing of the Nur Otan Democratic People's Party; the All-China Youth Federation; the Youth Public Council of Kyrgyzstan; the Russian Union of Youth; the Youth Public Chamber of Russia; and the Youth Union of Tajikistan. The Youth Council is formed on a parity basis, with no more than six members from each National Part, which consist of representatives of national youth organizations of the Council's founders. New members are admitted to the Council on its recommendation. To coordinate and control the implementation of Council decisions, one of its National Parts, depending on which country currently chairs the SCO, holds the chairmanship of the Council.¹¹ In accordance with the Regulations on the Council, it meets at least once a year in different countries, sometimes at youth forums.

The first SCO Youth Forum, which discussed issues related to youth involvement in the fight against drugs, extremism, terrorism, and separatism, as well as the problems of youth entrepreneurship, took place in Cholpon-Ata (Kyrgyzstan) in September 2011. The 2012 Youth Forum in Beijing focused on the Great Silk Road, cultural exchanges in the Eurasian region, and regional economic cooperation. In September 2014, young people engaged in international cooperation projects and experts from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and SCO observer states met in Belokurikha (Russian Federation). The purpose of the event was to connect aspiring entrepreneurs with representatives of big business from SCO countries. In 2017, the SCO Youth Forum was hosted by Astana. Its main theme was development of the green economy, tourism, and

¹⁰ Generalnyi sekretar OON: "ShOS—vedushchi igrok regionalnoi diplomatii, natselennyi na protivodeistviye ugrozam miru i bezopasnosti v Yevrazii," 27 November, 2018, available at [<http://rus.sectesco.org/news/20181128/491370.html>], 6 February, 2019.

¹¹ See: "Polozheniye o Molodyozhnom sovete Shankhaiskoi organizatsii sotrudnichestva," available at [<https://pandia.ru/text/77/433/1201.php>], 8 February, 2019.

sports, as well as promotion of further comprehensive cooperation between young people. SCO Forums of Young Leaders are also being held (with the participation of the Youth Council). The first such forum took place in Omsk in 2016, and the second in Khabarovsk in September 2018.

Time has shown the relevance of the Youth Council and other youth policy structures for the development of good neighborly and mutually beneficial relations between the SCO countries. They have become an effective platform for expanding and seeking new forms of cooperation between youth organizations from different countries.

Youth Cooperation in the BRICS

In my view, youth integration processes in the SCO have inevitably affected the situation in the BRICS group of countries. The association includes Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. The First Youth Summit of these states took place in Kazan (Russia) on 3-8 July, 2015, on the eve of the 7th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the BRICS countries in Ufa (Russia). Its main purpose was to establish international cooperation and share experience. The Summit participants—250 leaders—noted that BRICS has a future only if it works with young people, and this implies the need to invest in youth. On 6 July, 2015, BRICS youth ministers met in Kazan within the framework of the Youth Summit and signed a memorandum of understanding on youth policy in these countries, which was presented at a meeting of BRICS heads of state in Ufa.

At the end of July 2015, Ufa hosted the Youth Forum of the SCO and BRICS countries. The fact that the tasks of the two associations are intertwined and complementary is important for such dynamic development of cooperation. At the same time, there are specific features in the activity of each association. Overall, however, this cooperation can be called unique. The Forum brought together more than a hundred young leaders from Russia, Brazil, India, China, South Africa, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan engaged in public activity, business, politics, and diplomacy. On that platform, they were able to meet each other, share experience, and map out ways of further cooperation.

The 3rd BRICS and SCO Youth Forum, held in Sochi in 2017 as part of the 19th World Festival of Youth and Students, focused on cooperation between national youth associations and the priorities of youth policy. The Brazilian director of the Moscow-based Ibero-American Institute and the president of the BRICS United Business Cooperation Center, Professor Vicente Barrientos, visited the Forum to assist Eurasian youth in joining efforts in the field of education. He told the Forum participants about the opportunities for promoting faster development of integration of higher education institutions in Russia and in the BRICS and SCO countries among themselves and with those of other countries in the field of postgraduate education. This includes, among other things, wider use of the Internet, which cuts costs and shortens distances. There were proposals to intensify cooperation in youth sports and to hold more competitions between national youth teams.

Representatives of countries that are not part of the BRICS or the SCO but are members of the EAEU also participated in the 3rd Youth Forum. For example, there was a large youth delegation from Armenia, which took part in the work of this forum for the first time. The young people of Belarus were represented at the event. Thus, it created yet another hub, this time for communication between young people from three large groups of states: BRICS, SCO, and EAEU. Speaking at the BRICS Summit in Ufa on 9 July, 2015, the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan noted that with the emergence of a multipolar world and growing interdependence between countries and regions, associations such as the EAEU, SCO, and BRICS play an increasing role. The unprecedented formula of these associations is an indicator of the unity and solidarity of the largest part of the

planet's population on the way to cooperation for security and prosperity. Their complementary potential and combined capabilities can play a positive role in addressing global issues.¹²

Youth Integration in the CICA

Youth cooperation has also been developing within the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA). The need to expand work with young people in this association of states and to make it more systematic, concrete, and purposeful was highlighted at the CICA International Conference in Astana in June 2012 on the theme “Youth Policy of the CICA Member States: Building the Future Together.” The event was timed to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the initiative to establish the CICA launched by the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Representatives of 23 states—young parliamentarians, government and embassy employees, and members of national youth organizations—discussed how to unlock the creative potential of young people, promote their cooperation, and develop mutual understanding between them. Speakers at the Conference raised issues related to cooperation between national executive bodies in implementing joint projects in support of youth. At a Conference roundtable on the current state and problems of youth policy and ways to address them, its participants spoke of youth policy in their countries with focus on its priority areas. The Conference speeches reflected the active interest of the CICA countries in developing bilateral and multilateral relations between youth organizations and young people in general. The Conference supported the proposal of Kazakhstan's representatives to create a CICA Youth Council which could be particularly useful in exchanging experience and implementing joint youth projects of the CICA member states. The participants in the event were acquainted with the approach to youth policy in Kazakhstan. At the end of the Conference, its participants adopted an appeal to the younger generation of this group of countries.

The CICA Youth Council was established by decision of the 4th CICA Summit in Shanghai in May 2014. The Council is a deliberative and advisory body that coordinates the activities of its member organizations, associations, and movements in the CICA focus areas. The first informal meeting of the Council on the theme of intercultural youth dialogue as the basis for trust in Asia was held in Ust-Kamenogorsk (Russia) in August 2014 in the wake of the International Youth and Youth Organizations Camp. It featured dialog platforms, master classes to improve youth leadership skills, and sporting and entertainment events. The meeting was organized by the Youth Congress of Kazakhstan and the CICA Secretariat with the assistance of the Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan and the Akimat (regional government) of the East Kazakhstan Region. It was attended by representatives of eight CICA countries: Kazakhstan, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, China, Turkey, Iraq, and Palestine. The main purpose of the event—to develop contacts between young people at the interstate level—was achieved. One should also mention the activities of the CICA Civil Forum of National Cultural Centers, which has been meeting for ten years under the auspices of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan. In 2018, the event took place under the motto “With Love to Astana” to celebrate the capital's 20th anniversary. One of the Forum's tasks is to develop cultural and business ties between young people of the CICA member countries.¹³

¹² See: *Pervyi Prezident Respubliki Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev. Khronika deiatelnosti. 2015 god*, Delovoi mir, Astana, 2016, pp. 297, 299.

¹³ See: *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 8 June, 2012; L. Syzdykova, “Sila narodnoi diplomatii,” *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 29 June, 2018.

Youth Policy in the Turkic Council

Youth has also become a focus of attention for the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States (CCTS or Turkic Council), which includes Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkey. Youth festivals, youth camps, and courses for young diplomats are held under its auspices. The first Turkic Council University Sports Games took place in April 2018 with the participation of a national student team from Kazakhstan. The first three World Nomad Games, hosted by Kyrgyzstan, were important events for the Turkic world. The 6th Summit of the Turkic Council in September 2018 on the theme of “Youth and National Sports” noted that creating conditions for young people was a sacred duty and responsibility of each state. Such work depends directly on the country’s economic capabilities. Education of young people in a spirit of respect for the history, culture, language, and traditions of brotherly peoples and inter-religious tolerance is of special importance. The Summit adopted a Joint Statement of the Turkic Council States on the Development of Cooperation in the Field of Youth and National Sports. Nursultan Nazarbayev proposed the establishment of a forum of young leaders of the Turkic Council.

Meetings of youth and sports ministers are an established practice in the Turkic Council. The third such meeting was held in Astana in December 2018. Its participants were informed about the main aspects of implementation of state youth policy in Kazakhstan and the prospects of cooperation in the Turkic Council, considering that 2019 was declared Year of Youth in the republic. Kazakhstan expressed its willingness to host the Second Forum of Young Leaders of the Turkic Council in 2019. The meeting also considered questions of holding the 4th International Youth Camp and the 3rd International Youth Festival of the Turkic Council.¹⁴

Conclusion

Thus, youth integration processes have accelerated in recent years. The creation of specialized youth agencies and organizations has become characteristic not only of individual states, but also of their associations. Moreover, integration processes are at work between the youth structures of large associations of states. They are driven by factors such as greater focus on youth and youth associations in individual states and international organizations and improvement of youth policy at different levels of its implementation.

Practice shows that a significant event in the life of a particular group of states can be a spur to the development of youth cooperation. An example of such a relationship is provided, in my view, by the development and signing of the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea by the five Caspian states: Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Russia, and Turkmenistan. In September 2017, the First International Youth Forum of this group of states, the Caspian Youth Forum: Zhas. Zhalyn. Zhan-gyru, took place at the new Youth Palace in Aktau (Kazakhstan). Among its 500 participants were leaders of youth organizations, young researchers, politicians, entrepreneurs, cultural workers, athletes, and members of the media from the Caspian states, as well as the heads of youth policy departments of Kazakhstan regions and the cities of Astana and Almaty. The Forum’s purpose is to foster intercultural dialog, share best practices and innovations in the field of youth policy, and consolidate

¹⁴ See: Yu. Mager, “Gorizonty tiurkskoi integratsii,” *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 4 September, 2018; K. Nurgaliyeva, “Budushcheye za molodyozhyu,” *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 5 September, 2018; M. Irzhanov, “Dorogu molodym,” *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 6 December, 2018.

youth organizations and young leaders of the Caspian states. A youth camp called Caspi Leader Camp, organized on the premises of the Baldauren Camp within the framework of the Caspian Youth Forum, was designed to motivate young people to do something interesting and useful for the country's development.¹⁵

More active youth cooperation, in turn, is of great help in developing state foreign policy, strengthening international structures, improving them organizationally, and enhancing their efficiency. It is important to create in good time robust and flexible mechanisms for developing international youth cooperation in the context of state youth and foreign policy, taking into account regional and global trends in social development.

¹⁵ See: A. Deviatkina, "Shkola motivatsii," *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 21 September, 2017; idem, "Imeia chotki orientir," *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 27 September, 2017.

EFFECTIVENESS OF COMPETITION AND ANTIMONOPOLY REGULATION POLICIES IN GEORGIA: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH EU COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT

Reforms have been recently undertaken in Georgia in the field of competition regulation. This comparative analytical study examines the institutional issues of free competition regulation in Georgia, Poland, and Lithuania.

Currently, there are several international rankings published, with the Global Competitiveness Index of the World Economic Forum being one of the reliable sources. A country's competitiveness is determined by the efficiency of its institutions, effective policies and other factors that fur-

ther impact the volume of production. Out of the given index components, number 6, namely, the Goods Market Efficiency component, seems important. Georgia ranks 112th in the implementation of the antimonopoly regulatory policy among 137 countries, while Lithuania and Poland occupy the 68th the 49th places, respectively. When comparing Georgia to Lithuania and Poland, the most significant difference is observed in the effectiveness of antimonopoly regulation policy. The reason for this gap is to be found in the existing institutional framework of

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competition regulation in the above-mentioned countries.

A comparison of the essential features of competition regulation legislation in Georgia, Poland, and Lithuania had revealed the differences and gaps that lead to different outcomes in terms of policy efficiency:

- There is no separate institution in Georgia that focuses on consumer protection issues, the presence of which is essential, but not sufficient for effective regulation. In the case of Poland and Lithuania, consumer protection is one of the main directions of work of competition regulation bodies;
- The presence of only one centralized body without regional branches in Georgia limits the reach of its activities due to undeveloped Internet technologies. Lithuania and Poland have complex region-

al structures that allow to embrace the entire country, leading to equal efficiency of antimonopoly and competition regulation;

- Certain important priority directions have been left without attention, i.e., tax privileges and state guarantees have not been yet become priority directions of work for the Competition Agency of Georgia;
- The Competition Agency of Georgia has rather limited power in terms of defining the executive orders and imposing fines compared to Poland and Lithuania, which leads to the agency's institutional weakness. The legislation should be modified in accordance with EU countries' practice in light of the comparison of the two EU members—Poland and Lithuania—with Georgia.

KEYWORDS: *competition policy, competition and antimonopoly regulation, policy effectiveness, free market development.*

Introduction

The effectiveness of competition and antimonopoly regulation is one of the relevant problems of contemporary economic policy in the world. Georgia is no exception in this regard, which is determined, on the one hand, by theoretical considerations, i.e., by the importance of fair competition to the economy and by its role in enhancing consumer welfare. Additionally, in case of Georgia, the importance of effective antimonopoly policies is doubled by the existing challenges: an active tendency towards the monopolization of consumer markets and obvious signs of cartel agreements, as well as by the agenda set by Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations¹. Recently, reforms have been undertaken in Georgia in the competition regulation sphere in order to raise the efficiency of state policy in this regard.

Chapter 10 of the Association Agreement² between Georgia and the European Union deals with free competition issues in trade relations, namely, Art 203-334. These issues are relevant for the European integration processes, as well as for establishing long-term economic competitiveness of the Georgian economy.

¹ Georgia has signed the Association Agreement with the EU that underlines the state's official aspiration to become a member of the EU and bring its competition regulation practices in line with those that are set at the EU level.

² ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, on the one hand, and Georgia, on the other, available at [http://eeas.europa.eu/georgia/pdf/eu-ge_aa-dcfta_en.pdf], 10 December, 2018 (in Georgian).

Clearly, the creation and protection of a competitive market environment in the country is one of the most important functions of any democratic state. The interference of the state in defense of the competition is justified in the case of a “market fiasco,” or “market failure,” when the free market may in itself fail to ensure an equilibrium that is optimal for the society. Market agreements regarding community welfare are exceptionally effective only if there is a competition among the suppliers and among the consumers. That is the case when neither the supplier nor the customer can influence the market price for a long period of time. The latter, namely, the necessity of competition, is a commonly accepted point, however, the views about the methods and ways of competition regulation do vary.

The modern society, including the extreme supporters of maximum liberalism, agree on the positive sides of the policy on free competition and limiting monopolies, however, based on the dynamic nature of the economy, the policy effectiveness is under question. The essence of the matter is that in light of the fact that the private sector of the economy is changing much more rapidly than state policy and structures, it is not quite clear how effective are the tools used by the state? Whether these instruments increase market efficiency or are merely additional bureaucratic mechanisms that bring far worse results? In general, the key tools of competition policy are elimination of cartels, and of market power abuses, and control of company mergers and state subsidies. Their action is supported by auxiliary activities that defend the general rules of competition policy and market transparency and are against the rapid fraud or illegal reproduction of new products. The above-mentioned are some relatively general principles, and the legislative mechanisms for their practical realization vary depending on the countries’ experience. The specific characteristics of the regulations determine the effectiveness of the state in creating and protecting the competitive environment in a specific country.

The aspiration of the state to create a competitive environment is more effective when there is a uniform practice of competition regulation across the country’s foreign trade partners or across the entire regional economy. In this regard, the EU experience seems interesting, as it supports a relatively uniform practice of state approaches to competition regulation, excluding the specifics that belong to the competence of national states. In addition, it is important that the EU has different requirements in the field of competition regulation for candidates for EU membership. Georgia also falls within the framework of such an approach through the Association Agreement between the European Union and European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, on the one hand, and Georgia, on the other hand, signed in July 2014, which imposed certain commitments on Georgia in the sphere of competition regulation. Since the goods and services produced in a country with acceptably competitive domestic markets circulate in international trade, the Association Agreement with the EU also concerns foreign trade issues.

Experience has proven that monopolism often leads to the loss of economic development dynamics and stagnation, which ultimately leads to a decline in public welfare and to poverty. Therefore, it is important to analyze the current situation in Georgia, as well as to conduct a comparative analysis of the differences between Georgia and EU practices.

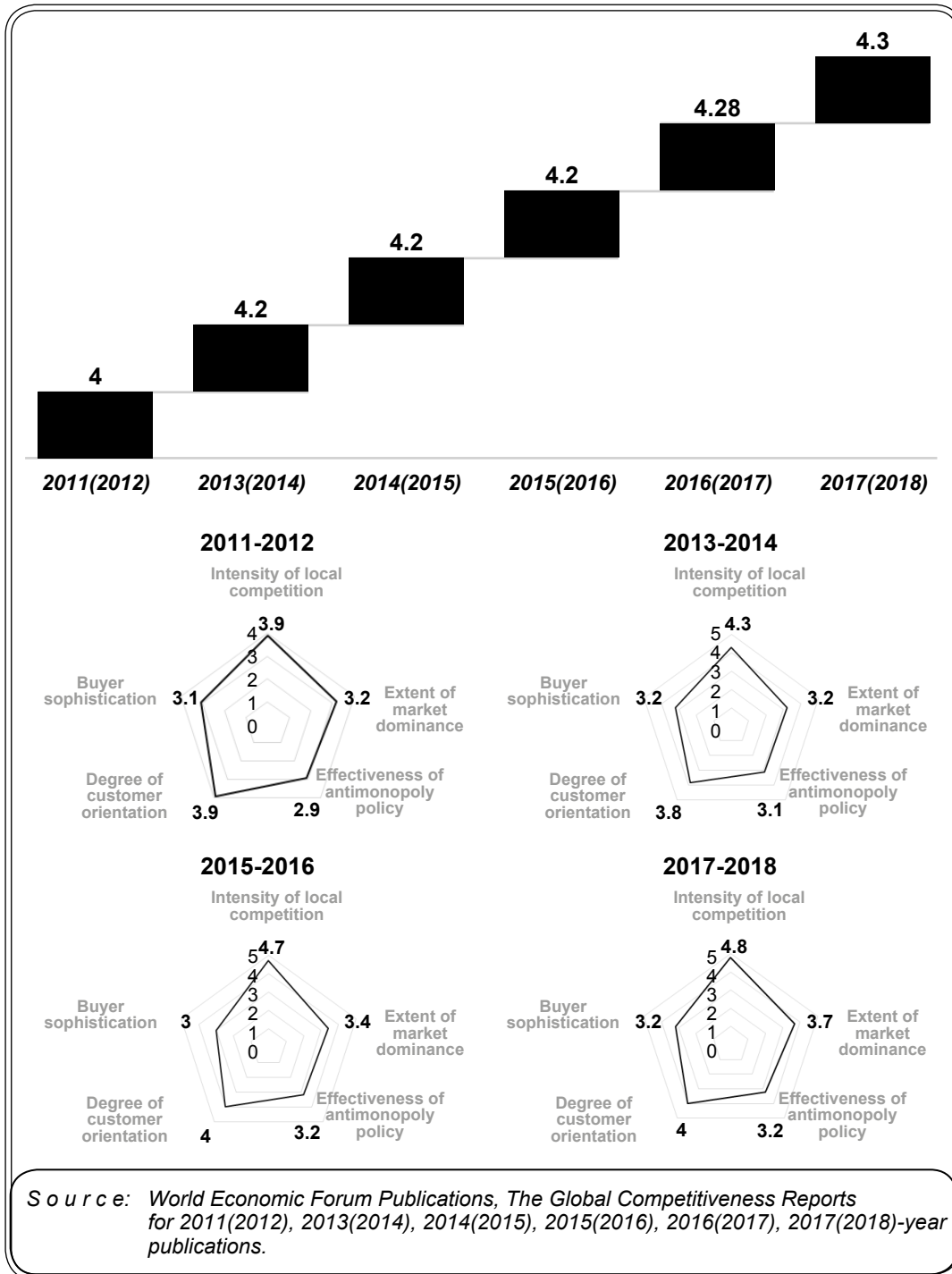
The presented analytical study examines the institutional issues of free competition regulation in Georgia, Poland, and Lithuania. The main conclusions that summarize the results of comparative analysis and key findings are presented at the end of the article.

Comparison of Competition Regulation Effectiveness: Georgia, Lithuania, Poland

International research and ratings are one of the analytical sources that allow to assess the effectiveness of competition policy and market monopolization in the countries in question. Currently,

Diagram 1

**Goods Market Efficiency Assessments for 2011-2018,
Overall and by Component, Georgia**



there are several international rankings published, the Global Competitiveness Index of the World Economic Forum being the most authoritative and reliable source. The World Economic Forum collects data on ratings of countries since 2005. According to the authors of the research, the competitiveness of a country is determined by the effectiveness of the institutions, effective policies and other factors that further impact the volume of production in a particular country.³ On the other hand, the latter determines the returns made by investors as a result of investing in the economy of a given country. The Competitiveness Index includes the static and dynamic components and is based on 12 major competitiveness elements: institutions, macroeconomic environment, health care and school education, higher education and non-formal education, training system, goods markets efficiency, labor market efficiency, financial market development, technology development level, market size, business sector development level, the presence of innovations.

Out of the given index components, we would like to highlight the 6th component, namely, Goods Market Efficiency, which comprises intensity of local competition, extent of market dominance, effectiveness of antimonopoly policy and the degree of customer orientation⁴ This component of the Index fully reflects the general effectiveness of the competition policy.

The Goods Market Efficiency component is divided into 5 sub-components. According to the overall assessment of the Goods Market Efficiency, Georgia occupied the 93rd place⁵ among the 139 countries of the world in 2010-2011, and ranked 59th among 138 countries in 2017-2018. The change in place in the Index itself depends on the results a specific country has achieved, as well as the other countries' progress. In this regard, a substantial change in the ranking position reflects the above-mentioned effect and, in this case, it indicates the improvement in the effectiveness of Georgia's competition policy.

If we analyze the components of Goods Market Efficiency, the most problematic issue according to the World Economic Forum is the effectiveness of antimonopoly policy, which maintains the lowest index among the remaining 4 factors in 2011-2018 (2.9—3.2). It is interesting to compare these indicators with those of Poland and Lithuania.

Georgia is far behind both Lithuania and Poland as far as the assessment of the effectiveness of the antimonopoly policy is concerned. This difference is observed both in the calculation component of the evaluation, and in the rankings. Namely, Georgia ranks 112th among 137 countries in the efficiency of the antimonopoly regulatory policy, while Lithuania and Poland occupy the 68th and the 49th place, respectively. When comparing Georgia to Lithuania and Poland, the most significant difference in the Goods Market Efficiency assessment component is observed in the effectiveness of antimonopoly regulation policy (see Table 1). The reason for this gap is to be found in the existing institutional framework of competition regulation in the above-mentioned countries and the differences in the legislative framework.

If we examine the general assessment of the effectiveness of antimonopoly policy, in this regard from 2010 to 2018, there is significant positive progress observed in Georgia, which should be attributed to the institutional reform of the national regulation mechanisms, which took place in Geor-

³ The Global Competitiveness Report 2014-2015, World Economic Forum, pp. 3-83, available at [<http://www.weforum.org/reports/global-competitiveness-report-2014-2015>].

⁴ 6th pillar of Global Competition Index: Goods Market Efficiency Countries with efficient goods markets are well positioned to produce the right mix of products and services given their particular supply-and-demand conditions, as well as to ensure that these goods can be most effectively traded in the economy. Healthy market competition, both domestic and foreign, is important in driving market efficiency, and thus business productivity, by ensuring that the most efficient firms, producing goods demanded by the market, are those that thrive (see: *World Economic Forum, The Global Competitiveness Report, Insight Report, 2016-2017*, p. 36).

⁵ According to the index methodology, a position closer to the beginning of the rating indicates a better situation, while a position towards the end of the rating is indicative of a worse scenario.

gia in 2013-2014.⁶ However, the issue of market monopolization and the extent of dominance of individual agents on the market still remains relevant, and a significant difference is observed in this regard in comparison with the European Union members Poland and Lithuania. Below is the study of those institutional mechanisms that determine the effectiveness of the antimonopoly regulation policy in these three countries.

Table 1

Comparison of Goods Market Efficiency—Georgia, Poland, Lithuania (2017-2018)

Goods Market Efficiency	Poland		Lithuania		Georgia	
	Score	Rank (out of 137)	Score	Rank (out of 137)	Score	Rank (out of 137)
Overall Indicator	4.6	39	4.6	41	4.3	50
Intensity of local competition	5.3	55	5.5	27	4.8	94
Extent of market dominance	4.7	16	3.6	77	3.7	67
Effectiveness of antimonopoly policy	4	49	3.7	68	3.2	112
Degree of customer orientation	5.1	36	5.2	31	4	111
Buyer sophistication	3.4	70	3.2	81	3.2	85

Georgia: Institutional Mechanisms of Competition Regulation

The state plays a key role in the functioning of competitive framework—the key stimulating mechanism of the market economy. The essential component of the economic system is the competitive framework. In this regard, the formation of institutional mechanisms, the legislative framework in Georgia began to be established when the state had gained its independence. In addition, it is important to note that despite the Civil Code’s broad coverage of individual components of the economy, the Code’s regulation of competition had been historically restricted and insufficient, which establishes the separate development of the legislative framework of competition regulation, which, in turn, is based on the arguments of economic feasibility. If we consider the history of the existing competition policy in Georgia, we can conclude that this policy has not been consistent for years and has not provided sufficient opportunities for forecasting economic feasibility.⁷ It often transformed

⁶ See: N. Khaduri, S. Fetelava, “Implementation of Competition Policy in Georgia,” in: *The First International Scholarly and Practical Conference. “Competition Policy: Contemporary Trends and Challenges,”* Proceedings, Tbilisi, 2017, pp. 312- 320 (in Georgian).

⁷ See, for example: Sh. Gogiashvili, *Economic Policy of Competition and Legislative Practice in Georgia*, Tbilisi, 2009; S. Fetelava, *Evolution of Competition Theory and Antitrust Regulation in Georgia*, Ph.D. thesis on economics, Robakidze State University, Tbilisi, 2008 (both in Georgian).

into purely bureaucratic mechanisms, and later regulation was brought down to the minimum level due to the maximum liberalization of market regulations. Since 2012, the approaches to competition policy have changed, influenced by public opinion, which claimed that there was a significant degree of monopolization in a number of sectors of the economy.

Since 2014, the state policy has become more active in terms of competition. In the Georgia's Social-Economic Development Strategy—Georgia 2020,⁸ which is the main conceptual document of the country's economic policy, the special emphasis is placed on the competition policy priorities. If we summarize the approaches this document stipulates, we can conclude that policy planning is based on the analysis of the previous period and potential answers to future challenges that aim to strengthen the institutional mechanism. The weakness of the competitive environment regulation prior to 2012 is considered to be the main cause of the innovation delay in the sphere of production. According to the claims made by the government, the transition from non-regulation practices to the institutional mechanisms of competition regulation has yet to be made. According to the same document, institutional mechanisms will be implemented in compliance with the best European practices and the EU-Georgia Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA).

Despite the differences in the nominations and the structure of competition systems and laws, they are characterized by similar structural elements (the so-called main functional provisions). All of them contain:

- (a) General provisions concerning the goals and objectives of the law, its scope and jurisdiction, and the definition of the main concepts;
- (b) So-called main provisions, which establish the “rules of competitive players,” including major prohibitions/prohibited actions and agreements, as well as exceptions to such prohibitions;
- (c) The provisions on the structure of the competition regulation agency and law administration;
- (d) Preventive and eliminative measures for violations (including sanctions); Appeal procedures, loss remuneration mechanisms, and other issues.

Conventionally, the basic elements of the efficiency of the antimonopoly regulatory system are as follows:

- (a) Presence of appropriate, clear and predictable rules of competition;
- (b) Effective state-supervised monitoring of their protection;
- (c) Reliable and transparent enforcement practices.

Based on these three pillars, we will conduct a discussion of the institutional mechanisms of antimonopoly regulation in Georgia, Poland, and Lithuania.

According to Decree No. 288 of the Government of Georgia on the Approval of the Regulation on the Legal Entity of Public Law, the Competition Agency, the rights of the Competition Agency have been enhanced. The main goals of the Agency have been determined: implementation of competition-related policy, creation and protection of conditions for the promotion of competition in Georgia, and the prevention and elimination of all types of anticompetitive agreements and actions for the same purpose. The broader discretionary functions of the Agency have been added to the Statute of the Competition Agency⁹. *Article 3: Functions and Responsibilities of the Agency*: Execution of the Agency's decisions and other legal acts shall be mandatory for state authorities, authorities

⁸ [http://www.economy.ge/uploads/ecopolitic/2020/saqartvelo_2020.pdf] 10 December, 2018 (in Georgian).

⁹ See: *Decree of the Government on the Approval of the Statute of LEPL Competition Agency of Georgia*, No. 288, 14 April, 2014, available at [<http://competition.ge/ge/page2.php?p=4&m=63>] (in Georgian).

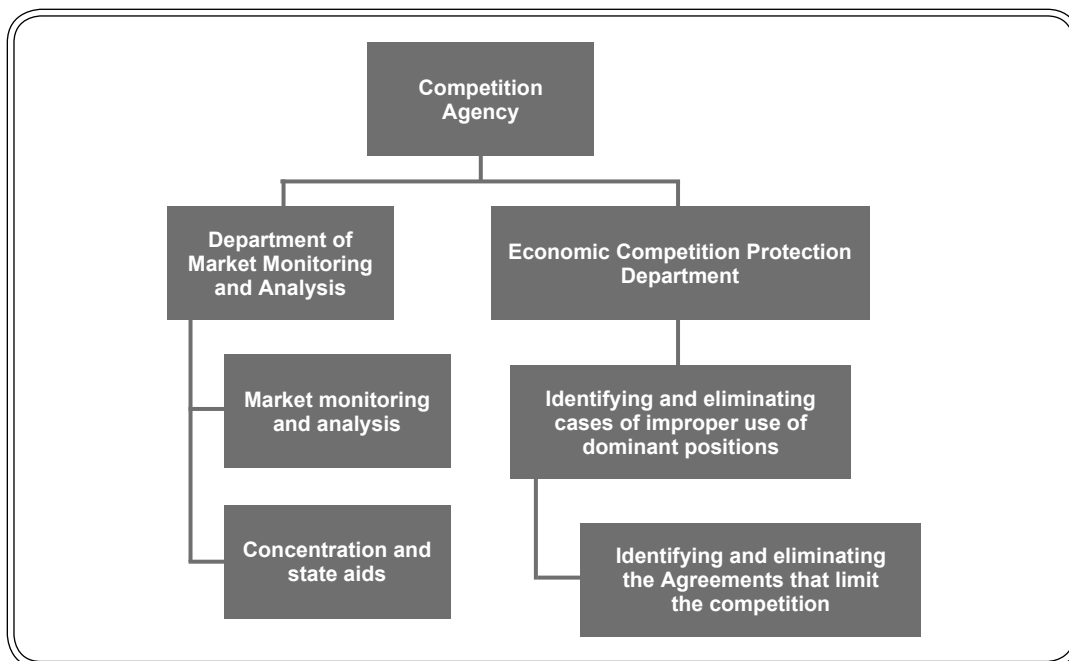
of the autonomous republics, local self-government bodies and economic agents. The following of the Agency’s enhanced rights should be particularly emphasized:

1. To invite and arrange meetings with relevant persons in order to get oral explanations at the inquiry stage, when required;
2. To issue the Agency’s opinion on the competitive impact of the expected merger/concentration based on the Terms and Conditions set by the Legislation;
3. Upon the consent of the court, to carry out an on-site inspection of the economic agent engaged in the case;
4. To request a court to temporarily suspend certain actions of an economic agent prior to the final decision of the Agency;
5. Where appropriate, to conduct research to determine the scale of the unobserved economy in order to establish the market share that determines the dominant position in the relevant market.

The principal structure of the Agency is as follows:

Diagram 2

Functional Structure of the Competition Agency of Georgia



In accordance with the Agency’s regulations, its statute allows it to have representatives in regions and autonomous republics. As of 2018, such representations have not yet formed.

In order to reveal the facts of competition limitation and unfair competition, the Agency is entitled to:

- Conduct monitoring and analysis of the Goods and Services Markets;
- In case of concentration, evaluate the competitive effect and prepare conclusions;

- To conduct an investigation based on the submitted application and/or complaint, or on its own initiative;
- Request information from the relevant economic agent and other stakeholders, related to the specific case, including its legal, organizational and economic relations, to get acquainted with relevant documents related to the activity of the economic agent;
- If a complaint is filed, invite parties to receive oral explanations from them and, if necessary, arrange meetings with stakeholders;
- In order to investigate, based on the consent of the court, examine the economic agent engaged in the case at the site;
- In case of need, conduct research to determine the scale of unobserved economy in the relevant market, in order to determine the market share, determining the dominant position at the market;
- The Agency is entitled to request the information on the agreements periodically, from the agent which is at the dominant position due to the effect of the concentration, on certain privileges, and the transaction that may significantly restrict the competition on the relevant market.

The following key approaches to the concentration and market-leveling are foreseen in the Georgian legislation:

- Concentration that limits effective competition in the Goods or Services Market of Georgia or on a significant part thereof, resulting in gaining or strengthening the dominant position, shall be inadmissible;¹⁰
- Abusive use of one or more (in case of group domination) economic agent's dominance position, is prohibited;

The government and local self-government authorities, as well as the authorities of the Autonomous Republic are prohibited to merge enterprises established with state share participation, create councils, associations, units or other entrepreneurial structures, if this leads to weakening and limiting competition, except for the cases stipulated for by the Georgian legislation.

In the process of execution of its authority, the Agency is entitled to:

1. Set the fine in the amount of 1,000-3,000 GEL if the information is not provided.
2. In case of abusing dominant position or entering restrictive agreements, impose a penalty upon an economic agent (except for economic agents in the regulated sphere of economy), whose amount shall not exceed 5% of its annual turnover during the previous financial year.
3. In case of non-elimination of the legal grounds of the violation or repetition of the violation, impose a fine upon the economic agent, whose amount shall not exceed 10% of its annual turnover during the previous financial year.
4. While determining the amount of the fines, take into account the damage caused by the violation, the duration of the violation and its severity.¹¹

¹⁰ See: *Law of Georgia on Competition*, Chapter II, Art 11.5, available at [<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/download/1659450/4/en/pdf>].

¹¹ See: *Ibid.*, Chapter VII, Art 33.

It is also important to note that in case of these violations, with the exception of the fine, the law provides a collaboration program to the violating entity, wherein the person will fully or partially be released from the responsibility prescribed by this law if the following conditions are met:

- (a) admits to participation in the Agreement;
- (b) provides the information to the Agency verbally and/or in written form, and, if possible, the evidence of the Agreement before the information will be secured by the Agency from another source;
- (c) cooperates with the Agency continuously and without limitation in the process of inquiry.¹²

Institutional Mechanisms of Polish Competition Regulation

Following the transition of Poland to market economy and the country becoming a member of the EU, competition policy has become one of the central issues of the reform. Protecting companies from unfair actions of other companies that violate free market principles is the key for the Competition Policies in Poland, as well as in all other European countries. The background of this general principle is an important experience and the foundation of competition regulation practice.

The competition policy in Poland is mainly based on the Law on Competition,¹³ which was adopted on 16 February, 2007. It regulates the control of monopoly agreements between companies, abusive use of dominant positions by companies, and control of merging and uniting associations. This law is based on the regulation adopted on 16 April, 1993, the Unfair Competition Act, which determines what is considered unjustified behavior of market participants. One of the important aspects of regulating the competitive environment is the supervision of state aid or supervision of any assistance that is being utilized through state resources, since the latter is associated with the risk of the unfair strengthening of any market participant and facilitating unfair competition.

Poland's competition legislation can be divided into three parts: antimonopoly regulation, control of mergers and concentration and state aid. Art 6 of the Law on Competition prohibits all types of agreements (contracts, hidden deals or reservations in any form) that may potentially become the restrictive factors in competition. The law emphasizes the use of "market dominance." The latter category means possessing an economic power when one entity does not take into account the reaction of competitors, intermediaries or final users due to its market position. According to the law, a market share of 40% is believed to exceed the norm and indicate the dominant position at the market. However, the characteristics of the market itself are taken into consideration.

The most important issue in the competitive environment protection is the control of company mergers and formation of unions. The unions that potentially will have a significant impact on market operation aspects are monitored by the authorities. The Polish legislation requires companies to provide well-defined explanations for the goals and reasons behind the large-scale union. The need to submit such explanation arises under the following circumstances:

- Merger of two or more companies;
- Establishing control over one or more companies;

¹² See: Law of Georgia on Competition, Chapter VII, Article 33¹.1.

¹³ See: A. Jurkowska, *Antitrust Private Enforcement—Case of Poland*, University of Warsaw, 2008, p. 61.

- Creation of a common capital company from several legal entities;
- Acquisition of other company's assets.

The adjusted regulation concerns transactions that amount to over 10 million euros. In Poland, the Office of Competition and Consumer Protection (the antimonopoly authority) plays the role of a national regulator itself, whose decisions can only be appealed in court.

European Union provides special aid to EU Member States, in regard to the assistance provided to business by the state.¹⁴ The Treaty directly prohibits state aid to private sector, which leads to some companies being in an unequal position with its competitors. State aid includes the following categories:¹⁵

- State grants;
- Concessions or exemptions from state fees;
- Tax privilege;
- Guarantees issued by the state;
- Supply of goods and services by a state holding in a preferential manner.

However, Polish legislation allows for exceptions to the above-mentioned cases, especially with respect to state support. The latter is defined by state law on 30 April, 2005, based on the relevant EU regulations.

As we have already mentioned, the national regulatory function of a competition regulation mechanism is carried out by the Office of Competition and Consumer Protection. The decisions and instructions of the President of the Office are officially published, and their implementation is mandatory for regulation entities. The decision of the President of the Office can be appealed in a special court—the **Warsaw Regional Court—the Court of Competition and Consumer Protection**.¹⁶ The subsequent appeal mechanism involves the Civil Case Court of Appeals and the higher institution is the Supreme Court.

Competition and consumer protection is carried out at both central and local levels. The President of the Office is the central government administration authority competent in the protection of competition and consumers. **Consumer protection issues at a regional level are regulated by local consumer ombudsmen**, whose main task is to raise the awareness of the relations with consumers and related problems at the regional level. In addition, the Consumer Ombudsman National Council acts as a mediator between the President of the Office and local self-governments and uses the services of a subordinate consultation body. At the same time, the protection of consumers' rights and free competition is carried out by consumer protection organizations.

The Office of Competition and Consumer Protection is the principal body and operates in two main directions: protection of free competition and protection of consumer rights.

The President of the Office is supervised by the Prime Minister. At the same time, the Prime Minister appoints the President of the Office and, if necessary, the Prime Minister is authorized to dismiss him/her from the position.¹⁷

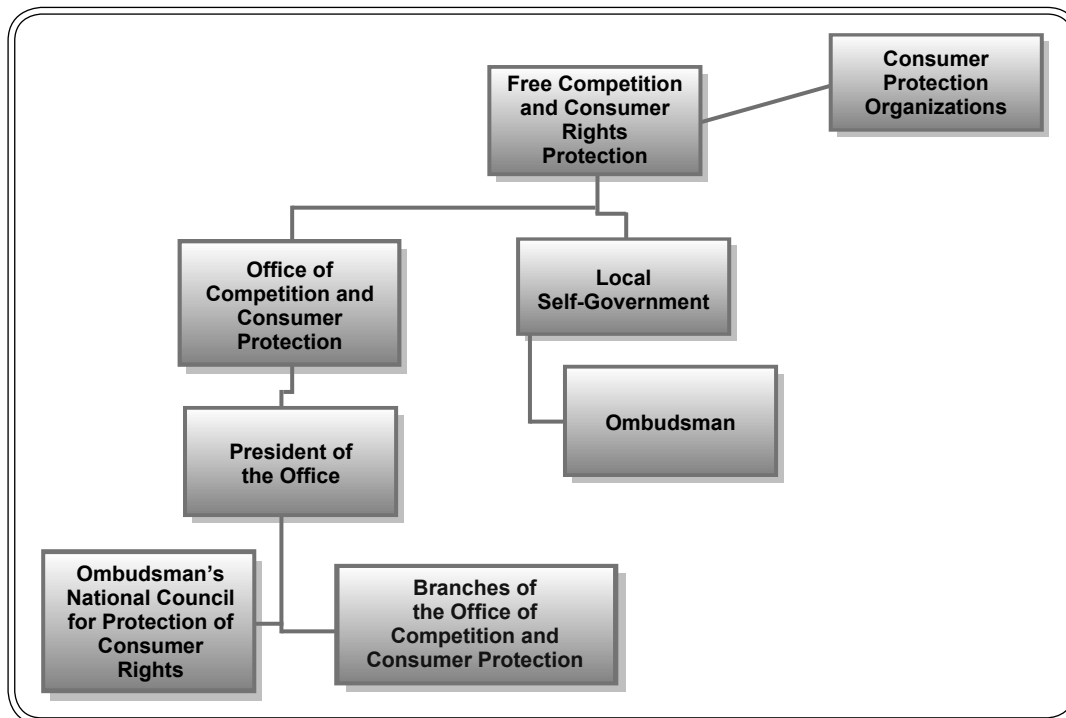
¹⁴ See: Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Art 107, available at [<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT>].

¹⁵ See: M. Błachucki, *Polish Competition Law—Commentary, Case Law and Texts*, Warsaw, 2013, p. 33.

¹⁶ See: EU Commission, *Poland Report—Competition and Antimonopoly Regulation*, 2010, p. 7.

¹⁷ Act on Competition and Consumer Protection, Section V, Chapter 1, Art 29.3.

Institutional Arrangement of Poland's Free Competition and Consumer Rights Protection



The Office operates in 4 main areas of competition protection to:

- Regulate antitrust agreements between economic agents;
- Prevent the abusive use of power by companies dominating the market;
- Control the concentration;
- Monitor state assistance;

The Office works in three main areas of consumer protection to:

- Eliminate collective violations of consumer interests;
- Monitor standard agreements;¹⁸
- Ensure product safety and quality of service.¹⁹

The Office's central headquarters is located in Warsaw, with nine branches in nine administrative units. The territorial and subjective jurisdiction of the Office's branches for cases falling within the scope of the activities of the President of the Office are determined by the Prime Minister based on the number of cases and their nature in the territory in question.²⁰

¹⁸ The reference in the Law to standard agreements see: Art 23a. The use in standard agreements with consumers of abusive clauses referred to in Art 3851(1) of the Civil Code of 23 April, 1964 is prohibited.

¹⁹ See: *Competition and Consumer Protection. Report on Activities 2015*, pp. 11-12, available at [https://www.uokik.gov.pl/reports_on_activities.php].

²⁰ See: Act on Competition and Consumer Protection, Section V, Chapter 1, Art 33.1, 3.

Local Self-Government

The main task of local self-government bodies is to raise awareness about local consumer issues.²¹

Consumer protection at the local level is facilitated by the local Ombudsman. The Ombudsman shall be appointed in the district by the head of self-government or by Mayor in the towns with a district status, and is directly responsible to the governor or mayor. The Ombudsman may file suits on behalf of customers or with their consent, or is entitled to join them in the interests of consumer protection.²²

Ombudsman's duties:

- Provide free legal advice to consumers in the interests of consumer protection;
- File requests with regard to consumer interests regarding the amendment and enforcement of local regulations.²³

The Ombudsman is obliged to regularly report the relevant conclusions and information to the Office related to the problems of consumer rights protection that need to be resolved at the government level.²⁴

National Council of Consumer Ombudsman

National Council of Consumer Ombudsman is a subsidiary body of the President of the Office with regard to matters related to consumer protection at the local level.²⁵

The Council comprises nine consumer rights protection ombudsmen, one from each area of the local competence of the Branch Offices. The President of the Office has the right to appoint and dismiss the Council members. They are appointed by the Director of the Branch and based on the recommendation of the Ombudsman. The Office provides administrative and financial assistance to the Council. Operations of the Council are regulated by the President of the Office.²⁶

The Council aims to:

- Define areas of legislative amendments in terms of consumer rights protection;
- Provide information on legislative proposals and various aspects of the government's consumer rights protection policy;
- Provide ideas on other issues related to consumer protection²⁷.

Consumer Protection Organizations

Consumer protection organizations represent the interests of consumers in central and local governments and participate in policy implementation.

²¹ Ibid., Chapter 2, Art 39.

²² Ibid., Art 42.2.

²³ Ibid., Art 42.1.

²⁴ Ibid., Art 43.3.

²⁵ Ibid., Art 44.1-2.

²⁶ Ibid., Art 44. 4-5.

²⁷ Ibid., Art 44.3.

Duties:

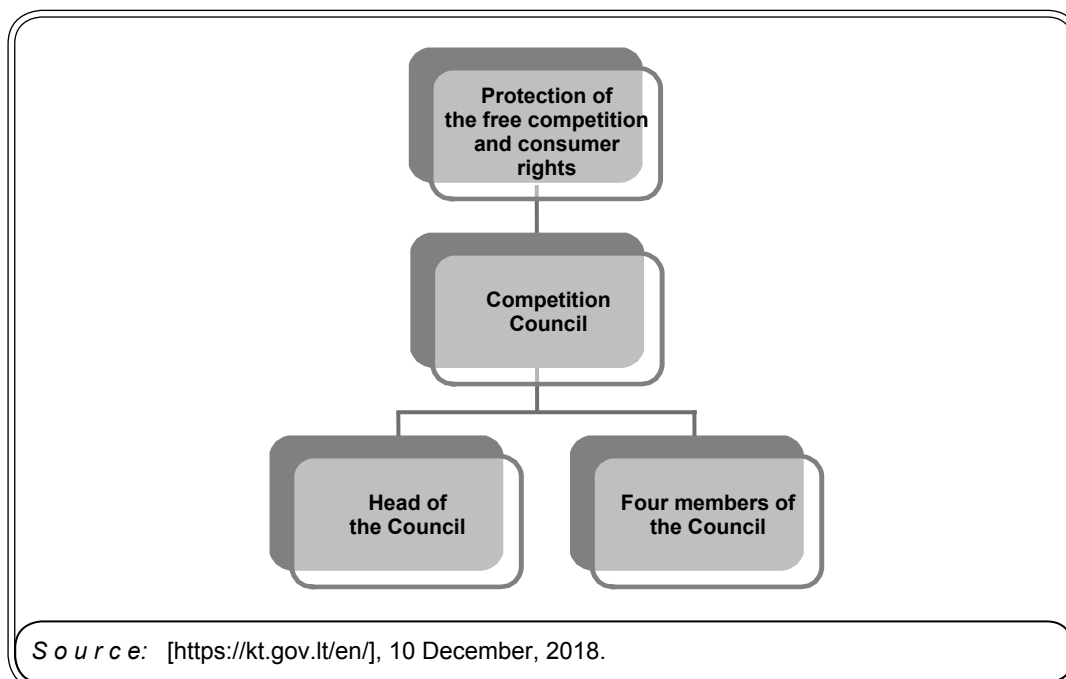
- Conduct product and service tests and publish results, prepare research papers that promote increased awareness in users;
- Ensure free consultation services and the support for customers who file a complaint, if stipulated by the statute of the specific organization;
- Express their position on legislative proposals and implement the tasks of the state that are related to consumer protection and are defined by central and local entities, use public finances to carry out these tasks.²⁸

Institutional Mechanisms of Lithuanian Competition Regulation

Free competition in Lithuania is regulated by the Lithuanian Competition Council.

Diagram 4

Competition Council of the Republic of Lithuania



The Competition Council is an independent state institution that implements state policy for free competition and supervises the protection of the requirements envisaged in the law.²⁹

²⁸ Act on Competition and Consumer Protection, Section V, Chapter 2, Art 45.2.

²⁹ See: Republic of Lithuania Law on Competition, Chapter IV, Art 17, available at [<https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/49e68d00103711e5b0d3e1beb7dd5516?jfwid=q8i88mf0v>], 10 December, 2018.

The Free Competition Council is composed of a chairperson and four members, appointed by the President of the country based on the submission of the Prime Minister of Lithuania³⁰.

The main functions of the Free Competition Council are to:

- Receive notifications about mergers and unions, conduct investigations, identify the cases of limiting free competition, outline administrative measures and penalties;
- Supervise the relevance of the activities of economic agents in the private sector and the activities of state agencies with regard to the Law of Free Competition;
- Request to be engaged in the consultations on preparing any laws or acts of the law which, according to the Council's position, affects the environment of competition in the country and submit the conclusions to the Seimas/Parliament;
- Establish the criteria and formulate the procedures to determine relevant markets and dominant positions that require regulation, start inquiries, define the share of economic agents and their position on the relevant market;
- Check the legal acts adopted by public administrative units for their compliance with the law. If violations are discovered, the Council is authorized to appeal to public administrative authorities to change or revoke the decision;
- Submit amendments to laws and regulations, which restrict competition and effective functioning of the Council, to the Parliament.

The Council operates in the following spheres:

Prohibition of cartel agreements and transactions³¹—Based on a general approach, the activities that are considered to contradict the principles of competition are:

- Price fixing;
- Restriction of production (sales);
- Sharing the product market on a territorial basis, according to groups of buyers or suppliers;
- Disclosure of commercially sensitive information;
- Offered price fixed at a specified level;
- Price fixing between producers and distributors;

If cartel agreement is discovered, the legislator imposes the following sanctions:

- A penalty up to 10% of the previous turnover;
- Restrict the manager of a specific company assume a managerial position at another company in the next 3 to 5 years and impose a penalty of 14,481 euros;
- Disqualification from state procurement for up to 3 years;
- The affected party is entitled to claim losses.

Unfair Competition³²—Unauthorized use of registered trademarks or any substantial change of the form of the trademark that misleads the customer. Misleading the consumer by inappropriate delivery of information on the number of products, quality, composition or risk of consumption. Unfair competition also includes the disclosure of information that is a commercial secret of another economic agent without its consent, or illegal acquisition of such information.

³⁰ Ibid., Art 19.1.

³¹ Ibid., Chapter II, Art 5; Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Art 101.

³² See: Republic of Lithuania Law on Competition, Chapter III, Art 15.

In 2016-2017, the Council had identified 10 cases of restriction of free competition, 3 cartel deals, 2 privileged municipal companies, whose activities limited free competition, 23 notifications sent to state administrative bodies on the alleged violations of the law, 127 proceedings related to the violation of the law on the commercial activity were initiated by the Council.

The total amount of fines paid by law violators in 2016 is 18.7 million euros. The total number of fines imposed on companies is 824,811 euros, of which 758,100 Euros is the amount of fines received from agreements that restrict competition.³³

The Council places a special emphasis on defending consumer rights. The monetized benefits for consumers amounted to 15 million Euros in 2018.³⁴ In its turn, the Council has the legal power: a fine of 289 to 8,688 Euros may be imposed upon advertisers for the use of misleading or prohibited comparative advertising, and in the cases when the set requirements have been violated repeatedly over the year, a bigger fine of up to 34,754 Euros may be imposed.³⁵

Conclusion

The general conclusion is that the essential pillar of effective regulation measures are, first and foremost, institutional mechanisms and their flexibility to impose the policies tailored to the declared aims. A comparison of the essential features of competition regulation legislations in Georgia, Poland, and Lithuania had revealed the differences and gaps that lead to different outcomes in terms of policy efficiency:

There is no separate organization in Georgia that focuses on consumer protection issues. The existence of such an organization is an essential, but not a sufficient condition for effective regulation. In the case of Poland and Lithuania, consumer protection is one of the main directions of work of competition regulation bodies.

The presence of one centralized body with no regional branches limits its activities under the conditions of undeveloped internet technologies. Lithuania and Poland possess complex structures, which allow to cover the entire territory of their countries with antimonopoly and competition regulation at all levels of economic activity.

Certain important priority directions have been left without appropriate attention, i.e., provision of tax privileges and state guarantees has not yet become a priority for the Competition Agency of Georgia.

The Competition Agency of Georgia has rather limited power in terms of defining the executive orders and imposing fines compared to the corresponding organs in Poland and Lithuania, which leads to the agency's institutional weakness. In light of the comparison between the situation in Georgia with that in the two EU member countries (Poland and Lithuania), the need to modify the legislation in Georgia in accordance with EU practices is becoming apparent.

³³ See: Competition Council of the Republic of Lithuania, Annual Report 2016, available at [https://kt.gov.lt/uploads/publications/docs/2982_c4ee36b83a02e0c723d2c7614852685d.pdf] 10 December, 2018.

³⁴ See: Annual Report 2018, available at [https://kt.gov.lt/uploads/publications/docs/3878_3ca764aa0603e8c5e2e6924c0594a33c.pdf], 10 December, 2018.

³⁵ See: Republic of Lithuania Law on Advertising, 18 July, 2000, Art 24.

LABOR AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH OSSETIA-ALANIA OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

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ABSTRACT

The article presents a study of the economic and labor situation in the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania of the North Caucasus Federal District of the Russian Federation. An ethno-sociological study involving 250 respondents and 15 experts was conducted in May 2018. The examined indicators were as follows: significance of labor for people, satisfaction with the level of wages, opportunities to realize one's creative potential, intellectual capacities and work skills, expansion of professional hori-

zons. Various aspects of horizontal and hierarchical relationships among the staff members were also researched. The study reveals the attitude of regular people to such realities of contemporary life as the need to continuously acquire new knowledge and skills, hired labor and self-employment, individual and collective labor, non-standard work schedules—extended workday or workweek and remote workplace. Attention is also drawn to gender stereotypes in labor, issues of the impact of work on family: time

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spent with family and children, work as the main source of replenishing the family budget or, first and foremost, means of social and professional self-realization. Unemployment certainly has a special place in the

study—how widespread it is in the region, how much it threatens those currently employed, what measures people prefer to take in order to prevent losing their job under the current conditions.

KEYWORDS: labor, economic activities, traditional society, talent, temporary work, physical labor, information technologies, financial resources, wages, intellect.

Introduction

The majority of folk festivals in Ossetia are related to labor: *Atynag* is dedicated to the patron of fruitfulness, who sends an abundance of grasses and good weather during hay harvesting; *Jeor-guyba* is a festival dedicated to St. George, and is conducted after the end of seasonal agricultural works; *Rekom*¹ is a holiday in the honor of the god who brings an abundant harvest and preserves and multiplies the livestock, ensures good hay harvesting and fortuitous hunting.

Over 100 years ago Kosta Khetagurov had published his famous essay “Persona” (1891-1902), where he primarily emphasized the “isolation of the Ossetians, who at that time lived in gorges that were enclosed by extremely high snow peaks. The majority of the population of this mountainous land was engaged in livestock breeding and the development of private agriculture.”²

After North Ossetia joined Russia in 1774, highlanders began living in the plains of the Central Caucasus, which led to the change in the “content” and “nature” of labor. It had become more complex, and the reality of life began placing demands on each person’s professional competence. Under the tough living conditions in the mountains, such qualities as courage, resourcefulness and fearlessness were at the forefront. These qualities were in strong demand in wars that the Czarist Army conducted in the 18th century against Turkey and Iran. Many highlanders were promoted to high ranks, up to and including generals and colonels. By the beginning of the Great October Revolution of 1917, there were as many as 90 Ossetian colonels, who were subsequently exterminated in the course of “Red Terror” when they refused to pledge allegiance to the Soviet authorities.

Due to the change in the socio-economic order, labor policy in the Caucasus had also been altered. Labor became the only transformative instrument.

Methods and Materials

This article is based on the materials of mass surveys of residents of Vladikavkaz, conducted by the North Ossetian Department of Social Research of the Institute of Socio-Political Research of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Department of Sociology of the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work of the K.L. Khetagurov North Ossetian State University in May 2018. 250 respondents

¹ See: *Etnografiia i mifologiia osetin. Kratkii slovar*, Compiled by A.B. Dzadziev, Kh.V. Dzutsev, S.M. Karaev, Vladikavkaz, 1990, pp. 18, 51, 115.

² K. Khetagurov, *Proizvedeniia*, Ir, Vladikavkaz, 2009, p. 419.

and 15 experts took part in the research study, including journalists, architects, civil servants, lawyers, university professors, construction workers, cultural professionals, entrepreneurs.

Results and Discussion

In contemporary society work becomes an important instrument for supporting an individual's self-respect.³ Even where labor conditions are not particularly pleasant and the tasks are tedious, the work is a structuring element of a person's psyche and a part of the cycle of the daily routine.⁴ As it is demonstrated in Table 1, this idea is supported by the materials of the mass survey held in March 2018.

Table 1

What does Labor Mean to You?

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
It is a set of tasks at my workplace	34.3
Work is the basis for acquiring skills and realizing my potential	42.4
Work is a form of communicating with colleagues that differs from the home environment	6.0
Work provides a certain direction to my daily routine	12.2
Work allows to participate in joint projects with other people	0.0
Work allows me to support the family budget	60.6
Undecided	4.0

Experts believe that labor motivation is different for people of different professions. The primary, statistically modal motive for any labor is to earn a living for oneself and one's family. Other motives may augment the primary one—if labor coincides with the individual's potential, its content brings pleasure (i.e., creative work); in case of altruistic labor, a person can be motivated by the social significance of his or her work; working at a specific job because there is no other work available; work (especially true of youth) for the purpose of acquiring labor skills.

Handicrafts were the main type labor in traditional societies, Ossetia in particular, up to the 1950s. These included forging, sewing, cattle breeding, crop farming, while the distinguishing feature of the modern times seems to be the growth in the number of public servants and members of security and law enforcement agencies,⁵ which the materials of our survey confirm.

Modern economy characterizes modern societies in a very clear-cut manner. The active phase of the industrialization process took place in 1961-1982, when Bilar Kabaloev was the First Secretary of North Ossetian Regional Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. This period was the time of economic growth based on industrial production. The republic turned from an agricul-

³ See: V.V. Adamchuk, *Ekonomika truda*, INFRA, Moscow, 2009; B.M. Genkin, *Ekonomika i sotsiologiya truda*, Norma, Moscow, 2009.

⁴ See: *Ekonomika truda*, ed. by M.A. Vinokurov, N.A. Gorelov, Peter, St. Petersburg, 2008.

⁵ See: Kh.V. Dzutsev, *Sotsialno-ekonomicheskaya, politicheskaya situatsiya v Respublike Severnaya Osetiya-Alaniya*, Moscow, Vladikavkaz, 2017.

tural into an industrial one. In those years there were 12 electronic manufacturing plants in the city of Vladikavkaz alone, with 40,000 on staff. As the education system had become an all-encompassing one, increasingly more people embraced the study of fundamental sciences, not simply the practical transfer of specific skills and abilities. In our times, education and qualification have become a significant condition of obtaining work and career growth.⁶ An industrial boom has given a boost to the development of many spheres, especially education and health care. According to the survey results, 33.3% work in science, education and health care.

After the 1990s, agriculture received an irrecoverable blow, when after the disintegration of the Soviet Union these spheres were no longer supported. Ever since that time, we have been unable to attain the economic level of those years both in the agricultural and the industrial sectors. As a result, social inequality has been established between the residents of cities and villages, which contributed to a decrease in the number of village residents.

Table 2

Which Industry are You Currently Working In?

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
I work at a plant or a factory, in industrial production	15.1
I work in the agricultural industry (agriculturist, farmer, grow agricultural crops)	18.1
I work in the digital technology sphere	9.0
I work in the state system (public servant)	15.1
I work in science, education or health care	33.3
I work in security or law enforcement structures	12.1
Undecided	12.1

According to the experts, the majority of people works where there is an earning opportunity; even if they are only engaged in one type of activity: law, education, etc., they have several sources of income, i.e., they work in several places simultaneously according to their profession. In the 1990s, owing to the policy of the Russian Federation’s federal authorities, our electronic industry plants were destroyed, with only an insignificant part of the population engaged in this sector of the industry, but the society expects the plants to begin functioning once again.

Table 3

Are You Satisfied with Your Wages?

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
Rather satisfied	39.4
Unsatisfied	51.5
Undecided	15.1

⁶ See: G.V. Osipov, M.N. Strikhanov, F.E. Sheregi, *Vzaimodeistvie nauki i proizvodstva: sotsiologicheskii analiz*, in two parts, Part 1, TsSP, Moscow, 2014.

According to experts, if a person is engaged in private entrepreneurship, the income depends on the entrepreneur himself, for instance, you will earn more if you find more committed customers. If, however, he works in the public sector, his wages do not necessarily depend on him. Some are satisfied with this fact, since they are not busy for an entire workday. There are certain professions, i.e., an educator, when reasonable wages depend on the volume of work, the number of hours: the more you work, the more you earn. Some of our experts are rather satisfied with their earnings, not because it satisfies more than the minimum needs, but because “in comparison with the majority of intellectual workers in the republic or the country, on the whole, there is no reason to complain.”

Table 4

Does the Level of Labor Activity Fully Utilize Your Intellectual and Labor Capabilities?

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
Yes, definitely	36.4
I realize my intellectual and labor capabilities to a certain extent	51.5
Not entirely satisfied	21.2
Completely dissatisfied	6.0
Undecided	0.0

One expert believes that labor intensity often depends on the number of orders, in fact, a person can do much more by engaging additional labor resources, however, there often are not enough orders, another laments the fact that the “‘regional’ segment is the most restricted and powerless in the organizational vertical axis of major companies.”

Table 5

Do You Believe that Work Allows to Demonstrate Your Talent?

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
Yes, I can demonstrate my talent and professional skills	45.4
Not entirely	51.5
Absolutely not	12.1
Undecided	0.0

One of the experts finds it unfortunate that “talent goes unpaid,” at least in his business, which is why he has to “execute whatever the orders are.”

Table 6

Is Your Work Temporary or Permanent?

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
Permanent	81.8
Temporary	18.2

Experts believe that it is very important for a person to have a regular and stable job. However, over the last 20 unstable years, people have constantly been under the threat of losing employment. It seems to be the way to distract workers from the problem of low wages. Only an individual with a private business does not depend on administrative decisions.

Table 7

If You are Employed Temporarily, Does the Nature of Your Employment Allow You to Use Your Talents in Your Current Workplace?

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
I work temporarily and do my best	33.3
There is no way to realize one's potential in a temporary job	23.9
Undecided	42.8

According to experts, temporary work does not provide an opportunity to realize oneself, but management personnel should work with this population group in order to activate its labor activity.

Table 8

Does Your Job Allow You to Make Friends with Other People?

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
Yes, it does	80.5
No, it does not	8.3
Undecided	11.2

Work atmosphere and common interests provide a sense of harmony, resolving staff's common issues. Work and common interests bring one closer to a greater number of people. As is well known, the circle of potential friends and acquaintances away from work is likely to diminish.

A job, whether temporary or regular, is essentially a business transaction with a specific term, thus, when it ends, the relationship with the customer also ends.

Table 9

Does Your Job Provide You with a Sense of Stability in Order to Support Your Family's Income?

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
Yes, entirely	27.7
No, not entirely	36.1
No, it does not	36.2
Undecided	0.0

According to experts, there is no stability—just like in any business, everything depends on the current situation with orders and on whether the contract conditions are acceptable.

Table 10

**What Kind of Work Do You Find Preferable—
In the Informal Economy or the State Economy
with a Fixed Income Determined by the State?**

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
I prefer working in the informal sector	32.4
I prefer working in the state sector with a fixed income	62.2
Undecided	5.4

One of the experts stated that he does not like “pressure from bureaucrats and fools, it is best to make half as much, but be free of idiots.”

Table 11

**What Do You Believe Is Best for You—
Work Done for Fixed Wages from the State or
Work Outside of the State System?**

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
I prefer working within the state system	58.3
I prefer working outside the state system	38.8
Undecided	2.9

Technological changes are one of the main distinctions of the 21st century, and, as Table 12 demonstrates, the number of respondents who work at high-tech enterprises with modern digital technologies amounted to 38.8%. Some of the military plants’ directors have retained their engineering personnel, and with proper financing industrial economy can be restored in the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania.

Table 12

**Do You Work at a High-Tech Enterprise
with Modern Digital Technologies?**

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
Yes	38.8
No	52.7
Undecided	8.5

While in the 1930s the majority of the republic’s population was engaged in manual labor, today the situation is cardinally different. Out of every 20 people, approximately 4 and more are engaged in physical labor.

Table 13

Is Your Work Related More to Manual Labor or Are You a “White-Collar” Worker?

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
I am mostly engaged in manual labor	25.0
I am mostly engaged in intellectual labor	66.6
Undecided	8.4

Our world today is on the verge of new technologies, the basis of which is industrialism. We are entering the era of economic knowledge. It is a type of economy where economic growth occurs due to information and various forms of knowledge, as a result of implementing new ideas. In the knowledge economy the majority of labor resources is engaged in the design of goods, development of new technologies, marketing, sales and services, rather than manual labor or manufacturing material goods. This category of people may be defined as a group of specialists that create this knowledge economy. Thus, a lot of people do not produce anything, and we can claim that they “are making money out of thin air.”

Table 14

**We Live in the Century of New Information Technology.
Do You Think That You are Working in a Knowledge Economy System,
Where the Ideas of Information and Various Forms of Knowledge Support
the Economic Growth of the Republic and the Country?**

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
Yes, I work in a knowledge economy system	32.4
No, I am far removed from this type of work	51.3
Undecided	16.3

We may say that this issue is not being currently addressed in the society, and the Government of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania is not investing in the knowledge economy in the form of public education, investment in software development. This form of work must account for a significant share of the republic’s budget.

Table 15

**Do You Believe That There are Sufficient Financial Resources
in the State Budget for the Knowledge Economy to Become
a Significant Part of the Republic’s or Country’s Budget?**

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
Yes, I agree that the republic is investing enough funds in the knowledge economy	11.1
I do not have any information on this issue	66.6
Undecided	22.3

The state is not making significant investments in the economy, however, it should not be doing it under the current market conditions. The scourge of Russia's economic development is precisely in the fact that the state is still holding the business back, and it will eventually lead to the failure of the economy.

There are currently very extensive requirements on the part of the employer as to the level of trust. A system with a low level of trust threatens any organization with an inevitable crash. There is close observation by the citizens not only of the authorities, but also of each other. Where there is a low level of trust, there is a high level of population's dissatisfaction with both employers and the authorities.

In a system with a high level of trust, population is allowed to control authorities' actions without going beyond the framework of the law. In such societies, there is extensive concentration on fulfillment of obligations both in industrial organizations and in other systems of society's sociopolitical life.⁷

Table 16

Can Present-Day Employers Be Trusted if They Promise High Rewards for Your Work?

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
Yes, I trust employers	41.2
In our times the concept of trust is disappearing, vanishing from society	41.3
Undecided	17.5

The society believes that work allows laborers and white-collar workers to expand the scope of their knowledge.

Table 17

Do You Believe That Work Allows Laborers and White-Collar Workers Expand the Scope of Their Knowledge?

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
Yes, work allows to expand the scope of knowledge	56.8
I am very busy at work, that is why I have no time for self-improvement	32.4
Undecided	10.8

Experience demonstrates that that new forms of work within large staff bodies allow workers to expand the range of their skills thanks to the diversity of the tasks performed.

Our experts are convinced that it leads to greater productivity and the improvement in the quality of manufactured goods and services.

⁷ See: *V teni regulirovaniia: neformalnost na rossiiskom rynke truda*, ed. by V.E. Gimpelson, R.I. Kapeliushnikov, High School of Economics Publishers, Moscow, 2014.

Table 18

Today Many Employers Hire Quick Learners. Do You Believe That the Population of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania is Ready for Such Requirements?

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
Yes, they are ready	56.8
No, they are not ready	32.0
Undecided	11.2

While in the past employers had hired workers based on education and qualifications, today they are seeking people who are able to adapt quickly and learn new skills. Meanwhile, the knowledge of various computer programs may not be as valuable as the ability to comprehend concepts quickly. Specialization at all levels of the job is often an advantage, however, if the workers have difficulties in creatively applying former skills under new circumstances, it may no longer be considered an advantage under the new conditions.

Table 19

Modern Staff Collectives Value People Capable of Cooperation. Others Want to Work Individually, Take Initiative and Take Creative Approaches. Do You Think That There are People of the Latter Sort Among Your Acquaintances, Friends or Close Ones?

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
Cooperative people are more valued in my workplace	62.2
There are not as many people who want to work independently	32.4
Undecided	5.4

Training and re-training of white-collar workers are widespread in modern workplaces. Many companies prefer to hire capable specialists who may develop their skills in the course of their work. As the result, the majority of those surveyed believe that the investment in the main body of employees, who may become valuable workers devoting their entire careers to the specific organization, is justified, and such leaders are keeping pace with the quickly changing times.

Table 20

As the Technologies and Market Requirements Change, Many Companies Retrain Their White-Collar Workers in Order Not to Substitute New Workers for the Existing Staff. Is This Approach to the Staff Typical of Your Organization?

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
Yes, our management tries to retrain its workers	57.1
No, our organization does not retrain its workers	34.2
Undecided	8.7

Prior to World War II working women were a minority, while today 37.5% of the population believe that over a half of female population are economically active.

Table 21

**Prior to World War II, Women Held an Insignificant Share of the Workforce.
What Percentage of Women in the Republic Do You Believe
to be Economically Active? (Write a Number):**

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
15-30%	18.7
40-50%	37.5
60-70%	37.5
75.0% and more	6.3

Today the vast majority of women have a paid workplace outside of the house. An increase in the number of working women with children had also occurred. Women of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania are not well-represented in the public sphere, with only 10% in the parliament, and an equally insignificant share in the government of the republic. This reality is represented in our survey materials.

Table 22

**Your Opinion:
Are Men More Economically Active Than Women?**

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
Yes, I believe that men are more active	47.2
Women are just as economically active as men	44.4
Undecided	8.4

Table 23

**Traditional Models of Domestic Labor Separation are Rather Simple:
Women Took Up Most of the Domestic Work, While the Men Supported
the Family by Earning Money. Do You Believe That
This Separation is True Today As Well?**

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
Yes, this separation of duties remains true to this day	29.4
It is partially preserved	58.8
No, it is not preserved	11.8
Undecided	0.0

Traditional concepts of the roles of men and women both in public and the industrial spheres have taken root in the public consciousness. Due to work outside of the home, men have spent more time in public spaces and have become more engaged in politics, the market, while the women have always been associated in the public consciousness with house work, bringing up children and cooking food for the family being their main activities.

The idea that “home is the place for women” had become common to the North Ossetian society, and no one is refuting or raising this issue, so there is no active opposition or even discussion in regard to it.⁸

Women’s level of employment beyond the home for all social strata was low in the early 20th century, but with the change in politics, especially during World War II, the situation had cardinally changed with the departure of practically all men for war. This policy subsequently has taken root and today female labor resources have been practically equalized with the men’s employment level. In fact, they are the majority in the education and health care spheres. But men still have a higher level of economic activity.

Table 24

From Your Point of View, Is the Idea That a Man is the Provider Preserved in the Modern Families?

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
Yes, it is preserved in our family	66.7
This scheme does not work today	33.3
Undecided	0.0

Our respondents (38.9%) believe that the era of market reforms in the Russian Federation in the beginning of the 1990s brought a more flexible system with a greater efficiency. The majority of the population of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania (57.8%) work in the same manner as before, and it is likely that it corresponds to the group of our respondents that are employed in state structures and are not planning to change their place of employment. Only 3.3% found the posed question difficult to answer.

Table 25

Do You Believe That You are Currently Working More Strenuously and Faster than Before?

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
The market requires greater efficiency at work	38.9
I work in the same manner as before	57.8
Undecided	3.3

⁸ See: Kh.V. Dzutsev, *Etnosotsiologicheskii portret respublik Severo-Kavkazskogo federalnogo okruga Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, ROSSPEN, Moscow, 2012.

Table 26

**Some Employers are Introducing “Prolonged Workdays.”
What is Your Standpoint on This Issue?**

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
I am for the “prolonged work day” as long as I get paid	26.5
I am against it because it affects my personal life	64.7
Undecided	8.8

Our respondents link the significant prolongation of the workweek among married women to the fact that mothers with babies are forced to work due to the need to earn money for the children’s needs. Men are still more economically active, however, the share of women in paid labor resources is growing.

Table 27

**As Increasingly More Mothers with Babies Enter the Labor Market,
There Emerges an Issue of the Long-Term Consequences of
This Tendency and Its Impact on the Children’s Well-Being**

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
It is the worst option, because it leads to children suffering	36.5
Mothers with newborns are forced to work because they lack the money to bring up the children	51.2
It is normal for young modern women	12.3
Undecided	0.0

There is no single opinion in regard to the relatively clear criteria of politics that may be considered “pro-family.” Our respondents believe that it must be aimed at the workers being allowed to do their work both at home and at work (55.3%), 36.8% stated the following: “Policy must not be discriminatory. It must also be open to employer’s needs.” 5.3% of the respondents are in favor of the policy of gender equality between men and women. “A pro-family policy is lucrative for everyone,” our experts state, “because it gives workers greater control over their own fates, allowing them to make decisions regarding the way that they are best fit to work. It leads to the fact that employers find a more acceptable balance among their workers and obligations that are irrelevant to work.” Workers have different needs at different stages of their lives when flexible policies are in place. Experts are convinced that “the second strong side of the ‘pro-family’ policy is that it is useful for the employer.” As employers seek more convenient labor models, they find that their employees become more interested and more committed to their work. It is, as a result, more effective and expeditious, since they spend less time in the attempts to coordinate various aspects of their lives.

Aiming for full employment became the state goal for the head of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania Viacheslav Bitarov. In the 1990s, the level of unemployment in the republic was difficult to keep under control, and was practically null as an attempt to regulate the population’s economic activity. With the new leader assuming the post on 15 September, 2016, there were specific steps

taken to resolve this problem. However, unemployment is a complicated issue. There is currently an acute shortage of doctors and teachers in countryside schools, despite the republic's medical academy, university and a teacher training institute. Specialists are not interested in working in the countryside areas, where the base salary of a doctor or a teacher is 11,635 rubles since May 2018. Despairing graduates of our higher education institutions seek employment beyond North Ossetia. While during the existence of the U.S.S.R., the republic's citizens moved to Central Asia, among other places, they now prefer Moscow and St. Petersburg. It is prestigious for both parents and the young people, since it allows to preserve their quasi-image in the eyes of society.

Table 28

There is No Single Opinion in Regard to Relatively Clear Criteria for the Policy That May Be Considered "Pro-Family." Which Criteria Do You Believe Must Be Fulfilled by the State?

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
Policy must be aimed at the workers being able to meet requirements both at home and at work	55.3
Policy must support gender equality between men and women	5.3
Policy must not be discriminatory, it must be conducted in acceptable work conditions. It must also be open to the employer's needs	36.8
Undecided	2.6

Table 29

The Issue of Unemployment is Poignant Not Only in Our Republic, but also in the Entire Country. How Do You Assess the Level of Unemployment in the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania?

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
Critical	34.3
High	40.0
The same level as throughout the country	22.8
Undecided	2.9

Table 30

Are Residents of Republic of North Ossetia-Alania Afraid of Losing Their Jobs?

Response Options	Share of Respondents, %
Those I know are afraid of losing their job	57.1
Only those who have patronage in the republic are not afraid to lose their job	34.2
Undecided	8.7

Conclusion

In the last decade, the phenomena of fear for one's job had become one of the main topics among those involved in resolving this issue, namely, the Government of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania, administration of the city of Vladikavkaz, heads of district centers. The fear of losing one's job is characteristic of all population categories. The absorption of small enterprises, including stores, by large ones is a continuous process. The striving for efficiency and revenue means that those who lack qualifications are either "wrong" candidates or obtain unstable marginal workplaces. We are now living in a culture of "hirings and terminations," in which the idea of "a life-long workplace" is no longer applicable. Our experts share the opinion that the fear of losing one's job has been exaggerated. There are currently ongoing changes in the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania in regard to the nature of labor organization, which will acquire greater significance in the future. However, practically all the experts are strongly convinced that for the majority of respondents paid work is the key method of obtaining resources required to maintain their well-being.

The breakthroughs occur when the state itself is ready for the changes. This fact is supported by this country's history and may occur at any time, today or tomorrow, thus, the people must be ready for it. But the main thing is the striving for qualitative changes. The authorities must convince its people that every citizen can become a hero and an affluent and respected individual as a result of his or her labor.

RELIGION IN SOCIETY

PROBLEMS OF EFFICIENCY IN COUNTERING EXTREMISM

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ABSTRACT

Despite the fact that extremism is recognized as a global threat to the modern world, the issue of the efficiency of countering it often remains at the periphery of attention in the relevant discourse. Based on the generalization of international experience in organizing counteraction to Islamic extremism, we have identified seven areas of focus: law enforcement, legal, organizational, informational/educational, scien-

tific/theoretical, social, and religious. The specificity of the organization of countering extremism in the framework of these focus areas and the balance of their priority in a certain country is characterized by the concept of a "national anti-extremist system." Based on the comparative analysis of the national anti-extremist systems of Russia, certain Western European countries and a number of Central Asian countries, the pa-

per formulates quantitative and qualitative criteria for countering extremism.

Effective opposition to extremism should be a flexible combination of coordinated international and regional measures that take the specifics of the local socio-cultural environment into account. The struggle must be comprehensive, well-coordinated in all spheres of preventive activities, managed according to a common plan, possess a

single coordinating body, allow for proper feedback and flexible operational modification of the plan itself.

Simultaneously, the measures to eliminate the fundamental causes of extremism and its prevention measures should be prioritized. In the fight against institutionalized extremism, emphasis must be placed on undermining the material base of extremist organizations.

KEYWORDS: *extremism, terrorism, Islamic terrorism, prevention of extremism, efficiency of countering extremism.*

Introduction

Extremism in the modern world resembles a mythical hydra, which grows two new heads instead of the one felled. No situational successes in the fight against extremism are decisive or final. Having suffered a temporary defeat in one place at a certain time, it revived with a new force in the same place, and, in addition, it inexorably spreads around the planet, affecting new regions. Apparently, there are grounds to discuss the global spread of extremism in various guises. That is why extremism is recognized by everyone, with the exception of the extremists themselves, as the world's evil, one of the global dangers for the entire modern world. The fight against extremism is global not only in this context, but also in the context of the sociocultural spread of extremism, thus, it should be conducted in different directions: economic, political, legal, informational, religious, educational, cultural, social, etc. "The fight against terrorism, an activity aimed at eradicating terrorism as a destructive, damaging and socially dangerous phenomenon, includes the preparation and implementation by the states and their authorized bodies of an integrated system of political, socio-economic, informational, educational, organizational, intelligence, legal and other measures aimed at preventing, identifying and suppressing terrorist activities, minimizing their consequences, establishing and eliminating the reasons and conditions that promote it."¹

Formally and theoretically, the entire societies, or, more precisely, all of society's constructive forces, struggle with extremism; in fact, the ranks of de facto fighters against extremism are few and far between, and the results of their efforts are far from the desired efficiency.

- The first unit of fighters against extremism is the authorities, which provide guidance, set goals, carry out organizational, material, personnel and financial support and the ultimate control over this struggle, altering it when necessary.
- The second unit is the special services and their paramilitary units, which come into direct, immediate contact with extremists (especially armed ones) and are engaged in their actual neutralization.

¹ K.A. Kudratov, "Osobennosti i perspektivy borby s terrorizmom v respublike Tadjikistan," *Vestnik Novosibirskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, Series: *Istoriya, filologiya*, Vol. 12, Issue 4: Vostokovedenie, 2013, p. 143.

- The third unit is the theorists (scientists, ideologists, media workers, educators, etc.) who develop conceptual models of extremism and theoretical programs of combatting it.
- The fourth unit comprises the representatives of peaceful interpretations of traditional religions, who are loyal to the sociocultural environment and lead the organizational and ideological struggle for the minds and consciousness of believers.

The actions of these four actors of the struggle against extremism are not properly coordinated in Russian society. For example, rational arguments, conceptual designs, and theorists' programs often do not find an appropriate response from government officials. Some active fighters against extremism use this struggle in order to provide stable material support for their own sustenance. Loyal religious figures concentrate on the purely religious aspects of the struggle against extremism, without effectively coordinating their actions with those of the other actors of the fight against this world evil. The issue of the efficiency of the fight against extremism often remains on the periphery of attention of the public discourse. Despite a vast amount of literature on the topic of combatting extremism, the criteria for the efficiency of this struggle are barely analyzed, although many point out the need to intensify this struggle and increase its efficiency.

Is it possible to defeat extremism? It is obvious that today it is impossible to defeat it completely, because its roots are too deep, diverse and intertwine with each other in a complex manner. The postmodern image of the rhizome is a perfect characteristic of these roots. Let's put the question differently: How to effectively deal with extremism? What is the efficiency of the fight against extremism? What are its criteria? This paper is dedicated to clarifying these issues.

Methods and Materials

In modern discourse, there is practically no special theoretical explication of the problem of the anti-extremist actions' efficiency; in fact, there are only a few fragmentary statements and assessments, whose grounds remain conceptually unclear. As far as the situation in Russia is concerned, on the one hand, there are allegations of certain successes in the area of countering extremism by force. "Despite individual attacks and the preservation of loci of instability in the Northern Caucasus, the spread of religious extremism in Russia has stopped, and Russian law enforcement agencies are increasing resources and mastering new methods to counter this threat. This process is intensifying and giving rise to a broad public debate about how to most effectively counter terrorism, including Wahhabism, in Russia."² The role of the National Anti-Terrorism Committee, which was established in 2006, is especially important.

On the other hand, there is a lack of efficiency of traditional means of combatting extremism in the discourse. "Unfortunately, traditional methods of fighting crime are not effective in combating terrorism... At present, under the constantly changing conditions, new rules of interaction between social structures and the government are required, only partner relations can withstand extremism... Regrettably, the existing methods of working with young people aimed at preventing extremism and terrorism are not effective enough today."³

The problems of the inefficiency of international efforts in the fight against extremism are no secret. "The presence of a solid international legal base does not preclude serious shortcomings and difficulties in the fight against international terrorism and extremism... Interstate associations do not

² A.E. Adam, "Borba s radikalnymi islamskimi sektami," *Gumanitarnye problem voennogo dela*, No. 2 (7), 2016, p. 6.

³ N.N. Tretiakova, M.M. Bozhina, "Problemy ekstremizma v molodezhnoy srede," *Vestnik Permskogo natsionalnogo issledovatel'skogo politekhnicheskogo universiteta*, No. 2, 2016, pp. 102, 104.

coordinate their actions: while pursuing the same goals, they do not utilize each other's experience properly. The regional states cannot boast an integrated approach to the threats of terrorism and extremism, or coordinated actions."⁴ Problems of the inefficiency of countering extremism are associated with the peculiarities of the institutional network, the "rhizome" structure of radical organizations, as well as with a simplified approach to the fight against extremism, which reduces the entire struggle mainly to power methods. "And in local/regional conflicts, this approach should not be limited to isolated military operations."⁵

Problems with the inefficiency of countering extremism also exist in the West. Despite the significant resources spent on coercive opposition to extremism, "there remains an open question about the efficiency of this struggle: many failed attacks were largely prevented by chance, often the terrorists were not immediately arrested and managed to carry out their plans, the special services have practically no influence on potential extremists—those who have not yet committed anything illegal, but support extremist views in one way or another, and in some cases there is a link between terrorist organizations and officials."⁶

And yet, despite the importance of this problem, the comments about the lack of efficiency in countering extremism in scientific discourse are quite rare and fragmentary.

The research methods utilized are a synthesis of international experience in the fight against extremism, a systemic approach to determining the criteria for the efficiency of the fight against extremism, and the conceptual integration of approaches to the fight against extremism. A comparative analysis of specific national systems of organizing the counteraction to religious extremism, especially Islamic, is also used.

Results

Based on the generalization of international experience in countering extremism, one can identify seven main areas of such counteraction. The legal sphere includes the adoption of legal acts that regulate the fight against extremism, including religious extremism, as well as the law enforcement practice of the society's main legal institutions.

The organizational sphere includes a set of measures: the creation of specialized bodies to combat extremism; coordination of the activities of various state bodies and social institutions in countering extremism; general management, instruction and control of activities to counter extremism; financial and material support of the activities of state bodies and social institutions for countering extremism.

The religious direction includes such measures as anti-extremist religious propaganda and the exposure of extremist religious ideology; control over religious behavior and the consciousness of believers by loyal religious denominations; interfaith cooperation of loyal religious denominations in order to preserve and reinforce religious tolerance and religious peace; anti-extremist religious education.

One of the key areas in countering religious extremism is the power struggle with extremist religious organizations, aimed at neutralizing all types of destructive activities, at eliminating the extremist religious organizations themselves, and at isolating or eliminating their leaders and militants.

⁴ S.Ye. Sakhiyev, "Terrorizm i ekstremizm kak glavnye ugrozy bezopasnosti Kazakhstana i Rossii, iskhodiashchie iz Tsentralnoy Azii," *POLITEKS*, Issue 3, No. 3, 2007, pp. 90.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁶ T.G. Khrishkevich, "Organizatsionno-pravovye mekhanizmy obespecheniia antiterroristicheskoy bezopasnosti v FRG v nachale XXI v.," *Metamorfozy istorii*, No. 9, 2017, p. 105.

Just as important as power struggle is the informative and educational sphere, which includes preventing the use of the media and the Internet to propagandize extremism; anti-extremist propaganda through the media and the Internet; anti-extremist training and education of the population, especially young people; channeling the energy of youth into socially constructive activities; reeducation, persuasion, de-radicalization of members of religious extremist organizations and ordinary believers who fell under the influence of religious extremist ideology.

Scientific and theoretical opposition to extremism involves the scientific study of this phenomenon and the development of practical recommendations for countering extremism, including religious extremism.

Finally, one of the key areas of countering extremism is the social sphere, which aims to improve the socio-economic living conditions and cultivate the political system as a dependable channel for expressing social discontent and protest.

Each country has its own system for countering extremism. Its key features can be conveyed in the profile of the priority directions of this counteraction and in the specific emphasis in its anti-extremist activities. Let us call such a system a “national anti-extremist system” (NAS). The nature or a characteristic of a particular NAS is determined,

- first of all, by the specific national situation;
- secondly, by the current government’s level of competence;
- thirdly, by using international experience and international cooperation in anti-extremist activities.

The efficiency of the NAS depends on the degree of its adequacy to its local conditions and on the productivity of international cooperation.

Despite the individual differences in NAS, they share common problems in the efficiency of their activities, specific to each of the seven areas we have identified.

As far as the legal sphere of countering extremism, there may be problems in its efficiency due to poor quality or insufficiency of the legislative framework, as well as due to the lack of consistency in national and international anti-terrorism legislation. Problems with efficiency in this area also arise due to the lack of coherence and coordination of interstate and international interactions of legal bodies.

At the organizational level, many factors complicate the efficiency of countering extremism, i.e., the inadequacy of anti-extremist programs and/or their insufficient implementation, insufficient funding for anti-extremist activities and poor coordination between its main actors.

In the religious sphere, problems are related to the insufficient, mainly declarative anti-extremist activities of the clergy loyal to the state, as well as to the poor organization of anti-extremist religious education and fragmentary and ineffective interfaith cooperation. “Russia’s spiritual administrations of Muslims and other Islamic centers do not demonstrate sufficient activity or ability in the ideological confrontation with Islamic terrorism, they are avoiding direct controversy with Islamic radicals on the key issues of Muslim legal theory, limiting themselves to general declarations.”⁷

At the level of power struggle, paradoxically, the main obstacle to efficiency is its scale. It is best to strive to minimize the power struggle by precluding the rise of extremist activity. In a study conducted by Alvin M. Saperstain, an attempt was made to create a mathematical model of the correlation between the scale of terrorist and counter-terrorist activities. The author comes to the trivial conclusion that in order to minimize terrorism, counter-terrorism forces have to be significantly su-

⁷ K.M. Khanbabayev, “Ideologicheskoe protivodeystviye ekstremizmu i terrorizmu v Rossii,” *Islamovedeniye*, No. 2, 2011, p. 14.

perior. To retain the precursors of terrorism at a minimum level "...means fostering a society with no incentives for terrorism and 'nipping in the bud' any beginning hints of a terrorist movement."⁸

Where the power pressure is more intense, the opposing extremist resistance is more active. Improving the power methods of dealing with extremism provokes the improvement in the extremist activity methods. This is illustrated clearly by the example of Israel. "The heavy losses in the leadership of the Hamas militant organizations, the liquidation of weapons and explosives depots by the Israeli special services necessitated a structural reorganization of the military apparatus of the movement, as a result of which, in the case of Al-Mujahidun Al-falastiniyun, it became more amorphous, and in the case of the Majd—more secretive."⁹

In addition, the successes in the violent suppression of Islamic extremism stimulate the latter to engage in a more active and sophisticated struggle as revenge for the losses suffered, which is also apparent in the example of Israel. "A recent empirical analysis suggests that 'targeted hits' by the Israeli forces boosted the estimated recruitment to the 'terrorist stock,' presumably due to the Palestinians' motivation to revenge the fallen comrades."¹⁰

It is simply impossible to destroy religious extremism by force alone, but the latter can significantly increase its scale, or temporarily drive extremism as a social disease deeper inside, into the underground, which would inevitably lead to a subsequent destructive explosion. "It is obvious that in order to overcome extremism as a specific conflict form of relations between the authorities and the people, it is necessary, first and foremost, to substantially improve the population's standard of living, lift the people out of critical social conditions and stagnant poverty, overcoming the long-term trend of a decline in the standard of living, and to attain a true democratization of the political system."¹¹

The efficiency of scientific and theoretical counteraction to religious extremism is significantly reduced by two key factors: the disorienting pluralism of scientific concepts of extremism and the insufficient development of practical recommendations for countering extremism.

The efficiency of informational and educational counteraction to extremism is problematic, mainly because of its declarativeness, formalism, and poor coordination of anti-extremist activities between the media, Internet monitoring services and the society's educational institutions. Both the media and the society's educational institutions (the family, the education system) formally set the task of countering extremism, but there are no material incentives to support the resolution of these tasks, nor is there any responsibility for the inefficiency of their anti-extremist activities. Each of the informational and educational actors of countering extremism acts on its own discretion, without coordinating its actions with other actors.

The main factor in the inefficiency of countering extremism in the social sphere is the inertia of the existing socio-economic and political systems, which actually gives rise to the extensive social roots of extremism, the unwillingness or the inability of the ruling elites to make political efforts and carry out socio-economic reforms to eliminate these roots.

In addition to local problems that reduce the efficiency of countering religious extremism in certain spheres, there are also two global problems associated with prioritizing these spheres. The most common obstacle to the efficiency of countering extremism is building an inadequate counter-

⁸ A.M. Saperstain, "Mathematical Modeling of the Interaction between Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism and its Policy Implications," *Complexity*, Vol. 14, Issue 1, 2008, p. 49.

⁹ A.V. Martynkin, "Izrail'skiy opyt borby s organizatsiiami islamskogo ekstremizma v 90-e gody XX veka," *Prichernomorie. Istoria, politika, kultura*, Issue XXI (VII), Series B, 2017, p. 32.

¹⁰ A.W. Kruglanski, S. Fishman, "Psychological Factors in Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Individual, Group, and Organizational Levels of Analysis," *Social Issues and Policy Review*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2009, p. 37.

¹¹ A.F. Polomoshnov, "Ekstremizm kak sotsialnoe iavlenie," *Vestnik Donskogo gosudarstvennogo agrarnogo universiteta*, No. 2 (20.2), 2016, p. 31.

measure priority system, which is inadequate to local specifics. Usually, in the regions where Islamic extremism has spread significantly, legal, organizational, and power opposition are considered priority areas, while the social direction is almost completely ignored and the informational and educational direction—poorly organized. It is obvious that an effective NAS should be based on other priorities, i.e., on the priority of the social direction, which is the key to eliminating the social grounds of extremism, as well as on the priority of the scientific and theoretical direction as the basis of the efficiency of anti-extremist activity.

The second global problem of the efficiency of NAS is related to the balance of preventive measures and measures taken to combat extremism. Prevention of extremism is aimed at precluding the formation and spread of extremist ideology, as well as at averting the establishment of extremist organizations. Preventive measures are mostly peaceful and socially constructive. They prevail in the informational, educational, social, and religious areas of countering extremism. The main target of prevention are population groups that are in an unstable, critical material and marginal social situation, but that have not yet embraced extremist ideology.

The fight against extremism is aimed at neutralizing the activities of operating extremists and members of extremist organizations, at their elimination, or social exclusion, as well as at persuading and re-educating individuals who are sympathetic to extremist ideology, but have not yet moved on to being involved in extremist activity. It is dominated by tough power methods. The struggle prevails in legal, organizational and power areas of countering extremism.

Of course, effective opposition to extremism must be based on the priority of preventive measures, since it is better to prevent a fire than to extinguish it. However, preventive measures that involve the removing marginalized, low-income population groups, which are potentially subject to extremist influence, from a critical situation require large-scale social reforms and significant material investments.

In general, efficiency is the relationship between the resources used and the result achieved. There are two aspects of efficiency of anti-extremist activities.

- The first is the ratio of material costs and the result obtained. For example, you can calculate the ratio between the number of terrorist attacks and the amount of funding received by special services that are supposed to prevent terrorist attacks.
- The second aspect of efficiency is that of achieving the objectives of countering extremism, the ratio of plans and results. Efficiency is established by a comparative method: over time periods or when comparing different national anti-extremist systems.

Two series of criteria should be distinguished: quantitative and qualitative, in accordance with the two aspects of the efficiency of anti-extremist activity. The list of quantitative criteria may include the following: firstly, the ratio of the material and human resources aimed at combatting extremism to the number of destroyed or neutralized extremists and extremist organizations, as well as to the total number of extremists and sympathizers of extremism; secondly, the ratio of the amount of funds allocated to the prevention of extremism to the amount of funds allocated to combat it.

We consider the productive principles of organizing counteraction to extremism (consistency, a complex approach, flexibility, a balance of universalization and specialization, specificity, continuity, concentration, and preventive actions) to be the qualitative efficiency indicators. Consistency means clear coordination of the actions of all actors engaged in the fight against extremism, competent planning and management by a single governing center or body. A complex approach refers to countering religious extremism from all directions, without underestimating any of the areas. Flexibility means effective feedback between planning and execution of anti-extremist actions and prompt introduction of required corrections. The balance of universalization and specialization presupposes a flexible combination of global measures, international coordination and local measures to counter

extremism. “The most effective form of combating international terrorism and extremism should be the interaction of all the stakeholders based on existing international agreements, and the creation of an effective regional security system, which is the link between the national and global security levels.”¹²

Specificity means taking into account the specifics of the regional and local socio-cultural environment. “Acknowledging that different countries have different cultural backgrounds and political settings, it is understandable that no system can be duplicated using a copy-paste technique into a new arena... Nevertheless, efforts should be made to advance local capabilities, response plans, and resilience by drawing on the experience of others in coping with the terror threat.”¹³

Continuity is the need to be actively involved in overcoming extremism on a continual basis, to wage a constant war on it, rather than to organize fragmented campaigns or battles. Concentration requires to combine all efforts and concentrate all the necessary resources to strike extremism with a powerful fist, and not with splayed-out fingers. Preventive actions mean nipping extremism in the bud, preventing its institutionalization, shifting the emphasis to the prevention of extremism. “On the social level of analysis, a central counterterrorism endeavor could be the creation of a shared reality opposed to terrorism.”¹⁴

The qualitative criteria also include the target indicators used in certain counterterrorism programs, which allow us to correlate the goals set and the results achieved through specific indicators. However, measuring the qualitative aspect of efficiency using quantitative target program indicators is in itself a rather ambiguous and challenging procedure.

The main criterion of the efficiency of the fight against extremism is the elimination of the latter’s social roots, that is, the disease itself, rather than its symptoms. When we combine the fight against extremism with the category of efficiency, rather than general abstract reasoning, the efficiency of this fight will increase. Only the execution of performance criteria will allow us to achieve a significant reduction in the level of extremism. The fight against extremism can be represented as a dynamic confrontation between two processes: strengthening or weakening extremism, which occurs in waves. Efficiency is manifested in the steady trend of the second’s tendency’s dominance instead of the wave-like fluctuations of these tendencies.

Discussion

Let us consider the problem of the efficiency of countering extremism using the example of specific NAS. Let us compare the profiles of NAS in Russia, Central Asia (former republics of the U.S.S.R.) and Western Europe (England and Germany).

The Russian NAS profile consists of a priority triad of active measures, which comprises three areas: law enforcement, legal and organizational. Additional directions in the Russian NAS profile are informational/educational and religious. The scientific/theoretical and social areas of countering opposition remain on the periphery. The main actor in countering extremism in the Russian NAS profile is the state, as represented by the National Anti-Terrorism Committee. The main emphasis in countering extremism is placed on the fight against Islamic extremist organizations and the prevention of terrorist acts, as well as the suppression of the subversive activities of Islamic extremists and extremist propaganda.

¹² S.Ye. Sakhiyev, op. cit., p. 102.

¹³ M. Siman-Tov, M. Bodas, K. Peleg, “The Social Impact of Terrorism on Civilian Populations: Lessons Learned from Decades of Terrorism in Israel and Abroad,” *Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 97, No. 1, 2016, p. 83.

¹⁴ A.W. Kruglanski, S. Fishman, op. cit., p. 34.

Without taking into account the insignificant local differences between the former republics of the U.S.S.R., the Central Asian NAS profile includes the priority of four areas: law enforcement, legal, organizational, and religious. Three directions remain on the periphery in these systems: informational/educational, scientific/theoretical and social. A specific feature of the Central Asian profile of countering extremism is the leading role of central and local authorities in organizing the struggle against Islamic extremism, as well as the active engagement of loyal clergy and active regular believers in controlling the consciousness and behavior of believers. In some Central Asian republics, extremely harsh repressive measures are used not only against Islamic extremists, but also against the members of their families. For example, "...in Tajikistan over the past two years, starting in 2014, a tough campaign was launched to combat 'religious extremism,' which, according to those who criticized the campaign, was characterized by a number of abuses. In particular, government representatives (often not very competent in matters of religion) were present at sermons at mosques, and subsequently closed down those mosques where they deemed the sermons too radical (most often, the premises were handed over to various cultural centers). A total of about 2,000 mosques were closed." Obviously, the result of this tough campaign was not a weakening, but a strengthening of Islamic extremism, "At the same time, there is an acceleration of radicalization in society, which, in particular, has affected the law enforcement agencies."¹⁵

The Western European NAS profile (without taking into account the individual differences of national anti-extremist systems) is characterized by the priority of four areas: legal, organizational, law enforcement, and informational/educational. Peripheral areas in this profile include the scientific/theoretical, religious, and social. The nature of the European NAS profile is related to the interpretation of the terms "prevention" and "struggle." Prevention here includes the prevention of terrorist acts, de-radicalization of extremists, and control of the special services over Islamic religious communities. European NAS emphasize this type of prevention. The main actor of countering extremism in Europe is the special agencies and units under the Ministries of Internal Affairs. "Anti-terrorist measures in Germany can be divided into the following categories: criminal procedure measures; administrative and legal (measures to protect and ensure the safety of institutions and persons); agent/operative (obtaining information about terrorists' plans); peace initiatives (political solutions to problems)."¹⁶

An important place in the Western counterextremism system is held by the emphasis on the de-radicalization of Islamic extremists. "The various Muslim programs addressed the intellectual elements through the enlistment of religious authorities to counterargue the jihadist interpretations of the Q'uran. And, they addressed the motivational component by providing terrorism suspects with ways and means of forging a significance-bestowing integration into the society, thus partially undermining the motivational basis for finding the violent ideology appealing. By contrast to programs that targeted militants with extant ideological commitments, some programs (e.g., Exit Sweden or the Colombian programs) were designed for militants who became disenchanted with the ideological contents on their own, as it were, and merely addressed the motivational component by extending relocation and reintegration assistance offering these individuals the opportunity to 'turn the page.'"¹⁷

The issue of protecting human rights and maintaining a balance between legal and extralegal forms of combatting Islamic extremism in this context is important for the Western anti-terrorist system. "States attempt to subordinate decisions related to the new counterterrorism policies to the

¹⁵ L.Yu. Gusev, "Borba s ekstremizmom i terrorizmom v stranakh Tsentralnoy Azii," *Sovremennye evraziyskie issledovaniia*, No. 2, 2016, p. 66.

¹⁶ T.G. Khrishkevich, op. cit., p. 101.

¹⁷ A.W. Kruglanski, S. Fishman, op. cit., p. 33.

test of their 'efficiency/inefficiency' in guaranteeing security, at the expense of questions about their 'legal/illegal' nature and legal constraints."¹⁸

As the comparative analysis of the national anti-extremist systems of Russia, Germany, Great Britain, and former Central Asian republics of the U.S.S.R. shows, the emphasis in the fight against extremism is placed on the development of legal documents, the drafting of programs and concepts to combat extremism. In practice, these concepts and programs are ineffective, abstract and aimed at treating the symptoms, and not the disease itself. This is why they are constantly adjusted, yet their main drawback is not eliminated. None of these programs have been fully implemented and, very importantly, there is no control over their implementation at all in the above-mentioned countries. The situation is even worse in regard to the elaboration of criteria for monitoring their implementation.

Summarizing the existing global experience in dealing with extremism demonstrates that as a rule, symptoms, rather than the disease, are being addressed all over the world. Social troubles that find an outlet in extremism are the large-scale marginalization of the population, massive unemployment and stagnant, hopeless poverty, especially youth poverty, as well as anomalous social polarization.

The "relative approach" to extremism proposed by Charles Tilly is of interest. "Terrorism arises from the dynamic interactions and relations among political actors — and so must be explained 'relationally.'" "If we do not go relational, we will not explain terror."¹⁹

However, we should agree with the clarifications of this approach by Goodwin, who rightly notes that not all types of violent conflicts in politics are related to terrorism and extremism. "In fact, many, if not most analysts, including myself,²⁰ reserve the label 'terrorism' exclusively for violence against noncombatants... Terrorism in this sense would not include sabotage, guerrilla warfare, or counterinsurgency directed exclusively at armed rebels. Terrorism may be further differentiated between violence targeted at *specific* noncombatants (e.g., politicians, political leaders, judges, and journalists) and 'indiscriminate' violence directed at *whole categories* of noncombatants (e.g., ethnic groups, nationalities, social classes)."²¹

Indeed, extremism is associated with social relations, but not only with political relations between political actors, but also with the relations between the government and the people. "There are two sides to extremism as a specific social relationship: the government and the people, or the governing caste and the governed society (social groups). Thus, extremism is an acute form of the relationship between the authorities and the people, when both parties resort to violent extreme actions towards each other. In this regard, it is necessary to distinguish the two sides: the activities of the authorities (as the initial message) and the activities of the people (as a response to a message or a trigger). On the part of the authorities, this conflicting social attitude is manifested in a policy that puts the population in critical, unbearable conditions of existence, and on the part of the people it is an extreme form of social protest."²²

The relationship between the population's low standard of living and extremism, however, is not recognized by all. For example, referring to empirical data for Western Europe, Matt Qvortrup finds a weak correlation between the population's level of income and the level of extremism. "Traditionally, studies of political violence and terrorism have focused on the social and economic causes

¹⁸ D. Tosini, "The Autonomy of Law in the War on Terror: A Contribution from Social Systems Theory," *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice*, Vol. 40, Issue 2, 2012, p. 115.

¹⁹ C. Tilly, "Terrorism as Strategy and Relational Process," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, No. 46 (1-2), 2005, p. 32.

²⁰ See: J. Goodwin, "A Theory of Categorical Terrorism," *Social Forces*, No. 84 (4), 2006, pp. 2027-2046.

²¹ J. Goodwin, "The Relational Approach to Terrorism," *Swiss Political Science Review*, No. 15 (2), 2009, p. 392.

²² A.F. Polomoshnov, *op. cit.*

of terrorism. From the pioneering studies in the early 1970s through to more recent studies, there has been a focus on terrorism as a result of social causes. ‘Relative deprivation’—often measured as economic inequality and a low level of economic income has often been blamed for increased levels in the incidence of terrorist attacks. Far from wanting to dismiss these studies entirely, there is evidence to suggest that these causes do not account for the occurrence of terrorist incidents in Western Europe. Based on the data from countries in Western Europe, there is little to suggest that social factors play a decisive role.”²³

Matt Qvortrup suggests another correlation between extremism and society, “...systems of consensus democracy (typically countries with PR electoral systems with a large number of candidates elected in each constituency) have lower levels of domestic terrorism.”²⁴ However, recognizing the value of the correlation proposed by Qvortrup, it is worth noting that extremism is generated not by the relative poverty of the population, but by a critically low standard of living and the social hopelessness of the low-income social strata.

Extremist forms of religious ideologies are only forms of expressing social protest. When people are excluded from normal life and find themselves on the sidelines of society, they are actually forced into active resistance and drawn into destructive social revenge. In the Arab countries and in the countries of the Islamic region with an unsatisfactory economic situation, extremism is the social revenge of the socially marginalized classes. Moreover, the worse the socio-economic situation, the more acute and widespread is the manifestation of religious extremism. In the West, the grounds for extremism are formed by conflict and the polarization of cultures, social polarization and social revenge of marginalized aliens, unsettled aliens, revenge of refugees from ravaged, previously prosperous Arab countries.

Globalization leads to global social polarization, transforming entire regions into hopeless areas of geopolitical and economic marginalization. As a result, marginalized migration flows emerge from these regions to the prosperous Western world, where these flows form enclaves of social instability, nests of potential extremism. The geopolitical social polarization of the world and the marginalization of entire regions creates a response in the form of the internationalization of Islamic extremism—the ideology of a global or regional Islamic caliphate, establishment of entire extremist states (ISIL, Afghanistan during the Taliban rule) and the formation of an international network of Islamic extremist organizations.

As a result, we can formulate some general recommendations for increasing the efficiency of national anti-extremist systems, despite some differences in the Russian, Central Asian, and Western European anti-extremist profiles. These recommendations suggest that the top priority should be attributed to scientific/theoretical, social, informational/educational and religious areas of combatting extremism, which, however, does not require activities to diminish in other spheres. In this case, the scientific/theoretical and social spheres are particularly important.

Conclusion

It is impossible to completely eradicate extremism in the modern world without qualitative changes in the global economic and political order. Extremism as a threat to world stability requires not merely global, but effective counteraction. Therefore, the fight against extremism should be a flexible combination of global measures, international coordination and local measures, with regard

²³ M.H. Qvortrup, “Terrorism and Political Science,” *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol. 14, 2012, pp. 505-506.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 514.

for the specifics of the regional/local socio-cultural environment. The struggle must counteract all areas of extremism, and should be coordinated and managed according to a common plan with a single coordinating body, with proper feedback and flexible operational correction of this plan. The priority in countering extremism should belong to measures that eliminate the fundamental roots of extremism and prevent extremism. When fighting against institutionalized extremism, the emphasis needs to be shifted to undermine the material base of extremist organizations. If we do not fight extremism, fight ineffectively or, even worse, formally imitate this struggle, this can lead to devastating consequences for modern civilization.

RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM AMONG CENTRAL ASIAN YOUTH: SPECIFICS, PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Proliferation of religious extremism remains high on the agenda of the globalized world. A local phenomenon, extremism is nevertheless a problem of global dimensions: armed with religion, extremists have selected the younger population as their target. In Central Asia the prob-

lem acquired special intensity in the post-Soviet independent states. The difficult geopolitical context serves as fertile soil for extremist religious movements. The local states are drawn into an uncompromising competition with extremist religious forces for the minds of the younger generation as

the most vulnerable part of their populations. This paper analyzes the sources and scope | *of the problem, as well as the position of the local states and their efforts to resolve it.*

KEYWORDS: *youth extremism, religious extremism, Central Asia, national security.*

Introduction

Extremism, which has spread far and wide across the world, is one of the urgent global problems that affects, to different degrees, all states and their policies, and the Central Asian countries are no exception.

Intertwined with other socio-cultural and political phenomena, such as nationalism, separatism and fundamentalism, it may develop into serious threats to national security.

Religious extremism as a social phenomenon of international dimensions is dangerous because it embraces a wide range of criminal motivations, crops up in different forms and, therefore, can be described as an extremely dangerous conglomerate of violent forms of its realization, a great deal of greed and avarice, a high level of economic support and a high level of organization of terrorism in general and its individual manifestations in particular.¹

Much has already been written in this country and abroad about the phenomenon of extremism, youth extremism, extremism in Central Asia, extremism among teenagers in specific countries, yet there are still no works that contain a comprehensive analysis of extremism in all its manifestations.

We have posed ourselves with the task of analyzing the concept of extremism, religious extremism as a phenomenon in its own right and the problem of religious extremism among the younger generation. We concentrated on Central Asia, which has somewhat narrowed down our analysis.

Extremism in the System of International Relations. Specifics of Religious Extremism

The spread of extremism as an urgent problem of a global nature is present, in one way or another, on the political agenda of all states, the Central Asian countries being no exception in this respect.

Before delving into the depths of this phenomenon, we should first define it in scholarly terms. This is important because academic and expert communities have yet to agree upon a definition of terrorism. Peter Coleman and Andrea Bartoli, for example, apply the term to all types of human activities which, in one form or another, differ from the commonly accepted varieties.² In this case the

¹ See: D.N. Ziablov, "Osobennosti religioznogo ekstremizma v sovremennoy Rossii: istoriko-pravovye aspekty," in: *Istoricheskie, filosofskie, politicheskie i iuridicheskie nauki, kurlturologia i iskusstvovedenie. Voprosy teorii i praktiki*, in 4 parts, Part II, Gramota Publishers, Tambov, No. 5 (11), 2011, pp. 97-100.

² See: P. Coleman, A. Bartoli, *Addressing Extremism*, International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution, Columbia University, New York, 2003.

term “human activities” is used to define attitudes, feelings, actions and strategies.³ In fact, rejection of political norms, laws, values, procedures and the key principles of organization of political systems, as well as the desire to undermine political stability and topple state power, should be viewed as manifestations of extremism.⁴

The definition of terrorism as “an act aimed at seizing or keeping power through the use of violence or changing violently the constitutional regime of a State, as well as a violent encroachment upon public security, including organization, for the above purposes, of illegal armed formations and participation in them” used in Art 1 of the Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism of 15 June, 2001⁵ can be accepted as the most general one.

The resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe of 2003 speaks of extremism as “a form of political activity that overtly or covertly rejects the principles of parliamentary democracy, and very often bases its ideology and its political practices and conduct on intolerance, exclusion, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and ultra-nationalism.”⁶

Here is another comprehensive definition of extremism: it is “one of the most dangerous threats to the world community and its security because of its crimes and destruction of the commonly accepted moral norms, human rights and values; it is a highly specific means of resolving social contradictions that took shape in certain spheres of social life.”⁷

Extremism might take different forms: there are political, religious, religious-political and nationalist extremisms.

Religious extremism is the reverse side of any religion directed against other confessions, demonstrating aggression when dealing with their followers and promoting the eternal essence of one’s own religion as the only true one. Religious extremism strives to uproot followers of different faiths or even liquidate them; it demonstrates extreme intolerance when dealing with followers of other confessions or engaging in a struggle within its own. Normally, religious extremism not only insists on the domination of one religion; it strives to set up state or administrative structures to make this religion official and dominant.⁸

It should be said that religious extremism and other types of extremism mentioned above do not exist in “pure forms.” More likely than not, we are confronted by a combination of factors of extremist nature in which a certain trend predominates. The religious component dominates in religious extremism, which may crop up in different forms.

In inter-confessional contexts religious extremism relies on all available means and assets to prove that religious postulates of a certain confession are inconsistent. It may betray itself in several countries at one and the same time, invariably in the form of struggle between traditional religions.⁹

There is sectarian religious extremism, in which non-traditional religious teachings and movements (sects) are involved.

³ See: Ibidem.

⁴ See: E.V. Ulezko, “Ekstremizm i terrorizm: poniatyino-kategorialny apparat issledovaniia iavleniia,” *Filosofia prava*, No. 5 (36), 2009, pp. 122-125.

⁵ See: *Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism*, Site of the President of the Russian Federation, available at [<http://kremlin.ru/supplement/3405>].

⁶ *Resolution No. 1344 on the Threat for Democracy from Extremist Parties and Movements in Europe*, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 2003, available at [<http://www.assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=17142&lang=en>].

⁷ “Ekstremizm: poniatie, vidy,” *Mezhregionalnaia obshchestvennaia organizatsia “Tsentri sodeystvia gosudarstvu v protivodeystvii ekstremistskoy deiatelnosti,”* available at [<http://www.csgped.ru/protivodejstvie/ekstremistskaja-dejatelnost/ekstremizm-ponjatie-vidy.html>].

⁸ See: Ibidem.

⁹ See: O.V. Mukhina, “Religiozny ekstremizm v natsionalnom politiko-pravovom prostranstve: sushchnost i formy proiavleniia,” *Iurist-Pravoved*, No. 1 (32), 2009, pp. 64-67.

Intra-confessional religious extremism betrays itself in contradictions and conflicts caused by different interpretations of the religious teaching or its fragments.¹⁰

Anti-confessional extremism deserves a special mention. By this we mean attempts to destroy one of the religions by religious or public organizations of other types, private or official figures as well as branding this religion as anti-constitutional, operating outside laws, violating all religious postulates, infringing on human rights and freedoms inside the state and outside it.¹¹

The following factors make it easier to promote religious extremist views in any society:

- deformation of political structures;
- socio-economic crises;
- insulting religious feelings, convictions and traditions of followers of one of the religions in a multi-confessional state;
- unwillingness of state structures to speak to religious communities and their passivity when dealing with believers;
- low life standards of a considerable part of the country's population;
- suppression of the opposition and those who think differently;
- ambitions of the leaders of political parties and religious groups who strive to realize the tasks they had set as promptly as possible;
- criminalization of society, etc.¹²

The following are the typical features of religious extremism:

- religious ideology that rests on the rejection of different opinions and intolerance of followers of other religions;
- ideological justification of the use of force when dealing with active opponents and any other people who do not share extremist views and opinions;
- domination of emotional means of propaganda of religious extremist ideas;
- creation of charismatic images of the leaders of religious extremist movements; the desire to present them as infallible and their orders as unquestionable;
- considerable deformation of the mentality of religious extremist organizations' members: on the one hand, they accept the dominance of a certain religious doctrine; on the other, they remain indifferent to the rest of the world, its norms and religious systems that differ from their own.¹³

Extremism Among Younger Generations: Causes and Specifics

For many reasons, younger generations are identified as a category that requires separate studies.

¹⁰ See: O.V. Mukhina, op. cit.

¹¹ See: Ibidem.

¹² See: D.N. Ziablov, op. cit.

¹³ See: Ibidem.

Teenagers (14-22 years of age) are most susceptible to extremist activities. They graduate from school, start living separately from their parents or even move away from their place of birth. On the whole, they are not burdened with family or property; they have no permanent jobs, let alone a chance to climb high on the career ladder. On the one hand, they acquire freedom and mobility; on the other, they are socially vulnerable.

The following is very typical of this population category:

- high level of anxiety, impressionability, propensity to reflection, low stress resistance against the background of low situational anxiety. In most of cases, they feel absolutely helpless and need adults to coordinate their actions;
- high level of subjective self-assessment: high demands in the absence of knowledge and skills in dealing with problems;
- apparent individualism, egotism, lack of interest in other people; they place their interests above the interests of others, are determined to defend them and to be independent;
- unwillingness to obey the demands and observe the norms of behavior accepted in society;
- carelessness, impulsive nature and penchant for rash actions;
- inability and unwillingness to assess the consistency of one's actions, uncritical attitude towards themselves and impulsive behavior;
- inability to organize personal time, inconsistent plans and aims;
- inadequate self-regulation mechanisms (prediction, control, modeling, assessment of results).¹⁴

This explains why teenagers and young men are easy prey; they are maximally responsive to all social feelings. Social frustration may stir up highly complicated ambivalent feelings, a combination of asthenic negative awareness of depression, hopelessness, fear, impotence, on the one hand, and sthenic feelings of hatred and aggression, on the other.¹⁵

The share of radically-minded people among the younger generation is higher than in other age groups, even amid political and economic stability.¹⁶

The following three factors figure prominently in stirring up extremist sentiment among the Central Asian youth:

- (1) low social security amid social and economic disorder; political instability in some countries (wars, revolutions, regime changes, separatist feelings in the country as a whole or its region);
- (2) low social mobility (the absence of the so-called social lifts) that leads to social and cultural stratification and makes the access to social resources much harder for young people;
- (3) social anomia, that is, loss of normative axiological reasons to maintain social solidarity and social identity.¹⁷

This fairly complicated combination of factors leads to extremist and radical behavior, inclination towards violence and cruelty towards one's "enemies," responsible for all misfortunes. Extrem-

¹⁴ M.V. Samoilova, S.P. Shumilov, T.A. Rodermel, E.V. Bokova, N.P. Plekhanova, V.A. Merenkov, *Metodika reabilitatsii detey i podrostkov, postradavshikh ot verbovochnoy deiatelnosti. Metodicheskoe posobie*, Information center SurGU, Surgut, 2016.

¹⁵ See: Ibidem.

¹⁶ See: V.E. Shinkevich, "Molodezhnyy ekstremizm kak faktor vozniknoveniya terroristicheskikh ugroz v obshchestve: sotsialno-filosofskiy aspekt," *Vestnik Kazanskogo iuridicheskogo instituta MVD Rossii*, No. 3 (25), 2016, pp. 12-15.

¹⁷ See: Ibidem.

ist behavior is caused by a conviction that violence and cruelty are the two instruments that can remedy the unacceptable situation and the crisis in which the social group has found itself. Extremist behavior weakens or even rejects all normative bans, both legal and moral.¹⁸

Central Asian Vulnerabilities. Religious Extremism as a Product of Geopolitical Changes

Political scientists and experts in international relations disagree on the problem of extremism in Central Asia: some speak of a high level of threat; their more optimistic colleagues insist that the threat is exaggerated because of the “geopolitical cliché,”¹⁹ according to which Central Asia is a source of political instability and a potential seat of extremism. Several factors, however, testify to the fact that the threat caused by certain external and internal problems is, indeed, real.

Internal problems are caused by the very uneven social, economic, political, ecological, religious and cultural development levels of the Central Asian countries. The following factors are directly responsible for the threatening dynamics of extremism in Central Asia:

- (1) economic and social crisis, unemployment and impoverishment of large population groups;
- (2) nationalism, ethnic intolerance and separatism, which are growing by an hour;
- (3) acute awareness of social exclusion and vulnerability prevalent in large population groups;
- (4) active and steadily increasing trafficking of drugs and firearms;
- (5) the rising crime level, while authorities are losing respect of the people, who no longer believe that they can ensure their security.

In these conditions, youth becomes extremely vulnerable, which accelerates the growth of extremist feelings.

External factors, the weightiest of them being trafficking of drugs and firearms, inter-state conflicts over energy and water resources, as well as religious extremism among the younger generation are responsible for the practically uncontrolled surge of tension, which causes concerns in the expert community.

The real nature of regional problems came to light as soon as the Soviet Union fell apart. It had kept these negative factors in check,

- first of all, because atheism pushed religion aside;
- secondly, because Islam was poorly developed across the region, certain patches of strong religious feelings being the only exception;
- thirdly, the Soviet citizens were isolated, ideologically and culturally, from the outside world; and
- finally, the KGB was actively involved in preventing and uprooting ideological outcrops that contradicted the communist doctrine.²⁰

¹⁸ See: M.V. Samoilova, S.P. Shumilov, T.A. Rodemel, E.V. Bokova, N.P. Plekhanova, V.A. Merenkov, op. cit.

¹⁹ A.-R. Hojati, “Polemika o budushchem ekstremizma v Tsentralnoy Azii,” Inosmi.ru, 2018, available at [<https://inosmi.ru/politic/20180213/241437563.html>].

²⁰ See: K.I. Poliakov, *Islamskiy ekstremizm v Tsentralnoy Azii*, Institute of Oriental Studies, RAS, Moscow, 2014.

Disintegration of this sustainable system destabilized the internal situation in the newly liberated countries, which for a long time concentrated on internal problems and self-identification as new actors on the international scene, while pushing the problems of regional security to the background.

As could be expected, dangerous trends became obvious in the 1990s; Uzbekistan and Tajikistan were confronted with the threat of Islamism.²¹ It seemed that Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan had avoided this negative scenario, yet over time, the problem became apparent there as well. The Northern Caucasus, a region brimming with cultural and confessional contradictions and disagreements among its peoples, became a serious problem for the Russian Federation. As far as Central Asia is concerned, Afghanistan, plunged into a low-intensity warfare and political instability, became, in fact, a safe haven for fighters who had fought in the ranks of the Islamic State and the Taliban, members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), the radical Tajik opposition, and Uyghur separatists.²²

The newly acquired sovereignty pushed Central Asian Islamic fundamentalists into an unfavorable competition with the followers of “pure Islam” (so-called Arabic Islam), who permeated the region in the 1990s.

Under the influence of the ideas of Salafism (Wahhabism), brought to Central Asia from the Middle East, the “true believers” demanded that the region should return to the norms of life dating from the time of Prophet Muhammad. They set up jamaats, the spiritual leaders of which insisted on strict observation of the moral norms of Islam, they refused to obey secular authorities and accused the rest of the Muslim community of “apostasy” and “lack of faith.”

In the mid-1990s, the Islamic Liberation Party (Hizb ut-Tahrir al Islami) invaded the region’s political landscape, aiming to change the constitutional order and the secular nature of the Central Asian states by building up an Islamic Caliphate and introducing the Muslim Law (Shari‘a) in all spheres of social life.²³

There is a multitude of smaller groups engaged in extremist and terrorist activities in the region (Jamaat Ansarullah, Jaysh al-Mahdi, and others); some of them cooperated with foreign Islamic extremist organizations and the local Islamist underground.²⁴

Prior to 9/11 terrorist acts, Islamists in Central Asia were, on the whole, disunited. It was after 9/11 that they closed ranks ideologically, partly morally and organizationally and began coordinating, to a certain extent, their informational efforts.²⁵

Today, the region is being rapidly occupied by the ideology of Islamic extremism; it has fallen prey to the terrorist methods of struggle for political power, among other aims. The expert community warns that extremist sentiments in the region are rising and that there are several potentially dangerous seats of tension in Central Asia.

- The Ferghana Valley at the crossing of borders of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan is the most obvious example. The reasons for destabilization in this area are the following: ethnic patchiness, national conflicts rooted in a distant past, high population density, lack of land and shortage of water, proliferation of religious extremism, wrong tactics of the local authorities that became obvious in 2005 in Andijan when the military had opened fire at the crowds of protesters, as well as the activity of the intelligence services of the re-

²¹ See: M. Murtazin, “Gosudarstva Tsentralnoy Azii i ugrozy religioznogo ekstremizma,” *Rossia i novye gosudarstva Evrazii*, No. 1, 2017, pp. 41-55.

²² See: L. Gusev, “Borba s terrorizmom i ekstremizmom v stranakh Tsentralnoy Azii i Afghanistanane, Rol ODKB,” *Rossia i novye gosudarstva Evrazii*, No. 1, 2018, pp. 126-133, available at [DOI: 10.20542/2073-4786-2018-1-126-133].

²³ K.I. Poliakov, op. cit.

²⁴ See: Ibidem

²⁵ See: Ibidem.

gional and non-regional states, border disagreements, illegal trafficking of drugs and other substances and goods on a huge scale.²⁶

- Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan can be described as potential seats of instability. Security services of Afghanistan deemed it necessary to warn that groups of fighters associated with ISIS have increased their activity in the country's north at the Central Asian border.²⁷ The Kunduz, Baghlan, Sari Pul, Faryab and Jowzjan provinces attract terrorists from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, the Northern Caucasus, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

According to the experts of the CIS Antiterrorist Center, in 2016 there were 15 extremist organizations in Russia and as many in Azerbaijan, 12 in Kazakhstan, 29 in Tajikistan, 19 in Uzbekistan and 4 in Kyrgyzstan. The following extremist and terrorist organizations—Islamic Party of Turkestan, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Organization of Liberation of Turkestan, Hizb ut-Tahrir, etc.—operate in Central Asia.²⁸

In fact, the region is inundated by religious organizations of different kinds—Jehovah's Witnesses, the Hare Krishna Movement, the Church of Satan, etc.—defined as extremist.²⁹

The unfavorable internal situation in some of the Central Asian countries destabilizes the situation and encourages the emergence and development of local extremist groups. The external factor is also important: funding, training, proliferation of relevant publications and the presence of foreign preachers invigorate extremist ideology and make it attractive for the poorest marginalized population groups with no future in sight,³⁰ in particular for teenagers and young people.

How Religious Extremism is Suppressed

In view of the hardly favorable situation in the region, the local states fully aware of the potential threat of regional instability (which neither any particular country nor its neighbors need) and the local authorities are doing their utmost to oppose religious extremism.

Tajikistan, which borders on unstable Afghanistan, presents the biggest threat of religious extremism. The greater part (60%) of the border territories are the battlefield between the government forces and the Taliban and other radical Islamist groups. The border is left unguarded, border control along its stretches is inadequate, hence a steady flow of drugs.³¹ It should be taken into account that 70% of the republic's population is comprised by young people below 30, who are highly responsive to extremist ideas.³² Protest sentiments are especially popular in this population group because of numerous negative factors such as corruption, nepotism, the outdated educational system, the absence of social lifts and chances to rise high on the career ladder, unequal distribution of social bonuses, etc.

²⁶ See: A. Taye, "Tsentralnaia Azia kak ochag aktivnosti ekstremistov," Inosmi.ru, 2015, available at [https://inosmi.ru/middle_asia/20150325/227105819.html].

²⁷ See: Ididem.

²⁸ See: K.T. Alimova, "Religiozny ekstremizm v Kyrgyzstane v perekhodny period," in: *Aktualnye voprosy obshchestvennykh nauk: sotsiologia, politologia, filosofia, istoria*, Collection of materials of LVII International Scientific-Practical Conference, No. 1 (53), SubAK, Novosibirsk, 2016.

²⁹ See: M. Abisheva, T. Shaimerzhenov, "Religious-Political Extremism in Central Asia: Why and How It Is Spreading," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 6 (42), 2006, pp. 42-54.

³⁰ See: K.I. Poliakov, op. cit.

³¹ L. Gusev, op. cit.

³² See: K.I. Poliakov, op. cit.

Since 2010, Tajikistan has been holding special operations to liquidate fighters, incapacitate extremist groups and detain terrorists. A lot is done to fight the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Jamaat Ansarullah, the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan and Islamic State recruiters.³³

In 2014-2015, about 2,000 mosques were closed down as one of the measures to suppress religious extremism; head-scarfs for women and beards for men were banned for the same reason.³⁴

The practice of “exporting young men” to other countries as workforce can be described as one of the methods of struggle.³⁵ This is done,

- primarily, to lower the level of discontent among the young people by cutting down the share of the highly dissatisfied who might join all sorts of revolutionary movements; and
- secondly, to unburden the budget and the state’s social responsibility, since the migrants are expected to support their families.

It remains to be seen whether this is a farsighted policy: outside their countries emigrants become easy prey for all sorts of international extremist organizations; due to the low level of religious education young people promptly find themselves in fighter training camps.

In 2010, being aware of these dangers, the government of Tajikistan spared no effort to bring back home Tajik students from foreign universities and established new rules for those who sought religious education abroad. This produced practically no effect, since the domestic situation in Tajikistan has not improved. The expert community is of the same opinion: so far there is no clear, consistent and efficient policy aimed at preventing religious extremism in the younger generation.³⁶

The country acquired a system of state regulation of religious and religious-political life including the Committee for Religious Affairs under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, the Islamic Center of Tajikistan with the Ulama Council (the Council of Theologians). Significant amounts are being poured into the promotion of patriotism and appreciation of national values and spiritual traditions, all sorts of events, entertainments, etc. Official clergy is expected to educate the younger generation, prevent fanaticism, fight prejudices, extremism and religious narrow-mindedness, as well as consolidate national pride and patriotism.

These are very important and well-justified measures, yet no positive results can be expected until the country resolves its principal economic, social, cultural and religious problems.

For Uzbekistan, regional peace and stability was and remains an absolute foreign policy priority. The authorities do not hesitate to use the harshest available methods when fighting religious extremism and terrorism. The Prosecutor General Office and the corresponding departments of the National Security Service and the Ministry of the Interior, the Committee for Religious Affairs under the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan and local administrations (mahallah committees) are the main elements of the anti-extremist and anti-terrorist system.³⁷

Since 1992, the law-enforcement structures of Uzbekistan have turned their attention to the following organizations and groups: Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami (Islamic Liberation Party), Islamic Jihad— the Jamaat of Central Asia Mujahideen, Ittihad al-Jihad al-Islamiyya (Islamic Jihad Union), Hizb an-Nusrat (The Party of Victory); Lybian Jamaat, Tablighi Jamaat, Akromiyya, the Nur movement, Salafis (Wahhabis), Baha’i (the Baha’i Community).³⁸ It is crucial to point out that the extremist structures of Uzbekistan (IMU in the first place) are the region’s

³³ See: L. Gusev, *op. cit.*

³⁴ See: *Ibidem.*

³⁵ See: K.I. Poliakov, *op. cit.*

³⁶ See: *Ibidem.*

³⁷ See: *Ibidem.*

³⁸ See: *Ibidem.*

strongest and most aggressive. The situation is complicated by the fact that IMU cooperates with Al-Qaeda and terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba of Pakistan.³⁹

Religious extremism is fought at all, including judicial, levels: after the terrorist acts in Tashkent in 1999, the relevant laws were tightened. Even before that, in 1998, the Law on the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations was amended to stipulate the articles dealing with religious organizations, sects and trends.⁴⁰ The Criminal Code was revised accordingly. From that time on, the law and order structures control all spheres of life of the common people.

Authorities do not let the younger generation out of sight; much is done to cut down or prevent proliferation of extremist ideas. Students and schoolchildren meet prominent religious and public figures who talk about the negative results of religious extremism brought to the country by foreign missionaries. Young people are taught to respect and follow traditional Islam and the national cultural traditions. Schools across the country organize Centers for the Family, Mahallahs and Schools, clubs of all sorts, including the Centers for Struggle against Religious Extremism and Terrorism, to explain the dangers of extremism to schoolchildren.

Public organizations—the Women’s Committee of Uzbekistan, Public Movement of the Youth of Uzbekistan Kamolot, the Oydinhaet non-profit organization—are putting much efforts into preventing the spread of religious extremism by making young women “ideologically immune” to its ideas. They organize seminars and round-table conferences to discuss the methods of anti-extremist struggle and the ways and means that add efficiency to the efforts to prevent conscription of women to extremist religious organizations.⁴¹

In 2011, the government set up a Spirituality and Enlightenment Center with branches in all regions to inform the younger generation about a healthy way of life and to protect it against negative influences of religious ideologies and extremism.⁴²

These efforts are not entirely free of shortcomings: people in power at all levels practice undifferentiated approach to Islamic organizations; they tend to rely on harsh measures when dealing with moderate Islamic forces. This makes it much harder to defuse or neutralize the threat of Islamic extremism spreading across the country. The level of ideological opposition to religious extremism is still unacceptably low; the officials and structures responsible for religious affairs in Uzbekistan do not pour enough effort into the religious education of common people.

In Kyrgyzstan, religious extremism is supported from outside; its support within the country is insignificant. We are referring, in particular, to the fact that extremist groups from two neighboring countries, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, have moved to the southern part of Kyrgyzstan. In 2010, Uzbeks and Kyrgyzes who lived in the country’s south were involved in a religiously tinged conflict. Under the pressure of this and other ethnic conflicts in the south, Muslims became even more eager to isolate themselves within their communities; the trend spread to Islamist extremist organizations and groups banned in Kyrgyzstan.⁴³

Geographic proximity to Afghanistan and Pakistan, two states with numerous problems, and the separatist-minded Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China negatively affects the situation in Kyrgyzstan, where the echo of the Arab Spring and the wars in Syria and Iraq was heard and which was clearly aware of illegal drug trafficking across the Osh and Dzhahalal-Abad regions in the Kyrgyz part of the Ferghana Valley.

The law and order system of Kyrgyzstan was too weak to cope with the inflow of emissaries of international terrorist organizations and extremist groups of Islamists, which made the country a transshipping terminal of sorts.

³⁹ See: L. Gusev, *op. cit.*

⁴⁰ See: K.I. Poliakov, *op. cit.*

⁴¹ See: *Ibidem.*

⁴² See: *Ibidem.*

⁴³ See: *Ibidem.*

Kyrgyzstan, in which paganism and elements of polytheistic cults (totemism, animism, ancestor worship, magic, Tengrism, etc.) survive side by side with traditional Islam, differs greatly from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Today, there is a number of the followers of Muslim sects (Baha'i, Ahmadiyya, Sulaymaniyah, Akromiyya. etc.) previously absent in Kyrgyzstan who are consolidating their positions among the local people. The same can be said of Protestantism and Catholicism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Baptists, members of the Pentecostal Movement and the Seventh-Day Adventists, etc. Since 2005, the number of radically-minded Muslims (Salafis and Wahhabis) has been growing.⁴⁴

This ignited religious extremism inside the country. A great share of autochthonous population is suspicious of the spread of non-traditional confessions that increase religious tension and add popularity to the ideas of radical Islam.

Unlike extremists in its Central Asian neighbors, in Kyrgyzstan the emissaries target women. According to statistics, between 2010 and 2016 international extremist and terrorist organizations drew 863 citizens of Kyrgyzstan into their structures; 188 of them (23.8%) being women.⁴⁵ Women close ranks with radicals under the banners of extremism not only as rank-and-file fighters. Recently, many of them have been claiming the leading positions in extremist organizations and realizing their potential as propagandists of radical ideologies.⁴⁶

Similarly to other countries in the region, extremism and its gradually strengthening trends in Kazakhstan are fed by certain social, economic, cultural and religious problems. Unsafe environment coupled with unemployment, the gap between the rich and the poor and the ideological vacuum strongly affect the minds of the younger generation, which craves social justice.

The state has not yet arrived at a policy aimed at preventing the proliferation of religious extremism among the younger generation. The problem is being discussed, yet the country should promptly move away from theory to practice, otherwise the results would be difficult to predict.

In Kazakhstan, too, the problem of the rising potential of terrorist and extremist threat is actively discussed in connection with the explosions in Aktobe and Astana and armed clashes in Janaozen. It should be said, however, that the problem had emerged long before these events and took some time to become too obvious to be ignored. Experts have identified its main stages⁴⁷:

- the first lasted from 1991 to 1998, when Islamic extremism was building up its structures;
- second—from 1999 to 2010, when terrorist acts forced the authorities to recognize the scope of the threat;
- the third began in 2011 and is marked by effective efforts to oppose the threat and build up an adequate infrastructure.

In Kazakhstan, very much like elsewhere in Central Asia, Islamist movements and organizations are the main exponents of terror, which means that their impact on mass consciousness should be minimized. With this aim in sight, the country's leaders adopted certain measures designed to increase the efficiency of religious and spiritual education of Kazakhstanis.

The republic acquired a specialized structure—the Ministry of Social Development of Kazakhstan (earlier, until 2 July, 2018, it was called the Ministry for Religious Affairs and Civil Society of the Kazakhstan Republic). The country adopted several normative legal acts designed to oppose extremism, including religious extremism.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ See: *Ibidem*.

⁴⁵ See: "Ekstremizm v Kirgizii vse bolshe priobretaet zhenskoe litso," available at [<https://www.ritmeurasia.org/news-2018-02-08--ekstremizm-v-kirgizii-vse-bolshe-priobretaet-zhenskoe-lico-34846>].

⁴⁶ See: *Ibidem*.

⁴⁷ See: K.I. Poliakov, *op. cit.*

⁴⁸ See: *Ibidem*.

Today, the list of foreign organizations banned by court decisions in the territory of Kazakhstan includes Al-Qa'eda, Islamic Movement of Eastern Turkestan, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Asbat al-Ansar; the Muslim Brotherhood, the Taliban, the Jamaat of Central Asia Mujahideen, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Society of Social Reforms, Organization of Liberation of Eastern Turkestan, Islamic Party of Turkestan and the religious political party Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami.⁴⁹

Certain foreign organizations that have been left off the list of banned structures still operate in the republic unhampered, even if they patronize extremists. They are the Islamic union Tablighi Jamaat (literally translated as Society for Spreading Faith) and Salafi (Wahhabi) jamaats patronized by certain Persian Gulf states.⁵⁰

Kazakhstani authorities are growing increasingly more determined to fight extremists and terrorists. In 2016-2017, a wave of arrests of extremists swept across the country, also embracing those involved in criminal activities (stealing oil in Western Kazakhstan, in particular).⁵¹

Today, the social and economic roots of Islamic extremism have become absolutely clear; the same fully applies to the shortcomings of market economy and the shortcomings of state youth policy. According to the Committee for Legal Statistics and Special Registration of the Prosecutor General's Office of the Kazakhstan Republic, in recent years young people, many of whom had tried and failed to find a place in life, who had no jobs, no money, no good education and no prospects, have been turning to terrorism.⁵²

Today, republican leaders are working hard to close the gaps: they focus on opposing extremism among the younger generation by actively developing the social spheres (education, medical care, employment and sports) and promoting patriotism with the help of lectures, talks and cultural events at schools and universities.

Conclusion

The geopolitical processes unfolding in the region present a serious threat for the Central Asian countries and their neighbors; they are charged with huge social conflict potential, which, if realized, may lead to various disasters: foreign invasions, civil wars, refugee flows, etc.⁵³ If realized, they may destabilize vast regions and make interference of foreign states and international organizations inevitable.

The fact that the state has to fight for the hearts and minds of the younger generations most susceptible to all sorts of ideas and actions makes the fight against radicalism, religious radicalism included, an absolute priority in Central Asia and beyond.

Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are moving in a more or less similar direction: they are adopting new laws to regulate the social and religious life without infringing on the rights of their citizens, while protecting them against extremism and terrorism. This means that the Central Asian states have no choice but to use force to deal with the threat: fighters are captured and their structures are liquidated. This, however, cannot bring an ultimate victory because extremist groups cannot be totally liquidated. Much is being done to improve the social sphere and to influence the minds of young people through education, knowledge of religion and patriotism.

These measures, however, are not fully effective since many basic problems and contradictions remain unresolved. The latter include low standards of living, the socio-economic gap between the

⁴⁹ See: K.I. Poliakov, op. cit.

⁵⁰ See: Ibidem.

⁵¹ See: L. Gusev, op. cit.

⁵² See: K.I. Poliakov, op. cit.

⁵³ See: Ibidem.

rich and the poor, unequal distribution of social benefits, the absence of the formerly functioning social lifts, low quality of education which in any case remains inaccessible to many, no jobs and humiliatingly low wages of those who have jobs, disappointment in authorities, which are no longer trusted, minimum social guarantees and an acute awareness of social vulnerability. These problems should be resolved, otherwise all further steps, no matter how correct and well-justified, will not improve the situation.

To prevent the spread of the ideology of religious extremism in the Central Asian countries, their leaders should persuade the young generations of their importance for the country and pay more attention to problem groups. These countries need to adopt a set of efficient measures, otherwise they will be unable to prevent extremist and radical sentiments among the younger population groups. The country needs the following to prevent this undesirable scenario:

1. Conditions in which aggression, tension and extremist activity of young people are suppressed.
2. Conditions in which successful, efficient, tolerant, patriotic and responsible young people are nurtured.
3. Conditions in which teenagers and young people in dangerous life situation can count on support.
4. Constructive social activities of teenagers and young people.
5. Positive youth subcultures, public alliances, movements and groups.
6. Conditions in which young people are able to realize their potential in their own countries.⁵⁴

The problem of proliferation of extremism among the younger generations of the Central Asian countries and the struggle against it cannot be promptly resolved.⁵⁵ This means that the Central Asian states should focus on consistent internal policies, interact at the inter-state level, and cooperate with international organizations.

⁵⁴ See: N.V. Farafonova, "Opasnost ekstremistskikh molodezhnykh organizatsiy dlia lichnosti i obshchestva," 2013, available at [<http://bfigu.isu.ru/ru/staff/teacher/docs/antiterror-docs/Stati-po-protivodejstviyu-ehkstremizmu-i-terrorizmu.pdf>].

⁵⁵ See: D.N. Ziablov, op. cit.

ISLAM IN KAZAKHSTAN: HISTORY OF REVIVAL UNDER CONDITIONS OF INDEPENDENCE

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ABSTRACT

The article discusses the process of formation and development of the relations between the state and religion in the late 20th-early 21st centuries. An attempt is made at rethinking the religious revival phenomenon and the attitude of the authorities towards this process. Political and legal factors in the development of state-confessional relations in multiconfessional Kazakhstan, methods and mechanisms of overcoming contradictions and ways to relieve tension between the state and religion are revealed.

The study of religion and society and the specific forms of their interaction during the transition period must be carried out with regard to their unity and connectedness. Hence, the article explores the influence of the socio-political and legal mechanism on the revival of religion, which has expanded significantly in the face of accelerated transformation of public life. This article aims to link the problem under consideration with a wider range of socio-political development issues under modern conditions.

Currently, significant socio-economic and political changes are underway in the independent Republic of Kazakhstan, and

the need for them is dictated by life itself. Along with the transformation, there is an ongoing process of reappraisal of spiritual values, and a modification of a number of conceptual provisions of various ideological theories and views, which is a natural phenomenon. This is entirely understandable, since any historical phenomenon that involves the formation of a new independent state is characterized by its uniqueness and inimitability. In this case, more than ever, the capacity for introspection, the accuracy of forecasts and the perception of historical experience becomes increasingly more significant.

Contemporary events that are taking place in Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries clearly confirm the relevance of the revival of Islam and spiritual traditions, as well as the problems of strengthening the state's national and spiritual unity and its security. These problems are especially topical now, when Kazakhstan is actively seeking moral guidelines for religious teachings, methods of preventing the "politicization of religion" as one of the most dangerous social destabilization factors, and there is an ever-increasing interest in Islamic values on

the part of young people and other socially active segments of the population. All of the above makes us seek answers to a number of questions, including the following: What kind of state-confessional and inter-confessional relations are appropriate? What is the impact of the Islamic revival on the religiosity

in the country? How can religious traditions be utilized without impeding socio-political transformations, and what should the state-confessional relations model be in order to be aligned with the domestic conditions and be recognized by all as necessary?

KEYWORDS: Kazakhstan, state, revival, Islam, politics, tradition, law.

Introduction

Characteristics and Main Directions of the Religious Revival Process

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was a rise in what was later called the “Islamic revival” in Central Asia (we believe it would be more appropriate to use the term “revitalization of religion,” that is, the return of religion to life). The Islamic faith and traditions associated with it, as important elements of national identity, began to be revived in the Northern Caucasus, Azerbaijan, the Volga region, Crimea, Tatarstan and other regions of the former U.S.S.R.¹ An entire set of theoretical concepts was formed.² Researchers pointed out that the general prerequisite for this surge of interest in religion was the powerful socio-political process that influenced many social aspects.³ The years of perestroika and the consequences of the collapse of the U.S.S.R. played an important role, as did the independence of the former Soviet republics, which allowed to align the spiritual and cultural values with their people in a short period of time, gradually forming an ethnic and religious identity under new conditions. Mosques and temples began to revive and the number of believers gradually began to grow. Their number increased particularly following the adoption of the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Freedom of Religion and Religious Associations on 15 January, 1992, which guaranteed the right to freedom of religion (Art 1), equality of citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, regardless of their attitude to religion (Art 3), a ban on establishing political organizations of a religious nature, etc.⁴ The new legislation established the equality of all religions before the law, the right of citizens to determine their attitude to religion. The principle of non-interference by the state in the affairs of religious associations was proclaimed.

Against this background, there was a notable tendency towards intensification in the activities of official Muslim religious associations (the World Assembly of Islamic Youth, and the international foundations Abu Dhabi al-Khayriyah, Ahmed Yassawi, the Wakf al-Islamiya Charity Founda-

¹ See: S.M. Akimbekov, *Afganskiy uzel i problemy bezopasnosti Tsentralnoy Azii*, Second enlarged and revised edition, KontinenT, Almaty, 2003, pp. 147-148.

² See: L.G. Yerekesheva, *Religiia i sotsiokulturnye sistemy v istorii Tsentralnoy Azii*: Ph.D. Thesis in History, R.B. Sulaimenov Institute of Oriental Studies, KN MON RK, Almaty, 2008, pp. 16-17.

³ See: I.Z. Marziyev, “Islamskiy faktor na Severnom Kavkaze: prizrak ‘islamizma’ dobralsia do Rossii?”, *Kazakhstan-Spektr*, No. 2, 2005, p. 8.

⁴ See: The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated 15 January, 1992, “On Freedom of Religion and Religious Associations,” in: *Religiia i pravo. Informatsionnyy biulleten*, Committee for Religious Affairs, Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Astana, 2007, pp. 161-162.

tion, Bereket, and Kaganat, Ahmedin Charity Center, Harun Yahya Center), as well as religious societies (League of Muslim Women, Fatima Association, Rifah movement, Sufi Brotherhood, Ihlas Cultural Center for Russian Muslims).

Since the mid-1990s, the activity of closed religious societies, as well as non-traditional Islamic movements and schools, has intensified.⁵ Followers of the Sufi Pir Ismatullah, members of the Turkish religious groups Nurjular and Suleymaniyah, the Pakistani religious and educational movement Tablighi Jamaat, the Naqshbandi group Hazrat Ibrahim, the Sufi group Tariqatshylar, as well as missionary organizations and movements Islamic Salvation Organization, World Islamic Assistance began to intensify their activities, along with others.

An Islamic education network was created in Kazakhstan, comprising the Islamic University (later renamed the Nur-Mubarak Egyptian University of Islamic Culture, where 145 students received religious education between 2001 and 2007), the Islamic Institute for Advanced Studies of Religious Figures under the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan (SAMK). Additionally, the Kazakh-Kuwait University (now the South Kazakhstan Humanitarian Academy), the international Kazakh-Arab University, and the international Kazakh-Turkish University were opened. These higher education institutions operate outside the SAMK system and were established with financial assistance from foreign countries. In 2003 the Center for Islamic Studies at the Ramazan Suleimenov Institute of Oriental Studies under the Committee of Science of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan was inaugurated. In 2006, the Center for Islamic Economics and Law (CIE&L) was founded at the Kazakh University for Law and Humanities, and the Union of Muslims of Kazakhstan was established. Since 1997, the religious and educational journal *Islam əlemi* (World of Islam), the *Shapagat-Nur* journal (published since 1998), the *Islam* magazine (published since 2003), the religious-educational newspaper *Islam zhene örkeniyet* (Islam and civilization), the newspaper *Iman* (Faith), the independent newspaper *Rukhani omir* (Spiritual Life), and the independent republican information newspaper *Islam* have been published.

Kazakhstani authorities have realized the need not only to proclaim the Law, but also to take measures to enforce it. A number of mass campaigns were organized to familiarize the population with new laws. Almost all religious organizations received a legal status. They began to freely publish and buy religious literature, conduct explanatory work among believers, and engage in charity work.⁶ As Sébastien Peyrouse notes, there was no deep break with religion, which the Soviet authorities were hoping for: religion remained taken for granted even after seventy years of the atheistic regime.⁷

One cannot but agree with Sultan Akimbekov, who states that “with the lifting of official bans in the U.S.S.R., Islam in Central Asia was unexpectedly ‘revived’ and ‘the revival from nonexistence’ of Muslim structures in itself allows us to argue that inter-civilization interaction did not take place via the replacement of one civilization with another, but was, rather, a form of coexistence, partial closure without damage to the basic systemic links. Naturally, after the pressure from the center had disappeared, Central Asian Muslim communities quickly began to restore familiar ties and interactions.”⁸

Why did the process of religious revival in various regions of Kazakhstan start off with such apparent success? We do not believe that this phenomenon can be explained by the fact that people have a tendency towards religious fanaticism, or merely by the level of their economic and social

⁵ For more details, see: Z.G. Jalilov, *Dvizheniia i techeniia v islame: ot proshlogo k nastoiashchemu*, R.B. Suleimenov Institute of Oriental Studies, Almaty, 2016.

⁶ Today in the country, 3,715 religious associations representing 18 faiths are officially registered and carry out their activities under the law.

⁷ See: S. Peyrouse, “The Partnership between Islam and Orthodox Christianity in Central Asia,” *Religion, State and Society*, Vol. 36, Issue 4, 2008, pp. 393-405.

⁸ S.M. Akimbekov, op. cit., p. 148.

development, whether low or high. There are many catalysts that have activated the mechanism of returning to the roots of Islam. The process of reverting to the religion of the forefathers brought positive trends, but also generated numerous socio-political problems, often becoming a source of conflict situations, especially considering the fact that knowledge of religion itself among Muslims of Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries was not particularly deep.⁹ Moreover, the Islamic religion began to be seen as a panacea for many problems, including socio-economic and socio-political ones. Incidentally, it was against this background that non-traditional religious movements and schools, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, appeared and began to actively operate in the republic, which sowed discord within the Muslim population of the region.¹⁰

In his book *Hibatullah at-Tarazi and its Spiritual Heritage*, Sheikh Absattar Haji Derbisali notes that “neither nationalism, nor regionalism, nor patriotism, nor socialism, nor capitalism, and none of the other communities on earth have been able to unite Muslims as religion did.”¹¹

In general, since the first years of the country’s independence, Kazakhstani officials adopted a new tactic in relation to Islam. It entailed using all the values of Islamic civilization in their activities without denying its influence on the population, and at the same time prevent the radical forces from resorting to Islam for political purposes and violating interethnic and interreligious harmony, as was the case, for example, in some countries of the Middle East and North Africa.

The Religious Environment and Political and Legislative Regulation in the Formation of the Relations between Secular and Religious Spheres

As we have noted above, in the very first years of independence, having openly embarked on the path of building a secular and civil society, the official leadership of the Republic of Kazakhstan began to remove the obstacles placed before religion by Soviet ideology.

According to the first article of the Constitution, the Republic of Kazakhstan affirms itself as a democratic, secular, legal and social state. Art 19 states: “Everyone shall have the right to determine and indicate or not to indicate his ... religious affiliation.”¹² The Republic of Kazakhstan, recognizing and guaranteeing human rights and freedoms in accordance with the Constitution (Art 12.1), allows reasonable restrictions on the rights of citizens. They are possible “only by law and only to the extent necessary for the protection of the constitutional system, defense of public order, human rights and freedoms, and the health and morality of the population” (Art 39).¹³

Certain aspects of the relationship between religious associations and state bodies are regulated by a number of normative acts:

1. Rules for the Registration of the Charters (Provisions) of Religious Associations, approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated 14 April, 1992 No. 327.

⁹ See: R.M. Mustafina, *Predstavleniia, kulty, obriady u kazakhov (v kontekste bytovogo islama v Yuzhnom Kazakhstane v XIX-XX vv.)*, Kazak Universiteti Publishing House, Almaty, 1992, p. 42.

¹⁰ See: K.M. Baypakov, *Srednevekoveye goroda Kazakhstana na Velikom Shelkovom puti*, Fylym, Almaty, 1998, p. 80.

¹¹ Quoted from: R.S. Zharkynbayeva, “Kazakhstan i strany Tsentralnoy Azii: poiski identichnosti,” *Evraziiskoye soobshchestvo*, No. 2, 2001, p. 15.

¹² Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan: Official Text with Amendments and Additions of 7 October, 1998.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

2. Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated 14 December, 1993 No. 247 "On the Approval of the Regulation on the Procedure for Transferring Religious Buildings, Structures and Other Property to Religious Organizations."
3. Regulation on the Accreditation Procedure for Foreign Citizens and Stateless Persons Engaged in Missionary Activities, approved by the Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated 21 September, 1997 No. 1362.

To a certain extent, such measures stimulated the revival of traditional religious heritage, an increase in the number of places of worship, religious associations, and various faiths and denominations, as mentioned in the previous section. For the first time, leaders have made an attempt to develop a state policy in regard to religious associations' activities. In early 1992, the Government adopted the Resolution on the Enactment of the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Freedom of Religion and Religious Associations, which defined the principles of relations between the state and religious organizations: separation of religion from the state, equality of all religions, and a ban on the formation of religious parties.¹⁴

The late 1980s and early 1990s occupy a special place in the history of the post-Soviet Central Asian republics. There is no doubt that the emergence of numerous controversial phenomena in social life and the ethnocultural development of the regional states is far from accidental. Its internal and external collisions, the contradictory nature of social phenomena, the turbulence and instability of life, earned it the name of a period of acute and painful crisis and a transitional stage.

In 1993, at the initiative of the first President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev, a provision was introduced in the Constitution that banned the activities of public and religious organizations that proclaim or practice religious intolerance. This provision was further reflected in the 1995 Constitution (Art 53), but with a broader wording. At the same time, this Constitution was supplemented with an article against propaganda and proclamation of religious superiority.¹⁵ The development of the actual religious situation in the country required the introduction of a number of provisions in the Civil Code related to the activities of missionaries and foreign leaders of religious associations and religious educational institutions, which should be coordinated with state authorities (Art 109).

All these measures were associated with the extremely complex and largely ambiguous religious situation in the country. An alarming symptom of problems in the religious sphere was the widespread dissemination of unofficial theological educational institutions and radical fundamentalist communities in the country. There were more than 20 theological educational institutions in the Zhambyl and South Kazakhstan regions alone that did not have an appropriate educational license. Madrassas were closed in the villages of Merke and Lugovoe, Zhambyl region, Shymkent and Sary-Agash for their non-compliance with the law. Incidentally, out of the 2 million people in the SKR, 600,000 are young people 14 to 29 years of age.

In August 1998, the activities of the radical Islamic fundamentalist community of Pir Kurban Ali Akhmetov in Kyzylorda were revealed. In October 1998, the activity of the Wahhabi community in the Zhylyoi district of Atyrau region was suppressed. In September 1998, a group of Pakistani Wahhabi missionaries operating in the Zhambyl region were expelled from the country. In 1999, five criminal cases were opened against 14 clergy members for the crimes they had committed. The measures taken in 2000 to verify religious associations' compliance with the constitution and laws revealed the activities of 497 unregistered religious organizations. In August 2003, several members of

¹⁴ See: The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated 15 January, 1992, "On Freedom of Religion and Religious Associations", Art 20.

¹⁵ See: Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan: Official Text with Amendments and Additions of 7 October, 1998.

Hizb ut-Tahrir¹⁶ were detained by law enforcement agencies of the South Kazakhstan Region for the production and distribution of leaflets containing calls to overthrow the existing system and establish an Islamic state. Their activities extended beyond the southern regions of Kazakhstan, and were also uncovered in Karaganda, Pavlodar, Petropavlovsk, and Kokshetau.

After the well-known events in Tashkent, on 16 February, 1999, the official authorities adopted a number of laws and decrees, as a result of which state control over Islamic activity was tightened. The Decree of the President of the Republic on Measures to Prevent and Suppress Manifestations of Terrorism and Extremism (10 February, 2000) had once again formulated the tasks of state authorities, stipulating their strict supervision over prevention of the radicalization of the population's religious consciousness.

In describing the socio-economic and political situation in the country during that period, it is important to recall that it was experiencing the consequences of the Asian financial crisis at the time. Kazakhstan had suffered losses from the falling global prices for oil, lead, zinc, and aluminum. At that point, many enterprises faced the threat of bankruptcy. The situation at the external borders was rather dangerous, and the territorial integrity of the Central Asian states has been challenged by the direct international terrorists' attacks from the south.

As the social crisis worsened, the financial situation of all population groups in the region has deteriorated. The situation that arose did not merely repeat that which occurred in other countries, but, rather, possessed certain specifics due to its geographical location and political situation and its complex ethnic composition. With the growth of general dissatisfaction and the rise of unemployment, the tendency towards a spiritual and organizational formalization inherent in any opposition had manifested itself increasingly more clearly in the republics. Meanwhile, the majority of the population urgently required a phenomenon that could provide them with a mainstay and moral support, as the local authorities abused their power and the spiritual vacuum intensified. The noted tendencies could not but lead to the emergence and active spread of religious and political parties and organizations, as well as radical fundamentalist ideology in the post-Soviet republics of Central Asia.

In fact, a similar situation had occurred in the 1970s in Iran, when the government of Shah Reza Pahlavi carried out accelerated modernization, structurally altering the traditional Iranian society. Sultan Akimbekov has written: "People who were involved in the modernization processes, yet did not obtain real advantages, formed the social foundation for the protest against the modernization policy by the government of Shah Reza Pahlavi. These were mainly recent immigrants from the Iranian villages, who, under the new conditions in the city, had lost their familiar value orientations and the familiar foundations of social organization."¹⁷

From the first years of independence, the leadership of Kazakhstan tried to prevent such a development of events. In January 1990, the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan was established, with Mufti Ratbek kazhi Nysanbayuly as its head, and since June 2000 Absattar kazhi Derbisali (now director of the Ramazan Suleimenov Institute of Oriental Studies) has assumed this post. Since 1996, the Council for Religious Affairs under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan has been operating in the country, dealing with the affairs of both the local Islamic and other religious communities, as well as those that adhere to different creeds. The state's position in relation to religions, as is evident from official statements, is the source of the society's democratization, as reflected in the tasks of humanizing the entire state's social system and modernizing it. Coordination of relations with religious are addressed by the Ministry of Information and Public Accord, and since 2017, by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Civil Society.

¹⁶ See: *Spetsifika proiavleniy terrorizma i ekstremizma v Tsentralnoy Azii: itogi 2004 goda*, Report of the Center for Antiterrorism Programs, available at [<http://studies.agentura.ru/centres/cap/report2004/>].

¹⁷ S.M. Akimbekov, op. cit., p. 26.

In order to quickly and comprehensively analyze the religious situation in the country, as well as to study the activities of religious educational institutions, a special resolution (No. 683 dated 6 May, 2000) established the Secretariat of the Council for Relations with Religious Associations, and on 27 July, 2000, a resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan approved the regulations and composition of the Council, which comprised representatives of all concerned ministries and departments.

A similar situation was in place in 2002-2003, when the state also took measures to amend and modify the Law on Freedom of Religion and Religious Associations. The name of the bill is "On Amendments and Additions to Some Legislative Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the Issues of Religious Freedom and the Activity of Religious Associations." The need for this bill was dictated by the aggravation of the religious situation not only in the country, but also in the region as a whole.

A number of religious denominations spoke out against this bill. These were mainly the representatives of non-traditional religions, in particular, the Protestant Association of Religious Organizations of Kazakhstan (AROK), the Emmanuel Christian mission, Jehovah's Witnesses, the National Ahmadi Muslim Zhamagat, etc. However, this bill was passed by the Parliament and sent for signing to the president of our country. But in accordance with Art 72.1.2 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the head of the state sent it to the Constitutional Council. Guided by Art 72.1.2 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Art 17.2.1, Arts 31, 32, 33, 37, 38, and 39 of the Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the Constitutional Council of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which has the power of a constitutional law, the Constitutional Council found that the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Amendments and Additions to Certain Legislative Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Freedom of Religion and the Activities of Religious Associations contradicts the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

By the way, representatives of certain religious organizations also drew attention to the non-constitutionality of the following provisions: Para 3.3 of the Law regarding the possibility of restricting legislative rights to the free dissemination of religious beliefs; Para 3.13 on state registration of Islamic religious associations on the recommendation of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan; Para 3.17 of the Law, which provides for the construction and/or opening of Muslim religious buildings and structures with the permission of the SAMK. At the same time, they drew attention to the fact that certain articles of the legislative acts on freedom of conscience and religion contain violations of human rights and of certain articles (1-6) of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.

However, the fight against religious extremism and terrorism became the most relevant topic in the early 2000s, particularly, in 2011-2012. Due to the challenging religious and criminal situation in a number of the country's regions, the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated 11 October, 2011 No.483-IV "On Religious Activities and Religious Associations" was adopted.¹⁸

Since 2017, all amendments related to religious affairs and religious associations have been developed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Civil Society. While presenting the bill "On Amendments and Additions to Some Legislative Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Religious Activities and Religious Associations" in the Majlis, the head of the ministry, Nurlan Yermekbayev (now the head of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Kazakhstan), noted that it stipulated over 50 amendments and additions to 12 legislative acts. In September 2018, senators returned the bill to the Majlis for revision, and on 29 January, 2019, the developers withdrew it from the lower house of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

¹⁸ The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated 11 October, 2011 No.483-IV "On Religious Activities and Religious Associations" (with amendments and additions as of 11 December, 2016).

Development of Religiosity in the Country's Population: Special Characteristics and Tendencies¹⁹

A new turn in the republican authorities' religion-related policy began in the late 1990s and was continued into the next century. For instance, it has found its official expression in the Decree of the Head of State Nursultan Nazarbayev on Measures to Prevent and Suppress Manifestations of Terrorism and Extremism, as well as in his speech on 31 January, 2001, to akims of all levels. It gave a worldview and political assessment of religion in the republic at the time, identified the main directions of work for local authorities and religious organizations, and aimed to normalize religious activity in the country. In particular, it pointed out that active promotion of public, universal values, ensuring the rights of citizens to freedom of religion, which are protected by the Constitution, strengthening spiritual harmony in society and harmonizing interfaith relations, are a strategic area of work in the religious sphere. Particular attention was paid to preventing the radicalization of religious consciousness.²⁰

Changes in the attitude to Islam, recognition and affirmation of its positive role in society led to the fact that many representatives of the clergy, as already noted above, took an active position in promoting the programs developed by state authorities.

And yet, how do regular people relate to religion? To respond to this and other questions, we have conducted a sociological survey in different regions of Kazakhstan. Among the respondents there were no representatives of the clergy, religious institutions, or various units of the administration. Our respondents were ordinary people who live in today's challenging conditions, and whose opinion reflects the interests, needs and moods of the majority of the population, at least to a certain extent.

While discussing the potential options for Islam's development, the respondents were asked the following question: "Along which path should religion develop? Modernization (i.e., alignment with the modern world) or the traditional path?" The respondents were divided into four groups, each of which was characterized by certain social characteristics. The majority of respondents (30.5%) selected "modernization" out of the proposed set of answers. This group contained, primarily, men, young people, highly qualified professionals, as well as entrepreneurs. These people supported the alignment of Islam with modern reality.

From the interviews with the respondents and in the process of analyzing their responses, it has become apparent that the respondents in this category are, as a rule, people who rely on their own energy, knowledge and entrepreneurial skills. These people are advocating a new relationship, a renewal of our lives. The second largest group supported the development of religion "along the traditional path, but without extremism and fanaticism" (17.7%). Among them, there was a greater share of older people, retirees and small business owners; all of them had doubts about improving, and even maintaining their social status. Propaganda of religious values resonated with them most often. The third group would have preferred the Muslim religion to develop "along the traditional path, but with an emphasis on cultural and moral values" (17.3%). This direction often attracted creative workers and intellectuals over 40 years of age. They found the emphasis on the moral foundations of religion to be the most realistic version of the spiritual transformation and society's cultural revival. Representatives of the third group were close to the second group. The fourth group supported the "preser-

¹⁹ This section uses data from field studies in 2001 and 2003.

²⁰ See: *Spetsifika proiavleniy terrorizma i ekstremizma v Tsentralnoy Azii: itogi 2004 goda.*

vation of the traditional path of development of Islam” (11%). In this group, the proportion of women and workers in the agricultural sector of the economy was above average. In terms of content, it is mostly a position that links culture and religion, closer to the option that states that “Islam, traditions and customs are inseparable.” The remaining respondents (8.3%) found the question difficult to answer. The respondents’ attitude to religion was reflected in the answers to the following question: “In what life situations is religion most beneficial?” According to the respondents, it is most important in child-rearing (36%), nurturing spirituality and morality (23%) and uniting people (17%). Islam attracted a large number of supporters with its spiritual and moral potential.

It should be noted that over the years of independence, a generally positive attitude has formed towards religion in the public consciousness. Answering the question of “In your opinion what place in our society should religion occupy?” 50.3% believe that religion should become the basis of spiritual and moral education; 13.3% accept the development of religion only within a reasonable framework; 10.8%—only under state control. Religion is considered unacceptable and intolerable in our society by only 8% of the respondents, while 2% found it difficult to answer.²¹

In assessing the prospects of “modernizing” Islam, the respondents were divided into “optimists,” “doubters,” and “pessimists.” “Optimists” (39%) were attracted by this prospect, since it means that this will eliminate unhealthy religious feelings in life. The share of “optimists” among professionals and businessmen 30-50 years of age was approximately the same. The tendency towards the modernization of Islam provoked conflicting feelings among the “doubters” (36%). They were not convinced that this process would not cause discontent among believers, and adversely affect the preservation of national traditions and customs, although religion itself should not lag behind modern life. The third, and the smallest group of “pessimists,” comprising 25% of respondents, did not accept this prospect. Respondents believed that moving away from Islamic traditions would hit national and religious feelings. The pessimistic point of view was shared by older people of low and average educational qualifications, most often women. As you can see, the respondents did not constitute an integral community, and the social groups that compose it related to religion in a different way. They were determined by the social status of groups, their gender and age, professional and qualification characteristics.

As is well-known, one of the fundamental issues determining the place and role of religion in society is the relationship between religion and politics in the activities of the society in question. In this regard, we find it interesting to consider students’ answers to the question “Would you like to live in a secular or religious state?” 89% of respondents answered that they would like to live in a secular state, 1.4%—in a theocratic, 9.6% found it difficult to answer.

Of course, problems in the religious sphere are particularly important for the country and its security, but it is obvious that flexible methods and principles of studying religious processes with regard for regional specifics are required. For effective regulation of the religious environment it is absolutely necessary to take these features into account. The authors of sociological studies came to the conclusion that the true scale of religiosity of Kazakhstan’s population is not as wide as claimed by the official clergy and statistics. If there was a practical way to establish the fact of functional religiosity, the percentage of believers would apparently be significantly lower for all age groups.

In fact, there are not so many strong believers in Kazakhstan (those who know the Arabic language, and consistently follow the instructions of the Koran and Sunnah in their daily lives). Those who act in accordance with the established tradition (observing religious traditions, customs and rituals, but do not read the Qur’an and the Sunnah, do not propagate faith), i.e. believers by tradition, are more numerous. However, they can hardly be considered “true” believers. For them, there is no difference between religious and national. They understand religion as a means of supporting morality

²¹ Here the data from field studies in 2017 are used.

and culture in a society, that is, in a socially utilitarian sense. Meanwhile, observance of religious rituals cannot serve as a criterion for distinguishing believers from the rest of the population. According to famous theologians, such as Professor Muhammad Ali al-Hashimi, the role of religious rituals is to strengthen the faith.²²

The level of religiosity in Kazakhstan, although generally relatively high, is not sufficiently deep. Our analysis shows that the religiosity of Kazakhstani population is heterogeneous. For many Kazakhstanis, faith is primarily conformist in nature. Preliminary results of the sociological study suggest that the modern believer is a person who fulfills not only his religious, but also civil obligations. He does not seek self-isolation, seclusion, and is tolerant of other religions.

Conclusion

As noted above, the problems of Islamic revival in Kazakhstan have inspired serious interest in researchers. This is due to the fact that without identifying the place and role of this religion in the countries of Central Asia, it is difficult to determine the nature and degree of society's maturity at different times, or resolve legal, philosophical, socio-psychological, cultural and other issues. All these objective difficulties have aroused scientific interest in the development of Islam in Kazakhstan and other countries of the region and in elucidating the main trends of its development. In this context, the study of the past is important not so much from a purely scientific standpoint, but rather for the correct understanding of present and future processes. An attempt to consider the historical scale of events with the participation of Islam allows us to better understand the nature of the issues that require immediate resolution today.

The problems of the historical development of Islam have always been a difficult task for researchers, and its genesis, at the time of a socio-political transformation in Kazakhstan, is even more complex and contradictory. Not only did religion have to protect its position in the new environment, but the origins of evolution of Islam were also extremely diverse, and its alignment with the new realities had lingered for many years, and in some countries continues into the present time. During this period, Islam, which had often played a decisive role in the emergence of unique forms of Eastern society, itself went through several stages of development, and during each the socio-economic and socio-political conditions influenced religion differently, subjecting it to their influence and control. The intricacy of the analysis is related to the fact that to this day there is a wide variety of Islamic schools and movements in Central Asian countries. It should be noted that the problem of politicization of Islam is poorly studied, which is often explained by the extreme scarcity of sources and materials on this issue.

Even though there undoubtedly are general trends in the development of Islam typical of many Eastern countries, practically each one of them possesses special innate features. In Kazakhstan and other post-Soviet states, Islam began to take a firm position mainly after independence. Islam in Kazakhstan underwent a long and strong impact from the atheistic propaganda of the Soviet state, which exerted constant pressure on the Muslim clergy and destroyed religious buildings and Islamic monuments. Indonesia, Iran or Lebanon have not encountered anything similar. However, Islam in these countries was more strongly influenced by the classical or "theoretical" norms and dogmas. It should be noted that the uniqueness of socio-economic and socio-political conditions left its mark on the development of religion in Kazakhstan.

²² See: M.A. Al-Khashimi, *Lichnost musulmanina v tom vide, kotoryy stremitsia pridat ey islam s pomoshchiu Korana i Sunny*, Transl. from the Arabic by V.F. Nirsha, Ibrahim Bin Abdulaziz Al-Ibrahim Russian Charitable Foundation, Moscow, 1999, p. 17.

As the analysis demonstrated, Islam's position in Kazakhstan in the early years of independence was different in that it mainly aimed to occupy a certain position in the state and the social system of the new society.

The main distinction of the development of Islam in Kazakhstan under conditions of independence is that it began to play a significant role in the revival of national culture.

TOLERANCE IN INTER-ETHNIC AND INTER-CONFESSIONAL RELATIONS IN KAZAKHSTAN

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ABSTRACT

Poly-ethnic and poly-confessional states, each with its own national and confessional policies designed to maintain political stability are not a rarity in the contemporary world, yet not all of them cope with the task of maintaining peace and agreement among ethnicities and confessions. Post-Soviet countries were not alien to outburst of conflicts. While strengthening its

market economy and developing democracy, Kazakhstan has arrived at a special type of ethnic and confessional tolerance created, in particular, by the centuries-old experience of living in the Great Steppe and the historical experience of different peoples that lived in its territory. The Great Silk Road that crossed Central Asia brought different peoples closer together and blended their cultures.

The nationality policy of contemporary Kazakhstan is intended to preserve and develop the cultures of all its peoples.

Sociological polls invariably confirm the constructive nature of the development

of ethnicities and confessions in the poly-cultural society. The state and the institutions of civic society should spare no efforts to preserve this favorable climate of tolerance.

KEYWORDS: *tolerance, risks, ethnicities, confessions, nomads, world outlook, syncretism.*

Introduction

In the 20th century, all civilized countries adopted fundamental documents to ensure the peaceful coexistence of states. In the early 21st century, however, it turned out that certain states pushed aside international law for the sake of their geopolitical interests.

The world is sliding into conflicts, while ethnic and religious contradictions, as well as international and regional problems are exacerbated.

In the West, politicians and public figures are discussing the crisis of multiculturalism, caused, in particular, by migration-related pressure and acts of terror in Europe. Hence the crisis of tolerance in the world and strong anti-immigrant feelings in Europe. Even the most democratic countries are not alien to outcrops of nationalism, chauvinism, aggression in inter-ethnic, inter-racial, inter-confessional and other relations that are spreading far and wide.

Having become independent, the Republic of Kazakhstan entered a new historical stage of radical political transformations against a background of rising national and religious self-awareness. The latter is caused by the multi-ethnic nature of the republic's society, inherited from the Soviet period, and the multi-confessional nature, ensured by democratic changes.

The period of economic and political transformations in Kazakhstan is fraught with a multitude of risks that may undermine social stability under certain circumstances.

These risks may emerge due to various factors:

- First of all, the development level of the country that is determined to move on from the traditional forms of social life to modern ones and join the community of civilized states as their equal member;
- Second, the absence or inadequate development of democratic political traditions, mentality, cultural specifics and axiological orientations of different ethnic and confessional groups, as well as hyperbolized importance of the personality factor in the structure of social relationships;
- Third, a variety of historical and cultural traditions and customs of Kazakhstan's ethnicities, the preferences and ambitions of their leaders that may strongly affect the level of tolerance among the community members;
- Fourth, different quality of life of various social groups which negatively affects personal relationships and the moral/psychological climate in society;
- Fifth, an unequal level of regional development and a discrepancy in wages, which are responsible for social disproportions of different groups in the Kazakhstani society and may ignite antagonism;

- Sixth, the increased and further increasing activity of extremist groups in Central Asia and Kazakhstan that not only spread their influence among common people, but have already penetrated the corridors of power.

As a multinational country, during its years of independence, Kazakhstan acquired a certain amount of experience in coordinating the interests of numerous national communities and confessions; it has arrived at a very specific model of their coexistence, which takes into account their cultural specifics and their past. Within a very short time, the ethnocultural associations and the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK),¹ which represent their interests, became efficient and highly respected civil society institutions. This model of ethnic tolerance and social contract relies on the democratic principles of ethnic relationships. When moving towards this model, Kazakhstan took into account similar experience of other countries, the specifics of its own experience of inter-ethnic and inter-confessional coordination and the recommendations of the OSCE and other international organizations.

This is not a simple and straightforward process; as a poly-variant system, it permits only probabilistic forecasting and makes its management a challenge. In the last decade, extremist groups became more active in Central Asia. From time to time, the media inform their audiences about the prevention of terrorist acts in Kazakhstan and people sent to prison for terrorism.²

Radicalism and extremism thrive in societies that violate social justice, do not fight corruption, and block important social programs designed to lower the level of unemployment.³

In the absence of an efficient system of religious education (even if much has been done in this respect in recent years) and the younger generation's total ignorance of moral and social ideas preached by the founders of world religions allow the proponents of extremist ideas to pass for defenders of true religions.⁴

The expert community has correctly pointed out that religious feelings are on the rise among common people. It is, indeed, the case not only because of those who seek freedom of spiritual self-identification under conditions of ideological pluralism, but also because of spiritual expansion of numerous foreign missionary movements and sham religious organizations.

Sociological studies have confirmed that, despite social problems, ethnic and confessional tolerance survives.

Methodology

We have relied on the theories of structural functionalism, interactionism and ethno-symbolism. Structural functionalism explains society as a social system with a structure of its own, mechanisms of interaction of structural elements that perform their specific functions; symbolic interactionism explains interaction among groups through a system of culturally conditioned signs and meanings; the theory of conflict presents the conflict as intrinsic to human society that fights for material boons, power or prestige.

¹ The Assembly of the *Peoples* of Kazakhstan was set up by a presidential decree of 1 March, 1995. In 2007, it was renamed the Assembly of the *People* of Kazakhstan.

² See: "26 kazakhstansev zaderzhali s nachala 2018 g. v ramkakh borby s terrorizmom," *Vremya*, available at [<http://www.time.kz/news/society/2018/08/22/26-kazhstancev-zaderzhali-s-nachala-2018-g-v-ramkah-borbi-s-terrorizmom>], 22 August, 2018.

³ See: "Pri realizatsii programmy zaniatosti pokhishchen milliard tenge," *Kapital*, available at [<https://kapital.kz/gosudarstvo/71409/pri-realizatsii-programmy-zanyatosti-pohichshen-milliard-tenge.html>], 15 August, 2018.

⁴ See: V.D Kurganskaya, A.G. Kosichenko, *Sostoiante i tendentsii islamskogo prosveshchenia i obrazovania v Respublike Kazakhstan*, Tsentri gumanitarnykh issledovaniy, Almaty, 2006, pp. 77-80.

The authors proceed from the fact that different ethnic and religious characteristics do not cause tension and violence; rather, they are created by material, social, political and ideological factors.

Our conclusions are based on the analysis of theoretical sources and social information acquired through field sociological studies.

Historical Roots of Tolerance in Kazakhstan

In Kazakhstan, the tolerance of the titular nation towards other peoples, which is a product of its history, has become an inalienable part of Kazakh mentality. Kazakhs, who lived in vast steppes, were glad to greet any guest irrespective of ethnicity, confession or culture. The difficult life in the steppe had taught Kazakhs to cherish mutual assistance, which was crucial to survival in this part of Eurasia. Central Asia has become the homeland of a unique nomadic culture.

The Great Silk Road, a Eurasian trade and cultural phenomenon, played an important role in shaping the phenomenon of tolerance. This transcontinental road that spans hundreds of kilometers was the space of interaction and mutual influence of different cultures of peoples involved in trade along this road.

Historian Ayzhan Kapaeva has written: “Economic and cultural life in Kazakhstan was determined, to a great extent, by its geographic location, by the Great Silk Road in the first place. It was a process of mutual cultural enrichment that strongly affected the region’s religious life. Since time immemorial, this has been a place where different cults and faiths coexisted, while the local nomads served as a link between different civilizations.”⁵

The Great Silk Road traversed the territories of Muslim states and brought with it Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Manichaeism, Nestorianism, Taoism, etc.; mosques, churches and synagogues were scattered across the territory of contemporary Kazakhstan; nomads respected the spiritual cultures of other peoples and never destroyed their places of worship.

Kazakhstani philosopher Mukhammadiar Orynbekov wrote at one time: “The epoch of the Early Middle Ages was marked by highly impressive synchronous existence of different confessions in Kazakhstan. The small religious cosmos in Southern Kazakhstan and Semirechye (Zhetysu) was, in fact, a detailed picture of the main confessions of the world, which positively affected the spiritual life of the steppe peoples. It seems that from that time on religious tolerance became typical of the steppe people, surviving until our days.”⁶

In the 21st century, the Great Silk Road was revived as the Belt and Road Initiative. Initiated by the PRC, it is defined by the analytical community “as a strategy of intensified international trade intended to encourage economic cooperation between the countries along the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road, free movement of raw materials, capitals and workforce, more efficient distribution of resources and more efficient regional economic cooperation. A vast free trade area that will finally appear, stretching from the northwestern provinces of China to Central and Eastern Europe and having the population of about three billion, will become a huge potential market.”⁷

⁵ A.T. Kapaeva, “Religioznaia tolerantnost v Kazakhstane: istoria i sovermennost,” *Kazakhskaiia tsivilizatsia*, Kainar University, No. 2, 2013, pp. 61-62.

⁶ M.S. Orynbekov, *Genesis religioznosti v Kazakhstane*, Dayk-Press, Amaty, 2005, p. 189.

⁷ R. Nurtazina, P. Tokar, S. Ruban, “Ukraine and Kazakhstan: Together in the Great Silk Road Project,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 19, Issue 3, 2018, p. 75.

The Great Silk Road strongly affected the social consciousness of the peoples who lived in the areas it traversed and helped syncretism emerge as one of the individual features of Kazakh mentality. Dana Stewart defined this quality of the Kazakh soul as “the phenomenon when a people that preaches a certain religion creates a new form under the influence of other confessions.”⁸ Indeed, the Kazakh version of Islam differs from its traditional form.

People who lived in the south and southeast of Kazakhstan (settled Turks who lived in towns) were the first Muslims. Ancestors of the ancient Turks were the Tengrists, followers of an ancient religion in which Heaven (Tengri) was the main deity. It was revered as the father-patron, as the male principle that created everything in existence and lived in Tien Shan (also known as the Tengri Tagh). This religion appeared before our era, while gods with similar names were revered by many ancient religions.

Turks depended on forces of nature, on heavenly forces from which they expected warm weather and precipitation. This explains why Tengri was perceived as the creator and omnipotent ruler of human lives.

Islam, that reached the territory of Kazakhstan as “people’s” Islam, absorbed certain features of Tengrism, first and foremost, respect for the spirits of ancestors. This syncretism promoted confessional tolerance, the feature singled out by many students of tolerant behavior of different peoples, religions, cultures, ideas, opinions, etc.

In the 20th century, this tolerance cropped up in Soviet Kazakhstan as Kazakhs’ very humane treatment of repressed peoples exiled to their republic, which became their new Motherland. The grateful refugees subsequently erected numerous monuments to thank Kazakhs for their generosity and humanness. In Kazakhstan, 1 March is celebrated as the Day of Gratitude of Repressed Peoples to the Titular Ethnicity.

In the 1990s, at the early stages of independence, the republic faced the danger of confrontation among the local ethnicities. It was avoided owing to the wise nation-building strategy; otherwise, the people of Kazakhstan would have paid dearly for the miscalculations, as the experience of certain other post-Soviet republics had demonstrated.

Kazakhs remained tolerant towards other ethnicities and confessions, while the proper nationality policy ensured the continued existence of Kazakhstan as a state of 130 nationalities and 18 confessions.

Each and every member of the Kazakhstani people, irrespective of nationality and confession, respects all ethnic or confessional “aliens.” Tolerance as a part of world outlook of the Kazakhs can be defined as acceptance of all cultures present in the republic. This is explained by the fact that for over half a century Kazakhs had lived in a different state (the Soviet Union) in which another ethnicity (Russians) played the main role; likewise, the Kazakh traditional culture rests on the principle of non-violence in relations with other peoples and ethnicities.

It should be said, however, that disagreements are inevitable in any poly-cultural state. In Kazakhstan, for example, there is no agreement on the language issue: national patriots insist that the Kazakh language should be widely used in the social sphere, while the Russian speakers insist that the Russian language should preserve its status. There are other signs of intolerance: ethnic prejudices and stereotypes, as well as everyday nationalism.

Tolerance, however, survives: the majority of the republic’s population remains absolutely loyal to “others,” their religions and lifestyle; together they seek compromises, reject domination and violence and settle conflicts occurring from time to time. All ethnicities, united into ethnocultural associations, have preserved their cultural specifics, values and traditions.

⁸ D. Stewart, “Sinkretizm verobaniy Kazakhov i ego aktualizatsia,” in: *Globalizatsia i dialog konfessiy v stranakh Tsentralnoy Azii: materialy mezhdunarodnoy nauchno-prakticheskoy konferentsii*, Almaty, 2002, pp. 227-231.

The Ideology of Tolerance: Theory and Practice in Kazakhstan

In recent years, the problem of philosophical interpretation of tolerance as a consolidating principle has come to the fore among the ongoing globalization and integration unfolding across the world. Peoples and states interpret this phenomenon differently because of the nature of their world outlook, cultural and ethical attitudes and stereotypes of national mentalities.

Tolerance as a phenomenon relies on positive, socially constructive meaning—as its main feature, this corresponds to the essence of the moral categories accepted by mankind. A. Novikov deemed it necessary to point out that “tolerance means inner harmony as the first step towards the harmony of Truth, Goodness and Beauty that make an individual a human being.”⁹

In the process of its formation, the culture of tolerance passes through several development stages in its opposition to certain social and psychological phenomena (rejection of alien traditions, national and confessional intolerance, xenophobia, etc.). Canadian psychologist, N. Goldenberg has written: “Tolerance is a treacherous word, because next to it there is always intolerance and refusal to cooperate. Genuine tolerance extends the boundaries of the ‘ego’, but at the same time, genuine tolerance poses a hidden danger, because it usually means that I should change my mind.”¹⁰

Kazakhstani-style tolerance does not alienate people: it means respect for the religions of others, as well as for their cultures and nationality. In Kazakhstan, the principle of tolerance is geared at respect for culture and the rights of others as the highest value of the relations between people. This fully corresponds to the interpretation of tolerance found in the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance: “Art. 1—Meaning of Tolerance. 1.1. Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world’s cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human.”¹¹

It is stated in the “Kazakhstan-2050 Strategy” that “civil peace and inter-ethnic harmony remain key values for us” and that national unity, peace and agreement are among the main components of the national idea Мәңгілік Ел.

The state needs institutions to consistently and purposefully maintain tolerant relations among ethnic and confessional groups in multi-ethnic and multi-confessional societies and preserve living space and their cultural specifics.

In Kazakhstan, this role belongs to the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan, which comprises representatives of the biggest ethnic groups. Its mid-term strategy (until the year 2007) says, in particular, that “a rich and unique experience of peaceful coexistence between peoples, civilizations, cultures and various confessions in one state has been accumulated in the historical land of the Kazakhs. This is the root of our unity that helps us acquire a clear vision of our future.” The Assembly has posed itself with the task of formulating and promoting the ideas of spiritual unity, people’s friendship, inter-ethnic harmony, Kazakhstani patriotism, propagation of history knowledge, historical heritage and culture of the people of Kazakhstan and development of national specifics and traditional cooperation of ethnic groups.

The Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan was a consultative assembly under the President that discussed the problems of ethnocultural associations, national schools, languages, educational measures, etc. at its annual sessions.

⁹ A.G. Novikov, “Cherez terpmost i ponimanie k vrozozhdeniu i dostizheniu novogo urovnia dukhovnoy kultury etnosov,” in: *Tolerantnost: materialy regionalnoy nauchno-prakticheskoy konferentsii “Tolerantnost kak sposob vyzhivania narodov v uslovoiahk Severa,”* Iakutskiy nauchny tsentr SO RAS, Iakutsk, 1994, pp. 17-31.

¹⁰ Eurasian Research Institute, Weekly Bulletin, 20.01.2015-26.01.2015, Tolerance as a Value in Contemporary Kazakhstani Policy.

¹¹ *Declaration of Principles on Tolerance*: adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-eighth session, Paris, 16 November, 1995.

In 2007, it acquired wider powers to become an equal entity of the republic's social and political life, with several seats in the parliament. It is, therefore, involved in legislative activities; its decisions are obligatory for all official structures. Each region has its own regional Assembly actively involved in the nationality policy.

The Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan cooperates with 16 smaller Assemblies: 14 regional assemblies and 2 city assemblies of Nur-Sultan and Almaty. They are consultative structures under regional akims; their members are recruited from national-cultural communities, councils of veterans, deputies of local elected structures, prominent members of local intelligentsia, heads of confessions and youth organizations. The smaller Assemblies are headed by akims of corresponding regions and cities who approve each of the deputies. There are members of 35 nationalities in the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan.

The Republic of Kazakhstan has confirmed its image of a peace-loving state on the international arena. Many poly-confessional states are attracted by its experience in this sphere. Kazakhstan is consistently moving towards tolerance and mutual respect; this is amply confirmed by the congresses of the leaders of the world and traditional religions held in the capital of Kazakhstan, and its information policy designed to popularize the ideas of inter-confessional peace and agreement among the people through TV, press, the Internet, etc.

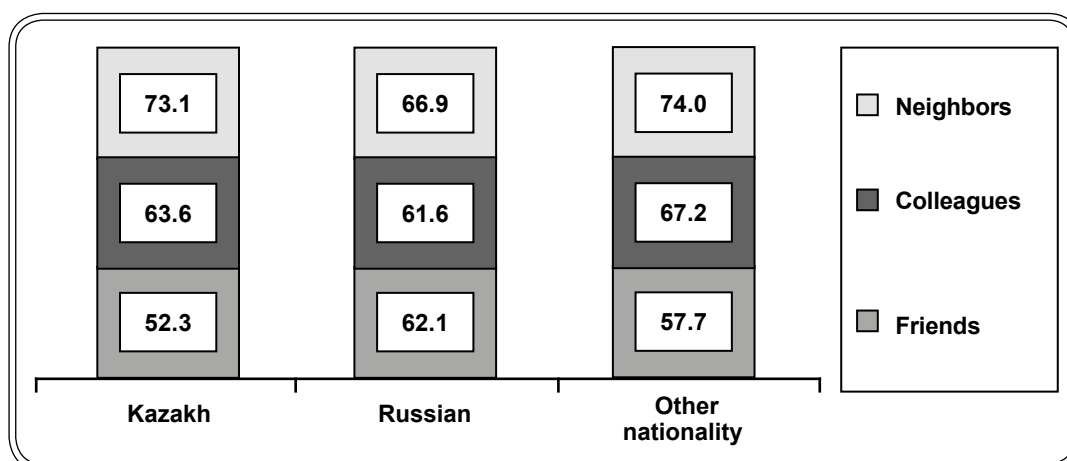
What People Think about the Relations between Ethnicities and Confessions

Sociological polls conducted by the Institute for Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies of the Science Committee, Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, confirm that tolerance was and remains the main characteristic of personal relations.

A 2008 poll confirmed that most of the respondents were indifferent to nationalities of their friends, colleagues and neighbors. This means that in Kazakhstan, which is a multinational state, people are adjusted to the multinational milieu (see Fig. 1).

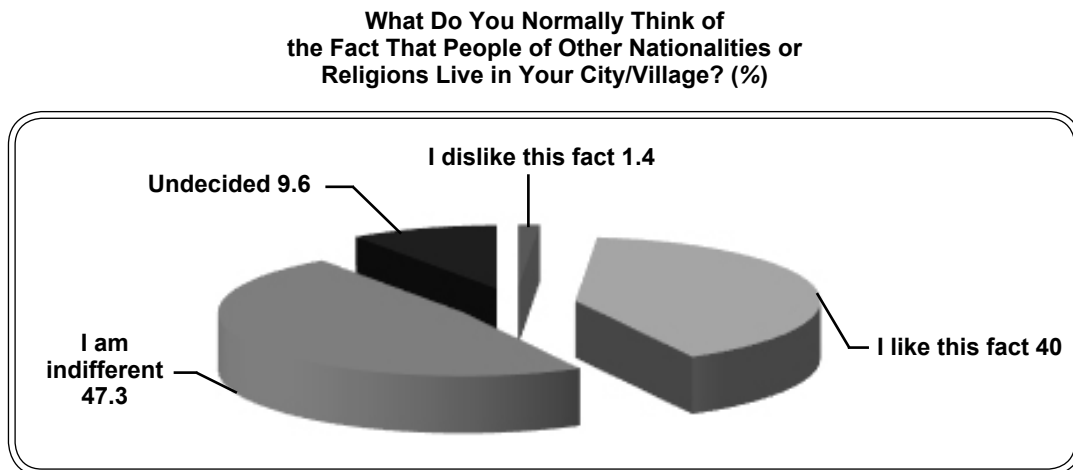
Figure 1

There is No Need to Take Nationality into Account when Choosing... (%)



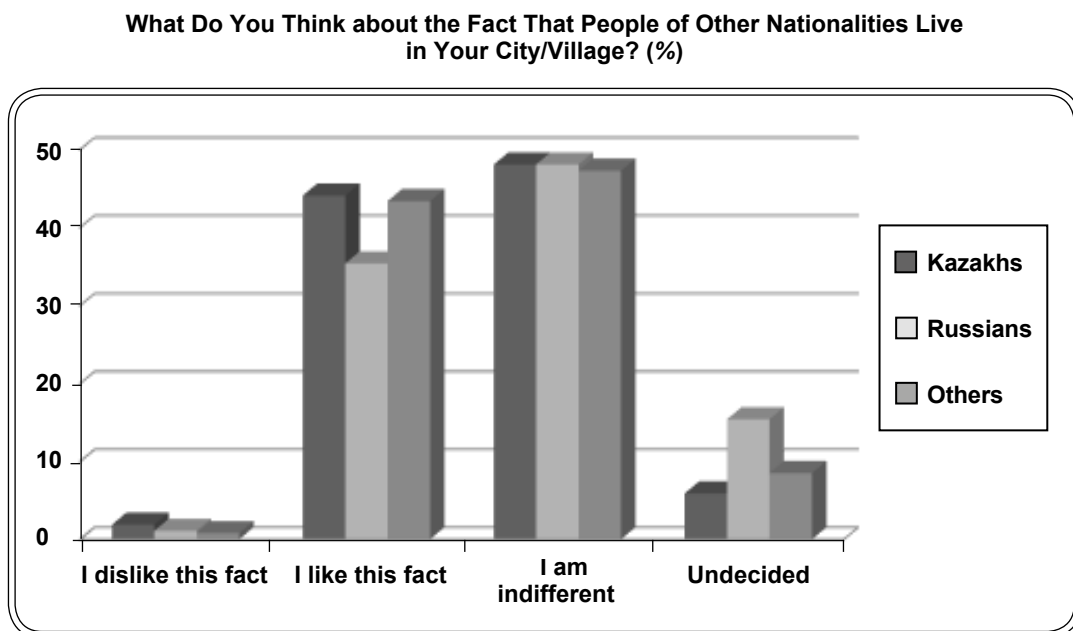
Our respondents were quite comfortable in a poly-ethnic environment; they either liked to live side by side with people who belonged to different cultural milieus or, at least, were indifferent to this (see Fig. 2).

Figure 2



Respondents from different ethnic groups offered more or less similar answers; this means that cooperation and agreement between ethnic groups can develop further (see Fig. 3).

Figure 3



The values of non-violence, tolerance, dialog and cooperation became the most important strategic landmarks and undisputed priorities of Kazakhstan's social-political sphere. Tolerance means

that indigenous population is ready to accept carriers of different social norms, traditions and customs. This has been confirmed with certainty by the results of our opinion polls.

In 2008, we tried to postulate the forms of intolerant behavior inevitable in socially heterogeneous societies.

It turned out that most of the respondents have never encountered intolerance, yet one out of seven or eight respondents has encountered symbols hostile to his ethnic group (leaflets, banners, inscriptions) and one out of five—publications in the press that insulted his nationality or religion (see Fig. 4), which means that there is intolerance among certain population groups.

Figure 4

Have You Ever Encountered the Following Signs of Intolerance...? (%)

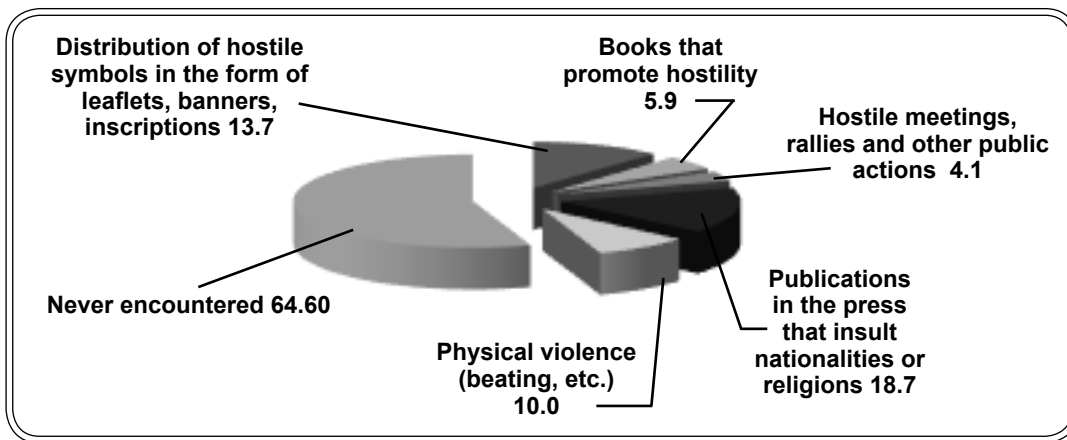
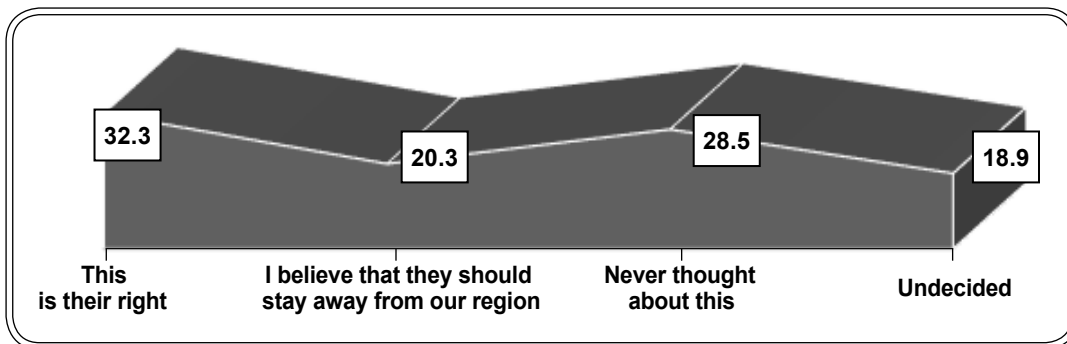


Figure 5

What Do You Think about the New Confessions Actively Operating in Kazakhstan? (%)

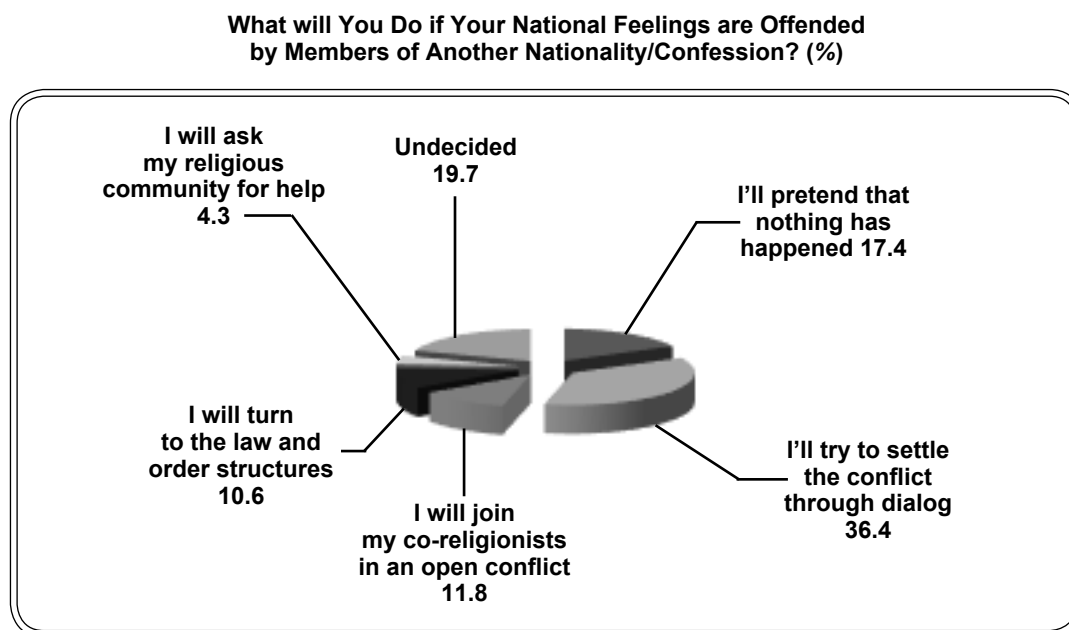


Globalization is making states' cultural borders transparent. Kazakhstanis responded with a fair share of tolerance to the confessions previously unknown in Kazakhstan, which appeared in the country as one of the outcrops of cultural globalization. On the other hand, some of the Islamic and Orthodox leaders believe that the newcomers may destroy confessional harmony in the country and even dilute the cultural identity of its population. They are convinced that the international standards of the freedom of conscience, in particular, are liberal Western values that can hardly be applicable in Ka-

zakhstan. According to our poll, however, only one out of five polled was convinced that the country should be closed to new confessions (see Fig. 5).

In 2008, when asked about their behavior in a conflict when their feelings are insulted by a member of another nationality or confession, the respondents demonstrated that they were ready for discussion (see Fig. 6).

Figure 6



According to a later (2015) poll, ethnic tolerance survived. Indeed, 83% of the focus-group members described the relations between people of different nationalities at workplace and among neighbors, and in the public space as good, healthy, peaceful, stable, comfortable and favorable. This is confirmed by the answers in questionnaires. The majority of the respondents gave a negative answer to the question “Do you think that the relations between people of different nationalities are worsening?”

The majority assessed the nationality policy of the country’s leaders as balanced, adequate and fitting the demands and challenges of the time.

It turned out that the respondents (irrespective of nationalities) were more concerned with social and economic problems:

- Low wages (58.5% of the Kazakhs; 48.4% of Russians and 43.2% of other ethnic groups);
- Expensive goods and services (59.8% of Kazakhs; 63.5% of Russians and 53.2% of other ethnic groups);
- Environmental problems (43.4% of Kazakhs; 41.1% of Russians; 32.4% of other ethnic groups);
- Corruption (46.7% of Kazakhs; 32.9% of Russians; 41.7% of other ethnic groups);
- Violations of social justice (34.5% of Kazakhs; 31.5% of Russians; 32.4% of other ethnic groups).

The nature of inter-national relations was highly regarded by the respondents both in places where they lived and in other regions. Kazakhs and other ethnic groups assessed the nature of ethnic relationships in their residential areas as 4.1 (out of 5); Russians—as 3.9. In the last twelve months, the majority has not been involved in ethnic conflicts: Kazakhs, 87.8%; Russians, 75.3%; members of other ethnic groups, 82.0%.

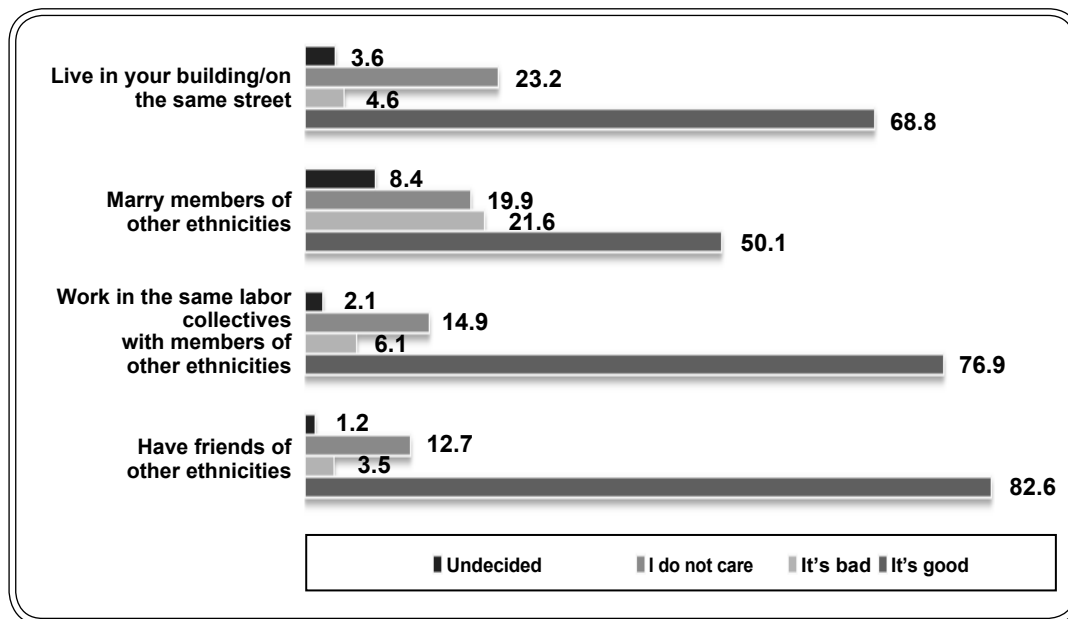
Most of the respondents agreed that such values as civil equality, diligence, honesty, the cult of knowledge, education and tolerance can unite the peoples of Kazakhstan into a single nation. This is the opinion of 87.8% of Kazakhs, 77.6% of Russians and 81.3% of members of other ethnic groups.

Both in 2015 and in 2008, most of the respondents were determined to resolve conflicts peacefully.

The 2018 sociological poll confirmed the preceding results. The absolute majority of the respondents believe that the relations between ethnic groups in places where they live are favorable or rather favorable (92.5%). A high degree of tolerance was confirmed by the readiness of the majority of the ethnically varied polled population to communicate at the personal and social levels and in different spheres. They are ready to work in multinational collectives, live in the same areas/buildings; make friends with people of other nationalities or even marry them (see Fig. 7).

Figure 7

What Do You Normally Think about the Fact that People of a Different Ethnic Group... (%)



The above suggests that the majority do not object to inter-ethnic marriages. Most (over a quarter of the polled) of those who object are Kazakhs; one out of fourteen Russians and one out of ten members of other ethnic groups are of the same opinion (see Fig. 8).

This is highly indicative: the way members of titular nations treat inter-ethnic marriages is one of the clearest inter-ethnic delimitations. Globalization made inter-ethnic marriages a more or less common phenomenon that stirs up fears of losing ethnic and cultural identity, hence the negative attitude to such marriages among Kazakhs. Some of the Kazakh experts in the humanities (Zira Nau-

Figure 8

What Do You Think about Marriages between People of Different Ethnicities? (%)

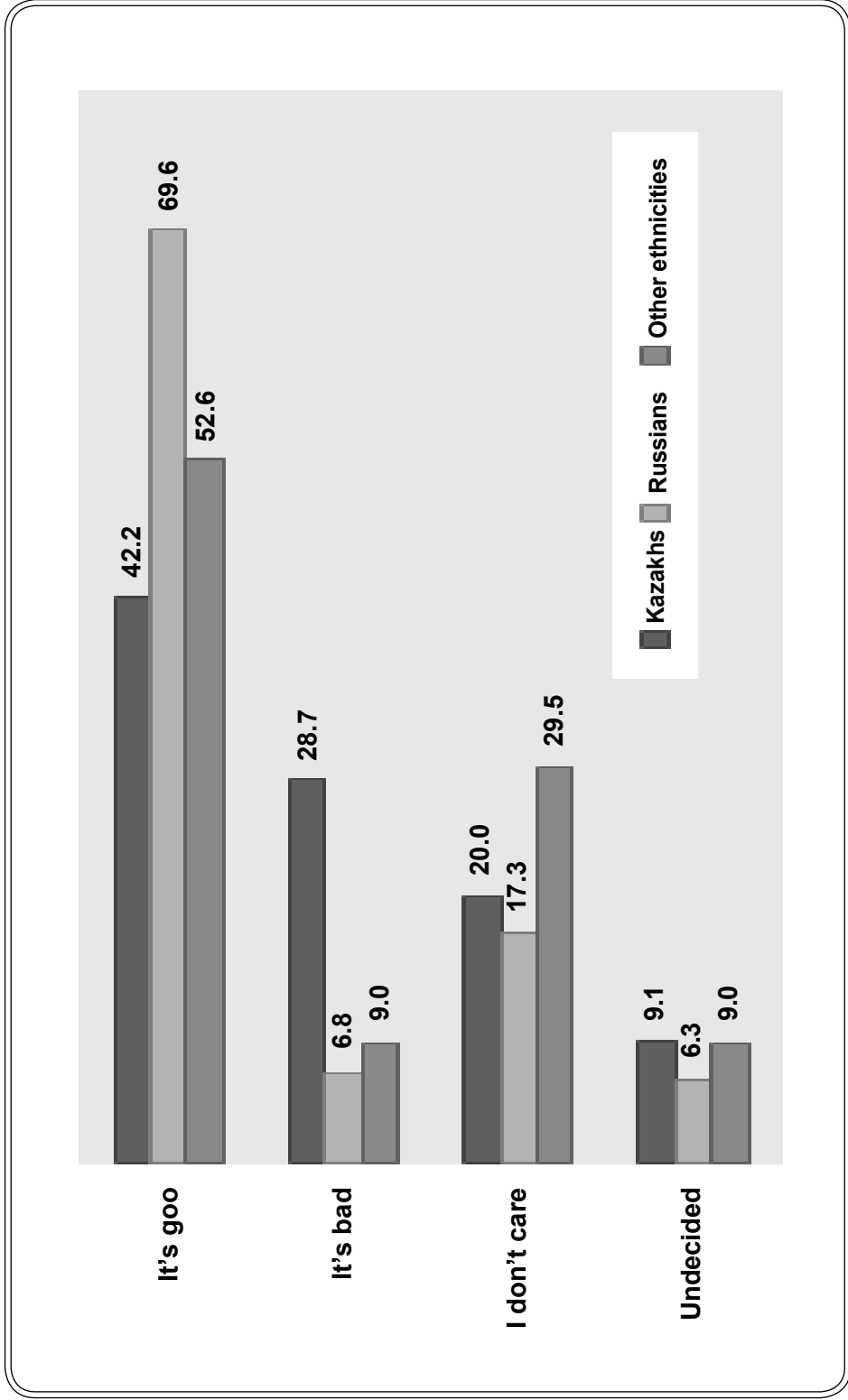
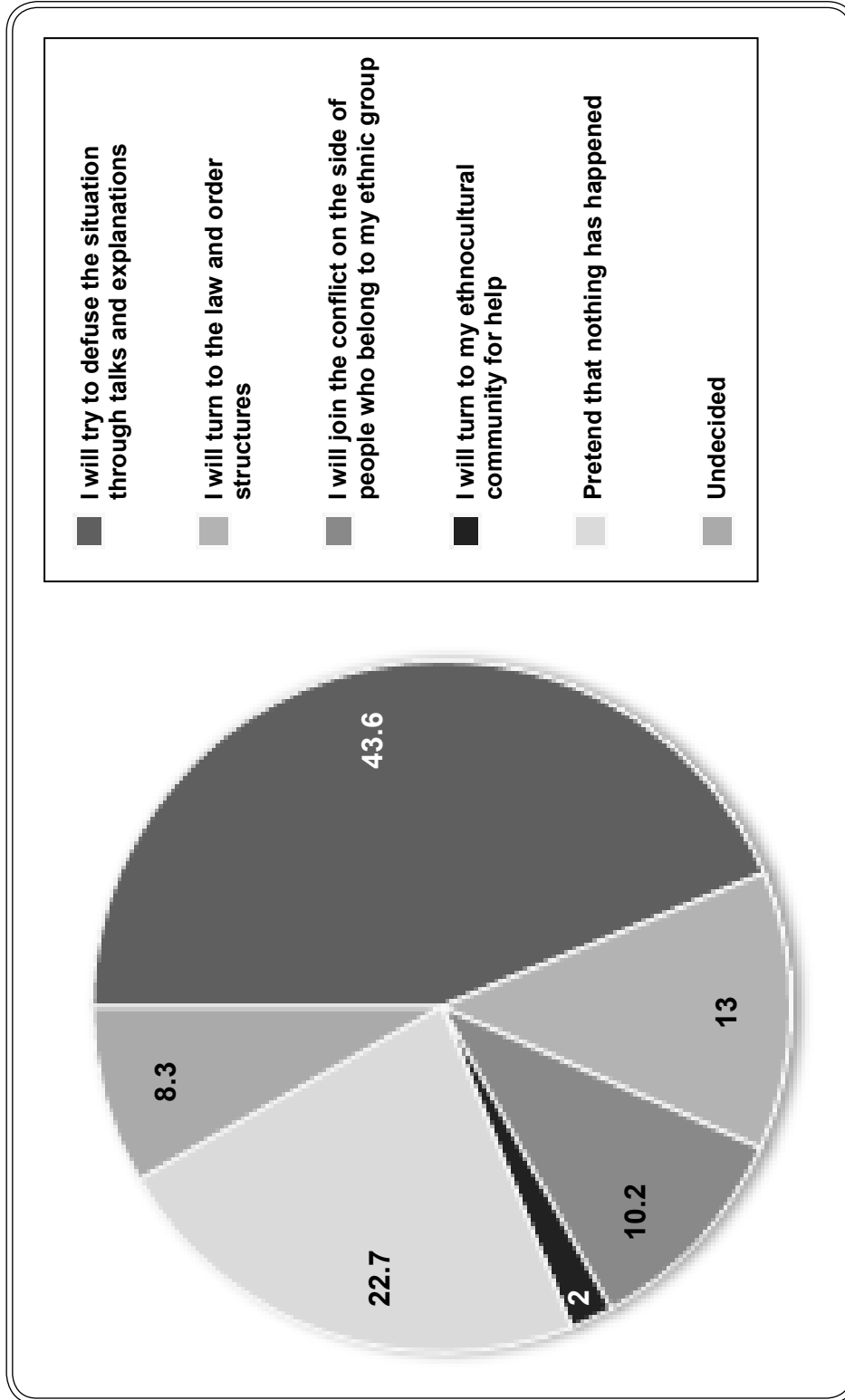


Figure 9

How Would You Behave when Members of a Different Ethnic Group Infringe on Your Feelings? (%)



rzbaeva being one of them) are convinced that globalization will inevitably remove cultural boundaries and that inter-ethnic marriages will become acceptable.

Conflicts, including those in the inter-ethnic relations sphere, are part of everyday life even if ethnic disagreements are strongly charged. Normally they stem from economic, social, political, and other circumstances, rather than ethnic ones. Everybody is aware of this in Kazakhstan. In 2018, the citizens of Kazakhstan remained ready for a dialog in case of a conflict. Most of the respondents were prepared to defuse possible conflicts through dialog or even to pay no heed to them (see Fig. 9).

The fact that about one-tenth of the respondents were ready for an open conflict on the side of their ethnic group speaks of the latent *conflict potential* in Kazakhstani society: these people are not seeking justice, but are ready to *defend the interests of their own ethnicity* even if its members started the conflict in the first place. “Our people are in danger!” immediately divide society into “ours” and “others” and draw more and more people into the conflict.

Conclusion

Despite the calls to limit the impact of global culture, it is developing into a universal behavior pattern for our contemporaries. In the 21st century, mankind discovered not only new communication means that create virtual reality that, in its turn, controls individual behavior and social processes (elections in any given country). Scientific and technological progress has moved information wars into the networks, the main mechanism of shaping social consciousness. Virtual networks are brimming with real life: politicians and public figures assess what is going on in the world, their assessments may ruin the currency and securities markets; mercenaries ready to fight and die for imaginary aims are conscripted; groups that organize protests and rallies to put pressure on politicians are established; virtual world currency as an alternative to the traditional currencies is created, etc. Human lives, including their strictly personal components, become dependent on virtual reality.

The language of animosity and intolerance used by ethnicities and confessions as communication means has become an inalienable part of virtual reality, therefore civilized states should pour more effort into the culture of tolerance by expanding the range of actions, all sorts of possible measures, including the traditional and innovational forms of social identifications and solidarity.

Tolerance is the product of socialization in the family, school, cultural institutions, the media, public organizations, that is, the result of many institutions’ efforts. In order to achieve this, the society has created a system of educational measures to familiarize its members with cultures of different ethnic groups. In Kazakhstan, the fundamental principles of cultural policy are equal rights and opportunities for its citizens, development of a system of education and upbringing that helps familiarize its citizens with the values of national and world culture (the Law on Culture, Art 3).

In the conditions in which societies undergoing reforms lose their traditional ties, the system of social institutions should generate communicative practices of tolerant co-existence; to be efficient, these institutions should be respected by corresponding societies. Institutionalization of the tolerance principles as the highest achievement of humanistic culture guarantees successful and consistent development of society. It is expected that the institutions of civil society will consolidate the effects of institutionalization and transform the principle of tolerance into a common value.

The main role in the teaching and educational process at all levels designed to formulate the principles of tolerance belongs to state structures. It is in the sphere of education that

- People familiarize themselves with different cultures;
- Learn to be tolerant to those “who are different from me” and become interested in the culture of “others”;

- Learn to accept cultural variety;
- Acquire national self-awareness and a tolerant attitude to people of “other” cultures and “other” traditions;
- Acquire a fuller understanding of the cultural pluralism concept;
- Learn to be tolerant to those who think differently;
- Learn to accept the right of others to be different from them, respect for their opinions;
- Acquire partnership, mutual understanding and cooperation skills;
- Learn to understand and respect the interests of others;
- Acquire national self-awareness and the feeling of belonging to a territory, collective, national culture and history.

Local authorities should promote the values common to all Kazakhstanis, they should eliminate the propaganda of ethnocentrism that identifies any ethno-national group as special; formulate and promote the principles of tolerance in multi-ethnic communities based on an open dialog and communication between different ethno-national and confessional communities.

This policy should teach each and every citizen of Kazakhstan to act together with all ethnicities and confessions for the sake of economic, social and cultural progress. This action will improve the dynamics of social relations and bring positive results.