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in the next three issues will discuss:***

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

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ENERGY POLICY AND ENERGY PROJECTS

ENERGY POLICIES IN THE SOUTHERN CAUCASUS

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ABSTRACT

The Southern Caucasus continues to be a major focus of attention. Its unique geographical location and geopolitical importance are enhanced by its substantial hydrocarbon reserves. A key role in the region's energy sector is played by Azerbaijan, which has achieved significant successes. Pipeline projects implemented in the early 21st century have enabled Azerbaijan

to become an exporter of Caspian oil and gas to the European market. Western energy companies and government structures have played a major part in this process, providing financial assistance and political support for the new pipeline projects. Their involvement in creating alternative routes for oil and gas transportation from the Caspian region has increased the role of Georgia,

since export pipelines run through its territory. At the same time, Armenia was excluded from the discussion of energy projects owing to political factors. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and close relations with Russia in the 1990s became an obstacle to its participation in new pipeline projects.

In the last decade, the energy situation in the Southern Caucasus has changed radically. The implementation of pipeline projects initiated by Western countries has strengthened the position of Azerbaijan and Georgia, creating conditions for the development of new projects. At the same time, Baku is no longer oriented only towards Western countries, but has expanded its cooperation with Turkey. The energy factor has played a key role in strengthening the Turkish-Azerbaijani tandem, paving the way for its expansion to include Georgia. This triple alliance, in which Turkey holds the

leading position, has allowed Ankara to significantly expand its presence in the Southern Caucasus and to increase its influence on the political, economic, and cultural development of Azerbaijan and Georgia.

New pipeline projects involving Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey are to be implemented in the next few years. This will open a new page in the energy history of the Southern Caucasus. However, it should be emphasized that in recent years Azerbaijan has met with some difficulties in oil and gas production. This fact rules out the possibility of stronger competition between Russia and Azerbaijan for the European market in the coming years. Nevertheless, the sphere of oil and gas production and export in the Southern Caucasus will have a crucial effect on the development of the region, so that it will remain a focus of attention in the foreign policy of non-regional states.

KEYWORDS: *the Southern Caucasus, energy, pipelines, oil, gas.*

Introduction

In the last quarter-century, the South Caucasian countries have been involved in energy projects associated with the production and export of hydrocarbons to external markets. The greatest attention has been paid to Azerbaijan, which has historically played a key role in oil production. Azerbaijan's significant oil reserves, its newly discovered gas fields, and its advantageous geographical location have aroused the interest of the world's leading oil and gas companies and Western states, which have supported the creation of a new pipeline infrastructure.¹

Georgia, along with Azerbaijan, has played an important role in the new projects for the production of hydrocarbons and their supply to external markets. The interest shown by the new Georgian authorities in expanding cooperation with the United States and the European Union allowed Tbilisi to occupy an important place in the new pipeline projects. Georgia's development strategy provided for the construction of oil and gas export pipelines, which offered additional opportunities for attracting foreign investment and increasing budget revenues.² In this matter, Georgia got the edge over Armenia despite a surge of interest in the latter after independence because of its proximity to the oil and gas resources of the Caspian region. Moreover, Armenia was once seen as a potential transit

¹ See: S.S. Zhiltsov, "Russia's Policy towards the Pipeline Transport in the Caspian Region: Results and Prospects," in: *The Handbook of Environmental Chemistry*, Vol. 51, 2016, pp. 85-94.

² See: I.V. Prokofiev, "Toplivno-energeticheskii kompleks," in: *Gruzia: problemy i perspektivy razvitiia*, in two vols., Vol. 1, ed. by E.M. Kozhokin, Russian Institute for Strategic Studies, Moscow, 2001, pp. 38-39.

country for oil and gas exports to the West.³ But Erevan's continued close political and economic relations with Russia and the conflict with Azerbaijan finally led to Armenia's exclusion from future pipeline projects, especially since Turkey and Azerbaijan were categorically against the use of Armenian territory as this implied, among other things, routes through Nagorno-Karabakh.⁴ Finally, there was the Turkish factor. Turkey, Azerbaijan's nearest neighbor, was an attractive potential buyer of Azerbaijani natural gas.⁵ The coinciding interests of Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Western states, including the U.S., which did not want the future oil and gas flows to pass through Russian territory, led to the development and implementation of pipeline projects such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE or Southern Caucasus) gas pipeline. They have had a great impact on Azerbaijan's energy policy, fueling interest in a further increase in oil and gas production.⁶ At the same time, the creation of new energy infrastructure has done nothing to normalize relations between the South Caucasian countries.

The Energy Strategy of Azerbaijan

After the breakup of the U.S.S.R., Azerbaijan was able to pursue its own foreign policy, particularly to develop an energy strategy based on its own national interests.⁷ In the early 1990s, the country's leaders pinned their hopes on oil production. The establishment of the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) in September 1992 was followed by the development, under the direction of President Heydar Aliyev, of a national oil strategy⁸ that provided for an increase in oil production and oil exports to the European market. In the context of this approach, special mention was made of the need for cooperation with major Western oil companies, because Azerbaijan had no industrial base for offshore oil production. In implementing this oil strategy, the republic's authorities sought to achieve key objectives such as strengthening Azerbaijan's position in the South Caucasian region, resolving the Karabakh conflict, developing the economy, and finding a place for the country in the global oil market.

The Western countries in turn showed a greater interest in Azerbaijan as an additional source of raw materials and an alternative to Russian supplies. The West was also interested in Azerbaijan's transit potential for the transportation of energy resources from Central Asia to Europe bypassing Russia. The Western approach was reflected in the assessments of Zbigniew Brzezinski, who wrote that Azerbaijan's location makes it the region's "geopolitical pivot," describing it as "the vitally important 'cork' controlling access to the 'bottle' that contains the riches of the Caspian Sea basin and Central Asia."⁹

³ See: V.P. Vasyutovich, "Mesto Armenii v geopolitike SShA," in: *Armenia: problemy nezavisimogo razvitiia*, ed. by E.M. Kozhokin, Russian Institute for Strategic Studies, Moscow, 1998, pp. 370-371.

⁴ See: S.S. Zhiltsov, I.S. Zonn, A.M. Ushkov, *Geopolitika Kaspiiskogo regiona*, Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, Moscow, 2003, p. 123.

⁵ See: A.A. Kurtov, "Kaspiiski spor: otnosheniia Azerbaidzhana s Turkmenistanom," in: *Nezavisimi Azerbaidzhan: novye oriyentiry*, in two vols., Vol. 2, ed. by E.M. Kozhokin, Russian Institute for Strategic Studies, Moscow, 2001, pp. 76-77.

⁶ See: S.S. Zhiltsov, I.S. Zonn, *Kaspiiskaia truboprovodnaia geopolitika. Sostoianie i realizatsiia*, Vostok-Zapad, Moscow, 2011, 317 pp.

⁷ See: S. Zhiltsov, D. Slisovskiy, N. Shulenina, E. Bazhanov, "Azerbaijan's Energy Policy: Results, Problems, Prospects," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 18, Issue 4, 2017, p. 20.

⁸ See: "Azərbaycanın neft strategiyası (The Oil Strategy of Azerbaijan)," Heydər Əliyev İrsini Araşdırma Mərkəzi (Heydar Aliyev Heritage Research Center), available at [<http://aliyevheritage.org/az/oilstrategy.html>], 28 December, 2018.

⁹ Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Washington, D.C., 1997, p. 129.

Long negotiations between Azerbaijan and 12 large oil companies led to the signing on 20 September, 1994, of a production sharing agreement for the development of three oil fields: Azeri, Chirag, and Gunashli. The agreement, which became known as “the contract of the century,” determined the role of the oil factor in Azerbaijan’s foreign policy. The Baku authorities came to regard oil as a foreign policy tool and an instrument for improving the country’s economic position. After the signing of the agreement, the leaders of Azerbaijan expected an increase in oil production and implementation of pipeline projects. But the lack of information on construction schedules for the new pipelines induced them to sign a contract with Russia on the transportation of Azerbaijani oil through the Baku-Novorossiysk pipeline.¹⁰ The document was signed in January 1996. Simultaneously, Azerbaijan was looking for alternative export routes. As a result, in March 1996 Azerbaijan signed an agreement with Georgia on the transportation of Azerbaijani oil through a pipeline that would run from Baku through Tbilisi to the Supsa terminal in Georgia. The Baku-Supsa pipeline, commissioned in 1999, was the first step in diversifying transportation routes for Azerbaijani oil. This enabled the republic to increase budget revenues. It also established an extra-budgetary fund, the State Oil Fund of Azerbaijan (SOFAZ), to accumulate part of the oil revenues.¹¹ Subsequently, in November 1999, Azerbaijan signed an intergovernmental agreement with Turkey and Georgia on the construction of another pipeline, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline. Construction began in April 2003, and the Azerbaijani section of the pipeline was already inaugurated at the Sangachal terminal in May 2005;¹² the whole 1,776-kilometer-long BTC pipeline was put into operation in July 2006.

From a geopolitical perspective, the main purpose of this pipeline project, which was the result of joint efforts by the United States and the European Union, was to create a route for transporting oil from the Caspian region to the world market independently of Russia, thus reducing Russian influence. Owing to the pipeline, Azerbaijan has diversified its oil transportation routes. Allied relations with Turkey, which opposes a union of Russia, Armenia, and Iran,¹³ are also of great importance to Azerbaijan.

The BTC’s capacity is 50m tons of oil per year (1 million barrels per day). However, it has been operating below capacity. In 2016, the BTC transported only 28.8m tons of Azerbaijani oil, because oil production in the country has been steadily declining since 2011 (see Fig. 1).

In 2017, oil production totaled 39.2m tons, down 5.2% from 2016. This trend continued in 2018 and, according to the International Monetary Fund, will continue in the future.¹⁴ The main reason is the depletion of oil reserves of the Azeri-Chirag-Gunashli fields. This situation has led to a decline in the economic efficiency of the BTC pipeline. As for the Western companies, their interest in the project and their investments have declined accordingly. Overall, Azerbaijan’s oil sector accounts for almost 60% of GDP, which makes its economy dependent on external demand and oil prices. The country’s vulnerability was confirmed by the global financial crisis of 2008-2009. As a result of a significant fall in demand and world oil prices, Azerbaijan recorded a sharp drop in foreign trade (see Fig. 2).

In the last decade as a whole, the volume of the country’s foreign trade decreased 2.6-fold, including exports 3.2-fold. Such a trend has been observed in recent years owing to the decline in world

¹⁰ See: S. Zhiltsov, D. Slisovskiy, N. Shulenina, E. Bazhanov, op. cit., p. 24.

¹¹ See: “Azerbaijan Republic: Selected Issues and Statistical Appendix,” IMF Country Report, May 2003, No. 3/130, p. 11.

¹² See: A. Guryev, *Geopoliticheskiy rakurs nefteprovoda Baku-Tbilisi-Dzheikhan*, Institute of the Middle East, 19 June, 2005, available at [<http://www.iimes.ru/rus/stat/2005/19-06-05.htm>], 27 August, 2018.

¹³ See: *V ozhidanii buri: Yuzhnyi Kavkaz*, ed. by K.V. Makiyenko, Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies (CAST), Moscow, 2018, 200 pp.

¹⁴ See: *Republic of Azerbaijan: 2016 Article IV Consultation—Press Release*; Staff Report; and Informational Annex, IMF Country Report, No. 16/296, September 2016, p. 4.

Figure 1

Azerbaijan: Oil Production in 2007-2017
(in thousands of barrels per day)

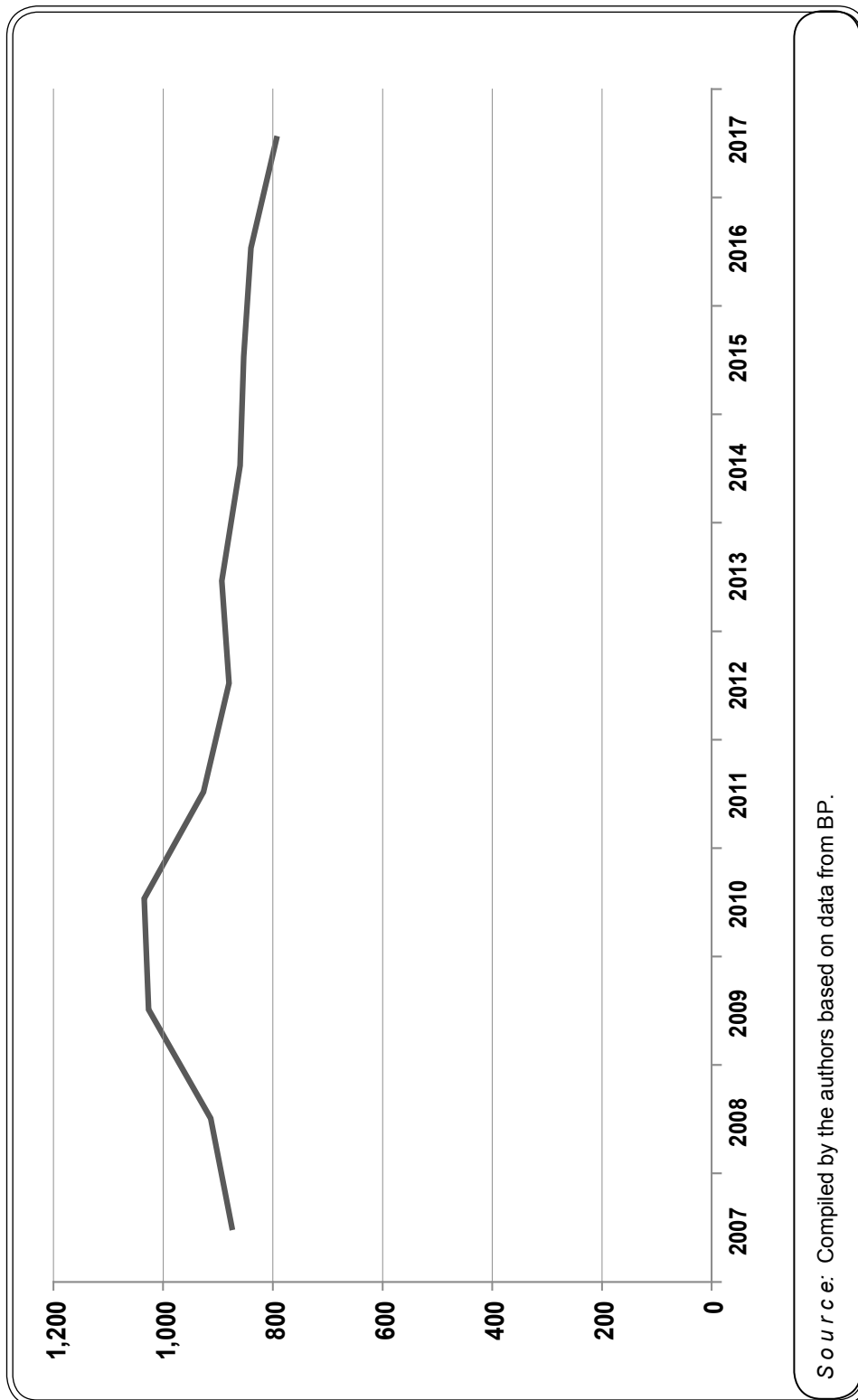
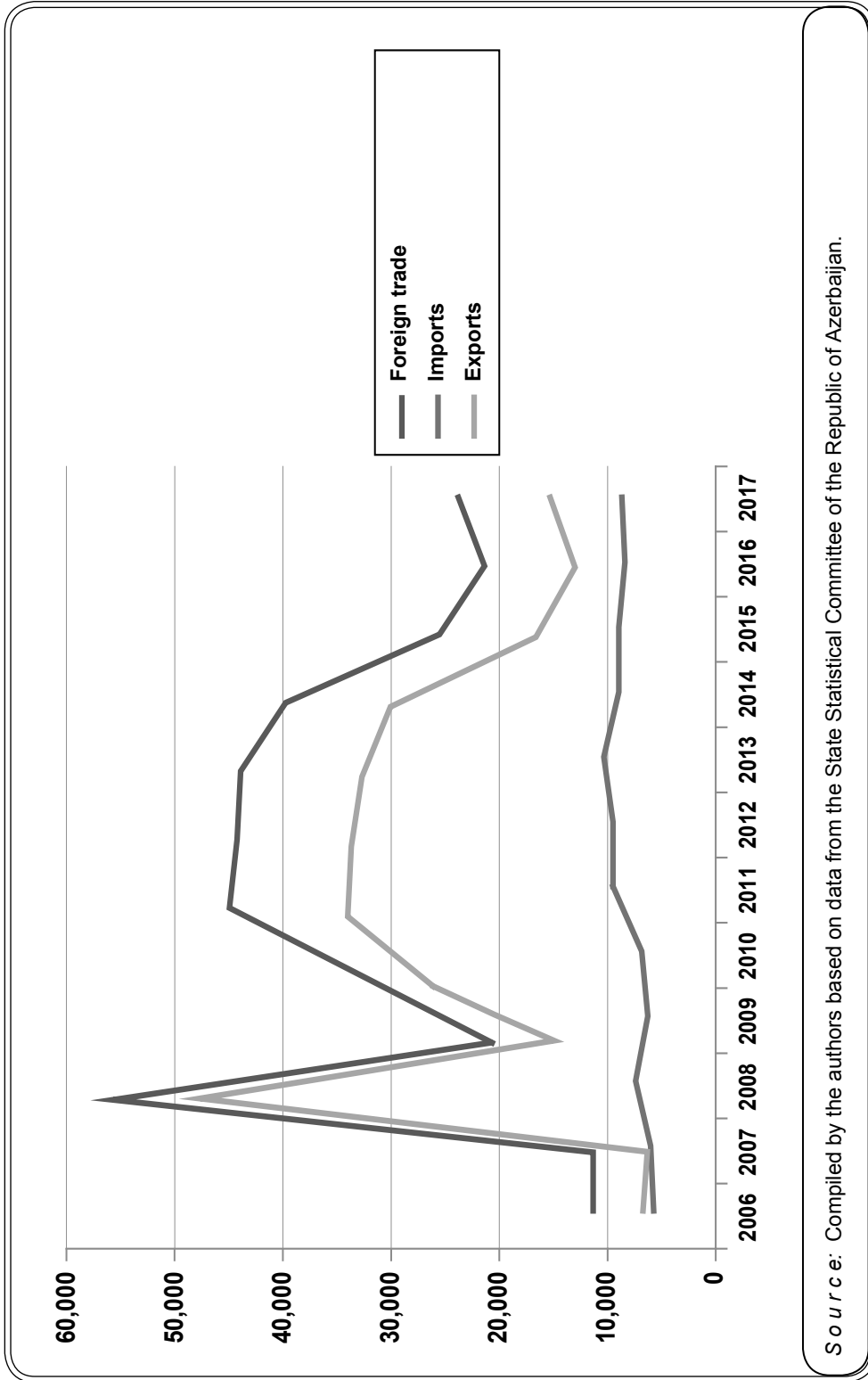


Figure 2

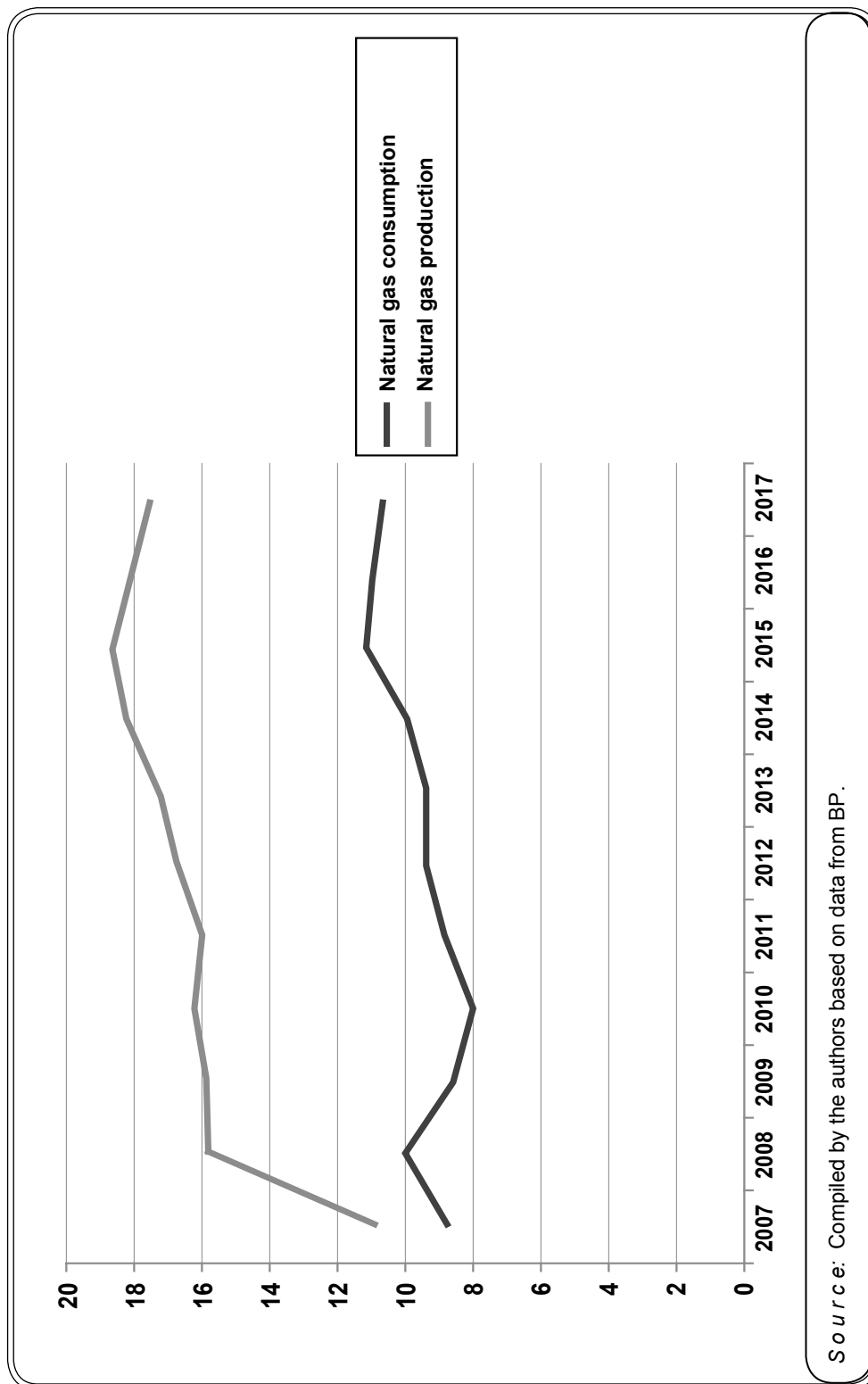
Azerbaijan: Foreign Trade in 2006-2017 (in millions of dollars)



Source: Compiled by the authors based on data from the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Figure 3

Azerbaijan: Natural Gas Production and Consumption in 2007-2017 (in billions of cubic meters)



Source: Compiled by the authors based on data from BP.

oil prices. Considering these factors, Azerbaijan has sought to diversify its economy so as to reduce its dependence on the oil sector while developing the non-oil sector.¹⁵ Special attention is being paid to renewable energy sources, including wind and solar power.

Another hydrocarbon raw material, natural gas, has become more important for Azerbaijan in the last decade.¹⁶ In 1999, following the discovery of large natural gas reserves in the Shah Deniz field, Azerbaijan's energy policy began to change.¹⁷ As a result, by 2007 the country became fully self-sufficient in natural gas, stopped importing it, and turned into an exporter of this hydrocarbon. But growing domestic demand (see Fig. 3) has induced Azerbaijan to start importing small amounts of gas since 2015, first from Russia and then from Turkmenistan and Iran.¹⁸ In 2016, according to BP, Azerbaijan's proved reserves of gas totaled 1.3 trillion cubic meters (about 0.7% of global reserves).¹⁹ Natural gas now plays a key role in the country's economy, accounting for about two-thirds of its total domestic energy consumption. About half of Azerbaijan's natural gas consumption is used for power generation.²⁰

Along with resolving the problem of meeting domestic demand, Azerbaijan has also been looking for ways to strengthen its position in the natural gas market. In order to achieve this goal, the Azerbaijani authorities have sought to create infrastructure for gas exports. The Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline, whose construction began at the end of 2002 with the support of Western countries and Turkey, was put into operation in July 2007. This 970-kilometer-long pipeline, built at a cost of \$1 billion, has a capacity of 20 bcm of gas per year. But until 2017 the pipeline transported an average of 5-6 bcm per year. Most of this gas goes to Turkey, and 1.5 bcm per year, to Georgia.

The BTE gas pipeline was the second regional project that bypassed Russia and Iran. It has allowed Azerbaijan to create conditions for economic development and to become a gas exporter. In addition, the Baku authorities are looking to enter the European market, although Azerbaijan's main problem is resource depletion. However that may be, the implementation of these projects has reduced Russian influence on Azerbaijan's energy sector by giving Baku direct access to international energy markets bypassing Russia.²¹

The Role of Turkey in Implementing the Southern Energy Corridor

The key role in the implementation of energy projects in the Southern Caucasus belongs to Turkey. Ankara has not only achieved the construction of new pipelines, but has also been able to pursue a policy of balancing between Russia and Western countries. Simultaneously, Ankara has managed to establish control over hydrocarbon resources coming from Russia—Blue Stream gas

¹⁵ See: N. Vidadili, E. Suleymanov, C. Mahmudlu, "Transition to Renewable Energy and Sustainable Energy Development in Azerbaijan," *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews*, Vol. 80 (C), 2017, p. 1153.

¹⁶ See: I. Ibragimov, *Strategiia effektivnogo vliianiia: vneshniaia politika, "myagkaia sila" i energeticheskaia diplomatiia Azerbaidzhana v XXI veke*, Moscow, 2016, p. 47.

¹⁷ 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, p. 73.

¹⁸ See: S. Pirani, *Let's Not Exaggerate: Southern Gas Corridor Prospects to 2030* // The Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, July 2018, p. 8.

¹⁹ See: *BP Statistical Review of World Energy*, June 2018, 67th edition, p. 26.

²⁰ See: *Country Analysis Brief: Azerbaijan*, U.S. Energy Information Administration, 22 June, 2016, p. 8.

²¹ See: *Uglubleniye Rossiisko-Turetskikh otnoshenii: doklad*, ed. by A.V. Kortunov, E. Ershen, Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), Moscow, 2018, 128 pp.

pipeline (2002) and TurkStream gas pipeline (to be put into operation by 2020)—and from Azerbaijan: BTC (2006) and BTE (2007). By supporting the implementation of these pipeline projects, Turkey has gained control over the “energy valve” that allows it to regulate oil and gas supplies to European countries.

In recent years, Ankara has taken the lead from Western countries that had the greatest influence on the development of energy projects in the Southern Caucasus. A key factor here was the failure of the Nabucco gas pipeline project, initiated by the EU in 2002. The Nabucco pipeline was to supply natural gas from the Caspian region to the European market. The project was associated with the long-term goals of European and U.S. policy designed to limit Russian influence in Europe. But owing to insufficient gas supply for Nabucco, Turkey and Azerbaijan began to lose interest in the project and revised their energy policy. The EU’s attempts in late 2012 and early 2013 to maintain interest in the project by developing a shorter route (Nabucco West) failed to produce the desired result. The new version of the project encountered the same difficulties as Nabucco: lack of available gas supply. Caspian hydrocarbons from Turkmenistan could not be supplied through the new pipeline because of poor prospects for the construction of a Trans-Caspian gas pipeline.²² As a result, Azerbaijan, a long-standing supporter of Nabucco, adjusted its policy of outright support for the European pipeline project and proposed, jointly with Turkey, its own energy projects as part of the Southern Gas Corridor, which was expected to increase Azerbaijani gas exports to the European market.

The Southern Gas Corridor project provides for the construction of a system consisting of the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP) and the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP), with the whole system to be completed after 2019. The main supply source for these pipelines is the Shah Deniz gas field, which will supply 16 bcm of gas per year, including 6 bcm to Turkey and 10 bcm to the European market. The Trans-Anatolian pipeline, proposed by Azerbaijan and Turkey, is to be connected to the already operational Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipeline²³ so that Azerbaijani gas can be supplied to Turkey’s western borders. Overall, TANAP should be seen as a local pipeline project of interest primarily to Azerbaijan and Turkey.

In addition, the consortium for the development of Azerbaijan’s Shah Deniz gas condensate field took a decision in June 2013 to choose the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline as the main route for supplying gas to Europe. This pipeline will run through Greece and Albania, cross the Adriatic Sea, and come ashore in Italy. If the TAP project is implemented, it will supply up to 10 bcm of gas per year to Europe after 2019-2020.

For some European countries, primarily those located in Southern Europe, gas supplies from Azerbaijan can play a noticeable role. On the whole, however, Azerbaijani gas will have no serious impact on the European gas market, which may soon be getting significant amounts of liquefied natural gas (LNG) and shale gas.

In contrast to Nabucco, which provided for the supply of Caspian gas to the main gas-consuming countries, TAP is designed to transport gas to Greece and Italy, where gas consumption is lower. Since the terminals for Azerbaijani gas exports are to be located in countries that have no particular need to diversify energy supplies,²⁴ it is difficult to talk about Caspian gas gaining entry to the European market. For the supply of gas to other European countries, it is necessary to build new connecting pipelines, which requires additional financing and takes time.

²² See: I.S. Zonn, S.S. Zhiltsov, A.V. Semenov, “Export of Hydrocarbons from Turkmenistan: Results and Perspectives,” in: *The Handbook of Environmental Chemistry*, Vol. 51, pp. 125-137.

²³ See: A. Cohen, “Caspian Gas, TANAP and TAP in Europe’s Energy Security,” Istituto Affari Internazionali—IAI Working papers, 14 April, 2014, 17 pp.

²⁴ See: F. Umbach, S. Raszewski, *Strategic Perspectives for Bilateral Energy Cooperation between the EU and Kazakhstan: Geo-Economic and Geopolitical Dimensions in Competition with Russia and China’s Central Asia Policies*, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2016, 70 pp.

In spite of this, a geopolitical battle has unfolded around the TurkStream project and TAP, which is a gateway for Azerbaijani gas exports to the European countries. The Southern Gas Corridor is positioned as an alternative to the TurkStream gas pipeline project being implemented by Russia and Turkey. Such comparisons do not reflect the actual situation, the fact that Russian gas will remain the major source of gas supply to the EU in the coming decade. Additional amounts of gas coming from Azerbaijan will provide new opportunities for European countries to export hydrocarbons and will have an effect on price negotiations with Russia. But a real influence on the European gas market and Russian policy can be exerted by additional amounts of Azerbaijani gas only much later. In this context, it is incorrect to contrast TurkStream and the Azerbaijani-Turkish projects. Their implementation is caused by different political circumstances and depends on the availability of natural gas reserves.

The Energy Policy of Georgia

The need for an active energy policy in Georgia is due to a domestic shortage of fuel and energy resources. Although foreign companies are actively engaged in oil and gas exploration in the country, there are no data on large reserves.²⁵ According to the National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat), natural gas production in 2017 was only 8.5 million cubic meters, while gas imports reached 2.3 bcm.²⁶ In 2017, Georgia imported 65.8% more gas than in 2013. Forecasts for the next decade published by the Georgian Oil and Gas Corporation show that domestic demand for gas will continue to grow,²⁷ just as gas imports (see Fig. 4).

A specific feature of energy demand in Georgia is its seasonal nature. During the winter months, demand for fuel is several times higher (see Fig. 5).

The share of natural gas in the country's total energy balance is about 40%. Back in the summer of 2004, Georgia and Iran agreed in principle on the supply of Iranian natural gas to Georgia via Azerbaijan. But anti-Iranian sanctions and an increase in the share of Azerbaijani gas in the Georgian market brought cooperation between Georgia and Iran in the sphere of gas transportation projects to an end.²⁸ Since 2008, after the worsening of Russian-Georgian relations and the cessation of Russian gas supplies to Georgia, Azerbaijan has become the country's main partner in this area. In 2017, Russia still accounted for 10% of gas supplied to Georgia,²⁹ but since 2018 Georgia has been buying natural gas only from Azerbaijan.

Dependence on imports of Azerbaijani gas raises the question of diversification of hydrocarbon supply sources. Despite close economic and political relations with Azerbaijan, energy dependence on gas imports from that country is a potential threat to Georgia's national security.

²⁵ See: I.S. Zonn, S.S. Zhiltsov, "Oil and Gas Production in the Black Sea Shelf," in: *The Handbook of Environmental Chemistry*, Vol. 51, pp. 51-65.

²⁶ See: *Energy Balance of Georgia 2017*, National Statistics Office of Georgia, available at [http://geostat.ge/?action=page&&p_id=2916&lang=eng], 3 January, 2019.

²⁷ See: *Ten-Year Development Plan for Georgian Gas Transmission Network 2018-2027*, Georgian Oil and Gas Corporation, October 2017, p. 19.

²⁸ See: V.S. Davtian, "Rol energeticheskikh kompanii na Yuzhnom Kavkaze" in: *Postsovetskoe prostranstvo: rol vneshnego faktora*, Collected articles, ed. by A.B. Krylov, A.V. Kuznetsov, G.I. Chufirin, IMEMO RAN, Moscow, 2018, pp. 215-225.

²⁹ See: E.M. Kuzmina, "Rossiisko-Gruzinski dialog v deistvii," in: *Rossia-Gruzia. Otnosheniia: energetika, ekonomika, bezopasnost, geopolitika, migratsiia i kul'tura*, ed. by N. Tsikhistavi-Khuchishvili, I.N. Timofeyev, M. Areshidze, T.A. Makhmutov, Damani, Tbilisi, 2018, pp. 24-32.

Figure 4

Georgia: Natural Gas Imports in 2013-2017 (in billions of cubic meters)

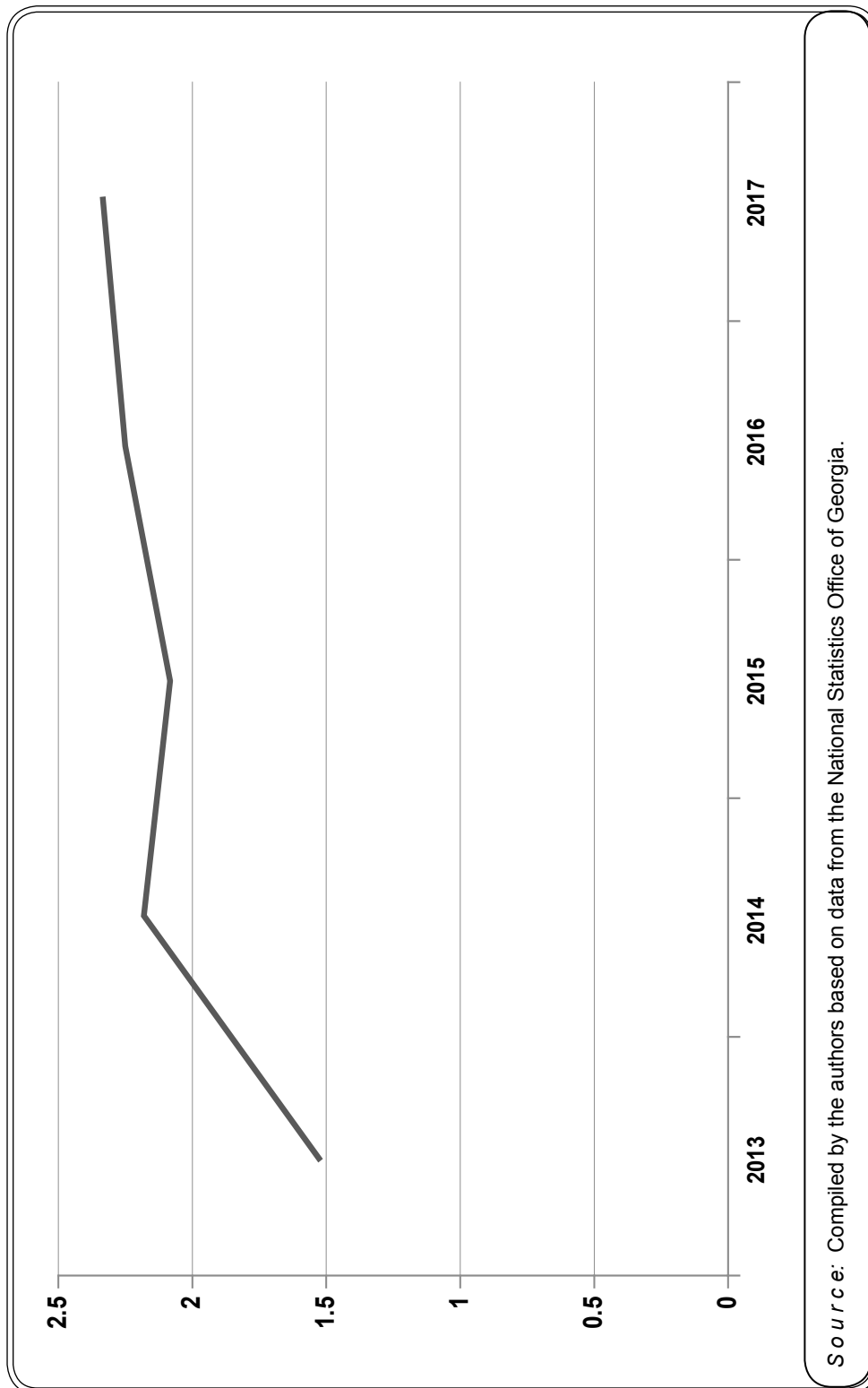
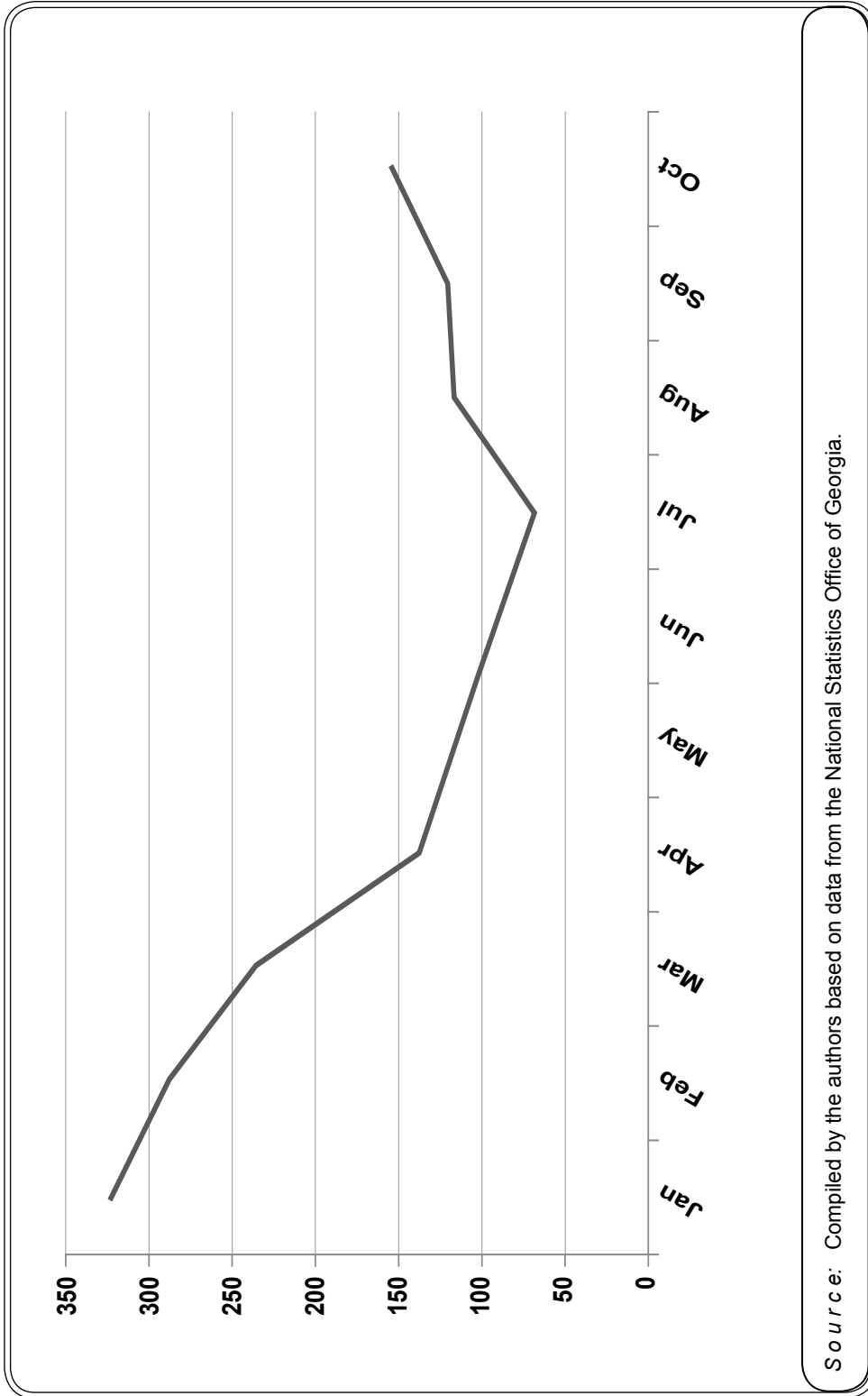


Figure 5

Georgia: Natural Gas Imports in January-October 2018 (in millions of cubic meters)



Source: Compiled by the authors based on data from the National Statistics Office of Georgia.

The situation in the Georgian oil sector is similar. Oil has long been produced in Georgia, albeit in insignificant amounts.³⁰ According to the National Statistics Office of Georgia, oil production in the country in 2017 was only 32 thousand tons. Georgian imports of crude oil are also insignificant (see Table 1), while imports of oil products have an important place in its energy sector and keep increasing (see Table 2). The main supplier of oil and oil products to Georgia is Azerbaijan. A strategic document of the Ministry of Energy of Georgia states: “For improving national energy security, one of the main directions is diversification of supply sources and routes for oil, natural gas and electricity; efficient utilization of local energy potential; and if necessary, creation of strategic minimum reserves for oil and/or oil products.”³¹

Table 1

**Georgia:
Production and Import of Crude Oil in 2013-2017
(in thousands of tons)**

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Production	47.9	43.3	40.2	39.1	32
Import	—	10.3	133.3	43.3	59.6

Source: Compiled by the authors based on data from the National Statistics Office of Georgia.

Table 2

**Georgia:
Production and Import of Oil Products in 2013-2017
(in thousands of tons)**

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Production	—	—	—	—	—
Import	1,065.4	1,152.2	1,347.2	1,526.6	1,440.8

Source: Compiled by the authors based on data from the National Statistics Office of Georgia.

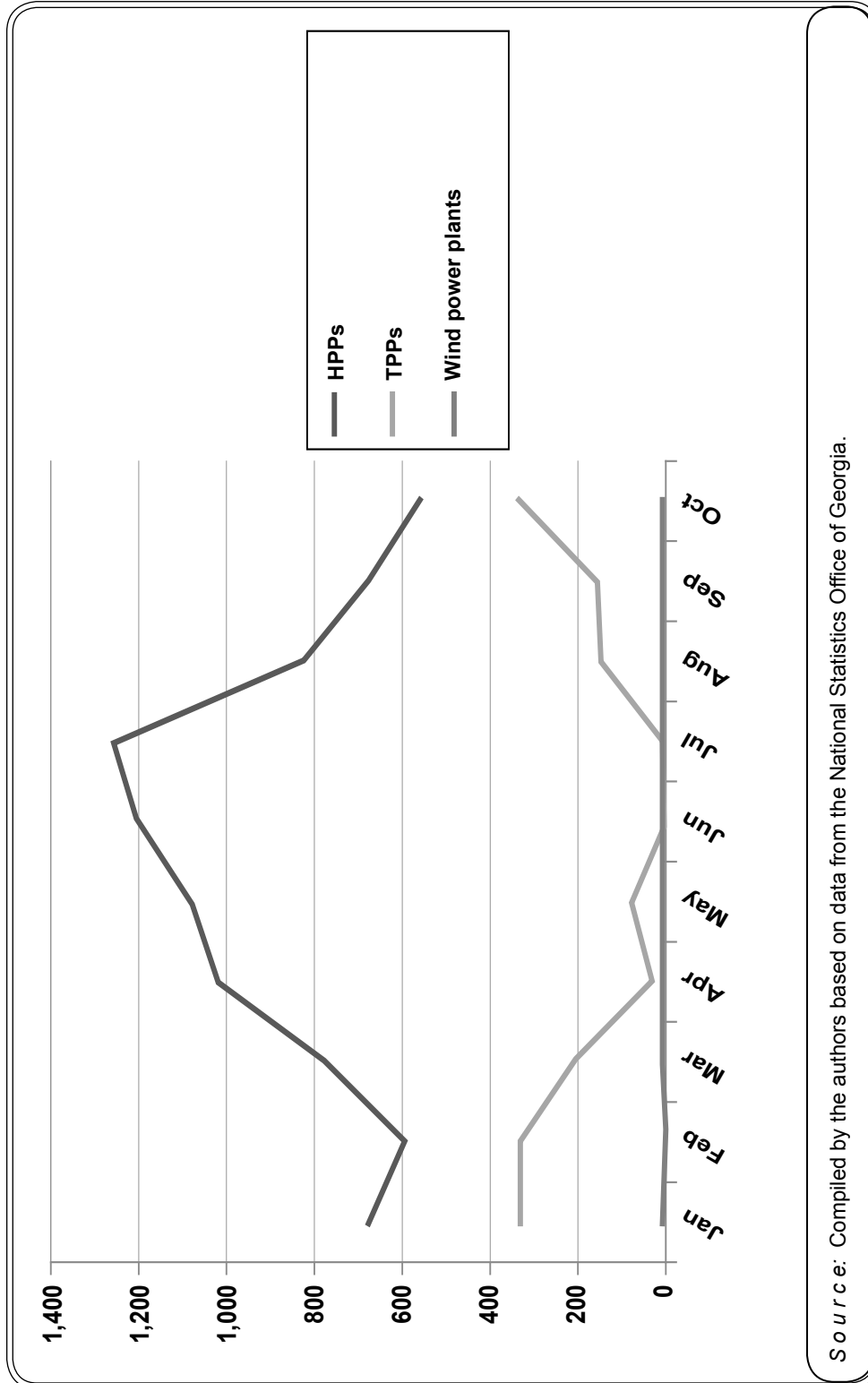
Despite the domestic shortage of fuel and energy resources in Georgia, foreign companies continue to show a strong interest in that country. This is due to Georgia’s geostrategic position, which is of particular importance given the continuation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In addition, Georgia is a transit country in regional energy projects. This transit corridor is an attractive route for transporting hydrocarbons from Azerbaijan and eventually from Central Asia to international markets. It is used to transport hydrocarbons by pipeline, rail, and sea through Georgian seaports. Today, there are two energy transit corridors running through Georgia: East-West and North-South. Within the framework of the East-West transit corridor, Georgia is involved in pipeline projects such as Baku-Supsa, Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan, and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum. They have enhanced Georgia’s regional importance as a transit country, ensuring close cooperation with Turkey and Azerbaijan. Geor-

³⁰ See: “Ashot Egiazarian: Rol prirodnogo gaza v energetike Gruzii (spravka),” REGNUM News Agency, 25 October, 2006, available at [<http://regnum.ru/news/728152.html>], 3 January, 2019.

³¹ *Main Directions of the State Policy in Energy Sector of Georgia*, Ministry of Energy of Georgia, p. 2, available at [http://www.energy.gov.ge/ministry.php?id_pages=12&lang=eng], 4 January, 2019.

Figure 6

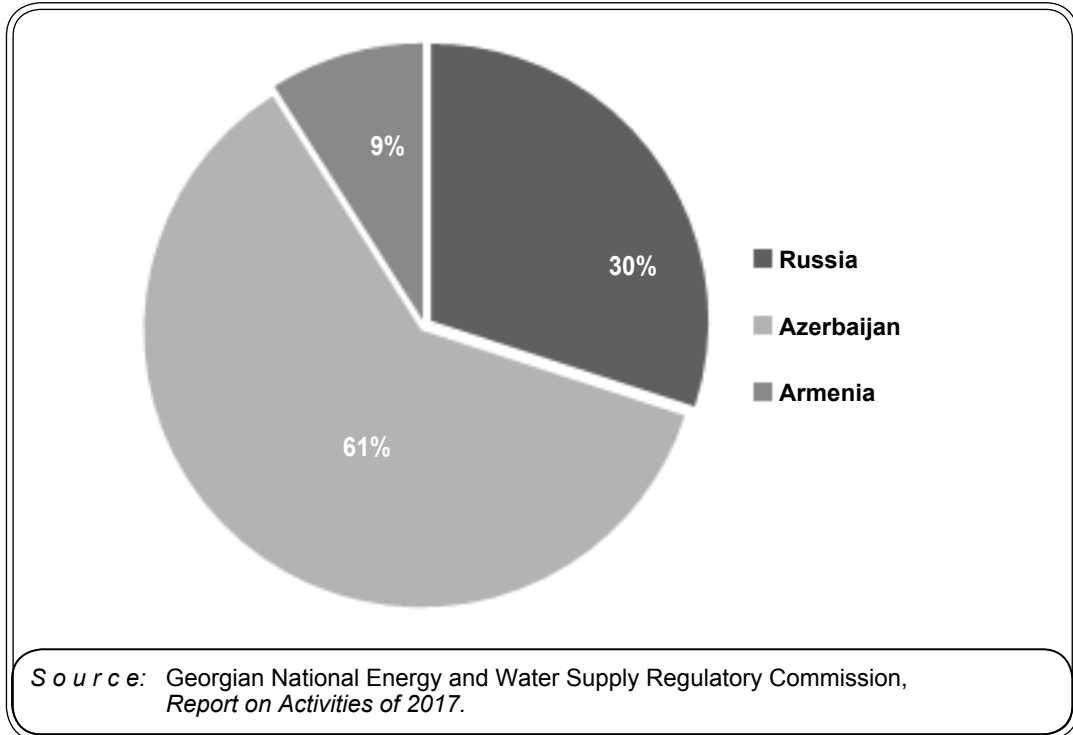
Georgia: Electricity Generation in January-October 2018 (GWh)



Source: Compiled by the authors based on data from the National Statistics Office of Georgia.

Figure 7

Georgia: Electricity Imports in 2017



Georgia sees its participation in these projects as a step towards integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. Its authorities also support the implementation of TANAP, which will increase foreign investment inflows and strengthen Georgia's role as a transit country.

The North-South transit corridor includes the North Caucasus-South Caucasus gas pipeline, which ensures the transit of Russian gas to Armenia. Using its geopolitical location, Georgia seeks to become a logistics hub and a connecting link between East and West, North and South. Georgia's energy policy is designed to deepen the country's involvement in energy transportation projects of regional and international importance. Its socioeconomic development strategy, *Georgia 2000*, emphasizes that the country's infrastructure is still not sufficiently developed to ensure maximum use of its transit potential.³²

In order to reduce dependence on imported energy resources and enhance energy security, Georgia uses hydro power, wind power, solar energy, biomass, and geothermal power. Their development is supported by domestic and foreign investment, as well as R&D programs. Georgia's energy policy is aimed at developing renewable energy sources. In 2007-2017, domestic electricity consumption in Georgia increased by an average of 4.4% per year.³³ Electricity in the country is mainly generated by hydroelectric power plants (HPPs) and thermal power plants (TPPs) (see Fig. 6).

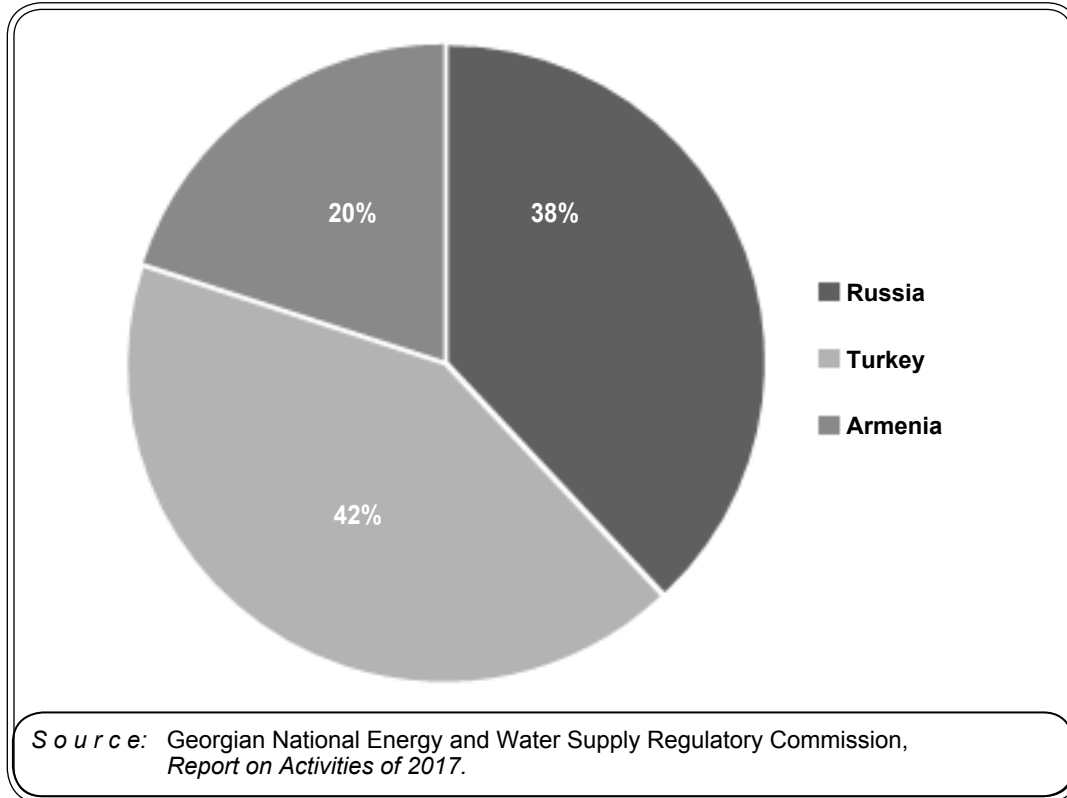
Today, the country has 21 licensed and 53 small, run-of-the-river HPPs that do not require a license. The largest source of power generation is the Enguri HPP, which accounts for about a third

³² See: *Social-Economic Development Strategy of Georgia "GEORGIA 2020"*, Government of Georgia, 2015, p. 31.

³³ See: *Georgian National Energy and Water Supply Regulatory Commission. Report on Activities of 2017*, p. 10.

Figure 8

Georgia: Electricity Exports in 2017



of all electricity generated in the country. Enguri HPP and Vardnili HPP have large dams and regulating reservoirs.³⁴ In 2017, HPPs generated 80.4% of the total amount of electricity produced in the country. The share generated by TPPs in 2016-2017 was 18.8%, while the wind power plant commissioned in late 2016 contributed 0.8%. Since seasonality is a specific feature of the energy sector, domestic demand for electricity increases in the autumn and winter months, thus making it necessary to import electricity. In 2017, 30% of Georgian electricity imports came from Russia, 61% from Azerbaijan, and 9% from Armenia (see Fig. 7).

In the second half of the spring and summer period, abundant water resources make it possible to meet domestic demand for electricity and to export its surplus. Electricity exports go to Turkey (42% of the total), Russia (38%), and Armenia (20%) (see Fig. 8).

Georgia's energy strategy is designed to increase total hydropower capacity so as to meet domestic electricity demand and ensure exports to neighboring countries. The strategy's key purpose is to turn Georgia into a regional hub for the generation and sale of clean energy.

According to the *Georgia 2020* strategy, the main goal of government policy in the energy sector is to reduce energy imports and increase energy independence while attracting foreign investment for the development of the energy sector.³⁵ But the Georgian authorities have so far been unable to

³⁴ See: *Electricity Sector: Overview*, Business Association of Georgia, June 2016, p. 1.

³⁵ See: *Social-Economic Development Strategy of Georgia "GEORGIA 2020"*, p. 33.

create a robust energy system. According to the Energy Trilemma Index, which is published annually by the World Energy Council and ranks countries' energy performance on three dimensions (energy security, energy equity, and environmental sustainability), in 2018 Georgia ranked 69th, Armenia 43rd, Azerbaijan 27th, Turkey 44th, and Russia 59th.³⁶

The Energy Security of Armenia

In the early 1990s, Western countries saw Armenia as a convenient transit corridor for the transportation of energy resources from the Caspian basin to the world market. But because of the unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Armenia was excluded from regional energy transportation projects. This was also due to Armenia's close economic and political ties with Russia. In addition, Western countries were interested in implementing pipeline projects that would bypass Russia in order to reduce its influence in the region. As a result, Armenia was isolated from new energy sources, because it was not involved in projects such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline, and the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway. This situation threatened Armenia's energy security. Azerbaijan's continuing efforts to push the country out of regional infrastructure programs were seen in Armenia as an immediate threat.³⁷ That was how Azerbaijan tried to pressure the Armenian side into making concessions in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.³⁸

The main energy sources traditionally used in Armenia are oil products, natural gas, nuclear energy, hydroelectric power, and coal. Since hydrocarbon resources are scarce, Armenia depends on their import. Russian gas is supplied through the Vladikavkaz-Tbilisi-Erevan gas transportation system with a capacity of 4.38 bcm per year. A monopoly right to supply Russian gas belongs to Gazprom Armenia, a 100% subsidiary of Gazprom.³⁹ In 2016, gas imports from Russia totaled 1.86 bcm.

Armenia also imports natural gas from Iran through the Iran-Armenia gas transportation system with a capacity of 2.3 bcm per year. In exchange for gas supplies, Armenia exports electricity to Iran.⁴⁰

Although Armenia has no oil and gas reserves, the country manages to meet 30% of its energy requirements. It produces nuclear and hydroelectric power. The nuclear power industry plays a key role in national energy supply, meeting almost a third of domestic energy demand. The decision to build a nuclear power plant (NPP) in Armenia was taken back in Soviet times. The Armenian NPP consists of two earthquake-resistant units, activated in 1976 and 1980, respectively. In 1989, after the 1988 Spitak earthquake, the NPP was shut down. But during the economic crisis that followed the breakup of the U.S.S.R., the Armenian government decided to reopen the plant. As a result, the second unit was restarted in 1995.

An action plan for 2014-2020 approved by the Armenian government provides for an extension of the lifetime of the NPP's operating unit by 10 years and for the construction of a new (1,000 MWe)

³⁶ See: *World Energy Trilemma Index 2018*, World Energy Council, pp. 15-16.

³⁷ See: D. Gasparian, "Rol rossiisko-armianskogo partnerstva v sfere obespecheniia energeticheskoi bezopasnosti Respubliki Armenia," *Istoriia, sotsiologiia, politologiia*, 2008, p. 83.

³⁸ See: Prezident Ilkham Aliyev: My izolirovali Armeniiu or vseh regionalnykh proyektov, 1News.az, 10 July, 2018, available at [<http://www.1news.az/news/sostoyalos-zasedanie-kabineta-ministrov-azerbaydzhana>], 27 December, 2018.

³⁹ See: E.A. Visulkina, G.N. Rozhkov, I.P. Azyukov, "Sotorudnichestvo stran YeAES v energeticheskoi sfere," *All-Russia Scientific Conference "Ensuring National Security in the Context of Eurasian Integration"*, 15 March, 2017, p. 39.

⁴⁰ See: *Armenia: Country Overview*, International Energy Agency, available at [<http://www.eu4energy.iea.org/countries/Armenia>], 24 January, 2018.

unit on the plant's premises. The new unit is to be put into operation in 2026.⁴¹ This project is a top priority of Armenia's energy strategy, with Russia and other investors taking part in its implementation.⁴²

Two thermal power plants, Erevan TPP and Hrazdan TPP, are of particular importance in Armenia's energy supply. The generating unit of the Erevan TPP with a capacity of 272 MW of electricity was put into operation in 2010. Electricity generated by hydropower plants met 6.5% of total demand in 2016. The largest hydropower systems are the Vorotan and Sevan-Hrazdan cascades, which include 10 HPPs. Under Armenia's energy strategy, there are plans to build several new HPPs, as well as to develop renewable energy resources.

Conclusion

The participation of Azerbaijan and Georgia in energy projects initiated by non-regional states has had a positive effect on their economy, helped to attract foreign investment, and provided additional opportunities for expanding political relations with Euro-Atlantic structures. At the same time, Armenia's exclusion from projects involving exports of Caspian hydrocarbons to external markets has had a negative impact on the development of the Southern Caucasus without bringing the countries of the region closer to a settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Moreover, the new pipeline projects have contributed to the establishment of new economic relations both within the region and with non-regional countries.

Competition between Russia, Turkey, Iran, and Western countries for the right to control exports of hydrocarbons produced in the region continues in the Southern Caucasus. In the last decade, significant successes in this area have been achieved by Turkey, which has not only "opened the door" for Azerbaijani hydrocarbons, but has also created a Turkish-Azerbaijani tandem in the energy sector. While implementing its energy policy, Turkey has actively promoted various economic projects and has created mechanisms for influencing the political situation in Azerbaijan and Georgia, since it views the territory of these countries as a strategic bridgehead for advancing its own interests.

All in all, one can say that energy infrastructure projects in the Southern Caucasus have been implemented in the interests of third countries. From a geopolitical perspective, the greatest beneficiary here is the United States, which has regarded new hydrocarbon export routes as a long-term objective ever since the 1990s. The successes of the European Union are less obvious, because the European countries have been unable to implement their ambitious Nabucco project and change the foreign policy course of Turkmenistan. Turkey's policy has been effective: it has managed to increase its influence in the Southern Caucasus through the construction of new pipelines. Turkish activity conflicts with the interests of Russia and Iran, which also have a strong interest in the Southern Caucasus. All the more so because in recent years Russia and Iran have continued their energy cooperation with the South Caucasian countries, protecting their own long-term interests in the region.

⁴¹ See: S.A. Gevorkian, O.S. Avagian, V.Z. Marukhian, A.A. Gevorkian, "Analiz programm razvitiia energeticheskoi sistemy Respubliki Armeni," *Vestnik NPUA. Elektrotekhnika, energetika*, No. 1, 2017, p. 22.

⁴² See: *Country Nuclear Power Profiles: Armenia (Updated 2018)*, IAEA, available at [<http://cnpp.iaea.org/countryprofiles/Armenia/Armenia.htm>].

THE GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE OF EURASIA UNDER THE PRESSURE OF CASPIAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN POWER PROJECTS

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ABSTRACT

In the last ten years, the geopolitical situation in the Caspian region and Central Asia has been changing rapidly under the pressure of several factors, the main of them being energy projects realized, in particular, by non-regional states. Oil and gas transportation routes have become a strong instrument of geopolitical impact on the Central Asian and Caspian countries. Through their active involvement, the non-regional states, namely, the U.S., China, and the EU countries, have rechanneled the flows of hydrocarbons and changed the Eurasian geopolitical landscape.

Having won this rivalry, China expanded the area of its geopolitical influence. The United States, which since the early 1990s has been working hard to turn the oil and gas flows away from Russia to the West came second. It changed the directions of Caspian hydrocarbon flows, while the greater part of Central Asian oil and gas is now moved to China.

Beijing has become the key partner of the Central Asian and Caspian countries; it determines the nature of their cooperation in the energy sphere and, to a great extent, their foreign policy priorities.

For geographical reasons, Central Asia and the Caspian are active on the regional energy market that comprises China, India and Russia. While the echo of the United States' "shale revolution" resounded all over the world and reached regional markets, the impact of Central Asian and Caspian fuels, extraction level and export routes is limited to Eurasia.

It is no secret that the new pipelines undermined Russia's monopoly on oil and gas import and transit from Central Asia and the Caspian region, and that the local states nevertheless remain dependent on the policy pursued by their neighbors. Russia, which has preserved its influence in the region, shares its role of a consumer and a transitory territory with China, Turkey and Iran. India may join them at a later time. This makes the Central Asian countries fully de-

pendent on the energy interests of these states, which do not hesitate to exploit the mechanism of price-formation and the volume of hydrocarbons bought to channel the policies of these countries.

The local pipelines did not extinguish the fire of geopolitical rivalry and did not quench the interest of Russia, the U.S., China and Turkey, Iran and India in local hydrocarbon resources: they were used in the past and are used today as a powerful instrument of foreign policies. Another spiral of geopolitical rivalry in this part of the Eurasian space is coming closer: new pipelines have been practically completed, potential projects to be realized in the next few decades have been identified, while the regional states want to extract and sell the steadily increasing volumes of their hydrocarbons.

KEYWORDS: *Central Asia, the Caspian Region, oil, gas, infrastructural geopolitics, Caspian Pipeline Consortium, Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline (TAPI).*

Introduction

The new geopolitical situation across the former Soviet space, which stirred up an interest in the newly independent states on the Caspian shores and in Central Asia and their hydrocarbons is steadily fanning the rivalry for export pipelines and export routes. The local countries, in their turn, intended to pour their future incomes into their economies¹ in general and geological prospecting for oil and gas in particular.²

In the majority of cases, however, pipelines presented geopolitical rather than technical or economic problems: the future of exports of hydrocarbon riches stirred up bitter rivalry among non-regional countries, first and foremost, Russia, China and the U.S.³

Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, two gas-richest countries, and Kazakhstan with its huge oil reserves attracted a lot of attention of international consortiums. Their interest was encouraged by the

¹ See: E.M. Kuzmina, "Modernizatsia ekonomiki prikaspiyskikh gosudarstv (na primere Kazakhstana)," *Problemy postsovetskogo prostranstva*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 2018, pp. 251-267, available at [<https://doi.org/10.24975/2313-8920-2018-5-3-251-267>].

² See: D. Bolekbaeva, I.F. Selivanova, "Osnovnye napravleniya vneshney politiki Kazakhstana (1991-2015)," in: *Vneshniaya politika nezavisimykh gosudarst*, Collection of articles, ed. by B.A. Shmelev, IE RAS, Moscow, 2015, p. 230.

³ See: Hu Bin, "Oil and Gas Cooperation between China and Central Asia in an Environment of Political and Resource Competition," *Pet. Sci.*, No. 11, 2014, pp. 596-605.

Caspian and Central Asian countries that wanted to earn enough money to intensify geological prospecting and start selling their hydrocarbons outside the region.

Infrastructural Politics

In the 1990s, a new “energy ellipse” concept was coined to describe the hydrocarbon resources of Central Asia and the Caspian.⁴ There was a lot of talk about the future directions of oil and gas pipelines; the local countries, fearing to remain in the cold, started thinking about alternative routes. The inevitable clash of interests developed into a fierce rivalry of associated pipeline projects, and with good reason, with the future of the entire region. The implemented projects positively affected the economic development of the Caspian and Central Asian countries and drew them into the sphere of interests of non-regional states. Assessments of the oil and gas reserves and their future extraction, likewise, strongly affected the foreign policy course of the region’s states and, therefore, the involvement of oil and gas companies.⁵

Russia, China and the United States, which relied on infrastructural projects as their most efficient instruments, figured prominently in post-Soviet Central Asia and the Caspian region. As a result, the region acquired the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline in 2006, the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) in 2001, the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum in 2007 and Turkmenistan-China pipeline in 2009 as visible results of the geopolitical rivalry among the big players. Each of them was persistently promoting its interests and spared no effort to engage all or at least some of the local countries in its infrastructure.⁶

Despite several attempts to bring the local pipelines together through the Trans-Caspian Energy Corridors, they do not form an integrated architecture: all new oil and gas pipelines are differently orientated and are, in fact, isolated systems. This is what geopolitical pluralism and the leading powers with different, or even opposing, foreign policy priorities have done to the region.⁷

The pipeline projects realized in Central Asia were a geopolitical compromise between Russia and China. Each country tried to arrive at the best possible position, from which it could realize its policy in the whirlpool of radical changes in the world after 2014.⁸

Hydrocarbons of Turkmenistan in the Center of Geopolitical Struggle

The up-and-coming TAPI (Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India) pipeline project is the best confirmation of continued geopolitical balance in Central Asia. Back in September 2015, Turkmenistan conducted a feasibility study and started engineering works on the track of the future

⁴ See: G. Kemp, *Energy Superbowl: Strategic Politics in the Persian Gulf and Caspian Basin*, Washington, 1997, p. 26.

⁵ See: S. Zhiltsov, “The Caspian Region at the Crossroads of Geopolitical Strategies,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 15, Issue 1, 2014, pp. 33-43.

⁶ See: N. Contessi, “Central Asia in Asia: Charting Growing Trans-Regional Linkages,” *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, No. 7, 2016, pp. 3-13.

⁷ See: P. Kubicek, “Energy Politics and Geopolitical Competition in the Caspian Basin,” *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, No. 4, 2013, pp. 171-180.

⁸ See: *Mirovaia politika v fokuse sovremenosti*, ed. by M.A. Neymark, Dashkov i Co., Moscow, 2019, 515 pp.

pipeline between the Galkynysh gas field (the world's second richest with 21.2 trillion cu m of gas) and the Afghan border. It will be 1,840 km long, with an annual capacity of 33 bcm. In December 2016, Turkmenistan completed its part of the pipeline and achieved a preliminary agreement with Afghanistan, expected to guarantee pipeline security. Despite the very obvious interests of all sides, the exact date of the project's completion has not yet been agreed upon. The talks with Afghanistan on the construction and protection of the future pipeline are still in the preliminary stage.

Turkmenistan expects that when completed, the pipeline will help it diversify its gas supplies to world markets, which explains its great interest in the project. So far, its export possibilities are very limited. In 2016, Russia and in 2017 Iran stopped buying Turkmenian hydrocarbons. In the last three years, Ashkhabad became practically totally dependent on China, which explains its pronounced interest in a pipeline to India. The above confirms that the Central Asian countries depend to a great extent on non-regional players.⁹ Today, Ashkhabad was left with China as the only consumer of its hydrocarbons that emerged in the last fifteen years.

The Energy “Bridge” for Caspian Hydrocarbons

While pushing forward the TAPI project, Turkmenistan is discussing possible oil and gas export to the European Union. In June 2015, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Turkey and the EU decided to set up a permanent workgroup to study all the possible options of bringing Turkmenian gas to Europe.¹⁰ The preliminary dates of gas deliveries were coordinated: the Iranian territory and the Trans-Caspian pipeline were discussed as possible variants. The latter might be pushed aside for an indifferent time: Turkmenistan does not have enough gas to move it to Europe, while the pipeline across the Caspian should fit the provisions of the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea adopted by the Fifth Summit of Heads of Caspian States that took place on 12 August, 2018, clarifying the future of the Caspian region.

As could be expected, the Convention elucidated the issues related to main pipelines laid on the seabed. Art 14 says, in particular: “The Parties may lay submarine cables and pipelines on the bed of the Caspian Sea. The Parties may lay trunk submarine pipelines on the bed of the Caspian Sea, on the condition that their projects comply with environmental standards and requirements embodied in the international agreements to which they are parties, including the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea and its relevant protocols.” This means that the pipeline issue should be discussed in the context of the Protocol on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context of the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea (Tehran Convention signed on 4 November, 2003). The Protocol was signed on 20 July, 2018 and confirmed the right of each of the Caspian states to take part in ecological studies carried out to clarify the impact of any of the intended projects on the Caspian environment. This means that each of the Caspian states has the right to assess the possible effects of the planned pipeline. In full conformity with the Protocol, international assessment will be required for large-diameter pipes used for oil and gas exports. The same article specifies: “Submarine cables

⁹ See: M.P. Amineh, W.H.J. Grijns-Graus, “The EU-Energy Security and Geopolitical Economy: The Persian Gulf, the Caspian Region and China,” *African and Asian Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1-2, 2018, pp. 145-187.

¹⁰ See: S.S. Zhiltsov, “EU Policy in Shaping the Pipeline Architecture in the Caspian Region,” *The Handbook of Environmental Chemistry*, Vol. 51, 2016, pp. 95-103.

and pipelines routes shall be determined by agreement with the Party the seabed sector of which is to be crossed by the cable or pipeline.”¹¹

This means that no breakthrough in laying cross-Caspian pipelines is anywhere in sight. Today, the Trans-Caspian pipeline has lost its importance. Expensive essential feasibility studies are required, which may take a lot of time.

On the whole, the Caspian states agreed to look at the Caspian Sea as a unique water basin. The seabed is divided into sectors, the same principle is applied to the lakes, whose coasts belong to several countries. Art 8 of the Convention says: “Delimitation of the Caspian Sea bed and subsoil into sectors shall be effected by agreement between States with adjacent and opposite coasts, with due regard for the generally recognized principles and norms of international law, to enable those States to exercise their sovereign rights to subsoil exploitation and other legitimate economic activities related to the development of resources of the seabed and subsoil”¹² The Caspian states used the provisions of the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982 and agreed that “Each Party shall establish the breadth of its territorial waters up to a limit not exceeding 15 nautical miles, measured from baselines determined in accordance with this Convention” and “Each Party shall establish a 10 nautical miles-wide fishery zone adjacent to the territorial waters”; the space outside the fishery zone can be used by all coastal states.

The Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea formulated the principles of cooperation among the Caspian states in many, including the energy, spheres. Some of the countries still have certain disagreements with their neighbors: Azerbaijan should come to an agreement with Iran and Turkmenistan, while Turkmenistan has certain problems with Iran. Not all issues related to the Caspian mineral reserves (which caused tension in the 1990s) have been settled. Today, however, we can say that a breakthrough has been achieved in the form of the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea.

The Chinese “Energy Wave”

In the first place, China focused on the energy sector of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, hence its fairly impressive successes in selling equipment and servicing the oil and gas sector.¹³

Beijing overcame the considerable political resistance in the region’s states where distrust of the Chinese was relatively widespread; it started by buying nearly exhausted oilfields; cheap loans were Beijing’s another efficient argument when it came to promoting its interests in the region; it was ready to shoulder part of the costs of development of the Caspian region’s infrastructure. This was a wise strategy that bore its fruits: Beijing could claim the right to develop new and much richer oil and gas fields. At first, China bought a share in the Kashagan oil and gas field; then became involved in the development of the Galkynysh (South Iltan) gas field, the biggest in Turkmenistan.¹⁴

The first stage of China’s infiltration of the Caspian Region and Central Asia ended in 2009 with the first string of the Turkmenian-Chinese gas pipeline. The third string was completed in 2015 and brought the pipeline’s total annual capacity to 55 bcm. In view of the fact that the gas pipeline

¹¹ S.S. Zhiltsov, “Pravovoy status Kaspiyskogo moria: novye vozmozhnosti dlia regionalnogo sotrudnichestva,” *Rossia i mir. Vestnik Diplomaticheskoy akademii MID Rossii*, No. 4, 2018, pp. 18-38.

¹² *Kaspiy: mezhdunarodno-pravovye dokumenty*, Compiled by S.S. Zhiltsov, I.S. Zonn, A.G. Kostianoy, A.V. Semenov, Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, Moscow, 2018, 568 pp.

¹³ See: Z.A. Dadabaeva, E.M. Kuzmina, *Protsessy regionalizatsii v Tsentralnoy Azii: problemy i protivorechia*, Institute of Economics, RAS, Moscow, 2014, p. 33.

¹⁴ See: S. Peyrouse *Turkmenistan: Strategies of Power, Dilemmas of Development*, Routledge, 2015, 264 pp.

crosses the territory of Kazakhstan, China could buy Kazakhstan resources. In this way, the pipeline guaranteed uninterrupted supply of gas from the eastern shores of the Caspian mainly to China. By the same token, this reduced the likelihood of the Caspian states' greater engagement in the West-oriented pipeline projects. So far, the volumes of oil and gas from the eastern Caspian shores lag far behind the planned and expected amounts. It should be said that the volumes of gas extracted in Turkmenistan are not sufficient to fill the Turkmenistan-China pipeline to capacity. In 2016, Ashgabad supplied only 35 bcm of gas, which made the project of the pipeline's fourth string look unlikely. On the other hand, in October 2017 Kazakhstan started selling 5 bcm of gas to China annually, which explains why in early 2017 China suspended the fourth string project.

By active crediting of the Caspian countries' economies and buying assets in the oil and gas sector China lowered the prices it was paying for exported fuels. By the same token, Beijing consolidated its geopolitical positions and acquired an argument used at the talks about the prices of fuels exported from Russia.¹⁵ The Belt and Road strategic initiative is another instrument of promoting interest.¹⁶ The "Silk" project, devised to build oil and gas pipelines of strategic importance to bring fuel to China and the already built pipelines, allows us to discuss the Great Oil and Gas Road.¹⁷ Joint realization of the Energy Corridor (Belt) of the Great Silk Road on the basis of joint investments enlivened the contacts between Eurasian countries and organized them.

By widening the sphere of its influence in the region, China is pursuing not only commercial but also geopolitical aims. It has focused on the eastern coast of the Caspian to resolve its strategic tasks and intensify its relations with Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan in the energy fuel sphere.¹⁸ Beijing is determined to prevent reorientation of both countries towards the West and to limit the influence of Western oil companies in this region. It is closely following the dialog between the Caspian and Central Asian states, on the one hand, and the United States and the European Union, on the other. The latter, in their turn, rely on pipeline projects to weaken Russia's influence on these countries and limit the role of China.¹⁹

The Turkish Factor

Turkey, which demonstrated intensive activity in trying to penetrate the Southern Caucasus immediately after the Soviet Union's disintegration, profited from the geopolitical rivalry between the United States and Russia in the Caspian region.²⁰ Having engaged Azerbaijan in new pipeline projects that Georgia later joined made Turkey an active participant in energy-related Baku-Ceyhan and Baku-Erzurum projects that brought Caspian oil and gas to the European market.

¹⁵ See: S. Malle, "Russia and China in the 21st Century. Moving towards Cooperative Behavior," *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, No. 8, 2017, pp. 136-150.

¹⁶ See: M. Gliants, "Kitayskaia initsiativa "Odin poias-odin put": chto mozhnet sdelat brand," *Problemy postsovetskogo prostranstva*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2017, pp. 8-19.

¹⁷ See: I.S. Zonn, Yu. Tyan, "Novoe prochtenie Velikogo shelkovogo puti," *Problemy postsovetskogo prostranstva*, No. 3, 2015, pp. 5-18.

¹⁸ See: M. de Haas, "Security Policy and Developments in Central Asia: Security Documents Compared with Security Challenges," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2, 2016, pp. 203-226.

¹⁹ See: E.M. Kuzmina, "Bolshaia Evrazia": interesy i vozmozhnosti Rossii pri vzaimodeystvii s Kitaem," *Problemy postsovetskogo prostranstva*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2017, pp. 229-239 [DOI: 10.24975/2313-8920-2017-4-3-229-239].

²⁰ See: L.M. Aleksanyan, "Turetsko-gruzinskie otnoshenia v kontekste regionalnoy politiki Turtsii na sovremennom etape," *Problemy postsovetskogo prostranstva*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 2017, pp. 307-320 [DOI: 10.24975/2313-8920-2017-4-4-307-320].

Ankara was consistently realizing its own energy strategy since the EU-initiated pipeline projects (Nabucco being one of them) had failed. It involved Azerbaijan in its own projects: in 2011, Turkey and Azerbaijan signed the memorandum on the Trans-Anatolian Gas Pipeline (TANAP), which was expected to bring Azeri gas to the Turkish western border; in June 2018 the gas pipeline called the Energy Silk Road was built, which means that Azerbaijan will supply Turkey with additional 16 bcm of gas annually, of which 10 billion will be sent to Europe and the rest (6 billion) will be used in Turkey. Gas supplies to the hub on the Turkish-Greek border are slated to start in mid-2019.

There is the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) 878 km-long project that will cross the territories of Greece, Albania, Adriatic Sea and Italy with an initial annual capacity of 10 bcm, to be later doubled to 20 billion. The project was established in 2003 and approved by the European commission in March 2016. Construction began in May of the same year; it is expected that it will be launched in 2019-2020. The South Gas Corridor will bring Caspian gas to Europe and consolidate the Turkey's positions. Since the final consumers of Azeri gas were not very much bothered by the diversification of the sources of exported fuels,²¹ we can hardly expect that significant quantities of Azerbaijan's gas will reach the European market. This pipeline, however, is of a geopolitical importance for Turkey and Azerbaijan.²²

The Iranian Vector

In the 1990s and until January 2016, Iran remained excluded from all new Caspian oil and gas projects,²³ leaving Russia alone to cope with the newly independent Caspian states and the West that seized this opportunity to promote their infrastructural projects.

The Iranian sanctions lifted in January 2016 created a new context in the Caspian region. Tehran announced that it was ready to move more gas to external markets. The extensive choice of directions and considerable oil and gas reserves make it easier for Iran to realize its plans. It might move to the West and build a pipeline leading to Europe. This looks all the more likely since Tehran repeatedly confirmed its intention to increase its share on the European market. Brussels, which is very much interested in Iranian gas, may reciprocate with new technologies very much needed to increase the quantities of extracted oil and gas; they may be used as an instrument in its talks with Iran. Indeed, without them Iran will find it hard to increase the amounts of extracted hydrocarbons, especially on the shelf.

Iran's involvement in the discussion of the wide range of problems related to oil and gas extraction and exports from the Caspian will offer new prospects of the functioning and, even to a greater extent, planned pipelines. Isolated for twenty years, Iran was unable to take part in the pipeline projects in which the political component was much stronger than their economic value. This explains why Iran, despite its highly advantageous geographic location, does not occupy an adequate place in the new Caspian pipeline geography.²⁴

²¹ See: F. Umbach, S. Raszewski, *Strategic Perspectives for Bilateral Energy Cooperation between the EU and Kazakhstan: Geo-Economic and Geopolitical Dimensions in Competition with Russia and China's Central Asia Policies*, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2016, 70 pp.

²² See: L.M. Aleksanyan, "Rol publichnoy diplomatii vo vneshney politike Turtsii v otnoshenii Gruzii," *Problemy postsovetskogo prostranstva*, Vol. 5, No. 4, 2018, pp. 418-428 [DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24975/2313-8920-2018-5-4-418-428>].

²³ See: S.A. Mikheev, A.E. Chebotarev, G.S. Kovalev, "Problemy regiona nakanune IV Kaspiskogo summita," *Problemy postsovetskogo prostranstva*, No. 2, 2014, pp. 31-69.

²⁴ See: V. Khosseynzadeh, "Politika Irana v Kaspiskom regione na sovremennom etape: itogi i perspektivy," *Problemy postsovetskogo prostranstva*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2017, pp. 221-228 [DOI: [10.24975/2313-8920-2017-4-3-221-228](https://doi.org/10.24975/2313-8920-2017-4-3-221-228)].

The United States played an important role in the pipeline architecture: Washington closed the southern “door” for the Caspian countries and made it much harder for them to look for and find new oil and gas export routes from the Caspian (the route across Iran being the most obvious and the cheapest). As a result, Caspian countries acquired considerable preferences for their hydrocarbon resources. Today we can expect that in the future the energy policy of Iran will strongly affect the export routes in the Caspian region. Tehran plans not only to widen the geography of its hydrocarbon exports but also to increase the volume of oil and gas sold to other countries. It is very much interested in a gas pipeline to India via Pakistan, which makes the planned Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) project a competitor of TAPI. The Caspian states are not greatly concerned with the rivaling projects; they affect China, the EU and the United State to a much greater extent: the Caspian hydrocarbons were and still remain an instrument of influence in the region.

Conclusion

In the past twenty-five years, the energy projects have hugely affected the Caspian region and Central Asia. The new gas and oil pipelines, the result of uncompromising geopolitical competition in Eurasia, drew Russia, the United States and China into a bitter rivalry of geopolitical dimensions for control over the hydrocarbon resources. Turkey, the EU and Iran were pursuing their own policies and fought for their own interests behind the back of the leaders.

In its relations with the local countries Russia relies on the extensive common history. Moscow preserved its influence in the Central Asian and Caspian countries, yet these close economic and cultural ties did not keep non-regional powers away from the region. China has obviously come to stay: it applied its trade and economic instruments and later its energy projects and credit policies to the belt of states along its western borders to ensure security. Impressed with these activities, the Caspian and Central Asian states changed their policy and moved somewhat away from Russia, albeit with no chance of becoming free in their foreign policy maneuvers.

The realized and planned pipeline projects designed to export Caspian hydrocarbons have already divided the region and worsened the complicated relations between the Caspian and Central Asian countries. The United States and the EU, on the one hand, and China, on the other, have agreed that Brussels and Washington will operate on the western coast and China—on the eastern. In their sphere of influence, Brussels and Washington stake on the hydrocarbon reserves of Azerbaijan as the main alternative to Russian gas exported to European countries. The Europeans refuse to admit that the volumes of future gas supplies from Shakh Deniz cannot be compared with Europe’s real demands, yet Brussels is insisting on a trans-Caspian pipeline to bring Turkmenistan gas to Europe.

The first stage of geopolitical rivalry for Central Asian hydrocarbon resources and transportation routes for additional oil and gas volumes extracted in the region has been completed. In 2017-2018, an interest in Central Asian hydrocarbon reserves was preserved, while the region’s countries and their neighbors were involved in the discussions of new export pipelines. Nothing has been resolved so far: the funding and security issues remain pending. Western influence is another negative aspect. The forecasted oil and gas reserves that the Central Asian countries plan to extract are strongly politicized. In the context of the dynamics of oil and gas extraction in the last few decades and the objective problems that interfere with the transit of gas and oil, we can expect that new pipelines will be commissioned and new energy flows will emerge. By that time, the question of the extraction level of the Central Asian countries will be elucidated; it will become clear whether they have enough oil and gas to fill the planned export pipelines to capacity.

If the volume of exports increases considerably, we will see a new stage in the development of Central Asia and the Caspian region, and a radically transformed geopolitical landscape of Eurasia.

REGIONAL INTEGRATION

EURASIANIST RHETORIC IN RUSSIA AND KAZAKHSTAN. NEGOTIATING HEGEMONY THROUGH DIFFERENT VISIONS OF SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

This study fathoms the question what Eurasianist discourse in Russia and Kazakhstan reveals about contemporary hierarchy dynamics between Russia and Central Asia.

To grasp these dynamics, the study relies on an English School theoretical framework. It links Filippo Costa Buranelli's "negotiated hegemony" concept with the *gemeinschaft-gesellschaft* distinction introduced to the English School by Barry Buzan. While the former provides an analytical framework for contemporary spheres of influence argu-

ing that great powers are in need of the approval of the sovereign states they seek to influence, the latter opens up room for different approaches to (regional) international society. Whereas *gemeinschaft* is used to denote an understanding of society as a civilizational entity based on a shared culture and with common norms and values, *gesellschaft*-type societies are understood as a product of pragmatic and functional interaction. This study argues that the degree of hierarchy in a regional international society and the *gemeinschaft-gesellschaft* dis-

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inction constitute two interrelated dimensions. More generally speaking, the analysis suggests that the type of society preferred or promoted by an actor is interrelated with this actor's stance within a hierarchical relationship. Following this reasoning, a(n aspirational) hegemon will promote a *gemeinschaft*-type society because this civilizational ideal offers a greater leverage to generate legitimacy as well as to wield influence over other actors of the society.

The Russo-Kazakh Eurasianist discourse offers an instructive example of these dynamics. Both countries' foreign pol-

icy rhetoric formulates different visions of an Eurasianist society that are insightful in understanding their relative positioning towards each other. It is suggested that Russia's invocation of a civilizational *gemeinschaft*-type society built on a common culture and identity serves to legitimize its hegemonic claims towards Central Asia. The functional *gesellschaft* vision which Kazakhstan conveys through its pragmatic Eurasianist rhetoric constitutes in turn a resistance to these hegemonic claims by highlighting sovereign equality and invoking counter-hegemonic narratives.

KEYWORDS: English School, Negotiated Hegemony, Gemeinschaft, Gesellschaft, Eurasianism, Central Asia, Russia.

Introduction

Recognizing the surge of Eurasianist rhetoric in the post-Soviet space, this essay seeks to fathom the question: **What does the Eurasianist discourse in Russia and Kazakhstan reveal about contemporary hierarchy dynamics between Russia and Central Asia?**

It suggests that the Russo-Kazakh Eurasianist discourse must be seen in the light of a “negotiated hegemony” where Russia's invocation of a civilizational *gemeinschaft*-type society serves to legitimize its hegemonic claims, while Kazakhstan's functional *gesellschaft* vision of the Eurasian space constitutes an opposing response to these claims.

Examining Eurasianist foreign policy rhetoric is instructive as the invocation of Eurasianist narratives necessarily conveys a subjective picture of the Eurasian space. As Roland Bleiker puts it: “the difference between represented and representation is the very location of politics.”¹ In this light, Eurasianist rhetoric is understood as a discursive framework that allows actors to express their visions and expectations of their Eurasian environment. The examination of the representation—in this case the countries' respective Eurasianist vision—is thus of utmost relevance to understand underlying political reasoning. Therefore, only the external, foreign policy dimension of the Eurasianist discourse will be looked at; acknowledging that Eurasianist rhetoric also has far-reaching domestic effects.²

To answer the research question, this essay refers to an English School (ES) theoretical framework. The ES is instructive as its recent *regional turn* has generated apt analytical tools to examine dynamics on the sub-global level.³ Moreover, the ES has developed a vivid debate on hierarchy and

¹ R. Bleiker, “The Aesthetic Turn in International Political Theory,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 2001, p. 512.

² Cf. P. Pryce, “Putin's Third Term: The Triumph of Eurasianism?” *Romanian Journal of European Affairs*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2013; M. Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire*, Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Washington, 2008.

³ See: Y.A. Stivachtis, “Shifting Gears: From Global to Regional. The English School and the Study of Sub-Global International Societies,” in: *System, Society and the World: Exploring the English School of International Relations*, ed. by R.W. Murray, E-International Relations, Bristol, 2015, pp. 68-86.

influence that informed earlier studies on the relationship between Russia and Central Asia, understood here as the five Republics—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan.⁴

Russia and Kazakhstan constitute suitable objects for analysis because both countries' governments have adopted distinct Eurasianist narratives in their foreign policy rhetoric. Given the unique character of each country's Eurasianism, this study cannot claim to formulate strict general conclusions for the whole of Central Asia. However, as Russian Eurasianist rhetoric formulates its vision of "Eurasia" irrespective of state borders and given that the general hierarchical relationship between Russia and Central Asia is widely accepted,⁵ it is suggested that the Russo-Kazakh discourse can be understood as an exemplary indicator of this hierarchy.

The essay will evolve through four sections. After developing the theoretical framework, Eurasianism's historical evolution and contemporary narratives in Russia and Kazakhstan will be briefly outlined. These then will be analyzed with the main findings summarized in the conclusion.

Theoretical Framework

In order to analyze the Russo-Kazakh Eurasianist discourse in terms of hierarchy dynamics, this section seeks to elaborate an appropriate theoretical framework. It does so by linking two conceptions within the ES edifice: *negotiated hegemony*, developed by Filippo Costa Buranelli⁶ and the *gemeinschaft-gesellschaft distinction*, introduced to the ES by Barry Buzan.⁷

Negotiated Hegemony

Buranelli's concept of *negotiated hegemony* builds on the discussion of Great Power Management (GPM) within the ES. In his seminal work *The Anarchical Society*, Hedley Bull defined GPM as one of five primary institutions of the international society.⁸ Great Powers (GP) serve an ordering function: to "[simplify] the pattern of international relations" by introducing a hierarchical order to different states' interests.⁹ Importantly, Bull highlights that the status of a GP is contingent upon the recognition as such by other states.¹⁰ GPs thus legitimize their unequal role by accepting responsibilities and claiming rights.¹¹ Ian Clark derives his notion of *hegemony* from Bull's conception of

⁴ See: F.C. Buranelli, "Spheres of Influence as Negotiated Hegemony—The Case of Central Asia," *Geopolitics*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 2017; K. Kaczmarek, "Russia's Droit de Regard: Pluralist Norms and the Sphere of Influence," *Global Discourse*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 2015; G. Pourchot, Y.A. Stivachtis, "International Society and Regional Integration in Central Asia," *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, Vol. 5, 2014.

⁵ See: S. Hast, *Spheres of Influence in International Relations: History, Theory and Politics*, Ashgate, Burlington, 2014, p. 14.

⁶ See: F.C. Buranelli, op. cit.

⁷ See: B. Buzan, "From International System to International Society: Structural Realism and Regime Theory Meet the English School," *International Organization*, Vol. 47, No. 3, 1993.

⁸ See: H. Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, The Macmillan Press LTD, London, 1977, pp. 71-74.

⁹ See: Ibid., p. 206.

¹⁰ See: Ibid., p. 202.

¹¹ See: B. Buzan, S. Cui, "Great Power Management in International Society," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 2016, p. 182.

GPM, contending that hegemony takes the role of GPM if one single power is prevalent.¹² Acknowledging the importance of legitimacy for a hegemon to realize its managerial rights and duties, Clark delineates hegemony as an institution of international society from mere material *primacy*.¹³ Similar to GPs, who are in permanent need “of securing and preserving the consent of other states to their special role,”¹⁴ a hegemon’s status is therefore better described as a social relationship that is “permanently conditional, and subject to ongoing contestation in terms of its degree of legitimacy.”¹⁵ Focusing on *spheres of influence*, Buranelli traces how the character of this legitimacy changed throughout history.¹⁶ While historically spheres of influence were above all contingent upon external legitimacy—i.e. acceptance by other GPs—the entrenchment of the norm of sovereign equality in the contemporary international society increased demand for internal legitimacy. Respectively, these normative changes delegitimized power-relations defined as suzerainty or dominion on Adam Watson’s¹⁷ spectrum and required GPs to consider the approval of those within their sphere of influence.¹⁸ Pointing to the example of Russia’s relationship with Central Asia, Buranelli argues that contemporary spheres of influence can thus be described as “negotiated hegemony.” The first part of the term thereby underlines the influenced states’ competence to “[accept], [accommodate] and even [resist] different conditions posed by the hegemon.”¹⁹ Discourses thereby constitute “rhetorical indicators” of these reactions.²⁰

The Gemeinschaft-gesellschaft Distinction

Buzan²¹ has introduced the sociological *gemeinschaft-gesellschaft* distinction to the ES to bridge the different approaches to international society by Hedley Bull and Martin Wight and thereby to clear up the complex system/society relationship within the ES framework.²²

Buzan identifies Wight’s vision of international society, based on his 1977 *Systems of States*, to correspond to a *gemeinschaft* conceptualization of society—“something organic and traditional, involving bonds of common sentiment, experience, and identity.”²³ According to this *civilizational* *gemeinschaft* understanding, “some degree of cultural unity”²⁴ is necessary for a society to emerge.²⁵ It thus assumes that society is based upon an existing culturally homogeneous world society, i.e. common norms and values.²⁶ Bull, in contrast, leans towards an understanding of international society as

¹² See: I. Clark, “Towards an English School Theory of Hegemony,” *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2009, p. 213.

¹³ See: *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ H. Bull, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

¹⁵ I. Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

¹⁶ See: F.C. Buranelli, *op. cit.*

¹⁷ See: A. Watson, *The Evolution of international society*, Routledge, London, 1992.

¹⁸ See: F.C. Buranelli, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²⁰ See: *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²¹ See: B. Buzan, *op. cit.*

²² See: J. O’Hagan, “The Question of Culture,” in: *International Society and its Critics*, ed. by A.J. Bellamy, Oxford Scholarship Online, 2015, pp. 209-228.

²³ B. Buzan, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

²⁴ M. Wight, *Systems of States*, Leicester University Press, Leicester, 1977, p. 33.

²⁵ B. Buzan, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

²⁶ See: R. Little, “International System, International Society and World Society: A Re-evaluation of the English School,” in: *International Society and the Development of International Relations Theory*, ed. by B.A. Roberson, Pinter, London, 1998, p. 64.

an evolutionary interim stage between anarchy and world society.²⁷ This, according to Buzan, follows a *gesellschaft* understanding which “sees society as being contractual and constructed rather than sentimental and traditional.”²⁸ Following this *functional gesellschaft* conception, the existence of a shared culture or identity is not necessary. An international society could thus evolve from an international system without building on a common culture or identity.²⁹ Buzan, however, reasons that a consciousness of common values emerges as a product of what Watson calls *raison de système*, i.e. shared objectives among units with “a common desire for order [as the] minimum necessary condition.”³⁰ Ultimately, the development of common norms, rules, and institutions leads to the emergence of a common identity whereby sovereign equality constitutes the benchmark that demarcates an international society—in which units mutually recognize each other as equal—from an international system.³¹ In a *gesellschaft* society, sovereign equality is thus seen as vehicle of common identity.³² Buzan contends that in a postcolonial world, international society is inevitably a multicultural one and thus exhibits strong *gesellschaft* features.³³ However, because nearby states often share cultural elements, regional *gemeinschaft*-type societies can exist within the international society.³⁴

Bringing Both Dimensions Together

In their study on regional integration in the post-Soviet space, Georgeta Pourchot and Yannis Stivachtis present the *gemeinschaft-gesellschaft* distinction and the degree of hierarchy in a regional international society as two variables that can be depicted on two independent spectra.³⁵ Also, reasoning about the relationship between these two dimensions, Richard Little³⁶ refers to Watson’s discussion of legitimacy and beliefs in ancient imperial systems.³⁷ It suggests that common beliefs and norms in historical *gemeinschaft*-type societies facilitated the generation of legitimacy for authority³⁸ as (influenced) beliefs of how things are or should be justify restraints on actors.³⁹ Listing several counterexamples, Little convincingly qualifies this conclusion, without, however, rebutting its underlying reasoning.⁴⁰

Similarly, I argue here that the two dimensions—type of society and hierarchy—are interrelated. Moreover, the argument goes that this interrelation is even more instructive for the contemporary international society, as the internal legitimacy of a hegemonic status has grown more important with the entrenchment of the norm of sovereign equality. Following Buranelli’s contention that influence can be wielded in all three domains of international system (provision of security), international society (normative influence), and world society (cultural/civilizational cohesion),⁴¹ it is argued

²⁷ See: B. Buzan, op. cit., pp. 334, 338.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 333.

²⁹ See: G. Pourchot, Y.A. Stivachtis, op. cit., p. 71.

³⁰ B. Buzan, op. cit., pp. 334-335.

³¹ See: Ibid., pp. 336-345.

³² See: S.C. Pasic, “Culturing International Relations Theory: A Call for Extension,” in: *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR*, ed. by Y. Lapid, F. Kratochwil, Lynne Rienner Publishers, London, 1996, p. 92.

³³ See: B. Buzan, op. cit., p. 336.

³⁴ See: G. Pourchot, Y.A. Stivachtis, op. cit., p. 71; Y.A. Stivachtis, op. cit., p. 70.

³⁵ See: G. Pourchot, Y.A. Stivachtis, op. cit.

³⁶ See: R. Little, “The English School and World History,” in: *International Society and its Critics*, pp. 45-64.

³⁷ See: A. Watson, op. cit., p. 130.

³⁸ See: R. Little, “The English School and World History,” p. 53.

³⁹ See: A. Watson, op. cit., p. 130.

⁴⁰ See: R. Little, “The English School and World History,” p. 53.

⁴¹ See: F.C. Buranelli, op. cit., p. 9.

that a hegemon relying on cultural or civilizational discourses has more leverage if the society exhibits a strong *gemeinschaft* character in comparison to one based on a *gesellschaft* logic. Given that a *gemeinschaft* society has a profounder civilizational grounding with “‘sentimental and traditional’ ties between individuals,”⁴² civilizational and cultural forms of influence must be regarded as more potent than in a *gesellschaft* society that derives its common identity “more shallowly” from the acknowledgement of sovereign equality.

Eurasianism in Russia and Kazakhstan

Eurasianism has recently become a “catchall vision of Russia,”⁴³ an “umbrella term”⁴⁴ that encompasses a myriad of different schools of thought, ideologies, identities and doctrines.⁴⁵ A disambiguation is thus required to clarify the focus of this essay. The following section will briefly outline the origins of Eurasianism before depicting the respective Russian and Kazakh Eurasianist narratives that serve as case study in this essay.

The roots of Eurasianism trace back to a 19th century anti-European sentiment.⁴⁶ In the 1920s interwar period, Russian exile intellectuals including Nikolay Trubetskoi and Petr Savitsky developed an Eurasian ideological movement united by an emphasis on Orthodox faith, the importance of Russia’s Asian connections, a critique of Eurocentrism, and a specific historical and cultural interpretation that substantially relocated Russia’s past from the Kievan Rus’ to the steppe.⁴⁷ Lev Gumilev’s influential work, which developed Eurasian thoughts during the Soviet Union before the 1990s, gave rise to a multifarious neo-Eurasianism, associated with figures such as Alexander Dugin and politicians like Vladimir Zhirinovskiy or Gennady Zyuganov.⁴⁸

The term “Eurasia” has become widely spread within and outside Russia today. The links of contemporary narratives to classical Eurasianism remain questionable, however. Marlène Laruelle claims that “[the] more ‘Eurasia’ invades Russia’s public space, popular culture, and state-produced narratives in Russia, the more forgetful of its Eurasianist founding ideologists it seems to be.”⁴⁹ Moreover, the influence of Eurasianist ideology on contemporary foreign policy is debated. While the impact of Gumilev’s works on the collective conscience⁵⁰ and Dugin’s personal ties to political elites are highlighted,⁵¹ Eurasianist rhetoric in the foreign policy discourse is predominantly deemed *prag-*

⁴² R. Little, “The English School and World History,” p. 50.

⁴³ M. Laruelle, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

⁴⁴ P.J. Katzenstein, N. Weygandt, “Mapping Eurasia in an Open World: How the Insularity of Russia’s Geopolitical and Civilizational Approaches Limits Its Foreign Policies,” *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2017, p. 428.

⁴⁵ See: M. Laruelle, “Eurasia, Eurasianism, Eurasian Union: Terminological Gaps and Overlaps,” *Ponars Eurasia Policy Memo*, No. 366, 2015, p. 2.

⁴⁶ See: F.C. Buranelli, “‘Knockin’ on Heaven’s Door: Russia, Central Asia and the Mediated Expansion of International Society,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 3, 2014; M. Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire*, p. 18; P. Pryce, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30.

⁴⁷ See: M. Laruelle, “Eurasia, Eurasianism, Eurasian Union: Terminological Gaps and Overlaps,” p. 3; M. Bassin, S. Glebov, M. Laruelle, “Introduction: What Was Eurasianism And Who Made It?” in: *Between Europe & Asia: The Origins, Theories, and Legacies of Russian Eurasianism*, ed. by M. Bassin, S. Glebov, M. Laruelle, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 2015, pp. 1-12.

⁴⁸ See: P.J. Katzenstein, N. Weygandt, *op. cit.*, p. 430; M. Laruelle, “Eurasia, Eurasianism, Eurasian Union: Terminological Gaps and Overlaps,” p. 2.

⁴⁹ M. Laruelle, “Eurasia, Eurasianism, Eurasian Union: Terminological Gaps and Overlaps,” p. 5.

⁵⁰ See: P.J. Katzenstein, N. Weygandt, *op. cit.*; M. Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire*, p. 10.

⁵¹ See: P. Pryce, *op. cit.*; M. Schmidt, “Is Putin Pursuing a Policy of Eurasianism?,” *Demokratizatsiya*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2005.

matic, i.e. detached from ideology and rather interest-based.⁵² Regardless of its (non-) ideological motivation, this discourse, however, has established a “narrative space for tangential invocations of Eurasianist perspectives”⁵³ and thus lends itself for analysis of the underlying visions conveyed.

In *Russian* foreign policy rhetoric, early Eurasianist references were rather pragmatic in character:⁵⁴ a realization of Russia’s “physical identity” of bordering both European and Asian landmasses.⁵⁵ This discourse justified a balanced foreign policy, allowing Russia to pursue its interest both in the West and in the East. Vladimir Putin’s 2004 statement on a summit of the Asian-Pacific Economic Consortium “Russia always felt itself an [*sic!*] Eurasian country”⁵⁶ has to be viewed in this regard, motivated largely by economic gains from making Russia an “energy and transportation bridge between Asia and Europe.”⁵⁷ More recently, however, Russian official Eurasianist rhetoric increasingly takes on a rather civilizational character.⁵⁸ Putin’s 2011 *Izvestia* article “A New Integration Project for Eurasia”⁵⁹ that precluded the Eurasian Union project is seen as seminal for this new course.⁶⁰ Here, Putin argued not only with economic benefits but conjured “a deeper Eurasian integration which reflects in part the civilizational identity of the nations ... in a historical Eurasian space.”⁶¹ Putin entrenched this narrative in his 2013 address to the Valdai Discussion Club, calling the Eurasian Union “a project for maintaining the identity of nations in the historical Eurasian space.”⁶² Within this civilizational reasoning, Russia is presented as the leading power within its Eurasian sphere of influence.⁶³

Kazakh Eurasianist foreign policy rhetoric is closely associated with President Nursultan Nazarbayev.⁶⁴ Nazarbayev’s Eurasianism has been identified as pragmatic with significant differences from its Russian counterpart.⁶⁵ The three elements of sovereignty, integration, and leadership are at the core of Kazakh Eurasianism.⁶⁶ It welcomes economic cooperation but emphasizes equality and anti-imperialism. Nazarbayev’s 1994 speech, proposing a Union of Eurasian States, is seen as a foundational moment of Kazakh Eurasianism.⁶⁷ Here, Nazarbayev adopted a counter-hegemonic rhetoric,

⁵² See: L. Anceschi, “Kazakhstani Neo-Eurasianism and Nazarbayev’s Anti-Imperial Foreign Policy,” in: *The Politics of Eurasianism: Identity, Popular Culture and Russia’s Foreign Policy*, ed. by M. Bassin, G. Pozo, Rowman & Littlefield International, London, 2017, pp. 283-300; M. Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire*, pp. 8-9; G. Pozo, “Eurasianism in Russian Foreign Policy: The Case of the Eurasian Economic Union,” in: *The Politics of Eurasianism: Identity, Popular Culture and Russia’s Foreign Policy*, pp. 161-180.

⁵³ G. Pozo, op. cit., p. 163.

⁵⁴ See: M. Schmidt, op. cit.

⁵⁵ P. Rangsimaporn, “Interpretations of Eurasianism: Justifying Russia’s Role in East Asia,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 58, No. 3, 2006, p. 375.

⁵⁶ Quoted from: M. Schmidt, op. cit., pp. 92-93.

⁵⁷ P. Rangsimaporn, op. cit., p. 379.

⁵⁸ See: P.J. Katzenstein, N. Weygandt, op. cit., p. 431.

⁵⁹ V. Putin, “A New Integration Project for Eurasia: The Future in the Making,” *Izvestia*, 4 October, 2011, available at [<https://www.rusemb.org.uk/press/246>], 28 September, 2018.

⁶⁰ See: L. Anceschi, op. cit.; V. Papava, “The Eurasianism of Russian Anti-Westernism and the Concept of ‘Central Caucaso-Asia,’” *Russian Politics and Law*, Vol. 51, No. 6, 2014; A. Podberezkin, O. Podberezkina, “Eurasianism as an Idea, Civilizational Concept and Integration Challenge,” in: *Eurasian Integration—The View from Within*, ed. by P. Dutkiewicz, R. Sakwa, Routledge, London, 2015, pp. 46-60; G. Pozo, op. cit.

⁶¹ G. Pozo, op. cit., p. 167.

⁶² V. Putin, “Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club,” 19 September, 2013, available at [<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19243>], 28 September, 2018.

⁶³ See: P.J. Katzenstein, N. Weygandt, op. cit., p. 431.

⁶⁴ See: M. Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire*, p. 176.

⁶⁵ See: L. Anceschi, op. cit.; S.N. Cummings, “Eurasian Bridge or Murky Waters between East and West? Ideas, Identity and Output in Kazakhstan’s Foreign Policy,” *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 2003.

⁶⁶ See: *Ibid.*, p. 295.

⁶⁷ See: L. Anceschi, “Regime-building, Identity-making and Foreign Policy: Neo-Eurasianist Rhetoric in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan,” *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 42, No. 5, 2014, p. 733; D.T. Kudaibergenova, “Eurasian Economic Union Integration in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan,” *European Politics and Society*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2016, p. 101.

highlighting the equality of partners, while envisioning a Russo-Kazakh axis as a basis for Eurasian multilateral integration.⁶⁸ Kazakhstan's relations with Russia are central for this Eurasianist rhetoric⁶⁹ as close ties with Russia—as a partner, not a leader—are perceived necessary to secure economic benefits.⁷⁰ Kazakh counter-hegemonic Eurasianist rhetoric proposes a reassessment of Soviet center-periphery relations, positing Kazakhstan as a leading integrator among equal states.⁷¹ The intensity of the anti-imperialist narrative varied considerably over time. Introduced in the early 1990s, it weakened when during Putin's first tenure and the enlargement of the Eurasian Economic Community both presidents' pragmatic Eurasianist rhetoric coincided. Emphasis on sovereignty and equality resurfaced, however, when Putin adopted more civilizational tones in 2011 and especially after the Crimea Crisis in 2014.⁷²

Negotiating Hegemony through Eurasianist Discourse

This section will first examine the Eurasianist discourse as a “rhetorical indicator”⁷³ of the Russia-Central Asia negotiated hegemony. Then, the *gemeinschaft-gesellschaft* dimension will be added in order to explain more profoundly how the Eurasianist discourse serves the negotiation of this hegemony.

While Kazakhstan in the early 1990s assertively conveyed an anti-imperial rhetoric that sought to reassess former center-periphery relations, this counter-hegemonic stance towards Russia silenced when Kazakh pragmatic integration plans matched with Russian pragmatic Eurasianist narratives before Putin's third term. After Putin's return, however, tensions arose between Kazakh Eurasianist rhetoric and “Russia's hegemonic multilateralism.”⁷⁴ Especially instructive in that regard is the debate between Putin and Nazarbayev following the former's civilizational colored 2011 *Izvestia* article. Anceschi states that “Putin's neo-Eurasianism ... has hence come to pose specific challenges to the [integrationist] leadership agenda pursued by [Kazakhstan] in post-Soviet Eurasia.”⁷⁵ Less than a month later, in response to Putin's self-presentation as “leader of post-Soviet multilateralism,”⁷⁶ Nazarbayev thus wrote himself a commentary for *Izvestia* where he illustrated his view on the future of Eurasian integration, highlighting the sovereign equality of all states involved in this process.⁷⁷ Moreover, in December 2013, Nazarbayev urged the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council of the newly established Eurasian Economic Union not “to politicize the union we are creating” and presented political cooperation as incompatible with the intended economic orientation of the project: “As sovereign states, we are actively cooperating ... without impinging on each other's interests.”⁷⁸ Anceschi acknowledges that the development of Kazakh Eurasianist rhetoric has been contingent upon

⁶⁸ See: L. Anceschi, “Kazakhstani Neo-Eurasianism and Nazarbayev's Anti-Imperial Foreign Policy,” p. 288.

⁶⁹ See: *Ibid.*, p. 285.

⁷⁰ See: S.N. Cummings, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

⁷¹ See: L. Anceschi, “Kazakhstani Neo-Eurasianism and Nazarbayev's Anti-Imperial Foreign Policy,” pp. 285-287.

⁷² See: *Ibidem*; A. Podberezkin, O. Podberezkina, *op. cit.*

⁷³ F.C. Buranelli, “Spheres of Influence as Negotiated Hegemony—The Case of Central Asia,” p. 9.

⁷⁴ L. Anceschi, “Kazakhstani Neo-Eurasianism and Nazarbayev's Anti-Imperial Foreign Policy,” p. 285.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 292.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 285.

⁷⁷ See: N. Nazarbayev, “Evraziiskii Soiuz: ot idei k istorii budushchego,” *Izvestia*, 25 October, 2011, available at: [<https://iz.ru/news/504908>], 28 September, 2018.

⁷⁸ N. Nazarbayev as translated in A. Podberezkin, O. Podberezkina, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

its environment.⁷⁹ Viewed in the framework of negotiated hegemony, Kazakhstan's counter-hegemonic rhetoric thus needs to be understood as resistance to the hegemonic aspirations that are inherent in Russia's civilizational Eurasianism since 2011.

Trying to locate both nations' formulated Eurasian visions on the *gemeinschaft-gesellschaft* spectrum reveals a stark contrast. By highlighting civilizational and cultural ties, a shared history and identity, Putin invokes an ideal close to the *gemeinschaft*-type society. Kazakhstan's vision of Eurasia, on the other hand, seeks to restrict Eurasian integration to rather pragmatic, predominantly economic cooperation and puts to the front sovereignty and equality of states. The Kazakh ideal thus leans towards a *gesellschaft*-type society that is based on functional interaction instead of a common culture or identity. This difference can be explained through both countries' positions within the negotiated hegemony relationship. Given that a hegemon can wield influence through all three different domains, including cultural or civilizational affinity,⁸⁰ and given that common beliefs can be used to generate legitimacy for authority,⁸¹ a *gemeinschaft* ideal of Eurasia enables Russia to assert its claim for regional hegemony more effectively. Ray Silvius writes that “[civilizational narratives demonstrate] the co-opting by the Russian state of what are otherwise more potentially radical and disruptive strains of Eurasianism for the purpose of establishing ideological hegemony and legitimacy.” This is done by portraying Russia as “the architect of a Russia-centered regional order on Eurasian space.”⁸² Peter Katzenstein and Nicole Weygandt moreover highlight that on the civilizational level “[culture], mass media, common language, the Orthodox Church, and business networks all provide instruments of influence.”⁸³ Kazakhstan's emphatic insistence on a *gesellschaft* model for Eurasia in turn reflects the country's weaker position on the hierarchy spectrum. Highlighting the equality of all states taking part in Eurasian integration and stressing their sovereignty constitutes a refusal of Russia's supposedly civilizational legitimized hegemony. Rejecting the “politicization” of integration projects and showing a clear preference for economic cooperation can furthermore be seen as an attempt to limit Russian influence in the domain of world society, i.e. through cultural or civilizational cohesion.

Conclusion

This essay has explored the Russo-Kazakh Eurasianist discourse in terms of hierarchy dynamics in Russia's relationship with Central Asia. After having established a theoretical framework building on Buranelli's concept of negotiated hegemony and Buzan's *gemeinschaft-gesellschaft* distinction, the origins of Eurasianism as well as contemporary Eurasianist narratives in Russian and Kazakh foreign policy discourse were depicted. The analysis examined the Russo-Kazakh Eurasianist discourse as an indicator of a negotiated hegemony relationship between Russia and Central Asia. The negotiation within this relationship is characterized by a Russian invocation of a civilizational *gemeinschaft*-type society built on a common culture and identity, serving the legitimation of Russian hegemonic claims. The functional *gesellschaft* vision which Kazakhstan conveys through its pragmatic Eurasianist rhetoric constitutes in turn a resistance to these hegemonic claims by highlighting sovereign equality and invoking counter-hegemonic narratives.

⁷⁹ See: L. Anceschi, “Kazakhstani Neo-Eurasianism and Nazarbayev's Anti-Imperial Foreign Policy,” pp. 294-295.

⁸⁰ See: F.C. Buranelli, “Spheres of Influence as Negotiated Hegemony—The Case of Central Asia.”

⁸¹ See: R. Little, “The English School and World History.”

⁸² R. Silvius, “Eurasianism and Putin's Embedded Civilizationalism,” in: *The Eurasian Project and Europe: Regional Discontinuities and Geopolitics*, ed. by D. Lane, V. Samokhvalov, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2015, p. 76.

⁸³ P.J. Katzenstein, N. Weygandt, op. cit., p. 431.

More generally speaking, the analysis thus suggests that the type of society preferred or promoted by an actor is interrelated with this actor's stance within a negotiated hegemony relationship. According to this reasoning, a(n aspirational) hegemon will promote a *gemeinschaft*-type society because this civilizational ideal offers a greater leverage to generate legitimacy as well as to wield influence over other actors of the society. Promoting a *gesellschaft*-type society in turn may deprive the hegemon of this leverage, thus opposing hegemonic aspirations or extorting better conditions within the negotiated hegemony.

This interrelation between the two dimensions of society-type and hierarchy requires further theoretical reasoning and different case studies. However, it has proven insightful for the analysis of the Russo-Kazakh Eurasianist discourse as it offers an explanation for both countries' differing Eurasianist narratives.

RISKS AND PROSPECTS OF KAZAKHSTAN'S PARTICIPATION IN INTEGRATIVE INTERACTIONS WITHIN THE EAEU

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ABSTRACT

The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is currently one of the most important integrative structures in the post-Soviet territory. The expansion of the organization, military and political conflicts in the post-Soviet territory, world crises and other factors directly influence the integrative union's member countries and cause numerous questions regarding the future of the EAEU. Kazakhstan is one of the most important members of the Union, and the aforementioned processes also have a direct impact on it. The prospect of integrating new

states, as well as an expansion of the Union's powers and role and its transition to a political level bring new challenges, require reconsideration and an establishment of new national politics in regard to both member countries and the EAEU as a whole. The current study analyzes the relevance and the peculiarities of the existence of a structure such as EAEU in the contemporary geopolitical realities, its influence on member countries (Kazakhstan in particular), and evaluates the risks and prospects for Kazakhstan as a member country.

KEYWORDS: *Eurasian Economic Union, integration, modernization of economy, foreign investments, competitiveness, economic development, national security.*

Introduction

The beginning of the 21st century is characterized by the international political tendency of countries towards the formation of a new architecture of world economic order. Integrative inter-bloc unions are becoming the key entities of this order. The active dynamics of such processes is determined by the most powerful countries and their unions (i.e., EU, U.S., China) engaging in competitive relations in regard to integrative unions in various macroregions of the world.¹

These global processes are most certainly reflected in Eurasia, where at this stage, the EAEU is currently of the most interest as an institution of this sort.

The initial founding of the EAEU presumed the establishment of terms for member countries that promote the development of national economies and the strengthening of positions on the international arena.² Leaders of Belarus and Kazakhstan have emphasized numerous times that the EAEU was created for the purpose of promoting the economic, scientific and technological cooperation. Its goal is economic integration, which does not postulate political integration, as is the case in the European Union.

Despite the existing problems and contradictions that emerge today among the EAEU countries, their leaders are committed in preserving the EAEU, since the membership provides certain economic advantages.

For instance, Belarus obtains the most significant results in the framework of this cooperation, receiving \$3-4 billion annually in the form of subsidies, incentives and grants. Russia is currently supplying Belarus with up to 25 million tons of oil, which serves as the basis for the continuously growing oil product export from Belarus to EU countries; meanwhile, since 2016, the customs tariffs

¹ See: S. Khapilin, "Obespechenie ekonomicheskoi bezopasnosti gosudarstv Evraziiskogo ekonomicheskogo soiuza v usloviakh konkurentsii modelei integratsii," *Natsionalnye interesy: priority i bezopasnost*, No. 33, 2015, pp. 22-30.

² See: E. Alekseenkova, "EAES k 2025 g.: priority i ozhidaniia gosudarstv-chlenov," available at [<https://mgimo.ru/upload/iblock/679/alekseenkova.pdf>].

from this export have been remaining in the Republic of Belarus in their entirety. The average annual oil financing grant of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Belarus in 2010-2015 is estimated by experts to equal up to 15% of the GDP of the Republic of Belarus.³

Kyrgyzstan has managed to increase the export of goods by 39% in a short period of time.⁴ The establishment of the Russian-Kyrgyz Development Foundation allowed the country to obtain \$118 million in preferential credits.⁵ The opportunity for work migrants to move around freely is another powerful advantage for the country.

As of 2017, Armenia also increased its export of goods to Russia by 25.8%.⁶ It was also noted that the level of inflation in the country has lowered by 3.1%.⁷

We would like to place special emphasis on Kazakhstan as one of the Union's driving forces. In 2017, the country's foreign trade indicator grew by 25%. As part of the launch of a Free Trade Zone with Vietnam, Kazakhstan received the maximum benefits, since the goods turnover between the countries increased by 48%. Also, there was growth in the non-resource-based economy spheres: the pharmaceutical industry (41.8%), production of vehicles and equipment (38.4%), production of electrical equipment, electronic and optic equipment (17.6%), production of leather goods and shoes (8.4%), textile and sewing industries (7.2%), chemical industry (7.2%), as well as the metallurgical sphere (5.9%).⁸

In addition, participation in the EAEU provides countries with free access of their goods to local markets, where the prices for union members are lower than for other countries. EAEU member countries are particularly attracted with the fact that there is already an integrated labor market in the EAEU, as a result of which work migrants of the EAEU member countries, unlike migrants from other CIS countries, can migrate and remain in EAEU member countries with no migration-related restrictions, taking advantage of the social benefits of their country of temporary residence.

EAEU membership allows its members to obtain low-interest loans from the Anticrisis Foundation, participate in the work of the Center for High Technologies, which approved and coordinated innovative policy, as well as in the creation of an innovative program financing mechanism. Participation in the EAEU promotes the influx of foreign investments from non-member countries to its members, since the Union's entire duty-free area with its numerous population is the sales market for enterprises with foreign investments.

However, the attractiveness of the integrative union also carries certain risks for countries in the spheres where they fall short of their union partners.

In the framework of this paper, we would like to resolve a number of tasks, i.e.:

- Examine the peculiarities of the EAEU as an integrative union in Eurasia, formulate its main phases and development forecasts.
- Determine the place and role of Kazakhstan as one of the leading countries in the integrative union;
- Characterize the development prospects and potential risks for Kazakhstan in the framework of subsequent membership in the EAEU.

³ See: V.N. Viunov, M.G. Filippova, R.M. Mamedov, V.V. Korotovskii, E.A. Rzaeva, V.A. Kofanov, "Nekotorye perspektivy i protivorechiia razvitiia EAES," *Molodoi uchenyi*, No. 8, 2016, pp. 520-523.

⁴ See: D. Berdakov, "Kyrgyzstan v EAES: chto izmenilos v strane za god?," available at [<http://eurasia.expert/kyrgyzstan-v-eaes-chto-izmenilos-v-strane-za-god/>].

⁵ See: *Ibidem*.

⁶ See: "Lider integratsii: Armeniia operezhaet partnerov po EAES," available at [<https://ru.armeniasputnik.am/review/20170901/8493013/armeniya-operezhaet-partnerov-po-integracii-v-eaehs.html>].

⁷ See: "Dva goda v EAES: ob'em torgovli promproduktsiei Armenii i gosudarstv Soiuza po itogam 2017 goda vyros na 57.4%," available at [<http://www.yerkramas.org/article/137112/dva-goda-v-eaes-obem-torgovli-promprodukcii-armenii-i-gosudarstv-soyuz-a-po-itogam-2017-goda-vyros-na-57-4>].

⁸ See: "Chetyre goda v EAES: kakuiu vygodu poluchil Kazakhstan," available at [<https://ru.sputniknews.kz/economy/20181026/7790163/eaes-4-goda-kazakhstan-vygoda.html>].

EAEU as an Integrative Alternative on the Eurasian Continent. The Potential of the Integrative Union on the International Arena. Forecasts and Prospects

The project of a customs union has launched a process of limited integration of a number of countries of the post-Soviet space. On 6 January, 1995, there was a framework Agreement on a Customs Union signed between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus. On 20 January of the same year the Agreement on the Customs Union among Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan was signed. In 1996, Kyrgyzstan had joined the Customs Union; in 1999, Tajikistan had become a member. In 2000, the integration attempts of these five countries resulted in the signing of the documents related to the creation of the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC), the goal of which was the creation of an integrated goods and services market among member countries.

At the time of the Union's establishment, the level of development of member countries was rather non-uniform in regard to economic, social and political perspectives. The uniqueness of this union is in the fact that the EAEU was positioned as an alternative to the European Union in Eurasia, and its equivalent that is adapted to the post-Soviet realities.⁹ At that, the emphasis was placed on regional economic integration, which was intended to promote comprehensive modernization of member countries.¹⁰

The framework agreement on the Customs Union between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan was signed as early as in 1995, but it was, in fact, created, according to the Agreement dated 6 October, 2007. Since 1 January, 2010, the integrated customs zone that comprises Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan with common customs tariffs and a unified system of regulatory measures, is in place. Since 6 July, 2010, these countries' Unified Customs Code is in effect. On 9 December, 2010, in Moscow presidents of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia have signed the last three documents required to establish the Common Economic Space (CES), in particular, the agreement on conducting a coordinated macroeconomic policy, an agreement on creating the financial market conditions for free movement of capital, and an agreement on the coordination of monetary policy. Fourteen agreements were signed previously, on the prime minister and vice prime minister level. This includes, in particular, the agreements on the regulation of natural monopolies, interaction in the sphere of power industry, public procurement, competition, services, investments; provision of state subsidies, migration policy; technical regulations; conducting a coordinated policy on oil transportation along the main pipeline system, on the rules of access to natural monopoly services in the sphere of gas transport along the gas transmission networks, in the sphere of railroad transportation and in the power energy sphere, including the issues of price formation and tariff policy. As a result of these agreements, on 1 January, 2012 the Common Economic Space of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia began functioning on the basis of the Customs Union.¹¹

The next step on the path to Eurasian integration was the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union. The agreement on the establishment of the EAEU was signed on 29 May, 2014 in Astana, the

⁹ See: V.T. Sakaev, "Evraziiskii ekonomicheskii soiuz: politiko-demograficheskie aspekty," *Izvestiia Uralskogo federal'nogo universiteta*, Series 3, *Obshchestvennye nauki*, No. 2 (164), 2017, pp. 141-153.

¹⁰ See: *Ibidem*.

¹¹ See: S. Blank, "The Intellectual Origins of the Eurasian Union Project," in: *Putin's Grand Strategy: The Eurasian Union and Its Discontents*, ed. by S.F. Starr, S.E. Cornell, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, Washington, D.C., 2016.

capital of Kazakhstan. The new integrative union, which includes the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space began functioning on 1 January, 2015. The EAEU's highest administrative organs are the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council and the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council, which incorporates the heads of member countries. The councils' decisions are made by consensus.

A panel meeting of the Council of the Heads of CIS Countries, as well as a meeting of the Interstate Committee of the Eurasian Economic Community and a Supreme Eurasian Economic Council on the level of the heads of member countries took place in Minsk on 10 October, 2014. The presidents of EurAsEC member countries have signed an agreement on termination of the functioning of this organization starting on 1 January, 2015 and transferring its economic functions to the Eurasian Economic Union. The agreement on its establishment was ratified by the parliaments of all three member countries shortly prior to the Minsk meeting. There was also an agreement signed regarding Armenia's entry into the EAEU, and it had become a member of the organization in January 2015. Kyrgyzstan acquired membership in the organization in May of the same year.¹²

The Concept of Formation of Common Oil and Oil Product Markets and the Concept of Formation of a Common Gas Market were approved at the panel meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council on 21 May, 2016 in Astana. These documents stipulate for a phased implementation of measures that should lead to the signing by the EAEU member countries of an agreement on common oil and oil product markets and an agreement on a common gas market in 2024. According to the former, EAEU member countries will obtain free access to partners' oil infrastructure, will be able to buy oil at market prices with no quantitative restrictions or export duties; according to the latter, EAEU member countries will attain the functioning of a common gas market with free gas supplies at market prices.

There was also a project developed in relation to the formation of a common electrical power market up to 2019, issues of establishment of an integrated transport space, creation of an integrated pharmaceutical market, etc. In August 2016, the heads of the governments of EAEU countries have agreed on the new version of the Customs Code, which stipulates for the unification of the customs processing procedures at the external EAEU borders and the simplification of the conditions of the flow of goods.¹³

The EAEU is conducting an active macroeconomic policy. On 5 October, 2016, the agreement on free trade between the EAEU and Vietnam had entered into force. Agreements on the establishment of free trade zones with Israel, Iran, Cambodia, and Singapore are under way. There is an ongoing negotiation process on unifying the trade regime with Serbia. In September 2016, there was a memorandum signed by the Eurasian Economic Commission and Hungary's Ministry of Agriculture on cooperation in the agricultural sphere. There are negotiations on concluding a trade and economic cooperation agreement between EAEU and China. In particular, there are discussions on potential participation of the EAEU in the implementation of the New Silk Road Economic Belt initiative, proposed by China in 2013. It stipulates for market integration and free flow of capital between member countries.¹⁴

Countries like Ukraine and Turkey are not considered as potential Union members in the near future. Despite the rumors of Turkey considering joining the EAEU as an alternative to EU membership, its participation in this organization is hardly viable. Neither Turkey itself, nor the EAEU have

¹² See: D. Cadier, M. Light, *Russia's Foreign Policy. Ideas, Domestic Politics and External Relations*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

¹³ See: D. Cadier, "Eastern Partnership vs Eurasian Union? The EU-Russia Competition in the Shared Neighbourhood and the Ukraine Crisis," *Global Policy*, Vol. 5, No. S1, 2014, pp. 76-85, available at [<https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12152>].

¹⁴ See: L. Delcour, "Between the Eastern Partnership and Eurasian Integration: Explaining Post-Soviet Countries' Engagement in (Competing) Region-Building Projects," *Problems of Post-Communism*, No. 6, 2015, pp. 316-327, available at [<https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2015.1057075>].

officially acknowledged the prospects of membership. In addition, yet another reason that impedes its membership are the strained Turkish-Armenian relations (there are currently no diplomatic relations between the two countries). And while certain experts claim¹⁵ that Turkey's entry into the EAEU may reconcile the two countries and smooth things over in the long-standing conflict, there is, on the contrary, also a risk of its intensification. The most recent statements from Armenia's diplomatic circles regarding such prospects sound rather unambiguous¹⁶—Turkey would not be welcome in the EAEU.

As for Ukraine, the vector of its foreign policy has shifted towards membership in the EU since 2014, and the issue of membership in the EAEU had lost its relevance. The conflict between Ukraine and Russia deserves a special note.¹⁷ The countries are currently unable to negotiate, accordingly, their simultaneous membership and peaceful cooperation in the framework of the Union seems unlikely.

As for Georgia, the standpoint of its elite and the majority of its population presumes integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures, rather than a Eurasian project.¹⁸

The key and the most important prospect of Eurasian integration is the switch from economic to political integration. In order to launch the process of switching from economic to political integration, union members must have a generally comparable economy weight. Meanwhile, an exchange of various goods and services should be established between the countries in question. Furthermore, the participants' goals and aspirations should coincide and should be aimed at integration within the framework of the economic union. The establishment of integrative institutions (i.e. supranational organs, supranational legal system, integration development strategy) is required. The integrative bloc itself should be founded as a union, an organization, etc. The probability of a switch to the next integrative step is particularly high when loyalty to integrative decisions and processes is expressed in various groups of interests in an integrative community.¹⁹

As far as the evaluation of potential Union prospects, according to certain estimates, a scenario is possible in the near future wherein EAEU countries will conduct uncoordinated policy and conclude separate treaties with foreign partners. Over time, the contradictions within EAEU will increase, and the project will no longer be efficient as a result.

China may expand its influence in the Central Asian region, and Russia's role will shift to being a transport corridor between China and its partners. In addition, Russia's engagement in transport corridors will be minimized, due to the laying out of these corridors through Central Asian countries and other CIS countries.²⁰

If such factors emerge in the future, the disintegration in the Eurasian region will escalate, and the EAEU will fail as an integrative project.²¹

¹⁵ See: "Armeniiu i Turtsiiu mozhno pomirit s pomoshchiu EAES: vostokoved," available at [<https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2017/03/17/armeniya-i-turciyu-mozhno-pomirit-s-pomoshchyu-eaes-vostokoved>].

¹⁶ See: "V MID Armenii nazvali absurdnym pozhelanie Turtsii vstupit v tamozhennuiu zonu EvrAzES," TASS, available at [<https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/4494063>]; A. Vaneskegian, *Armenia VS Turtsia: dve storony odnoi medali dlia EAES*, Sputnik, 2017, available at [<https://ru.armeniasputnik.am/analytics/20170822/8358326/armeniya-vs-turciya-dve-storony-odnoj-medali-dlya-eaehs.html>].

¹⁷ See: S. Martynova, Modern Russian Society in the Context of Antroposocietal Approach // *Annals of Anthropological Practice*, No. 1, 2018, pp. 19-28, available at [<https://doi.org/10.1111/napa.12115>].

¹⁸ See: S. Biriukov, A. Barsukov, D. Berezniakov, S. Kozlov, "Problemy i perspektivy rasshireniia EAES," available at [<http://svom.info/entry/676-problemy-i-perspektivy-rasshireniya-eaes/>].

¹⁹ See: R. Dragneva, "The Eurasian Economic Union: Balancing Sovereignty and Integration," *Working Paper*, University of Birmingham, 2016.

²⁰ See: R. Dragneva, K. Wolczuk, *Eurasian Economic Integration: Law, Policy, and Politics*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 2013.

²¹ See: A.M. Libman, B.A. Kheifets, "Modeli ekonomicheskoi dezintegratsii. Integratsiia i dezintegratsiia," *Evraziiskaia ekonomicheskaiia integratsiia*, No. 2 (11), 2011, pp. 4-18.

Such a scenario may be implemented if the conditions of Russia's economic isolation, a downward trend in oil prices, absence of meaningful steps in EAEU countries on diversification of high-revenue spheres, failure of diplomacy on the Ukrainian issue, and absence of meaningful EAEU infrastructural projects in the East, are fulfilled. All in all, the number of premises for the realization of a pessimistic scenario is rather large in the current situation.²²

Nonetheless, the optimistic scenario also has a number of premises in the current economic and political world view.

Despite the complicated political and economic situation, the EAEU may develop faster than the EU did. Integrative bloc experience demonstrates that every new integrative organization develops faster than its predecessors. EAEU initially assumed a rather quick development speed, which, however, slowed down in 2016-2017.²³ Currency devaluation and the lowered national currency rates against the dollar had weakened the economic positions of Kazakhstan and Russia. This period was not the most appropriate for the Union expansion processes.²⁴ However, if the prices of oil and other mined resources stabilize, which is currently the case, EAEU may catch up with the tempo assumed at the outset.

Kazakhstan's Position in Regard to EAEU Membership

Prior to Kazakhstan's joining the EAEU, experts have given cardinally different evaluations to this event.

Main prospects of Kazakhstan's participation in the Union must have positively impacted the country's economic success through:

- Its focus on the EAEU market through the creation of high-technology competitive manufacturing through engaging foreign investments in this sphere;
- Expansion of non-energy exports to EAEU partner countries, thus, lowering the dependence of domestic economy on the international market dynamics;
- Lowering the dependence on international volatile fluctuations and crises with the help of consolidation of supranational EAEU institutions;
- Kazakhstan's free access to the labor, capital and services market within EAEU countries;
- Raising the level of competitiveness of Kazakhstani goods and services on both the foreign and domestic consumer markets by lowering the prices for certain categories;
- Growth of economy due to activation of participation in international trade.²⁵

Aside from obvious prospects, there are certain risks for Kazakhstan in actively participating in EAEU, typical specifically of the national economy:

²² See: S.Iu. Glazev, "O tseliakh, problemakh i merakh gosudarstvennoi politiki razvitiia i integratsii," *Evraziiskaia integratsiia: ekonomika, pravo, politika*, No. 13, 2013, pp. 268-278.

²³ See: D. Cadier, op. cit.

²⁴ See: *Evraziiskaia ekonomicheskaiia integratsiia*, 2017: *doklad No. 43*, Evraziiskii bank razvitiia, Tsentri integratsionnykh issledovaniy EABR, TCI EABR, St. Petersburg, 2017, 88 pp.

²⁵ See: M.S. Eliseev, "Evraziiskoe prostranstvo: geekonomicheskii aspekt razvitiia," *Evraziiskaia integratsiia: ekonomika, pravo, politika*, No. 14, 2013, pp. 49-57.

- Suppression of national manufacturers by external competitors of EAEU member countries;
- Outflow of highly qualified personnel to countries with better labor conditions and higher wages;
- Emergence of a dependence of Kazakhstani financial institutions on major Russian banks in the framework of establishing a joint financial market or on major foreign investments from outside the EAEU;
- The need to obey supranational economic regulation institutions in the framework of integrative process for EAEU member countries.²⁶

Certain risks and prospects were largely dependent on the level of Kazakhstan's integration into EAEU, as well as on the process of development of the integrative union itself. The first years of integration brought a positive effect, that is why we can say that the majority of concerns was exaggerated. However, while Kazakhstan's focus on resources is preserved, its economy cannot adequately compete with Russia.²⁷ The enumerated risks and prospects for Kazakhstan remain relevant still, but only the subsequent development of events will demonstrate tangible results of EAEU membership.

We must also briefly discuss the relationship between Kazakhstan with other member countries and other geopolitical players as part of cooperation within the EAEU.

As part of Armenia's entry into the EAEU, there was a significant deepening of economic relations with Kazakhstan. The reason for such a surge in the goods turnover volume was, first and foremost, the growth of Kazakhstani export to Armenia, as well as the establishment of Kazakhstani firms in the allied country. On the other hand, in 2016, the export from Armenia to Kazakhstan increased by 19.4% compared to the previous year. In particular, the export of products of the food processing industry and agriculture had increased, while the export of textile and shoe manufacturing industry grew twenty-five-fold.²⁸ In this context, we have to note the fact that over the course of the last two years, the range of products exported from Armenia to Kazakhstan have expanded, coming to include a number of new products, such as cigarettes and their substitutes, leather goods, clothing, etc. Unfortunately, the absence of common borders and, accordingly, complicated logistics, play an important role in development of export-import operations between Armenia and Kazakhstan. We may say that this is currently the most significant problem. The Belt and Road project will be able to ensure the development of economic cooperation among countries of a larger region, including between Armenia and Kazakhstan, particularly with consideration to the engagement of Kazakhstan in the above-mentioned project.

The full potential of cooperation between Armenia and Kazakhstan in various spheres, in particular in the trade and economic sphere, has not been realized. That is why the work on developing specific projects has to be conducted. Cooperation of companies in the framework of establishing free economic zones that function in both countries may become a promising direction. Establishing joint companies in order to come out onto other countries' markets in such spheres as food industry, textile and chemical industries, as well as information technologies seems especially promising.

Kazakhstan is also one of the leading trade and economic and investment partners of Kyrgyzstan, and holds the third place in the country's foreign trade turnover. Positive dynamics in the

²⁶ See: V.A. Koksharov, "Mnogourovnevaia integratsia v postsovetskom prostranstve," *Izvestia Uralskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, No. 4, 2011, pp. 9-16.

²⁷ See: T.A. Mansurov, "Stanovlenie i razvitie Evraziiskoi integratsii," *Mezhdunarodnaia ekonomika*, No. 12, 2013, pp. 6-12.

²⁸ See: C. Hartwell, "Improving Competitiveness in the Member States of the Eurasian Economic Union: A Blueprint for the Next Decade," *Post-Communist Economies*, Vol. 28, Issue 1, 2016.

growth of bilateral goods turnover are also in place. The volume of mutual trade in the 9 months of 2018 amounted to \$625.7 million, namely 9.9% more than in the previous year.²⁹ Over 300 joint Kazakhstani-Kyrgyz enterprises and a number of companies with 100% Kazakhstani capital are functioning in Kyrgyzstan. However, the positive cooperation between the two countries was preceded by the resolution of conflicts with shadow imports. The problem of shadow imports from the neighboring country had emerged in connection with uncontrolled contraband of goods to Kazakhstan, the reason for which was the absence of desire on the part of the Kyrgyz side to comply with EAEU trade requirements.³⁰ The latest surge of the customs conflict occurred when Astana sharply reinforced control on the border with Kyrgyzstan. A difficult reconciliation took place after the leaders of the two countries at the meeting in Minsk approved the measures on the interception of shadow imports over the Kyrgyz border, which inflicted damage to Kazakhstani economy and complicated the multilateral cooperation within the EAEU. Negative consequences of the customs conflict between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have far surpassed the framework of the relations between the two countries, creating undesirable precedents of non-fulfillment of obligation not only by Kyrgyzstan, but also by other EAEU members.

As a member of the Union, Kazakhstan is particularly attractive to Russia and China, which are using various means to expand their presence in all of the country's economic spheres.

It is extremely significant for Kazakhstan, which is geographically removed from main sales markets and has no access to seaports, to have equal access to the infrastructure of Russia and Belarus. Kazakhstan intends to efficiently resolve these issues within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union, which began to function in January 2015. Currently, the Concept of Foreign Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2014-2020 stipulates that Russia is Kazakhstan's main partner.³¹ We can state that Russian and Kazakhstani governments have rather close ties, which have strengthened the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union.

As for China's interests in Kazakhstan, first and foremost, we have to mention PCR's endeavors to obtain access to mineral resources (oil, gas, uranium), and ensure reliable transit of Turkmen gas.³² China is committed to the development of Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous Region in the framework of inter-regional cooperation, constructing highway and railroad infrastructure. Beijing also aims to increase the volume of Chinese goods on Kazakhstani markets, and plans to bind Astana with economic obligations through financial aid and loans and deepen cultural ties, influencing the emergence of a new generation of Kazakhstani elite. China hopes to become a permanent player in the promising Caspian oil projects.³³

Due to the growth of PCR's influence in the Central Asian region, there's growing concern in Kazakhstan regarding the "Chinese threat." Kazakhstan is concerned about the potential dependence on Chinese import and the decrease of manufacturing in domestic industry sectors, such as textile and shoes. Tough competition between Chinese and Kazakhstani manufacturers impacts the local markets, where half of the turnover may soon come under the control of Chinese businessmen. The growing Chinese influence also causes apprehensions in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. With an understand-

²⁹ See: "Tovarooborot Kazakhstana s Kyrgyzstanom po itogam 9 mesiatsev tekushchego goda sostavil \$625.7 millionov," available at [<https://kursiv.kz/news/vlast-i-biznes/2018-12/tovarooborot-kazakhstana-s-kyrgyzstanom-po-itogam-9-mesyacev-tekushchego>].

³⁰ See: A. Konopelko, "Eurasian Economic Union: A Challenge for EU Policy towards Kazakhstan," *Asia Europe Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2018, pp. 1-17, available at [<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-017-0480-7>].

³¹ K. Kirkham, "The Formation of the Eurasian Economic Union: How Successful is the Russian Regional Hegemony?" *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2016, pp. 111-128, available at [<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euras.2015.06.002>].

³² A. Dugin, "Eurasian Mission: An Introduction to Neo-Eurasianism," *Arktos Media Ltd.*, 2014.

³³ See: P. Dutkiewicz, R. Sakwa, *Eurasian Integration—The View from Within*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2015.

ing of this fact, Beijing introduced a strategy aimed at improving its image, using, in particular, cultural and educational programs.³⁴

The seriousness of Uzbekistan's intention to integrate into structures linked to the safeguarding of national and regional security, is beyond dispute. Its endeavor to join the economic component of the Eurasian integration processes is continuously facing a number of objective restrictions. First and foremost, these are complex processes within the Uzbekistan's political elite, where the competition among the regional clans is continuing in a concealed form. Aside from the traditional rivalry with Kazakhstan for leadership in the region, there is a concern among the Uzbekistan business elite in regard to the economic "takeover" by the more powerful Kazakhstan, whose business is integrated with an even more powerful Russian economy. However, Uzbekistan's intentions will be actively supported by the interest of Kazakhstan in a new market for its products, the competitiveness of which is significantly higher than that of a potential new member of the Union.³⁵

Further expansion of the EAEU presumes the adjustment of strategy with regard to the changing political and socioeconomic circumstances. The refusal to comprehend "multidirectional" strategy as permanent maneuvering between centers of power in order to obtain unilateral benefits is practically inevitable. Otherwise, the structural and institutional foundations of the EAEU are likely to be destabilized, which may lead to the Union becoming ineffective. While the principal directions of cooperation among Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan have been agreed and stipulated, the situation remains somewhat uncertain in regard to new and potential members of the Union. This complicates the planning of the subsequent stages of the integrational process and their coordinated administration.³⁶

In order to intensify and improve the quality of integration, the Eurasian Economic Union needs political reinforcement, namely the bolstering of the structures that act side by side in ensuring systemic security in Eurasia. The establishment of independent regional policy, which would allow for better use of resources of the regions within the Union for general socioeconomic development, seems equally necessary.³⁷

The deepening of economic ties between Kazakhstan and Armenia and Kazakhstan's integration into the WTO may lead to Kazakhstan becoming a connecting link in expanding the integrative processes between the EAEU and the EU.³⁸ Under the conditions of the agreement in force between Armenia and EU on the comprehensive and expanded partnership for countries of the EAEU, of which Armenia is a member, new opportunities and prospects are opening up for cooperation with the European Union. Despite the tension in the relations with Europe, the EAEU is a big step towards forming a Greater Europe (from Lisbon to Vladivostok), the foundation for which was officially laid in 2003, when Russia and the EU have agreed to form a common economic space. Russia's and Kazakhstan's entry into the WTO also works towards the same purpose.

Greater Europe (or the Greater Eurasia) is a concept of a common space from Lisbon to Vladivostok in the economic, legal, cultural, scientific and, perhaps, military and political spheres. This idea was at the foundation of the Eurasian idea of equal-level cooperation of the European civilization and Russia/Eurasia.

³⁴ See: A. Kroeber, *China's Economy. What Everyone Needs to Know*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2016; M. Titarenko, *Kitaiskaia Narodnaia Respublika: politika, ekonomika, kultura. K 65-letiiu KNR*, ID «FORUM», Moscow, 2014.

³⁵ See: A. Obydenkova, A. Libman, *Autocratic and Democratic External Influences in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, Ashgate, Farnham, 2015.

³⁶ See: V.Iu. Dodonov, "Kazakhstanskaia ekonomika v usloviiakh Evraziiskoi integratsii: tendentsii i promezhutochnye itogi," *Arkhot journal*, Issue 1, 2017.

³⁷ See: E. Vinokurov, P. Balas, M. Emerson, P. Havlik, V. Pereboev, E. Rovenskaya, A. Stepanova, J. Kofner, P. Kabat, *Challenges and Opportunities of Economic Integration within a Wider European and Eurasian Space. Synthesis Report*, IIASA, Laxenburg, 2016.

³⁸ See: K. Haushofer, *Kontinentalnyi blok: Berlin — Moskva — Tokio. O geopolitike: Raboty raznykh let*, Mysl Publishers, Moscow, 2001.

Vladimir Putin and Nursultan Nazarbaev have offered their concept of creating a common space from Lisbon to Vladivostok through the empowerment of the Eurasian community and cooperation with the EU on equal footing (the Paris-Berlin and Moscow-Astana axis). Such a space may be created via the establishment of a common space that includes the EU and the EAEU.

The integration of the Belt and Road project will develop on a mutually beneficial basis. Russia and Kazakhstan may not only preserve the role of a key transport corridor, but may also become full-scale partners in infrastructural projects within the association. The integration of the Belt and Road project with the EAEU will not be limited by transportation issues and will include trade and investment cooperation. Collaboration with SCO and BRICS will be intensified.

With the condition of amplification of soft power within the EAEU, the EAEU project will be acquiring increasingly greater popularity among the population of the EAEU countries, neighboring countries and, possibly, European countries as well. This may lay a foundation for subsequent cooperation between the EU and the EAEU if the economic blockade of Russia is discontinued.³⁹

Scenarios of deeper cooperation between the EU and the EAEU on one side, and the EAEU and China on the other may possibly be worked out and begin to be implemented by 2050, with a prospect of full continental integration.⁴⁰

In summary, let us note that in the current phase of Kazakhstan's development, elimination of customs borders, creation of an integrated market of goods, services, investments and labor resources, a common trade policy and regulation of standards will allow to give a powerful impetus to the development of business within the republic, increase consumer demand and improve the quality of goods and services. Due to the advantageous conditions of access to Russian transport infrastructure, Kazakhstani exporters will be able to decrease their transport expenditures and promote the competitiveness of their products on third countries' markets.

However, the main problems that Kazakhstani firms will face within the EAEU are the insufficient readiness for changes of a qualitative nature and the lack of readiness of enterprises to switch to a new business management format.

Ensuring macroeconomic stability is a required condition for the establishment of stable competitive advantages of both the EAEU as a whole and its individual members. Great significance is attributed to the augmentation of added value produced in the EAEU and the development of efficient interaction between the economies of member countries. In order to establish sustainable competitive advantages of EAEU member countries, measures to strengthen their economic, financial and currency potential are required. Meanwhile, it is crucial to emphasize the implementation of programs that entail the modernization of these economies to diversify the structure of goods manufacturing and export.

Risks and Prospects of Subsequent Membership in the EAEU for Kazakhstan. New Challenges to the Security of the Country and the World

Kazakhstan's entry into the EAEU has brought a number of definitive advantages and apparent disadvantages to the country, which were discussed in the previous section.

³⁹ See: V. Movchan, R. Giucci, *Quantitative Assessment of Ukraine's Regional Integration Options: DCFTA with European Union vs. Customs Union with Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan (Policy Paper No. PP/05/2001)*, Institute for Economic Research and Policy Consulting, Kiev, 2011.

⁴⁰ See: Zh.D. Kusmangalieva, *Kazakhstan i evraziiskaia integratsiia: kollektivnaia monografiia*, Delovoi mir, Astana, 2014.

Despite the fact that the EAEU was initially conceived as a structure for economic integration, at some point the Union began to go beyond the strictly economic sphere, involving political issues, as well as the actualized security issues, increasingly more.⁴¹ Meanwhile, the strategy of EAEU expansion must be of a more complex nature, when aimed at the creation of a consolidated subject of geo-economic and geopolitical relations, a working model of regional international cooperation, attractive for new member countries. The development of any international institution stipulates for the establishment of supranational organs, which does not mean the loss of sovereignty or own development possibilities by member countries, but does postulate their transformation. The switch to a discussion of social, cultural and political issues will also occur in the short-term perspective.⁴²

If the structure's powers are expanded, the country's subsequent membership in the EAEU may bring new security challenges to the Republic of Kazakhstan.⁴³

For instance, conflict situations may impact the international stance of a country, both individually and within the organization. Russia's conflict with Western countries on the issue of the conflict within Ukraine serves as a vivid example. Member countries, and Kazakhstan in particular, must be exceptionally diplomatic in the existing situation in order to act within the framework of national interests while establishing a balance in the relations with both the Russian Federation and the West.

When the Crimean Peninsula was transferred under Russian jurisdiction, Kazakhstani authorities stated that they perceive the referendum in Crimea as a free expression of will by the population of the Ukrainian autonomy and treats Russia's decision "with understanding." Despite the attempts of certain Kazakhstani experts to draw analogies between the situations around Crimea and the state of things in the north of Kazakhstan itself, such assessments did not gain acceptance with the majority of Kazakhstan's society and elite. Kazakhstan's authorities continued its course, which was aimed at the development of its relations with Russia, recognizing it as being in the best interests of the country. Meanwhile, Kazakhstan played an important intermediary role in establishing dialog between Russia and the U.S. in the east of the Ukraine, by stimulating the launch of the Minsk process. At the same time, Kyrgyzstan, which at that point was a potential member of the Customs Union and the EAEU, went even further, officially accepting the results of the referendum.⁴⁴

The following may also pose a threat to the country's development:

- proprietary modernization projects of EAEU candidate countries, which may not correlate with the general Eurasian integration strategy, which is developed and realized by the key participants in this process;
- incoherence of economic models used by various post-Soviet states (a strategy that stipulates for reliance on proprietary development resources);
- weakness or insufficient consolidation of political, and administrative authority institutions within certain potential member states, which limits the possibility of their participation in integrative and, on a greater scale, modernization processes in the post-Soviet space;
- absence of an appropriate level of political consensus among the elites of certain potential EAEU member countries, which complicates their decision in making a choice for the integrative strategy;
- incomplete formation of EAEU structures aimed at ensuring integration and providing its qualitative content.⁴⁵

⁴¹ See: S. Biriukov, A. Barsukov, D. Bereznikov, S. Kozlov, op. cit.

⁴² Ibidem.

⁴³ See: A. Zhansautova, Ye. Nechayeva, M. Kazbekova, "Political Risks in Ensuring Water Security. Central Asian States' Experience: Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 19, Issue 4, 2018, pp. 24-34.

⁴⁴ See: S. Biriukov, A. Barsukov, D. Bereznikov, S. Kozlov, op. cit.

⁴⁵ Ibidem.

An equally serious threat may be posed by the issue related to ensuring a real and effective equality of EAEU member countries. The responsible position of Russia, which did not allow a formal center and periphery to emerge within the joint economic space that is being formed, is especially significant from the point of view of expanding and deepening the integration within the EAEU. The relevance of this issue is related to the structural peculiarities of the EAEU, since the potential of the member states is hardly comparable. In order to avoid the apprehensions that EAEU member states may have about the possibility of a certain “neo-imperial course,” new initiatives related to the comprehensive development of socioeconomic potential of these states should be proposed, and the mutually beneficial nature of cooperative endeavors substantiated.⁴⁶ Such concerns may be overcome by an official EAEU-institution level acceptance of a possibility of integration at various levels and at different speeds, as well as a diversity of various ways to include new members and partners in the Union’s structure.

It is also crucial to mention such threats as the fight with drug trafficking, Islamic terrorism, illegal migration. These problems concern both Kazakhstan and other member countries, as well as candidates for membership in this union.⁴⁷

The formation of an EAEU-based geopolitical bloc and its action to counter structures like EU and NATO, is an issue that is just as serious and concerns national security.⁴⁸ An implementation of this scenario may very well turn into a serious international conflict.⁴⁹

Conclusions

The EAEU is a relatively young international economic union on the Eurasian continent. However, in the years of its existence, the Union had managed to bring positive results for the member countries’ economies. According to experts, despite a number of complications, the EAEU strives to expand its influence on the continent and obtain authority as a political organization, as well as an economic institution.

The Union is facing a number of strategic tasks, the execution of which will allow to switch to a new level in foreign policy, and will have a positive impact on the economic situation both within the member countries and the region as a whole.

Kazakhstan, as one of the most important Union member countries, experiences all the risks of participating in the Union. The complications in the initial phase of EAEU establishment were unable to offset the rise of the country’s economic indicators. An undisputable intermediation of Kazakhstan between the EAEU and Union’s potential partners define the country as one of the drivers of integrative processes. The expansion of ties with Armenia will assist in stimulating the development of cooperation and building a relationship with the EU, while the sanctions against Russia are still in place. Meanwhile, there is a danger for Kazakhstan in being engaged in the political conflicts of its Union partners. As long as Kazakhstan is capable of maneuvering between political battles and advocating its own interests, while remaining open to other directions of economic and political cooperation, participation in EAEU will bring exclusively economic benefits.

⁴⁶ See: S. Biriukov, A. Barsukov, D. Berezniakov, S. Kozlov, op. cit.

⁴⁷ Ibidem.

⁴⁸ See: D. Lein, “Stanet li Evraziiskii ekonomicheskii soiuz «protivovesom» ES?”, available at [<http://ru.valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/protivoves-es>].

⁴⁹ Ibidem.

NEW SILK ROAD DIPLOMACY: INDIA'S CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES

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ABSTRACT

The historical significance of the Silk Road as a network of several inter-linked trade routes connecting Eastern Europe and Africa to South and East Asia, with intersections in the present-day Eurasia or Central Asia, is well established. For the last couple of decades (post-U.S.S.R. disintegration period), voices have been heard from all over the world calling for a revival of the ancient Silk Road with an aim of enhanced overland commercial cohesiveness in the region connected/covered by it. However, the continuous war in Afghanistan over the course of the last three decades and uncertainty in Central Asia have continuously rendered the idea of revival unviable, up until the present time.

Efforts aimed at the revival of the Silk Road seem to be gaining a renewed mo-

mentum lately. It is important to note that the present-day major international powers have their own, distinct concepts of the revival of the Silk Road that seem to be moving ahead at varying paces, operating parallel to each other, if not exactly coinciding.

With all the above inferences, India is still in the process of expanding the association, which would eventually lead to close engagement with major powers. In the rapidly changing geopolitical scenario, some of the most important challenges for India are the adverse economic effects of world economy and energy security along with geocultural relevance in the context of Islamic State and fundamentalism. In this context, this paper aims to elaborate India's challenges and responses for a new Silk Road diplomacy.

KEYWORDS: *Silk Road, Central Asia, India, China, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan.*

Introduction

The mystique of the Silk Road has been conjured up as a hazy image of a caravan of camels laden with silk on a dusty desert track, reaching from China to Rome involving trade of not only fine Chinese silk, spices, perfume, grapes, coriander, Baltic amber, and Mediterranean coral but also forming kinship alliances along the route through marriages.¹ Christopher Beckwith describes the rise and fall of the great Central Eurasian empires, including those of the Scythians, Attila the Hun, the Turks and Tibetans, and Genghis Khan and the Mongols associated with this route.² Not just the rise and fall of the empires that were associated with this path, but the spread of great world religions such as Buddhism, which emerged from India, was also related to it. The Silk Road has been indeed the “first engagement in globalization.”³

The Central Asian saga forms a major narrative in the mystique of the Silk Road. Central Asia was the heart of the great Mongol empire of Tamerlane, site of the legendary Silk Road and scene of Stalin’s cruelest deportations. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of newly independent republics, Central Asia—containing the magical cities of Bukhara and Samarkand, and terrain as diverse as the Kazakh steppes, the Karakum desert, and the Pamir Mountains—has been in a constant state of transition.⁴ Civilizations flourished, died and reflowered along this route in Central Asia. It was and still is a region which has been a witness to the Victorian Great Game and to the war-torn history of the region in recent decades. The original Great Game, the clandestine struggle between Russia and Britain for dominance in Central Asia, has long been regarded as one of the greatest geopolitical conflicts in history.

In this context, the historical significance of the Silk Road as a network of several interlinking trade routes connecting Eastern Europe and Africa with South and East Asia, with intersections in the present-day Eurasia or Central Asia, is well established. For the last couple of decades (post-U.S.S.R. disintegration period), voices have been heard from all over the world calling for a revival of the ancient Silk Road to attain enhanced overland commercial cohesiveness in the region connected/covered by it. However, the continuous war in Afghanistan over the last three decades and uncertainty in Central Asia have rendered the idea of a revival unviable, up until the present time.

Efforts aimed at the revival of the Silk Road seem to be gaining a renewed momentum lately. It is important to note that the major present-day leading powers have their own, distinct concepts of the revival of the Silk Road that seem to be moving ahead at varying paces, operating parallel to each other, if not exactly coinciding.

The continuity of this great game in the present times is reflected in the multiple Silk Road initiatives at the behest of various “powers” vying for a place of significance in the world. In this power struggle, the Central Asian region has again emerged as a place of immense geopolitical significance.⁵ The rise of the Arab world and China, which have since the ancient times created challenges for other countries, especially in the context of China’s current trade and economic hegemony, are all associated with this route.⁶ Today it has become a major policy initiative of the Chinese state that involves the highest level of government functionaries.⁷

¹ See: P. Hopkirk, *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road: The Search for the Lost Cities and Treasures of Chinese Central Asia*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1984.

² See: Ch.I. Beckwith, *Empires of the Silk Road: A History of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present*, Princeton University Press, 2009.

³ *Traveling the Silk Road: Ancient Pathway to the Modern World*, ed. by M. Norell et al., Sterling Signature Publication, 2011.

⁴ See: C. Thubron, *Shadow of the Silk Road*, Harper Collins Publishers, Noida, India, 2007.

⁵ See: B.V. Anand, “Afghanistan and America’s New Silk Road Strategy,” 2012, available at [<http://www.vifindia.org>].

⁶ See: K. Rezakhani, “The Road That Never Was: The Silk Road and Trans-Eurasian Exchange,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol. 30, No. 3, 2010, pp. 420-433.

⁷ See: M. Kaczmarek, “The New Silk Road: A Versatile Instrument in China’s Policy,” 2015, available at [<http://www.osw.waw.pl/en>].

The Chinese idea of a New Silk Road emerged long ago, when Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng visited Central Asia in the mid-1990s. As China's economic boom gained momentum in the 1990s and continued through the first decade of the 21st century, the country has understandably searched for ways to diversify its fast-increasing energy needs, for which the hydrocarbon-rich Central Asian region provided an important source and a rather safe alternative. Thus, China has built two important pipelines to import natural gas from Turkmenistan and oil from Kazakhstan. In addition, China has not only established road and rail connections with the CAR, but is also working on extending them beyond CAR to other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and beyond, to Europe. Of course, China has plans and objectives of its own similar to those of the U.S. and its allies.

In a persistent pursuit of this strategy, Chinese leader Xi Jinping presented the concept of the New Silk Road in Astana in 2013—an aggregation of land and maritime routes, including the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) and the Maritime Silk Road (MSR). The Silk Road Economic Belt is a Chinese plan to amalgamate the economies of Asia and Europe with the Chinese economy along the Eurasian route through the expansion of transport infrastructure and communication networks connecting railways, roads and fiber optics highways that would link South Asia, South East Asia, Central Asia and Europe along an integrated land corridor. The Chinese Silk Road Economic Belt is an ambitious project aimed at heightening international cooperation and joint development throughout Eurasia. The project, which has been presented by Chinese president under the slogan of “Belt and Road,” is supposed to be essential for the development of the entire region.

The notion of the Maritime Silk Road is another major aspect that is gaining significant importance in light of China's hegemonic attempt to create an overland Silk Road. The Maritime Silk Road emphasizes improved connectivity, but, more importantly, it is designed to improve China's geostrategic position in the world. It is an effort to initiate a “grand strategy” with global implications, which could be very helpful in reinforcing cooperation and raising it to a new level of maritime partnerships. Nevertheless, China has yet to cultivate the much-needed political and strategic trust.⁸

The major reasons for this renewed Chinese interest has been attributed to mostly domestic rationales: a need to preserve stability on its borders and in the western part of China, secure export markets and energy supplies, develop inland transport routes as an alternative to unstable sea lines, and to narrow the development gap between the eastern and western parts of China by Justyna Szczudlik-Tatar.⁹ Another proposition in this sphere has been made regarding security and economic imperatives in Xinjiang, home to Muslim Turkic nationalities who have historically challenged Beijing's jurisdiction, thus prompting and shaping China's relations with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.¹⁰ The historical rhetoric that China has built around the mystique of the Silk Road has been challenged by Tansen Sen. He claims that the goal is to link China's historic and modern roles in promoting peace and prosperity for Asia. But the history of ancient expeditions is complicated, with goals and practices unacceptable in the modern context. “Not mentioned ... are the backdrops of conflict and the push to spread a Sino-centric world order.”¹¹

The U.S. is another major power vying for presence in this region through its own Silk Road project. Of all these parallel initiatives, the first was the New Silk Road Initiative (NSRI) that has extensively been promoted by the U.S. and its allies. A closer look at the NSRI and the programs related to it makes it apparent that the proponents of NSRI are planning a network of roads, railways

⁸ See: R.R. Chaturvedy, “New Maritime Silk Road: Converging Interests and Regional Responses,” *ISAS Working Paper*, No. 197, 8 October, 2014.

⁹ See: J. Szczudlik-Tatar, “China's New Silk Road Diplomacy,” *PRISM Policy Paper*, No. 34 (82), 2013.

¹⁰ See: H.H. Karrar, “The New Silk Road Diplomacy: A Regional Analysis of China's Central Asian Foreign Policy, 1991-2005,” 2006, available at [http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=102514&local_base=GEN01-MCG02].

¹¹ T. Sen, “Silk Road Diplomacy—Twists, Turns and Distorted History,” *YaleGlobal*, 2014.

and pipelines that connect primarily South and Central Asia through Pakistan and Afghanistan. On the face of it, seen from purely an economic and commercial point of view, NSRI seems to be an excellent initiative that can usher the region into a new era of unprecedented economic, trade and energy cooperation. But it is also a hard reality that peculiar geopolitical, geo-economic and geo-strategic significance of the South and Central Asian regions, and interests/objectives of the U.S. and its allies cannot be ignored.

Though fraught with some inextricable political, security and technical complications, the project aims to establish Afghanistan's intra-regional and trans-border trade with Central and South Asia after the withdrawal of NATO forces¹² and to improve Afghanistan's beleaguered economy by reviving one of history's oldest trading routes—the Silk Road.¹³ Vladimir Fedorenko believes that with the announcement of the New Silk Road strategy, the United States drew global attention to the various ongoing initiatives aiming to promote trade, economic cooperation and development in Central Asia and in other countries located along the ancient Silk Road.¹⁴ Such a shift in U.S. policy in the Central Asian region from a security-oriented approach to the new trade-driven and economy-oriented approach can become a turning point that empowers other ongoing national and international initiatives, such as those launched by Turkey, China, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan, as well as the Customs Union, TRACECA, CAREC, SPECA, and INOGATE, among others.

The presence of other major powers like Russia and Japan is also important. Russia counters the various Silk Road initiatives with its long-standing SCO presence, which has never been a point of overt contestations. Russia's long-standing relationships with the states of Central Asia created the conditions for making the SCO a necessary tool of Russian foreign policy, while Moscow's relations with China and the U.S. have driven the development of the group.¹⁵ With the continuation of the legacy of Russian dominance in the Central Asian region and predominantly its influence over and strong connectivity with the region, and areas beyond this region—China, on the one hand, and Iran and South Asia, on the other—initiatives such as the North-South Corridor and the recently established Eurasian Economic Union acquire a special significance. It is just as clear that Japan is using its Eurasia initiative to try to balance and stabilize its relations with Russia and the U.S., on the one hand, and with China, on the other, in the Great Game being played in Central Asia. While Central Asia as a region and Central Asian Republics (CARs) as individual states apparently seem to be obtaining economic gains from all these initiatives, but still find themselves balancing their acts in an atmosphere of competing influences of major powers, all of which are important to them.

Positioning India: *Sine qua non*

With the expanse of almost 7,000 kilometers, the Great Silk Road as a plausible trade route was a significant passage for India to connect with Asia and Europe from 200 BC to the 14th century AD.

¹² See: M.A. Kaw, "New US Silk Route Project for Post-2014 Afghanistan: Myth or Reality," *Journal of Central Asian and Caucasian Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 17, 2014, pp. 75-98.

¹³ See: R. Standish, "The United States' Silk Road to Nowhere, 2014, available at [www.foreignpolicy.com].

¹⁴ See: V. Fedorenko, "The New Silk Road Initiative in Central Asia," Rethink Institute, *Working paper 10*, 8 May, 2015, available at [http://www.rethinkinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Fedorenko-The-New-Silk-Road.pdf].

¹⁵ See: B.F. Gonzalez, *Charting a New Silk Road? The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Russian Foreign Policy*, University of Victoria, 2007.

The existing historical accounts of Central Asia secluded by immense deserts and overwhelming mountain ranges with the meandering Silk Road as a vital trade route through it have existed for over 2,000 years. Deconstructing the historicity of Silk Road with respect to Central Asia is required to remove the imaginings of Central Asia from the mold of exoticization as a distant land. The Silk Road is a continuous process whose impact continues from the past into the present and would extend well into the future as well, not just locally, but also globally.

Apart from being a trade route, in India's perception the Great Silk Road was also a germane avenue for cultural and knowledge exchange. This was the only route that allowed India and Central Asia to have a significant impact on each other. Whereas after the disintegration of the U.S.S.R., India lost an opportunity to strengthen the relationships in this region with the conceptualization of "revival of Silk Road." From the peak of the non-alignment movement and up to this day, India has not been able to fully integrate itself into the modern-day Silk Road initiatives.

The issue that arises out of the above-mentioned facts is about India's reaction and India's presence in all the proposed Silk Road initiatives. Anand wonders "whether America's new Silk Road strategy is really new or whether it is old wine in a new bottle? What are the objectives and significance of this strategy?"¹⁶ or what will happen if India joins China's maritime Silk Road?¹⁷ J. Jacob believes that Beijing does not seem to have invested enough effort in convincing Indian policymakers of both China's good intentions and its willingness to see India as an important player in its own right in Asia and the world and as a country not to be ignored when China and the United States talk shop.¹⁸ At the moment, therefore, the view from New Delhi is that China's Belt and Road initiative is about consolidating Chinese leadership in the region, particularly in opposition to the United States. This seems quite worrying to Indian strategists, who understand that it requires a stable and forward-looking relationship between Beijing and Washington for both China's progress and a peaceful Asia. But some believe that in spite of the trust deficit in India with respect to China, India's partnership in this initiative might prove fruitful.¹⁹

Global interconnectivity is the primary attribute of the globalization era. U.S.-led "Asia rebalancing" and "Asia Pivot" policies aimed at countering Chinese hegemony in Asia, as well as at contending the recently proposed SREB and MSR policies, which are considered an expansion of the Chinese "string of pearls" theory in the Indian ocean and the region, could be seen as rebalancing the U.S. role in this whole region and as an important element of the Great Game being played in Central Asia. On the other hand, India's age-old partnership with Russia and its evolving partnership with Japan have increased these two countries' ambitions of having more impact, especially through the Eurasia project in the context of the Silk Road revival.

With all the above conjectures, India is still in the process of expanding the collaboration and eventually engaging with these countries. In the rapidly changing geopolitical scenario, some of the most important challenges for India are the adverse economic effects of world economy and energy security along with geocultural relevance in the context of Islamic State and fundamentalism. In pursuit of these objectives, which are of utmost priority for Central Asian countries as well, India would not be able to disassociate itself from other countries in this aspect, as well as in the subsequent planning and implementation of the Silk Road plan. In this regard, India is already contemplating the development of strategies like Cotton Route, Spice Route and Mausam to balance its position in this region. Whether these strategies emerge as counter-balancing or as cooperative to the existing Silk Road strategies of other countries in this region is a matter of time.

¹⁶ B.V. Anand, op. cit.

¹⁷ See: M.K. Bhadrakumar, "Modi Leads India to the Silk Road," 7 August, 2014, available at [www.rediff.com].

¹⁸ See: J.T. Jacob, "Pothole Potential on China's Silk Roads," *Asia Times*, 13 March, 2015, available at [www.atimes.com].

¹⁹ See: A. Mattoo, R. Medcalf, "How the World Looks from India," *The Hindu*, 20 May, 2013.

Conclusion

Great power rivalries between the U.S.-China-Russia troika would define the power balance of and in the Asian landscape in the coming decades. The Silk Road would be a significant tool for manifestation of this rivalry. The Russia-China axis or Russia-U.S. entente-cordiale would influence the future power dynamics in Asia. If this future alliance does happen, then would it be correct to assume that India, Japan, Australia and NATO alliance partners would merely be peripheral actors in a balancing role or that India could be the central rather than a peripheral participant. In the latter case, the arising query is how India can play a proactive role in new Silk Road projects.

Apropos to this entire discourse, India has proposed its own programs like the Spice Route, the Cotton Route and ancient maritime routes with a specific emphasis on the Central Asian region. These programs endeavor to delve in-depth into the two scenarios where India could make its presence felt: as an independent proposer of another Silk Road project or as a strong contributor to an existing Silk Road initiative. It would be significant to know which of the options is more viable for India's position, if the second aspect noted above emerges to be a strong point. However, in either scenario, India's strong presence may act as a smooth game changer in this entire New Silk Road diplomacy. The efforts of the current Indian government have enthused new energy in the Indian foreign policy corridors and may lead to a successful synthesis of various Silk Road initiatives.

REGIONAL POLICY

THE YOUTH OF KAZAKHSTAN AND KYRGYZSTAN: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL ACTIVISM

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A B S T R A C T

The authors have offered a comprehensive analysis of political activism of the Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan youth, identified its specifics in both countries, defining differences and similarities of political involvement of the younger generation.

KEYWORDS: *political activism, political involvement, the youth, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan.*

Introduction

Studies of youth political activism are highly topical because, first, political involvement is an inalienable part of the political system, social and political institutions and the level of political culture. Political involvement of the younger generation determines, to a great extent, the efficiency of social, economic and political reforms and the country's future. Secondly, at the turn of the twenty-first century young people played an especially prominent role in the protests that shook the North African and Middle Eastern countries. These protests led to regime changes¹ and the so-called color revolutions of the spring of 2011. In many countries, protest movements are used/misused by destructive radical forces. Thirdly, discussions of the nature and level of youth political activism pushed the problem to the forefront of political science. On the one hand, researchers note the low level of political activism of the younger generation that looks a-political and is gradually losing interest in politics. On the other hand, the forms of its political activism is becoming more numerous and gradually acquiring new forms; information technologies play a new, previously unknown, role and influence political behavior of the younger generation to a much greater extent than before. This means that to identify and analyze the causes and factors that led to new forms and new trends in youth political activism we should rely on conceptual approaches and scholarly methods of studies.

We have selected Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan as the subject of our studies because they are coping with more or less identical political problems and yet demonstrate certain peculiarities of functioning of their political systems and methods of ensuring stability. We have identified the role of youth in the political processes, its attitude to the current social, economic and political events and the ways in which the younger generation influences political decision-making in the corridors of power.

Methods of Studies

In our studies we proceeded from the basic scientific approaches that allow us to identify not only traditional but also new types of political activism of the younger generation, including the theory of political participation, which offers the concepts and typologies of political involvement

¹ M. Lynch, *The Arab Uprisings Explained. New Contentious Politics in the Middle East*, New York, 2014, 340 pp.; A. Vasiliev, N. Petrov, *Retsepty Arabskoy vesny. Russkaya versiya*, Moscow, 2012, 301 pp; Major R.E. Barnsby, *Social Media and the Arab Spring: How Facebook, Twitter, and Camera Phones Changed the Egyptian Army's Response to Revolution*, Lexington, Kentucky, 2015, 60 pp.

(S. Verba and N. Nie,² L. Milbrath and M. Goel,³ R. Putnam,⁴ J. Ekman and E. Amna⁵); the theory of democracy and political participation (S. Lipset,⁶ D. Collier and S. Levitsky,⁷ G. O'Donnell and P. Schmitter⁸), the institutional theory and political participation (F. Piven and R. Cloward⁹), the rational choice theory (A. Downs,¹⁰ M. Franklin,¹¹ T. Feddersen¹²), the theory of political efficiency (H. Catt,¹³ A. Campbell, G. Gurin and W. Miller,¹⁴ R. Niemi, S. Craig and F. Mattei,¹⁵ P. Abramson and J. Aldrich,¹⁶ A. Acock, N. Clarke and M. Stewart,¹⁷ S. Finkel,¹⁸ R. Hero and C. Tolbert¹⁹); the socio-economic theory and political participation (S. Verba, K. Schlozman, and H. Brady,²⁰ S. Verba and N. Nie,²¹ R. Wolfinger and S. Rosestone,²² T. De Luca,²³ D. Campbell²⁴), the theory of political socialization (M. Jennings²⁵ and R. Niemi, D. Glasberg and D. Shannon,²⁶ L. Powell and J. Cowart,²⁷ K. Varkey,²⁸ T. Janowski and J. Wilson²⁹).

² S. Verba, N.H. Nie, *Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality*, Harper & Row, New York, 1972.

³ L.W. Milbrath, M.L. Goel, *Political Participation*, 2nd edition, United Press of America, Maryland, 1977, p. 2.

⁴ R.D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2000, p. 168.

⁵ J. Ekman, E. Amnå, "Political Participation and Civic Engagement: Towards a New Typology," *Human Affairs*, Vol. 22, 2012, p. 287.

⁶ M. Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*, Doubleday and Company, New York, 1960.

⁷ D. Collier, S. Levitsky, "Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research," *World Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 3, 1997, pp. 430-451.

⁸ G. O'Donnell, P. Schmitter, *Transition from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986, 81 pp.

⁹ F.F. Piven, R.A. Cloward, *Why Americans Don't Vote*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1988, p. 35.

¹⁰ A. Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, Harper and Row, New York, 1957, p. 260.

¹¹ M.N. Franklin, *Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies since 1945*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004, 250 pp.

¹² T.J. Feddersen, "Rational Choice and the Paradox of not Voting," *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2004, pp. 99-113.

¹³ H. Catt, "Now or Never: The Impact of Political Education on Civic Participation," *Australasian Political Studies Conference*, Dunedin (New Zealand), 2005, 9 pp.

¹⁴ A. Campbell, G. Gurin, W. Miller, *The Voter Decides*, Row, Peterson and Company, Evanston, Illinois, 1954, p. 187.

¹⁵ R.G. Niemi, S.C. Craig, F. Mattei, "Measuring Internal Political Efficacy in the 1988 National Election Study," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 85, No. 4, 1991, pp. 1407-1412.

¹⁶ P.R. Abramson, J.H. Aldrich, "The Decline of Electoral Participation in America," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 76, 1982, pp. 502-521.

¹⁷ A. Acock, H. Clarke, M. Stewart, "A New Model for Old Measures: A Covariance Structure Analysis of Political Efficacy," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 47, No. 4, 1985, pp. 1062-1084.

¹⁸ S.E. Finkel, "Reciprocal Effects of Participation and Political Efficacy: A Panel Analysis," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 29, No. 4, 1985, pp. 891-913.

¹⁹ R.E. Hero, C. Tolbert, "Minority Voices and Citizen Attitudes about Government Responsiveness in the American States: Do Social and Institutional Context Matter?" *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 34, 2004, pp. 109-121.

²⁰ S. Verba, K. Schlozman, H. Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1995, 664 pp.

²¹ S. Verba, N. Nie, *Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality*, Harper and Row, New York, 1972, p. 2.

²² R.E. Wolfinger, S.J. Rosenstone, *Who Votes?* Yale University Press, New Haven, 1980, 158 pp.

²³ T. De Luca, *The Two Faces of Political Apathy*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1995, 294 pp.

²⁴ D. Campbell, "What is Education's Impact on Civic and Social Engagement?" in: *Symposium on Social Outcomes of Learning*, Danish University of Education, Copenhagen, 23-24 March, 2006, 102 pp.

²⁵ M. Jennings, R. Niemi, *The Political Character of Adolescence: The Influence of Families and Schools*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1974, p. 5.

²⁶ D. Glasberg, D. Shannon, *Political Sociology: Oppression, Resistance, and the State*, Pine Forge Press, Thousand Oaks, 2011, p. 56.

²⁷ L. Powell, J. Cowart, *Political Campaign Communication: Inside and Out*, Allyn & Bacon Press, Boston MA, 2013, 320 pp.

²⁸ K. Varkey, *Political Theory: An Indian Perspective*, Indian Publishers Distributors, 2003, 424 pp.

²⁹ T. Janowski, J. Wilson, "Pathways to Voluntarism: Family Socialization and Status Transmission," *Social Forces*, Vol. 74, No. 1, 1995, pp. 271-292.

We have chosen both quantitative and qualitative methods. In 2017 and 2018 we carried out quantitative polls among the young people of Kazakhstan based on new technologies—the online Survio platform with digital processing of the data received. The total number of young people of Kazakhstan (between 14 and 29) is 4,656,466; the corresponding number in Kyrgyzstan is 1,768,017. The sampling in Kazakhstan was 930 young people, in Kyrgyzstan, 384. We relied on a quota sampling based in the age, sex, region, town/countryside and ethnicity. Secondly, in 2018 we carried out quality semi-structured interviews with randomly selected questions from questionnaires with 30 young people in Almaty (between 14 and 29) and the same number of young people of the same age in Bishkek to acquire a more profound understanding of their political affiliations and their ideas about politics. The following questions served as the starting point of our assessment of youth political activism of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and of the comparative analysis of its manifestations:

1. How do young people between 14 and 29 in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan understand politics?
2. Do the young citizens of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan believe that they can be involved in politics and influence political decision-making in their countries and to what extent?
3. What methods do the young people of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan use to demonstrate their political activism?
4. What is similar and what is different in the manifestations of youth political activism in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan?

Interest in Politics in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan

The results of the quantitative polls among and qualitative interviews with young people from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan suggested that over half of the respondents in Kyrgyzstan (58%) and a much smaller share (40.5%) of the respondents in Kazakhstan turn to the Internet and social networks for sociopolitical information.

This is probably explained by the following figures: 43% of youth in Kazakhstan said that they had no time to browse the Internet and social networks every day in search of political news; in Kyrgyzstan, only 29.3% complained of a lack of time.

It turned out that 8.9% of the polled in Kazakhstan and 7.3% of the polled in Kyrgyzstan were interested in political news, yet failed to grasp their sociopolitical meanings (see Fig. 1).

The answers to the question: “*Do you read the posts and opinions of politicians and political scientists on Facebook about your country’s social and political problems?*” invited the following answers: 7.6% of young Kazakhstanis and 14.6% of young Kyrgyz answered that they always read these posts and frequently comment on them; 21.5% of the youth of Kazakhstan against 68.3% of the youth of Kyrgyzstan read posts of politicians and political scientists every day for information and practically never comment on them; 27.8% of the polled in Kazakhstan pointed out that they were not subscribed, yet wanted to be subscribed, to pages of politicians and political scientists. The share of the Kyrgyz respondents who gave the same answer is ten times smaller—2.4% (see Fig. 2).

We should bear in mind that in Kazakhstan the Internet is much more accessible than in Kyrgyzstan: 70% of Kazakhstanis have access to mobile Internet, while 63% use high-speed broadband.³⁰

³⁰ “70% kazakhstanstsev imeiut dostup k Internetu,” *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 8 November, 2016, available at [<https://www.kazpravda.kz/news/tehnologii/70-kazahstastsev-imeut-dostup-k-internetu—issledovanie>], 5 September, 2018.

Figure 1

Do you Browse the Internet-Media and Social Networks for News?

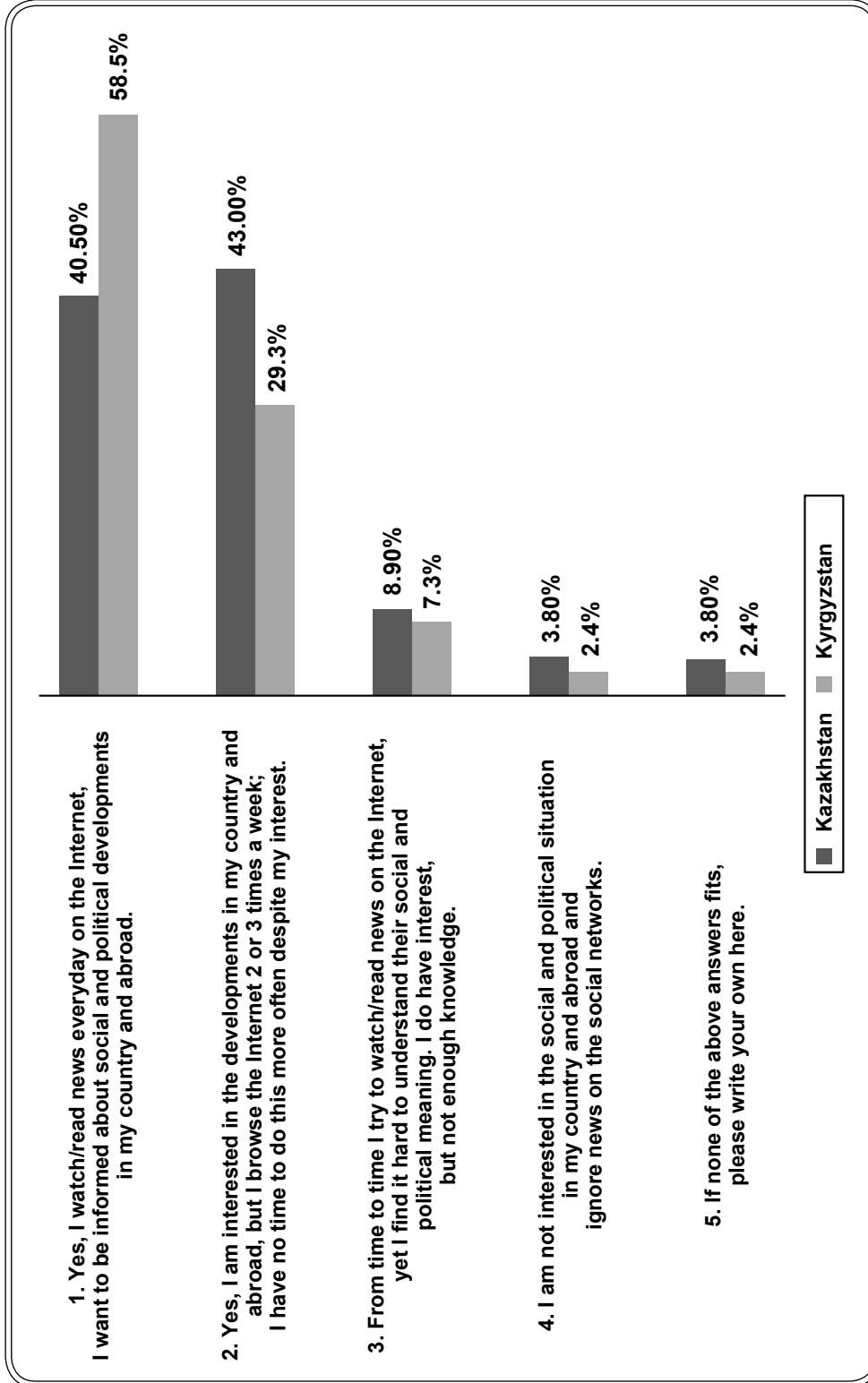
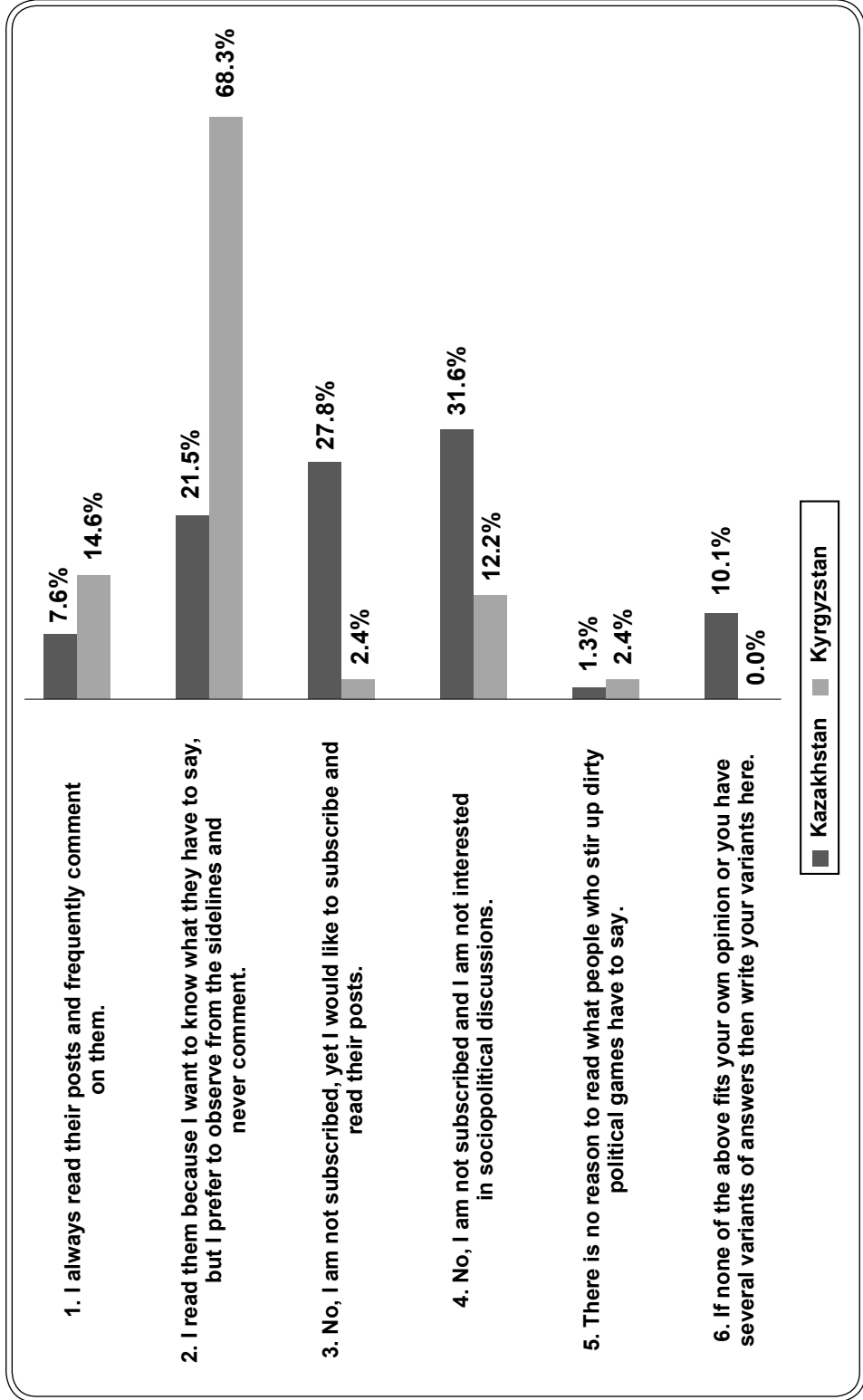


Figure 2

Do You Read the Posts and Opinions of Politicians and Political Scientists on Facebook about Your Country's Social and Political Problems?



In Kyrgyzstan only 34% of the total population has access to the Internet.³¹ The results of our studies confirmed that the young people of Kyrgyzstan show a lot of interest in what their politicians and political scientists have to say online. Unlike the younger generation of Kazakhstan, in Kyrgyzstan young people know their political leaders much better; this is probably explained by the country's geographic and demographic specifics.

Information resources can be described as the main channel through which the younger generation of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan can express their opinions, first and foremost, negative ones. The government blogs, sites and social networks can be used as an alternative source of information about what young people think, and help promptly identify the accumulated contradictions and problems and readily expand the sphere of efficient measures.

Today, when political activism of Kazakhstan citizens is still gaining momentum, the mechanisms of coping with the problem have been already tuned up. In 2009, in Kazakhstan Internet resources were legally defined as media and obliged to observe the rules applied to all other electronic media. In 2018, the work that had begun in 2016 to tie the IMEI codes of cellular devices to phone numbers was completed. In 2016, it was believed that the IMEI codes of cellular devices should be tied to the phone numbers according to the Law on Counteracting and Fighting Terrorism and Extremism; starting with 2018, all users of mobile telephony are obliged to tie their numbers to their unique identification numbers.³² This is done to preserve stability in Kazakhstan. Its younger generation, however, demonstrates a lot of caution when talking about political events: there is a shared opinion that criticism might end in criminal prosecution. In 2017, anonymous comments on the Internet were banned by law; any comments on the articles and other materials that appeared on the network should be actualized by digital signatures or SMS messages.³³ According to Minister of Information and Mass Communication of Kazakhstan Dauren Abaev, this document stipulated the legal regulation of social relations in the media. At the same time, new registration technologies will keep young people away from discussing the most important social and political issues. In Kazakhstan the share of those "not interested in sociopolitical discussions" (31.6%) is higher than in Kyrgyzstan (12.2%). On the one hand, this might mean that young people are more interested in practical issues than in political discussions and that this does not interfere with the smooth functioning of the political system. On the other hand, this might mean that the younger generation does not trust people in power in Kazakhstan and does not believe that it can influence the government and political decision-making.

For example, our analysis of student appeals on the blogs of the Ministry of Education and Science and wardens of higher educational establishments (see Fig. 3) revealed that only 0.001% of students openly spoke out about their problems on the official pages of the government of Kazakhstan. Students do not trust the efficiency of online communication feedback. Young people doubt that their communications will attract attention and prefer not to waste time on written complaints on the official Internet pages of heads of educational establishments and the government.

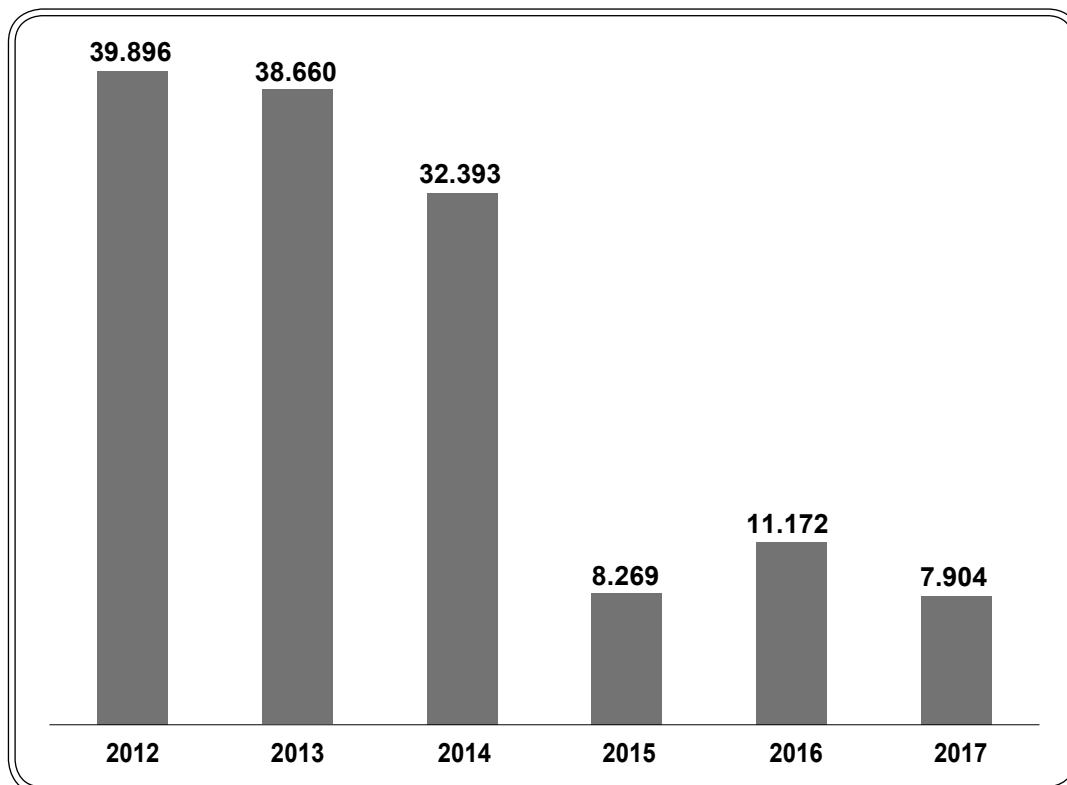
The state, however, is consistently narrowing down the already narrow possibilities of using communication resources through which regular people try to inform the government of their problems so that to expand the field of common positive efforts. Today, the number of requests and appeals from people on the blogs of the ministers of the government of Kazakhstan has dropped. In 2015, the requirements to those who placed their appeals on the blogs of the leaders of state structures

³¹ "Skolko polzovateley Interneta v KR? I skolko polzuiutsia sotssetiami?" *Kaktus Media*, 30 January, 2017 [https://kaktus.media/doc/351674_skolko_polzovateley_interneta_v_kr_i_skolko_polzyutsia_socsetiami.html], 5 September, 2018.

³² "Kak privyazat IMEI-kod telefona k IIN," *Today.kz*, 17 May, 2018, available at [<http://today.kz/news/gadzhetyi/2018-05-17/765765-kak-privyazat-imei-kod-telefona-k-iin>], 5 September, 2018.

³³ "Anonimnye komentarii na saytakh zapretili v Kazakhstane," *Zakon.kz*, 28 December, 2017, available at [<https://www.zakon.kz/4896289-anonimnye-komentarii-na-saytah.html>], 5 September, 2018.

Dynamics of the Number of Appeals on the Blogs of the Ministers of Kazakhstan in 2012-2017



were adjusted to Art 6 of the Law on the Procedure for Dealing with Appeals of Physical and Juridical Persons (enacted on 01.01.2015); they should be signed or verified by digital signature.³⁴

To lodge their appeal in the virtual reception office, people have to authorize themselves in the system by a unique identification number for physical persons and by business identification number for juridical persons and confirm it by digital signature.

This means that prior to 2015 many of those who lodged their appeals did it anonymously; after 2015 all their personal information becomes apparent; as could be expected, the number of those ready to communicate with authorities dropped. As a result, latent conflicts, irritation and other negative feelings in the youth milieu might remain unnoticed.

Forms of Political Activism

Today, the young people of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are attracted by new forms of political activism realized through volunteering, involvement in daily offline and online political discussions

³⁴ G. Nassimova, K. Smagulov, M. Buzurtanova, "Content Analysis of Students' Internet Communication with Authorities and University Administrations to Study Problems of Kazakhstan Youth," *Vestnik Al-Farabi KazNU. Philosophy series. Cultural science series. Political science series*, No. 2 (64), 2018, pp. 128-142.

and informal interest groups.³⁵ This is supported by the fact that 43% of the respondents in Kazakhstan agree that today the active involvement on the Internet has already replaced traditional forms of political involvement and that there is no need to join a political party or a youth organization. The share in Kyrgyzstan is 26.4%. It is sufficient to browse the Internet to receive information, discuss news, express indignation and read posts of politicians and public figures (see Fig. 4). In Kazakhstan, the share of those who disagree with the above is 21.6%; in Kyrgyzstan, 36.8%.

This means that young people in Kyrgyzstan disagree with the youth of Kazakhstan who regard an active involvement on the Internet as a form of political activism. The polled were convinced that those actively involved online are and will remain so-called sofa critics, or “slacktivists”³⁶ (to use the modern term); they prefer to follow the events; at critical moments they will remain online and will never use other channels to demonstrate their negative feelings.

This has been amply confirmed by the answers to the question: “*Do you think that a citizen who follows news and discusses and analyzes social and political issues is involved in politics?*” In Kyrgyzstan, 21.1% of the respondents believe that virtual political activism is not sufficient; people should be involved in real, offline activism in parties, NGOs, meetings, demonstrations, etc. In Kazakhstan this opinion is shared by 12.7%.

On the other hand, 54.4% of the polled young people in Kazakhstan believe that an observer will remain an observer no matter what, since his position has nothing to do with political activism. At the same time, one out of ten deemed it necessary to point out that active involvement in formal institutions of political activism is needed and that people should demonstrate their negative attitude to state politics at meetings and demonstrations (see Fig. 5).

According to public opinion, the results of the polls of both countries’ youth insist that offline political activism is preferable to virtual involvement. At the same time, people prefer to avoid possible risks and to keep away from political activism, especially if it contradicts the official political course. Mona Eltahawy, an Egyptian-American journalist who lives in New York and who participated in the Arab Spring, is of the same opinion. During an expert interview she gave at the Zagreb Youth Summit (Croatia) she said: Those who never leave the anonymity of the Internet out of fear of being punished for their protests offline are not slacktivists. In Arab countries before the revolution (now known as the Arab Spring) many people discussed politics on the Internet, increased the number of contacts and informal ties through social networks. Later virtual activism developed into action.

This is confirmed by 32.9% of the polled young people in Kazakhstan and 31.6% in Kyrgyzstan, who are convinced that people with an interest in politics, who follow the news on the Internet demonstrate political activism, even if it is low-key. At the opportune moment these people will become active offline participants.

The question: “*In which of the listed types of political activism have you taken part?*” (see Table 1 on p. 73) drew the following answers: 26.6% of young Kazakhstanis and 28.0% of the youth of Kyrgyzstan are interested in news, they discuss social and political subjects on social networks and blogs and leave their comments; 5.1% of the young people of Kazakhstan and 7.2% of the young people of Kyrgyzstan answered that they were involved in volunteering, charities and helped poor people or victims of natural disasters.

The youth in Kazakhstan is more active during elections than the young people in Kyrgyzstan (47.8% and 40.6% respectively); on the other hand, young people in Kazakhstan are less interested in membership in political parties, trade unions and youth organizations (4.2%). In Kyrgyzstan the

³⁵ S. Kilybayeva, G. Nassimova, A. Massalimova, “The Kazakhstani Youth Engagement in Politics”, *Studies of Transition States and Societies*, Vol. 9, Issue 1, 2017, pp. 53-71.

³⁶ A combination of words “slacker” and “activist”, which describes a person actively involved in political propaganda and publishes petitions in an effort to change the world while remaining in front of his computer.

Figure 4

Do You Agree that Today an Active Involvement
on the Internet has Replaced Traditional Political Activism?

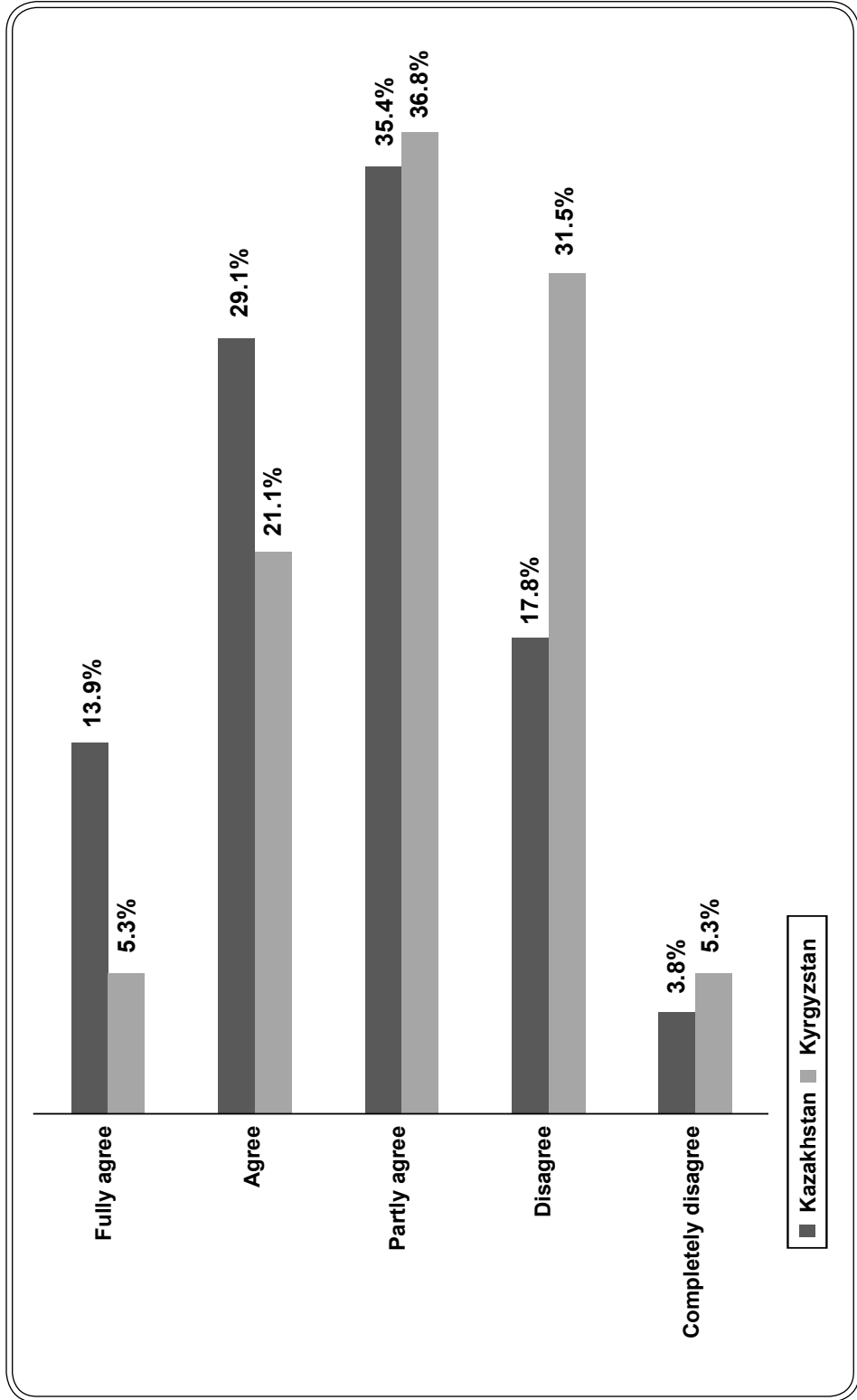
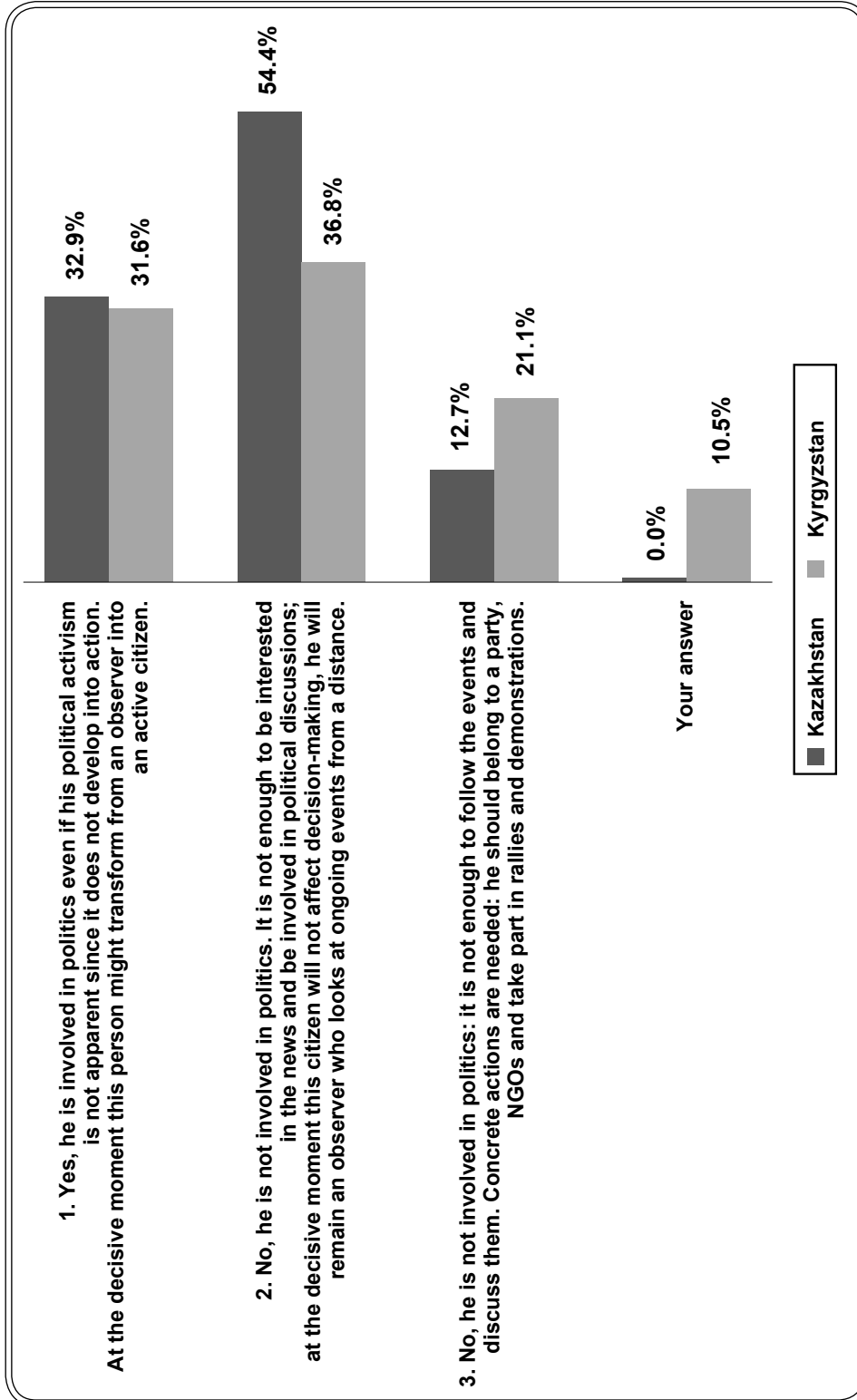


Figure 5

Do You Think that a Citizen Who Follows News, Discusses and Analyzes Social and Political Issues is Involved in Politics?



share of such people is 5.1%. The shares of those who prefer to keep away from politics differ greatly: 14.4% in Kazakhstan against 4.7% in Kyrgyzstan.

Table 1

In Which of the Listed Types of Political Activism have You Taken Part? (%)

	Forms of Political Activism	Youth of Kazakhstan	Youth of Kyrgyzstan
1.	I am interested in politics, follow the events and discuss sociopolitical subjects in social nets, blogs and offer my comments under pieces of information	26.6	28.0
2.	I am engaged in charities, volunteer movements, help poor people and victims of natural calamities	5.1	7.2
3.	I vote at presidential and parliamentary elections	47.8	40.6
4.	I am/was a member of a political party, trade union, youth organization	4.2	5.1
5.	I take part in peaceful protests, rallies and strikes	0	10
6.	I am not involved in political life because I am not interested in politics	14.4	4.7
7.	I take part in several types of political activism	1.9	3.3
8.	Other	0	1.1

The Protest Potential of the Youth of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan

We have studied the level of protest potential of the younger generation of both countries and tried to find out whether young people are ready to take part in protest actions of all sorts.

Kazakhstan. The question “Have you ever taken part in peaceful protest marches, meetings, boycotts and signing of petitions?” invited the following answers: All the polled individuals said that they never did and do not want to be involved in the future. Ten percent admitted that they had taken part in protests; during the interviews some of the young people said that involvement in protest actions could hardly be acceptable because this meant siding with the opposition. Others believed that protest rallies and marches could be acceptable, yet they were not ready to take part in them in order to avoid possible criminal investigation, which could potentially undermine their future. Many of the young people are aware of risks; they prefer to stay away from protest actions as useless.

“I will never take part in protests; this is a threat and a big headache. This might affect my husband’s career if my name becomes known” (housewife, 24).

“I will always avoid such actions; I do not want problems. These actions will change nothing. As a peaceful person I do not need the attention of special services and law and order structures. I don’t want to become one of those who come under scrutiny if and when something bad happens” (manager, female, 25).

“In my student years I could have been involved. Today I have children. If I am crippled during such events, nobody will look after my children?” (business woman, 29).

A certain group of the respondents feared that protest actions in Kazakhstan might follow the Ukrainian and Kyrgyz scenario, by which they meant destabilization and interference of other countries into the domestic affairs of their state. One of the respondents believed that rallies were a bad idea: they fanned disagreements between people and the state, undermined national security and threatened authorities, and that they were organized by people seeking profits. It seems that the young Kazakhstanis have opted for this type of political behavior to avoid violations of laws. In 2018, the Esilskiy Court of Astana ruled that the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan movement was an extremist organization.

Kyrgyzstan. Ten percent of Kyrgyz youth gave an affirmative answer to the question *“Have you ever taken part in peaceful protest marches, meetings, boycotts and signing of petitions?”*

The majority is convinced that there is no criminal responsibility for taking part in protests; this, however, may cost teachers, doctors and civil servants their jobs; but there is no criminal prosecution and their families are not threatened.

“Since 2010 we have more protests than before. This year there are fewer of them, probably because of cold weather (laughter). Protests will begin in the spring. The responses from the state are balanced—this was under President Atambaev. Protestors gather in front of the White House, the media arrive to take pictures for newspapers and social networks. In fact, protests are organized precisely with this aim. When people in power see that there are too many displeased and irritated people, they will try to change something. The top stratum is afraid of criticism; they fear disturbances that may cost them their top posts. Information spreads fast, hence the close attention to social networks” (woman of 26, lawyer).

Young people, nevertheless, are convinced that their involvement in protest meetings will change nothing: there were enough rallies and demonstrations during the revolutions of 2005 and 2010, people poured into the streets to change life to the better, yet no changes followed.

“In Kyrgyzstan there is a law that information about prearranged meetings should be provided 12 days before the event. This is why people are not afraid to join. They can be arrested only if they block the roads and interfere with transport flow. People had been detained for 5 days for blocking the roads during a meeting. This caused a lot of indignation on social networks; next time when the roads were blocked during a rally people were merely warned” (lawyer, male, 26).

“In 2005 we lived in a suburb, revolutionaries reached it and plundered all the shops. My parents kept me at home. In 2010, plundering was concentrated in the center of Bishkek; the suburbs remained peaceful. My parents did not allow me to go out: I was 14 and they feared for my safety... My parents and relatives never took part in protest rallies. My father is a policeman and as such was involved in the events of 2010” (student, female, 20).

This means that the younger generation of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan does not want to be involved in protest actions; this decreases a possibility of destructive protest forms. Young citizens are convinced that protests are hardly efficient when it comes to defending their interests; those who want to protest, do this on social networks. In Kazakhstan young people refuse to go out into the streets with protest slogans, let alone violate laws; in Kyrgyzstan the younger generation has become disenchanted with revolutions as politically, socially and economically inefficient. In Kazakhstan, the majority of the youth consider protests a threat that leads to disagreements in society; in Kyrgyzstan, young people look at protests as a natural phenomenon of the country’s political development process.

Conclusion

The quantitative and qualitative studies confirmed the following (see Table 2).

Table 2

Specifics of Political Activism of the Young People of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan

Young People of Kazakhstan	Young People of Kyrgyzstan
Political activism is realized through institutionalized forms of involvement	Political activism is realized through non-institutionalized forms of involvement
Low assessment of the level of their political activism	High assessment of the level of their political activism
Over half of the respondents believe that activism in social networks can replace traditional forms	Over half of the respondents believe that activism in social networks cannot replace traditional forms
Protest is regarded as a threat to social stability	Protest is regarded as a natural way to defend their interests
Avoid active forms of protest as contradicting legal procedures; youth never goes beyond the legal framework	Take part in protests yet the experience of several revolutions in the history of their country taught them to doubt their efficiency and their role as stimuli of social and economic changes
Voting is seen as one of the duties and a sign of patriotism	Voting is a response to current political reforms
Actively read on social networks and on the Internet what other people think, but rarely state their opinions, even if they want to	Actively read on social networks and the Internet what other people think and, if they want, they always express their opinion
The majority of young people prefers to use aliases when writing critical comments about the country's policies	The majority prefers to criticize the policy of the country openly through different channels

Political activism of the youth of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan has a lot of common characteristics:

- (1) The youth is interested in politics, young people are active on the Internet, subscribe to bloggers, political scientists, read commentaries and follow the news;
- (2) In both countries, young people are attracted by new non-institutionalized forms of political activism realized through volunteering, daily political discussions offline and online on social networks, political organizations and informal groups by interests;
- (3) They do not believe that they can efficiently influence political decision-making in their countries through voting, membership in political parties, trade unions and youth organizations;
- (4) They use all sorts of platforms to legally express their interests;
- (5) They choose the most efficient forms of political involvement;
- (6) They deliberately avoid active protests and use social networks to protest, disagree or defend their interests and opinions.

KAZAKHSTAN IN THE ARAB SPRING CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

The authors have analyzed the Arab Spring, which caused an outburst of radical Islamism and echoed in the sociopolitical and economic context of Central Asia. The subject has gathered a lot of importance because of rising extremism that threatens national security of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The authors have posed themselves with the task of delineating the general provisions and specific situations related to the problem of extremism in Kazakhstan, as well as the measures needed to lower the level of radicalization of different population groups, first and foremost, the younger generations, and prevent their involvement in terrorist activities. This is achieved by accomplishing three tasks: to

explain in which way the Arab Spring affected Central Asia, first and foremost, in the form of terrorist activities; to reveal the global nature of the problem of religious extremism, the measures needed to prevent its spread among the younger generation and the mechanisms of protecting our country against the ideas of terrorism; to create and improve the legal, normative, organizational and other mechanisms of power of the Republic of Kazakhstan designed to oppose the ideology of terrorism.

We have concentrated on the driving forces, impacts of the Arab Spring, its role in the contemporary history of the Republic of Kazakhstan and deemed it absolutely necessary to pay particular attention to the

place Kazakhstan occupies in the processes that are pushing the world towards a new world order. The type of radical activities in Kazakhstan, and in the Central Asian region for that matter, changed significantly under the pressure of the Middle Eastern crisis, which has been unfolding since 2011. Today, Syria and Iraq attract mercenaries from all corners of the world.

The events in the Middle East forced many people to ask themselves whether the Arab Spring can be repeated in Central Asia; whether Arab revolutions can be continued there, how these processes might affect the region and, last but not least, how the Arab Spring echoed in other regions, what place Kazakhstan occupies and will occupy in the near future in the international balance of power and how this will affect the region's security. The impact of the Arab Spring, which is a multidimensional phenomenon, has spread far and wide outside the Middle East. This means that what happened and is

happening there had already affected the interests of the United States, Russia, the European Union, Turkey, Iran, China and other countries which share Kazakhstan's international and geopolitical interests.

Authors of hundreds of books, thousands of articles, monographs, academic papers and collections of articles published in different countries around the world have already discussed the economic and political impacts of the Arab Spring on Central Asia as a whole, and on Kazakhstan in particular. This is a topical subject that attracts attention of politicians and analysts of many countries. This article is our contribution to the common effort. We have posed ourselves with the task of examining the lessons of the Arab Spring from a different angle: having analyzed the lessons of the Arab Spring, we should work hard to prevent all sorts of threats and the spread of extremism and terror as the main challenges created by the Arab Spring.

KEYWORDS: *the Arab Spring, the Middle East, Central Asia, the Republic of Kazakhstan, extremism.*

Introduction

The Arab Spring and Central Asia

The peoples of Central Asia were following the events in the Middle East and the Arab world that became known as the Arab Spring with gradually mounting attention; political developments in Arab countries were discussed and varied forecasts were made, while the Central Asian governments and experts in international relations compared the conditions and prerequisites of the revolutionary situation in Arab countries with the political and economic contexts of their countries.

The countries engulfed by the Arab Spring were part of the Arab world and Arab civilization, similar to Asian civilization in certain respects and different from it in many other respects. They have different histories, different economies, they speak different tongues, live in different climates, different geographic landscapes, etc. There are, however, certain cultural economic and religious similarities and external circumstances responsible for many common political, social and economic characteristics. These similarities and common features shared by some of the Arab and Central Asian states are obvious, the most apparent among them being:

- The deepening difference in incomes, the low and plummeting living standards and rising social disproportions;
- High unemployment level, especially apparent in the younger generation;
- Ethnic and clan tension;
- Confrontation between regional elites and clans;
- Low efficiency of state institutions and a low level of public confidence in power structures;
- Impossibility of transparent democratic elections in the structure of state power;
- High level of corruption.

These factors suggest that certain Central Asian countries might have been plunged into something similar to the Arab Spring. The experts and analysts who have studied the causes and vectors of political, social and economic development of the Arab countries concluded that the Arab Spring may be repeated in Central Asia and Russia. Some members of the expert community of Kazakhstan remain convinced that the possibility of an Arab Spring in Central Asia is still very high: “There are no unifying national ideas; many of the Central Asian countries are steeped in corruption; the level of social inequality, unemployment and poverty of the greater part of the population has reached a dramatic dimension; social marginalization is intensifying, religious extremism is mounting—such are the factors, which, when combined, might become a detonator.”¹

The region is dotted by seats of social, economic and ethnic tension; old problems of endogenous nature are swept under the carpet:

- There are unresolved territorial and border problems between Central Asian states, first and foremost, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan;
- Water and energy issues between the states have already formed two factions—Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan with ample water resources, on the one hand, and Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, with a shortage of water, on the other;
- Clan structure of local societies intensified by ethnic disagreement; nationalism is steadily mounting in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan;
- Drug trafficking, which can compete with any global natural disaster, forces mankind to seek consolidation and mutual assistance;
- Afghanistan, with the crisis phenomena steadily rising was and remains one of the gravest external challenges for Central Asia, while foreign terrorists operating in Northern Afghanistan, at the border with Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, are the gravest of challenges;
- The religious factor, one of the most prominent factors of influence, is spreading across the world. The number of practicing Muslims is increasing along with much stronger propaganda capabilities of Islamic organizations and associations;
- Outburst of political, including religiously motivated, extremism can be described as another challenge. From 2011 onwards, terrorism has been growing into one of the most popular methods of power struggle in all countries of the region. No Central Asian country is free from adherents of radical Islamism ready to start fighting at the first signs of political destabilization; it actively and skillfully exploits social problems to discredit the secular ruling regimes. This is an important subject that deserves closer attention.

¹ D. Satpaev, T. Umbetalieva, A. Chebotarev, R. Zhumaly, Z. Karazhanov, A. Zhusupova, R. Kadyrzhanov, R. Sarym, “*Sumerechnaia zona*” ili “*lovushka*” *perekhodnogo perioda*, Meloman Publishers, Almaty, 2013, p. 264.

A considerable number of political scientists, experts, analysts, observers and members of the academic community accompanied the Arab Spring unfolding in the Middle East with their forecasts of Islamists coming to power in the Middle East and in the Muslim World as soon as the local secular authoritarian regimes are liquidated. Indeed, in the latter half of 2011, the situation in the Middle East and North Africa was gradually changing; Islamists capitalized on the results of the local revolutions: they secured political victories in Egypt, where The Muslim Brotherhood came to power after parliamentary elections; in Tunisia in October 2011, when the Islamic Ennahdha Party came to power; in Yemen, where half of the country fell under the control of radical Islamists, in Libya, where after coming to power, the National Transitional Council declared that it would be building up an Islamic state. Since the victory of Islam was complete and its right to be involved in the political process was legitimized, some people presumed that the successes of religious parties in the Arab world will inevitably affect Central Asia. Those who made this claim proceeded from the fact that the local Islamists, encouraged by the success of religious parties, may push with increased vigor towards Islamization of society and the state: the social and economic situation and the Central Asian regimes were similar to those in the Arab countries.

Amid the geopolitical chaos, many Arab countries supported extremist groups, the Central Asian fighters got a chance to increase their ranks and organize themselves into groups. When assessing the impact of the Arab Spring on the Central Asian fighters, we should bear in mind that, on the whole, the war in Syria moved the groups of Central Asian fighters from Afghanistan to Syria. The Syrian war changed the regional dynamics: Central Asian terrorist groups turned their attention to Syria. In 2012, the first Central Asian fighters reached Syria: the following armed groups from Central Asia were fighting in Syria: Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, the Islamic Party of Turkestan, the Imam Bukhari Detachment, Katib, the Jund al Khilafah, etc. People from Central Asia (mostly Kazakhs, Tajiks and Kyrgyz) fought on the side of ISIS and al-Qa'eda.² Many of the extremist movements appeared in Ferghana after the Soviet Union's disintegration, when the Soviet Central Asian republics became independent states. The Jihadist ideology is rooted in the Afghan war. Central Asian fighters flocked to Syria and Iraq mainly for ideological or financial reasons, which means they may try to organize radical groups back at home.

The Arab Spring demonstrated to the entire world that social and economic problems, unemployment and corruption inevitably end in a social upheaval. However, the Central Asian countries will not necessarily follow the Arab Spring pattern. It seems impossible that Islamist extremists will directly affect Central Asia. It goes without saying that the Central Asian secular regimes were threatened to a great extent; radical groups could increase their pressure but their potentials should not be overestimated: the events in the Arab world did not affect the situation in Central Asia to any more or less noticeable extent. The threat of gradually growing radical groups and associations is very real. If and when the ideology of extremism becomes a norm, or even legally acceptable behavior, the threat will become very real and very dangerous.

Religious Extremism in Kazakhstan

Today religious extremism is equally dangerous for the strong Western countries and the weak countries of the East. It is one of the serious threats to the national security of the Republic of Kazakhstan. As one of the Soviet republics, Kazakhstan officially expounded Communist and atheist

² See: E.T. Karin, J. Zenn, *Mezhdú IGIL i Al-Qaedoy: tsentralnoaziatskie boeviki v Siryyskoy voyne*, Print House Gerona, Astana, 2017, p. 9.

ideology. Today the situation is different: freedom of religion declared in Kazakhstan made the younger generation the target of ideological pressure by extremist centers operating abroad. From that time on, the country has been gradually acquiring a new element of its religious and political context, namely, religious extremism in the form of terrorism. During the first stage, there emerged a set of prerequisites for extremism created by the new political, social and economic processes unfolding in Kazakhstan. The youth as one of the demographic groups is the easiest target for those who promote extremist ideas.

Even before the Arab revolutions, the following factors played the main role in fanning religious-political extremism:

- An absence of an efficient state ideology and inability of executive power, law-and-order structures and special services to efficiently oppose religious extremism;
- Financial, material and technical problems that prevented the realization of normative and legal acts, as well as shortage of information and personnel resources needed to oppose Islamic extremism;
- The rising level of corruption in state structures;
- The absence of important social and economic results of reforms and the negative trends that are gaining momentum in the social sphere and economics;
- Increasing poverty, economic and social inequality, low incomes at rising prices;
- Growing protests and the rising predisposition to rely on Islam when dealing with everyday problems;
- Growing unemployment among the younger generation. In the absence of workplaces for young men with university diplomas and without previous work experience young people are more inclined than others to follow extremist ideas;
- Geographic closeness of Kazakhstan to unstable countries and regions with strong positions of political (radical) Islam—Afghanistan, Pakistan, etc.
- Destabilization of the religious and political situation in the neighboring countries against the background of mounting international and regional competition for natural resources and control over the extraction and transportation of energy fuels;
- The impact of the foreign factor created by Islamic missionaries and teachers of Islam, some of them promoting the ideas of radical Islam;
- The low level of religious and standard education of those who preach Islam and of the greater part of the Muslims of Kazakhstan makes them unable to separate genuine religious feelings from religious fanaticism and extremism;
- Appearance of Salafi and Wahhabi jamaats, as well as groups that pursue purely commercial aims throughout the republic;
- An increase in the number of Islamic organizations, including madrassahs, mosques and other Islamic cultural and education centers, where non-traditional Islam was preached;
- Religious education that the younger generation received in Islamic educational establishments abroad (in Turkey, Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, etc.).

An analysis of the above reveals the highly sustainable nature of external and internal impacts. The revolutionary storms in the Arab world undermined Central Asian stability and security. In fact, all countries irrespective of their geographic location have similar problems. It is hardly correct to state that the Arab Spring will reach Central Asia if the preconditions are in place.

Revolutions in the Arab world inspired extremists in Kazakhstan, who switched to terrorist methods (explosions, suicide bombers, attacks on law-and-order structures, courts, prisons; mass rioting with the use of arms, etc.). The series of terrorist acts of 2011-2012 confirmed the existence of an armed terrorist underground in Kazakhstan. The 17 May, 2011 terrorist act in Aktobe, the first in the republic's recent history, was followed by terrorist acts in big regional centers (Atyrau, Astana, Almaty and Taraz). Between May 2011 and the fall of 2012 there were 14 terrorist acts that killed 70 people (6 of them civilians, 13 members of the law-and-order structures and 51 terrorists).³ The Jund al Khilafah, the terrorist organization connected with al-Qa'eda and engaged in training fighters for this international terrorist organization, assumed responsibility. In recent years, fighters (many of them young people) were transferred from Afghanistan and Pakistan to Kazakhstan to conscript new members and put pressure on authorities. According to expert assessments, 80% of extremist organizations' members are young people between 18 and 19 and not older than 30. According to the information supplied by the Committee for Legal Statistics and Special Records of the Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Kazakhstan gathered in the last five years, terrorists in Kazakhstan are young people who tried and failed to find their place in life: they have no jobs, no money, no adequate education and, therefore, no future.⁴ In 2012-2016, some of the extremist movements in Kazakhstan were persistently increasing their ranks with young people. The younger generation is radicalized because of the economic crisis, the absence of prospects and jobs and highly corrupt local authorities. This is more typical of Southern and Western Kazakhstan.

Extremism can be described as an ideology of racial, national, religious and political intolerance that crops up in different forms, which is a fairly vague description of extremism as a social phenomenon. Youth extremism should be defined by its manifestations in real life: aggression, intolerance of and negative attitude to certain social groups, propaganda of extremist ideas, demonstration of symbols of extremism, insistence on their superiority, rejection of social norms, values and laws, and mass demonstration of extremist ideas.⁵

Monitoring of the Spread of Extremism among the Young People in Central Asia

The level of religiosity of the Republic of Kazakhstan's younger generation generally corresponds to the regional level, while the slightly differing social empirical data suggest absolutely clear conclusions. The material quoted here and related to the level of extremist threat was obtained from the polls of students of Kazakhstan's higher educational establishments (both full- and part-time departments in Almaty). The sample consisted of 1,012 students between 18 and 25 years of age who answered the following questions among others: the level of religiosity; whether there is a danger of extremist actions in Kazakhstan and how migrants from neighboring countries affect the level of extremism in Kazakhstan.

³ See: M. Shibusov, V. Abramov, "Terrorizm v Kazakhstane—2011-2012," REGNUM Information Agency, 27 November, 2012, available at [<https://regnum.ru/news/1598478.html>], 28 November, 2012.

⁴ See: A.E. Chebotarev, "Ekstremizm v Kazakhstane: sovremennoe sostoyanie i voprosy protivodeystviia," in: *Natsionalnaia bezopasnost Respubliki Kazakhstan*, Almaty, 2016, p. 88.

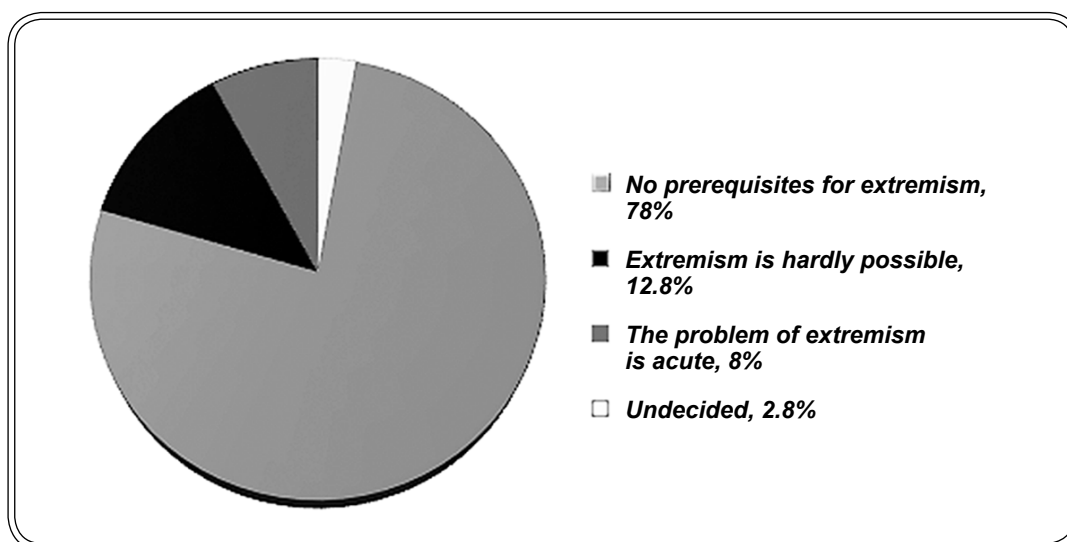
⁵ See: A.I. Kirsanov, D.V. Davydov, A.V. Zavalsky, N.A. Skribitsova, "Ekstremizm v molodezhnoy srede i ego profilaktika v obrazovatelnoy organizatsii," E-journal *Psikhologicheskaya nauka i obrazovanie*, psyedu.ru, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2014, p. 89, available at [http://psyedu.ru/journal/2014/1/Kirsanov_Davydov_Zavalskij_Skrib.phtml], 22 January, 2014.

Kazakhs constituted 75.6% of the sample, Russians—16.2%, while members of other nationalities (Uyghurs, Dungans, Tatars, etc.) account for 8.2%. The majority of the respondents spoke of themselves as religious people; 82.1%—as religious people who do not observe religious rites; 8.4% spoke of themselves as religious people who observe religious rites; 7% were undecided, while 2.5% spoke of themselves as atheists.

The majority (85.7%) spoke of the inter-ethnic relationships in Kazakhstan as generally friendly, which could be expected in a multinational republic with an ethnic structure being the result of its long history. Nearly 84% of the respondents believed that the multinational nature of the republic's population positively affects the relations between confessions, which were described as stable.

Figure 1

Distribution of Answers to the Question about the Real Prerequisites of Extremism in Kazakhstan



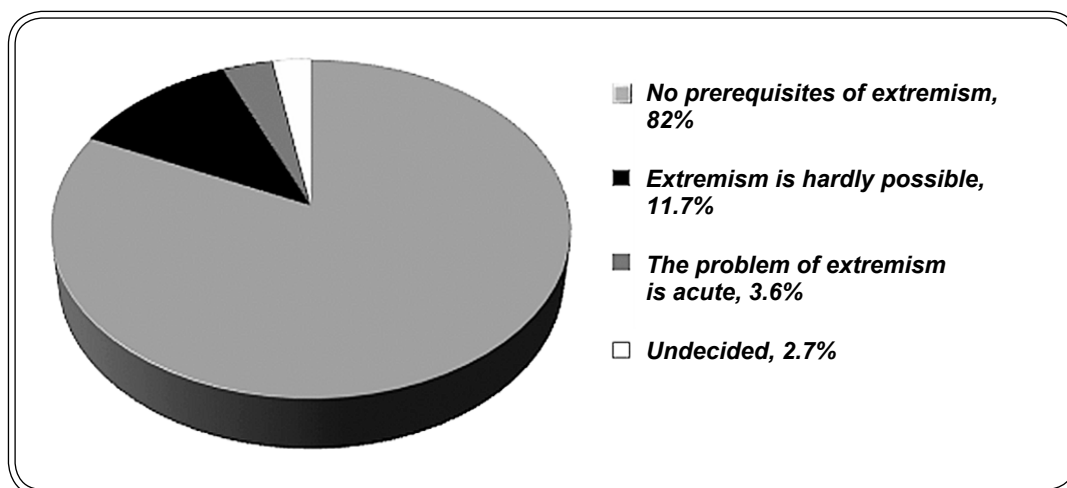
An analysis of the data obtained speaks of sustainable relationships in the republic. According to 78% of the polled, there are no prerequisites for extremist sentiments; about 12.8% believe that there is a threat of extremism, albeit insignificant; 8% of the polled described this threat as acute. The polls supplied us with a much more exact picture of the spread of extremism among the young people of Kazakhstan: the problem of extremism is relatively small, which means that there is no sense in overstating the threat of radicalization (see Fig. 1).

There is another problem: the risks of extremism caused by an increase of migration flows.

External players spare no money to move religious emissaries to Kazakhstan; they rely on social inequality in the republic and intend to establish a belt of instability in the region. Today, there are two centers of terrorist activities in Kazakhstan: its western and southern regions, both with the predominantly Kazakh population. The predominantly Russian north of the republic is relatively calm. The west, which neighbors the Northern Caucasus, where the struggle against radical groups has been waged for many years, is currently growing more and more extremist. In the south, with its big Uzbek diaspora, Islam is promptly radicalized under the pressure of illegal labor migrants coming from Uzbekistan. This threatens the stability of Kazakhstan, which cannot protect itself against religious extremism brought into the country under the guise of labor migration.

Figure 2

**Distribution of Answers to the Question about the Impact of Migrant Flows
on the Spread of Extremism in Kazakhstan**



Migration and the threat of extremism are interconnected: 3.6% believe that the problem of extremism in the republic is acute; 82% believe that migration does not affect the inter-ethnic and inter-confessional relations in the Republic of Kazakhstan (see Fig. 2).

This means that an insignificant share of the respondents saw migration as one of the channels of extremism. In fact, the fears of the growing external impact of the Islamic factor should be treated with a great deal of skepticism. The Arab Spring scenario is impossible in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

A comparison of the results of the sociological polls suggests that the majority of the republic's younger generation (82%) is secular-minded and the number of active or "real" believers (those who obey religious rules in their everyday life) is not higher than 8 or 9% of the total number of young people in Kazakhstan. This figure shows no trend towards increasing, which is typical of all generations.

According to the 2009 national population census there were 11,237,900 followers of Islam in the republic, or 70.2% of the total population.⁶ Nevertheless, the social basis of religious extremism in Kazakhstan is comparatively small and we should not overestimate the level of radicalization in Kazakhstan.

However, the fact that young people from Kazakhstan joined radical groups and fought in Syria and Iraq should be described as a threat to the country's security. This means that we should pay more attention to the younger generation and to practical issues such as education and upbringing and standards of living of families. The state should improve its youth policy by providing, first and foremost, affordable housing for young families, affordable high-quality education, new jobs and support of the socially vulnerable categories of young people. It is even more important to teach young people to oppose destructive influences of religious and extremist organizations.

Students regularly meet with representatives of religious organizations; there are open lessons and seminars teaching to separate the right religious trends from extremist. Young people learn more

⁶ See: *Analytical Report "Itogy Natsionalnoy Perepisi naseleniya Respubliki Kazakhstan 2009 goda,"* ed. by A.A. Smailov, Agentstvo Respubliki Kazakhstan po statistike, Astana, 2011, p. 25.

about the values and practices of different religions and acquire respect for and tolerance of different confessions.

The Comprehensive Plan of Opposing the Ideology of Extremism in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2013-2018 as the Conceptual Foundation of the Prevention of Terrorism and Extremism

In view of the above, the state has revised the methods used to oppose religious extremism and terrorism. Our leaders are moving towards a secular state that would take into account the current orientation of the new Kazakh national elites towards the European legal, political and cultural norms. The Arab Spring complicated the religious and political situation in the country that had enough social and economic problems of its own: the low level of knowledge about religions, the urgent problem of moral and patriotic education of the younger generations, as well as corruption, etc.

The level of religious extremism reached its peak in 2011-2012 with 14 extremist attacks and armed clashes with the law-and-order structures in different parts of the republic. Thirteen officers of law-and-order structures, 6 civilians and 51 extremists were killed. Today, 32 terrorists are serving life sentences.⁷ Starting in 2013, the law-and-order structures prevented 27 acts of terror (8 in 2013, 3 in 2014, 4 in 2015 and 12 in 2016).⁸

The state and the law-and-order structures resolutely responded to the outburst of terrorist activities, while the acts of violence in Taraz, Mangystau and Aktobe in 2011 and the riots in Zhanaozen were not outcrops of radicalism, but criminal acts. On 11 October, 2011, the state passed the Law on Religious Activities and Religious Organizations to bring more order into the religious sphere of social life in the republic.⁹ Monitoring of Islamic associations of all sorts was improved, the activities of religious (missionary, in the first place) organizations were better organized, while prevention and undercutting the dissemination of radical Islamic ideas by religious organizations and associations received more attention. Those of them that spread religious radicalism and thus threatened the republic's social and political stability were closed down; the rules of exit, entry and stay in the republic for foreign citizens were tightened. The republic established the Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Religious Affairs. Starting in 2014, the Committee on Religious Affairs has been cooperating with experts, theologians and the clergy on different issues, including prevention of religious extremism. The law-and-order structures started pouring more efforts into the prevention terrorist and extremist crimes; more people were sent to jail for crimes of radical and extremist nature.

The Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan that endorsed the State Program of opposing religious extremism and terrorism for 2013-2017 on 24 October, 2013, focused on the prevention of such crimes. Today, more than 200,000 are involved in the information and propaganda

⁷ See: A. Serenko, "Bumerang radikalizma v Kazakhstane," *NG-Religiya*, 14 August, 2018, available at [http://www.ng.ru/problems/2018-08-14/14_448_kazakhstan.html], 14 August, 2018.

⁸ See: *Natsionalnaia bezopasnost: proverka vremenem* (Official Site of the National Security Committee), available at [<http://knb.gov.kz/ru/news/nacionalnaa-bezopasnost-proverka-vremenem>], 11 September, 2017.

⁹ See: The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan of 11 October, 2011 No. 483-IV on Religious Activities and Religious Organizations (with amendments and additions as of 11.12.2016), available in Russian at [https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=31067690].

efforts started within the program.¹⁰ The National Security Committee of Kazakhstan created a new state program of opposing religious extremism and terrorism for 2017-2020.

The state structures acting within their competencies are doing the following to prevent extremism:

- (1) the state structure responsible for contacts with religious associations studies and analyzes the activities of religious associations and foreigners engaged in preaching and/or promotion of religious teachings; it bans those religious organizations that violate the laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan on opposition to extremism;
- (2) it monitors the mass media to prevent propaganda and justification of extremism, to identify extremist materials and efforts of educational or informational nature;
- (3) the central executive structures in the field of education approve and realize the programs designed to teach the students to reject the ideas of extremism, control the fulfillment of international student exchange agreements, etc.;
- (4) the national security structures of the Republic of Kazakhstan are engaged in operational and investigatory measures to prevent infiltration of the republic by foreigners or stateless persons who might threaten or undermine the security of society and the state;
- (5) the structures of the Ministry of the Interior are engaged in operational-investigatory activities, executive and organizational efforts to protect social order and social security;
- (6) the local executive structures interact with public associations, they study activities of religious organizations and foreigners engaged in promoting religious teachings and analyze the religious situation in the republic;
- (7) much effort is poured into a comprehensive plan of measures to cut short or prevent terrorism and extremism in Kazakhstan.¹¹

This means that this law defines the legal and organizational foundations of opposition to terrorism and extremism to ensure national security of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

In view of the laws designed to oppose religious extremism and terrorism, Kazakhstan revised, to a certain extent, its approaches, anti-terrorist methods and mechanisms. The state is determined to suppress the very possibility of extremism and terrorism emerging in its territory. Anti-terrorist struggle has become one of the priorities of the republic's national security policy, calling for close cooperation with other states in the military-technical sphere, at the political level and interstate cooperation at the global and regional levels. Today, Kazakhstan is actively and efficiently cooperating with the U.N., NATO, the European Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organizations and the Collective Security Treaty Organization. It is working hard to fulfill the demands of the resolution of the U.N. SC and presents its annual reports to the U.N.

Neither the authorities, nor the people of Kazakhstan are ready to repeat the Arab Spring scenario in their country. The extremist acts of 2011-2017 sprang up rather than being planned in advance, which explains why they never developed into an ideology. Religious extremists in Kazakhstan had no coordinating center, no leaders, while their associations were not cooperating among themselves. They had no clear-cut strategy and no ultimate aims; their activities could be defined as acts of jihad or acts of crime to an equal extent.

¹⁰ See: State Program of Opposition to Religious Extremism and Terrorism for the Years 2013-2017: Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan N.A. Nazarbaev, *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, No. 258 (1164), 2 October, 2013, pp. 2-8.

¹¹ See: The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Opposition to Extremism, No. 31 of 18 February, 2005 (with amendments and additions as of 28.12.2016), available in Russian at [https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=30004865#pos=90;-47], 28 December, 2016.

On the whole, everything the leaders of Kazakhstan are doing to oppose radicalism and extremism allows them to control the religious and political situation; common people are assured that the country will remain a secular state. Much is done to realize the social, economic and political reforms under the fairly complicated internal and external conditions; the leaders of the republic, on the whole, are working hard to oppose the threat of terror and religious extremism. The formerly higher level of threat has been suppressed, while the religious and political situation is improving. The current level of radicalization is not high, yet we should never forget that the attitude to radicalism held by the common people, who prefer peaceful manifestations, is the main factor of struggle against radicalism. The state should consolidate it by its support of social justice, religious politics, traditional Islam and its firm positions among the younger generation.

Kazakhstan is involved in the global process of the Syrian settlement; our country believes that it is highly important to take part in the global summits on the Syrian process; it invariably supports international negotiations with important practical contributions. President Nazarbayev offered Astana as the platform for the talks on the discontinuation of armed struggle in Syria. In 2017, Astana hosted eight international meetings on the Syrian settlement; in May 2018, it hosted the ninth, and in November 2018—the eleventh round of Syrian talks. The contribution of Kazakhstan to conflict settlement through a diplomatic dialog was highly appreciated by the U.N. and many of the world leaders. The Astana process complements the Geneva process, and both are carried out to arrive at a peaceful and stable settlement of the Syrian crisis.

This vector realized by President Nazarbayev summed up, to a certain extent, the republic's role in raising international relations to a new level, at which all misunderstandings and disagreements between countries will be resolved and conflicts settled at the negotiation table. Throughout the years of its independence Kazakhstan has been consistently promoting its peaceful foreign policy principles, viz. its multi-vectoral and balanced nature, peace and agreements. Kazakhstan's authority as an active supporter of the Syrian process that earned it international confidence has been recognized. An international recognition of President Nazarbayev's achievements is the result of his thoughtful and weighted actions. At the dawn of the country's independence he made a weighty contribution to international settlements, which today allows the country to pursue an active foreign policy and fulfill some of its foreign policy projects.

President Nazarbayev has repeatedly pointed out that peaceful and constructive talks based on the sides' equal responsibility for peace and security, mutual respect and noninterference in domestic affairs of countries are the sine qua non of peaceful settlement of all conflicts. In recent years, this has become especially important for the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, where extremism has become everyday reality. It is equally important to reform the system of international relations since only concerted efforts of all countries can stop extremism.

Conclusion

Hundreds of young people from Kazakhstan fought in the ranks of all sorts of radical armed groups in Syria and Iraq. On the one hand, this is a warning that should be taken into account; on the other, we should admit that the absolute majority of Kazakhstani Muslims not only demonstrate indifference to religious extremism, but also denounce it resolutely as a social evil. Kazakhstani Muslims have remained loyal to the norms of traditional Sunni Islam. Until recently, the attempts at extremist propaganda and recruitment of local Muslims into the ranks of radicals were few and far between. Today, under the pressure of the civil war in Syria Kazakhstan demonstrates a trend, apparent in all Central Asian countries, towards a massive outflow of radical Muslims to the Middle East. Disintegration of radical groups that disappeared from the information space pushed aside the problem of the

outflow of Kazakhstanis to the combat zone, Syria and Iraq in particular, and the problem of anti-terrorist struggle. The law-and-order structures managed to radically change the situation: the main cells of radical structures have been identified and liquidated; the system of anti-terrorist and anti-extremist struggle has been revised together with the strategy that united the efforts of state, as well as the public structures designed to prevent radicalism.

It should be said in conclusion that

- The leaders of Kazakhstan have taken and continue to take timely and adequate measures to prevent threats of terrorism and religious extremism;
- According to sociological polls of the younger generation, the threat of radicalization of the Kazakhstani youth has practically disappeared thanks to the efficient anti-extremist measures taken by the law-and-order structures;
- Kazakhstan should deepen its involvement in anti-terrorist and anti-extremist struggle at the global level under the aegis of the U.N. and NATO and at the regional level within the CSTO and SCO. This means that the Arab Spring affected the national security of Kazakhstan, yet it will probably be never repeated in it.

Kazakhstan should take into account everything that is going on in the Middle East and North Africa. Indeed, the Arab Spring has taught us that the state security system may be affected by a set of internal and external factors. The wars and revolutions in the Middle East have demonstrated that any country's state system may be destroyed by inefficient social and economic or political actions and that the leaders of all countries should be ready to address these problems efficiently and on time. The policy of social and state security should be geared towards an efficient system of protection of the interests of society, each of its members and the state.

RELIGION IN SOCIETY

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS LITERACY IN COUNTERACTING NEW ISLAMIST MOVEMENTS IN KAZAKHSTAN

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ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on the critical role of educational institutions in disseminating a sophisticated and historically grounded understanding religion among young people of post-Soviet Kazakhstan. In the context of plurality of opinions, world-views as well as of cultural and religious products available on the today's global market-place, one can hardly expect any restrictive measures and bans imposed by the government to prevent Kazakh youth from getting exposed to non-systemic and alternative religious movements, including those with militant agendas. The rapid development of modern communication technologies today renders all kind of information readily available to the young generation of Kazakhs through virtual forums, blogs and chatrooms. Invisible and anonymous recruit-

ers for various religious-political causes and religious cults exploit this fact to their advantage, using the legitimate grievances of young people that the state is unwilling or unable to address.

The situation in Kazakhstan is further aggravated by the fact that the majority of the population, especially its youth, has a very vague knowledge of their own religion, not to mention the religions that are not part of their personal background or family tradition. Under these circumstances, the issue of religious education requires close attention on behalf of both researchers and policy-makers. The authors see education as the key factor in immunizing young Kazakhs against religious extremism, close-mindedness, and religion- and ethnic-based intolerance and hatred.

KEYWORDS: *de-secularization, new religious movements, Kazakhstan, youth, religious literacy and education.*

Introduction

The 21st century brought about a drastic change in the spiritual and intellectual demands and inclinations of the world population. Contrary to the predictions current in the 1950-1960s, religion has not only survived the onslaught of secularism, but has become a major ideological and political factor in the life of many societies.¹ Thus, according to the statistics of Pew Research Center, more than eight-in-ten people of the globe identify themselves with a religious group. A comprehensive demographic study of more than 230 countries and territories conducted by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life estimates that there are 5.8 billion religiously affiliated adults and children around the globe, representing 84% of the world population of 6.9 billion.²

The rediscovery of religion by various social and demographic groups in the republics of the former Soviet Union is a fact that no one can deny. During the Soviet era, religious practices in the republics of the U.S.S.R. were performed officially in severely curtailed form and under a close supervision of the state security apparatus or clandestinely by some individuals and groups of the officially atheist Soviet societies. Against great odds, religiously committed individuals kept attending churches, mosques, places of worship, and could even manage to obtain religious education in the

¹ See: *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, ed. by P.B. Clarke, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 2009, passim.

² See: Pew Research Center. *The Global Religious Landscape*, 18 December, 2012.

official religious colleges (*madrastas*) of Central Asia or in semi-clandestine “study rooms” (*hudzhras*: from the Arabic *hujra*, “room”).³ After the former Soviet republics of Central Asia became independent, their populations were eager to find new ideological and spiritual orientations, which they often rationalized as a rediscovery of their authentic religious roots. For former nominal “Soviet Muslims”⁴ adopted Islamic religious slogans and eagerly displayed their newly found Muslim identity and piety by Islamic dress and language.⁵ At the same time, in their personal and professional lives the overwhelming majority of the Soviet Muslims was still guided by secular rules and norms. This is hardly surprising, because their governments did not implement the policy of wholesale Islamization, fearing that it might backfire. Instead, they chose, at least in theory, to pursue the course of establishing a civil society based on secular constitutional principles.⁶ In reality, civil freedoms were restricted in most Muslim republics of the former U.S.S.R. Regardless of the desires of the secular authorities of the newly independent post-Soviet countries, the newly discovered religious sentiment and orientation of their subjects have become part of the social fabric of the newly independent states of the Central Asian region. From that time on, the Muslim revival has been closely monitored and controlled by the state apparatus.

In an attempt to conceptualize the religious turn in the trajectories of the former Muslim republics of the Soviet Union and elsewhere, Western sociologists have proposed that the contemporary postmodern and post-secular world is characterized by either an insidious or an overt de-secularization that promotes religion, while preserving secular elements and norms of social life in the public space. In particular, the researchers stress the shift in religious knowledge acquisition and distribution from centralized authoritative institutions to a personal self-discovery and quest for world-orientation that takes on a non-traditional religious form. Some sociologists consider this flight of the postmodern individual from institutionalized religions to be a vivid proof of de-secularization. Those who disagree with them, on the other hand, argue that this trend indicates a new dimension or twist of secularization in the modern world.⁷ Be this as it may, the majority of modern sociologists and scholars of religion acknowledge that definitions of such concepts as “secularization,” “de-secularization,” and “post-secular” are fluid and open to an academic discussion. In other words, the academic community has no consensus regarding the content of these important notions, so everyone is using them as he or she sees fit.

For example, some researchers view what they call “post-secular epoch” not just as a simple, mechanical comeback of religion, but also as an era of new approaches to the evaluation and definition of the sacred by the Western academic establishment. There are also those who prefer to speak about a new “enchantment” of the world following Max Weber’s famous concept of “re-sacralization.” In the context of such debates, secularism itself may be seen a form of a hidden religion or quasi-religion, as Paul Tillich used to describe it. For example, Communism, Nazism, or liberalism could be identified in such terms.⁸

³ For details, see: *Allah’s Kolkhozes: Migration, de-Stalinisation, Privatisation, and the New Muslim Congregations in the Soviet Realm (1950s-2000s)*, ed. by Stéphane A. Dudoignon, Christian Noack, Klaus Schwarz Verlag, Berlin, 2014.

⁴ For illuminating discussions of this notion, see the volume quoted in the previous note and A. Bustanov, “Muslim Literature in the Atheist State,” *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts*, No. 9, 2018, pp. 1-31; idem, “Against Leviathan: On the Ethics of Islamic Poetry in Soviet Russia,” in: *The Piety of Learning: Islamic Studies in Honor of Stefan Reichmuth*, ed. by M. Kemper, R. Elger, Brill, Leiden and Boston, 2017, pp. 199-224.

⁵ See: A. Knysh, “Islam and Arabic as the Rhetoric of Insurgency: The Case of the Caucasus Emirate,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 35, 2012, pp. 315-337.

⁶ See: The Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, available at [<http://mfa.gov.kz/en/hague/content-view/the-constitution-of-the-republic-of-kazakhstan>].

⁷ See: K. Dobbelaere, *Sekularyzacja. Trzy poziomy analizy*, tłum. R. Babińska, Nomos, Kraków, 2008, p. 147.

⁸ See: R. Grzegorzczkova, “Co o fenomenie duchowości mówi język?” in: *Fenomen duchowości*, ed. by A. Grzegorzczk, J. Sójka, R. Koschany, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań, 2006, pp. 21-29; R. King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India, and “the Mystic East,”* Routledge, London and New York, 1999, pp. 8-14.

The predominantly secular political, social and cultural environment of contemporary nation states gives rise to religious pluralism. According to Peter L. Berger, modern lifestyles, ways of production and ideological orientations have become a catalyst for secularization and an engine of pluralism. In other words, religious pluralism is intimately and inextricably linked to the rapidly evolving process of globalization, which in turn is associated with secularization (regardless of the inevitable polysemy of this concept).⁹

In considering the vicissitudes of secularization in the Muslim post-Soviet republics, it is important to note that in this part of the world secularism usually took on the most rigid form of Marxist-Leninist atheism that denied religion any visible place in the public sphere. As mentioned, after the fall of the Soviet Union, the situation in these republics changed dramatically. Taking post-Soviet Kazakhstan as our case study, we observe a vigorous revival of the country's old religious traditions, such as Islam of the Hanafi legal and theological school (*madhhab*) and Russian Orthodox Christianity. At the same time, representatives of new religious movements, which we will loosely identify as "non-traditional" or "alternative," also made their way into the country to disseminate their teachings. Some did that actively and effectively, others less so. This process was taking place in the context of an intensive quest for identity by young Kazakh men and women in which, in accordance with the worldwide trends outlined above, religion has an important role to play. On the one hand, in the 1990s, religious belief and affiliation served as a major factor of self-assertion and socialization, inevitably contributing to the accentuation of a distinctive ethnoconfessional identity by members of various religious communities. On the other hand, the quest for religious not infrequently led to the conversion of spiritual seekers to new religious communities.¹⁰

In Kazakhstan, the majority of the population, especially young people, has little or no knowledge of either their own religion (Islam), or of other religions. Heeding the advice of Kazakh academic scholars, the state authorities sought to address this religious illiteracy, because, in their view, it was intimately linked to the larger societal problems faced by the state, namely religious and ethnic intolerance and national security. This is not the place to discuss the downsides of "securitization of Islam" by post-Soviet state authorities.¹¹ Such discussions by well-meaning and liberally minded Western academics are important and timely, but have little or nothing to offer in terms of viable state policies. This is understandable, because the scholars who criticize the governments for being "authoritarian" or "inapt" have no hope of seeing their own policies (if they have any) being implanted and, therefore, can afford to be harsh, vocal and unforgiving in their condemnation of the Kazakh government and the country's academic establishment.

The Kazakh academics, on the other hand, have to address the problem of youth radicalization (which is quite real), whether they are prepared for this or not. By taking advantage of the funds provided by the government of Kazakhstan, they convened a series of international conferences and encouraging Kazakh and foreign academics to address the problem. Thus, the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University became a forum for discussing such burning issues of the day as "Religious Education in the Context of a Research University" (Almaty, 2017), "Religious Education in Modern Kazakhstan: Present and Future" (Almaty, 2014), and "The Role of Religion in Cultural and Socio-Political Developments in Kazakhstan: A Textbook as a Humanitarian Dialogue Project" (Almaty, 2015). In a similar vein, a group of scholars affiliated with the said university has published a collec-

⁹ See: P.L. Berger, "The Good of Religious Pluralism," *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life*, April 2016, p. 39. Peter L. Berger outlines four benefits of pluralism.

¹⁰ See: Ye.Ye. Burova. "Novaya religioznost kak epifenomen i realnost," *Izvestia NAN RK*, Vol. 6, 2013, p. 45.

¹¹ J. Heathershaw, D.W. Montgomery, *The Myth of Post-Soviet Muslim Radicalization in the Central Asian Republics*, Russia and Eurasia Program, Chatham House, November 2014, available at [https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/field/field_document/2014-11-14%20Myth%20summary%20v2b.pdf].

tive monograph entitled *Religious Studies in Modern Kazakhstan: Ways of Formation and Development* (Almaty, 2014).

The present study is an attempt to summarize the results obtained in the course of these academic discussions. The authors submit that by educating Kazakhstan's young men and women in the viscidities of religions in various global contents the state is bound to achieve its goal of dissuading Kazakhstan's young men and women from joining Islamic groups with radical agendas that act in the name and on behalf of Islam.

The Religious Situation in Kazakhstan

Islam has been the main form of religious commitment in Kazakhstan since the fourteenth century CE. However, even before the Soviet campaign to eradicate religion, Islam was hardly the principal factor in the construction of Kazakh culture and identity.¹² Contemporary Kazakh scholars argue that the Kazakh tribes were syncretic in their religious beliefs and practices and freely combined pre-Islamic rituals with Muslim practices.¹³ To what extent the two can be neatly separated is a different matter that should not detain us here.¹⁴ For the moment, we assume that they have become closely, even inextricably intertwined.

Modern Kazakhstan is a territorially large and ethnically diverse state that includes many non-Kazakhs (mostly Russians and Ukrainians as well as Uzbeks, Koreans, Uyghurs, and Germans), whose families moved there on their own or were exiled during the Soviet period. According to the *Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom* (2017), about 65% of the country's residents are Muslims, mostly Sunni Hanafi; 25%—Orthodox Christians; less than 5% comprises Jews, Roman and Greek Catholics, various Protestant denominations and other religions.¹⁵

During Stalin's reign of terror, the Soviet government applied a relentless atheistic policy by discouraging or actively suppressing any manifestations of religious beliefs, practices and values in the public sphere.¹⁶ Somewhat softer policies of managing religion were pursued under Stalin's successors¹⁷. After gaining independence in December 1991, Kazakhstan became a secular state officially. In practice, this means that the government regulates the activity of religious organizations and licenses religious groups. It also has the authority to declare certain religious traditions to be indigenous and orthodox, while branding others as pernicious and socially dangerous "cults."¹⁸ Thus, An-

¹² See, e.g.: W. Clark, "Networks of Faith in Kazakhstan," in: *Back Conversion After Socialism: Disruptions, Modernisms and Technologies of Faith in the Former Soviet Union*, ed. by M. Pelkmans, Berghahn Books, New York, 2009, pp. 129-142; for further details, see: B. Privratsky, *Muslim Turkestan: Kazakh Religion and Collective Memory*, Richmond, Curzon, Surrey, 2001. Chapter 1.

¹³ See: S. Akatai, *Drevnie kul'ty i traditsionnaia kultura kazakhskogo naroda*, Kazakhskii NII kultury i iskusstvovedeniia, Almaty, 2001; R.M. Mustafina, *Islam i relikiy doislamskikh mirovozzrencheskikh traditsii u kazakhov*, Zharkyn Ko, Astana, 2010.

¹⁴ An attempt to unravel the complex relations between Islamic and pre-Islamic elements of the Kazakh identity has been undertaken by Bruce Privratsky in his *Muslim Turkistan*; see Chapters 2 and 3.

¹⁵ See: Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook Kazakhstan*, available at [<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kz.html>], 5 January, 2018.

¹⁶ See: A. Nurmanova, A. Izbairov, "Islamic Education in Soviet and Post-Soviet Kazakhstan," in: *Islamic Education in the Soviet Union and Its Successor States*, ed. by M. Kemper, R. Motika, St. Reichmuth, Routledge, New York, 2010, pp. 280-313.

¹⁷ See: *Ibidem*.

¹⁸ O. Roy, *Holy Ignorance: When Religion and Culture Part Ways*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2010, p. 160. Roy talks here about the government of Russia, however his statement can be extrapolated to Kazakhstan whose state policies in many ways mirror those of the Russian Federation.

drew Yarbrough¹⁹ cogently argues that the primary concern of the government of Kazakhstan is politically motivated Islamic activity (Islamism), because state officials see it as a grave threat to the country's internal stability and international image. This conclusion finds support in John Anderson's theory that the issue of religion is inherently complex and ambivalent, especially for so-called transitional states, because religion can and frequently does become an alternative source of power and authority that is in a position to challenge the state's dominance in the ideological, social and political spheres.²⁰ The real or perceived danger of the religious challenge to the secular state lies in the ability of religious leaders to mobilize the masses for certain mundane goals in the name of higher, cosmic truths. Religion also helps its representatives to transcend and override localized loyalties and affiliations, rendering it a formidable social and political force. In the words of an Israeli expert on religious psychology (and in line with Hobsbawm's statement), "religion inspires cooperation among genetically unrelated individuals by invoking a new identity which is above that of a family or clan."²¹ While nationalism or revolutionary secular ideas and ideals (e.g., communism, anarchism or socialism) have been doing the same thing over the past two centuries, they are often monopolized and utilized by the nation state (e.g., the post-colonial governments of North Africa, the Middle East and South Asia),²² leaving religion as one of the few, if not the only, vents for popular discontents with the status quo. The state, predictably, responds to such religiously articulated challenges by branding them as manifestations of "pernicious foreign cults," "religious extremism" or "religious radicalism."²³ As an illustration, one can cite the speech of Kazakh president Nursultan Nazarbayev during the Youth Forum in Astana in 2014: "The more people hold on to radicalism, the less dynamics is there in the development of the state. The reason is simple. Radicalism does not benefit any sphere of life, but only hinders the progress. In the economy, it leads to unreasoned adventures and useless spending. The values and traditions that helped people to survive for many centuries are getting erased in [our] culture. The immunity of such a country becomes weaker, and it gets sick... The point is not about rejecting religion. During the years of independence 2,230 mosques, 186 Orthodox Christian churches, and 40 Catholic churches were built in Kazakhstan. Religious tolerance is an important part of our spiritual heritage. However, religion should always be kept separate from the state, and this is a rule of thumb for surviving in the 21st century."²⁴

Noteworthy here is that, in addition to blaming radicalism for hindering social and economic progress, the president of Kazakhstan forcibly emphasizes a strict and uncompromising separation of

¹⁹ See: A. Yarbrough, *Islamist Challenge Authoritarian Response: Politics and Policies towards Islamism in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in the Post-Soviet Era*, Thesis for the Degree of Master of Arts, University of Washington, Seattle, 2014, p. 53, available at [https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/bitstream/handle/1773/26777/Yarbrough_washington_02500_13191.pdf?sequence=1].

²⁰ See: J. Anderson, *Religious Liberty in Transitional Societies*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, p. 216 (see also pp. 115-165).

²¹ B. Beit-Halalhami, "On Neither Burying Nor Praising Religion," *Critical Research on Religion*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2017, p. 211. This idea was formulated much earlier by Eric Hobsbawm who argued that "Religion is an ancient and well-trying method of establishing communion through common practice and a sort of brotherhood between people who otherwise have nothing much in common" (see his *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, p. 68).

²² For some concrete examples, see: A. Knysh, *Islam in Historical Perspective*, 2nd ed., Routledge, Abington, Oxon, New York, 2017, Chapters 22-24.

²³ For a justification of war on ["Islamic"] terror disguised as an academic study, see: R. Emanuilov., A Yashlavsky, *Terror in the Name of Faith: Religion and Political Violence*, Academic Studies Press, Boston, 2011; for an analysis of the use of the notion of "Islamic extremism" to suppress opposition to the state and its policies, see: A. Knysh, "A Clear and Present Danger: 'Wahhabism' as a Rhetorical Foil," *Die Welt des Islams*, Vol. 44, No. 1, 2004, p. 3-26.

²⁴ See: N.A. Nazarbayev, *Address of the President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev at the Youth Forum "Towards New Victories Led by the Leader of the Nation!"*, available in Russian at [http://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/internal_political_affairs/in_speeches_and_addresses/vystuplenie-prezidenta-kazahstana-nazarbaeva-na-forume-molodezhi-s-liderom-nacii-k-novym-pobedom].

religion and the state—an ideological stance that is vividly reminiscent of Turkish Kamalism and its variations in other Islamic regions.²⁵ Yet, paradoxically, his words also inadvertently reveal the role of the state in sponsoring the construction of religious buildings, because, as everyone in Kazakhstan and beyond knows well, only the Kazakh state and some carefully vetted foreign donors, have the license and means to implement such expensive projects.

The president's concerns regarding [Islamic] radicalism are understandable in the light of the perpetual instability in Afghanistan that has had a considerable negative effect on regional security in Central Asia, especially in the aftermath of the events of 11 September, 2001 in the U.S. Faced with non-state actors operating under Islamic slogans and in the name of Islam, the five states of the region—Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan—eagerly joined the U.S. and NATO's "war on terrorism" declared by President George W. Bush in 2001.²⁶ This military-political alliance has been described, justified or even praised by experts on "security studies" in a host of publications that are too numerous to be listed here.²⁷ The most successful and high profile Islam-based movements such as Hizb ut-Tahrir and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) have received the lion's share of academic attention.²⁸ The overall list of the Islamic religious organizations banned by the Kazakh government includes the following: the IMU, Hizb-ut-Tahrir al-Islami (HT), Jamaat of Central Asian Mujahedin, Islamic Party of Eastern Turkestan, Kurdistan Workers' Party (Turkey and Iraq), Boz Kurt (Turkey and East Turkestan), Lashkar-e-Toiba (Pakistan), Social Reforms Society (Kuwait), Asbat-an-Asar (Israel), al-Qa'eda, Taliban (Afghanistan-Pakistan), and the Muslim Brotherhood (Egypt).²⁹

Why and How Do Alternative Religious Groups Attract the Young?

The majority of Kazakh observers of non-traditional or alternative movements seems to agree that the Internet has become the major recruitment tool for various oppositional Islamic groups worldwide and their aficionados and imitators across the globe. In the opinion of these observers, the Internet enables leaders and recruiters to address large audiences, while remaining anonymous and undetectable by state security apparatuses.³⁰ High transmission and communication speed, low costs, and various multimedia capabilities facilitate the virtual presence and public outreach of non-traditional Islamic organizations. Various groups acting on behalf of Islam use modern information technologies

²⁵ See: B. Sayyid, *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism*, Zed Books, London and New York, 1997, pp. 52-83.

²⁶ See: E. Karagiannis, *The New Political Islam: Human rights, Democracy, and Justice*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2017, p. 184.

²⁷ See, e.g.: D. Chaudet, "Hizb ut-Tahrir: An Islamist Threat to Central Asia?" *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 26, Issue 1, 2006, pp. 113-125; A. Tabyshalieva, "Hizb-ut-Tahrir's Increasing Activity in Central Asia," *Central Asian-Caucasus Analyst*, 14 January, 2004, available at [<http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/8656>]; for a book-length study of Hizb ut-Tahrir, see: E. Karagiannis, *Political Islam in Central Asia: The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir*, Routledge, London and New York, 2010.

²⁸ For details, see: M.B. Olcott, *In the Whirlwind of Jihad*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, D.C., 2011; Zh. Baizakova, R. McDermott, *Reassessing the Barriers to Islamic Radicalization in Kazakhstan*, Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, Carlisle, PA, 2015.

²⁹ See: A. Nurmanova, A. Izbairov, "Islamic Education in Soviet and Post-Soviet Kazakhstan," in: *Islamic Education in the Soviet Union and Its Successor State*, Routledge, New York, 2010, p. 294.

³⁰ See: *Religioznye konversii v postsekuliarnom obshchestve (opyt fenomenologicheskoi rekonstruktsii)*, Collective monograph, ed. by A.Kh. Bizhanov, Institute of Philosophy, Political Science and Religion Studies, Almaty, 2017, pp. 344-348.

and online blogs not just to recruit young people and advance their political, social and intellectual agendas, but also to detect potential supporters and sponsors, thus turning the Internet into an effective fundraising tool.³¹ The number of sites containing propaganda materials of various alternative Islamic groups and movements is steadily growing, while the rapid development of sophisticated mobile applications facilitates downloading their literature on mobile phones.

This said, in the final account, the Internet is nothing but a medium, one of many possible ways to disseminate or advertise certain Islamic ideas, e.g., those advocating social and economic equity and those that portray Islam as the religion of justice par excellence.³² Before the Internet, there were audiotapes, and before them religious pamphlets and newspapers. However, it is the ideas and their reception by intended audiences that matter, not the channels through which they are broadcast.³³ In other words, the Internet is not the cause; it is but a medium and facilitator.

What follows are the conditions and circumstances that, according to Kazakh experts, facilitate the recruitment activity of alternative Islamic movements in Kazakhstan:

- The absence of the consistent and unambiguous state policy on religion.
- A lack of correct and positive coverage in the media, educational courses, and Internet resources—especially those directed at young people—of the questions about religious and secular spirituality.
- The absence of quick solutions of social and economic problems, e.g., unemployment, poverty, marginalization.
- The delay in spreading religious literacy among targeted audiences and the population at large.
- The absence of some religious organization in the prohibition list.
- Internet influence³⁴.

To infuse some theory into our discussion, many Western scholars believe that those who join radical groups are marginalized, poor, and antisocial people who want to compensate their deprivation and economic needs through emotional and social rewards by participating in highly organized groups that consider themselves the elect. In other words, radicals are more often than not people who are socially and psychologically vulnerable.³⁵

Lorne Dawson disagrees.³⁶ He advances the theory of relative deprivation, according to which economic deprivation is not the main reason why people turn to radical religious groups. Dawson then argues that it is difficult to determine who will eventually join new religious movements, including ones preaching violence. He concedes, however, that converts to new religious movements are more likely to have fewer and weaker social ties. In other words, people with fewer social attachments have lower stakes in conformity and therefore are more readily available for recruitment to groups that are in high tension or philosophical conflict with society.³⁷ They are usually individuals “who are looking for something,” for example, a new religious commitment that provides ready-made answers to their existential questions. Such converts indeed have weak social and ideological connections. Therefore,

³¹ For concrete examples of the use of the Internet by Kazakh young men and women to find information about Islam, see: *Ibid.*, 169-171, 179, 186, 211, 238, 340-341.

³² See: E. Karagiannis, *The New Political Islam*, p. 182.

³³ See: F. Burgat, *Comprendre l'islam politique*, La Découverte, Paris, 2017, pp. 267-268.

³⁴ See: *Religioznye konversii v postsekuliarnom obshchestve (opyt fenomenologicheskoi rekonstruktsii)*, p. 431.

³⁵ See: R. Barrett, *Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees*. The Soufan Center, 2017, p. 41.

³⁶ See: L. Dawson, “The Study of New Religious Movements and the Radicalization of Home-Grown Terrorists: Opening a Dialogue,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 22, Issue 1, 2009, pp. 1-21.

³⁷ See: *Ibid.*, p. 6.

many relatively well-off young people join radical organizations, simply because they can afford to experiment with alternative ways of living and believing.

Such findings generally agree with the situation in Kazakhstan, where single individuals or individuals “looking for something” as well as those who have been victims to psychological and social traumas of various kinds become the easiest targets for recruitment into alternative religious organizations and cults. Such people do not have a strong attachment to their homeland, have nothing to lose, and they may even be on the lookout for escape from their homeland. For example, some young Kazakhs joined the Islamic State (ISIS). In 2017, their number was officially estimated to be 127, including women and children.³⁸

Conclusion

Summarizing our findings, we would like to emphasize the importance of education in immunizing Kazakhstan’s youth against “catching the bug” of religious extremism, close-mindedness, and intolerance. In the context of an astounding plurality of opinions, world-views, cultural and religious products on the today’s global market place, one can hardly expect any restrictive measure and bans imposed by the government to prevent Kazakh youth from getting exposed to alternative or non-traditional religious movements, including those with radical and militant agendas. The rapid development of modern communication technologies allows the young generation of Kazakhs to expand their intellectual horizons by navigating the cyberspace. Here they are likely to meet recruiters for various religious causes and cults. The recruiters with militant religious and political agendas astutely use the legitimate grievances of young people that the state is unwilling or unable to address in order to persuade them to join their ranks. In the case of Islamic (Islamist) movements, global and local agendas seamlessly merge: the grievances of the worldwide Muslim *umma* are universal, but present in every local Muslim community in an always unique or specific way. This situation creates the phenomenon of “glocalization” that sustains such movements despite repression by secular and occasionally also not-so-secular states.³⁹ The recent, albeit short-lived successes of al-Qa’eda and the Islamic State in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Somalia and West Africa, are evidence of continual vitality and attractiveness of such movement to young Muslim men and women living both in the East and in the West.

When we started to write this article, we aimed to demonstrate that educating Kazakh youth about religion in historical and comparative perspective would prevent them from joining “foreign” movements acting in the name and behalf of Islam. We have discovered that these movements are not so “alien” to Kazakh society, after all. There are purely local factors and grievances that feed them. Given the fact that religion has become a major element of the new Kazakh identity, especially among young people, they should be encouraged to ponder its implications for their personal lives. It is not enough to teach them about the Hanafi Islam of their ancestors. We need also to show them that Islam has a long history and offers a wide variety of interpretations and role models to identify oneself with. To this end, we, the educators, should prepare a coherent curriculum and a series of well-written textbooks based on an up-to-date research in the field of Islamic studies. We should design these educational tools in such a way as to highlight the plurality and polyphony of Islam as an intellectual tradition and devotional practice with wide-ranging political, social and cultural ramifications. No less importantly, the instructional materials should not focus exclusively on Muslim phenomena, but also expose learners to similar or parallel developments and concepts in other religious traditions.

³⁸ See: R. Barrett, op. cit., p. 12.

³⁹ For details, see: E. Karagiannis, *The New Political Islam*. The author uses the concept of “glocalization” to analyze the recent evolution of the movements acting in the name and on behalf of Islam and the *umma*.

This approach will help to remove the aura of exclusivity from Islam, giving it its due place in the gallery of universal religious traditions.

The second goal is much more challenging and difficult to achieve. It lies in encouraging young men and women to think critically about the facts and statements with which they are being bombarded on a daily basis due to the global outreach of information technologies. Sifting through information flows, discerning facts from fiction and tracing certain statements and theories back to their ideological origins are skills that every educated person should possess nowadays. Barring this, young men or women will inevitably fall victim to illusions, carefully constructed and disseminated myths and utopias and, worse still, to manipulation by various actors and “agents of influence,” as they are often dubbed in official and unofficial discourses today. Concrete ways of devising and implementing these educational tools and strategies are a collective task to be undertaken by the Kazakh state and its intellectuals (educators). They lie outside the purview of this article.

To conclude our discussion of the religious situation in Kazakhstan, we would like to share several insights that we have acquired in the course of the present study. First, we should be realistic about the goals outlined above. The state cannot turn the situation around overnight, as some Western critics seem to propose. Theirs’ is but wishful thinking, a well-meaning academic pipe dream of sorts. The most the current Kazakh state can do is to alleviate at least the most urgent grievances that push young men and women to embrace radical religious and political agendas advertised by certain Islamic groups and movements. In practice, this means reducing the level of corruption among state officials and creating well-paid jobs for the young. As for their moral-ethical wellbeing, one should remember that inculcating critical thinking in the population is not a panacea, but, in fact, a double-edged sword in that it can easily turn against real or perceived misdeeds and injustices of the state or its individual representatives. On the positive side, a critically minded and enlightened youth may remain dissatisfied with the incumbent government and its policies, but, at the same time, perhaps be more realistic and sophisticated regarding ways and means of challenging or changing them. In other words, a better-informed and educated young generation will be more constructive than disruptive. As for the state itself, its officials, too, need to be educated in ways of determining which religious movements are relatively benign and should be allowed to exist⁴⁰ and which indeed constitute a danger to state security and public order. A zero sum game is not the solution, because it results in totalitarianism—an outdated way of building and managing a nation today. A more accommodating, open-minded approach can only be implemented by the states whose leaders are ready to relinquish their political, cultural and ideological monopoly and allow other players to enter these fields of human endeavor. In short, the simultaneous education of the state authorities and the citizenry seems to be the only guarantee of the success of the project that we call “Kazakh society.”

⁴⁰ Thus, according to Emmanuel Kargiannis, a life-long student of Hizb ut-Tahrir, this and other Islamic movements (such as, e.g., apolitical, inward oriented variants of Salafism) “are examples of non-violent Islamist activism” that secular states should learn to tolerate (E. Karagiannis, *The New Political Islam*, p. 185).

REGIONAL ECONOMY

EXPORT OF LABOR RESOURCES FROM KYRGYZSTAN: TENDENCIES AND CONSEQUENCES

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ABSTRACT

The article discusses contemporary tendencies in the export of labor resources from Kyrgyzstan. The issue of seeking employment abroad remains topical for a significant share of the country's population due to the complicated socio-economic situation and high levels of unemployment and poverty. The major vectors of labor resources' export are researched—in the recent years, citizens of Kyrgyzstan have been seeking employment in Kazakhstan, Turkey, Rumania and South Korea increasingly more often. An assessment of factors that define Russian Federation as the key receiving country is provided. Most of those working abroad continue to choose Russia, despite the increase in the share of the younger generation that often considers other countries. Young men aged 20-29 with a completed high school education are currently predominant in the labor migrant flow. The presence of cultural and historic ties, along with the tight proximate transport connectivity has established the framework for the development of close economic relations, including the issues related to the export and import of labor resources. The widespread use of the Russian language in the Kyrgyz Republic allows to obtain significant competitive advantages when obtaining employment in various spheres of the Russian economy. An analysis of the struc-

ture and number of workers, their distribution over Russian regions and employment spheres is conducted. A clear eastern vector is apparent in the migration of Kyrgyz citizens to Siberia, the Urals and the Russian Far East, despite the fact that a significant share of workers is still concentrated in the major cities of the European part of Russia. The share of migrants from the Kyrgyz Republic among the working population is currently higher beyond the Ural Mountains—Kyrgyz labor force is becoming increasingly more needed specifically in the Eastern part of Russia. The contribution of labor migration to the economy of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Russian Federation at the national and regional levels is studied. Employment opportunities available to Kyrgyz Republic citizens are described. The process of establishment of ethnic Kyrgyz community organizations and their influence on the quality of life and labor conditions, as well as on the growth of the number of migrant workers from the Kyrgyz Republic are discussed. The Kyrgyz Republic's problems related to the labor resource export are analyzed. The outflow of able-bodied population with an active life potential leads to noticeable degradation of the country's social system. Opportunities for subsequent development of the Kyrgyz Republic's economy are brought to light.

KEYWORDS: *labor resources, export of labor resources, working migrants, Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyz workers.*

Introduction

In the recent decades, internal socio-economic and political factors promote a continual increase in the export of labor resources from the countries of Central Asia. A significant share of the workers is comprised of natives of the Kyrgyz Republic, who are currently working in dozens of countries around the world. The geographic directions of labor migrants' distribution continue to be diversified. Among other reasons, this fact is stipulated by the new generation of young people entering the labor resources export process. Their knowledge of Russian is weaker, they are not as oriented towards Russia, think more broadly and are capable of utilizing modern means of communication and obtaining information.

Nonetheless, Russian Federation still remains the leading direction of labor resources export for citizens of Kyrgyzstan, which allows to speak of strong economic ties between the two countries, which encourages their bilateral development. Large-scale emigration processes have significant socio-economic, demographic and political consequences for both the donor and the receiving countries. The Kyrgyz Republic holds a high place in the world rating of countries by the share of remittances in GDP (a significant share of transfers is conducted from Russia). Meanwhile, the export of labor resources from Kyrgyzstan also has great socio-economic importance for the Russian Federation. Numerous sectors of the economy, such as construction, housing and utilities, service, agriculture, transport, etc. and are developing owing to the inflow of labor resources. The entry of the Kyrgyz Republic into the Eurasian Economic Union in August 2015 has given rise to a new phase in Russian-Kyrgyz relations, including the sphere of labor migration. Currently, migrants from Kyrgyzstan have significant advantages compared to representatives of other countries due to a higher level of mastery of the Russian language, as well as to the fact that free movement of labor force is allowed within the Eurasian Economic Union member countries (working without a work patent, the term of temporary stay, provided for by an employment or independent contractor agreement and exemption from the need to recognize academic degrees).

Factors that Promote the Export of Labor Resources from Kyrgyzstan

We can emphasize several key factors that stipulate the export of labor resources from Central Asian countries, including Kyrgyzstan, to Russia in particular.

Economic factor. On the one hand, in the countries of labor migrants' origin, the outflow of a significant number of able-bodied population was stimulated by typical "propelling" factors: a drop in industrial production, low wages, high unemployment, lack of workplaces, spreading of poverty, excess of labor resources. On the other hand, Russia, as the receiving country, has appealing factors: a high-volume labor market, a diversified economy, a need for labor resources in many regions and segments of economy, higher wages, better quality of life. As a result, a large-scale migration corridor between Central Asian countries and Russia has been established in Eurasia, in the post-Soviet territory.

Socio-demographic factor. Over the course of the 1990s-2010s, the size of the able-bodied population in Russia shrinks, while the share of older people increases. These factors exacerbate the deficit of labor resources on the Russian labor market, increases the competition for labor resources, stimulates the export of labor resources from donor countries with an excess of population. The demographic situation in Central Asian countries—the main point of origin of labor migrants—is completely opposite.

The forecasts state that by 2050 the able-bodied population will increase by 6.4 million in Uzbekistan, by 2.8 million in Tajikistan, by 900,000 in Turkmenistan, and by 600,000 in Kyrgyzstan.

Cultural and historic factors. Comprehensive interaction of Central Asian countries with Russia is based on the socio-economic ties that have formed in the framework of the ex-U.S.S.R. and on the wide distribution of the Russian language as the main interpersonal communication tool. When choosing a destination for going abroad residents of many donor countries are oriented towards the Russian Federation, since their knowledge of the Russian language and the understanding of the Russian mentality significantly increases their chances of finding employment in Russia in particular. Notably, this is especially characteristic of the Kyrgyz citizens, who obtain an additional advantage in finding employment due to their better mastery of the Russian language. The majority of migrant workers in Russia find work through social networks, relatives, private intermediaries, etc. Unfortunately, the role of state structures and private employment agencies in migrant job placement remains extremely low.

Infrastructural and geographical factor. Despite their geographical location in the very heart of Eurasia, the Central Asian states are linked far more closely with the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan than with China, the Middle East and Western Europe. There are several transportation options for traveling to the Russian Federation from Central Asia, namely, railroad, automobile, maritime, and air. In the recent years, airborne transportation has been developing and promoting the export of labor resources to Russia. Many national and Russian airlines have launched direct flights not only to Moscow, but also to other major Russian cities with relatively inexpensive flight tickets, and the gradually developing system of credits for flights to Russia (for instance, in Central Asian countries). The transportation factor in conjunction with the geographical location stimulates the export of labor resources from Central Asian countries to Russia.

Political factor. On the one hand, migration in Central Asian countries was determined by an entire range of ethnopolitical factors (civil wars, ethnic conflicts, everyday nationalism, a shrinking sphere of application of the Russian language, impossibility of career growth, lack of prospects for making a career), which led to a large-scale migration of Russian and Russian-speaking population from Central Asian countries to Russia in the 1990s-2000s. Meanwhile, the political and economic integrative processes within the CIS, and, subsequently, the EEU, the presence of a visa-free regime between the countries acted as stimulating factors for workers throughout the post-Soviet territory and promoted the influx of labor resources from the Central Asian states to Russia and Kazakhstan.

The Geography of the Export of Labor Resources from Kyrgyzstan: Russia as the Main Receiving Country

Over several years, the Kyrgyz Republic has been a major supplier of labor resources to other countries, Russia and Kazakhstan being the two main destinations. Over the course of the recent years, a gradual diversion of labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan to new destinations, such as Turkey, South Korea, and the Middle Eastern countries (see Figs. 1-2) has been occurring. According to the State Migration Service under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, in 2017 over 800,000 Kyrgyz citizens were living abroad, including over 640,000 in Russia, 35,000 in Kazakhstan, 30,000 in Turkey, 5,000 in South Korea, and the rest—in Europe, the Middle East (UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, etc.) and in the U.S.¹

¹ See: The State Migration Service under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, available in Russian at [<http://ssm.gov.kg>], 5 September, 2018.

Figure 1

Main Destination Countries of Kyrgyz Citizens' Labor Migration in 2015

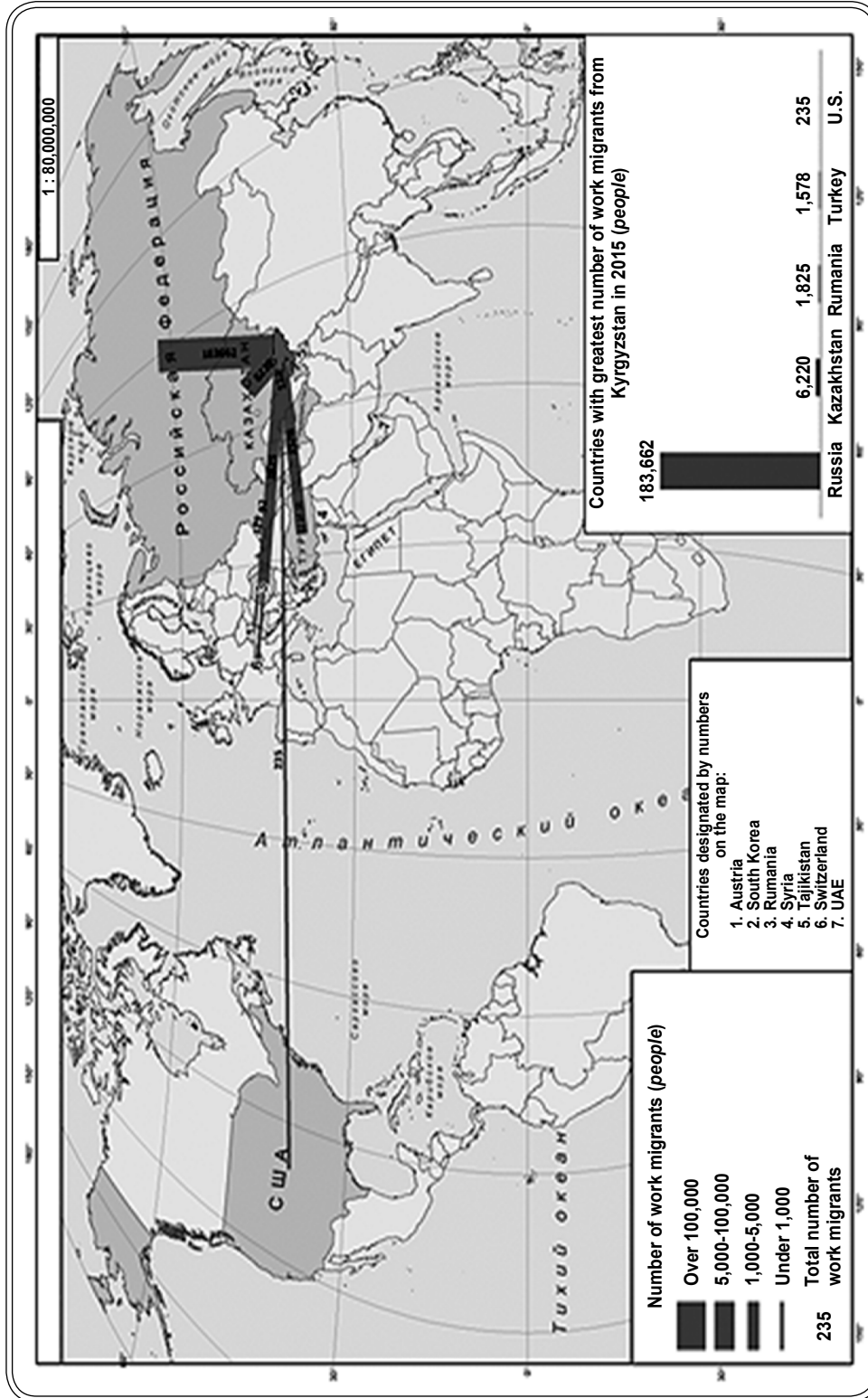


Figure 2

Main Destination Countries of Kyrgyz Citizens' Labor Migration in 2016

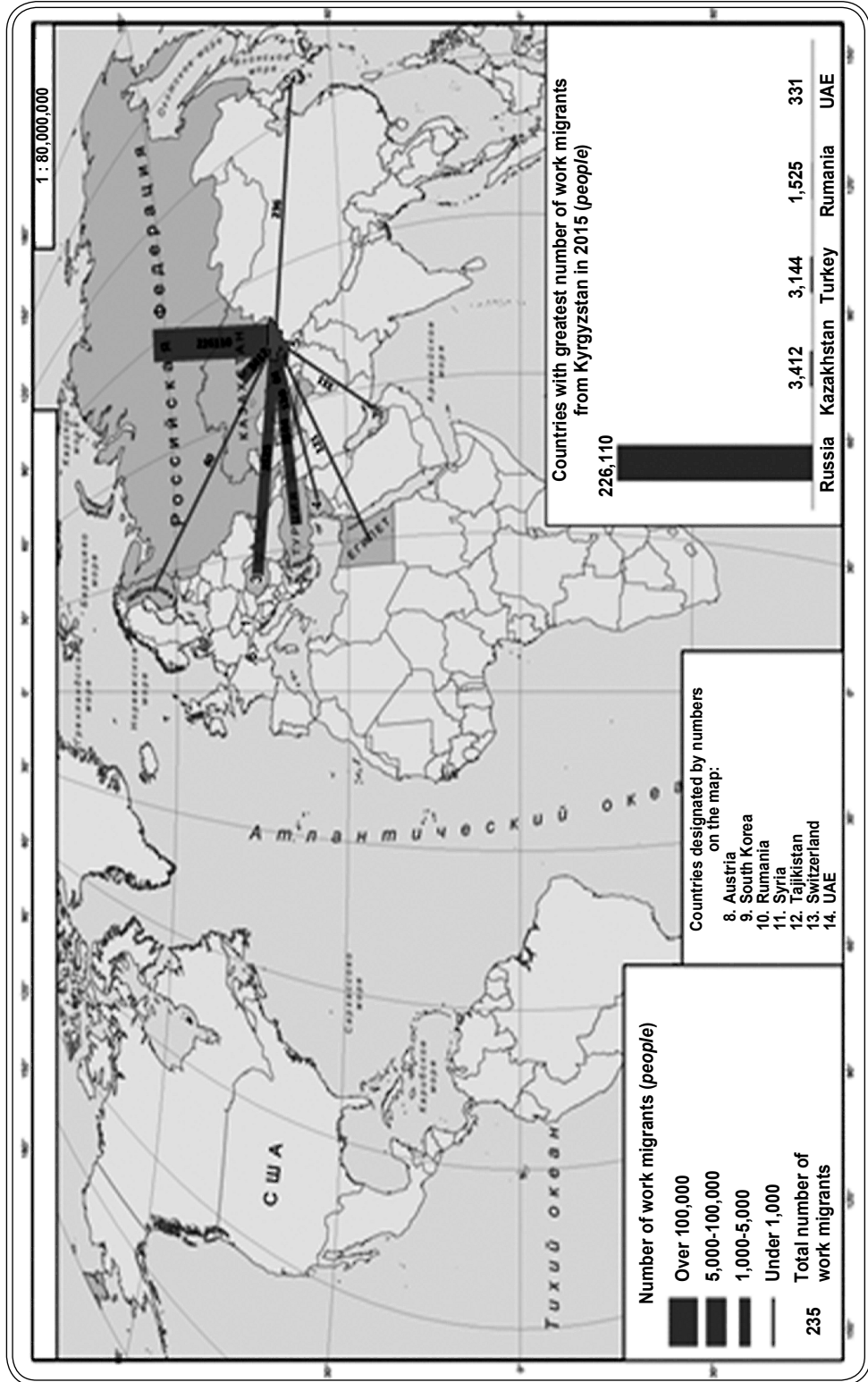


Figure 3

Distribution of Labor Migrants from Kyrgyzstan to Russia by Region in 2015*

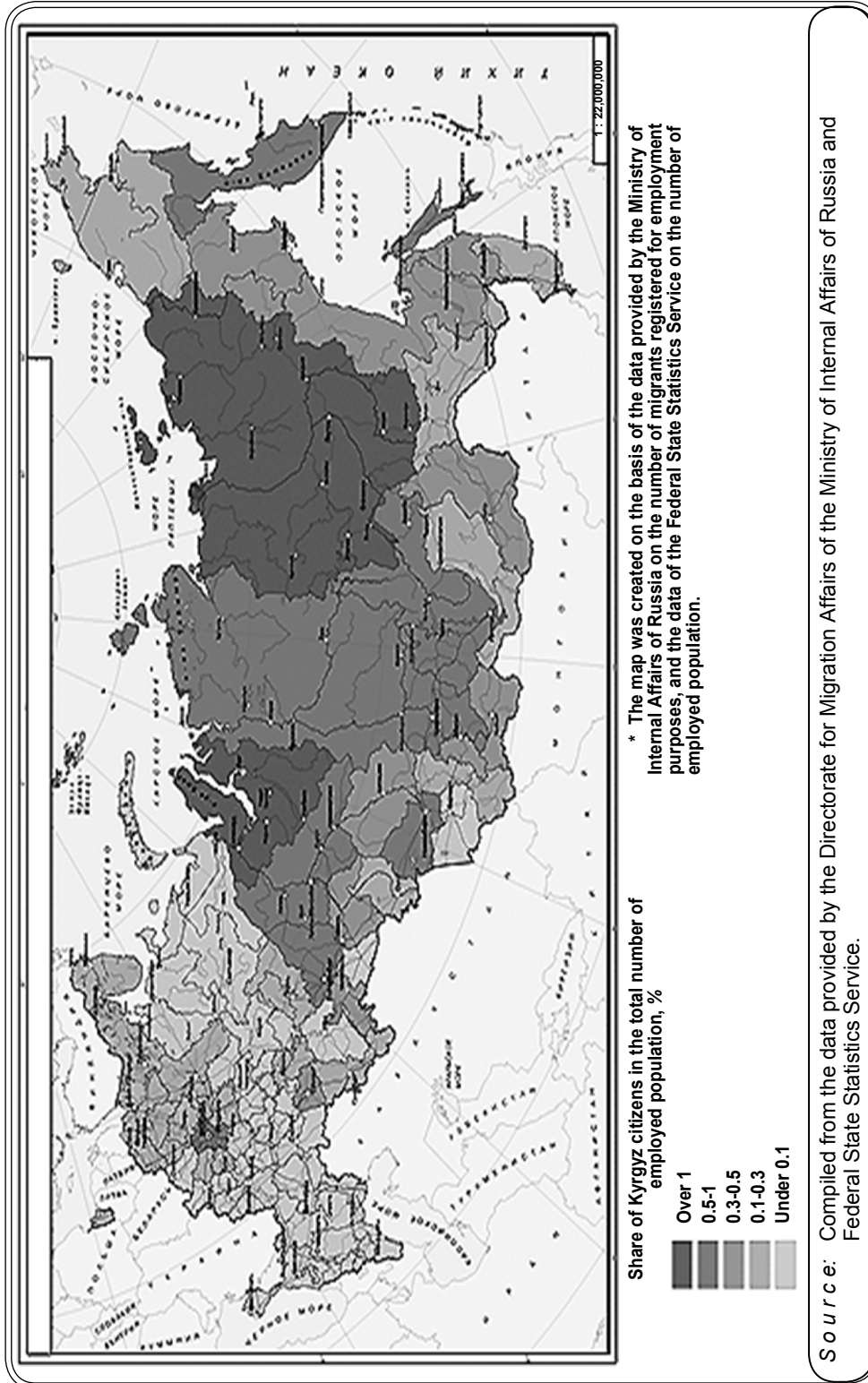
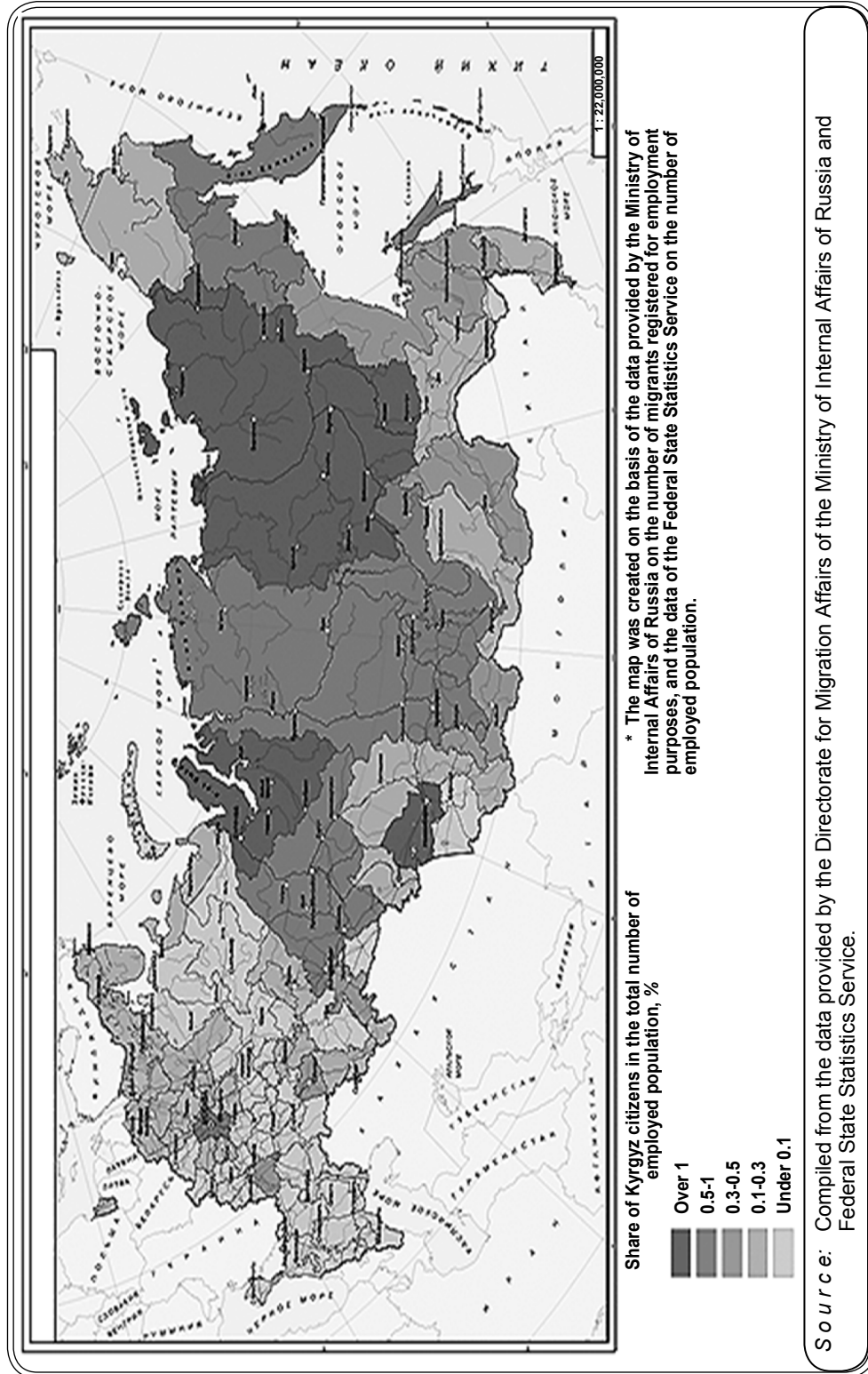


Figure 4

Distribution of Labor Migrants from Kyrgyzstan to Russia by Region in 2017*



The export of labor resources from Kyrgyzstan to Russia picked up momentum in the 2000s, and reached its peak in the 2010s. According to the Russian Federal Migration Service, in 2014 there were approximately 238,000 documented laborers from Kyrgyzstan, of which 73,400 were employed by companies, and 164,500—in the private sector. According to the Main Directorate for Migration Affairs of Russia, about 640,000 Kyrgyz citizens were registered as migrant workers in 2017.² Despite an increase in departure options and the emergence of new geographical directions of labor migration, it is currently the Russian labor market that is the most attractive to the able-bodied population of Kyrgyzstan.

In 2017, the Central Federal District employed the most Kyrgyz Republic citizens in Russia. Within the Central Federal District, the laborers are concentrated in Moscow, the Moscow Region and Tver Region. Over half of Kyrgyz citizens in Russia, namely, over 300,000 people, work in the above-mentioned regions. This is not accidental, since the Moscow agglomeration is home to the most capacious and diversified labor market in the country, which accumulates about a third of migrant workers in Russia. Interestingly, Kyrgyz citizens account for about 3% (over 212,000 people) of all the laborers in the Moscow labor market.³

The Siberian Federal District is the second one in the number of labor migrants from the Kyrgyz Republic. Kyrgyzstan natives work in the Novosibirsk Region, Krasnoyarsk Territory, Irkutsk Region, Zabaikalie Territory and Tomsk Region. Approximately 150,000 Kyrgyz citizens are currently working in the above-mentioned entities of the Russian Federation.⁴

The main regions of migrant employment in the Ural Federal District are Ekaterinburg and the Sverdlovsk Region, Tyumen Region, Yamal-Nenets and Khanty-Mansy Autonomous Areas, and Chelyabinsk Region. Approximately 70,000-80,000 Kyrgyz Republic citizens are currently working in these regions. In relation to the number of employed population, the share of migrants from Kyrgyzstan in the eastern part is significantly higher than in the European part of Russia.

Kyrgyz Republic citizens also work in the Far Eastern Federal District (Sakhalin Region, Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), Primorie Territory), Volga Federal District (Republic of Tatarstan, Nizhny Novgorod Region, Perm Territory, Samara Region), North-Western Federal District (St. Petersburg and Leningrad Region, Murmansk Region, Kaliningrad Region). The majority of Kyrgyzstan citizens in the South Federal District (about 13,000 people) work in Krasnodar Territory (see Figs. 3-4).⁵

The Socio-Demographic Structure and Employment of Labor Migrants from Kyrgyzstan on the Russian Labor Market

The socio-demographic structure of labor resources from Kyrgyzstan is characterized by the domination of young people. According to the data provided by a 2016 selective study of household budgets, a third (32.2%) of Kyrgyz migrants working abroad were 20-24 years old, while one-

² See: The Main Directorate for Migration Affairs of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation, available in Russian at [<https://pda.guv.m.mvd.ru/>], 28 August, 2018.

³ See: The Russian Federal State Statistics Service, available in Russian at [http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_main/rosstat/ru/statistics/accounts], 5 September, 2018.

⁴ See: The Main Directorate for Migration Affairs of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation.

⁵ See: *Ibidem*.

fifth (21.4%) was 25-29 years old, thus 53.6% of Kyrgyz labor migrants abroad were young people 20-29 years old.⁶ According to the estimates of the experts of the State Migration Service under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, the structure of Kyrgyz citizens working abroad comprised 47% of young people 18-29 years of age (including 17% of women), and 31% of people of 30-49 years of age (39% of them women).⁷

It is difficult to determine the engagement of labor resources from Kyrgyzstan in various spheres of the Russian economy, due to the fact that the permit system and the approach to keeping track of labor migration have changed several times.

According to the Russian Federal Migration Service data, in 2014, 57% of Kyrgyz laborers worked in the service industry, 17%—in construction, 5% in retail, 4%—in the transport industry.⁸ A significant share of service industry workers is explained by the fact that Kyrgyz citizens have a good command of the Russian language. Kyrgyzstan is one of the few countries of the ex-U.S.S.R. where the Russian language has had a wide sphere of application and had remained a second official language for a long time. This fact gives labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan substantial competitive advantages on the Russian labor market. For instance, a 2012 study conducted by the Center of Social Demography of the Institute of Socio-Political Research of the Russian Academy of Sciences demonstrated that women from Kyrgyzstan often work as governesses, caregivers and nannies due to their strong command of the Russian language. Women from Kyrgyzstan with a nursing degrees work as home attendants, take care of the elderly. It is a very particular type of work that requires certain skills and medical abilities.

According to the data provided by a 2014 selective Rosstat study, 40% of the Kyrgyz natives who worked in the private sector were engaged in the retail sector, 26% in the manufacturing industry, 20% in agriculture, 11% in the municipal infrastructure sector.⁹

Kyrgyz citizens are currently engaged in the construction sphere (brick layers, welders, general laborers, installers), service industry (hairstylists, cooks, waitstaff, street cleaners, cleaners, taxi drivers), retail (cashiers and store attendants), as well as in the sewing industry. Men are usually engaged in more complex and heavy labor: at construction sites, in menial labor, in street and yard cleaning. More qualified workers find work as cooks and taxi drivers. Thanks to the fact that the Russian language has the status of an official language in Kyrgyzstan, in 2017 the Russian authorities preserved the Kyrgyz citizens' ability to work as drivers in Russia with their national driver's license, while it had become illicit for citizens of other countries.

Women from Kyrgyz are engaged in room cleaning in company and institutions' offices, work as service personnel, general laborers, waitresses. Those with good command of the Russian language are employed in better-qualified and higher-paid positions: as nannies in households, attendants to the elderly and the sick, manicurists and hairstylists in beauty salons, massage therapists in massage salons, cashiers in supermarkets, retail clerks in stores, medical personnel in medical institutions. However, labor migrants are often unable to find work according to their qualifications. Some obtain new skills and qualifications in Russia, often after they start their work. People with secondary education are in greatest demand abroad—they account for 70% of Kyrgyz citizens working abroad, according to the data of the selective national study of household budgets in 2016.¹⁰

⁶ See: The National Statistics Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, available in Russian at [<http://www.stat.kg/ru/statistics/>], 5 September, 2018.

⁷ See: The State Migration Service under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic.

⁸ See: The Main Directorate for Migration Affairs of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation.

⁹ See: The Russian Federal State Statistics Service. Selective Federal Statistical Study of Migrant Labor [http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/imigr/index.html], 22 September, 2018.

¹⁰ See: The National Statistics Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Remittances and Their Contribution to the Socio-Economic Development of Kyrgyzstan

Between the Central Asian states, on the one side, and the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan, on the other, a stable migration corridor has been established, which is one of the largest ones in the world from the point of view of transition of population and remittances.¹¹ Kyrgyzstan is an active participant of regional migration processes.

According to World Bank's international comparisons, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan shared the first and third place in the international rating of the share of remittances in GDP, with 47% and 29%, respectively. The volumes of remittances to Central Asian countries from abroad peaked in 2013, amounting to \$12.9 billion. Subsequently, due to the financial and economic crisis in Russia, which was accompanied by the devaluation of the ruble and outflow of labor resources, a decrease in the amounts of remittances to Central Asian countries occurred. As a result, the volume of remittances reached a minimum (\$6.6 billion) in 2016. In 2017, it grew again to \$7.9 billion. In Kyrgyzstan, the increase in the volume of remittances was already noted in 2016, and in 2017 they already exceeded the pre-crisis 2013, amounting to \$2.5 billion.¹²

A certain positive factor in the export of labor resources for Central Asian countries in general and Kyrgyzstan in particular is the fact that people who do not have a chance of working in their home country, or are engaged in low-paying work, are able to leave and earn far more abroad than at home. Thus, thanks to labor migration, household incomes are growing, and poverty in donor countries is increasingly relieved.

It is rather telling that the export of labor resources from Kyrgyzstan occurs mostly from the regions with a high population poverty level.

In the short-term, the export of labor resources abroad is rather advantageous for Kyrgyzstan. Large-scale remittances support household incomes, decrease poverty, stimulate consumption and the development of certain sectors of economy (retail, service, restaurant business and small manufacturing enterprises). According to expert estimates, in the absence of labor migration the poverty level in Kyrgyzstan may have risen from 25% to 34%.

Sociological studies conducted in the Central Asian countries demonstrate that over one-half (54%) of those working abroad are not ready to invest in the development of national economy. Approximately a quarter of those surveyed is ready to invest, but only under conditions of a higher interest on deposits, and 11%—if there are guarantees from the authorities. Surveys show a lack of population's trust in the state in the investment issues. Meanwhile, the experience of other donor countries demonstrates the short-term effect of large-scale remittances ("money transfer tsunami"). It stipulates the need to search for the ways to stimulate the investment of migrants' money in the regional and local economy. Tax breaks, state guarantees, insurance instruments are the mechanisms that have helped other countries attract the investments of their citizens who work abroad in the regional and local economy.¹³

Despite the positive aspects of using remittances at the regional and local levels, we cannot overlook the negative consequences of the export of labor resources at the national level in the mid-

¹¹ E. Pismennaia, S. Ryazantsev, V. Bozhenko, "Central Asian Diasporas in the Russian Federation: Migration Channels and their Contribution to the Socioeconomic Development of the Sending Communities," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Tom 17, Issue 4, 2016, pp. 87-95.

¹² *Migration and Remittances Fact Book 2018*, 3rd Edition, The World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2018, pp. 149-238.

¹³ S.V. Ryazantsev, E.S. Krasinets, "Sovremennye tendentsii i ekonomicheskie efekty trudovoi migratsii iz Tsentralnoi Azii v Rossiiu," *Nauchnoe obozrenie*, Series 1: *Ekonomika i pravo*, No. 5, 2016, pp. 5-14.

and long-term. First and foremost, the outflow of able-bodied population with an active life potential leads to a notable degradation of Kyrgyzstan's social system—health care, education and science have lost a huge number of qualified specialists who are much needed by the country. In addition, the spending of migrants' remittances is inefficient at the macro level—the majority of funds is understandably spent by the people on current consumption (usually on food, everyday goods, weddings and funerals, in the best-case scenario—on acquiring and renovating a residence and children's education). The funds are rarely invested in economic and business development; thus, the impact of the remittances is a short-term one.

Studies demonstrate that, nonetheless, citizens of Central Asian countries working abroad are largely ready to invest in social projects that tangibly improve the life of local communities. About 33% of households are ready to collect and invest funds in the construction or renovation of water supply lines, sewage, gas pipelines in their locality, approximately 31%—in the construction or renovation of roads, 16%—in the construction or renovation of a school, about 11%—in the construction or reconstruction of a hospital, about 3%—in the construction or renovation of cultural centers and socially significant sites. Moreover, there are numerous examples of already implemented projects of local infrastructure development in Kyrgyzstan using the funds provided by migrant workers. This demonstrates a high level of social responsibility of households that include migrant laborers, as well as their commitment to the development of the local community and its infrastructure.

Apparently, Kyrgyzstan currently is experiencing a certain “loss of revenue”—it does not receive the revenues that it could have, had the remittances been invested in the industrial sector of the economy and small business. An economic model based on the replacement of labor resources export with the export of goods and services, which, in its turn, must be based on the growth of export-oriented manufacturing and expanding population engagement, would be far more efficient for Kyrgyzstan. The export of labor resources grants Kyrgyzstan a chance to switch to a new economic development model. In order to do this, the country needs to stimulate the development of entrepreneurship.

An important aspect of investments on the part of the citizens engaged in labor abroad are the funds used to launch enterprises and small businesses. In this context, remittances provide excellent starting conditions to realize the entrepreneurial potential of the local population, not just of those who have directly participated in migration, but also their relatives and household members.

Of course, Kyrgyzstan's stimulation of population's entrepreneurial potential is still weak. It is more viable to introduce more favorable lending terms (lower interest rates on credits, longer-term credits), offer tax holidays and prolongations for those launching business. This may not have only led the laborers who'd returned home to Kyrgyzstan to invest money, but also stimulated the investors—Kyrgyz migrants who chose to permanently reside abroad—in Russia and other countries—to do the same.

The Contribution of Kyrgyz Labor Resources to the Economy of the Russian Federation: National and Regional Levels

The import of labor resources from Central Asia in general and Kyrgyzstan in particular has a significant social and economic impact on Russia. There are no precise estimates of migrants' economic contribution. In 2009, the then-director of the Federal Migration Service of Russia Konstantin Romodanovsky remarked that labor resources from other countries are responsible for 6%-8% of Russia's GDP. Unfortunately, the calculation methods used by the Federal Migration Service were

not made public, however, the number began to circulate in the Russian media and political circles. Our research was based on the evaluation methods that allow to estimate the contribution of migrant laborers to the economy of Thailand, proposed by U.S. economist Philip Martin in 2007.¹⁴ According to our calculations, in 2013, migrants have produced goods and services in the amount of 1.4 trillion rubles (or 3.12% of GDP). Considering the fact that 173,100 Kyrgyz citizens were officially working in Russia (with work permits and patents) in 2013, which amounted to 7.8% of all labor migrants in Russia, we may assume that the contribution of labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan to Russian economy was as high as 109.2 billion rubles, which is the sum of goods and services produced by them in 2013 (0.25% of Russia's GDP).¹⁵

Unfortunately, many migrant workers in Russia are undocumented, have an only partially legal status, lacking resident registration and work permits. Due to this fact, they are exploited by the employees, while the lack of a legal status and migrants' work in the informal and shadow economy lead to several missed opportunities of the donor countries' socio-economic development.¹⁶

- First of all, the unstructured and undocumented nature of migrants determines corresponding behavior strategies—as a rule, they exclusively aim to increase the current consumption level and give no consideration to savings and long-term investments beyond the satisfaction of daily needs.
- Secondly, the earning opportunities for undocumented workers and those working in the informal and shadow sector of the economy are decreasing, thus, the amounts of remittances to their home country and their families are also decreasing. Even more importantly, the lack of a fully documented status makes their earnings and transfers irregular and unstable, creating sizeable risks for the stable position and balanced development of households in their home country. It also breaks up the social connections between migrants and members of their families, which is sometimes accompanied by the severance of personal relations and breakup of families.
- Thirdly, a certain share of laborers accumulates savings, however, due to their undocumented status there is a problem with officially transferring the money and a lack of opportunity for investment. Banks do not always manage to concentrate migrants' small amounts of money. The average amount of transfer is \$200-300, and while the transfers are conducted several times a year, it is impossible to invest such insignificant amounts in production industries. In this context, the only viable long-term investment option is the purchase of real estate, cars, construction (reconstruction) of a house.

Over the years of active labor migration, rather notable (in demographic and socio-economic regard) ethnic communities of Kyrgyz migrants have been established in Russia and other countries. According to expert estimates, in 2017 the number of Kyrgyz Republic natives in Russia amounted to over 1 million people, and half of them had already exchanged Kyrgyz Republic citizenship for Russian Federation citizenship. New ethnic communities were also established in Kazakhstan (50,000), in Turkey and South Korea (15,000 each), a number of European countries and the U.S.

Due to the fact that labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan enjoy advantages on the labor market and occupy higher socio-economic niches in the Russian economy, they are integrating more success-

¹⁴ P. Martin, *The Economic Contribution of Migrant Workers to Thailand: Towards Policy Development*, International Labor Office, Bangkok, 2007, 32 pp.

¹⁵ S.V. Ryazantsev, "Vklad trudovoi migratsii v ekonomiku Rossii: metody otsenki i rezultaty," *Humanities. Bulletin of the Financial University*, No. 2 (22), 2016, pp. 16-28.

¹⁶ S.V. Ryazantsev, "Nedokumentirovannaia trudovaia migratsiia v rossiiskoi ekonomike," *Bulletin of the Tyumen State University. Socio-Economic and Law Studies*, No. 1, 2015, pp. 24-33.

fully into the Russian society. In addition, Kyrgyz citizens have been actively obtaining Russian citizenship, using the preferences that were granted to them at some point, and being generally oriented at establishing permanent residence in Russia.¹⁷ In 2001-2011, 374,000 Kyrgyz citizens obtained Russian citizenship. Unfortunately, Russia's migration policy in regard to offering citizenship to Kyrgyz citizens was not particularly stable and underwent periods of procedure tightening and rule complication in 2002 and 2010. In 2014-2016, about 23,000 Kyrgyz natives became citizens of the Russian Federation. According to the data provided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia, 8,800 Kyrgyz citizens became Russian Federation citizens in 2017, another 5,000 obtained a Russian Federation resident permit, and 7,600 people received temporary residence permits.¹⁸

No elaborate organizations (associations, ethnic communities) that encompass all the migrants have been established in the main countries of Kyrgyz migrants' resettlement. As a rule, community organizations are established due to the efforts of activists and unite those people who immigrate to live abroad permanently and either change their citizenship, or obtain new citizenship without renouncing their Kyrgyz Republic citizenship. The active members of the organizations usually actualize the problematic issues that emerge during relocation, and sometimes protect the rights and interests of migrants and their family members, provide consultations, initiate mutual assistance, especially in places where their fellow countrymen work collectively, in large companies, at market-places, or via social media.

Most organizations mainly target the preservation of the Kyrgyz identity, language, culture, traditions and customs, and these diasporas first and foremost unite the ethnic Kyrgyz. In the context of active migration, the role of community organizations remains significant. In the regions with no presence of state authority structures of the Kyrgyz Republic, community organizations become the centers of mutual assistance, they shape ethnic communities, conduct joint meetings, festivals and celebrations, sports competitions.

Conclusion

Kyrgyzstan is currently an active participant of migration processes in Eurasia and the Central Asian region, as a large country that sends labor resources abroad. The import of labor resources from the Kyrgyz Republic continues to grow in many countries, first and foremost in the Russian Federation.

The geographical distribution of laborers from Kyrgyzstan in Russia is changing. The majority of them seeks employment and, as a result, is concentrated in Moscow and the Moscow Region and the major cities of the European part of Russia. Nonetheless, there's a clear eastern-bound vector of migration of Kyrgyz Republic citizens to Siberia, the Ural region and the Russian Far East. Their share in the employed population in the eastern regions is higher than in that of the European regions of Russia. The demand for the labor of Kyrgyzstan natives is becoming increasingly greater, in the eastern part of Russia in particular.

Despite the apparent advantages of remittances at regional, local and national level in the mid- and long-term perspectives, one cannot overlook the negative consequences of large-scale export of labor resources. The spending of migrants' transfers remains inefficient at the macro level. The funds rarely get invested in the development of economy.

¹⁷ S. Ryazantsev, "Integratsia migrantov v kontekste vneshnei integratsionnoi politiki Rossii," *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia*, No. 1, 2018, pp. 105-111.

¹⁸ See: The Main Directorate for Migration Affairs of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation.

In turn, with the increase of the number of working Kyrgyzstan natives in Russia, the size of their contribution to the Russian economy also grows.

In the context of active migration, the role of community organizations remains significant. In the regions that lack the presence of Kyrgyz Republic authority structures, migrant community organizations become the centers of mutual assistance. They shape ethnic communities, conduct joint meetings, festivals and celebrations and sports competitions. Associations of Kazakhstan natives mainly seek to preserve the Kyrgyz identity, language, culture, traditions and customs, with diasporas uniting, first and foremost, the ethnic Kyrgyz. A significant number of Kyrgyzstan natives obtain Russian citizenship.

There are no significant changes in the Kyrgyz Republic labor resource tendencies forecasted for the near future. The most significant event that had an impact on the structure and number of labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan was the beginning of the financial and economic crisis in Russia in 2014. Nonetheless, even such a substantial event turned out insignificant in the long-term.

INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE SPHERE OF SOCIAL POLICY IN THE CONTEXT OF MODERNIZATION IN KAZAKHSTAN

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A B S T R A C T

The authors have selected the problems of institutionalization of the sphere of social services in Kazakhstan in the context of modernization of its social policy as the subject of their article. They have studied the issue of upgrading professional skills and supervising of specialists who provide special social services to the target population groups. The article is based on sociological studies with the aim of improving social policies in the Republic of Kazakhstan based on questionnaires, interviews of experts and social workers employed by the social service structures and people under stressful circumstances. The authors rely on the comparative analysis of the results of statistical studies and other methods utilized in political science. An institutionalized approach to upgrading the professional skills of social workers and the efficiency of social services was analyzed on the basis of public opinion polls. The empirical and sociological statistical studies al-

lowed the authors to identify the main factors that affect professional skills and labor productivity in the social sphere. It seems that the Kazakhstan system of special social services needs a new model of social policy patterned on the Cross-functional Institute of Supervision in social services. Institutionalization should be seen as a comprehensive system that unites the state, public, academic, educational and moral-axiological aspects of activities of a socially-oriented society.

The authors offer important information about the impact of different factors on the professional qualities of experts and their productivity in the social sphere. In this way, this article helps perfect the entire system of social work through the supervision mechanisms to help specialists who offer special social services to target population groups improve their results. This work relates to the previously unexplored field of Kazakhstan's social policy.

KEYWORDS: *social work, special social services, institute of supervision, professionalism, social policy.*

Introduction

Social policy holds a special place in Kazakhstan as a socially-oriented state in which social work as multi-dimensional activity is also multi-departmental. This means that social services and social workers should not only perform multiple functions, but should also demonstrate high professionalism and competence in the social sphere, as well as encourage scientific and analytical efforts and highly professional management of social processes.

Proceeding from the confirmed and approved strategic and state development priorities, Kazakhstan as a socially-oriented and law-governed state spared no effort to consolidate the social resources of its economic development.

This adds more consequence to the social services system, makes it necessary to develop the social interaction harmonization mechanisms, improve the system of social services designed to support target social groups.

It has become abundantly clear that the state should intensify its search for factors and innovation mechanisms best suited to the local specifics of the social sphere and very much needed to consolidate the social management system, modernize the social services sphere and process the

results thus obtained to arrive at practical measures designed to add efficiency to Kazakhstan's social sphere.

To improve the country's administration system, it has become much more important than before to upgrade professional skills of social workers as the key element of the branch of executive authorities responsible for special social services.

Modernization of the social services system in Kazakhstan kindled an interest in the problem of institutionalization of social services provided to certain categories of the republic's population. The analytical community and social workers have found it perfectly timed and highly topical. Indeed, improving the professionalism of social workers and supervision of their services attracted the attention of those who analyze or are involved in the sphere hands-on. It is obviously highly important to compare what and how is being done in the social sphere in post-Soviet Central Asian countries.

Object and Subject of Studies Identified

The internal social services system, the social interaction harmonization mechanisms, improvement of the social system that supports the target groups (people in stressful situations) are gaining more importance in the context of further modernization of the social sphere. The most efficient factors and innovation mechanisms that help consolidate the social services sphere management and modernization system should be studied and assessed. It has become highly important to upgrade the professional skills of social workers, especially of those who provide special social services.

Here we have posed ourselves the task to identify the main mechanisms that may help establish supervision as an institutional factor for improving the quality and efficiency of special social services. Social work as an extremely complicated system of special social services is the object of our studies. The subject of our studies is supervision as a factor of upgrading the efficiency of social politics and the quality of special social services in Kazakhstan.

Institutionalization of the Social Services Sphere

Kazakhstan as a law-governed social state is invested in consolidating all the social resources of its economic development. This has been fully confirmed by the measures adopted to deepen the changes in the social services system up to 2021 as part of the Concept of Further Modernization of the Social Services System.¹ It rests on the Programmed Article of President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev² and the Concept of Social Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan³ that has formulated the strategic aim of joining the group of the thirty most developed states of the world by 2050.

¹ See: *Concept of Further Modernization of the Social Services System*, available at [[https:// enbek.gov.kz/content/](https://enbek.gov.kz/content/)] (all documents are in Russian unless otherwise stated).

² See: Programmed Article of President of the Republic of Kazakhstan N. Nazarbayev "Vzgliad v budushchee: modernizatsiia obshchestvennogo soznaniia," available at [http://www.akorda.kz/ru/events/akorda_news/press_conferences/statya-glavy-gosudarstva-vzglyad-v-budushchee-modernizaciya-obshchestvennogo-soznaniya].

³ See: *Concept of Social Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2030* (No. 396, 24 April, 2014).

The specifics of the normative legal base of special social services are discussed using the “children in a difficult situation” category as an example.

The Law on Social Protection of the Disabled in the Republic of Kazakhstan⁴ was one of the first social laws designed to protect the rights of children. It created the socioeconomic, legal and organizational conditions needed to ensure equal possibilities for all, including the disabled and children. The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Compulsory Social Insurance⁵ determined the legal, organizational and economic foundations of the social protection of the republic’s citizens guaranteed by the state and realized through compulsory social insurance, including the social insurance of children.

The Law on State Social Disability Benefits in connection with the loss of breadwinner and age in the Republic of Kazakhstan⁶ was directly related to social protection of children. It was a legal confirmation that the citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan have the right to state social disability benefits, benefits extended to underage children and to children who have lost family breadwinners.

The Law on Social and Medical and Pedagogical Correctional Support of Disabled Children⁷ is another and equally important document that speaks of support extended to children in complicated life situations. It specifies the forms and methods of social, medical and pedagogical correctional support of disabled children and is designed to create an efficient system of social support for children with developmental disorders and to resolve the problems of their education, work and professional training, as well as to prevent childhood disability.

There is another, equally important Law on Special Social Services⁸ that regulates social relationships in the sphere of special social services delivered to certain categories of people (families) in difficult situations. It defined, for the first time at the republican level, the concept of a “difficult situation in a family”.

All in all, during the years of independence the country has adopted over 20 legal acts related to state social policies. When pursuing its social policy, Kazakhstan takes into account the new globalization challenges, social requirements and the country’s economic interests.

Institutionalization of Social Policy: Prerequisites

The ongoing modernization of the social services system of Kazakhstan has already changed it significantly. Below the reader will find the figures related to the social services sector in the recent years. The main measures taken in the last few years have been generalized in Table 1.

⁴ See: Law on Social Protection of the Disabled in the Republic of Kazakhstan (No. 692-XII, 21 June, 1991) (amendments and additions in accordance with the Decree of the President of RK, having the force of law, of 12.04.94, No. 1652; the Laws of the RK of 14.07.94, No. 137-XIII; of 22.09.94, No. 168-XIII; the Decree of the President of RK, having the force of law, of 05.10.95, No. 2488; the Laws of the RK of 02.04.97, No. 88-1; of 19.06.97, No. 134-1; of 16.07.97, No. 166-1; of 17.12.98, No. 323-1; of 07.04.99, No. 374-1; of 15.01.2001, No. 138-II; of 11.06.2001, No. 207-II; of 21.03.2002, No. 308-II).

⁵ See: Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Compulsory Social Insurance (No. 405, 25 April, 2003) (amendments and additions of 02.07.2018, No. 165-VI ZRK).

⁶ See: Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on State Social Disability Benefits in connection with loss of breadwinner and age in the Republic of Kazakhstan (No.126-I, 16 June, 1997) (amendments and additions of 02.07.2018, No. 165-VI ZRK).

⁷ See: Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Social and Medical and Pedagogical Correctional Support of Disabled Children (No. 343-II, 11 July, 2002) (amendments and additions of 02.07.2018, No. 165-VI ZRK).

⁸ See: Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Special Social Services (No. 114-IV, 29 December, 2008) (amendments and additions of 28.12.2018).

Table 1

Radical Changes in the Social Services System of the Republic of Kazakhstan

CRUCIAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE SYSTEM OF SOCIAL POLICY IN KAZAKHSTAN				
Systematization and Specification of the List of Special Social Services	Elaboration of Standards of Extending Special Social Services	Introduction of Institutional Changes and New Forms of Services	Changes in the Funding Scheme	Changes in and Enlargement of the Staff of Social Institutions
Social medical	The standard of providing special social services to disabled children with neuropsychological disorders (2009)	Over 50 day hospitals opened	Up to 2009, specialized institutions were funded according to their estimates	Previously, nursing and teaching staff dominated
Social pedagogical	The standard of special social services for people with these types of disorders, 18 and older (2010)	The number of departments of home social services increased 1.5-fold		
Social psychological	The standard of special social services for children with musculoskeletal disorders and the elderly (2011)	Special services were extended to over 5,000 children and people over 18	A system of social service co-funding by clients and the state was introduced	
Social legal	The standard of special social services to the homeless (2012)	Services were extended to about 43,700 elderly people and disabled and over 13,000 disabled children		
Social related to everyday life	The standard of special services for victims of slave trade (2016)	About 3,000 disabled children receive services at day hospitals and at home	Since 2016 co-funding is conducted according to the types and volume of special social services and the number of recipients	Social service consultants and social workers who assess the quality of services were accepted as staff members of all social institutions
Social economic services	The standard of special social services to victims of domestic violence (2017)	Private sector and volunteers are engaged		

Source: The authors' table based on information supplied by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan. (see: Statistical Report *Social Services in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2012-2017)* of the Committee for Statistics, Ministry of Trade and Social Protection of Population of the RK, Astana, 2017, p. 96).

Special social services may include general services in the form of information, consultations and intermediary services. There are two types of special social services in Kazakhstan: the guaranteed volume of special social services paid by the state budget and special social services paid by the clients (see Table 2).

Table 2

List of Guaranteed Volume of Special Social Services

No.	List of Special Social Services
1	Social everyday services
2	Social labor services
2	Social medical services
3	Social psychological services
4	Social pedagogical services
5	Social legal services
6	Social economic services
7	Social cultural services

Source: The authors' table based on information supplied by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

According to the above-mentioned Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan, twelve categories of the republic's population enumerated in Table 3 receive special social services.

Table 3

The Categories of People Receiving Special Social Services

Categories	
Orphans	Children Deprived of Parental Care
Minors in educational establishments with special medical treatment	Abandoned minors, including children with deviant behavior
Children with limited capabilities of early psychophysical development	People with physical or psychiatric impairments
People with limited life activities because of socially significant ailments and ailments dangerous for other people	People who cannot serve themselves because of illness and/or disabilities
People who were victims of cruelty that caused social maladaptation and social deprivation	Homeless people with no permanent addresses
People released from prisons	People registered with probation service

Source: The authors' table based on information supplied by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

In Kazakhstan, targeted social assistance, state benefits for children under 18 and house construction assistance are funded from the budget. Table 4 based on information supplied by regional structures⁹ shows how much money was spent on state social assistance between 1 January, 2015 and 1 January, 2017.

Table 4

**State Social Assistance
in Kazakhstan (2015-2017)**

Period	Targeted Social Assistance		State Benefits for Children under 18		Housing Assistance		Material Assistance to Disabled Children Raised and Educated at Home	
	Recipients, thous persons	Average Size, tenge	Recipients, thous persons	Average Size, tenge	Recipients, thous families	Average Size, tenge	Recipients, thous persons	Average Size, tenge
03.2017	28.8	2,438.5	576.2	1,633.8	97.1	2,083.1	12.8	3,833.8
01.03.2016	38.2	2,179.0	551.2	1,539.3	93.9	2,179.0	11.9	3,630.9
01.03.2015	56.1	1,970.7	562.6	1,402.3	110	2,036.6	14.9	3,151.1
Total	123.1	6,588.2	1,690	4,575.4	301	6,298.7	39.6	10,615.8

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on statistical data supplied by regional structures of coordination of employment and social programs of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

In the last three years (2015-2017), targeted social assistance was extended to 123,100, with an average size of 6,888.2 tenge. State benefits for children under 18 were extended to 1,690,000 people, with an average size of 4,575.4 tenge. Between 2015 and 2017, 301,000 families received housing aid, its average size being 6,298.7 tenge. In the last three years (2015-2017), 39,600 disabled children raised and educated at home received on average 10,615.8 tenge every month.

According to the statistical information of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population,¹⁰ it employed 25,041 people; relevant figures are shown in Table 5.

Today, regional managing organizations are entrusted with the task of coordinating social programs working both at the regional and local (districts and towns) levels (hereinafter, local executive structures). They are expected to strictly observe social laws and normative acts, create and fund regional social programs.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Ministry of Health Protection of the Republic of Kazakhstan are responsible for social programs and their funding at the state level.

⁹ See: Statistical data supplied by regional structures engaged in coordination of employment of population and social programs of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

¹⁰ See: Statistical data of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Table 5

Number of People (Experts) Employed in the Social Sphere in Kazakhstan

Number of Employees	Number of Organizations Providing Special Social Services, Total	Number of Organizations with Several Conditions of Providing Special Social Services, Total	Number of Organizations Providing Special Social Services in Hospitals, Total	Organizations of Temporal Hospitalization	Number of Organizations Providing Special Social Services in Semi-Permanent Hospitals, Total
The de facto numerical strength of the staff of administrative and secondary structures	17,627	75	13,626	844	3,082
Staff of social and medical services	3,985	1	3,315	171	498
Staff that provides social educational and psychological services	3,429	11	2,433	163	822
Total	25,041	87	19,374	1,178	4,402

Source: The authors' table based on information supplied by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Main Results of Sociological and Statistical Analysis of Professional Qualities of People Employed in the Social Sphere of Kazakhstan

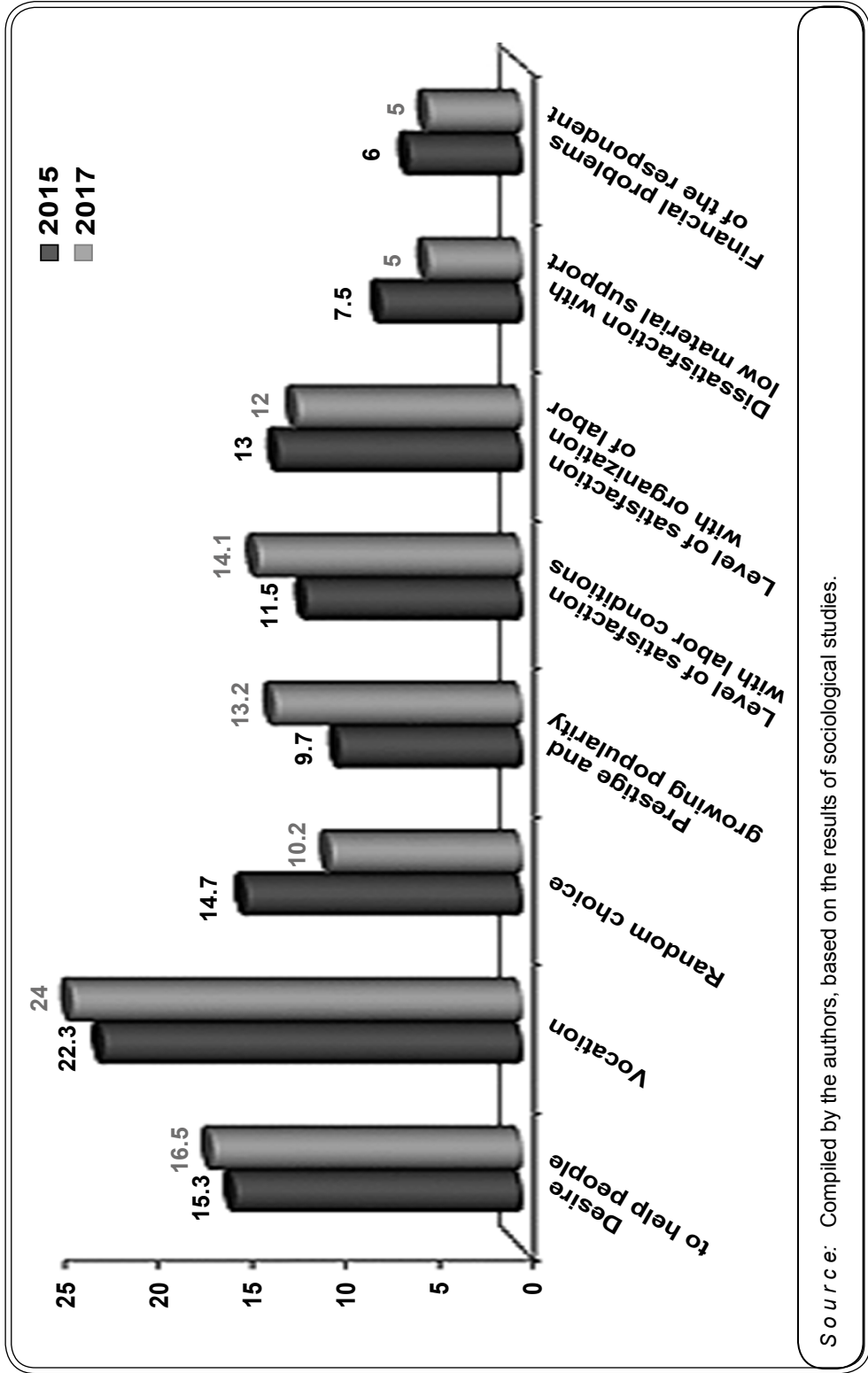
Motivation was identified as one of the key parameters of our sociological studies that produced the following results: 15.5% were driven by the “desire to help people and empathize with people”; 22.3% were driven by their “vocation”.

It should be said that in recent years the social sphere became “prestigious and increasingly popular” (9.7%); in 2017, 13.2% considered social services highly popular. The level of satisfaction of social workers with the organization and conditions of their labor and the quality of services are an important motivational factor. In 2015, within the scope of deep interviews experts pointed to an obvious dissatisfaction with the organization of labor (13%), labor conditions (11.5%) and inadequate material assistance to those in need (7.5%).

Fig. 1 shows the results of comparative motivation analysis in 2015 and 2017.

Figure 1

Motivations of Choice of Profession and Employment in the Social Sphere among the Respondents (2015-2017)



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the results of sociological studies.

Figure 2

Assessment of Labor Values of Social Work based on the Results of an Analysis
(normality of distribution of the sampling)

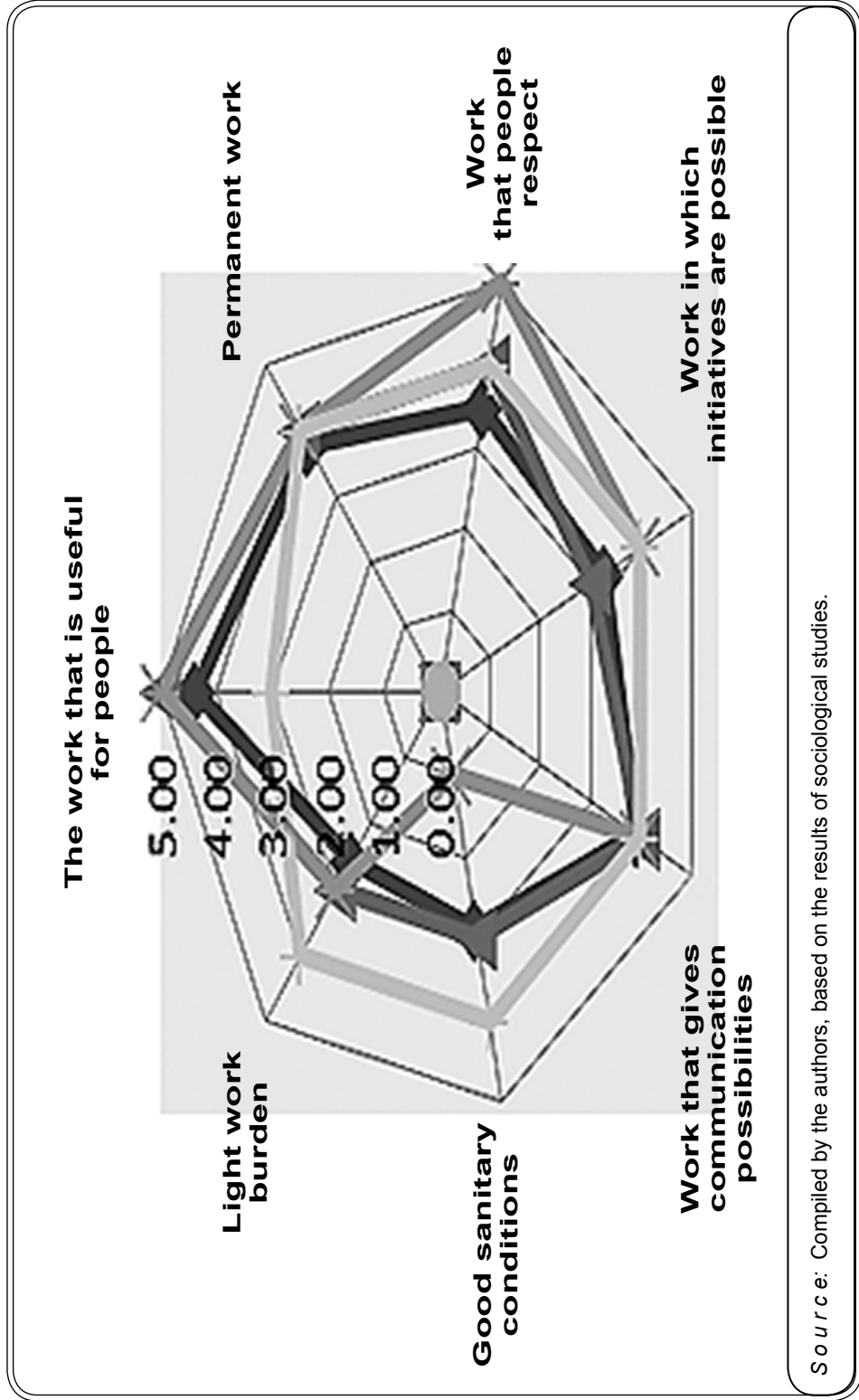
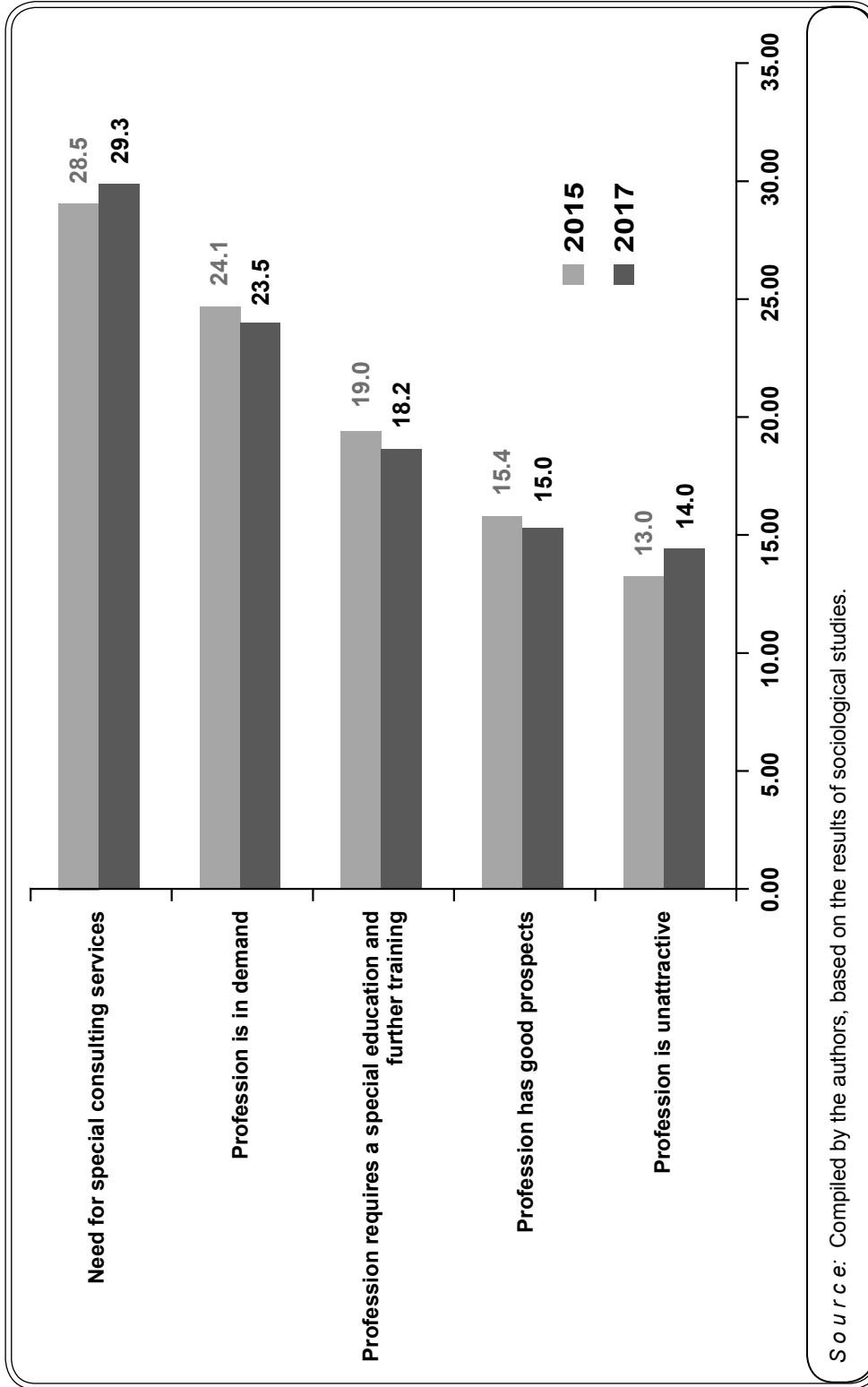


Figure 3

Diagram of Comparative Analysis of the Relevance of Social Services on the Labor Market of Kazakhstan



Professional activities of social workers can be assessed by their professional values and their attitude to what they are doing. The biggest share (27.3%) believes that “this work brings a lot of good to people” followed by other considerations: “continuous communication with people” (10%), “work that people respect” (9%), “interesting work” (8%).

In repeated interviews carried out to check the results of the first interviews, the respondents were asked to assess social services on the 5-point scale. The qualitative descriptions of “work values” related to the scalar values were checked in view of their normal or Gaussian distribution with the use of statistical processing mechanisms. Statistical analysis identified the average value, the median and dispersion of indicators. It was pointed out that the values were mostly arranged around a certain median value, on both sides of which the frequency of observations was gradually and evenly diminishing (see Fig. 2).

The respondents were most satisfied with the “social usefulness of social work” value (4.5 points); other values fit in the corridor between 3.9 points (“communication possibilities”) and 2.5 (light work burden) points. We have analyzed the dynamics between the average value and the mode to social service by assessing the labor values typical of professional activities in the social sphere.

The results showed that social workers were absolutely convinced that their services were needed. Both in 2015 and 2017, a large part (about 40%) of those employed in the social sphere were convinced that their work was very much necessary (24.1% in 2015, 23.5% in 2017) and offered good prospects (15.4% in 2015, 15.0% in 2017). Ten percent, on average, of those whose education was incompatible with their profession believed that the latter was unattractive (13.0% in 2015, 14.0% in 2017). About 20% of respondents would like to upgrade their education, attend retraining courses or work, for some time, side by side with more experienced colleagues (19.0% in 2015, 18.2% in 2017) (see Fig. 3).

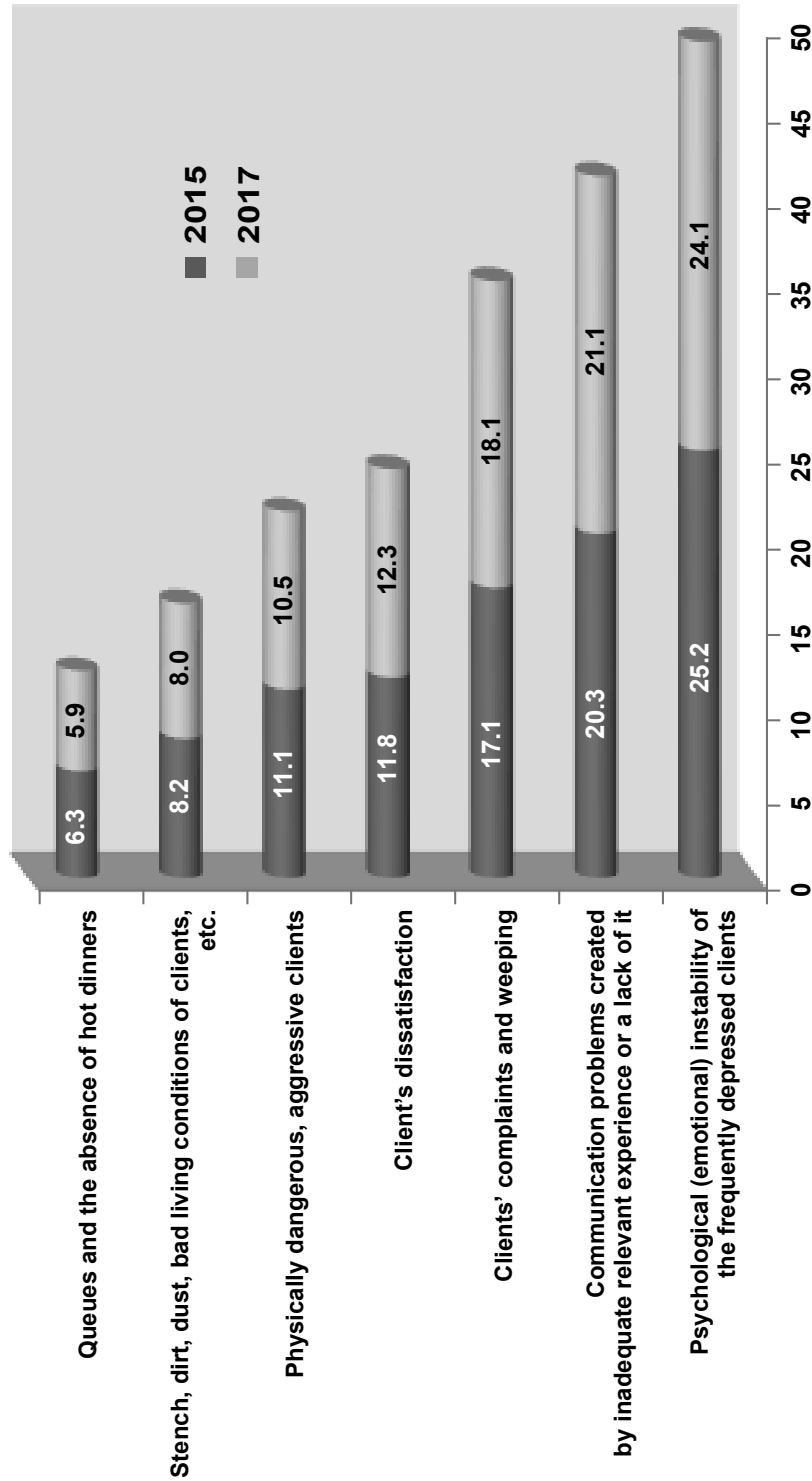
Main Conclusions Suggested by the Sociological Poll and Assessment of the Risk Factors of Labor Productivity of Social Workers and Social Services

Assessment of the impact of labor conditions on psychological state and labor productivity of social workers revealed that people employed by the social services and special social services centers are more responsive to negative “psychological” rather than “physical” or material factors for over 50% of their work hours. Comparative analysis of the data collected during two years (2015 and 2017) of studies has demonstrated that the emotional instability of clients was the factor noted by a quarter of respondents (25.2% in 2015, 24.1% in 2017); every fifth respondent had communication problems due to lack of pedagogical and psychological skills or the inadequate experience (20.3% in 2015 and 21.1% in 2017) (see Fig. 4).

Positive attitude to life and optimism are two of the main features that strongly affect the labor productivity of social workers (26.5% in 2015, 25.8% in 2017 and 18.5% in 2015, 17.9% in 2017, respectively). An analysis has revealed that, on the whole, social workers are not positive or optimistic; this is partly explained by the specifics of those who receive social services and their negative influence on those who look after them. The dissatisfaction of people with their labor places them into a risk group with grave problems, depression, etc. (see Table 6).

Figure 4

Diagram of Comparative Analysis of Impact of Psychological Indicators on Labor Conditions of Social Workers



Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the results of sociological studies.

Table 6

Social Workers' Attitude to Life (Diagram)

No.	Indicators of Assessments	Relative Data, %	
		2015	2017
1	Positive attitude to life	26.5	25.8
2	Optimism	18.5	17.9
3	Absolute satisfaction with life	29.5	30.1
4	Total dissatisfaction with life	6.5	7.2
5	Problems in everyday life	10.7	11.2
6	Depression	8.3	7.8

Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the results of sociological studies.

Information related to the types of activities and risk factors obtained by social statistical analysis has been confirmed and determined by information based on questionnaires. By the end of the workday the majority (over 50%) of social workers was very tired (50.9% in 2015, 61.7% in 2017); about 25% of respondents were exposed to significant psycho-emotional stress all day long (23.3% in 2015, 24.2% in 2017); 20% of respondents were experiencing a state of severe depression during their work (20.1% in 2015, 19.2% in 2017) (see Table 7).

Table 7

Comparative Analysis of How Labor Conditions Affect the Health of Social Workers

Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strong Fatigue	Excessive Physical Strain	Psycho-Emotional Stress	Depression	Not Tired by the End of the Day	Unfavorable Work Conditions	Working Conditions Do Not Affect Health
2015	41.2	9.7	23.3	20.1	0.2	5.1	0.5
2017	42.5	9.9	24.2	19.2	0.1	4.2	0.2

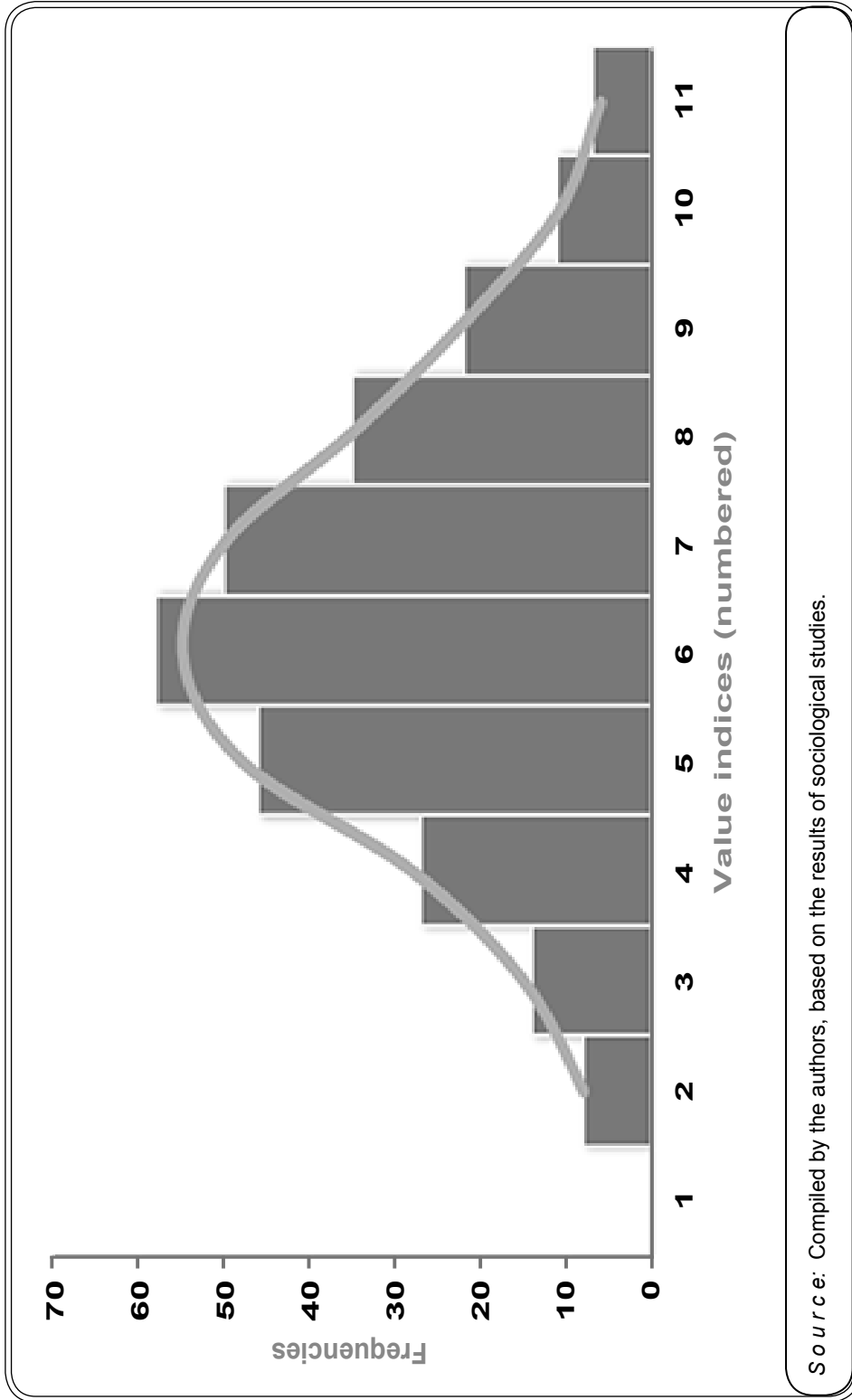
Source: Compiled by the authors, based on the results of sociological studies.

Practically none of the polled individuals stated that they were not tired after a day of work (0.2% in 2015, 0.1% in 2017); less than 1% of the respondents (0.5% in 2015 and 0.2% in 2017) pointed out that the labor conditions do not affect their health. They were unanimous practically on all points and they slightly disagreed when answering the questions about the “feeling of great tiredness” (an increase from 41.2% to 42.5%) and the “feeling of psycho-emotional stress” (an increase from 23.3% to 24.2%).

To identify the general sum-total based on the returns of random sampling of the labor value parameters, we created a frequency distribution chart based on direct observation. Normal and Poisson distributions were used. The graphic thus obtained suggested that the differences between the empirical and theoretical frequencies were purely random (see Fig. 5).

Figure 5

Frequency Distribution of Answers about Values and Approximating Curve of Normal Distribution



We have thus arrived at the key conclusions based on sociological and statistical analysis; we also relied on the conclusions derived from the polls of social workers dealing with certain categories of clients and their assessments. At the first stage, we relied on questionnaire polls to analyze professional qualities and assess the level of professionalism and competence of social workers in Kazakhstan and identify the factors that interfere with efficient work.

Respondents complained that they had no instruments (mechanisms) to upgrade their educational level and no experienced consultants (supervisors), the main factor of professional social work to train them for professional social services.

At the second stage, we analyzed and assessed the risk factors influencing labor productivity, in particular, dissatisfaction with the work they were doing caused by inadequate experience and lack of knowledge in the related spheres which did nothing good to the psyche and caused stress.

Experiments confirmed that the state should promptly supply instruments of rehabilitation and correction of physical and psycho-emotional status of professional social workers.

Conclusions

Our sociological studies and statistical processing of empirical information (on the basis of qualitative methods of data analysis) produced the following results.

The nature and conditions of labor can be described as damaging for the physical and psychological health of social workers.

Measures should be taken to prevent risk factors and introduce correcting instruments to upgrade labor productivity. The country needs a new Social Institute as a Cross-functional Institute of Supervision in the social sphere. This institutionalized approach will make it possible to create programs of uninterrupted professional development such as communication training as well as work and self-reflection skills.

We studied the institutionalized approach to upgrading professionalism and competence of social workers, as well as efficiency of social work based on our public opinion studies as part of our sociological program. The key factors that strongly affect the professional qualities and labor productivity of social workers were identified with the help of our assessment of empirical and sociological statistical data. The results confirmed what we had thought about the risk factors which can and should be eliminated by consultative support provided by experienced social workers, the upgraded role and prestige of the profession of social worker and higher quality of specialized social services provided through social structures, etc. These measures and mechanisms should accelerate, to a great extent, the positive dynamics of the work of special services and social workers and upgrade the competence of this professional group.

This is but the first step towards comprehensive studies of the innovational institute of social work. Our experience and the experience of other countries testify that the problem of supervision in Kazakhstan has been raised to a new level of scholarly studies.

In the long-term perspective, these studies will concentrate on the problems of monitoring and forecasting the requirements of the regions in professional social services, professional training, higher prestige of social work and a Cross-functional Institute of Supervision as an innovative institution in the social sphere.

In Kazakhstan, researchers are mainly interested in reforming social policy, state regulation of social services and are discussing increased funding, better training of social workers and overall modernization of the social sphere. So far, the specifics of institutionalization of the special social services system, as well as upgrading the professionalism of social workers have not yet been adequately studied in Kazakhstan. Everything that has been written so far is limited to supervision in

medicine and in the health protection system. This means that the subject of social services is new and we should pay more attention to the problem of modernization of the social sphere.

The time has come to study the problem of supervision as a new institutionalized entity designed to add efficiency of state management to the sphere of social services.

Seen from this point of view, supervision is understood as a potentially efficient institutionalized structure that coordinates the work of state and social services and institutions and upgrades the efficiency of state policy in this sphere based on state standards.

Elaboration and realization of this task should include an introduction of a new institute into the system and practice of state administration at (a) the national level; (b) the interdepartmental level and (c) the level of object-subject (department/organization/department-social worker). Supervision should become part of the following segments of state administration: the normative-legal, institutional, informational, social and economic, structural and branch. To upgrade the professionalism and competence of social workers (teaching centers, consultations, etc.) supervision can be organized on the basis of interaction of the public and private partnerships.
