

ISSN 1404-6091 (Print)
ISSN 2002-3839 (Online)

**CENTRAL ASIA
AND
THE CAUCASUS**
English Edition

Journal of Social and Political Studies

**Volume 19
Issue 4
2018**

***CA&C Press AB*
SWEDEN**

FOUNDED AND PUBLISHED BY

INSTITUTE
FOR CENTRAL ASIAN AND
CAUCASIAN STUDIES

Registration number: 620720-0459
State Administration for Patents and Registration of Sweden

CA&C PRESS AB

Publishing House

Registration number: 556699-5964
Companies registration Office of Sweden

Journal registration number: 23 614
State Administration for Patents and Registration of Sweden

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IN THIS ISSUE:

REGIONAL SECURITY

- Sergey Ryazantsev,
Munira Akmalova,
Mirzokosim Karimov,
Zafar Vazirov.*** METHODS OF ENSURING NATIONAL SECURITY OF
CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES
UNDER NEW GEOPOLITICAL CONDITIONS 7
- Lasha Tchantouridze.*** THE BLACK AND THE CASPIAN:
RUSSIA'S WARM SEAS 16
- Aliya Zhansautova,
Yelena Nechayeva,
Meruert Kazbekova.*** POLITICAL RISKS IN ENSURING WATER SECURITY.
CENTRAL ASIAN STATES' EXPERIENCE:
KAZAKHSTAN, TAJIKISTAN, UZBEKISTAN..... 24

POLITICS TODAY

- Nikolay Borisov.*** FROM PRESIDENTIALISM TO PARLIAMENTARISM:
PARLIAMENTARIZATION OF GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS
IN KYRGYZSTAN, GEORGIA AND ARMENIA..... 35

REGIONAL POLICY AND ECONOMY

Zhalgas Adilbayev, Svetlana Kozhirova.	TRADE, ECONOMIC, AND INVESTMENT COOPERATION BETWEEN KAZAKHSTAN AND ARMENIA: STATUS AND PROSPECTS	47
Sergey Zhiltsov.	UZBEKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY SETS OBJECTIVES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CENTRAL ASIA.....	60
Vakhtang Charaia, Mariam Lashkhi.	AN ANALYSIS OF THE MOTIVES UNDERLYING FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENTS (THE CASE OF GEORGIA)	72

RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM

Aydar Amrebaev, Akhan Bizhanov, Elena Burova.	POLITICAL SCIENCE AND SOCIOLOGY ON THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN THE AXIOLOGICAL AND MEANINGFUL SPACE OF KAZAKHSTAN SOCIETY ...	83
Irina Babich.	ISLAMIC VALUES IN EVERYDAY LIFE OF NORTH CAUCASIANS IN FRANCE	97
Vakhit Akaev, Murat Keligov, Boryat Nanaeva.	INTERPRETATIONS OF TERRORISM: THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL APPROACHES.....	106
Contents of the <i>Central Asia and the Caucasus</i> Issues		113
Volume 19, 2018		

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

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in the next three issues will discuss:***

- ***Eurasia: Energy Policy and Energy Projects***
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REGIONAL SECURITY

METHODS OF ENSURING NATIONAL SECURITY OF CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES UNDER NEW GEOPOLITICAL CONDITIONS

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ABSTRACT

Vital interests of the Shanghai Five are concentrated in the post-Soviet countries, including Central Asia. The article substantiates the need to work out an SCO foreign policy strategy in regard to the post-Soviet space, which is based on national interests.

A conclusion is made that national interests and a specific strategy in regard to the post-Soviet space need to be recorded in the SCO doctrinal documents. National interests of the Central Asian countries are

based on permanent, rather than immediate, applied or institutional goals.

The article also examines certain problems and peculiarities of religious extremism, and religious terrorism as its extreme form. Special attention is heeded to the formulation of characteristic features of a partnership as a special and independent format of international relations. In conclusion, the author points to the manifestation of global tendencies in regard to state sovereignty and security as the research aim.

KEYWORDS: state, security, Central Asia, drug trafficking, destabilization processes, national interests, struggle, independent states, energy resources, threat.

Introduction

One of the key security maintenance centers in the post-Soviet space is the Central Asian region, one that is extremely heterogeneous in the political, social and economic regard, which largely complicates the process of ensuring its regional stability. The interweaving of interests and the struggle for influence in Central Asia set off the interests of many countries against each other, give rise to the competition between the leading states that have geopolitical and geo-economic interests in the region. It is precisely the struggle for energy resources and control over the region's communications that may create the premises for the transformation of Central Eurasia into one of the crisis areas of world politics in the coming years and make the military threats posed to the national security of new states, along with existing non-traditional threats.¹

Following the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. and the formation of new independent states, changes have occurred, as the result of which the Central Asian region began playing a key role in the Eurasian geopolitical system. Currently, Central Asia is considered a place of collision of geopolitical interests of such superpowers as Russia, the U.S., and China.² The resolution of regional security issues, which affects the countries' political and economic development, is also of interest to the so-called Central Asian Great Game. The general idea is that Central Asia is a buffer for all the negative processes occurring in the Middle East. The Central Asian countries are currently capable of generating threats and challenges in Eurasia that may have long-standing consequences. The processes and events of the early 1990s that followed the war which broke out in Tajikistan, serve as an example.

¹ See: A.N. Makhmadov, *Bezopasnost i nekotorye interesy Tadzhikistana. Materialy respublikanskoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii*, Irfon, Dushanbe, 2009, p. 23.

² See: S. Ryazantsev, R. Manshin, Z. Vazirov, M. Karimov, "China's Influence on the Social and Economic Development of the Central Asian States: Methods and Consequences," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 19, Issue 1, 2018, pp. 18-25.

The Development of Collective Security Mechanisms in Central Asia

With the goal of ensuring military security in the post-Soviet space, in 2002, the Collective Security Treaty Organization was established based on the Collective Security Treaty (CST) signed on 15 May, 1992. This military and political union comprises the Russian Federation, the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, and the Republic of Armenia. This organization does not only ensure the military security of the CIS countries, its functions also include combatting terrorism, drug trafficking, illegal migration, transnational organized crime, the collective reaction to emergencies, humanitarian catastrophes, a wide range of threats in the information sphere and the fight with cybercrime.³ Despite the results attained by this organization, even greater efforts are required to ensure security in the region. Counteracting negative events in the sphere of ensuring security and stability in the region is impeded by economic and political challenges in Russia and Central Asia.

From the point of view of security in Central Asia, the most significant threat is posed by factors like the specifics of the sociopolitical structure with a complicated system of inter-clan relations, the peculiarities of Central Asian states' socioeconomic development, the discord among elites on various issues. The economic crisis that broke out in the Central Asian states immediately after they had acquired independence, provoked and aggravated the situation in regard to the deterioration of regional stability and security situation. The complicated socioeconomic situation in the Central Asian countries is gradually improving, but it is still not sufficiently stable, and is characterized by the poverty of the population and the economy's underdevelopment.⁴

The threats that destabilize the region are, first and foremost, religious extremism, terrorism and drug trafficking. These threats have been recently posing a direct danger to the socioeconomic and political systems of the Central Asian states, and destabilizing the situation in the entire region. These negative tendencies have manifested themselves in futile attempts to overthrow state authorities in Uzbekistan (Andizhan, 2005) and Tajikistan (2015).

Challenges posed by illegal drug trafficking remain some of the most difficult and most important issues in ensuring security not only of Central Asian countries, but of the entire global community. This negative point has a serious impact on the socioeconomic development of the Central Asian region. The situation is associated with the geographic proximity of the Central Asian region to Afghanistan—the major drug manufacturing and distribution center. This country has become the largest drug production center in Eurasia due to the political events of the recent years. Shadow economy of drug trafficking creates major impediments to the development of Afghanistan's national economy in general, and also inhibits the development and maintenance of security in Central Asia.

The aim of the illicit drug trafficking organizers is to extract a profit at any cost, with the masterminds using any means and methods of engaging people in transporting and using illicit drugs. This leads to destructive processes and political and socioeconomic instability in the Central Asian region. This phenomenon has a negative impact on the socioeconomic and demographic development and poses a serious security threat to the Central Asian region. In this context, the issue of security system formation on different levels—not only national or regional, but also global—emerges on the agenda.

³ See: R. Abdulatipov, *Paradoksy suvereniteta*, Slavianskii dialog, Moscow, 1995, 224 pp.

⁴ See: R.M. Masov, *Tadzhiki: istoriia natsionalnoi tragedii*, Irfon, Dushanbe, 2008, 535 pp.

Central Asian countries are facing an urgent goal of creating an organization that would be able to ensure stability in the region, systemically develop and implement measures to maintain national and regional security. A similar attempt was made in 1996, when, as the result of negotiations, the heads of five states—the People’s Republic of China, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and the Republic of Tajikistan—created the Shanghai Five. On 26 April, 1996, they signed an Agreement on Strengthening Confidence in the Military Field in the Border Area. This document allowed the states to begin the coordinated process of preserving stability and assisted in the development of friendly relations between them. Another Agreement, signed in 1997, became the foundation for the modern concept of security, developed by the members of the Shanghai Five. The key principles of the organization are mutual trust, mutually rewarding cooperation, equality and cooperation. The countries of the Shanghai Five that have a common border have also assumed the obligations to take measures to prevent dangerous military activities, strengthen the contacts between military units, border security forces, and not to conduct military maneuvers aimed at each other. Annual president-level meetings of the member countries were conducted, held in Moscow, Beijing, Tashkent, and Dushanbe. The main goals of the Shanghai Five were joint operations against international terrorism, organized crime, drug and weapon trafficking.⁵

Originally, the growing rapport and coordination of activities of the Shanghai Five countries were fueled by the security threat to their border areas posed by Afghanistan—the main source of instability in the Central Asian region. A need gradually arose to expand cooperation. Uzbekistan joined the organization in 2000, and the Shanghai Five transformed into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The incorporation of Uzbekistan was an important step in maintaining regional security, since the country has an important geostrategic position, bordering China. In this manner, the Five became a Six, establishing a legal basis for the modern security system in Central Asia.

Issues of regional security are of an external as well as a domestic nature. In the contemporary context, national security depends not only on the armed forces, but on a whole range of other factors—economic might, competitive industries, level of educational system, people’s prosperity, their attitudes, etc. Among the sources of real security threats for most, if not all countries are: terrorism, proliferation of mass destruction weapons, inter-ethnic and inter-confessional conflicts, environmental degradation, slowing down or a halt of economic growth. Four decades ago, various epidemics and drug trafficking, regardless of the extent of damage they inflicted, could be considered non-political and, thus, not subject to power resolution methods.⁶ Today, the situation has changed and one of the main issues is the creation of an integrated regional security system. The question of this system’s formation emerges along with that of the extent to which it reflects the modern geopolitical system and how it reacts to global processes. It really does pose a certain difficulty, considering the divergence of states’ interests in the region’s political and economic evolution.

“The SCO is advocating for a new security concept, adheres to principles of general security, non-involvement in alliances, non-confrontation, non-directedness against other countries...”⁷

Despite the existence of various inter-regional organizations in Central Asia, only SCO may become the guarantor of regional security in the future.

“Today’s world is already difficult to imagine without SCO,” stated the President of the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rakhmon in an interview to the Xinhua agency. He emphasized that through joint efforts on the part of all member countries, SCO is strengthening its position as a guar-

⁵ See: A.N. Makhmadov, *Politicheskoe povedenie: sotsialnye faktory i formy proiavleniia*, DDMT, Dushanbe, 2008, 27 pp.

⁶ See: I.K. Asadulloev, *Tadzhikistan: pogranichnaia zona i ekspansiia podobiia*, Sharki ozod, Dushanbe, 2000, 87 pp.

⁷ See: S. Aslov, *Shankhaiskaia organizatsiia sotrudnichestva segodnia: vzgliad iz Dushanbe*, IMNK, Dushanbe, 2014, 140 pp.

antor of security and stability in the region, gradually transforming into a substantial factor in international politics, into a powerful, promising and responsible partner in Asia. Among the achievements of SCO development and reinforcement, the President of Tajikistan pegged the creation of a real and extensive security and stability zone along the borders of the countries in the region, the formation of a stable basis to attain the Organization's key goals, completion of the process of establishment of the permanently functioning SCO bodies. According to the head of the state, SCO is advocating for a new security concept, adheres to the general security principles, non-involvement in alliances, non-confrontation, and non-directedness against other countries.

Within the Organization's framework, its members are essentially striving for cooperation in the security sphere, rather than a military bloc. "Inter-state relations of a new type are entirely free of the Cold War mentality. This novel security concept became the basis of the Organization's establishment," stated Emomali Rakhmon.⁸

The history of SCO establishment has begun with the signing of two primary documents by the heads of the member states—the Agreement on Strengthening Confidence in the Military Field in the Border Area (26 April, 1996, Shanghai) and the Agreement on Mutual Armed Force Reduction in the Border Area (24 April, 1997, Moscow). This was the starting point for the examination of issues of maintaining regional security.

The Shanghai (1996) and the Moscow summits that followed a year later became the prototypes of the structure that would transform into a full-scale multi-profile cooperation organization six years later. Joint work on the implementation of the above-mentioned agreements served as the primary foundation of the "Shanghai spirit," which includes mutual trust, mutual rewards, equality, respect for the others' interests and opinions, mutual consultations, attainment of mutual understanding through a consensus and voluntary agreement to abide by the negotiated agreements.⁹

The July 1998 Almaty summit of the Five brought an understanding that the in-depth consultations on the issues of regional and Asian security, establishing wide-scale and long-term cooperation in all spheres, including trade, economy, energy resources, as well as joint struggle against ethnic separatism, religious extremism, international terrorism and transnational crime.

The summit of the Shanghai Five that took place on 5 July, 2000 in Dushanbe marked the beginning of the transformation of the Five into a forum for the examination of vital Central Asian issues (security, defense, law enforcement, foreign policy, economy, environmental protection, culture). On 14-15 June, 2001 a meeting of six heads of state (of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan) took place in Shanghai, resulting in the announcement of the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a new regional body that declared its goals to be the strengthening of mutual trust, friendship and good-neighborliness among the member states, rewarding and efficient cooperation between them in the political, trade, economic, scientific, technological, cultural, educational, power, transportation, environmental and other spheres, support and maintenance of peace, security and stability in the region. In addition, the Convention on Combatting Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism, which had laid the legal foundation for collective counteraction of the threats and challenges common to all of the region's countries, was signed at the Shanghai summit. The SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), which received the status of a permanent SCO body in 2002, was created on the basis of the Convention to improve the interaction in the struggle against terrorism, separatism, extremism, illegal drug and weapon trafficking, as well as illegal migration. The main goals and functions of the RATS are as follows:

⁸ See: "Emomali Rakhmon: ShOS pokazala vsemu miru svoiu sostoiatelnost," available at [<http://khovar.tj/rus/archive/300-emomali-rahmon-shos-pokazala-vsemu-mirusvoyu-sostoyatelnost.html>].

⁹ See: A.N. Makhmadov, *Bezopasnost i nekotorye interesy Tadzhikistana*, p. 23.

- developing propositions and recommendations on the development of cooperation in combatting terrorism, separatism and extremism for corresponding SCO structures and SCO member countries;
- assisting competent authorities of SCO member countries in fighting terrorism, separatism and extremism, in accordance with the Convention's provisions;
- gathering and analyzing the information obtained by RATS from SCO member countries in relation to issues of combatting terrorism, separatism and extremism, forming a RATS database of international terrorist, separatist and other extremist organizations, their structure, leaders and members, other persons involved in these activities, as well as their financing sources and channels;
- assisting in the preparation and conducting anti-terrorist command-and-control and tactical military exercises;
- assisting in the preparation and conducting investigative and other measures in combatting terrorism, separatism and extremism;
- establishing and maintaining work contacts with international organizations engaged in combatting terrorism, separatism and extremism.

RATS is currently the key structure that performs significant tasks in the prioritized directions of counteracting terrorist, separatist and extremist threats. One of the reserves of its activities is the coordination of joint reaction to situations that threaten the stability and security within SCO member states. RATS is actively developing international contacts. The Procedure for the interaction of SCO RATS with states and international intergovernmental organizations (forums) with the observer status at the SCO was adopted in 2008. The RATS Executive Committee has established work contacts with the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the U.N., Anti-Terrorist Center of the CIS, organizations like the CSTO, OSCE, ASEAN, EAG, CARICC, etc.

In recent years, documents that have established a solid foundation for the operation of the SCO RATS, have been negotiated and signed, including:

- Concept of Cooperation between SCO Member Countries in Combatting Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism;
- Program of Cooperation between SCO Member Countries in Combatting Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism for 2010-2012;
- Agreement on Cooperation in Identifying and Blocking the Channels of Entry of the Persons Involved in Terrorist, Separatist and Extremist Activities;
- Agreement on Personnel Training for SCO Member Countries' Antiterrorist Units.

The SCO Convention against Terrorism, signed at the summit of the heads of SCO member states in Ekaterinburg on 16 June, 2009, became a landmark in the development of the regulatory framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in counteracting terrorism. This document establishes the vectors of counteracting terrorism, the forms and methods of combatting it with regard to the provisions of the Global Counterterrorist Strategy of the U.N., U.N. Specialized Conventions, and U.N. Security Council resolutions. Considering the fact that terrorist organizations are currently extensively using information technologies for their purposes, an Agreement between the Governments of SCO Member Countries on Cooperation in the Sphere of Ensuring International Information Security, where the issues of counteracting cyberterrorism are among the key, was signed. SCO RATS heeds close attention to the practical issues in the sphere of counteracting terrorism. For instance, for the purpose of organizing the international search of people involved in terrorist, extrem-

ist and separatist activities in the SCO member states, the Unified Investigation Register of Law Enforcement Agencies and Special Forces of SCO Member Countries is being formed based on the List of Persons Declared Wanted at International Level by Special Services and Law Enforcement Agencies of the SCO Member States For Committing Crimes or On the Suspicion of Committing Crimes of a Terrorist, Separatist or Extremist Character. Due to the fact that cross-border crime is an inalienable component of terrorism and extremism, the mechanism of cooperation between Ministries of Internal Affairs and Public Safety of SCO member countries in counteracting organized cross-border crime was launched within the Organization. For this purpose, the Protocol on Cooperation in Counteracting Cross-border Crime was signed at the Meeting of Ministers of Internal Affairs of SCO member countries on 18 May, 2009. In addition, decisions were made to initiate the creation of the SCO Center on Collection and Analysis of Information on the Illegal Foreign Economic Activities of Physical and Juridical Persons in the SCO-member countries, as well as develop a framework Agreement on Cooperation in Counteracting Crime. In the course of SCO summit in Tashkent (11 June, 2010) this Agreement was signed. The issues of its practical implementation are currently being worked out. One of the directions of cooperation in the anti-terror sphere were regular Defense Ministry-level contacts. In 2002, meetings of Defense Ministers were commenced, and since 2006, these meetings have become annual. In addition, defense agencies are actively cooperating in conducting joint anti-terrorist military exercises. Paramount significance is attached to continued cooperation in harnessing the drug and terrorist threats that emanate from Afghanistan, establishment of “belts of anti-drug security” and their augmentation with “zones of financial security” in order to bring to a halt the transfer of drug trade revenues to financing terrorism.

In this context, joint work in the framework of the SCO member states Agreement on the Cooperation in Counteracting the Illegal Circulation of Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and their Precursors dated 17 June, 2004, work is being conducted on establishing an efficient structure to counteract these negative events. Efforts are being made to promote the operations of the SCO-Afghanistan group, which aims to foster the mitigation of the situation in Afghanistan and around it. Assistance is being provided to the establishment of the national system of counteracting money laundering and the financing of terrorism in Afghanistan. In accordance with the Decision of the Council of Heads of SCO Member States dated 16 August, 2007, a Group of Experts on International Information Security (IIS) of SCO Member States was established and assigned the task of maintaining coordination and control over the course of the execution of the Plan of the SCO Member States on IIS up until the period of its completion.

Let us note that even with consideration to all the positive points and the existence of numerous signed documents, there is currently a range of issues that require a joint effort in resolving them, especially in promoting a full-fledged integrative process. The main issues in the context of SCO, in particular, are the absence of a unified secure space, which remains fragmented, indistinct and full of internal contradictions, and the lack of a mechanism of crisis situation monitoring, both in the member states, and in intra-organizational interactions.

Thus, considering the threats and challenges to regional security, the following conclusions and proposals on subsequent operations may be made in the SCO context:

1. Considering the lack of readiness of the regional economy to counteract the negative effects of globalization processes, a closer cooperation for the purpose of preserving the region’s sustainable and stable development is required.
2. Getting rid of the raw material orientation of the economies and diversifying them into promising industrial manufacturing, information technology and science-intensive economy sectors.
3. Paying more attention to closer interaction between the state and the mass media for the purpose of protecting the information space, which affects the creation of the state’s positive role.

4. Transforming the education sphere with regard to programs of studying advanced and science-intensive technologies.
5. Conducting a preventive policy aimed at thwarting radical and extremist manifestations.
6. Developing the transport and communications sector, which unifies all SCO member countries.
7. Holding intermediate scientific events aimed at the analysis of the situation in the SCO context within a year.¹⁰

SCO's international authority is determined not only by the potential of its member states, but also by the strategic dialog that goes on within SCO, as well as the membership of two nuclear powers—permanent members of the U.N. Security Council—the Russian Federation and People's Republic of China. These facts pre-determine the key role played by SCO in currently maintaining collective security in both Central Asia and the entire Asia-Pacific region. Issues of security were and remain of key significance in SCO activities. In addition, SCO became the first international structure that appealed to unite efforts in counteracting terrorism, extremism and separatism in Central Asia.¹¹

Due to its geopolitical location, the Republic of Tajikistan also joined this international coalition. The main criterion for Tajikistan's actions is the protection of its own national interests, the paramount one being the preservation of independence.

Key Security Issues in the Central Asian Region

Another serious challenge to security is the growth of extremism and radicalism in the Middle East, while the competition among different terrorist and extremist organizations and groups spreads throughout the world. This creates problems and challenges for Central Asia, Tajikistan included. Islamic State is already actively destroying the existing borders and modern order in Syria, Iraq and the entire Middle East, making their far-reaching plans heard.

This should also be considered in the context of the situation in Afghanistan following the withdrawal of coalition forces and the large number of Tajikistan citizens involved in the Islamic State operations and advocating the spread of these ideas in Central Asia. At a press-conference in Dushanbe, Deputy Director of the Center for Strategic Research Saifullo Safarov remarked: "Challenges to the security of our country are varied, there are both internal and external factors. However, the most tangible threat emanates from misguided young Tajiks who are lured into extremist groups. There are currently hundreds of young citizens of our republic in Syria, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Some of our youth remained cut off from school and education during the civil war and after its end. Others are growing up away from their parents, who are forced to work outside of the republic in order to feed their families. Such conditions make it easier for the youth to turn to extremist groups."¹²

The nature of emergence and existence of illegal extremist groups can be explained by the fact that this "group" uses social rhetoric methods; in other words, they criticize the official institutes, sometimes receiving support from dissatisfied low-income population, which is not politically liter-

¹⁰ See: R. Abdulatipov, op. cit.

¹¹ See: M.N. Akmalova, *Stanovlenie i razvitie politicheskoi nezavisimosti Respubliki Tadjikistan*, Noshir, Khujand, 2010, 212 pp.

¹² See: K.S. Gadzhiev, *Geopolitika, Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia*, Moscow, 1997, p. 271.

ate, as well from as the youth from the low-income social strata. According to expert evaluations, the main conflict potential in Central Asia lies in the Ferghana Valley. Various extremist and terrorist groups manifested in Andizhan in 2005, when the Islamists attempted to overthrow legal authorities and establish a Caliphate. A similar situation occurred in Tajikistan in September 2015, when the Islamists, led by the chairman of the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan, a legal party that acted under the mask of democracy, yet aimed to overthrow the legitimate authorities. According to the Islamists' plan, the overthrow of authorities in Central Asian regions, namely in the Ferghana Valley, would allow to create a Caliphate. The presence of a radical Islamist movement in the countries of the region—Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan—is extremely dangerous for security and stability, and its consequences are important for Eurasia and the entire community. Fortunately, the plans of radicals and extremists have failed in various regions of Central Asia. Threats and challenges associated with the radicalization of religion are moving beyond the borders of regional issues, and efforts of the entire global community, rather than merely of the Central Asian states should be funneled to their resolution.¹³

At the current stage, the manifestation of destabilizing processes that emerge as the result of the political system change is yet another threat to the security of Central Asian states. Immediately after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the newly formed states were not politically powerful.¹⁴ This problem manifested immediately. A civil war ensued in Tajikistan, waves of “colored revolutions” swept through the entire post-Soviet territory and the Central Asian region. The countries in the region faced a complex sociopolitical situation, with a multitude of internal contradictions that destabilize political systems and the situation, and negatively affect regional security. Reinforcement of the Central Asian countries' national security system requires a political modernization of the states, creation of efficient political institutions that satisfy the criteria for stable political systems, acceptance of methods of efficient nation-building and developed civil society.¹⁵

Let us note that the Central Asian states require the development of an efficient dialogue on the resolution of regional problems. Russia, as a long-standing partner throughout history, is assigned an important role of a regional stabilizer. If Russia does not fulfill its historic mission, another player will surely take its place.¹⁶ The strategic partnership between Russia and Central Asian states are established by bilateral strategic partnership agreements. Cooperation priorities have also been determined. However, the determination of priorities is not an exhaustive action; specific actions are required. Resolving socioeconomic and political issues confronted by the Central Asian countries and transforming Central Asia into a developed region require economic measures, investment policies, as well as economic, infrastructural, and employment development programs. In the context of the region's successful development, the risks of spreading terrorism and religious extremism will be lowered, stability and security of these countries will be ensured.

Conclusion

State sovereignty and maintenance of national security in the context of modern global tendencies are complex categories that are determined, on the one hand, by the multi-ethnicity and com-

¹³ See: I.K. Asadulloev, op. cit.

¹⁴ See: I. Karabulatova, S. Ryazantsev, R. Manshin, Z. Vazirov, “Chinese Migration to the Customs Union Countries and Regional Security,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 18, Issue 2, 2017, pp. 57-65.

¹⁵ See: K.S. Gadzhiev, op. cit.

¹⁶ See: S.V. Ryazantsev, I.Ia. Bogdanov, M.N. Khramova, “Prognozirovaniie migratsii v kontekste formirovaniia vneshnei migratsionnoi politiki Rossii,” *Nauchnoe obozrenie*, Series 1, *Ekonomika i pravo*, No. 1, 2017, pp. 5-12.

plexity of state structure, and, on the other hand, the continuing negative trends (economic crises, insufficiently effective political systems, etc.). Issues of state sovereignty and national security are relevant in the ever-changing contemporary world, which is subject to dynamic economic and political changes.

For the purpose of protecting national interests, the most significant requirement set forth by the sides in the course of inter-state conflicts is the creation of conditions for nations' political self-determination, i.e., their obtainment of an independent state status. However, this requirement contradicts the principle of territorial integrity and inviolability of state sovereignty, guaranteed by the U.N. We believe that this contradiction was created artificially, since these concepts do not initially contradict each other, and national self-determination does not always call for political sovereignty. In our opinion, national self-determination through the violation of the state sovereignty principle is a purely political manipulation instrument, and international organizations become the guarantor of this tool's non-application, despite the fact that their political power is currently insufficient for resolving ethnic conflicts. Under extremely complicated geopolitical conditions, where extremism and religious radicalism are spreading throughout the world, joint operations of Central Asian states within SCO and CSTO should be intensified for the purpose of resolving conflicts, combatting religious extremism, terrorism, and protection of national and cultural interests, which will have a significant effect on expanding cooperation, sustainability, peace and stability.

THE BLACK AND THE CASPIAN: RUSSIA'S WARM SEAS

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ABSTRACT

By defeating Georgia and Ukraine in small wars, Russia has managed to consolidate its military dominance over the Black Sea, and has halted NATO's eastward ambitions. Faced with Moscow's willingness to use naked aggression and military force, the United States and its Western allies have been unable to do anything to stop and reverse Russia's territorial gains in the former Soviet Union or to counter its growing influence beyond. Soon after

the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia's position in the Black Sea region appeared to be weakening, but its dominant status was once again recovered in the first decade of the 21st century. Moscow has subsequently used its controlling position in the Black Sea for a successful military campaign in Syria, where the Russian forces have aided the Syrian regime in its fight against the Islamic radicals and other opposition forces. In this Middle Eastern engagement, Russia has

demonstrated its newly found advantage in strategic force deployment, in which the Caspian Sea Flotilla played a surprising and effective role. Unlike the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea has seldom figured in anyone's strategic calculations beyond its immediate littoral states, but as Russia's Caspian Sea Flotilla has made it evident, now this landlocked sea holds an important position in Russia's overall military posture. Although the United States has managed to throw cold water on Russia's enthusiasm in demonstrating new strategic weapons systems, Washington can do nothing to stunt Mos-

cow's advances on the ground in Syria and elsewhere.

As a result, for the first time since World War II, Russia's influence and power in the Middle East exceeds that of the United States or of any other major power. Russia's continuing military presence and control over its two warm seas, the Black and the Caspian, has been crucial in expanding Moscow's influence beyond Russia's immediate neighborhood, with the Middle East occupying a prominent place in Moscow's new international political and military calculations.

KEYWORDS: *Russian foreign policy, the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea, Ukraine, Georgia, Syria, the Middle East, small wars, balance of power, cruise missiles*

Introduction

Historically, it has been widely believed that Russia needed access to warm seas in order to maintain its great powers status.¹ This was especially true in the 19th century, when Russia's seas froze for several months every year or were too far from the European centers of power. This belief was preserved throughout the 20th century, and strategic affairs of that turbulent era demonstrated that it was not misplaced at all: the last battles of the Russian civil war took place on the Black Sea coast of Russia and in the Crimea, and during World War II, the battles in the Black Sea basin leading to the German push towards Stalingrad were crucial, so was the defense of Sevastopol and Crimea. Russia's access to the Black Sea and the freedom of operation of its combat-ready Black Sea Fleet were threatened in the 1990s, and in the first decade of the 21st century, when the sea nearly became NATO's internal lake: among its littoral states, two former Soviet allies, Rumania and Bulgaria joined NATO, and two former Soviet republics, Georgia and Ukraine, expressed a strong desire to follow suit. Had Georgia and Ukraine succeeded in their plans, Russia would have ended up with a single Black Sea port of Novorossiysk, a location rather shallow and unusable for large vessels, and entirely unsatisfactory for combat readiness and credibility of Russia's Black Sea fleet. Russia's short 2008 war with Georgia, which created the self-proclaimed Russian protectorates of Abkhazia and "South Ossetia," changed Russia's position vs. NATO dramatically by drowning Western enthusiasm for further enlargement of European and transatlantic institutions.² Russia's invasion and annexation of Crimea in the spring of 2014, topped by the Moscow-fueled rebellion in southeastern Ukraine, has heavily tilted the Black Sea basin balance of power towards Moscow. The United States and its European allies possess no immediate countermeasures to Russia's military annexation of parts of Geor-

¹ See: A. Kokoshin, *Soviet Strategic Thought, 1917-1991*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1998.

² See: T. Turmanidze, *Bupheruli sakhemtsifoebi* (The Buffer States), BTKK Political Research Group, Tbilisi, 2006 (in Georgian).

gia and Ukraine. Moscow has scored significant victories by unilaterally revising the political geography of the post-Cold War Europe—and this is noteworthy—no country has been able to do it unilaterally since Germany's ill-fated attempts in the 1940s. The Black Sea basin also carries international significance for all the states in the region, as well as for the international system overall, due to two factors: strategic importance of Georgia's and Ukraine's coastline, and oil and gas reserves of the Caucasus and Central Asia. These two closely linked issues dwarf all others in the region, as both the Russian Federation and the United States have primarily focused on the themes of region's energy and access capacity since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the 1990s, the retrenching Russian state did barely enough to maintain its influential role in the Black Sea region, while the rebuilding of the Russian military under Vladimir Putin has allowed Moscow to commence more aggressive and uncompromising policies towards its neighbors. In fact, since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, some of the most significant disagreements between Moscow and Washington have developed around the issues involving developments in the Black Sea basin: the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, Tbilisi and Kyiv's aspirations to join NATO, the August 2008 war between Russia and Georgia, Moscow's recognition of Abkhazia and "South Ossetia" as "sovereign" states, the annexation of Crimea by Russia, and the Russian invasion of southeastern Ukraine.

Russia's Great Power Status

Russia's great power status depends much more on the developments in the Black Sea region (and those in the Baltic) than on any other region in the world. On the other hand, the United States or other great powers do not see their status as great powers being dependent upon their access capacity in the Black Sea region—it is essentially a remote backwater for them. On the other hand, the historical legacy and strategic significance of the Black Sea is too great for Russia to abandon the region without a serious fight. The key to the Black Sea access capacity lays in Crimea, and specifically Sevastopol, Crimea's biggest city, sea port, and a major naval base. However, Crimea, a peninsula with a narrow land-bridge to the mainland Ukraine, is economically unsustainable in the long-term—it has historically received most of its resources such as electricity, gas, oil, and even drinking water from the mainland Ukraine. Therefore, Russia's intervention in southeast Ukraine appears to be a long-term project aimed at building a land corridor from Russia to Crimea by capturing the Luhansk and Donetsk provinces. These provinces of Ukraine, the so-called "Novorossiya," can serve Moscow's long-term plans in other ways: they can be used as bargaining chips with Kyiv and/or with the West to secure Crimea's long-term status within the Russian Federation. During the Cold War, the Black Sea was seen as an internal sea by Moscow—its dominance there was not challenged by the West—the U.S. and other NATO members respected both the Montreux Convention³ and Turkey's desire not to pursue confrontation with Russia in this sensitive region.⁴ More recently, with Bulgaria and Rumania joining NATO, and Georgia and Ukraine having displayed strong intentions of joining the Western alliance, Moscow has witnessed its "internal" sea gradually turning into an internal lake of its main rival, NATO. To counter this trend, Moscow has started pursuing a strategy of acquiring as many foreign assets as possible in the form of conquered land or capturing strategic advantages in vital areas of its neighboring regions. When time comes, these assets would grant

³ See: J. Daly, "Oil, Guns, and Empire: Turkey, Russia, Caspian 'New Oil' and the Montreux Convention," *Caspian Crossroads*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1998.

⁴ After the August 2008 war with Georgia, Moscow did accuse Ankara of violating the Montreux Convention (see: A. Murinson, "Russia Accuses Turkey of Violating Montreux Convention," *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst*, Johns Hopkins University, available at [<http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/4960>], 15 October, 2008.

Moscow more room for maneuvering and horse trading than it had in the 1990s. In this context, the Russian adventure in Syria may be viewed as a step made to acquire a very important asset.

Russia's takeover of Crimea has confirmed that Moscow had no desire to abandon its dominant military presence and operations in the Black Sea. The deployment and operation of Russian troops in Syria has further demonstrated the strategic advantages of having military dominance over the Black Sea area, and unimpeded access to the Mediterranean. For the first time since the Russian troops approached and challenged Turkish-ruled lands in the 18th century, the Turkish state finds itself nearly surrounded by combat-ready and aggressive Russian military units.⁵ Incidentally, the current Kremlin leadership has resurrected the 18th-century term "Novorossia," and has applied it liberally in reference to the areas of southern Ukraine that have become the battleground between the combined forces of the Luhansk-Donetsk rebels aided by Russian mercenaries and regulars, and the Ukrainian armed forces. Further, the Syrian engagement has not diminished Russian gains in Ukraine and Georgia, and so far, all appears to be well in terms of military successes on the ground there. On the other hand, the Russian Federation has acquired smaller but determined opponents eager to inflict damage on Russia if it ever shows any weakness.⁶ President Putin's December 2017 "victory tour" of the Middle East illustrated Russia's increased influence in the Middle East in contrast with the United States' and other Western powers' diminishing presence there. This is the first time in history for Russia, which would not have been possible without Moscow's military control of the Black Sea.

By capturing Abkhazia from Georgia in 2008, Russia not only secured that part of Georgia's northwestern coastline, but has also assumed ownership and control of the old Soviet diesel submarine base in Ochamchire, not to mention better control over the Black Sea. Diesel submarines are necessary for the adequate defense of the Black Sea fleet assets, and for the deterrence of other navies operating in the sea. An additional naval base enhances Russia's Black Sea Fleet's submarines' operational effectiveness, and deprives the rival navies' potential access to the same assets. Since then, among other things, Moscow has deployed a new submarine system that has been developed and tested specifically for Black Sea operations.⁷ Prior to the August 2008 war with Georgia, Moscow had authorized a multi-billion project to make the Novorossiysk harbor suitable for its Black Sea fleet vessels.⁸ With Sevastopol firmly in the Russian hands following the conquest of Crimea in 2014, with its naval base serving as the critical strategic location for the Russian fleet, the combined Novorossiysk-Ochamchire assets have added to Russia's naval strength significantly, and enabled Moscow to exercise its military control more credibly. Sevastopol is blessed with a remarkable strategic position in the "middle" of the Black Sea, which allows the naval force stationed there to monitor, control, and address potential threats emerging from any geographic direction. New weapons, military bases, the pursuit of strategic goals with military power both in the Black Sea and in the Middle East help Moscow keep its potential adversaries in the region unstable, uncertain, and on the defensive while deterring future advances by NATO towards its southern frontiers.

⁵ The Russian Black Sea Fleet was founded by Prince Potemkin in 1783, but Russia's advance to the Black Sea shores had a long road, which included subjugation of Ukraine, destruction of the Tatar khanate in Crimea, fierce rivalry with Austria for strategic access to the Black Sea, and the sacking of Izmail (see: G.S. Thomson, *Catherine the Great and the Expansion of Russia*, Thomson Press, London, 2008, pp. 130-148; R.F. Weigley, *The Age of Battles: The Quest for Decisive Warfare from Breitenfeld to Waterloo*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, 2004, p. 355; K. Osipov, *Suvorov: A Biography*, Hutchinson, New York, 1944, p. 87).

⁶ See: F. Hill, O. Taspinar, "Turkey and Russia: Axis of the Excluded?" *Survival*, Vol. 48, No. 1, Spring 2006.

⁷ According to the Russian Minister of Defense, the Black Sea Fleet is slated to receive six new submarines of Project 636 (see: "Fregaty stanut 'Admiralami'," *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, available at [<http://www.rg.ru/2015/06/29/shoigu-site.html>], 26 June, 2015).

⁸ See: "Russia Navy must Seek Alternative to Sevastopol Base—Top Brass," *RIA Novosti*, available at [http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20090718/155555161.html], 18 July, 2009.

Russia is the only great power in the world with an autarkic defense structure. Moscow has inherited this feature from the Soviet Union. No other major power in the world domestically manufactures and produces everything necessary for its homeland defense, including energy resources, fuel, and new research and development in the military industry. In comparison, the United States, the largest military power in the world, depends on oil (and other energy) imports, albeit from close allies, for the proper functioning of its military capabilities, not to mention the equipment purchased from NATO countries. The dependence on defense-related imports is even more pronounced for other major states. Further, most countries cannot defend themselves unilaterally against their potential adversaries without being involved in military alliances (NATO) or treaties (with the United States), while Moscow needs no military alliance or treaty membership to defend itself or to credibly deter any potential aggressor. In fact, the current military doctrine of the Russian Federation is written with such a self-sufficient defense structure in mind, presuming military autarky to be a natural and even desirable condition for Russia.⁹ Such autarkic defense capabilities boost Russia's international position, likely to support it for at least a few more decades, and to inform its unilateral foreign and defense policy actions.

Russia/U.S.S.R.'s unilateral great power policies,¹⁰ often running counter to preferences of most of the rest of the world during the second half of the 20th century, were only possible due to the country's vast oil and natural gas reserves. The first decade of the post-Soviet period saw Russia militarily preoccupied in its immediate neighborhood, including the secessionist uprising in Chechnia. Recently, Russia has managed to recover its old military confidence, and now Moscow can sustain regional campaigns at its borders for a few years in the face of global opposition, and criticism, and even comprehensive sanctions—the latter being the most unlikely to be imposed as Russia exports large quantities of oil and natural gas—a vital supply source for today's energy-hungry global economy,¹¹ not to mention its permanent membership in the United Nations' Security Council. Without ready access to cheap oil and natural gas, Russia's unilateralism will end alongside its aggressive defense and foreign policies. When Russia exhausts its vast oil reserves, it will be a signal of the first dramatic shift in Russian foreign policy since the siege of Izmail in the late 18th century. Russia's hydrocarbon resources will diminish and end one day—there is nothing permanent under the Sun—but before that day comes, the development of strategic access points to hydrocarbon reserves elsewhere, such as in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Middle East, will push the end of Russia's energy independence farther into the future.

Moscow has resurrected *realpolitik* in world affairs out of necessity, to reassert Russian power, and to make a strong counterpoint to its Western neighbors. Now Russia is fully ready to pursue a tit-for-tat approach in international matters. When Russia's current national security strategy was debated in the 2000s, the principle of the so-called “double standards” was vocally discussed as one of the most pressing international issues facing Russia. Russian officials complained that according to the “double standards” championed by Washington, the West under the U.S. leadership had granted itself a privilege to pursue any international policy that was deemed appropriate in Western capitals, while other states were put under much more restrictive standards of behavior.¹² The national security document approved by President Medvedev in May 2009 provided for Russia to deploy and maintain armed forces in other countries to “support strategic stability and equitable strategic partner-

⁹ See: “Voennaia doktrina Rossiiskoi Federatsii,” available at [<http://kremlin.ru/supplement/461>], 5 February, 2010.

¹⁰ See: *Kholodnaia voina 1945-1963 gg. Istoricheskaia perspektiva*, ed. by N.I. Yegorova and A.O. Chubarian, Olma-Press, Moscow, 2003.

¹¹ See: A. Movchan, “New Sanctions Won't Hurt Russia,” *Foreign Policy*, 26 September, 2018.

¹² See: E. Urushadze, *Rusuli sagareo politikuri azrovneba postsabchota periodshi (Russian Foreign Policy Thinking in the Post-Soviet Era)*, BTKK Political Research Group, Tbilisi, 2006, pp. 64-65 (in Georgian).

ship” in international affairs.¹³ Pundits in Russia have pointed out that the lessons of most recent history necessitate Russia’s more aggressive and assertive stance in international matters.¹⁴ Despite verbal promises made to the Soviet leadership at the end of the Cold War, NATO started to enlarge in the late 1990s and ignored vocal protests from Moscow. Presumably, it was Russia’s perceived weakness that gave the Western allies a sense of self-confidence and righteousness. This was enough to reinforce Moscow’s old guard’s perception that international politics was indeed a zero-sum game—the territories “conceded” by the Soviets as their spheres of influence were “overtaken” by its former adversary.

Since the mid-2000s, the Russian Federation has managed to reassemble all the former Soviet republics under its control, with the exception of the Baltic States. Georgia and Ukraine had been the most resistant to Moscow’s advances and both of them have paid a heavy price by losing parts of their territories to the Russians. The main lesson of this experience is this: the countries of the former Soviet Union, including those in the Caucasus, are left to face or deal with the Russians on their own. For the states of the Caucasus this means that they will have to seek individual arrangements with Moscow as any unified front among them is highly unlikely. Moscow will continue to play them against each other for its own advantage, and to pursue its unilateral foreign policies aided by formidable military power.

Missile Messages in Syria

Russia’s other warm sea, the Caspian, has been virtually neglected in the international balance of power calculations. Themes concerning the developments around the Caspian Sea only occasionally emerge in discussions of international affairs. The April 2017 missile attack on a Syrian airbase by the U.S. Navy signaled a change in such calculations, as the Americans sent the first credible message to Moscow since August 2008. More directly, the American Tomahawk cruise missiles countered Moscow’s spectacular October 2015 demonstration of force and strategic capabilities. Back then the Russians targeted select locations in the Syrian section of the so-called “Islamic State,” more commonly known as ISIS, and other Syrian militant groups, and the first salvo was launched from the Caspian Sea. As Russia entered the Syria war in the fall of 2015, it undertook the first round of cruise missile attacks from the Caspian Sea: it was fired by Russia’s Caspian Sea Flotilla—an entirely unexpected and dramatic demonstration of Russia’s unparalleled military capabilities, and newly found confidence. The attack underscored how much strategic significance the Caspian Sea had acquired without anyone suspecting its rising importance in the international balance of power. The strike, launched by four Russian warships on 7 October, 2015, President Putin’s 63rd birthday, originated from the neutral waters off the coast of Azerbaijan with nuclear warhead-capable 26 sophisticated cruise missiles.¹⁵ The Caspian cruise missile strike reached its targets as it appeared to be a complete surprise for NATO—always an unpleasant combination of words when “missile attack” and “surprise” are used in the same sentence. Further, the *Kalibr (Club)* missile system used by Russia to carry out this attack is capable of carrying nuclear warheads. Four warships participated in the launch of the missiles, meaning that Russia has a significant and very dangerous strategic force in the Cas-

¹³ *Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii of 12.05.2009, No. 537 “O Strategii natsionalnoi bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii until 2020”*, available at [<http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/29277/page/1>].

¹⁴ See: D. Trenin, *Should We Fear Russia?* Polity Press, Malden, MA, 2016.

¹⁵ See: “Russian Missiles ‘Hit IS in Syria from Caspian Sea’,” *BBC News*, 7 October, 2015.

pian Sea. The maximum range of the *Kalibr* missiles is stated to be 2,500 kilometers—the Caspian flotilla with these missiles covering the entire Caucasus, the Black Sea, most of the Middle East including the Persian Gulf, major parts of the Red and Arabian Seas, eastern parts of the Mediterranean Sea, parts of NATO members of southeastern Europe, and can reach any part of Turkey, Central Asian states, including Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Most importantly, the Caspian Sea flotilla can easily support Russia's Black Sea fleet in combat—a unique situation given that the Caspian Sea is landlocked and separated from the Black Sea by three states and a series of mountain ranges. This is especially noteworthy if one remembers the strategic importance of the Black Sea for Russia. In October 2015, the Russian cruise missiles from the Caspian Sea entered Iranian airspace and then crossed into Iraq before hitting targets inside Syria¹⁶—Moscow had permissions to fly over their airspace from both Iran and Iraq—a good indication of close cooperation among these three. Russia has used the war in Syria for an effective demonstration of its conventional and strategic military capabilities—a very useful method of deterring potential adversaries contemplating conventional military operations—but the *Kalibr* missile attack had a far-reaching message.

As it was mentioned above, *Kalibr/Club* cruise missiles are capable of delivering nuclear payloads. This missile system is the most sophisticated in its class as it reportedly has two stages, the final stage engaging as the missile approaches its target. The *Kalibr* missiles, and cruise missiles in general, fly very low, almost hugging the surface and their long-range detection by radar is impossible. The cruise-missile can be detected at about 24 or 26 kilometers (about 15 miles) from their target, and it is possible to intercept and destroy it, but at this point the missile's second stage engages and gives it a supersonic speed, making it nearly impossible to shoot it down. The message the Russians sent to Washington in October 2015 communicated in no uncertain terms that Moscow possessed devastating weapons against which the Western allies had no defense. In other words, the strategic balance between Russia and NATO is now in Russia's favor. The cruise missile deployments have been restricted since the late 1980s following the U.S.-U.S.S.R. treaty restricting the intermediate nuclear forces in Europe, the so-called INF Treaty. Among other things, cruise missiles are banned from the land-based launch systems, but are allowed for water-based launch vessels. The range for cruise missiles is restricted, but if the range restriction is removed, such missiles from the Caspian Sea can reach any part of the European continent with potential targets having no advance warning. Similarly, these nuclear warhead-capable missiles can easily penetrate the American defense and successfully attack targets on the American soil from somewhere in the Atlantic or Pacific Ocean. Further, if rivalry between Russia and NATO were to escalate, and if Russia were to withdraw from the 1987 treaty, the initial strategic balance would be in Moscow's favor.¹⁷

The April 2017 American response on the Al-Shayrat air base in Syria was designed to deter Russia from pursuing that path. The pretext for the attack was the presumed chemical attack by the Assad regime on al-Qaeda-affiliated rebels near the Turkish border a few days earlier. American warships in the Mediterranean launched 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles, whose performance is similar to that of the Russian *Kalibr* missiles, but they do not have a supersonic stage, they are older and somewhat inferior. These missiles can be shot down, but instead of making it a surprise, the American military warned its Russian counterparts of the upcoming missile attack. Despite the advance warning, all missiles reportedly reached their targets inside the air base, in other words, even though the Russians knew about the incoming Tomahawks and they could theoretically intercept and destroy them, they could not manage to destroy even a single Tomahawk. The Tomahawks, just like the *Ka-*

¹⁶ See: "Syria Crisis: Russian Caspian Missiles 'Fell in Iran,'" *BBC*, 8 October, 2015, available at [<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34479873>]; "Rossiia oprovergla fake o padenii 'Kalibra' v Irane," *Vzglyad*, 9 October, 2015, available at [<http://www.vz.ru/society/2015/10/9/771400.html>].

¹⁷ See: R. Legvold, *Return to Cold War*, Polity Press, Malden, MA., 2016.

libr missiles, can be detected by Russian radars when they are about 24-26 kilometers away from their targets, at which point the tracking device will direct the ground-based computerized missile interceptors to shoot them down. Each Tomahawk missile will need at least two Russian anti-missile systems firing simultaneously, and if successful, the incoming missile can be brought down at about 8 kilometers from its intended target. In other words, to repel the American attack with 59 cruise missiles, the Russians had to have at least 118 advanced missile interceptors at the Al-Shayrat base. However, no Russian air base can ever have such an extensive anti-cruise missile defense infrastructure, let alone an expeditionary base, and even if they had enough radars and interceptors, nothing prevents the U.S. Navy from launching twice as many Tomahawks in the following round. In short, the United States may not possess the cruise missiles as advanced as those in Russia's possession, but it can always overwhelm the Russian defenses by the sheer quantity of inferior but equally deadly weapons. In the spring of 2017, Washington made sure the Russians and everyone else involved in the Middle East understood that the Americans were back in the balance of threat game with the Russians, the engagement which they abstained from since August 2008. Moscow received this message with some annoyance, but aside from affirming the strategic balance between the two countries, the American missile response could take nothing away from Russia's success on the ground in the Middle East and elsewhere.

Conclusion

Russia's successful military campaigns in the Black Sea basin have withdrawn the eastern regions of the former Soviet Union from NATO's influence. Although Western leaders have consistently rejected the idea of "new dividing lines" in Europe, what the Europeans are getting now is a continent divided between NATO and Russian spheres of influence, and the dividing line crosses over Ukraine and Georgia. Russia's success in Syria has demonstrated the crucial role that the control over the Black Sea plays for Moscow, while the effective deployment of the Caspian Sea Flotilla-based cruise missile systems has emphasized the significance of this seemingly unimportant region in the international balance of threats. However, there are the costs and consequences in this: this new rump assembly of Eurasian states and quasi-states effectively limits Russian influence to its own side of the dividing line. At the same time, Moscow is no longer being trusted in Western capitals, and besides, its favored tit-for-tat approach can only be effective to a point. Moscow has acquired a stronger voice in European affairs through fear and without being a member of either the European Union or NATO. The Russians have achieved this by developing an aggressive and unilateralist line in foreign and defense matters, and while the line is holding, they are unlikely to step away from it anytime soon.¹⁸ President Putin has confirmed his intention to stay in power as long as he can, but even under someone else's leadership, it will be nearly impossible to convince Russia's military and political class to abandon it. It takes force or threat of force to change Russia's behavior, and the European states are not likely to return to Cold War-style policies anytime soon.¹⁹ Europe is under a huge strain not only due to the resurgent Russia, but also because of European countries' ill-conceived policies that supported the overthrow of secular dictatorships in the Middle East, which all but guaranteed long-term instabilities at its southern and southeastern frontiers. When Europeans bicker among themselves over major issues, such as refugee affairs or Brexit, it translates into disunity and misunderstanding

¹⁸ See: A.E. Stent, *The Limits of Partnership: U.S.-Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2014.

¹⁹ See: G. Kasparov, *Winter is Coming: Why Vladimir Putin and the Enemies of the Free World Must Be Stopped*, Public Affairs, New York, 2015.

that also affects their trans-Atlantic links. The Americans are unlikely to argue with the Russians over the European problems, about which the Europeans themselves have no unity. This does not exclude future friction between the United States and Russia; however, future conflicts between them are likely to remain largely symbolic and marginal.

POLITICAL RISKS IN ENSURING WATER SECURITY. CENTRAL ASIAN STATES' EXPERIENCE: KAZAKHSTAN, TAJIKISTAN, UZBEKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The article focuses on examining the influence of political risks on ensuring water security in the context of comparative analysis of the experience of the Central Asian countries—Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan. The article pays particular attention to the prospects and peculiarities of the subsequent development of water

diplomacy among the region's countries in the context of globalization and world economic crisis. The results of the conducted research make it possible to reveal and aggregate scientific approaches to the definitions of the political risk and water security concepts; characterize the influence of political risks on water security in the context of

intensifying international relations; define the characteristics of formation of water policy in a number of countries and determine the approaches to ensuring water security in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. In

addition, the work stipulates the need to conclude a unified interstate water agreement, which should become the foundation of a sustainable water policy for the Central Asian states.

KEYWORDS: *water policy, political risks, Central Asia, water security, international relations.*

Introduction

Preserving security in the world is currently a key goal both for national states and international organizations. Ensuring the fragile balance in international relations is a difficult task in the context of the globalizing world, and the water crisis is one of the greatest threats of our days. Its first international manifestation was the Arab-Israeli conflict of 1967.

Scientists from various parts of the world regularly emphasize the fact that this problem is of a global scale, and the tendency is only bound to deepen. Rapidly growing demand, in particular for livestock products, stimulates demand for water. According to U.N. forecasts, the international demand for foodstuffs is expected to grow by 70% by 2050.¹

While it is not as apparent for European countries, the issue of water supply is all too poignant for Asian and African states. This problem will be intensified with each passing year, since the planet's population is growing, and the demand for water to provide for economic, industrial and agricultural needs is also slated to increase.

High-quality, detailed research of the above-mentioned problem today should entail the examination of the theoretical and methodological foundation of the existing water security system in the context of international relations. This research is particularly relevant under the conditions of significant transformations of the modern geopolitical environment. Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan were selected as the objects of analysis due to the negative development tendencies of their water security-related interstate conflicts, which at this point are leading to the formation of new relationships on the geopolitical map of the world and are a direct consequence of the domestic and foreign policy implemented by these states. For instance, excessive water consumption in Amu Darya and Syr Darya has led to a deficit of water resources in their lower reaches, particularly, to the drying out of the Aral Sea. Moreover, the irregular distribution of water resources in Central Asia pre-determines the conflict of interests of the key water suppliers (Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan) and its main consumers (Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan). Thus, the confrontation between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan regarding the rights to the disputed body of water had reached its peak in 2016 and was ready to move into the active military hostility phase. In this manner, these states' varied water consumption needs cause the emergence of political risks and allow to consider the situation to be a non-traditional regional security threat.

¹ See: "Increasing Demand and Climate Change Threatening World Water Resources Says New U.N. World Water Development Report," UNESCO OFFICE IN JUBA, 12 March, 2012, available at [http://www.unesco.org/new/en/juba/about-this-office/single-view/news/increasing_demand_and_climate_change_threatening_world_water/].

Numerous experts tend to consider the current water resource-related conflict in Central Asia to be not only a consequence of the Soviet regime, but also determined by the political ambitions of regional state leaders. Each of the newly established states has begun to seek the reasons to make a claim regarding the infringement of their interests. The accumulated mutual dissatisfaction, no longer limited by any regulators, began to splash out in the form of violation of obligations and new claims being lodged.

It is worth noting that in 2012 at the Rio-de-Janeiro Conference on the Issues of Environment and Development, member states have demonstrated their commitment to long-term sustainable environmental development vector for the entire planet, taking into account the interests of both current and future generations.² The international tendency towards ecosystem preservation, ecologically balanced use of natural resources and the intensification of environmental security measures had only increased its lead. Based on the conceptual provisions of a systemic approach to resolving the sustainable development issues, it can be said that currently the primary innovative dominant element for democratic and developed countries is the formation of a complex international environmental system that is balanced and adequate to their state interests, and contains a mandatory water security component.

Today we can observe the activation of negative water crisis tendencies among developing countries, which can subsequently provoke catastrophes of a planetary scale. Approximately 1.1 billion of the world population still do not have access to clean water, which leads to millions of deaths every year.³ Apparently, along with negative health consequences, the lack of access to clean water impedes national development, therefore condemning the suffering population to sinking deeper into poverty and low quality of life.⁴

Central Asia is facing a choice between electrical power generation and irrigation. The circumstances in place have led to practically all of the countries in the region setting a course for autonomous power generation. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have assumed particularly principled stances on this issue.

Based on the above, the goal of our research is the definition of the concepts of water security and political risks in this sphere, as well as an analysis of the water policy of Central Asian countries, particularly Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

Literature Review

In the recent decades, globalization and qualitative systemic changes have forced scientists to seek more grounded arguments for the intensification of the internationalization and conversion of the political and ecological interests of the majority of the world's countries. However, few of these studies have encompassed the definitions of political risks and water security. These issues were fragmentarily touched upon by the scientific schools of political science, economics, sociology, philosophy, environmental and international law, as well as others. Both domestic and foreign scientific publications, monographs, regulatory acts of national and international legislation in the sphere in

² See: *Report of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development*, A/CONF.216/16. 28 September, 2012, available at [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/CONF.216/16&Lang=E].

³ See: "Safer Water, Better Health: Costs, Benefits, and Sustainability of Interventions to Protect and Promote Health," World Health Organization, 2008, available at [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/43840/9789241596435_eng.pdf?sequence=1].

⁴ See: J. Barnett, *The Meaning of Environmental Security: Ecological Politics and Policy in the New Security Era*, Zed Books, London, 2001.

question were the object of analysis. For instance, in her work N.A. Piskulova⁵ revealed the proportion of political risks in international relations and ecology; in turn, A.A. Pozhalov⁶ had conducted a complex study of political risks. A special contribution to the study of this issue was made by A.N. Bordovskikh⁷ in her dissertation entitled “Political Risks: Contemporary Issues in Evaluation and Theoretical Modeling.” Among the foremost pertinent foreign scientists are M. Fitzpatrick,⁸ R. Stulz⁹ and A. Shapiro,¹⁰ who have exposed the category of political risks and conducted their own classification, encompassing the sphere of water security.

A review of scientific literature, which either fully or fragmentarily touches upon this issue, gives grounds to state that this phenomenon has not been subject to complex exploration within political science, and, in turn, increases the poignancy of this paper.

Methodology

In the context of the research conducted in this paper, general scientific (dialectical, systemic, synergetic, analytical and synthetic, formal logical, legal modeling, instrumental, etc.) and specialized scientific (historical legal, comparative legal, formal legal) methods have been used. For instance, the dialectical method allowed to reveal the condition, tendencies and development prospects of scientific research in the sphere of the influence of political risks on ensuring water security; the comparative legal method allowed to conduct a comparative analysis of the specifics of the Central Asian countries’ positive experience in the sphere in question; the method of legal modeling provided the opportunity to predict the potential prospects of further development of the existing situation in the sphere of ensuring water security of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Concepts of Political Risks and Water Security. Central Asian States’ Experience in the Sphere of Water Conflict Management

First and foremost, special attention should be devoted to the definition of the concept of political risk, which needs to be examined in the international relations context. Equating political risks

⁵ See: N.A. Piskulova, “Tendentsii izucheniia problem ekologii v sovremennoi zarubezhnoi nauke o mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniakh,” in: *Sovremennaiia nauka o mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniakh za rubezhom*, in 3 volumes, Vol. 2, RSMD, Moscow, 2015.

⁶ See: A.A. Pozhalov, “Issledovaniia politicheskogo riska: istoriia zarozhdeniia, stanovleniia i razvitiia,” *Vest. Moskovskogo un-ta*, Series 12: “Politicheskie nauki,” No. 3, 2006, pp. 43-57.

⁷ See: A.N. Bordovskikh, *Politicheskie riski: sovremennye problemy otsenki i teoreticheskogo modelirovaniia*, PhD Thesis in Political Science, Moscow, 2009.

⁸ See: M. Fitzpatrick, “The Definition and Assessment of Political Risk in International Business: A Review of the Literature,” *Academy of Management Review*, No. 8 (2), 1983, pp. 249-254.

⁹ See: R.M. Stulz, “Pricing Capital Assets in an International Setting: An Introduction,” *Journal of International Business Studies*, No. 15 (3), 1984, pp. 55-73.

¹⁰ See: A.C. Shapiro, “Currency Risk and Country Risk in International Banking,” *Journal of Finance*, No. 40 (3), 1985, pp. 881-891.

with state risks is among the unfounded and mistaken approaches in this sphere. The latter category is broader and more extensive in content, encompassing all of the characteristics of the environment that a state interacts with internationally.

For the first time this term was formalized by the International Commission on Radiological Protection (1972), which defined it as the determination of the de facto amount and presence of harmful factors and unprejudiced evaluations of the harm to human health.¹¹ Since then, this concept has significantly expanded and began to comprise multiple components. Today, political risk is regarded by the international relations theory as one of the components of the democratic process, associated with the evaluation and selection of alternatives, as well as with their subsequent practical approbation,¹² and is seen as the potential onset of any political event (war, revolution, coup d'état, etc.) within the state or beyond its borders, which can lead to loss in revenue and/or assets in international business operations,¹³ in particular as the risk of financial loss due to the transformation of the political system, combination of political powers within a society, political instability.¹⁴ Sometimes, this same threat is determined as unforeseen circumstances that emerge on the political arena and take the shape of various limitations.¹⁵ In addition, political risks are regarded as events that may lead to cardinal changes of governmental policy and create unfavorable situations for specific social groups or national development in general.¹⁶

It is essential to note that an integrated unified definition is absent in the scientific circles, however, the latter may be considered the most appropriate of the aforementioned definitions, as it encompasses the widest range of legal relations.

Thus, the political risk for each state depends on its strategy and tactics, and is a growing concern in the countries that are at the stage of deep-rooted institutional changes, an unstable economic or sociopolitical situation, and are also distinguished by the inadequacy of the legislation in place and the absence of a developed political activity culture.¹⁷ It is worth mentioning that a large number of approaches to the analysis of political risk testify to the complexity and multidimensionality of this problem.

Security is one of the notions that border that of political risks. This term traditionally incorporates the protected state of an individual's society's and state's interests from external and internal threats.

The concept of water security should be examined separately in the context of this research.

There are several definitions of this notion. According to the 2013 U.N. report, water security is defined as the population's capability to continually access an adequate quantity of water acceptable for: sustaining means of sustenance, human well-being and socioeconomic development; protection from water-related pollution and disasters; preservation of ecosystems in the world climate and political stability.¹⁸ This definition of water security is provided by the Asian Water Development Outlook 2013, which reveals not only the evaluation of the water resources condition and their usage,

¹¹ See: J. Barnett, op. cit.

¹² See: M. Busse, C. Hefeker, "Political Risk, Institutions and Foreign Direct Investment," *European Journal of Political Economy*, No. 23 (2), 2006, pp. 397-415.

¹³ See: J. Barnett, op. cit.

¹⁴ See: A.A. Pozhalov, op. cit.

¹⁵ See: T.V. Zonova, *Diplomatiia: modeli, formy, metody*, Aspekt Press, Moscow, 2013.

¹⁶ See: L.V. Smorgunov, *Gosudarstvennaia politika i upravlenie*, Textbook in two parts, Part 1, "Konceptcii i problemy gosudarstvennoi politiki i upravleniia," Rossiiskaia politicheskaia entsiklopediia (ROSSPEN), Moscow, 2006.

¹⁷ See: E.A. Panfilova, "Poniatie riska: mnogoobrazie podkhodov i opredelenii," *Teoriia i praktika obshchestvennogo razvitiia*, № 4, 2010, pp. 30-33.

¹⁸ See: I.V. Dzhus, *Politicheskie riski: otsenka, analiz i upravlenie*, IMEMO RAN, Moscow, 2004.

but also lays the groundwork for long-term safe water use by Asian countries and the entire Pacific region.¹⁹

Unfortunately, it is precisely the lack of water resources that often leads to interstate conflicts that are difficult to resolve and in certain cases may span for as long as decades. As was mentioned above, Central Asia is a region with a high risk of conflicts associated with the lack of water resources. We would like to discuss this issue in more detail on the cases of several countries. The factor of Central Asia's geographical isolation, its remoteness from the world markets and undeveloped communicative characteristics negatively affect its transformation and integration of countries in the modern world. Following the disintegration of the U.S.S.R., the existing water resource management schemes were disavowed, while the quotas no longer satisfied the republics. The interests of independent states moved to the foreground, and these states began to conduct a policy of absolute national sovereignty, with no regard for their neighbors' interests, thus disrupting the balanced water resource management model that was previously in place. Let us note that the existing international agreements between the republics were not being honored since the 2000s, thus, according to certain scientists, water confrontation between the countries under examination is a political problem that has been forming for years.²⁰ According to the calculations of the World Bank, the absence of regional cooperation in Central Asia will lead to a loss of 20% regional gross product. This problem is particularly poignant in relation to the use of common water resources.²¹

For instance, for many years now the shortage of water resources has been the reason for Uzbekistan being on the verge of acute conflict with the neighboring countries. Taking into account the experts' forecasts concerning reduced water availability in the Central Asian region in the nearest future²² and the fact that the current need for water has grown qualitatively we can say that today this republic is more vulnerable and dependent on transboundary water bodies.

In this context, the Amu Darya and Syr Darya water usage-associated conflicts remain relevant. For instance, Islam Karimov noted in 2012 that countries that are located higher upstream should be required to request a consulting evaluation from international experts prior to altering river utilization methods.²³ According to him, regional water conflicts related to transboundary water bodies will lead to war in the future, which is confirmed by the absence of consensus on the Syr Darya river and the hydropower plants in its basin between Uzbekistan, on the one hand, and Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, on the other. In August 2016, a conflict, which broke out between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan regarding the ownership of the Orto-Tokoy reservoir, almost developed into a military confrontation, and only the news of President Islam Karimov's health problems and death halted this conflict. In addition, the joint Aral crisis problem remains poignant for both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, a problem that makes a vivid example of an ecological problem with serious socioeconomic consequences, which affect all Central Asian states directly or indirectly. The crisis provoked by the drying out of the Aral Sea, was established as a result of an incorrect economic and agricultural policy, irrational usage of the irrigated agricultural resources, and the increase in the volume of the non-recoverable

¹⁹ See: *Asian Water Development Outlook 2013*, Asian Development Bank, Second print, Philippines, April 2013, available at [<https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/30190/asian-water-development-outlook-2013.pdf>]; I.M. Malkovskiy, *Geograficheskie osnovy vodoobespecheniia prirodno-khoziaistvennykh sistem Kazakhstana*, Almaty, 2008.

²⁰ See: A.R. Medeu, I.M. Malkovskiy, L.S. Toleubaeva, *Vodnye resursy Kazakhstana: otsenka, prognoz, upravlenie (kontseptsiiia)*, Vol. 1, Almaty, 2012.

²¹ See: "The Rogun Dam: Regional Conflict and Opportunity," Central Eurasia Standard, May 2013, available at [<https://cestandard.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/rogun-dam-a-nexus-of-conflict-and-opportunity.pdf>].

²² See: "Obespechennost vodoi v TsA k 2040 godu mozhet snizitsia pochti na 25%," available at [<https://ru.sputnik-tj.com/asia/20171123/1023969843/obespechennost-vodoy-v-centralnoy-azii-k-2040-g-mozhet-snizitsya-pochti-na-25.html>].

²³ See: S.-M. Jalilov, "Impact of Rogun Dam on Downstream Uzbekistan Agriculture," North Dakota State University, Fargo, North Dakota, 2011, available at [<http://www.cawater-info.net/library/eng/jalilov-et-al.pdf>].

water used for irrigation. This issue is aggravated even further by the lack of resources and the absence of a common approach to its resolution by the countries of the region.

Uzbekistan's water policy today is undergoing significant transformations in the context of the recently adopted Strategy of Further Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2017).²⁴ At the current stage of declarative confirmation of norms, the latter are noted for their progressive features, such as democratization, de-bureaucratization, aim to establish an integrated water policy, prospects of implementing innovative water protection technologies, research and approbation of international experience with regard to the specifics of state structure. Let us note the innovative tendencies of the republic's diplomatic initiatives, particularly in regard to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, which were launched in 2018. The above-mentioned facts testify to the conciliatory nature of Uzbekistan's foreign policy, which will subsequently contribute to the implementation of the intended roadmap of water reforms and ensuring water security. Previously, this country was not particularly eager to engage in international cooperation in water resource usage, however, the President of the Republic Sh.M. Mirziyoyev had played a special role. He established friendly and neighborly relations with all the countries in the region and with Afghanistan, which will most certainly contribute to a rational, mutually agreed, and systematic management and usage of transboundary water resources.²⁵

Among the aforementioned republics, Tajikistan possesses the largest water resources, accumulated in numerous glaciers, rivers, lakes and underground water systems, with approximately 60% of the Central Asian water resources formed there. However, the country is encountering significant difficulties due to the obsolete infrastructure, limited financial resources and insufficient technical potential. The issue of the absence of water, and even more so the necessary agreements, which would allow to use the present water resources more efficiently, still remains poignant. As far as the emerging conflicts, the beginning of the construction of the Rogun dam on the river Vakhsh, which uses the Amu Darya waters and, as a consequence, becomes an additional risk and creates a potential conflict in the sphere of water usage, is a stumbling stone between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Let us note that the design of the aforementioned construction has begun in Soviet times, but subsequently was halted until the states gained independence.

The President of Tajikistan Emomali Rakhmon remarked that the country is in the state of energy crisis and the Tajik people have suffered hardships over the course of many years, that's why the only grounded solution is the end of construction.²⁶ The launch of the first stage of the hydropower plant is slated for November-December 2018. Let us emphasize that Tajikistan had addressed World Bank in order to receive a technical and environmental expert evaluation, which took five years to conduct. The results of the evaluation, which were presented in 2014 and demonstrated that the construction of the hydropower plant with all recommendations taken into account was economically sound and would not harm the environment, were surprising to the leaders of Uzbekistan and prompted them to collaborate.

Currently, the National Water Council, presided over by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan, is the highest body involved in the development of policy and efficient utilization and protection of water resources.²⁷ It is also currently responsible for the water resource sector, and the

²⁴ See: K. Zorlu, E. Akilli, "Ulus Devlet ve Bölgesel Dinamikler Zemininde Orta Asya'da Sınırşan Sular," *Orta Asya ve Kafkasya Araştırmaları Dergisi*, No. 9 (19), 2015, pp. 25-47 (K. Zorlu, E. Akilli, "Transboundary Waters in Central Asia as the Factors of Forming a Nation-State and Regional Dynamics," *Journal of Central Asian and Caucasian Studies*, No. 9 (19), 2015, pp. 25-47).

²⁵ See: G. Askeeva, B. Gabdulina, E. Nechaeva, J. Smakova, "Transboundary Water Cooperation in Central Asia and Regional Security," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 18, Issue 1, 2017, pp. 64-75.

²⁶ See: S.-M. Jalilov, op. cit.

²⁷ See: *Postanovlenie Pravitelstva Respubliki Tadjikistan ot 30 dekabria 2015 goda No. 791 «O Programme reformy vodnogo sektora Respubliki Tadjikistan na 2016-2025 gody*, available at [http://www.cawater-info.net/bk/water_law/pdf/tj_791_2015.pdf].

power industry, as one of the types of water usage, with a potential risk of a conflict of interests between these two sectors.

Despite the fact that today state's economic interests not infrequently prevail over the environmental ones, we have to emphasize that Tajikistan is implementing an open-door policy, based on consensus, common discussion and effective political dialog in the resolution of all domestic and international issues. This country had initiated numerous water-related initiatives, which were supported by the international community. For instance, the 2018-2028 decade was declared the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development."²⁸ In addition, today it is already possible to discuss the qualitative alterations to Tajikistan's Water Code²⁹ and other regulatory acts in the sphere of water security. Tajikistan can be considered an adherent of political diplomacy in the sphere of ensuring water security, both domestic and international; moreover, its experience is a worthwhile example to follow.³⁰

Intensive use of water in the energy sector, along with the changes in the water utilization mode, has created serious problems for Kazakhstan's downward stream. Chu and Talas rivers are strategically crucial for Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan both in power production and irrigation. All water bodies, whose stable functioning and proper operation are crucial to the republic, are located in the Kyrgyz Republic, which became the reason for establishing legal grounds for joint water management by the two countries.

Just like in the previous years, Syr Darya remains a crucial source of water for Kazakhstan, and the disputes related to the distribution of water resources between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are still in place. With the goal of regulating the spring river flooding after the water flush from the Kyrgyz Toktogul reservoir, Kazakhstan had constructed the Koksarai reservoir in the South Kazakhstan region, which became the counter-regulator for the Shardara hydropower plant. It is worth noting that if there were a mutually lucrative approach to transboundary river water resource usage negotiated with Kyrgyzstan, there would be no need for Kazakhstan to undertake the expensive project mentioned above. Due to the above-mentioned circumstances, the latter entered into a conflict with Kyrgyzstan and declared its deprecation of any unilateral attempt to manage water resources. Moreover, the republic's government had always stated that common grounds and mutual interests may ensure regional stability, and also insisted on developing regional water resource strategies for all Central Asian countries.³¹ If the problems currently in place are not resolved, the pressure may affect regional stability.

Unfortunately, the Republic of Kazakhstan possesses great potential for the emergence of political risks capable of affecting water security. There are also a number of hydrological threats capable of leading to an interstate confrontation and unresolved problems associated with soil degradation, water resource deficit, high level of air pollution in cities, utilization of solid municipal waste, etc.³² The state's water policy is far from perfection: the existing methods of managing and distribut-

²⁸ U.N. General Assembly Resolution of 21 December, 2016, 71/222, 71st Session, available at [<http://www.un.org/en/ga/71/resolutions.shtml>].

²⁹ See: *Postanovlenie Pravitelstva Respubliki Tadjikistan ot 30 dekabria 2015 goda No. 791 «O Programme reformy vodnogo sektora Respubliki Tadjikistan na 2016-2025 gody.*

³⁰ See: V.I. Fokin, S.S. Shirin, J.V. Nikolaeva, N.M. Bogolubova, E.E. Elts, V.N. Baryshnikov, "Interaction of Cultures and Diplomacy of States," *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences*, No. 38 (1), 2017, pp. 45-49, available at [<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.kjss.2016.05.001>].

³¹ See: "Vodnyi kodeks Respubliki Tadjikistan ot 27 dekabria 1993 g.," *Akhbor Verkhovnogo Soveta Respubliki Tadjikistan*, No. 2, 1994, Art 38.

³² See: R. Syzdykov, K. Aitmambet, A. Dautov, *Country Report: Kazakhstan*, Analytical Centre of Economic Policy in Agricultural Sector, Kazakhstan, 2015, available at [http://www.agricistrade.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Agricistrade_Kazakhstan.pdf].

ing water resources, the regulatory legislation and the mechanism of its implementation are obsolete. However, the state's highest echelons are attempting to overcome the existing situation.³³

Special attention should be dedicated to the Strategic Plan of Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan up to 2025, adopted in February 2018.³⁴ This regulatory act emphasizes

- (1) ensuring international accord, security, stability of international relations;
- (2) development of policy in the "green" economy sphere and environmental protection, oriented toward improving the natural resource quality, development of alternative energy sources, adaptation to climate changes, as well as de-carbonization and raising the economy's energy efficiency;
- (3) need to improve the quality of life and environmental security, decrease environmental risks and deficits;
- (4) predicting the development and approbation of systemic water-saving measures in agriculture, industrial and municipal sectors.

Also, the state's obligation to conclude bilateral and multi-partite international agreements in the sphere of water security is formalized.

It should be emphasized that these promising transformations stipulate an implementation mechanism, which, proceeding from the Action Plan for 2017-2018 of the National Dialog for Water Policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan,³⁵ presumes the participation of the Republic's representatives in the regional meeting on the results of the Economy of Water Security in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan project, familiarization with some of its developments applied in Kazakhstan, as well as the continuation of preparatory work for the Kazakhstan initiative for the 8th Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention.

The previously adopted Concept of International Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2014-2020³⁶ had confirmed the striving towards intra-regional integration in Central Asia with the purpose of minimizing conflict generation potential and resolution of water and energy contradictions. The aforementioned policy vector postulates the creation of a complex independent entity of international law similar to Visegrád Group. Establishing such an association and instituting long-term cooperation in many spheres would resolve many problems in Central Asia and contribute to the improvement of the global environmental situation and ensuring water security.³⁷

In keeping with the above, the key role in structuring a dialog between the Central Asian republics on the issues of water resource distribution is currently played by Kazakhstan. Even despite the global economic crisis, the country is not planning to cut down the planned work on the resolution of the Aral Sea problems, which have long exceeded the scope of just one region and one country. In order to improve the situation, efforts in regard to more efficient use of water resources and adherence to water withdrawal quotas should be stepped up.

³³ See: L.S. Toleubaeva, *Vodoobespechennost Respubliki Kazakhstan: sostoianie i perspektivy*, Almaty, 2012.

³⁴ See: "Strategicheskii plan razvitiia Respubliki Kazakhstan do 2025 goda, 2018," available at [<http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/U1800000636>].

³⁵ See: "Plan rabot na 2017-2018 gody po Natsionalnomu dialogu po vodnoi politike v Respublike Kazakhstan," available at [https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/water/meetings/NPD_meetings/Kazakhstan/5th_NPD_working_31_May_2017/KZ_5WG_workplan_RU.pdf], 27 June, 2018.

³⁶ See: *Foreign Policy Concept for 2014-2020 Republic of Kazakhstan: Approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 21 January, 2014, No. 741*, Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Kazakhstan, available at [<http://mfa.gov.kz/en/content-view/kontseptsiya-vneshnoj-politiki-rk-na-2014-2020-gg>].

³⁷ See: T.T. Shaimergenov, M.A. Abisheva, *Tsentrlnaia Azia 2027: meniaiushchiisia strategicheskii landshaft. Veroiatnye stsennarii na desiat let vpered*, Biblioteka Pervogo Prezidenta RK, Elbasy, Astana, 2017.

Conclusions

The current geopolitical situation is characterized by the intensification of international relations, where the sustainable development concept remains at the core. In the context of active innovative technological development and significant differences in countries' domestic and international policies, the need to establish an integrated interstate water policy becomes ever more poignant. The influence of political risks on water security, both domestic and international, is rationally grounded.

After examining the political accents in the transboundary water sphere we can state that water resources are used by states as conflict instruments. According to research, political motives and military expansion are at the foundation of water-related disputes, thus, ensuring fair and rational usage of water resources in Central Asia is a poignant issue in the context of the disintegrating environmental situation and fresh water deficit.

The data obtained objectively underscore the complexity of the interstate relations and its conflict-prone component. The dependence of Central Asian countries on the transboundary water resources of the Syr Darya and Amu Darya rivers causes discord among them on the issue of the distribution of these resources. Since the countries of the region are incapable of regulating these conflicts independently, they pin their hopes on international intermediaries. Thus, the engagement of numerous external actors, who are pursuing their own geo-economic and geopolitical interests in the region, thus contributing to an even greater fragmentation of the region, can be considered a risk factor.

While the Republics of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which are located further upstream on the aforementioned rivers, want to use their hydropower potential by building hydropower plants, the countries further downstream, such as Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, object to such attempts due to their need for water for irrigation purposes. In addition, the Rogun dam construction that has a great impact on the relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan may lead to a military conflict due to a strong protest on the part of the latter.

We have to mention that at this stage, Uzbekistan's aim is to raise the regional interaction to a new level, since the future of this republic depends primarily on water, as well as on a balanced domestic and foreign policy. In the future, Tajikistan should alter its state development strategies, which are now apparently leaning towards the development of the regional hydropower industry rather than the ecological potential and international cooperation. The Republic of Kazakhstan as a mediator state should prevent the intensification of conflicts and contradictions between water consumers, including the aggravation of international water relations in transboundary basins, by correcting the water usage volumes and structure.

Despite significant progress, many problems remain unresolved. The main sign of the resolution of negative situations is the efficiency of measures taken, which is precisely why the elimination of consequences and prevention of emerging risks require a complex political approach and international collaboration. Establishing an integrated international water usage regime for Amu Darya and Syr Darya transboundary water resources is especially relevant. Thus, this would be a proper, if fragmentary, resolution of one problem, rather than continued futile attempts to encompass all of the disputed issues of the water sector.

In addition, it would be reasonable to conclude an integrated water interstate agreement, which would provide a fundamental basis on the path of forming a sustainable water policy for Central Asian countries. All of the above allows us to conclude that the most promising development scenario involves the formation of a newly formed independent organization similar to the Visegrád Four, capable of undertaking long-term obligations in regard to numerous transboundary issues, including in

the sphere of ensuring water security. The prospects of evolution of water-related collaboration and the need to integrate Central Asian countries may become the global-scale driving force in the sphere of ensuring water security, as well as establish a tendency towards a more multifarious international environmental collaboration.

**FROM PRESIDENTIALISM
TO PARLIAMENTARISM:
PARLIAMENTARIZATION OF
GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS IN KYRGYZSTAN,
GEORGIA AND ARMENIA**

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ABSTRACT

The article deals with the transformation of government forms in the post-Soviet states (Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Georgia) towards parliamentarization on the basis of neo-institutional and comparative methods. The reasons for this transformation and the degree of its influence on the political process are analyzed.

As a result of the changes, the presidents of Georgia, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan

lost the most important powers, retaining, however, the status of the head of state. The electoral system for parliamentary elections in all three states has been replaced by a fully proportional one. The author comes to the conclusion that the changes in government forms and the electoral system were initiated by the ruling elites and are aimed not so much at improving the efficiency of public administration, but at preserving

This work was supported by the Russian Foundation for Basic Research, project No. 18-011-00110.

the power. However, the parliamentarization of government systems in the three post-Soviet states had a “capsizing” effect on the ruling elite in two cases (Armenia and Georgia), and in another case (Kyrgyzstan) it could lead to the removal of the former incumbent from the channels of influence on

the incumbent President. In general, institutional reforms geared towards parliamentarization, combined with the transition to a proportional representation system, lead to the development of political competition and contribute to the institutionalization of party systems in the states considered.

KEYWORDS: *parliamentarism, government system, electoral system, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, Armenia.*

Introduction

In modern political science, there is a fairly stable and reasoned opinion that the institutional framework (primarily the constitutional formula, the type of electoral system and the legislation on political parties) has a significant impact on the political process. This becomes especially important in those states that have passed or are undergoing regime transformations, as they are characterized by frequent changes of political elites, instability of party systems and other institutional fluctuations.

Turning to the problems of the post-Soviet space, it can be noted that in the last two electoral cycles in a number of post-Soviet states processes of parliamentarization of government systems (forms) are in place. Previously, the main and, in fact, the only trend in the constitutional development of the post-Soviet states was presidentialization, there is currently a reverse trend. Constitutional amendments are being adopted, which significantly change constitutional balance of powers of the President, Parliament and government in favor of the last two. In some states, this has already led to a radical evolution of the government system from presidential to parliamentary. In particular, in Georgia, the government form index¹ decreased from +7 to -1, and then to -3, in Armenia—from 0 to -8, in Kyrgyzstan—from +4 to +1. Certain parliamentarization trends, which have not yet been practically implemented, can also be observed in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. In this regard, it is necessary to understand the reasons for such changes, the degree of their influence on the political process and the significance for both the ruling elite and the opposition, as well as to identify general and special characteristics. In this paper, we propose a review of these changes and their analysis on the basis of neo-institutional and comparative methods using the following criteria:

- basic processes that precede the constitutional amendments;
- the essence of constitutional changes (the status of the President, the main powers of the President, the government and Parliament and their relationship, presidential elections, the electoral system);
- practices of power transfer after the adoption of new government forms;
- probabilistic forecast regarding the impact of constitutional changes on the political process in the next election cycle.

¹ See: On methods of measuring government forms, see: O.I. Zaznaev, *Poluprezidentskaia sistema: teoreticheskie i prikladnye aspekty*, Kazan, 2006.

The paper considers the cases of Kyrgyzstan, Armenia and Georgia during the last two electoral cycles.

Kyrgyzstan: Parliamentarization after the Coup

After the March coup of 2010 and the resignation of the second President Kurmanbek Bakiev, a constitutional reform was carried out in Kyrgyzstan. In June 2010, a new Constitution was adopted by referendum, which came into force in 2011. It consolidated the model of an almost completely balanced semi-presidential republic (government form index +1).²

The President of Kyrgyzstan under the new Constitution is the head of state and is elected for 6 years by direct elections. With regard to the formation of the government, he received the right to appoint only two Ministers (defense and security, the rest are appointed by the Parliament), is deprived of the right to appoint judges of the Constitutional and Supreme courts, the right of legislative initiative. In addition, it is established that the same person does not have the right to be elected President twice (Art 61)—an unprecedented clause at the time for the post-Soviet space constitutional norm. The Parliament (Jogorku Kenesh) received the right to approve the program of the government, to determine the structure and composition of the government and the right to express distrust to the government. A no-confidence vote, twice expressed by Parliament to the government within three months leads to the unconditional resignation of the government (Art 85).

A significant achievement in the institutional design after the 2010 coup that should be recognized is the establishment of the post of Interim President of the Republic (it was occupied by Rosa Otunbayeva), which was preserved for two years. During this period, the required legislative framework was established, parliamentary elections were held, and the election of a new President was prepared. The Interim President was prohibited by law to take part in them. This deprived the incumbent of the incentives to expand his/her authority, extend or monopolize his/her power.

In 2016, the faction of the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan in the Parliament initiated a referendum on amending the Constitution.³ On 11 December, 2016, a referendum was held, with 79.63% of citizens who took part in it approving the constitutional changes.⁴ In accordance with the amendments,⁵ the President gained the right to present to the Parliament the candidatures of judges not only for the Supreme Court, but for the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court; to dismiss the Prosecutor General with the consent of at least half of the deputies of the Jogorku Kenesh (in the previous version it required the consent of not less than two-thirds of the deputies).

² See: *Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic: Adopted by Referendum (Nationwide Voting) on 27 June, 2010, Enacted by the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic of 27 June, 2010*, Kyrgyz Republic legal information centralized database, available in Kyrgyz and Russian at [<http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/202913/10?cl=ru-ru>], 14 August, 2018.

³ See: *Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on the Appointment of a Referendum (Nationwide Voting) on the Draft Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on Amendments to the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic of 3 November, 2016, No. 174*, Kyrgyz Republic legal information centralized database, available in Kyrgyz and Russian at [<http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/111453>], 20 January, 2018.

⁴ See: *The Results of the Referendum (Nationwide Voting) of the Kyrgyz Republic of 11 December, 2016*, The Central Commission for elections and referendums of the Kyrgyz Republic, available in Kyrgyz and Russian at [https://shailoo.gov.kg/ru/ReferendumReferendum/rezultaty_referenduma_vsenarodnogo_golosovaniya_Kyrgyzskoy_Respubliki_ot_11_dekabrya_2016_goda], 20 January, 2018.

⁵ See: *Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on Amendments to the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic of 28 December, 2016, No. 218*, Kyrgyz Republic legal information centralized database, available in Kyrgyz and Russian at [<http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/111484>], 20 January, 2018.

The decision to withdraw from the coalition of factions has become more difficult: the decision to withdraw from the faction coalition of the parliamentary majority is made by the faction with not less than two-thirds of the faction deputies' total number, it is made by its resolution and signed by each member of the faction who voted to withdraw. Instead of 15 working days, 25 working days are allocated for the presentation of the new Prime Minister to the faction coalition.

The most significant group of amendments concerns the expansion of the Prime Minister's powers. It is permitted to combine the post of the Deputy of the Jogorku Kenesh and the Prime Minister or the First Vice Prime Minister with the preservation of the parliamentary mandate and the right to vote in the plenary sessions of the Jogorku Kenesh; the Prime Minister may raise the question of confidence in the government in the Jogorku Kenesh twice a year, not one, as before; if the President does not issue a decree of dismissal within five working days after receiving the request for the dismissal of a member of the government, the Prime Minister, after consultation with the leaders of the parliamentary majority factions, has the right to dismiss the member of the government from office by his decision. The same applies to appointment of government members: if the President does not issue a decree appointing the government member within three working days from the date of receipt of the Jogorku Kenesh decision to approve the candidacy of the Minister, he is considered to be appointed. The Prime Minister also received the right to appoint and dismiss heads of local state administrations without the participation of local councils. The amendments entered into force on 1 December, 2017, and on 24 November, 2017, the newly elected President Sooronbay Jeenbekov took office, replacing Almazbek Atambayev.

Although the amendments do not change the form of government in general, as a result the Prime Minister's independence in the formation of the government and the dismissal of its members is significantly increased, and the exit of the faction from the coalition factions becomes more complicated. According to Almazbek Atambayev, the amendments were aimed at the strengthening of parliamentarism, but, according to his opponents (including interim President in 2010-2012 Rosa Otunbayeva) they are aimed at expanding the powers of Almazbek Atambayev after leaving the post of President for the post of Prime Minister.⁶ It is obvious that the outgoing President planned a scenario of a "soft" succession, in which he can either take the post of Prime Minister, or remain an influential *de facto* leader, determining the personnel and economic policy of the state.

In April 2018, Almazbek Atambayev headed the Social Democratic Party again and announced his "return to politics," and also accused President Sooronbay Jeenbekov of "authoritarian rule and a departure from democratic standards."⁷ It turned out that the new President does not intend to keep the staff of the former government and the presidential apparatus and seeks to pursue an independent policy, so it is already obvious that the "soft succession" option has not been realized. In April 2018, after the government resignation, Muhammedkaly Abylgaziev, formerly head of the office of President Sooronbay Jeenbekov, became the new Prime Minister.

For the elections to the Jogorku Kenesh, the new Constitution established a proportional electoral system, with no more than 65 seats in Parliament (a total of 120 seats) to be given to one political party as a result of the elections. Two barriers were set for the parties: at least 7% of the votes of the voters who took part in the voting in the whole country or at least 0.7% of the votes of the voters who took part in the voting in each region, Bishkek and Osh cities.⁸ Parties that overcome

⁶ See: "Referendum v Kirghizii: ukreplenie parlamentarizma ili uderzhanie vlasti," *RIA "Novosti"*, 25 November, 2016, available at [<https://ria.ru/world/20161125/1482138467.html>], 20 August, 2018.

⁷ V. Panfilova, "Almazbek Atambayev vozvrashchaetsia v politiku: eks-prezident obvinil deistvuiushchego glavu Kirghizii v korruptsii i vozvrashchenii strany k avtoritarizmu," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2 April, 2018, available at [http://www.ng.ru/cis/2018-04-02/7_7202_kirgisia.html], 20 August, 2018.

⁸ See: *The Constitutional Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on Elections of President of the Kyrgyz Republic and Deputies of Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic of 2 July, 2011, No. 68*, Kyrgyz Republic legal information centralized database, available in Kyrgyz and Russian at [<http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/203244/10?cl=ru-ru>], 31 August, 2018.

one of the barriers are allowed to receive seats in the Parliament. The introduction of regional barriers has become an additional obstacle to the monopolization of power by one or more parties representing only one part of the country. For the same purpose, the nationwide barrier was raised to 9% in 2017.⁹

Georgia: Imposed Parliamentarization

In 2010, Georgia underwent a radical change of the form of government, resulting in the transition to a parliamentary-presidential republic.

Objectively, the opposition was interested in amendments to the Constitution that promote the parliamentarization of the form of government, as it traditionally criticized the President for maintaining broad powers and noted the constitutional and actual imbalance of the President and Parliament powers. This demand was also used by the ruling party headed by Mikheil Saakashvili, which sought to maintain its positions through amendments. Amendments to the Constitution were initiated by Mikheil Saakashvili himself in September 2008.¹⁰ He justified the need for changes by the tasks of “modernization” and “democratization” of Georgia, saying: “We are moving to more complicated system, as the new system will be based on several power centers... Adoption of such a system right after the Rose Revolution would have amounted ‘to disaster’.”¹¹

In the opinion of the Venice Commission “Democracy through Law,” the new draft of the Constitution laid out the risk of the emergence of a situation of the President’s conflict with other government branches. The likelihood of such a situation is also increased by the fact that the President will be a directly elected official, which increases his political weight.¹² There was indeed a contradiction: a President who is weak in terms of authority receives a mandate directly from the voters and is responsible to them, and the actual head of state—the Prime Minister—does not receive a direct mandate. The presence of a constitutional majority in the Parliament, consisting of deputies of the ruling United National Movement Party, made it possible to adopt the presidential version of amendments to the Constitution without major obstacles in October 2010.¹³

In accordance with the amendments adopted in 2010, the powers of the President were significantly weakened and the powers of the government and Parliament were strengthened. The President has ceased to be the head of the executive power branch, since when appointing the Prime Minister, he is obliged to take into account the party composition of the Parliament and propose a candidature only from the winning party or from the largest faction (Art 80); the Prime Minister receives powers to appoint ministers, including power ones (Art 79).

⁹ See: *The Constitutional Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on Amendments to the Constitutional Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on Elections of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic and Deputies of the Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic of 5 June, 2017, No. 96*, Kyrgyz Republic legal information centralized database, available in Kyrgyz and Russian at [<http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/111583?cl=ru-ru>], 31 August, 2018.

¹⁰ See: “Saakashvili reshil podelitsia polnomochiiami s parlamentom,” *Lenta.Ru*, 26 December, 2008, available at [<http://lenta.ru/news/2008/12/26/president>], 20 August, 2018.

¹¹ “Saakashvili on New Constitution,” *Civil.ge: Daily News Online*, 30 September, 2010, available at [<http://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22713&search=>], 20 August, 2018.

¹² See: “Venice Commission on Georgia’s New Constitution,” *Civil.ge: Daily News Online*, 3 September, 2010, available at [<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22638&search=>], 20 August, 2018.

¹³ See: *The Constitutional Law of Georgia on Amendments and Addenda to the Constitution of Georgia of 15 October, 2010, No. 3710-IIc*, Parliament of Georgia: Official website, available in Georgian at [<http://parliament.ge/ge/law/7437/19994>], 20 August, 2018.

The government became the body that implemented the country's domestic and foreign policy (Art 78). Parliament was vested with the exclusive right to form a government, a constructive vote of no confidence in the government was introduced. If the Parliament is unable to approve the government twice in a row, the President submits to the legislative body a candidacy of the Prime Minister, proposed by 2/5 of the deputies; the President dissolves the Parliament and calls extraordinary parliamentary elections only after the third attempt to express confidence in the government fails (Arts 81, 81¹). The President's veto on a bill is overcome by half of the Parliament deputy votes (and not 3/5, as before) (Art 68). The President has lost the right to appoint governors; this right has been transferred to the government (Art 81³). Most of the acts of the President are subject to mandatory countersignature of the Prime Minister (Art 73¹). The President is deprived of the right of legislative initiative (Art 67).

The President has retained the functions of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief (Art 69), Chairman of the National Security Council (Art 72), the right to appoint three members of the Constitutional court (Art 88), as well as the function of an arbitrator in appointing the Prime Minister (if the Parliament cannot determine the candidacy and no faction has submitted the candidacy of the Prime Minister for consideration, and if the Parliament does not express confidence in the composition of the government within the established time frame). The norm for direct presidential elections (Art 70) has also been preserved.

It is characteristic that the residence of the Parliament and the government was moved from Tbilisi to Kutaisi by a separate law,¹⁴ which also symbolically reduces the dependence of the legislature on the President.

In general, the result of the constitutional reform meant the transition to a parliamentary-presidential form of government, in which the actual head of state is the Prime Minister. The government form index fell to -1, which means the transition to a parliamentary semi-presidential form of government.

In the transitional provisions of the law on amendments to the Constitution (Art 3) amendments to the Constitution were supposed to come in full effect on 1 December, 2013. Presidential elections were scheduled for October 2013, thus the amendments were applicable only to the next President. According to the Constitution, Mikheil Saakashvili had no right to be elected for a third term, therefore, transferring the constitutional powers to the Prime Minister, in case of victory in the parliamentary elections of his party, he was guaranteed to become Prime Minister and could actually remain the head of state. In this way Mikheil Saakashvili solved two tasks at once: to expand the powers of the future Prime Minister, who, as he expected, would represent his party, and to implement the demands of the opposition for the transition to a parliamentary system of government.

However, the parliamentary elections of 2012 brought victory to the opposition bloc Democratic Georgia—Georgian Dream headed by millionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili, who formed a new government. So, the original plan to maintain power was violated. In 2013, the candidate of Georgian Dream Party Giorgi Margvelashvili won the presidential election with the result of 62.12% in the first round, and the candidate from the United National Movement David Bakradze was defeated with the result of 21.72%, and the power in Georgia was finally replaced.¹⁵

¹⁴ See: *The Constitutional Law of Georgia on Amendments to the Constitutional Law of Georgia on Addenda to the Constitution of Georgia of 1 July, 2011, No. 4985-vs*, Parliament of Georgia: Official website, available in Georgian at [<http://parliament.ge/ge/law/7281/13955>], 20 May, 2018.

¹⁵ See: *Summary Protocol of the Results of Presidential Elections of 27 October, 2013 of Georgia*, Election Administration of Georgia: Official web-portal, available in Georgian at [<http://www.cesko.ge/uploads/other/26/26885.pdf>], 20 August, 2018.

Thus, the institutional reforms of 2010 had a “capsizing” effect for the Georgian ruling elite and worked in favor of the opposition. The institutional reforms initiated by Mikheil Saakashvili reduced the status and influence of the President to a minimum.

In the parliamentary elections of 2016, the Georgian Dream party significantly improved its presence in the Parliament, receiving 48.7% of votes and 44 seats in the proportional part and 71 in the majority part, while the opposition’s Unified National Movement received 27.1% and 27 seats in the proportional and no seats in the majority part of the electoral system.¹⁶ Immediately after the parliamentary elections, the party announced the need to move to a parliamentary form of government, in connection with which the Parliament formed a constitutional commission. The President of Georgia Giorgi Margvelashvili refused to take part in its work.¹⁷

The aim of the new ruling party was to complete the transformation of Georgia into a parliamentary republic by changing the electoral system to fully proportional, delaying its introduction by one electoral cycle, and cancelling direct presidential elections. The six years should be used to institutionalize the party, so that it can increase its representation in the proportional system. After that, indirect presidential elections will make him dependent on the ruling party.

Representatives of the United National Movement and other opposition parties abandoned the constitutional commission formed on the basis of multi-party representation in 2017. The opposition party supported by President Giorgi Margvelashvili offered a coherent alternative project of amendments to the Constitution. The agreement between Giorgi Margvelashvili and the opposition stated: “The Constitution cannot become a document uniting citizens with different socio-political views if it has the support of only one political party.”¹⁸ Among the main demands of the opposition was the immediate introduction of a proportional electoral system, the preservation of direct presidential elections and the reduction of the electoral barrier to 3%. The draft was rejected by the ruling party and the Constitution was adopted in its final version on 23 March, 2018. Thus, the new version of the Constitution was not a compromise of political forces, but a document imposed by the ruling Georgian Dream party on all other participants in the political process.

Under the new version of the Constitution,¹⁹ the President of Georgia is endowed with the status of the head of state, guarantor of national independence and unity of the state, and retains the status of the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. At the same time, the President is completely deprived of the opportunity to participate in the formation of the government. In accordance with Art 36 of the new Constitution, the main directions of Georgia’s domestic and foreign policy are determined by the Parliament, not by the government.

The President is elected by an indirect election by an electoral college of 300 members, consisting of representatives of representative bodies of Abkhazia, Adjara and local self-government bodies, for five years. The same person cannot be President for more than two terms (Art 50). The President has no right to be a member of a political party (Art 51). In case of the President’s inability to perform his duties, his duties are performed by the Chairman of Parliament.

The President appoints and dismisses the Commander of the Defense Forces of Georgia on the recommendation of the government; appoints members of the Supreme Council of Justice; partici-

¹⁶ See: *Summary Protocol of the Central Election Commission of Georgia on the Final Results of 8 October, 2016 Parliamentary Elections of Georgia*, 16 November, 2016, Election Administration of Georgia: Official web-portal, available in Georgian at [<http://cesko.ge/res/docs/shemajamebelieng.pdf>], 20 August, 2018.

¹⁷ See: “Prezident Gruzii otkazalsia uchastvovat v konstitutsionnoi komissii,” *Kavkazskii uzel*, 14 December, 2016, available at [<http://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/294254>], 20 August, 2018.

¹⁸ “Oppozitsiia i prezident Gruzii soglasovali proekt popravok v Konstitutsiiu,” *Kavkazskii uzel*, 20 September, 2017, available at [<http://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/309839>], 20 August, 2018.

¹⁹ See: *Constitution of Georgia* (Constitutional Law of Georgia № 1324 of 13 October, 2017, Constitutional Law of Georgia № 2071 of 23 March, 2018), *Legislative Herald of Georgia*, available at [<https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/30346>], 20 August, 2018.

pates in the appointment of the Chairman and members of the Central Election Commission; nominates candidates for members of national regulatory bodies on the recommendation of the government. The acts of the President shall require the countersignature of the Prime Minister, while the political responsibility for such acts rests with the government (Art 53). The President retained the right of veto, which can be overcome by a simple majority of the total number of Parliament members (Art 46).

The candidacy of the Prime Minister is proposed by the party that won the parliamentary elections, and the new government should receive the Parliament's vote of confidence (Art 56). In case of a vote of confidence, the President must appoint the Prime Minister nominated by the winning party. If the President does not do so, the Prime Minister is considered to be appointed. If the government does not receive a vote of confidence, the President dissolves the Parliament, except in a situation where, within a week after the no-confidence vote, the Parliament nominates a new Prime Minister and votes for the proposed composition of the government (this procedure is close to a "constructive vote of no confidence" in the Basic Law of Germany).

Thus, the President in the new version of the Constitution retains only symbolic and ceremonial powers and is deprived of political responsibility for his acts. The only significant power of the President that was preserved is the right to dissolve the Parliament, but it is also subject to a vote of no confidence in the government.

According to the wording of the Constitution, "after the full restoration of the jurisdiction of the Georgian state throughout the territory of Georgia," the Parliament of Georgia should become bicameral, consisting of the Senate and the Council of the Republic. The Council of the Republic should be elected under proportional representation, and representatives of Abkhazia, Adjara and other territorial units of Georgia are elected to the Senate, five representatives are appointed by the President.

Before the formation of a bicameral Parliament, a unicameral Parliament is retained, which consists of 150 deputies elected under proportional representation for four years (Art 37). A barrier of 5% is introduced for parties. These rules will apply starting with the parliamentary elections of 2024. Thereby, the ruling party has delayed the transition to the proportional system for one electoral cycle.

Armenia: Change of the Ruling Elite in Condition of Parliamentarization

In September 2013, a large-scale constitutional reform began in Armenia. On the instructions of President Serzh Sargsyan, a Commission on Constitutional Reforms was formed. A preliminary version of the Constitutional reform concept was published in April 2014, and the full version of the draft of the new Constitution, submitted for public discussion, appeared only in July 2015.²⁰ The new version of the Constitution was adopted by referendum on 6 December, 2015 with the result of 66.2% of those who voted in favor.²¹

²⁰ See: *The Draft Constitution of Armenia of 15 July, 2015*, Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Armenia: Official website, available in Armenian at [http://moj.am/storage/uploads/nakhagits_3.doc], 20 July, 2015.

²¹ See: *Referendum on Amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia*, The Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Armenia: Official website, available in Armenian at [<http://res.elections.am/images/doc/06.12.15v.pdf>], 25 July, 2017.

According to the Constitution,²² the President loses the basic political powers, which are transferred to the government and the Prime Minister. The President retains the status of the head of state. Direct elections of the President are cancelled: the President is elected by the National Assembly (Parliament) (in the draft the election of the President by the special Board consisting of deputies of National Assembly and the same number of deputies of local governments was established) (Art 125). Re-election of the same person as President is not allowed.

The main directions of domestic and foreign policy are developed and implemented by the government, not the President (Art 146), the Armed Forces are subordinate to the government (Art 155). The government is formed by the political party or bloc that wins the parliamentary elections, and the President must appoint a candidate for the post of Prime Minister, represented by the parliamentary majority (Art 149). If the Parliament refuses to approve the government's program or does not propose a Prime Minister, it is dissolved by law (Arts 149, 151), the President does not have the right to dissolve the Parliament. The President also lacks the right of veto and the right of legislative initiative. A rule on a constructive vote of no confidence in the government has been introduced (Art 115), wherein a vote of no confidence in the government always leads to its resignation (Art 158).

The electoral system in the parliamentary elections of Armenia becomes fully proportional, with the formation of national and territorial electoral lists of parties. The minimum (but not exact) number of deputies of the National Assembly (101 mandates) is established. The lists of parties that received at least 5% and the lists of party blocs that received at least 7% of the votes are allowed to receive mandates distribution. The concept of additional mandates aimed at limiting the monopoly of one party in Parliament is introduced: if one of the parties as a result received a majority of the total number of mandates, but less than 54%, this party receives such a minimum number of additional mandates that as a result the number of mandates of this party would not be less than 54%. If one of the parties has received more than 2/3 of the total number of mandates, the other parties receive such a minimum number of additional mandates that the total number of their mandates would be at least 1/3 of the total number of mandates.²³ At the same time, coalitions of factions can be created without quantitative restrictions.

After the implementation of these changes, Armenia became a typical parliamentary republic (government form index = -8), which in the presence of the dominant party (Republican Party of Armenia, RPA) should have led to the preservation of the power of the former ruling elite. As a result of such changes, the Republican party headed by Serzh Sargsyan was to form another government headed by the Prime Minister, who would become the de facto head of state, according to the ruling elite. At the parliamentary elections in April 2017, the RPA received 50 seats out of 105 and, together with the Dashnaksutyun party faction, formed a ruling coalition of 57 deputies (slightly more than half of the Parliament). In April 2018, after the expiration of Serzh Sargsyan's presidential mandate, the ruling coalition nominated him as the Prime Minister of Armenia, and on 17 April, he was appointed Prime Minister. It would seem that the planned scenario to consolidate the power of the RPA as a result of the constitutional reform was fully implemented. However, after the election, the leader of the opposition party Elk Nikol Pashinyan organized mass protests in all cities of the republic against the preservation of Serzh Sargsyan in power, with the number of supporters increasing rapidly. Nikol Pashinyan put forward a demand for Serzh Sargsyan's resignation as a condition of starting negotiations with the authorities. On 23 April, Serzh Sargsyan announced his resignation

²² See: *Constitution of the Republic of Armenia as Amended: Adopted 6 December, 2015*, The National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia: Official website, available in Russian at [http://www.parliament.am/law_docs/06122015.pdf], 20 August, 2018.

²³ See: *The Constitutional Law of the Republic of Armenia "Electoral Code of the Republic of Armenia" of 28 May, 2016, No. ZR-54*, The National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia: Official website, available in Russian at [<http://www.parliament.am/legislation.php?sel=show&ID=5479&lang=rus#17g>], 31 August, 2018.

from the post of Prime Minister, and on 8 May, after the second attempt to vote in Parliament, Nikol Pashinyan was appointed Prime Minister, and two deputies of the former ruling RPA faction voted for him. Since extraordinary parliamentary elections were not held, the party retains some influence as the largest party, and Serzh Sargsyan remains its Chairman as of now. The prospects of its activity as an active opposition party can also be assessed as doubtful.

Thus, the transition to a parliamentary form of government had a “capsizing” effect on the ruling party of Armenia and its leader. On the one hand, after the 2017 elections, the RPA received an unstable majority in the Parliament and could not control the legislative process and the executive power alone. On the other hand, the ruling elite underestimated the potential of mass mobilization of opposition supporters and their ability to unite. It should not be forgotten that about 40% of voters in the referendum opposed the adoption of a new version of the Constitution.

Conclusion

In the case of post-Soviet states, a careful analysis of formal changes in the powers of the authorities is extremely important, because in practice, the weakening of the powers of the President is not always aimed at promoting competition. We can distinguish two sets of causes of parliamentarization in the states examined:

- (1) the need to preserve the power of the President after the expiration of the terms permitted by the Constitution or to ensure the transfer of power to the successor (Armenia in 2016-2017, Georgia in 2010);
- (2) the result of intra-elite competition and the way to institutionalize political conflicts (Kyrgyzstan in 2011, Georgia in 2016-2017).

As a result of the changes (see the comparative table), the presidents of Georgia, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan lost the most significant powers, although they retained the status of heads of states. The presidents lost the ability to influence the appointment of the Prime Minister and the government and lost the legislative initiative. In addition, the President must either withdraw from any political party or suspend his or her membership. The electoral system in parliamentary elections in all three states has been replaced by a fully proportional one, which is most effectively combined with the parliamentary form of government.

The procedure for electing a President varies: in Armenia the President is elected by the Parliament, in Georgia—by electoral college, in Kyrgyzstan—by direct elections. The powers of the President are limited to two terms (Georgia) or one term (Armenia, Kyrgyzstan). In Armenia, the President is deprived of the right of veto, in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan this right is reserved for him. The “weakest” President is in Armenia (government form index = -8), in Georgia he is stronger (-4) and the strongest is in Kyrgyzstan (+1). The role of former presidents also differs: in Kyrgyzstan Almazbek Atambayev is trying to maintain his influence on the political process and heads the country’s largest party, while former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili is out of the country, and Serzh Sargsyan’s political future is very uncertain.

Changes of the government form and electoral system were aimed not so much at improving the efficiency of public administration, but at preservation of power by the ruling elites; parliamentarization merely became a tool to achieve this goal. However, in two cases, it has already had a “capsizing” effect on the ruling party (in Georgia in 2012-2013 and in Armenia in 2018). Only in Kyrgyzstan did the Social Democratic Party retain its influence, although under the conditions of the coalition government and the conflict between President Sooronbay Jeenbekov and party chairman Almazbek Atambayev, a party system with a dominant party will not be able to form.

Parliamentarization in Kyrgyzstan, Armenia and Georgia

Criterion / State	Kyrgyzstan	Georgia	Armenia
President status	Head of State	Head of State, guarantor of national independence and unity of the country	Head of State
The term of office, number of terms	6 years, 1 term	5 years, 2 terms	7 years, 1 term
The actor that determines the main directions of domestic and foreign policy of the state	No direct formulation	Parliament	Parliament
Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces	President	President	Prime Minister
The election of the President	Direct	Indirect (electoral college)	Indirect (Parliament)
The appointment of the Prime Minister	The President by decision of the Parliament	The President by decision of the Parliament	The President by decision of the Parliament
Appointment of the government members	The President by decision of the Parliament	Parliament	The President by decision of the Parliament
Legislative initiatives of the President	Absent	Absent	Absent
Overriding the President's veto	2/3 of the total number of deputies	By a simple majority of deputies' votes	Veto power is absent
The Institute of the countersignature of the President's acts	Absent	Present	Absent
Replacement of the President's post	Chairman of Parliament	Chairman of Parliament	Chairman of Parliament
The possibility of the President's membership in a political party	Suspends	Prohibited	Prohibited
The electoral system and the barrier	Proportional; 9% in the whole country or 0,7% in each region, cities of Bishkek and Osh	Proportional, 5%	Proportional, 5%
The practice of power transfer	Competitive elections	Competitive elections	Competitive elections / early resignation of the incumbent
Pre-reform / post-reform government form index	+4 / +1	+7 / -4	0 / -8

Thus, the parliamentary system of government in the three post-Soviet states, initiated by the ruling elite, in two cases had a “capsizing” effect on it, and in another case, the situation may result in the removal of the former incumbent from the channels of influence on the incumbent President. In general, institutional reforms in the direction of parliamentarization, combined with the transition to a proportional representation system, have led to the development of political competition and contribute to the institutionalization of party systems in the states considered. At the same time, it should be noted that in Georgia, and especially in Kyrgyzstan, the President remains an important actor in the political process even in the new conditions.

After the transition to parliamentary systems, despite a number of political crises, power in Georgia, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan was replaced on a competitive institutional basis through elections, rather than through a coup, and the losing side was ready to admit defeat and play by the rules. If it turns out possible to maintain political competition and provide an opportunity for opposition forces to legally participate in the political process in Kyrgyzstan after the presidential and in Armenia after the early parliamentary elections, there is a possibility of stabilization and institutionalization of the parliamentary form of government. In Georgia, the latest constitutional reform was imposed by one political force on everyone else, and after the next electoral cycle of 2018-2024, everything will depend on the extent to which the Georgian Dream will seek to monopolize power, on the one hand, and to what extent the opposition is able to mobilize its supporters to protest, on the other. The next two or three electoral cycles will demonstrate the degree of stability of the parliamentary form of government with its potential and threats, as well as a set of models of behavior of the ruling elites in the new environment.

REGIONAL POLICY AND ECONOMY

TRADE, ECONOMIC, AND
INVESTMENT COOPERATION BETWEEN
KAZAKHSTAN AND ARMENIA:
STATUS AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a brief overview of the current status of trade, economic, and investment cooperation between Kazakhstan and Armenia, integration processes between the two countries in the Eurasian space, priority areas of their foreign economic policy, and cooperation prospects.

Since the early 1990s, the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Armenia

have worked to build bilateral relations by establishing clear political and economic priorities and setting strategic goals in order to promote Kazakhstan's national interests in the South Caucasian region and Armenia's national interests in Central Asia. This in turn has made it possible to fill the agenda of relations between the two countries with concrete practical content.

After gaining independence, the former Soviet republics were faced with a number of difficult foreign policy problems, including that of developing trade, economic, and investment cooperation on a new basis. The need to look for ways to develop further cooperation was dictated by the existence of common problems.

For Armenia, the countries of Central Asia are of particular importance in this respect, and Kazakhstan has a major role to play here as a long-term trade and economic partner, a country with economic potential, rich natural resources, and a promising market. Considering the situation in these two countries, one can say that there are prospects for the development not only of political, but also of trade, economic, and investment cooperation.

The first thing to note is that political cooperation between the two countries provides a good legal basis for expanding cooperation and tapping its full potential in every area, including the trade and economic sphere.

At present, trade and economic relations between Kazakhstan and Armenia are not yet fully developed for a number of geopolitical reasons. On the one hand, virtually all transport and logistics routes in the South Caucasian region are blocked by Turkey, Azerbaijan, and partly by Georgia in view of

strained relations with Russia. The lifting of international sanctions against Iran points to the possibility of new transport corridors of paramount importance to Armenia being initiated in the region. In this context, Armenia will continue its close cooperation with Iran in the medium term to create the necessary prerequisites for gaining access to the markets of the Middle East and Persian Gulf countries. Kazakhstan, for its part, is also taking steps to enter the Iranian market, including through the Caspian Sea. In 2017, it announced the construction of a transport hub port in Western Iran. In addition, freight trains are now running from Kazakhstan through Turkmenistan to the Iranian city of Gorgan. Kazakhstan and Armenia could focus their efforts on combining mutually beneficial economic projects using Tehran's entire potential.

One of the most attractive transport and logistics projects is the Silk Road, which is being actively implemented by the Beijing authorities. For example, Kazakhstan has already launched a number of government programs somehow connected with the implementation of the Chinese Silk Road initiative. Armenia is also negotiating with the Chinese on its possible participation in this project, which can solve many transportation problems that currently exist in the South Caucasian region.

KEYWORDS: *trade and economic cooperation, investment, integration processes, macroeconomic indicators, cooperation prospects, Eurasianism, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).*

Introduction

The current geopolitical realities allow states, including those without a large potential in the military-political, economic or other spheres, to influence, in one way or another, the situation in the regions and the world as a whole.

Today there is a tendency to expand and accelerate integration processes throughout the world, including the post-Soviet space, and this in turn has an effect on the regional and geopolitical situa-

tion, on vector shifts in the foreign policy priorities of developed countries, and on the role of individual states in strengthening regional security and stabilizing the economic situation.

Historically, owing to their energy, transport, and logistics potential, the regions of Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus were a point where the geopolitical and geo-economic interests of developed countries intersected, thus setting the regional agenda. The impact of this trend on the stable development of countries in the region has not always been positive. At present, the necessary prerequisites are in place for building bilateral relations between countries based on a rational and pragmatic approach that would allow them to act, first and foremost, in their own interests (both foreign policy and foreign economic) instead of sacrificing them to the interests and priorities of the “great powers.”

Since gaining independence, Kazakhstan and Armenia have traditionally followed a pragmatic multi-vector foreign policy, maneuvering between the interests of Russia, the United States, the European Union, and China. This foreign policy concept of the two countries is primarily motivated by security concerns. Considering their common history of emergence as independent states, their common historical past, similar paths of institutional development, and Russian influence on their political and economic situation, it is only natural that Kazakhstan and Armenia are involved in Eurasian integration processes.

According to Kazakhstan’s Foreign Policy Concept for 2014-2020, in light of current realities, the foreign policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan requires modernization and promotion of national interests based on the principles of pragmatism and taking into account external factors such as the negative effects of the world financial and economic crisis, intensified conflicts and current regional and global problems, and the emergence of a qualitatively new geopolitical and geo-economic situation on a regional and global scale.¹

One of Kazakhstan’s implemented initiatives is, of course, the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). The initiative to establish a Eurasian Economic Union was first put forward by President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan in a speech at the Lomonosov Moscow State University in 1994.² 1 January, 2015, marked the beginning of the Eurasian Economic Union, founded by Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia. That same year, the Republic of Armenia and the Kyrgyz Republic became full-fledged members of the Union.

The EAEU is an international organization of regional economic integration based on agreements reached by the participating states within the framework of the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space.

According to Kazakhstan’s Foreign Policy Concept for 2014-2020, Eurasian economic integration is seen as an effective tool for moving the country to a sustainable position in the system of international economic relations.³

Armenia’s involvement in Eurasian integration processes is primarily associated with the top priorities of its foreign policy, as listed in its foreign policy doctrine, which places the main emphasis on the following: Armenia is consistent in its desire to strengthen and deepen its strategic partnership and allied relationship with Russia, based on the traditional friendly ties between the two nations.⁴

¹ See: *Foreign Policy Concept of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2014-2020*, Official Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 17 September, 2014, available at [<http://mfa.gov.kz/en/content-view/kontseptsiya-vneshnoj-politiki-rk-na-2014-2020-gg>].

² See: M. Baigarin, “EAES: Segodnia rozhdaietsia novaya geoeconomicheskaya realnost XXI veka—N. Nazarbayev,” Kazinform International News Agency, 1 January, 2015, available at [http://www.inform.kz/ru/eaes-segodnya-rozhdaetsya-novaya-geoeconomicheskaya-real-nost-hhi-veka-n-nazarbaev_a2733115].

³ See: *Foreign Policy Concept of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2014-2020*.

⁴ See: *Foreign Policy of the Republic of Armenia*, Official Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, available at [<http://www.mfa.am/en/foreign-policy/>].

The Armenian political establishment has traditionally followed a multi-vector foreign policy. For example, while maintaining a certain level of relations with Western and Middle Eastern countries and with Iran, it attaches particular importance to a pro-Eurasian policy, although it should be noted that the recent political changes in Armenia might affect its foreign policy line in the near future.

The main priorities of Armenia's foreign policy include a settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict;⁵ further recognition of the "Armenian genocide" by the international community; involvement of the Armenian diaspora abroad as soft power in lobbying for Armenia's interests; and the creation of a favorable economic and investment climate in the country.

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, Armenia and Kazakhstan have joined several newly created integration arrangements. Although cooperation between countries within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is effected through its coordinating institutions (statutory, executive, and sectoral cooperation bodies),⁶ the role of this organization today is rather declarative, because its members have never actually managed to create the necessary mechanisms for regulating their military-political relations and their trade and economic ties. This leads to the conclusion that the key agenda-setting role in the post-Soviet space has now been assigned to three separate organizations: the Eurasian Economic Union is mainly concerned with economic cooperation; the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) with military-political cooperation; and the CIS with cultural and humanitarian cooperation. When it comes to the EAEU and the CSTO, the positions of Kazakhstan and Armenia on the further development of these organizations are largely similar.

Naturally, each of the EAEU member states, owing to differences in economic development, has its own list of priorities and urgent tasks within the framework of Eurasian economic integration. For Armenia, the priorities for integration within the EAEU are set by the following factors: the ability of the common energy market emerging in the EAEU to reduce energy prices for Armenia; the Union's ability to help Armenia overcome its transport isolation, realize its transit potential, and create an infrastructure that would allow the republic to integrate into regional trade (through the establishment of a free economic zone in Meghri on the border with Iran); and the Union's ability to help Armenia expand its exports and implement a multi-vector foreign trade policy (primarily towards the EU, Iran and other neighboring countries).⁷

A similar set of priorities within the Union can be identified for Kazakhstan. The most important systemic aspect of EAEU membership for economic growth and diversification in Kazakhstan as a landlocked country is a reduction in transportation costs. The EAEU agreements on access to the infrastructure and domestic freight rates of the partner countries have enabled Kazakhstan companies to reduce transportation costs. The competitiveness of their products in foreign markets has increased accordingly.⁸

The following factors within the Union will help to tap Kazakhstan's entire transport and transit potential: reduction in transportation costs, pooling of the transit capacities of all Union countries, de-bureaucratization of transport procedures; development of a logistics base; and opportunities for equal access to Russian pipelines and ports in the Baltic.⁹

⁵ See: *Foreign Policy of the Republic of Armenia*.

⁶ See: "Strany Sodruzhestva Nezavisimykh Gosudarstv," Official Website of the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States, available at [<http://www.cisstat.com/rus/ciscountry1.htm>].

⁷ See: Ye. Alekseyenkova, "Armenia in EAEU 2025, Eurasian Studies?" 16 June, 2017, available at [<http://eurasian-studies.org/archives/3993>].

⁸ See: *EAEU*, Official Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 29 January, 2017, available at [<http://mfa.gov.kz/en/content-view/tamozhennyj-soyuz>].

⁹ See: Ye. Kuzmina, "Kazakhstan's Participation in the EAEC: Pros and Cons, Eurasian Studies," 13 March, 2017, available at [<http://eurasian-studies.org/archives/2664>].

The Southern Caucasus is historically associated with big military-political challenges and threats, mainly in view of its strategic location between the Black and Caspian seas. Its great strategic importance is due to the region's transit and logistics potential, because oil products from the Caspian basin and Central Asia can be transported through its territory to European and other world markets.

In general, Armenia's role in the Southern Caucasus should be seen through the prism of Russian interests, since Erevan in this context remains within the scope of the Kremlin's geopolitical interests and strategic priorities. This is due to the fact that in the last twenty five years Armenia has been living under a transport blockade, which has had a serious effect on its external economic relations. For the same reason, the Erevan authorities cannot take full advantage of integration processes in the post-Soviet space.

Central Asia is located at the junction of Eurasian transport corridors and has a large transport and communications network. Central Asian countries have access to the Persian Gulf through Iran, to the Indian Ocean through Afghanistan and Pakistan, and to the Asia-Pacific region through China.¹⁰

Today, there are three competing geopolitical projects in Central Asia: the EAEU, the Economic Belt of the Silk Road (EBSR), and the New Silk Road. These three projects appeared almost simultaneously and were due to changes in the Central Asia policies of the states that initiated these projects.¹¹ Each of these projects has its own conceptual framework and a number of pros and cons. Taking into account these circumstances allows us to evaluate both the projects themselves and the opportunities and challenges of their interaction. In this situation, Kazakhstan is obliged to use its entire foreign policy potential to maneuver between the interests of Russia, the United States, and China in order to ensure that Astana's foreign policy priorities are taken into account.

Overall, the factors that influence the foreign policy of Kazakhstan and Armenia and, accordingly, many systemic elements of this policy have a number of common characteristic features. Foreign, including foreign economic, policy in the two countries cannot be constructed without taking into account the interests of international actors. For these countries, Russia is undoubtedly the main reference point. At the same time, the influence of the key global players (the U.S., EU, and China), whose interests are also present in the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia, will also increase in the future. In this situation, Kazakhstan and Armenia have more or less similar opportunities for further development in accordance with their own priorities and interests. For this reason, bilateral cooperation between Erevan and Astana is of primary importance for mutually beneficial and complementary partnership, considering the similar regional challenges and existing problems. This cooperation can guarantee that the national interests of the two countries are taken into account in the context of regional integration processes and external threats.

Economic Context and Prospects

In the last 25 years, trade and economic relations between Kazakhstan and Armenia have developed as opportunities have arisen, under the impact of both positive and negative factors. Unfortunately, it has so far proved impossible to tap the entire potential of the two countries in the trade and

¹⁰ See: Ye. Irgaliyev, "Budushcheie Tsentralnoi Azii v partniorstve Astany i Tashkenta," 365info.kz, 10 February, 2017, available at [<https://365info.kz/2017/02/ekspert-pri-trampe-amerikanskij-biznes-budet-maksimalno-zhestko-prokladyvat-sebe-dorogu-v-tsa/>].

¹¹ See: K. Syroezhkin, "Geopolitical Projects in Central Asia and the Role of Kazakhstan," Central Asian Bureau for Analytical Reporting, 6 April, 2016, available at [<http://cabar.asia/en/konstantin-syroezhkin-geopoliticheskie-proekty-v-tsentralnoj-azii-i-rol-kazahstana/>].

economic sphere. This is partly due to adverse trends in the world economy. At the same time, the dynamics of mutual trade show that external factors have a short-term effect on this trade, while the trade turnover has tended to decline under favorable market conditions as well.

Obviously, there are objective reasons of a mutual nature that affect export and import margins in trade between Kazakhstan and Armenia, regardless of global economic processes.¹² The first thing to note is the difficulty of freight transportation between our countries. Owing to well-known regional problems, rational trade routes—through both the Caspian Sea and South Ossetia—have been disrupted, so that it has become difficult to supply traditional export products, such as grain, metals, and liquefied gas, from Kazakhstan to Armenia.

These problems and the prospects of interstate cooperation are periodically discussed at meetings of the Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation.¹³

It should be noted that in the area of economic cooperation there was some increase in trade in 2017. According to the Statistics Committee of the Ministry of National Economy of Kazakhstan, trade between Kazakhstan and Armenia totaled \$10 million, increasing by 34% from 2016 (of this, Armenia accounted for \$4.6 million, and Kazakhstan, for \$4.4 million).¹⁴

In the last five years, Armenian exports have accounted for most of the total trade between the two countries, while Kazakhstan goods have been losing their competitiveness for a number of reasons. Russian companies play a key role in Armenia's energy sector (gas, oil products), and Russian exporters have price advantages in grain and metal products. Kazakhstan's exports to Armenia in these areas have fallen by half compared to previous years. Today, these exports consist of small batches of goods: grain products, paper and cardboard products, pharmaceuticals, organic and inorganic chemicals, etc.¹⁵ As for Armenian exports to Kazakhstan, there are steady supplies of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, jewelry, tobacco products, and foodstuffs, minor shipments of stone, gypsum, etc.¹⁶

Low volumes of trade between the two countries are due in large part to high transportation costs because of a lack of direct transport links. What makes the situation worse is that Azerbaijan does not allow Kazakhstan goods destined for Armenia to pass through its territory.

Another factor holding back trade is the similar nature of the two economies as regards exports, in which raw materials prevail. Armenia's small consumer market and the low purchasing power of its population also affect the interest of Kazakhstan producers in the Armenian market.

At present, the activity of companies with Kazakhstan capital in Armenia, except SCAT Airlines, is low. At the same time, the number of small and medium-sized enterprises established by Armenian citizens in Kazakhstan has more than doubled (to 145) in the last three years. It should be noted that remittances from Armenian citizens working in Kazakhstan are almost double the total amount of trade between the two countries (\$18.9 million in 2016).¹⁷ These data show that the citizens

¹² See: A. Tavadyan, Zh. Adilbayev, "Perspektivy razvitiya ekonomicheskikh svyazei Armenii i Kazakhstana," Information and Analytical Journal *21-i VEK* (Erevan), No. 2 (43), 2017, pp. 81-91.

¹³ See: "Bakytzhan Sagintayev obsudil s Premierom Armenii novye formy sotrudnichestva," Kazinform International News Agency, 14 August, 2017, available at [http://www.inform.kz/ru/bakytzhan-sagintaev-obsudil-s-prem-erom-armenii-novye-formy-sotrudnichestva_a3054568].

¹⁴ See: *External Trade Database: Kazakhstan*, Official Website of the Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, available at [<http://www.armstat.am/en/?nid=159&thid%5B%5D=398&years%5B%5D=2016&submit=%D0%9F%D0%BE%D0%B8%D1%81%D0%BA>].

¹⁵ See: "Ob'omy eksportnykh postavok Respubliki Kazakhstan v gosudarstva-cheny EAES za 2016 god," Eurasian Economic Commission, available at [http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/act/integr_i_makroec/dep_stat/tradestat/tables/intra/Documents/2016/12/I201612_8_3.pdf].

¹⁶ See: "Ob'omy eksportnykh postavok Respubliki Armenia v gosudarstva-chleny IeAES za 2016 god," Eurasian Economic Commission, available at [http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/act/integr_i_makroec/dep_stat/tradestat/tables/intra/Documents/2016/12/I201612_8_1.pdf].

¹⁷ See: A. Tavadyan, Zh. Adilbayev, op. cit., p. 80.

of Armenia and Kazakhstan already enjoy the advantages of the EAEU associated with the common labor market and the free movement of persons within the Union.

Armenian citizens in Kazakhstan, as a rule, work in construction, services, and trade. Most individual enterprises have been set up with the help of compatriots living in Kazakhstan. Among large companies, the Erevan Brandy Company (Ararat) has established a dealer network in the country. Armenian jewelry companies have also shown an interest in Kazakhstan.

So far, the current situation does not pave the way for a significant increase in Kazakhstan's share in the Armenian market. The volume of trade between the two countries continues to be affected by the following factors: (1) high transportation costs (lack of rail communications and complex road transport logistics caused by the Azerbaijan blockade); (2) Armenia's small domestic market (population of 3 million) and limited purchasing power; (3) Armenia's highly monopolized market; and (4) competitive prices of Russian goods similar to those of Kazakhstan (metal and grain products). Let us note that, even excluding the impact of transportation costs, a number of Kazakhstan goods with export potential are either noncompetitive in the Armenian market or have low profit margins.

At the same time, an excess of imports over exports in the structure of Armenian foreign trade provides some opportunities for Kazakhstan exporters.

The recent start of direct flights between Astana and Erevan will help to develop trade cooperation and build contacts between the two business communities.¹⁸

In joining the EAEU, Armenia was guided, in particular, by military-political considerations, while macroeconomic calculations were mainly based on its existing trade and economic relations with Russia. The economic arguments for Armenia's accession were based not only on the advantages of membership in the Eurasian project, but also on the negative effects of a refusal to join the Union.¹⁹

- First, EAEU membership has enabled Armenia to buy Russian gas at a discount.
- Second, a refusal to join the Union would have significantly complicated access to the Russian labor market for migrant workers from Armenia.
- Third, Russia is the key market for Armenian agricultural products.
- Fourth, Russia remains the key investor and creditor of the Armenian economy.

At the same time, the economic slump in Russia and the decline in world commodity prices have partially offset the impact of Armenia's accession to the EAEU. For example, the amount of migrant remittances has continued to decline.

Armenia has also tended to step up cooperation with the EU countries, the United States, China, and especially with Western financial institutions. This creates an opportunity for turning Armenia into a bridge connecting the EAEU, the EU, and Iran. The lifting of sanctions against Iran could also open serious prospects for cooperation between Armenia and Iran in the energy and transit-transport sphere. It will also provide opportunities and increase incentives for EAEU countries to take part in such projects.

Armenia's negative balance of trade, in which the share of imports is almost twice as large as that of exports, has an adverse effect on the stability of the national currency. In 2017, its tight mon-

¹⁸ See: "Priamoi reis v pervye svyazhet Astanu i Erevan," International News Agency Novosti-Armenia, 31 May, 2017, available at [<http://newsarmenia.am/news/society/pryamoy-reys-vpervye-svyazhet-astanu-i-erevan/>].

¹⁹ See: A. Tavadyan, "Ushcherb ot nevstupleniya Armenii v EAES sostavil by primerno milliard dollarov," ARKA News Agency, 26 December, 2015, available at [http://arka.am/ru/news/economy/ushcherb_ot_nevstupleniya_armenii_v_eaes_sostavil_by_primerno_milliard_dollarov_ekspert/].

etary policy helped to reduce inflation and to strengthen the Armenian dram (AMD), while the exchange rate of the Kazakhstan tenge (KZT) varied from 330 to 340 tenge per dollar.²⁰

As a result of a significant reduction in the value of exports to Russia, in migrant remittances, and in consumer and investment demand, Armenia's economic growth slowed by 0.6% in recent years. The negative effects of the economic slowdown in most countries of the region and lower prices for the main export items have been mitigated by an increase in the physical volume of exports to non-CIS countries owing to larger supplies of copper ores and concentrates.

A temporary easing of fiscal policy in 2017 coupled with additional external financing under the IMF Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and sovereign bonds issued by the government have enabled Armenia to cushion the initial impact of the worsening external environment and to avoid excessive macroeconomic adjustment. The main contribution to GDP growth is made by an increase in net exports and by government spending, whereas domestic demand remains relatively low as a result of reduced household spending.

Overall, the Armenian economy continues to depend on external financing and private remittances. According to the International Labor Organization, Armenia is a world leader (after Tajikistan) in terms of dependence on remittances from abroad (21% of GDP). Economists are seriously concerned about the annual increase in the republic's external debt. As of 31 March, 2017, Armenia's total public debt stood at \$5.9 billion (its GDP in 2016 was \$10.5 billion). Of this, external debt amounted to \$4.8 billion (78.7% of the total), and internal debt, to \$1.1 billion (21.3%). According to the Armenian Finance Ministry, the country's public debt tripled from \$1.9 billion in 2008 to \$5.9 in 2016.²¹

In 2017, Armenia's GDP increased by 6.7%, and economic activity by 7.7%.²² The main factors behind faster economic growth in 2017 were as follows: an expansion of credit in drams (by 28.8% YoY in December 2017, compared to 25.1% YoY in September 2017) and some increase in remittances from migrant workers, which led to a further rise in consumer demand. Retail sales in October and November 2017 were up 7.1% and 7.6% YoY, compared to 5.8% in January-September 2017. The fact that the annual import growth rate rose from 25.4% in September 2017 to 40% in December 2017 also points to continued high levels of consumer spending.

Rising world prices for Armenian export goods along with high external demand and a decline in the real effective exchange rate of the dram continued to support exports, whose volume in December 2017 was up 44.4% YoY.

According to Armenian experts, the construction sector (up 10.4% YoY in December 2017) had a positive effect on economic activity. In addition, strong consumer demand led to significant growth in the trade and service sectors (up 12.7% and 15.6% YoY in December 2017, respectively).

In general, all sectors of the Armenian economy included in the index of economic activity (except agriculture, where production fell by 3%, largely because of bad weather conditions) showed positive growth rates in 2017.

As a result of monetary policy and a decline in external inflationary pressure, deflation in December was 1.1% YoY. Thus, actual annual inflation in 2017 (1%) remained below the Central Bank's target of 4±1.5%.

²⁰ See: "Arkhiv kursa dollara SShA v Kazakhstane za ianvar 2017," Kurs tenge, available at [<http://kurstenge.kz/archive/usd/2017/01>].

²¹ See: "Vneshnii dolg Armenii po itogam 2017 goda," Financial-Banking Portal of the ARKA News Agency, available at [www.ambanks.am/2017/09/25/110022/].

²² See: S. Martirosian, "Ekonomika Armenii s robkimi nadezhdami na pozitiv v novom godu," *Ritm Evrasii*, 25 January, 2018, available at [<https://www.ritmeurasia.org/news--2018-01-25--ekonomika-armenii-s-robkimi-nadezhdami-na-pozitiv-v-novom-godu-34626>].

In order to encourage economic activity and reduce deflationary pressure, the Central Bank lowered its refinancing rate by another 0.25 percentage points to 6.00%. These monetary policy measures contributed to a rapid recovery in economic activity and an increase in inflation in 2017 (from deflation of 1.4% in 2016).

In October-December 2017, the trade deficit in goods widened (reaching \$225.4 million in December) as imports of goods continued to grow rapidly fueled by rising domestic demand. International reserves increased by \$80 million in October-November 2017 to a total of \$2,174.4 million, which was partly due to an increase in the country's debt obligations.

According to preliminary estimates by the Ministry of Finance, Armenia's state budget showed a deficit of AMD 180.1 billion, with a reduction from 5.5% of GDP in 2016 to 3.6% in 2017. Owing to increased economic activity in the country, budget revenues for the year rose by 5.6%. Budget expenditures decreased by 2.2%.²³

Commenting on the country's economic development, the then prime minister of Armenia, Karen Karapetyan, said that the main macroeconomic indicators for the first quarter of 2017 were satisfactory but insufficient to achieve the desired results.²⁴

In addition, it should be noted that one of the advantages enjoyed by the Armenian economy is the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), which is a system of preferential tariffs applied by developed countries to goods exported by developing countries to promote their economic growth and enhance their export capabilities. It provides for reduced MFN (Most Favored Nation) tariffs or duty-free entry of eligible products exported by beneficiary countries to the markets of preference-giving countries.

As we know, Armenia enjoys GSP beneficiary status with Canada, Japan, Norway, Switzerland, and the United States. Since 1 January, 2009, Armenia has also been included in the list of countries granted GSP+ status by the European Union.

Products that are not eligible for GSP duty-free treatment mainly include textiles, apparel, watches, footwear, bags and suitcases.²⁵

Let us note that there are favorable conditions for the development of Armenia's foreign trade not only within integration groupings, but also with leading world markets, which in turn provides additional opportunities for its Eurasian integration partners. For landlocked Kazakhstan, this circumstance could play a significant role in developing trade and economic cooperation with Armenia.

An improvement in the global economic environment has been a catalyst for recovery growth in the economy of Kazakhstan. This unexpectedly rapid recovery was a delayed effect of timely anti-crisis measures, which had prevented the economy from sliding into a recession. With an increase in world prices for metals and oil, stronger demand in trading partner countries led to a rapid recovery in economic growth. According to preliminary estimates by the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, GDP growth in 2017 accelerated to 4% (from 1.1% in 2016).

Overall economic activity in Kazakhstan was influenced by the following main factors: in the context of an increase in the potential for growth in industry and the service sector, the state's role in stimulating growth declined in the second half of 2017. For 2017 as a whole, the volume of construction largely funded by the state increased by only 1.9% (compared to 7.9% in 2016). Industrial growth accelerated to 7.1% (compared to a decline of 1.1% in 2016). The sector's improved performance was due to gains in both mining and manufacturing. Whereas the former resulted from a favorable pricing

²³ See: "Defitsit gosbiudzheta Armenii po itogam 2017 goda snizitsia do 3.6% ot VVP—EABR," 8 December, 2017, available at [<http://www.armbanks.am/2017/12/08/111501/>].

²⁴ See: N. Badalian, "Armenian Prime Minister considers recorded macroeconomic indicators satisfactory, but insufficient," Financial Portal ArmInfo, 21 April, 2017, available at [http://finport.am/full_news.php?id=29414&lang=3].

²⁵ See: "GSP and GSP+," Global SPC Invest in Armenia, available at [<http://www.investinarmenia.am/en/gsp-and-gsp-ru>].

environment in the world oil market and the high productivity of the Kashagan Field,²⁶ the latter was due to the implementation of the National Industrialization Map and its multiplier effect throughout the value-added chain from mining to manufacturing.

During 2017, inflation was within the target range of 6-8%. Despite short-term supply shocks (decreased supply of vegetable products, fuels and lubricants) and increased tenge/dollar exchange rate volatility, inflation was on a steady downward trend throughout 2017.

Domestic debt increased by 32.1% in 2017 year-on-year, compared to a 2.1% reduction in 2016. Given nominal GDP growth and a reduction in external debt, the ratio of public debt to GDP remained at about the same level as in 2016.

If we analyze the above data taking into account the international and regional circumstances of the two Union countries linked together by economic and political commitments, we will find that in the foreseeable future the full potential of economic relations between them can only be tapped through Eurasian integration. It should also be taken into account that the current situation in the sphere of logistics, the lack of a common border and access to the sea, and the blockade by neighboring countries make it impossible to take full advantage of economic opportunities in a bilateral format. It would make sense to coordinate monetary and industrial policies and to agree a common position on the Economic Belt of the Silk Road. In our view, it is also necessary to adjust and agree the priorities for the economic policy of the EAEU countries. A primary task is to implement an agreed economic policy in accordance with the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union and to develop logistics in every possible area.

It is known that economic globalization creates an imperative need for deep structural changes in the economy, and the dynamics of these changes depend in large part on economic growth rates and can only be ensured with large-scale investments in the economy. A study of the scale, dynamics, and geography of international capital flows suggests that more rapid growth of foreign investments (compared to GDP and foreign trade growth) increases their importance for most countries in the world. A country's development level is an important indicator of its attractiveness to foreign investors.

A study of the current state of the Armenian economy shows that there is a set of problems whose solution is necessary for the country's successful socioeconomic development. This includes an insufficiently favorable investment climate, an imperfect legal and regulatory framework for attracting foreign investors, undeveloped financial markets, etc. The importance of these under-explored problems has determined the choice of this topic related to the development and implementation of an optimal strategy for Armenia's investment cooperation with foreign countries.²⁷

Borrowings and investments have enabled many countries, including Armenia, to reach a new level of development. That is why a sound, rational policy for attracting foreign investment is a prerequisite for the successful development of national economies.

Armenia has declared an "open door" investment policy as defined in the Law on Foreign Investment and the Investment Policy Concept of the Republic of Armenia. Today, it has one of the most open investment regimes among developing countries.

According to Armenia's current legislation, there are no restrictions on the conversion and transfer of money or the repatriation of capital, earnings, dividends, interest, royalties or management and technical service fees. Foreign investors and employees are guaranteed the right to freely repatriate their property, income or other assets resulting from their investments after all taxes are paid.

Armenia has a liberal foreign exchange system and does not limit the conversion of money associated with investment to hard currency at the official exchange rate. Foreign currency is widely

²⁶ See: "Ekonomicheskie obzory. Evraziiskaia Ekonomicheskaiia Komissia," available at [http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/act/integr_i_makroec/dep_makroec_pol/economyViews/Pages/default.aspx].

²⁷ [<https://regnum.ru/news/2384356.html>].

available, and the Armenian dram (AMD) is maintained as a freely convertible currency. Bank accounts in Armenia can also be opened in foreign currency.

The Armenian business diaspora can and must play a major role in attracting foreign investment to Armenia, because, as experience shows, it has already done much to attract direct investment and private remittances from abroad. This is rational, especially since, at a time of increasing globalization, unprecedented development of communication technology, and the exceptional importance of business networks, the Armenian diaspora can be a unique competitive advantage for the Armenian economy.²⁸

Considering current trends in foreign direct investment (FDI), such as a progressive increase in the share of FDI going into high-tech industries, steps should be taken to significantly change the structure of the country's competitive advantages, with a gradual reduction in the role of natural resources and cheap labor and shift of focus to "created assets," such as a skilled workforce, scientific and technological capabilities, and developed infrastructure. Particular attention should be paid to information and communication technologies and their wide use.

In the system of relations between actors in today's world economy, a special place belongs to the group of countries with transition economies, which in recent decades have faced the need to transform their national economies and economic development models. The CIS countries, including Kazakhstan and Armenia, are no exception in this group of countries. Moreover, transformation processes in the least competitive economies (like that of Kazakhstan) were particularly painful and were associated with numerous internal and external shocks and risks, which made it more difficult to optimize the economic ties of these countries. That is why Kazakhstan, like other similar countries, became increasingly involved in international capital flows, and not only through large-scale sovereign external borrowing, but also through joint ventures with foreign companies as vehicles for foreign direct investment. Hence the country's course towards a gradual removal of barriers to foreign investment and to the use of foreign advanced technologies and management practices.²⁹

At present, Kazakhstan has developed, in collaboration with the World Bank, a National Investment Strategy for 2018-2022. In the next five years, given successful implementation, the strategy will lead to a gradual increase in FDI inflows by 26% compared to 2016, including efficiency-enhancing (i.e. export-oriented) FDI by 50%.³⁰ Under this strategy, a special effort is to be made not only to attract new investors, but also to keep the old ones and to stimulate reinvestment.

Today, trade and economic relations between Kazakhstan and Armenia are not yet fully developed for a number of geopolitical reasons. On the one hand, virtually all transport and logistics routes in the South Caucasian region are blocked by Turkey, Azerbaijan, and partly by Georgia in view of strained relations with Russia. The lifting of international sanctions against Iran points to the possibility of new transport corridors of paramount importance to Armenia being initiated in the region. In this context, Armenia will continue its close cooperation with Iran in the medium term to create the necessary prerequisites for gaining access to the markets of the Middle East and Persian Gulf countries. Kazakhstan, for its part, is also taking steps to enter the Iranian market, including through the Caspian Sea. In 2017, it announced the construction of a transport hub port in Western Iran. In addition, freight trains are now running from Kazakhstan through Turkmenistan to the Iranian city of Gorgan. Kazakhstan and Armenia could focus their efforts on combining mutually beneficial economic projects using Tehran's entire potential.

As noted above, the development of trade relations between Kazakhstan and Armenia is prevented by the transport blockade imposed by some of the latter's neighbors. In this context, one of

²⁸ See: "Investitsionnye voprosy Respubliki Armenia," Invest in Armenia, available at [<http://investmentprojects.am/>].

²⁹ See: "Main Macroeconomic Indicators of Republic of Kazakhstan," Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States, available at [<http://www.cisstat.com/en/macro/kaz.htm>].

³⁰ See: Zh. Mamyshev, "Kazakhstan stanet privilekatelnym dlya investorov," Atameken Business Channel, 15 August, 2017, available at [<http://abctv.kz/ru/news/kazahstan-stanet-privilekatelnym-dlya-investorov>].

the most attractive transport and logistics projects is the Silk Road, which is being actively implemented by the Beijing authorities. For example, Kazakhstan has already launched a number of government programs somehow connected with the implementation of the Chinese Silk Road initiative. Armenia is also negotiating with the Chinese on its possible participation in this project, which can solve many transportation problems that currently exist in the South Caucasian region.

It should also be noted that the government of Armenia pays much attention to renewable energy sources, primarily because of the energy shortage in the country. This topic is a focus of attention for Kazakhstan as well. For example, an international specialized exhibition, Astana EXPO 2017, devoted to “green energy” was held in Astana from June to September 2017, and the then president of Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan, took part in the opening ceremony.³¹

In view of the growing role of the EAEU and other integration arrangements in the post-Soviet space, economic cooperation between the two countries should be developed through the establishment of joint ventures, as well as full use of the existing trade and economic preferences provided to Kazakhstan and Armenia to encourage exports of their goods and services to the markets of third countries.

It would make sense, in particular, to use the preferential tariff system GSP+ extended to Armenia by the European Union, under which Armenian producers have an opportunity to export certain goods to the EU duty-free or at reduced rates of duty (about 30% of total exports).³² This system could be of interest for establishing enterprises in Armenia with subsequent access to the EU market. At the same time, Armenia’s participation in this system makes it more profitable to set up enterprises in its territory, considering its developed transport infrastructure.

In addition, it is necessary to tap the entire potential of free economic zones (FEZs) in Armenia and Kazakhstan for mutually beneficial promotion of exports of goods and services to Iranian and Chinese markets, respectively.

For example, on 3 August, 2017, the government of Armenia approved a draft resolution to establish a closed joint stock company called Meghri Free Economic Zone.³³ The FEZ will be located in Armenia’s Syunik Province on the border with Iran. Its construction is among the priority investment programs of the Armenian government. The operation of this FEZ has been written into the Customs Code of the EAEU. The total cost of the Meghri project is estimated at \$32 million, including \$28 million of capital expenditures. The FEZ will cover an area of 10-15 hectares, with the possibility of further expansion to 45-50 hectares. According to the Armenian government, its exploitation will make it possible to create 2,500 jobs and to increase Armenian exports by 30%. The zone is expected to host about 100-120 companies, whose earnings will amount to \$52 million over 10 years. Their products will be exported to Iran, EAEU and Middle Eastern countries, Turkmenistan, and other countries. In ten years, total investments by all companies are expected to reach \$350-400 million.³⁴ Kazakhstan in turn is also taking steps to enter the Iranian market, including through the Caspian Sea. Kazakhstan and Armenia could focus their efforts on combining mutually beneficial economic projects using Iran’s entire potential.

Kazakhstan also has a free economic zone on the border with China, the Khorgos International Center of Boundary Cooperation JSC, which handled 5 million tons of cargo in the first six months of 2017.³⁵

³¹ See: Astana EXPO 2017, Official Website of the International Specialized Exhibition Astana EXPO 2017, available at [<https://expo2017astana.com/en/>].

³² See: What is GSP+? European Commission Trade Helpdesk, available at [<http://trade.ec.europa.eu/tradehelp/gsp/>].

³³ See: S. Martirosian, “SEZ v Megri: zainteresovannye aktyory i nedobrozhelateli, Ritm Ievrazii,” 25 April, 2017, available at [<https://www.ritmurasia.org/news--2017-04-25--sez-v-megri-zainteresovannye-aktyory-i-nedobrozhelateli-29791>].

³⁴ See: “ZAO ‘SEZ Megri’ budet sozdana v Armenii,” ARKA News Agency, 3 August, 2017, available at [http://arka.am/ru/news/economy/zao_sez_megri_budet_sozdana_v_armenii_/?sphrase_id=16918817].

³⁵ See: “Khorgos International Center of Boundary Cooperation,” available at [<http://www.mcps-khorgos.kz/>].

Conclusion

Armenia and Kazakhstan have a large transport and logistics potential, and, with a correct policy in this area, both countries can become regional hubs in the transport and logistics infrastructure of Eurasia.

If the above-listed prospects, principles, and vectors are realized, this will help eliminate the geopolitical and geo-economic imbalance in bilateral relations between the two states. The constantly changing global situation urges countries to join forces in addressing both regional and international challenges and threats.

Work is underway to intensify trade and economic cooperation. The parties are interested in increasing bilateral trade. Let us note that in 2016 trade between Kazakhstan and Armenia rose by 46%, mainly owing to their participation in the EAEU.³⁶ The two countries should seek new logistics opportunities for mutual trade and implement new leading-edge technologies to make their goods and services more competitive in the Eurasian market.

Overall, relations between Kazakhstan and Armenia are currently developing in the spirit of partnership on a pragmatic and mutually beneficial basis. There are no disagreements between them over matters of bilateral cooperation, and they have similar positions on many regional and global policy issues as allies in the EAEU, CSTO, and CIS.

One of the most attractive transport and logistics projects is the Silk Road, which is being actively implemented by the Beijing authorities. For example, Kazakhstan has already launched a number of government programs somehow connected with the implementation of the Chinese Silk Road initiative. Armenia is also negotiating with the Chinese on its possible participation in this project, which can solve many transportation problems that currently exist in the South Caucasian region.

In view of the growing role of the EAEU and other integration arrangements in the post-Soviet space, economic cooperation between the two countries should be developed through the establishment of joint ventures, as well as through full use of the existing trade and economic preferences provided to Kazakhstan and Armenia to encourage exports of their goods and services to the markets of third countries.

It would make sense, in particular, to use the preferential tariff system GSP+ extended to Armenia by the European Union, under which Armenian producers have an opportunity to export certain goods to the EU duty-free or at reduced rates of duty (about 30% of total exports). GSP+ status has been granted to only 14 countries, including Armenia from among the members of the CIS. This system could be of interest for establishing enterprises in Armenia with subsequent access to the EU market.

Considering that Kazakhstan and Armenia play a certain role in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus and taking into account their participation in common integration arrangements, the two countries should develop joint roadmaps to fill their interstate relations with deeper and more meaningful content.

Let us also note that this topic is under-researched and requires further joint study by Armenian and Kazakhstani researchers.

³⁶ See: "Eurasian Economic Union," available at [<http://www.eaeunion.org/?lang=en>].

UZBEKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY SETS OBJECTIVES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CENTRAL ASIA

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ABSTRACT

Since Uzbekistan had gained independence, it has been pursuing an active foreign policy, laying claim to a leading position in Central Asia and simultaneously developing its relations with Russia and the U.S. However, the lack of progress in the resolution of the key regional problems with Central Asian countries, the exacerbation of differences with Western countries and Russia have led Tashkent to reconsider its foreign policy priorities. As a result, Uzbekistan's main attention was turned to the implementation of trade, economic and transportation projects within Central Asia, limiting cooperation with extra-regional states.

Since the late 2016, Uzbekistan's foreign policy began to undergo significant change. The change was linked to the victory in the elections secured by Shavkat Mirziyoyev, who had set the new national foreign policy priorities. First and foremost, the major changes affected the relations with Central Asian countries. Tashkent's conflicts with its regional neighbors became a thing of the past. Uzbekistan restored bilateral relations with Central Asian countries, initiated the expansion of trade and economic cooperation and the development of regional interaction.

The need for alterations in foreign policy was dictated by the increase in the number of unresolved issues in the relations with Central Asian states, most significantly, in the water energy sphere. For Uzbekistan, which depends heavily on water resources that enter the country via trans-border water courses, it is crucial to resolve water-related issues. The new head of Uzbekistan decided to avoid resolving this problem with a confrontational approach to its regional neighbors. He proposed a number of integrative initiatives aimed at developing interaction mechanisms in the water energy sphere, which would take the interests of all the parties involved into account. In addition, Uzbekistan expanded the interaction in the transportation sphere, which determines the country's prospects in regard to entering external markets.

The changes in Uzbekistan's foreign policy were related to the need for economic development and resolution of regional problems. Ambitious tasks are only attainable if an export-oriented economy is created, and the products of this economy should gain additional opportunities to enter external markets. Uzbekistan's plans to liberalize the foreign trade regime and modify the cur-

rency regulation sphere were linked to the above.

Uzbekistan expanded its interaction with extra-regional actors, establishing a new mode of relations with Russia, the U.S., the EU and China. The new foreign policy course is aimed at resolving economic problems, attracting Western countries' investments and obtaining access to external markets for Uzbekistan-made products. Uzbekistan's ambitious plans have already affected

the political climate in Central Asia. Multilateral meetings of the heads of regional states, discussion of integration initiatives aimed at resolving regional problems testify to the interest invested by all of the region's countries in a new approach to establishing relations. Uzbekistan's foreign policy vector creates additional conditions for resolving regional problems and may lead to the formation of an entirely new balance of power in Central Asia in the future.

KEYWORDS: *Uzbekistan, Central Asia, foreign policy, integration projects, water resources.*

Introduction

Following the disintegration of the U.S.S.R., Uzbekistan's foreign policy was aimed at reinforcing independence, resolution of regional problems, and expansion of contacts with the Western states. One of the key directions of the country's foreign policy was regional cooperation and development of bilateral relations with other Central Asian states. For instance, in 1994 the presidents of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan signed a cooperation agreement. Subsequently, in December 1996, an agreement On Eternal Friendship was signed with Kyrgyzstan. Despite the signing of this agreement, the countries were unable to resolve the arguments that centered around the terms of natural resource supplies or to develop a water issues-related interaction mechanism.¹

Uzbekistan's foreign policy began changing in the mid-1990s. Resolution of regional problems, first and foremost, in the water energy sphere, was complicated by the disparity of the Central Asian countries' interests. It led to the aggravation of relations with neighboring countries. Of all the Central Asian states, Uzbekistan's relations with Turkmenistan were the most convoluted. The countries were unable to negotiate the development of the Kokdumalak oil and gas condensate deposit field, which was located on the border between the two countries. The issue on the ownership of the water bodies that played a significant role in servicing agriculture was not resolved.²

Nonetheless, Uzbekistan attributed great significance to regional integration, seeing it as an additional opportunity to resolve its own problems.³ Uzbekistan aimed to realize its own model of economic transformation, which would reflect its economic potential and the need to establish new economic ties.⁴

In 1994, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan created the Central Asian Union (since 1998—Central Asian Economic Union, Tajikistan joined in the same year). Uzbekistan intended to strengthen its positions in the region and was hoping that the participation in the integrative alliance

¹ See: L. Livitin, *Uzbekistan. Epokha Karimova*, Vagrius, Moscow, 2003, p. 373.

² See: *Postsovetskaya Tsentralnaya Azia. Poteri i obreteniia*, Vostochnaya literatura RAN, Moscow, 1998, pp. 112-113.

³ See: I.A. Karimov, *Uzbekistan po puti uglubleniia ekonomicheskikh reform*, Lenizdat, St. Petersburg, 1995, 246 pp.

⁴ See: I.A. Karimov, *Stabilnost i reformy*, Paleia, Moscow, 1996, pp. 88-89.

will allow to improve the economic situation.⁵ However, many agreements that were concluded within the framework of regional integration were not implemented in reality. The contradictions in the water energy sphere, which the countries were unable to resolve, impeded the process. It could be attributed to the increasing competitiveness among them in the trade/economic cooperation and transportation spheres.⁶

Despite the complicated relations with neighboring countries, the position maintained by the Uzbek leaders stated that Central Asia's development was possible exclusively in case of maintaining regional stability and geopolitical equilibrium. This fully reflected the interests of Uzbekistan, which in the early 1990s supported the idea of regional integration.⁷ It was not accidental that in the Law on the Main Principles of Foreign Policy Activities of the Republic of Uzbekistan,⁸ adopted in December 1996, the role of Central Asia was emphasized as a foreign policy priority. Uzbekistan's vital interests were linked to this region.⁹

A heightened level of attention to regional interaction did not get in the way of Uzbekistan pursuing a policy aimed at establishing political contacts with Western countries. Germany, the U.K., and the U.S. were promising partners. Cooperation with them was considered an opportunity to receive economic assistance and political support, which was important for Uzbekistan to resolve internal problems. In 1994, Uzbekistan joined the NATO Partnership for Peace program, and in 1996, it signed a partnership and cooperation agreement with the EU. Contacts with the U.S., which heeded a lot of attention to Uzbekistan, were actively developing. The June 1996 visit of the Uzbek president to the U.S. had significant influence on the U.S.-Uzbekistan bilateral relations. The visit resulted in the expansion of trade and economic cooperation and attraction of investments in Uzbekistan's economy. The U.S. side was especially interested in the oil and gas and mining industries. The U.S. considered Uzbekistan to be a state through which it could promote its interests in Central Asia and pursue a policy aimed at limiting Russia's influence. Washington believed that the country is one of the key U.S. interests in Central Asia.¹⁰

The competition between Russia and the U.S. in Central Asia, which unfolded after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, allowed to speak of the beginning of the "new great game."¹¹ Unlike the 19th century, when the interests of Russia and the U.K. collided in the Central Asian expanses, modern geopolitical competition is unfolding with an increased number of extra-regional states. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Central Asia was drawn into the focus of attention of the Western states and China, while the interest on the Russian side temporarily subsided. In turn, the countries of the region, including Uzbekistan, searched for balance in the relations with various centers of power.¹²

⁵ See: J. Kakharov, "Regional Cooperation in Central Asia as Seen from Uzbekistan," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 6 (48), 2007, pp. 110-116.

⁶ See: S. Zhiltsov, "Political Processes in Central Asia: Peculiarities, Problems, Prospects," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 17, Issue 1, 2016, pp. 21-29.

⁷ See: I.A. Karimov, *Uzbekistan na poroge XXI veka: ugrozy bezopasnosti, usloviia i garantii progressa*, Uzbekiston, Tashkent, 1997, p. 315.

⁸ See: I.A. Khamedov, M.M. Khakimov, *Mezhdunarodno-pravovye otnosheniia Respubliki Uzbekistan*, World Economy and Diplomacy University, Tashkent, 2003, pp. 42-43.

⁹ See: B. Ergashev, "Politika Uzbekistana v otnoshenii Afganistana v kontekste obespecheniia regionalnoi bezopasnosti v Tsentralnoi Azii," *Rossiia i musulmanskii mir*, No. 5, 2014, pp. 90-95.

¹⁰ See: M.S. Gafarli, A.Ch. Kasaev, *Uzbekskaiia model razvitiia: mir i stabilnost—osnova progressa*, DROFA, Moscow, 2000, pp. 28-29.

¹¹ E. Kavalski, "Coming to Terms with the Complexity of External Agency in Central Asia," *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, No. 2, 2011, pp. 21-29.

¹² See: S.S. Zhiltsov, I.S. Zonn, *Strategiia SShA v Kaspiiskom regione*, Edel-M, Moscow, 2003, 200 pp.

In 1997, Uzbekistan continued to expand the cooperation with Western countries and a number of states of the post-Soviet territory, which advocated the growing rapport with the EU and the U.S. This led to Uzbekistan entering GUAM (Georgia-Ukraine-Azerbaijan-Moldova), and in May 1999—to the refusal to continue its membership in the Collective Security Treaty.

Afghanistan's geographic proximity increased Uzbekistan's interest in resolving the conflict in this country. In 1997, the "6+2" format came into effect under the U.N. auspices (Pakistan, Iran, China, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and the guarantor countries—Russia and the U.S.). The negotiations resulted in the signing of the Tashkent declaration On the Basic Principles of Peaceful Conflict Resolution in Afghanistan. In 2001, Uzbekistan began expanding its cooperation with the American side, offering the U.S. its assistance in conducting the operation in Afghanistan. In October of the same year, a bilateral agreement was concluded with the United States, which received the right to use the air space and the airbase in Khanabad. In March 2002, Uzbekistan and the U.S. signed a Strategic Partnership Declaration.

Despite the progress attained in bilateral U.S.-Uzbekistan relations, after 2003, signs of a cooldown in the cooperation between the two states became apparent. The reason for the change in Tashkent's position was the refusal of the United States to make lease payments for using the Khanabad military base, a lack of increase of U.S. investments in Uzbek economy, as well as the hard correlation established by the U.S. between the provision of assistance to the country and the state of affairs with democratization and observance of human rights. In addition, in 2004, the U.S. did not accede to the country's request to increase economic aid.¹³ As a result, Uzbekistan amended its foreign policy priorities, growing its rapport with Russia and China. First and foremost, the Uzbek side was interested in expanding cooperation in the energy sphere.

Uzbekistan heeded great attention to the development of economic interaction with Afghanistan. Since 2002, the Uzbek side realized a number of transportation projects, having built bridges on the Mazari-Sharif-Kabul section and participated in the construction of a 220-kV 442-km high-voltage power line. The line extended from Kabul towards Uzbekistan. During that period, plans emerged to link the power grids of Uzbekistan and Afghanistan—from the Surkhan substation to the Khairaton substation. In June 2003, Uzbekistan, Iran and Afghanistan signed an agreement on creation of the Trans-Afghan transportation corridor, which stipulated the construction of a motor road network and the development of railroad communications. Subsequently, in 2009-2010, Uzbekistan constructed the 75-km Khairaton-Mazari-Sharif section of the railroad. This section was intended to become a part of a larger-scale transportation project—a 2000-km railroad covering the Mazari-Sharif-Kabul-Kandahar-Herat route.

Tashkent found it very important to expand cooperation with international financial institutions. The latter were considered a potential source of investments, which the Uzbek economy needed so desperately. In 1991-2007, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) took part in projects totaling \$820 million. However, active cooperation with international financial institutions in the first decade of the 21st century has practically ended. The EBRD has declined to implement new projects, criticizing Uzbek authorities for their lack of readiness to reform the economy and the authoritative governance style. After 2007, the bank pursued practically no active operations in Uzbekistan.

In the early 21st century, Uzbekistan furthered its cooperation with Turkmenistan in the energy sphere, since the Turkmenistan-China gas pipeline, built in 2009, passed through Uzbek territory. In addition, in 2011 a discussion began regarding the Central Asia-Near East transportation corridor via the Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran-Oman route.

¹³ See: E.F. Troitskii, "Vneshniaia politika Uzbekistana v 2004-2007 gg.: ot strategicheskogo partnerstva s SShA k soiuznicheskim otnosheniiam s Rossiei," *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, No. 3, 2008, pp. 93-97.

Tashkent's attempts to establish cooperation with Central Asian countries were unsuccessful, since the countries had different foreign policy strategies. Despite the contradictions in the interstate relations with its regional neighbors, in 2012 Uzbekistan has concluded a strategic partnership agreement with Kazakhstan. Tashkent considered Astana a promising and key regional partner. Meanwhile, Uzbekistan continued to avoid any integrative alliances.¹⁴ For instance, the foreign policy concept, approved by the parliament in 2012, stated that the country is adhering to the principle of equidistance from China, Russia and the U.S., and refuses to participate in multilateral integrative alliances. As a result, the Uzbek side pursued a foreign policy in Central Asia based on bilateral agreements. This primarily concerned the hydro-energy sphere, where Tashkent and Dushanbe could not find a compromise solution for the problem. In November 2015, Uzbekistan had approved a Water Power Development Program for 2016-2020. Uzbekistan planned to modernize the old hydroelectric power plants and build new hydroelectric power facilities. In turn, Tajikistan made unilateral decisions related to the completion of the Rogun hydroelectric power plant. In July 2016, Tajikistan signed an agreement with the Italian company Salini Impregilo on the completion of the Rogun power plant. The disparity between the positions of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan exacerbated the problems in the bilateral relations of the two countries.

Generally, prior to President Mirziyoyev's rise to power, the relations between Uzbekistan and other Central Asian states were strained and conflict-ridden. The greatest number of problems emerged in the sphere of using hydropower resources, which became one of the main regional problems.¹⁵

Cardinal Change in Foreign Policy

Shavkat Mirziyoyev's rise to power following the late 2016 elections led to cardinal changes in Uzbekistan's foreign policy. The changes were largely related to the problems that have accumulated in the Uzbek economy, as well as to the need to resolve regional problems and the need for transport communications, the lack of which limited the opportunities of Uzbekistan's economic development. These tasks were reflected in the Action strategy adopted in February 2017. Five priority directions of the country's development up to 2021 were determined. One of them was linked to foreign policy, which was intended to create a belt of stability and good-neighborliness around the country. Meanwhile, projects in the transportation sphere were intended to be the foundation for the development of Uzbekistan's cooperation with states like Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.¹⁶

Judging by Uzbekistan's stated foreign policy goals, it had begun to establish new interstate relations with its regional neighbors. First and foremost, Uzbekistan began to restore its relations with Central Asian countries. The main attention was focused on Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, with whom Uzbekistan intended to implement joint economic and transportation projects. One of Mirziyoyev's first visits was to Turkmenistan in March 2017. As a result, a Strategic Partnership Agreement was signed and a discussion of key cooperation issues ensued. In the course of the return visit of the President of Turkmenistan, which took place in April of the same year, the countries signed a number of bilateral agreements on the development of economic cooperation, expanding interaction in the transportation and oil chemistry spheres, as well as in agriculture. A transportation sphere co-

¹⁴ See: D.B. Malysheva, "Prezidentskie vybory v Uzbekistane i Kazakhstane," *Rossiia i novye gosudarstva Evrazii*, No. 2, 2015, pp. 20-36.

¹⁵ See: St. Blank, "Whither the New Great Game in Central Asia?" *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, No. 3, 2012, pp. 147-160.

¹⁶ [<https://ia-centr.ru/publications/kak-menyaetsya-vneshnyaya-politika-uzbekistana/>], 18 September, 2018.

operation program for 2018-2020 and the scientific and technological cooperation program for 2019-2020 were signed. Regional cooperation prospects and the idea of establishing an Advisory Council of the heads of Central Asian states were discussed.

Subsequent visits of the Uzbek president to Turkmenistan, which occurred in May and September of the same year allowed to elaborate the previously negotiated agreements. The discussion centered mainly on the issues of interaction in the transportation sphere, which holds key significance for the development of Uzbekistan's economy. Tashkent's heightened attention to the transportation sphere was determined by the role of Turkmenistan, wherein lie the shortest transportation routes that allow Uzbekistan to enter external markets.

Uzbekistan has been paying much attention to the energy sphere. In May 2017, the National Oil & Gas Company Uzbekneftegas and the State oil & gas consortium Turkmenneft have signed a memorandum about the participation of the former in conducting prospecting surveys in Turkmenistan. Besides, the Uzbek side has expressed an interest in the implementation of the TAPI gas pipeline (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India). This position was duly appreciated by Ashkhabad, which had attempted to implement this project over the last decade. In addition, the parties discussed the prospects of electric power supplies from Turkmenistan to Uzbekistan, and then further to Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as the Central Asia-Near East transportation corridor project. The agreement on its creation was signed in 2011. Tashkent was interested in creating a transportation corridor that would pass through Turkmenistan to Iran.

Thus, Uzbekistan aimed to initiate projects with neighboring countries that it found to be of particular interest. For Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan's territory is the shortest route for entering the external markets. In order to further develop its relations with Ashkhabad, Uzbekistan has signed an agreement on the junction point of the three states with Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan in November 2017.

In April 2018, the president of Turkmenistan paid an official visit to Uzbekistan. The negotiations focused on the implementation of two projects, namely, the China-Central Asia-Near East transportation corridor and the joint development of deposit fields in the Turkmen section of the Caspian Sea shelf.¹⁷

In March 2017, practically simultaneously with the visit to Turkmenistan, the President of Uzbekistan visited Kazakhstan. A Declaration on Further Deepening of the Strategic Partnership and Strengthening Good-Neighborliness was signed in the course of the visit. In addition, the countries signed agreements on economic cooperation for 2017-2019, as well as on regional economic partnership. Documents related to the military and military technology spheres were also adopted. In March 2018, the countries continued to expand their trade and economic cooperation. Documents on the establishment of joint enterprises in the construction, auto and railroad machinery industries. Much attention has been paid by Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to the transportation sphere. This led to the sides restoring bus communications, which was halted in the 1990s. It led to the countries setting a goal of increasing the volume of trade to \$3 billion in 2018, and to \$5 billion in 2019.¹⁸

Generally, Uzbekistan's negotiations with Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan concerned the issues of trade and economic cooperation, which up until 2016 experienced certain difficulties, the restoration or expansion of transport communications, as well as the energy sphere. The absence of topical border issues in the bilateral relations allowed the countries to positively assess their cooperation prospects.

¹⁷ See: V. Panfilova, "Tashkent i Ashkhabad vzialis za globalnye proekty," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 21 April, 2018.

¹⁸ [<https://www.ritmearasia.org/news--2018-09-13--uzbekistan-i-kazahstan-ot-skrytoj-konkurencii-k-vzaimovыgodno-mu-sotrudnichestvu-38498>], 27 September, 2018.

The Hydropower Factor

The task of normalizing the relations with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan was a more complex task for the President of Uzbekistan, since these countries' interests did not coincide with Uzbekistan's approach to the resolution of the hydropower problems. Uzbekistan was committed to resolving the issues that the country faced in the hydro-energy sphere, however, it was rather difficult. Nonetheless, in March 2018 the President of Uzbekistan visited Tajikistan. Twenty-seven documents related to trade and economic cooperation were signed. The presidents stated their plans to increase the trade volume between the countries to \$1 billion in the coming years, since it amounted to merely \$240 million in 2017. Uzbekistan had stated its readiness to increase the supply of its goods to the Tajik market. In order to promote its products on the external market, Uzbekistan began to actively use the new mechanisms of stimulating trade with Central Asian countries. In particular, intergovernmental agreements with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were concluded in regard to extending credit lines in the amount of \$100 million.¹⁹

In February 2017, air travel was restored between the countries, and border checkpoints began to open. In that same year, new railroad and auto bridges over the Amu Darya were constructed along the Turkmenabad-Farab route.²⁰ These bridges are very important transportation links between Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, and Oman. Uzbekistan restored gas supply to Tajikistan, which was halted in 2012. In addition, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan decided to abolish visas for the citizens of their countries, conducted joint military maneuvers and expanded military and technological cooperation.

The discussion of the problems in the hydro-energy sphere was complicated compared to the rather successful resolution of the trade and economic issues. The Uzbek side considered the possibility of expanding regional cooperation and establishing interaction with its Central Asian neighbors to be one of the potential ways to proceed. However, the countries were unable to reach a compromise, postponing it to the future.

The most acute contradictions between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan were related to the construction of the Rogun hydropower station. Over the course of a long time, Uzbekistan opposed its construction. In its turn, Dushanbe attempted to realize the project both independently, as well as engaging Russian and European capital. Tajikistan invested major hopes in the World Bank, which initially supported Tajikistan's policy. Subsequently, however, World Bank declined to support the project. Nonetheless, this did not affect Tajikistan's plans to build the Rogun hydropower plant. The first block was supposed to be launched into operation in late 2018, and the second one—by mid-2019. Tajikistan intends to supply electric power via Afghanistan to Pakistan and India. The implementation of this case scenario, however, is only possible after the construction of the high-voltage power line, which is a part of the regional CASA-1000 project, as well as other infrastructural projects, is completed. The launch of these facilities is slated for 2022.²¹

Making Uzbekistan one of the shareholders of the Rogun hydropower plant may be one of the options for the resolution of the disputable situation; this would allow the country to participate in its operation. However, even in this case environmental issues would not have been eliminated from the agenda.²² Nonetheless, despite the accumulated contradictions and the disparity with Tajikistan's

¹⁹ [<https://podrobno.uz/cat/economic/tovarooborot-uzbekistana-so-strana/>], 2 October, 2018.

²⁰ [<https://ia-centr.ru/publications/v-tsentralnoy-azii-sozdatud-edinyy-mezhdunarodnyy-transportnyy-khab/>], 23 September, 2018.

²¹ See: V. Panfilova, "U Rogunskoi GES zakonchilis dengi," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 26 June, 2018.

²² [<https://ia-centr.ru/publications/rogun-zarabotaet-uzhe-osenyu-no-ostayutsya-voprosy-i-voznikayut-novyey/>], 26 August, 2018.

position, Uzbekistan managed to take one of the most topical issues in the bilateral relations off the table, namely, that of construction of the Rogun hydropower plant. In March 2018, Shavkat Mirziyoyev stated that Uzbekistan is committed to developing the electrical energy sphere of Tajikistan. The joint statement of the presidents of the two countries stated that “the Uzbek side expressed its readiness to multilaterally consider the possibility of participating in the construction of hydropower facilities in Tajikistan, including the Rogun hydropower plant, among others, with regard to established international norms and standards for the construction of such facilities.”²³

Uzbekistan’s shift away from its stern antagonism towards the construction of the Rogun hydroelectric plant, is explained not only by Tashkent’s revision of its foreign policy vector. The Uzbek side is interested in purchasing Tajik electric power and transfer of energy-intensive enterprises to the neighboring state’s territory. The implementation of this scenario will allow the countries to obtain significant economic benefits.

In June 2018, a meeting of the Uzbek and Tajik presidents took place, where they discussed the prospects of cooperation in the trade and economic spheres. Uzbekistan is interested in increasing the volume of goods delivered to Tajikistan. Subsequently, in August of the same year the president of Tajikistan visited Uzbekistan. The sides signed a Strategic Partnership Agreement.²⁴ In addition, an agreement was reached to construct a hydropower plant on the Tajik part of Zarafshan River.²⁵ However, the construction of the Rogun power plant is the crucial issue for the two countries, an issue in regard to which they are still attempting to find economic and political solutions.

The most poignant issue in the Uzbek-Kyrgyz relations was border demarcation, unlike Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, with whom Uzbekistan had accumulated numerous problems in the trade and economic spheres in the last decades of the 20th century. Although the relations between the two countries were also complicated in the spheres of joint water usage, trade and economic cooperation and transport communications, the issue of enclaves (which were located in adjoining countries, as well as their own in neighboring Central Asian countries) was still one of the critical ones for the region. In December 2017, the countries signed an appropriate agreement, and in August Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan established that Barak, a Kyrgyz enclave located in Uzbekistan, will be transferred under Uzbek authority. In that case, a part of a territory that belongs to one country will cease to exist within another country. In exchange, Kyrgyzstan will receive a part of Uzbek territory.²⁶

The countries of the region are investing certain hopes in international organizations that are engaged in the resolution of hydropower problems. In 2017, the U.N. Regional Center of Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, located in Ashgabad, presented the draft of a convention on water resource distribution in Central Asia.²⁷ The project, directed to the governments of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, discussed the Syr Darya and Amu Darya river basins. These trans-border water flows play a key role in water relations among Central Asian countries. Meanwhile, it is apparent that the intensification of water withdrawal by Afghanistan may lead to an aggravation of water issues and have a negative effect on the economic and political development of Turkmenistan. All in all, the normalization of relations with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in the water sphere was regarded by Uzbekistan through the prism of resolving economic development issues and the attainment of social stability.

²³ V. Panfilova, “Rakhmon i Mirziyoyev pobratilis,” *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 12 March, 2018.

²⁴ [<http://eurasia.expert/emomali-rakhmon-v-tashkente-itogi-strategicheskogo-vizita/>], 15 August, 2018.

²⁵ [<https://ia-centr.ru/publications/tadzhikistan-i-uzbekistan-strategicheskie-partnery/>], 29 September, 2018.

²⁶ [<http://www.fergananews.com/article.php?id=10127>], 2 October, 2018.

²⁷ [https://www.gezitter.org/politic/59293_rekomendatsiya_oon_poresheniyu_vodnogo_voprosa_v_tsentralnoy_azii/ 2017. 19 апреля], 23 September, 2018.

The Role of Extra-Regional States in Uzbekistan's Policy

After 2016, Uzbekistan expanded its cooperation with extra-regional states, namely, Russia, the U.S., the EU and China. The Uzbek side counted on engaging foreign investments in the economy, and joint implementation of infrastructural projects.

Uzbekistan began to increase its cooperation with the U.S., which, in turn, was interested in restoring the C5+1 format (five Central Asian states plus the U.S.). Tashkent considered the U.S. a partner in the resolution of regional problems, and was hoping for investments from American companies. In its turn, the U.S. saw Uzbekistan as a country that can be used to put pressure on China, Russia and the EU. In addition, Washington highly valued the geographical position of Uzbekistan, which had a direct railroad connection to Afghanistan—towards Mazari-Sharif and Khairaton. In May 2018, the Uzbek president paid an official visit to the U.S. In the course of the visit, joint projects estimated at \$4.8 billion were discussed. Besides, Tashkent was keen on training its military personnel in U.S. educational institutions and equipping its army with modern technology.

Uzbekistan has altered the nature of its relations with Russia. In the course of negotiations held in 2017-2018, an agreement was reached on the construction of two nuclear power blocks in Uzbekistan by Russia. They are valued at \$13-14 billion. Russia is expected to provide Tashkent with various options for the financing of these facilities. As a result, Uzbekistan will obtain the opportunity to generate electrical energy that would be sufficient for the countries of the region. Meanwhile, it is still unclear how Uzbek and Tajik electric energy will compete in this case. Besides, Russia must purchase 4 billion cubic meters of Uzbek gas in 2018 for an amount of \$2.5 billion.²⁸

Uzbekistan has expressed a heightened interest in expanding its cooperation with China. As a result, the visits of the Uzbek leader to Moscow and Beijing have concluded with signing investment agreements, valued at \$16 and 20 billion, respectively.²⁹

Having concluded an agreement on trade and economic cooperation with Russia, the U.S. and China, Tashkent was concerned with expanding its interaction with the EU. In 2015 and 2017, the European Union adjusted its strategy in regard to Central Asian states and intends to develop a new document in 2019. A number of Central Asian countries have already signed or are discussing the signing of an agreement with the EU, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan among them. Similar discussions with Uzbekistan are scheduled to begin in late 2018/early 2019, at least in June 2018 the EU held negotiations with Uzbekistan on the draft of a new strategy. All in all, the EU had invested over \$7.6 billion in Uzbekistan.³⁰

Integrative Initiatives

If we do not take the Action strategy adopted in February 2017 into account, the initiatives proposed by the Uzbek leader in the fall of 2017 at the 72nd U.N. General Assembly can be considered the first ones aimed at the rapprochement of Central Asian states. The president of Uzbeki-

²⁸ [<https://www.ritmearasia.org/news--2018-10-03--kak-vyshlo-chno-tashkent-operedil-astanu-v-jadernoj-sdelke-s-rossiej-38839>], 4 October, 2018.

²⁹ See: V. Panfilova, "SShA obeshchaiti Uzbekistanu investitsii v ekonomiku i armiiu," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 15 May, 2018.

³⁰ [<http://www.fergananews.com/article.php?id=9902>], 5 October, 2018.

stan drew attention to the need to develop mutually beneficial connections among neighboring countries.³¹

The pivotal event in the development of Central Asia and the creation of conditions for further implementation of integrative initiatives was the informal summit of the heads of regional states, which was conducted in Astana on 15 March, 2018. The presidents of four Central Asian countries and the speaker of the Turkmen parliament discussed a wide range of issues related to new grounds for interaction.³² Subsequently, in August 2018 the heads of founding states discussed the problems of the Aral Sea. The meeting of the presidents of Central Asian states took place after an almost ten-year break and was aimed at the resolution of the environmental catastrophe that struck the Aral Sea. Uzbekistan takes an active part in resolving this problem, having adopted a state program on improving the conditions and quality of life in the Aral Sea region for 2017-2021 with a budget of \$1.08 billion.³³

Uzbekistan aimed to overcome the geographic isolation of the country and the region in general. That was the purpose of the meeting of the regional countries' representatives in the framework of the *Central Asia in the International Transportation Corridor System: Strategic Perspectives and Unrealized Opportunities* conference, which took place in September 2018. The Uzbek side remarked that the integration of the regional countries' efforts with the goal of speeding up the region's integration in the international transportation corridor system acquires a special significance. Tashkent proposed a number of initiatives that were aimed at expanding Central Asian regional transportation corridors, as well as establishing a Regional Council for Transport Communications of Central Asian Countries, which should become the coordinating structure for the resolution of problems in the transportation sphere. Generally, Uzbekistan is keen on implementing the transportation corridor that will ensure access to the Iranian, Pakistani and Indian railroads. For this reason, Uzbekistan pays special attention to the development of transport communications with Afghanistan, in particular, to the Khairaton–Mazari-Sharif railroad line. It was built by Uzbekistan in Afghanistan. Uzbekistan is currently offering Kabul to build a 750-km railroad line between Mazari-Sharif and Herat. The implementation of this project will provide Uzbekistan with new opportunities to transport the products it manufactures to the sea and, subsequently, to new markets. This issue was discussed in late 2017 during the visit of the President of Iran to Uzbekistan, and in 2018—by the Ministries of Transport.

The Uzbek side is counting on the implementation of the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan-China railroad line construction project, which has been discussed for quite some time. Considering the fact that the project cannot be financed by Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, since its cost amounts to \$2 billion, its implementation will depend on China's position. In turn, in exchange for the financing, Beijing expects to obtain assets in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Central Asian states are attempting to find alternative project financing options. For instance, Turkmenistan was invited to join the project. A corresponding agreement was signed in August 2018 between Bishkek and Ashgabad.³⁴ However, Turkmenistan's financial capabilities are also limited.

Basically, Uzbekistan is focusing on the North-South and West-East transportation projects, the participation in which should provide Uzbek economy with new opportunities. In addition, Uzbekistan is devoting particular attention to promoting tourism. With this goal in mind, the Silk Road International University of Tourism was established in Uzbekistan in 2018. As part of the initiative to

³¹ [<https://ru.sputniknews-uz.com/politics/20180717/8908354/Konsolidatsiya-i-razvitie-ili-Kak-OON-smotrit-nanovuyu-Tsentrlnuyu-Aziyu.html>], 7 October, 2018.

³² See: V. Panfilova, "Tsentrlnooziatskii sammit proidet bez Rossii," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 15 March, 2018.

³³ [<http://theopenasia.net/articles/detail/uzbekskiy-plan-po-spasenyu-arala/>], 23 September, 2018.

³⁴ [<http://www.ca-irnews.com/ru/breaking-news/49254-туркменистан-пригласили-строить-железную-дорогу-от-кнр-до-узбекистана>], 20 September, 2018.

develop tourism in the region, Uzbekistan proposed to cultivate the concept of development of Central Asian tourist hubs.

Ultimately, according to the U.N. estimates, cooperation of Central Asian countries will allow to increase regional GDP twofold.³⁵ Similar evaluations were made by World Bank experts. They have noted that trade, attracting foreign investments, as well as the joint use of communications and transportation infrastructure are especially significant for Central Asian countries.³⁶

Cooperation with International Financial Institutions

In the last year and a half there has been a breakthrough in the relationship between Uzbekistan and international financial institutions. Following Mirziyoyev's rise to power, they have expressed a heightened interest in expanding their cooperation with Uzbekistan. As early as in November 2017, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) opened its office in Uzbekistan, and credit agreements for an amount of \$120 million were signed.³⁷ Ultimately, the EBRD investment portfolio should increase to \$4.6 billion by 2022.

Within the last year, Uzbekistan signed Agreements with international financial institutions and certain foreign banks regarding provision of loans. For instance, Uzbekistan has been actively expanding its cooperation with the European Investment Bank. A partnership agreement was adopted in October 2017, and endorsed by the President of Uzbekistan in January 2018. The funds in the amount of €400 million will be funneled towards irrigation and agricultural projects.³⁸ Subsequently, in July 2018 the National Bank of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Foreign Economic Activity concluded an agreement with the Deutsche Bank for an amount of €500 million. Financing should be directed to the realization of energy and transportation projects, into the agricultural, metallurgical and petrochemical industries.

In May 2018, the World Bank had allocated \$940 million for power efficiency improvement and agricultural development projects. The World Bank is implementing projects in Uzbekistan that amount to a total of \$2.8 billion.³⁹ The China Development Bank intends to allocate \$250 million to develop entrepreneurship. A corresponding agreement was signed on 5 June, 2018. In September of the same year, the EBRD adopted a new strategy for Uzbekistan for the next five years. This decision was made by the EBRD based on the evaluation of reforms being implemented by the country's president since 2017. In turn, the bank is committed to supporting projects related to using alternative power sources, promoting the implementation of transportation and power projects that Uzbekistan will be engaged in.

Conclusion

The activity of Uzbekistan, which in 2017-2018 in fact reset its foreign policy priorities in an entirely different manner, has already significantly affected the development of Central Asia. Tashkent restored the relations with its regional neighbors, which had been stagnant and confrontational

³⁵ [<http://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2018/09/20/transport/>], 26 September, 2018.

³⁶ [<https://nuz.uz/ekonomika-i-finansy/35363-vsemirnyy-bank-proanaliziroval-mezhgosudarstvennye-svyazi-v-regione-centralnoy-azii.html>], 4 October, 2018.

³⁷ [<http://www.fergananews.com/news.php?id=33030>], 26 September, 2018.

³⁸ [<http://www.fergananews.com/news.php?id=30062>], 5 October, 2018.

³⁹ [<http://www.fergananews.com/news.php?id=30348>], 3 October, 2018.

for a significant amount of time. The first steps that aimed to restore these relations have improved regional trade and economic indicators. Central Asia has been declared a priority of Uzbekistan's foreign policy. The latter hopes to significantly improve the situation in the region and establish new political relations. For the time being, the Uzbek side is limiting itself to the initiatives in the transportation sphere, some of which have already been realized and others are intended for the long-term. In any case, Uzbekistan and its neighbors have benefitted from the restoration of transport communications.

Uzbekistan's activity is shaped by the resolution of clearly defined tasks. First and foremost, it is the formation of good neighborly relations with Central Asian countries. Tashkent considers them key partners in the resolution of current economic issues and the creation of a regional security belt. Accordingly, the initiatives proposed by Uzbekistan are aimed at altering the political climate, which should ultimately assist in resolving a wide range of bilateral and regional problems.

The Uzbek president has improved the relations with extra-regional states and international financial institutions. Uzbekistan's foreign policy tasks include the creation of conditions for foreign investments and the expansion of possibilities for Uzbek economy. Shavkat Mirziyoyev's calculations are based on the attraction of additional investments in Uzbek economy, which desperately needs additional funds. Negotiations with the U.S. and the EU, and the signing of political, trade and economic agreements with Russia and China have opened up a new phase in the relations with extra-regional players. A similar situation is observed in the relations with international financial institutions. In response to the Uzbekistan's realignment of its approaches and its readiness to cooperate and implement changes in the economy and the social sphere, financial institutions have resumed their cooperation with Tashkent.

Uzbekistan has initiated the reexamination of the cooperation between the region's countries. Central Asian states are demonstrating new approaches to establishing relations in the region, which differ greatly from those in place since the 1990s.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, despite the positive attitude towards Tashkent's initiatives, its foreign policy activity does evoke a certain apprehension in its regional neighbors: the large-scale economic reforms that Tashkent intends to pursue and the new foreign policy course may potentially exacerbate the fight for regional leadership.⁴¹

In the years to come, much will depend on the successful implementation of multilateral projects and the resolution of regional issues. If the Central Asian states manage to overcome national egotism and find compromise solutions for the most acute regional problems, it will not only strengthen regional stability, but also increase the interest in it on the part of extra-regional states.

Cardinal changes that have occurred in Uzbekistan's foreign policy over the last two years have established a foundation for the formation of a new geopolitical landscape in Central Asia. Adherence to this course may make Uzbekistan a regional leader in the years to come and lead to a deepening of integrative processes in Central Asia.

⁴⁰ See: M. Rakhimov, "Internal and External Dynamics of Regional Cooperation in Central Asia," *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, No. 1. 2010, pp. 95-101.

⁴¹ See: A. Ivanov-Vaiskopf, "V borbe za regionalnoe liderstvo," *Kursiv* (Kazakhstan), 4 October, 2018, pp. 1, 2.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE MOTIVES UNDERLYING FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENTS (THE CASE OF GEORGIA)

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ABSTRACT

In general, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is considered a beneficial factor for local and international economic development. However, it is not always the case. Without taking into account the peculiarities of local economy and MNE motivations, FDI could play a neutral, or in some cases even a negative role in the process of economic development, especially in case of developing countries with small markets. Historically, foreign investments have played a significant role in the economic growth of different countries, by increasing local production and connecting the country to foreign markets.¹ Georgia, as well as the whole world, has long ago recognized the positive

¹ See: J. Kline, *Foreign Investment Strategies in Restructuring Economies: Learning from Corporate Experiences in Chile*, Quorum Books, Westport, CT., 1992.

impacts of FDI on its economy,² especially for an import-dependent country with unstable / unreliable macroeconomic indicators³ and, moreover, with the ambition to become the regional economic hub. It is important to know that FDI has led to significant positive spillover effects on the labor productivity of domestic firms and on the rate of growth of domestic productivity.⁴

² See: V. Charaia, "The Role of Multinational Enterprises' Investments in Emerging Country's Economic Development, Case of Georgia," *International Journal of Economics and Management Engineering*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 2017, pp. 721-724.

³ See: V. Charaia, V. Papava, "Agflation and Other Modifications of Inflation (The Cases of Georgia and its Neighboring Countries)," *Annals of Agrarian Science*, Vol. 16, No. 2, 2018, pp. 201-205.

⁴ See: M. Blomström, A. Kokko, "Multinational Corporations and Spillovers," *Journal of Economic Surveys*, No. 12, 1998.

KEYWORDS: *MNE motivations, FDI, IPD, Scott-Kennel's Model, Georgian economy.*

This work was supported by Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia (SRNSFG) [YS-2016-66207].

Introduction

Georgia is the number 82 on the list of FDI recipients according to 2017 estimates, based on FDI stock of over 15 billion USD. This figure is not particularly impressive, but still, being at the same level as Latvia, an EU member country, and leaving behind Luxemburg and Iceland, it could be seen as a positive achievement to a certain extent. Moreover, in 2017 while the FDI inflows to developing economies remained stable at \$671 billion, seeing no recovery following the 10% drop in 2016,⁵ FDI inflows in Georgia rose by more than 20% to \$1.89 billion, recovering from the drop of 2015.⁶

However, the extent to which MNEs transfer and/or diffuse their firm-specific advantages to local Georgian firms and the whole economy has not been properly studied yet. On the other hand, a lack of information on MNE motivations and activities, as well as a lack of understanding of the local industries' readiness for open competition creates ambiguity in FDI policy-making not only in Georgia, but in the majority of developing countries in the world.

Literature Review

How does the influx of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) influence local Georgian businesses? In general, inward FDIs are treated as a positive impulse for the local economy, but very few concentrate on their impact on local industries, which may vary from very positive to very negative, depending on MNE goals and local economy's readiness for foreign investments. In a positive case scenario, FDI may influence the upgrading of local industry via a spillover effect through indirect and direct linkages, however, we should not forget that FDIs can support the stability of local currencies, which is crucial during financial crises. FDIs also play an active role not only in favor of the local market and consumers, but also in balancing the external trade.⁷

This thesis uses Scott-Kennel's model of local industry upgrading, which provides a micro-level explanation of the Investment Development Path (IDP) by J. Dunning.⁸ The Ownership (O), Location (L) and Internalization (I) paradigm (OLI) determines the IDP by suggesting that the extent to which FDI impacts an economy depends on the nature of the following: O-specific characteristics of the investor; L-specific characteristics of the host country; and the extent to which firms choose to internalize cross-border markets for intermediate products.⁹

The Scott-Kennel's model refers to the interaction between the O-, and I-, advantages of the foreign affiliate, and the L-advantages of the host economy.¹⁰ The process includes four different stages. The model suggests a process of local asset augmentation via linkages with foreign affiliates with better technologies, contacts, financial opportunities, etc. Moreover, foreign affiliates can provide local companies with valuable competition, collaborative agreements, new markets, etc., in other words, integration can lead to the prosperity of both local and foreign companies. However, all

⁵ See: UNCTAD, *World Investment Report*, United Nations, New York, 2018.

⁶ See: Georgian National Statistics Office, available at [http://geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&p_id=2231&lang=eng].

⁷ See: F. Wang, V. Papava, V. Charaia, "China-Georgia Economic Relations in the Context of the Belt and Road Initiative," *Bulletin of the Georgian National Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2018, pp. 153-160.

⁸ See: J. Dunning, "Explaining the International Direct Investment Position of Countries: Towards a Dynamic or Developmental Approach," *Weltwirtschaftliches Archiv*, No. 119, 1981, pp. 30-64.

⁹ See: J. Dunning, *Multinational Enterprises and the Global Economy*, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Wokingham, England, 1993.

¹⁰ See: J. Scott-Kennel, *The Impact of Foreign Direct Investment on New Zealand Industry*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Waikato, New Zealand, 2001.

this could be seen as a potential threat for local companies, which could lead to them being pushed out from the market.

Scott-Kennel's model recognizes three main types of linkages between MNE and local firms based on their potential for local industry upgrading: low (i.e., competitive effects); moderate (i.e., forward and backward linkages); and high quality linkages (i.e., knowledge and collaborative agreements). Based on the model, the stage of linkage development is directly related to the local economy's upgrade capabilities. The size and speed of progression through stages is determined by the specific OLI pattern of the foreign affiliate, and especially the L-specific advantages of the host country.

- Stage One: Entry of the Affiliate (only the affiliate benefits from the upgrading of its O-advantages by employing full internalization).
- Stage Two: Linkage Formation (indirect linkage with local competitors, direct forward linkages with local agents, etc.).
- Stage Three: Diffusion and Transfer of O-specific Advantages (direct transfer and/or indirect diffusion of O-advantages by foreign and local firms).
- Stage Four: Ownership-Advantage Augmentation (local firm and/or foreign affiliate is able to augment its O-advantages as a result of indirect or direct linkages with foreign companies).

While analyzing the positive and negative effects of MNE motivations and the readiness of local firms to cooperate, a key element is to examine the government policy, especially through the prism of a developing country, which is often more willing to please foreign investors than to analyze the impact of foreign investments on its own economy. Georgia has to build its comparative advantages by forming human capital through strong vocational and general education policies.¹¹

MNEs play a key role in the global economy; the effect of FDIs they are pushing to the host economy has attracted a huge attention of both academics and governments.¹² Especially in developed countries, these issues have generated an immense corpus of literature. Specialists' opinions are divided into positive and negative approaches.

However, many writers are considering both the benefits and the costs of FDI simultaneously.¹³ According to Jenkins, three main approaches towards FDI have emerged: developmentalism, economic nationalism and dependency approaches. Developmentalism underlines the positive effects of MNE activities on host economies. While the economic nationalism and dependency approaches are more critical to MNEs and emphasize the negative effects of foreign investments.

The idea that FDI should be seen as an aspect of an industrial economic structure rather than that of international relocation of production factors was initiated by Hymer,¹⁴ and subsequently developed by Kindleberger,¹⁵ Caves,¹⁶ Vernon,¹⁷ and Dunning¹⁸. An approach that suggests a positive

¹¹ See: D. Sikharulidze, V. Kikutadze, "Location Advantage and Georgia's Potential to Attract Foreign Direct Investment," *European Scientific Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 10, 2014.

¹² See: X. Liu, P. Siler, C. Wang, Y. Wei, "Productivity Spillovers from Foreign Direct Investment: Evidence from UK Industry Level Panel Data," *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 3, 2000, pp. 407-424.

¹³ See: R. Jenkins, *Transnational Corporations and Uneven Development: The Internationalization of Capital and the Third World*, Methuen, London, 1987.

¹⁴ See: S.H. Hymer, *The International Operations of National Firms: A Study of Direct Investment*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1960.

¹⁵ See: C. Kindleberger, *American Business Abroad*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CN, 1969.

¹⁶ See: R. Caves, "Industrial Corporations: The Industrial Economics of Foreign Investment," *Economica*, No. 38, 1971, pp. 1-27.

¹⁷ See: R. Vernon, "International Investment and International Trade in the Product Cycle," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, No. 80, 1961, pp. 190-207.

¹⁸ See: J. Dunning, "Explaining the International Direct Investment Position of Countries: Towards a Dynamic or Developmental Approach."

effect of FDI and a vital role of MNEs in the latter are widely supported by famous researchers and even international organizations.

The eclectic theory of international production and the concept of investment development path, proposed by John Dunning, are examples of a pro-FDI curve. Blomström claims that MNEs may influence the productivity and growth of local firms; may change the nature and evolution of concentration; may fix financing, marketing, technological and managerial practices in the industries that they enter.¹⁹

Investment Development Path in Georgia

J. Dunning's IDP model analyzes how patterns in FDI respond to changes in the ownership (O) advantages of domestic firms; the O advantages of MNEs; and the location (L) advantages of countries. The IDP model comprises five stages, when investments influence the local economy in different ways.

- The first stage is the case in the least developed countries, where both inward and outward FDIs are very small. The country lacks O or L advantages and is characterized by a limited domestic market, a lack of infrastructure, a low-skilled labor force, absence of required institutions and government policies.
- Stage two, the inward FDI grows significantly in comparison with the first stage. Some L-specific advantages arise and country's attractiveness to MNEs becomes higher. However, the outward FDI (OFDI) remains limited because of weak O-advantages of domestic firms.
- At stage three, the outward FDI increases as domestic firms become more competitive in comparison with foreign firms. At this stage, the inward FDI could be overcome by the outward FDI.
- At stage four, the Net Operation Income (NOI) position turns positive after continued growth in outward FDI, underscoring the development of O advantages. Finally, at stage five, the expected outcome is an unstable equilibrium around zero. So far, only developed countries managed to achieve this level.

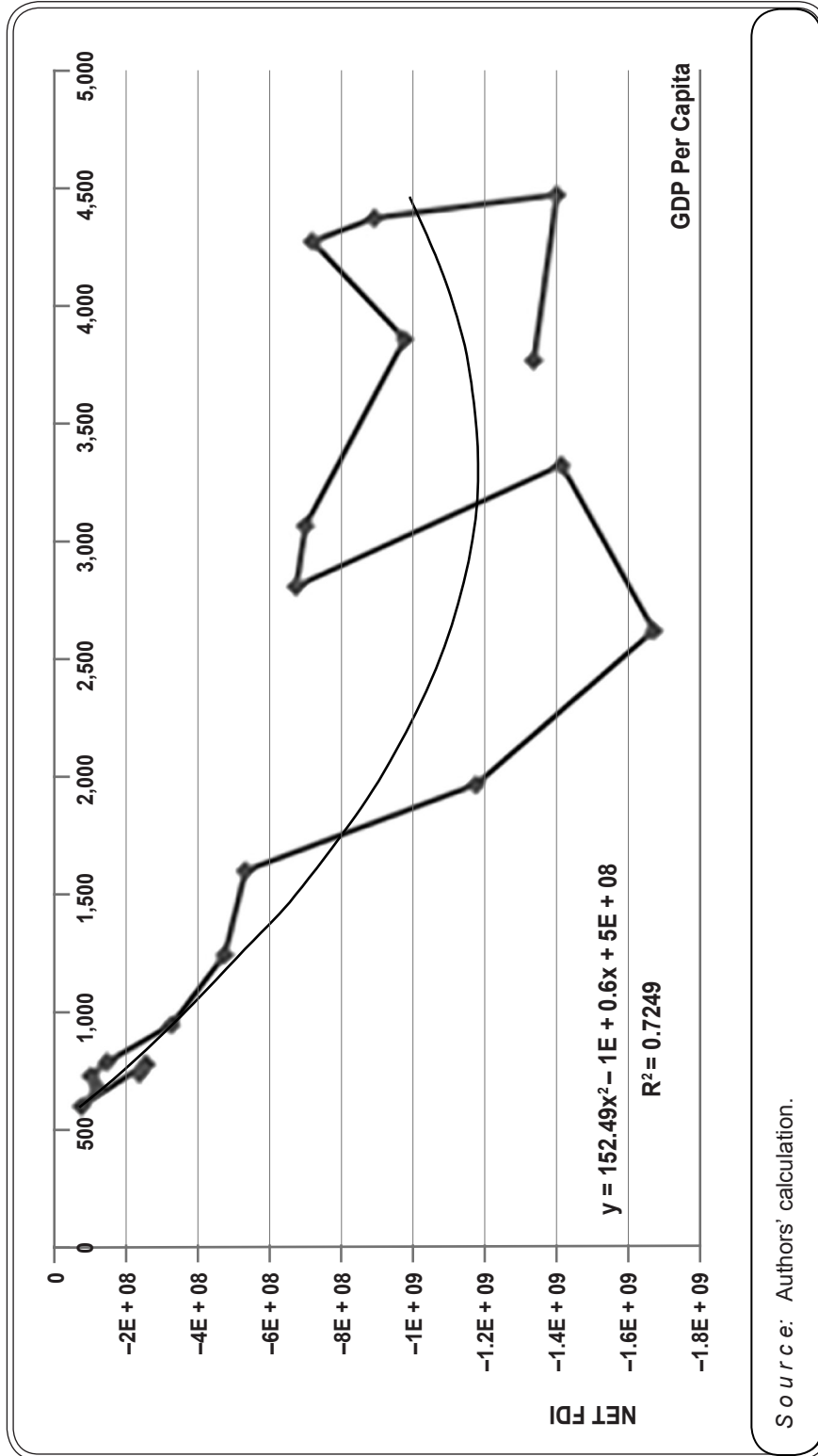
Based on the Georgian IDP model build by the author, it is obvious that the country is still trapped in the second stage of development (see Diagram 1), where Net FDI is still negative and the r^2 for GDP per capita is linked closely to the Net FDI amount. The problem for Georgia at this stage of development is that MNE motivations are mainly oriented towards obtaining the local natural resources and controlling the local markets. The outward FDI is very small (5-6 times less than inward FDI on the average), but the inflows are increasing (almost \$1.9 billion in 2017, 20% more than in 2016) as the size and purchasing power of local markets grow. The local firms have some ownership advantages, but these are not sufficient to generate more FDI outflows than inflows, especially at the time of macroeconomic instability.

This level is also showing that foreign investors are largely motivated by the cheap labor force availability, however it cannot last forever and with the next stages of development this opportunity for foreign affiliates will gradually vanish. On the other hand, Georgia will need to strengthen other aspects of its attractiveness or try to obtain advantages in the fields where it previously had none.

¹⁹ See: M. Blomström, *Foreign Investment and Spillovers: A Study of Technology Transfer to Mexico*, Routledge, London, 1989.

Diagram 1

Investment Development Path of Georgia 1997-2017



Source: Authors' calculation.

Diagram 2

IDP Model with Different Specification (Case of Georgia)

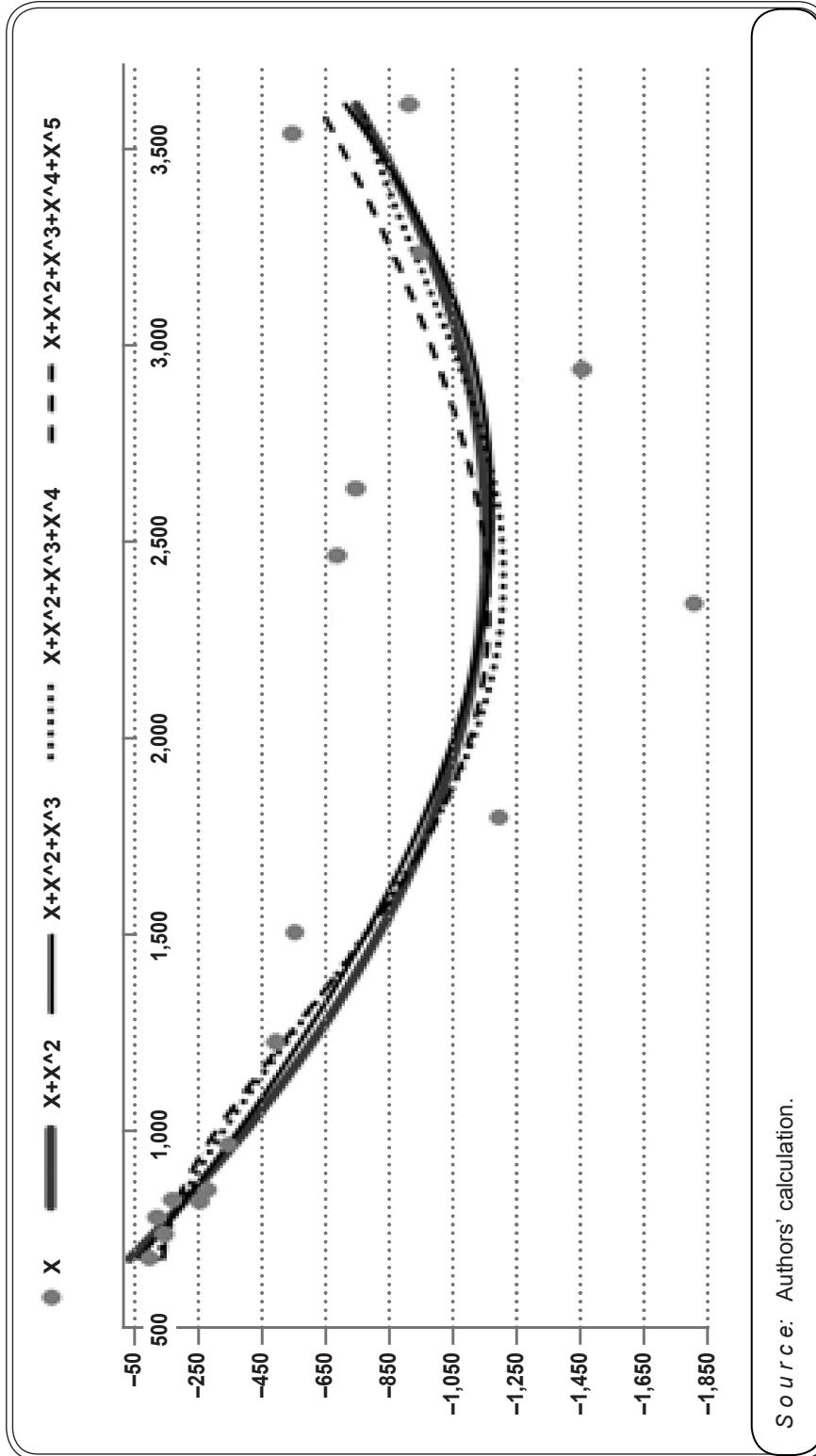


Table 1

Statistic Specifications for IDP in Georgia

C	872.99	0.01	629.92	0.47	-381.14	0.87	-1,205.16	0.69
X	-1.62	0.00	-1.13	0.50	1.57	0.79	4.29	0.69
X^2	0.00033	0.00	0.00006	0.94	-0.00230200000	0.64	-0.0055580000000000	0.69
X^3			0.0000000413	0.76	0.0000086200	0.61	0.0000026400000000	0.75
X^4					-0.00000000010	0.63	-0.0000000005460000	0.80
X^5							0.00000000000000425	0.84
adjusted R ²	0.65		0.63		0.61		0.57	
AIC	14.35		14.46		14.55		14.67	
SIC	14.45		14.65		14.8		14.96	
HQ	14.36		14.48		14.58		14.7	
RRtP	0.57		0.6		0.97		0.33	
JB prob.	0.6		0.68		0.88		0.85	

The graphic analysis shows (see Diagram 2 on p. 77) that out of the different polynomial functions, the square function is the most suitable in our case, it is the best one to show the relation between the variables. This could be proven with the following:

- Square function coefficient is important, while with other models the coefficient is unimportant;
- Adjusted R² is better in the first model than in the rest;
- According to the Akaike information criterion (AIC), Schwarz information criterion (SIC) and Hannan-Quinn information criterion (HQ) they reach the minimum level under the square function, which shows that this function represents the relation better than any other;
- Ramsey RESET-test Probability shows that model specification is approved even for a 57% importance level;
- Jarque-Bera probability test is also positive (see Table 1).

Scott-Kennel’s Model

To meet the requirements of the research goals, the well-known Scott-Kennel’s model of local industry upgrading was used, which was based on the Georgian case and which applied the framework of the IDP at the micro level. Data were collected by self-administered questionnaires, composed according to Scott-Kennel’s model. Questionnaires lasted approximately 60 minute each, in Georgian, English or Russian languages according to the preferences of respondent. Questionnaires had different sections, where respondents evaluated the business environment, the issue of competitiveness, linkage formation, innovation implementation and other important aspects of Georgian economy and MNE’s influence on it. The study was carried out among twenty companies from the list of top 200 foreign investor companies in Georgia.

Table 2

Obstacles to Doing Business in Georgia

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Macroeconomic instability (inflation, exchange rate, etc.)	3	5	4.3	0.71
Skills and Education of available workers	2	5	4.2	0.89
Cost of Financing (interest rate)	2	5	4.1	0.87
Political Instability	1	4	3.6	0.81
Justice Inefficiency	1	4	3.4	0.78
Innovation and Sophistication	0	5	3.2	1.26
Infrastructure	2	5	2.5	0.85
Access to Land	0	2	1.6	0.37
Labor Regulations	0	5	1.8	1.45
Crime, theft, and disorder	0	1	0.4	0.21

Macroeconomic Instability was named the biggest obstacle (see Table 2). Unfortunately for the Georgian economy and investors in particular, exchange rate instability has become the biggest problem, since it made planning the budget, prices, salaries, logistics, etc. problematic. Since the devaluation process has been started in late 2014, the Georgian Lari has been devaluated by around 60% to 2.6 Gel per USD, but even greater problems come from the main trading partners devaluating their local currencies by 2, 3 and even more times (Turkey, Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, etc.).

The second biggest problem named was **Skills and Education of Available Workers**. Despite the fact that this problem had been known for years, no significant improvement has been observed in this direction so far. By the way, this issue is declared one of the most significant obstacles to doing business in Georgia, according to different international organizations and international rankings. The roots of this problem are hidden deep in the educational system and the Georgian mentality. The fame of older-generation scientists still exists in Georgia, but at the same time qualification and possibilities of the majority of those scientists today are below the world average. Thus, while holding the leading positions at different universities, the majority of older-generation scientists lack knowledge and experience in modern science trends and are not ready to transmit the power into the hands of younger, Western-educated generation, not even ready to cooperate with them.

On the other hand, one of the lowest mean scores was attributed to the **crime level**, which testifies to Georgia being one of the safest places to do business in terms of the low criminal level and high level of trust in police.

The second part of the questionnaire, which was related to opportunities, was also interesting (see table 3). Among the answers to the question of which aspects of FDI policy positively influence the way your firm operates in Georgia, one of the highest mean scores was allotted to the **Easiness of Interaction with Governmental Bodies**.

Low Corruption and **Tax Rates** were also noted as some of the main advantages of doing business in Georgia. According to Transparency international, Georgia is in the 46 place among the average European countries according to the corruption parameter, which is a positive result. The tax system in Georgia has been simplified, probably to the maximum possible extent, allowing investors to reinvest without paying income tax, with payments required only when distributing the income.

Table 3

Advantages of Doing Business in Georgia

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Ease and Speed of interaction with the governmental bodies	3	5	4.4	0.73
Ease and Speed of different procedures	3	5	4.2	0.71
Business Licensing and Operating Permits	3	5	4.1	0.70
Tax Rates	2	5	3.9	0.84
Labor Force	0	5	3.8	1.34
Corruption	1	4	3.5	0.75
Access to Financing	0	4	3.3	1.17
Customs and Trade Regulations	0	5	3.0	1.19

Customs and Trade Regulations are an important aspect for the companies aiming to settle down in Georgia with the aim of operating in the whole region. For instance, this particular reason was crucial for Toyota. Free trade agreements with EU and China simultaneously make Georgia one of the most unique countries in the world, which could stimulate not only Georgia, but also EU and Chinese economies as well.²⁰

Labor force in general is an obstacle to doing business in Georgia according to many investors; however, in this case, many Local Market-seeking MNEs were quite satisfied with it. For many MNEs it was important to find motivated youngsters with knowledge of foreign languages who are ready to work for a lower salary than in developing countries, or even start with an internship, who were easy to find in Georgia.

Table 4

MNE Linkages with Local Affiliates

	YES	NO
Have resources transferred to the local firms been unique?	10	90
Have your firm assisted other Georgian firms in improving their products or services?	85	15
Have your firm's operations in Georgia led to changes?	95	5

When it comes to the real influence of foreign MNEs on the local Georgian economy, we see that 85 percent of respondents claim that they have assisted local firms in improving their product or service to different level. 95 percent of respondents claimed that their operations in the country have instigated a change in the economy. However, only 10% of resources transferred to local firms were unique (see table 4).

Conclusion

Influence of MNE motivations in Georgia is not identical in all fields of the economy. MNEs are largely motivated by the cheap labor force availability, however it cannot last forever and in the next stages of development this opportunity for foreign affiliates will gradually vanish. On the other hand, Georgia will need to strengthen other aspects of its attractiveness or try to obtain advantages in the fields where it previously had none.

Based on the Georgian IDP model built by the author, it is obvious that the country is still trapped in the second stage of development, where Net FDI is still negative and the r^2 for GDP per capita is very closely linked with the Net FDI amount. At this stage of development, we can state that MNE motivations are mainly oriented towards obtaining local natural resources and controlling the local market, the outward FDI is very small (5-6 times less than inward FDI on the average), but the inflows are increasing (almost \$1.9 billion in 2017, 20% more than in 2016) as the size and purchasing power of local markets grow. The local firms have some ownership advantages but these are not sufficient to generate more FDI outflows than inflows, especially at a time of macroeconomic instability.

²⁰ See: V. Papava, V. Charaia, "Belt and Road Initiative: Implications for Georgia and China-Georgia Economic Relations," *China International Studies*, No. 67, 2017, pp. 122-139.

Scott-Kennel's model used for research demonstrates that the biggest obstacles for doing business in Georgia are: Macroeconomic Instability (inflation, exchange rate, etc.), Skills and Education of available workers, and Cost of Financing (interest rate). On the other hand, the most positive factors for doing business in Georgia are: Ease and Speed of interaction with governmental bodies, Ease and Speed of different procedures, Business Licensing and Operating Permits. We believe that the second stage of IDP is clearly identifying the opportunities and MNE motivations combination in Georgia.

RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM

POLITICAL SCIENCE AND SOCIOLOGY ON THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN THE AXIOLOGICAL AND MEANINGFUL SPACE OF KAZAKHSTAN SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

The article is based on the latest sociological data and deals with the problem of axiological comprehension of the phenomenon of religiosity in Kazakhstan as part of a political science discourse.

The authors have traced down the evolution of the content and volumes of religiosity in Kazakhstan. They studied varied meaningful contents and the way they affect political decision-making in the sphere of spiritual development of society in the conditions of social, economic and political transformations in Kazakhstan. They have assessed the importance of global trends of civilizational development in the time of international turbulence and their importance for socialization at the individual and collective levels. Interpretation of sociological data by political science identifies constructive and destructive roles of religion in the public

consciousness of the Kazakhstan citizens. The authors have studied the correlation between religiosity, quasi-religiosity and secularity in the makeup of Kazakhstan society as we know it today. They have classified the trends obvious in the development of religiosity in Kazakhstan and addressed the problem of an adequate state policy in the religious sphere. The attitude of the Kazakhstan citizens to religious radicalization and the ways and means of its suppression, as well as the issue of applied importance have been discussed.

On the whole, the present article is a comprehensive discussion in terms of sociology and political science of the problem of great social importance for Kazakhstan and its Central Asian neighbors coping with more or less similar problems of interaction between the state and religion.

KEYWORDS: *religiosity, secularity, quasi-religiosity, religious policy of the state, religious radicalization, sham religiosity, religious conversion, modernization of mentality, ethno-confessional identity, political risks.*

Introduction

Any expert wishing to assess the development of Kazakhstan from the first day of its independence will invariably pay attention to political and economic aspects of sovereignty and will not miss the axiological matrix of the consciousness of Kazakhstan citizens. The country is struggling through fairly complicated social transformations: having liberated itself from the burden of axiological, meaningful and extremely ideologized patterns of the Soviet past, Kazakhstan is drawn into a new spiritual reality, another combination of advantages and disadvantages. Public consciousness is modernizing. President Nursultan Nazarbayev has written about this in his widely read article “A Glance into the Future: Modernization of Public Consciousness” published on 12 April, 2018.¹

In the 1990s, destatization, different social stratification, new vectors of social mobility and loss of the old ideological stereotypes confronted a fairly large number of Kazakhstanis with the need to make an existential choice and revise what seemed like meaningful strategies in the past. Many of

¹ See: N. Nazarbayev, “Vzgliad v budushchee: modernizatsia obshchestvennogo soznania,” available at [http://www.akorda.kz/ru/events/akorda_news/press_conferences/statya-glavy-gosudarstva-vzglyad-v-budushchee-modernizaciya-obshchestvennogo-soznaniya].

them found themselves at a crossroads: they had to look for different occupations; they changed their lifestyle and abandoned the old axiological system. The realization of the sovereign “path of Kazakhstan” and the efforts to outline its trajectory meant that identities (including cultural) and the ideas about the world required changes.

A new generation was born in an independent state; they matured amid new globalization trends and the transformed axiological context of life as a whole. Socialization of the younger generation and re-socialization of the middle-aged and senior Kazakhstanis coincided with the period of ideological turbulence of sorts. Later, de-ideologization was pushed aside for the sake of a paradigm that would unite traditions and ideas as axiologically important meanings. Today, Kazakhstan, and the entire post-Soviet space for that matter, is living through a new stage of efforts to finally formulate a new model of national identity, to identify the national idea and realize it, to fully tap historical memory and revive spirituality. Today, societies with the Soviet experience of state atheism behind them revived their interest in religious canons and socialization potentials. As a form of public consciousness, religion is moving towards a very important place in the new system of social relationships. Under the pressure of mercantilism of liberal economics people start searching for lofty spiritual principles. That is precisely what a religious tradition can offer. Amid global rivalry, however, Kazakhstan has found itself in the center of strong external pressure in the political and economic spheres, as well as in the field of ideological preferences and the nation’s new spiritual image.

Having formulated the ambitious task of joining the world’s most developed countries, Kazakhstan intends to move beyond economy towards a spiritual immunity of its citizens, the nation’s intellectual level and security, which is especially important today, when terrorism, religiously motivated terrorism included, has become a real threat that requires prompt and adequate responses. This is a challenging task in the new and much more varied realities created by the changed lifestyle and the fundamentally new social, group and individual identities.

An interest in religion caused a spiritual renaissance, an important feature of the post-Soviet period. The old ideological constructs disappeared leaving society in a search of new ideas and fresh approaches. Religious and quasi-religious organizations play a significant role in self-identification practices. This explains why religious identification has come to the fore when other identities required cardinal revision.

Today, the situation is highly ambiguous since the state does not know what to expect from the institute of religion: there is religious variety inherited from the past, intentionally created variety, intervention of quasi-religious interests and groups that may turn religion into a political instrument. This means that the state needs an optimal religious policy since the separation of religion from the state is too primitive to be treated as the only means and methods of tuning up the relations between the individual and society, state institutions, religious canons and associations. Max Weber pointed out in his time that the state “claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of violence.”² This means that it cannot remain indifferent to the widening influence of religious values on society; their growing political influence on the masses, their interpretation of meanings of human life and of the model of social fairness.

The Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan defines it as a secular state that guarantees its citizens freedom of conscience. In a secular state, believers and unbelievers have equal rights irrespective of their confessional preferences. Today, however, it has become clear that the concept of a secular state should be further clarified, while the dividing line between it and the sphere of the religious should be fine-tuned. In recent years, many countries have already become aware of the need to separate the secular from the religious in human minds and human behavior. Indeed, balance and a *contrat social* of sorts in this highly sensitive sphere have come to the fore when it became abso-

² From Max Weber: *Essays in Sociology*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1946.

lutely necessary to formulate the concept of the secular and draw the line between it and the religious sphere.

Sustainable development of any state and reproduction of social stability is possible only if the religious situation is taken into account; if it is studied, analyzed and its trends identified. Inadequate knowledge of religious trends and tendencies makes religiosity a factor of social and political risks, cripples manageability of social processes; unpredictable developments cannot be ruled out if the religious factor is used as an instrument of political influence.

Today, religious identity in any society (Kazakhstan society being no exception) means not only and not so much a spiritual quest; it has more specific motivations suggested by the lifestyle, the channels and means of socialization preferred by any given society (upbringing, education, professional training, labor activity) and reproduction of the feeling of belonging.

Quasi-religious institutions are actively involved in socialization: they promote religious life style, education and organization of labor; they help build up families and recruit people for protest actions. Globalization affects, to a certain extent, the civil identity of Kazakhstanis by drawing them into communities with no roots in our ethno-confessional sub-culture.

Natural resources and cultural, territorial and other specifics have pushed Kazakhstan into the very center of global interests. Globalization affects the religious identity of the country's population and promotes religious ideologies. This means that Kazakhstan cannot escape quasi-religions that spread far and wide and destroy traditional, that is, inherited from the past, ethno-confessional identities.

The challenge is growing since Kazakhstan has not yet arrived at a scientifically substantiated model of a secular state. The decisions related to legal regulation of religious communities are criticized from abroad, while the sociology of religiosity has not yet been completely institutionalized. This interferes with efficient cooperation between the state and religious organizations, creates a no-man's-land where quasi-religious identification of at least part of the country's population and religiously motivated extremism are flourishing. The state should tune in to the feelings of the believers and demonstrate efficiency when it comes to the form and content of national public consciousness and create a positive, optimistic and constructive picture of the world in people's minds.

What is Behind the Worldview Pluralism in Kazakhstan?

Very much like elsewhere in post-Soviet space, consolidation of sovereignty in Kazakhstan was accompanied by an intensified religious life and a greater role of the religious factor. Political motivations, rather than revived religiosity, were behind the religious revival and an interest in religion. Today, religion looks more like a political instrument and a geopolitical resource than anything else. Kazakhstan is no exception in this respect. There are conditions and factors practically unrelated to the religious renaissance; much has been done to plant quasi-religious practices on the Kazakh soil, practices that borrow religious makeup to exploit its positive image. Their main aim is social destabilization and destruction.

As a Soviet republic, Kazakhstan was a poly-confessional and poly-ethnic territory, hence the religious variety we observe today. From the 1990s onward, religious migrants attracted by the liberal legislation flocked to Kazakhstan in considerable numbers. As of April 2017 (the latest statistical information supplied by the Committee for Religious Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan), there were 3,679 registered religious associations in the country that represented 18 confessions; about 500

foreign missionaries worked in Kazakhstan.³ Given an open cultural space, a worldview variety of Kazakhstan offers a wide range of religious self-identities.

Today, religion is gradually appropriating some of the social (or even obviously political) statuses and functions found in the sphere of secular institutions—not only worldviews, but also labor socialization. Religious and quasi-religious organizations (pyramids and neo-cults) offer professional training and jobs; they set up small work collectives and enclaves in the form of vast markets trading in construction materials, spare parts, halal products and services that employ and thus unite co-religionists.

Religious organizations and groups of all sorts appeared in great numbers during the first years of independence: it was during that period that the country acquired religious movements based on Islam, evangelicalism, new religious movements (NRM), network marketing, etc. As could be expected, a much wider choice of confessions and faiths made religious conversion much more popular: people move from lack of faith to faith, they change faiths or retreat from faith to atheism. Inside the religious sphere, the dynamics is just as active.

There are less obvious or even latent processes related to functioning religiosity. In order to be detected, they require adequate indicators, scholarly studies and monitoring, expert and public assessments, etc.

In Kazakhstan, religiosity betrays itself in different types and projections: confessional and extra-confessional, traditional and new, obvious and latent; it can be constructive or destructive; it might contradict the Constitutional and the legal norms, it might undermine the axiological and meaningful content of social life; it can be authentic where its religious content is concerned or quasi-religious, exploiting the positive image of religion to shelter whatever is going behind the screen.

Trends of Religiosity: An Expert Opinion

The worldview atmosphere in a sovereign country changes a lot, for instance, along *the secular/religiosity, traditional religiosity/new religiosity, genuine religiosity/quasi-religiosity* demarcation lines.

New trends have appeared:

- (a) a greater role of traditional religions in the context of which a religious sub-culture is being formed. It follows customs and traditions that help overcome religious ignorance;
- (b) blending of religious and folk culture;
- (c) stronger everyday religiosity;
- (d) increased quasi-religiosity;
- (e) functioning latent religiosity;
- (f) growing religiously motivated extremism;
- (g) replacement of secular institutions with religious organizations when it comes to certain functions of socialization, such as the treatment of alcoholism and drug dependence, employment, structuring the meaning of life, etc.

³ See: T. Nurseitova, “V Kazakhstane deystvuet bole 3,600 religioznykh ob’edineniy, predstavliaiushchikh 18 konfessiy,” zakon.kz, available at [<https://www.zakon.kz/4871654-v-kazakhstane-deystvuet-bolee-3600.html>].

Expert assessments are dominated by the scale of positive measuring of the growing role of religion in society. It is said that frequently the process of return to religion takes vulgar forms, leads to conservation and even archaization of certain social groups. This happens because

- people find it easier to copy the lifestyle and interpret religion merely as an instruction for a “correct” lifestyle, even if it is rooted in hoary antiquity and does not, therefore, suit the realities of the 21st century;
- the volume of “sham” or even “false” religiosity typical of the so-called nominal groups of the faithful who are accepted at face value, but who are not carriers of religious consciousness is very large.

There are fears of possible effects of religious renaissance and Kazakhstanis’ growing interest in religion. On the one hand, it demonstrates that society as a whole and youth in particular are developing a steadily increasing interest in spiritual development, moral ideals, religious values and religious way of life. On the other, there are latent religiously motivated forms of religiosity, namely, terrorism and extremism. They negatively affect the political and religious context in certain regions bordering Kazakhstan and have already penetrated the country and increased the risks. Indeed, these forms of religiosity can exploit the authority of any religion for destructive purposes as an instrument of manipulating the minds of religiously ignorant people.

The following factors stir up concerns about the future of religion-related developments:

- Low religious awareness of the nation, the younger generation in particular;
- Vague and mostly devalued traditional values;
- Underestimation by common people of the threats of religiously motivated extremism;
- Weak immunity to destructive/extremist religious ideologies;
- The growing number of non-traditional religions and communities that try to pass for religious associations;
- Communities preaching religious extremist views and radical ideology thus threatening stability, inter-ethnic and inter-confessional harmony in Kazakhstan;
- Attempts of radical communities and non-traditional religious trends to instigate religious intolerance and xenophobia by playing confessions against one another;
- Global instability and much stronger influence of geopolitical instability closer to home, in Central Asia.

There is a more or less common opinion that the political, economic and social situation and the crisis of the age of transformations warped the ideological, moral and axiological content and deformed ideals.

New communication technologies changed the targets of ideological impact, the canals through which ideology was transferred and means and methods of brainwashing. This added weight to the efforts to identify spiritual landmarks, on the one hand, and challenged spiritual security of society and the state, on the other.

Religious Identifications: Sociological Measurement

There are no statistics of religiosity in Kazakhstan, which adds special importance to its sociological measurement. As distinct from the sociology of religion with institutional traditions and de-

veloped disciplinary organization in American, European and post-Soviet (Russian, Belorussian) science, in Kazakhstan sociology of religion has not yet been firmly rooted.

Everything that we have offered to our readers in this article, namely, expert assessments, data of massive polls and focus-groups, was obtained through sociological measuring carried out by the Institute of Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies, Committee for Science at the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Two thousand and five hundred of the two-step quota sampling represents 14 regions and the megalopolises of Astana and Almaty. We used the conclusions supplied by experts from Kazakhstan who study the local religious situation, work in scientific and educational (universities) organizations and state structures and are engaged in tuning up the relationships between the state and religious associations.

Sociological measurement of religiosity allowed us to outline its model.

Religious identity affects, to a great extent, the lifestyle of an increasingly greater number of Kazakhstanis; we have identified the three main trends of religious conversion:

- (1) Islamization of potentially Muslim or traditionally non-Muslim population;
- (2) evangelization of the potentially Muslim population; and
- (3) involvement of different population groups (with the potentially determined ethnocultural, including traditional confessional, statuses) in neo-orientalist cults and practices.

The country's adult population is more and more clearly identifying itself with religion. The classical pattern of religious self-identification "confirmed believer-a believer rather than an unbeliever-undecided-an unbeliever rather than a believer-confirmed unbeliever" applied to the religious situation in Kazakhstan reveals that the share of confirmed believers is not bigger than 15 to 17%; believers rather than unbelievers, about 30 to 40%, undecided, about 18%; unbelievers rather than believers, 12%, confirmed unbelievers, 13%. About 55% speak of themselves as believers, yet do not follow religious commandments; about one-fifth of the country's population are atheists; between 5 and 11% do not question their religious convictions, while between 7 and 13% are involved in religious conversion.

Up to 13% deliberately demonstrate indifference to religious self-identification; up to 62.5% say that their religious self-identification remained the same: "I have not changed my attitude to religion, I was and still remain a believer" (this is a nominal figure, unrelated to real believers. In the early 2000s, 82.5% of the respondents spoke of themselves as nominal believers). Out of 62.5% of those who spoke of themselves as believers, only 16.8% followed all religious norms and instructions in everyday life; 13% regularly make donations of their own free will to their religious organizations; 11.5% fast regularly; 10.9% pray according to the rules; 10.6% follow religious norms at their workplaces and educational establishments; 8% regularly go to church or mosque; 4.4% read religious literature according to instructions.

The Phenomenon of "Sham Religiosity" and Social Religiosity

In Kazakhstan, perception and interpretation of religiosity is highly distinctive. Here are some eloquent figures: out of 82% of those who speak of themselves as believers 36% never pray; 27.3% pray very rarely; 23.6%, rarely, only 10.9% pray as prescribed.

The small share (8%) of those who regularly attend services likewise speaks volumes; 70.1% observe religious fast: 26.75% of them fast regularly; 26%, rarely and 27.4%, very rarely, while 18.3% never observe religious fasts.

A large share (47.5%) never reads religious literature; 63% are not interested in religion-related TV and radio programs; 65% never pray; 53% never fast; 44.9% do not follow religious prescriptions in everyday life and do not take part in religious rites.

The share of those who regularly and voluntarily donate to religious organizations is highly illustrative: 13% do it regularly; 26.4%—rarely, and 28.8% very rarely.

There are several sub-groups in the adult population group that speaks of itself as faithful: real believers, passive believers, sham believers. There is also the so-called sham religiosity. Kazakhstan is a country of social, rather than spiritual religiosity. Social religiosity means that people follow an approved and fashionable social trend related to religion, but are not fully aware of their inner spiritual requirements (in different contexts positive replies do not reach even 1%). This means that the number of those who speak of themselves as believers is growing at the expense of those who respond to the external, rather than internal, factors.

Spiritual religiosity means a profound awareness of unity with God and a religious brotherhood. These people cherish religion as the ultimate and incontestable value, while the essence of faith becomes obvious in its modalities. In Kazakhstan, the level of spiritual (or true) religiosity is much lower than that of declared religiosity; it did not increase even when atheism has been pushed aside.

The factor and situational analysis of the gradually changing religiosity reveals that mass consciousness does not fully comprehend the phenomenon of religious faith; there are superficial interpretations of religion and distorted identifications in the spiritual sphere. A large number of respondents who speak of themselves as faithful while remaining totally ignorant of the doctrines, religious practices and the entire lifestyle within a religion as a system of ideas rooted in spiritual experience, cultural matrix, spiritual guidance, etc. creates a risk of an extensive spread of quasi-religiosity.

Religious Conversions and Their Assessments by Mass Consciousness

In recent years, religious conversions among those who spoke of themselves as believers reached 12.5%; from 8 to 13% of respondents involved in religious quest

- assumed a religious perception of the world, that is, became believers (6%-8%);
- abandoned religious ideas to become an atheist (up to 3%);
- converted from one confession to another (2%-4%).

The problem of faith/atheism remains absolutely alien to 12.5%-14.5%. In the last few years, the dynamics of religious conversion and its vectors, however, have remained the same. This means that religious conversion is not a chance phenomenon.

Conversion, its course and results involves not only the converts themselves, but also those around them (their families, close friends and colleagues). Kazakhstanis demonstrate religious tolerance. The share of those who would object to religious conversion of relatives (45.8%) points to the share of those who consistently support traditional values; 17.3% will remain indifferent to a religious conversion of their relatives; 27.4% will respect their choice; 3.9% changed their faiths.

The range of responses to conversion among the closest relatives is fairly wide: it stretches from the readiness to fight till the end against it and a refusal to accept their choice to the readiness to unconditionally accept it as a realized constitutional right. We obtained these answers from people of different ages, social statuses and confessions.

An impact of the religious factor on identification through socialization in non-traditional communities is far from unambiguous: religious ideas affect, in very different ways, the social situation,

family and civil status, which finally deprives society of its influence on cultural and, subsequently, political processes.

In the social, cultural and economic context, Kazakhstanis turn to religion (frequently to less frequently or even rarely) in hard existential situations; for socialization and re-socialization purposes; when they need spiritual pillars, when they merely follow fashion or when religion helps resolve psychological collisions at the individual/group level.

Mass consciousness very differently assesses the shift from lack of faith to faith, from one religion to another and from faith to lack of faith.

The shift from lack of faith to faith is assessed in a highly positive manner (74.8%); 9.8% insist that these shifts do not change much in individual lives; 4.6% consider it as a negative act, while 10.8% are undecided.

Religious conversion invites very different assessments: 15.8% of the respondents are positive; 38.9% very negative; 23.9% believe that it does not affect personal lives to any significant extent; 21.4% remain undecided.

On the whole, there is a firm conviction in Kazakhstan that faith is better than its absence, which explains why common people are more positive about new converts and are fairly negative about the shift from faith to atheism.

Ethnocultural Predestination to the Choice of Religion

A world outlook that corresponds to ethnocultural roots is the main or even dominant trend when it comes to the choice of religion. This strengthens the traditional ethno-confessional identity related to the Hanafi madhhab, Russian Orthodoxy, as well as the faiths of the people who live in Kazakhstan. Comparative analysis (2013 and 2016) points to the following trends:

- The choice of traditional ethnocultural religious self-identification as an unavoidable paradigm of world outlook is not only consistent but also tends to modest growth—from 55.8% to 64.8%;
- There is a statistically insignificant, yet de facto noticeable number (from 7.6% to 8.4%) of those who opt for religious identification outside their ethnocultural traditions;
- The share of those who can potentially be drawn into religious conversion is registered within the 22.5%-30% range.

Those who correlate religious identity and sociocultural tradition constitute 64.8%; 19.5% (one-fifth of the respondents) believe that there is no need for all believers living in Kazakhstan to follow the religions prescribed by its political and cultural past. Over one-third of the adult population (35.2%) can be regarded as potential and real supporters of nontraditional faiths and organizations or potential converts.

Trends and Intensity of Religious Conversion

An assessment of the changes unfolding on the religious field of Kazakhstan through the eyes of the respondents is reconstructed as following:

- Conversion of unbelievers to traditional Islam of Hanafi madhhab is intensive, 35%;
- Conversion from traditional to nontraditional Islam is less intensive—30.1%;
- A fairly large number (19.8%) of people fell into the trap of corporations preaching sham religious ideologies (trade nets, pyramids, etc.);
- Not infrequently people (14.3%) are attracted by pseudo-religious cults and movements;
- Orthodoxy is less popular than nontraditional cults (13.7%);
- New orientalist cults attract a fairly big share (9.2 %) of converts;
- Protestantism attracts a steady flow of new converts—6.2%;
- Catholicism is less popular, 4.7%,
- The number of people who turn to atheism is even smaller—4.5%;
- Buddhism, likewise, is rarely chosen as a new religion—3.6%;
- No conversions—25.5%.

Society in Kazakhstan has registered that most frequently Kazakhstanis (potentially Islamic and Christian population) prefer traditional religions (51%), nontraditional religions (18.9%); neo-orientalist cults and movements (8.8%); 7.1% of the potentially Christian population join Islam while 5.1% of the potentially Islamic population are attracted by Christianity.

Despite the fact that conversion to traditional Islam and Orthodoxy predominate, conversion to other religions and movements is gradually spreading. This undermines, to a great extent, traditional religious mentalities and, in the final count, transforms them. Amid the never-ending religious conversions confessional agreement and confessional unity is and will remain one of the most urgent issues.

Religious Conversion: Risks

Disintegration (or weakening) of personal contacts in the post-socialist period as the country was moving towards the market, has created objective conditions for conversion as a means and a channel of socialization through social and economic, rather than religious, contacts. As a socialization factor, religion in Kazakhstan intensifies traditional ethno-confessional identification and, on the other hand, expands the potential for conversion or even radicalization.

Conversion became popular because religion (or its quasi-image) has replaced, to a certain extent, unsatisfactory social relationships. This explains why people with no interest in religion join religious organizations when they find themselves in complicated situations caused, among other things, by the loss of axiological and meaningful codes and prospects.

In Kazakhstan, religious conversion is, primarily, the main channel through which young people, socially crippled population groups and individuals seeking socialization, new collectivity, spirituality and the meaning of life are drawn into quasi-religious structures. This radically changes their life style; they become vehicles of new ideas about the world that, in many respects, do not correlate with the values cherished by Kazakhstan society, the unity of the Kazakhstanis being one of them.

Conversion affects the life of the present and future generations and changes Kazakhstan as a secular state. The effect is highly ambiguous: the sphere of traditional religions is gradually narrowing down, which greatly distorts cultural identities. Religious conversion replaces the traditional

confessional statuses based on Kazakhstan's ethnic and cultural identities and its history with new, frequently quasi-religious, identities.

As a social phenomenon, religious conversion is highly ambivalent; on the one hand, one out of three respondents (31.8%) is convinced that it should be treated as a strictly private personal choice immune to interference of the state. An equal share of the respondents (31.5%) is of an opposite opinion: religious conversion disunites people (members of one family or a religious community) and leads to conflicts within families and society. One out of six respondents (16.2%) believes that today religious conversion cannot and does not strongly affect social and political life. The share of those who believe that religious conversions might help resolve social and political problems is very small (8.9%).

Spiritual and moral health of the nation is closely connected with religious conversion, due to nontraditional cults' strict principles and the increasingly stricter rules imposed on the members of nontraditional religious groups. The country's population as a whole disagrees over the impact of religious conversion on the spiritual and moral health of new converts: 37.4% believe that the impact is negative since people lose the religious tradition of their ancestors; 36.5% believe that conversion does not affect the spiritual and moral health of the nation, while 17.4% describe the impact as positive: conversion means a religious quest that draws an increasingly greater number of people into religion. Kazakhstanis do not consider important the spiritual and moral values that help align the idea of the world with the religious paradigms and promote socialization within the religious paradigm.

Monitoring of the requirements related to religious problems has identified that

- (1) the state does not supply adequate information about religious organizations and their activities;
- (2) people need a scholarly and educational discourse in the media in the form of understandable and accessible information about traditional and new religions, religious organizations and religious movements;
- (3) it is expected that experts will finally offer a critical analysis of the religious situation;
- (4) people are ready to support the state and its tolerance of religious variety in the country;
- (5) people want to learn more about religion's socializing function in Kazakhstan.

Radicalization: How People Assess its Risks

The Kazakhstanis can identify activities that pose as religions, subjects of such activities and assess the problems created by these subjects. Identification of the agents of extremism easily understood as such by the nation—religious sects, sham religions (including healers, financial and trade pyramids, societies and corporations) and radical Islam—shows that the problem of radical Islam is less dangerous than sham religions and religious sects: over one-third (35.2%) of the respondents believe that the situation is under control; one-fourth (26%) points to the latent nature of the process and its possible negative outcrops; one-fifth (19.1%) speaks of the situation as critical and calling for special measures.

Open and latent quasi-religious radicalization of social mentality (conscience and behavior) creates a "flexible consciousness" that rejects civic values, that has alienated itself from the matrices of cultural-historical memory, that is alien to inherited spiritual traditions and is not ready to promote them.

Socially vulnerable people deprived of adequate conditions of labor, educational and family socialization; people with strong emotional (psychological) problems who are keenly aware of social injustices; those with axiological orientations that remained undeveloped in the process of family or school socialization and those with no clear ideas about the world because of incompetence of experts in religions are the ones who willingly embrace radical ideology. They are easily radicalized: after two or three months of brainwashing they become suicide bombers. De-radicalization, on the other hand, requires 1.5 or 2 years or even more.

We have organized expert assessments of the risks created by the religiously motivated radical ideologies and the means used to oppose them in the following table.

Table

Expert Assessment of the Risks Created by Religiously Motivated Radical Ideologies and Means and Methods of Opposition

Why is the Impact of Religiously Motivated Radical Ideologies Dangerous?	What Can be Done to Oppose the Impact of Extremist Ideology in Kazakhstan?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Radicalism and organized crime join forces in criminal communities that are organized into networks. ● Integration of terrorism, organized crime and radical groups acting under different political, religious or other slogans threaten the political system. ● External or internal political actors are geared at regime change. ● Deterrence was and remains the main method of efficient struggle against terrorism and extremism; it is necessary to expand the powers of corresponding structures to block illegal activities. ● Certain radical religious organizations are not banned by law. ● Outflow to radical Islamic organizations against the background of growing religiosity might become a form of protest against the low living standards, unemployment and corruption. ● A national idea based on social justice is needed. ● Since the requirements of many social strata are not realized within the actual norms and rules, society turns to the “third power.” ● Inertia of the traditional religious institutions not engaged in active proselytism. ● The low level of religious knowledge: the nation knows next to nothing about religions. ● Cultivation (in certain circles) of a romantic image of radicalism that allegedly defends the faith, fights for justice and is opposed to corrupt power and amoral society. ● The state’s inadequacy when it comes to practical, effective, consistent and balanced religious policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Liability for extremist crimes should be increased. ○ The activities of religious organizations with due account for public opinion should be monitored. ○ Social prerequisites and the base of extremism should be narrowed down by solving social and economic problems—unemployment, poverty, marginalization, and new approaches to ideology (another round of de-ideologization) should be taken. ○ Conditions for the functioning of mediation institutes with due account for different interests should be created. ○ Comprehensive approaches with due account for regional specifics should become common practice needed to cultivate national traditions, customs and common national values. ○ A system of secular religious education should be set up. ○ The possibilities of counter-propaganda online, in the media and through works of art should be widened. ○ Joint efforts of traditional religions, state structures, and civil society should be intensified to arrive at new methods of shaping the culture of world outlook. ○ Religious institutes should organize wide-scale educational and propaganda activities to stop the proliferation, among young people in the first place, of all sorts of stupefying and anti-state destructive ideologies.

The latent protest potential in Kazakhstan society runs along the secular vs. the religious line, is associated with the alienation of certain groups of believers from the social context of life, with civil disobedience of radicalized consciousness dissatisfied with the cultural, social, political, economic and other parameters of social life and the state and power institutions.

Inadequately elaborated state ideology opens doors to religious ideas about the world as an alternative to secular ideas about life and values. Experts have identified three population groups that are potentially much more inclined to change sides: young people, labor migrants living under permanent economic and psychological stress and prison inmates.

There is a dilemma created by civil responsibility and the rules and norms of religious associations that should be resolved in the context of everyday life.

Religious identity prevails, to a fairly great extent, over civilian identity in different social and demographic groups. In the gender category, men are more inclined to disobedience (14.1%) than women (10.7%); in the age category all groups are differently inclined to obey the demands of their religious communities rather than the state. The younger the respondent, the less willing he is to obey the state. In the under-29 group, 14.7% are ready to fulfill their religious obligations and avoid by all means their duties as citizens; the share in the oldest group (61 and older) is 7.9%.

Among the ethnic groups, 13.1% of Russian respondents feel more obliged to comply with their religious responsibilities than with those of the state; 12.1% of Kazakhs feel the same; the share of respondents of other nationalities is 8.8%.

Different educational levels demonstrate different and thought-provoking results: 23.6% (practically over one-fourth of the group) of people with incomplete higher education prefer to fulfill their duty to the religious community rather than to the state. The gap separating this group from the other groups is large enough, yet the share of those who are ready to disobey the law is fairly big: 14.4% among people with secondary education; 11.5% among people with higher education; 10.4% with specialized secondary education and 8.8% among those who upgraded their higher education.

All groups, irrespective of their incomes, are ready to disobey the state, albeit to different degrees. The richest (with an income of 120,000 tenge and up) and the poorest (with an income below the 20,000 tenge level) are less inclined to follow the calls of the religious community—7% and 9%, respectively. The respondents who earn between 20,000 and 80,000 tenge who can be described as “needy” and the lower level of the “relatively well-off” are especially inclined to disobey the state and assume quasi-religious ideas (13% and 14.6%).

The geographic distribution of those who would rather side with their religious communities than with the state demonstrates that the greatest number of them live in small cities (17.3%), regional centers (13.9%) in the capital (12.2%), in auls and villages (10.9%); their share in Almaty (5%) is the country’s lowest.

We have established the volume of potentially deviant behavior (12.1%) of those prepared to act not in the secular-legal but in the religious sphere of decision making. In view of the fact that 15%, or one out of six remained undecided, we may surmise that some of them might, likewise, act outside the legal field.

Religious Trends in the Republic of Kazakhstan and Related Problems

It is commonly accepted in Kazakhstan that a religious quest is a centuries-old phenomenon of any nation’s cultural history; it is a part of human nature and, therefore, cannot be blocked off or discontinued. At the same time, a marginal worldview; inadequate, if any, knowledge about religion;

incomplete civil socialization; vague convictions based on the system of Kazakhstan values; weaker educational (socializing) impact of the family and school; and inadequate efforts of the state and society intensify religious conversions, including conversions to nontraditional religions unconnected with the local ethnocultural tradition and, therefore, undesirable from the point of view of the sustained development of state and society.

The inertia of the traditional religious institutions with no experience of active proselytism; the low level of religious knowledge of the country's population (people know next to nothing about religious studies); promotion in certain circles of a romanticized idea of radicalism as the struggle for faith and fairness as opposed to corrupt power and amoral society; inadequate efforts of the state to pursue an efficient, consistent and balanced religious policy and the fact that certain religious and openly extremist communities are not banned are the factors responsible for the merge of radicalism with organized crime and the emergence of religiously motivated radical network groups.

The political system is threatened by glorification of terrorism, organized crime and radical groups operating under all sorts of political, religious and other slogans.

Having failed to satisfy their requirements within the current norms and rules, social groups turn to the "third power." In fact, against the background of mounting religiosity of the country's population, membership in radical Islamist organizations might develop into protests on the back of the low living standards, unemployment and corruption.

In Kazakhstan, which is a multinational and poly-confessional state, extremism and manifestations of terrorism (including religiously motivated one) have become relatively common. This forced the state to formulate, adopt and realize the State Programs of Opposition to Religious Extremism and Terrorism in the Republic of Kazakhstan for the period of 2018-2022 with the budget of 270,148.8 million tenge. The first program was realized in 2013-2017 with the budget of 103,176.375 million tenge. Targeted at consistent opposition to extremism and terrorism, they were expected to neutralize the vehicles of radical ideas, their rehabilitation and re-socialization.

Practical realization of such programs is highly complicated and requires dynamism, competent decisions and due regard for numerous factors to exclude social risks in the process of shaping world-view identities, including their religious component.

Political Risks and Religious Situation

Today, the preservation and extension of unique Kazakhstan identity based on openness, unity, tolerance, variety, etc. is moving towards the zone of risk. This means that the state should cooperate with religious institutions more actively and more efficiently than before in a search of a consensus based on laws and public support.

In order to be realized, this religious policy and its concepts require scientifically substantiated strategies: a model of secularity, a corpus of state conceptions and programs of shaping intellectual spirituality and a legal system designed to regulate the relationships between the state and confessions; adequate worldview identification adjusted to the requirements of modernity. We should permanently monitor the shifts in the religious sphere; identify religious trends and tendencies of religiosity, as well as involvement in the so-called "field of interests" of international monitoring structures, missions, etc.

The state is still looking for a secular model; it has assumed international obligations related to religious freedoms only to find itself in a more ambiguous situation than the nontraditional religions, which unfolded alternative networks of ideological impacts on the country's population to undermine the traditional ethnocultural and confessional foundations. The country has found itself under the

strong pressure of globalization due to the processes of religiosity up to and including its radical forms.

The process of initiation, preparation and discussion of new laws related to the sphere of religion revealed that different social groups perceive the state policies of legal regulation of the religious sphere differently: religious organizations and individual believers disagree, openly or latently, with amendments. This gives a chance to international monitoring missions to exploit discussions and use public platforms to criticize state policies or even humiliate the state, while indiscriminately interpreting the concepts of the freedom of religion, secular state, etc. They are not alien to lecturing; they call on the state to fold up the endorsed and realized monitoring procedures and skillfully replace the idea of legal regulation of the religious sphere with the anarchy of the market of religious faiths, the process that the Western liberal community left behind in the 1960s.

The discussions of the draft Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the Amendments and Additions to certain legal acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan related to religious activities and religious associations created the situation in which the state preferred to “put off” final decisions. There is no intention to accelerate the discussion by the parliament; public discussions are still going on which is quite understandable and absolutely correct.

At the same time, all sorts of target groups (authorized structures, law and order structures and the nongovernment sector) need algorithms that can be applied to non-contradictory legal causes. That is why the understanding of the principles of freedom of religion, confessional and extra-confessional religiosity, secularity, pluralism of the ideas about the world, religiously motivated destructive activities, etc. should be adapted to the context of Kazakhstan.

ISLAMIC VALUES IN EVERYDAY LIFE OF NORTH CAUCASIANS IN FRANCE

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ABSTRACT

The author has identified the place of Islamic values in everyday realities of the North Caucasians in France, an effort of great practical importance. On the one hand, we learn how Caucasian migrants live in Europe; on the other, it helps obtain more specific ideas of how radicalization and criminalization of the younger generation of Caucasian migrants in France can be avoided. The article is based on new (2015-

The article has been prepared within the project of the RNF “Mechanisms of Ensuring Civil Harmony in Multiethnic States: Russian and Foreign Experience,” No. 15-18-00099 II headed by E. Filippova.

2016) field ethnographic materials gathered in France that confirmed that the North Caucasian diaspora is divided into active (practicing) and passive (so-called ethnic) Muslims who practically never communicate. The very natural desire to belong to a community has brought Northern Caucasians to the Muslim milieu of Europe; they become

Islamists or even radical Islamists. In case of the North Caucasian migrants, Islam serves as a psychological instrument of sorts that helps them adjust to life in France. Due to a stronger role of Islam in the life of the North Caucasian diaspora, its national identity is being gradually dissolved in religious identity.

KEYWORDS: *Islam, North Caucasian peoples, France, adaptation, French culture, society, religious identity, national identity.*

Introduction

In the course of the 20th and 21st centuries, Europe admitted several waves of Caucasian migrants. In the 1990s, an impressive outflow from the Caucasus was caused by political (the war in Chechnia) and social-economic circumstances (crisis in Russia and the Transcaucasian states).¹ France has become one of the host countries for migrants. Islam, the prevailing religious confession among the North Caucasians, figures prominently in the process of adaptation to the French lifestyle, culture and society. European ideologists of multiculturalism and European leaders are convinced that sooner or later North Caucasian migrants, and migrants from other countries for that matter, will gradually accept European values and European cultures. Nothing of the sort has happened so far: as a rule, the efforts of North Caucasian migrants to become “one of us” in Europe fail; while new adaptation mechanisms appear.

Today, the Muslim population of Europe has reached the figure of 15 to 20 million. Divided by their ethnic, economic, social and political differences, the Muslims of Western Europe are aware of the fact that they are members of a single community (due to the specifics of integration of contemporary Islam) and are perceived as such by the indigenous populations of host countries.² A different trend observed in Europe is especially obvious in Germany and Poland: the radicalized Chechen diaspora that is fighting for the independence of Chechnia has developed a mechanism of propaganda of certain (mainly radical, but not Islamic) political ideas among the North Caucasians (Chechens in the first place). The “Studies without Borders” educational program, implemented in Germany, is one of such instruments. Chechens, including those who live in the Chechen Republic, receive a higher education without leaving their homeland. The program, which promotes the idea of an independent Chechnia, is an instrument of political brainwashing.³ This does strongly affect the social and political situation in the Northern Caucasus.

Today, the North Caucasian diaspora is present in many European countries: France, Germany, Poland and others. Its numerical strength in France is practically impossible to establish for many reasons: first, North Caucasian migrants in Europe are registered as citizens of Russia and are treated

¹ See: L. Vinatier, *Tchéchènes: une diaspora en guerre*, Pétra, Paris, 2013.

² See: E.A. Ivanchenko, “Musulmanskaya obshchina vo Frantsii: problemy religioznoy i kulturnoy integratsii,” *Vestnik Mogilevskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, No. 2-3, 2009.

³ [<http://www.studieren-ohne-grenzen.org/ru>].

as such by immigration statistics. According to the Cultural and Spiritual Association of the Caucasians of Strasbourg, there are about 10 thousand Chechens and Ingushes in this city.

So far, the adaptive processes of North Caucasians in all European countries, in France in particular, and their specifics received little or no attention from the academic community. I relied on the field ethnographic materials gathered in France in 2015-2016 to analyze the specifics of Islamic life of North Caucasian émigrés in France and the place Islamic values occupy in their life.⁴ I have anonymously interviewed about 40 Kabardians, Balkars, Ossets, Chechens and Ingushes between 15 and 45 years of age; as a rule the social status of migrants in France is not high.

Religious Life of the Northern Caucasus Reproduced in France

As could be expected, the North Caucasian Muslim immigrants in France tend to reproduce the religious Islamic life as they knew it in Russia. On the whole, it is a combination of two lifestyles: the youth of Daghestan, Chechnia and Ingushetia, the so-called “practicing Muslims” and most of the migrants from the North-Western and Central Caucasus (Adygei, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachaevo-Cherkessia and North Ossetia-Alania), the so-called ethnic Muslims who observe the main Islamic holydays (Kurban-Bayram and Uraza-Bayram) but do not attend Friday services and never pray at home five times a day as is required by their religion.⁵ The North Caucasian diaspora in France is no exception.

Reproduction of the specifics of North Caucasian religious life calls new trends to life: some of the ethnic Muslims become practicing Muslims, while others appeal to Islam much less than they did it at home. In France, Adyghe, Balkars and some of the Ingushes who speak of themselves as Muslims do not attend mosques for many years. They randomly observe the main Islamic holidays and rarely sacrifice a ram (as is required by the Islamic tradition) on Kurban-Bayram (the feast of the sacrifice): first of all, it is not that easy to buy a live sheep in France; secondly, the places where people can sacrifice live animals are few and far between and, thirdly, in the absence of public opinion they do not feel obliged to perform the ritual. Many of my informers admitted that back at home they would have been obliged to follow the Islamic traditions for the simple reason that this was a common practice to be observed to avoid public condemnation. There is no North Caucasian public opinion in France, which means that the private life of each and every North Caucasian migrant is not conditioned by the Islamic influence of the North Caucasian society: each migrant is free either to sacrifice a ram or not. These migrants are benevolently disposed to the religions practiced in France; they might even go to a church to light a candle to ensure the success of an important family venture.⁶ For example, a teenage Adyghe girl, having discovered that the Bible was much more interesting than the Koran, attended a high mass in a Catholic church together with her French friend. Parents of children born and raised in France in the families of ethnic Muslims tell them about the North Cau-

⁴ See: L. Babich, “Islamskie tsennosti v zhizni kavkazskikh emigrantov vo Frantsii (1919-1939),” *Islamovedenie*, No. 1 (27), 2016.

⁵ See: I.L. Babich, “Sovremennoe islamskoe dvizhenie v Kabardino-Balkarii,” in: *Islamskoe vozrozhdenie v sovremennoy Kabardino-Balkarii*, Moscow, 2003.

⁶ See: I.L. Babich, Field materials, France, November 2015, interview with B., Kabardian woman, 40, November 2016, interview with L., Kabardian man, 45.

casian traditions and the religion of their ancestors. The new generation, girls in the first place, find the status of Islamic women in the family and society in the Northern Caucasus incomprehensible. They think that women in Islam are not free, while the girls raised in a European country prefer freedom in its Western variant.⁷

The Roads which Bring North Caucasians to European Islam

On the whole, the North Caucasian diaspora can be divided into two groups: a fairly big group of Chechen migrants and a mixed group of migrants from other North Caucasian republics. To my mind, the Islamic life of the Chechens is very different from that of other North Caucasians since nearly all or even all of them are practicing Muslims. Chechen Muslim immigrants are determined to teach Islam to their children born in France. For this purpose in 2011 they set up a Cultural and Spiritual Association of Caucasians (Association Culturelle et Cultuelle des Caucasiens se Strasbourg⁸) in Strasbourg. It is headed by Shamil Albakov, with Izmail Baykhanov as its treasurer. It teaches children and young people the Islamic norms (expressive reading of the Koran, lessons of Islamic dogmas, etc.), languages (French, Arabic and Russian); helps migrants cope with legal problems and extends material support to those who need it. Strange as it may seem, it does not promote ethnic Caucasian cultures (there are no ethnic dance courses, etc.). This is done by other North Caucasian diaspora organizations unconnected with Islam. In France, there is an obvious opposition between Islamic and ethnic traditions in contemporary society and the contemporary system of moral values.

As I have already written, part of the North Caucasian Muslims (not necessarily Chechens) in France are determined, for different reasons, to move away from their status of ethnic Muslims to become part and parcel of the Muslim community in a wider sense.

Here is the fate of a Balkar family that moved to France about 15 years ago with its children. The elder generation, 35-40 years of age, consists of a Balkar woman, an ethnic Muslim back at home who, having landed in France, became a practicing Muslim in an ardent desire to acquire a social milieu. There are not enough Balkars in France to create a specifically Balkar context of their own.

In fact, an increased interest in Islam as the only sphere that North Caucasian migrants see as familiar and close is kindled by unemployment and lack of relatively important occupations in an alien country. Many of the North Caucasian migrants in France live on social welfare benefits of about €400. An average family of two adults and a child gets no less than €1000 every month, sufficient for more or less modest living. Social dwelling is free. This means that there is a group of people in France with no apparently meaningful occupation. No wonder that practicing Islam comes to the fore in the everyday life of North Caucasian émigré groups and helps them resolve many problems, up to and including the psychological problems of the younger generation.

In the absence of higher, or at least secondary, professional education received back at home or acquired in France, a North Caucasian migrant has no choice but to seek employment at enterprises that hire migrants (French people prefer to get an education and seek better paid jobs) where his life and behavior are strongly affected by his environment. An educated migrant may find employment among the French; the new milieu affects him strongly and positively. In France,

⁷ See: I.L. Babich, Field materials, France, November 2015, interview with B., Kabardian woman, 40, November 2016, interview with L., Kabardian man, 45.

⁸ [www.acccs.fr].

which is a secular state, secular values prevail. On the other hand, it is highly hierarchical, which means that certain social groups are closed off to “aliens” and open to those who occupy high posts and actively communicate with their French colleagues. This means that it is much easier for the North Caucasian migrants to become a part of the North Caucasian emigre environment than to assimilate.

Here is a confirmation of the above. A Kabardian family with two teenage sons moved to France some 15 years ago. The boys found it hard to adjust to the new environment. Today, at 30 they have no higher education or interesting work and survive on chance earnings. So far, they do not frequent mosques, yet have become practicing Muslims who strictly observe all Islamic prescriptions and regularly perform namaz. In fact, their life in France is geared towards Islam. They have not yet become radical Muslims. It should be said, however, that young men with no clear aim in life might later join the ranks of radical Muslims. Their younger sister, born in France, has no problems. She studies at a French school, has become a part of French society, has French friends, is invited to their homes and remains a Muslim.⁹

This family is not an exception; there are many similar cases and there are many young Chechens who live in Paris. It is highly important to understand how their relatives respond to them. There are several branches of one Kabardian family in the city of L. (about 30 people). L., a teenage member of this big family of ethnic Muslims, who had been absolutely indifferent in Islam in his homeland, developed serious interest in Islam in France.¹⁰ He found it hard to adjust to French society and to find his place at school (he switched between several in search of a more or less favorable atmosphere). Exasperated, his relatives sent him back to Nalchik where he, likewise, failed to adjust. He moved to Moscow where he started attending a mosque, met a Russian girl and returned to France with her. Their son was born in France, the young father grew a beard, he fasts, performs namaz, and attends mosque from time to time. He has no job; he does not study and sometimes talks about radical Islamic ideas. His younger sister is perfectly adapted, she graduated from a French school, learned several tongues and is studying in Britain (Manchester). She obeys all Muslim rules including fasting, she and her brother are good friends who understand each other well. L. is psychologically comfortable among French Muslims; he has no other milieu—his friends are Chechens and Azeris. He is 27-28.

His relatives admitted that they had been appalled to hear him talking “about Islam, the Islamic world and Islam in France.” They tried to dissuade him, to no avail, by saying that “in our homeland Kabarda Islam is different.” His Adyghe relatives prefer to keep their teenage daughters and sons away from him, despite the fact that he is a close relative. They explain to their children: “Everything that you might hear from him is lies; he himself does not observe Islamic morals” (which is partly true because he lives with his Russian common-law wife without performing nikah).

Here is another relevant case: fifteen years ago a family with a teenager boy B. arrived in France. The boy had found it hard, if at all possible, to fit into the French milieu and found a comfortable environment in Islam as a practicing Muslim and a regular visitor to Paris mosques. Very much concerned, his relatives, ethnic Muslims, sent him to Russia. He settled in Moscow, found a job, continued his education and remained Muslim with no radical excesses.¹¹

In some cases the path from “ethnic” to “practicing” Muslims is very short: still in hostels for emigrants where they live awaiting their paperwork, women begin to cover their heads and dress in Muslim style. In some cases, however, the process is several years long. Some of the Muslim Chechen women wear no headscarves for many years. One of them, let us call her Zh., adapted well to the

⁹ See: I.L. Babich, Field materials, France, March 2016, interview with V., Balkar woman, 50.

¹⁰ See: I.L. Babich, Field materials, France, March 2015, interview with B., Kabardian woman, 40.

¹¹ I.L. Babich, Field materials, France, March 2015, interview with Zh., Chechen woman, 45.

French lifestyle, set up a souvenir company and wore no headscarf in public for many years. Everything changed when she married a Chechen (from the Netherlands), the couple performed nikah and his husband asked her to wear a headscarf.¹² Another Chechen woman, K., for a long time wore short skirts and no headscarf and drank wine. Later she adjusted her behavior to the norms of Islam—she stopped drinking wine and started wearing long skirts.¹³ In fact, North Caucasian migrants do not necessarily follow Islamic prescriptions when it comes to their appearances: at dance parties, a frequent occurrence at hostels with a young Chechen population, Chechen girls do not strictly follow the Muslim dress code.

There is a fairly big diaspora of Turkish Muslims with a big share of Turkish North Caucasians in it. By this I mean the descendants of those who migrated to the Ottoman Empire in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the time when the Northern Caucasus was “incorporated into the Russian Empire.” It should be said that Turkish North Caucasian migrants in France remain loyal to Islam in all spheres of life. They form a fairly independent community and maintain minimal contacts with the life, culture and society of the receiving country. Russian North Caucasians communicate with Turks and sometimes even join their Muslim communities.

Islamic Radicalism and North Caucasian Migrants in France

Today, all European states, France being no exception, control radical Muslims (including those who arrived from the Northern Caucasus, Chechnia in particular).

On 13 February, 2015, DGSI (Direction générale de la sécurité intérieure) officers detained six Chechens (aged from 32 to 38) in Southern France (in Albi not far from Toulouse) “in the course of investigation of the case of sending jihadists to Syria. They were accused of belonging to terrorist groups.” One of them was a French citizen; another has both French and Russian origin; others—political refugees. All of them were accused of involvement in terrorist activities and funding potential fighters.

According to official information, they were suspected of an involvement in dispatching potential jihadist fighters to Syria and/or extending them financial or logistic support.¹⁴

On 31 August, 2016, Special Services of Belgium compiled a list of terrorists, which contained 29 names of Russian citizens; four of them holding Belgian passports. Most of the Russian citizens who attracted the attention of the Belgian special services arrived from the Northern Caucasus, mainly from Chechnia, to be more exact, and was connected with the organization known as Emirate Kavkaz. Islamist propaganda and funding of extremists were their two main activities.

Eleven of those listed by the special services had Russian passports; they fought in Syria and Iraq; thirteen returned to Belgium. One of them was arrested on the way back; four others left the country. There were citizens of Russia, Belgium, France, Morocco, Algeria, the Netherlands, Italy, Syria, Tunisia and Macedonia among the 614 persons whose names appeared on the list.¹⁵

¹² Ibidem.

¹³ See: I.L. Babich, Field materials, France, November 2015, interview with M., Chechen woman, 45.

¹⁴ [<https://news.mail.ru/incident/21061404/>].

¹⁵ See: S. Kosiakov, “V belgijskiy spisok terroristov popali 29 rossiian,” 31 August, 2016, available at [<http://smiex-press.ru/news/world/-26159-v-belgijskiy-spisok-terroristov-popali-29-rossiyan/>], 13 December, 2016.

School, North Caucasians and Islam

In French schools, children of North Caucasian Muslims have to face secular educational principles. In France all external signs of religious affiliation (such as hijabs) are banned. A Kabardian woman, an administrator at one of the schools, told us that girls who come to school in hijabs remove them as soon as they enter the school, yet keep very much to themselves.¹⁶ The law of 2004 bans all apparent signs of religious affiliation at state schools, be it Muslim headscarves or Jewish kippahs. There are no bans at private schools, which explains why a certain number of girls from Muslim families prefer Catholic schools, where they can wear hijabs.

Religion and religious culture are absent from the state school curricula in France: pupils are taught philosophy and encouraged to think and acquire personal ideas of life.¹⁷ Children are taught that religion is a purely personal matter, that it should not be a part of social life in France. This is what the French Muslims do not like most of all in French school education. It is a *secular state based on the principle of equality* applied, specifically, to all religions; this means that *it is impossible to treat different religions differently*, and that *none of them are officially supported*, yet all of them have the right to exist.

Here is another fact that is just as interesting. Some schools, if allowed by the mayor, serve three different lunches—without pork, without meat and a regular lunch. Each and every parent is free to choose one of the three. According to the teachers at a primary school near Paris, parents of 25 percent of pupils chose lunches without pork. The mayor can change the rule, which will stir up a lot of indignation among Muslims, who will claim that there is no equality in France. It should be said, however, that there are no privileges for Jewish children—no kosher food is offered at schools. It looks as if France has “partly succumbed to Muslims.”¹⁸

On the one hand, North Caucasian Muslim migrants plunge deep into Islam and the life of Islamic communities in France for want of a different and more interesting life in the new country. On the other, whether wittingly or unwittingly, they are removed from the huge community of Russian immigrants. Some of the North Caucasian migrants communicate with them to compensate for the scarcity of other contacts. It should be said, however, that if Russians detect an increased interest in Islam in their North Caucasian friends or acquaintances, they immediately limit their communication with them. This happened in a school outside Paris, attended by Chechen and Jewish girls from St. Petersburg. They became friends and frequented each other’s homes, yet when at the age of 12 to 14 the Chechen girls developed a strong interest in Islam and started talking about religion, not necessarily Islam, to their Russian friends, the latter did not like this at all and gradually discontinued their communication.¹⁹

Islamic Culture and Everyday Life

In France, North Caucasians wear no ethnic or Islamic clothes, they dress in a European style; their wives and daughters who practice Islam wear headscarves or hijabs not frequently. In fact, a headscarf says nothing about the degree of Islamization of its wearer.

¹⁶ See: I.L. Babich, Field materials, November 2015, interview with D., Kabardian man, 50.

¹⁷ See: I.L. Babich, Field materials, November 2015, interview with I.D., Kabardian woman, 18; interview with S.D., Kabardian woman, 17.

¹⁸ I.L. Babich, Field materials, November 2015, interview with A., teacher at primary school, 45.

¹⁹ See: I.L. Babich, Field materials, November 2016, interview with A., Russian woman, 40.

Food is an important attribute that helps preserve ethnic culture in a foreign country: North Caucasian migrants, on the whole, remain devoted to their national cuisine. Chechen marriage feasts are marked by an amazing variety of national dishes.²⁰ Adyghe migrants mark Kurban-Bayram with a national soup (*ashryk*) made of seven grains: white maize, three types of beans, pearl barley, milled wheat, rice and millet), jerked beef kept from the previous Kurban-Bayram. Meat (fresh in the past, now cooked) is distributed among all North Caucasian Muslims.

Wedding and Funeral Traditions and Islam

Everyday life of North Caucasian migrants in France is full of ethnic rather than Islamic components. They listen to North Caucasian and Russian pop music and watch Russian TV.²¹ Practically all families have lots of discs with national and national pop music. Dances are another important attribute of ethnic identity among migrants. In France, North Caucasian dances are an inevitable attribute of festive occasions. Chechens invariably celebrate what they call “positive” (the date they received a positive decision on the political refugee status). On such occasions everybody dances—boys and girls, men and women. In France, marriages and all sorts of holidays are accompanied by national dances; it is shameful not to know how to dance.²²

North Caucasian Muslims have not abandoned the Muslim rite of *nikah*: they either go a mullah or a mullah comes to the bride and groom to perform it. The marriages are practically never confirmed in the mayor’s office. The groom pays the bride’s parents a small dowry. In France, ethnic traditions are only partly reproduced at weddings: feasts are organized in restaurants with no ethnic components (except certain dishes).²³ North Caucasian migrants, first and foremost, Chechens, look at marriages as the central event in their lives (*lovzar*). Guests (from 300 to 500) are invited from all corners of France or even Europe. Chechens have preserved the tradition of introducing the bride to the groom’s home.

To perform this ritual, the floor is covered with sheepskins, the groom addresses the elder members of the bride’s family with a request to forgive him for taking his bride from their home; the bride and groom imitate escape, etc. During the wedding, the bride and her girlfriend stand in a corner; the groom is absent. Chechen migrants still serve separate tables for men and for women. Other North Caucasian peoples have already abandoned this tradition. There is a *tamada* (toastmaster) at each table at Chechen weddings; other North Caucasian peoples prefer one *tamada* for all tables²⁴; there are dance *tamadas* who select dancers.²⁵ In France, Chechens still prefer to serve their national dishes at weddings: *zhizhig galnash*, pilau, *chepalgash* with soft cheese, cheese or meat...²⁶ *Salade Olivier* (also known as Russian salad), dumplings, and sweet dessert—halva and sweet rice. More complicated dishes—*kurze* (ravioli) and *galushki* (hand-made pasta with meat)—are also served. Sometimes Chechen artists from Chechnia or from other European cities (i.e., Strasbourg) are invited to weddings.

²⁰ See: I.L. Babich, Field materials, March 2016, interview with Zh., Chechen woman, 40.

²¹ See: I.L. Babich, Field materials, March 2015, interview with Kh., Chechen woman, 45.

²² See: I.L. Babich, Field materials, November 2015, interview with T., Kabardian woman, 35.

²³ See: I.L. Babich, Field materials, March 2015, interview with A., Kabardian woman, 46.

²⁴ See: I.L. Babich, Field materials, 2016, interview with M., Chechen man, 30.

²⁵ See: I.L. Babich, Field materials, 2015, interview with A.Ch., Kabardian woman, 40, Lion, 10 November.

²⁶ See: A. Chleïnikov, Les particularités de la société traditionnelle tchéchène. Identité tchéchène. Master d’Ethnologie. Nanter, 2008 (manuscript).

Today, every time when a North Caucasian dies in France, his relatives and representatives of all North Caucasian immigrant communities gather money to send the body to his native land for burial.²⁷ People are buried in their homeland,²⁸ while funeral repasts to mark 40 days after death, half a year and a year are organized in France.²⁹ Kabardians serve a ritual dish (called *lakumy* in the Kabardian language), which is distributed among seven families of North Caucasian migrants. While eating a lakum, the Muslim should pray for the dead (*tkhaytu* in the Chechen language). To avoid misunderstanding, French neighbors are never offered lakums; besides they do not know the right prayers.

Conclusion

An analysis of the Islamic dimension of North Caucasians' everyday life in France has demonstrated that the diaspora (and each of the North Caucasian national immigrant communities) is divided into active (practicing) and passive (ethnic) Muslims who have no common ground and, therefore, practically never communicate.³⁰ The desire to belong to a community leads North Caucasians to the European Muslim context, where they become Islamized or even radicalized. Islam serves as a psychological instrument of sorts that helps the North Caucasian Muslims adjust to the specifics of life in France. Those who become active Muslims limit their lifestyle to a great extent: they have no interest in French life and remain unadjusted to it. They concentrate on their religious family. Islam plays a greater role in private lives of the North Caucasian diaspora in France than at home, which means that *national identity is gradually replaced with a religious identity*. In France North Caucasians strive not only to preserve their religious and cultural identity but sometimes to oppose it to the values of the state that made them its citizens.

²⁷ See: I.L. Babich, Field materials, 2011, interview with B., Ossetian man, 46.

²⁸ See: I.L. Babich, Field materials, 2015, interview with D., Chechen man, 40.

²⁹ See: I.L. Babich, Field materials, 2011, interview with B., Kabardian woman, 46.

³⁰ See: I.L. Babich, "Sotsiokulturnye i politiko-pravovye aspekty adaptatsii kavkazskikh musulman v sovremennoy Evrope (postanovka problemy)," Sotsiodinamika, No. 1, 2015.

INTERPRETATIONS OF TERRORISM: THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL APPROACHES

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ABSTRACT

The variety of specific forms of terrorism and, therefore, its different interpretations are rooted in social, economic, political, geopolitical and religious factors. Theoretical and practical approaches to terrorism help identify its most important characteristics, global and regional specifics and the ways and means to be used to combat it.

A clearer idea of regional specifics of terrorist manifestations suggests specific

forms of prevention and counteraction. Sociological polls among North Caucasian students, in the Chechen Republic in particular, serve precisely this purpose. Prevention depends, first and foremost, on a better understanding of the causes of asocial behavior of those young men who fell into the trap of criminal groups; better understanding is achieved through finding out what the students of the Chechen Republic think about extremism and terrorism.

This article has been written according to the State Project of the RF Ministry of Education and Science No. 35.930.2017/БЧ.

KEYWORDS: *ideology and practice of terrorism, interpretation of extremism and terrorism, types of terrorism, measures of opposition, sociological poll, student youth, Chechnia, Daghestan.*

Introduction

Today terrorism as a social deviation has already become an international phenomenon. French philosopher Jean Baudrillard paid particular attention to the universal nature and mobility of terrorism: “Terrorism, like viruses, is everywhere ... it accompanies any system of domination as though it were its shadow, ready to activate itself anywhere, like a double agent”¹ and added, “We can no longer draw a demarcation line around it. It is at the very heart of this culture which combats it, and the visible fracture (and the hatred) that pits the exploited and the underdeveloped globally against the Western world secretly connects with the fracture internal to the dominant system.”²

We all know that both in the past and today many terrorist groups demonstrated strong religious affiliations.³ However, terrorism is highly varied; it wears all sorts of masks and adjusts to any intertwining of its political, ideological, religious, ethnic, etc. components, making it hard, or even impossible to identify its different types. The mere fact that terrorism, irrespective of its type or manifestations, negatively affects the relationships between people, social groups, ethnicities and religions and threatens people, societies and states, making the consolidation of anti-terrorist efforts of states and public associations indispensable.

Theoretical Interpretation of Terrorism

There are many interpretations of terrorism. Some researchers concentrate on ethno-religious terrorism as the most common and the most dangerous type.⁴ It is defined as a crime committed to ensure the triumph of one’s nation and/or religion, to realize national and religious ideas up to and including separatist schemes by suppressing or liquidating other national and religious groups (within one and the same religion). This terrorism grows on the soil of extremism, national and religious intolerance, enmity and hatred, inability or unwillingness to see other groups as partners at the negotiation table; as the side with which compromises can and should be achieved and whose interests should be respected and taken into account.⁵

This can be further specified by identifying Islamic, Arab, Chechen and other types of terrorism. Today, American politicians and analysts and their Russian colleagues do not hesitate to use the terms

¹ J. Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism and Other Essays*, Verso, 2006, p. 10.

² Ibidem.

³ See: B. Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism (Columbia Studies in Terror)*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2006, pp. 90-91.

⁴ See: M.Iu. Antonian *et al.*, *Etnoreligioznyy terrorizm*, Aspekt Press, Moscow, 2006, p. 14.

⁵ See: Ibid., p. 15.

Islamic terrorism and Islamo-fascism. Viacheslav Sosnin has supplied Chechen terrorism with a historical background, namely, the Caucasian War of the 19th century led by Shamil, who had wanted to establish an Islamic state, and has claimed that this movement was revived in 1991.⁶ This is not merely unscientific; it is politically burdened and is, therefore, ideologically toxic.

Ideological and Practical Opposition to Terrorism

U.N. Resolution 60/288—The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy adopted on 8 September, 2006 clearly confirmed that the international community should close ranks in its counterterrorist struggle. It was for the first time that terrorism of all types was condemned at the highest international level. More than that: the U.N. demonstrated its determination “to develop practical mechanisms to prevent terrorism and to struggle against it.” It intended to remove the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and to invigorate counterterrorist struggle; to consolidate the potentials of states needed to prevent and oppose terrorism, to consolidate the role of the U.N., to ensure universal respect for human rights and the rule of law as the foundation of counterterrorist struggle.⁷

At the same time, the quoted document says that the U.N. reaffirmed “that terrorism cannot and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group.”

Despite their extremely cool relationship of the last few years, Russia and the United States do not deny that they should act together to oppose terrorism by coordinated efforts.

Terrorism threatens society and the state, which means that it should be opposed effectively as a social deviation. In the academic context, however, we should separate the concepts of “terror” and “terrorism”. The former describes the material and technological arsenal used in terrorist acts. The struggle against terror is the struggle against those who are directly involved in acts of terror, i.e. terrorists. This is a very specific field of counterterrorist activities carried out by law enforcement structures, intelligence and armed forces that target those who prepare, organize and carry out criminal deeds. (Russia and its Aerospace Forces were fairly successful in the struggle against terrorists and their structures in Syria.)

Struggle against terrorism as an ideology or a system of social, economic, political, religious, ethnic and moral assessments is something very different from the struggle against terrorists. It should be systematic, well-planned and efficient; it seems that we need experts or “ideologists” in Soviet parlance. Meanwhile, the situation is very strange: there is an ideology of terrorism, yet there is no counterterrorist ideology. Not all knowledge and not even knowledge about society can be described as an ideology. Ideology stems from the views and axiological attitudes formulated by politicians, political scientists, philosophers, sociologists, publicist writers and journalists who assess historical and civilizational processes in the context of the basic interests of the state, political movements and organizations, classes and social groups. An ideologist synthesizes knowledge and values into a philosophical construct or an ideology.

It is highly important to liquidate terrorist infrastructure, yet ideology is confronted with a more challenging task: it is expected to liquidate terrorism as a crime against humanity. So far, mankind is not ready to wipe out terrorism, yet the ideological denunciation of terrorism as an anti-human ideol-

⁶ See: V.A. Sosnin, *Psikhologiya terrorizma i protivodeystvie emu v sovremennoy mire*, Institute of Psychology Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, 2016.

⁷ [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/60/288].

ogy is highly important from humanitarian and historical positions. Terror and terrorism will not be liquidated, yet the intensity of terrorist acts and their scope should be suppressed.

Which criminal anti-human designs serve the cornerstone of the ideology of terrorism? Which ideas form the foundation of terrorist manifestations?

In the past, for instance, in pre-revolutionary Russia, top officials—prime-ministers, governors and ministers—and even the czar were held responsible for the suffering of the common people, and as such became targets of terrorist acts carried out by fighters of all kinds—Anarchists, Socialist Revolutionaries or members of the Narodnaya Volya (People's Will) organization. Today, terrorists are guided by the idea of collective guilt, which means that each and every member of any social community (no exception made for children, women or the elderly) should answer for everything that is going on in society and the state. Indeed, mass deaths as a result of a terrorist act are much more frightening than the death of a state official or even the head of state. This means that contemporary or “new” terrorism is not merely an anti-human ideology and the practice of violence, but an “extremely amoral phenomenon” (B. Pruzhinin) and an “embodiment of absolute evil” (A. Guseynov).⁸

It is highly important to bear in mind that all forms of terrorism, geopolitical, state or sociopsychological, are charged with deterrence and violence. The practical political component makes terrorism a greater or lesser evil irrespective of its specific forms. As an ideology and political practice it is intended to push people into moral and psychological depression, create an atmosphere of fear or even panic to allow terrorists to achieve their aims.

The problem of terrorism and the methods of its resolution defy straightforward approaches: the ideology of terrorism is best described as a patchwork of ideas, while terrorists represent certain sociocultural groups, each with reasons of their own to generate criminal ideas, they are driven by specific motives and specific justifications of their terrorist activities. This variety of ideas and political practices render useless abstract deliberations about terrorism. Those who speak about terrorists as fanatics and fatalists deprived of an ability to think rationally and acting on the spur of the moment merely simplify the problem. “Today terrorists demonstrate the psychology,” writes Valentina Fedotova, “that makes them deeply convinced people, short of Luther (Here I stand; I can do no other), rather than fanatical bandits determined to use arms to commit their crimes.”⁹

Today, those who organize and inspire terrorism rely on all sorts of means and methods to consolidate their convictions to pass them for an ideology. Religion as an ambiguous phenomenon plays a special role in the process. On the one hand, terrorists embrace religion in its distorted forms and rely on it for motivation of terrorist acts and their justification. They use misinterpreted religious ideas to justify their antihuman crimes. Those who support ultra-radical ideas tend to interpret the concepts *shahid*, *jihad*, *takfir* and *gazavat* one-sidedly and insist that they allegedly speak about the need to fight infidels. In Islam, however, it is not enough to simply uphold the letter of the teaching—its provisions should be studied and comprehended.

In the contemporary world, socially disorientated young men with no prospects of well-being, cultural development or political career become vehicles of extremism and terrorism. The Millionshchikov Grozny State Oil Technical University organized a sociological poll mostly among students in the Chechen Republic to clarify at least some of the sides of the problem. The results are found below.

⁸ “Terrorizm v sovremennom mire. Opyt mezhdunarodnogo analiza (materialy ‘kruglogo stola’),” *Voprosy filosofii*, No. 6, 2005, p. 9.

⁹ V.G. Fedotova, “Vystuplenie na ‘kruglom stole’ po probleme: Terrorizm v sovremennom mire. Opyt mezhdistsiplinarnogo analiza,” *Voprosy filosofii*, No. 6, 2005, p. 12.

Assessment of Extremism and Terrorism: An Analysis of the Results of Sociological Polls among Students

In 2018, research associates at the Opposition to Extremism and Terrorism Laboratory at the Department of Philosophy of the Oil Technical University carried out a sociological poll, within the framework of a State Project of the Ministry of Education and Science, among the students of the Millionshchikov Oil Technical University, the State University of Chechnia and the Chechen State Pedagogical University (a sampling of 500 second-year students) to clarify what the students at these educational establishments thought about extremism and terrorism and specify their personal attitude to these asocial phenomena. A questionnaire compiled for this purpose (*Ideas about Extremism and Terrorism and Attitude to These Illegal Actions among the Students of the Chechen Republic*) consisted of three blocks. Block 1 contained questions about personal ideas of the polled students about extremism and terrorism; Block 2 was related to students' personal attitudes to extremist and terrorist manifestations and Block 3 contained questions about students' ideas of how extremism and terrorism could and should be opposed.

The question about the most typical features of extremism invited the following answers: 66% of the polled pointed to violence and the threat of violence; 10.5%, to fanaticism and unbridled determination to insist on one's principles; for 47% extremism was a destabilizing factor in the public and state context. Eighty-two percent of the polled students described extremism and terrorism as a detestable crime against humanity; 5.0% of the polled accepted extremism as one of the possible methods of struggle.

The polled students (16.8%) explained the growth of extremism and terrorism as its extreme form by the growth of social and economic contradictions; 36.6%, by mounting political contradictions; 40.6%, by increasing religious contradictions and 6.0% pointed to other reasons. Religious contradictions were identified as the main source of extremism and terrorism, followed by political contradictions; social and economic problems came third. A fairly large share of students (77.2%) pointed to religious and political factors as the roots of terrorism.

The poll revealed the most efficient methods of struggle against religious extremism: moral and spiritual values and traditions of the Chechen ethnicity: historical memory and love of the land of ancestors (32.6%), awareness of responsibility for the future generations (42.0%) and tolerance and dialog (25.4%).

The answers to the key questions of Block 1 showed that the students of the second year had already acquired clear ideas about extremism and terrorism and that their absolute majority denounce them as anti-human. The absolute majority of the polled (77.2%) believed that extremism and terrorism were spreading far and wide along with political and religious contradictions. Six percent of the students pointed to other reasons without specifying them.

The researchers believed that it was necessary to find out whether the polled students were aware that ethnic and traditional values of the Chechens can be used to oppose extremism and terrorism. Historical memory, love for the land of ancestors, acute awareness of responsibility for future generations, tolerance and dialog were identified as the key factors of struggle against extremism and terrorism.

Questions of Block 2 were designed to identify personal attitudes to extremist and terrorist acts. The answers to the question about the methods used to prevent extremist and terrorist outbursts revealed that 56.6% of the polled believed that criminal responsibility should be tightened; 23.0% admitted that liberal methods and administrative responsibility should be used, while 20.4% believed that nothing could prevent acts of extremism and terror in the contemporary world. Thus, one-fifth of the polled was convinced that terrorism could not be liquidated; this was a fairly big share probably persuaded by information often obtained from TV programs and Internet resources.

The question about the reasons that pushed young men into extremist organizations invited the following answers: 17.1% were convinced that money was the main attraction; 10.2% - that they were driven by vanity and possible glory; 72.6% mentioned ideological convictions (without specifying whether they were related to religion, politics or philosophy).

Money as the main attraction was fairly apparent; vanity was realized in slightly more than 10% (lower than the previous one), yet big enough to mobilize a fairly big share of young people. The very high share of young men who join asocial terrorist organizations for ideological reasons cannot but cause concerns. Even if unspecified, it is more or less clear that religious factors dominate.

These answers let us identify the fairly vulnerable spot in the spiritual makeup of the younger generation and supply those who analyze the factors behind religious extremism and political terrorism with food for thought.

Block 3 of our questionnaire revealed what students of higher educational establishments of the Chechen Republic think about the possible methods of opposing extremism and terrorism. The ban on the propaganda of national and religious hatred was selected as the most efficient method by 22.4%; 22.6% believed that public and religious organizations that kindled racial, national and religious strife should be banned, while 54.0% believed that success could be achieved through spreading the knowledge of the humanist essence of Islam, which is incompatible with extremism.

The question whether extremism and terrorism could be successfully opposed by values of ethnic culture drew 25.7% of positive answers, 9.1% of negative answers, while 65.1% of the polled were undecided. This means that students find it hard to identify the potentials of ethnic cultures as an instrument of opposition to extremism and terrorism as its extreme form. The question probably should have been specified and divided into several questions, each relating to one of the components of ethnic cultures: customs and traditions, mental and spiritual specifics.

Conclusions

Young men, who tend to trust everything they find online and all sorts of gatherings, are easy prey to Islamist recruiters. In 2000, 26 teenagers from the same village in Chechnia in search of deeper knowledge about Islam attended lectures of a Wahhabi mullah who preached jihad and the Islamic State as God-pleasing deeds. They joined jihadists and perished, while the mullah merely disappeared from the village.

According to the poll, students in Chechnia, on the whole, condemn participation in extremist and terrorist groups in any state. At the same time, we have established that they have no clear ideas about why these asocial phenomena appeared and how they should be suppressed even if they demonstrated a wide range of opinions about the reasons that stir up terrorist intentions and identified religious and political disagreements as most important.

The respondents, or 22.4% of them, to be more exact, believed that a ban on the propaganda of national and religious hatred would be enough to halt the spread of extremism and terrorism; 22.6% believed that public and religious associations known to kindle social, racial, national and religious disagreements should be prohibited; 54.0% pointed out that people should acquire a deeper knowledge of Islam, the humanistic nature of which is incompatible with extremism. None of them, however, had clear ideas about the ethnic and cultural resources as instruments to be used to prevent the spread of extremism and terrorism and uproot their shoots. Over 65% of the polled had no answer to the question of how ethnic and cultural values could be used to oppose extremism and terrorism.

Chechen students, on the other hand, know that it is highly important to use all sorts of legal instruments to ban socially dangerous groups that threaten national and confessional unity of the society and the state. On the other hand, we all know that legal education of the younger generation, students of higher educational establishments in the first place, is practically non-existent in many regions of the Russian Federation.

Analysts in Daghestan, who study the ways and means through which religious extremism and terrorism is promoted in the republic and the specifics of its spread among young people, have pointed out that this can also be observed in many regions. It turned out that the polled students cannot distinguish between “religious extremism and religious terrorism which they treat as identical phenomena.”¹⁰

Zaid Abdulagarov, one of the respected students of extremism and terrorism in Daghestan, has written that the Federal Financial Monitoring Service of the Russian Federation (Rosfinmonitoring) regularly publishes lists of physical persons involved in extremist activities or terrorism. The list of 1,781 persons includes 438 people from Daghestan (24.6%), with the average age of 30.3 years; Chechens constitute 10.7%; 6.8% hail from Kabardino-Balkaria; 1.7%—from Ingushetia; 1.1%—from Tatarstan. The author concluded that “this is a well-arranged and carefully planned organization set up with religious aims in view.”¹¹

This means that the theoretical provisions formulated above and sociological information suggest that:

- (a) studies of extremism and terrorism presuppose profound scholarly comprehension, exact terminology; training of qualified ideologists able to organize ideological and practical opposition;
- (b) the greater part of the students in Chechnia look at extremism and terrorism as repulsive crimes against humanity; these phenomena are not popular in the student milieu and their support is minimal;
- (c) less than 20% said that young people join extremist and terrorist organizations in hopes of growing rich; slightly more than 10% are believed to be vain enough to seek glory, while nearly 73% of the respondents spoke of ideological convictions. The share is big enough to require further specification;
- (d) students, on the whole, believe that criminal responsibility should be toughened;
- (e) 45% of Chechen students are convinced that propaganda of national, religious and racial hatred and strife should be banned; more than half of them have admitted that hatred and strife are rooted in superficial knowledge of the humanist and peaceful nature of Islam. This suggests a conclusion that the greater part of the young people involved in extremist and terrorist groups do not know enough about religion that makes them easy prey for those whose job is to replenish the ranks of fighters against “crusaders and Jews.” This is true: John Esposito, a prominent American student of political processes going on in Islam, has pointed out that members of extremist and terrorist groups know next to nothing about the true Islam and its fundamental values.

Further studies of what young people think about extremism and terrorism, their involvement in social acts and their specific commentaries will help us assess their philosophy, inner convictions, the degree of tolerance and their understanding of possible mobilization of ethnic and cultural resources, as well as the society and the state for active opposition.

¹⁰ *Religiozno-politicheskiy ekstremizm: sushchnost, prichiny, formy proiavleniia, puti preodolenia*, ed. by Prof. M.Ia. Iakhiaev, Parnas, Moscow, 2011, p. 196.

¹¹ Z.M. Abdulagatov, “O pokazateliakh ekstremizma i terrorizma v Respublike Daghestan,” in: *Strategia i taktika protivodeystvia vyzovam ekstremizma i terrorizma v Rossii na sovremennom etape: Materialy Vserossyskoy nauchno-prakticheskoy konferentsii (18-19 November, 2016 g.)*, ed. by Prof. M.Ia. Iakhiaev, ALEF, Makhachkala, 2016, pp. 196-197.

Contents of
the *Central Asia and the Caucasus* Issues
Volume 19, 2018

Issue 1

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Konstantin Syroyezhkin, Svetlana Kozhirova.</i> EVOLUTION OF CONTEMPORARY CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY: LEGACY AND INNOVATION	7
<i>Sergey Ryazantsev, Roman Manshin, Zafar Vazirov, Mirzokosim Karimov.</i> CHINA'S INFLUENCE ON THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE CENTRAL ASIAN STATES: METHODS AND CONSEQUENCES	18
<i>Erbolat Sergazin, Zhanar Esimova, Aygul Kozhakhmetova, Manshuk Mukasheva.</i> SECURITY STRATEGY AS A FACTOR IN THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN	26
<i>Sergey Zhiltsov, Dmitriy Slisovskiy, Nadezhda Shulenina, Elena Markova.</i> SHAPING NATIONAL IDENTITIES IN CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES: RESULTS, PROBLEMS, PROSPECTS	38
<i>Ali Salgiriev, Maret Betilmerzaeva, Magomed Soltamuradov, Magomed-Emi Shamsuev.</i> SPECIFIC INTERESTS OF THE NORTH CAUCASIAN ELITES AS A CONFLICT POTENTIAL	51
<i>Leyla Arapkhanova.</i> AN ANALYSIS OF THE ADDRESSES DELIVERED BY THE HEAD OF THE REPUBLIC OF INGUSHETIA YUNUS-BEK EVKUROV BEFORE THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY IN 2010-2017: PROSPECTS OF GROWTH AND OVERCOMING THREATS	59
<i>Maret Betilmerzaeva, Ali Salgiriev, Magomed Soltamuradov, Vakha Gaziev.</i> SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES OF INSTITUTIONAL TRUST IN CHECHEN SOCIETY	66
<i>Mukhtar Senggirbay.</i> SUFI IDEOLOGY, SHAMANIST RITUALS: HOW RELIGIOUS GROUPS BECAME POPULAR IN KAZAKHSTAN?	77
<i>Layla Khusnutdinova, Ramil Istamgalin, Evgeniy Efimenko, Liana Sadykova.</i> IN SEARCH OF A CONFESSIONAL COMPROMISE IN THE "RELIGION-SOCIETY-THE STATE" CONTEXT	83

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Svetlana Lyausheva, Irina Karabulatova, Zuriyet Zhade, Nadezhda Ilyinova.</i> THE ISLAMIC UMMAH OF RUSSIA AND ISIS: ISLAMIC RADICALISM IN THE TURKIC-SPEAKING REGIONS	90
Issue 2	
<i>Eldar Ismailov, Vladimer Papava.</i> CAUCASIAN TANDEM AND THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE	7
<i>Sergey Zhiltsov, Lidiya Parkhomchik, Dmitriy Slisovskiy, Nikolay Medvedev.</i> CENTRAL ASIA TODAY: A NEW WAVE OF WATER AND ENERGY COOPERATION AND PIPELINE ARCHITECTURE	18
<i>Sergey Ryazantsev, Galina Osadchaia, Igor Seleznev, Elena Pismennaya.</i> WORKFORCE MOBILITY IN THE EAEU: TRENDS, BARRIERS, PROSPECTS	28
<i>Ketevan Kikilashvili.</i> THE POST-SOVIET SOUTH: OIL, INNOVATION, AND SCIENCE	36
<i>Ali Salgiriev, Maret Betilmerzaeva, Magomed-Emi Shamsuev, Abbas Osmaev.</i> POLITICAL MYTHS IN THE SYMBOLIC SPACE OF RUSSIAN ELITES: FEDERAL AND REGIONAL ASPECTS (A NORTH CAUCASIAN CASE STUDY)	49
<i>Elena Zavyalova, Nikolay Studenikin, Evgeniya Starikova.</i> BUSINESS PARTICIPATION IN IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIALLY ORIENTED SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL ASIA AND THE CAUCASUS REGION	56
<i>Maret Betilmerzaeva, Hasan Dzutsev, Magomed-Emi Shamsuev, Ali Salgiriev.</i> COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE SOCIOPOLITICAL SITUATION IN THE CHECHEN REPUBLIC (BASED ON SOCIOLOGICAL DATA)	64
<i>Louisa Rykova.</i> THE RELIGIOUS AXIOLOGICAL SPHERE IN THE SOUTH OF RUSSIA	75
Issue 3	
<i>Sergey Zhiltsov.</i> THE POST-SOVIET SPACE: PREVIOUS DEVELOPMENT AND A NEW CONFIGURATION	7
<i>Gulnaz Kuramayeva, Saniya Nurdavletova.</i> CHINA'S SOFT POWER METHODS APPLIED IN CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES (THE CASE OF KAZAKHSTAN)	17

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Ulviyya Aydin.</i> THE EUROPEAN UNION-CENTRAL ASIA RELATIONS: KAZAKHSTAN AS A LEADING ACTOR	25
<i>Marat Baypakov, Akhan Bizhanov, Rustem Kadyrzhanov.</i> THE PARTY SYSTEM AS AN ELEMENT OF POLITICAL MODERNIZATION OF KAZAKHSTAN	34
<i>Yerkinay Ongarova, Aidarbek Amirbek, Azhar Serikkaliyeva, Makpal Anlamassova.</i> KAZAKHSTAN DIPLOMACY IN DEFINING THE LEGAL STATUS OF THE CASPIAN SEA: 1991-2017	49
<i>Malik Augan, Tolganay Ormysheva, Fatima Kukeeva, Duman Zhekenov.</i> KAZAKHSTAN AND CHINA: THE PROBLEM OF TRANSBOUNDARY RIVERS	63
<i>Roza Nurtazina, Petr Tokar, Sviatoslav Ruban.</i> UKRAINE AND KAZAKHSTAN: TOGETHER IN THE GREAT SILK ROAD PROJECT	73
<i>Youngmin Chu, Kalamkas Yessimova, Botagoz Rakisheva.</i> SOUTH KOREA AND KAZAKHSTAN: PARTICULARITIES OF CULTURAL AND HUMANITARIAN COOPERATION	82

Issue 4

<i>Sergey Ryazantsev, Munira Akmalova, Mirzokosim Karimov, Zafar Vazirov.</i> METHODS OF ENSURING NATIONAL SECURITY OF CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES UNDER NEW GEOPOLITICAL CONDITIONS	7
<i>Lasha Tchantouridze.</i> THE BLACK AND THE CASPIAN: RUSSIA'S WARM SEAS	16
<i>Aliya Zhansautova, Yelena Nechayeva, Meruert Kazbekova.</i> POLITICAL RISKS IN ENSURING WATER SECURITY. CENTRAL ASIAN STATES' EXPERIENCE: KAZAKHSTAN, TAJIKISTAN, UZBEKISTAN	24
<i>Nikolay Borisov.</i> FROM PRESIDENTIALISM TO PARLIAMENTARISM: PARLIAMENTARIZATION OF GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS IN KYRGYZSTAN, GEORGIA AND ARMENIA	35
<i>Zhalgas Adilbayev, Svetlana Kozhirova.</i> TRADE, ECONOMIC, AND INVESTMENT COOPERATION BETWEEN KAZAKHSTAN AND ARMENIA: STATUS AND PROSPECTS	47
<i>Sergey Zhiltsov.</i> UZBEKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY SETS OBJECTIVES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CENTRAL ASIA	60
<i>Vakhtang Charaia, Mariam Lashkhi.</i> AN ANALYSIS OF THE MOTIVES UNDERLYING FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENTS (THE CASE OF GEORGIA)	72

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Aydar Amrebaev, Akhan Bizhanov, Elena Burova.</i> POLITICAL SCIENCE AND SOCIOLOGY ON THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN THE AXIOLOGICAL AND MEANINGFUL SPACE OF KAZAKHSTAN SOCIETY	83
<i>Irina Babich.</i> ISLAMIC VALUES IN EVERYDAY LIFE OF NORTH CAUCASIANS IN FRANCE	97
<i>Vakhit Akaev, Murat Keligov, Boryat Nanaeva.</i> INTERPRETATIONS OF TERRORISM: THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL APPROACHES	106
