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in the next three issues will discuss:***

- ***Eurasia: Politics Today***
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TEN YEARS OF THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP: EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

The year 2019 marks the tenth anniversary of the inauguration of the Eastern Partnership program that targets the six South Caucasian and Eastern Europe countries that border the European Union: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. The program's main objective was to bring the eastern neighbors closer to the European Union, transfer good practices, develop trade, economy and political arrangements and to help eastern partners in their democratic transitions and in implementing reforms. The main aim of this article is to present the effects of the program on EaP countries and on the European Union's policy towards the East, as well as the main determinants of this program implementa-

tion— both internal and external. The author analyzes the most important external factors in EaP countries' foreign policy, especially Russian policy towards the former Soviet Union and EU's eastern policy in order to point out the basic dilemma and challenge for the EaP countries' foreign policy: The European Union's offer vs Russia's offer. The author also investigates the most important internal factors that determine each country's approach to the EaP program and the probability of its implementation. First and foremost, these factors include the interests of the ruling elites of the EaP countries that are determined by political calculation, social support and unresolved internal conflicts that affect regional relations.

KEYWORDS: *Eastern Partnership, European Union, Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine.*

Introduction

The Eastern Partnership project was established following the Russian-Georgian war of August 2008, which revealed the scale of challenges and threats present in Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus, and significantly increased the support for the Eastern Partnership idea, since the need to develop a wider commitment beyond the eastern borders of the European Union and a relevant EU policy became urgent at that time. On the other hand, it was the time of the financial crisis and crisis within the Eurozone, which negatively affected the attitude of the member states towards neighborhood policy and expansion, and subsequently receded into the background in the face of the European Union's own internal problems. In 2009, on the initiative of Poland and Sweden, the Eastern Partnership program was launched within the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy. It targeted six countries formed after the collapse of the Soviet Union: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. The program's main objective was to establish a common area of shared democracy, prosperity, stability and increased cooperation. The decade of existence of the Eastern Partnership program is a sufficiently long period to draw certain conclusions in regard to the achievements of the European Union's eastern policy, prompting reflection on the purposefulness, effectiveness and efficiency of the activities undertaken within its framework. The main research question is: What are the effects of the EaP program for individual countries covered by it? Other research questions can also be posed, i.e., Did all EaP countries benefit from program to the same extent? Can the program leaders be determined, and if so, in what areas and why? What were and are the most important factors in the program's implementation? What are the prospects of the program? How can the policy be made truly efficient in the context of the growing differentiation among the eastern partners?

Objectives of the Eastern Partnership and their Implementation

Eastern European countries have become the European Union's immediate neighbors after its expansion in 2004. That geopolitical change led to the introduction of a new instrument in EU policy—the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), which included 16 Eastern European and Southern European countries.¹ The Union started to recognize this region as its immediate neighbor, resulting in the need for the Union to increase political and financial involvement there. At the same time, Eastern European countries have been separated in EU policy from Russia, which did not participate in the ENP. This significantly altered the EU's perception of the region: it was no longer treated as

¹ See: Communication from the European Commission, European Neighborhood Policy, Strategy Paper, 12 May, 2004, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/2004_communication_from_the_commission_-_european_neighbourhood_policy_-_strategy_paper.pdf], 4 January, 2020.

the former Soviet Union, where Russia played a key role, but as the neighbors of the Union, with the prospect of a rapprochement with the EU.

Maintaining a common framework and communication standards in a diverse neighborhood in the East and in the South was a difficult task. As a result, two regional dimensions of the ENP were defined: the Union for the Mediterranean, covering ten North African and Middle Eastern countries in 2008 and the Eastern Partnership (EaP) for Eastern European and South Caucasian countries in 2009.² It was also facilitated by internal competition between EU member states committed to increasing EU involvement in the south or in the east. EU stressed the fact that the EaP initiative is not directed against Russia.³

The main goal of the EaP was “to create the necessary conditions to accelerate political association and further economic integration between the European Union and interested partner countries.”⁴ The offer of the European Union, which is addressed to the Eastern Partnership countries, includes the opportunity to sign association agreements, create a so-called Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, as well as the liberalization of the visa system or abolition of the visa regime, which is to become a significant modernization impulse for EaP countries according to European politicians. Within the Eastern Partnership, six countries covered by it are offered:

- (1) Association Agreement of the given partner country with the European Union;
- (2) Establishing a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) between the European Union and individual countries covered by the program;
- (3) Deepening cooperation in the control of common borders, related to the desire to establish a visa-free regime for the citizens of both sides in the long-term, and shorten the time to the liberalization of the visa system;
- (4) Cooperation in the field of energy security;
- (5) European Union’s support of the economic and social development of partner countries.⁵

The Eastern Partnership is not an expansion strategy, it is an instrument bringing the partner countries closer to the EU in the economic sphere, but not politically (as it will not lead to future EU membership). Deepening relations with the European Union depend on the partners’ progress in introducing such values as democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and in implementing the free market economy principles. Thus, the Eastern Partnership is based on conditionality, that is, the diversification of the European Union’s policy towards individual states depending on the scale of their ambitions, political will and opportunities to act.

The initiative is a manifestation of the EU’s operational policy of “soft power,” and is meant to be a significant impulse for modernization. The Eastern Partnership encourages multilateral projects which, through financial assistance, aim for economic and political changes to the rules relevant in the European Union. Cooperation takes place through institutions such as Euronest, a parliamentary assembly of deputies delegated from the European Parliament and parliaments of countries participating in the Eastern Partnership, Civil Society Forum and summits with heads of state and government (held once every two years) or ministers (held annually).

² See: E. Korosteleva, “The Eastern Partnership Initiative: A New Opportunity for the Neighbors?” *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 2011, pp. 1-21.

³ See: M Łapczyński, “The European Union’s Eastern Partnership: Chances and Perspectives,” *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2009, p. 155.

⁴ *Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit*, Council of the European Union, Prague, 7 May, 2009, available at [https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/31797/2009_eap_declaration.pdf], 4 January, 2020.

⁵ See: Available at [https://eeas.europa.eu/diplomatic-network/eastern-partnership/419/eastern-partnership_en], 11 November, 2019.

So far, six Eastern Partnership summits have been held in:

- (1) Prague, 7 May, 2009
- (2) Warsaw, 29-30 September, 2011
- (3) Vilnius, 28 November, 2013
- (4) Riga, 21-22 May, 2015
- (5) Brussels, 24 November, 2017
- (6) Brussels, 13-14 May, 2019.

Up until now, association agreements with the European Union have been signed by Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. Citizens of these countries can already enter the EU without visas, and the commercial part of the agreements is gradually being implemented. Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine: Association Agreements and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements concluded in 2014 have already entered into force, giving a new dimension to mutual relations. Armenia: in 2017, on the occasion of the Fifth Eastern Partnership Summit, a comprehensive and enhanced partnership agreement was signed. Azerbaijan: in 2017, negotiations on a new comprehensive contract have started. Belarus: The EU is deepening its critical engagement with Belarus through carefully balanced bilateral actions.⁶ As of now, due to many reservations about the Belarusian authorities' observance of human rights and civil liberties, Belarus has limited access to the financial projects envisaged in the Eastern Partnership, participates in the group's work only at ministerial or ambassador level, and members of the Belarusian parliament are not present in the Euronest parliamentary assembly.

From the EU perspective, the Eastern Partnership has made 10 notable achievements over the last decade:

- (1) The EU has concluded new political and economic bilateral agreements;
- (2) More trade and investment opportunities emerged between the EU member states and the six Eastern partner countries;
- (3) More diversified and vibrant economies emerged across the region, which attract investments and create jobs;
- (4) Better transport links and infrastructure;
- (5) Visa-free regimes have been put in place between the EU and Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova;
- (6) Greater energy resilience and efficiency through decreasing energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions;
- (7) Support for young people, particularly in terms of developing their skills and fostering their employability;
- (8) More accessible and convenient public services for citizens across the region;
- (9) Easier access to a high-capacity broadband internet network for 2 million scientists, academics and students;
- (10) Greater awareness of the EU among residents of the Eastern partner countries.⁷

⁶ See: Available at [<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/pl/policies/eastern-partnership/>], 17 April, 2019 (in Polish).

⁷ See: "Top 10 Achievements of the Eastern Partnership in the Last Ten Years," Brussels, 10 May, 2019, available at [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/factsheet_eap_10_years_2019.pdf], 20 January, 2020.

Internal and External Determinants of the EaP Implementation. EU's Offer vs Russia's Offer

“Ten years after the EaP was launched, it seems fair to say that the neighborhood has not experienced a steady increase in prosperity, democracy and stability”⁸. We can point out and discuss the main internal and external determinants that have shaped the EU's relations with the EaP countries.

The most important external factors in the development of the Eastern Partnership program include the policy of the Russian Federation, which is perceived as the main actor in the post-Soviet space, and the policy enacted by the European Union. The basic dilemma and challenge for EaP countries' foreign policy is the EU's offer vs Russia's offer. In 2008, former EU Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso declared that in comparison to the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), the new eastern policy would be a significant “step change,” and would project EU's soft power into the former Soviet Union. In president's opinion, the Eastern Partnership “shows what could be called the power of soft power, the ability of the EU to attract others and bring about changes in societies.”⁹ If soft power is to be understood in the classic sense, as “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion and payment,¹⁰ then the Eastern Partnership “is supposedly a medium for such attraction, and for co-opting the eastern neighbors around the EU's agenda”¹¹.

In European policy, the post-Soviet space, and especially the countries of the Southern Caucasus (Azerbaijan and Georgia) were considered a source of energy that provides an alternative to Russian gas and oil, contributing to supply diversification. There were plans to build the so-called Southern Gas Corridor (after the Nabucco pipeline project was abandoned in 2012), in which Azerbaijan played the role of gas supplier (rich deposits of the Caspian Sea), and Georgia as one of the transit countries.¹² That project has become a part of the game between Russia and the EU, especially following the crisis in EU-Russia relations over Ukraine. Another field of play between the EU and Russia was the so-called colored revolutions in the former Soviet Union, including the Revolution of Roses in Georgia in 2003, Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004 and Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan in 2005. Russia perceived the support of EU politicians as interference in the internal policy of those countries, and the EU intruding in the Russian sphere of influence.

The situation within the European Union itself poses a problem in program implementation and development. This is due to several crises in which the Union has found itself in recent years, and, among others, the financial crisis in the eurozone, migration crisis, Brexit and the debate on the future of the Union and the process of deepening integration. All of the above result in a decrease in the EU countries interest in foreign policy, especially in the Eastern neighborhood and differing attitudes of individual member states.

Russia's policy presents a huge challenge for the EU policy in the Eastern neighborhood. Russia has been perceiving the Eastern Partnership as an initiative that impedes the economic and geopolitical interests of Russia in the post-Soviet space. Moscow seeks to include its neighbors in its

⁸ S. Saari, S. Secrieru, “Introduction. Doom or Bloom for the Eastern Partnership,” in: *The Eastern Partnership A Decade On*, ed. by S. Saari, S. Secrieru, European Union Institute for Security Studies, Paris, 2019, pp. 5-7.

⁹ P. Runner, “Brussels to Project ‘Soft Power’ in Post-Soviet Zone,” *EUObserver*, 3 December, 2008.

¹⁰ See: J.S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs, New York, 2004, pp. 191.

¹¹ K.L.G. Nielsen, M. Vilson, “The Eastern Partnership: Soft Power Strategy or Policy Failure?” *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 2014, pp. 1-19.

¹² See: A. Jarosiewicz, “The Southern Gas Corridor. The Azerbaijani-Turkish Project Becomes Part of the Game between Russia and the EU,” *Point of View*, 20 August, 2015, available at [<https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/point-view/2015-08-20/southern-gas-corridor-azerbaijani-turkish-project-becomes-part>], 30 December, 2019.

sphere of influence, so it makes an effort to prevent former Soviet republics from forming a rapport with the European Union and to force them into the Russian project of reintegration of the former Soviet Union in the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union. Russia continues to use existing political and economic relations (including energy dependence) and is willing to provide unconditional financial support. The most important instruments of Russian policy towards the so-called “near abroad,” as the post-Soviet space is defined, include:

- (1) soft power—the influence of the Russian language or the Orthodox religion, implementation of Putin’s doctrine of “*Russkij mir*” (Russian world);
- (2) military (preserving the so-called frozen conflicts);
- (3) political (reintegration of the post-Soviet space);
- (4) economic (gas crises, food embargoes).

In 2014, President Vladimir Putin presented his vision of Russia’s foreign policy towards the post-Soviet space as an outline of the conceptual foundation for Russian dominance in the former Soviet Union—Russia is the center of a special, spiritual and civilizational community referred to as the “Russian world.” “That community takes the form of concentric circles, the first one of which is based on the close ties,

- first and foremost, between Russia and Ukraine, and
- secondly, with Belarus.”¹³

The new doctrine is based on several principles of Russia’s policy:

- (1) Russia is the guarantor and defender of the rights of Russian-speaking people;
- (2) “Good neighborly relations” is a precondition of Moscow’s recognition of independence and territorial integrity;
- (3) Use of force is a legitimate way to defend compatriots.

Russian policy towards the post-Soviet space is mainly based on the use of “soft” measures such as media propaganda, pro-Russian political movements’ activities, cooperation with the Orthodox Church, building up ties between people and businesses in order to foster anti-Western and pro-Russian attitudes in the societies of former Soviet republics.

Violation of Ukraine’s territorial integrity in 2014 by annexing Crimea and supporting separatists in the eastern Ukraine has shown that Russia can use its military to implement its policy of domination in the post-Soviet space. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, each military conflict in the Southern Caucasus has erupted, continued and was put on hold with the active and decisive participation of Russia. Political and military domination is the main pillar of Moscow’s policy in this region, which no one has been able to successfully contest.¹⁴ Open attempts to undermine the dominant position of Russia by Turkey, the U.S. and the EU have been either averted or unsuccessful, despite their growing ambitions and interests. A vivid example was the failure of Georgia’s integration with NATO (the war of 2008). Russia, which has been continually active in the security sphere, could use its forces in the so-called “frozen conflicts,” effectively blocking the progress of EaP countries’ European integration. In none of the four regional conflicts (Abkhazia and South Ossetia in

¹³ M. Menkiszak, “The Putin Doctrine: The Formation of a Conceptual Framework for Russian Dominance in the Post-Soviet Area,” *OSW Commentary*, 27 March, 2014, available at [<https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2014-03-27/putin-doctrine-formation-a-conceptual-framework-russian>], 8 January, 2020.

¹⁴ See: A. Jarosiewicz, K. Strachota, “Nagorno-Karabakh—Conflict Unfreezing”, *OSW Commentary*, 26 October, 2011, available at [<https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2011-10-26/nagorno-karabakh-conflict-unfreezing>], 8 January, 2020.

Georgia, Armenian-Azeri conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistrian conflict) has the situation improved; on the contrary, all have remained highly volatile. Russia, whose troops are present in the conflict region, remains the only entity capable of playing the situation out in its favor, and aims to destabilize the internal situation in the EaP countries. In 2014 and 2015, treaties of alliance and integration between Russia and Abkhazia and South Ossetia have been signed as a result of the Georgian-Russian war in August 2008. They sanctioned the effective incorporation of both entities into Russia, while maintaining the façade of statehood. From Moscow's point of view, the signing of those treaties (Russia recognized Abkhazia's and South Ossetia's independence in 2008, however, Moscow has not decided on complete annexation) ends the Georgian-Ossetian and Georgian-Abkhazian conflicts. The weak reaction of the Georgian authorities to the signing of the agreements testifies to a sense of powerlessness in the face of Russia's actions and the lack of faith of the elite and society in the possibility of regaining control over South Ossetia and Abkhazia in the foreseeable future, or in the help of the West in achieving this goal.¹⁵ The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh remains volatile and the resumption of military operations cannot be ruled out (a short-term thawing of the conflict occurred in 2016, during the four-day war in Nagorno-Karabakh), as evidenced by the fact that the armament buildup, especially on the part of Azerbaijan, and the number of border incidents has also increased.¹⁶ Russia is likely to actively participate in each attempt to change the status quo in Karabakh, if any are made.

During the last thirty years (Transnistria "declared independence" from Moldova in September 1990) no real progress has been made towards the resolution of the frozen Transnistrian conflict. On the contrary, Transnistria has effectively consolidated its unrecognized statehood, and Russia preserves a continuous military presence in the republic. In the event of real rapprochement between Chisinau and the European Union, which could threaten the geopolitical interests of Tiraspol's main protector, Russia, the risk of the conflict escalation could increase, and Russia could use it to block the progress of Moldova's European integration. Russia retains all of its current tools of influence on the Moldovan political scene, which mainly includes: supplies of energy resources, access to the Russian market for Moldovan agricultural products, the influence of Russian media, policy towards the Moldovan diaspora in Russia, corruption schemes using Russian business and the potential exacerbation of the dispute around Transnistria.¹⁷

Another type of instruments in Russian policy are the economic energy-related measures—gas supplies, gas crises and food embargoes. Due to their geographic locations, Ukraine and Belarus were of key importance in Russian energy policy as transit countries, but after several gas crises Russia began to implement projects that bypass the current transit countries, such as Nord Stream I, South Stream (ultimately withdrew from this project) and Turkish Stream.

When it comes to internal factors that determine the participants' attitudes to the program and the chances of its implementation, the most important are the interests of the ruling elite of the EaP countries. They are based on political calculation, social backing and regional relations. Carrying out structural reforms in EaP countries is difficult due to internal factors that inhibit changes, such as oligarchic connections, corruption, and the nature of authoritarian regimes. In certain EaP countries, the dominant foreign policy vector is pro-Russian, which may be a result of various conditions: political, economic and social. Armenia and Belarus are members of the Eurasian Economic Union.

¹⁵ See: M. Falkowski, "Russia is Absorbing South Ossetia," *Analyses*, 25 March, 2015, available at [<https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2015-03-25/russia-absorbing-south-ossetia>], 8 January, 2020.

¹⁶ See: R. Sadowski, "Partnership in Times of Crisis. Challenges for the Eastern European Countries' Integration with Europe", *Point of View*, 18 July, 2013, available at [<https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/point-view/2013-07-18/partnership-times-crisis-challenges-eastern-european-countries>], 4 January, 2020.

¹⁷ See: J. Strzelecki, "Changing Russian Tactics towards Moldova," *Analyses*, 25 June, 2019, available at [<https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/node/27340>], 8 January, 2020.

Armenia has an unresolved conflict with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, and a significant number of its citizens rely for sustenance on money transfers from family members working in Russia. There are new hopes for reforms after Pashinyan's revolution¹⁸ and the My Step coalition's victory in early parliamentary elections in Armenia in 2018.¹⁹

Azerbaijani elites are rather skeptical about EU policy towards the former Soviet Union and prospects of its economic integration with the European Union. Within Azerbaijan, support for the EaP is difficult to secure because of the perceived lack of EU's support for the country's territorial integrity (European Union has avoided taking sides in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict). Therefore, the EaP is predominantly seen as a means of asserting the country's role as a major regional and international energy player and obtaining the EU's support for the development of its strategic energy infrastructure.²⁰

Moldova's foreign policy was characterized by perpetual instability and absence of a distinct long-term vision. Chisinau's international activities were determined, on the one hand, by the need to find a balance between Russia and the West, which involved periodically intensifying or loosening ties with one or the other side as needed. When in 2009 a coalition of four parties that supported integration with the EU came to power in Moldova, it made European integration the main objective of its policy. It stemmed from their desire to curb Russia's political, cultural and economic influence on Moldova.²¹ That was one of the reasons why Moldova was open to the Eastern Partnership program and had high expectations. Several years later, when the anticipated results were not achieved, the support for the idea of integration began to decline. The pro-European coalition had not been able to restructure the Moldovan state, which was still largely based on Soviet models, eradicate the endemic corruption that affected all spheres of life, or achieve a tangible improvement of the economic situation. Yet another internal factor is the Transnistrian problem. The existence of Transnistria in its present form means that Chisinau is effectively unable to control more than 30 percent of the total length of its borders (around 450 km), which creates the perfect conditions for smuggling. The protracted Transnistrian problem has led to the permanent presence of Russian armed forces in the territory that legally belongs to Moldova, and it is used as an argument against possible military cooperation between Moldova and its Western partners. Criticized by the EU for the absence of reforms and fully subordinated to the oligarchs, Chisinau is only interested in strengthening those elements of cooperation with the EU that give Moldova (and its political elites) tangible financial benefits.²²

Kiev is pushing for the formulation of new, ambitious program goals, and above all, strives intensely to obtain a guarantee of membership prospects. In the beginning, Ukrainian officials expressed their dissatisfaction with the fact that the EaP places them in the same category as all other EaP partners without regard to their experience or aspirations. Besides, the Ukrainian crisis of 2013/2014 (civil protests against president Yanukovich's regime—Revolution of Dignity, annexation of Crimea, the hybrid war waged by Russia against Ukraine in Donbass) presented a huge challenge

¹⁸ See: A. Miarka, "Velvet Revolution in Armenia and its Influence on State Policy: Selected Aspects," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 20, Issue 4, 2019, available at [https://www.ca-c.org/journal/2019/journal_eng/cac-04/04.shtml], 27 January, 2020.

¹⁹ See: W. Górecki, "Armenia: Pashinyan's Bloc Wins the Election", *Analyses*, 10 December, 2018, available at [<https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2018-12-10/armenia-pashinyans-bloc-wins-election>], 15 January, 2020.

²⁰ See: K. Wolczuk, "Perceptions of, and Attitudes towards, the Eastern Partnership amongst the Partner Countries' Political Elites," *Eastern Partnership Review*, No. 5, 2011, p. 6.

²¹ See: K. Całus, "The Unfinished State. 25 Years of Independent Moldova," *OSW Studies*, 14 December, 2016, available at [https://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/prace_59_ang_25_years_moldova_net.pdf], 8 January, 2020.

²² See: K. Klysiński, T. Iwański, K. Całus, "Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus on the Eastern Partnership," *Analyses*, 22 November, 2017, available at [<https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2017-11-22/ukraine-moldova-and-belarus-eastern-partnership>], 15 January, 2020.

for the EaP.²³ Significant progress in the reform process has been made by Ukraine despite extremely challenging conditions, including an ongoing conflict in the east of the country. Much work is still required, which includes the fight against corruption and improvement of the business climate. Ukrainian citizens support Europeanisation and expect more effective reform implementation from the government.²⁴

The attractiveness of the EaP for Belarus stems from its geopolitical significance as a counterbalance to Belarus's dependence on Russia. Belarus sees the EaP membership as a pragmatic step towards dialog with the EU.²⁵ In itself, the EaP does not offer sufficient financial incentives to Belarus to embark upon political and economic reforms.²⁶ It should be emphasized, however, that the Eastern Partnership is the first initiative that conditionally integrates the previously isolated Belarus into the European circle and outlines the prospect of its cooperation with the European Union. Over the years, the Lukashenko regime has been and still is a barrier to the democratization process in Belarus, and it is difficult to predict progress in rapprochement with the EU. Nevertheless, the Ukrainian crisis pushed Minsk to strengthen the European vector in its foreign policy and to seek the normalization of EU-Belarus relations.²⁷

In the case of Georgia, the positive effects of the EaP are apparent in the economic sphere and in the tourist industry, since mobility has increased and Georgia has become increasingly more connected with Europe. Georgia has been one of the most successful partners within EaP initiative, achieving considerable success in implementing policies and following the European Union integration path ever since the Rose Revolution in 2003.²⁸ There is still, however, a number of obstacles for Georgia on its path to the West, especially associated with Russian policy towards Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Conclusions

Since the launch of the European Neighborhood Policy in 2004, the situation in the spheres of key importance for the EU, such as democratization, free-market transformations, European integration, political stability and regional security, has not improved significantly.²⁹ The parties involved in the EaP program are more concerned with maintaining the dialog than with achieving specific results or progress in the process of European integration. This shows the limited possibilities of the EU's ability to influence its Eastern neighbors. Due to the gap between the expectations of the partner countries and their elites on the one hand, and what the EU has to offer on the other, the EaP countries have shown only limited commitment to integration with the EU and transformation in accordance with EU models. These are long-term processes that may produce tangible benefits only if their ultimate aim was clearly defined, which is not the case—the Eastern Partnership initiative is not the same as the EU accession process.

²³ See: E. Tsybulenko, S. Pakhomenko, "The Ukrainian Crisis as a Challenge for the Eastern Partnership," in: *Political and Legal Perspectives of the EU Eastern Partnership Policy*, ed. by T. Kerikmäe, A. Chochia, Springer International Publishing, Switzerland 2016, pp. 167-168.

²⁴ See: J. Kobzova, "Can the Eastern Partnership Work?" *European View*, Vol. 11, 2012, pp. 209-2014.

²⁵ See: E. Korosteleva, "Change or Continuity: Is the Eastern Partnership an Adequate Tool for the European Neighborhood?" *International Relations*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 2011, pp. 243-262.

²⁶ See: K. Wolczuk, op. cit.

²⁷ See: S. Saari, S. Secieru, "Executive Summary," in: *The Eastern Partnership A Decade On*, pp. 2-4.

²⁸ See: A. Chochia, J. Popjanovski, "Change of Power and its Influence on Country's Europeanization Process. Case Study: Georgia," in: *Political and Legal Perspectives of the EU Eastern Partnership Policy*, p. 197.

²⁹ See: R. Sadowski, op. cit.

The cost of rapprochement with the European Union may be too big for the political elites of EaP countries, and the benefits will not be able to compensate for the losses. The challenges and goals of shaping the EaP offer for every country are very diverse. They differ according to the degree of each state's political will to carry out reforms, which does not depend on whether a country has signed an EU association agreement. For instance, Armenia is currently undergoing reforms without an agreement, while in Moldova, a country associated with the EU, there is a regress in this matter.

There is a growing differentiation between EaP countries' ambitions in their relations with the EU. There are the three countries that have stated their wish to become members of the EU, and three others, which have chosen very different paths for a variety of reasons.³⁰ Two groups of countries can be distinguished according to their advancement in the implementation of the EaP program:

- (1) The frontrunners are Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, the three EaP members that have already achieved the three most important goals, having signed association agreements with the European Union, agreements on the free trade area and visa agreements. So the natural question is—what's next? What can and should the European Union offer these countries next?³¹
- (2) Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus, with their lukewarm view of the EU and their Russia-oriented foreign policy, have not achieved any EaP goals, and are involved in Russian integration projects in the post-Soviet space (Armenia and Belarus are members of Eurasian Economic Union). Azerbaijan is more interested in economic contacts with the EU and in the transportation of its energy resources to Europe. Given the difficult geopolitical situation, Armenia was forced to abandon economic integration with the EU in favor of joining the Russian reintegration project for the former Soviet Union. The authoritarian governing style of the Belarus leader Alexander Lukashenko, and his recent attempts to balance between Brussels and Moscow suggest that the EU needs to develop an individual approach to Minsk.

The EaP program has brought varied and ambivalent results for different countries. There are significant differences between the six partnership countries in their approach to and assessment of the program. For Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, the Eastern Partnership is a stage on the road to EU membership, but without clear perspectives, while for the other three countries it is a chance to develop economic cooperation.

The Eastern Partnership initiative has created a framework and mechanisms of cooperation with the European Union. Still, countries within the EaP have not yet achieved significant progress in modernization or reform implementation, none of the six EaP countries achieved the anticipated progress in the four areas that are considered essential by the Union: democratization, free market transformation, political stability and regional security. The effectiveness of the support programs financed by the EU and their positive impact on the situation in partner countries is dubious. From the EU perspective, internal developments in partner countries raise a number of concerns. On the one hand, positive examples of changes do exist. On the other hand, the EU disapproves of the deteriorating democracy. The partner countries are also disappointed with EU policy. They are unable to bear the substantial costs of transformation and integration with the EU, especially since the ultimate objective of such integration has not been clearly defined.

EaP countries are trapped between the EU and Russia. It seems that only a clear perspective of EU membership would be able to persuade some of the EaP countries to clearly indicate the Western course of their foreign policy. Otherwise they will fall into the arms of Russia.

³⁰ See: *Political and Legal Perspectives of the EU Eastern Partnership Policy*, p. 278.

³¹ See: M. Falkowski, "EU-Georgia: Visas Abolished—What Next?" *Analyses*, 29 march, 2017, available at [<https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2017-03-29/eu-georgia-visas-abolished-what-next>], 18 November, 2019.

Despite some pessimistic forecasts of the future of the Eastern Partnership, the initiative is already an established and active component of the European Neighborhood Policy, and EU is unlikely to abandon it or to try to replace it with some other means of cooperation in the East.

KAZAKH-TURKISH LYCEUMS: PROMOTION OF GÜLENISM IN KAZAKHSTAN

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ABSTRACT

Today, education has come to the fore in international relations as an important factor of cooperation between states. Ankara uses it as a “soft power” instrument to promote the ideas of Turkic unity and cultural closeness of the Turkic world.

The Kazakh-Turkish lyceums (KTLs) opened in the Republic of Kazakhstan on the initiative of the presidents Nursultan Nazarbayev and Turgut Özal occupy the leading positions in education in Kazakhstan. After a failed coup d'état in Turkey, Ankara officially asked the states where these lyceums were functioning to close them as part of the network of the Gülen movement Hizmet, which raised and educated its loyal followers.

Open borders and the diversity of educational models can be regarded as a challenge to the local society, which is confronted with a huge variety of ideas and opinions influencing the lives and minds of common people. Education is no longer a sphere of cultural impact ("soft power"), but, rather, has become a factor of state security.

Despite the measures taken by the Kazakhstani authorities, the problem created by the KTLs has not yet been sorted out: the Gülen schools continue to function and promote the ideology of Gülenism among the future members of the political and financial

elite of Kazakhstan. We have analyzed this problem through the lens of the soft power theory and securitization to find an answer to the question of whether the lyceums not only endanger bilateral relations, but also threaten security of the Republic of Kazakhstan in other respects. In other words, should this problem be reviewed to eliminate the risks or should it be disregarded in view of its great importance as a "soft power" instrument and its close connection with economic modernization and social progress.

The ideological components, rather than the educational programs per se are raising doubts: loyalty to the Gülen ideology is being instilled in the minds of the future elite and leaders of Kazakhstan. Irrespective of the extent to which the movement is involved in Islamic proselytism and propaganda of Turkism, it negatively affects the processes of national construction, nation's self-identification and formulation of the national idea, social security and stability, religious unity, etc.

KEYWORDS: *Kazakhstan-Turkish relations, education, Kazakh-Turkish lyceums (KTLs), the Gülen movement, securitization, soft power.*

Introduction

In any developed information society, education becomes a strategic resource of the state and its powerful instrument on the international arena. Ankara promotes the idea of Turkic unity and cultural closeness of the Turkic world, and realizes it by contributing to the development of education in Kazakhstan, which is an important factor in cooperation between the two countries.

The network of private Kazakh-Turkish Lyceums (KTLs) appeared in Kazakhstan in the early 1990s with Ankara's support as an important instrument of Turkish soft power in Kazakhstan.

The Turkish contribution to the educational system of Kazakhstan cannot be overestimated; the competitive advantages of the graduates testify to high-quality education, which explains why they are perceived as elite educational establishments in Kazakhstan.

According to official statistics, KTLs currently occupy the top lines in the republic's ratings: In 2017, all KTLs (there is a total of 27 in the country) were among the 100 best schools assessed by the results of the National Testing System (a comprehensive testing system for all college-bound high-school students). All in all, during the years of independence, KTL students accounted for 70-80 percent of Kazakhstan's participants in all international subject competitions. In 2017, 251

out of 1,400 KTL graduates were admitted to the most prestigious Nazarbayev University, which is geared towards Western standards and teaches in English. According to statistics, one-third of 700 first-year students were KTL graduates.¹

Until recently, these schools were perceived as a mutually advantageous mechanism of cooperation between Turkey and Kazakhstan: the former used the KTLs to promote its interests through soft power, while the latter improved its system of education. Everything changed in 2013-2014, when, despite their efficiency and the important role in bilateral cooperation, the lyceums became a stumbling block in the relations between the two countries.

The uncompromising conflict between the Erdoğan government and Fethullah Gülen, a prominent Islamic preacher and head of the informal Hizmet movement, forced the Turkish powers to pressurize the structures connected with it. Ankara could not limit its efforts by the struggle against the local Gülen followers; it tried to control their assets in other countries. As could be expected, it paid particular attention to Turkish schools controlled by the movement, KTLs being no exception.

Ankara considered them a part of the Gülen network, which propagated loyalty to the Gülen movement, and asked other countries through diplomatic channels to close them in their territories. As could be expected, this stirred up a storm of discussions on Kazakhstan's social media. The local powers publicly confirmed that the schools would not be closed; they were supported by the spokesperson of the Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan, who stated that "this prospect is not being discussed today."² The failed military coup of 2016 in Turkey revitalized the subject: the Turkish authorities laid the blame on Gülen's supporters. The KTL issue was revived in Kazakhstan; the government had to clarify its position on the issue and proceed with certain measures in relation to the lyceums.

The fact that the president of Kazakhstan was the first head of state to pay an official visit to Turkey after the attempted coup meant that Kazakhstan supported the policy pursued by Erdoğan and his administration. Nursultan Nazarbayev explained his visit: "I came here to support my brother Erdoğan and the Turkish state."³ As could be expected, the lyceums figured prominently at the talks. At a press conference Nazarbayev stated: "It is not in our interests to take actions against Turkey. We have reached an agreement." He also stated that "Kazakhstan will expel any Turkish teacher linked to an Islamic cleric."⁴ Soon after the visit it was announced that "the 33 Turkish-Kazakh schools in Kazakhstan ... are to be renamed 'Bilim' (Education) Innovative Lyceums."⁵

Despite the measures implemented by the Kazakh authorities, the KTL problem remains on the table: they continue teaching the future political and financial elite of Kazakhstan loyalty to the Gülen ideas.

The Theoretical and Methodological Basis of Our Studies

An analysis of the problems discussed requires a reference to the soft power theory, which its author Joseph Nye defined as the ability to attract and entice, rather than coerce. Education as part of

¹ See: A. Erkebulan, *Povliial li otezd turetskikh uchiteley na kachestvo obrazovania v KTL*, Forbes.kz, 29 May, 2018, available at [https://forbes.kz/process/education/uderjat_planku_1527513459/], 2 February, 2020.

² A. Kosenov, *V Kazakhstane ne budut zakryvat kazakhsko-turetskie litsei*, Tengrinews.kz, 10 April 2014, available at [https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/v-kazahstane-ne-budut-zakryivat-kazahsko-turetskie-litsei-253367/], 2 February, 2020.

³ *Nazarbayev: visit v Turtsiu ia sovershil, chtoby podderzhat moego brata Erdogana*, Nur.kz, 5 August, 2016, available at [<https://www.nur.kz/1212132-nazarbaev-o-poezdke-v-turciyu-etot-vizi.html>], 6 February, 2020.

⁴ T. Gumrukcu, A.J. Yackley, *Kazakhstan to Expel Teachers Linked with Gülen Movement* // Reuters.com, 5 August, 2016, available at [<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-kazakhstan-education/kazakhstan-to-expel-teachers-linked-with-gulen-movement-nazarbayev-idUSKCN10G1PIJ>], 7 February, 2020.

⁵ *Gülen-linked Turkish Schools in Kazakhstan Being Renamed*, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service, 18 October, 2016, available at [<https://www.rferl.org/a/kazakhstan-Gülen-turkish-schools-renamed/28061316.html>], 7 February, 2020.

soft power is a mechanism of communication, an instrument that increases attractiveness and consolidates a country's prestige outside its borders. By offering high-quality knowledge and competencies, as well as progressive educational and research technologies, a state creates an attractive image among the population of other countries. Education and its institutions as part of soft power can serve as instruments of foreign policy interests of one state within another.

Today, when educational models transcend borders, the Kazakhstani society is living amid a variety of ideas and opinions that elude a black-and-white definition as positive or negative factors. This means that the sphere of education should be analyzed not only in the context of its political impact (soft power), but also as a state security factor.

This brings us to a discussion of education from the point of view of whether the state considers the influence of foreign educational institutions a security issue. The elusive nature of the KTLs' ideological activities in Kazakhstan has made them a security issue. The reason is not in their educational programs, rather, it is their ideological impact on the future elite and future leaders of Kazakhstan, which may become loyal followers of the Gülen ideology.

Whether or not a certain issue poses a threat to state security is decided in the course of discussions by the state or the political elite. In the absence of an agreement, the answer can be found in expert discourse designed to identify the risks or signs of latent threats to state security.

The authors have proceeded from the fact that educational services extended to students from outside the state borders are one of the key instruments of propagation of the language, culture and ideas of the country or the movement that provides the services in the first place.

The paper attempts to determine (at the expert opinion level) whether the KTLs that promote Gülen's ideas in Kazakhstan and realize certain ideologically loaded political technologies present risks to the country's security.

The Religious and Political Nature of the Gülen Movement Hizmet

It is highly important to identify the concepts and aims of Gülen's organization because the Kazakhstani people know next to nothing about the Hizmet movement and its activities in Kazakhstan. The real state of affairs is even worse: Kazakhstan's expert community does not know enough about the activities of Gülen and his followers which might negatively affect the quality of analytical support of the state's security policy.

Turkish analyst Soner Çağaptay has described the Gülen organization as "a tight-knit Islamic brotherhood with political ambitions and endowed with a strong, near devotional, attachment to its founder."⁶ Its philosophy relies on the idea of Hizmet ("service" in Turkish); in a wider sense it means religiously motivated services. Gülen and his supporters look at the Hizmet conception through the lens of "pleasing God."⁷

This means that the Hizmet members consider everything done by their organization to be duties of a faithful individual, and teachers of foreign Turkish schools being no exception—they are invariably driven by this factor.

The movement is a hierarchy, in which all and everyone has a role to play. Its ideology presupposes that the members strictly follow instructions from superiors, which makes Hizmet a fairly efficient structure where all decisions are realized fairly promptly.

⁶ S. Çağaptay, *The New Sultan: Erdoğan and the Crisis of Modern Turkey*, I.B. Tauris, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2020, p. 111.

⁷ H. Yavuz, *Toward an Islamic Enlightenment: The Gülen Movement*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2013, p. 80.

Gülenism, which promotes the concept of religion modernization stands apart from many other Muslim movements of the East. Gülen is the follower of a prominent Islamic intellectual Saïd Nursî (1873-1960), who believed that amid a crisis of sorts in the Muslim world Islam should be modernized to become integrated with science.⁸ This explains why Hizmet concentrates on education and educational establishments as a foundation, from which to preach Islamic values.

The quality of knowledge is an important instrument of shaping the “golden generation” of Muslims, who should not only remain loyal to the Turkish Islamic tradition, but be well-educated.⁹

To sum up: on the one hand, the movement is promoting the Turkish version of Islam, on the other, it is building up a dialog with the conventional West.

- First and foremost, the national factor in the organization’s religious teachings is too obvious to be missed, hence the very small number of the Gülen schools in the Arab world.
- Secondly, it has become clear that the Muslims should leave their self-isolation behind, since their integration in the current international processes is too important to be ignored.

In view of the above, Hizmet speaks of itself as a relatively moderate religious teaching—a highly positive characteristic against the background of other Islamic movements that are highly critical of Western values.

The movement is an authoritarian structure on the inside: it functions on strictly hierarchical principles, under which collective decisions are unthinkable and unimaginable. Each of its members must fulfil orders from above.

The image of Hizmet as a moderate movement is positively assessed: its educational establishments function both in countries with Islamic majorities and in the West. Since 1999, Gülen has been living in the United States despite the Turkish authorities’ efforts to extradite him. An extensive network of Turkish schools (160 educational establishments) is functioning in 20 U.S. states.¹⁰ They have no intention of converting American students to Islam: very much in line with the movement’s philosophy, it strives to create a positive image of Turkey and its version of Islam, to make the Gülen movement more attractive in the eyes of followers of other confessions and Western society as a whole.

Gülen’s followers look at their schools as a profitable business; U.S. budget supports their educational establishments with \$150 million annually; just as elsewhere, some of the teachers are Turkish citizens.¹¹ Several years ago American authorities launched regular revisions of the schools suspected of abusing taxpayers’ money.¹² According to *Der Spiegel*, Gülen’s followers regularly donate 10 percent (or even up to 70 percent) of their income to the movement, not always voluntarily.¹³

This means that money plays an important role in the movement’s strategy. It should be said that by informally connecting people, Hizmet is functioning as social capital: it regularly supports those of its followers who need either moral encouragement or money. All members are expected to pay individually sized dues to corroborate their loyalty.

⁸ See: B. Balci, *Islam in Central Asia and the Caucasus since the Fall of the Soviet Union*, Transl. into English by G. Elliott, Hurst & Company, London, 2018, p. 52.

⁹ See: *Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹⁰ See: S. Cagaptay, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

¹¹ See: *US Charter Schools Tied to Powerful Turkish Imam*, cbsnews.com, 13 May 2012, available at [<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/us-charter-schools-tied-to-powerful-turkish-imam/>], 7 February, 2020.

¹² See: *U.S. Network of Turkish Cleric Facing Pressure as Those at Home Seek Help*, Reuters.com, 26 September 2016, available at [<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-gulen-usa-insight/u-s-network-of-turkish-cleric-facing-pressure-as-those-at-home-seek-help-idUSKCN11W0BL>], 8 February, 2020.

¹³ See: C. Holton, C. Lopez C., *The Gülen Movement: Turkey’s Islamic Supremacist Cult and its Contribution to the Civilization Jihad in America*, The Center for Security Policy Press, Washington D.C., 2015, p. 19.

Rigidly organized, with a relatively moderate ideology, the movement extends its activities into the political sphere. According to expert assessments, the Gülen movement is developing into an organization with ambitious political aims,¹⁴ which is common in the Muslim East: all sorts of religious brotherhoods have political ambitions; The Muslim Brotherhood that came to power in Egypt when Mubarak was deposed is a recent example.

The widely quoted words Gülen addressed to his followers confirm Hizmet's intentions, particularly in Turkey: "You must move in the arteries of the system without anyone noticing your existence, until you reach the power center... Until the conditions are ripe they [the followers] must continue like this... You must wait until such time as you have gotten all the state power, until you have brought to your side all the power of the constitutional institutions of Turkey."¹⁵ This is the program for coming to power in any country, pure and simple.

The events that have been unfolding in Turkey since the early 2000s testify to the fact that Hizmet had already launched its program. It placed its supporters in all sorts of Turkish official structures, first and foremost, the judicial and law and order structures. According to Soner Çağaptay, the failed military coup d'état was initiated by a group of generals "at least partially affiliated with Gülen."¹⁶

This explains why Hizmet is frequently called a state within a state. What is even more important is the fact that its followers are more loyal to it than to their respective states. As an informal structure, it is an evasive enemy, since the organization and its members have neither registration or other credentials. Despite the large-scale purge in Turkey's state structures, with which the state responded to the unfolding crisis, we can say with a great degree of probability that there are Gülen's "sleeper" supporters in various official structures, who will "wake up" upon orders to resume their struggle against the Turkish government.

The KTLs as Carriers of Gülen's Ideas in the Kazakhstani Society

The first lyceums opened in Kazakhstan in 1992 on the initiative of presidents Nursultan Nazarbayev and Turgut Özal, spreading far and wide across the country to become a common element in all major cities. They have moved to the fore as leaders in secondary education in Kazakhstan, earning top places in the rating of the republic's schools.¹⁷

Both states needed these schools: Kazakhstan obtained schools with a high level of education funded by private sponsors, while local authorities were expected to provide them with adequate premises. Not only did it improve the overall quality of education in Kazakhstan, it also helped in the search for national and religious identity within the Turkic sphere of influence.

Kazakhstan and Central Asia in general, with its deeply rooted cultural, historical and political ties with Turkey, are the most suitable platform for Ankara's soft power. Still, in the 1990s the Turkish military establishment and secularists were somewhat concerned about the activities of the Gülen movement abroad. Ankara, however, pragmatically supported Hizmet, which opened its educational establishments in foreign countries.

¹⁴ See: H. Yavuz, *op. cit.*, pp. 85, 90.

¹⁵ C. Holton, C. Lopez, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

¹⁶ S. Çağaptay, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

¹⁷ See: A. Erkebulan, *op. cit.*

Gülen's followers looked at the Central Asian countries as a testing area where they could learn how to operate on the transnational level. Even before the Soviet Union's disintegration, Gülen and his followers in various Turkish cities "were readying themselves to conquer Central Asia."¹⁸

Today, Kazakhstan comes second after the United States in the number of Gülen educational establishments.¹⁹ There are 30 lyceums, two international schools, two colleges and the Suleyman Demirel University.²⁰ They operate under the Kazakhstan and Turkey Educational Foundation (KATEV—Kazakhstan ve Türkiye Eğitim Vakfı), set up specifically for this purpose and controlled by the Gülen movement.²¹ The lyceums offer gender-isolated education, a scheme that is still present in many Muslim countries.

The KTLs are extremely popular among the local population, despite the complicated entrance exams. In 2017, there were 25 candidates per vacant spot,²² which is explained by the top-notch quality of education. The above numbers are the best confirmation.

Competitiveness of the KTLs. The following factors ensure their excellent results:

- First of all, according to Gülen's concept of the "golden generation" of contemporary Muslims, the lyceums select the most promising and able children through competitive exams. Prospective students pass tests on several subjects, the Kazakh language being one them, which gives certain advantages to pupils of Kazakh schools. The lyceums enroll 12-year-old pupils for the simple reason that the most gifted had already demonstrated their worth and were ready to master new subjects. The lyceums operate as boarding schools, which improves the results to a certain extent; the day is strictly regimented, with education and self-education being the main points.
- Secondly, the KTLs are totally autonomous, despite the fact that their programs are correlated with the official educational structures; teaching is strictly individual, this fully applies to the textbooks and the highly flexible educational process.
- Thirdly, the KATEV Foundation, whose budget depends on the money earned by the movement through business and other activities, supplies the lyceums with necessary resources.
- Fourth, the KTL administrative structures pour a lot of money into upgrading the teaching staff's qualifications. Their motivation is further consolidated by stipends (up to 230 thousand tenge) paid by the KATEV,²³ in addition to the wages paid by the Ministry of Education and Science of the RK. In the early 2020, a teacher's average salary in Kazakhstan was 197,000 tenge. Religious motivation of Gülen's followers can serve as another stimulus for the KTL teachers: work is regarded as service to God and is, therefore, a duty of any faithful person. This is what one of the graduates had to say about his Turkish teachers: "...they dedicated their best years to educating the children of Kazakhstan; many of them had arrived when still very young, boys and girls of 18-20 years. The majority of them, the first generation, the first wave of the teachers had arrived during the most difficult years of Ka-

¹⁸ B. Balci, "Fethullah Gülen's Missionary Schools in Central Asia and their Role in the Spreading of Turkism and Islam," *Religion, State and Society*, Vol. 31, No. 2, 2003, p. 154.

¹⁹ See: P. Alexander, "Turkey on Diplomatic Push to Close Schools Linked to Influential Cleric," *Voanews.com*, 31 August, 2017, available at [<https://www.voanews.com/europe/turkey-diplomatic-push-close-schools-linked-influential-cleric>], 10 February, 2020.

²⁰ See the site of the manager of the Kazakh-Turkish lyceums of the Foundation: [<https://bil.edu.kz/>].

²¹ See: B. Balci, *Fethullah Gülen's Missionary Schools in Central Asia...*, p. 155.

²² See: A. Erkebulan, *op. cit.*

²³ See: M. Bekmaganbetov, *V KATEV govoriat, chto oni ne imeiut otnoshenia k Giulenu*, *Rus.azattyk.org*, 27 June, 2016, available at [<https://rus.azattyq.org/a/kazakhstan-tureckie-licei-kazakhsko-turecky-universitet/27884615.html>], 11 February, 2020.

zakhstan's history. They did not come to earn money; rather, they were driven by a high and noble aim—to share their knowledge and principles with us, the children of Kazakhstan,”²⁴ Hence the conclusion: Gülen's followers movement are driven by their ideas, rather than material interests.

The graduates' competitive advantages are largely due to their better knowledge of English, since certain subjects (natural sciences and mathematics) are taught in English. Turkish is another foreign tongue in the curriculum. These are the main points of attraction for students and their parents.

KTL's religious agenda. Some experts suspect that Gülen was initially driven by the idea of Islamic revival in the region that was immersed in atheism for over seventy years.²⁵ Gülen's supporters had not hesitated to promote their ideology inside and outside the lyceums, stirring up mistrust and rejection among both the common people and the ruling class.

Pragmatically minded Gülen supporters changed their tactics to what is called “*temsil*,” which literary means “presentation.” It surmises proliferation of religion by means of soft power through good deeds of believers, which are to serve an example to be followed. According to *temsil*, the lifestyle and highly moral behavior of a Muslim should form a positive opinion of Islam that will attract more followers. This radically differs from the proselytism of *Tablighi* that relies on open religious propaganda.

The readjusted tactics has proven efficient. This has been thoroughly confirmed by former students and their parents' testimonies about Turkish teachers as highly educated and highly moral professionals loyal to the Gülen ideas. A teacher from one of the Istanbul Gülen schools said the following: “There are many means and methods to bring somebody to Islam: first, you should win the hearts of your students by giving them a good example to inspire admiration of your lifestyle, integrity and discipline. You will not need books to teach Islam; you should use your body language; what you wear and how; how you communicate with your pupils and other people as a means to transfer the Islamic lifestyle without discussing Islam as a religion. When your pupils become attracted by your behavior, they will gradually understand your behavior and thought model and seek to copy it. At this stage, you may gradually start discussing the real reasons behind your way of life and, finally, when they are ready, you will reveal Islamic literature to them.” The main idea is to present them with an image of a good Muslim. This explains why morals and ethics figure prominently in Gülen's followers' worldviews. This fully applies not only to schoolteachers, but also to all followers of the movement among businessmen, journalists, etc.²⁶

In view of the movement's highly cautious approach to proliferation of Islamic values in their lyceums, not all children, but only the most perceptive of them, experience religious influence. The fact that children live in boarding schools makes the process easier. According to field studies of Turkic scholar Bayram Balci, KTL officials do not engage in missionary activities. This task is transferred to the so-called *abi* (elder brother); these spiritual teachers introduce students to the basics of Islam and teach them to read *namaz*.²⁷ One of the graduates has described the religious life in her lyceum: “Yes, the teachers used religion as an instrument of education and upbringing; they told us all sorts of educational parables without imposing any specific religion. Many of us graduate from the lyceums in scarves, long skirts and in covered clothing, yet this was our personal choice.”²⁸

²⁴ *Prepodavately kazakhsko-turetskikh litseev prosyat ubezhishcha v Kazakhstane*, Tengrinews.kz, 27 September, 2017, available at [https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/prepodavately-kazakhsko-turetskikh-litseev-prosyat-ubejishcha-327354/] 15 February, 2020.

²⁵ See: B. Balci, *Fethullah Gülen's Missionary Schools in Central Asia...*, p. 155.

²⁶ See: N. Sultanmuratov, *Obrazovanie po-turetski, ili faktor Giulena v Kazakhstane*, Institute of Asian Studies, Almaty, 2018, p. 9, available at [<https://institute.asiakz.com/files/files/attachments/79/obrazovanie-po-turecki-nuriddin-sultanmuratov.pdf>].

²⁷ See: B. Balci, *Fethullah Gülen's Missionary Schools in Central Asia...*, p. 164.

²⁸ K. Pridatchenko, *Otkrovenia KTLshchika*, Yvision.kz, 29 December, 2014, available at [<https://yvision.kz/post/454060>], 11February, 2020.

The strategies used by Gülen followers and the Jesuits are very similar.²⁹ They rely on their educational structures to create an elite, which will later open the doors to power and influence in the country. Even if proliferation of Islamic values was and remains the cornerstone of the movement's ideology, Hizmet demonstrates a certain deal of flexibility: conscription of new supporters or at least sympathizers is one of the movement's main tasks. This leads to mutually advantageous informal relations and adds to the movement's potential.

The risks created by the Gülen movement as assessed by Kazakhstan authorities and society. The above suggests that Kazakhstan, and its Central Asian neighbors, for that matter, confronted with the rising wave of fundamentalist movements should formulate its attitude to Gülen's ideology that is promoted in its territory by the KTLs. In July 2016, the failed coup d'état, which Ankara had pinned on the Gülen movement, added urgency to this problem. The Turkish authorities demanded that Central Asian countries should close all Gülen lyceums that operate in these states. The responses differed from country to country. "The deterioration of relations between the Turkish government, the Gülen movement and Uzbekistan in the 2000s resulted in a drastic reduction of the Gülen movement's influence and presence in the region."³⁰ The Turkish Attaché for Education was deported from Uzbekistan. "In May 2014, Uzbekistan's government was the first to close all Gülen schools in its country."³¹ Their image in Central Asia started to deteriorate, and seeds of mistrust and fear of Islamic infiltration gradually started to rise. In 2015, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan closed the Gülen schools on their territories, Tajikistan was not very far behind,³² in full conformity with its plan to cut down the number of active religious organizations. The Party of Islamic Revival of Tajikistan was banned.

Kazakh and Kyrgyz authorities allowed the lyceums to function; they returned to partial measures: the schools received a new name, while the majority of Turkish teachers were replaced with their local colleagues; some of the Turkish teachers were unable to extend their visas.³³

The problem of Gülenism in Kazakhstan was not conceptualized since, as President Nazarbayev pointed out, the schools had been transferred under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education of Kazakhstan and, therefore, had nothing to do with the Turkish Islamic scholar Gülen.³⁴ For its part, the Ministry informed the public that Turkish officials could in no way influence the KTLs funded from the Kazakh budget and working according to the state educational standards.

There are several reasons behind this.

- First, Kazakhstan has demonstrated a lot of pragmatism: the lyceums allowed the country to modernize and upgrade its educational system to make it more competitive.
- Secondly, KTLs were no longer regarded as a threat to social and state security. In fact, the popularity of certain Islamic values was encouraged as an expected religious renaissance in the country, the religious life of which had been suppressed in Soviet times.
- Thirdly, it should be kept in mind that the Kazakhstan leaders interpreted the request of the Turkish authorities to close the lyceums as an interference in their domestic affairs and believed that to agree with it would demonstrate weakness.

²⁹ See: B. Balci, *Islam in Central Asia and the Caucasus since the Fall of the Soviet Union*, p. 55.

³⁰ S. Mori, L. Taccetti, *Rising Extremism in Central Asia? Stability in the Heartland for a Secure Eurasia*, Brussels, European Institute for Asian, February 2016, p. 12, available at [http://www.eias.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/EIAS_Briefing_Paper_2016_Mori_Taccetti_Central_Asia.pdf], 2 February, 2020.

³¹ Ibidem.

³² S. Brletich, "Tajikistan, Turkey and Gülen Movement," thediplomat.com, 21 August, 2015, available at [<https://thediplomat.com/2015/08/tajikistan-turkey-and-the-gülen-movement/>], 15 February, 2020.

³³ See: T. Wesolowsky, A. Mamashuly, "They'll Take Us into Custody": *Turkish Teachers in Kazakhstan Fear Going Home*, rferl.org, 8 October, 2017, available at [<https://www.rferl.org/a/kazakhstan-turkey-teachers-gülen-repatriation/28780416.html>], 14 February, 2020.

³⁴ See: "Nazarbayev: turetskie uchitelia ne budut ekstradirovany v Turtsiu, tema zakryta" mk-turkey.ru, 16 September, 2017, available at [<https://mk-turkey.ru/politics/2017/09/16/kazahsko-tureckie-licei-ne-imeyut.html>], 17 February 2020.

The negative response of the public to the Turkish request proved to be the final and the most significant argument. The social networks were boiling with discussions in which lyceum graduates (there are about 25,000 of them in the country³⁵) demonstrated a lot of vitality. People unrelated to the Gülen schools were also very positive about their results and spoke highly of their educational merits. Galia Amitraeva, chairperson of Ar-Namys, the Public Association of Teachers and Lecturers has offered her opinion on the issue. "I can say with a great deal of certainty that there is no threat at all. This is an educational organization that does its job well and provides real knowledge. To my mind, there are no violations. I met the children from the Kazakh-Turkish Lyceums and can say that these are normal schools that give good knowledge. Contrary to the what some people think the Lyceums do not belong in Turkey... Today, the KTLs mostly staffed with our teachers."³⁶ This was the key line of the discussions supported by graduates, their parents, experts and officials.

Hizmet has always skillfully used the media to promote its interests. The *Zaman* newspaper published by the Gülen movement (the most popular in Turkey at the time until it was closed by the Turkish authorities) informed the readers about Gülen's opinion on different issues. The locally published *Kazakhstan Zaman* and social media were also involved in the discussion. The public figures connected to the movement to different extent were also conscripted to support the KTLs and the results of their educational activities. Economist Oljas Khudaibergenov, member of the board of trustees of a KTL, was involved in a discussion with Turkish officials; he wrote an open letter to the Turkish Ambassador to the Republic of Kazakhstan, in which he disagreed with the latter's negative opinion about the activities of the Gülen movement in Kazakhstan and his arguments.³⁷

Conclusion

An analysis of the ideological theses of the KTLs in Kazakhstan confirmed that they should be regarded as a threat to social and state security and should be neutralized as such.

We have proceeded from the following factors: the ideology of Gülenism is still present in the lyceums, while the efficient mechanisms of idea dissemination and conscription of new members or at least sympathizers are still in place; proliferation of religion through soft power continues and the nature of Islam being disseminated remains the same.

The attitude of society and the state to the ideas of Gülenism realized through the lyceums can be described as another risk. The generally positive assessment of the KTLs is explained by the pragmatic approach of the Kazakh side to high-quality education and the advantage of having competitive graduates. The issue, however, is much broader than the quality of education. The lyceums can and should be considered as an instrument of instilling loyalty to Gülen's ideas among Kazakhstanis. In the presence of various Islamic trends in Kazakhstan, Gülen version of Islam, which claims the status of a modernized version of Islam that is open to science, cannot be considered an acceptable variant.

The measures already taken by the state to reorganize the lyceums do not provide sufficient risk control. The problem could not be and was not solved by deportation of a certain number of Turkish teachers. Their Turkish colleagues and Kazakh graduates hired as teachers were also supporters of the Gülen movement. This is not all: the lyceums are still controlled by the KATEV Foundation,

³⁵ See: E. Erkebulan, op. cit.

³⁶ N. Batrakova, *Umy malenkikh kazakhstantsev vne opasnosti! Giulen na nikh ne vliiaet*, ktk.kz, 2 August, 2016, available at [<https://www.ktk.kz/ru/blog/article/2016/08/02/71202/>], 5 February, 2020.

³⁷ See: Oljas Khudaibergenov: "Prepodavateli, kotorye vernulis iz Kazakhstana v Turtsiu, sidiat v tiumre bez suda i sledstvia," Tengrinews.kz, 21 September, 2017, available at [https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/oljas-hudaybergenov-prepodavateli-kotoryie-vernulis-326984/], 10 February, 2020.

which hires the teaching staff. There are quite a few potential supporters of the movement among the local teachers who are graduates of KTLs.³⁸ The problem can be resolved by moving the Turkish schools under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education of the RK and out of KATEV's control. This may, however, negatively affect the teaching process and the level of education which means that the lyceums will no longer be able to maintain the high level of tri-lingual education, and which the officials of the Ministry of Education will not endorse.

The virtually nonexistent analytical assessment of the state policy on Gülen's ideas and his teaching can be described as one of the risks; nothing has been written so far about its role in and its impact on the public and religious spheres in Kazakhstan. Bayram Balci has offered the most exhaustive analysis of this range of problems in his work.³⁹

The absence of a discussion can be probably explained by the problem's weak conceptualization in the republic's official discourse even if it is absolutely clear that the mounting regional threats and risks require a comprehensive analysis of the impacts of religious and public movements, the Gülen movement among them, on the structures of the Central Asian states.

Regardless of the extent to which this movement is involved in Islamic proselytism and propaganda of Turkism, it threatens the processes of national construction, self-identification, formulation of the national idea, maintaining social security and stability, religious unity, etc. unfolding in Kazakhstan while its interference in these processes might plunge Kazakhstan into crises and instability.

³⁸ See: N. Sultanmuratov, op. cit.

³⁹ See: B. Balci, *Islam in Central Asia and the Caucasus Since the Fall of the Soviet Union*.

ISRAEL: THE NEW PERIPHERAL STRATEGY IN CENTRAL ASIA

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ABSTRACT

The Soviet Union disappeared from the historical stage, leaving behind several newly independent states in Central Asia, and the political void was immediately filled with the struggle for the spheres of influence in the region. The main actors are the EU, the United States, Russia, Iran, Turkey, China, and India. Attracted by the political and socio-economic changes in Central Asia, Israel expected to consolidate its presence in the region to limit the influence of Iran, to help local countries establish moderate Muslim states and develop eco-

nomics relations and political dialog with them. This was seen as a step towards a stronger position in the Middle East.

In the last decade, Israel poured even more efforts into establishing relations with the Central Asian countries in the form of the recently developed the New Peripheral Strategy: improved relations with the moderate Muslim and non-Muslim states for coordinated struggle against radicalism, separatism, and terrorism. Guided by the need to consolidate its national security and being fully aware that this goal can be achieved

only if and when it breaks the circle of Islamic hostility around Israel, the latter adjusted its strategy and tactics accordingly. This makes a comprehensive study of the Central Asian trend of the New Peripheral Strategy highly topical.

The paper examines the specifics and the main elements of the Central Asian vector of Israel's foreign policy within the New Peripheral Strategy, and analyzes the

stages of the unfolding dialog between Israel and the Central Asian countries and the sides' mutual interest in bilateral cooperation.

The variants of Israel's approaches to individual countries have been analyzed to suggest a conclusion that Israel's successful and promising Central Asian policy has a good prospect of becoming a model of cooperation between Muslims and Jews.

KEYWORDS: *Israel, Central Asia, New Peripheral Strategy, the Middle East.*

Introduction

Many states, Israel among them, have poured into the regions vacated by the Soviet Union to start discussions with the newly independent states. The official Basic Policy Guidelines of the 25th Government stated, in particular that “the dramatic changes on the international scene—the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War ... have created new and great possibilities”¹ for Israel to build up and consolidate its relations with the former Soviet republics, first and foremost, the Muslim republics.

Israel was interested in Central Asia primarily because the Muslim population of Central Asia “had no prejudices against the Jewish state.”² Israel interpreted the relations with the newly independent states as a chance to increase its influence in the Muslim world and ensure its national security. Israel feared that Iran might spread its ideological impact across the region, make the Central Asian republics part of the “circle of animosity” around the Jewish state³ and threaten the Jewish communities in the Central Asian states.⁴

Israel's foreign policy efforts in Central Asia were supported by the United States, which planned to promote its interests in the region. In July 1992, they agreed to realize joint projects in Central Asia.⁵

This became one of the factors of greater interest of the local countries in Israel as a window to the West; closer relationships with the United States through Israel as an intermediary as well as its high scientific and technological development level was another. Confronted with political, social and economic problems, the Central Asian states needed assistance in the spheres of industry, pharmacol-

¹ “Basic Policy Guidelines of the 25th Government, July 1992,” *Foreign Policy. Historical Documents 1992-1994*, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, available at [<https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/MFADocuments/Yearbook9/Pages/2%20Basic%20Policy%20Guidelines%20of%20the%2025th%20Government-.aspx>], 24 January, 2020.

² V.I. Mesamed, *Israel v Tsentralnoy Azii: grezy i realnost*, Moscow, 2012, p. 49.

³ By the early 1990s, Israel maintained diplomatic relations with two Muslim states—Turkey and Egypt (see: *Ibid.*, p. 48).

⁴ According to the 1989 population census, there were 19,900 Jews in Kazakhstan, about 11,000 in Tajikistan; about 3000 in Turkmenistan; 93,862 in Uzbekistan, and 6,000, in Kyrgyzstan (see: “Diaspora: regiony i strany,” *Elektronnaia evreiskaia entsiklopedia*, available at [<https://eleven.co.il/diaspora/regions-and-countries/>], 24 January, 2020).

⁵ See: “State Department Statement on Joint U.S.-Israel Technical Assistance in Central Asia,” 30 July, 1992, *Foreign Policy. Historical Documents 1992-1994*.

ogy, medicine and higher education; they could not cope with the numerous crises on their own. Israel needed the region as a source of raw materials⁶ and was ready to consolidate its economic interests there.

The dialog between Israel and the Central Asian states was promoted by highly qualified local Jews who had been moving to Israel since the late 1980s and who filled high posts by the time of the Soviet Union's disintegration.⁷

The Dialog between Israel and the Central Asian Countries

Tel Aviv responded to the disintegration processes unfolding across the post-Soviet space with highly varied approaches carefully fine-tuned to each of the Central Asian states.⁸ Uzbekistan's cotton and Kazakhstan's gold and energy fuels made them the two obvious priorities. Their two biggest Jewish communities were another reason⁹: in the 1990s, Israel sought diplomatic relations with them at the embassy level. Diplomatic relations with Uzbekistan were established in February 1992¹⁰; Israeli embassy in Tashkent was opened in May 1992.¹¹ Uzbekistan opened its consulate general in Israel, and in 1997 it acquired the status of an embassy. Diplomatic relations between Kazakhstan and Israel were established in April 1992; in August Israel opened its embassy in the country's capital Astana (today Nur-Sultan); in 1996, Kazakhstan opened its embassy in Tel Aviv.

The relations were developing at a fast pace: in August 1992, Uzbekistan and Israel were connected by direct flights; in July 1994, Foreign Minister of Israel Shimon Peres came to Uzbekistan with an official visit¹² during which the sides signed agreements on investments, cooperation in transport, air traffic and tourism. In April 1997, the foreign minister of Uzbekistan paid a reciprocal visit to Israel, in the course of which the sides signed agreements in the spheres of culture, science and medicine. In 1998, the official visit to Israel of President of Uzbekistan Ilkham Karimov raised bilateral cooperation to a new level. The sides signed agreements on trade, agriculture and health protection. The president of Uzbekistan expressed his solidarity with Israel: he pointed out the dangers of Islamic radicalism that was spreading through Central Asia and was very open about his negative attitude to Iran's nuclear policy.¹³

In September 1992, Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Sergey Tereshchenko visited Israel to discuss joint projects in science, communication, pharmacy and air traffic.¹⁴ The sides signed a document on

⁶ I. Muradian, "Israel i Evrazia," INOSMI.RU, available at [<https://inosmi.ru/asia/20100901/162579531.html>], 29 January, 2020.

⁷ See: V.I. Mesamed, op. cit., pp. 56-57.

⁸ See: G. Feiler, K. Lim, "Israel and Kazakhstan: Assessing the State of Bilateral Relations," The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, *Mideast Security and Policy Studies*, No. 107, May 2014, p. 18.

⁹ See: "Diaspora: regiony i strany," *Elektronnaiia evreiskaia entsiklopedia*.

¹⁰ See: "Strany, s kotorymi Uzbekistan ustanovil diplomaticheskie otnoshenia," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, available at [<https://mfa.uz/ru/cooperation/country/>], 26 January, 2020.

¹¹ See: "Posolstvo Israelia v Uzbekistane," available at [<https://embassies.gov.il/tashkent/Pages/default.aspx>], 26 January, 2020.

¹² See: "Cooperation of the Republic of Uzbekistan with Near East, Middle East and African Countries," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, available at [<https://mfa.uz/en/cooperation/countries/376/>], 25 January, 2020.

¹³ See: V.I. Mesamed, "Israel i Respublika Uzbekistan: sotrudnichestvo v ekonomicheskoy i sotsialnoy sfere," Institute of the Middle East, 14 January, 2011, available at [<http://www.iimes.ru/?p=13810>], 28 January, 2020.

¹⁴ See: "Summary of a Meeting between Prime Minister Rabin and Prime Minister Tereshchenko of Kazakhstan," 7 September, 1992, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, available at [<https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/MFADocuments/Yearbook9/Pages/11%20Summary%20of%20a%20meeting%20between%20Prime%20Minister%20Rab.aspx>], 25 January, 2020.

a joint intergovernmental commission on trade and economic cooperation.¹⁵ In 1995, President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev visited Israel in the course of which the sides signed the Declaration on the Foundations of Cooperation between the two states as the basis of further bilateral cooperation in investments, health protection and air traffic. In 1998, the two countries signed an agreement on trade and economic cooperation.¹⁶

During the first post-Soviet decade, Kazakhstan received the Israeli Minister of Science and Economy (1992), Minister of Energy (1993), Director General of the Defense Ministry (1995), and Foreign Minister (1995). Kazakhstan was obviously assigned a special role in Israel's Central Asian strategy.

Israel needed closer ties with oil- and gas-rich Turkmenistan that demonstrated much less enthusiasm¹⁷ mainly because of its close economic relations and cultural and historical closeness with Iran, its southern neighbor. The diplomatic relations between Israel and Turkmenistan were established in December 1993, much later than with its Central Asian neighbors. Turkmenistan took the position of Iran into account, but it required technological, economic and scientific assistance from Israel. Starting in 1994, the top leaders of the two sides exchanged visits.

The 1992-1997 civil war in Tajikistan made the dialog with it much harder than with its neighbors, its cultural and political closeness with Iran presented yet another obstacle.¹⁸ The two countries established diplomatic relations in April 1992, but the Israeli embassy in Uzbekistan was entrusted with sorting out all issues related to Tajikistan. It remained at the margins of Israeli Central Asian policy, yet the official diplomatic relations with another Muslim state were highly important per se.¹⁹

In March 1992, Israel established official relations with Kyrgyzstan, a country that required assistance in the agriculture, medicine and health care spheres. In 1993, President of Kyrgyzstan Askar Akaev visited Israel, signing several agreements on cooperation in the political and economic spheres, as well as in the areas of culture and science.

In the 1990s, Israel established relationships with all Central Asian states; in 1996 it tried to define a New Periphery, with the post-Soviet Muslim states as its new element.²⁰

Spikes in the Wheel of the Israel-Central Asia Dialog

On the whole, the dialog remained at its initial stage in the last century, and has not demonstrated any progress in the first decade of the 21st century so far due to numerous domestic and foreign policy problems of the Central Asian countries and Israel's passivity. The relations between Israel and Uzbekistan are the most pertinent example. Before 2000, they looked as successful cooperation in security, economy, latest technologies and health protection. In 2004-2005, they plunged into a crisis caused by the suppression of riots in Andijan, at the border with Kyrgyzstan. The presi-

¹⁵ See: "Sotrudnichestvo Respubliki Kazakhstan s Gosudarstvom Israel," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, available at [<http://mfa.gov.kz/ru/content-view/sotrudnichestvo-respubliki-kazakhstan-s-gosudarstvom-izrail>], 25 January, 2020.

¹⁶ See: V.I. Mesamed, "Pravovaia baza i ob'emy sotrudnichestva mezhdru Israelem i Kazakhstanom," Institute of the Middle East, 8 January, 2011, available at [<http://www.iimes.ru/?p=13897>], 28 January, 2020.

¹⁷ See: M. Bishku, "The Relations of the Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan with Israel," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 6, November 2012, p. 928.

¹⁸ See: G. Feiler, K. Lim, op. cit., p. 19.

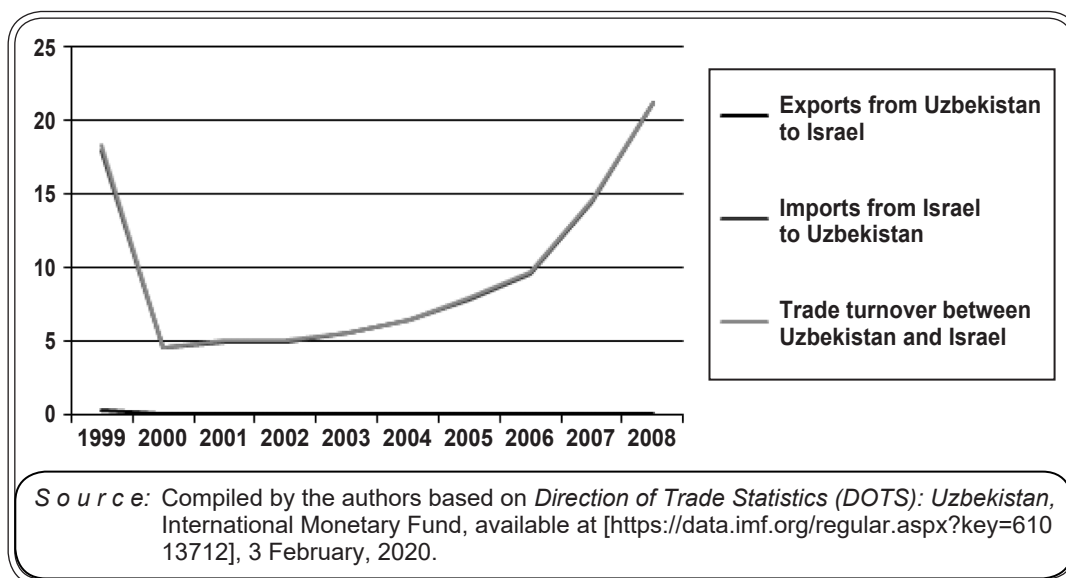
¹⁹ See: V.I. Mesamed, *Israel v Tsentralnoy Azii: grezy i realnost*, p. 74.

²⁰ See: Iu.I. Kostenko, *Evolutsia periferiynoy strategii Israelia (1990-2017 gg.) (Na primere politiki v Tsentralnoy Azii)*, Ph.D. thesis, Moscow, 2018, p. 106.

dent of Uzbekistan responded to Israel’s support of the U.N. GA resolution that condemned the suppression of anti-government disturbances²¹ with slowing down political and economic relations that had no positive effect on the trade turnover in the first place (see Fig. 1).

Figure 1

Trade Turnover between Uzbekistan and Israel (1999-2008) (\$m)



The dialog between Israel and Turkmenistan, which was fairly active in the 1990s, was discontinued in the 2000s, when Iran had moved to the fore in foreign and economic policies of independent Turkmenistan as one of its biggest economic partners.²² The same can be said about Israel’s relations with Tajikistan. Encouraged by the end of the civil war, Israeli businessmen tried, albeit without much success, to restore their positions on the Tajik market:²³ however, Tajikistan had already turned to Iran. It should be said in all justice that Israel did not need a more active relationship with Tajikistan, since the latter’s relationships with Iran made it rather hopeless.

The relations with Kyrgyzstan, likewise, remained at a low level: the volume of trade turnover remained at the level of \$1 million for nearly two decades.²⁴ The same applies to Israel’s investment activities in Kyrgyzstan.

In fact, Kazakhstan was the only Central Asian country that was actively developing its cooperation with Israel: It needed Israel’s experience in anti-terrorist fight and the struggle against radical Islam; the countries’ dialog on regional and global issues was steadily developing to become an example of successful cooperation between Jews and Muslims. Mutual interests inspired active investment activities: in 2009, there were 52 Israeli companies working in Kazakhstan; between 1993 and

²¹ See: “The Third Committee, taking action on 3 draft resolutions, approves text expressing deep concern over human rights situation in Uzbekistan,” United Nations, 22 November, 2005, available at [<https://www.un.org/press/en/2005/gashc3843.doc.htm>], 4 February, 2020.

²² See: V.I. Mesamed, *Israel v Tsentralnoy Azii: grezy i realnost*, p. 152.

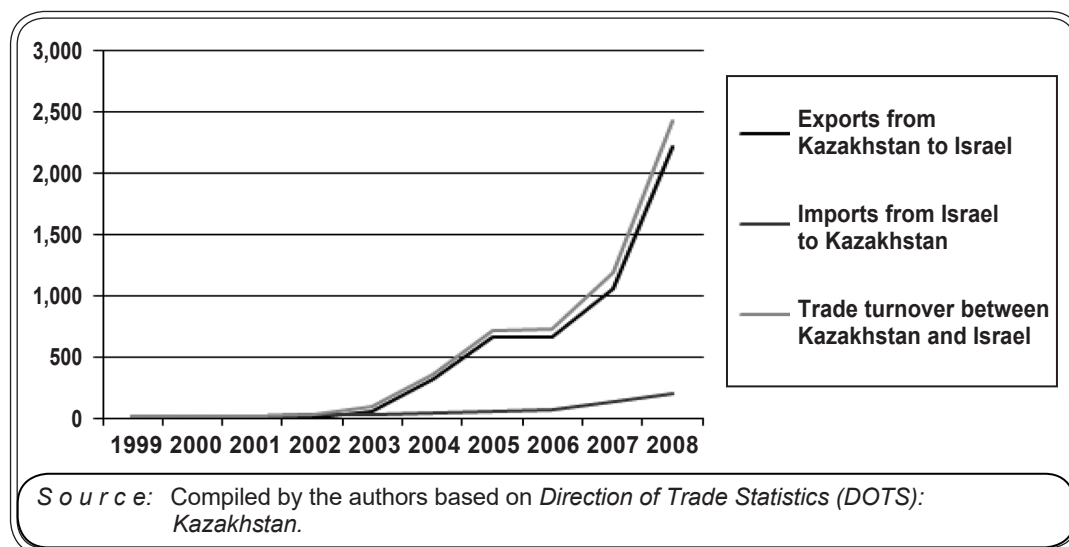
²³ Iu. I. Kostenko, op. cit., p. 154.

²⁴ See: “Direction of Trade Statistics (DOTS): Kyrgyz Republic,” International Monetary Fund, available at [<https://data.imf.org/regular.aspx?key=61013712>], 3 February, 2020.

2006 Israel invested about \$300 million²⁵ in Kazakhstan's economy, particularly in agriculture. In the first decade of the 21st century, the trade turnover between them steadily increased (see Fig. 2).

Figure 2

Trade Turnover between Kazakhstan and Israel (1999-2008) (\$m)



In 2008, the trade turnover between the two countries reached \$2.43 billion, an about 100-fold increase since 1999. Kazakhstan supplied Israel with grain, oil and gas and imported electronic components, foodstuffs and chemicals, machines and equipment. Cooperation in health care, medicine, science, education and cultural spheres was also underway.

On the whole, however, Israel's foreign policy in Central Asia in the first decade of the 21st century cannot be characterized as active. Between 2000 and 2008, few of the Israeli top officials visited the region; the dialog, however, was ongoing at different levels.

Israel's Foreign Policy within the New Peripheral Strategy

In 2010-2011, under the pressure of its mounting confrontation with Iran,²⁶ the crisis of its relations with Turkey, which were aggravated by the steadily unfolding Islamization, political Islam in the Middle East spreading far and wide against the background of the Arab Spring revolutions and the multiplying terrorist groups, Israel, which had found itself in the center of the circle of animosity, had no choice but to revise its foreign policy, among other things. It needed a new version of the Periph-

²⁵ See: G. Feiler, K. Lim, op. cit., p. 28.

²⁶ In 2009, Israeli deputy prime minister Dan Meridor who delivered a keynote address to The Washington Institute of Near East Policy pointed out: "the prospect of Iran obtaining nuclear capabilities remains Israel's most dangerous threat" (D. Meridor, "Israel: The Search for Peace and Security," The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, available at [<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/israel-the-search-for-peace-and-security>], 7 February, 2020).

eral Strategy that rechanneled Tel Aviv's attention to the Central Asian, South Caucasian and the moderate Arab states of the Middle East, North Africa and the non-Muslim states of the Mediterranean.

In fact, it was back in the middle of 2008 that Israel had decided to pour more efforts into the Central Asian vector of its foreign policy. At the end of the same year, its foreign ministry set up a Eurasia-2 department to work with the Central Asian and South Caucasian countries.²⁷ Israel replaced its ambassadors to all Central Asian countries; the foreign minister of Israel acquired an advisor for the CIS countries, while since 2008 Israel's high officials increased the number of their visits to the region. Head of Eurasia-2 Shemi Tzur visited Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan; the Deputy Speaker of the Knesset Amnon Cohen visited Kazakhstan, while the Deputy Foreign Minister of Israel Majali Wahaben visited Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. The ambassador of Israel to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan visited Tajikistan. The visits of top Israeli officials testified to the fact that the region had acquired a new political and economic role in Israel's foreign policy. In implementing the New Peripheral Strategy in general and the Central Asian vector, in particular, Israel proceeded not only from political considerations, but also from economic benefits.

Foreign Minister of Israel Avigdor Lieberman, appointed in 2009, outlined the new foreign policy priorities—a political dialog and trade and economic cooperation with the moderate Central Asian Muslim republics. In his message of 7 October, 2009, he pointed out that Israel would be able to cope with all problems if and when it had widened the coalition and poured more efforts into its relations with the countries and continents “abandoned” by Israel.²⁸

Kazakhstan, which favored the region's stability, supported a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and was determined to fight radical Islam, was a natural choice as a priority partner within the New Peripheral Strategy. Involved in the activities of regional and international Islamic organizations, it looked as a bridge of sorts to the Muslim world, while its status of a secular state was confirmed by its Constitution.²⁹ Its population, less Islamic than in many other countries, was positively disposed to Jews.

Likewise, economic cooperation, based on the newly signed agreements on encouragement and mutual protection of investments, trade and economic cooperation, collaboration and mutual assistance in customs affairs, interaction in the sphere of business activities, investments and widening of mutually advantageous cooperation were of key importance in the bilateral economic relations. They were further promoted by the Kazakhstan-Israeli Intergovernmental Commission on trade and economic cooperation and the Israeli-Kazakhstan Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

In the last decade Kazakhstan remained Israel's main trade and economic partner in the region (see Fig. 3).

In the last decade, the trade turnover between the two countries dropped twice (see Fig. 4).

In 2009, amid the world economic crisis and the low and dropping oil prices (the oil accounted for 80 to 90 percent of Kazakhstan's exports to Israel), trade turnover between Israel and Kazakhstan dropped by 50 percent and even lower in 2015 (\$305 million, the level of 2004). In 2018, the volume of bilateral trade increased by 38.7 percent against 2017; the oil imported from Kazakhstan accounted, on average, for 15 to 25 percent of Israel's total oil imports,³⁰ which made Kazakhstan a country of strategic importance for Israel.

²⁷ See: A. Grigorian, “Prioritetnye napravleniia vneshney politiki Izraelia: Iuzhny Kavkaz i Tsentralnaia Azia,” Noravank Foundation, 10 September, 2009, available at [http://www.noravank.am/rus/issues/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=2713], 11 February, 2020.

²⁸ See: “‘Novaia vneshniaia politika’ Liebermana. Dokument MID Israelia,” Newsru.co.il, 7 October, 2009, available at [http://newsru.co.il/israel/07oct2009/mid_105.html], 11 February, 2020.

²⁹ See: *Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan*, Official site of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, available at [https://www.akorda.kz/ru/official_documents/constitution], 12 February, 2020.

³⁰ See: “Slabosti—v preimushchestva,” *Forbes Kazakhstan*, No. 62, October 2016, available at [https://forbes.kz/process/technologies/slabosti_v_preimushchestva/], 12 January, 2020.

Figure 3

Trade Turnover between Israel and the Central Asian Countries (\$m)

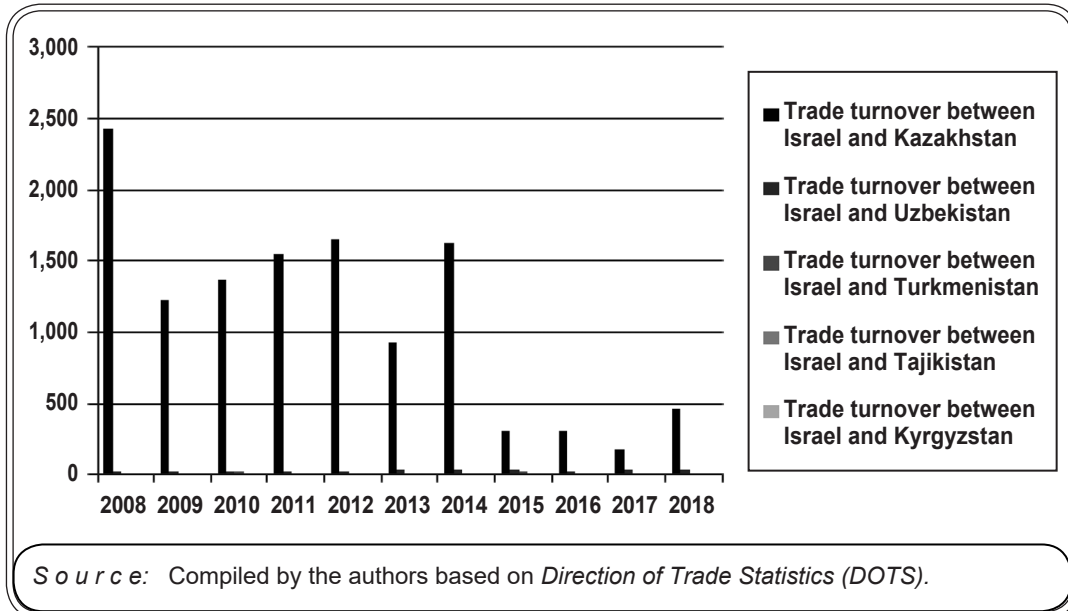
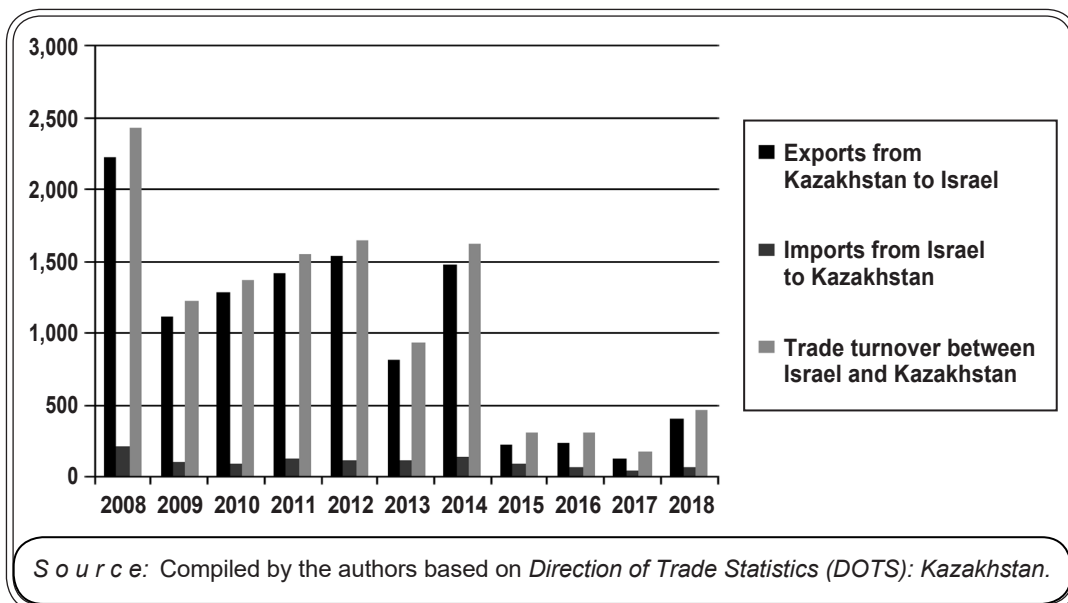


Figure 4

Trade Turnover Between Israel and Kazakhstan (2008-2018) (\$m)



Oil is not the only item imported from Kazakhstan: Israel also buys other mineral resources, metals and grain. For its part, Kazakhstan buys from Israel electronic components, mechanical equipment, chemicals, etc.

Israel is building up its investment activities in Kazakhstan, which needs Israeli money and, in addition, maintains a favorable investment climate within its borders. By 2017, over 270 enterprises with Israeli capital were functioning in Kazakhstan; Israel participates in investment projects in construction, oil and gas and processing industry, cable production, medicine, and urban infrastructure. Agriculture was and remains the priority: drip irrigation, hothouses and water- and energy-saving technologies are among the things shared by Israel. The sides realized several agricultural high-tech projects. Kazakhstan desperately needs Israeli water-saving technologies, drip irrigation, in particular, in the zones of hazardous agriculture,³¹ production of foodstuffs and dairy husbandry.³²

MASHAV (Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) puts a lot of effort into developing bilateral relations. It runs five consultative centers for the development of small and medium businesses in agriculture, medicine and higher education.³³

Israel plans to expand its presence in the Kazakhstan economy to be able to join infrastructural projects implemented in Eurasia, including China's New Silk Road project; it also hopes that Kazakhstan will help it set up a free trade area with the EAEU. In 2016, during his meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, Nazarbayev said that he fully supported Israel's interest in the EAEU.³⁴

Despite the fairly high level of economic cooperation between the two countries that was attained in the last decade, there are enough negative factors: certain Israeli companies had to revise their policies in Kazakhstan because of the economic and currency crisis and a high level of corruption.³⁵ The absence of direct flights between the two countries (despite the joint Declaration on Cooperation in the Sphere of Air Traffic signed in 2016³⁶) does not benefit their bilateral relations. In February 2020, Kazakhstan and Israel decided to launch direct flights in May 2020.³⁷

In the last decade, the two countries have been paying more attention in their cooperation in the security sphere, exchange of military technologies and intelligence and anti-terrorist struggle. Back in 2010, the SIBAT at the Israeli Defense Ministry approved Kazakhstan as a potential trade partner. Israeli companies—ELBIT, Plasan, FAB, Israel Aerospace Industries, Israel Military Industries and others—have been periodically participating in exhibitions of foreign armaments held by the Kazakhstan Defense Expo (KADEX) since 2010.

The Intergovernmental Agreement on Military-Technical Cooperation signed in 2014³⁸ added more vigor to the bilateral efforts in the security sphere. At a 2016 meeting, the defense ministers reached “agreements on cooperation in production of drones using Israeli technologies and training Kazakhstan military at the Training Center for UAV Operators.”³⁹ In 2019, they signed a long-term

³¹ See: N.S. Orlovsky, I.S. Zonn, “Vodnye resursy Izraelia: opyt osvoeniia,” *Problemy postsovetskogo prostranstva*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2018, pp. 8-36, available at [<https://doi.org/10.24975/2313-8920-2018-5-1-8-36>].

³² See: “Ekonomiki Izraelia i Kazakhstana,” Israel's Embassy in Kazakhstan, available at [<https://embassies.gov.il/astana/Relations/Pages/economic-relations.aspx>], 14 February, 2020

³³ See: Iu.I. Kostenko, op. cit., p. 171.

³⁴ See: “Kazakhstan podderzhivaet interes Izraelia k zone svobodnoy torgovli c EAES,” RIA Novosti, 14 December, 2016, available at [<https://ria.ru/20161214/1483562665.html>], 14 February, 2020.

³⁵ See: S. Ramani, “The Israel-Kazakhstan Partnership,” *The Diplomat*, 19 July, 2016, available at [<https://thediplomat.com/2016/07/the-israel-kazakhstan-partnership/>], 14 February, 2020.

³⁶ See: “Mezhdu Kazahstanom i Izraelem otkroiut priamoe aviasoobshchenie,” STMEGI Новости, 14 December, 2016, available at [<https://stmegi.com/posts/40568/mezhdu-kazahstanom-i-izraelem-otkroyut-priamoe-aviasoobshchenie/>], 15 February, 2020.

³⁷ See: “Mezhdu Kazahstanom i Izraelem otkroetsia priamoe aviasoobshchenie,” Lechaim, 20 February, 2020, available at [<https://lechaim.ru/news/mezhdu-kazahstanom-i-izraelem-otkroetsia-priamoe-aviasoobshchenie/>], 20 February, 2020.

³⁸ See: “Kazakhstan i Israel podpisali dogovor o voenno-tekhnicheskome sotrudnichestve,” *Voenny obozrevatel*, 21 January, 2014, available at [<https://waronline.info/inostrannie-armii/kazahstan-i-izrail-podpisali-dogovor-o-voenno-tekhnicheskome-sotrudnichestve.html>], 15 February, 2020.

³⁹ “Novye puti sotrudnichestva otsenili ministry oborony Kazakhstana i Izraelia,” KAZINFORM, 22 August, 2016, available at [https://www.inform.kz/ru/novye-puti-sotrudnichestva-ocenili-ministry-oborony-kazahstana-i-izrailya_a2940167], 16 February, 2020.

contact on the final drone assembly in Kazakhstan.⁴⁰ This made Kazakhstan one of Israel’s closest partner in the Muslim world in the security sphere. Kazakhstan needs cooperation with Israel not only because of its impressive achievements in military technologies and training, but also because its closer relations with Israel will consolidate its ties with the EU and the United States in the security sphere.

Their cooperation in medicine and health care is just as successful: the two countries open joint medical centers in Kazakhstan, improve the quality of medical services, develop a high-tech system of health protection. Their cooperation in tourism, scientific, cultural and humanitarian spheres is also important.

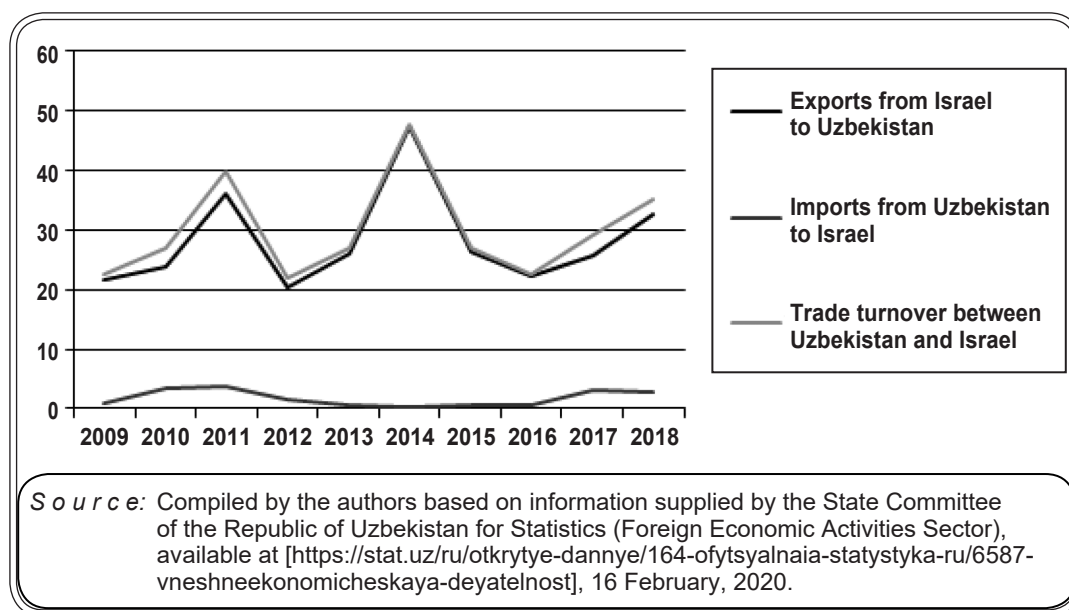
As a Muslim state that supports a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Uzbekistan is one of Israel’s Central Asian priorities within the New Peripheral Strategy. Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan provide examples of cooperation between Jews and Muslims. Uzbekistan, which borders Afghanistan, needs Israel’s experience in the struggle against terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism, as well as its achievements in the sphere of industrial and agricultural technologies.

As part of the New Peripheral Strategy, Israel revived its economic relations with Uzbekistan. According to the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Statistics, in 2018 the volume of bilateral trade grew by 36 percent against 2016. The share of Israel in Uzbekistan trade turnover is 90 percent on average: Tashkent imports electrical machines, equipment, pharmaceutical products and plants. Israel imports from Uzbekistan plastics, fruit, nuts, sets of optical and medical instruments, etc.⁴¹

In the recent decade, the volume of trade between the two countries had ranged between \$27 and \$47 million (see Fig. 5). In the last three years, they have been pouring more efforts into the roadmap of their trade and economic relations.

Figure 5

Trade Turnover between Israel and Uzbekistan (2009-2018) (\$m)



⁴⁰ See: “Kazakhstan i Izrael budut sovместno proizvodit BPLA,” GolosIslama.RU, 6 August, 2019, available at [https://golosislama.com/news.php?id=36972], 16 February, 2020.

⁴¹ See: “Vneshneekonomicheskaja deyatelnost,” State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Statistics, available at [https://stat.uz/ru/otkrytye-dannye/164-ofytsyalnaia-statystyka-ru/6587-vneshneekonomicheskaya-deyatelnost], 16 February, 2020.

In 2017, the Ministry for Foreign Trade of Uzbekistan initiated talks on holding the first meeting of the Uzbek-Israeli Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation, set up in 2000 to promote bilateral trade and investments. In 2019, the sides reached an agreement on establishing the Israel-Uzbekistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry.⁴² On the whole, these decisions were not so much about effective trade as about new investment projects. Today, there are 38 enterprises with Israeli capital functioning in Uzbekistan, eight of them with 100 percent Israeli capital.⁴³ Israel prefers to pour its money into agriculture, while Uzbekistan, a country with severe environmental conditions, desperately needs Israel's experience in managing water resources.⁴⁴ Uzbekistan introduced the Israeli drip irrigation technologies to ease the burden on its water resources.

In 2018, the Navoiy Region mastered and started using the drip irrigation technology imported from Israel.⁴⁵ The Israeli company NETA-FIM, which has been working in Uzbekistan for 25 years now, has widened the geography of application of its drip irrigation technology for cotton fields.⁴⁶ In 2019, it established drip irrigation on 82 hectares of cotton fields in the Kurgan-Tepe District. All in all, in 2019 this technology was applied on 33,200 hectares, or 44 percent of the total drip irrigation area.⁴⁷

In 2019, Uzbekistan adopted a Decision on measures of expanding the mechanisms of stimulating the introduction of water-saving resources in agriculture. In May 2019, Uzbekistan hosted an Uzbek-Israeli agro-business forum; in July Israel stated that it was ready to promote exchange of experience and training and retraining of Uzbek specialists. In late 2019, the Minister of Innovations of Uzbekistan signed an agreement on acquiring several thousand generators to produce water out of air, developed by an Israeli company Watergen.⁴⁸ Israel has been recently intensifying its cooperation in animal husbandry and dairy factories by supplying Uzbekistan with equipment. In 2020, President of Uzbekistan passed a decision on state support of husbandry and on setting up the Republican Council for the development of animal husbandry and all its branches.⁴⁹

In its relations with Uzbekistan, Israel pays particular attention to health care and education; the lion's share of projects is realized by MASHAV. Uzbekistan built a medical center staffed with Israeli doctors with Israeli support.⁵⁰ Israeli ophthalmologists regularly visit Uzbekistan for free surgeries and training courses.⁵¹ In April 2019, the sides started negotiations on building an oncological diagnostic

⁴² See: "Namecheny prakticheskie shagi po usileniu delovogo sotrudnichestva mezhdU Uzbekistanom i Izraelem," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, available at [<https://mfa.uz/ru/press/news/2019/07/20051/>], 16 February, 2020.

⁴³ See: "V Minvneshtorge Uzbekistana proshla vstrecha s poslom Izraelia," UzDaily, 11 May, 2018, available at [<https://www.uzdaily.uz/ru/post/37418>], 16 February, 2020.

⁴⁴ See: N.S. Orlovsky, L.G. Orlovskaya, I.S. Zonn, "Okhrana prirody v Izraile," *Problemy postssovetskogo prostranstva*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 2019, pp. 336-354, available at [<https://doi.org/10.24975/2313-8920-2019-6-4-336-354>].

⁴⁵ See: "V Navoisoy oblasti v pervye stali primeniat kapelnoe oroshenie khlopchatnika," KUN.UZ, 27 July, 2018, available at [<https://kun.uz/ru/52572564>], 16 February, 2020.

⁴⁶ See: "Izraelskiy opyt irrigatsii—Uzbekistanu," Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2 October, 2019, available at [<https://mfa.gov.il/MFARUS/ForeignRelations/Bilateral%20relations/EuroAsia/Uzbekistan/Pages/Israeli-knowledge-of-water-tech-helps-Uzbekistan.aspx>], 16 February, 2020.

⁴⁷ See: "O merakh po rasshireniu mekhanizmov stimulirovaniya vnedreniya vodosberegaiushchikh tekhnologiy v selskom khoziaystve," Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 25 October, 2019, available at [<https://uza.uz/ru/documents/o-merakh-po-rasshireniyu-mekhanizmov-stimulirovaniya-vnedren-25-10-2019>], 17 February, 2020.

⁴⁸ See: "Uzbekistan zakupit tysiachi izraelskikh ustanovok po dobyche vody iz vozdukh," Newsru.co.il, available at [<http://www.newsru.co.il/finance/02nov2019/watergen303.html>], 17 February, 2020.

⁴⁹ See: "Zhivotnovodam v Uzbekistane predostaviat subsidii i kompensatsii," Sputnik, 30 January, 30, available at [<https://uz.sputniknews.ru/economy/20200130/13337396/Zhivotnovodam-v-Uzbekistane-predostavyat-subsidii-i-kompensatsii.html>], 17 February, 2020.

⁵⁰ See: K. Faulkner, "Enjoying Good Relations with a Muslim State: Uzbekistan and Israel," *Kehilane*, 31 October, 2016, available at [<https://news.kehila.org/enjoying-good-relations-with-a-muslim-state-uzbekistan-and-israel/>], 18 February, 2020.

⁵¹ See: "Oftalmologi iz Izraelia besplatno provedud operatsii v Uzbekistane," *Gazeta.uz*, 7 May, 2019, available at [<https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2019/05/07/zion/>], 18 February, 2020.

center and an oncological clinic in Uzbekistan.⁵² The talks on getting access to Israel's experience in standardization and digitalization of medicine and raising the level of medical services are under way.⁵³

Israel is pouring more efforts into cooperation with Uzbekistan, which is greatly interested in its educational system. The sides have already organized teacher and student exchange; training specialists in the most needed fields, introduction of information technologies and the latest teaching methods in the educational process.⁵⁴

In recent years, bilateral relations have been developing in the tourist sphere; since 10 February, 2018, Israeli citizens no longer need a visa to stay in Uzbekistan for 30 days. In 2018, the number of Israeli tourists doubled,⁵⁵ stirring up even greater interest among the Israeli tourist agencies. In July 2019, the Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Israel and Director of the Israel Association of Travel Agencies & Consultants (ITTAA) agreed to promote the tourist potential of Uzbekistan in Israel on the ITTAA platform⁵⁶ and signed an agreement with the Association of Private Tourist Organizations of Uzbekistan on partnership and cooperation in the tourist sphere.⁵⁷

On the whole, in the last few years, the two countries left behind several decades of stagnating relations and even discovered new spheres of bilateral cooperation.

The Iranian factor figures prominently in the Israeli-Turkmen relationships: Ashgabad has found itself in a trap: cooperation with the Jewish state against the background of its complicated relations with Iran. In early 2007, when President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov came to power, he was ready to widen its country's cooperation with Israel. In 2009, the Foreign Minister of Israel and the President of Turkmenistan agreed to open an Embassy of Israel in Ashgabad. In January 2012, the two sides discussed possible spheres of their cooperation (electric power, agriculture and health care); in 2013, Israel opened its embassy in Ashgabad and appointed Shemi Tzur its ambassador.

Political consultations between the foreign ministries of both countries became an important part of their dialog. In 2016, Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan visited Israel. This visit, the first in twenty years, confirmed that Turkmenistan needed and was ready to strengthen bilateral economic and cultural ties.⁵⁸

The dialog on political issues is the foundation of the two countries' bilateral cooperation within international organizations, first and foremost, the U.N.⁵⁹

Trade and economy are the two priorities of Turkmenistan-Israeli cooperation, even if the volume of trade turnover is still very low. According to the data for 2018, it amounted to \$1.17 million.⁶⁰

⁵² See: "Vstrecha v Izraele," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 16 April, 2019, available at [<https://mfa.uz/ru/press/news/2019/04/18610/>], 18 February, 2020.

⁵³ See: "V Izraele obsuzhdeny voprosy razvitiya sotrudnichestva v oblasti zdravookhraneniia," UzDaily.uz, 6 August, 2019, available at [<https://uzdaily.uz/ru/post/45373/>], 18 February, 2020

⁵⁴ See: "Rektory obsudili perspektivy sotrudnichestva," UzDaily, 17 April, 2019, available at [<http://www.uzdaily.com/ru/post/43213/>], 17 February, 2020.

⁵⁵ See: "Sotrudnichestvo Respubliki Uzbekistan so stranami Srednego, Blizhnego Vostoka i Afriki," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, available at [<https://mfa.uz/ru/cooperation/countries/59/>], 7 February, 2020.

⁵⁶ See: "V Izraele obsuzhdeny voprosy razvitiya sotrudnichestva v oblasti turizma," UzDaily, 31 July, 2019, available at [<http://www.uzdaily.com/ru/post/45268/>], 17 February, 2020.

⁵⁷ See: "Sostoialos podpisanie memoranduma mezhdru Assotsiatsiey chastnykh turistichestvix organizatsiy Uzbekistana i Izraelskoy assotsiatsiey turistichestvix agentstv i konsultantov," UzDaily, 14 November, 2019, available at [<https://uzdaily.uz/ru/post/47521/>], 17 February, 2020

⁵⁸ See: "Glava MID Turkmenistana posetil Izrael v pervye za 20 let," Radio Ozodi, 1 June, 2016, available at [<https://rus.ozodi.org/a/27771971.html>], 17 February, 2020.

⁵⁹ See: "Politicheskie konsultatsii mezhdru Turkmenistanom i Gosudarsvom Izrael," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, available at [<https://www.mfa.gov.tm/ru/news/14/>], 17 February, 2020.

⁶⁰ See: "Direction of Trade Statistics (DOTS): Turkmenistan," International Monetary Fund [<https://data.imf.org/regular.aspx?key=61013712>], 4 February, 2020.

The share of Turkmenistan in trade turnover is zero, since the trade balance is one-sided—at this point only 1% of Turkmenistan's imported goods come from Israel.

The two countries, however, are developing their cooperation in the oil and gas sphere: Israel took part in the reconstruction of Turkmenistan's largest oil refinery.

Israel and Turkmenistan are developing cooperation in the spheres of agriculture and water management. Israeli companies that work in Uzbekistan are introducing high technologies in Turkmenistan's agrarian sphere. In 2019, the sides discussed a possibility of supplying Turkmenistan with drip irrigation equipment;⁶¹ the countries are contemplating wider cooperation in health care.

On the whole, we can say that despite their mutual desire, the bilateral relations remain at a low level due to closer relations between Turkmenistan and Iran and the extremely complicated relations between Tehran and Tel Aviv.

The Iranian factor is present in the Israel and Tajikistan relations, which are not, in fact, one of Israel's foreign policy priorities. Their dialog is stalling; Tajikistan is the only Central Asian country that the Israeli prime minister did not visit. Recently the sides have activated their bilateral contacts at the level of ministries, at which plans of cooperation in economy and health care were discussed. Cooperation in agriculture increased in 2009.⁶² In 2017, President of Tajikistan said that he expected even more efficient cooperation between the two countries, primarily in agriculture.⁶³ The volume of mutual trade is negligible. According to the 2018 data, trade turnover between them amounted to \$3.56 million; the share of Tajikistan's exports was \$5,000.

Kyrgyzstan occupies the last line on the list of Israel's Central Asian partners mainly because of the fairly weak legal basis of bilateral cooperation; the volume of trade turnover is small to the extent that these figures are not included in Israeli statistical publications. According to Kyrgyz sources, the volume of trade turnover was \$1.7 million,⁶⁴ in which the share of Kyrgyz exports was even smaller than negligible.

Agriculture is an exception: the close contacts realized through MASHAV included consultative and educational services related to the use of water resources. Israel introduced drip irrigation technologies, it shared with Kyrgyzstan its skills of fighting desertification, construction of hothouses, dairy mini-plants, etc.

Conclusion

In the post-Soviet period, Israel has invigorated its Central Asian policy and identified Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan as priorities. Israel's Central Asian policy has developed in stages.

- At the first stage, the mutual interest led the sides to a dialog; it intensified contacts between the Jewish state and the Central Asian Muslim countries.
- At the second stage, Israel was operating by inertia without political or economic gains.

⁶¹ See: "Turkmenia zainteresovalas postavkami orositelnykh system iz Izraelia," REGNUM, 6 September, 2019, available at [<https://regnum.ru/news/2711054.html>], 4 February, 2020.

⁶² See: "Tadzhikistan i Izrael vystupili za rasshirenie sotrudnichestva v sfere selskogo khoziaistva," AVESTA, 14 December, 2011, available at [<http://avesta.tj/2011/12/14/tadzhikistan-i-izrail-vystupili-za-rasshirenie-sotrudnichestva-v-sfere-selskogo-hozyajstva/>], 19 February, 2020.

⁶³ See: "Posol Izraelia v Tadzhikistane vruchil veritelnye gramoty prezidentu Rakhmonu," Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, available at [<https://mfa.gov.il/MFARUS/PressRoom/2017/Pages/Israeli-Ambassador-to-Tajikistan-presented-his-credentials.aspx>], 19 February, 2020.

⁶⁴ See: "Direction of Trade Statistics (DOTS): Kyrgyz Republic," International Monetary Fund, available at [<https://data.imf.org/regular.aspx?key=61013712>], 4 February, 2020.

- The third stage began in 2010, when Central Asia found itself in the focus of Israel's close attention. The New Peripheral Strategy became part of Tel Aviv's foreign policy agenda: Israel was seeking firmer positions in the Muslim world for the sake of its own security. This is achieved by creating a circle of friendly states to suppress new threats. Tel Aviv focuses on cooperation in the economy and high-tech spheres. Its relations with Central Asian countries give Tel Aviv a chance to demonstrate a successful model of cooperation between the Jewish state and Muslim countries.

The future of Israel's Central Asian policy depends on continued pro-American orientation of the regional states: today relations with Israel are seen as a platform of closer cooperation with the West.

ISRAEL IN THE SOUTHERN CAUCASUS: POLITICAL ASPECTS

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ABSTRACT

For obvious reasons, Israel's policy in the Southern Caucasus is a post-Soviet phenomenon, at the first stage of which Israel was building up a favorable geopolitical environment in the region far removed from its borders. It was no rival for

the main actors involved in geopolitical contention in this part of the former Soviet Union.

At the same time, Israel's interests were not limited to purely economic issues and the agenda of its exporter companies. Its geopolitical struggle against Iran and complicated relations with Turkey, which claimed a dominant position in the Southern Caucasus, forced Israel to rely on the steadily expanding range of its foreign policy instruments in the region.

Israel identified the support of potential Jewish émigrés to Israel as its main task in the post-Soviet Southern Caucasus. In the first years after the disintegration of the U.S.S.R., the region lost tens of thousands of Jews, while Israel welcomed the highly

qualified specialists that it needed. On the whole, Israel practices different approaches to each of the South Caucasian states, fine-tuning them to the tasks resolved by Tel-Aviv in this region. Its highly developed relations with Azerbaijan are based on economic interests and oil imports. The relations with Georgia and Armenia are less developed. Turkey, which is very interested in building closer economic ties with the former, can hardly tolerate rivalry, while closer relations with the latter are complicated by the Iranian factor.

Despite political complications and weakly developed economic relations, Israel preserves its significant interest in the region: together with Central Asia it is seen as a "remote security belt."

KEYWORDS: *Israel, the Southern Caucasus, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia.*

Introduction

There are different geopolitical interpretations of the Southern Caucasus. But all of them say that it is part of the Caucasus, the geopolitical region on the border between Eastern Europe and Central Asia that consists of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia (the status of the latter two is disputable). According to the 2016 Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, the region consists of five states;¹ Azerbaijan and Georgia, which insist on the region's territorial integrity, disagree.

Israel established diplomatic relations with all South Caucasian countries and opened its embassies in Tbilisi and Baku, Georgia opened its embassy in Tel Aviv, while, for political reasons, Armenia and Israel have not confirmed their diplomatic relationships by opening permanent diplomatic missions.

At first, Tel Aviv did not treat the Southern Caucasus as a foreign policy priority because of the distances that separated them and the absence of clear foreign policy reasons. However, it displayed its interest in the region and its Jewish community as soon as the Soviet Union had fallen apart. The Basic Policy Guidelines of the 25th Government adopted in 1992 stated, in particular, that "the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War" have opened the gates for "mass immigration of its residents to Israel."² Indeed, encouraged by Tel Aviv, which needed an influx of able-bodied

¹ [https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptlCk6BZ29/content/id/2542248].

² "Basic Policy Guidelines of the 25th Government—July 1992," in: *Foreign Policy. Historical Documents 1992-1994*, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, available at [<https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/MFADocuments/Yearbook9/Pages/2%20Basic%20Policy%20Guidelines%20of%20the%2025th%20Government-.aspx>], 22 February, 2020.

population, Jews driven by political instability, economic hardships and conflicts were leaving the South Caucasian countries in great numbers.

Israel became involved in the region for geopolitical and economic reasons; it was determined to prevent an expansion of Iranian influence, a complex task due to Iran's geographic and historical proximity. Unperturbed, Tel Aviv is building up its South Caucasian policy, adjusting the mechanisms to its specific aims in each of the regional states.

Israel-Azerbaijan

Israel established diplomatic relations with Azerbaijan in April 1992, opened its embassy in Baku in 1993 and has since that time maintained active political and economic contacts.

The fairly large Jewish diaspora of Azerbaijan (35,500 in the late 1970s) was one of the strongest factors of Israel's involvement. According to the population census of 1999, Azerbaijan has lost half of the diaspora members.³ According to other sources, the number of Jews in Azerbaijan dropped from 25,300 in 1989 to 12,700 in 1999.⁴ At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, there were 12,000 Jews.⁵

Resolved to diversify its foreign policy contacts, Baku wanted to establish more extensive ties with Israel, yet could not initially support its political desire to widen its cooperation with Israel with economic arguments. In 1993, Israel's exports to Azerbaijan did not exceed \$545,000, import—\$12,000.⁶

Starting in the mid-1990s, the two countries have been pouring significantly more efforts into their bilateral relations. By that time, Tel Aviv became more interested in dealing with the regional economic and political issues, oil being one of the most important of them.

Israel invariably took into account the role of extra-regional actors in the region's development trends, their involvement in the domestic affairs of the regional countries and, in particular, pursued a policy of containment of Iran in the Southern Caucasus.⁷ Its special place in the region allowed Iran to pursue a highly specific policy there. While supporting the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, it extended active economic aid to Armenia.⁸ Long-term cooperation between Azerbaijan, the European Union and the United States caused a lot of concern in Tehran⁹: neither Brussels, nor Washington tried to conceal their desire to limit Iran's involvement in the Southern Caucasus and the Caspian region. As Washington's strategic ally, Tel Aviv tried to prevent the influx of investments into the development of Iran's energy resources.¹⁰ This means that Israel supported Washington's policy in the Southern Caucasus, which was designed to prevent Tehran's involvement in extraction and trans-

³ See: "Istoriya evreev Azerbaidzhana," available at [<https://gorskie.ru/juhuro/history/item/13634-istoriya-evreev-azerbaidzhana>], 24 February, 2020.

⁴ See: R. Musabekov, "Stanovlenie nezavisimogo azerbaidzhanskogo gosudartsva i etnicheskie menshinstva," in: *Azerbaidzhan i Rossia: obshchestva i gosudarstva*. Edited and compiled by D.E. Furman, Moscow, Letniy sad, 2001, pp. 355-356.

⁵ See: G. Lerner, "Azeri Jews: Centuries of Coexistence in Azerbaijan," 11 January, 2008, available at [<https://jewish-journal.com/news/world/15943/>], 23 January, 2020.

⁶ See: "Nekotorye aspekty politiki Izrailia v otnoshenii dvukh armianskikh gosudartsv," Part 2, 5 April, 2012, available at [<https://pandukht.livejournal.com/192504.html>], 13 February, 2020.

⁷ See: A.A. Kornilov, "Vneshnepoliticheskie priority gosudarstva Izrail v nachale XXI veka," *Vestnik Nizhegorodskogo universiteta imeni N.I. Lobachevskogo*, History, Political Science, International Relations series, No. 1, 2003, p. 111.

⁸ See: H.N. Najafov, "Iran and the Southern Caucasus," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 1 (49), 2008, pp. 35-43.

⁹ See: M. Khalifa-Zadeh, "Iran and the Southern Caucasus: A Struggle for Influence," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 12, Issue 1, 2011, pp. 51-62.

¹⁰ See: *Rossia i Zakavkazie: realii nezavisimosti i novej partnerstvo*, ed. R.M. Avakov, A.G. Lisova, IMEMO RAN, Finstatinform, Moscow, 2000, pp. 51-55.

portation of hydrocarbons to external markets. Tehran, for its part, looked askance at the widening contacts between Azerbaijan and Israel.

In 1997, Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu stopped in Baku to discuss trade and economic issues, the threats emanating from Iran and cooperation in the intelligence sphere with President of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev.¹¹ This laid the foundation for wider trade and economic cooperation despite the highly negative attitude assumed by Tehran. In January 1998, Iran negatively responded to the visit of State Foreign Policy Advisor of Azerbaijan Vafa Guluzadeh to Israel.¹²

The relations between Azerbaijan and Israel were further encouraged by the fact that any outcrops of anti-Semitism in Azerbaijan were immediately condemned and suppressed. Israel reciprocated by supporting the territorial integrity of its partner. Because of the fairly precarious situation in Palestine, Tel Aviv refuses to recognize areas that have detached themselves from bigger states as independent states. It has not recognized the independence of Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh and South Ossetia.¹³

Despite Iran's negative attitude to the relations between Israel and Azerbaijan, in 1997-2004, exports from Azerbaijan to Israel increased from \$2 to \$323 million.¹⁴

The President of Azerbaijan was steering his country towards a wider partnership with the Jewish diaspora and with Israel. The Jews of Azerbaijan strongly affect the ties between the two countries; Israel paid particular attention to education and culture in its relations with Azerbaijan. Back in 1994, Baku University opened a Hebrew Studies Department; in 2006, the "Israel and the Jewish Language" teaching center.¹⁵ In June 2009, the two countries signed an agreement On Cooperation in Culture, Education and Science.¹⁶ Several cultural centers, including the Jewish Agency for Israel (Sohnut) and Joint and Vaad-L-Hetzola committees have been set up to promote the cultural values of Jews and publish newspapers in Hebrew.

Israel went beyond the political and economic boundaries to promote its technological civilian and military breakthroughs, which made Baku one of Israel's priorities in the Southern Caucasus.

In June 2006, an Israeli delegation led by Minister of National Infrastructure Binyamin Ben-Eliezer visited Azerbaijan to discuss cooperation in the energy sphere. In 2006, Azerbaijan exported about 2 million tons of oil every year (which covered about 17% of the country's requirements) to Israel.¹⁷ On the whole, in 2006, Azerbaijan imported 10.7% of its products to Israel.¹⁸

Tel Aviv expected to implement a global Jewish project New Oil Geography, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline extended to Israel being its part.¹⁹ In 2006, Turkey and Israel began negotiating

¹¹ See: M. Khalifa-Zadeh, "Israel and Azerbaijan: To Counteract Iran," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 13, Issue 3, 2012, pp. 68-79.

¹² See: A.A. Kurtov, "Azerbaijan-Iran: poka problem v otnosheniakh sosedey bolshe, chem resheniy," in: *Nezavisimiy Azerbaidzhan: novye orientiry*, in 2 vols., Vol. 2, ed. by E.M. Kozhokin, RISI, Moscow, 2000, pp. 189-279.

¹³ See: "Azari: Izrail ne priznaet nezavisimost Abkhazii i Iuzhnoy Osetii," 30 December, 2008, available at [<https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/147338/>], 28 February, 2020.

¹⁴ See: I. Bourtman, "Israel and Azerbaijan's Furtive Embrace," *Middle East Quarterly*, Summer 2006, pp. 47-57.

¹⁵ See: S.F. Gadjiev, "Sotrudnichestvo mezhdru Azerbaidzhanom i Izraelem v sfere nauki, tekhniki i obrazovania v gody nezavisimosti Azerbaidzhana," *Sociologie Cloveka*, No. 4, 2016, pp. 39-46.

¹⁶ See: Agreement on cooperation in culture, education and science between the government of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the government of the State of Israel, available in Russian at [https://edu.gov.az/ru/page/136#move_top], 22 February, 2020.

¹⁷ See: "Izrail poluchil pervuiu partiu azerbaidzhanskoy nefti," 10 July, 2006, available at [<https://regnum.ru/news/670923.html>], 22 February, 2020.

¹⁸ See: "In 10 months of 2006 foreign trade turnover of Azerbaijan with the CIS countries topped \$2.3 billion," 28 November, 2006, available in Russian at [<https://www.caravan.kz/news/vneshnetorgovyyj-oborot-azerbajdzhana-so-stranami-sng-za-10-mesyacev-2006-goda-prevysil-23-mlrd-218736/>], 27 January, 2020.

¹⁹ See: "Izrail nabliudaet za Iranom iz Azerbaidzhana," 14 June, 2006, available at [<https://regnum.ru/news/polit/657036.html>], 24 January, 2020.

a \$2-billion project that was expected to bring oil, gas and water to Israel via pipelines laid on the bottom of the Mediterranean.²⁰

Energy is not the only sphere of Israeli interest in Azerbaijan; Tel Aviv expects to expand its military technological cooperation with Baku to help its companies gain profits.²¹ Baku positively assessed these initiatives as a chance to improve the battle worthiness of its Armed Forces.

The Azerbaijan-Israeli relations changed in 2008 after the August conflict between Russia and Georgia. Tel Aviv distanced itself from Tbilisi in order not to spoil its relationships with Moscow. Azerbaijan tried to capitalize on this rational decision to lower the level of cooperation between Tel Aviv and Tbilisi. Israel, in turn, compensated for the lower level of military and technical cooperation with Georgia by raising the level of its cooperation with Azerbaijan. Earlier, in February 2007, the sides had signed an agreement on mutual protection of investments.

In May 2009, President of Israel Shimon Peres came to Baku with the state visit that summed up the cooperation of the two countries and laid the foundation for its further development. Israel was interested in military cooperation; it supplied Azerbaijan with the latest armaments systems, including Heron TP and EL/M-2080 Green Pine drones and small arms. In 2012, the total sum of the contracts was \$1.6 billion. A JV was created which produced Orbiter drones. Bilateral relations have reached their highest point; the sides fostered their cooperation in the military technology and energy spheres. Trade turnover reached \$4 billion, mainly because of the hydrocarbons imported by Israel.

On the whole, in the late 2000s Israel revised its South Caucasian policies; the structure of its foreign policy clearly confirmed the region's exceptional importance. In 2008, its Foreign Ministry established the departments responsible for the relations with the South Caucasian states.²²

Israel invariably took Turkey's position into account: Turkey expanded its presence in the region, consolidated its trade and economic cooperation with Azerbaijan and Georgia and created permanent mechanisms of bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Israel uses its ties with Turkey within the context of its own regional policies.²³

Israel was building up its political dialog with Azerbaijan to discuss many of the Middle Eastern and South Caucasian issues. This process is further promoted by contacts between heads of state and foreign ministers to the extent that their assessments of the South Caucasian interests related to the interests of Azerbaijan have become more similar. Containment of Iran was and remains one of the central issues in Israel's foreign policy.²⁴

In 2013-2014, foreign and defense ministers of Israel and Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan Elmar Mammadyarov exchanged visits for the purpose of widening bilateral economic and military cooperation; Israel aimed for continued cooperation in the energy sphere.

Tel Aviv's position on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue was closer to the Azeri than to the Armenian approach. Israel supported Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and the idea that the conflict should be resolved on the basis of resolutions passed by international organizations.²⁵ At the same time, a diplomatic mission of Azerbaijan in Israel was not even discussed to avoid an outburst of enmity from

²⁰ See: A.V. Glazova, "Turetsko-izraelskie otnosheniya: est li perspektiva vykhoda iz ktizisa?" *Problemy natsionalnoy strategii*, No. 2, 2012, pp. 49-62.

²¹ See: N.S. Niyazov, "Sotrudnichestvo Izrailia i Azerbaidzhana v voennoy sfere v 1994-2014gg.," *KLIO*, No. 3, 2015, pp. 217-224.

²² See: S. Markedonov, "Kavkazskie priority Izraelia," No. 9, 2011, available at [<https://noev-kovcheg.ru/mag/2011-09/2547.html>], 23 January, 2020.

²³ See: R. Menon, "The New Great Game in Central Asia," *The International Institute for Strategic Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 2, 2003, pp. 187-204.

²⁴ [<http://izrus.co.il/dvuhstoronka/article/2011-04-08/13942.html>], 13 February, 2020.

²⁵ See: R.G. Avetisian, "Evreyskaia obshchina Azerbaidzhana—istoria razvitiya i ee mesto vo vneshnepoliticheskoy deiatelnosti gosudarstva Izrail," *Nizhegorodskiy zhurnal mezhdunarodnykh issledovaniy "Vesta"*, Summer 2008, p. 48.

the Muslim world and its rejection of the decisions connected with conflict settlement in Nagorno-Karabakh.²⁶

The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, commissioned in 2006, brought the volume of oil exported to Israel to 40% of its requirements. On the average, in 1990-2016 Israel's annual oil imports remained between 8.3 and 12.1 million tons;²⁷ Israel extracted no more than 1 million tons of oil every year. In 2015, up to 77% of imported oil reaches Israel from Iraqi Kurdistan.²⁸

In December 2016, the Prime Minister of Israel paid a historic visit to Azerbaijan;²⁹ the sides discussed cooperation in defense, energy and information technologies.³⁰ This can be interpreted as a continuation of Israel's policy that entails an establishment of a strategic environment including the Central Asian and South Caucasian countries as its part.³¹

Israel invariably paid particular attention to Azeri oil deliveries: Azerbaijan is responsible on average for about 20% of its imported oil. Baku is similarly interested: in 2017, oil exports accounted for 77% of its total exports, with Turkey and Israel buying 9.80% and 4.63% of Azeri oil, respectively.³²

On the whole, in recent years their bilateral relations were sufficiently intensive: Israel invested in the Azeri economy and bought Azeri oil, while Baku expected to acquire Israel's high technologies to be used in agriculture, telecommunications and the military sphere.³³ In April 2017, they eliminated double taxation that improved their trade and economic relations: in 2019, their trade turnover exceeded \$5 billion.

Israel-Georgia

Georgia and Israel established diplomatic relations in June 1992. Tel Aviv was interested in cooperation with Georgia and its sizeable Jewish community: in the early 1990s, it was about 14,000 strong, but later it had lost many of its members.³⁴

Georgia was in need of cooperation in the spheres of agriculture, tourism and telecommunications. The official visit of President of Georgia Eduard Shevardnadze to Israel in 1995 launched the countries' bilateral relations; the sides signed an agreement on cooperation in the military sphere, and, later in the same year, an agreement on protection of investments and cooperation in air traffic. The two countries were actively interacting in the military sphere: Georgia received small arms, grenade launchers and drones from Israel.

²⁶ See: E. Ismayilov, "Israel and Azerbaijan: The Evolution of a Strategic Partnership," *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 2013, p. 74.

²⁷ See: A. Marjanian, "Neftianaia otrasl Izrailia," 5 November, 2018, available at [http://www.noravank.am/rus/articles/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=17789], 23 February, 2020.

²⁸ See: N. Zubov, "Izrail zapodozrili v finansirovanii kurdsikh boevikov," *Kommersant*, 24 August, 2015.

²⁹ See: "Istoricheskiy visit': Azerbaidzhan i Izrail brosayut vyzov Iranu?" 14 December, 2016, available at [<https://eadaaily.com/ru/news/2016/12/14/istoricheskiy-vizit-azerbaydzhan-i-izrail-brosayut-vyzov-iranu>], 16 January, 2020.

³⁰ See: "Premier ministr Izrailia posetil Azerbaidzhan," 14 December, 2016, available at [<https://regnum.ru/news/2217220.html>], 25 February, 2020.

³¹ See: I. Avinoam, "Israeli PM's Visit to the Two Sides of the Caspian Sea," *CACI Analyst*, 6 February, 2017.

³² See: "77% eksporta Azerbajjana v 2017 g. prishlos na nef," 15 January, 2018, available at [<https://regnum.ru/news/economy/2367805.html>], 23 February, 2020.

³³ See: "Azerbajjan i Izrail nuzhdaiutsia drug v druge: k vizitu Benyamina Netanyahu v Baku," 9 September, 2016, available at [<https://eadaaily.com/ru/news/2016/09/09/azerbaydzhan-i-izrail-nuzhdayutsya-drug-v-druge-k-vizitu-binyamina-netanyahu-v-baku>], 12 January, 2020.

³⁴ See: A. Ganbarov, "Gruzinskie evreii," available at [<https://maxpark.com/community/6224/content/6013294>], 16 January, 2020.

They were also actively fostering economic cooperation: Israeli companies and firms were actively seeking to establish firm positions in the Georgian economy, and partly succeeded, even if the trade turnover between the two countries remained negligible.

In 1998, President Shevardnadze came to Israel with a working visit, during which the sides signed several important documents including the Declaration on Cooperation in the sphere of bilateral investments, air flights, agriculture and telecommunications. They also discussed potential involvement of Israel in the reconstruction of a chemical plant in Georgia.³⁵ The relations were developing on a minor scale, yet by the late 1990s Israel occupied the first place by the size of investments (16% of the total) in Georgia's economy.³⁶

The visit of President of Israel Moshe Katsav and a group of Israeli businessmen to Georgia in 2001 to discuss the projects of trade and economic cooperation had launched the process; the Israeli side was especially interested in the anticipated project (the idea of which had first surfaced in 1999) of pipelines designed to bring potable water to Israel through Turkey. According to Shevardnadze, "water supplies might become one of the priorities of our cooperation with Israel: Georgia is one of the world's richest resources of potable water."³⁷

In 2003, bilateral relations intensified in the context of the two countries' discussions of wider economic cooperation. Georgia needed assistance in agriculture, telecommunications and communications, while Israel hoped that the oil- and gas pipelines that would bring oil and gas from Azerbaijan to Israel across the Georgian territory would consolidate bilateral relations.

Later, in 2004-2008, their economic relations reached new heights due to Israel's involvement in the rearmament of the Georgian army. In 2004, President of Georgia Mikhail Saakashvili paid an official visit to Israel; this invigorated the trade and economic cooperation, even though Georgia remained a trade partner of secondary importance.³⁸ In 2006, the Georgian president came to Israel with a working visit. In this way, thanks to external assistance and a new taxation system, Georgia poured practically \$1 billion into defense. It bought anti-aircraft missiles and corvettes from Israel and East European countries.³⁹ Israeli arms traders frequently visited Georgia; cooperation was developing into a long-term affair and became highly important for both sides. Israel sold the latest military machines and was involved in training Georgian military.

After the August 2008 conflict in South Ossetia, weapon supplies were discontinued,⁴⁰ since Israel did not want to spoil its relations with Russia, which would have predictably worsened significantly if military cooperation with Georgia continued. The problem was resolved by the obligation of Israel to discontinue its military-technical cooperation with Georgia; Russia reciprocated by promising not to supply Iran with long-range missile complexes.⁴¹

The relations between Israel and Georgia further suffered when Tel Aviv banned deliveries of its products to Georgia in response to the arrest of Israeli businessmen accused of bribing Georgian officials.⁴²

³⁵ See: I.A. Novikov, "Otnoshenia Izraelia so stranami byvshego SSSR," 25 January, 2005, available at [http://www.iimes.ru/?p=3450], 22 February 2020.

³⁶ See: *Rossia i Zakavkazie: realii nezavisimosti i novoe partnerstvo*.

³⁷ See: I.A. Novikov, op. cit.

³⁸ See: "Gruzinsky ministr schitaet ekonomiku Izraelia obraztsovoy," 9 May, 2007, available at [https://www.inopressa.ru/article/09May2007/jpost/georgia.html], 8 February, 2020.

³⁹ See: D. Rayfield, *Edge of Empires: A History of Georgia*, Moscow, Reaktion Books Ltd, London, 2012.

⁴⁰ See: S. Kozheurov, A.D. Epstein, *Rossia i Izrail: Izmeniaushchiesia vektory dvustoronnikh otnosheniy*, The Middle East Institute, 10 October, 2010, available at [http://www.iimes.ru/?p=11660], 20 February, 2020.

⁴¹ See: A.D. Epstein, E.E. Zadvoriansky, "Dva desiatiletia vosstanovlenia rossiysko-iraelskikh otnosheniy (1991-2011): ot konfrontatsii—k torzhestvu prava mira," *Nauka i obrazovanie: khoziaistvo i ekonomika; predpinimatelstvo; pravo i upravlenie*, No. 11, 2011, pp. 32-42.

⁴² See: S. Hoffman, "Rossiysko-izraelskie otnoshenia v poslednee desiatiletie," in: *Obshchestvo i politika sovremennogo Izraelia*, Gesharim, Jerusalem; Mosty kultury, Moscow, 2002. p. 32.

For a while, the level of trade and economic cooperation remained fairly low because of the 2008 events and the tension caused by the arrest. In October 2012, bilateral relations received a new lease on life by the appointment of Bidzina Ivanishvili prime minister of Georgia. In June 2013, he visited Israel.⁴³ Georgia was in need of Israeli drones and armaments.

In its relations with Israel, Azerbaijan relied on its oil-created advantages, while Georgia preferred economic cooperation, which remained at a fairly low level. In 2012, their trade turnover did not exceed \$70 million: Israel carefully selected what to export from Georgia and what could be disregarded. It needed oil, first and foremost, the rest could wait. On the whole, Tel-Aviv was developing its cooperation with Georgia in the context of its South Caucasian policies.

In 2016, the two sides started talking about a free trade agreement,⁴⁴ yet at first the talks did not improve their economic cooperation—trade turnover remained at a relatively low level of \$91 million in 2017.

In 2018, Georgia and Israel, following discussions between their ministers of economy, decided to raise their trade turnover in the next five years to \$1 billion. Today, 271 Israeli companies are working in Georgia, and their investments in Georgian economy total \$124 million.⁴⁵

Israel-Armenia

Diplomatic relations were established in April 1992, yet neither side has so far opened a diplomatic mission in the other country.

In the first post-Soviet years there were no official working visits. It was in 1995 that President of Armenia Levon Ter-Petrosian went to Israel for the burial of Prime Minister of Israel Yitzhak Rabin. Five years later, another President of Armenia, Robert Kocharyan, visited Israel.

The Armenian Jewish community was much smaller than in Georgia and Azerbaijan with their big Jewish populations. It is commonly believed that about 6,000 Jews left Armenia for Israel in the 1990s; approximately the same number stayed behind.⁴⁶ According to different sources, there are between 500 to 1,000 Jews in Armenia.⁴⁷

On the whole, in the absence of economic prerequisites, political dialog and cooperation between the two countries are practically absent. This is explained by the fact that Iran was and remains an important economic and political partner of Armenia, and, therefore, a weighty political factor. After the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan and Turkey closed their borders to Armenia making Iran the only and, therefore, crucial link to the outside world.

Israel, nevertheless, contemplates possible wider cooperation with Armenia: Tel Aviv wants to diversify its foreign policy contacts in the region in which the main role belongs to Azerbaijan.

As distinct from the rapidly developing relations between Israel and two neighbors of Armenia in the energy and military spheres, its relations with Armenia can hardly be called dynamic. The agreements on cooperation in culture, science and education, health protection and medicine, and mutual

⁴³ See: Ts. Mamulashvili, "Vizit Ivanishvili v Izrail mozhет vyvesti otnosheniya dvukh stran na novy etap—MID," available at [<https://sputnik-georg5ia.ru/georgia/20130624/215747549.html>], 19 January, 2020.

⁴⁴ See: "Gruzia nachinaet peregovory o 'Svobodnoy trgovle' s Izrailem," 24 September, 2016, available at [<https://www.geomigrant.com/2016/09/24/грузия-начинает-переговоры-о-свободной-торговле-с-израилем/>], 25 January, 2020.

⁴⁵ See: "Gruziya i Izrael za pyat let uvelichat tovarooborot do odnogo milliarda," 26 March 2018, available at [<https://www.newsgeorgia.ge/gruziya-i-izrail-za-pyat-let-uvelichat-tovarooborot-do-odnogo-milliarda/>], 24 February 2020.

⁴⁶ See: "Chto predstavliaet soboy 'evreyskaia problema' Armenii—k teme diskutiruemogo antisemitizma v Armenii," 1 July, 2019, available at [<https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/blogs/83781/posts/38500>], 23 February, 2020.

⁴⁷ See: A. Svarants, "Chto razdeliaet i chto zviazyvaet Armeniu i Izrael," 6 September 2017, available at [<https://regnum.ru/news/polit/2318014.html>], 12 February, 2020.

protection of investments, all signed in 1994-2000, did not affect either the state or the prospects of bilateral interaction.

Economic relations between the two countries were limited: in 2006, Israel's share of Armenia's total imports comprised 4.8%, while Armenia exported to Israel 7% of its total exports.

Tzahi Hanegbi, Minister of Regional Cooperation of Israel who visited Armenia in July 2017, described his visit as a step forward in relations to make the Armenia-Israeli "friendship mutually beneficial in many fields."⁴⁸

Conclusion

Azerbaijan is and will remain Israel's main partner in the region: oil and gas are the main attractions that suggest deeper cooperation and long-term plans of using Azerbaijan's hydrocarbon potential in the future.

Unlike Turkey and Iran that rely on multilateral formats to promote their interests in the region, Israel prefers bilateral relations even if in the 1990s there were plans supported by the United States to create an Azerbaijan-Israel-Turkey-Georgia format.⁴⁹

Israel looks at its relations with the South Caucasian states as an anti-Iranian instrument.⁵⁰ In 2016, when the anti-Iranian sanctions were removed and Iran's role in the region was thus set to increase, Israel revised its foreign policies and started paying more attention to the South Caucasian countries.⁵¹

Today, very much as before, Israel's relations with Azerbaijan and Georgia look promising. At the same time, despite Israel's unshakeable support of territorial integrity of Georgia and Azerbaijan, it is expanding its relations with Tskhinval and Sukhumi: it has already widened its economic contacts with them, and is especially interested in their agriculture, extraction of minerals and involvement in building up their transport infrastructure.

Israel is doing its best not to infringe on the sphere of Russian interests in the region. Unlike many other countries, determined to demonstrate their active position in the region, Israel invariably admits that Russia has special interests in this part of the world.⁵²

On the whole, Israel pursues a highly consistent policy; it is developing economic relations with all South Caucasian states and is gradually widening the spheres of its cooperation.

⁴⁸ E. Avdaliani, "Israel and the South Caucasus: Building a New Approach," *BESA Center Perspectives Paper*, No. 632, 2 November, 2017.

⁴⁹ See: G. Lindenstrauss, "Israel-Azerbaijan: Despite the Constraints, a Special Relationship," *Strategic Assessment*, Vol. 17, No. 4, 2015, pp. 69-79.

⁵⁰ See: M. Bishku, "The South Caucasus Republics and Israel," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 2, 2009, pp. 295-314.

⁵¹ See: E. Avdaliani, *op. cit.*

⁵² See: A.D. Epstein, E.E. Zadvoriansky, *op. cit.*

**MILITARY STANDOFF
BETWEEN THE U.S. AND IRAN:
THE PARTIES' MILITARY POTENTIALS AND
HYPOTHETICAL SCENARIOS OF
CONFLICT DEVELOPMENT
IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

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ABSTRACT

The paper analyzes the physical and geographical conditions of the Iranian theater of operations, the combat capabilities of the Iranian armed forces and Iran's military doctrine. It notes the growing combat potential of the Iranian Army, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the Law Enforcement Force.

The article provides an analysis of combat capabilities and the forecast of the

likely scenarios of U.S. and Israeli military operations against Iran. It assesses the parties' probable losses in the military operation. It emphasizes the fact that, despite the overwhelming American military power, Iran's armed forces can repel aggression using the "hybrid war" assets and methods and an asymmetric response to the enemy. There are also shortcomings in the work of the American expert community in analyzing

and forecasting the development of the military and political situation around Iran, which can lead to grave consequences for the United States.

KEYWORDS: *Iran, military power, hybrid war, military situation, Iran-U.S. confrontation, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).*

Introduction

The Iran-U.S. confrontation, which began after the 1979 revolution in Iran and received a new impetus after the assassination of the IRGC General Qasem Soleimani, deserves close attention and a detailed assessment of the parties' military potentials.

While it is possible to assess the combat capabilities of the armed forces of the U.S. and Israel, its strategic ally in the Middle East, it poses a difficulty in the case of Iran, which is one of the most non-transparent countries in the world. It explains the limited number of systems analysis studies of the military policy and military power of Iran, which immediately become important sources of information.

This work aims to examine the combat potential of the Iranian armed forces, as well as the doctrinal views of the Iranian leadership on the use of armed forces (AF), analyze the scenarios and provide forecasts of the regional military and political situation in the deteriorating situation around the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Combat Use and Potential of Iran's Armed Forces in Countering Potential Aggression

Iran takes the statements made by U.S. political and military leaders regarding a military operation against Iran with utmost seriousness. Such an operation would aim to overthrow the country's political regime and hinder the subsequent development of nuclear and missile technologies, which, according to the West, can turn Iran into a nuclear power. In response to these threats, Iran, being under the burden of sanctions and the strong military, diplomatic and economic pressure of Western countries, is preparing its armed forces to repel aggression.

First of all, the Iranian leadership relies on the country's unique military, geographical and climate characteristics. The terrain and climatic conditions, with a humid subtropical climate on the Caspian coast, which alternates with mountains with a sharply continental climate, and vast anhydrous deserts with an arid climate, and a small number of plains with swampy areas in the southwestern regions, will adversely affect the nature of hostilities and the methods and forms utilized by the parties' armed forces.¹

¹ See: T.A. Ganiev, S.M. Zadonsky, V.V. Karyakin, *Voennaia moshch Islamskoy Respubliki Iran: voennaia politika i vooruzhennyye sily strany*, Vol. 1, Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow, 2019, pp. 24-33.

Iran's mountain ranges go in different directions and act as natural barriers that military and transport vehicles can only pass via mountain passes. Thus, under these conditions, military operations can only be conducted within narrow sections of the front that determine the direction of the main attacks. This will lead to a discrete nature of fighting, reminiscent of a "patchwork" of alternating zones of the parties' military control, which are being supplied by air or armed convoys.

The underdeveloped communications and the absence of routes to bypass the enemy complicate the utilization of large military units and their material and technical support. Fighting can be conducted only along the lines of communication with the aim of capturing and retaining settlements, dominant heights, mountain crossings and mountain passes using a limited number of airmobile units and special operations forces. The use of heavy armored vehicles will be limited. The importance of mobile tactical groups, i.e., infantry, airborne, artillery and engineering units supported by army and tactical aircraft, acquires great importance under mountainous terrain conditions.

Heavy snowfalls in winter and stormy spring floods during snowmelt complicate military operations in the mountains. Water bodies (rivers, canals, lakes, reservoirs) will also impede any actions taken by the troops. The plains in the southern section of the western theater of war offer the most favorable warfare conditions. However, continuous flooding zones can also form here during rainy season, a factor that will have a decisive influence on the planning and course of hostilities. Troops will be unable to build traditional engineering structures in these areas due to the presence of marshland. Therefore, defenses can be engineered by building shielded resistance nodes, personnel shelters and equipment storage, creating very tall and steep anti-tank ramparts, rather than by constructing dugouts and trenches. A large number of armored excavators and special soil-transporting vehicles are required for the technical outfitting of wetland positions.

There are areas with dense gravel and pebble soils in the desert regions of the country, where personnel can move on wheeled vehicles. The complexity of desert warfare in a specific area is determined by the presence of minimum conditions for camouflage and the threat of significant damage to troops if weapons of mass destruction are used.

Water scarcity and high temperatures are the two critical factors that affect the use of troops in the desert. Specific water and temperature conditions in the desert can lead to the onset of infectious diseases and epidemics among personnel. Supplying troops with perishable products will present serious difficulties. Therefore, the command must pay close attention to creating reserves of drinking and technical water.

When planning combat operations, the absence of an extensive network of roads and railways, especially in the Western, Southern and Southeastern operational directions of the Iranian theater of war must be taken into account. The underdeveloped transport network complicates the regrouping of troops and delivery of supplies. Under these conditions, the main burden will be borne by road transport and military transport aircraft. Helicopters and pack animals have to be used for these purposes in mountainous areas.

The deployment of troops and reserves in the three above-mentioned operational directions present certain difficulties for the Iranian command. All but a few settlements in the zone of the second echelon, reserve and the rear defense zone of the Iranian troops, are small. The deployment of large military contingents there is impossible due to the limited number of suitable buildings, their unsanitary condition and exposure to enemy aircraft and artillery.

The lack of vegetation in practically all operational directions will make camouflage difficult. High temperatures, rocky and sandy soils in these areas will lead to increased amortization of the running gear of military equipment and weapons.²

² See: *Ibid.*, pp. 34-53.

Military Doctrine Views of the Iranian Military Command on Engaging Iran's Armed Forces

Ground troops. In 2005, the IRGC leadership announced the implementation of the doctrine of the country's flexible layered defense, which was called "mosaic defense." The author of this concept was General Mohammad Jafari, head of the IRGC Center for Strategy, who was subsequently appointed commander of the IRGC.

As part of the defense program, a plan was drawn up to create a management system comprising 31 commands: one for Tehran and 30 for Iranian provinces. This plan's main objective was to improve local-level command and control and endow commanders with the ability to deter threats. This plan was based on an analysis of US military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

A layered defense plan allows the Iranian military command to use the strategic depth and difficult geographical conditions of the country for both the armed forces, guerillas and special forces acting against an enemy. Most Iranian settlements and main communications are located inside mountain ranges, which serve as natural barriers for enemy troops. Since during the battles the enemy's rear support lines stretch into Iran's internal regions, they will be helpless against special operations forces and previously conspired groups—"sleeping cells" of guerillas and saboteurs.³

Army units reinforced with armored and mechanized divisions will become the first line of defense in repelling an enemy attack.

The IRGC troops will occupy the second line of defense, covering the most important operational directions by moving in from the interior, delivering counterattacks and exhausting the enemy. Support for the Army and the IRGC will also be provided by the core of popular resistance, the bulk of which is formed by Basij and other paramilitary guerilla forces. In the event of a heightened military threat, the IRGC developed a wartime mobilization plan for the Basij, according to which Basij fighters will replenish the regular IRGC units in the event of an enemy invasion.

At the exercises, the IRGC and Basij constantly practice conducting ambushes and raids on enemy military convoys. Please note that most of the exercises are carried out in urban conditions, which suggests that Iran intends to draw the enemy into combat in urban areas, where the adversary will be deprived of mobility and direct air support.⁴

Along with the use of troops, Iran's military command pays attention to passive protection measures, i.e. increasing troops' survival rate on the battlefield, including disguises and misinformation of the enemy.

Naval operations. Recently, the country's military leadership has attached the same importance to maritime operations as to ground operations. The use of Iranian naval forces is aimed at confronting the technologically superior enemy, namely, the U.S. Navy. The foundations of this doctrine were developed during the tanker war (1984-1988), when Iran used aircraft, speed boats, sea mines and land-based cruise anti-ship missiles to attack civilian tankers carrying oil in the Persian Gulf.

After the American frigate *Samuel B. Roberts* was damaged by an Iranian mine, the U.S. Navy retaliated with Operation Praying Mantis (1988), destroying two Iranian oil platforms and sinking several Iranian surface ships, including a corvette, a patrol boat and gunboats.

Following Operation Praying Mantis, the military leadership of Iran concluded that its naval forces would not be sufficiently effective in a naval conflict with an adversary like the United States.

³ See: Ibid., pp. 303-328.

⁴ See: Ibid., pp. 434-513.

Based on the lessons learned from the tanker war, the Iranian Navy has developed an asymmetric strategy based on the prevention of direct confrontations at sea. The adopted plan provided for unexpected attacks, ambushes and raids. Instead of inflicting a decisive defeat, Iran's naval forces will attempt to damage the enemy, so that the price of victory becomes unacceptable.

Iran's naval doctrine is based on layered defense and building up firepower by combining naval, land and air weapons to crush or intimidate the enemy. The Iranians put into service a large variety of naval equipment designed to conduct asymmetric warfare in order to implement this doctrine. These weapons include naval mines, which can be secretly installed using small boats or commercial vessels; land and sea anti-ship cruise missiles; small high-speed boats that can participate in swarm operations and suicide attacks, as well as submarines produced domestically and in North Korea, used in the shallow areas of the gulf.

Hydrography is a key element in Iranian naval planning. The limited space of the gulf, which is under 100 nautical miles wide in some places, makes maneuvering difficult for large ships, such as aircraft carriers. This creates favorable conditions for the Iranian naval forces. The northern gulf coast is dotted with rocky inlets, ideal for basing and camouflaging small boats and anti-ship missiles. For this purpose, the Iranians have fortified numerous islands in the Persian Gulf, which are located on the main sea routes and are in the defense frontline.

In order to repel enemy attacks, Iran has developed a strategy that makes it difficult for enemy navies to access the Persian Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz. This strategically important stretch is 29 nautical miles wide in its narrowest part. Iranian officials claimed they could shut down the strait during the conflict, thereby halting the transportation of up to 30 percent of global oil supplies.

Use of Iranian air force and air defense equipment. The doctrine of the Air Force and Air Defense of Iran is aimed at protecting the country's airspace, repelling military aggression and striking at an advancing enemy. Land-to-air missiles and interceptor aircraft play a crucial role in solving these problems. Iranian pilots are the best in the region. They continue to use the knowledge and tactics obtained during the U.S.-Iranian military cooperation during the Shah's rule, integrating them with modern air combat methods. However, the outdated combat aircraft are not able to withstand an attack by modern enemy air forces, while the Iranian fleet of modern aircraft is still small.

The Air Force and Air Defense are separate commands within the Army. The two main problems in protecting the Iranian airspace are the outdated aircraft fleet, and geographical conditions. The size of Iran and its mountainous terrain create difficulties in forming a continuous radar field. This leads to the emphasis on protecting Tehran, nuclear infrastructure facilities and command and control posts. Tactics utilized by the air defense include on-ground camouflage and ambush for detecting enemy aircraft, avoiding its premature detection by radio-electronic means. The sustainability of air defense positions is ensured by camouflage and dispersal of forces, the use of advanced detection tools, and the establishment of fortified shelters and hidden missile positions.

Use of missile forces. The Iranian ballistic missile program began in the mid-1980s, during the Iran-Iraq war. For Tehran, Iraq's use of ballistic missiles against Iran's strategic targets highlighted the critical vulnerability of Iran's defense and had a demoralizing effect on civilians. To prevent any subsequent attacks on its facilities, Iran began developing its own ballistic missiles, starting with the initial supply of Scud missiles from Libya. By the end of the war, Iran had fired more than 100 ballistic missiles at Iraqi targets as part of the so-called "urban warfare."

Iran's missile forces are a major factor in its deterrence strategy. Iran currently has the largest stockpile of ballistic missiles in the Middle East. The IRGC, which directly controls Iran's missile forces, continues to develop, modernize, increase its range and improve the performance of its missiles, some of which are capable of reaching Israel, the Persian Gulf countries and U.S. military bases in the Middle East. However, their limited accuracy suggests that they can be effectively used

to strike at large-area targets such as cities, oil production and refining facilities, ports, desalination plants, and the accumulation of troops and warships at ports and naval bases.

Military Capabilities of Iran's Armed Forces

The leadership of the Islamic Republic of Iran does not exclude the possibility of the United States and Israel launching missile and bomb strikes against their country and pays close attention to the development of a strategy for effectively countering possible aggression. The concept of asymmetric warfare and retaliation aimed at forcing the enemy to halt the armed invasion is at the core of this strategy.

An analysis of the statements made by a number of top statesmen and military leaders of the United States and Israel, who are concerned about the growing nuclear missile threat from Tehran, allows to predict the three most likely options for the United States' and Israel's actions against Iran:⁵

1. Limited air and missile strikes to disable the essential Iranian nuclear facilities. In this case, Israel can carry out a unilateral air strike. Israeli military aviation has applicable experience in the destruction of nuclear facilities in the Middle East. For instance, in 1981, the Israeli Air Force destroyed the Iraqi nuclear reactor in Osirak.

When evaluating the effectiveness of an air strike against Iran, it is important to remember that Israel does not have cruise missiles. Thus, it will have to employ American-made fighter-bombers: F-35I Adir,⁶ F-16, and F-15.

It must be presumed that there are three possible routes for Israeli aviation if an independent air strike at Iran's nuclear facilities is launched by the Israeli command.⁷

- The first one is from the north, through Turkish airspace along the Syrian border. The range to the targets is 1,000-1,200 km. The main obstacle is that it requires Ankara's consent, however, even with American mediation in resolving this issue, it does not seem feasible at the moment.
- The second route is over the territory of Jordan and Iraq. The distance is short (700-800 km), but it has to be traversed secretly without notice, at a low altitude, hoping that the Israeli aircraft are not detected by these countries' air defense systems.
- The third route is over Jordan and Saudi Arabia from the Persian Gulf. This would certainly be the worst option for the military leadership of Iran, but the main question is whether Tel Aviv will be able to reach an agreement with Riyadh. In addition, it should be noted that this route is the longest (1,300-1,500 km).

Nevertheless, in order to get approval for the flight of aircraft over Saudi Arabia or Turkey, Israel will in any case require U.S. mediation and support.

A complicating factor in the attacks on Iran is the need to refuel Israeli aircraft in the Turkish, Iraqi or Saudi Arabian airspace. If this proves impossible, it will lead to Israel being unable to participate in the operation.

⁵ See: D. Grafov, "V Tel-Avive prizyvaiut udarit po Iranu," available at [<http://www.odnako.org/blogs/v-tel-avive-prizivayut-udarit-po-iranu>], 16 December, 2019.

⁶ In mid-2019, there were 16 F-35I planes in the Israeli Air Force. Plans are in place to form two full squadrons by 2024, 25 planes in each.

⁷ See: T.A. Ganiev, S.M. Zadonsky, V.V. Karyakin, op. cit., Vol. 2, pp. 215-243.

Figure 1

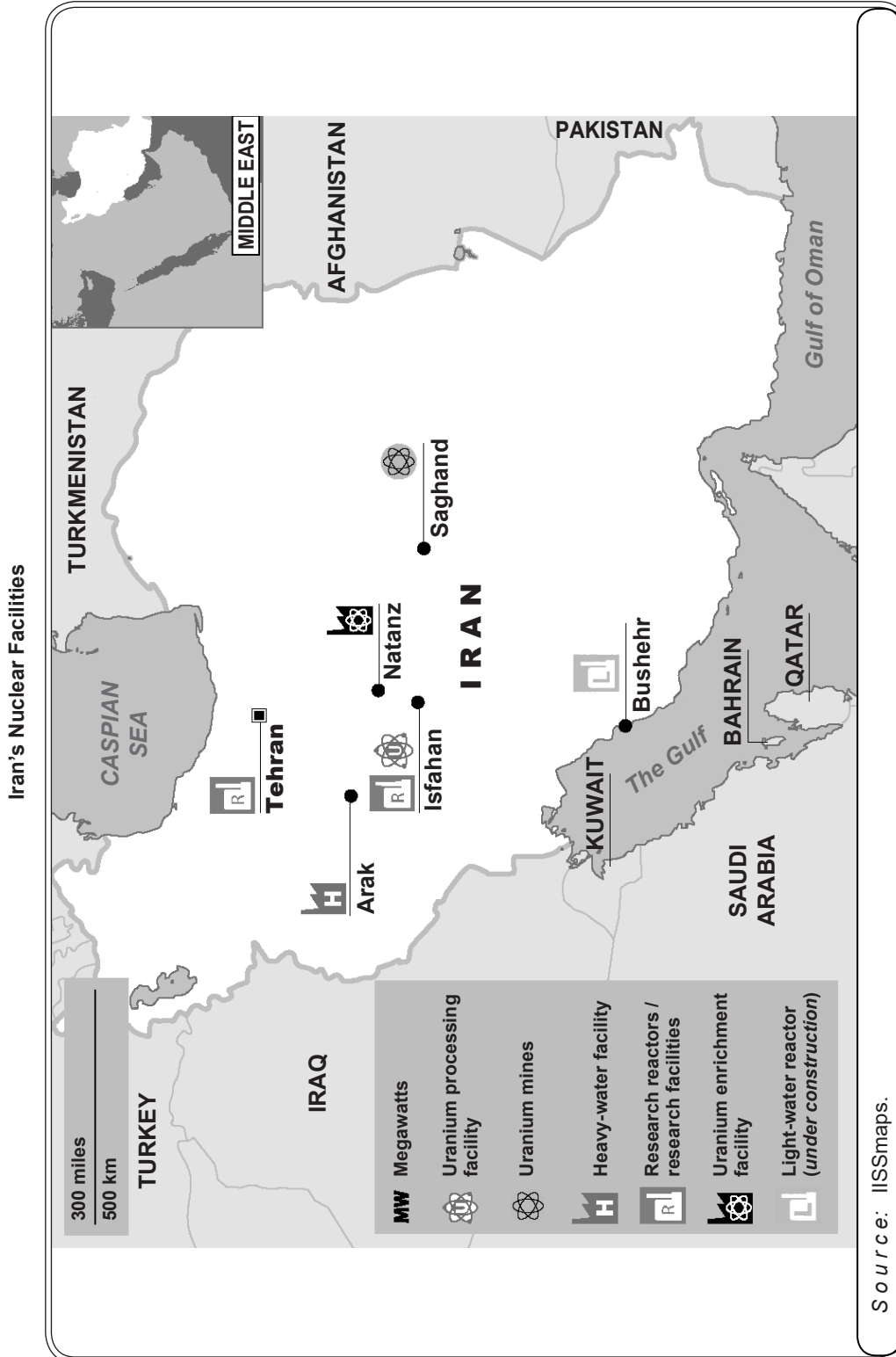
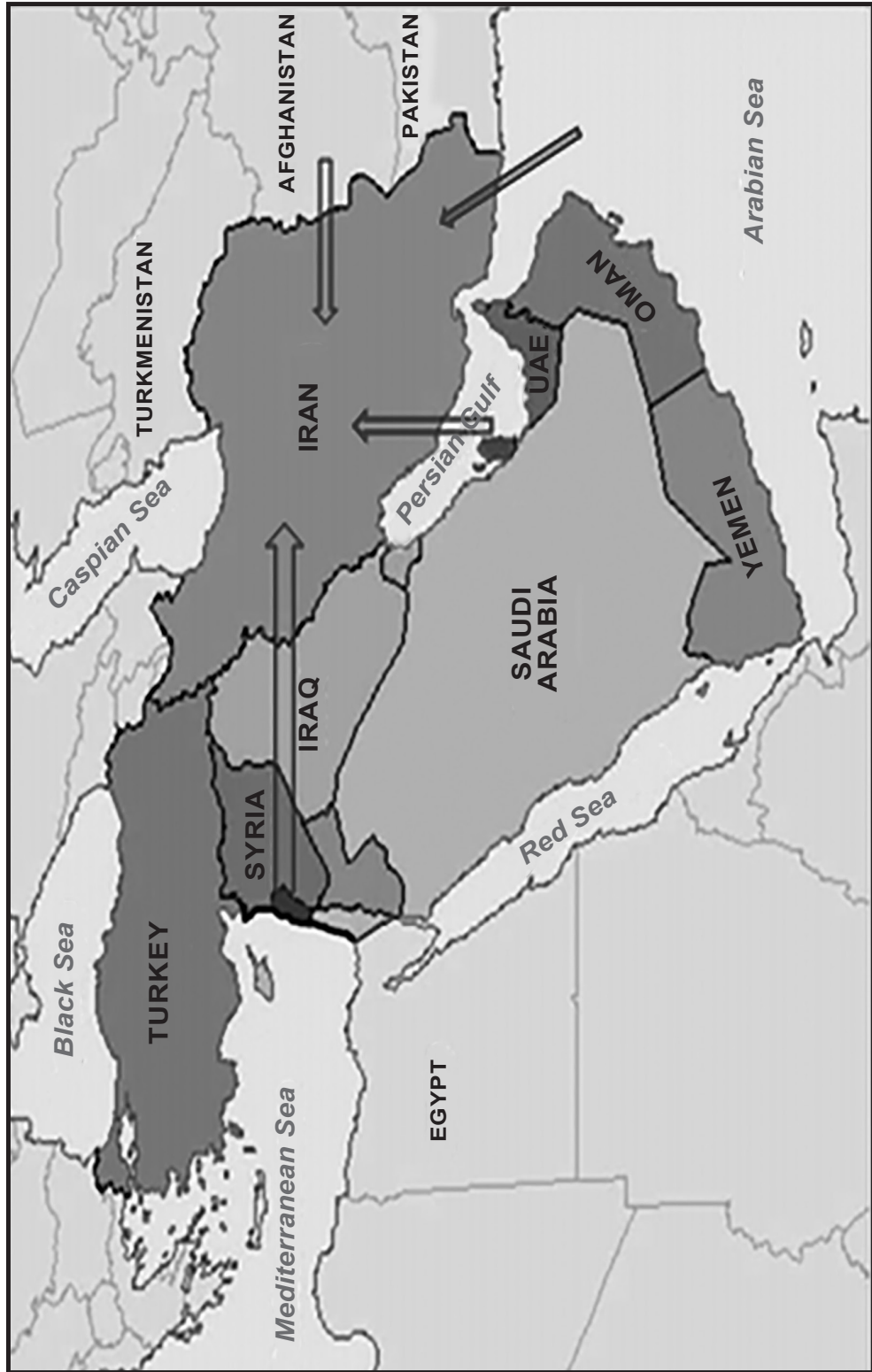


Figure 2

Possible Directions of Military Strikes



There is also a fourth route over Syrian territory, but Israeli pilots must utilize their top flight and routing skills, accounting for the terrain and the fact that the airspace is controlled by the Russian S-400 and S-300 air defense systems.⁸ Thus, the chance of this route being used successfully is rather low.

However, as noted by foreign sources, the Israeli Air Force is, in fact, capable of flying undetected over the Syrian and Iraqi territory.

It should be noted that the range of combat loaded Israeli aircraft F-35I equals 1,100 km, F-16—1,300-1,500 km, and F-15—1,900 km. If confrontation with Iranian fighters becomes inevitable, the Israelis may not have enough fuel for the return trip. Depending on the situation, you can land in an airfield controlled by the United States in Afghanistan, or in Azerbaijan or Georgia. If landing in another country is not possible, then assistance will be required from American tanker aircraft.

A massive attack on Iran will require about 100 fighter bombers. They will cover the Iranian air defense, ballistic missiles and nuclear infrastructure facilities.

The operation can achieve more significant targets with a joint U.S.-Israeli air strike. At the same time, the U.S. will use F-22, B-2 combat aircraft, and Tomahawk sea and air-based cruise missiles.

2. A large-scale air operation of the Israeli and U.S. Air Forces that lasts between several weeks and several months, aimed to completely destroy the nuclear complex, damage Iran's economic entities, state and military command and control posts, civil and industrial infrastructure, that is, all of the country's critical facilities.

U.S. ground forces and special operations forces may be engaged in this operation, as they were in Syria.

3. Full-scale warfare with the use of the air force, naval and ground forces, aiming to defeat the armed forces of Iran, occupy its territory and establish a pro-American regime.

When planning a full-scale war against Iran, the United States will need to deploy more strike aviation forces in addition to the aircraft carrier-based grouping of forces for an aerial offensive operation:

- in Saudi Arabia and the Arab monarchies of the Persian Gulf—for operations in the western and southern regions of Iran;
- in Turkey—for operations in the northern and northwestern regions of Iran (the Turkish participation factor is currently completely excluded);
- in Pakistan and Afghanistan—for operations in the eastern and southeastern regions of Iran;
- it is also possible to use air bases (mostly for emergency landing of combat aircraft) in Transcaucasia.⁹

⁸ In March 2018, according to a Kuwaiti publication *Al-Jarida*, two Israeli Air Force F-35 aircraft allegedly conducted an intelligence operation over Iran, undetected by Iranian and several other countries, including Russia. According to the source, the fighters flew over the Syrian and Iraqi airspace, and then crossed the Iranian border, completing reconnaissance missions in the vicinity of Bandar Abbas, Isfahan and Shiraz, flying at high altitude above nuclear facilities.

⁹ A number of media outlets and expert assessments have noted that Iran can be attacked from the territory of Azerbaijan in the event of a military solution to the Iranian problem. At the same time, the United States may try to use Azerbaijan and the Azerbaijani factor as the so-called new version of the Afghan "Northern Alliance," this time in northern Iran. Moreover, if major border alterations occur and new states are created in the region (Kurdistan, etc.), vast parts of Iranian Azerbaijan may be promised to Azerbaijan. However, this raises a number of questions. First of all, Iranian Azerbaijan is much larger than the Republic of Azerbaijan. Secondly, many Iranians live there alongside ethnic Azerbaijanis. Both of these factors mean that southerners will dominate in the socio-political setting in this hypothetical "United Azerbaijan." They are both socially and psychologically different from northern Azerbaijanis, which, in turn, may mean serious problems for the present-day

In all variants of the military operation cruise missile strikes will be delivered from the northern part of the Arabian Sea and the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea. Given the relatively high potential of Iran's air defense system, the air operation participants will strive to achieve their goals as quickly as possible – within one to two months, as was the case in Iraq and Yugoslavia.

The specific implementation of the military strike by the United States and its likely allies in Iran will likely consist of three stages.

- As part of the first stage, Iran's radar stations and air defense system are suppressed, and its critical facilities are put out of commission.
- During the second stage, massive air strikes are carried out against Iran's vital state, military and industrial facilities in order to reduce the country's military and economic potential and suppress the Iranians' will to resist. These include air defense facilities, airfields, naval bases, weapons depots and missile launchers.
- During the third stage, as the air defense system weakens, the emphasis will be shifted to nuclear facilities, transport infrastructure, and industrial facilities. Everything capable of counterattacking, working, supplying and transporting will be subject to massive bombing.

If the operation is successful, perhaps by the end of the second or third week of active U.S. and ally aviation strikes, the following situation will develop: the air defense and aviation of the Iranian Army and the IRGC will be suppressed or weakened to an extent that they can no longer actively counteract the U.S. plans for the second phase of the military operation.

At the same time, the air offensive operations will aim to gain complete air supremacy over Iranian territory. The total duration of hostilities can range from two to six months, depending on Iran's determination and ability to counter the aggressor, as well as the reaction of the international community, primarily China and Russia. Meanwhile, the United States and its allies will have to ensure the overwhelming superiority of its aviation group in quantity and quality over Iranian air defense and air forces. An aviation grouping with a total number of at least 2,000-2,500 aircraft, including up to 400 aircraft carrier planes and up to 500 strategic bombers, will need to be created. Besides, between 1,500 and 2,500 cruise missiles may have to be added.

This grouping's intensive military operations will require the creation of appropriate material and technical reserves. The total volume of goods that must be delivered to the region, as the experience of military operations against Iraq demonstrated, may exceed 3 million tons. The total cost of such an operation will amount to over a trillion dollars.

However, it will be impossible to completely disrupt the Iranian nuclear program by air operations alone, since its most important facilities are located in rocky sheltered areas, which none of the existing, even the most powerful, conventional ammunition can reach. The use of nuclear weapons may be required, which would be unacceptable for political reasons.

During a land operation, a puppet government will likely be created in the area under the control of American troops. Agreements will be concluded with this government on the development and export of Iranian oil, the lease of land for military bases, and the lease or annexation of islands in the Strait of Hormuz. In addition, CIA operations will be conducted according to the scheme previously used in Iraq, i.e. an attempt to outbid the enemy's high command, promising money and evacuation to Western countries.

Azerbaijan. And if Iran is not defeated, then the regional U.S. ally may face numerous problems. However, the official Baku is trying to develop an adequate policy in the complicated military and political context around Iran, so as not to find themselves in a situation with unpredictable consequences.

Figure 3

Correlation between Combat Potentials of the Armed Forces of the U.S. and Iran



In response to the high-tech U.S. warfare, the Iranian side will use an asymmetric “hybrid” strategy, combining the use of advanced military technologies, special operations forces and guerilla warfare methods.¹⁰

The Iranian armed forces command is contemplating the launch of missile strikes at control centers, U.S. naval and air bases located in the Arabian Gulf states. In addition, missile strikes will be carried out against the residential areas of Tel Aviv and Haifa and vital economic infrastructure facilities in Israel and other anti-Iranian coalition countries. These include water and energy supply systems, airports and transportation hubs, the destruction of which will paralyze the life of the countries that are undertaking the aggressive actions.

IRGC Aerospace Force (AF) missile brigades have a sufficient number of missile weapons to execute this part of the retaliation. In particular, the IRGC AF has about 150 medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs) for attacking Israeli territory, such as Shehab-3 and Shehab-3M, with cluster warheads, with a launch range of about 26000 km.

Strikes against U.S. bases in Qatar, Bahrain, Iraq and Afghanistan will be carried out by short-range Shehab-1 missile complexes, with a launch range of up to 330 km, and Shehab-2 missile complexes with a launch range of up to 700 km, as well as various modifications of the Nazeat and Zelzal tactical missiles with a launch range of 80 to 300 km.

Clearly, massive strikes will be delivered simultaneously from Iran’s territory and from the territories directly bordering Israel, including Lebanon and the Gaza Strip. For these purposes, there is a plan in place that entails the use of Hezbollah’s Lebanese combat wing and the Palestinian Hamas, which have tactical missiles in their arsenal. At the same time, despite the current military and political situation in Syria, an attack on Israeli military facilities and state infrastructure is also expected from the Syrian side, where, according to available information, Iran is deploying Zelzal tactical missiles with a launch range of up to 300 km. It is impossible to exclude the possibility of direct strikes against Israel by the Syrian armed forces, which possesses various modifications of Scud complexes. According to the Iranians, such tactics will significantly reduce the effectiveness of Israeli air defense and missile defense.

In addition to the air strikes, the command of the Iranian Armed Forces assigns a significant role in its retaliation plans to inflicting significant damage to Israeli and American military personnel by using suicide bombers. In particular, there are three main areas for conducting such operations: Israel (by Hamas and Hezbollah), Iraq (by the Al-Mahdi army) and Afghanistan (by suicide bombers trained in Iran).

Moreover, where suicide bombers are active, in addition to the physical elimination of government officials and military personnel of the U.S. and Israeli armies, plans are also in place to abduct them and hold them hostage in order to exert psychological pressure on the leadership of these countries.

A series of large-scale terrorist attacks against embassies and other U.S. and Israeli institutions in Middle Eastern countries cannot be ruled out.

Special groups can use portable air defense missile systems to shoot down American planes flying through presumably friendly airspace, as well as during takeoff and landing. They can also use anti-ship cruise missiles, anti-ship mines and improvised explosive devices to strike against ships and vessels in the Suez Canal, the Strait of Hormuz, and the discharge ports in the Persian Gulf.

A special role in retaliating in the waters of the Persian and Oman Gulfs is assigned to units and formations of the Navy and the IRGC. At the same time, the Iranian command particularly emphasizes the use of a large number of small and high-speed missile boats, whose crews are tasked with

¹⁰ See: V. Vasiliev, “Smozhet li Iran asimmetrichno otvetit SShA na ubiystvo Suleymani?” 4 January, 2020, available at [<https://regnum.ru/news/polit/2823069.html/>], 16 December, 2019.

an order to “at any cost, even if not to destroy, but to cause substantial harm” to enemy warships. So, the Navy and the IRGC currently have about 2,000 small boats and about 150 high-speed boats equipped with Kowsar-3 anti-ship missiles with a launch range of up to 25 km, and Nur with a range of up to 190 km at their disposal.

In addition, the IRGC Navy guided missile brigades (GMB), which are currently equipped with S-801 and S-802 anti-ship missiles (ASMs) (launch ranges of 45 and 120 km, respectively), as well as NU-1 and NU-2 (launch ranges 85 and 95 km, respectively), began to acquire Iran-manufactured Raad anti-ship missiles. For the first time, this weapon was demonstrated during the Payambar-e Azam-3 military exercises in 2008. The missile has a launch range of about 300 km, which allows the IRGC Navy to hit surface targets throughout the entire Persian Gulf. In order to prevent the destruction of the IRGC Navy missile units, 26th and 36th GMB units of the IRGC Navy (Bandar Abbas and Bushehr, respectively) were withdrawn from their permanent deployment points. Missile divisions, armed with self-propelled and towed anti-ship missile launchers, are constantly changing their firing positions on the coast of the Persian and Oman gulfs and in the Strait of Hormuz. Along with this, work is underway to transfer stationary anti-ship missile launchers to a mobile base.

Special operations forces of the Navy of the Armed Forces and the IRGC are supposed to be engaged in the destruction of the Persian Gulf coastal infrastructure facilities of the U.S. naval bases (there are 1,500 combat-ready groups, with 5-18 people in each).

Iran’s hybrid naval strategy provides for the use of surprise attack tactics using guided missiles in the limited and crowded space of the Strait of Hormuz, and possibly in the Gulf of Oman. Iran can use such attacks in combination with the firing anti-ship cruise missiles and mass launches of unmanned aerial vehicles, which can be conducted either from the Iranian coast or from the islands at the entrance to the Persian Gulf.

In his speeches, the IRGC Commander had announced the plans to use the “Hormuz factor” if the United States or Israel attempt to carry out aggression against Iran. According to him, the Iranian Armed Forces will make every effort to disrupt navigation in the waters of the strait. At the same time, the extensive Iranian coastline along the Strait of Hormuz, the presence of dominant heights and modern weapons with a firing range greater than the width of the strait, make it possible to establish a long-term positional defense section on this site. Other methods of blocking the Strait of Hormuz include mining and disruption of the fairway by sinking large tankers there. Americans are currently reporting the continuous presence of several outdated Iranian tankers near the Larak island, south of Bandar Abbas.¹¹

The closure of the Strait of Hormuz will cause a spike in oil prices. If oil supplies are cut off for even a few weeks, the global economy will begin to decline. This will be the very high price that Western countries will have to pay for aggression against Iran. This development should become a sobering factor for the American leadership.

If the situation at sea develops favorably for Iran, enemy losses in the maritime zone between 100-150 km and in the zone up to 300 km can be very significant. The failure of one aircraft carrier and several surface ships will significantly reduce the combat capabilities of the enemy fleet. However, the losses of the Iranian Navy will also be very substantial and can reach 60-70% of the initial combat strength.¹²

In developing retaliation plans, the leadership of the Islamic Republic of Iran proceeds from the fact that the ground operations are unlikely to be a part of the U.S.-Israeli aggression, or they will take

¹¹ See: S.M. Zadonsky, “Iran gotovitsia k voyne s Izrailem i SShA,” Information-News System Raketnaia Tekhnika, available at [<http://rbase.new-factoria.ru/news/iran-gotovitsya-k-vojne-s-izrailem-i-ssha/>], 22 December, 2019.

¹² See: K. Sivkov, “Ot udara po Iranu SShA uzhe ne opraviatsia. Za boevymi poteriami posleduiut ekonomicheskii krizis i sotsialnyi vzryv,” *Voenno-promyshlennii kurier*, No. 22 (785), 11 June, 2019, available at [<https://vpk-news.ru/articles/50767>], 12 October, 2019.

place on a limited scale. Therefore, to repel the bombing attacks, special attention will be paid to the organization of air defense of nuclear facilities in Natanz, Arak, Isfahan, the nuclear plant in Bushehr and the Ford plant.

The Iranian air defense system is organized by zone/facility and includes three lines assigned, respectively, to the IRGC, the Army and the Law Enforcement Force (LEF). The engagement of LEF units in solving air defense tasks should be noted as a new trend. For these purposes, several air defense groups were formed in the LEF structure, armed with anti-aircraft artillery guns and man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS). According to the Iranians, this air defense structure will minimize damage to protected facilities under conditions of massive use of aircraft and cruise missiles by the enemy.

If air strikes by the United States and its allies at nuclear facilities, large airfields, and industrial enterprises occur, Russian Tor-M1 air defense systems can create problems for the attackers. In combination with the Russian S-300 complexes, these short-range systems make it possible to create a stable defense system that can protect both the guarded facilities and long-range missile systems. The leading role in this tandem will belong to the “long arm”—the S-300, which is capable of hitting targets at a significant distance, and the Tor complexes will destroy air targets within a distance of 12 km. This should provide reliable defense from cruise missiles and enemy aircraft for protected facilities.¹³

If these measures are taken, the total damage from Iran’s air defense actions may exceed the 3% threshold for aviation losses that is acceptable for the U.S. and its allies’ Air Force. This fact will disrupt the air offensive operation that involves about 300-350 aircraft and 500 cruise missiles. At the same time, the anticipated losses of the Iranian air defense system and air force will not exceed critical values, and are expected to maintain combat effectiveness, while the losses of the aggressor may reach 15% of the engaged aviation group.

A “suicide pilot” detachment was formed in the Air Force of the IRGC for the purpose of combatting enemy ships in the Persian Gulf and destroying coastal infrastructure facilities. For this purpose, the existing Iraqi aircraft that flew to Iran during the U.S. military Operation Desert Storm will be engaged. Iranian aviation industry experts repaired these planes and prepared them to resolve these tasks. All equipment was removed from them, except for what is required for piloting and navigation.

Conclusion

All in all, it should be noted that the combat and numerical strength of the Iranian armed forces, their weapons and equipment are capable of withstanding modern threats and will provide a powerful response to potential aggression using asymmetric warfare methods.

Iran’s ground troops, together with the IRGC units and Law Enforcement Force, will manage to repel large-scale attacks by enemy troops in defensive operations, even if they are the troops of the leading military powers of the world, such as the U.S., Israel, Great Britain and France, operating with the support of their Arab allies. The armed forces of Iran are capable of defeating an enemy grouping of about 200,000-250,000 people and conducting long-term military operations against an enemy grouping of up to 350,000.

At the same time, it should be noted that the fixation of the American political elite on their country’s global superiority and the overwhelming power of their own armed forces do not allow for

¹³ See: “Rossiyskimi S-300 Iran prikroet zavody po proizvodstvu raket,” *Vzgliad. Delovaia gazeta*, available at [<https://vz.ru/world/2016/5/10/809779.html>], 12 October, 2019.

an objective assessment of the consequences of drawing the United States into a regional conflict, based on the following factors:

1. According to available information, there is no expert U.S. assessment of the situation developing around Israel in terms of its value to Washington on the Middle Eastern chessboard. The American side should answer the question of whether Israel is a strategic ally of the United States that requires protection, or whether it is destined to play the role of a sacrificial pawn in the game of American politicians in the event of a large-scale military conflict that spins out of U.S. control in the Middle East?
2. Judging by D. Trump's statements, Iraq must pay the U.S. for the construction of military bases before they leave. Washington may need to soberly and accurately assess the situation and understand that 60 percent of the Iraqi population are Shi'ites, for whom General Soleimani became an icon of a martyr. Apparently, they do not fully understand that the United States has no prospects of remaining in Iraq, which will irrevocably become a part of Iran's zone of influence. Iran has won after the Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein was overthrown by U.S. forces and the field was cleared to establish Shi'ite influence in the country.¹⁴
3. Apparently, there is no understanding in the American expert community of the danger of Iran's blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, which will lead to a crisis in the Western economy that American shale oil will not be able to prevent, while giving Russia and China serious economic advantages.
4. If the United States and its allies decide to conduct a military operation against Iran, will they be able to realistically assess the capabilities of the air defense, anti-missile, anti-ship and anti-submarine groupings of their troops in repelling massive attacks by Iranian ballistic missiles, by numerous swarms of unmanned aerial vehicles, flocks of missile boats and small submarines operated by martyrs, as well as vigorous actions against the United States by at least a 100,000-strong group of pro-Iranian forces in the Middle East?
5. It is also surprising that the American establishment does not take seriously the growing influence of the so-called "Shi'ite triangle," which allows Tehran not only to set its own rules of the game in the regional arena, but also to become the Heartland of civilization, which may give rise to a new regional and world order.¹⁵
6. Nevertheless, we do not believe that the U.S.-Iranian confrontation will develop into a regional conflict or into a conflict that could be called the Third World War. An active military campaign with the use of armed forces in this theater of operations will be avoided for now. Iran adequately assesses the combat, operational, strategic and economic capabilities of its opponents, and it will not risk being drawn into a full-scale military conflict with the United States and its allies.

At the same time, a large-scale conflict is also undesirable for the current political leadership of the United States. In the presidential election year, the American leadership needs a media propaganda campaign in the wake of the upcoming re-election of Donald Trump. Therefore, the conflict is likely to develop as part of an informational and psychological operation, although incidents such as the downing of a Ukrainian Boeing near Tehran or Iran's rocket launches at U.S. bases in Iraq are not

¹⁴ See: I. Yunusov, "Velikiy Tramp v posudnoy lavke," available at [http://actualcomment.ru/velikiy-tramp-v-posudnoy-lavke-2001081255.html?utm_source=politobzor.net], 22 January, 2019.

¹⁵ See: V. Karyakin, "Geopolitical Regionalistics: The Greater Middle East as the 'Heartland' of the 21st-Century World-System," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 23, Issue 1, 2020.

ruled out. Everyone will wait for the outcome of the U.S. presidential election. If Trump remains in the White House for a second term, the crisis may be exacerbated again, and if Democrats come to the White House, it may be possible to reset relations and conclude agreements, including those beneficial for the U.S. However, the risks that something might go wrong remain in place.

NATION-BUILDING

ARMENIA'S DOMESTIC POLICY AFTER THE VELVET REVOLUTION: SELECTED ISSUES

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ABSTRACT

The article aims to analyze and characterize changes in Armenia's domestic policy initiated by the reform government led by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. In the course of research, the emphasis was placed on the presentation of such issues as the fight against corruption, the reform of the tax system, the fight against poverty and the reform of the judiciary system. It was also extremely important to present the short-term implications of the implemented mea-

asures and to discuss the attitude of the society towards the executed reforms, as well as public support for the operations of new political forces.

In the light of the results of the research, it is clear that the activity of the post-revolutionary government has significantly changed the domestic policy vector of Armenia, bringing the country closer to meeting international democratic standards and strengthening the economic sector.

KEYWORDS: *Armenia, Armenia's domestic policy, Nikol Pashinyan, reforms.*

Introduction

The Velvet Revolution,¹ which took place in Armenia in April-May 2018, was the beginning of an integral transformation of power structures and vectors of state policy, especially in the field of domestic² policy. As a result of the total shift of power, the best example of which is afforded by the results of the December 2018 parliamentary elections, the pro-reform block My Step gained complete dominance in terms of both legislative and executive power³. This made it possible for new political forces to become active in implementing the demands made during the revolution. The author's intention is to answer the following research questions:

- Which reforms have been initiated by the Nikol Pashinyan government?
- What is the public perception of the government's actions?
- How did the reform efforts affect Armenia's policy in the short term?

Answers to these questions are essential to the analysis and characterization of the key changes in Armenia's domestic policy that were implemented after the revolution. It is important to verify the hypothesis, which stated that the pro-reform government has acted swiftly to significantly alter Armenia's domestic policy. In the course of the research, the methods and techniques specific to social sciences were used, i.e., secondary analysis of quantitative research, analysis of documents and official statements of politicians, and deduction.

The post-revolutionary government headed by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has developed a program of ambitious reforms, successively implemented in Armenia, which aim to bring the country closer to meeting European requirements for democratization and transparency of the public sphere. In this context, it is worth noting the government's program adopted in February 2019. The key objective of the government's activity was to boost the competitiveness of Armenia's economy, which is technologically, industrially, environmentally friendly and export-oriented. This assumption is to be achieved through transparency in business, increasing investments, achieving the economic growth rate of at least 5%, development of tourism and intensification of exports. Among the priorities the document identifies the development of democratic institutions and the rule of law (an independent judiciary system); the fight against corruption, proper management of state finances (primarily emphasizing the importance of an effective tax system), ensuring a decent and happy life for citizens (i.e., overcoming poverty through work and education).⁴ In view of the particular importance of these areas for state welfare, further reflection will focus on these issues.

¹ For more on the causes and course of the revolution in Armenia, see: A. Miarka, "Velvet Revolution in Armenia and its Influence on State Policy: Selected Aspects," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 20, Issue 4, 2019, pp. 41-50; A. Iskandaryan, "The Velvet Revolution in Armenia: How to Lose Power in Two Weeks," *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization*, Vol. 26, No. 4, Fall 2018; G. Minassian, "The 'Velvet Revolution' in the History of the Armenians," *Études*, December 2018.

² For more on Armenia's policy before the Velvet Revolution see: *Armenia's Foreign and Domestic Politics: Development Trends*, ed. by M. Palonkorpi, A. Iskandaryan, Yerevan, 2013; M. Zolyan, "The Poverty of Authoritarianism: What Made the Armenian Revolution Possible," in: *Protests in Armenia. The Domestic Dimension*, ed. by L. Badalyan, available at [<https://www.research-collection.ethz.ch/bitstream/handle/20.500.11850/323671/2/CAD108%281%29.pdf>]; N. Borisov, "Potentials and Limits of Political Competition: Institutional Transformations in Georgia and Armenia in the 2000s", *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 16, Issue 3-4, 2015, pp. 17-22.

³ For detailed results of the parliamentary election, see: *Sunday, 9 December, 2018 Parliamentary Elections*, Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Armenia, available in Armenian at [<https://www.elections.am/parliamentary/>].

⁴ See: *Decision NO 65-A of the 8 February, 2019 on the Program of the Government of the Republic of Armenia*, The Government of the Republic of Armenia, available at [<https://www.gov.am/files/docs/3562.pdf>].

Transparency of Authorities and Business: Fighting Corruption

Since the post-revolutionary government's activity in shaping Armenia's domestic policy, the decision-making center has stressed the need to fight corruption at the highest levels of government as the prerequisite for success in implementing deep structural changes. During the Prime Minister's speech on 7 June, 2018, the importance of separating politics from business and unequivocally eliminating corruption in the public sector was stressed.⁵ Recognizing the destructive impact of corruption on the proper functioning of the state and building trust between the authorities and citizens, the new political forces have focused their efforts on creating the core agenda for a new approach to this phenomenon, assuming a complete transformation of Armenia's anti-corruption system. It was stressed, among other things, the obligation to establish an independent body with the power to investigate and operate the necessary tools to expose corruption offences and to ensure transparency in the economic activity and assets of persons involved in public services.⁶ The Anti-Corruption Policy Council chaired by the PM was established in June 2019 to review existing priorities in the fight against corruption and to overcome corruption. In addition, the elaboration of positions on draft policies, programs and legislation contributing to the elimination of corruption was identified as a priority⁷.

Work on the draft strategy intensified in December 2018 and was prepared with the participation of civil society organizations and officials to identify the main pillars of Armenia's future anti-corruption policy. The draft was posted on the website of the Ministry of Justice in the same month, but it quickly aroused numerous objections from international experts⁸. It is clear that this was one of the reasons to verify the content of the document⁹.

During the Government meeting on 3 October, 2019, during which the Anti-Corruption Strategy of Armenia and the Action Plan 2019-2022 were approved, Minister of Justice Rustam Badasyan stressed the importance of establishing an anti-corruption body, i.e., the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption and the Anti-Corruption Committee, while the system of enforcement of legal standards was undergoing extensive reforms to increase its effectiveness. A single body responsible for detecting and investigating corruption offences—the Anti-Corruption Committee—is slated to be established in 2021.¹⁰

The adopted document clearly sets forth the fundamental principles on which the anti-corruption policy will be based:

⁵ See: "Speech Delivered by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan while Introducing the Government Program to the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia," available at [<https://www.primeminister.am/en/statements-and-messages/item/2018/06/07/Nikol-Pashinyan-Speech-National-Assembly/>].

⁶ See: *Decision NO 65-A of the 8 February, 2019 on the Program of the Government of the Republic of Armenia*, The Government of the Republic of Armenia, available at [<https://www.gov.am/files/docs/3562.pdf>].

⁷ See: *Decision No 808-N of 24 June, 2019 on Establishing an Anti-Corruption Policy Council...*, The Government of the Republic of Armenia, available at [<https://www.gov.am/files/docs/3518.pdf>].

⁸ In January 2019, Transparency International specialists, in an official statement, made a number of comments indicating that the course of work on the document, as well as its structure and content, raise a number of objections (see: "Statement on Draft RA Anticorruption Strategy and its Implementation Action Plan 2019-2022," Transparency International Anticorruption Center, available at [<https://transparency.am/en/news/view/2596>]; "2019-2022 Anti-Corruption Strategy Discussed, Goals Mentioned," available at [<https://www.aysor.am/en/news/2018/12/19/anti-corruption/1505560>].

⁹ See: "Newspaper: Armenia Develops New Anticorruption Action Plan," News.am, available at [<https://news.am/eng/news/517674.html>].

¹⁰ See: "Effective Anticorruption Institutions to Be Set Up in Armenia, Including an Anticorruption Committee," The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, available at [<https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2019/10/03/Cabinet-meeting/>].

- (1) disclosing cases of corruption-related crimes;
- (2) initiating preventive measures;
- (3) educational activities and raising public awareness (Point 90 of the Strategy).

The Strategy focuses on developing an institutional framework for responding to corrupt activities. The above-mentioned Commission for the Prevention of Corruption deserves attention. The tasks of this body include: monitoring the implementation of an anti-corruption strategy; furthering anti-corruption education and coordinating its implementation; developing programs to raise public awareness; carrying out evaluations of the legal effects of anti-corruption acts and their projects.¹¹ Given the broad spectrum of the Commission's competences, it should be considered an extremely important (and necessary) element in the new policy for the elimination of corruption in Armenia.

It is worth remembering that even before the development of new formal guidelines for preventing and combating corruption, Pashinyan initiated a policy of uncompromisingly combating corruption at the highest levels of government, starting with accounting for the offenses of the old regime. One of the priority cases in this regard was to punish those guilty of the use of firearms by the security forces against participants in the demonstration of 1 March, 2008.¹² In connection with this case, former President Robert Kocharyan was arrested in July 2018 and charged with trying to overthrow the constitutional system, as well as accepting financial benefits. The president was released several times and arrested again in connection with this case.¹³

From September 2019 onwards, the dynamics of the trial of the former president could be followed. In line with the ruling of the Constitutional Court (CC) on the conformity of Art 35 and Part 2 of Art 135 of the Criminal Procedure Code with the Constitution of Armenia at the request of the Kocharyan, the quoted articles were found to be unconstitutional.¹⁴ The ruling argued that the indictment ignores the immunity of current and former senior officials from prosecution for activities related to their position.¹⁵ Citing the opinion of the CC, the former President's counsel applied to the Erevan District Court for release from custody and acquittal in connection with the events of 2008. Judge Anna Danibekyan rejected the motion on 17 September.¹⁶ Kocharyan's supporters point to the politically motivated decision of the court, which was under pressure from the PM, undermining the independence of the judiciary. In fact, the Prime Minister took an intransigent stance on the need to finalize the case of Kocharyan. Suggestions have been put forward that undermine the legitimacy of the CC's verdict, and the leading representatives of the governmental party My Step postulated the dismissal of the President of the Court.¹⁷

The indictment of the former President of Armenia is unprecedented, but it deepens the fear of using the anti-corruption vector for the complete elimination of political rivals, motivated by particular interests and the desire to continue to hold on to the power of the My Step party, rather than merely the desire to remove the old political agreements in order to strengthen justice in Armenia.

¹¹ See: *Decision on Approving the Republic of Armenia Anti-Corruption Strategy and its Implementation Action Plan for 2019-2022*, Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Armenia, available at [http://www.justice.am/storage/files/pages/pg_7105326429691_Anti-Corruption_Strategy_03.10.2019_ENG.pdf].

¹² See: "Armenia Clamps Down after Post-Election Violence," *The New York Times*, available at [<https://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/02/world/europe/02iht-armenia.4.10626008.html>].

¹³ See: A. Miarka, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-48.

¹⁴ See: *Decision of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Armenia on the Case of Conformity of Art 35 and Part 2 of Article 135...*, The Constitutional Court of the Republic of Armenia, available at [<http://concourt.am/english/decisions/common/pdf/1476.pdf>].

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ See: "Erevan Court Refuses to Free Kocharyan," *The Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, available at [<https://mirrorspectator.com/2019/09/19/Erevan-court-refuses-to-free-kocharyan/>].

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

The crackdown on political predecessors also concerned another former Armenian president, Serzh Sargsyan. In early December 2019, the Special Investigation Service accused the President of embezzling state funds.¹⁸ The trial of politicians who used to hold the highest positions in the state is intended to demonstrate Pashinyan's determination to completely transform Armenian political life. Furthermore, it builds the PM's position in the perception of Armenian citizens as an effective, consistent, trustworthy politician and, above all, without any connections with preceding political authorities. This is proven by a public opinion poll conducted by the International Republican Institute (IRI) in 2019. Its results confirm strong support for the government's anti-corruption efforts: as many as 70% of respondents believe that the fight against corruption is effective, and 66% that the government is taking sufficient action in this area.¹⁹

Pashinyan is aware that the degeneration of the ruling elite, nepotism and corruption were among the key reasons for the growing social frustration in Armenia, which led to the outbreak of the Velvet Revolution. By demonstrating a tenacious attitude towards cases of corruption, he is building his popularity on the polarization of us (forces initiating in-depth political reforms) vs. them (corrupt, authoritarian governments), completely cutting itself off from the political vector created by the republican forces.

State Financial Management: Tax Reform

As already mentioned, the Government is committed to creating a comprehensive, competitive and export-oriented economy in Armenia that meets all international standards. In addition to the multi-faceted fight against corruption, which is one of the obstacles to the proper functioning of the country's economic sphere, other tools have been set in place to strengthen the international position of the Armenian economy. In this context, it is impossible not to mention the highly emotionally charged tax reform. Legislative changes to the State Tax Code have been formulated to enable the transition from a progressive to a linear system of income taxation, among other things. Prior to the start of work on the amendment of the Code, the Minister of Finance commissioned a study to diagnose the state of the Armenian economy. The much lower profitability of export-oriented economic sectors was noted as an alarming trend, by 40-45% compared to sectors focusing only on domestic consumption.²⁰ In order to strengthen Erevan's economic competitiveness, the country had to focus on issues beyond domestic consumption, so Armenia's political forces have developed proposals to amend the Tax Code to stimulate the country's exports, which is a key reason for the government's actions.

The tax reform package, which stipulated for the transition from 1 January, 2020 to a flat-rate tax set at 23% regardless of the income received, as well as the reduction of the turnover tax, was adopted on 25 June, 2019, with the opposition of members of the Prosperous Armenia faction and the approval of the dominant My Step party. Politicians expect that the changes adopted will lead to an

¹⁸ For more details, see: "Former President Serge Sarkisian Charged with Embezzlement," *The Armenian Weekly*, available at [<https://armenianweekly.com/2019/12/04/former-president-serzh-sargsyan-charged-with-embezzlement/>].

¹⁹ See: "New Poll: Armenians Support Anti-Corruption Measures, Want Action on Socioeconomic Concerns," International Republican Institute, available at [<https://www.iri.org/resource/new-poll-armenians-support-anti-corruption-measures-want-action-socioeconomic-concerns>].

²⁰ See: N. Badalian, "Armenian Parliament Adopted Amendments to Tax Code: Changes are Aimed at Improving the Competitiveness of the National Economy," Financial Portal ArmInfo, available at [https://finport.am/full_news.php?id=38733&lang=3].

additional 0.8% GDP growth and a 0.5% increase in employment.²¹ Despite optimistic forecasts, such a profound transformation of the system is arousing controversy among part of Armenian society. It is worth noting the report prepared by a number of economists for Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung during the debates on changes. They argue that the functioning of the flat tax will lead to budget losses during the first year in the amount of AMD 27-37 billion, and the society fears that the government will still have to raise taxes in a few years' time due to numerous challenges for the economy.²² The government will certainly want to mitigate the negative consequences of decreasing budget revenues by increasing indirect taxation on such goods as alcohol, cigarettes or gambling, among other measures. It seems that the source of social unrest may lay, among other things, in the inadequate information campaign indicating the positive aspects of the reform. Moreover, the key economic powers, such as Germany, maintain a progressive system. On the other hand, Eastern European countries that struggled with similar problems as Armenia in the 1990s, e.g. Lithuania, are successfully using the linear system. Given the long-term implications of the changes implemented and the importance for Armenia's economy, the consequences should be monitored.

Fight against Poverty: Employment and Education

One of the consequences of Armenia's longstanding economic collapse is the high poverty rate in the country. According to the Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, the poverty level was 23.5% in 2018, while the percentage of the extremely poor was estimated at 1% of the population. This data means that the number of people living in poverty was about 700,000, i.e., 1 in 4 citizens of Armenia was considered poor. In turn, the unemployment rate was 20.5% in that year.²³ The protests that led to the Velvet Revolution and the complete shift of the authorities in the country were strongly motivated by the low level of the citizens' prosperity, the lack of adequate public services and insufficient concern for the change of these trends shown by the Republican Party of Armenia.

The problem of poverty is one of the most important domestic policy issues facing Nikol Pashinyan's government in Armenia. It is worth noting that mitigating this phenomenon will strengthen the position and confirm the effectiveness of the government. Poverty involves a number of factors, not all of them material, i.e., the wealth of the society (associated with satisfactory employment), but also, for example, the quality of social assistance and the education system. The decision-making center in Yerevan emphasizes the importance of these factors in the conceptual framework of the struggle with poverty.

One of the fundamental assumptions is the creation of new jobs, which can be achieved by encouraging the business sector to invest more and increase the number of establishments in the country. During the meeting with entrepreneurs in November 2018, the Prime Minister already expressed the hope that the economic revolution initiated by the government will lead to an improvement of the business environment, through transparency, separation of the political sphere from business and support

²¹ See: "Parliament Ends Work of Extraordinary Session," National Assembly of Republic of Armenia, available at [http://www.parliament.am/news.php?cat_id=2&NewsID=11786&year=2019&month=06&day=25&lang=eng]; N. Badalian, op. cit.

²² For more on this, see: "Amendments to the Tax Code in the Light of the Reasons for, and Consequences of, the 2018 Revolution in Armenia," Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, available at [<http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/georgien/15471.pdf>].

²³ See: "Armenia—Poverty Snapshot over 2002-2018," Statistical Committee of Republic of Armenia, pp. 32, 34, 36, available at [https://www.armstat.am/file/article/poverty_2019_english_2.pdf].

by the state for start-ups related to the advanced technologies, among other things.²⁴ In turn, in December 2018, Deputy PM Ararat Mirzoyan emphasized that the implemented investment reliefs will result in the creation of about 900 new jobs for Armenians.²⁵ The reforming government has fulfilled its promises in this aspect, because over 65,000 new jobs were created between May 2018 and September 2019, which implies a 12-percent increase in the generation of new employment opportunities²⁶.

In the education sector, the reformist government emphasizes the need to adapt the education system to labor market needs. In September 2019, the Education-to-Work Program was launched. It is the response of Erevan to the challenge of unemployment and the changing perception of education. The need to evaluate the labor market and to develop an educational offer based on the results, while at the same time teaching soft competences, which are desired by employers, such as teamwork skills or creative thinking, was articulated.²⁷ In the context of the success of educational reforms, it is worth remembering the support of the European Union (in various forms, e.g. financial or advisory), which is important for a country as small as Armenia. The Torino Process, an initiative of the European Training Foundation, should be mentioned. The Foundation supports the EU neighboring countries in the process of improving the educational system and labor policy. Torino is a tool for verifying the effectiveness of the implemented national educational program reforms. Erevan has been cooperating with the Foundation since 2010, which has enabled a relatively high increase in the quality of services in this sector in relation to the rather modest funds allocated to education²⁸.

The flexibility offered by the Armenian government in shaping the educational system and adapting it to Western standards should undoubtedly be considered a positive vector of the country's internal policy, but not all the novelties are acceptable to a conservative society. The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, headed by Arayik Harutyunyan, has submitted a draft reform of On Higher Education and Science, which abolishes compulsory teaching in subjects such as Armenian language, Armenian literature and history. The proposed changes caused indignation among students and academic staff of some universities, such as the Erevan State University, where students initiated demonstrations in November 2019 to protest against the reform, demanding Harutyunyan's resignation.²⁹ It is worth remembering, however, that the project that stipulates for the freedom of higher education institutions in providing optional subjects does not prohibit their inclusion in the mandatory curriculum. In the perception of some, these actions will blur the Armenian identity and threaten internal security. What is noteworthy is that the changes in the education sector have been used by the political opposition as propaganda, since the youth faction of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Party (Dashnaksutyun) was behind the protests. The opponents of the post-revolutionary political forces want to emphasize the negative impact of modern trends and values promoted by the Government on the Armenian tradition. Therefore, the Government should pay attention to the society's attachment to certain values that have been building the unity of citizens and the state for years, so that reforms are not perceived as an attempt to impose foreign patterns of civilization. Such think-

²⁴ See: "Nikol Pashinyan: 'Armenia is to Become a Country Where Major Businesses Will Never Get Smaller, and the Smaller Ones Will Grow into Medium-Size Entities and So On'," The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, available at [<https://www.primeminister.am/en/statements-and-messages/item/2018/11/21/Nikol-Pashinyan-speech/>].

²⁵ For more details, see: "Privileges Provided Under New Investment Projects: Over 900 Jobs to Be Created in Armenia," available at [<https://www.gov.am/en/news/item/9460/>].

²⁶ See: "100 Facts about New Armenia-2"—PM Nikol Pashinyan's Introductory Remarks at His Press Conference," available at [<https://www.primeminister.am/en/interviews-and-press-conferences/item/2019/09/16/Nikol-Pashinyan-Press-Conference/>].

²⁷ See: "Tigran Avinyan Attends Launch of Education-to-Work Program," available at [<https://www.gov.am/en/news/item/9581/>].

²⁸ See: "EU and Armenia for Better Education Reforms," The European Training Foundation, available at [<https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/news/eu-and-armenia-better-education-reforms>].

²⁹ See: "Student Protests Continue Over the Proposed Education Reform Bill in Armenia," *Caucasus Watch*, available at [<https://caucasuswatch.de/news/2200.html>].

ing may result in a drastic drop in public support for a reforming government that initiates such important structural reforms.

Both the Education-to-Work Program and the On Higher Education and Science reform project should be considered adequate responses to the weaknesses of the higher education system in Armenia, which prove that the post-revolutionary government wants to comply with international demands. Areas of concern to the education system have been identified by many international organizations. It is worth noting the report of October 2019 prepared by employees of The World Bank as part of The Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) initiative. Experts warn, among other things, that the current regulatory framework does not create equal opportunities for all entities, with private universities enjoying greater autonomy in terms of decision making and financing than public universities. Moreover, the experts stress that the current educational offer is not adapted to the needs of the labor market.³⁰ Therefore, the vector of educational policy created by the Pashinyan government is not only an unfounded pursuit of Western patterns, but also an arguable need for transformations in this sphere, which may constitute an effective long-term tool for combating poverty.

Rule of Law: Reform of the Judiciary

During the Velvet Revolution, Pashinyan pointed out the need for fundamental changes in the functioning of Armenia. By gaining a majority in the National Assembly, the reformers managed to dominate the structures of the legislative and executive power, but the third pillar of statehood, the judiciary, is a problematic area for the implementation of changes. According to the PM's perception, there is a need for an independent and transparent judicial system, which would eliminate the possibility of restoration of oligarchs in political and business structures as part of the establishment of democratic standards and the rule of law in Armenia. As already mentioned, Kocharyan's case arouses strong emotions and is seen as a political issue. The General Prosecutor's Office has opened criminal proceedings against David Grigoryan, judge at the Court of First Instance in Yerevan, who released Kocharyan from pre-trial detention (May 2019); post-revolutionary political forces are also demanding the resignation of the President of the CC, who referred the case of the former President to the European Court of Human Rights and the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe³¹.

After Kocharyan's release from custody in May, N. Pashinyan called on his supporters to block the courts in an act of opposition to the court decision. The PM also repeatedly stressed the need to remove from office those members of the CC, who were elected by the preceding political forces and were part of the old political regime, which was overthrown by the Velvet Revolution. In his statement on the judicial system in May 2019, he pointed out that the judiciary branch has lost its social legitimacy and is perceived by the people as a relic of the corrupt old system. He argued that the political system and the judiciary branch had previously been strongly intertwined, which does not guarantee that the current judges are able to objectively conduct judicial proceedings related to the 2008 events. At the same time, the shortcomings of the system undermine the effectiveness of the fight against corruption. Moreover, the PM has spoken out directly about the need to vet judges, so that the public has information about their political stand and the size of their assets, and all judges who have been found

³⁰ For more details, see: *Armenia: Tertiary Education*, SABER Country Report, October 2019, The World Bank, available at [<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/32631/Saber-Tertiary-Education-Country-Report-Armenia-2019.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>].

³¹ See: E.Y. Azadian, "Challenges to Armenia's Judicial Reforms," available at [<https://mirrorspectator.com/2019/08/01/challenges-to-armenias-judicial-reforms/>].

by the European Court of Human Rights to be committing gross human rights violations should resign or be removed from office³². On the one hand, the government sees these solutions as putting forth a group of impartial judges who can adjudicate in accordance with international standards, on the other hand—it should be remembered that the members of the CC were elected in accordance with the constitutional provisions of the Republic of Armenia and their term of office should not be questioned in any way due to the political rotation in the country.³³ Any pressure on judges may pose a serious threat to the success of the judiciary reform and may be used by Pashinyan’s adversaries, allowing them to claim that the post-revolutionary forces want to subjugate the judiciary branch, which is a manifestation of the new forces’ authoritarianism, a phenomenon that also characterizes their predecessors.

It seems that the opinions of international organizations that support Armenia in implementing reforms to democratize political life, such as the European Parliament, the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, should be decisive in determining the correctness of the initiated changes. In this context, the opinion of the Venice Commission, which provides advice to countries on constitutional law, deserves special attention. This opinion indicates that the reform package prepared by the Ministry of Justice is praiseworthy, developed with due care and respect for European standards, while not compromising the independence of the judiciary branch. The experts also pointed out the issues that required more elaboration, e.g. the need to create constitutional mechanisms allowing for an appeal against the Supreme Judicial Council’s decisions on disciplinary issues. In turn, there was no reason to initiate vetting activities.³⁴ Moreover, international actors will provide the center of power in Erevan with strong support. The government’s actions are assessed positively, as evidenced, for example, by the statement of the Head of the EU Delegation in Armenia Andrea Wiktorin made in September 2019, which claimed that the EU welcomes the government’s work in developing a strategy and implementing judicial reforms. In July 2019, Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, underlined that the EU will provide financial and technical support to Armenia for the implementation of reforms.³⁵ Undoubtedly, the Armenian justice system needs multi-faceted reforms, implemented with respect for internal law and EU standards and approval of the public, which should be informed by the government about the actions taken and their purpose.

Conclusion: Implications of Reforms and Public Support

An assessment of whether the reform package implemented since the beginning of the Government’s activity has brought the expected results is required. It should be stressed that it is only possible to examine the short-term implications of changes in Armenia’s domestic policy, since a comprehensive characterization of their impact will be possible only after they are fully implemented.

³² See: “Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s Statement on Judiciary System,” The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, available at [<https://www.primeminister.am/en/statements-and-messages/item/2019/05/20/Nikol-Pashinyan-Speech/>].

³³ The procedure for the election of members of the Constitutional Court is laid down in Art 166 of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia: *Constitution of the Republic of Armenia*, available at [<https://www.president.am/en/constitution-2015/%20-%3E>].

³⁴ See: *Armenia. Joint Opinion of the Venice Commission (...) on the Amendments to the Judicial Code and Some other Laws*, European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), pp. 17-18, available at [[https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2019\)024-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2019)024-e)].

³⁵ See: “EU Reaffirms Support for Judicial Reforms in Armenia,” available at [<https://www.azatutyun.am/a/30187494.html>]; “Remarks by President Donald Tusk after his Meeting with Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan,” available at [<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/pl/press/press-releases/2019/07/10/remarks-by-president-donald-tusk-after-his-meeting-with-prime-minister-of-armenia-nikol-pashinyan/>].

Nevertheless, certain trends caused, among other factors, by the aforementioned changes in domestic policy-making, can already be observed.

According to World Bank data, Armenia's GDP grew by 7.9% year-on-year in the third quarter of 2019. Notably, despite the stagnation of exports at the beginning of the year, it contributed 0.7 percentage point to the country's GDP. The inflation rate fell from 2.5% (2018) to 1.8% (August 2019). This lowered the level of poverty: the average poverty level decreased to 10.8% (2018), which is the best result attained since 2010. Real wages increased by 1.5% in 2018 and the upward trend continued in 2019. Positive trends in the economic sector contributed to a change in estimated real GDP growth to 6.8% in December 2019 (from 5.5% in mid-year).³⁶ The reforms initiated by Pashinyan's government have undeniably brought the expected results for the Armenian economy in the short term. This is also confirmed by Armenia's advancement in international rankings: it was ranked 41st in the Doing Business 2019 (47th in 2018) and 64th in the Global Innovation Index 2019 (68th in 2018).³⁷ Although some of the reforms being implemented raise fears and controversies, they are required for the power center in Erevan on the way to implementing revolutionary demands—increasing the welfare of citizens, transparency of the authorities and eliminating the flaws of the former system (oligarchy, nepotism, coupling of business and politics, corruption).

Finally, it should be considered whether, despite the courageous actions of PM Pashinyan in establishing the domestic policy vector, he can count on such high support of Armenian citizens as during the Velvet Revolution, thanks to which the reformist party My Step gained power in the country. In this context, the results of the research carried out by the IRI in July-August 2018 and May 2019 are of great interest. In the first case, as many as 83% of respondents positively assessed the new government. Importantly, 63% of respondents expected the required reforms in the country to be initiated quickly. In turn, the 2019 survey also confirms strong support for the Pashinyan government, but with a downward trend: 72% of respondents are satisfied with the government's work. It should be emphasized that the society's expectations remain unchanged in relation to the rapid initiation of economic and political reforms by the executive branch (still over 60% of respondents).³⁸ Undoubtedly, Pashinyan's policy vector's is a good response to people's expectations for the dynamics of change: some reforms have been initiated very quickly, but it should be remembered that changes in such spheres as the judiciary branch should be evolutionary in order to have an appropriate effect. The evolving political powers need to take measures with positive implications that are tangible to the people. Then, these powers will be able to maintain a high level of support and strengthen their position on the political scene. However, leading decision-makers should be aware of the need to conduct an appropriate information campaign to raise public awareness of the legitimacy and objectives of the changes being initiated. This may lead to the susceptibility of the people to the campaigns held by the oppositions that seek to discredit the government.

³⁶ See: A. Manookian, *Armenia Monthly Economic Update—December 2019*, available at [<http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/699271576482576286/AM-MEU-Dec19.pdf>]; [<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/armenia/overview>].

³⁷ [https://www.doingbusiness.org/content/dam/doingBusiness/media/Annual-Reports/English/DB2019-report_web-version.pdf]; [<https://www.doingbusiness.org/content/dam/doingBusiness/media/Annual-Reports/English/DB2018-Full-Report.pdf>]; [<https://www.globalinnovationindex.org/gii-2019-report#>]; [https://www.globalinnovationindex.org/userfiles/file/reportpdf/gii_2018-report-new.pdf].

³⁸ See: "New Poll: Armenians Optimistic About Future, New Government," available at [<https://www.iri.org/resource/new-poll-armenians-optimistic-about-future-new-government>]; "New Armenia Poll: High Public Confidence in Government; Enduring Economic Concerns," available at [<https://www.iri.org/resource/new-armenia-poll-high-public-confidence-government-enduring-economic-concerns>].

**REGULATION OF
RELATIONS BETWEEN THE STATE AND
RELIGIOUS CONFESSIONS
IN THE PRC AND THE RK:
AN ATTEMPT AT COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

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ABSTRACT

This article sums up the results obtained by a group of scientists who analyzed different models of the relations between the state and religious confessions using the Republic of Kazakhstan and the People's Republic of China as examples to conceptualize this sphere of state governance that initially seems to be of a practical scope.

Our analysis relies on the following characteristics of a comprehensive approach: a wide range of sources—from legal acts and political declarations to the authors' personal observations; the means and methods (analysis and synthesis) of a general scientific nature and discussion of individual cases to refer to specific research problems.

KEYWORDS: *state policies, state-confessional relations, religious associations, national security, global challenges and threats.*

Introduction

Religion is an important part of individual and collective identity; today the dialog between religions and the related problems have been pushed to the fore by the need of all states to preserve their security and stability.

The steadily mounting terrorist and extremist threats have fanned an interest in a wide range of religious issues.

The authors are absolutely convinced that in a multinational state the society will never gravitate towards religious principles. Such states are doomed to remain secular and to promote corresponding values. This should not be taken to mean that there is no place for religion: in these states faith and religious practices are a prerogative of an individual rather than society as a whole.

In view of this, we set out to analyze the models of state-confessional regulations in the Republic of Kazakhstan and the People's Republic of China, where the society remains secular. Both countries, however, have accumulated sufficient experience of cooperation in the religious sphere, thus it is crucial to analyze the efficiency of the existing models and to identify their strong and weak sides in the conditions of an active terrorist threat caused by the rising influence of political Islam. Time has come to formulate efficient recommendations of fine-tuning the constructive dialog between the community of the faithful and the secular-minded part of society.

Meanwhile, both states are involved in mutually advantageous economic cooperation, they preach similar ideals, have similar institutions, address similar problems and face similar threats. This can be expected from close geographical neighbors and political partners. Even more important is the sustainable consensus in both countries on the secular nature of state as a value on its own right. Both can hardly be defined as monotheist states, which means that their laws and practices are adjusted accordingly. Both states stand opposed to religious extremism and terrorism that had challenged the world order on 9/11.

In this article we tried not only to answer the questions formulated above, but also to assess the possibilities of sharing relevant experience. In order to achieve both aims, we addressed the following tasks:

- (1) To formulate the concept of state-confessional relations;
- (2) To determine the basic models of this type of social interactions;
- (3) To compare the religious politics of Kazakhstan and China in the face of contemporary threats and challenges.

In the course of our studies we relied on comparative and situational analysis, case-study, and other relevant methods.

In our studies we relied on legal acts and political declarations, as well as media publications on the subjects of inquiry.

1. The Concept of State-Confessional Relations

More or less generally, the state-confessional relations can be defined as ties and relations between state institutions and religious groups and associations.

Freedom of worship is an important indicator of adequacy of any democratic state and is one of the main functions of the contemporary social states, which are expected to efficiently oversee social

processes. The state cooperates with religious organizations to build up the spiritual unity of its people and a sustained and dynamically developing society. Balanced and pragmatic confessional policy consolidates sovereignty and independence, which are indispensable or even critically important in the globalized world—one where identity is pushed aside for the sake of unification, spiritual unification in the first place. An efficient policy in the religious sphere helps promote national interests in the spiritual and religious sphere.¹

The term “state-confessional relations” is a relatively new term actively used in the post-Soviet space, where the states’ religious policy still requires comprehension and analysis. On the one hand, we can say that the set of state institutions and departments and their powers is clear-cut. On the other, religious associations and groups are highly diverse in the number of members, organizational forms and the nature and degree of their influence on social and cultural life. This means that they do not form a homogenous whole and that antagonism among them should not be discounted.

The term is related to all legal and political acts and to all actions of state institutions and departments and their relations with religious groups.

Based on this definition, we can identify the objects of state-confessional relations:

- The rights and freedoms of citizens in the spiritual-religious sphere;
- Religious organizations and their relations.

Stability within religions and between religions is an indicator of the efficiency of the system of state-confessional relations, only viable in the states that are aware of the hierarchy of priorities of their social, political and spiritual development.

This narrows down the highly popular term “confession” used by religious studies to the term “religious association,” which has found its place in legal discourse. This, in turn, allows us to talk about legal or illegal activities of the entities of the relations, on the one hand, and the possibility of balancing the rights of all the highly diverse religious groups, on the other.

This means that in this context the term “state-confessional relations” refers to the state-policy in relation to religion and/or religious policy and that, therefore, this term can be used as an analogue of “state policies in relation to religion” used by our Chinese colleagues.

The two countries share a certain specific feature of their state-confessional relations—the principle of a secular state confirmed by their Constitutions.² In both states, secularism is understood as the separation of church from the state and of school from the church. In both cases, the state has clearly declared that it would not interfere in the affairs of religious associations and demands that all confessions should not interfere in its affairs, the political life in particular.³

This is based on a wide and sustainable consensus that a multinational state cannot and should not be religious. This principle alone can guarantee the freedom of conscience and freedom of worship for a country’s citizens. In other words, the secular nature of the state is an efficient institution required by society.

This logically leads to another aspect of the state-confessional relations in China and Kazakhstan: in both countries the secular nature of the state guarantees constitutional order and the fundamental rights and freedoms of their citizens. This means that the relations between the state and reli-

¹ See: L.V. Chupriy, “Religioznaia sostavliaiushchaia politiki natsionalnoy bezopasnosti Ukrainkogo gosudarstva v gumanitarnoy sfere,” *Studia Humanitatis. International Scientific Research Journal*. ISSN 2308-8079—No. 2, 2013 available at [<https://st-hum.ru/en/node/87>], 10 January, 2020.

² See: Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Art 1, available at [https://www.akorda.kz/ru/official_documents/constitution], 28 December, 2019; Constitution of the People’s Republic of China (2018), Art 36 [<https://npcobserver.files.wordpress.com/2018/12/PRC-Constitution-2018.pdf>], 28 December, 2019.

³ See: Zh.R. Manukian, T.L. Guruleva, M.V. Skripkar, “Religioznaia politika Kitaia,” *Mezhdunarodny zhurnal prikladnykh i fundamentalnykh issledovaniy*, No. 8, 2013 (Part 3), p. 175.

gion are related to the state or, in a wider sense, national security. In this case, the state-confessional relations, or state policy in the sphere of religion means the realization and/or practical implementation of the institutions accepted by society.

2. The Models of State-Confessional Relations in China and Kazakhstan

In the last 2,000 years China has been home to many religions—Buddhism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism—and practically no religious conflicts. Different religions inherited and continued the traditions of Sinicization, adaptation to local realities, social requirements and the best traditions of serving society, of harmony and inclusiveness; they have consciously protected China's state and social interests. The religious circles in China maintain friendly relations with religious organizations of over 80 countries, they actively responded to the Belt and Road initiative and are promoting the ideas of closer relations with different peoples and mutual penetration of cultures.

The Buddhist communities organized four Buddhist forums, and the Taoists—one international forum as platforms for discussion between Chinese and foreign Buddhist and Taoists.

In 2012 and 2014, the Islamic Association of China organized cultural events in Turkey and Malaysia. In 2013, the Chinese and American Christian Churches held the Second Forum of Chinese and American Christian Leaders in Shanghai; in 2017, a seminar Officials of the Chinese Churches in the United States was held. In 2016, the Islamic Association of China, the Chinese Christian Society, the Catholic Patriotic Association of China and the Chinese Catholic Episcopate College, acting together with the German Protestant Union, organized (in Germany) a Religious Dialogue between China and Germany—Peace and Joint Use.

As a contemporary state in the process of active integration in the international relations system China pursues a carefully weighted policy in the sphere of the state-confessional relations.

According to official figures, by 31 April, 2018 there were about 200 million believers in China, 380,000 religious ministers and 144,000 religious facilities.

There are Buddhists (the biggest religious community of China), Taoists, Catholics and Protestants among the Chinese. Islam is popular among the Uyghurs, Hui, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kyrgyz, Tatars, Sala, Baoan and Dōngxiāng.

There are about 5,500 religious organizations in China, seven of them of a national scale:

- The Buddhist Association of China
- The Tao Association of China
- The Islamic Association of China
- The Catholic Patriotic Association of China
- The Chinese Catholic Bishop College
- The Chinese Christian Society
- The national committee of Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Church in China.

In China all religions are equal by law. Art 36 of the Chinese Constitution says: "Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief. No state organ, public organization, or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or not to believe in, any religion... No one may make

use of religion to engage in activities that disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens or interfere with the educational system of the state.”

The status of a religious community is regulated by the Provisions for Religious Affairs of 1 March, 2005, which defines the legal status of religious communities, places of religious ceremonies, the rules of opening spiritual educational establishments, publication of religious literature, administration of religious communities’ property, external religious activities, etc.

The document was amended in September 2017 to fit the current requirements. It confirmed freedom of worship and the rules according to which the government administers religious affairs and ensures state security and social harmony.

In 2017, the State Administration for Religious Affairs of China and 11 other departments elaborated and published a document *Certain Considerations Related to Continued Resolution of the Problem of Commercialization of Buddhism and Taoism*. It banned trade activities with religion-related objects, extortion of money under religious pretexts and all other similar actions that violated the normal order of religious activities.

The corresponding departments tightened their control of religious activities in the Internet; they consistently remove illegal information related to religion and protect the legal rights and interests of the religious circles.

Confronted by the challenges of religious extremism that threaten the very foundations of human civilization, religious circles have clearly demonstrated their rejection of extremism, their determination to oppose any terrorist and national-separatist activities camouflaged as religious activities and consistently encourage proper faith and deeds.

According to Roman Podoprigora, state and religious organizations coexist in a great number of models; those who study and classify them rely on an equally numerous research methods.⁴ There are at least three related factors:

- (1) the cultural and historical background or the traversed path by a country;
- (2) the socio-cultural dynamics, that is, the changes in society and the state that transform the attitude to religion of an individual and society as a whole; in the post-Soviet countries, for example, much has been said and is still being said about the spiritual vacuum left by the collapsed Soviet ideology;
- (3) functioning of the state and its institutions.

This means that, on the whole, the following three components are responsible for the situation in Kazakhstan:

- (1) a fairly extensive (at least three centuries) experience of coexistence of different religions, first and foremost, Orthodox Christianity and Sunni Islam, within the borders of one state;
- (2) Soviet modernization, which suppressed social, religious and ethnic segregation; raised the standards of living, yet restricted the development of religious associations in every way;
- (3) continued intensive construction of a contemporary national post-Soviet secular state.

Political organization of the Chinese society is China’s most apparent feature:

—China is a socialist state that is building socialism with Chinese characteristics. Members of the Communist Power, the vanguard of Chinese society must be atheists: this is the only limitation in the religious sphere confirmed by law;

⁴ See: R.A. Podoprigora, *Gosudarstvo i religioznye organizatsii (administrativno-pravovye voprosy)*, Arkaim, Almaty, 2002, pp. 80-111.

- The country has no experience of a dominant and obligatory religion encouraged in all its forms. In China the state traditionally has priority over religion;
- Chinese leaders have demonstrated impressive social and cultural successes without a harsh confrontation with religion (unlike in the Soviet Union), which explains the relatively consistent dynamics of religiosity.

These three factors allowed us to analyze the relations between the state and religion on the basis of certain factors. For example, an impartial approach to religious associations is not merely a declared, but consistent policy realized in China and Kazakhstan that equates the rights of large religious communities with millions of followers and tiny religious organizations in their contacts with the state.

The states and religious confessions carefully avoid all interference in each other's internal affairs, which is another typical feature. The laws of both China and Kazakhstan ban the transfer of state functions and powers to religious associations, including registration of acts of a civil status, courts, protection of law and order, etc. The state, in turn, guarantees by laws freedom of religious associations in the questions of faith, administrative structure and other aspects of internal activity.

In China and Kazakhstan alike, the state insists on its priority when it comes to the relations with religious associations and the demand placed on them to obey laws. It guarantees rights and freedoms and decides whether a religious organization has the right to pursue certain types of activities or not, and to what extent.

Registration of religious associations (which means that any of them is recognized as a religious community) is one of the main regulatory instruments in the sphere of state-confessional relations. Not all religious groups meet the requirements of the law. The large religious associations, similar to the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Kazakhstan and the Russian Orthodox Church responded sensitively to the lowering of the required numerical strength between 1991 and 2011. The Law on Religious Activities and Religious Associations adopted in 2011 ended the discussion that went on persistently for many years. Today even the smallest confessions can defend their rights and insist on them in front of the state.

In both countries the separation of powers described above is complemented by cooperation in the spheres of mutual interest. The Forum of Leaders of the World and Traditional Religions held regularly in Kazakhstan is not merely the source of its pride, it is a useful platform of public diplomacy and communication between Kazakhstan's religious confessions and foreign organizations. It consolidates the mutual understanding both inside and outside the country.⁵

The state extends seemingly routine yet, in fact, extremely important assistance: the Muslims of both countries would have been unable to organize the hajj without the state's diplomatic, consultative, transportation and medical assistance and safety measures. According to Chinese diplomats, over 11,000 Chinese Muslims performed the hajj in 2019.⁶

Both states are doing much more than organizing pilgrimages; in China the meaning of the Koran was translated into Chinese and the languages of national minorities, with over one million copies published.

⁵ See: *Declaration of the 6th Congress of Leaders of the World and Traditional Religions*, 11 October, 2018, available in Russian at [<https://www.religions-congress.org/content/view/467/82/lang.ru/>], 17 December, 2019.

⁶ اجحلا اذهل نينين يصلنا اجحلا ددع حضوي ماعلا نينين يصلنا لصنقلا صاخ حيرصرت [<https://osas-est.com/%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AD-%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%B5%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%86%D8%B5%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%85-%D9%8A%D9%88%D8%B6%D8%AD-%D8%B9%D8%AF%D8%AF/>], 09.01.2020 // اجحلا لفسانم قيدات بناج ىل [<https://arabic.people.com.cn/n3/2019/0806/c31660-9603785.html>], 9 January, 2020.

The two models of the state-religious relations are very similar in many respects (despite certain objective differences); they are also close to a number of models that took shape over the course of centuries in other countries, in different cultural-historical contexts and within different ideological and political systems. On the whole, all of them are geared at harmonious coexistence between the state and religious confessions.

Freedom of worship is one of the basic rights of man; religiosity is one of oldest characteristics of human society. Today, the global world has acquired different approaches to religion conditioned by historical, cultural and civilizational development dynamics. The models of the state-confessional relations are highly diverse.⁷

Some states do not specify the status of religions in their Constitutions; some countries stipulate their religious approaches in legislation. The Constitution of the FRG speaks of the responsibility of the German nation to God, the Constitution of Ireland begins with “In the Name of the Most Holy Trinity.” There are state churches in England, Finland, Denmark, Norway, Scotland, Greece, etc. In these countries churches are part of the state machine, and their statuses differ from the statuses of other religious communities that belong to the non-state sector.⁸

In many countries, including those where religious organizations are separated from the state, clerics are present in civilian institutions such as schools, hospitals, armed forces and penitentiary systems. In some states the president, deputies and members of government swear an oath on holy books.

The unfolding liberalization has invigorated the contacts between state and religious figures, heads of state visit places of worship, while religious organizations are more frequently mentioned in legal documents. On the other hand, religion remains mainly a private business.

3. Religious Policy in Kazakhstan and China in the Face of Contemporary Challenges and Threats

In the wake of 9/11, religion and politics have acquired new meanings: it became abundantly clear that terrorism was no longer persecuting individuals, organizations or even states, it challenged the entire world order. Today, nearly 20 years later we can observe that mankind is generally managing to cope. China and Kazakhstan are moving in the same direction: their models of state-confessional relations had confirmed their adequacy and efficiency.

The state and religious associations share common approaches to terrorism and are aware of the need to oppose it. It is only natural that in Kazakhstan and in China religious confessions do not limit themselves to general statements on the need to protect social values and institutions; they spare no effort in supporting the state.

From 2001 onwards, the states have been confirming in word and in deed that they do not equate religion and religious terrorism. Religious confessions, in turn, have been doing a lot to explain and popularize their interpretations and practices. Sometimes that was perceived as attempts by certain

⁷ See: Iu.V. Pechin, “K voprosu o modeli gosudarstvenno-konfessionalnykh otnosheniy v sovremennoy Rossii,” in: *Teoreticheskie i prakticheskie aspekty razvitiya upravlencheskoy mysli v sovremennom mire*: Collection of scientific works of lecturers and post-graduate students, State Agrarian University of Novosibirsk, Novosibirsk, 2015, pp. 101-105.

⁸ See: O.N. Petiukova, “Modeli gosudarstvenno-konfessionalnykh otnosheniy: zarubezhny opyt pravovogo regulirovaniya,” *Finansy: teoria i praktika*, 2010, pp. 57-61; R. Podoprigora, *Gosudarstvo, pravo i religia: zarubezhny opyt i kazakhstanskii realii?* available at [https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=1034230#pos=3;-153], 15 January, 2020.

confessions to interfere in state affairs. In the course of time, however, it became clear that prominent religious figures and institutions play an important role in promoting national ideas and national institutions. In this respect, the slogan exhibited on the mosque entrances across China “Love the Party, Love Your Motherland” looks adequate. This laconic and capacious slogan has become the symbol of Chinese mosques and an attribute of sermons and other types of religious activity of the Muslim clerics in China.

In Kazakhstan, religious leaders opted for a different approach, which is justified by the relatively low level of religious awareness. In particular, they have reformed the confessional educational institutions, expanded their network and raised the level of educational programs to those of corresponding secular educational structures. The same was done to the religious courses that target those who want to join one of the confessions and need more profound religious knowledge. Religious organizations have demonstrated increased activity in the media.

It would be a great exaggeration to say that the joint efforts were unfolding seamlessly. Since the very first day of the international counterterrorist campaign, it was visualized as war and peace, black and white in a world where there was an obvious enemy and an army led by one commander. This explains why in some cases the relations between the state and religious confessions were fairly tense. In Kazakhstan this took the form of the failed attempt to introduce certain limits to hairdos and clothing.

In the states that considered themselves benchmarks of secularism, these attempts were reflected in legislation; in China and Kazakhstan they remained at the level of administrative acts. The wise and cold-blooded approach prevailed in both countries.

This means that in both countries the relations between the state and confessions are passing the durability test with flying colors.

Global challenges and threats are not limited to terrorism and religious extremism, yet our recently acquired experience confirms the functioning models of state-religious relations are beneficial and serve the state, religious confessions and society as a whole.

Kazakhstan is an interesting example of how specific historical and cultural circumstances, and features of social development helped create a unique model of religious interaction.

In its civilizational choice, the Republic of Kazakhstan is adhering to eternal values shared by all mankind—dialog and harmony of interests, peaceful creative coexistence, wellbeing and flourishing.⁹

Conclusion

No matter how unique, the state-confessional relations in Kazakhstan and China share common features that suggest exchange of experience. Much has already been done in this respect.

The very similar models of state-confessional relations in these countries may be explained by the relatively similar courses of social and cultural development and historical closeness of sorts. In both countries the high level of tolerance stems from centuries of coexistence of different peoples and religions. In Kazakhstan, coexistence of Islam and Christianity is one of its traditional elements; in China, Taoists, Buddhists, Muslims and others have been peacefully living within the same borders.

In the twentieth century, the very similar course of political development and an uncompromising struggle waged by the authorities against all manifestations of religiosity to impose atheism can be assessed as another factor that brought together the state-confessional interaction in these countries.

⁹ See: B. Aryn, “Svoboda veroispovedania: tsivilizatsionny vybor Kazakhstana,” *Vestnik diplomatii*, available at [<https://mfa.gov.kz/ru/content-view/berik-aryn-svoboda-veroispovedania-civilizacionnyj-vybor-kazakhstana>], 22 December, 2019.

At the end of the 20th century, Kazakhstan, as an independent post-Soviet state, moved away from atheism to build its own model of the relations between the state and local confessions.

As its political system was developing, China became more loyal towards its religious citizens and atheism remained mandatory only for the members of the Communist Party.

Today, both states are coping with similar problems created by the increasingly apparent threats of extremism and terrorism, the duty of any state to preserve the balance between human rights (including the right to worship) and the interests of the state that should control public sentiments and implement adequate social engineering.

There can be no discussion of global threats and challenges without a discussion of megatrends. We can claim that religion, while remaining a personal choice in full accordance with the freedom of worship, is developing into a very much needed social institute. Religious associations can realize this potential within the current model.

REGIONAL INTEGRATION

**CONTEMPORARY ISSUES AND
WAYS OF IMPLEMENTING
THE GREAT SILK ROAD TOURISM PROJECT
IN THE CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS**

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of any international project, including the Great Silk Road, is not conceivable without major legal, economic and political decisions. The article shows that the Central Asian region can hardly be considered homogenous in terms of legal, political and economic resources in the context of this project. The republics are also gradually departing from an authoritative and centralized administrative and political style to a more liberal communication style in their dialog with the tourist industry. The republics have also inherited different historical and cultural versions of this historical phenomenon—the Great Silk Road. This contributed to the fact that economic feasibility led the leadership of the Central Asian republics in different directions in the development of tourism within their segment of the Great Silk Road. In Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, a large number of historical, cultural and religious monuments contribute to the development of tourist infrastructure around these sites. At the same time, Kyrgyzstan, traversed by the mountain transit roads of the Great Silk Road (which also pass through Tajikistan), relies on natural sites, as evidenced by its official map of

attractions and statistics of the National Statistical Committee of the republic. The Republic of Tajikistan, in view of its predominantly agricultural economy, is making efforts to develop rural tourism, relying on eco-friendly agricultural products. Meanwhile, Turkmenistan generally remains a “blind spot” for observers.

Despite the efforts being made, both within the republics (internal reforms) and at the interstate level (an open-door visa policy), the level of tourism development varies significantly between the republics. This applies both to the legal framework and to the financial and infrastructure base. Thus, the Republic of Tajikistan, despite having one of the most loyal visa regimes, demonstrates the lowest number of foreign visitors in the region (not counting Turkmenistan, which has no objective information available in the tourist sphere). An important result of promoting the international Great Silk Road project for the Central Asian republics is the integrative trends and processes aimed at creating a single regional space that contributes to the sustainable development and security both within the republics and in the region as a whole.

KEYWORDS: *Great Silk Road, tourism, pilgrimage, legal basis for tourism, Central Asia.*

Introduction

The Great Silk Road, which connected Central Asia with China, Western Asia, Europe, the Caucasus and other regions between the 2nd century BC and the 16th century, was not merely an economic, but also a vast sociocultural and political space. The ten-year project Integral Study of the Silk Road: Roads of Dialog, initiated in 1988 by UNESCO, became the launching pad for the modern Great Silk Road and provides for a comprehensive study of the history of civilizations along the Great Silk Road, the establishment of close intercultural contacts between Eurasian peoples, etc. The project turned out to be so topical that the Silk Road International Advisory Commission and a number of states, including the Central Asian republics, decided to extend it in the fall of 1997. It was extended as a new project, East-West Intercultural Relations in Central Asia, aimed at the study and

preservation of caravanserais, the postal system, petroglyphs of Central Asia, and other cultural and historical artefacts. (Later, it was extended as a Great Silk Road.) It provided for the establishment of a network of scientific institutes, including the Maritime Silk Road Research Center (Fu Zhou, China), Silk Road Research Information Center (Nara, Japan), Indira Gandhi National Center for the Arts (New Delhi, India), International Institute for Central Asian Studies (Samarkand, Uzbekistan). The result of these centers' work was the international colloquium *The Contribution of the Samanids to the Cultural Heritage of Central Asia* in June 1998 in Dushanbe (Tajikistan), as well as the publication of a fundamental work—*Atlases of Religious Monuments and Applied Arts of Central Asia*.

Subsequently, a group of states (China, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan) submitted an application to include the Great Silk Road in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The route was then represented by the Chang'an-Tien-Shan corridor network that spanned 5,000 kilometers—from the cities of Xi'an (Chang'an) and Luoyang, the capitals of China during the Han and Tang dynasties, to Zhetysay in the Central Asian region. The final, positive decision was made at the 38th session of the World Heritage Committee in Doha, Qatar, on 15-25 June, 2014. The "corridor" approach was considered the optimal way to identify the specific Silk Road sections where the sites to be included in the nomination are located. At present, 54 variations of such corridors have been proposed; they do not merely include the cultural sites that are adjacent to caravan routes, but those of them that reveal the historical significance of this route and contribute to the concept of universal heritage.

Over 30 years have passed since the launch of the Great Silk Road project. During this period, each of its Central Asian participants has arrived at a provisional milestone with its own baggage of experience in promoting this project within their space. Thus, in order to be able to outline the key anticipated results of this international event, it makes sense to draw some kind of interim conclusions and consider the prospects of the project's further implementation.

The outlines of the key results are, in fact, visible today. The draft resolution of the 74th session of the U.N. General Assembly on 14 November, 2019, initiated jointly by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan, emphasizes the fact that this route through Central Asia not only promotes tourism in international markets, but also ensures regional stability and sustainable development. The project's legal, as well as both the internal and foreign policy components in the Central Asian republics, which reveal their position in the implementation of this project in their territory, will demonstrate the extent of objectivity of this assessment.

The Legal Factor in Project Implementation

The idea of reviving the Great Silk Road as a tourist destination in the Central Asian states has found its political and legal manifestation in various interstate agreements and domestic legal acts. Currently, this is the only and the central collaboration project conducted by the Central Asian republics jointly with the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

Despite the fact that Uzbekistan was not among the initiators of the inclusion of the Great Silk Road on the UNESCO World Heritage List, it was still the state that was most actively engaged in promoting this project among all Central Asian countries. To some extent, this is due to the fact that there are more than 7,300 cultural heritage sites¹ that are perfectly preserved to this day. Since 1994, 38 laws and by-laws governing the tourism sector have been adopted in Uzbekistan in the framework

¹ See: O. Mukhamejanov, "Moshchnyi instrument ustoychivogo rosta ekonomiki," *Golos Uzbekistana*, 2 March, 2018, available at [http://uzbekistonovozi.uz/ru/articles/index.php?SECTION_ID=174&ELEMENT_ID=52864], 16 January, 2020.

of this international project.² Just as in other Central Asian republics, serious financial investments were required for its promotion, first and foremost, in the outdated tourist infrastructure inherited from the Soviet times. It did not merely necessitate “hole-patching,” that is, the restoration of roads, hotels, and food establishments, but also required the training of highly skilled hospitality industry professionals.

The international Silk Road meeting of the World Tourism Organization on 3-6 October, 1995, and the associated international tourism fair Tourism along the Silk Road³ can be considered the starting point of project implementation in Uzbekistan. In the presidential decree that followed this event,⁴ the republic embarked on a course towards “creating a modern tourism industry,”⁵ which presupposes a whole range of measures, entailing the introduction of a simplified customs procedure, the establishment of a single visa for foreign tourists, and preferential loans for the construction of tourist facilities and infrastructure with a maturity term of at least 5 years. Other measures included the establishment of Uzsaekhatinvestbank, the formation of the Interdepartmental Council on Tourism under the Government, with the aim of coordinating the interaction of all commercial agents, promoting tourism, staffing and legal support in the tourism sector, etc. The Meros national program was also developed to restore, improve and utilize the architectural, archeological, historical and cultural monuments located in the ancient cities of the Great Silk Road: Samarkand, Khiva, Tashkent, and Bukhara, which were declared economic zones of international tourism.

The next step in ensuring the legal foundations entailed the special Programs for the Development of the Tourism Sphere in the Khorezm, Tashkent and Kashkadarya Regions for the period up to 2015, which were introduced in 2013. Eighty-four historical and cultural heritage sites were identified and financing was allocated in the amount of \$17.6 million, however, most of the funds, or approximately \$137.4 million, were used for the restoration of hotels and other tourist facilities. The enterprises involved in project implementation were provided with preferential loans and exempted from various taxes and customs duties on the goods produced outside of the republic. In 2017, similar Development Programs were adopted for Bukhara and the Bukhara region, as well as Samarkand and Samarkand region. By 2021, a so-called “green corridor” is slated to be established at the international airports of these cities, the quality of service at these transport hubs will be improved, hotel guests will be registered electronically, the passport and customs control procedures will be simplified, and more.

The decisions made by the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan were aimed, first and foremost, at improving the tourism infrastructure⁶ and engaging private tourism companies in the Association.⁷ For this reason, the government exempted the companies engaged in improving the

² See: *Acts and Decrees of the President*, State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Development of Tourism, available in Russian at [<https://uzbektourism.uz/ru/document/resolutions>], 16 January, 2020.

³ See: *Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 2 March, 1995 # 78 On the Preparation and Realization of the International Tourism Fair “Silk Road Tourism,”* Information Retrieval and Expert Systems, Legislation of Uzbekistan, available at [https://nrm.uz/contentf?doc=416784_postanovlenie_kabineta_ministrov_respubliki_uzbekistan_ot_02_03_1995_g_n_78_o_podgotovke_i_provedenii_mejdunarodnoy_turisticheskoy_yarmarki_turizm_po_shelkovomu_puti&products=1_vse_zakonodatelstvo_uzbekistana], 10 December, 2019.

⁴ See: *Decree of the President of Uzbekistan #UP-1162 dated 2 June, 1995 On the Measures to Stimulate the Participation of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the Restoration of the Great Silk Road and the Development of International Tourism in the Republic*, Lex.uz, available in Russian at [<https://lex.uz/docs/182124>], 21 December, 2019.

⁵ Ibidem.

⁶ See: *Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 3 June, 1995 #210 On the Measures to Create the Modern Infrastructure for International Tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan*, Information Retrieval and Expert Systems, Legislation of Uzbekistan, available in Russian at [https://nrm.uz/contentf?doc=416782_postanovlenie_kabineta_ministrov_respubliki_uzbekistan_ot_03_06_1995_g_n_210_o_merakh_po_sozdaniyu_sovremennoy_infrastruktury_mejdunarodnogo_turizma_v_respublike_uzbekistan&products=1_vse_zakonodatelstvo_uzbekistana], 12 November, 2019.

⁷ See: *Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 8 August, 1998 z. #346 On Improving the Organization of Tourism Organizations*, Information Retrieval and Expert Systems, Legislation of Uzbekistan, available in

tourism infrastructure from paying customs duties for three years until 2005:⁸ they imported technological and hotel equipment, transport and other means for tourism purposes. In addition, the embassies of a number of states introduced a full-time position of a cultural and tourism adviser, half of which was paid out from the budget of Uzbektourism.

Future tourism and hospitality industry professionals initially studied abroad through the Umid Foundation. However, these functions were subsequently assigned to Tashkent State Economic University.⁹ This idea was later abandoned on 28 June, 2018 by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, when a decision was made to establish the Silk Road International University of Tourism in Samarkand.¹⁰ The decision was a part of the phased process that aimed to establish tourism as a strategic industry. The education process at this university is conducted in Uzbek, Russian and English, two foreign languages are taught at the bachelor's level:

- the first is English (French or German),
- the second is one of the official languages of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (Russian or Chinese).

The University and its Board of Trustees have been granted broad rights and powers to develop and approve educational standards, curricula and programs, a system of assessing students' knowledge based on best practices, setting time standards for the types of faculty activities, opening up new promising areas and specialty training based on the need for personnel in the tourism sector, and more.

The first versions of the Laws on Tourism in all five Central Asian republics stipulated for human resources support in tourism through the state system of personnel training, retraining and advanced training. But in the latest versions of this law, which are more liberal, the official authority is limited to the extensive establishment of “qualification requirements for personnel training in the tourism sector,”¹¹ as it was done in one of the most closed-off Central Asian republics—Turkmenistan. Kazakhstan can also be cited as an example, where Art 9.3 of the Republican Law on Tourism limits state participation to “assistance” in this area. Obviously, these changes are explained by the development of a network of non-governmental higher educational institutions.

Turkmenistan was the first (in 1995) to enact the Law on Tourism among all other Central Asian republics. Then, four years later, a similar normative act was adopted in Uzbekistan,¹² Kyrgyzstan in 1999, Kazakhstan in 2001, and Tajikistan in 2005. A comparative analysis of the features of the Laws on Tourism in all five republics shows a remarkable difference in understanding of how this sector of the economy should develop. In particular, state authorities acquired full control over the tourist in-

Russian at [https://nrm.uz/content?doc=416781_postanovlenie_kabineta_ministrov_respubliki_uzbekistan_ot_08_08_1998_g_n_346_o_sovershenstvovanii_organizacii_deyatelnosti_turisticheskikh_organizaciy&products=1_vse_zakonodatelstvo_uzbekistana], 3 November, 2019.

⁸ See: *Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 15 April, 1999 #UP-2286 On the State Program of Development of Tourism in Uzbekistan Up To 2005*, Lex.uz, available in Russian at [<http://lex.uz/docs/213703>], 14 October, 2019.

⁹ See: *Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 30 June, 1999 # UP-2332 On the Training of Qualified Personnel for the Tourist Sphere in Uzbekistan*, Lex.uz, available in Russian at [<http://www.lex.uz/docs/214104>], 14 October, 2019.

¹⁰ See: *Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan On the Establishment of the Silk Road International Tourism University*, *Golos Uzbekistana*, 29 June, 2018, available in Russian at [http://uzbekistonovozi.uz/ru/articles/index.php?SECTION_ID=173&ELEMENT_ID=58015], 3 December, 2019.

¹¹ *Law of Turkmenistan dated 10 May, 2010 #107 On Tourism*, Alpagama, available in Russian at [<https://alpagama.org/pravovaya-baza-turista/zakon-turkmenistana-o-turizme>], 3 December, 2019.

¹² See: *Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 20 August, 1999 #830—I On Tourism*, Information Retrieval and Expert Systems, Legislation of Uzbekistan, available in Russian at [https://nrm.uz/content?doc=416776_zakon_respubliki_uzbekistan_ot_20_08_1999_g_n_830-i_o_turizme&products=1_vse_zakonodatelstvo_uzbekistana], 12 November, 2019.

dustry in the Republic of Turkmenistan in the first edition of the Law on Tourism.¹³ In particular, Art 4 identifies state and local programs as the organizational and even financial basis for the development of tourism, approved by the president in the former case, and by local executive authorities—in the latter. All this had to be supported solely by state funding. In the new 2010 edition, the legislator has changed the wording from “state administration” to “state regulation.”

The legislation of Uzbekistan provides for a wider range of interaction in terms of tourism industry financing. In particular, Art 12 distinctly addresses the matter of the extra-budgetary Tourism Support Fund, which was established under an authorized state body, specifically, the State Committee). The Fund is formed using the proceeds from the tourist tax,¹⁴ grants from international financial institutions, foreign donors, charitable donations from legal entities and individuals, proceeds from the placement of the Fund’s temporarily available funds and other sources that are not prohibited by law. In Uzbekistan, these funds and fees are redirected to the development of tourism, while in Tajikistan Art 3 of the Law on Tourism explicitly prohibits the free or gratuitous use of tourism resources “included in the state cadaster of tourist resources of the Republic of Tajikistan.”¹⁵ This pertains to tourism resources of national and international importance. However, the taxes obtained from this type of activity do not come back to this sphere for its development, but only replenish the country’s total budget.

The article on the entities of tourism activity, traditionally a part of the standard law on tourism, demonstrates the different degrees of liberalization of the tourism segment of the economy in different republics. Unlike Turkmenistan, Art 3 of the Law on Tourism in Kazakhstan recognizes tourist associations (civic associations) and state bodies that regulate public relations in the field of tourism as entities of tourism industry, in addition to tour operators, travel agents and guides (as the law in Turkmenistan states), equalizing the status of the state with all other participants in tourism activities.¹⁶ There are no such provisions in the legislation of Turkmenistan, but Uzbekistan has gone even further in this matter by introducing a separate Art 13 in the updated version of the law, which is dedicated to citizen self-government bodies and non-governmental non-profit organizations that, within their powers, participate in the development and implementation of state, territorial and other tourist programs and in the promotion of cultural heritage; they carry out public control, make suggestions for improving the legislation on tourism and interact with government agencies and other organizations in the tourist sphere.¹⁷

It is important to emphasize the fact that the Law on Tourism of Turkmenistan is shifting away from “state administration” to “state regulation.” It defines tourism as a whole, in all its forms, as “a priority direction of the state socio-economic policy of Turkmenistan” (Art 11¹⁸). In Kazakhstan and Tajikistan,¹⁹ the state assumes the obligation to support and develop only the “priority areas of tourist activity” (Art 8), namely domestic, inbound, social and amateur tourism.

¹³ See: *Law of Turkmenistan dated 24 November, 1995*, International Tourist Academy, available in Russian at [<http://www.intacadem.ru/zakonodateljstvo-zarubezhnyh-stran/zakon-turkmenistana-o-turizme-ot-24.11.1995.html>], 24 December, 2019.

¹⁴ Tourists must pay an entry duty in the amount of \$50 upon entering Uzbekistan.

¹⁵ *Law of the Republic of Tajikistan On Tourism*, Pandia, available in Russian at [<https://pandia.ru/text/80/195/42904.php>], 25 October, 2019.

¹⁶ See: *Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated 13 June, 2001 #211—II On Tourist Activities in the Republic of Kazakhstan (amended and revised, as of 1 July, 2019)*, Online.zakon.kz, available in Russian at [https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=1023618#pos=47;-156], 14 December, 2019.

¹⁷ See: *Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 18 July, 2019 #ZRU—549 On Tourism*, Narodnoe Slovo, 19 July, 2019, available in Russian at [<http://xs.uz/ru/16466>], 11 January, 2020.

¹⁸ *Law of Turkmenistan On Tourism*, Parahat.info, available in Russian at [<https://www.parahat.info/law/2010-05-21-zakon-turkmenistana-o-turizme>], 15 December, 2019.

¹⁹ See: *Law of the Republic of Tajikistan On Tourism*, Pandia, available in Russian at [<https://pandia.ru/text/80/195/42904.php>], 11 December, 2019.

It is obvious why the government of Uzbekistan is committed to promoting the Silk Road project. Between 1995 and the present time, 3 thematic meetings were held: 3-6 October, 1995 in Tashkent; 19-22 April, 1999 in Tashkent, Samarkand, and Khiva; 27-28 October, 2002 in Bukhara. In 2009, hygiene requirements for catering and living conditions in accommodation facilities were approved.²⁰ In 2013, regulations were introduced on the location of tourists in territories with a special regime of stay,²¹ as well as a list of sites and territories restricted to tourists,²² which included military and strategic sites. In addition, there is a ban in the country for photo and video shooting at certain sites (the list remains undisclosed) with the aim of subsequent public display, which requires special permission. As a result, tourists sometimes encounter police hostility. However, in 2018, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev removed such restrictions for tourists with the exception of the official list of sites in the decree On Measures for the Development of Inbound Tourism.²³

In 2016, the Decree of the President of Uzbekistan named tourism the “strategic sector of the country’s economy,”²⁴ and for the first time the need arose to ensure “the safety of life and health of tourists and sightseers when organizing tourism services,” and “strengthen the social role of tourism” through the development of child, youth, family and social tourism, expanding international cooperation with the U.N. World Tourism Organization, other international and national tourism organizations, etc.

Of the other Central Asian republics engaged in the Great Silk Road project, Kyrgyzstan²⁵ relies on natural attractions, namely 86 specially protected natural areas, which is by no means a coincidence. Most of its territory is occupied by mountains (about 90% of its area is located at an altitude of over 1,500 m above sea level). The list of world-class attractions includes Pobeda peak (7,439 m), Lenin peak (7,134 m), Khan-Tengri (6,995 m), and Enylchek, one of the longest glaciers). Forests occupy 5.3% of the area, water—4.4%, and farmland—54%. There are also 1,923 lakes, including Lake Issyk-Kul—one of the largest, non-freezing and deepest alpine lakes in the world. In addition to natural attractions, there are historical and cultural monuments in the Kyrgyz Republic located on the Great Silk Road routes, but they are not numerous: the Tash-Rabat guesthouse, the foot of the

²⁰ See: *Sanitary Regulations and Norms RUz # 0282—09 (Approved by the Head State Sanitary Doctotron, 31 December, 2009*, Information Retrieval and Expert Systems, Legislation of Uzbekistan, available in Russian at [[https://nrm.uz/contentf?doc=416770_gigienicheskie_trebovaniya_k_organizacii_pitaniya_i_usloviyam_projivaniya_v_gostinichnyh_kompleksah_motelyah_kempingah_turisticheskikh_bazah_i_individualnyh_mestah_razmeshcheniya_\(sanpin_ruz_n_0282—09\)\(utverjdeny_glavnym_gosudarstvennym_sanitarnym_vrachom_31_12_2009_g\)&products=1_vse_zakonodatelstvo_uzbekistana](https://nrm.uz/contentf?doc=416770_gigienicheskie_trebovaniya_k_organizacii_pitaniya_i_usloviyam_projivaniya_v_gostinichnyh_kompleksah_motelyah_kempingah_turisticheskikh_bazah_i_individualnyh_mestah_razmeshcheniya_(sanpin_ruz_n_0282—09)(utverjdeny_glavnym_gosudarstvennym_sanitarnym_vrachom_31_12_2009_g)&products=1_vse_zakonodatelstvo_uzbekistana)], 14 October, 2019.

²¹ See: *Provision on the Entry, Temporary Sojourn and Movement of Tourists through Sites and Areas with a Special Sojourn Regime (Addendum # 1 to the Provision KM RUz dated 10 March, 2015 #53)*, Information Retrieval and Expert Systems, Legislation of Uzbekistan, available in Russian at [[https://nrm.uz/contentf?doc=386708_polojenie_o_poryadke_vezda_\(prohoda_vremennogo_prebyvaniya_i_peredvizeniya_turistov_po_obektam_i_mestnostyam_na_territorii_kotoryh_ustanovlen_osobyy_rejim_prebyvaniya_\(prilozhenie_n_1_k_postanovleniyu_km_ruz_ot_10_03_2015_g_n_53\)&products=1_vse_zakonodatelstvo_uzbekistana](https://nrm.uz/contentf?doc=386708_polojenie_o_poryadke_vezda_(prohoda_vremennogo_prebyvaniya_i_peredvizeniya_turistov_po_obektam_i_mestnostyam_na_territorii_kotoryh_ustanovlen_osobyy_rejim_prebyvaniya_(prilozhenie_n_1_k_postanovleniyu_km_ruz_ot_10_03_2015_g_n_53)&products=1_vse_zakonodatelstvo_uzbekistana)], 14 October, 2019.

²² See: *List and Sites and Areas Forbidden for Tourist Visits (Addendum #2 to Provision KM RUz dated 10 March, 2015 #53)*, Information Retrieval and Expert Systems, Legislation of Uzbekistan, available in Russian at [[https://nrm.uz/contentf?doc=386706_perechen_obektov_i_territoriy_zapreshchennyh_dlya_poseshcheniya_turistami_\(prilozhenie_n_2_k_postanovleniyu_km_ruz_ot_10_03_2015_g_n_53\)&products=1_vse_zakonodatelstvo_uzbekistana](https://nrm.uz/contentf?doc=386706_perechen_obektov_i_territoriy_zapreshchennyh_dlya_poseshcheniya_turistami_(prilozhenie_n_2_k_postanovleniyu_km_ruz_ot_10_03_2015_g_n_53)&products=1_vse_zakonodatelstvo_uzbekistana)], 17 December, 2019.

²³ See: “Turistam razreshat svobodnuiu s’emku v obshchestvennykh mestakh,” *Gazeta.uz*, 6 February, 2018, available at [<https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2018/02/06/photo/>], 17 December, 2019.

²⁴ *Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan On the Measures to Ensure the Accelerated Development of the Tourist Sphere in the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2 December, 2016 #UP—486*, *Lex.uz*, available in Russian at [<http://lex.uz/docs/3077023>], 2 October, 2019.

²⁵ See: *Turizm v Kyrgyzstane*, National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, available at [<http://www.stat.kg/ru/publications/sbornik-turizm-v-kyrgyzstane>], 20 December, 2019; *Turizm v Kyrgyzstane 2011-2015*, Statistical collection, Bishkek, 2016, National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, available at [<http://www.stat.kg/media/publicationarchive/ddd4f2bb-2e32-47bf-8dbf-d44574deb91d.pdf>], 2 October, 2019.

Suleiman Mountain, the Burana Tower, the Uzgen architectural complex. Historically, three branches of trade routes passed through its territory: the Pamir-Alai, Ferghana, and Chui.

The most difficult situation in the development of the tourism sphere is observed in Tajikistan, where the legal support for this industry is just being established. The republic only joined the World Tourism Organization in 2007. Various events that are related to the Great Silk Road project to one degree or another are held in Tajikistan regularly, but they do not have the required resonance and effect. They include the reconstruction of one of the branches of the Great Silk Road, the Aini-Penjikent motorway and the International Exhibition of Artists for Peace *The Pearl of the Silk Road*, held on 11 November, 2016. Scientific and research work is also being carried out to add eight of Tajikistan's historical and cultural monuments to the Great Silk Road route list. These are Pyanjikent Ancient Town, Bunjikat Town, Gissar Fortress, Achinateppa Buddha Sanctuary, Khoja Mashhad Madrasah, the city of Takhti Sangin, City of Khulbuk, Yamchun Fortress.²⁶

Back in 2010, P.Kh. Azimov and M.M. Aliboeva²⁷ named the following among the factors that impede the development of this sector of the economy: the lack of a unified state concept for industry development, ineffectual tax policy, poor infrastructure, unstable situation in the region, problems in ensuring tourists' safety, etc. Emphasis was placed specifically on the need to guarantee security and intensify the fight against current threats in the region in order to safeguard the strengthening of economic relations—not only within scientific circles, but also at the level of heads of state.

According to Azimov and Aliboeva, the republic primarily fosters rural tourism, with well-defined agro-economic belts: cotton, grain, meat and dairy, potato, and pasture. The government is still making what seems to be hasty tax decisions in regard to this still up-and-coming industry. On 31 August, 2012, an amendment was made to the list of types of individual entrepreneurial activities carried out based on a patent, namely, “renting out residential buildings for tourists and providing services in a city (town, village) without hotels.”²⁸ This targeted, first and foremost, the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region, where this type of service has begun to develop. Recall that it is one of the largest, yet least populated regions (44.9% of the total area, 2.6% of the population as of 1 January, 2014) bordering Afghanistan, China and Kyrgyzstan. Despite the fact that the current legislation of Tajikistan had followed the example of neighboring republics, exempting travel agencies from taxes on profit and added value, customs duties on the import of equipment and building materials for tourist facilities, and simplifying the visa procedure for citizens of 112 countries, these steps did not produce a tangible result, as eloquently confirmed by statistics on the republic's foreign visitors. To date, there are no official statistics on the development of tourism, and the available information is collected from figures officially published by other states.

The figures for Tajikistan, which are the lowest among the republics of Central Asia (despite the fact that the republic is among the top five countries with easiest requirements for a tourist visa, according to the British travel magazine *Wanderlust*,²⁹ and introduced an e-Visa electronic system in 2016), are not likely to be objective, since it remains unclear whether these tourists are guest visitors from other countries, or Tajiks who have naturalized in other states and are visiting their relatives at home.

²⁶ See: *Address of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan*, Official website of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, 20 April, 2011, available in Russian at [<http://www.president.tj/ru/node/864>], 14 October, 2019.

²⁷ See: P.Kh. Azimov, M.M. Aliboeva, “Formirovanie i razvitiye predprinimatelstva v sfere turizma v Respublike Tadjikistan,” *Vestnik Natsionalnoi akademii turizma*, No. 4 (16), 2010, p. 62.

²⁸ *Decree of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan On Amending and Revising the Decree of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan dated 31 August, 2012, #451*, Official website of the Tax Committee under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, available in Russian at [https://andoz.tj/docs/postanovleniya-pravitelstvo/Resolution__№451_ru_new.pdf], 11 December, 2019.

²⁹ See: “Tajikistan in the Fourth Place in the World! British Journalist Names RT among the top-5 Countries with Easiest Requirements for a Tourist Visa,” *Tajikistantravel*, 21 August, 2017, available in Russian in Russian at [<https://travel-tajikistan.tj/ru/varzob—2>], 14 November, 2019.

Statistical Data on Foreign Visitors in Central Asian Republics in 2002-2018

Year	Uzbekistan	Kazakhstan	Tajikistan	Kyrgyzstan
2006	262,000	4,707,000	11,605	766,000
2007	242,000	5,311,000	16,038	1,656,000
2008	560,000	4,117,000	21,779 (13,043 ¹)	2,379,000
2009	903,000	3,774,000	25,504 ²	2,451,000
2010	1,069,000	4,097,000	160,000 ³	1,224,000
2011	1,215,000	5,685,000	183,000	3,025,000
2012	975,000	6,163,000	244,000	3,393,000
2013	1,969,000	6,841,000	19,528 ⁴	4,134,000
2014	1,862,000	6,333,000	213,000	3,791,000
2015	1,918,000	6,430,000	414,000	4,000,000
2016	2,027,000	6,509,000	344,000	3,853,000
2017	2,690,000 ⁵	7,701,000 ⁶	430,922 ⁷	4,568,000 ⁸

¹ 2008 data taken from: P.Kh. Azimov, M.M. Aliboeva, "Formirovanie i razvitie predprinimatelstva v sfere turizma v Respublike Tadjikistan," *Vestnik Natsionalnoi akademii turizma*, No. 4 (16), 2010, p. 63.

² 2006-2009 data taken from: L.V. Zhdanova, S. Bobokhonov, "Statistika turizma," Agency for Statistics under the President of Tajikistan, available at [<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/tradeserv/Workshops/Chisinau/docs/09%20c%20-%20Tajikistan.pdf>], 11 December, 2019.

³ 2010-2012, 2014 and 2016 data reflect the total number of foreigners entering the country, including tourists. Information taken from: "Tadjikistan—kolichestvo pribyvshikh," Knoema, available at [<https://knoema.ru/atlas/Таджикистан/Количество—прибывших>], 12 December, 2019.

⁴ "Analiz sostoyaniia turizma v Respublike Tadjikistan," Vuzlit.ru, available at [https://vuzlit.ru/771172/analiz_sostoyanie_turizma_respublike_tadjikistan], 8 November, 2019.

⁵ Information on the arriving foreign tourists taken from: "Uzbekistan—kolichestvo pribyvshikh," Knoema, available at [<https://knoema.ru/atlas/Узбекистан/Количество—прибывших>], 2 December, 2019.

⁶ Information on the arriving foreign tourists taken from: "Kazakhstan—kolichestvo pribyvshikh," Knoema, available at [<https://knoema.ru/atlas/Казахстан/Количество—прибывших>], 2 December, 2019.

⁷ S. Karaev, "Komturizma: Tadjikistan posetili svyshe 1 mln 150 tys. inostrantsev," *Asia-Plus*, 16 January, 2019, available at [<https://asiaplustj.info/news/life/travels/20190116/komturizma—tadjikistan—posetili—svishe—1—mln—250—tis—inostrantsev>], 18 December, 2019.

⁸ Information on the arriving foreign tourists taken from: "Kyrgyzstan—kolichestvo pribyvshikh," Knoema, available at [<https://knoema.ru/atlas/Киргизия/Количество—прибывших>], 17 December, 2019.

The State Program for the Development of Tourism in the Republic of Tajikistan in 2010-2014 was adopted in order to develop this segment of the economy, with the vision of an annual 50,000-people increase in the number of foreign tourists. However, the financial support for this program was extremely insignificant. For example, in 2013, only 661,140 somoni (approximately \$65,000) were allocated for restoration and renovation work in the mausoleums of Imam Zaynalobiddin, Khoja Zar-

rin, Nakibkhan Tugral, Abdullah Vali, Khoja Ahmad Buzurg, Abdukadir Dzheloni and the Vomar fortress.³⁰

The situation in the tourist sphere in Tajikistan has fundamentally changed since 2018, when, on the one hand, the threat of a terrorist Islamic state was significantly reduced in the international arena, and on the other, when the country's leadership, realizing the importance of the tourism industry problems, set about creating a legal framework in this sector of the economy. 2018 was declared the Year of Tourism and Folk Crafts Development in Tajikistan. In this context, a meeting of the Tourism Council of the CIS member states was held in Dushanbe, which focused on the development of tourism, the expansion of cooperation, the preparation of regional routes and other issues in the development of the tourist industry. A program was also adopted to promote tourism in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2018-2020. In addition, in August 2018, after a certain delay, Decree #372 of the Government of Tajikistan On the Strategy for the Development of Tourism in the Republic of Tajikistan until 2030 was adopted, which outlined phased goals, objectives and priority directions for the development of the country's tourism industry. According to the year-end results, 1,150,000 foreigners have visited the republic.³¹ In 2019, the years 2019-2021 were already declared the Years of Village Development, Tourism and Folk Crafts. As part of the implementation of this decree, on 30 December, 2019, the Government of Tajikistan approved the bills On Tourism and On Handicrafts, which will be adopted in the country in 2020.

Advances in this sphere are in no small measure associated with the \$10-million grant provided by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in November 2019 to support tourism in the country. The Government of Tajikistan, for its part, also committed to allocate \$1 million from the state budget. The implementation of the project, estimated until 2024, provides for the preparation of a comprehensive development plan for this segment of the economy, including the analysis of market demand, skill mapping, strengthening institutional capacity in the tourism sector and estimating the financial support of tourism. This estimation should reflect the share of tourism in the country's GDP and in foreign direct investments, as well as the share of various types of tourism along with corresponding income, etc. As part of the celebration of the Year of Tourism, Dushanbe hosted the International Tourism Forum and the *Tajikistan-2019* exhibition on 8-10 August, with participation of representatives and experts on tourism from 25 countries of the world. In Uzbekistan, similar events are held annually.

As for Turkmenistan, statistical information on entry to the republic is not publicly available. We only know the data for 2002-2007, with the following figures: 2002—10,800 people; 2003—8,200 people; 2004—14,800 people; 2005—11,600 people; 2006—5,600 people; 2007—8,200 people.³² Unfortunately, the source does not reveal whether these numbers indicate the number of tourists who have entered the territory of Turkmenistan, or the total number of foreigners who have entered the country.

Internal and External Political Components of Project Implementation

A number of interstate activities were conducted by the Central Asian countries with the aim of developing regional tourism; however, most of them were implemented on the CIS platform, rather

³⁰ See: F.Z. Mirzoeva, Sh. Saldiev, "Kulturnyi turizm i perspektivy ego razvitiia v Tadjikistane," *Vestnik Tadjikskogo tekhnicheskogo universiteta*, No. 4 (24), 2013, pp. 82-88.

³¹ See: S. Karaev, "Komturizma: Tadjikistan posetili svyshe 1 mln 150 tys. inostrantsev," *Asia-Plus*, 16 January, 2019, available at [<https://asiaplustj.info/news/life/travels/20190116/komturizma-tadjikistan-posetili-svishe-1-mln-250-tis-inostrantsev>], 18 December, 2019.

³² 2002-2007 data taken from "Turkmenistan—kolichestvo pribyvshikh," *Knoema*, available at [<https://knoema.ru/atlas/Туркменистан/Количество-прибывших>], 19 December, 2019.

than within the framework of the Silk Road project. It is not accidental, since this platform is, in fact, the main source of tourists. Of the 5,346,219 foreigners who had entered Uzbekistan, which had attained the greatest success in promoting tourism, in 2018, 5,020,392 were CIS citizens.³³ Another important factor is the lack of language barriers due to the common historical past.

Among the most significant measures is the agreement signed on 30 May, 2012 in Ashgabat on the establishment of the Council on Tourism of the CIS member states.³⁴ It was slated to be formed from among the leaders of the relevant CIS member states' structures, which sought to implement the Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Tourism dated 23 December, 1993. Guided by the CIS Charter, the Tourism Council was entrusted with the responsibility of coordinating teamwork in priority areas and cooperation in the tourism sphere, proposing solutions to specific problems, expanding and strengthening international tourism relations between the CIS countries and the global community, and assisting in the development and implementation of national programs, including the training of scientific and teaching personnel, exchange and professional development of tourism sphere professionals, aiding in attracting investments for the purpose of improving tourism infrastructure and quality service based on international standards. On 4 July, 2014, Kazakhstan acceded to this agreement.

Certain progress has also been observed at the intergovernmental level. On 8 June, 2000 in Astana (now Nur-Sultan), the governments of the Central Asian republics signed an agreement on cooperation in the development of health resorts, health and tourism institutions and organizations. On 25 October, 2013 in Minsk, the heads of the CIS countries proposed the development of a unified Strategy for the development of cooperation in the field of tourism up to 2020,³⁵ and 2014 in the CIS was declared the Year of Tourism.³⁶ These initiatives assumed the form of a legal document as early as on 20 November, 2013 in St. Petersburg at a meeting of the heads of governments of the CIS countries.

The Republic of Kazakhstan is also making certain efforts in this direction. Interstate agreements were signed in the framework of the development of tourism and joint measures in this sphere: with Uzbekistan on 10 January, 1994, with the Kyrgyz Republic on 18 November, 1994, with Turkmenistan on 27 November, 2007, and with Tajikistan only on 24 November, 2010. Kazakhstan has an agreement on mutual visa-free travel of its citizens with many CIS countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. In the Russian Federation, citizens of Kazakhstan fill out a migration card, which gives them the right to stay in the Russian Federation without registration at the place of sojourn for up to 30 days.

Turkmenistan remains one of the most impassable countries in terms of tourism. There is a visa regime even for the neighboring Kazakhstan, with the exception of citizens permanently residing in the Atyrau and Mangistau regions, who can enter, leave and temporarily stay in the Balkan Welayat of Turkmenistan without obtaining a visa for a maximum period of 5 days with a passport and an identity certificate of a citizen of Kazakhstan, confirming their residence in these areas.

One of the contradictory factors in the development of tourism in Central Asian countries is the Islamic factor. Throughout the period of this region's independence, Islamic rhetoric has been used

³³ See: "Kolichestvo inostrannykh turistov za 2018 g.," State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Tourism, available at [<https://uzbektourism.uz/ru/research>], 21 December, 2019.

³⁴ See: *Agreement on the Council on Tourism of the CIS Member States*, Ashgabat, 30 May, 2012, Lex.uz, available in Russian at [<http://www.lex.uz/docs/2630463>], 13 November, 2019.

³⁵ On 10 March, 2020, an additional meeting of the expert group was held at the CIS Executive Committee in Minsk to finalize and agree on a draft Strategy for the Development of Cooperation between the Member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States in the Field of Tourism for 2021-2030.

³⁶ See: *Panel Meeting of the Council of the Heads of CIS States. Vladimir Putin Took Part in the Panel Meeting of the Council of the Heads of CIS States in Minsk*, Kremlin.ru, 25 October, 2013, available in Russian at [<http://www.kremlin.ru/news/19489>], 26 November, 2019.

by various radical forces that aimed to create an Islamic state out of the regions adjacent to the largest cities of the Ferghana Valley: Andijan, Namangan, Osh, with a center in Ferghana, which, according to the plan, were to become part of the global Islamic caliphate. From the number of the most high-profile terrorist attacks that have occurred in the Central Asian region since independence, the number of attacks against foreign citizens takes the third place after attacks against law enforcement officers and religious figures.³⁷ On 22 November, 1994, an attack was conducted against British and South African citizens working at gold mines in Tajikistan; in August 1999, in Kyrgyzstan, militants took 4 Japanese geologists hostage; in September 2000, 4 Japanese climbers were captured in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan by militants of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan; explosions occurred on 30 July, 2005 in Tashkent (at the embassy of the United States and Israel). In August 2016, a suicide bomber rammed the gates of the Chinese Embassy in Bishkek in a car and set off an improvised explosive device. The Kyrgyz State Committee for National Security blamed the Uyghur terrorist group affiliated with the terrorist organization Jabhat al-Nusra for the terrorist attack. The most resonant was the attack on tourists in the Dangara district of Tajikistan, where 2018 was declared the Year of Tourism. On 29 July, 2018, four out of seven foreign tourists—citizens of the United States, the Netherlands, France, Switzerland and Germany were brutally killed. After running them over, the driver and passengers (aged 18 to 21 years) finished off the victims with firearms and cold weapons. On the very next day, some of the attackers were liquidated in the village of Osmondara, and two more were detained later.³⁸ The Islamic State terrorist group claimed responsibility for the attack, and the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan (IRPT), which was banned in the country, was directly responsible for carrying out the terrorist attack.

Due to the awareness of the genuine threat of terrorism and extremism for tourism, various state programs have been adopted in the Central Asian republics to counter this evil. For instance, the State Program for 2018-2022 that was approved in Kazakhstan in 2018 focused on countering violent manifestations of an extremist nature.³⁹

At the same time, the Islamic factor has a positive context. The Central Asian republics remain in the focus of attention of international Islamic organizations, which also cooperate in developing the tourism sector of the economy. At the 37th meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the OIC member countries, held in Dushanbe on 18-20 May, 2010, with the aim of developing and strengthening the potential of Muslim states, an agreement was reached on investments by Islamic Development Bank into the tourism industry, among other things. As early as on 27 October, 2014, the parties resumed the elaboration of a joint Plan of Action of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation with Central Asian Countries,⁴⁰ designed to implement this project. In his statement, the President of Tajikistan noted “Central Asia has a great potential for transforming into a transit region through access to ports and seas, but they have not yet been fully utilized.”⁴¹

Certain integration and modernization processes are also underway in the interfaith relations sphere in the context of the joint implementation of the Great Silk Road project. For instance, on

³⁷ See: R.D. Kulbarakov, “Problemy terrorizma v Tsentralnoi Azii,” International practical conference “Terrorism: Problems of Counteracting,” available at [<http://conference.antiterror.rsb.kz/index.php/doklads/36—kylbarakov>], 11 October, 2019.

³⁸ See: “Ubiystvo turistov i nichtozhenie prestupnikov. Chto proizoshlo v Tadjhikistane,” Sputnik.Kyrgyzstan, 30 July, 2018, available at [<https://ru.sputnik.kg/incidents/20180730/1040424919/tadjhikistan—ubijstvo—turisty—terakt.html>], 28 October, 2019.

³⁹ See: V. Mel, “Zona povyshennogo vnimaniia,” *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 12 December, 2018, available at [<https://www.kazpravda.kz/fresh/view/zona—povishennogo—vnimaniya1>], 23 October, 2019.

⁴⁰ See: *Address at the First Investment Forum in the Context of the Action Plan of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation for the Countries of Central Asia*, Official website of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, 27 October, 2014, available in Russian at [<http://www.president.tj/ru/node/7783#muminobod>], 17 October, 2019.

⁴¹ Ibidem.

25-26 May, 2018, during his official visit to Uzbekistan the Chairman of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan Serikbay kazy Oraz signed a document declaring a general fatwa regarding religious holidays of the two countries. "The parties are deemed obligated to celebrate religious holidays (Oraza, Kurban Ait, etc.) according to the Hijra, as well as to make general decisions, fatwas on contemporary pressing religious issues,"⁴² states the text of the Memorandum of Mutual Cooperation and Interaction. In September 2018, the Muftis of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan signed an agreement on close cooperation and sharing of experience in the dissemination of Islamic values, including the Hanafi madhhab, as well as in organizing pilgrimages.

Earlier, in July 2018, the "Muslim-tour" travel agency began its activities at the foundation of the Office of Muslims of Uzbekistan, which named the organization of travel for local and foreign citizens to holy places for pilgrimage and creating favorable conditions for pilgrims and increasing the authority of Uzbekistan in the Muslim world among its primary tasks.⁴³ The leadership of the republics emphasizes pilgrimage tourism as part of the Silk Road project. It stipulates for the creation of the tourism cluster in the South Kazakhstan region, one of the sacred sites for the followers of Naqshbandi. This project stipulates for the introduction of the single-entry Silk Visa, the Central Asian counterpart of the European Schengen, which will allow citizens of the two countries and foreigners to visit the major tourist attractions of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

The largest number of famous Muslim shrines in these republics have been preserved and are functioning today, thus, it is no coincidence that they are, first and foremost, the centers of pilgrimage and historical and cultural educational tourism. In Kazakhstan, these include the mausoleums of Hajj Ahmad Yasavi (Sufi order Yasaviyya) and Arystan-baba, Beket-ata and Shopan-ata, Karaman-ata, Ukasha-ata and many other pilgrimage sites. In Uzbekistan, there is a memorial complex of Bakhautdin Naqshbandi, Sheikh of the Sufi "Naqshbandiya" order, one of the most famous Sufi brotherhoods. Over 16 ziyarats, where famous Sufi sheikhs and Muslim theologians are buried, are located in Uzbekistan. Mosque tourism, or visits to religious buildings for religious and educational purposes, is also gaining popularity. In July 2018, the central mosque Nur Astana (Kazakhstan) was included in the international list of the top tourist sites. According to this mosque's naib-imam, Marat Bektazinov, the majority of visitors to the mosques of the capital are foreigners: "...Muslim tourists from Europe, Arab countries, Malaysia, Indonesia." He noted that, in preparation for the EXPO-2017 exhibition, mosque employees had even studied foreign languages, and "a year earlier, at the initiative of the chief imam of Astana, Nauryzbay kazy Taganuly, the imams studied English. In addition, many imams studied Arabic," said Bektazinov in an interview.⁴⁴ The list of Kazakhstan sites also includes the mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, Big Almaty Lake, Charyn Gorge and Tamgaly. The idea of creating this list was supported on 7 November, 2017 at the 2nd meeting of the Eurasian Council on Culture, Science and Education, held in the city of Antalya. At that point, a Convention on "the identification of objects of tourist interest for the sustainable development of associations, nations and peoples" was adopted.⁴⁵

⁴² "DUMK: Vynesena obshchaia fetva po aktualnomu religioznomu voprosu," Official website of the Spiritual Directorate of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 26 March, 2018, available at [<https://www.muftyat.kz/ru/news/13499>], 4 October, 2019.

⁴³ See: "Pristupila k rabote turisticheckaia firma pri Upravlenii musulman Uzbekistana," Muslim.uz, 3 July, 2018, available at [<http://muslim.uz/index.php/rus/novosti—2018/item/9190—pristupila—k—rabote—turisticheskaya—firma—pri—upravlenii—musulman—uzbekistana>], 25 October, 2019.

⁴⁴ "Mecheti Astany privlekaiut vse bolshe turistov," Official website of the Spiritual Administration of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 13 November, 2017, available at [<https://www.muftyat.kz/ru/news/12337>], 16 October, 2019.

⁴⁵ "Mechet voshla v spisok luchshikh turisticheckikh mest mira," Official website of the Spiritual Administration of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 13 July, 2018, available at [<https://www.muftyat.kz/ru/news/14557>] 16 October, 2019.

Conclusion

It has been established that tourism is a business sector that does not tolerate restrictions, prohibitions, non-transparency or authoritarianism. As for the interim and principal results of the implementation of the Great Silk Road project, both display certain notable trends towards extensive liberalization in the Central Asian republics. The interim results include the establishment of a more democratic and liberal regulatory and institutional framework and government programs for the development of the tourism sector of the economy. In addition, it entails the creation of a service network that provides for the existence of both state and non-state economic entities, improved staffing, and a reduction of certain prohibitive measures, including some sites with restricted access or strict regulation of photo and video shooting, the development of legislation to safeguard security in the tourist sphere, etc.

Today, all of these interim results clearly outline the contours of more significant outcomes, which everyone involved in the project must bear in mind. Besides the above-mentioned sustainable phased development of the regional economy and ensuring security in Central Asia, they include the improvement of investment attractiveness of the entire region, establishment of a more open economy through the liberalization of fiscal policy and visa regime, the development of civil society institutions in individual republics, and the strengthening of the interaction between the spiritual administrations of the Central Asian republics, in regard to pilgrimage and religious tourism, among other things. The latter provides hope for a slight decrease in the degree of radicalization and confrontation among the residents of this region, which has not yet pacified, but is very important for the whole world.

COMPREHENSION OF CHINA'S BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE AND ITS EFFECT ON UZBEKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The paper primarily aims to reveal the processes behind the establishment of the diplomacy of the Belt and Road Initiative and its place in the foreign policy of the Central Asian countries, including Uzbekistan, its achievements and present problems. This paper is the result of a study of domestic and foreign literature, political

views and the impact of this international initiative on the socio-political, economic and cultural development of the region. It demonstrates the importance of Belt and Road diplomacy for the foreign policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan using the historicism and comparative analysis methods, and an interdisciplinary approach. A retrospective analysis of the stages of the establishment of Belt and Road diplomacy, its place and

role in the development of Central Asian countries in the context of recent history and international relations is done. The study also reveals the dynamics, state and existing problems of the relations between Uzbekistan and both Central Asian and other countries within the framework of the Belt and Road concept, and issues of cooperation in the political, economic and cultural sectors.

KEYWORDS: *Central Asia, Uzbekistan, Belt and Road initiative, regional initiatives, political economic and cultural cooperation.*

Introduction

Central Asian countries are actively striving to integrate into the modern international system. Characteristics of the geopolitical position and environmental conditions of Central Asia demonstrate the importance of the region in international relations. Uzbekistan plays a key role in increasing the effectiveness of Central Asia's economic integration into the global geopolitical space. It is essential for Uzbekistan to take its rightful place in world politics and economy, ensure its own security and sustainable development and expand foreign economic ties, including attracting foreign investments.

In this context, the Strategy for the Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017-2021, initiated by the country's president, is of paramount importance. It places special emphasis on the issues of "strengthening the independence and sovereignty of the state, creating a belt of security, stability and good neighborliness around Uzbekistan and consolidating the country's international image."¹

Several platforms and dialog formats have emerged and continue to show annual improvement in Central Asia's international relations system. In particular, the existing bilateral and multilateral dialog formats, i.e., Central Asia + Japan, Central Asia + Korea, C + 5, the European Union and Central Asia, Central Asia + Russia, are quite intense. However, the Belt and Road megaproject, initiated by China, also maintains an active presence in the economic and cultural life of the region. It is designed to promote the economic and diplomatic integration of China with 65 countries of Europe, East, South, South-east and Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. The Belt and Road project appeals to the countries of Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Africa to coordinate diplomatic efforts, standardize and combine trading platforms, integrate the financial sector and develop international cultural and educational programs. It is important to note that the Belt and Road program will favor the interests of the countries within its geopolitical space, in the absence of any political conflict or confrontation.

As one of the active initiators of the Belt and Road project, Uzbekistan is committed to regional and global integration processes, a mutually beneficial economic space, and the advance in modern international relations. It is possible to study and apply the experience of foreign policy of the leading developed countries through the prism of the public Silk Road diplomacy. This fact can be used in the national interests of Uzbekistan in its foreign policy. In this sense, the study and comprehensive analy-

¹ *Sobraniye Zakonodatelstva Respubliki Uzbekistan*, No. 6, 13 February, 2017.

sis of the Silk Road diplomacy is one of the most crucial and most pressing issues. A scientific analysis of the Silk Road diplomacy will help determine the place and role of Uzbekistan in the global world and in the region, find ways to further strengthen it, and develop new relevant development concepts.

In this regard, the purpose of this paper is to reveal the essence of Silk Road diplomacy from the modern international relations perspective and the significance of this mega-concept for the countries of Central Asia, including Uzbekistan, as well as to demonstrate the country's initiatives in the framework of this project, its achievements and problems in the foreign policy sphere. The paper highlights Uzbekistan's foreign policy, political, economic, transport and cultural relations in the context of the Belt and Road mega-concept.

Historic Approach to New Silk Road Megaproject

The idea of the Belt and Road project was officially proposed on 7 September, 2013 in a speech delivered by President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping at the Nazarbayev University in Astana (Nur-Sultan).² At the same time, the Belt and Road megaproject served as the foreign policy concept for the new Chinese leader. A month later, the Chinese leader first proposed the idea of building the Maritime Silk Road of the 21st century in his speech in the Indonesian parliament.³

China approached the launch of this major project on a global scale. In particular, it adopted a completely new concept of economic and cultural diplomacy, which reflects all the components of the Eastern tradition and encompasses Eurasia, Central Asia, Eastern and Western Europe, and Africa. This megaproject is inscribed in recent history as one of the large-scale global strategies of the 21st century.

The current Silk Road project covers 38.5% of the Earth's land area and 62.3% of the world's population. These countries produce 30.0% of the world's GDP and 24.0% of all consumer goods.⁴ In addition, this large geopolitical space contains 75% of the world's energy reserves.

The Silk Road Economic Belt exemplifies the long-term perspective of Eurasian infrastructure and economic cooperation and includes six international economic corridors:

1. New Eurasian Land Bridge Economic Corridor (NELBEC).
2. China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor (CMREC).
3. China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor (CCWAEC).
4. China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor (CICPEC).
5. Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIMEC).
6. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

These economic corridors aim to extend through the entire Eurasian space, however the economic potential of the countries within this trade space varies.

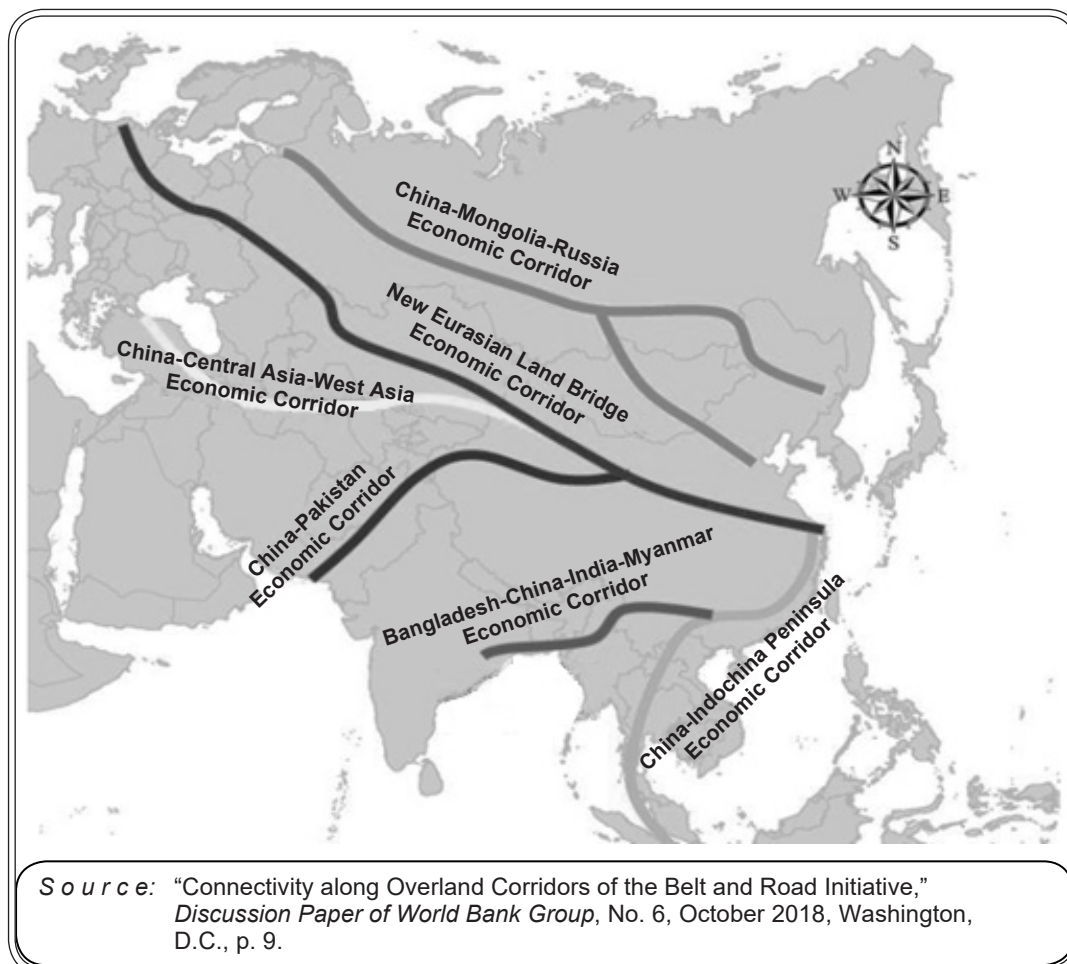
The Belt and Road project strategy includes the combination of two routes: land and sea. The land section starts from Xi'an and extends to Lanzhou and Urumqi, through Central Asia to the Middle East, and then continues on to Europe. The marine portion originates from Guangdong and passes through Hainan Island to the Indian Ocean. The two routes will merge in Venice.

² See: *Interpreting Belt and Road Initiative*, ed. by Qin Yucai, Zhou Guping, Luo Weidong, Zhejiang University, 2017, p. 12.

³ See: *Speech by Chinese President Xi Jinping to Indonesian Parliament*, Asian China Center, 3 October, 2013, available at [http://www.asean-china-center.org/english/2013-10/03/c_133062675.htm], 10 November, 2013.

⁴ See: H. Chin, W. He, *The Belt and Road Initiative: 65 Countries and Beyond*, Fung Business Intelligence Center, Hong Kong, May 2016, p. 2.

Six New Silk Road Economic Corridors



The New Silk Road spans approximately 6,500 km (the length of the historic Silk Road was 12,000 km), of which 4,000 km will be the main route from the Pacific coast of China to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Subsequently, the proposed route will go through Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey, and Europe is just one step away from there. Both the marine and the land sections will pass through the ancient trade route: from Guangzhou in China along the coasts of Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia to the Red Sea, and to Africa. The new transport corridor is designed to deliver goods from China to Europe in a short time. In order to implement this project, the Chinese government registered the Silk Road Fund in Beijing on 29 December, 2014.⁵ The total fund capital amounted to \$40 billion.⁶

⁵ [<http://www.silkroadfund.com.cn/enweb/23773/index.html>].

⁶ See: J. Rogers, "China's 'One Belt, One Road' Initiative Challenges Existing Project-Financing Banks for New Asian Development," 7 February, 2017, available at [<https://www.gfmag.com/magazine/february-2017/china-seeks-build-silk-road-project-finance>], 10 March, 2018.

However, a skeptical approach to the project is apparent in the foreign policy of some countries, as well as in specific scientific, statistical and analytical sources. In particular, the leading countries, such as the U.S., Japan, and India, believe that the project is not conceptually significant and does not possess sufficient resources and factors for successful self-realization. This can be explained by the existence of the American Silk Road Diplomacy, launched in 1999,⁷ the Japanese Silk Road Diplomacy, launched in 1997,⁸ and the economic and military competition between India and China in Asia. Consequently, each country's foreign policy prioritizes its national interests.

The modern Silk Road concept, proposed by China, can be considered the new model of international cooperation in the 1 + 65 (China and 65 five project participants). The project is facing many specific problems, including the conflict of national interests between states, the problem of interstate borders, inadequate infrastructure (roads and railways, ports, power plants, etc.), the absence of common customs tariffs and the lack of international legal standards.

In terms of SWOT Analysis, *the strengths* of the New Silk Road project initiated by China include macroeconomic stability of the major source of financing (China), global investment projects and availability of cheap labor, among *the weaknesses* are economic differentiation in certain member countries, low production quality in some of the participants, absence of proper planning for major long-term projects. There are also *opportunities*—expanding export opportunities, opening of new markets, attracting investments, implementation of industry, energy and trade megaprojects, the development of intercultural dialog, and strengthening of cultural relations, and *threats*—lack of support for the project from certain leading countries, political instability in a number of member and neighboring states (Iraq, Myanmar, Afghanistan, and Syria), the poverty in some of the countries and the lack of participation of large international financial organizations.

Some countries, including Iran, support China's Belt and Road initiative, but this does not, however, mean that the Iranian side is abandoning its political and economic ambitions, since the interests of Iran and China may not always coincide in the future. Iran is, in fact, China's competitor in the Central Asian region in the political, commercial and economic spheres. In addition, Iran is strengthening its position and prestige in the international arena.

On the other hand, China has managed to successfully implement a number of economic projects in a relatively short period of time, "bypassing" its partners' political considerations. These projects include the establishment of transport communications in Central Asia and the development of social and intercultural ties. There is no reason to believe that the situation will be somehow different with the New Silk Road projects.

The Belt and Road Initiative—A New Economic Platform

The New Silk Road is primarily an economic project. Its main goals are to promote mutually beneficial economic development and trade relations.

Central Asian countries need foreign investments to create major economic infrastructure facilities, including railways, highways, logistics centers and free economic areas. Therefore, it is advisable to attract capital from large foreign countries to the Belt and Road project. In terms of economic integration, China, Russia and Turkey are the most acceptable candidates among the major Central Asian economic players. Uzbekistan is making an active effort to participate in this global initiative's economic projects.

⁷ See: M. Rakhimov, "Complex Regionalism in Central Asia: Local, Regional, and Global Factors," *Cambridge Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 19 December, 2018, available at [<https://doi.org/10.22261/CJES.J6Y3O7>], 13 January, 2019.

⁸ See: *Japan's Silk Road Diplomacy Paving the Road Ahead*, ed. by Ch. Len, U. Tomohiko, H. Tetsuya, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Singapore, 2008, p. 206.

Filippo Costa Buranelli, a researcher at the University of St. Andrews, examines the Belt and Road initiative and the mutual interests of Uzbekistan and China from both countries' perspectives. According to him, China should engage Uzbekistan, since it is a "geographical and regional link in Central Asia." From Uzbekistan's perspective, the Belt and Road initiative will facilitate access to the Persian Gulf and expand trade and commercial routes.⁹

Reiner Michael Preiss, a Singapore-based asset portfolio management strategist, published an article in Forbes calling Uzbekistan a hidden gem in China's New Silk Road project. From his point of view, Uzbekistan is also "a springboard to the wider Central Asia region as it shares borders with Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Afghanistan. The country's strategic location makes it a key link in China's Belt and Road initiative."¹⁰ Uzbekistan is committed to developing mutually beneficial trade and economic relations with all member countries within the framework of this global project. Attracting new investors and capital, creating a favorable and competitive economic environment and implementing joint foreign projects are the priority tasks of Uzbekistan's new government. The new Silk Road project will create a constructive economic platform for Uzbekistan. The Belt and Road project will help Uzbekistan diversify its direct investment sources and expand access to regional markets through new transport corridors.

China is Uzbekistan's important strategic and reliable partner. Due to historical, geographical and geopolitical proximity, mutual political trust and dynamic economic relations, a solid foundation has been laid for the relations between the two countries. A special role in developing the Uzbek-Chinese relations and further expanding the mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries is played by cooperation within the U.N. and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Uzbekistan and China have established extensive cooperation in the political, trade, economic, credit, financial, cultural and humanitarian spheres. The interaction between Uzbekistan and China is widely recognized by the international community, since agreements based on mutual trust and friendship between the two states testify to the consistently increasing cooperation potential. In view of the impressive size of the economy and geographical proximity, China is one of the three key trading partners for almost every regional state and is one of the largest investors. Between 1992 and 2016, the total annual turnover of China with five Central Asian countries (Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan) increased 60 times.¹¹

In terms of its economic potential, Uzbekistan has crucial strategic importance in establishing the Silk Road Economic Corridor,¹² since this megaproject will give an impetus to the expansion and consolidation of Uzbekistan's position among the regional states and more advanced neighboring countries and even the world market. According to Yang Bo, deputy director of the Center for the Study of Central Asian Countries at Shanghai University of International Studies, "Central Asia is an important cooperation region. It connects China with Europe, the Middle East and South Asia. Uzbekistan is located in the heart of the region. And the Great Silk Road used to traverse your country."¹³

⁹ See: F. Costa Buranelli, "One Belt, One Road and Central Asia: Challenges and Opportunities," in: *The Belt & Road Initiative in the Global Arena: Chinese and European Perspectives*, Springer, Singapore, 2017, pp. 207-230.

¹⁰ R.M. Preiss, "Uzbekistan is the Hidden Gem in China's New Silk Road," 9 September, 2019, available at [<https://www.forbes.com/sites/rainermichaelpreiss/2019/09/09/uzbekistan-is-the-hidden-gem-in-chinas-new-silk-road/#2ec1c0273bd5>], 19 September, 2019.

¹¹ See: "China is Ready to be More Open for the Implementation of the New Project 'The New Silk Road' and to Actively Provide Financial Support for the High-Level Initiatives of the 21st Century," 6 May, 2019, available at [<https://uzanalytics.com/xalqaromunosabat/4539/>], 25 May, 2019 (in Uzbek).

¹² See: R. Koparkar, "25 Years of Uzbekistan-China Relations: Enhanced Economic Engagements Marked by Political Understanding," Vivekananda International Foundation, 16 February, 2017, available at [<http://www.vifindia.org/article/2017/february/16/25-years-of-uzbekistan-china-relations-enhanced-economic-engagements-marked-by-political-understanding>], 8 March, 2018.

¹³ "Belt and Road Initiative—A New Model of International Cooperation," *Siyosat*, 15 May, 2018, available at [<http://xs.uz/uzkr/post/bir-makon-bir-jol-khalqaro-hamkorlikning-yangi-modeli>], 29 May, 2018 (in Uzbek).

Uzbekistan was one of the first to support the initiative of the Chinese New Silk Road project. The republic is interested in multilateral cooperation with China in the framework of the concept of Belt and Road, since China has huge global economic potential. In addition, China held a leading position in international economic relations and Uzbekistan's foreign trade during the two subsequent years (2017-2018).¹⁴ The ancient city of Samarkand is named the industrial and innovative center of the Great Silk Road by the Chinese newspaper *Renmin Ribao*. And Tashkent, Uzbekistan's capital, is recognized as an industrial hub due to its high potential in the field of transport communications, production and science. Another major Chinese publication, *The Global Times*, had published a special page that contains information on Central Asian cities along the Silk Road. It shows photographs of Registan Square and photo reports from industrial enterprises created in collaboration with Chinese entrepreneurs in the Jizzakh Special Industrial Zone.

Table 1

Indicators of Trade between Uzbekistan and China, 2017-2018

	Foreign Trade Turnover	Exports to Uzbekistan	Imports from Uzbekistan	Share of Trade with China in Foreign Trade Turnover, %	Growth Rates of Foreign Trade Turnover, %
2017	3,335.8	1,523.3	1,812.5	18.8	33.9
2018	4,429.0	1,937.2	2,491.8	19.2	129.3

Source: Prepared using data of the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan is implementing a number of major economic projects with the participation of Chinese capital. At the same time, the volume of production of export-oriented goods by Uzbek-Chinese joint ventures has increased in recent years. In addition, it is important to note that political factors have not weighed in the course of almost 30 years of economic relations between Uzbekistan and China, which contributed to dynamic development of bilateral economic relations.

Its location in the economic and cultural center of Central Asia allows Uzbekistan to actively participate in the Belt and Road project and achieve excellent results in international economic relations and world trade. This in turn will allow cities like Tashkent, Samarkand, Ferghana and Bukhara to become major Central Asian economic and logistics centers.

Integration of Central Asia into the International Transport and Communication System within the Framework of the New Silk Road

China is actively involved in infrastructure projects in Central Asia. In particular, the Chinese government assisted in the construction of the Angren-Pap railway. The Angren-Pap railway, which

¹⁴ See: "Vneshnetorgovyi oborot Uzbekistana v ianvare-iiule sostavil \$17,8 mlrd," *Gazeta.uz*, 13 August, 2018, available at [<https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2018/08/13/foreign-trade/>], 20 August, 2018.

spans 123.1 km, will contribute to the creation of an integrated railway system in Uzbekistan, the establishment of the China-Central Asia-Europe international transit corridor and the continued development of the Ferghana Valley.¹⁵ The ambitious project, worth about \$1,635 million, engaged over 1,000 specialists from the Chinese company China Railway Tunnel Group, over 3,000 Uzbek railway workers, and over 300 electrical engineers. The opening of the Angren-Pap electrical railway line allows for rail and freight transportation between the Ferghana Valley region and other regions of the country. At the same time, the China-Central Asia-Europe route will become the key link in the new international transit railway corridor.¹⁶

The Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan-China rail corridor is the most important component of the modern Silk Road project. The entire China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway project aims to connect China with Eastern Europe through Central Asia, then through Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey. If the project is successfully implemented, Uzbekistan will become a key transit country in the region.

Uzbekistan has consistently sustained the work on the continued development of transport communications in the region. Namely, direct air, rail and road links with Tajikistan were restored, and a new Turkmenabad-Forob bridge across the Amu Darya was put into operation. Also, a number of intergovernmental agreements on the construction of the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan-China railway were signed. In addition, a forum on international cooperation was held in Beijing as part of the Belt and Road strategy, which aimed to extend the Hairaton-Mazar-i-Sharif railway to Herat on 14 May, 2017. The forum was attended by state and government heads of about 30 countries, as well as representatives of almost 130 countries. It was also attended by the U.N. Secretary General, the President of the World Bank, and representatives of other reputable international organizations. The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan attended the ceremony. At the forum, he put forward a number of specific proposals aimed at the practical implementation of the Chinese idea. In particular, Shavkat Mirziyoyev emphasized the importance of launching the construction of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway quickly.¹⁷ According to him, the Great Silk Road contributed to the development of trade relations, as well as to the exchange of information between states and regions, the spread of new product and crop types, the mutual enrichment of various cultures, thereby acting as an important means of inter-civilizational dialog. “The Belt and Road project, designed to revive this route, plays an important role in further expanding economic cooperation, creating even more favorable conditions for trade and investment, developing transport and communication infrastructure and partnership potential in agriculture, tourism, education and culture. It provides for the effective use of the developed countries’ capabilities, their assistance to developing countries with growing economies,”¹⁸ the President of Uzbekistan emphasized. As noted by Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the key issue is the development of a comprehensive action program for cooperation in establishing transport and logistics routes connecting Central Asia with the markets of South and Southeast Asia and European countries through China and Russia.

¹⁵ See: M. Rakhimov, “The Pap-Angren Railway and its Geoeconomic Implications for Central Asia,” *The Central Asia Caucasus Analyst*, 19 April, 2016, available at [<https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13354-the-pap-angren-railway-and-its-geoeconomic-implications-for-central-asia.html>], 28 April, 2017.

¹⁶ See: “Elektrifitsirovannaia zheleznaia doroga Angren-Pap—vysokiy rezultat strategicheskogo partnerstva,” Uzbekistan’s National Information Agency, 26 June, 2016, available at [<http://uza.uz/ru/politics/elektrifitsirovannaya-zheleznaya-doroga-angren-pap-vysokiy-r-23-06-2016>], 26 July, 2016.

¹⁷ See: “Uzbekistan-Kitay: Vysokiye rezultaty sotrudnichestva, osnovannogo na vzaimnom doverii i prochnoy družbe,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 16 May, 2017, available at [<https://mfa.uz/ru/press/news/2017/05/11006/>], 27 May, 2017.

¹⁸ “Shavkat Mirziyoyev vystupil na mezhdunarodnom forume ‘Odin poias, odin put’,” Uzbekistan’s National Information Agency, 15 May, 2017, available at [<http://uza.uz/ru/politics/shavkat-mirziyeev-vystupil-na-mezhdunarodnom-forume-odin-poya-15-05-2017>], 20 May, 2017.

Since 2017, Uzbekistan's transport system, which complies with international recommendations, has been developing in a stable manner. However, in order to further develop the transport system, it is necessary to foster the investment climate through state-owned private partnership. This will help to develop infrastructure along international transport corridors in the railway industry, create and expand a network of logistics centers and improve and implement technologies and tariffs for transit transportation with neighboring countries.

In June 2018, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on Strengthening Regional and International Cooperation to Ensure Peace, Stability and Sustainable Development in the Central Asian Region,¹⁹ initiated in a speech by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev to the U.N. General Assembly in September 2017. In Paragraph 12 of the resolution, a special place is set aside for the development of transport infrastructure and transit corridors in the Central Asian region, fostering the interaction between all modes of transport, partly through the opening of new roads, railways and air routes.

To this end, Uzbekistan has proposed a number of initiatives to promote sustainable transport systems in the region. In particular, an international conference Central Asia in the System of International Transport Corridors: Strategic Prospects and Unrealized Opportunities was held in Tashkent on the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, on 20 September, 2018. The event was attended by over 300 participants from 37 countries, including representatives of 25 international organizations, financial institutions and leading transport companies.

At the conference, Uzbekistan proposed a number of new initiatives.

- One of them involved the elaboration of a strategy for the development of Central Asian regional transport corridors with the assistance of experts from the World Bank, Asian and Islamic Development Banks, other international institutions and the adoption of a regional program for the sustainable development of the Central Asian transport system based on this strategy.
- The second entailed the creation of an integrated transport management system within the SCO.
- The third included the establishment of the Regional Council for Transport Communications of Central Asian countries, which must become a coordinating structure in solving the existing problems in the transport and logistics sphere.
- The fourth was related to the joint development of transport communications and infrastructure in order to increase the region's tourist attractiveness. This would be facilitated by the articulation of the Concept for the Development of Tourist Hubs in Central Asia jointly with the World Tourism Organization.

International transport integration in Central Asia has been gaining momentum in the first two decades of the 21st century, and several international transport routes running through Central Asia were created in the process. The fact that these roads are part of the revival of the Silk Road confirms the project's global significance. The large-scale transport projects emerging in the Central Asian region as part of the Silk Road restoration intensified in 2017-2018. This phenomenon was facilitated by new transformations and modernization processes in the Central Asian region, as well as the establishment of active good-neighborly relations. In particular, the Eurasia Transport Corridor connecting China and Western Europe is slated to be built by 2023. The route will pass from Beijing

¹⁹ See: "General Assembly Adopts Resolution on Strengthening Cooperation in Central Asia," U.N. HQ, New York, 22 June, 2018, available at [<https://unrcca.unmissions.org/general-assembly-adopts-resolution-strengthening-cooperation-central-asia>].

through Nur-Sultan, Moscow and Minsk to Berlin. By 2050, approximately 37 million passengers are expected to be transported along this route.

In addition, in 2016, the China-Kazakhstan section of the Western Europe-Western China international corridor, which became the shortest route to Europe, began to function. The corridor will extend through St. Petersburg-Moscow-Orenburg-Aktobe-Almaty-Khorgos. The megaproject's full-fledged launch is expected no earlier than 2030.

In 2017, representatives of Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey signed an agreement on the establishment of the Lapis Lazuli transport corridor. Rail and road routes are slated to connect the city of Turgundi (Afghanistan) with Ashgabad and the Turkmenbashi port on the Caspian Sea.²⁰ Subsequently, the corridor will pass through the Caspian Sea to Baku, then through Tbilisi to Ankara, branching out to Poti and Batumi, and then from Ankara to Istanbul and Kars in Turkey with further access to the European transport system. In May 2018, the first train was launched along the China-Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran route.

China's Belt and Road Initiative is an important project that aims to establish transport links between China and Europe as part of the new East-West corridor. A key link in the transport corridor is the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway.²¹ This project will play a significant role in establishing regular transportation from Turkey to Central Asia,²² China and Iran. Uzbekistan is interested in participating in this project. According to international experts, this route should play a special role in connecting Uzbekistan with Europe.²³ In light of the importance of the above-mentioned facts, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan On Measures to Improve Transport Infrastructure and Diversify Foreign Trade Directions for the Carriage of Goods for 2018-2022²⁴ was adopted, comprising measures to carry out pilot transit transport of foreign trade goods along the Baku-Tbilisi-Akhalkalaki-Kars route.

According to some reports, the launch of the North-South Corridor project, which will connect St. Petersburg with the Iranian ports of Bandar Abbas and Chahbahar, opens up the way to the Indian port of Mumbai.²⁵ It is important for Central Asia that the transport corridor will simplify cargo transportation through Iran to the Persian Gulf countries. The corridor will allow for an annual throughput of 3-5 million tons of cargo. This transport corridor is of particular importance for Uzbekistan. In view of this, the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev confirmed Uzbekistan's support of the construction of the Mazar-i-Sharif-Herat and China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway lines, as well as the development of Central Asia-Persian Gulf, North-South and East-West trans-regional corridors at the SCO summit in Qingdao in June 2018.²⁶ In our opinion, the development of the international

²⁰ See: "Turkmenistan i Afganistan reanimiruyut zheleznuiu dorogu Serkhatabat-Turgundi," Turkmenportal, 23 November, 2017, available at [<https://turkmenportal.com/blog/12616/turkmenistan-i-afganistan-reanimiruyut-zheleznuyu-dorogu-serhatabat-turgundi>], 23 January, 2018.

²¹ See: E.M. Hajizade, "Great Silk Road and the 'Baku-Tbilisi-Kars' Project," *Scientific Journal of Academic Research Conference Newsletter*, Tbilisi, Georgia, 2015, September Issue, pp. 1-17.

²² See: F. Shahbazov, "Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway to Become Central Asia's Gateway to Europe," The Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program Joint Center, 7 December, 2017, available at [<https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13486-baku-tbilisi-kars-railway-to-become-central-asias-gateway-to-europe.html>], 7 January, 2018.

²³ See: F. Shahbazov, "Will the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway Become Uzbekistan's New Connection to Europe?" *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 14, Issue 130, 16 October, 2017, available at [<https://jamestown.org/program/will-baku-tbilisi-kars-railway-become-uzbekistans-new-connection-europe/>], 10 February, 2018.

²⁴ See: *National Database of Uzbekistan's Legislation*, 4.12.2017, No. 07/17/3422/0349, 31 July, 2018, No. 06/18/5483/1594.

²⁵ See: N. Protsenko, "The North-South Corridor is a Multimodal Route for Transportation of Passengers and Cargo from Russia's St. Petersburg to the Mumbai Port," A "Window" to the Indian Ocean, 20 February, 2016, available at [https://www.rbth.com/economics/cooperation/2016/02/20/a-window-to-the-indian-ocean_569499], 20 March, 2016.

²⁶ See: "Tsentralnaia Aziia v sisteme mezhdunarodnykh transportnykh koridorov: vzgliad iz Uzbekistana," Uzbekistan's National Information Agency, 11 August, 2018, available in Russian at [<http://uza.uz/ru/society/tsentralnaya-aziya-v-sisteme-mezhdunarodnykh-transportnykh-k-11-08-2018>], 16 August, 2018.

transport system of Uzbekistan should be based on further improvement of political relations not only with the regional states, but also with their extra-regional counterparts. Due to this, Uzbekistan needs to improve its regulatory framework in accordance with the international transport and logistics infrastructure.

Uzbekistan: Sustainable Tourism along the New Silk Road

Tourism is one of the dynamically developing sectors of the world economy. International tourism plays an important role in ensuring sustainable development, the distribution of economic resources, creation of new jobs and fostering international cultural relations.

Uzbekistan is a country with great opportunities and potential for the development of tourism. There are over 7,000 sites of historical, architectural and archeological value in Uzbekistan. Of these, 545 are architectural, 575 historical, 1,457 are related to art, and 5,500—to archeology. 209 of them are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

In recent years, a great deal of attention has been paid to the development of the tourism industry in the republic. Changes within the country are also evident in the tourism industry. The country opened up, accelerated the attraction of investments in this sphere. In particular, a system for registering and issuing electronic entry visas has been introduced in 2018. At the same time, the procedure for obtaining tourist visas for citizens of over 50 countries has been simplified. Moreover, E-MEHMON, an electronic system for the temporary registration of foreign tourists has been created and visa-free entry has been introduced for transit air passengers from 101 countries. Starting on 1 January, 2020, a decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan established a visa-free regime for citizens of the People's Republic of China entering Uzbekistan. In order to further increase the flow of tourists, and with regard to their requests, the number of hotels was increased and favorable conditions were created for the development of transport infrastructure as part of the concept of “noble tourism” and “safe tourism.” Due to the introduction of new rules and the liberalization of the tourist service market, the number of foreign guests has increased.

The number of foreign tourists in 2017 grew by 32.7%, with the actual number of tourists in excess of 2.69 million. In 2015, the number of tourist agencies was approximately 398, while by the end of 2018 their number had grown to 950. In 2018, about 5.3 million foreign tourists have visited the republic, which is almost twice as many as in 2017.²⁷ It should be noted that the changes in the tourism sector are associated with the neutrality of the country's foreign policy, which comprises a multi-vector system of constructive international relations. Uzbekistan's participation in the Belt and Road venture also plays an important role. Thanks to the work carried out under this project, the flow of business visitors to the country has increased. In addition, the number of “pilgrimage tourists”²⁸ from Belt and Road member countries has increased. Among other things, there is active cooperation between the countries of Central Asia on the creation of free tourist routes, as well as on the launch of a Silk Visa for the Central Asian region, an analogue of the Schengen visa of the EU countries.

²⁷ See: “Uzbekistan: Booming Tourism,” Uzanalytics, 10 January, 2019, available in Uzbek at [<https://uzanalytics.com/iqtisodi%D0%B5t/3795/>], 13 January, 2019.

²⁸ “New Voices from Uzbekistan,” ed. by M. Laruelle, Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies, The George Washington University, 2019, p. 31.

Conclusion

Our study confirmed the active participation of Uzbekistan in the Silk Road Economic Corridor project, which was initiated by China. It had manifested in the following aspects:

- As one of the largest historical projects of the 21st century, it will help to raise the multilateral relations of the Central Asian region with its neighbors to a new level.
- The project will allow the country to enter global markets and contribute to its economic integration with the world economy.
- The Silk Road Economic Corridor will be important and relevant in the formation and development of a sustainable transport system in Uzbekistan and Central Asia.
- The project, which unites 65 countries, will further strengthen economic, political and cultural ties between the countries.

Summing up the results of this study, we can state that the active participation of Uzbekistan in this strategic project due to its key geopolitical and geo-economic location will continue to contribute to the growth of its international prestige.

ENERGY POLICY

THE ENERGY FACTOR IN THE GEOPOLITICS OF CENTRAL ASIA IN THE POST-REFORM PERIOD

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A B S T R A C T

Following the disintegration of the U.S.S.R., the geopolitical importance of Central Asia has never waned down. Instead, it emerged as a grand chess-board for regional and extra-regional players. In the quest for energy security and diversification of supply sources by the energy consumers, the heartland region has witnessed a great new game in the scramble for resources, which many now call the New Great Game that aims not merely to control but to directly administer the energy resources of the region. This article examines

the nature of the great game that evolved in Central Asia in the epic quest for oil and energy of the region in the post-reform period after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The paper attempts to examine the intensity of the great powers' game in the region by analyzing trends and variability. It concludes that the intensifying discovery and excavation of oil wells and gas fields will put increasingly greater pressure on the great game, while the declining energy profile of the heartland states would inhibit the great powers' engagement in the region.

KEYWORDS: energy security, geopolitics, Central Asia, New Great Game, pipeline diplomacy.

Introduction

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are designated as former Soviet republics for the purposes of this study. The geopolitical salience of this energy-rich region located between Russia, China, South Asia, and the Middle East has never been questioned. It has indeed emerged as a global alternative energy source in the latest geological survey. The Central Asian states are blessed with huge hydrocarbon resource potential. Kazakhstan is the most energy-rich country in the region with rich reserves of oil and coal, significant uranium deposits and only a few gas fields. Turkmenistan ranks second in the heartland region in terms of energy reserves, with gas being the prevalent resource. Apart from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan also has a fair amount of gas reserves. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are the two countries with the most scarce oil and gas reserves. However, both of these small states produce a significant amount of hydroelectricity, which enables them to be net energy exporters. "With proven oil reserves estimated to range between 9 and 40 billion barrels, and natural gas reserves possibly exceeding 131 trillion cubic feet (tcf), Central Asia is, in fact, poised to become a major world supplier of energy, especially in the oil and gas sectors."¹ The opportunities afforded by the region for discovery, production, refining and transportation of large amounts of oil, gas and other energy resources attract close international interest. It remains in the global limelight due to its promising and still underdeveloped reserves of oil, gas, and coal, as well as uranium deposits. The region's energy potential is detailed by sector below.

a) Oil

Oil is the second most valuable resource after gas provided by Central Asia to the rest of the world. As of 2018, "the region's oil reserves are pegged at almost 3 percent (38.284 billion

¹ A. Patnaik, *Central Asia: Geopolitics, Security and Stability*, Routledge, New Delhi, 2016.

barrels) of the world oil reserves.”² Kazakhstan, with its production capacity of 2,147 thousand barrels per day, is the main producer of oil in the region. In addition, it has proven reserves of 31.2 thousand million barrels.³ According to the estimates of British Petroleum, Turkmenistan has proven oil reserves of roughly 0.6 thousand million barrels and a production capacity of 258 thousand barrels per day (2018). Uzbekistan has an estimated 0.6 thousand million barrels of proven oil, a production capacity of 54 thousand barrels per day and 171 discovered oil and natural gas fields.⁴ Unlike some of their Central Asian neighbors, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan produce only minor quantities of oil.

b) Gas

Central Asia is primarily recognized for its gas fields and enormous production capacity. One-tenth of the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) known gas reserves are located in this region. Turkmenistan is the leading gas producer in Central Asia, while Uzbekistan ranks second. Kazakhstan although has some significant gas deposits but it is predominantly known for oil reserves. According to the estimates of British Petroleum, “Turkmenistan has 17.5 tcm of proven reserves with a production capacity of 72.4 bcm; Uzbekistan is home to 1.1 tcm gas reserves and a production potential of 57.7 bcm; and Kazakhstan has 0.9 tcm of gas reserves and a production capacity of 12.4 bcm.”⁵

c) Coal

Kazakhstan is the biggest coal producer country in the region with an estimated 33,600 million tons of coal. Almost all of its coal fields are located in Karaganda, but there are certain deposits in other areas. Uzbekistan also has 1,900 million tons of coal to its credit as well.⁶ Kyrgyzstan also possesses substantial coal reserves, but the greatest drawbacks are related to its transportation to the market. In spite of all these factors, coal continues to be an important energy source in Central Asia.

d) Electricity

The Kyrgyz Republic has the largest hydro-electricity potential in the Central Asian region. Bishkek generates most of the electricity it requires at hydroelectric power stations.⁷ Unlike Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan heavily relies on thermal power stations fueled by natural gas. Tajikistan also produces a huge amount of electricity from hydropower sources.

e) Uranium

In Central Asia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan possess significant uranium deposits. They are the two important states in the region to have strategic uranium reserves. According to the estimates of the World Nuclear Association, Kazakhstan, with about 12 percent of world uranium resources, produces around 41 percent of world uranium, which makes the country the leading uranium producer in the world, surpassing Canada and Australia. In 2019, Kazakhstan has pro-

² “World Energy Outlook: Understanding Our Scenarios,” ENI, December 2018, available at [https://www.eni.com/en_IT/investors/global-energy-scenarios/world-energy-outlook.page].

³ See: “BP Statistical Review of World Energy,” British Petroleum, March 2018, available at [www.bp.com].

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ Ibidem.

⁶ Ibidem.

⁷ See: J.P. Dorian, “Central Asia: A Major Emerging Energy Player in the 21st Century,” *Energy Policy*, No. 34, 2006, p. 549.

duced about 22,800 tons of uranium.⁸ In addition, Uzbekistan has the second-largest uranium reserves in Central Asia after Kazakhstan, and its production capacity in 2018 equaled 2,404 tons of uranium. As of February 2020, Uzbekistan ranks as the seventh-largest uranium supplier of the world.⁹

The Caspian Sea Region

The Caspian Sea is the largest inland water body on earth that contains over 40 percent of the world's inland waters. It is surrounded by five littoral states, namely Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan. The Caspian Sea bed and its coast are home to at least four major basins—the Northern Caspian, Middle Caspian, Southern Caspian basins, and the Northern Ustyurt basin. It accounts for 7 percent of the total world gas production¹⁰ and 3.4 percent of the total global oil production.¹¹ The Caspian Sea region is one of the oldest oil-producing areas of the world and an increasingly important source of global energy production. EIA estimates that the greater Caspian Sea basin possesses a total of 48 billion barrels of oil and 292 trillion cubic feet of gas as both proven and probable reserves.¹² According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, “Most of these reserves are offshore or near the Caspian Sea coast, particularly near the northern coast. EIA estimates 41 percent of total Caspian crude oil and lease condensate (19.6 billion bbl) and 36 percent of natural gas (106 Tcf) exists in offshore fields. In general, the bulk of offshore oil reserves is in the northern part of the Caspian Sea, while the biggest quantity of offshore natural gas reserves is in the southern part of the Caspian Sea. An additional 35 percent of oil (16.6 billion bbl) and 45 percent of gas (130 Tcf) can be found onshore within 100 miles of the coast, particularly in Russia's North Caucasus region. The remaining 12 billion bbl of oil and 56 Tcf of natural gas are scattered farther onshore in the large Caspian Sea basins, mostly in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan.”¹³

In 1997, the U.S. government stepped in and announced that the Caspian Sea region possessed reserves of approximately 15.6 billion proven and 163 billion probable barrels of oil.¹⁴ However, the first credible study of the Caspian energy potential was conducted by the Scottish consulting company Wood Mackenzie in 1998. It has revealed that the combined proven oil and gas reserves of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan were 68 billion barrels in oil equivalent. 25.2 billion barrels out of this amount was oil, 65 percent of which belonged to Kazakhstan (16.43 bbl), and the rest to Azerbaijan (6.5 bbl), Turkmenistan (0.91 bbl), and Uzbekistan (1.34 bbl). Two further studies published in April 1998 by Rice University's Baker Institute and the International Institute of Strategic Studies of London confirmed Wood Mackenzie's figures. Even with this energy potential, Caspian is of great importance for energy-consuming countries.¹⁵

⁸ See: “Uranium and Nuclear Power in Kazakhstan”, World Nuclear Association, April 2020, available at: <https://www.world-nuclear.org/information-library/country-profiles/countries-g-n/kazakhstan.aspx>

⁹ See: “Uranium in Uzbekistan”, World Nuclear Association, February 2020, available at: <https://www.world-nuclear.org/information-library/country-profiles/countries-t-z/uzbekistan.aspx>

¹⁰ See: A. Patnaik, op. cit.; R.H. Dekmejian, H.H. Simonain, *Troubled Waters, The Geopolitics of the Caspian Region*, I. B. Tauris, London, 2001, p.28.

¹¹ See: “Caspian Sea”, U.S. Energy Information Administration, August 26, 2013, available at: https://www.eia.gov/international/analysis/regions-of-interest/Caspian_Sea.

¹² Ibidem.

¹³ Ibidem.

¹⁴ See: R.H. Dekmejian, H.H. Simonain, op. cit., p. 30.

¹⁵ Ibidem.

The Great Power Game in Central Asia

While there are many potential consumers of Central Asian energy, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Iran, and Turkey, there are few states that are capable of influencing Central Asian energy geopolitics at the global level. While Russia remains an influential power, any examination of Central Asian energy geopolitics must now also account for the influence of the West and the growing reach of China. India's slow progress also requires attention. Our investigation will begin with the West, as its entry into the region after the Soviet-era in many ways marked the beginning of Central Asian geopolitics, challenging Russia's historical influence.

I. The U.S.

The U.S. emerged from Cold War as an unchallenged global leader. Yet, in the immediate post-Cold War euphoria, it was not until the mid-1990s that the U.S. began to really focus on Central Asian energy (the energy resources of Central Asia and the Caspian Region). It was only after the U.S. Department of Energy report that estimated the potential of the Caspian Sea oil reserves at around 200 billion barrels, which is equivalent to that of Saudi Arabia, the United States started heeding attention to Central Asia and the Caspian Sea region.¹⁶

The U.S. is the world's largest energy consumer, which in 2015 required 19.4 million barrels of oil per day (mbl/d) and 21.9 trillion cubic feet of natural gas per year (tcf/y).¹⁷ Although the U.S. is also a huge oil and gas producer, it remains a net energy importer, domestically producing 12,704 tbl/d of oil in 2015 and 368.7 tcf/y of gas in 2016.¹⁸

The U.S. interest in Central Asian energy, however, is not primarily driven by the need for a new source of imports. The U.S. already has well-established ties with other suppliers, its top five import partners in 2016 being Canada, Saudi Arabia, Mexico, Venezuela, and Nigeria. Importing crude from Russia is the closest the U.S. comes to tapping the Central Asian energy market, and Russia only ranked as the 13th largest import partner of the U.S.¹⁹ While the U.S. does not need Central Asian energy to cover its domestic demands, it does have strategic geopolitical interests in the region's energy. The U.S. has an interest in preventing the Russian monopolization of energy resources that might allow price manipulation, similar to that conducted by OPEC in 1973. It also has an interest in keeping certain states (like Iran) from earning profits from Central Asian energy.

For these reasons, the U.S. has supported two different pipeline projects that transport oil from the Caspian basin. The first was the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) pipeline that runs from Kazakhstan, through southern Russia, and to the Novorossiysk seaport on the Black Sea. The second pipeline is known as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline (BTC), which was completed in 2005.²⁰ That pipeline originates on the Caucasus side of the Caspian Sea and traverses Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey to avoid Russian territory.

¹⁶ See: A. Patnaik, op. cit.

¹⁷ See: "Analysis Brief: The U.S", U.S. Energy Information Administration, February, 2015 available at [www.eia.doc.gov].

¹⁸ See: BP, 2016.

¹⁹ See: EIA, 2015

²⁰ Ibid., p. 35.

II. Russia

Because of Russia's geographical proximity to Central Asia and its historical ties to the region, the former is likely to remain a long-term major geopolitical player. Despite the new pipelines, such as the BTC and the Kazakh-China line, Russia continues to dominate export routes in its near abroad. Russia possesses the world's largest natural gas reserves and the world's eighth largest oil reserves.

Nevertheless, Central Asian energy is important because it allows Russia the opportunity to expand its economic gains in the energy market and enables it to control and administer the energy transit and transportation facilities. Access to Central Asian energy will provide Russia with profit from transit fees, allow it to sustain its energy exports to Europe, and even serve as the supplier for China's growing energy needs. By the same token, Russia stands to lose political and economic ground if foreign companies continue to encroach on the region. In the Caspian Sea basin, Western companies are already responsible for roughly 70 percent of oil production.²¹

The new pipeline routes beyond Russia's control are, therefore, the primary threats to its energy domination. The BTC pipeline is the greatest success that the West has had in creating an alternative route, a success that the EU would like to replicate with the Nabucco project. Now, after the Kazakh-Chinese pipeline had also been completed, Russia must realize that it does not have much time to act before other players secure greater access to the region.

III. China

China's economy has been growing rapidly and its transformation into a major global power is just a matter of time. Today, China is the most populated country and the second-largest economy in the world. It is, in fact, the fastest-growing trillion-dollar economy. With a GDP of \$14.14 trillion in 2019, it makes up 16.38% of the global economy and is the largest economy based on purchasing power parity (PPP), with a GDP (PPP) of \$27.31 trillion.²² Due to the size of China's economy and its remarkable growth, China's energy consumption has soared. By 2005, China had become the world's largest consumer of oil after the U.S. China is now the third-largest importer of oil after Japan. While China's natural gas demands (1,995 bcf) are nearly met by its domestic production of 1,138.0 bcf,²³ its need for oil imports is becoming critical.

To secure its energy sources and to diversify the supply side, China started to focus on overland pipeline routes from neighboring Russia and Central Asian states. China has opened a new oil pipeline with Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. According to CNPC, "A general agreement was signed between the Chinese and Turkmen governments on the construction of Turkmenistan-China gas pipeline and sales of Turkmen gas to China in April 2006. In July 2007, CNPC signed a production sharing contract and a gas sales & purchase agreement with the Turkmen State Agency for Management and Use of Hydrocarbon Resources and Turkmengaz State Corporation. The former provided for the exploration and development of gas fields on the right bank of the Amu Darya, and the latter stipulated the annual delivery of 30 bcm of gas from Turkmenistan to China for 30 years through the Central Asia-China Gas Pipeline. On 6 June, 2012, a cooperation agreement was signed with Turk-

²¹ See: D. Trenin, "Russia and Central Asia: Interests, Policies and Prospects," in: *Central Asia: Views from Washington, Moscow and Beijing*, ed. E. Rumer, D. Trenin, Zhao Huasheng, ME Sharpe, New York, pp. 106-108.

²² See: "The 5 largest Economies in the World and their Growth in 2020", Nasdaq, January 22, available at: <https://www.nasdaq.com/articles/the-5-largest-economies-in-the-world-and-their-growth-in-2020-2020-01-22>

²³ Ibidem.

mengaz State Corporation, to increase gas supply from Turkmenistan to China via the Central Asia-China Gas Pipeline. On 3 September, 2013, CNPC and Turkmengaz inked an additional 25 bcm/y natural gas sale&purchase agreement and an EPC contract on the Galkynysh gas field for 30 bcm/y gas production capacity building.”²⁴

Similarly, China has entered into an agreement with Kazakhstan for the exploration of gas and its transportation through pipeline networks to China. As per the CNPC accounts, “On 18 August, 2007, an agreement on the construction and operation of the Kazakhstan-China Gas Pipeline was signed by the Chinese and Kazakh governments. On 8 November 2007, CNPC and KazMunayGas signed the agreement on the construction and operation of the Kazakhstan-China Gas Pipeline. On 15 February, 2008, Asia Gas Pipeline LLP (AGP) was registered in Kazakhstan, which took charge of the construction and operation of the Kazakh section of Central Asia-China Gas Pipeline. On 26 September, 2011, CNPC and KazMunayGas signed an agreement On Basic Principles of the Design, Financing, Construction and Operation of Line C of the Kazakhstan-China Gas Pipeline.”²⁵

Methods

This study is based on secondary data extracted from World Development Indicators. The dynamics of FDI inflow and GDP growth rate have been calculated over a period of time to understand their trends and variability patterns. Furthermore, the study used the variation coefficient and compound annual growth rate indicator to examine the variation pattern in FDI inflow among the Central Asian countries over a period of 28 years.

Result and Discussion

In recent years, there has been a growing debate over the depletion of oil and other energy sources. It has been reiterated several times by the “oil peak” theory that Russia is producing at its peak and Saudi Arabia has rather limited additional short-term capacity. Due to commercial disputes, regional instability, civic unrest and political coups in the Persian Gulf, investors have significant energy security concerns. In this scenario, the issues of energy security are now moving beyond the exclusive concerns of consumers; producers, too require a stable regimen with a coherent demand and supply scenario. While global reserves have been an important, or even the principal factor in the energy security debate, it may be recalled that the Club of Rome had cautioned the world community of depletion of non-renewable sources of energy in its report “Limits to Growth,”²⁶ It may be the reason why the ensuing global scramble for oil and energy quickly pervaded all energy-rich geopolitical structures. It is no wonder that the Central Asian geographical landscape, with its huge energy potential and congenial investment environment, invites global attention, thereby accentuating the competition over oil politics and pipeline diplomacy in the region and beyond.

Central Asia has long possessed huge untapped oil and gas reserves, but only emerged as a key global energy hub after the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. Blessed with huge natural resources, five former Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and

²⁴ “Flow of Natural Gas from Central Asia,” Chinese National Petroleum Company, April 2020, available at: <https://www.cnpc.com.cn/en/FlowofnaturalgasfromCentralAsia/FlowofnaturalgasfromCentralAsia2.shtml>

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ “The Limits to Growth,” Club of Rome, 2011, available at [<https://www.clubofrome.org/report/the-limits-to-growth/>].

Uzbekistan have managed to shift the world’s demographic and economic center eastward. The prolonged western reliance on Middle Eastern oil started to crumble due to the promising potential of Central Asian energy reserves and the speedy development of infrastructure in the region. Historically a hinterland of Russia, it now started to attract global attention to its vast energy resources, particularly the oil and natural gas deposits. The attention of regional and extra-regional countries like the U.S., China, European Union members, Japan, Israel, Iran, Pakistan, and India have accentuated the conflict over resources, to which many now refer to as the New Great Game, to control the energy resources of Central Asia and the Caspian Sea region. The growing trade relations between the region and the energy consumers can be discussed in accordance with Table 1 below to understand the developing relations between FDI inflow and GDP growth, which are closely intertwined with the operation and discovery of oil wells and gas fields in the region.

Table 1

**Net Inflow of FDI as a Percentage of GDP
in Central Asian Countries**

Country Name	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyz Republic	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan
1991	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
1992	0.40	0.00	0.47	0.00	0.07
1993	5.43	0.49	0.55	2.48	0.37
1994	3.10	2.27	0.79	4.02	0.57
1995	4.73	5.79	0.81	9.39	-0.18
1991-1995	2.73	1.71	0.52	3.18	0.16
1996	5.41	2.58	1.72	4.54	0.65
1997	5.96	4.74	1.95	4.40	1.13
1998	5.20	6.64	2.27	2.39	0.93
1999	9.41	3.56	0.62	5.10	0.71
2000	7.49	-0.17	2.74	4.51	0.54
1996-2000	6.69	3.47	1.86	4.19	0.79
2001	12.72	0.33	0.88	4.81	0.73
2002	10.51	0.29	2.95	6.19	0.67
2003	8.05	2.37	2.03	3.78	0.82
2004	13.01	7.93	13.10	5.17	1.47
2005	4.46	1.73	2.36	5.16	1.34
2001-2005	9.75	2.53	4.27	5.02	1.00

Table 1 (continued)

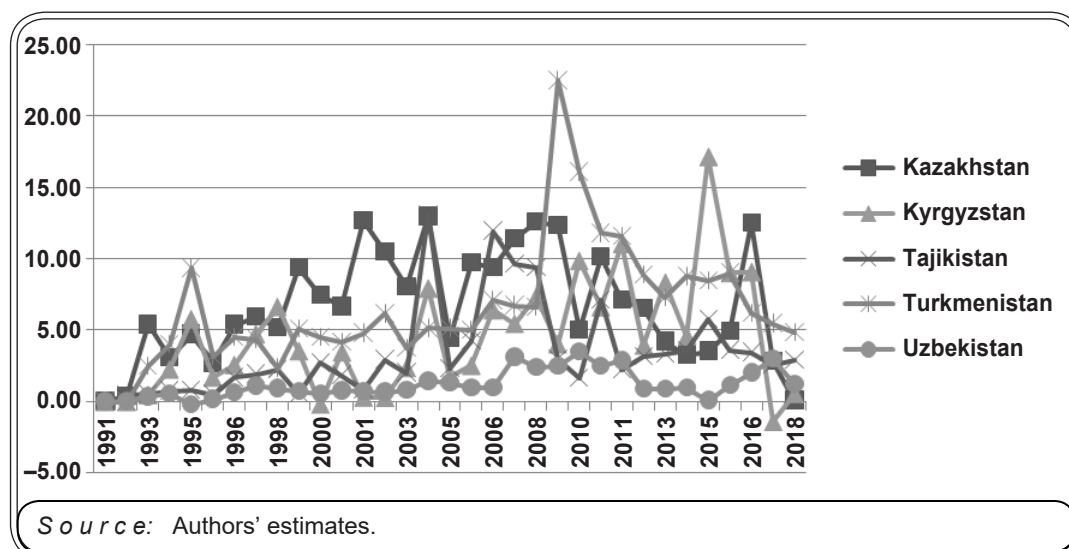
Country Name	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyz Republic	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan
2006	9.40	6.42	11.96	7.11	1.00
2007	11.42	5.47	9.68	6.76	3.16
2008	12.60	7.33	9.43	6.63	2.41
2009	12.38	4.04	2.99	22.52	2.50
2010	5.04	9.86	1.66	16.08	3.51
2006-2010	10.17	6.62	7.15	11.82	2.52
2011	7.14	11.06	2.24	11.60	2.89
2012	6.56	3.95	3.17	8.90	0.88
2013	4.23	8.34	3.35	7.30	0.92
2014	3.30	4.59	3.58	8.80	0.99
2015	3.57	17.13	5.78	8.50	0.08
2011-2015	4.96	9.02	3.62	9.02	1.15
2016	12.54	9.09	3.48	6.20	2.03
2017	2.83	-1.39	2.60	5.50	3.04
2018	0.12	0.58	2.94	4.87	1.24
2016-2018	5.16	2.76	3.00	5.52	2.10
MEAN	6.93	4.63	3.56	6.77	1.28
SD	3.85	4.22	3.44	4.43	1.01
CV	55.64	91.14	96.67	65.47	79.38
CAGR	-0.05	0.01	0.07	0.03	0.12

Source: World Development Indicators, 2019.

Table 1 presents the trend of net inflow of Foreign Direct Investment as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product in Central Asian countries after the structural adjustment period of the 1990s. The annual average FDI growth rate clearly reveals that the net inflow of FDI has been constantly increasing. The highest average growth rate was observed in Kazakhstan, where the average percentage of FDI net inflow equaled 2.73 percent during 1991-1995 and has gone up to 10.17 percent during 2006-2010, but declined again to 5.16 during 2016-2018. The compound annual FDI inflow growth rate is negative in Kazakhstan, although it has witnessed the highest capital inflow. But the variation coefficient equaled to 55.64 percent in the same period, depicting less variation in FDI inflow as compared

Figure 1

Trend of FDI Inflow as a Percentage of GDP



to other countries. The same pattern of increasing trend of FDI inflow can be observed in other Central Asian countries, such as Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Among the above countries, Uzbekistan witnessed the lowest percentage of FDI inflow as compared to other countries. It equaled to less than 1 percent, i.e., 0.16 during first five years of the post-1990s, but slowly increased to 2.52 percent during 2006-2010, and has recently declined somewhat to 2.10 percent. Furthermore, the compound annual growth rate of FDI inflow in Uzbekistan is the highest among the Central Asian countries, even though it has experienced a smaller FDI inflow in the post-1990s period. The above table reveals that the majority of the Central Asian countries demonstrate a positive FDI inflow growth as a percentage of GDP in post-structural adjustment period, yet recently the growth has been slowing down as it occurs in developed countries.

The above table and graph demonstrate that FDI inflows into Central Asian countries have been increasing following the structural adjustment period of the early 1990s. This positive FDI inflow trend can be closely linked with the discovery of oil and gas fields in Central Asian countries, which, in turn, increased the global interest in investing in their energy sectors. Therefore, this article argues that FDI inflow into the region is intrinsically linked with energy resources, and will vary depending upon the availability of energy resources. Thus, the great power game taking place in the heartland region is closely aligned with the regional resources, especially oil and gas. Once the regional energy resources edge closer to depletion, the FDI would follow a negative trend.

Conclusion

Central Asian states undoubtedly possess enormous natural wealth and resources. The region's hydroelectric potential is second to none. Their oil and gas deposits are considered an alternative to the Middle Eastern reserves. Some of them have valuable nuclear deposits. Coal resources are also abundant in the region. However, the Central Asian countries lack the economic power to maneuver these untapped resources. Massive foreign investments are required for this purpose, and major in-

vestments are indeed coming in. But the question here is whether the Central Asia states should unilaterally focus on laws and policies to boost foreign investments in energy sector? The response would be absolutely negative. While increased oil and gas output would definitely increase the welfare of its citizens, the general picture is not entirely positive. Central Asia should take note of the fate of other states that are rich in resources, and must take a neutral and balanced approach to investment and development. Today, any chance of a bright outlook on the development of Central Asian states is only due to their attractive energy resources, which only slows down the development of the other sectors of economy. There is no benefit to this approach in the long term.

THE ENERGY VECTOR OF KAZAKHSTAN-RUSSIA RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL CHANGES ON THE INTERNATIONAL ENERGY MARKET

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ABSTRACT

Kazakhstan actively cooperates with Russia in the energy sector, which is directly associated with the role played by the fuel and energy complex in the functioning of all sectors of the Kazakh economy. The paper considers the main factors in the development of Kazakhstan's fuel and energy complex, and concludes

that its partnership with Russia is important in ensuring national security in a contextual sense. The article also considers the risks of Kazakhstan’s energy policy based on the geopolitical competition of regional and global actors.

KEYWORDS: fuel and energy complex, energy security, Kazakhstan-Russia partnership, Eurasian Economic Union, diversification

Introduction

Kazakhstan is one of the major suppliers of fuel and energy products in the world. According to 2019 data, Kazakhstan takes the 12th place in oil reserves and the 14th place in oil production in the world.¹ The potential of the fuel and energy complex (FEC) of Kazakhstan can be evaluated using the following data (see Table 1).

Table 1

Production Volume by Kazakhstan Energy Sector Industries

Energy Sector Industry	Production Volume, 2019	Change Compared to 2018, %
Oil industry	90.5 million tons	▲ 0.2
Gas industry	46.2 billion cu m	▼ 16.7
Coal industry	111.1 million tons	▼ 2
Nuclear energy	22.7 tons of uranium	▲ 0.9
Electric energy	106.0 billion kWh	▼ 0.7
Renewable energy sources	1.9 billion kWh	▲ 44

Source: Compiled by the authors based on the reports of the state organs of the Republic of Kazakhstan and materials of the Committee for Statistics of the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan).

The development concept of the fuel and energy complex of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2030 integrates the development of the oil and gas, coal, nuclear and electric power industries, with regard for the trends in the development of world energy.² Although the republic aims to diversify the national economy, the development of the energy sector is extremely important since the country’s economic growth depends on world energy prices and price volatility in these markets.³

¹ See: *Global Firepower Index 2020*, available at [https://www.globalfirepower.com/proven-oil-reserves-by-country.asp].

² See: “Ob utverzhdenii Kontseptsii razvitiia toplivno-energeticheskogo kompleksa Respubliki Kazakhstan do 2030 goda,” available at [http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/P140000724], 3 December, 2019.

³ See: “Republic of Kazakhstan: 2018 Article IV Consultation-Press Release; and Staff Report,” available at [https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2018/09/14/], 3 December, 2019.

Mineral resource trade accounts for approximately 70% of the country's export portfolio.⁴ The issue of the country's energy security is a matter of strategic importance in this context. This factor is specified in a number of key documents related to the priorities for the republic's long-term development, including the Development Strategy of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2050, which emphasizes the key role of energy security in strengthening overall national security.⁵

Reliance on partners in the energy security sphere is crucial for Kazakhstan, especially in the context of globalization, when energy issues have become one of the factors in the formation of a new geopolitical and geo-economic structure of the world. The challenges facing the republic's energy sector require urgent solutions in the framework of cooperation with Russia, Kazakhstan's strategic partner. Focusing only on a range of problems in the energy sector, it is necessary to determine the possibilities for achieving a balance of interests of partner states in the current global energy market competition perspective.

The problem of the energy policy of Kazakhstan and Russia is currently being discussed in both domestic and foreign discourse. Kazakhstan researchers,⁶ focus on geopolitical aspects considering the problem of energy security as an important component of national security. A number of researchers⁷ pay special attention to cooperation between the two countries in the energy sphere within the framework of a single economic space and the EAEU. Publications of most Russian researchers examine the issue of the countries' energy security in a multilateral format (SCO, CIS and other structures).⁸

Methodology

Analysis and synthesis methods are used along with the study of processes by description and comparison, and economic and statistical analysis methods. Based on the fact that bilateral interstate cooperation is an integral part of the system of international relations, the systems approach method has become the optimal tool in analyzing the Kazakhstan-Russia relations. The systemic method considers the energy sphere a single organism with a multi-actor and multi-level structure and is the foundation for identifying Kazakhstan's priorities in the interstate energy relations system, as well as the country's positioning in regional and global energy spheres.

⁴ See: "Kazakhstan Export Profile 2018," available at [https://www.trademap.org/Product_SelProductCountry.aspx?nvpm=1%7c398%7c%7c%7c%7cTOTAL%7c%7c%7c2%7c1%7c1%7c2%7c1%7c1%7c1%7c1%7c1], 3 December, 2019.

⁵ See: "Strategiia 'Kazakhstan-2050'—novyy politicheskiy kurs sostoiavshegosia gosudarstva. Poslanie Prezidenta Respubliki Kazakhstan—Lidera Natsii N.A. Nazarbayeva narodu Kazakhstana," Astana, 14 December, 2012, available at [<http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/K1200002050>], 3 December, 2019.

⁶ See: M.T. Laumulin, "Politika SShA i EES v Tsentralnoi Azii (sravnitelnyi analiz)," in: *Vyzovy bezopasnosti v Tsentralnoy Azii*, IMEMO RAS, Moscow, 2013, pp. 106-132; K. Syroezhkin, "China's Presence in the Energy Sector of Central Asia," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 13, Issue 1, 2012; R. Izimov, "Globalnaia energeticheskaia politika KNR: mesto TsA," available at [<http://www.kisi.kz/ru/categories/geopolitika-i-mezhdunarodnye-otnosheniya/posts/>]; Idem, "Dlia nas rost voennoy moshchi Kitaia ne neset priamykh ugroz," 2017, available at [<https://www.caravan.kz/gazeta/ruslan-izimov-dlya-nas-rost-voennoj-moshhi-kitaya-ne-neset-priamykh-ugroz-392991/>], 27 October, 2019.

⁷ See: A.S. Nurgazyeva, G.A. Movkebayeva, "Sotrudnichestvo Rossii i Respubliki Kazakhstan v sfere energoresursov v ramkakh EEP," *Bulletin of KazNU, Series International Relations and International Law*, No. 2, 2014, pp. 95-99; G. Movkebayeva, E. Aydarkhanova, "Energeticheskoe sotrudnichestvo Kazakhstana i Rossii v ramkakh EAES," *Bulletin of KazNU, Series International Relations and International Law*, No. 2, 2017, pp. 44-51.

⁸ See: S. Luzyanin, "Kitayskiye korni i rossiyskie vetvi v Tsentralnoy Azii," available at [<https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/kitayskie-korni-i-rossiyskie-vetvi-v-tsentralnoy-azii-k-voprosu-o-sootnoshenii-politiki-kr-i-rf-v-regione>], 28 October, 2019; D.B. Malysheva, *Tsentralnoaziatskiy uzel mirovoy politiki*, IMEMO RAS, Moscow, 2010. 100 pp.

Main Vectors of Bilateral Cooperation

Based on the principle of multi-vector foreign policy, which it adheres to in its energy policy, Kazakhstan relies on several partners in its energy strategy. First and foremost, they are the key investors and main consumers of its energy resources, including EU countries, the U.S., and China. However, Russia plays a key role in the implementation of its multi-vector energy strategy.

Since Kazakhstan became an independent state, the republic has created conditions for attracting foreign direct investment by establishing joint ventures and concluding preferential agreements with the leading countries in the interests of developing the energy sector.

According to the RK Foreign Policy Concept for 2014-2020, Kazakhstan's most important country and regional priority is the strengthening of relations with the Russian Federation in all spheres based on the Treaty on Good Neighborliness and Cooperation in the 21st century.⁹

Russia, in turn, emphasizes the importance of relations with Kazakhstan, pointing out that "the development of bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States and deepening integration within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union are the key tasks."¹⁰

The characteristics of geopolitical cooperation currently determine the path of cooperation between the two countries. Kazakhstan and Russia have the longest land border in the world—about seven and a half thousand kilometers. Bilateral relations take on a different meaning given the country's inland location, the lack of direct access to the oceans, long distances in the ninth biggest country in the world, and the fact that Kazakhstan's main foreign trade partners in the crude oil market are EU countries, and supplying them requires transit through Russia. Kazakhstan and Russia also have a common border along the Caspian Sea, which accounts for a significant share of the country's hydrocarbon reserves.¹¹

The bulk of Kazakhstan's oil and gas production is provided by three mega-projects: Karachaganak, Tengiz (TCO), and Kashagan. The main increase in production in 2019 is associated with stable growth in the Kashagan field (14.1 million tons), as well as in Tengiz (29.8 million tons) and Karachaganak (11.2 million tons). These three projects account for about 60% of all production in Kazakhstan.¹²

The implementation of all these projects is linked to the partnership with Russia. In particular, the development of the Karachaganak field, one of the key oil and gas infrastructure sites, is carried out under the auspices of the Karachaganak Petroleum Operating (KPO) consortium,¹³ where Lukoil holds a 13.5% stake. However, the dependence of Kazakhstani oil exports to the world market on transit through Russian territory is the determining factor (see Table 2).

In May 1997, Kazakhstan and Russia agreed to establish the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC), the largest international oil transport project with the participation of leading international oil

⁹ See: Official website of the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Kazakhstan [www.mfa.kz/ru/erevan/content-view/koncepcia-vnesnej-politiki-rk-na-2014-2020-gg].

¹⁰ *The Concept of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (approved by the President of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin, 30 November, 2016)*, available in Russian at [http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/news/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2542248], 4 December, 2019.

¹¹ See: *Annual Report of JSC NK KazMunaiGaz for 2018*, available at [file:///C:/Users/Acer/Documents/kmgzp_2018_rus.pdf], 4 December, 2019.

¹² See: "Bolee 90,5 milliona tonn nefi i gazokondensata dobyto v Kazakhstane," available at [<https://ru.sputniknews.kz/economy/20200110/12508147/neft-dobycha-kazakhstan-2019-god.html>].

¹³ See: "Lukoil in the Republic of Kazakhstan," available at [<http://www.lukoil.ru/Company/BusinessOperation/GeographicReach/Asia/LUKOILinKazakhstan>], 4 December, 2019.

companies. The goal was to construct a 1,511 km long pipeline (452 km of which is in Kazakhstan). It connects the Tengiz oil field and the Russian sea port of Novorossiysk on the Black Sea, from where Kazakhstani oil goes on to the EU countries. CPC throughput in 2018 was 67 million tons of oil per year. It should be noted that only consortium shareholders (KazMunayGas, Chevron, Lukoil, Exxon-Mobil, Rosneft-Shell, Eni, etc.)¹⁴ have the right to use the CPC pipeline system to transport oil. KazMunayGas owns equity in the Caspian Pipeline Consortium in the amount of 20.75%, including KMG—19% and KOO Kazakhstan Pipeline Ventures—1.75%.¹⁵

Table 2

Pipeline System Span in Kazakhstan and Russia, 2019 (thousand km)

Indicator	Kazakhstan	Russia
Main gas pipelines	15	179.3
Main oil pipelines	8.0	53.4
Oil product pipelines	0.3	17.1

Source: EEC website.

In 2019, the CPC pipeline transported the prevailing portion of all produced Kazakhstani oil—55.8 million tons (of the total 90.5 million tons produced), which emphasizes the role of CPC for Kazakhstan.¹⁶

Another pipeline, Atyrau-Samara (throughput capacity—17.5 million tons of oil per year, in 2019 the oil transportation volume amounted to 14.3 million tons¹⁷), spanning a total of 697 km (535 km of which is the Kazakhstan section), provides access to markets across Russia through the Russian Transneft pipeline system to the ports of the Black and Baltic Seas. At the same time, transportation of oil in the Caspian and Black Seas is practically stagnant; on the contrary, its decline is anticipated.

Thus, the joint projects of the two countries' corporations in the energy sector are precisely what creates the basis for interstate cooperation in the energy field. Lukoil is involved in the development of three fields—Karachaganak, Kumkol and Tengiz, as well as in the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC). Rosneft is engaged in the development of Caspian resources at the Kurman-gazy field.¹⁸

Kazakhstan and Russia carried out joint production based on the 1998 Agreement on the Delimitation of the Bottom of the Northern Part of the Caspian Sea. In October 2015, the Presidents of Kazakhstan and Russia agreed to amend this agreement due to the joint use of the Central oil and gas

¹⁴ See: *Speech of the Minister of Energy of the Republic of Kazakhstan K.A. Bozumbayev at an Expanded Meeting of the Board of the Ministry on the Results of Activities for 2017 and Tasks for 2018 (Astana, 23 February, 2018)*, available in Russian at [<http://www.zakon.kz/4911798-vystuplenie-ministra-energetiki-rk.html>], 4 December, 2019.

¹⁵ See: "Otchet rukovodstva AO NK "KazMunayGas" o rezultatakh finansovo-khoziaistvennoi deiatelnosti," available at [<https://docviewer.yandex.ru/view/993944974/?page=2>], 1 January, 2019.

¹⁶ See: "KTK obnarodoval itogi za 2019 god po otgruzke nefti, v tom chisle kazakhstanskoy," available at [<https://inbusiness.kz/ru/last/ktk-obnarodoval-itogi-za-2019-god-po-otgruzke-nefti-v-tom-chisle-kazakhstanskoy>].

¹⁷ See: "AO 'KazTransOil' uvelichilo transportirovku nefti na NPZ Kazakhstana na 5% v 2019 godu," available at [https://www.kaztransoil.kz/ru/press-centre/press-releases/soobsheniia_o_proizvodstvennoy_deiatelnosti_i_finansovih_rezultatah/ao_kaztransoil_uvelichilo_transportirovku_nefti_na_npz_kazakhstana_na_5_v_2019_godu/].

¹⁸ See: "Natsionalnyi energeticheskiy doklad 2017," available at [http://www.kazenergy.com/upload/document/energy-report/NationalReport17_ru.pdf], 4 December, 2019.

condensate field, located in the border zone. Along with Lukoil and Gazprom, KazMunayGas was engaged in this project with a 50 percent stake.¹⁹

In addition, since 2013, Rosneft has been supplying Russian oil to China along the Omsk-Priirtyshsk-Atasu-Alashankou²⁰ route in an amount of up to 10 million tons per year (transportation price is \$15 per ton of oil), with the pipeline capacity of 20 million tons.

KazRosGaz partnership, formed in 2001 on a parity basis by the national company NK KazMunayGas JSC and Gazprom, is an example of mutually beneficial cooperation in the gas industry between Kazakhstan and Russia. The company's main functions are marketing, processing, transportation and sale of Kazakhstani natural gas and its products in the domestic and foreign markets. KazRosGaz operates primarily on the resources provided by Karachaganak.²¹

Since 2006, Kazakh gas has been processed in Orenburg and sold in Russia through the Orenburg-Novoposkov gas pipeline, while Russian gas is sold at reduced prices for consumption in the Kostanay and Aktobe regions. Thus, cooperation between Kazakhstan and Russia in the oil and gas sector, which is the basis of economic growth of both countries, is developing in several directions.

Unlike the oil and gas industry, the competitive factor acquires greater importance in the coal energy sector, where it affects the observed decline in coal exports to Russia, the country that has traditionally been the main market for Kazakh coal. It is worth noting that in Kazakhstan, which holds the eighth place in the world in terms of proven coal reserves (4% of world reserves), there are 12 large coal producers, which provide for 98% of the country's total production.

There are private producers among the largest enterprises, i.e., the Eurasian Group with its production share of 30%²² and state-owned companies (Samruk-Energy JSC—20% of production). Samruk-Energy and Russian Rusal each own 50% of the shares of the enterprise that is responsible for approximately 20% of Kazakhstan's coal production.

An average of 25% of coal mined in Kazakhstan is exported. On 14 April, 2016, the energy ministries of the two countries signed an Indicative Forecast for the Consumption of Kazakhstani Coal by Russian Electricity-Generating Enterprises for 2016-2022 (see Fig. 1).

For comparison purposes, a joint Indicative Balance of coal between the two countries for 2012-2015 was signed between the Ministry of Industry and New Technologies of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Ministry of Energy of the Russian Federation in 2012. This Indicative Balance²³ estimated the annual export of Kazakhstani coal to Russia at the level of 29 million tons. Figure 1 shows that a gradual decline in coal exports to Russia is expected.

Over 90% of exports to Russia are from the Ekibastuz basin (its coal mainly consumed by the power plants in the Urals). In addition, the Karaganda basin supplies coking coal for the needs of Russian industrial enterprises.

According to EDB estimates, diversification of export supplies depends on both the geographic distance of Kazakhstan from the largest export markets, and the high transportation costs. In addition, Kazakhstan coal is uncompetitive due to its high ash content and calorific efficiency, which affects the country's export capabilities.²⁴

¹⁹ See: "RK i RF soglasuiut popravki v soglasenie po razrabotke mestorozhdeniia Tsentralnoe na Kaspii," available at [<https://www.zakon.kz/4748497-rk-i-rf-soglasujut-popravki-v.html>], 4 December, 2019.

²⁰ See: "Utverzhdena stoimost transportirovki rossiyskoy nefi cherez Kazakhstan...," available at [<https://kursiv.kz/news/otraslevye-temy/2019-01/utverzhdena-stoimost-transportirovki-rossiyskoy-nefti-cherez?page=5>], 4 December, 2019.

²¹ Official website of "KazRosGaz". About the Company [<http://kazrosgas.org/rus/o-kompanii/>], 4 December, 2019.

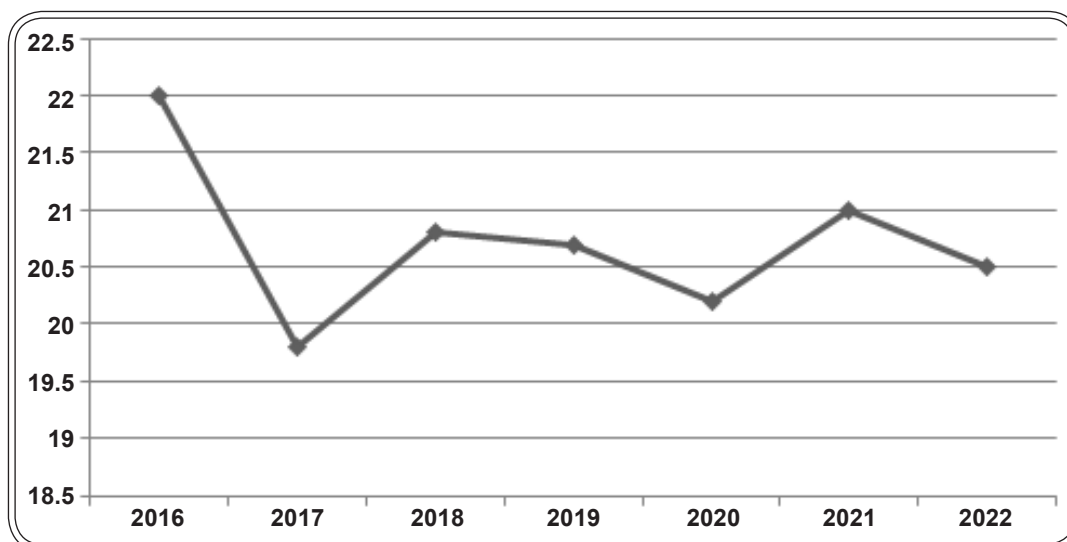
²² See: "Natsionalnyi energeticheskiy doklad 2015," available at [<file:///C:/Users/Acer/Desktop/национальный%20энергетический%20доклад.pdf>], 4 December, 2019.

²³ See: "Rossia medlenno perekryvaet Kazahstanu ugol," available at [<http://abctv.kz/ru/news/rossiya-medlenno-perekryvaet-kazahstanu-ugol>], 4 December, 2019.

²⁴ See: "Sostoianiye i perspektivy ugolnoy promyshlennosti Kazahstana," available at [<https://eabr.org/press/comments/sostoyanie-i-perspektivy-ugolnoy-promyshlennosti-kazahstana>], 4 December, 2019.

Figure 1

Estimate of Kazakhstan Coal Export to Russia (million tons)



Cooperation in the field of nuclear energy is developing with greater success. Kazakhstan has the second largest natural uranium reserves, which accounts for 12% of all the explored global stock. Russian companies enter the Kazakhstan market through the repurchase of global uranium mining companies engaged in developing Kazakhstani deposits. Russia is the leader in uranium mining in the republic: in 2013, the Russian Rosatom corporation purchased 100% of the Canadian Uranium One, a company with controlling stakes in Kazakhstan's uranium mining companies, and became a monopolist in this sphere. Uranium One owns more than 20% of uranium production in Kazakhstan.²⁵ Russia is among the major consumers of Kazakhstani uranium raw materials. There are also a number of agreements on scientific and technical cooperation in the peaceful uses of atomic energy.²⁶

The dynamics of the development of cooperation in the electric power industry are largely determined by the integrated energy system inherited from the U.S.S.R. For example, Northern Kazakhstan is traversed by power lines owned by the UES of Russia. In 2019, Kazakhstan exported 1.273 billion kWh of electricity to Russia.²⁷

Some factors influence the development of Kazakhstan-Russia relations in the energy sphere. The internal factors comprise uniform distribution of the fuel and energy balance of countries by region; condition of the transport and logistical infrastructure; and high energy capacity of economies. The external factors are: transit of various kinds of energy through neighboring and other countries; price of energy resources on external markets; tariff policy; deficit of investments; and geopolitical ambiguity.

²⁵ See: "Borba Kazakhstana za kontrol na mirovykh rynkakh urana," available at [<http://vstrokax.net/avtorskaya-kolonka/borba-kazahstana-za-kontrol-nad-mirovyim-ryinkom-urana/>], 4 December, 2019; *Collection of Regulatory Legal Documents Adopted in the Framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States in the Field of Electric Power*, Internet Portal of the Electricity Council of the Commonwealth of Independent States, available in Russian at [<http://energo-cis.ru/getfile/662.pdf>], 4 декабря 2019.

²⁶ See: "Rosatom and the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Kazakhstan Signed Documents in the Field of Nuclear Cooperation," available in Russian at [<http://www.rosatom.ru/journalist/news/rosatom-i-ministerstvo-energetiki-respubliki-kazahstan-podpisali-dokumenty-v-oblasti-sotrudnichestv/>], 4 December, 2019.

²⁷ See: "Kazakhstan Electricity and Coal Market Analysis Report January-December 2019," available at [<https://docviewer.yandex.ru/view/993944974>], 24 February, 2020.

The study of the relations between Kazakhstan and Russia in the fuel and energy sector by industry demonstrates a consistently evolving dynamics of mutually reinforcing cooperation. However, the ambivalent and asymmetric nature of the bilateral energy cooperation between the two countries is also apparent. This interaction can at once be characterized as a partnership and a competition.

Energy Market: Partnership vs. Competition

Kazakhstan's partnership with Russia in the energy sector should be viewed through the prism of the former's transit and transport dependence. In particular, Russia was a de facto monopolist in the transportation of energy resources from Kazakhstan until 2006. Despite the availability of resources and the active dynamics of energy production, the intracontinental location of Kazakhstan in the very center of Eurasia creates certain difficulties for the full realization of its potential.

The interconnectedness of the transport systems of Russia and Kazakhstan limits the choices for Kazakhstan, which seeks greater independence in hydrocarbon exports. The competition between oil producing countries for international investments, especially for new project financing, in the global market has increased. Despite the modernization of three oil refineries in Kazakhstan, dependence of the domestic market on the imports of Russian oil products is preserved.

In the face of increased competition among various geopolitical forces within the CIS, Kazakhstan is gaining new significance for Russia in realization of its geopolitical and geo-economic interests. Russia traditionally considers the entire Central Asian region, including Kazakhstan, its "zone of influence." According to experts,²⁸ Russia's energy strategy in Central Asia is based on Moscow's interest in "making full use of the raw materials and production potential of the countries in the region, their infrastructure, which contribute to Russia's economic and military security, as well as in controlling the energy flows to Europe and the Asia-Pacific region." Thus, energy has become not only a source of economic dividends, but also a kind of geopolitical resource.

Russia prefers to develop deposits jointly, striving to maintain its monopoly on the transportation of the region's energy resources in order to maintain its influence.

China's comprehensive evolution as a global actor in world geopolitics stimulates its increasingly more active presence in Central Asia. The competition between China and Russia for access to the region's resources and their transportation channels is slated to intensify. China has already managed to disrupt the Russian monopoly on the regional transportation of hydrocarbons, thereby changing the geo-economic situation within Central Asia, thanks to the beginning of the construction of the 900-km Atasu-Alashankou pipeline in 2005. The oil pipeline was commissioned in 2006.²⁹ Currently, about 12 million tons of oil is being delivered to China through the pipeline.

The subsequent agreement between China and the countries of Central Asia was signed in April 2006 on the construction of a new Central Asia-China gas pipeline, which passes through Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, spanning 1,830 km. Notably, Chinese investments in Kazakhstan's fuel and energy sector still make up about 98% of China's foreign direct investment in Kazakhstan's national economy. In 2017, with the commissioning of additional capacities of the gas pipeline system, namely the Beineu-Bozoi-Shymkent gas pipeline,³⁰ Kazakhstan began annually exporting 1 bcm of Kazakhstani gas to China.

²⁸ Yu. Morozov, "Rossiya, zapad i strany ShOS v energeticheskikh proektakh Tsentralnoy Azii," available at [<https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/rossiya-zapad-i-strany-shos-v-energeticheskikh-proektah-tsentralnoy-evrazii>], 5 December, 2019.

²⁹ See: "Realnaja rabota nefteprovoda Atasu-Alashankou nachnetsia v seredine 2006 goda—glava MEMR RK," available at [<http://www.zakon.kz/67523-realnaja-rabota-nefteprovoda-atasu.html>], 6 December, 2019.

³⁰ See: *Report of the Eurasian Development Bank*, available at [https://eabr.org/upload/iblock/252/EDB-Centre_2017_Report-47_FDI-Eurasia_RUS_1.pdf], 7 December, 2019.

China has become an important alternative market for hydrocarbons, and the oil pipeline is the first alternative route for oil exports, which had freed the country from direct dependence on Russian infrastructure. Kazakhstan has expanded its room for maneuver by implementing plans to de facto diversify the hydrocarbon export routes. Close cooperation with China is becoming a real tool in strengthening foreign policy positions, including those in relations with Moscow.

It also marked the beginning of competition between Russia and the Central Asian countries, forcing Russia to strengthen the focus on the eastern routes of energy supply. The commissioning of the Power of Siberia gas pipeline makes the issue of competition with the Russian Federation in the Chinese market pertinent for Kazakhstan.

In addition to the construction of oil and gas pipelines, China acquires ownership or conducts development on long-term concession terms³¹ in a number of fields in the region (60.3% of the shares of the Aktobe oil company were acquired in Kazakhstan for the development of large Kenkiyak and Zhanazhol fields). This served as an occasion for Russia to strengthen cooperation between the SCO member countries in the energy sector, and to support Beijing's initiative to establish the SCO Energy Club. Despite this, the difficulties associated with the different scales of the SCO countries' economies and the harmonization of national energy strategies are practically unsolvable.³²

In the context of the existing sanction confrontation between Russia and the West, suppliers of hydrocarbons from the countries of the Caspian basin, specifically, Kazakhstan, are considered by the European Union as important sources for diversifying the supply of hydrocarbons (crude oil, gas and oil products) to ensure their own energy security. The new Agreement between the EU and Kazakhstan can intensify energy cooperation and, on the other hand, intensify the key actors' struggle for access to Kazakhstani projects for the extraction and transportation of raw materials. China's energy cooperation with the Central Asian states has already attracted the attention of Russia, whose reaction to it is ambivalent.³³

As a landlocked country, Kazakhstan supports the key transport corridor construction projects, thus realizing its own geopolitical and geo-economic interests. Ideally, the country could become a transit hub for the North-South and West-East routes, which will ensure the country's development even in the event of shocks to the global hydrocarbon market and other crises. In addition, the transport corridor system significantly reduces the level of geopolitical tension, which is also among the country's priorities. Ultimately, in view of the new challenges and threats to national and regional security and the crisis of strategic stability, China, Russia and Kazakhstan are committed to ensure stability in the region. Pairing the Chinese Belt and Road initiative with the EAEU will reduce the severity of the geopolitical competition between Beijing and Moscow in Central Asia. The paradox of the current competition is Russia's reluctance to lose ground in the region, despite the obvious lack of resources and channels of influence to realize its own interests, which is largely dictated by the existing confrontation following the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis.

The Eurasian Economic Union, which aims, among other things, to establish a single energy market, carries certain risks for Kazakhstan's national economy in its current form. Today, disagreements arise among the EAEU participants because of the differences in the terms of oil and oil product trade, which Russia applies to different member states of the Union. In addition, Russia holds a dominant position among EAEU member countries, mainly due to the volume of its market and the size of the national economy. The harmonization of prices and tariffs in the process of forming a common energy market will be subject to pressure from Russia and will increase competition, espe-

³¹ See: "Proekty kitaiskikh neftegazovykh korporatsiy v gosudarstvakh TSAR," available at [<http://www.webeconomy.ru/index.php?page=cat&newsid=2274&type=news>], 7 December, 2019.

³² See: S. Luzyanin, *op. cit.*

³³ See: I.V. Zeleneva, "Perspektivy ekonomicheskogo i politicheskogo prisutstviia Rossii i Kitaiia v Tsentralnoy Azii," available at [<https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/perspektivy-ekonomicheskogo-i-politicheskogo-prisutstviya-rossii-i-kitaya-v-tsentralnoy-azii>], 7 December, 2019.

cially between Kazakhstan and Russia, the two main participants in the CIS energy market. Moreover, in 2018-2019, the Kazakhstan authorities already regulated the oil-refining market conditions, aiming to create advantages for domestic producers, while temporary bans were introduced on the import of Russian gasoline.

Meanwhile, membership in the EAEU intensifies one risk factor—the expansion of the economic consequences of sanctions imposed by the European Union, the United States and other states on Russia because of the Ukrainian crisis. Due to a double blow—the falling oil prices and Western sanctions—the Russian economy is in recession, which has a general negative effect on the economies of the EAEU countries: Kazakhstan and other countries of the Central Asian region are faced with problems such as lack of resources for economic growth, inflation, and devaluation of national currency, among others.

Thus, in the oil sector a ban was imposed on the transfer of technologies and equipment used to develop fields on the deep marine shelf. In addition, special financial sanctions were imposed on key oil companies (for example, Rosneft, Transneft, Gazprom Neft, Lukoil, and Surgutneftegaz).³⁴ Western sanctions on the provision of financing, technology transfer and the export of goods and services are becoming a factor of uncertainty in the near future, which has a negative effect for Kazakhstan, considering its close connections to Russia. Under such conditions, as the geopolitical confrontations intensify, Kazakhstan is forced to maneuver in order to maintain a balance of power, as it attempts to maintain the status quo both with Russia and with the countries of the West.

Conclusion

There are development risks in almost all of Kazakhstan's energy sectors, which are associated with cooperation with Russia. In addition to transportation issues in the oil or gas sectors, the development of the nuclear industry is also dependent on Russia in the transport and logistics spheres. Since uranium is transported through Russian ports, there is a risk of price changes for rail and sea transportation of raw materials by Russian carriers. Logistics problems are also relevant for the coal industry in Kazakhstan. Potential sales markets, for example, European countries, are quite far away. Russia, which is a major importer of Kazakh coal, has projected a decrease in supplies from Kazakhstan due to the decommissioning of specialized power plants that operated on Kazakh coal, as well as to the desire to support domestic producers.

As one of the largest exporters of energy resources, Kazakhstan occupies a significant position in the arrangement and balance of the energy space on a regional and global scale. The significant role of Kazakhstan's energy policy in the formation of the regional international relations subsystem is also evident. It can be clearly observed in the analysis of the dynamics of relations between Kazakhstan and Russia in the context of their trans-regional ties and the competition of global actors.

The multi-tier nature of energy problems can lead to more effective cooperation between Kazakhstan and Russia in the format of regional institutions (EAEU), as well as in the context of mega-projects launched by the leading powers (SCO, Belt and Road initiatives, TRACECA). The national interests of Kazakhstan require the strengthening of a multi-vector policy in the energy sector to ensure state security.

³⁴ See: "Novye sanktsii SShA prervut mezhdunarodnuiu ekspansiiu rossiyskikh neftianikov," available at [<https://www.rbc.ru/economics/04/08/2017/59824c529a7947b30d0818eb>], 7 December, 2019.

ETHNIC RELATIONS AND MIGRATION

HOW CAN MIGRANTS INFLUENCE DEMOCRACY IN THEIR COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN? CASE STUDY: CIS COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL ASIA

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates both migrant remittances and return migration as the possible factors for democratic demand occurrence in donor countries. We believe that one of the main elements of democracy emergence is the political structure and economic advantages of the recipient country. It is justified that if a migrant moves to a well-established democratic state his

satisfaction with how all the institutions work increases. Thus, most of the migrants might be dissatisfied with the effectiveness of their home countries' political management, but can they really influence democracy demand and does this process depend on the quality of the recipient country? In this connection, we argue that migrants can shape political atmosphere in their home country

via the scope of effects they produce by their remittances and social interaction. As an example, we analyze migration from CIS countries of Central Asia.

After the revision of theoretical framework and analysis of empirical data taken from the World Bank, the Central Bank of the Russian Federation and V-Dem data

version 9.0, we came to the conclusion that both migrant remittances and return migration can have an impact on democracy occurrence and thus are able to give impetus to democratic movements. However, the quality of a recipient country and domestic situation in a donor country play a determinant role in this process.

KEYWORDS: democracy, skilled migration, remittances, economy, protest activity, labor immigrants, CIS, Central Asia.

Introduction

As a form of adaptation to the changing living conditions, migration has a significant impact on the structure and dynamics of the world's population, from individual human settlements and regions to entire countries and continents. Jean-Pierre Cassarino¹ believes that today there is a growing recognition of the opportunities that migration offers for economic growth, development and stability in donor countries, as migrants play a role of a "bridge" between their country of origin and the place where they have migrated to. In this regard, we are interested in the effects which migrants can produce on their home country.

It should be noted that due to migration the intellectual sphere is developing on a global scale: as a rule, migration flows are directed to those countries where intellectual work and its results are more in demand than in donor countries, and where the best technical and institutional conditions for self-realization of its representatives are created.² In this connection, migrants become more culturally and intellectually educated, as they discover a different culture and acquire new knowledge which helps them to define living conditions in their home country. Furthermore, it is a fact that higher levels of knowledge are closely connected with a high level of political involvement.³ In other words, those migrants who have migrated via academic sphere or a high-skilled job are more likely to become politically active with a strong level of support for their new country's system if it values democratic principles more than their motherland.⁴ We believe that those factors can influence migrants to support democracy as the main form of government. In this connection, if the form of government in their country of origin differs from democracy, migrants can come to the conclusion that it is not effective and should be transformed.

When it comes to migration from CIS countries of Central Asia, its main flow is directed to Russia and is one of the most stable and numerous in the world.⁵ The main factors stimulating labor migration are the difficult economic situation in Central Asian countries, the widening gap in living

¹ See: J.P. Cassarino, "Conditions of Modern Return Migrants—Editorial Introduction," *International Journal on Multicultural Societies*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2008.

² See: Li Xiaoyang, J. McHale, "Emigrants and Institutions," University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, National University of Ireland, Galway, 2009.

³ See: G. Almond, S. Verba, *The Civic Culture Revisited*, SAGE, London, UK, 1989.

⁴ See: A. Spilimbergo, "Foreign Students and Democracy," *American Economic Review*, No. 99 (1), 2009, pp. 528-543.

⁵ See: S.V. Ryazantsev, *Trudovaia migratsiia v stranah SNG i Baltii: tendentsii, posledstviia, regulirovanie*, Formula prava, Moscow, 2007, 576 pp.

standards between the CA states and other countries, unclear prospects for the development of the region's economy and the low level of average monthly wages for any type of job, including high-skilled. The main source of labor migrants from the Central Asian region are Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.⁶

It goes without saying that migrant remittances and return migration can produce a lot of benefits to the donor country: the economy gains profit and the country gets back high-skilled specialists, but does this process really influence democracy occurrence in migrants' countries of origin?

Theoretical Framework

Speaking about possible ways of migrants' influence on democratic development in their home country it is necessary to define the concept "influence" in its two main aspects: social (personal influence) and economic (remittances).⁷

As a rule, a lot of migrants maintain close ties with their home country (relatives, friends etc.). This creates a powerful mechanism of social influence on the moods of locals via conveying them the fact that living under democracy is much more profitable not only economically, but also in terms of their personal rights and freedoms.⁸ In this regard, emigration can shape political institutions and convince locals for its necessity by creating substantial diaspora channels, which can influence political changes as well.⁹ What is more, sometimes migration has a temporary character. Therefore, after returning from a well-established and economically prosperous democracy migrants can raise the demand for democracy in their country of origin by their own¹⁰.

In the article by Catia Batista and Pedro Vicente,¹¹ there is a research on the topic of raising demand for political accountability by return migrants, examining Cape Verde. In this research there was used a simple voting experiment to measure a behavioral demand for improving governance at home. A defining factor selected was a measure of the population's desire for better governance. There was used a data from a tailored household survey in order to analyze the core of behavioral dimension of requirement for political accountability and to insulate the positive impact of international emigration employing locality level variation. The alleged results are robust to the use of instrumental variables, as past migration and macro shocks in the countries to which migrants return. The findings indicate that migrants affect a demand for improving political accountability, and can only be applied to return migrants who moved to the democratic states.

To confirm a statement that return migration can influence democracy in migrants' country of origin only if this country is nondemocratic, we should refer to the article of Romana Careja and Patrick Emmenegger¹², where the impact of return migration on political attitudes in Central and Eastern European countries is examined with the help of CCEB 2002.2 data received from 10,143

⁶ See: S.V. Ryazantsev, N. Horie, *Modelirovanie potokov trudovoy migratsii iz stran Tsentralnoy Azii v Rossii: Ekonomiko-sotsiologicheskoe issledovanie*, Nauchnyi mir, Moscow, 2011, p. 192.

⁷ See: F. Docquier, E. Lodigiani, H. Rapoport, M. Schiff, "Emigration and Democracy," *Working Paper 5557*, World Bank Policy Res. Ser., Washington, D.C., 2011.

⁸ See: C. Boix, *Democracy and Redistribution*, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

⁹ See: C. Batista, P.C. Vicente, "Do Migrants Improve Governance at Home? Evidence from a Voting Experiment," *The World Bank Economic Review*, 2011.

¹⁰ See: S. Bălăţescu, "Central and Eastern European Migrants' Subjective Quality of Life: A Comparative Study," *Journal of Identity and Migration Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2007, pp. 67-81.

¹¹ See: C. Batista, P.C. Vicente, op. cit.

¹² See: R. Careja, P. Emmenegger, "Making Democratic Citizens: The Effects of Migration Experience on Political Attitudes in Central and Eastern Europe," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 7, 2012.

respondents from 10 CEE countries investigated. The description of survey data reveals that migration experience diversifies the area of political behavior: however, migrants from selected countries more believe in EU democratic institutions and try to spread this point of view among their friends and relatives. However, the difference between their influence on domestic institutions and non-immigrants is not relevant. Careja and Emmenegger find out that migration experience has a noticeable influence only when there is a correlation with incensement of the material and cognitive status of migrants.¹³

When it comes to economic aspect (remittances), it can possess much more effectiveness rather than social due to its strong and direct impact on the economy of a donor country and the life of locals who receive them. Taking into account the research of Escribà-Folch, Meseguer, and Wright¹⁴ we can see that due to migrant remittances, politics can be shaped in donor countries and all these countries have particular autocratic regimes. This article examines political consequences of migrant remittances in connection with their influence on the anti-governmental protest behavior among non-migrant citizens. This research gives cross-national data on a prospective measure of opposition political movements, and through these data it can be seen that remittances increase protest. To find out mechanism, which links remittances with protests, the individual-level data from eight non-democratic states in Africa were used to highlight that remittances increase protests in opposition regions but not in progovernment ones. The research states that remittances increase political protests in non-democratic countries by increasing existing financial resources of political opposition. What is more, dynamics should be higher in societies where the groups have limited access to resources due to state restrictions.

To add, according to Pfütze's research on the case of the Mexican democratization process, where the data from municipal electoral cycle (2000-2002) were used,¹⁵ it is clear that migrant remittances are able to undermine a link between the government and its voters. As remittances increase a constituency available income, the necessary direct transfers paid in exchange for political support would grow as well. In this connection, remittances increase a household's disposable income, which makes recipients less dependent on government social payments and so weakens clientele networks. Due to households' disposable income incensement, we can notice the reduction in the whole utility of consumption of the members. What is more, remittances can also cause democratization in leading party autocracies by undermining electoral support for incumbent parties. All this leads to the fact that the amount of the material goods exchanged for political support is likely to be increased. Finally, this research comes to the conclusion that migrant remittances substantially increase an opposition party's chance of taking the first place in a municipal election for the first time.

Labor migration from CIS countries of Central Asia and its aspects were investigated by Sergey Ryazantsev and Norio Horie¹⁶. This is a mixed-methods research based on migrants' interviews and the analysis of empirical data. The authors of this investigation came to the conclusion that migration from CIS countries to Russia provided common benefits for both sides and it is an increasing feature. Firstly, due to migration, Russia gets positive growth of population. Secondly, migrant remittances solve a lot of problems in donor countries, such as economic aid for locals who desperately need money for food and medicine.

¹³ See: R. Careja, P. Emmenegger, op. cit.

¹⁴ See: A. Escribà-Folch, C. Meseguer, J. Wright, "Remittances and Protest in Dictatorships," *American Journal of Political Science*, 2018.

¹⁵ See: T. Pfützte, "Does Migration Promote Democratization? Evidence from the Mexican Transition," *Journal of Comparative Economics*, Vol. 40, No. 2, 2012.

¹⁶ See: S.V. Ryazantsev, N. Horie, op. cit.

The Origin of Migrant Remittances

Remittances form a large, sustainable and counter-cyclical source of external financing for many poor countries. Remittances enable households to increase investment in education, health, real estate, and small business. All those factors positively stimulate the economy of the donor country, making it more open and developing.

The export of labor is an important source of income for the countries of emigration through remittances of foreign currency from migrants to support their families and relatives, which generally contributes to the improvement of their economic situation. Migrant remittances are included in the country's balance-of-payments "private transfers" and account for a large share of foreign exchange earnings in many of the world's labor exporters and sometimes are the only source of foreign exchange. Furthermore, when migrants return home, they can bring with them wealth and savings of about the same (or larger) amount as their remittances.¹⁷

The volume of annual remittances associated with international migration is quite comparable in scale with annual foreign direct investment. The currency efficiency of labor exports is fivefold higher than the efficiency of commodity exports. In addition, according to the World Bank, the inflow of foreign currency from abroad

- increases the level of income of the population, and therefore stimulates the domestic demand of the donor country, which means the growth of production and employment;
- improves the balance-of-payments and the state of the national currency.¹⁸

In Table 1 we can observe remittance inflows to GDP (%) by Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. As the period of time we take recent 10 years to see dynamics of their change. These data are formed by an average sum of three items defined in the fifth edition of the IMF's Balance of Payments Manual: workers' remittances, compensation of employees, and migrants' transfers. Remittances in this dataset are classified as private transfers from migrant workers in the recipient country who reside there for more than a year to recipients in their country of origin.

Table 1

Remittance Inflows to GDP (%)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Kazakhstan	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3
Kyrgyzstan	23.9	20.9	26.4	27.6	30.7	31.1	30	25.3	29.3	32.3
Tajikistan	49.3	35.1	35.8	41.8	42.2	43.8	37.1	28.8	26.9	31.2
Uzbekistan	10.2	6.15	7.3	9.3	11	11.6	7.6	3.7	3	—

Source: World Development Indicators (WDI), Global Financial Development, The World Bank, available at [<https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/remittance-inflows-gdp>].

As we can see, both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan economies are totally dependent on remittances, as they form up to 49% of annual GDP, which can be described as absolute subjection. On the con-

¹⁷ See: P. Levitt, "Social Remittances: Migration Driven Local-Level Forms of Cultural Diffusion," *The International Migration Review*, Vol. 32, No. 4, 1998.

¹⁸ "Migration and Remittances," Factbook 2011, Second Edition, The World Bank, available at [<https://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTLAC/Resources/Factbook2011-Ebook.pdf>].

trary, Kazakhstan is the most independent CIS state of Central Asia with a tiny proportion of 0.1-0.3%. Uzbekistan has a slight proportion that does not exceed 11% with a fall of up to 3%. What is more, Kyrgyzstan has outrun Tajikistan in 2016 and 2017 which can be conditioned by the increasing number of Kyrgyz migrants in the Russian Federation¹⁹.

According to the World Bank²⁰, migrant remittances totaled about \$528 billion in 2018, exceeding the 1995 figure (\$101 billion) almost 5.5 times, so it has quite an increasing and impressive character in recent years. The cross-country analysis shows that a 10% increase in remittances per capita leads to a 3.5% decrease in the share of the poor in the country.

It is a fact that migrants are willing to help their families in the deteriorating political, social and economic situation at home. In this regard, remittances can be a rescue way for the crisis economy. One of the most obvious examples is the so-called Arab Spring in Egypt, when private investors and international “sponsors” hurried to withdraw their funds from the country and suspend the provision of assistance. Direct investment has almost evaporated, falling from \$9.5 billion to \$7.5 billion in 2009 to a negative value in 2011. On the contrary, the inflow of money from migrants increased almost threefold, from \$7.2 billion at that time in 2009 up to \$20.5 billion in 2012.²¹ It is necessary to note that not all of the remittances are intended for individuals, but as donations for private organizations or opposition which promote democratic principles within a country. Thus, remittances can play a role of accelerator and increase the probability of forthcoming political change, because some amount of money can go for anti-governmental opposition support.

When it comes to migrant remittances to CIS countries of Central Asia, we should keep in mind that the main donor country of these remittances is the Russian Federation. For example, according to the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs, during 2013-2017, the number of Kyrgyz citizens working in Russia has increased fivefold. In 2012, only 79,375 migrants worked in the territory of the Russian Federation, however in 2017, there were already 376,863 people.²² The main factor of Russia’s attractiveness for residents of the CIS countries is the opportunity to find a job due to low unemployment. Low unemployment not only simplifies the search process, but also contributes to the growth of salaries and, as a result, disposable income.²³

According to Table 2, Uzbekistan accounts for the largest scope of remittances with a peak of \$6,689 million in 2013, it is closely followed by Tajikistan with \$4,173 million in the same year. The Kyrgyz Republic has ups and downs from \$326 million to \$2,106 million. Kazakhstan possesses a least amount of transfers varying from \$90 million to \$577 million. However, if we compare these data with remittance inflows to the country’s GDP (%), it is obvious that for some countries remittances are one of the main economic incomes. For example, Uzbekistan has the largest amount of remittances for selected period, however it has a low proportion of their inflow to GDP (3%-11%). At the same time, in 2016-2017, the Kyrgyz Republic has the 29%-32% remittance inflow to GDP with a total amount of transfers of just \$398-457 million.

We should note that during 2009-2010 and 2015-2016, there was a large decrease in all remittances, which can be described as an unstable economic period in Russia caused by the economic crisis and sanctions. What is more, the proportion of remittances to Kazakhstan and their inflow to GDP are not so big in comparison with other CIS countries, and can be described as the more friendly economic situation in the country and as a result, not so big flow of migrants.

¹⁹ See: *Svodka osnovnykh pokazatelei deiatelnosti po migratsionnoi situatsii v Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2012-2017*, Ministry of the Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation, available at [<https://xn--b1aew.xn--p1ai/Deljatelnost/statistics/migracionnaya>].

²⁰ See: “Migration and Development Brief,” The World Bank, Vol. 30, 2018, available at [<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/labormarkets/brief/migration-and-remittances>].

²¹ See: “Migration and Remittances,” Factbook 2011.

²² See: *Svodka osnovnykh pokazatelei deiatelnosti po migratsionnoi situatsii v Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2012-2017*.

²³ See: S.V. Ryazantsev, N. Horic, op. cit.

Transfers from Russia by Individuals (\$m)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Kazakhstan	297	217	90	123	461	561	577	514	140	127
Kyrgyzstan	1,211	925	326	476	1,859	2,106	2,062	1,383	457	398
Tajikistan	2,549	1,740	640	1,044	3,651	4,173	3,854	2,220	496	423
Uzbekistan	3,007	2,071	841	1,512	5,693	6,689	5,653	3,059	728	620

Source: "Transgranichnye perevody fizicheskikh lits (rezidentov i nerezidentov), Otchetnost kreditnykh organizatsii," Central Bank of the Russian Federation, 2012-2017, available at [https://www.cbr.ru/statistics/macro_itm/tg/].

Discovering Return Migration Aspects

Speaking about return migration and its effect on democracy, we should define it as the movement of a person returning to his or her country of origin or place of permanent residence, usually after at least one-year's stay in another country. This return may be voluntary or involuntary, as return migrants have different socio-economic and migration experiences. Types of return migrants can vary from highly skilled to unskilled: students, labor migrants, migrants who immigrated to permanent residence, persons who were denied asylum, illegal migrants and etc.²⁴

On the whole, each migrant's experience can be a determinant in his future political participation. "Migration experience boosts one's own perception about accumulated knowledge and internal efficacy. This perception translates into increased interest in politics, manifested through consumption of political news and engagement in political discussions. We expect immigrants to be more likely than non-immigrants to vote in national elections and to try to convince their friends to change their political opinions."²⁵ On the whole, each migrant's experience makes him more politically active, even if it was one year low-skilled labor.

However, Cassarino²⁶ argues that models of the impact of migrants on political life in the country of return are shaped by three interrelated elements: the reintegration situation in the country of origin; the duration and type of migration experience; and the circumstances motivating return in both the country of origin and the host country. The motivation for emigration and return of migrants is crucial in calculating the likely outcome of migrants' political activity.

To conclude, when it comes to the analysis of return migration and its effect on democracy there are some main problems. First of all, it is an accurate calculation and determination of the number of return migrants, as sometimes, return migrants are not registered either at checkpoints or within the country as returned migrants. Thus, it is often not possible to have fully reliable statistics on the flow of return migrants. What is more, it is quite hard to determine the effects, which return migrants impose to improve democracy, as there are no official documents on this topic, rather than theory researches according to some polls, which sometimes cannot fully show the real situation.

²⁴ See: R. Perruchoud, *International Migration Law*, Glossary on Migration, International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2005.

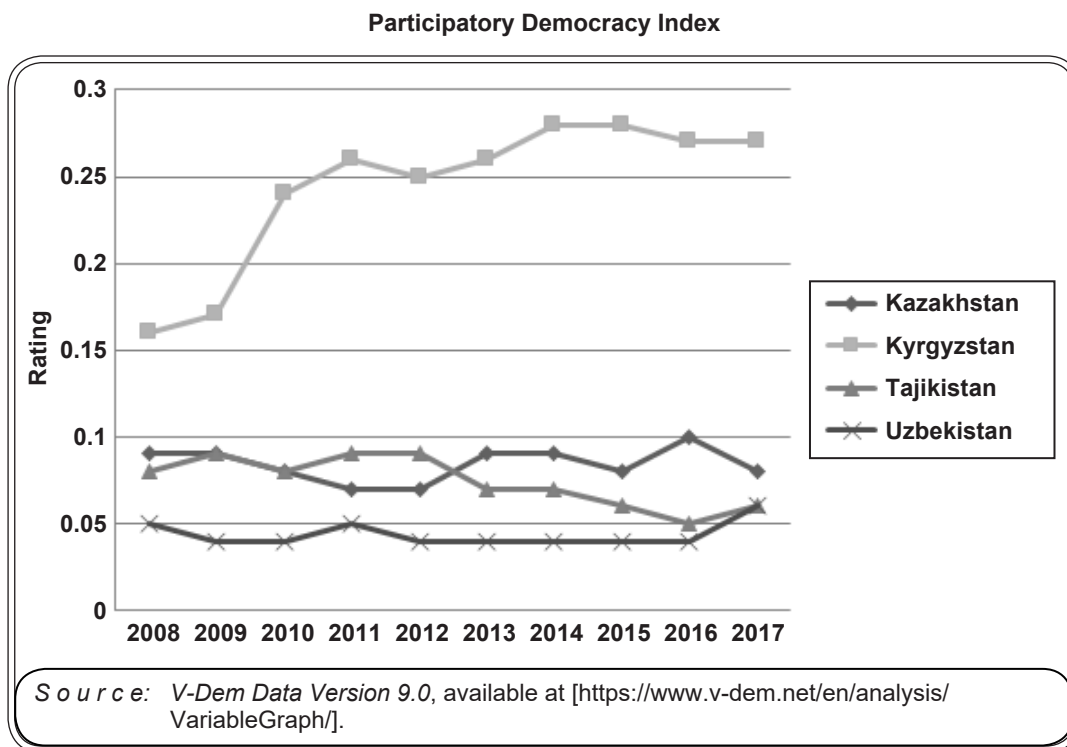
²⁵ See: R. Careja, P. Emmenegger, *op. cit.*, p. 883.

²⁶ See: J.P. Cassarino, *op. cit.*

Demand for Democracy

Speaking about remittances' effect on democracy in the migrant's country of origin, we can say that "international migration may be proxying for important local financial characteristics, so that international remittances may also matter as determinants of the desire for a better governance."²⁷ That means that if remittances positively stimulate economy they also improve the recipients' quality of life and that is why their desire for better governance increases. However, practically all the researches on this topic are made for well-established democratic states (Western Europe, North America and Australia). When we investigate Russia, we should keep in mind that it has a low democratic position and is marked as authoritarian regime²⁸. In Fig. 1 we can observe to what extent the ideal of participatory democracy is achieved in CIS countries of Central Asia, from low to high (0-1).

Figure 1



The participatory principle of democracy emphasizes active participation by citizens in all political processes, electoral and non-electoral. It is motivated by uneasiness about a bedrock practice of electoral democracy: delegating authority to representatives. This model of democracy thus takes suffrage for granted, emphasizing engagement in civil society organizations, direct democracy, and subnational elected bodies.²⁹ It is clear that only Kyrgyzstan has a significant increase during 2009-

²⁷ See: C. Batista, P.C. Vicente, op. cit., p. 13.

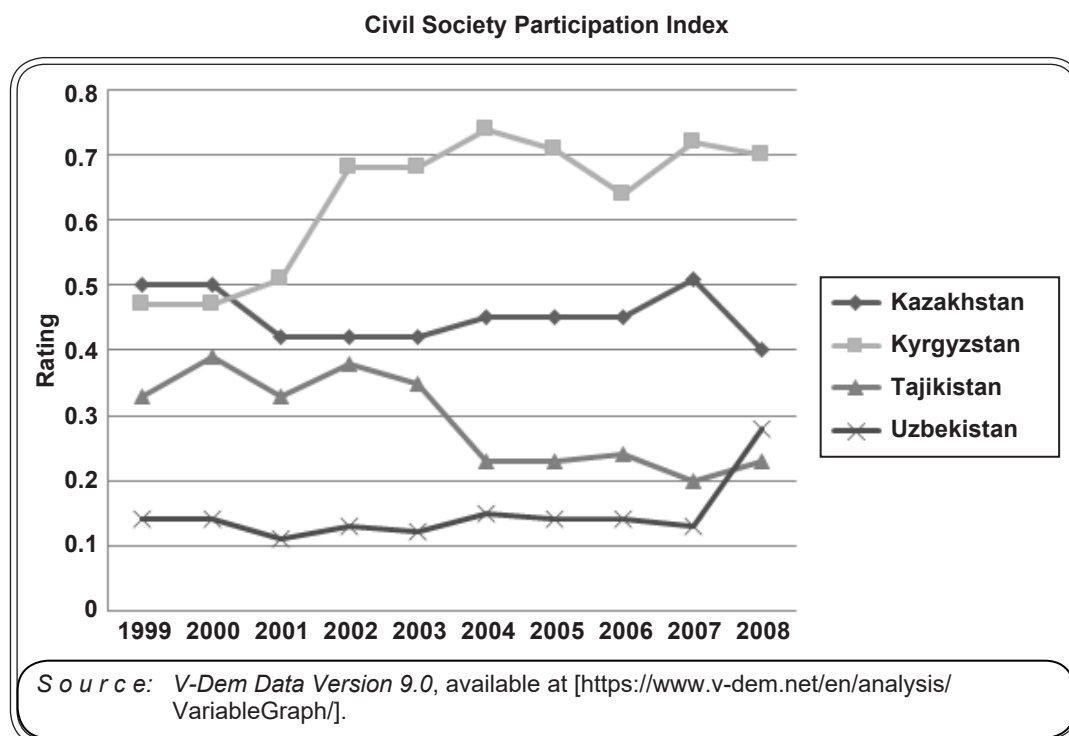
²⁸ See A. Maida, "Online and On All Fronts. Russia's Assault on Freedom of Expression," Human Rights Watch, 2017, available at [https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/07/18/online-and-all-fronts/russias-assault-freedom-expression].

²⁹ See: M. Coppedge, J. Gerring, C.H. Knutsen, S.I. Lindberg, J. Teorell, D. Altman, M. Bernhard, M.S. Fish, A. Glynn, A. Hicken, A. Lührmann, K.L. Marquardt, K. McMann, P. Paxton, D. Pemstein, B. Seim, R. Sigman, S-E. Skaaning, J. Staton,

2010 up to 0.26. During this period Kyrgyzstan had the largest remittance inflow growth up to 6% of GDP (26%). However, there is no clear correlation with other countries, as their participatory democracy index remains stable, but their amount of transfers as well as remittance inflow to the country's GDP (%) was irrational with significant ups and downs.

To get a clear overlook we should refer to civil society participation index. The sphere of civil society lies in the public space between the private sphere and the state. Here, citizens organize in groups to pursue their collective interests and ideals. The core civil society index is designed to provide a measure of a robust civil society, understood as one that enjoys autonomy from the state and in which citizens freely and actively pursue their political and civic goals. The index is formed by taking the point estimates from a Bayesian factor analysis model of the indicators for candidate selection—national/local, CSO consultation, CSO participatory environment and CSO women participation with interval, from low to high (0-1).³⁰

Figure 2



On this chart we can notice that Kyrgyzstan has the highest values of civil society participation among other countries with a rapid soar in 2010-2011 from 0.5 to 0.7. What is more that increase emerged right after participatory democracy situation became better, so it can be its consequence. Also, Kyrgyzstan has a moderate fall from 0.74 in 2013 up to 0.64 in 2015 and then a slight climb

S. Wilson, A. Cornell, L. Gastaldi, H. Gjerløw, N. Ilchenko, J. Krusell, L. Maxwell, V. Mechkova, J. Medzihorsky, J. Pernes, J. Römer, N. Stepanova, A. Sundström, E. Tzelgov, Y. Wang, T. Wig, D. Ziblatt, "V-Dem [Country-Year/Country-Date] Dataset v9," Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project, 2019, available at [https://doi.org/10.23696/vdemcy19].

³⁰ See: D. Pemstein, L. Kyle, M.E. Tzelgov, Y. Wang, J. Medzihorsky, J. Krusell, F. Miri, J. Römer, "The V-Dem Measurement Model: Latent Variable Analysis for Cross-National and Cross-Temporal Expert-Coded Data," *V-Dem Working Paper* No. 21. 4th edition, University of Gothenburg: Varieties of Democracy Institute, 2019.

in 2016. This climb coincided with the growth of a remittance inflow to the country's GDP (%). It is interesting to note that Tajikistan had the biggest drop from 2011 until 2013 (from 0.38 to 0.23), but these years on the contrary were the wealthiest in terms of received transfers (\$1,044m-\$4,173m) and remittance inflows to the country's GDP (41.8%-43.8%), so we can say that in this case the more remittances people got the less they became politically active. Kazakhstan and Tajikistan have common ups and downs until 2017, when they had a contrary increase and decrease, largest in 10 years. What is more, during 2009-2010 Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have a slight grow of remittance inflows to the country's GDP (0.7%-1.1%), but their civil society participation index has a slow drop (0.05-0.1).

Conclusion

To conclude, it is evidently that both return migration and migrant remittances can shape democratic situation in the donor country via multiple ways, such as

- *Relative ties; diaspora channels; return migration* (can raise the demand for improving political situation by influencing the moods of locals or undertaking democratization process by themselves).³¹
- *Private remittances* (undermining electoral support for incumbent parties and organizations; increasing existing financial resources of political opposition; improving local citizens' quality of life and their desire for better governance).³²

However, remittances influence democratization process in a selective way. Despite the fact that remittances allow to maintain social stability in the country, they do not contribute to the development of the country. Undoubtedly, they help population to survive and avoid extreme poverty, but in the long-term vision do not lead to qualitatively new changes and economic development of the state. All these factors can start democratization and forthcoming changes of regime. What is more, if recipients of remittances are opposition organizations, activists or just democratic foundations which advertise democratic principles and fight for human rights and freedom of speech, they possess much more capability to start democratic movements.

When it comes to investigated CIS countries of Central Asia, there is no strong correlation between remittances and return migration, on the one hand, and democratic demands, on the other. The main reason for this can be an unsatisfactory position of the Russian Federation among democratic rankings,³³ which makes it more difficult for migrants to distinguish positive aspects of democracy in action. The other reason for this process is a low civil society participation index in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. However, Kyrgyzstan remains the only country with a visible correlation of variables where growth of remittances produces direct growth of civil society participation index as well as participatory democracy index, which is the strongest among all other countries. One of the main reasons for this process is the social mentality of the Kyrgyz ethnic group. It is determined by the nomadic way of life, which implies freedom of choice. This is the key difference of the Kyrgyz from Tajiks and Uzbeks, whose sedentary lifestyle predetermines the desire to accept any form of government imposed by the leader.³⁴ That is why, in Kyrgyzstan, protests are more likely to arise and develop.

³¹ See: C. Batista, P.C. Vicente, op. cit.

³² See: A. Escriba-Folch, C. Meseguer, J. Wright, op. cit.

³³ See: A. Maida, op. cit.

³⁴ See: O. Brusina, A. Asankanov, A. Zhaparov, *Kyrgyzy, Narody i kultura* Series, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 2016, 623 pp.

Finally, we can state that remittances and return migration can really influence democracy in migrants' country of origin via multiple ways, however, the quality of governance in the recipient country as well as domestic situation in a donor country play a crucial role in this process.

THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF ENVIRONMENTAL MIGRATION IN THE CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES

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A B S T R A C T

Nowadays, increasing attention is paid to the impact of environmental change on society and the economies of countries because of the growing frequency and intensity of various adverse natural and man-made phenomena. In addition to their destructive effect on economic and social processes, they lead to the formation of specific migration flows, characterized by suddenness and complexity of forecasting. The article discusses the role of climatic and technological factors in economic, social, and migration processes in the countries of Central Asia. The study proved that, as a result of a steady increase in the population of Central Asian countries, anthropogenic pressure on the environment has significantly increased. The rise in average annual temperatures, which has accelerated with global warming, has an additional negative impact on the environmental situation. The study revealed that adverse environmental changes affect the living standards and working conditions of the rural population to a greater extent than those of urban dwellers. This fact is of particular importance because of the historically established patterns of settlement in the countries of Central Asia, where about half of the population lives in rural areas. For the region, the main negative consequences of global climate change are droughts, floods, desertification, and soil degradation. These processes

make it impossible to cultivate crops in certain areas, and this, given the large share of the agricultural sector, leads to additional risks in the form of a slowdown in economic growth and, consequently, a decline in the population's quality of life. At the same time, the adaptive capacity to counter these risks is quite low on account of social instability, conflicts, difficulties in socio-economic development, and institutional problems in emergency response systems. In recent years, the Central Asian countries have undertaken more and more initiatives in the field of ecology and climate change: projects to preserve mountain ecosystems in Kyrgyzstan, development of solar energy in Uzbekistan and wind energy in Kazakhstan, the establishment of an Ashgabad-based Regional Center for Climate Change Technologies for Central Asia, etc.¹

However, currently there are no specific national or international programs for managing environmental migration, whereas they could significantly reduce the social, economic, and environmental risks caused by population movements under the influence of negative environmental changes.

¹ "Turkmenistan initsiiuet sozhdanie Regionalnogo Tsentra po tekhnologiiim, sviazannym s izmeneniem klimata," Official website UN News, 16 March, 2015, available at [<https://news.un.org/ru/story/2015/03/1259881>], 20 February, 2020.

KEYWORDS: *climate change, ecology, environment, migration, Central Asia, Russian Federation, climate risks, security, adaptation.*

Introduction

Central Asia (CA) is a region exposed to various environmental hazards, both natural and man-made: droughts and floods, mudflows and avalanches, desertification and salinization of soils, dam failures and industrial disasters. For several decades now, environmental catastrophes in the region, such as the shrinking of the Aral Sea or radioactive contamination following nuclear tests at the Semi-

palatinsk Test Site, have attracted public attention throughout the world. All these problems, regardless of magnitude or frequency of occurrence, cause serious damage to the Central Asian economies and pose a real threat to stability in the region. A number of major studies that have appeared in recent years explore the impact of climate change on regional security² and socio-economic development in CA countries,³ the risks of natural disasters in Central Asia and ways to overcome them.⁴ But human migration is yet another important consequence of the worsening environmental situation.

Negative changes in the habitual human environment may be sudden and catastrophic or may develop slowly over many years, but in both cases they worsen people's living and economic conditions, inducing them to change their place of residence or to consider such a step. Migration is an integral part of life in any society and is always a complex process with multiple causes and complicated consequences. Migration flows triggered by changes in the environment have their specific features. It is particularly interesting and important to consider these in the context of the Central Asian region, with its specific natural and climatic conditions, uneven distribution of natural resources, polyethnic population, and socio-economic development problems. As of today, there are still no comprehensive studies on environmental migration covering the whole region. The purpose of this study is to make a general assessment of the trends in such migration processes and to outline the problems that are particularly relevant in this context from the perspective of ensuring sustainable development of the Central Asian countries.

Theoretical-Methodological and Statistical Issues in Environmental Migration Research

The very concept of environmental human migration has yet to take firm hold in Russian-language scientific discourse. We understand it as all human migrations (temporary and permanent, regular and irregular, forced and voluntary) directly or indirectly caused by adverse environmental conditions (such as natural and man-made disasters, as well as a gradual worsening of natural-climatic conditions or slow environmental degradation). One specific subtype of environmental migration is climate migration, that is, migration induced by climate change (changing temperature and precipitation patterns) and resulting natural cataclysms (droughts, floods, storms, landslides, etc.).

As for theoretical-methodological issues in studying migrations caused by environmental change, most scientific disputes revolve around the issue of how forced should a migration be to enable us to classify it as a special type of migration: climate and environmental, in contrast to labor migration. Even Norman Myers⁵ and Richard Black,⁶ who pioneered research in this area, differed in their views on this issue. Some current works on this problem, such as a 2011 study conducted for the European Parliament, say that people who decide to leave the affected area because of worsening living conditions under the impact of climate change while migration is not the only way for them to

² V. Novikov, C. Kelly *et al.*, *Climate Change and Security in Central Asia*, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2017, available at [<https://www.osce.org/secretariat/355471?download=true>], 13 December, 2019.

³ *Reaching Tipping Point? Climate Change and Poverty in Tajikistan*, ed. by A. Swarup, J. Magrath, R. English, Oxfam International, December 2009, p. 7.

⁴ Central Asia and Caucasus Disaster Risk Management Initiative (CAC DRMI). Risk Assessment for Central Asia and Caucasus: Desk Study Review, available at [https://www.preventionweb.net/files/11641_CentralAsiaCaucasusDRManagementInit.pdf], 28 November, 2019.

⁵ J. Myers, J. Kent, *Environmental Exodus: An Emergent Crisis in the Global Arena*, Climate Institute, Washington D.C., 1995, 214 pp.

⁶ R. Black, *Refugees, Environment and Development*, Longman, London, 1998, 229 pp.

sustain their livelihoods should not be classified as environmental migrants.⁷ But most of the recent studies are based on a different approach, which recognizes that migration induced by environmental factors can be both forced and voluntary.

In our opinion, the second point of view is more balanced and reasonable, because such an approach makes it possible to study environmental changes and their impact on socio-economic and socio-demographic processes while capturing their natural relationship in its entirety, which significantly increases the predictive capacity of such studies, providing wider opportunities for the practical use of their results. In reality, the mechanisms whereby environmental changes indirectly affect an individual's decision to migrate are extremely diverse and can manifest themselves in different areas of society's life: demographic processes (morbidity, mortality, changes in population size and density); economic situation (urbanization, decline in agricultural productivity) and socio-economic situation (changes in employment); social conditions (such as changes in the traditional roles of men and women in rural households); political situation (legislation, migration policy, relations with neighboring states); security of the state and society (threats to food security, scarcity of resources, conflicts, and rising crime); cultural norms (such as people's attitudes to the environment, issues of poverty, and migrants), and human psychology (diminished sense of security, loss of confidence in the future, other risk perceptions, etc.).

However, with this approach the researcher is bound to encounter difficulties in obtaining statistical data. At present, there is only one open resource that provides information on the number of persons displaced within a country (internally displaced persons) because of natural disasters: the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC). Statistical accounting of environmental migrants in the broad sense of the term is very difficult for a number of reasons. First of all, there is no single definition of environmental migrants for statistical purposes in international practice. Moreover, in the case of irregular, voluntary displacements, information about their causes can only be collected if the migrants themselves report them to registration agencies. But if people change their place of residence because they can no longer engage in their usual economic activities in view of environmental changes, they will probably cite job seeking as the reason for migration instead of environmental factors.

Thus, existing empirical data are very scarce and do not allow us to present an exhaustive picture of environmental migration flows, which is why in our study we mainly relied on indirect data and aimed to outline the general trends in migration processes induced by climate change and environmental degradation. Central Asia is an extremely vulnerable region in this respect because, owing to its specific natural and geographical conditions, it is highly exposed to the negative consequences of environmental deterioration and has a low capacity to adapt to them owing to socio-economic development problems in most countries of the region.

Environmental and Climate Changes in the Central Asian Countries and Their Impact on Migration Flows

Most of the territory of all Central Asian countries is covered by desert and semi-desert plains, highlands, and plateaus. Climate varies from dry continental (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan) to subtropical and semi-desert (southern Tajikistan and Turkmenistan). The difference

⁷ G.F. Renaud *et al.*, "A Decision Framework for Environmentally Induced Migration," *International Migration*, Vol. 49, 2011, pp. 5-29.

between the mean temperatures of January (from -10°C to -25°C) and July (from 20°C to 25°C) is very significant. The region's flora and fauna are poor in species composition. Such ecosystems in themselves are just as functional as any other, but their objective specific features make them more vulnerable to climate change and anthropogenic impacts. An active fight against desertification in the Central Asian republics was carried on in the U.S.S.R. from the mid-20th century.⁸

Today, anthropogenic pressure on the natural environment has multiplied because of a steady increase in the size of the population, while global climate change caused by rising global temperatures has already had a noticeable effect on people's daily life. For example, annual mean temperature in Central Asia in the past 30 years has been rising at an average rate of 0.5°C per decade.⁹ At the same time, the total population of the five CA countries has doubled or tripled in the past 50 years and continues to grow, which leads to an increase in anthropogenic pressure on the environment.

Central Asia's specific natural and climatic conditions leave an imprint on the socio-economic development of the CA countries, creating a number of specific risks. For example, according to the World Bank, average population density in these countries is 39.0 people per sq. km of land area,¹⁰ which is about two-thirds of the world average. However, the population of CA countries is distributed most unevenly across their territory, since vast areas are virtually uninhabited and are unfit for human habitation (high mountains, gorges, and deserts). In the first place, such population density patterns make densely populated areas particularly vulnerable to natural and man-made disasters and significantly limit the choice of areas suitable for the settlement of potential migrants obliged to leave their permanent place of residence because of adverse climatic or anthropogenic events.

In *Kazakhstan*, 21% of the total population is concentrated in three large cities: Nur-Sultan, Almaty, and Shymkent, with population densities of 1,353.1, 2,715.5 and 867.7 people per sq. km, respectively.¹¹ There is a similar situation in most other Central Asian republics. In Dushanbe, the capital of *Tajikistan*, population density is as high as 8,314 people per sq. km, while in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region it is 3.5 people per sq. km.¹² In *Uzbekistan*, 7% of the population lives in the city of Tashkent, with a density of 7,380 people per sq. km. At the same time, densities in the country's provinces (regions) do not exceed 700 people per sq. km, while the figure for Navoiy Region is only 8.6 people per sq. km.¹³ In *Kyrgyzstan*, the situation is somewhat better. Although 16% of the population lives in its capital, Bishkek, population densities are also significant in the Chuy and Osh regions: 47 and 46 people per sq. km, respectively. The only sparsely populated region in the country is Naryn Region, with a density of 6 people per sq. km.¹⁴ As for *Turkmenistan*, there are no publicly available exact data on the territorial distribution of the population. The most densely populated provinces are the Dashoguz Welayat (with more than 19 people per sq. km) and the Mary Welayat (about 17.5 people per sq. km), while the lowest density is in the Balkan Welayat (about 4 people per sq. km).¹⁵

⁸ I.S. Zonn, V.N. Nikolayev, N.S. Orlovsky, I.P. Svintsov, *Opyt borby s opustynivaniem v SSSR*, ed. by A.G. Babayev, Corresponding Member of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1981, 115 pp.

⁹ Calculated using data from [<https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/>].

¹⁰ Calculated using World Bank Open Data, available at [<https://data.worldbank.org/>], 4 December, 2019.

¹¹ *Demograficheski yezhegodnik Kazakhstana 2019*, Statistical Yearbook, available at [www.stat.gov.kz], 10 December, 2019.

¹² *Demograficheski yezhegodnik Respubliki Tadjikistan 2018*, Agency on Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, available at [<http://stat.wv.tj/publications/June2019/demographic-yearbook-2018.pdf>], 10 December, 2019.

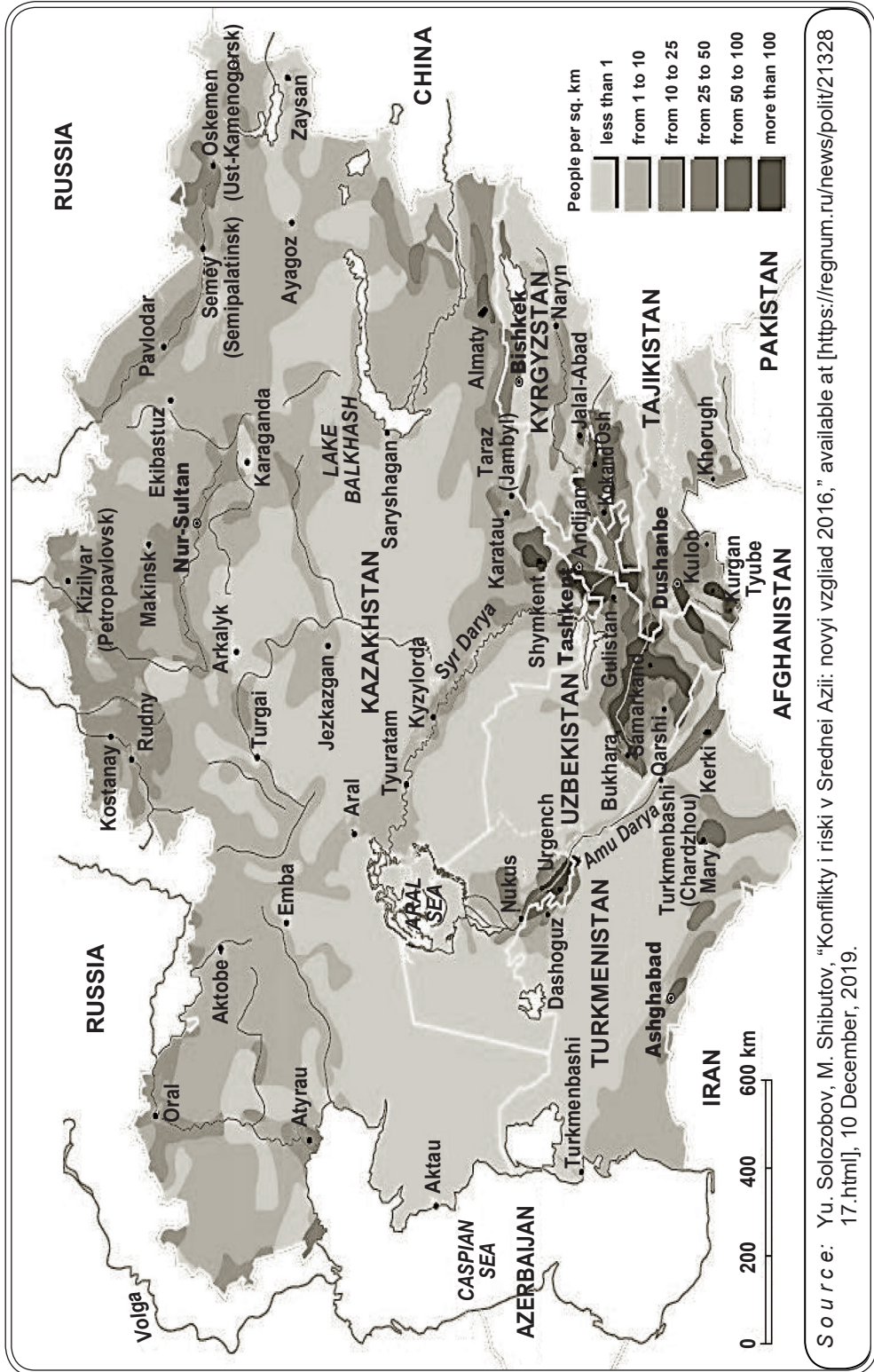
¹³ *Statistika yestestvennogo dvizheniya naseleniya*, State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, available at [<https://stat.uz/ru/164-ofytsyalnaia-statystika-ru/6569-demografiya2>], 10 December, 2019.

¹⁴ *Demograficheski yezhegodnik Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki 2014-2018*, available in Russian at [<http://www.stat.kg/ru/publications/demograficheskij-yezhegodnik-kyrgyzskoj-respubliki/>], 10 December, 2019.

¹⁵ Official website of the Academy of Sciences of Turkmenistan, available at [<https://science.gov.tm/turkmenistan/>], 10 December, 2019.

Figure 1

Population Density in the Central Asian Countries



Source: Yu. Solozobov, M. Shibutov, "Konfliktki i riski v Srednei Azii: novyi vzgliad 2016," available at [<https://regnum.ru/news/polit/2132817.html>], 10 December, 2019.

In such conditions, the relationship between human migration and the environmental situation is reversed: a concentration of people in areas least exposed to natural disasters and less affected by environmental degradation regardless of their ecological capacity leads to ineffective environmental management, excessive anthropogenic pressure, and ultimately to deterioration of living conditions in these areas.

Adverse environmental changes have a greater impact on working and living conditions in rural areas compared to urban ones, which is why migration of rural dwellers will increase faster with environmental degradation and climate change. Overall, the Central Asian countries have a relatively low (below the world average) level of urbanization. In Tajikistan, the percentages of the population living in rural areas (72.9%) and those employed in agriculture (50.8%) are particularly large. In Kyrgyzstan, more than half of the population (63.7%) also lives in rural areas, but employment in the agricultural sector is relatively low (26.3%). In Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, about half of the population (48.4% and 49.5%, respectively) lives in rural areas, and the figure for Kazakhstan is 42.6%, with only 14.9% of the population actually engaged in crop and livestock production.¹⁶

Climate change and resulting natural disasters pose a particular threat to agricultural areas, because they not only compel people to leave their habitual place of residence, but often make it necessary for them to abandon their normal economic activities. For example, droughts and floods, desertification and soil degradation eventually make it impossible to cultivate crops in some areas. In the case of the Central Asian countries, global warming only exacerbates these processes, which were already underway in the region owing to its specific natural features.

Thus, a decline in agricultural productivity threatens the livelihoods of a significant part of the population of Central Asia. High-risk zones in this respect include the northern part of Kazakhstan (the main grain-producing area) and the Ferghana Valley (the most fertile lands in the region). A decline in agricultural productivity in these areas will threaten food security in Central Asia. The situation is compounded by the narrow range of crops in the CA countries. Tajikistan, for example, has traditionally been a cotton-growing area. This system emerged in the Soviet period, but in the event of a crisis it will be unstable without the distribution system that was supported by the centrally planned economy of the U.S.S.R.

Another serious risk for the population is water scarcity, which will increase as annual mean temperatures rise. According to the forecasts of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC),¹⁷ Central Asia will see continued melting of mountain glaciers that feed the region's major rivers, Amu Darya and Syr Darya, as well as numerous small rivers, accounting for up to 70% of their flow in dry periods. For example, the Fedchenko Glacier, a major glacier in the Pamir Mountains, is retreating at a rate of 16-20 meters a year, and this, according to some estimates, could reduce the Amu Darya flow by 40% in the near future.¹⁸

The shortage of fresh water is in itself a driver of migration. In addition, it has a harmful effect on the productivity of irrigated lands and pastures, which may trigger a massive food crisis. Ultimately it may cause ethnic and even interstate conflicts and armed clashes, when people will be obliged to move in order to escape the violence. Such events have already taken place in Central Asia. For example, there were serious clashes over water distribution between Tajiks and Kyrgyz in the villages of Vorukh-Tangi (1982), in Match Aktatyr (1988), and in the Batken District (1998).¹⁹

¹⁶ World Bank Open Data, available at [<https://data.worldbank.org/>], 4 December, 2019.

¹⁷ IPCC Fifth Assessment Report, *Climate Change: The Physical Science Basis*, available at [<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg1/>], 12 February, 2020.

¹⁸ *Reaching Tipping Point? Climate Change and Poverty in Tajikistan*, p. 7.

¹⁹ A.G. Bolshakov, "The Foreign Policy of Kirghizstan in the Context of Conflicts' Change in the Post-Soviet States," *Russia and the Muslim World. Science-Information Bulletin*, INION RAN, Center of Scientific Information Studies in Humanities, Moscow, No. 6, 2011, pp. 58-71.

Apart from that, reductions and sharp increases in river flow, which become more frequent as mountain glaciers melt and the number of droughts and floods increases, pose a serious threat to the energy security of countries that depend on hydropower resources. Hydropower accounts for more than 98% of total power generation in Tajikistan and 85% in Kyrgyzstan. If hydropower plants stop supplying electricity, people in these countries will be forced to cut down forests, and this will lead to further environmental degradation. The seriousness of these threats is illustrated by the crisis that occurred in Tajikistan in 2007 and 2008, when there was a long drought in the summer followed by the coldest winter in decades. The exceptionally cold weather destroyed agricultural crops and livestock; energy systems failed; the total damage to the economy was close to \$850 million; about 2.2 million citizens were short of food; electricity in the cities was supplied for only a few hours a day, while some rural areas were without electricity for weeks.²⁰ There are no data on the number of people who decided to change their place of residence under the impact of these factors, but it is obvious that compound socio-economic crises always increase migration flows from the affected areas.

Another serious complex problem in the region is the catastrophe of the Aral and Caspian seas. Their rapid shrinking has sharply reduced species diversity, dealing a serious blow to fisheries, and has led to desertification and salinization of soils. According to U.N. data, particularly severe droughts in the Aral Sea area in the early 1990s and then in the early 2000s led to the migration of thousands of people, some of whom have never returned to their previous place of residence.²¹ Former ports and health resorts are disappearing. For example, the settlement of Qozoqdaryo in north-west Uzbekistan shrank from 14 thousand to 4 thousand people from 1975 to 2005.²² In 1994-1995, about 20 thousand people annually left the Aral Kzyl-Orda (now Kyzylorda) Region of Kazakhstan, with about half of them going to other countries.²³ In recent years, grant assistance to people living around the Aral Sea has been provided not only by the local authorities, but also by international organizations and distant countries. In 2018, the United Nations established a Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund²⁴ for the Aral Sea Region, and contributions have already been made by the European Union (\$5.57 million) and Norway (\$1.12 million)²⁵; a contribution of \$3.2 million is expected from Japan.²⁶

People living in mountain areas are also under threat, since climate change increases the risk of avalanches and mudflows. In Soviet times, many of them were forcibly resettled from the mountains to the lowlands as a source of labor for the development of agriculture, but after the breakup of the U.S.S.R. and the attainment of independence by the Central Asian republics they began to return to their native lands.²⁷ At present, the government of Tajikistan provides assistance to the inhabitants of

²⁰ *Reaching Tipping Point? Climate Change and Poverty in Tajikistan*, p. 9.

²¹ *Appraisal Reports on Priority Ecological Problems in Central Asia. United Nations Environment Programme for Asia and the Pacific, and Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development*, 2006, available at [<http://cawater-info.net/library/eng/icsd2-en.pdf>], 20 February 2020.

²² "Ubitoye more," RBC Newspaper website, available at [<https://www.rbc.ru/society/25/10/2012/5703fe819a7947fcb441c88>], 20 February, 2020.

²³ N.F. Glazovsky, N.V. Kudinova, L.Yu. Odinkova, V.N. Streletsky, A.S. Shestakov, *Migratsii naseleniia v stranakh SNG, sviazannye s opustynivaniem i zasukhoi*, Moscow, 2000, pp. 83-84.

²⁴ "UN Launches New Fund to Advance Sustainable Development in Aral Sea Region," UN News, 27 November, 2018, available at [<https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/11/1026701>], 25 February, 2020.

²⁵ "UN MPTF Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region in Uzbekistan," Trust Fund Factsheet, MPTF UNDP, available at [<http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/ARL00>], 25 February, 2020.

²⁶ "Yaponiia vydelit \$3.2 mln na pomoshch zhiteliam Priaralia," REGNUM News Agency website, available at [<https://regnum.ru/news/2813691.html>], 25 February, 2020.

²⁷ *Sustainable Mountain Development. From Rio 1992 to 2012 and Beyond. Central Asia Mountains*, ed. by G. Hughes, University of Central Asia, Zoi Environment Network, Mountain Partnership, GRID-Arendal, 2012, available at [<https://www.ucecentralasia.org/Content/Downloads/web-CAF-Central-Asia-Mountains.pdf>], 18 February, 2020.

the most threatened areas, allocating funds for their resettlement to safer areas as “environmental migrants.”²⁸

Radioactive contamination remains a serious problem for areas in eastern Kazakhstan around the Semipalatinsk Test Site, where numerous nuclear tests were conducted starting from 1949. In 1991, the site was closed entirely by decree of the President of the Kazakh S.S.R.; the adjacent areas were declared to be an environmental disaster zone, and a program was launched to clean up and restore these areas. Since then, a total of 1.3 million people have been officially recognized as victims of radioactive contamination.²⁹ The exact number of migrants who have left the areas around the test site for fear of radiation is unknown because of the classified nature of the information on its work.

Environmental Migration as a Strategy for Adapting to Environmental Change and as a New Threat to National Security

Thus, the environmental situation in Central Asia carries numerous risks for the population and the economy of the CA countries, while their adaptive capacity to counter these risks is quite low. In terms of vulnerability to climate change, according to an index compiled by the World Bank (see Fig. 2 on p. 153), Tajikistan ranks first, Kyrgyzstan third, Uzbekistan sixth, and Turkmenistan seventh among all Eastern European and Central Asian countries. Although their actual exposure to the impacts of climate change is not very high (significantly lower, for example, than Russia’s), their socio-economic systems and infrastructures are very sensitive to such impacts. Moreover, all these countries have lower adaptive capacity to the negative effects of climate change because of their low economic development level and living standards, as well as social instability, potential for conflict, and poorly organized work of the complex of measures and specialized agencies designed to combat natural disasters and eliminate their consequences.

World Bank statistics on the number of people affected by natural disasters caused by climate change in the Central Asian countries for 1990-2018 confirm that Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are indeed the most affected countries in this respect. Most of the damage is caused by floods, droughts, and extreme (extremely high or extremely low) temperatures (see Table 1).

Table 1

**Number of People Affected by Natural Disasters
(Climatological, Hydrological, and Meteorological)
in the Central Asian Countries in 1990-2017**

Year	People Affected	Disaster Type	Country
1990	280	Flood	Tajikistan
1992	63,500	Flood	Tajikistan

²⁸ Law of the Republic of Tajikistan on Migration, available in Russian at [<http://tajmigration.ru/zakon-respubliki-tadzhikistan-o-migracii.html>], 18 February, 2020.

²⁹ “Medvedev zaveril, chto Semipalatinski iadernyi poligon bolee ne opasen,” RIA Novosti news agency website, available at [<https://ria.ru/20180829/1527283626.html>], 25 February, 2020.

Table 1 (continued)

Year	People Affected	Disaster Type	Country
1993	30,420	Flood	Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan
	75,357	Landslide	Tajikistan
1994	6,051	Flood	Tajikistan
	58,500	Landslide	Kyrgyzstan
1996	180,000	Flood	Tajikistan
1997	600,000	Extreme temperature	Kazakhstan
	8,000	Fire	Kazakhstan
1998	49,618	Flood	Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan
1999	9,392	Flood	Tajikistan
	1,500	Storm	Tajikistan
2000	2,500	Flood	Kazakhstan
	3,600,000	Drought	Tajikistan, Uzbekistan
2001	5,858	Flood	Kazakhstan, Tajikistan
	12	Extreme temperature	Kazakhstan
	165	Landslide	Tajikistan
	830	Storm	Tajikistan
2002	4,251	Flood	Tajikistan
	1,002	Landslide	Kyrgyzstan
2003	1,755	Flood	Tajikistan
	6,392	Landslide	Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan
2004	400,000	Flood	Tajikistan
	98	Landslide	Kyrgyzstan
2005	33,662	Flood	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan
	1,953	Landslide	Tajikistan
2006	13,728	Landslide	Tajikistan
	9,075	Storm	Kyrgyzstan
2007	18,154	Flood	Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan
2008	13,000	Flood	Kazakhstan
	800,000	Drought	Tajikistan
	2,000,000	Extreme temperature	Tajikistan
2009	15,000	Flood	Tajikistan

Table 1 (continued)

Year	People Affected	Disaster Type	Country
2010	37,822	Flood	Kazakhstan, Tajikistan
	8,350	Landslide	Kyrgyzstan
2011	18,130	Flood	Kazakhstan, Tajikistan
2012	25,956	Flood	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan
	5,000	Extreme temperature	Kazakhstan
2013	2,500	Extreme temperature	Tajikistan
2014	15,932	Flood	Kazakhstan, Tajikistan
2015	23,472	Flood	Kazakhstan, Tajikistan
2016	12,750	Flood	Tajikistan
2017	7,700	Flood	Kazakhstan, Tajikistan
	55	Landslide	Kyrgyzstan

Source: Compiled using data from: World Bank Climate Change Knowledge Portal [<https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/>], 1 March, 2020.

In such conditions, migration becomes one of the main strategies for adapting to adverse climate changes and the resulting decline in living standards. Recent studies by the U.N. Human Rights Council show that climate change exacerbates existing poverty and inequality both between and within countries.³⁰ At the same time, low living standards reduce people's capacity to adapt to changing environmental conditions.³¹ Poverty is a traditional problem in most Central Asian countries (except Kazakhstan). According to the latest data, the percentage of the population living on less than \$5.5 a day (in 2011 PPP terms) is 96% in Uzbekistan, 93% in Turkmenistan, 66% in Kyrgyzstan, and 54% in Tajikistan.³² The poverty rate among the rural population is even higher. For many families, temporary labor migration has become one of the main sources of livelihood.³³ In 2018, migrant remittances from abroad amounted to 33.2% of GDP in Kyrgyzstan, 29% in Tajikistan, and 15.1% in Uzbekistan.³⁴

In the event of further environmental degradation, which, according to the latest estimates of climatologists, is almost inevitable,³⁵ migration flows will intensify. In 2008-2018, according to the IDMC, the number of people obliged to leave their homes without crossing international borders (internally displaced persons) because of sudden-onset natural disasters was 46,930 persons in Ka-

³⁰ Climate Change and Poverty. Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights. United Nations Human Rights Council, 24 June-12 July, 2019, available at [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Poverty/A_HRC_41_39.pdf], 25 February, 2020.

³¹ M. Fay, R.I. Block, J. Ebinger, op. cit.

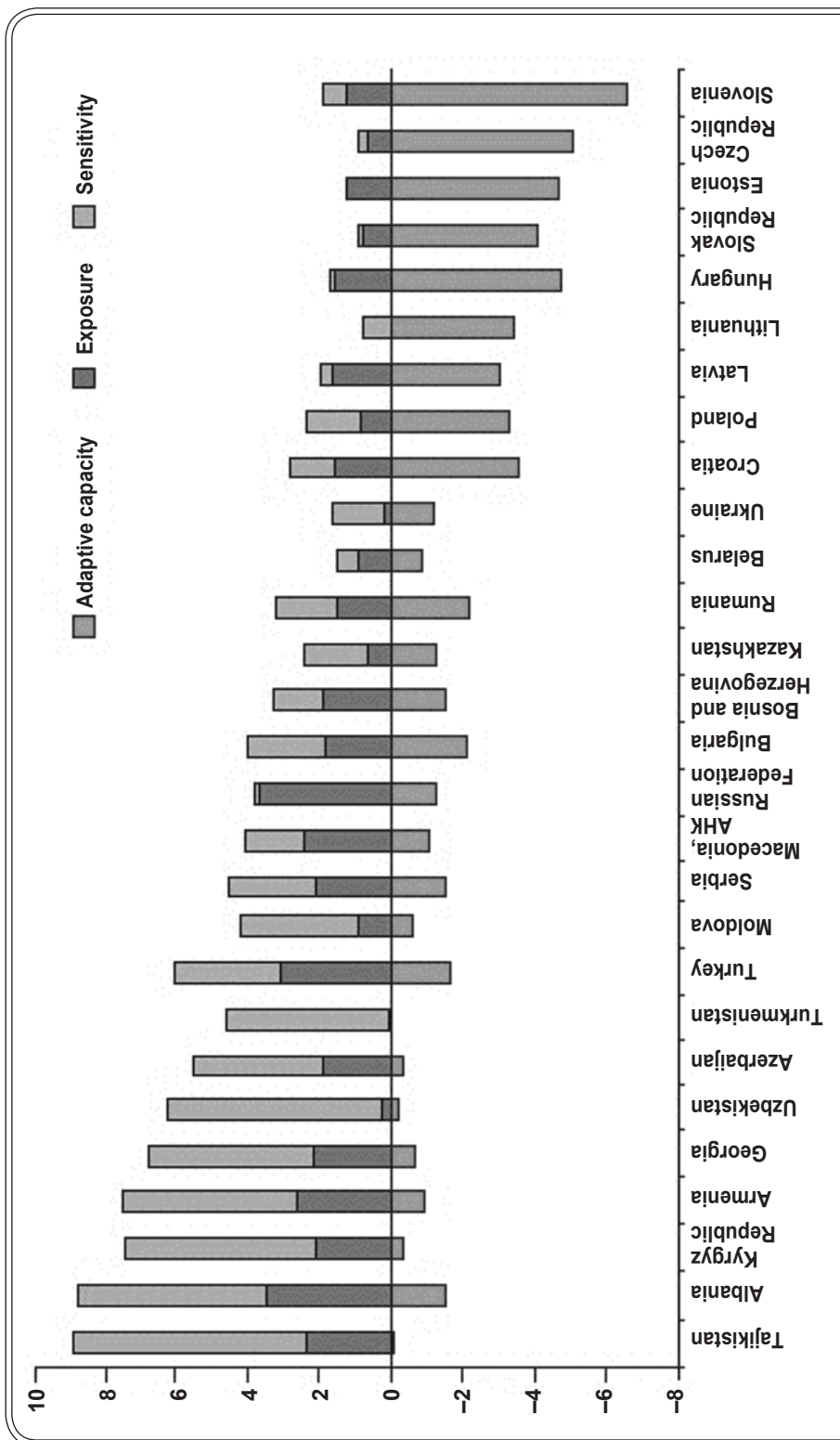
³² World Bank Open Data, available at [<https://data.worldbank.org/>], 10 December, 2019.

³³ S.V. Ryazantsev, N. Khoriye, *Modelirovaniye potokov trudovoi migratsii iz stran Tsentralnoi Azii v Rossiiu'' ekonomiko-sotsiologicheskoiye issledovaniye*, Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Socio-Political Research et al, Nauchnyi mir, Moscow, 2011, 189 pp.

³⁴ World Bank Open Data, 10 December, 2019.

³⁵ IPCC Fifth Assessment Report. Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects, available at [<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg1/>], 2 February, 2020.

Figure 2
Index of Vulnerability to Climate Change for Eastern European and Central Asian Countries



Source: M. Fay, R.I. Block, J. Ebinger, *Adapting to Climate Change in Eastern Europe and Central Asia*, 2010, The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank, p. 21.

zakhstan, 33,020 persons in Tajikistan, and 15,039 persons in Kyrgyzstan.³⁶ Our research has shown, however, that these data do not fully reflect the actual scale of environmental migration because, in the case of slow negative environmental changes, environmental factors driving migration act in combination with a complex set of socio-economic factors. As a result, they generate much larger migration flows than sudden-onset natural disasters, but statistical accounting of such migrants is extremely difficult, because they themselves often do not see environmental problems as the main reason for their resettlement.³⁷ This is also confirmed by opinion surveys conducted in Tajikistan by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in 2011-2012: migration caused by slow environmental degradation (in this case, soil degradation in the Isfara District, Sughd Province) is rarely understood as “environmental migration” either by the local authorities in charge of resettlement or by the migrants themselves.³⁸ Nevertheless, the scale of such migration could be vast: by 2050, according to World Bank projections, the number of internal climate migrants alone in only three regions of the world—Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America—could reach 150 million.³⁹

As already noted, migration often becomes the only livelihood strategy for the population of affected areas. When it comes to sudden-onset natural disasters, this kind of migration, as a rule, is temporary, but case studies show that some of the migrants leaving their homes never return, especially if natural disasters in this area are a regular occurrence.⁴⁰ In the event of gradual environmental degradation, labor migration, on the contrary, keeps people from leaving their place of residence by allowing the families of labor migrants to stay home and to continue working in agriculture despite its declining productivity. Most researchers believe that additional barriers to migration designed to protect the labor markets of neighboring countries (particularly Russia) from an influx of migrants from Central Asia will have an adverse effect on regional security and stability.⁴¹ Other constraints on environmental migration can include extreme poverty of the population, which makes it impossible to save enough money for moving, and in the case of multiethnic countries, the ethnic factor. For example, the population of the Aral Republic of Karakalpakstan (part of Uzbekistan) has continued to grow over the past few decades despite the ongoing disaster of the Aral Sea.⁴² On the other hand, excessive migration in itself threatens both the region’s socio-economic development and its environmental well-being.⁴³ Since the environmental situation in most cases acts as an additional push factor for labor migrants, its deterioration will exacerbate all problems associated with labor migration: hyper-urbanization and pseudo-urbanization in the case of internal migration; and a brain drain, a drain of people of working age in general, and dependence on remittances from abroad in the case of international migration. Along with this, excessive migration involving a concentration of people in population centers with a high level of environmental well-being or business activity will compound the specific problems and risks associated with the state of the environment. First of all, a sharp

³⁶ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre Database, available at [<https://www.internal-displacement.org/database>], 2 March, 2020.

³⁷ A.S. Lukyanets, S.V. Ryazantsev, A.S. Maksimova, E.M. Moiseeva, R.V. Manshin, “Theoretical, Methodological and Statistical Problems of Studying Environmental Migration,” *Amazonia Investiga*, Vol. 8, No. 19, 2019, pp. 227-236.

³⁸ Environmental Degradation, Migration, Internal Displacement, and Rural Vulnerabilities in Tajikistan, International Organization for Migration, 2012, available at [<http://iom.tj/pubs/eco-eng.pdf>], 15 December, 2019.

³⁹ K.K. Rigaud, Alex de Sherbinin, R.R. Jones *et al.* Groundswell: Preparing for Internal Climate Migration, World Bank Group, Washington, D.C., 2018, available at [<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/846391522306665751/Main-report>], 28 September, 2019.

⁴⁰ *Ecological Migration and its Effects on Social Policies in Kyzylorda Province of Kazakhstan*, ed. by V. Nee, A. Tonkobaeva, A. Ilyasova, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Central Asia Office, 2013.

⁴¹ V. Novikov, C. Kelly *et al.*, *op. cit.*

⁴² *Demograficheski yezhegodnik Kazakhstana* 2019, Statistical Yearbook.

⁴³ A.S. Lukyanets, S.V. Ryazantsev, “Economic and Socio-Demographic Effects of Global Climate Change,” *International Journal of Economics and Financial Issues*, No. 6 (8S), 2016, p. 268-273.

increase in anthropogenic pressure may exceed the natural self-regeneration capacity of the host ecosystem. In addition, densely populated areas are more vulnerable to natural disasters because of inevitable difficulties in evacuating people and providing the necessary medical and material assistance.⁴⁴

In light of the mixed role of migration in the adaptation of countries in the region to environmental and climate change, it is obviously necessary to develop science-based programs that would be consistently implemented at the state level. First of all, it is necessary to identify the areas that are most exposed to the negative consequences of these processes and to assess their vulnerability, followed by a decision on the need for the planned relocation of their inhabitants. Particular attention should be paid to the state of rural areas. An important condition of successful agricultural development in a situation of climate change is the adoption of new technologies for rational environmental management. But poverty and a low level of environmental awareness among rural residents do not allow them to respond appropriately and in good time to soil degradation, water shortages or declining water quality, which is why the state should support agricultural production in areas where its continuation appears to be rational.

Today, the concept of “environmental migrant” is enacted in law in the Republic of Tajikistan⁴⁵ and the Kyrgyz Republic,⁴⁶ but in both cases it only applies to persons obliged to leave their place of residence because of “environmental disasters” or a “sudden sharp deterioration of the environment.” All Central Asian countries have their own ministries that deal with emergencies (in Turkmenistan, this service is subordinate to the Ministry of Defense). All countries have been implementing various projects designed to improve the environmental situation. Kyrgyzstan is the leader in research on protecting mountain ecosystems; Uzbekistan has achieved significant successes in developing solar energy and other “clean development” projects; Kazakhstan is making progress in the use of wind energy; and Turkmenistan is to host an Ashgabad-based Regional Center for Climate Change Technologies for Central Asia under the auspices of the United Nations. However, there are no large-scale environmental migration programs being implemented in the region. Considering the cross-border nature of many natural disasters and adverse environmental changes in Central Asia, international cooperation in this area could help to coordinate the actions and efforts to overcome them. Such joint regional projects to combat water scarcity and improve soil fertility could also help to reduce ethnic tensions in border areas and stabilize the overall situation in the region.

Conclusion

Our general assessment of environmental threats and their impact on migration processes in the Central Asian countries shows that the following areas are particularly vulnerable and carry the greatest risk: densely populated areas, mountain areas, floodplains, border areas, lands around the Aral Sea and the Semipalatinsk Test Site, and the main agricultural areas. Natural disasters such as floods, droughts, and extreme temperatures account for the greatest damage and the largest number of affected people. Organized relocation of people is practiced, as a rule, in the event of major riverine floods, as well as mudflows and landslides in the mountains. But people living in areas exposed to

⁴⁴ A.S. Lukyanets, Toan Khanh Nguen, S.V. Ryazantsev, V.S. Tikunov, Hai Hoang Pham, “Influence of Climatic Changes on Population Migration in Vietnam,” *Geography and Natural Resources*, Vol. 36, Issue 3, July 2015, pp. 313-317 [DOI: 10.1134/S1875372815030129].

⁴⁵ Law of the Republic of Tajikistan “On Migration,” available in Russian at [<http://tajmigration.ru/zakon-respubliki-tadzhikistan-o-migracii.html>], 3 March, 2020.

⁴⁶ Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On Internal Migration” (as amended by KR Law No. 144 of 16 October, 2002), available in Russian at [<http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/knigi/zakon/zakon092.html>], 3 March, 2020.

desertification and soil degradation and suffering from water scarcity or heavy water pollution often leave these areas on their own. These are usually migrations of the rural population faced with a decline in agricultural productivity. This tendency, which will increase as the environmental situation worsens, is a serious threat to the Central Asian countries, where the level of urbanization is low and the share of the agricultural sector in the economy is high. It creates risks for food security and increases social tension. The resulting conflicts over water and land distribution could develop into serious ethnic clashes.

For the Central Asian countries, the role of migration in adapting to climate change and environmental problems is ambivalent. On the one hand, it enhances the security of the people leaving affected areas and allows them to improve their living standards by finding new employment opportunities. In the long term, however, migration can only increase environmental vulnerability, leading to an excessive concentration of people in certain cities and in areas where natural disasters are particularly rare. Since environmental factors accelerate labor migration, the drain of skilled and other labor will increase as well.

In light of these problems, we think it is necessary to develop comprehensive national programs and international projects for adapting to climate change and addressing environmental problems with due attention to the regulation of migration flows, that is, their promotion, deterrence or redirection depending on the economic and environmental situation in certain countries and their districts. This task is particularly important for the Central Asian region, which is multiethnic but has common problems and development goals.
