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## REGIONAL POLICY

CAUCASIAN TANDEM AND  
THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

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## ABSTRACT

**T**he paper discusses the issues of the joint role of Azerbaijan and Georgia, or the “Caucasian Tandem,” in Beijing’s Belt and Road Initiative global project. Proceeding from the Caucasian Tandem’s experience in establishing and operation of the Silk Road Transport Corridor, the chief challenges of the Silk Road Economic Belt implementation are examined.

*In the context of the Russian geopolitical theory of Eurasianism and the historical*

*experience of overcoming the Moscow-driven challenges in establishing the Silk Road Transport Corridor, the article analyzes potential hindrances in implementing the segment of the Silk Road Economic Belt that should traverse the Central Caucasus.*

*Special emphasis is placed on the Russian project of the Greater Eurasian Partnership or Community, as a more broad-scale reinterpretation of the Eurasian Economic Union, which Moscow considers an alternative*

to Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative project. A comparison of the major characteristics of Russia's and China's economic models allowed to determine that the Eurasian Economic Union, and all the more so the Greater Eurasian Partnership or Community, is unable to compete with the Belt and Road Initiative, although it can create certain geopolitical obstacles to its implementation.

The paper substantiates that in order to increase the efficiency of functioning of the Central Caucasian segment of the Silk Road Economic Belt, it is essential to transit from the alternative economic corridor paradigm (which is of a confrontational nature) to a paradigm of their mutual complementarity (which is of a healthy competitive nature). The mutual complementarity paradigm aims to harmonize the development of the corridors under consideration. Such an approach to economic corridors was once proposed to weaken the confrontational character of the transport and energy corridors traversing Russia and the Central Caucasus.

The Caucasian Tandem successfully plays the role of a transport and energy hub in the Silk Belt transport corridor system. The Belt and Road Initiative creates a potential opportunity for the transformation of this transport and energy hub into a more complex economic hub. It is in this context that the paper emphasizes the special role of Georgia, which will hold the primary burden in the creation of the trade and economic hub, since it is already involved in free trade relations with China, the European Union, and the European Free Trade Association. In order for these trading models to be utilized, the goods exported from Georgia to these regions have to be manufactured in Georgia, which increases its investment attractiveness.

Joint operation of the economic hub being created and the already functioning transport and energy hub in the Central Caucasus will establish great prospects for the Caucasian Tandem's economic development.

**KEYWORDS:** *Caucasian Tandem, Belt and Road Initiative, Silk Road Transport Corridor, Azerbaijan, Georgia, China, Russia, Eurasianism, transport and energy hub, economic hub.*

## *Introduction*

The relations between large and small countries, including economic relations, constitute a rather complicated phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> Owing to the difference in their size, a question of how equal their partnership can be in the geopolitical and geo-economic context arises from the outset. For instance, for Georgia, which is a small country, the economic (and not exclusively economic) relations with its northern neighbor, Russia,<sup>2</sup> turned out to be rather complicated; meanwhile the economic relations with the European Union (EU), another large economic space, seem hopeful.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The study of the economic aspects of a country's size is one of the priority directions in contemporary economic science (see, for instance: A. Alesina, E. Spolaore, *The Size of Nations*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 2003, 261 pp.).

<sup>2</sup> See: V. Papava, "Economic Component of the Russian-Georgian Conflict," *The Caucasus & Globalization*, Volume 6, Issue 1, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> See: V. Papava, "A Eurasian or a European Future for Post-Soviet Georgia's Economic Development: Which is Better?" *Archives of Business Research*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2017, available at [<http://scholarpublishing.org/index.php/ABR/article/view/2651/1554>], 25 March, 2018; A. Silagadze, T. Zubiashvili, "Parameters of the European Union and the Post-Soviet Georgia's Economy," *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Thought*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 2015.



Based upon the geopolitical and geo-economic characteristics of the Caucasus,<sup>4</sup> in the process of establishing a transport corridor connecting Europe and Asia, two Caucasian states, namely, Azerbaijan and Georgia, have formed the so-called Caucasian Tandem.<sup>5</sup> It is founded on the strategic and economic interests that these countries share, which made them join their efforts to implement large-scale transport and energy projects.<sup>6</sup>

In recent times, the trade and economic relations between China and Azerbaijan are acquiring increasingly greater significance.<sup>7</sup> The same claim can be made about the relations between China and Georgia.<sup>8</sup>

It is a fact that China is resolutely expanding the international trade and economic relations with both Azerbaijan and Georgia. It is only natural that a question emerges—why is it that, despite the complicated geopolitical situation in the Central Caucasus,<sup>9</sup> China is seeking to expand economic cooperation with Azerbaijan and Georgia, the two countries that are significantly geographically removed from it?

## On the Compatibility of the Belt and Road Initiative and the Functioning Silk Road Transport Corridor Projects

The Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR) are Beijing's new global projects, which together comprise the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance: K.S. Gadzhiev, *Geopolitika Kavkaza*, Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, Moscow, 2003, p. 463; *Non-Traditional Security Threats and Regional Cooperation in the Southern Caucasus*, ed. by M. Aydin, IOS Press BV, Amsterdam, 2011, 264 pp.; S.E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers. A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*, Curzon Press, Surrey, 2001, 480 pp.; E. Ismailov, V. Papava, *The Central Caucasus: Problems of Geopolitical Economy*, Nova Science Publishers, New York, 2008, 133 pp.; *The South Caucasus 2021: Oil, Democracy and Geopolitics*, ed. by F. Ismailzade, G.E. Howard, The Jamestown Foundation, Washington, DC, 2012, 354 pp.; E. Nuriyev, *The South Caucasus at the Crossroads: Conflicts, Caspian Oil and Great Power Politics*, LIT, Berlin, 2007, 370 pp.

<sup>5</sup> See: V. Papava, "Formation and Development of the 'Caucasian Tandem'," *Azerbaijan Focus*, Vol. 1 (1), June-August 2009.

<sup>6</sup> See: V. Papava, "On the Role of the 'Caucasian Tandem' in GUAM," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 3-4 (57-58), 2008.

<sup>7</sup> See: G. Dadashova, "Azerbaijan and China: Greater Integration," *AzerNews*, 23 May, 2016, available at [<https://www.azernews.az/nation/97015.html>], 25 March, 2018; T. Karelidze, "Azerbaijan Opens Beijing Trade Office," *Emerging Europe*, 6 February, 2018, available at [<http://emerging-europe.com/in-brief/azerbaijan-opens-beijing-trade-office/>], 25 March, 2018; A. Valiyev, "China Targets Azerbaijan for Transportation Projects," *Caspian Policy Center*, 22 March, 2017, available at [<http://www.caspianpolicy.org/news/china-targets-azerbaijan-for-transportation-projects/>], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> See: V. Charaia, *Trade and Investments Relations between Georgia and China*, Expert Opinion 94, Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, Tbilisi, 2017, available at [<https://www.gfsis.org/files/library/opinion-papers/94-expert-opinion-eng.pdf>], 25 March, 2018; J. Larsen, *Georgia-China Relations: The Geopolitics of the Belt and Road*, Policy Paper, October, Georgian Institute of Politics, Tbilisi, 2017, pp. 5-10, available at [[http://gip.ge/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Chineti%20Saqtartvelo%20Eng\\_Ydit.pdf](http://gip.ge/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Chineti%20Saqtartvelo%20Eng_Ydit.pdf)], 25 March, 2018; M. Zabakhidze, G. Bakradze, B. Kutelia, "Georgia and China: 'Carry away Small Stones to Move a Big Mountain'," *Economic Policy Research Center (EPRC)*, Issue No. 6, Tbilisi, 2017, pp. 13-16, available at [[https://www.eprc.ge/admin/editor/uploads/files/China\\_A5\\_WEB2.pdf](https://www.eprc.ge/admin/editor/uploads/files/China_A5_WEB2.pdf)], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>9</sup> According to the present authors, the Caucasus comprises three sub-regions: the Northern Caucasus is a part of Russia, the Southern Caucasus includes Turkey and Iran, while Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia constitute the Central Caucasus (see: E. Ismailov, V. Papava, "A New Concept for the Caucasus," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> See: G. Su, "The Belt and Road Initiative in Global Perspectives," *China International Studies*, No. 57, March/April, 2016.

Since the emergence of SREB project, the establishment of several economic corridors has been proposed (the New Eurasian Land Bridge, the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor, the Central Asia-Western Asia Economic Corridor, the Indochina Economic Corridor, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, and the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor).<sup>11</sup>

A segment of the Central Asia-Western Asia Economic Corridor traverses Azerbaijan and Georgia.<sup>12</sup> Apparently, it is the primary reason for the Chinese companies growing more active in the Caucasus.<sup>13</sup>

As early as the 1990s, Azerbaijan and Georgia were considered in the context of the Great Silk Road. This idea was implemented within the TRACECA project,<sup>14</sup> initiated by the EU in 1993, and the INOGATE project<sup>15</sup> that was launched in 1996 and subsequently supported by the U.S. Congress in the “Silk Road Strategy Act,” adopted in 1999.<sup>16</sup> As of today, practically all of these projects<sup>17</sup> are, as a whole, operational and gradually developing. However, these projects share a disadvantage—they begin in Europe and end in Central Asia, not reaching China.<sup>18</sup>

Azerbaijan and Georgia’s involvement in the Chinese SREB project was encouraged by the already functioning Silk Road Transport Corridor project. In addition, the already operational Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway constitutes a new significant phase of this project’s development, since this road already links not only Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey, but also the totality of all the countries along the East-West line. This railway, as an important component of the Iron Silk Road, is a logical fit with the BRI.<sup>19</sup>

The comparison between the Silk Road Transport Corridor (or TRACECA) and the Central Asia-Western Asia Economic Corridor projects reveals that their apparent similarity is merely limited to their regional context. The principal difference between them is actually in the fact that the first project, which is initiated by the EU (“the West”) intends to restore the historic Great Silk Road and eventually tie these countries’ economies to the EU, while the second project, launched by China (“the East”), intends to establish trade and economic relations between the countries involved. Mean-

<sup>11</sup> G. Su, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>12</sup> See: M.P. van Dijk, P. Martens, *The Silk Road and Chinese Interests in Central Asia and the Caucasus: The Case of Georgia*, Working Paper No. 2016/12, August, Maastricht School of Management, Maastricht, 2016, p. 5, available at [<https://www.msm.nl/resources/uploads/2016/09/MSM-WP2016-12-1.pdf>], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>13</sup> See: Y. Dong, “China’s Strategy in the Caucasus,” *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, 3 April, 2017, available at [<https://www.fpri.org/article/2017/04/chinas-strategy-caucasus/>], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>14</sup> See: TRACECA, “History of TRACECA,” *TRACECA: Transport Corridor Europe, Caucasus, Asia*, 2009, available at [<http://www.traceca-org.org/en/traceca/history-of-traceca/>], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>15</sup> See: INOGATE, “In Brief,” *INOGATE*, 2016, available at [<http://www.inogate.org/pages/1?lang=en>], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>16</sup> See: Congress, “Silk Road Strategy Act of 1999,” *106th Congress*, 2 August, 1999, available at [<https://www.congress.gov/bill/106th-congress/house-bill/1152>], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>17</sup> See, for instance: I. Aliev, *Kaspiiskaia neft Azerbaidzhana*, Izvestia, Moscow, 2003. C. 712; *Oil and Geopolitics of the Caspian Sea Region*, ed. by M.P. Croissant, B. Aras, Praeger, Westport, 1999, 328 pp.; *The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline: Oil Window to the West*, ed. by S.F. Starr, S.E. Cornell, Uppsala University, Uppsala, 2005, 150 pp., available at [[https://www.silkroadstudies.org/resources/pdf/Monographs/2005\\_01\\_MONO\\_Starr-Cornell\\_BTC-Pipeline.pdf](https://www.silkroadstudies.org/resources/pdf/Monographs/2005_01_MONO_Starr-Cornell_BTC-Pipeline.pdf)], 25 March, 2018; T.R. Stauffer, “Caspian Fantasy: The Economics of Political Pipelines,” *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Vol. VII, No. 2, 2000; E. Shevardnadze, *Great Silk Route. TRACECA-PETra. Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia. The Eurasian Common Market. Political and Economic Aspects*, Georgian Transport System, Tbilisi, 1999, 128 pp.

<sup>18</sup> See: K. Gogolashvili, *New Silk Road: A Stage for EU and China to Cooperate*, Expert Opinion 86, Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, Tbilisi, 2017, available at [<https://www.gfsis.org/files/library/opinion-papers/86-expert-opinion-eng.pdf>], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>19</sup> See: Ö.N. Ögütçü, “Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway and Regional Connectivity,” *Daily Sabah*, 20 February, 2017, available at [<https://www.dailysabah.com/op-ed/2017/02/20/baku-tbilisi-kars-railway-and-regional-connectivity>], 25 March, 2018.

while, the first project was primarily transport-related, while the second project was more multidimensional, involving trade and numerous economy spheres.<sup>20</sup>

Overall, it should be mentioned that BRI essentially alters the structure of economic development in the world, since the role played by the East, particularly by China,<sup>21</sup> comes to the fore as the point of origin. Thus, it can be noted that the BRI project intends to fundamentally change the global economic development architecture, where East will take over the key role instead of the West.

## The Russian Factor and Eurasianism

Certain analysts point out that Russia may pose a potential threat to the efficient functioning of the Central Asia-Western Asia Economic Corridor, which traverses Azerbaijan and Georgia.<sup>22</sup>

Two points have to be made in this regard.

- First of all, the Central Asia-Western Asia Economic Corridor does not traverse Russia, and may become a competitor (or, according to certain assessments, even an alternative to<sup>23</sup>) the above-mentioned New Eurasian Land Bridge, which does run through Russia.<sup>24</sup>
- Secondly, Moscow aims not merely to retain, but strengthen its influence in the post-Soviet space, specifically in the Central Asian and Caucasian states.<sup>25</sup>

We have to point out that in the past Moscow has not been particularly keen on the establishment and development of the Silk Road Transport Corridor independently from Russia via the Central Caucasus.<sup>26</sup> The situation is currently aggravated by the fact that Russia's participation in the BRI may seem rather modest.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Let us note that as early as 2002 it was stated that this transport corridor may become an integrated economic project for Georgia, since it could have promoted the development of various segments of its economy (see: V. Papava, "On the Special Features of Georgia's International Economic Function," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2, 2002).

<sup>21</sup> See: A. Bhardwaj, "Belt and Road Initiative: An Idea Whose Time has Come," *China International Studies*, No. 64, May/June, 2017; W. Jones, "The Belt and Road Initiative: Charting a New Trajectory for Mankind," *China International Studies*, No. 62, January/February, 2017; M. Fu, G. Xu, "New Silk Roads: Progress, Challenges and Countermeasures," *China International Studies*, No. 65, July/August, 2017; D. Mitrovic, "The Belt and Road: China's Ambitious Initiative," *China International Studies*, No. 59, July/August, 2016; M. Zabakhidze, G. Bakradze, B. Kutelia, op. cit., pp. 17-21.

<sup>22</sup> See, for instance: E. Avdaliani, "One Belt, One Road: How Far Will China Go for Georgia?" *Georgia Today*, 19 June, 2017, available at [<http://georgiatoday.ge/news/6828/One-Belt%2C-One-Road%3A-How-Far-Will-China-Go-for-Georgia%3F>], 25 March, 2018; M.P. van Dijk, P. Martens, op. cit.; J. Larsen, op. cit., pp. 20-21; T. Rinna, "The South Caucasus and China's Rising Presence," *New Eastern Europe*, 3 December, 2015, available at [<http://neweasterneurope.eu/articles-and-commentary/1811-the-south-caucasus-and-china-s-rising-presence>], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>23</sup> See: "Policy Recommendations for the EU," in: *China's Belt and Road: A Game Changer?* ed. by A. Amighini, Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI), Milano, 2017, p. 142, available at [[http://www.ispionline.it/it/EBook/Rapporto\\_Cina\\_2017/China\\_Belt\\_Road\\_Game\\_Changer.pdf](http://www.ispionline.it/it/EBook/Rapporto_Cina_2017/China_Belt_Road_Game_Changer.pdf)], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>24</sup> See: G. Debreczeni, *The New Eurasian Land Bridge: Opportunities for China, Europe, and Central Asia*, Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, Washington, D.C., 2015, available at [[http://publicspherejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/02.eurasian\\_land\\_bridge.pdf](http://publicspherejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/02.eurasian_land_bridge.pdf)], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>25</sup> See: M. Zabakhidze, G. Bakradze, B. Kutelia, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> See: J.H. Kalicki, "Caspian Energy at the Crossroads," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 5, 2001; A.N. Pamir, "Is There a Future of the Eurasian Corridor?" *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 2000; J. Roberts, "Energy Reserves, Pipeline Routes and the Legal Regime in the Caspian Sea," in: *The Security of the Caspian Sea Region*, ed. by G. Chufrin, Oxford University Press, New York, 2001, pp. 33-68; A. Rondeli, "Pipelines and Security Dynamics in the Caucasus," *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2002; S.F. Starr, S.E. Cornell, "The Politics of Pipelines: Bringing Caspian Energy to Markets," SAISPHERE, 2005.

<sup>27</sup> See: P. Baumgartner, "China's Massive 'One Road' Project Largely Bypasses Russia, but Moscow Still on Board," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 26 June, 2017, available at [<https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-china-one-belt-one-road-project-putin-xi/28579849.html>], 25 March, 2018.

In order to balance out the BRI, the concept of the Greater Eurasian Partnership or Community (GEP)<sup>28</sup> emerged in Russia in 2016. This concept is a more sweeping reinterpretation of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU),<sup>29</sup> a project launched by Russia and Kazakhstan a year earlier.

The concept of GEP also incorporates China, India, Iran, Turkey and other countries, and aims to counteract the hegemony of the U.S. and Atlanticism in general.<sup>30</sup> From a formal viewpoint, this concept is of the same scale and has the same goals and priorities as the BRI.<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile, this concept has major geopolitical significance for Russia, far in excess of merely being a large-scale economic cooperation project.<sup>32</sup>

Considering the fact that compared to China Russia is a country that is relatively weak from the economic viewpoint (but rather powerful from the military point of view),<sup>33</sup> Russia is practically unable to balance China out economically.<sup>34</sup>

The main reason for the superiority of China's economy over Russia's is the fact that while the Russian economic model is based on exporting hydrocarbon resources and using the consumer model of economic development,<sup>35</sup> the Chinese model is truly aimed at innovative development.<sup>36</sup>

As a rule, however, Chinese experts accept the fact that the Eurasianism<sup>37</sup> theory and its ideological convictions have a major influence on Russian politics in Eurasia,<sup>38</sup> and simultaneously think that the concept of GEP does not strive to weaken BRI, and that Russia only construes the post-Soviet space as Eurasia.<sup>39</sup>

In our understanding, this point of view has a certain tinge of naiveté. There are several noteworthy research studies regarding Moscow's far-reaching geopolitical ambitions based on *Eurasianism* (which in certain cases, such as in Georgia and Ukraine, assume an aggressive character).<sup>40</sup>

<sup>28</sup> S. Karaganov, "S Vostoka na Zapad, ili Bolshaia Evrazia. Rossia aktivno zakrepliaetsia na rastushchikh rynkakh Azii," *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 24 October, 2016, available at [<https://rg.ru/2016/10/24/politolog-karaganov-povorot-rossii-k-rynkam-azii-uzhe-sostoialia.html>], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>29</sup> See: L. Nurgaliyeva, "Kazakhstan's Economic Soft Balancing Policy vis-à-vis Russia: From the Eurasian Union to the Economic Cooperation with Turkey," *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2016.

<sup>30</sup> See: S. Karaganov, op. cit.

<sup>31</sup> See: Z. Li, "The Greater Eurasian Partnership: Remodeling the Eurasian Order?" *China International Studies*, No. 63, March/April, 2017, p. 61.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 58-61.

<sup>35</sup> See: V. Papava, "Necroeconomics of Post-Soviet Post-Industrialism and the Model of Economic Development of Georgia and Russia," *Journal of Business and Economics*, Vol. 6, No. 5, 2015, available at [<http://www.academicstar.us/UploadFile/Picture/2015-7/20157313847837.pdf>], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>36</sup> See: The World Bank and Development Research Center for the State Council, the People's Republic of China, *China 2030: Building a Modern, Harmonious, and Creative Society*, The World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2013, pp. 34-38, available at [<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/781101468239669951/pdf/762990PUB0china0Box374372B00PUBLIC0.pdf>], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>37</sup> See, for instance: A. Dugin, *Osnovy geopolitiki. Geopoliticheskoe budushchee Rossii*, Arktogeia, Moscow, 1997, p. 608; idem, *Evraziiskaia missia Nursultana Nazarbayeva*, Evrazia, St. Petersburg, 2004, p. 288; idem, *Osnovy Evraziistva*, ed. by A. Dugin, Arktogeia-Centr, Moscow, 2002, p. 800.

<sup>38</sup> See, for instance: Z. Li, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>40</sup> See, for instance: C. Clover, "Dreams of the Eurasian Heartland: The Reemergence of Geopolitics," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 2, 1999; D. Kerr, "The New Eurasianism: The Rise of Geopolitics in Russia's Foreign Policy," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 6, 1995; M. Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire*, Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Washington, D.C., 2008; V. Papava, "The Eurasianism of Russian Anti-Westernism and the Concept of 'Central Caucasus-Asia'," *Russian Politics & Law*, Vol. 51, No. 6, 2013; P. Rangsimaporn, "Interpretations of Eurasianism: Justifying Russia's Role in East Asia," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 58, No. 3, 2006; D.V. Shlapentokh, "Eurasianism: Past and Present," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 1997; A. Umland, "Pathological Tendencies in Russian 'Neo-Eurasianism': The Significance of the Rise of Aleksandr Dugin for the Interpretation of Public Life in Contemporary Russia," *Russian Politics & Law*, Vol. 47, No. 1, 2009.

Meanwhile, it is crucial to note that for Moscow Eurasianism holds a mostly ideological charge and there is little connecting it with the above-mentioned EAEU.<sup>41</sup>

Let us emphasize that the real opportunity to consolidate China's role in Eurasia based on the SREB project<sup>42</sup> brings out the issue of creating a theoretical construction of the so-called Chinese Eurasianism<sup>43</sup> to the agenda, requiring independent research. It is essential to mention that it is precisely in this context that significant questions requiring urgent answers emerge.<sup>44</sup>

According to certain analysts, the Chinese authorities are currently taking consistent steps premised on the internationally established Heartland Theory of the renowned British geographer Halford Mackinder,<sup>45</sup> and the creation of a "benevolent China-centric economically integrated zone"<sup>46</sup> in Eurasia is rather likely.

Meanwhile, we cannot forget the fact that this "benevolence" includes the penetration of Chinese migrants within the BRI-integrated states, which places new challenges before these countries.<sup>47</sup>

We have to note that Russian and Chinese leaders have signed a highest-level joint declaration regarding the EAEU and SREB,<sup>48</sup> jointly declared close cooperation between EAEU and BRI.<sup>49</sup> However, the agreement between China and EAEU on trade and economic partnership has yet to be signed.<sup>50</sup>

A more expansive format of dialog and cooperation between China and Russia is provided by BRICS, the international organization that unites Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

One has to agree with the Chinese experts who believe that the advance of BRICS and the BRI is closely connected, and that their coordinated actions must be focused on the development of infrastructure, which will facilitate cooperation between BRICS countries and states directly involved in BRI.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>41</sup> See, for instance: M. Laruelle, "Eurasia, Eurasianism, Eurasian Union: Terminological Gaps and Overlaps," *PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo*, No. 366, July, 2015, available at [<http://www.ponarseurasia.org/memo/eurasia-eurasianism-eurasian-union-terminological-gaps-and-overlaps/>], 25 March, 2018; V. Papava, "Economic Models of Eurasianism and the Eurasian Union: Why the Future is Not Optimistic," *The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, 29 October, 2015, available at [<http://caci-analyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13296/>], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>42</sup> See: M. Clarke, "Understanding China's Eurasian Pivot. The 'One Belt, One Road' Strategy Provides a Guide to the Future of China in Eurasia," *The Diplomat*, 10 September, 2015, available at [<http://thediplomat.com/2015/09/understanding-chinas-eurasian-pivot/>], 25 March, 2018; S. Yilmaz, C. Liu, "China's 'Belt and Road' Strategy in Eurasia and Euro-Atlanticism," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 70, No. 2, 2018.

<sup>43</sup> See: S. Yilmaz, C. Liu, "China's 'Belt and Road' Initiative and Its Implications for Euro-Atlanticism," *China Quarterly of International Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 2016.

<sup>44</sup> See: A. Aubakirova, S. Umirzakov, N. Aitenov, "New Silk Road: Opportunities and Threats for Central Asia (A View from Kazakhstan)," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 18, Issue 4, 2017, pp. 7-20.

<sup>45</sup> See: H.J. Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," *Geographical Journal*, Vol. XXIII, No. 4, 1904.

<sup>46</sup> A. Lukin, "Mackinder Revisited: Will China Establish Eurasian Empire 3.0? China has Emerged as a New Contender for Control Over Mackinder's 'Heartland'," *The Diplomat*, 7 February, 2015, available at [<http://thediplomat.com/2015/02/mackinder-revisited-will-china-establish-eurasian-empire-3-0/>], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>47</sup> See: S. Ryazantsev, R. Manshin, Z. Vazirov, M. Karimov, "China's Influence on the Social and Economic Development of the Central Asian States: Methods and Consequences," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 19, Issue 1, 2018, pp. 18-25.

<sup>48</sup> See: Hong Kong Trade Development Council, "Joint Statement on Cooperation on the Construction of Joint Eurasian Economic Union and the Silk Road Projects," *HKTDC Research*, 8 May, 2015, available at [<http://china-trade-research.hktdc.com/business-news/article/The-Belt-and-Road-Initiative/Joint-Statement-on-Cooperation-on-the-Construction-of-Joint-Eurasian-Economic-Union-and-the-Silk-Road-Projects/obor/en/1/1X000000/1X0A3ABV.htm>], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>49</sup> See: Xinhua, "China, Russia Pledge 'Unswerving' Partnership," *Xinhuanet*, 26 June, 2016, available at [[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-06/26/c\\_135466130.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-06/26/c_135466130.htm)], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>50</sup> See: M. Lagutina, "Improving Relations with Russia and Ukraine," in: *China's Belt and Road: a Game Changer?* p. 66.

<sup>51</sup> See: X. Zhang, "BRICS and Belt and Road Initiative Develop in Coordination," *China Plus*, 5 September, 2017, available at [<http://chinaplus.cri.cn/news/china/9/20170905/23492.html>], 25 March, 2018.

If we take into account the fact that all SCO member states are committed to participating in BRI, it is only natural to assume that the SCO and the BRI possess all the conditions for close cooperation.<sup>52</sup> In this regard, much depends on how constructively Beijing and Moscow are able to cooperate in implementation of the BRI.

## From Alternativeness to Mutual Complementarity

According to certain experts, China's economic cooperation with the Central Asian states, and the simultaneous participation of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in the EAEU, as well as a certain rapprochement between China and Russia (particularly in the energy segment), are establishing the prerequisites to the unification of EAEU and SREB, or at least their close cooperation.<sup>53</sup>

Certainly, cooperation between EAEU and SREB cannot be ruled out, although in order to determine the probability of their unification, the basic principle they were founded on need to be examined.

According to certain assessments, the key element for Moscow is not economic development (including within the EAEU), rather, it is the strengthening of its geopolitical influence in Eurasia.<sup>54</sup> It is for this purpose that economic mechanisms are used when Russia cedes the revenue received from the export of energy resources to EAEU member states of its own accord.<sup>55</sup> That is precisely why Moscow has approached the SREB project as a challenger of EAEU that aims to replace the Russian influence on Central Asian states with Chinese influence.<sup>56</sup>

In reality, the SREB project is perceived by its participants entirely differently. In particular, there are two circumstances that significantly affect its potential success.

- First of all, this project does not set any priorities, restrictions or norms for the actors involved in it, which leaves these actors a significant freedom to implement bilateral or multilateral cooperation;
- secondly, up to this point there has been no evidence that exerting strategic, political or economic pressure on SREB member states is within the scope of Beijing's interests.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> See: S.M. Saeed, "The Belt and Road, the Expansion of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *The Caspian Times*, 28 November, 2017, available at [<http://www.thecaspianimes.com/belt-road-expansion-shanghai-cooperation-organization/>], 25 March, 2018; M.A. Sivia, "Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Belt and Road Initiative and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor," *South Asia Journal*, 30 June, 2017, available at [<http://southasiajournal.net/shanghai-cooperation-organization-belt-and-road-initiative-and-china-pakistan-economic-corridor/>], 25 March, 2018; Xinhua, "Belt & Road Initiative Enhance Trade, Investment in SCO Countries: Chinese Minister of Commerce," *China Daily*, 10 June, 2017, available at [[http://www.china-daily.com.cn/business/2017-06/10/content\\_29696156.htm](http://www.china-daily.com.cn/business/2017-06/10/content_29696156.htm)], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>53</sup> See: F. Indeo, "A Comprehensive Strategy to Strengthen China's Relations with Central Asia," in: *China's Belt and Road: a Game Changer?* p. 38.

<sup>54</sup> See: H. Appel, V. Gel'man, "Revising Russia's Economic Model: The Shift from Development to Geopolitics," *PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo*, No. 397, November, 2015, available at [[http://www.ponarseurasia.org/sites/default/files/policy-memos-pdf/Peqm397\\_Appel-Gelman\\_Nov2015.pdf](http://www.ponarseurasia.org/sites/default/files/policy-memos-pdf/Peqm397_Appel-Gelman_Nov2015.pdf)], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>55</sup> See: A. Knobel, "Evraziiskii ekonomicheskii soiuz: perspektivy razvitiia i vozmozhnye prepiatstviia," *Voprosy ekonomiki*, 2015, No. 3, pp. 87-108.

<sup>56</sup> See: M. Lagutina, op. cit., pp. 60-61.

<sup>57</sup> See: R. Ghiasy, J. Zhou, *The Silk Road Economic Belt. Considering Security Implications and EU-China Cooperation Prospects*, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Solna (Sweden), 2017, p. IX, available at [<https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/The-Silk-Road-Economic-Belt.pdf>], 25 March, 2018.

It is apparent that the economic structures of EAEU and SREB are incompatible, not merely due to the differences in the institutional structure (EAEU is a regional organization, based on a protectionist policy, while SREB is an extra-regional and inclusive project<sup>58</sup>). It is important for Moscow to have geopolitical influence over the EAEU members, even to its own economic disadvantage, while Beijing considers SREB member states committed partners.

Based on the above, the fact that China does not currently consider the countries of the Caucasian Tandem to be within its sphere of influence, and does not seemingly have any active plans to establish its influence there, testifies to the viability of the SREB that traverses these countries.<sup>59</sup>

In accordance with the above, the rejection of the alternative economic corridor paradigm, which is of both dominant and confrontational nature, can play the role of an efficient BRI development tool for Beijing in its relations with Moscow. Instead, the transition to a paradigm of mutually complementary economic corridors may prove more constructive and will promote their harmonious development. This is precisely why GEP and BRI projects have to be considered mutually complementary.<sup>60</sup> It has to be noted that the Russian leadership supports the EAEU and BRI complementarity principle.<sup>61</sup>

In the modern world, as terrorist and man-made disaster threats are growing, the presence of mutually complementary transport and economic corridors, which should ensure a continuous transport flow, is gaining a huge significance. The need for such transport and economic corridors that can be interchangeable in a critical situation is brought to the agenda by the ever-increasing risks of man-made disasters, transport accidents, damage to pipelines or other disasters.

Thus, the complementarity of economic corridors and the possibility of their harmonization must be based on an approach that provides for the consideration of complementary, rather than alternative routes for energy resource delivery from Asia to Europe.<sup>62</sup>

It must be noted that for the ultimate success of the BRI, a transition to the paradigm of mutually complementary economic corridors should eventually ensure the implementation of this initiative as a result of mutually rewarding cooperation.<sup>63</sup> In this context, the statements made by Beijing and Moscow must be considered encouraging, and they have not escaped the expert community attention.<sup>64</sup>

## Caucasian Tandem and the Regional Trade and Economic Hub

The search for the opportunities to establish a free trade regime between the EU and China has great significance for the Caucasian Tandem countries.<sup>65</sup> From this viewpoint, SREB is a new stage

<sup>58</sup> See: J. Larsen, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>59</sup> See: T. Rinna, op. cit.

<sup>60</sup> See: Z. Li, op. cit., p. 62.

<sup>61</sup> See: Y. Li, "BRICS' Synergy with Belt and Road Initiative," *Belt and Road Portal*, 7 September, 2017, available at [<https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/home/rolling/26990.htm>], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>62</sup> See: V. Papava, M. Tokmazishvili, "Pipeline Harmonization Instead of Alternative Pipelines: Why the Pipeline 'Cold War' Needs to End," *Azerbaijan in the World. The Electronic Publication of Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy*, Vol. 1, No. 10, 15 June, 2008, available at [[http://biweekly.ada.edu.az/vol\\_1\\_no\\_10/Pipeline\\_harmonization\\_instead\\_of\\_alternative\\_pipelines.htm](http://biweekly.ada.edu.az/vol_1_no_10/Pipeline_harmonization_instead_of_alternative_pipelines.htm)], 25 March, 2018; idem, "Russian Energy Politics and the EU: How to Change the Paradigm," *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 2010, available at [[http://www.cria-online.org/Journal/11/Done\\_Russian\\_Energy\\_Politics\\_and\\_EU\\_How\\_to\\_Change\\_the\\_Paradigm\\_by\\_Vladimer\\_Papava\\_and\\_Michael\\_Tokmazishvili.pdf](http://www.cria-online.org/Journal/11/Done_Russian_Energy_Politics_and_EU_How_to_Change_the_Paradigm_by_Vladimer_Papava_and_Michael_Tokmazishvili.pdf)], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>63</sup> See: Z. Ruan, "Belt and Road Initiative: A New Frontier for Win-Win Cooperation," *China International Studies*, No. 65, July/August 2017.

<sup>64</sup> See, for instance: J. Larsen, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>65</sup> See, for instance: J. Liu, "Walk the Talk on FTA Negotiations," *China Daily Europe*, 7 July, 2017, available at [[http://europe.chinadaily.com.cn/epaper/2017-07/07/content\\_30026178.htm](http://europe.chinadaily.com.cn/epaper/2017-07/07/content_30026178.htm)], 25 March, 2018; Z. Haver, "Rebalancing EU-China

in the development of economic cooperation between EU and China.<sup>66</sup> In this regard, the entire burden of the issue falls on Georgia for objective reasons.

First of all, let us mention that Georgia and China are members of the World Trade Organization. In addition, Georgia and China have signed a free trade agreement.<sup>67</sup> Since a free trade agreement between China and the EU has not been signed yet, the fact that Georgia has free trade agreements with the EU<sup>68</sup> and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA)<sup>69</sup> are just as important.

Despite the fact that Azerbaijan is not currently party to such agreements with either China or the EU, it can play a strategic (and not just geographic) role in the economic relations between China and the EU together with Georgia in the framework of the Caucasian Tandem. In particular, the expansion of trade between China and the EU will facilitate the evolution of the Caucasian Tandem as a logistics center linking China with the EU (the new Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway and implementation of deep water port construction projects in Alat on Caspian Sea<sup>70</sup> and Anaklia on the Black Sea<sup>71</sup>). In turn, that will promote security in the Central Caucasus.<sup>72</sup>

Notably, due to the transportation of Caspian oil and gas through their territories to Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia (along with Turkey) are already acting as a transport hub for energy resources.<sup>73</sup> Azerbaijan also fulfills the same function in the Central Caucasus on its own.<sup>74</sup> Hence, it can be established that the Caucasian Tandem functions as a transport and energy hub in the Central Caucasus.<sup>75</sup>

Considering the fact that Georgia is already involved in free trade with both China and the EU, the SREB project establishes the premises for transforming Georgia from an energy resource transport hub into an economic hub. In this context, we have to emphasize that, according to the free trade agreement between Georgia and the EU, it is essential that the products supplied from Georgia to the EU market are produced in Georgia.<sup>76</sup> This makes Georgia economically advantageous for those countries that do not yet have a free trade regime with the EU, and which can invest in Georgia and

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Relations: The Case for an EU-China FTA,” *Global Policy*, 9 February, 2017, available at [<http://www.globalpolicyjournal.com/blog/09/02/2017/rebalancing-eu-china-relations-case-eu-china-fta>], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>66</sup> See: K. Gogolashvili, op. cit.

<sup>67</sup> See: N. Zhong, J. Xu, “China, Georgia Sign FTA,” *The State Council the People’s Republic of China*, 15 May, 2017, available at [[http://english.gov.cn/news/international\\_exchanges/2017/05/15/content\\_281475656216746.htm](http://english.gov.cn/news/international_exchanges/2017/05/15/content_281475656216746.htm)], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>68</sup> See: EC, “Georgia. Countries and Regions. Trade,” *European Commission*, 22 February, 2017, available at [<http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/georgia/>], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>69</sup> See: “Georgia Makes New European Free Trade Deal,” *Agenda.ge*, 6 June 2017, available at [<http://agenda.ge/news/59578/eng>], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>70</sup> See: P. Heydarov, T. Marsden, “Alat—the Missing Link Between Europe and Asia,” *Visions of Azerbaijan*, Autumn, 2016, available at [<http://www.visions.az/en/news/826/333f1152/>], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>71</sup> See: J. Larsen, “Georgia: The Black Sea Hub for China’s ‘Belt and Road’. New Investments (Some not Even Involving China) Make Georgia an Attractive Link between Asia and Europe,” *The Diplomat*, 3 May, 2017, available at [<http://thediplomat.com/2017/05/georgia-the-black-sea-hub-for-chinas-belt-and-road/>], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>72</sup> See: B. Ajeganov, “EU-China Trade to Bolster Security in the South Caucasus,” *The CACI Analyst*, 23 January, 2017, available at [<https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13423-eu%E2%80%93china-trade-to-bolster-security-in-the-south-caucasus.html>], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>73</sup> See: R. Boucher, “Opening of Caspian Basin Pipeline,” *U.S. Department of State*, 25 May, 2005, available at [<https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2005/46745.htm>], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>74</sup> See: S. Escudero, “Visions of Baku. Future Hub of the Caspian,” *Azerbaijan International*, No. 9.3, 2001, available at [[http://www.azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/93\\_folder/93\\_articles/93\\_stanley\\_escudero.html](http://www.azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/93_folder/93_articles/93_stanley_escudero.html)], 25 March, 2018; idem, “Hub for the 21st Century. Azerbaijan’s Future Role in the Caspian Basin,” *Azerbaijan International*, No. 10.2, 2002, available at [[https://www.azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/ai102\\_folder/102\\_articles/102\\_caspian\\_hub\\_escudero.html](https://www.azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/ai102_folder/102_articles/102_caspian_hub_escudero.html)], 25 March, 2018.

<sup>75</sup> See: E. Ismailov, V. Papava, *The Central Caucasus: Essays on Geopolitical Economy*, CA&CC Press, Stockholm, 2006, pp. 103-106.

<sup>76</sup> See: “Rules of Origin,” *Free Trade with the EU*, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, 2017, available at [<http://www.dcfta.gov.ge/en/dcfta-for-business/Rules-of-Origin->], 25 March, 2018.



deliver goods produced in Georgia to the EU market. This opportunity is already being taken advantage of by China, which has already begun actively investing in Georgian economy.<sup>77</sup>

The possibility of turning Georgia into an economic hub, and the fact that it is already fulfilling the functions of a transport and energy hub jointly with Azerbaijan, creates new stimuli for the Caucasian Tandem's incremental economic development.

## *Conclusion*

The place of the Caucasian Tandem in the SREB project (in the Central Asia-Western Asia Economic Corridor) creates entirely new opportunities for the economic development of Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Starting in the 1990s, Azerbaijan and Georgia are actively participating in the development of the Silk Road Transport Corridor, which is currently operational.

We can say that SREB is the next stage of development of the Silk Road Transport Corridor, as it gradually transforms into a more complex trade and economic corridor.

Certain analysts point to Russia as one of the factors threatening the intensification of operation of the Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor, which is not surprising, since Russia has resisted the creation of the Silk Road Transport Corridor as well.

Moscow has initiated the GEP project, which is a more sweeping reinterpretation of the EAEU, in order to restrain the development of the BRI.

Eurasianism theories have a significant ideological charge for Russian leaders, thus the opinion that the GEP project is not aimed at weakening BRI should be considered unfounded.

The issue of comprehending the new theoretical structure of Chinese Eurasianism, which deserves a separate study, has been brought to the agenda by the palpable chance of the BRI-based consolidation of China's position in Eurasia.

Despite the fact that the chance of interaction (and even cooperation) between EAEU and SREB should not be eliminated, their merger, the possibility of which is acknowledged by a number of experts, is impossible by definition. The main reason for that is the existing incompatibility between the economic models of EAEU and SREB—it is important for Moscow to have geopolitical influence over the EAEU member states even at the expense of its own economic interests, while Beijing considers SREB members economically committed partners.

Rejecting the paradigm of the alternative economic corridors that are of a confrontational nature may play the role of an efficient tool in the development of BRI for Beijing in its relationship with Moscow. If the paradigm of mutual complementarity replaces that of the alternative nature of economic corridors, their development may become more harmonious.

Georgia can potentially play the function of an economic hub in the SREB project, since it has already signed the free trade agreements with both the EU and China. This factor, in addition to the function of the economic and transport hub, which is in effect fulfilled by the Caucasian Tandem in the Central Caucasus, will promote the region's economic development.

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<sup>77</sup> See: V. Charaia, op. cit.; M. Zabakhidze, G. Bakradze, B. Kutelia, op. cit., pp. 14-16.

## CENTRAL ASIA TODAY: A NEW WAVE OF WATER AND ENERGY COOPERATION AND PIPELINE ARCHITECTURE

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### ABSTRACT

**I**n recent years, Central Asian countries have been demonstrating a readiness to widen their involvement in regional cooperation and interaction in the water, energy and transportation spheres. These trends have remained neglected far too long, which, as could be expected, had a negative impact on the regional economies. Under the pressure of mounting economic problems and the difficult situation, these countries had no choice but to revise their approaches to cooperation. Certain extra-

regional states have developed significant interest in the region's countries; today they want a wider presence there, first and foremost, in the projects targeted at the diversification of supplies of its hydrocarbon reserves to external markets. Generally, the Central Asian countries expected the more extensive pipeline architecture to consolidate their positions; allow to implement their social and economic projects; create new jobs; open new doors to Central Asian oil and gas exporters and radically change the

regional balance of power. In anticipation, they doubled their efforts in extraction and export of hydrocarbons.

These hopes were not justified. Their dependence on extra-regional players as the final consumers or transit territories was not reduced. The new pipelines have, however, destroyed Russia's monopoly on hydrocarbon exports from the region; it was replaced by Iran and China, which relied on the mechanism of price formation and the volumes of oil and gas they bought from the region's countries to put pressure on them. The Central Asian oil and gas exporters continued to widen the pipeline network to somehow reduce their dependence on neighbors.

The Central Asian states are revising their old approaches to the use of water; the confrontation of the 1990s is receding into the past to be replaced with new initiatives: wider bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the use of water resources of the transboundary rivers and coordination of positions. The changed positions are easily explained by the problems inherited from the Soviet past, which were gradually accumu-

lating and swept under the carpet. In the last few decades they grew even more acute: the countries in the upper reaches of the regional rivers can barely survive the acute shortage of energy in winter, while those in the lower reaches are aware of an acute shortage of water in the summer, when it is especially needed for agriculture.

According to different sources, after 2020-2025 the water shortage in the region will become absolute: the total amount of water consumed in the Central Asian countries will reach a level at which industrial enterprises will have no choice but to use less water. This will do nothing good to the regional economy and regional agriculture. Demographic growth and climate change will intensify the negative trends. Glaciers and snow-covered areas have contracted, which threatens the runoff of the Amu Darya and Syr Darya. The current desire to arrive at compromises and take the interests of all countries into account is explained by the problems that are piling up in the water and energy sphere mainly because the use of the transboundary rivers' water remains unregulated.

**KEYWORDS:** *Central Asia, water resources, energy policy, oil, gas, pipelines, Russia, the U.S., the EU, China.*

## *Introduction*

In the 1990s, the post-Soviet states turned their attention to the energy and water resources of Central Asia; the West, likewise, started looking in that direction.<sup>1</sup> They have become aware of the fact that oil and gas from Central Asia may lower their dependence on the Gulf oil exporters.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, inspired by numerous publications about large or even significant hydrocarbon resources, the Central Asian countries started developing their own reserves. Kazakhstan and Turk-

<sup>1</sup> See: G.I. Starchenkov, "Nef't Kaspia i puti ee transportirovki," in: *Musul'manskije strany u granits SNG*, Institute of Oriental Studies RAS, Kraft+, Moscow, 2001, p. 298.

<sup>2</sup> See: B. Schreiner, "Doc. 9635 Europe and the Development of Energy Resources in the Caspian Sea Region," *Working Papers*, 2003, Ordinary Session (First Part), Documents 9519, 9568 and 9576-9639—Council of Europe: Parliamentary Assembly, Vol. 1, 2003, pp. 303-315.

menistan, which have the biggest oil and gas reserves,<sup>3</sup> decided not to wait until the Convention on the Caspian Legal Status comes into force to begin oil and gas extraction.<sup>4</sup> They needed political support to realize their projects as promptly as possible which could not have been done without Western petrodollars.<sup>5</sup>

Many of the projects planned in the 1990s were implemented in the 21st century: such are the Turkmenistan-Iran gas pipeline (1997, 2010); the oil and gas pipelines between Turkmenistan and China (2009); Kazakhstan and China (2009). The Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) brought Kazakh oil to Russia. The energy corridor, along which the oil from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan was delivered across the Caspian to Azerbaijan by tankers, was highly appreciated in Central Asia as bringing it closer to the West even if the annual volumes were not that impressive: between 2 and 3 million tons.

Beijing's firmer positions in Central Asia became possible, among other things, due to the pressure on Iran. By introducing sanctions against Iran, the West deprived it of a chance to discuss new projects related to Caspian and Central Asian oil and gas.<sup>6</sup> Beijing that needed Central Asian hydrocarbons to decrease its dependence on Middle Eastern oil and gas<sup>7</sup> decided to look closer at Central Asia and its reserves.<sup>8</sup> As could be expected, it widened its presence in the region's energy sector, primarily in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, and demonstrated above average skills in organizing supplies of equipment and services to the oil and gas sector.<sup>9</sup>

The new pipeline structure set up by the Central Asian countries allowed them to diversify oil and gas exports. The extra-regional states, in their turn, were seeking greater involvement in oil and gas exploration, development of newly discovered fields and export of Central Asian and Caspian hydrocarbons<sup>10</sup> even if they knew next to nothing about the Caspian oil and gas.<sup>11</sup> This, however, did not decrease the geopolitical and economic rivalry between concerned regional and extra-regional players for access to the local reserves.<sup>12</sup>

The problem of water resources of the transboundary rivers has not disappeared. As independent states, the Central Asian countries have not yet arrived at a multisided consensus; they merely pushed the problem aside until the region has become acutely aware of water shortage. It strongly affects the problem of foodstuffs, economic development and social and political stability. In fact, water and foodstuffs were invariably present on the domestic and foreign policy agenda of the regional countries for the simple reason that they remain an economic constant and an instrument of political pressure on neighboring states.

<sup>3</sup> See: V.I. Kaliuzhny, "Vystuplenie na konferentsii 'Nef't i gaz Kaspiyskogo i Chernogo morey', Stambul (Turtsia), 27 maia 2003," *Vestnik Kaspiia*, No. 3, 2003, pp. 7-12.

<sup>4</sup> See: I.S. Rozhkov, "Retrospektiva kaspiyskikh sammitov: ot stabilnosti k ptogressu," *Problemy postsovetskogo prostranstva*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2017, pp. 210-220.

<sup>5</sup> See: D. Bolekbaeva, I.F. Selivanova, "Osnovnye napravleniia vneshney politiki Kazakhstana (1991-2015 gg.)," in: *Vneshniaia politika novykh nezavisimyykh gosudarstv*: Collection, ed. by B.A. Shmelev, IE RAN, Moscow, 2015, p. 230.

<sup>6</sup> See: S.A. Mikheev, A.E. Chebotarev, G.S. Kovalev, "Problemy regiona nakanune IV Kaspiyskogo sammita," *Problemy postsovetskogo prostranstva*, No. 2, 2014, pp. 31-69.

<sup>7</sup> See: I. Pop, "China's Energy Strategy in Central Asia: Interaction with Russia, India and Japan," *UNISCI Discussion Papers*, No. 24, 2010, pp. 200-205.

<sup>8</sup> See: S. Peyrouse, *Turkmenistan: Strategies of Power, Dilemmas of Development*, Routledge, 2015. 264 pp.

<sup>9</sup> See: Z.A. Dadabaeva, E.M. Kuzmina, *Protsessy regionalizatsii v Tsentralnoy Azii: problemy i protivorechia*, Institute of Economics, RAS, Moscow, 2014, p. 33.

<sup>10</sup> See: E. Tianlie, "Rol Tsentralnoy Azii v energeticheskoy strategii Kitaia," in: *Tsentralnaia Asia: problemy i perspektivy (vzgliad iz Rossii i Kitaia)*, Collection of articles, ed. by K.A. Kokarev, D.A. Alexandrov, I.Iu. Frolova, Russian Institute of Strategic Studies; Chinese Academy of Contemporary International Relations, Moscow, 2013, p. 145.

<sup>11</sup> See: I.S. Zonn, *Kaspiy: illiuzii i realnost*, Korkis, Moscow, 1999, 467 pp.

<sup>12</sup> See: M.P. Amineh, "Impact of the Caspian Energy Supply on the Global Market," *Atlantisch Perspectief*, Vol. 27, No. 7/8, 2003, pp. 27-33.

## Energy Independence Imitated

By 2015-2016, the Central Asian countries finally concluded the long period of pipeline construction. The oil and gas pipelines used to export hydrocarbons from the region ended Russia's monopoly as the main transit country and consumer, and brought Central Asian resources to external markets. The new export pipelines, however, did not decrease the Central Asian countries' dependence on their neighbors as the main oil and gas consumers. In 2015, China completed the second and third pipe runs from Turkmenistan to China that brought the potential annual maximum gas import to 55 bcm. Later, having engaged in gas extraction in its own territory, China lost interest in gas from Turkmenistan; construction of the fourth run of the same pipeline (210 km long with an annual capacity of 30 bcm) was postponed. It was expected that it would connect the already operating pipeline system in the Uzbek territory with the stretch of the pipeline under construction in Tajikistan. In March 2017, Uzbekneftegaz and China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) decided to postpone the project.<sup>13</sup> Less than a year later, in February 2018 China, aware of the heightened EU interest in Turkmen resources, made a U-turn. It agreed to lay the Turkmenistan-China pipeline through Tajikistan. According to preliminary calculations, the 400 km long pipeline with the annual capacity of 25-30 bcm will be completed by the end of 2019.

China's lower (and temporary) interest in expanding the capacities of the export pipeline appeared against the background of the revised principles of cooperation of Russia and Iran with Turkmenistan. Throughout the 2010s, the volumes of gas supplies to Russia from Turkmenistan were consistently shrinking; in January 2016 gas supply was discontinued. The demand for Turkmen hydrocarbons on the European market (where it was delivered via the Russian territory for a long time) practically disappeared; the two countries could not agree on the principles of price formation.

The relationship between Turkmenistan and Iran were not cloudless. Turkmenistan had two pipelines at its disposal, built in 1997 and 2010, to deliver gas to Iran, which had been living under Western sanctions since the mid-1990s. It relied on the Turkmen pipelines to resolve the economic problems of its northeastern regions, far removed from Iran's own gas fields in the south. Turkmenistan could supply up to 20 bcm of gas annually; Iran, for its part, did not need that much and exported about 8 bcm. Seen from Ashkhabad, Iran looked like a promising route of hydrocarbon exports; Turkmenistan planned to reach the annual volume of 14 bcm and subsequently construct a pipeline to Europe across the Iranian territory. These plans were never realized: in late 2016 their relationship deteriorated because of the Iranian debt of \$1.8 billion for the gas supplied in 2007-2008. Tehran refused to pay; in January 2017, Ashkhabad cut off gas supplies. Tehran adhered to a hard-line position: it was developing the Yuzhny Pars gas fields and infrastructure required to supply gas to the northeastern regions. Having built a pipeline, highways and railways by 2016, it relies on its own gas inside the country and cut down its need for Turkmen gas to the minimum. In early 2018, their failed attempt to achieve cooperation in the energy sphere left Ashkhabad with only one customer, namely, China. Beijing thus finally resolved a strategically important task: it reduced dependence on Middle Eastern suppliers<sup>14</sup> to become the only customer on the Turkmen gas market.

Ashkhabad's hopes of moving its gas westwards to Europe were also not fulfilled. From time to time, however, the EU resumes the talks about the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline to give Turkmenistan a chance to deliver its gas to Europe. So far, the talks never went beyond political statements due to the unsettled status of the Caspian Sea, as well as because the amount of gas that could be ex-

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<sup>13</sup> See: T. Dadabaev, "'Silk Road' as Foreign Policy Discourse: The Construction of Chinese, Japanese and Korean Engagement Strategies in Central Asia," *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, No. 1, 2018, pp. 30-41.

<sup>14</sup> See: Z.A. Dadabaeva, E.M. Kuzmina, op. cit.

tracted in Turkmenistan in the future remains vague and because Baku and Ashkhabad have entirely different goals. Azerbaijan wants to sell Europe its own hydrocarbon reserves.

This means that in the gas export sphere Turkmenistan depends to the greatest extent on the policies pursued by other states (Russia, Iran and China in the first place). In this context, the new opportunities created by the recently built pipelines did not give the Central Asian states more freedom in the energy sphere.

## Export Routes Diversified

Despite the realized pipeline projects, in the 2010s the Central Asian countries still want to widen the scope and geography of oil and gas exports. They are inspired by the interest in new export pipelines fanned, to a great extent, by Russia, Iran and China revising the nature of their cooperation with the Central Asian exporters.<sup>15</sup> In the first place, they currently need less hydrocarbon resources than they used to; secondly, their positions are strongly affected by the very different geopolitical context in Central Asia and the relationship between Iran and the West.

It was approximately at the same time that the local states moved on to new big oil and gas fields. Since 2016, Kazakhstan has been developing the Kashagan oil field in hopes of exporting more oil. Turkmenistan is pursuing the same aim at the Galkynysh gas fields. As could be expected, gas and oil exports will be increased<sup>16</sup> which means that the Central Asian countries are pinning big hopes on new pipelines.

In recent years, the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project has moved to the fore as the most promising. In fact, it has been discussed although to no avail since the 1990s. Not discouraged, Turkmenistan has preserved an interest in it and tried, so far without much success, to attract potential investors. The 1,800 km long pipeline, the construction of which will cost \$10 billion, is expected to move 33 bcm of gas a year.

In view of the fact that Iran has lost interest in Turkmen gas and that China became its exclusive client, Ashkhabad looked at TAPI as an alternative to both. In addition, Turkmenistan considers India as a promising consumer of hydrocarbon resources. If realized, TAPI will diversify Turkmen gas exports and lower its dependence on its current partners.

Late in 2015, Turkmenistan launched the TAPI pipeline in its territory. It owns 51% of shares in the consortium set up for this purpose; the rest has been distributed between Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and external investors. The TAPI pipeline will rely on Galkynysh as a source of gas.

It is not that easy to realize the project: before reaching India and Pakistan, the pipeline should pass as far as possible from the unstable Afghanistan; moreover, it is a rival of the Central Asia-China gas pipeline<sup>17</sup> and contradicts the interests of Iran, which wants a pipeline to India via Pakistan (Iran-Pakistan-India) to bypass the insecure Afghanistan.

In February 2018, the construction of the Afghan stretch of TAPI began; the entire stretch will be ready in late 2019. The realization of the Afghan part of the project had been predated by the talks between Ashkhabad and Kabul, the latter promised to ensure the complete safety of the pipeline. If

<sup>15</sup> See: B. Griffith, "Back Yard Politics: Russia's Foreign Policy Toward the Caspian Basin," *The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization*, Vol. 6, 1998, pp. 426-441.

<sup>16</sup> See: Lu Shanbing, Huang Mengfang, Lu Naxi, *Sopriazhenie stroitelstva EPSHP i EAES: problemy uglubleniya ekonomicheskogo sotrudnichestva mezhdru Kitaem, Rossiei i gosudarstvami Tsentralnoy Azii*, RISI, Moscow, 2016, pp. 119-135.

<sup>17</sup> See: T.S. Guzenkova, N.V. Karpov, D.A. Alexandrov, Ia.A. Amelina, I.V. Ippolitov, V.B. Kashirin, A.I. Kucherenkov, D.S. Popov, A.N. Sytin, K.I. Tasits, S.V. Tikhonova, *Strany SNG i Baltii v globalnoy politike Kitaia*, RISI, Moscow, 2013, p. 40.

realized TAPI will change the regional balance of power: Turkmenistan will acquire additional and greater chances to lower its dependence on China by exporting its gas to other markets.

Moreover, in recent years Turkmenistan has had discussions with the EU in hopes of delivering its gas to Europe. In June 2015, the negotiations between Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Turkey and the EU were concluded by setting up a permanent workgroup to devise several options for delivering Turkmen gas to Europe, one of them being a Trans-Caspian underwater gas pipeline. The EU was pursuing its own political interests: it wanted to tighten its grip on Turkmenistan to achieve cooperation in the energy sphere. In July 2017, EU foreign ministers decided that the EU needed a new foreign policy strategy in Central Asia, up to and including sources of energy export, to be formulated not later than the end of 2019. In fact, European countries have already demonstrated much interest in Kazakh and Turkmen gas. According to the Vice President of the European Commission Maroš Šefčovič, this gas will reach Europe via the Southern Gas Corridor.<sup>18</sup>

Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan responded promptly: in December 2017, they set up two workgroups to organize the potential delivery of Kazakh oil and gas via Azerbaijan to external markets. It should be said, however, that the plans of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan concerning gas delivery are unlikely to be realized any time soon: Russia and Iran are dead set against the Trans-Caspian project, which makes its realization hardly possible.<sup>19</sup> As soon as Iran disentangled from the Western sanctions in the 1990s, it has radically changed its energy policy, in Central Asia among other places. Today it intends to become one of the biggest gas suppliers to the West (Europe) and the East (China) by pushing the Caspian states to the side. It plans to export up to 80 bcm of gas a year starting with 2021; this will make it the biggest rival of Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan. This also means that it will hardly agree to become a transit territory for Kazakh and Turkmen gas.

Kazakhstan is no less ambitious when it comes to oil exports. Commercial oil extraction at Kashagan began in late 2016. It is expected that several years later commercial volumes will reach 13 million tons of oil and 9 bcm of gas, and that Kazakhstan will export more oil along the Western Kazakhstan-China pipeline.<sup>20</sup> Starting in 2014, despite the developed pipeline infrastructure, the volumes of Kazakh oil exports to China have been gradually shrinking. The total volume of extracted oil may remain at the same level because the oil from the Kashagan oil fields will fill the gap left by the smaller amounts from the old oil fields. This happened in 2017, when the volume of extracted oil grew to attain the figure of 86.2 million tons.

While building up oil extraction, Kazakhstan expects to sell more gas to China.<sup>21</sup> In October 2017, having built the 1,475 km long Beyneu-Bozoy-Shymkent pipeline, Kazakhstan started selling its gas to China; it hopes to bring the volume up to 5 bcm by late 2018. If the positive dynamics continues, it stands a good chance to become a rival of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in a few years.

This means that the Central Asian countries have entered a new period of consistent diversification of export routes. In recent years, Turkmenistan, which has the biggest gas reserves, has been exporting about 30 bcm of gas mainly to China. Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan each supply China with 10 bcm of gas. The annual capacity of the pipeline allows Turkmenistan to build up the volume of its export to China by a maximum of 5 bcm. On the other hand, it cannot export its hydrocarbon resources along other routes. Hence the intensified regional rivalry over oil and gas exports and higher tension in the relationship between Central Asian states.

<sup>18</sup> See: A. Muminov, "Evropa zhdet gaz iz kazakhstana," *Kapital*, 1 March, 2018, p. 10.

<sup>19</sup> See: R. Sokolsky, T. Charlick-Paley, "Caspian Oil and Energy Security," in: *NATO and Caspian Security: A Mission Too Far?* RAND Corporation, 1999, pp. 69-80.

<sup>20</sup> See: D. Bolekbaeva, I.F. Selivanova, op. cit.

<sup>21</sup> See: M. Elemesov, "Kazakhstan s 2017 goda planiruet eksportirovat gaz v Kitay," *Liter* (Kazakhstan), 20 February, 2017.

## Mounting Water Deficit

The situation in the sphere of water supply is no less dramatic. Despite all previous agreements there is no mechanism of joint management of the transboundary rivers' water resources: approaches to the problems of water supply differ from country to country, making integrated management of the water and energy complex impossible. There is no unambiguous legislation related to the use of hydro-resources of the transboundary rivers; no efficient mechanism of water distribution, management of water resources or conflict settlement; the level of information exchange related to the quality of water and its use is unacceptably low. This makes it harder to arrive at mutually advantageous solutions that are inevitably replaced with political statements and empty declarations. In September 2015, President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev called on the Central Asian countries to arrive at an agreement and build up long-term relationships.<sup>22</sup> Today, the water-related situation is fraught with interstate conflicts. The countries on the river shores are more interested in dividing the advantages created by access to water, rather than in dividing the water, which makes it much harder to arrive at a pattern of its joint use.<sup>23</sup>

In the absence of consistent access to the water resources of transboundary rivers, the relationships between the region's states are balancing on the edge of a conflict. In recent years, for example, the Syr Darya has barely reached the center of the Uzbek territory, its western areas being practically deprived of water. According to expert opinion, in 15 to 20 years the region's water resources will shrink by at least one-third. According to the U.N., by 2040 the annual runoff of Kyrgyzstan will drop to 19 cu km against the 2006 figure of 55 cu km. In the next 10 to 15 years the region might need 40% more water that will inevitably affect the region's conflict potential.

Despite their divergent interests, in 2017-2018 the Central Asian countries were gradually revising their approaches to water issues. In 2016, the new Uzbekistan authorities formulated new initiatives designed to tune up regional cooperation. All Central Asian countries are gradually becoming more aware that regional cooperation is the only answer to scarcity of water. The states and international organizations have already formulated certain initiatives designed to deal with the water problem. In early 2017, the Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia drafted a convention on water distribution in Central Asia. It was sent to the governments of four countries: Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and initiated the movement towards multilateral cooperation in the sphere of water resources.

Later, in November 2017 the conference dedicated to the conclusion of the EU project "Promotion of Dialog for Conflict Prevention Related to Water Nexus in Central Asia. Central Asia Water Nexus Cooperation" deemed it necessary to point out that in the absence of a dialog on the problems of management of transboundary water resources regional rivalry may intensify. Approximately the same was said early in 2018 at a meeting of the Board of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea. It was emphasized that rational and efficient use of water resources, supply of pure drinking water and environmental protection are the most important tasks. The shortage of water resources negatively affects the economic development of Central Asian countries.<sup>24</sup>

So far, no distribution mechanisms for the water resources of transboundary rivers have been created. It should be said, however, that a dialog on the water issue is a political breakthrough after twenty years, during which no agreements were reached and the nature of interstate relations re-

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<sup>22</sup> See: N.A. Nazarbayev, *Era nezavisimosti*, KAZaknarat, Almaty, 2017, p. 467.

<sup>23</sup> See: S. Zhiltsov, A. Bimenova, "Central Asian Politics Regarding Water Use of Transboundary Rivers," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 16, Issue 1, 2015, pp. 78-87.

<sup>24</sup> See: M.L. Pikulina, "Problema transgraniichnykh vodnykh resursov v Tsentralnoy Azii," *Kazakhstan-Spektr*, No. 1, 2013, pp. 31-42.



mained the same. This dialog may lay the foundation for the final settlement of the problem in the future.

## The Role of the Foreign Factor

Very soon the relatively peaceful interaction between the Central Asian countries regarding water sphere may come to an end mainly because of the influence of the neighboring states that may radically change the talks unfolding in the region. Afghanistan is one of the potential key partners in the future agreements on managing transboundary water resources. Since 1979, when the armed conflict caused by the introduction of Soviet troops ensued, it has been practically excluded from an active discussion of the region's water problems and their possible settlements. Meanwhile, the country may play a decisive role by claiming its share of water in the Amu Darya basin.

In recent years, it has been using about 2 cu km of the total 9 cu km of the annual runoff of the Panj, which, together with the Surkhob, that has its source in Tajikistan, form the Amu Darya in Afghanistan's territory. According to the 1946 treaty between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan, the latter acquired the right to use up to 9 cu km of the Panj water. In 1958, it was replaced with a new treaty on the use of the Amu Darya water. In post-Soviet times, cooperation between the independent Central Asian republics and Afghanistan and coordination in the Amu Darya basin were practically abandoned.

If and when the fighting in Afghanistan is discontinued and the situation becomes relatively normalized, the country will need considerably more water from the Amu Darya and Panj to develop its agriculture, which will negatively affect the countries in the lower reaches of both rivers.

In April 2009, despite the difficult political situation and being practically excluded from the discussions of the future of water use, Afghanistan passed the Water Law on the integrated management of water resources. So far, the country has been sorting out its water needs in agriculture, energy production and the housing and utilities sector.

China likewise figures prominently in the Central Asia water management context. Its water policy is closely connected with the future development of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) with annual water resources of about 26.3 cu km, sufficient for the local population of 20 million. To settle the region's political problems and develop its economy China plans to move from 60 to 100 million people to make it a regional center and a trade hub. This determines China's position on the transboundary Central Asian rivers. Irrigated agriculture, cattle breeding and oil and gas industry will require a new lease of life under the Great Discovery and Development of the Western Regions program, adopted in 1999 and Great Development of the West of China up to 2050 program, adopted two year later.<sup>25</sup>

Greater population will need more water for personal consumption and the economy. The Chinese have already decreased the flow of the Black Irtysh to Kazakhstan and Russia. The Decision on the acceleration of the reforms in water economy adopted in 2011 by the C.C. C.P.C. and the State Council of the PRC was intended to deal with the water problems: up to 2021 the state will invest \$62 billion annually in the water economy and irrigation, which means that even more water will be taken from the transboundary Black Irtysh. Thirteen new small and medium water reservoirs and one hydropower station Qiaobate are being built in XUAR on the Irtysh.

China's active use of the water of transboundary rivers will negatively affect the environment and make it harder for the countries in the lower reaches to cope with economic and social problems.

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<sup>25</sup> See: M. Gliants, "Kitayskaia initsiativa 'odin poias—odin put': chto mozhets delat 'brand'," *Problemy postsovetskogo prostranstva*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2017, pp. 8-19.

In fact, the greater amount of water taken from the Black Irtysh has already lowered the inflow into Lake Zaysan and the water level in the Satpaev Irtysh-Karaganda canal. Central Kazakhstan, which uses its water, has already become aware of this reality. If China continues moving in the same direction, it will greatly endanger the future of Lake Balkhash by tipping its environmental balance. In view of the fact that the total volume of water resources of the Irtysh is about 9 cu km, the planned volume of water use by China will be catastrophic for the economies and environmental situation in Kazakhstan and Russia.

This means that the talks between the countries in the upper and lower reaches of transboundary rivers are much more important than simple registration of the volumes of water intake and figures of energy production. They should arrive at coordinated decisions and take economic development as well as social and environmental issues into account. The environmental situation causes a lot of concern in all the countries. This is the only way to address the accumulated contradictions and lay the foundations for sustainable development.<sup>26</sup>

## Conclusion

The Central Asian countries do not let the hydrocarbon and water resources of their region out of sight. They pin their hopes on oil and gas exports and reliable and sustainable access to water resources that are indispensable for the region's development and consolidation of their political institutions. So far, however, no breakthroughs in dealing with regional problems should be expected since the region and, therefore, its oil and gas are far removed from the external markets.<sup>27</sup>

The region has already left behind the first stage of geopolitical rivalry for access to hydrocarbon resources and the routes by which additional volumes of oil and gas will be delivered to the markets.<sup>28</sup> They have chosen the eastern route to China. The first pipeline projects that targeted Europe were not realized for objective reasons, while Russia preserved its control over part of the exported oil and gas. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, with the region's biggest hydrocarbon resources, were not discouraged: not only have they widened the geography of their pipeline routes,<sup>29</sup> but also increased their number.

In 2016-2018, an interest in Central Asian hydrocarbon resources increased: the local countries and their neighbors found themselves involved in the discussions and realization of new export routes with a view of consolidating their positions in the region. At the same time, the recent dynamics of oil and gas extraction and the objective economic and technological problems posed by the extraction of hydrocarbons and their export give little hope that extraction and export will be rapidly developing.

The Central Asian countries are no less concerned about the water resources of transboundary rivers. In fact, the problem of water resources has come to the fore: on the one hand, the river systems and the internal seas (the Aral and the Caspian) unify the region; on the other, the water deficit and

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<sup>26</sup> See: N.K. Kipshakbaev, "Vodnomu sotrudnichestvu stran Tsentralnoy Azii—20 let: opyt proshlogo i problemy budushchego," *Vodnoe khoziaystvo Kazakhstana*, No. 2 (52), 2013, pp. 15-20.

<sup>27</sup> See: R. Manning, "The Myth of the Caspian Great Game and the 'New Persian Gulf'," *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Vol. VII, 2000, pp. 15-33.

<sup>28</sup> See: F. Umbach, S. Raszewski, "Strategic Perspectives for Bilateral Energy Cooperation between the EU and Kazakhstan Geo-Economic and Geopolitical Dimensions in Competition with Russia and China's Central Asia Policies," *Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung*, 2016, 70 pp.

<sup>29</sup> See: A. Cohen, "Caspian Gas, TANAP and TAP in Europe's Energy Security," *Istituto Affari Internazionali—IAI Working Papers*, 14 April, 2014, 17 pp.

the desire of each country to use it in its own interests and to the maximum extent add tension and stir up interstate conflicts.<sup>30</sup>

For more than 25 years of post-Soviet development, the Central Asian states have failed to suppress contradictions related to water use and arrive at a mechanism of taking into account the interests of all states, even opposing ones. So far, they have formulated their ideas and are discussing payments for water or bartering in gas and water (Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) and in water and energy (Tajikistan-Kazakhstan), etc. No final decisions have been reached: it is not particularly easy to weigh the value of fuel and energy resources and water, which each of the region's countries still hopes to exchange.<sup>31</sup> The contradictions inherited from the past do nothing good to interstate relations.<sup>32</sup>

While the countries tread cautiously when it comes to the elimination of water-related contradictions, the situation is gradually going from bad to worse. All the known directions of the rational use of Central Asian water resources are limited technologically and economically. It is for many years now that the Central Asian countries have been trying to arrive at an agreement on the ways and means of sharing water resources. About 40% of the region's drinking water is found in Kyrgyzstan. It uses a third of the annual runoff of transboundary rivers to meet the requirements of its 5-million population and the 6% of lands that can be used for agricultural purposes. The rest is consumed by Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and partly by Turkmenistan.

So far, however, the Central Asian countries are not ready to set up efficient water management mechanisms. This has been amply demonstrated at the informal summit of five Central Asian countries in March 2018. The water-related problems had developed into one of the burning regional issues, yet the Central Asian leaders did not go beyond political statements and carefully avoided specific decisions. President of Kazakhstan Nazarbayev said, in particular, that the Amu Darya and Syr Darya should not become an object of political haggling, and that the use of hydropower objects, water and electric energy should be used in the interests of all states.<sup>33</sup>

This makes the energy and water problems potential sources of interstate conflicts; each of the Central Asian countries acts unilaterally, pushing aside the interests of its neighbors and still hopes to address the problems independently. In fact, the conditions on which water resources are being divided and the electric energy used should be revised.

The Central Asian countries should abandon the idea of pricing the water and energy resources, since it makes it next to impossible to formulate the mechanism of joint use. They should take into account the indirect losses caused by the decision to close or limit access to water and energy resources. We have in mind a supra-state structure in which all countries should be represented with the right to elaborate and offer a concerted water- and electric power-related policy and assess the advantages and losses of each side. This calls for concerted and balanced management of the water and energy resources based on calculations of each country's requirements for water and electric power and the ways and means by which compromises can be achieved. Indeed, no compromises are possible if the countries refuse to take into account the interests of their partners. This means that a Convention on the Use of Water and Energy Resources of Central Asia should be approved and ad-

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<sup>30</sup> See: Kh.M. Mukhabbatov, "Vodnye problemy Tadzhikestana i problemy vodopolzovania v Tsentralnoy Azii," *Problemy postsovetskogo prostranstva*, No. 3, 2016, pp. 29-45.

<sup>31</sup> See: B. Auelbaev, T. Erzhanov, "Politika stran Tsentralnoy Azii i vodno-energeticheskie problemy regiona," *Analytic* (Kazakhstan), No. 3, 2009, pp. 13-18.

<sup>32</sup> See: B.R. Syrlybaeva, "Upravlenie vodnymi resursami kak faktor obespechenia bezopasnosti Tsentralnoaziatskogo regiona," in: *Aktualnye problemy bezopasnosti i sotrudnichestva v Kaspiysko-Tsentralnoaziatskom regione: materialy XI Ezhegodnoy Almatinskoy konferentsii (g. Almaty, 20 iunia 2013 g.)*, KISI, Almaty, 2013, pp. 119-148.

<sup>33</sup> See: N.A. Nazarbayev, "V vodnom voprose ne dolzhno byt politicheskogo torga," available at [[http://www.inform.kz/ru/v-vodnom-voprose-ne-dolzhno-byt-politicheskogo-torga-nursultan-nazarbaev\\_a3185780](http://www.inform.kz/ru/v-vodnom-voprose-ne-dolzhno-byt-politicheskogo-torga-nursultan-nazarbaev_a3185780)], 17 March, 2018.

opted, otherwise, interstate relations will never improve, and the region's sustainable development will remain a dream.

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## WORKFORCE MOBILITY IN THE EAEU: TRENDS, BARRIERS, PROSPECTS

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### ABSTRACT

**T**he authors have studied the factors and specifics of the integrated labor market and workforce mobility in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). They rely on sociological polls to discuss what the people in the EAEU countries think about

trends and prospects of economic integration and benefits and drawbacks of labor mobility.

They have analyzed the key problems, the mechanism of the free movement of workforce in the EAEU; identified institutional and psychological barriers, offered two

possible scenarios—intensive and extensive—of the future of labor migration in the region and assessed the advantages and disadvantages of both. This allowed the authors to demonstrate how the migration and labor market policies can become better coordinated and, therefore, more balanced.

**KEYWORDS:** *the Eurasian Economic Union, mobility, workforce, labor migrants, migration policy.*

## *Introduction*

Free movement of workforce in the EAEU is one of the key conditions of its functioning and development; it is a strong instrument of sustainable economic growth, higher living standards, more jobs and, therefore, social stability in all its member states. Labor migration implies the flow of workforce from depressive to economically active regions, which raises the efficiency of its use and alleviates social tension. According to the EDB's Integration Barometer 2017, one half of the population of Armenia, over one half in Belarus and Russia, and the majority of the population in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan are positive about their governments' decision to be integrated in EAEU. Also, 71%-87% respondents in these countries have a positive attitude towards allowing free movement of EAEU citizens throughout the structure's territory. In Belarus and Kyrgyzstan, the positive response comes mostly from the relatively well-to-do population groups; in Kazakhstan—from the poorer segments. In Armenia and Russia, the support does not depend on the economic status: in all income groups 70% assessed the idea positively.<sup>1</sup>

## Methods and Materials

### ***Mobility of Workforce in the EAEU: Factors and Trends***

The Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union has laid the foundation for the free movement of workforce within this integrated alliance.<sup>2</sup> EAEU members no longer apply the national laws limiting the use of workforce from other countries in their labor markets. They accept education-related documents issued by other member states at face value with the exception of the documents pertaining to pedagogical, legal, medical and pharmaceutical spheres, in which additional verification is needed. A visa-free regime, no customs inspections and no employment quotas, medical and social insurance and education in any of the member states can be described as additional advantages.

<sup>1</sup> See: EDB Integration Barometer-2017, Report No. 46, Center for Integration Studies, St. Petersburg, 2017, pp. 19, 21.

<sup>2</sup> See: *Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union* (signed in Astana on 29.05.2014) (version of 8.05.2015) (came into effect with amendments and additions on 12.08.2017), available in Russian at [[http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons\\_doc\\_LAW\\_163855/](http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_163855/)], 24 January, 2017.

Sociological polls and expert assessments speak of the following:<sup>3</sup> Russians are more satisfied with the results of EAEU efforts to create a common labor market than with certain other achievements in the spheres identified by the Treaty. The expert community, likewise, has assessed the results as “much has been done and the greatest progress has been achieved.”<sup>4</sup> Migration statistics in the EAEU countries consists of two primary data sets, the first related to migration for permanent residence; the second, to labor migration. The studies of labor mobility in the EAEU have revealed that the freedom of labor migration has barely affected the migration situation and the general trends of migration flows. The figures of permanent migration testify to the fact that Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan had a negative migration balance with the EAEU countries, while the net migration in Belarus and Russia was decreasing (see Table 1).<sup>5</sup>

Table 1

## International Migration Balance within the EAEU (men)

	2014	2015	2016
<b>Armenia</b>	<b>-1,584</b>	<b>-2,675</b>	<b>-2,123</b>
<b>Belarus</b>	<b>5,981</b>	<b>4,412</b>	<b>1,559</b>
<b>Kazakhstan</b>	<b>-20,670</b>	<b>-21,479</b>	<b>-26,253</b>
<b>Kyrgyzstan</b>	<b>-8,228</b>	<b>-4902</b>	<b>-452</b>
<b>Russia</b>	<b>86,698</b>	<b>70,144</b>	<b>62,293</b>

The legal status of labor migrants in the EAEU countries encouraged further migration. In 2015, 3,325 citizens of EAEU countries arrived in Belarus as labor migrants;<sup>6</sup> 16,349 labor migrants arrived in Kazakhstan.<sup>7</sup> In 2015, against the background of the dropping figures of labor migration to Russia caused by the economic crisis, Russia received 166,600 labor migrants from EAEU countries more than in 2014. According to the Eurasian Economic Commission, the number of labor migrants from the EAEU countries in Russia has reached 835,600 (see Table 2).<sup>8</sup>

According to the RF Ministry of the Interior, in 2016 about 2.4 million citizens of EAEU countries were registered as migrants in the Russian Federation (including 927,000 citizens of Kyrgyzstan, 632,000 citizens of Armenia, 546,000 citizens of Kazakhstan and 346,000 citizens of Belarus).<sup>9</sup> In

<sup>3</sup> Here and elsewhere the results of the project Social-Political Dimension of Eurasian Integration were used (sampling N = 1,500). The poll was conducted by ISPI RAS in May and October 2014, May and October 2015, February-November 2017, April, June and, November 2017.

<sup>4</sup> S. Glaziev, “Prioritetnaia zadacha EAES—edinyi rynek truda,” *Izvestia*, available at [<http://izvestia.ru/news/607260>], 19 February, 2017; “Sozdanie obshchego rynka truda—odin iz glavnykh prioritetov EAES,” available at [<http://www.eurasian-commission.org/ru/nae/news/Pages/30-11-2016.aspx> 30.11.2016], 17 January, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> See: *Statisticheskii ezhegodnik Evraziyskogo soiuzha*, Moscow, 2017, p. 48.

<sup>6</sup> Information on the number of guest workers who arrived in the Republic of Belarus from the members states of the Eurasian Economic Union in January-December 2014, 2015, 2016, available in Russian at [<http://mvd.gov.by/ru/main.aspx?guid=16721>], 17 January, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> See: “V 2016 godu bolshinstvo trudovykh migrantov iz Kazakhstana uezzhalo v Kitay,” *Vlast*, 20 September, 2016, available at [<https://vlast.kz/novosti/19354-v-2016-godu-bolsinstvo-trudovykh-migrantov-iz-kazahstana-uezzhalo-v-kitaj.html/>], 27 February, 2017.

<sup>8</sup> See: *Trudovaia migratsia i obespechenie trudiashchikhsia v Evraziyskom ekonomicheskom soiuze*, EEK, 2016, pp. 26, 32, 38.

<sup>9</sup> See: *Evraziyskaia ekonomicheskaia integratsia. Report No. 43*, Center for Integration Studies, St. Petersburg, 2017, p. 72.

addition, in 2016, in Russia there were registered 362,000 labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan; 210,000 labor migrants from Armenia; 98,000 from Belarus and 72,000 from Kazakhstan (a drop of 11% of labor migrants compared to the previous year,<sup>10</sup> caused by the economic crisis).

Table 2

**Number of Labor Migrants from the EAEU Countries  
in Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan in 2014-2016 (men)**

Countries of Origin	Target Countries						
	Russia			Belarus		Kazakhstan	
	2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2015	2016
Armenia	124,500	286,700	210,000	163	383	2,074	1,685
Belarus	3,500	4,300	98,000	—	—	608	394
Kazakhstan	187,000	113,800	72,000	569	656	—	—
Kyrgyzstan	354,000	430,800	362,000	23	77	1,138	1,496
Russia	—	—	—	1,866	2,209	12,529	9,388
<b>Total</b>	<b>669,000</b>	<b>835,600</b>	<b>742,000</b>	<b>2,621</b>	<b>3,325</b>	<b>16,349</b>	<b>12,963</b>

Russia's main attractions are the capacious labor market coupled with workforce deficit and shortage of workers and specialists. In fact, its labor market is 8 times bigger than the labor market of Kazakhstan; 17 times bigger than that of Belarus; 30 times bigger than Kyrgyzstan's and 58 times bigger than Armenia's.<sup>11</sup> There is an obvious disproportion between national labor markets. On the one hand, Russia and Kazakhstan are in dire need of labor resources, while Kazakhstan and Belarus require highly qualified workers and specialists.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, in some countries (Armenia and Kyrgyzstan) the workforce is much larger than their employment potentials. With the average unemployment level of 5.3% in 2017, 16.5% of Armenia's able-bodied population remained unemployed, the highest number within EAEU.<sup>13</sup>

In 2015, the conditions of labor migration for the citizens of EAEU member states were significantly altered in the Russian labor market: EAEU labor migrants are actively pushing aside labor migrants from other countries.<sup>14</sup> Segmentation of migrants in Russia is caused by registration costs: registration of labor migrants from EAEU countries is cheaper and, therefore, preferable.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>11</sup> See: *Evrziyskiy ekonomicheskiy soiuz v tsifrah*, Concise Statistical Collection, EEK, Statistika, Moscow, 2017, p. 42, available at [[http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/act/integr\\_i\\_makroec/dep\\_stat/econstat/Pages/dynamic.aspx](http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/act/integr_i_makroec/dep_stat/econstat/Pages/dynamic.aspx)], 17 January, 2017.

<sup>12</sup> See: N.N. Kotliarov, L.V. Levchenko, E.B. Starodubtseva, "Sostoianie i tendentsii razvitiya obshchego rynka trudovykh resursov v ramkakh evraziyskogo ekonomicheskogo soiuz," *Vestnik Omskogo universiteta*, Series Economics, No. 1, 2015, p. 31.

<sup>13</sup> See: *Evrziyskaia ekonomicheskaiia integratsia. Report No. 43*, pp. 70-72; *Evrziyskiy ekonomicheskiy soiuz v tsifrah*, p. 42.

<sup>14</sup> See: *Trudovaya migratsiya v EAES na nachalo 2016 goda. Report of EAK*, available at [<http://evrazklub.ru/analitik/trudovaya-migratsiya-v-eaes-na-nachalo-2016-goda-doklad-eak.html>], 22 January, 2017.

<sup>15</sup> See: S. Ryazantsev, "Kazakhstan Today: Migration—Trends and Regulation Approaches," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 17, Issue 2, 2016, pp. 70-79.

## ***Freedom of Labor Migration in the EAEU: Problems and Barriers***

Free labor migration across the EAEU is somewhat restrained by undeveloped legal and normative regulation; the problem of pension provision has not been resolved despite the efforts of the supranational regulator and the national governments of member states, which have not yet arrived at a comprehensive legal and normative base.<sup>16</sup>

More problems are created by unscrupulous employers who cheat Kyrgyz citizens; the status of Armenian labor markets likewise causes certain problems.<sup>17</sup> Unprotected by relevant documents, labor migrants remain socially vulnerable; the shadow employment sphere is expanding along with violations in the sphere of labor.<sup>18</sup> It should be said that workforce of the EAEU countries is not used as efficiently as it should be on Russia's labor market.<sup>19</sup> The scope of illegal exploitation of labor migrants can be described as considerable in Russia and Kazakhstan.<sup>20</sup> About 2.5 million migrants were employed in the shadow sector of Russian economy; about 1-1.5 million were exploited (they were deprived of their passports and, therefore, of the freedom of movement, and were locked up in places where they work and live, etc.).<sup>21</sup>

There is no comprehensive databases by branch, region and employer, which is very much needed in the recipient countries; they also need an elaborate program of education, language and professional training for labor migrants. The EAEU countries are aware of the deficit of highly qualified workers and laborers with adequate technical skills.<sup>22</sup> Inadequately developed social infrastructure in the form of rented housing, shortage of kindergartens and medical services strongly affects workforce mobility.

## **Results**

### ***How Local People Treat Labor Migrants from EAEU Member States***

Freedom of labor migration in the EAEU is strongly limited by the negative attitude of the local population to labor migrants. The majority of Russians supports the idea of freedom of labor migra-

<sup>16</sup> See: S. Ryazantsev, R. Manshin, "Special Features of the Adaptation of Migrant Workers from Asian Countries in the Russian Economy," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 17, Issue 4, 2016, pp. 95-103.

<sup>17</sup> See: M. Sulaymanova, "Migranty iz KR dazhe posle vstupleniya respubliki v EAES stankivaiutsia s problemami," available at [<http://old.kabar.kg/EAES/full/106591>], 14 March, 2017; "Migrantov iz Armenii i drugikh stran EAES mogut vydvorit iz Rossii," available at [<http://newsarmenia.am/news/society/migrantov-iz-armenii-i-drugikh-stran-eaes-bez-trudovykh-dogovorov-mogut-vydvorit-iz-rossii/>], 5 February, 2017.

<sup>18</sup> See: *Migration Problems Inside and Outside Russia: Materials for the Meeting of the Scientific-Expert Council at the Chairperson of the Federation Council*, Federation Council of the RF FA, Moscow, 2015 (in Russian).

<sup>19</sup> See: *Rossiyskiy rynek truda: tendentsii, instituty, strukturnye izmeneniya. Report of the Center of Labor Studies and the Laboratory of the Studies of the Labor Market NIU VShE*, Moscow, 2017, p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> See: S.V. Ryazantsev, "Integratsia migrantov v kontekste vneshney migratsionnoy politiki Rossii," *Sotsiologicheskie issledovania*, No. 1, 2018, pp. 105-111.

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>22</sup> See: "Information on the Number and Requirements of Organizations of Workers by Professional Groups in Russia by 31 October, 2016," in: *Bulletin of Statistics*, Moscow, 2017, pp. 131-135 (in Russian); "Chislennost i potrebnost v kadrakh krupnykh i srednikh predpriyatiy Respubliki Kazakhstan," *Statistichesky sbornik*, No. 17, 2017, p. 150; "Ministerstvo truda i sotsialnoy zashchity Respubliki Belarus. Spros i predlozhenie po professiam, vostrebovannym na rynke truda Respubliki Belarus na 01.12, 2016," available at [<http://www.mintrud.gov.by/ru/rynok/>], 7 February, 2017.



tion, while 32%-52% of them are against the freedom of labor migration within the EAEU. The wider the social and cultural gap between migrants and local people, the more vehement is their rejection. According to the public opinion poll carried out by ISPI RAS in February 2016, 60% of the polled population were ready to accept labor migration from Belarus; 44% conceded to labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan and 19%—to migrants from Tajikistan. Young males are less inclined than other population groups to support the general concept of labor migration: after graduating from an educational establishment, they have to organize their lives and start a family; first and foremost, they need jobs and, therefore, are apprehensive of possible competition from migrants. According to the results of sociological studies, ethnic intolerance of labor migrants among Russians is rising: the respondents subjectively assessed its level among their friends over the course of the last 25-30 years as having grown 2.5-3-fold (see Table 3).

Table 3

**Attitude to People of Other Nationalities, in % Among the Respondents to the Question: "Do You Think That People You Regularly Communicate with (Colleagues, Family Members, Friends...) Have Negative Opinions about People of Other Nationalities?"**

	1982 Russia*	2008 Russia	1982 Moscow	2016 Moscow
<b>Few, minority</b>	<b>92.6</b>	<b>76.6</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>74.2</b>
<b>Majority, nearly everyone</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>23.4</b>	<b>8.9</b>	<b>25.8</b>

*Source:* The Table is based on the results of the polls:

- (1) All-Union studies of the Soviet way of life carried out by ISI USSR AS in 1982, N-5522, questionnaire poll;
- (2) All-Russia study carried out in 2008, N-2017, questionnaire poll;
- (3) All-Russia study "The Way of Life of Russians in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia: Comparative Analysis and Assessment of Changes" conducted in June 2016, samplings—1,500 interviews.

\* See: A.A. Vozmitel, G.I. Osadchaia, "Obraz zhizni v Rossii: dinamika izmeneniy," *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya*, No. 1, 2010, pp. 17-27.

Hostile attitude to migrants undermines social cohesion. Even though the majority of the polled population from the EAEU countries were positive, with one out of three optimistic, one-fifth of the labor migrants from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan working in Russia admitted recently becoming worried, irritable or even frightened, desperate and despondent. Practically one out of three or four migrants living in Moscow was uncomfortable and aware of national or ethnic discrimination. In most cases, migrants from Armenia remain indifferent to the situation; one out of seven migrants from Kyrgyzstan and one out of ten migrants from Kazakhstan described Muscovites as unfriendly or even hostile. Kyrgyz migrants are of even worse opinion about public authority figures: one out of four spoke about their unfriendliness or even hostility.<sup>23</sup> All this is explained by the highly divergent behavior, everyday practices and mentality of the migrants and local population. Negative feelings deepen when the number of young people and people from agricultural regions among labor migrants increases.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> See: Issledovanie "Migranty iz stran-chlenov EAES na moskovskom rynke truda," Opinion polls carried out in June 2015 and June 2016. One hundred migrants from Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan were polled.

<sup>24</sup> See: V.S. Malakhov, E.B. Demintseva, A.B. Elebaeva, A.D. Musabaeva, "Vstuplenie Kyrgyzskoy Respubliki v Evraziyskiy ekonomicheskiy soiuz: vlianie na protsessy migratsii," *Working Paper of RSMD and NISI, KR*, No. 26, 2015, pp. 17-18.

## Discussion

Two different scenarios—*extensive and intensive*—of labor mobility in the EAEU countries may emerge in the near future. According to the former, the integrative structure may acquire new members. In 2015, it signed a free trade agreement with Vietnam; Tajikistan has also come close to EAEU membership. If and when it joins the common labor market, the volume of remittances will increase by 15-25% to reach 50-55% of GDP.<sup>25</sup> The Eurasian Economic Commission has already received 30 agreement proposals, the most important being the potential agreement between Russian and Chinese leaders about the unification of the EAEU and the New Silk Road. According to the latter, the labor market might stabilize if and when the quality of labor resources improves due to a higher educational level and higher professional skills. As long as non-qualified workforce dominates in the migrant flow, social and cultural adaptation will remain a big problem, while the situation with medical services and dwelling for migrants stays the same. Jobs are few and far between for low-skilled or unskilled labor migrants; this adds tension to the social and economic situation in the host countries.<sup>26</sup>

The problem can be resolved by teaching the Russian language to potential and actual migrants in their countries; the infrastructure of Russian-language courses should be improved, while access to it should be made significantly easier and free of charge. In fact, good command of the Russian language should become a social project.<sup>27</sup> Today, migrants have to pay for Russian-language exams at various centers and universities. The Russian language is the working tongue of the Eurasian Economic Commission, the CIS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization. We should bear in mind that labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan, Armenia and Tajikistan who flock to Russia in great numbers can count on better-paid jobs and successfully integrate in the host society if they have a reasonably good command of Russian.<sup>28</sup>

In this context, the EAEU should pay particular attention to the development of innovative economy that requires highly qualified workers and engineers as a road towards higher mobility of labor resources. Innovative economy is the objective basis on which infrastructure and unified educational space will emerge. It is very important to create the conditions attractive to highly qualified specialists and students, etc. This means that the intensive scenario will lead us to a single labor market of qualified specialists and a common educational space.<sup>29</sup>

Education can and should be regarded as an important instrument of deepening integration within the second scenario. The integrated labor market requires common approaches to training and education; today, the EAEU has no common educational system. Unified economic policy within the EAEU makes the integrated educational space a requirement: mobility of highly qualified specialists is an important factor that will positively affect the national labor markets of all member states. Indeed, an integrated economic space will offer employment to university graduates from any country that belongs to the integrated educational space and allow them to compete successfully on the national and the common labor markets.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See: S. Ryazantsev, A. Ter-Akopov, E. Pismennaya, M. Khranova, "Scenarios of Migration within the EAEU in Conditions of Enhancing Economic Integration," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 18, No. 3, 2017, pp. 43-51.

<sup>26</sup> See: S. Ryazantsev, R. Manshin, op. cit.

<sup>27</sup> See: S.V. Ryazantsev, "Integratsia migrantov...", pp. 105-111.

<sup>28</sup> See: S. Ryazantsev, A. Ter-Akopov, E. Pismennaya, A. Lukyanova, "Diasporas as Informal Tools for Regulating Migration in the Eurasian Economic Union," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 18, Issue 3, 2017, pp. 35-42.

<sup>29</sup> See: E. Pismennaya, S. Ryazantsev, V. Bozhenko, "Central Asian Diasporas in the Russian Federation: Migration Channels and their Contribution to the Socioeconomic Development of the Sending Communities," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 17, Issue 4, 2016, pp. 87-95.

<sup>30</sup> See: S. Ryazantsev, A. Lukyanets, "Emigration of Young People from Russia: Forms, Trends and Consequences," *International Journal of Applied Business and Economic Research*, Volume 15, Issue 23, 2017, pp. 485-493.

The time has come to establish normal living and labor conditions for migrants and to finally liquidate exploitation and corruption in the migration segment of Russia's economy. Today, there is a so-called migration-based economy in Russia that brazenly exploits labor migrants who have no documents, hence no rights and who can, therefore, be shamelessly taken advantage of, underpaid, kept in appalling conditions and often treated with cruelty. All those who use migrant labor should be bound by law to build or rent temporal dwellings for them, which should comply with at least minimal habitation requirements.<sup>31</sup> Trade unions and labor inspections should regularly check the conditions in which migrants work and to which they return after working hours, assess accident prevention systems at industrial enterprises, etc.<sup>32</sup>

It is highly advisable to apply the instrument of taxation to encourage employers to include the hired workers in the corporate medical insurance system: the rate of employers' social contributions (payroll tax) can be lowered for those employers who invest in the programs of corporate life and health insurance for Russian citizens and labor migrants.<sup>33</sup>

It is likewise highly important to integrate the migration politics of the EAEU countries: in its migration policy Russia concentrates on the regulation of migration flows into the country and integration of immigrants. Republic of Belarus is doing more or less the same and considers migration an element of its demographic policy. Kazakhstan welcomes the return of ethnic Kazakhs (the Oralman repatriation program) to maintain the ethnic and cultural balance within the country; it is willing to admit labor migrants to cope with the deficit of labor resources. Armenia and Kyrgyzstan stimulate emigration to enhance the contacts with the corresponding diasporas and lead them to invest in national economies.<sup>34</sup>

## Conclusion

Despite the crisis, the new legal status of the EAEU member states' citizens helped maintain labor mobility within the new integrative structure. The vector of labor mobility of the citizens of member states—from these countries to Russia—has been determined by the highly capacious Russian labor market that needed labor resources as well as by the state of labor markets in Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The new context of labor mobility changed the structure of Russia's labor market: labor migrants from the EAEU countries are actively pushing aside labor migrants from other countries.

The process was somewhat constrained by undeveloped legal regulatory norms, lack of experience of joint management of migration processes in the format of a common labor market and common migration infrastructure, undeveloped social infrastructure and hardly efficient use of migrant labor.

There are psychological barriers that interfere with the free movement of workforce in the EAEU: on the one hand, some people refuse to accept labor migrants as equal members of their so-

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<sup>31</sup> See: S. Ryazantsev, I. Bogdanov, V. Dobrokhleb, A. Lukyanets, "Migration from Central Asian Countries to Russia and Kazakhstan in the Context of Integration Processes in the Eurasian Economic Union Format," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 18, Issue 1, 2017, pp. 39-49.

<sup>32</sup> See: S. Ryazantsev, A. Ter-Akopov, E. Pismennaya, M. Khranova, op. cit.

<sup>33</sup> See: S. Ryazantsev, A. Ivanova, "Migrant Workers from Central Asian Countries on the Russian Labor Market: Living Conditions and Self-Preserving Behavior," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 18, Issue 4, 2017, pp. 65-74.

<sup>34</sup> See: E. Pismennaya, S. Ryazantsev, O. Pichkov, A. Lukyanets, "South Caucasian Countries: Socioeconomic Development and Demographic Potential in the New Geopolitical Conditions," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 18, Issue 4, 2017, pp. 57-64.

cities; on the other, some migrants reject the cultural specifics, everyday practices, mentalities, expectations and local rules of behavior.

In the short term two scenarios are equally possible: an extensive scenario based on the geographic expansion of the EAEU, which will acquire new members, and an intensive scenario based on improving the quality of social and labor relations. The common EAEU labor market can be stabilized by developing an innovative economy that will require highly qualified workers and specialists; integrating migration policies of the member countries; increasing the number of member states; raising the quality of labor resources due to a higher educational level and professional skills; getting access to greater possibilities for learning Russian, normal labor and living conditions; eliminating exploitation of migrants and corruption in the migrant segment of Russian economy; and by uniting all migrants into corresponding trade unions.

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## THE POST-SOVIET SOUTH: OIL, INNOVATION, AND SCIENCE

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### ABSTRACT

**T**he paper discusses the relationship between the development of the economy, the oil industry, science and innovation in the countries of the post-Soviet South (Central Caucasus-Asia, or Central Caucasia).

The oil industry makes the oil-producing countries of Central Caucasia relatively richer than those where oil is not produced (or produced in small amounts), but the development level of science in these

countries is clearly insufficient for the sustainable development of the oil industry and these countries as a whole. This is demonstrated by the author based on economic and scientometric data for both oil-producing Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan and non-oil-producing Georgia, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. It is shown that scientific collaboration with Russia is probably more promising for the economy.

**KEYWORDS:** *Central Caucasus-Asia/Central Caucasia, GDP per capita, oil production, science, articles, patents, Scopus.*

## Introduction

The early 21st century was a time of hope for rapid catch-up growth in the emerging countries of Asia. Following Japan, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea, the economies of China, India, Malaysia and Thailand surged ahead, with Indonesia and Vietnam joining them in recent years. South of the post-Soviet Caucasus lies the Persian Gulf Basin, one of the main oil-and-gas-producing regions in the world. The Caspian Sea, which for a long time was an almost entirely (80-90%) internal Soviet sea, is itself traditionally rich in oil. The economic successes of the oil-producing countries of the Persian Gulf in recent decades are well known. As for the oil-producing countries of Central Caucasasia,<sup>1</sup> they have also “put their stakes on oil,” and not without success. Do these stakes help to develop science in the countries of Central Caucasasia, and does science help to solve the problems of their oil industries?

The post-Soviet countries of the Central Caucasus<sup>2</sup> and Central Asia had a significant scientific and education potential after the breakup of the U.S.S.R. In the last years of its existence, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and, of course, Azerbaijan produced about 10% of Soviet oil,<sup>3</sup> while in the final year of Soviet rule they had a total population of 65 million, or about 22% of the U.S.S.R. population in 1991.

## The Oil Economy of Central Caucasasia: Strong Ties

In 2016, the total population of Central Caucasasia was 84 million. How much has the economy of these countries grown since 1990 at constant prices?

Figure 1 shows that after the breakup of the U.S.S.R. all Central Caucasian countries (except perhaps Uzbekistan) experienced a kind of economic shock, but by the early 2000s all of them gradually recovered from that shock. By 2016, their economies had grown compared to 1990, but not in all countries: growth in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan was minimal, while the Georgian economy never actually managed to reach the level of the Soviet period (in nominal terms).

Of course, it is difficult to determine how much richer a country has really become, because it is necessary to take into account population change over a long period. Figure 2 shows the data of Figure 1 correlated with population growth (GDP at 1990 prices, US dollars per capita).

The data of Figure 2 show that only Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan still remain trapped in the “cycle of poverty” caused by the disruption of the very strong ties that existed in the Soviet economic system, on the one hand, and rapid population growth, on the other. Georgia has exceeded the Soviet level of GDP per capita partly due to a lower denominator: population size. Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Armenia have significantly improved their performance. Among them, only Armenia is not an oil-producing country.

For comparison, Russia’s GDP at constant 1990 prices increased from \$570.4 billion in 1990 to \$649 billion in 2015.<sup>4</sup> This means growth was around 14%. Compared to 1990, Russia’s population

<sup>1</sup> See: V. Papava, “‘Central Caucasasia’ instead of ‘Central Eurasia’,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2 (50), 2008, pp. 30-42.

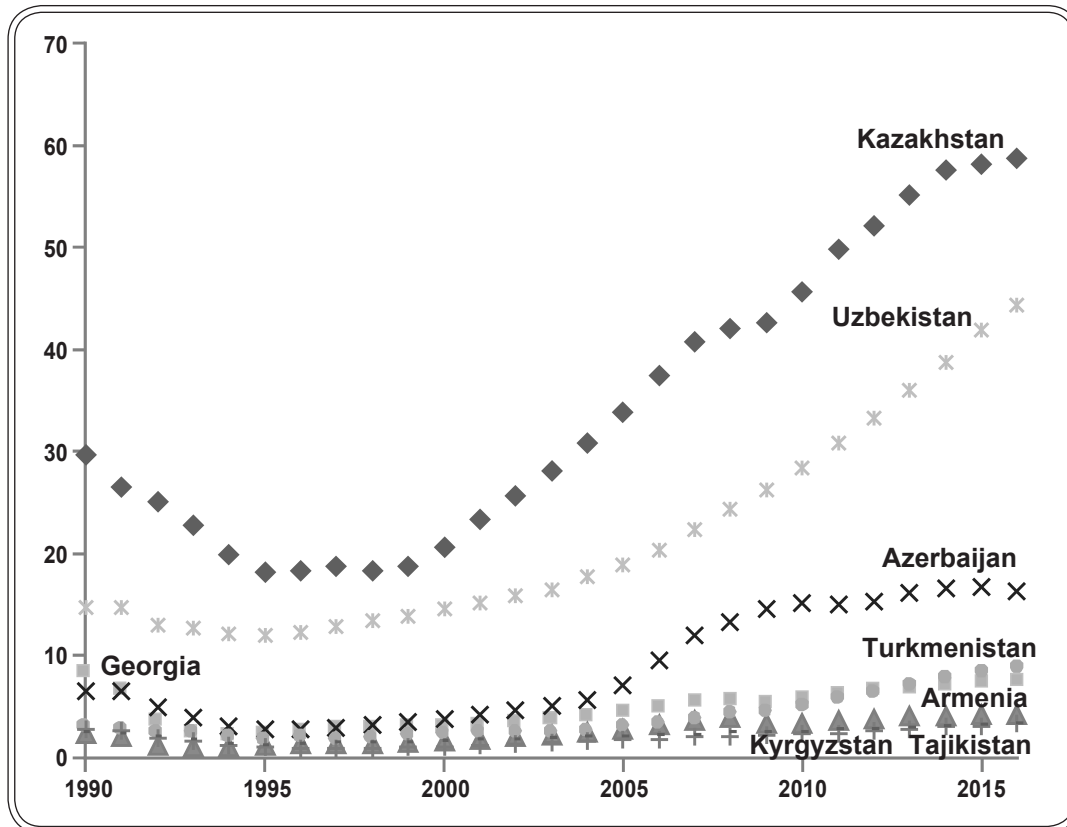
<sup>2</sup> See: E. Ismailov, V. Papava, “A New Concept for the Caucasus,” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 2008, pp. 283-298.

<sup>3</sup> See: *Toplivno-energeticheskiy kompleks SSSR 1990 g.*, VNIKTEP, Moscow, 1991.

<sup>4</sup> See: International Monetary Fund Database, available at [<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2015/01/weodata/index.aspx>], 1 February, 2018.

Figure 1

Economic Growth in the Countries of  
Central Caucasia from 1990 to 2016  
(GDP in billions of constant 1990 US dollars)



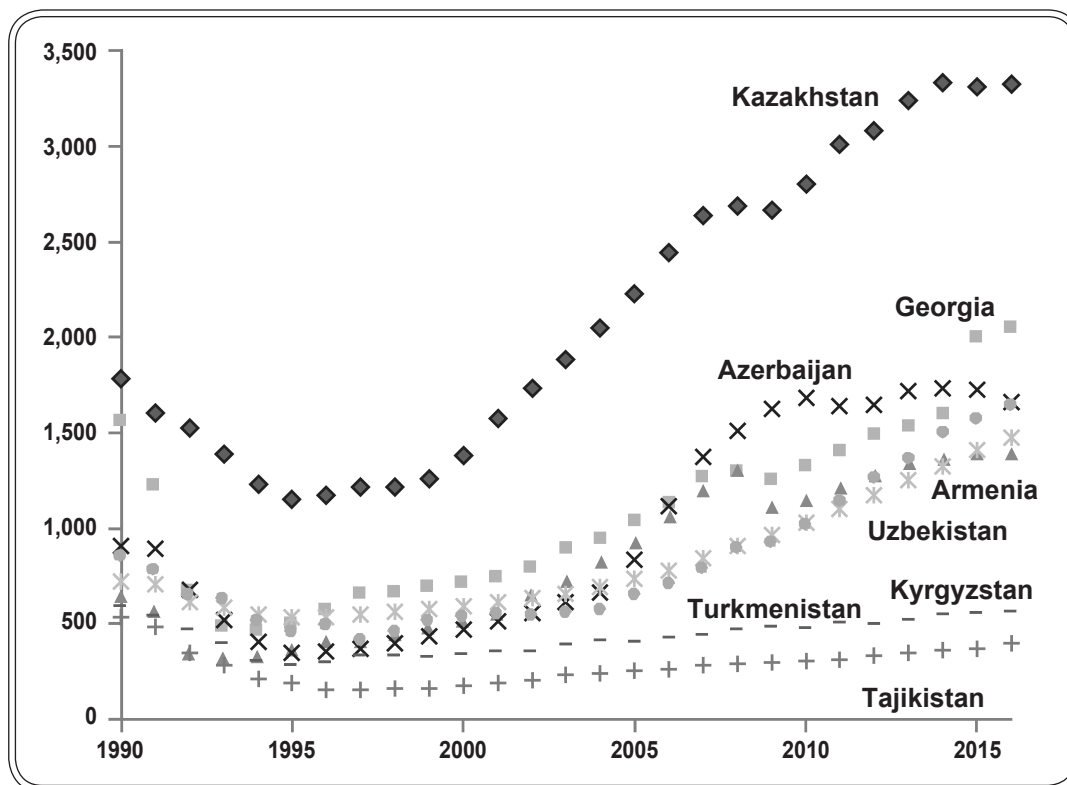
has slightly declined. In other words, the overall relative change in the economy of Russia is closest to that of Georgia.

The post-Soviet improvement in the relative per capita wealth of Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan (as well as, incidentally, of Armenia) is much more significant than in Russia. Of course, these countries started from different levels. In 1990, GDP per capita in Russia was almost \$4 thousand, while in Kazakhstan and Georgia it was \$1.8 thousand and \$1.6 thousand, respectively, and in each of the remaining countries in this group it was less than \$1 thousand.

How successfully and effectively have the Central Caucasian countries developed their oil industries?

Figure 3 shows the changes in oil production in Russia and the oil-producing countries of Central Caucasia. Let us note the obvious fact that Russia's oil industry was practically the only one to experience a post-Soviet shock: from 1991 to 1996, oil production in the country fell by about a third, whereas in the post-Soviet South there was no significant decline in production, and Uzbekistan even increased its production until 1998 (though later it began to decline). Oil output in the remaining countries fluctuated around the Soviet level and then began to grow—in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The surge in production was particularly impressive in Azerbaijan: oil output more than tripled from 2004 to 2010.

Figure 2

GDP per Capita in the Countries of Central Caucasasia from 1990 to 2016  
(in constant 1990 US dollars)

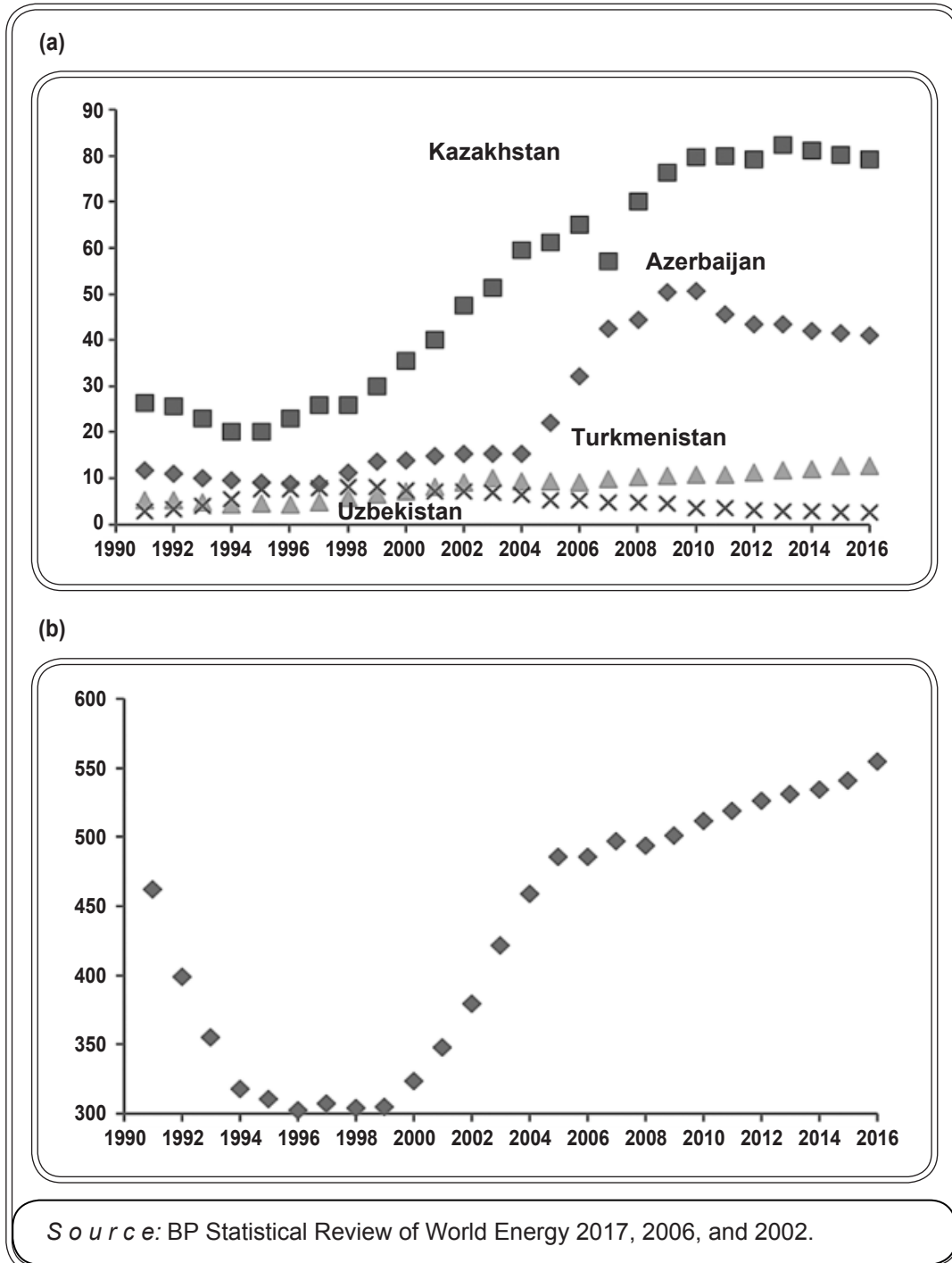
By 2016, oil production in the countries of Central Caucasasia reached a total of nearly 135 million tons, which amounts to at least 20% of all oil produced in the post-Soviet space. In the final years of the USSR, they produced 10% of the Soviet total. This means that in 26 years the oil dependence of these countries has doubled, although considering the total population of the Central Caucasasian countries it has not yet reached the Russian level: since 1990, the population of Russia has not increased, while the population of Central Caucasasia has increased very significantly. It is a different matter when we take into account only the main oil-producing countries: Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. In 2016 Russia produced 3.7 tons per person, Kazakhstan 4.4 tons, Azerbaijan 4.3 tons, and Turkmenistan less than 2 tons. In other words, the economies of Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan are now more dependent on oil (oil-oriented) than the Russian economy. For comparison, in Angola, whose GDP in 2012 was 66% dependent on oil exports, this ratio in 2016 was only 3 tons per person, while in Saudi Arabia, the absolute champion in oil production in 2016, it was 18.6 tons (even though the country's oil industry accounts for only 45% of its gross domestic product—roughly the same as in Azerbaijan<sup>5</sup>). Saudi Arabia's proven oil reserves amount to about 267 billion barrels (15.7% of the world total<sup>6</sup>). Iran, a neighboring country of Central Caucasasia, produced about 2.7 tons per person in 2016.

<sup>5</sup> See: M. Efendiev, "Azerbaidzhan ne smog zabyt neft," Haqqin.az—information, analytical and monitoring portal, 30 September, 2015, available at [<https://haqqin.az/news/54007>], 1 February, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> According to BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2015.

Figure 3

Oil Production in the Countries of Central Caucasasia (a) and in Russia (b) (million tons)





## Scientific Knowledge and New Technologies in the Oil Industry

With the development of shallow oil reserves, oil-producing companies have to drill deeper wells, which requires a constant influx of new and ever more sophisticated technologies based on scientific knowledge.

Even if current extraction technologies are still sufficient and accessible oil reserves are still abundant and can ensure an extensive increase in production for a long time to come, it is necessary to develop and upgrade innovative technologies in areas such as actual exploration and drilling, as well as in transportation, refining, storage, logistics, etc.

In the above case of abundant reserves and sufficient extraction technologies, it is nevertheless necessary to automate oil production to the utmost so as to reduce the labor intensity of these fairly hazardous processes (and this can be done endlessly, even to the point of creating cyber-physical systems for oil extraction and subsequent transportation, refining, storage and logistics).

Among the oil-producing countries of the Caspian (Central Caucasasia and Russia)—Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan—only the latter three have experienced population growth. For Russia and Kazakhstan, labor-saving technologies are highly relevant. At the same time, the development of automated systems requires a very high level of human potential, education and basic science, which is sometimes impossible to achieve with a high proportion of children and young people in the country. But such a level of human reproduction in turn requires a constant increase in revenue, inducing the oil industry to opt for extensive production. This option, however, poses threats and risks: de-innovatization of life in the country in general, growing dependence on world oil prices, increasing social inequality, and sociopolitical instability.

Today, virtually the entire oil industry is innovation-intensive, but how do the own innovations of Central Caucasian countries contribute to its development? And does their oil wealth help to develop science? There are some doubts about this. Despite a developed network of scientific organizations in Uzbekistan inherited from Soviet times (in 2011, 317 organizations, including 80 higher education institutions,<sup>7</sup> engaged in research), research activity is relatively low: in 2011, only 556 patent applications were filed in the country (compared to 1,125 applications in 1994).<sup>8</sup> Moreover, about half of these applications were filed by non-residents of Uzbekistan.

## The “Soft Power” of Science in the Oil-Producing Economies of the Post-Soviet South

The basis for an analysis of the innovation economy is provided by scientific knowledge recorded in publications. Let us turn to basic science, to articles in journals included in international databases.

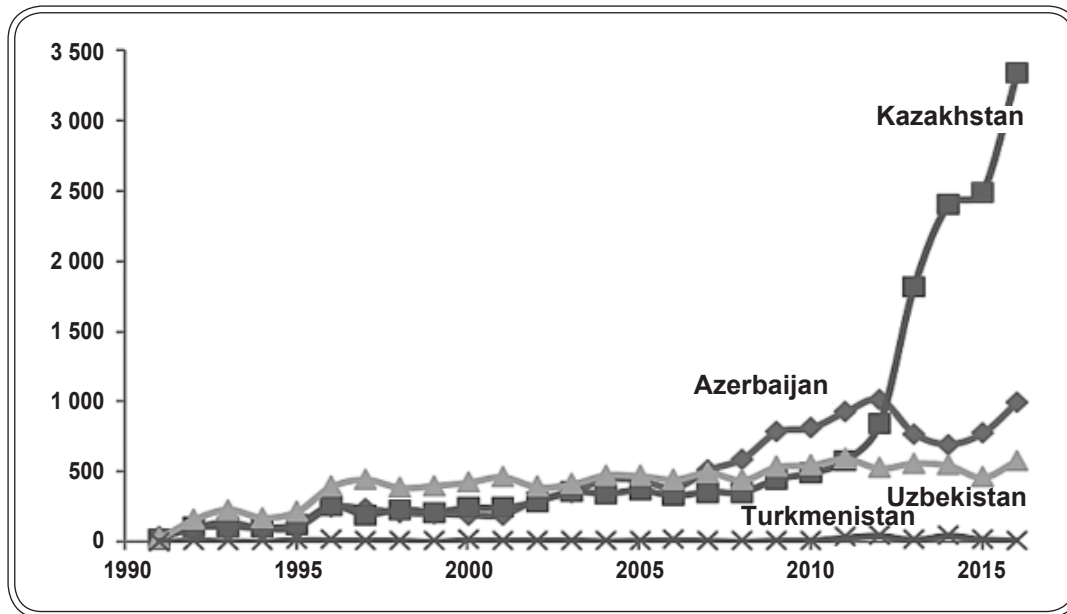
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<sup>7</sup> See: M.A. Ikramov, A.M. Abdullayev, K.I. Kurpayanidi, “Nekotorye voprosy gosudarstvennogo reglamenta innovatsionnogo protsesssa: zarubezhnyi opyt i praktika Uzbekistana,” *Innovatsionnaia ekonomika: perspektivy razvitiia i sovershenstvovaniia*, No. 3 (3), 2013, p. 202.

<sup>8</sup> See: L.Sh. Sultanova, M.A. Aidinova, “Znachenie kanalov transfera novykh tekhnologii dlia Uzbekistana,” *Aktualnye voprosy sovremennoi nauki*, No. 1 (2, 3), 2014, p. 87.

Figure 4

Number of Articles in the Scopus Database from the Oil-Producing Countries of Central Caucasasia (1991-2016)



As we see, Kazakhstan has significantly increased its presence in Scopus (a global database of scientific publications) since the start of the current decade. True, 3.0-3.5 thousand articles per year cannot be regarded as a high level for a country with a population of 14 million. Russian researchers published 77.2 thousand articles in Scopus in 2016. At the same time, GDP per capita in Kazakhstan is comparable to that of Russia. Considering the difference in population size, a further increase in Kazakhstan publications in the global database to 6-7 thousand per year would be more in line with the country's economic strength.

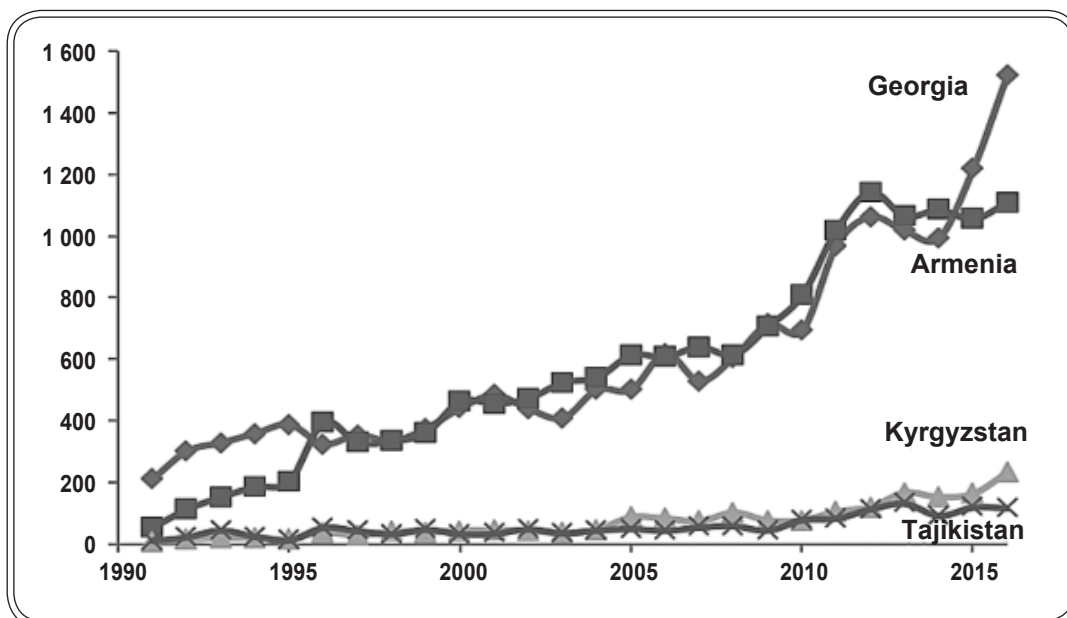
As for the other oil-producing countries of Central Caucasasia, in recent years they have shown only a modest increase in the number of Scopus articles or even a certain stagnation. Let us note that Uzbekistan reached a fairly high level of representation of its science in Scopus earlier than other countries, but this level increased insignificantly in 20 years.

For comparison, Figure 5 shows the dynamics of the number of scientific publications in the other, non-oil-producing countries of Central Caucasasia.

In Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, the development of world-class science is quite slow, while Georgia and Armenia demonstrate similar positive dynamics, with more Scopus articles than in Azerbaijan, although the population of each of these countries is only a third of the latter's. The ratio of the number of publications to population size in these countries is even higher than in Kazakhstan, the leader in the number of Scopus publications among the Central Caucasian countries. Georgia in its international scientific collaboration is oriented towards the United States, and the percentage of articles co-authored by Americans has increased: from 22% in 1991-2000 to 35% in the last decade. Russia had the second largest presence in Georgian science at the end of the 20th century (8% of all joint articles), but today it has dropped out of the top three international collaborators: in the last decade, 22% of articles by Georgian researchers were written in collaboration with German researchers, and 21% with researchers from Britain. Whereas in the 20th century 55% of all articles in post-

Figure 5

Number of Articles in the Scopus Database from the Countries of Central Caucasia Not Engaged in Active Oil Production (1991-2016)



Soviet Georgia were published independently, in recent years the figure is only 39%. In Armenia, the percentage of articles written in recent years without international collaboration is roughly the same. At the end of the 20th century, the top three countries collaborating with Armenia in this field were Russia (14% of all articles), Germany (12%) and the United States (11%), while 60% of all articles were written by Armenian researchers “on their own,” and in the current decade the top three are Russia and the U.S. with 26% each and Germany with 24%. Tajik and Kyrgyz researchers have also actively internationalized their publications in recent years (since the end of the 20th century, the number of “national” publications has declined from 68% to 35% in Tajikistan and from 61% to 27% in Kyrgyzstan). The absolute leader in international scientific collaboration with these countries is Russia (in all periods), whose presence has somewhat declined (from 25% to 17%) in Tajik science and somewhat increased (from 16% to 20%) in Kyrgyz science. The United States and Germany were the second and third largest collaborators, respectively, in both Kyrgyz and Tajik science in the 20th century, but in the current decade the second place is held by Turkey in Kyrgyzstan and by Pakistan in Tajikistan (each with 15% of all publications).

In assessing the presence of foreign “soft” scientific power in the national science of the oil-producing countries of Central Caucasia, we find that Turkey has been ahead of Russia and the United States in Azerbaijan in both the 20th century and today (and the share of joint publications with Turkish researchers has increased from 13% to 24%). The percentage of articles published by Azerbaijani researchers without international collaboration has been around 54% in recent years. Russia’s share in the science of Kazakhstan is double that of the United States, its nearest “competitor,” and four times higher than that of Germany, remaining at a steady level (16% at the end of the 20th century, and 14% in the current period). The situation in Uzbek science is similar: co-publications with Russia amount to 13% of all publications in recent years, although Germany has moved into second place with 9%.

Tables 1 and 2 show the level of spending on science and its patent productivity in the Central Caucasian countries based on data from the World Bank, UNESCO and national statistical organizations; data on Turkmenistan not available.

Table 1

**Research and Development Expenditure as a Percentage of GDP  
in the Countries of Central Caucasasia**

Year	Kazakhstan	Georgia	Kyrgyzstan	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
1995	0.44	0.32	0.16	0.11	0.1	—	—
2000	0.18	0.22	0.16	0.19	0.34	0.11	0.36
2005	0.28	0.18	0.2	0.26	0.22	0.1	0.23
2010	0.15	0.12	0.16	0.24	0.22	0.09	0.2
2015	0.19	0.11	0.1	0.26	0.21	0.13	0.21

*Source:* Research and Development Expenditure (% of GDP): World Bank; United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics.

Table 2

**Resident Patents in the Countries of Central Caucasasia**

Year	Kazakhstan	Uzbekistan	Georgia	Azerbaijan	Armenia	Tajikistan	Kyrgyzstan
1993	3,223	2,136	502	221 (1995)	184	5	132
2000	1,399	755	232	165	119	80	80
2005	1,523	264	225	281	206	30	179
2010	1,691	370	183	254	136	7	134
2015	1,271	288	99	184	113	2	122

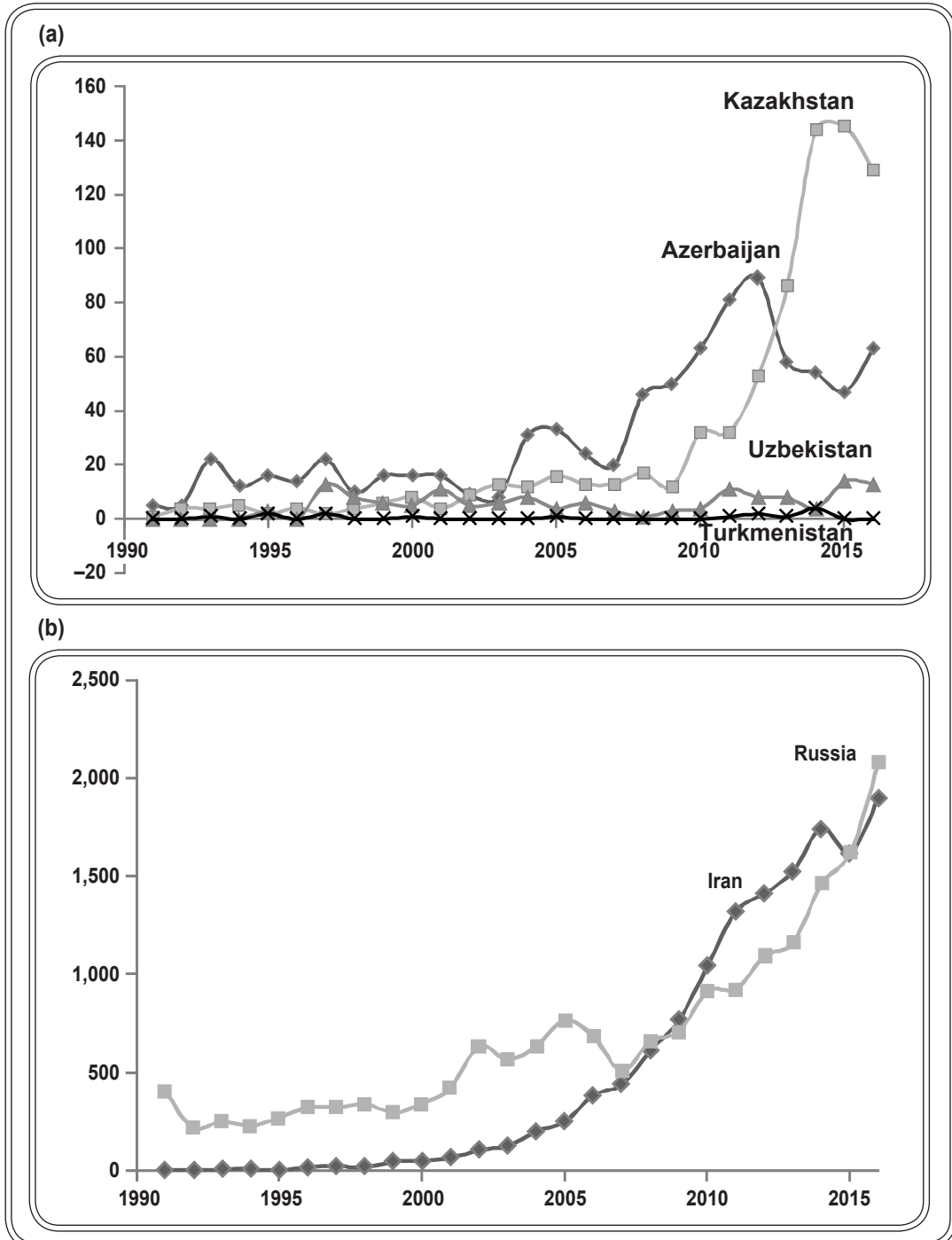
*Source:* Data of national statistical agencies from the Knoema World Data Atlas, available at [<https://knoema.ru/atlas>].

As we see from Tables 1 and 2, most of the countries in question have registered a rapid decline in inventive activity compared to the early post-Soviet years (it has remained at about the same level only in Armenia and Kyrgyzstan). The situation in Kazakhstan appears to be much better than in the other Central Caucasian countries (in both absolute and relative terms). A similar downward trend is also characteristic of almost all Central Caucasian countries (except Armenia and Azerbaijan) in R&D expenditure as a percentage of GDP. But research funding at 0.1%-0.3% demonstrated by the Central Caucasian countries is 10 or more times lower than in the innovative economies of developed countries and 5 times lower than in Russia.

In other words, the recent increase in the number of Scopus publications from the Central Caucasian countries is a consequence of the general trend towards globalization of national science, which has been particularly pronounced in the entire post-Soviet space in recent years, rather than actual development of science with a high-level basic and a sound applied component.

Figure 6

Number of Articles by Researchers from the Oil-Producing Countries of Central Caucasia (a), Russia and Iran (b) Whose Titles, Abstracts and Keywords Include the Words "Oil" or "Petroleum"



A fact to be noted is that the curves of publication activity in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan are similar to those of oil production (the more money, the greater the opportunities for funding science). In this context, let us take a look at Scopus articles on the topic of oil from the main oil-producing countries of Central Caucasasia and, for comparison, similar articles from Russia and Iran, a neighbor of Central Caucasasia in the Caspian region.

Figure 6(a) shows the dynamics of such articles in the countries of Central Caucasasia. Azerbaijan was the leader in the number of “oil” publications until 2012, but in 2013 Kazakhstan forged ahead, while the number of such publications by researchers from Azerbaijan declined.

Evidently, these countries have their own scientific and technological base for the solution of technical problems in the oil industry dating back to the days of the Soviet Union.

## International Scientific Collaboration in the Oil Sector

The “orientation” of world science towards oil is around 2% (out of a total of 2.62 million publications in Scopus in 2015, 51 thousand contain the words “oil” or “petroleum” in their titles, abstracts and keywords). Thus, the share of “oil” publications in the science of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan (5-6% in recent years) is three times higher than in Russia and the world at large, and about twice as high as in Iran. But since R&D expenditure as a percentage of GDP in these countries is less than a fifth of that in Russia, this level is clearly insufficient for the development of their own scientific and technological base, which is indirectly confirmed by the very significant decline in the number of patent applications compared to the early post-Soviet years.

In the post-Soviet period to 2016 (including 1991), a total of 1.75 thousand articles on oil were published by researchers in Azerbaijan, 1.28 thousand in Kazakhstan, 0.24 thousand in Uzbekistan, and only 34 in Turkmenistan (see Fig. 7).

Which foreign countries have been helping the oil-producing countries of Central Caucasasia to engage in “oil-oriented” science?

In 2010-2016, Kazakh researchers published 622 oil-related articles: 12% of these were written in collaboration with Russians, 10% with co-authors from the United States, and 3% with British co-authors, while 54% of all such articles were published without international collaboration.

In that period, Azerbaijanis published 455 “oil” articles: 7% with researchers from the United States, 3.5% with those from Russia, and 3.1% from Germany, while 78% of the total were published without international collaboration.

As for Uzbek researchers, they published only 58 articles on oil in that period: researchers from Germany and the United States each co-authored 7% of the total; 3.5% were written in collaboration with Russians, and 3.1% with researchers from Israel; 64% of all such articles were published without international collaboration.

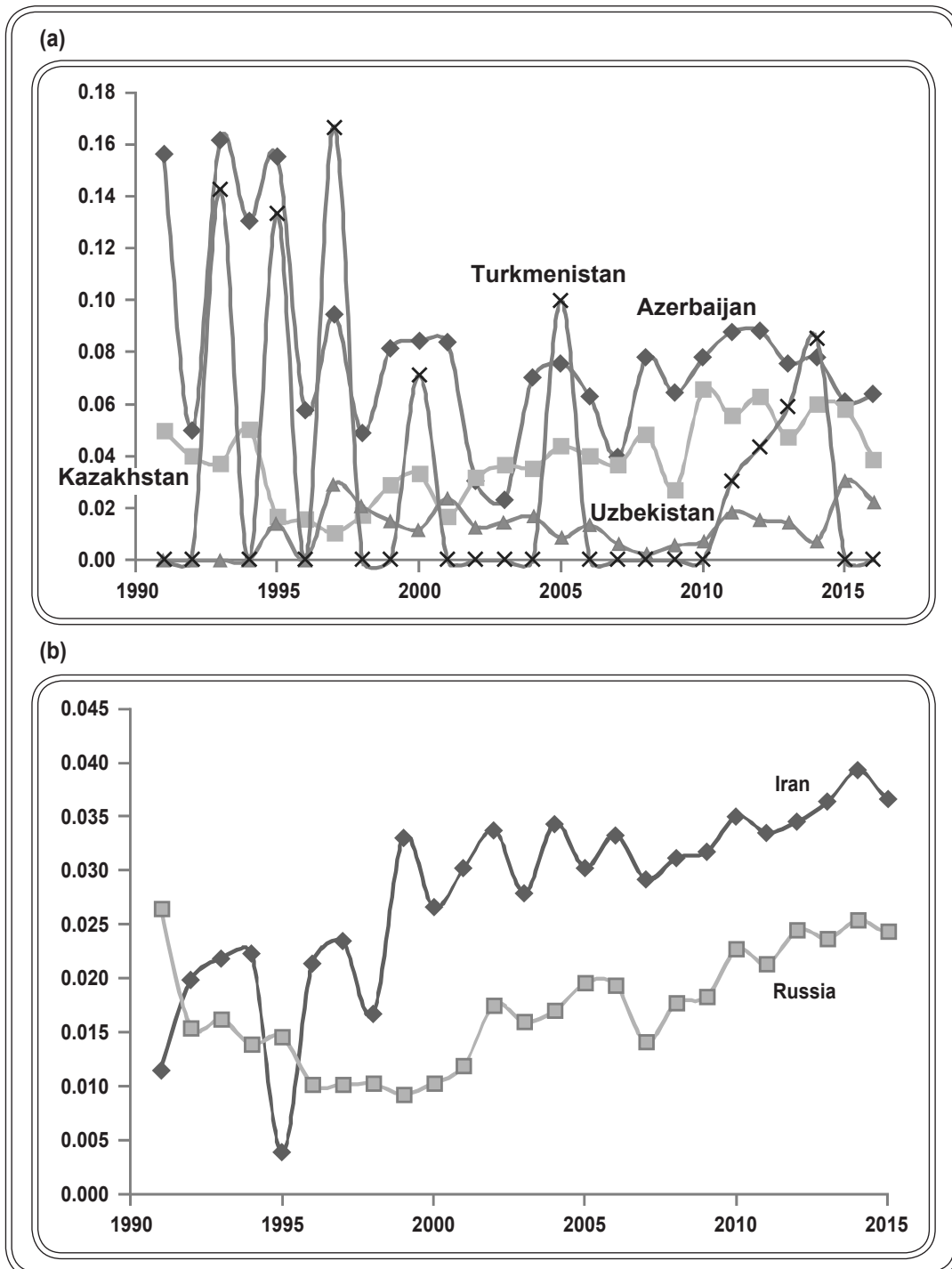
International collaboration in Kazakhstan’s oil sector (both production and research) is more active than in the other oil-producing countries of Central Caucasasia and is oriented towards Russia. At the same time, Azerbaijan, whose oil research and production is more Western-oriented, has experienced a decline in oil production in recent years. The contract with an international consortium for the development of three major fields (discovered, incidentally, by Soviet geologists) ends in 2024, and no new large oil fields have been discovered.<sup>9</sup> Western companies come and go without concern for the country’s welfare or its future, which is the exclusive responsibility of the state.

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<sup>9</sup> See: A. Zyutin, “Bogatoe nefianoe proshloe. Kak uglevodorody dvazhdy izmenili Azerbaijan,” *Kommersant*, 11 March, 2017.

Figure 7

Share of Publications on Oil in the Scopus Database from the Countries of Central Caucasasia (a), Russia and Iran (b) in 1991-2016



### *Conclusion*

Oil wealth has undoubtedly helped to improve the welfare of the oil-producing countries of Caucasia, but insufficient investment in national science (and, let us add, in technology) is a visible threat to the future of this welfare. The situation in Kazakhstan, which is naturally oriented towards Russia and has maintained and developed scientific and technological ties with it, is better in this respect, both currently and from a strategic perspective. The prospects of the oil industry in Azerbaijan are quite worrying, because its oil fields, discovered back in Soviet times, are gradually running out, while the competition for market share in the period of unstable prices is intensifying. Azerbaijan has succeeded in attracting foreign capital and quickly developing its rich oilfields, but the development of its own scientific and technological base for the oil industry seems to be stagnating, whereas the situation calls for innovative solutions directly linked to the country's future welfare, which, in effect, is of little interest to concessionaires from Far Abroad countries. Turkmenistan, which has virtually no world-class science of its own, is also in a strategically dangerous situation.

From a scientific perspective, the countries of Caucasia have different political leanings similar to those in foreign policy and economic cooperation. Science, including oil research, is in this respect a kind of marker of deep geopolitical affinity. Evidently, in long-term mineral resource development it is better for a country to collaborate with its closest neighbors and traditional partners.

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**POLITICS TODAY****POLITICAL MYTHS  
IN THE SYMBOLIC SPACE OF RUSSIAN ELITES:  
FEDERAL AND REGIONAL ASPECTS  
(A NORTH CAUCASIAN CASE STUDY)****Ali SALGIRIEV**

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**ABSTRACT**

**T**he political and administrative elites acting amid social, political and economic changes and facing the rising conflict potential in their countries have no choice but to tap into the full potential of symbolic politics as an important instrument of power. Indeed, their continued presence in the corridors of power depends, to a great extent, on their ability to influence public opinion; this is doubly important during election campaigns. In order to succeed, the elites have to use symbolic interactions and political myths as the most efficient instrument of brainwashing. The authors have described the technologies and practices used to construct functional political myths.

The social and cultural crisis into which the country had slipped in the first post-Soviet years, economic problems, seats of ethno-political conflicts made the use of barely verified information practically inevitable. The authors have analyzed the sources, means and instruments used to form and adjust public opinion. In democratic countries political systems are formed by and rely on independent media, balanced editorial policies and resolute rejection of unfounded or harmful information by the public. We live in "real virtuality" (Manuel Castells): real politics is still burdened by the Soviet heritage of myths firmly rooted in people's minds and people's readiness to accept utopian ideas.

The elites, meanwhile, are building up conspiracy theories, searching for external and internal enemies, offering simplified and

irrational explanations of social and political processes unfolding in the country. New myths are created and promoted amid the country's mounting isolation, multiplying sanctions and economic problems.

The authors have identified the sources of an obvious mythologization of public space as the alienation of citizens from real politics and their inertia, as well as the specifics of the binary structure of consciousness that is rooted in the past. In their minds, people separate politics from the economy, and are more concerned about the country's greatness and might than about the standards of living. No wonder that the citizens of Russia are proud of the country's armed forces, space exploration, heroic history and sport achievements and are pushing mundane issues aside. As could be expected, political elites are associated with the country's might, its international status, etc.

Ideological preferences and adherence to different schools produced several debatable opinions about the role of the political elites. So far, it is more or less commonly believed that they play a negative or even a destructive role. To arrive at an unbiased conclusion, we have analyzed their resource base, algorithms of their activities, the political and governing functions and related strategies. We have concluded the article with the recommendations on lowering the level of mythologization of public consciousness by implementing at least some elements of civil society.

**KEYWORDS:** *Russia, the Northern Caucasus, myth, political myth, mythologeme, public space, political elites, symbolic elites, the media, public opinion, brainwashing, consciousness, institutions, conflicts.*

## *Introduction*

In different languages the word ‘myth’ has the same meaning—a legend or a tale about heroes, gods and elements of nature. All cultures possess myths of their own, the best-known of them being the ancient Greek myths about Heracles, Prometheus and other heroes. Here we will analyze the role and place of a myth in the political space of the elites. There are different types of political myths; there is any number of explanations of their nature, genesis and essence. For our purposes, we have selected the political myth as an instrument of political governance.

Political elites that have concentrated the basic resources of influence and have acquired additional mobilization potential (economic, tribal and political) are important actors of political governance, their members, recruited through a nontransparent patron-client model, become a source of considerable conflict potential. This principle relies on authoritarian approaches in governing interactions.<sup>1</sup>

Sergei Potseluev has pointed out: “Symbolic politics, a very special type of political communication, are targeted at confirming sustainable meanings through visual effects rather than at rational comprehension. The process relies not only on various symbols, but on political actions treated as symbols.”<sup>2</sup> Egocentrism, eulogies and festivals that follow one another without interruption can be described as an inevitable attribute of the ruling elites.

Political elites rely on myths to explain the social and political processes unfolding in society, they refer to the exclusive nature of national history, hold up the heroism of the people and cultural specifics to manipulate public consciousness.<sup>3</sup> These and similar political myths (that spoke of golden taps, camel milk and saints that go up into the sky to down enemy aircraft with their sticks, etc.) were highly popular in the early 1990s, the time of mass rallies and demonstrations in the center of Grozny.<sup>4</sup> Common people readily accepted these myths; the rallies attracted mainly ignorant, marginalized and extremely reactionary people.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, the comprador elite was plundering the state and moving their money out of the republic.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See: A. Salgiriev, “The Northern Caucasus: Tribal-Clan Structure of the Political Elites as a Factor of Political Tension,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 17, Issue 1, 2016, pp. 29-35.

<sup>2</sup> S.P. Potseluev, “Simvolicheskaia politika: konstelliatsia poniatii dlia podkhoda k probleme,” *Politicheskie issledovaniia*, No. 5, 1999, pp. 62-75.

<sup>3</sup> See: M.M. Betilmerzaeva, *Etnicheskaia mentalnost v sisteme kul'tury*, Ph.D. thesis, Southern Federal University, Rostov-on-Don, 2005; idem, “Mesto i rol gumanitarnogo znania i dukhovnoy bezopasnosti v kontekste multikulturalizma,” in: *Gumanitarnoe znanie i dukhovnaia bezopasnost. Sbornik materialov II Mezhdunarodnoy nauchno-prakticheskoy konferentsii*, Grozny, 2015, pp. 74-82.

<sup>4</sup> See: A. Salgiriev, M. Betilmerzaeva, M. Soltamuradov, M.-E. Shamsuev, “Specific Interests of the North Caucasian Elites as a Conflict Potential,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 19, Issue 1, 2018, p. 57.

<sup>5</sup> See: A.R. Salgiriev, “Rossiysko-chechenskiy konflikt: prichiny, posledstvia i puti dostizhenia mira,” in: *Perspektiva-2005. Materialy Vserossiyskoy nauchnoy konferentsii studentov, aspirantov i molodykh uchenykh*, ed. by R.Kh. Kocheskov, Nalchik, 2005, pp. 226-228.

<sup>6</sup> See: A.D. Osmaev, L.M. Kotieva, “Borba za vlast v Chechenskoy Respublike Ichkeria (letu 1998-1999 gg.),” in *Natsionalno-gosudarstvennoe stroitelstvo v Chechne: istotia i sovremennost. Materialy regionalnoy nauchnoy konferentsii, posviashchennoy 90-letiu avtonomii Chechni*, ed. by S.R. Tepsuev, Grozny, 2013, pp. 277-285.

Any political myth is an irrational and simplified interpretation of social and political processes: it does not provide facts or reveal their logic; instead, it appeals to emotions and faith and addresses targeted groups. Any attempt to verify a myth through facts and logic is fiercely objected to as conspiratorial.

In the politics of symbols, the concepts of knowledge are used as an instrument of brainwashing of reference groups. By the concerted efforts of bloggers, journalists and public opinion leaders, the public learns what it should think about certain political decisions passed by the elites. For an outside observer this looks like the will of the people, as if a specific idea has been accepted by society after a wide discussion. As struggle for power is growing fiercer, and rivalry—more vehement, information and discussion practices gain more consequence as a source of new knowledge.

## Realities of Symbolic Politics

No society is free of social contradictions or even clashes: local people find it hard to accept migrants in their territory; there are confessional and ethnic conflicts, as well as the territorial conflicts between different constituencies, etc. In an effort to capitalize on these contradictions, people in power deliberately channel them into the information sphere to create a platform of condemnation as the first step towards a highly politicized public consciousness.

There are all sorts of political myths and a wide range of technologies used to create them, the symbolic elite being one of the main instruments. This technology is fairly simple: political and administrative elite ‘suddenly’ becomes aware of certain scholarly or even pseudo-scholarly studies. The required result is achieved by pushing this myth out into the information space to draw the expert community into a discussion.<sup>7</sup> Today, coercion or direct physical pressure are inefficient or rejected as unfitting, therefore groups close to the elites (which can be called ‘symbolic’), by which we mean journalists, academics, public figures, experts, etc., while being fully aware of their direct or indirect dependence on the administrative elites, have no choice but to create a myth designed to achieve certain results. Total control over public discourse is an inalienable condition of manipulating social sentiments and political preferences intended to change electoral preferences.

These principles and relationships are based on the guild model of circulation of the political elites, which takes into account the constitutional aggregation of interests. So-called brigades, commands or teams close ranks around their leaders. The leaders, in their turn, highly appreciate the loyalty of their followers who should be ready to accomplish a feat, while the relationships of kinship, place of origin, personal devotion, friendship, nepotism, etc., can be described as the main channel of cooptation.<sup>8</sup> Good education and upbringing, competence and patriotism come second. No wonder that societies are living in permanent tension and at the brink of conflicts. The symbolic elites (that could be conventionally defined as a ‘royal court’) create all sorts of myths around their leaders: he is lauded for his high moral principles and administrative skills supported by the examples of personal bravery, self-sacrifice, modesty, etc. This is done through the economic, media and reputational resources that make it possible to promote particular interests of a reference group.<sup>9</sup> In this manner political myths emerge not only in society, but also within political clans. This model of

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<sup>7</sup> See: S.A. Sukalo, “Simvolicheskaia politika kak tekhnologia kulturnogo kontroliia massovogo soznania,” *Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta kultury i iskusstva*, No. 3 (20), 2014, pp. 6-9.

<sup>8</sup> See: A.R. Salgiriev, “Struktura politicheskoy elity v polietnichnykh Respublikakh Severnogo Kavkaza,” *Vestnik Rossiyskogo universiteta druzhby narodov*, Seria: Politologia, No. 2, 2015, pp. 83-89.

<sup>9</sup> See: Z.Kh. Sergeeva, “Konflikty za kulturno-simvolicheskoe prostranstvo i postkolonialnoe myshlenie: analiz keisa,” *Upravlenie ustoychivym razvitiem*, No. 4 (5), 2016, pp. 56-64.

political governance and configuration of forces and resources can be observed in the Third World countries or risk societies, as they are often called.

Myths emerge, develop and conquer the minds in societies with a very low political culture: such people do not strive to comprehend the very essence of the political behavior of their elites. Such societies never study programs of political parties in detail; they never carefully listen to what they are told to identify tale-telling contradictions: it is much easier to absorb a myth. Society prefers to reduce realities to myths, with this trend becoming especially apparent during electoral cycles.<sup>10</sup> New myths appear when civil rights and freedoms are infringed upon, when sovereignty is violated; they thrive in societies where legal culture borders on legal nihilism, where authoritarian principles of governance dominate, where national human rights structures are weak and where the rich and the poor are separated by a wide gap.

Mass consciousness has not yet freed itself from Soviet myths: they are very much alive and encouraged; Lenin and Stalin still figure prominently as basic components of Russian culture. To confirm isolationism as Russia's policy, its leaders rely on the Soviet past that surfaces in the information space in the form of films that perfectly fit the current ideological trend and of works by certain authors that have found their way into school curriculum, etc.<sup>11</sup>

Crises, election campaigns, conflicts and other challenges to the elites' stability create the most obvious background for all sorts of myths. It should be said that today Russia's foreign policy course is moving towards autarchy and militarism. The pressure is increasing; Western countries are introducing new economic sanctions, while diplomatic collisions are reviving the old and creating new myths. The utopian idea to revive the Soviet empire is actively discussed; leaders of the Soviet Union are idealized while retrospective analysis is going on unabated. Democratic initiatives are declined, while the institutes of civil control—the public chamber, public councils at the structures of state and municipal authority—set up on state initiative are not adequately supported and therefore cannot satisfy social demands.<sup>12</sup>

## Symbolization of Regional Political Space

Post-Soviet social transformations and the widest possible sovereign rights of national republics launched the process of power redistribution within republics.<sup>13</sup> Ethnopolitical elites acquired a taste for policies based on ethnic stereotypes and myths.<sup>14</sup> They relied on historical memory: Stalinist repressions, social injustice, legends, etc., which explained why separatist sentiments came to the fore as soon as federal authority had weakened and the country had slipped into an economic and social crisis. Ethnopolitical tension was spreading far and wide, drawing republics into an abyss of disagree-

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<sup>10</sup> See: G.S. Devnina, "Rol sotsialnogo mifa vo vnutrigosudarstvennykh politicheskikh krizisakh Rossii: sotsialno-filosofskiy analiz," *Vesti. Sev. (Arktich.) feder. Un-ta*, Seria: Gumanit. i sots. nauki, No. 4, 2017, pp. 61-69.

<sup>11</sup> See: S.I. Belov, "Sovetskiy politicheskiy mif: prichiny gibeli, sodержatelnoe i simvolicheskoe nasledie," *Gosudarstvennoe upravlenie. Elektronny vestnik*, No. 65, 2017, pp. 45-56.

<sup>12</sup> See: M.M. Iusupov, "Spetsifika upravleniya regionom v postkonfliktnoy situatsii," *Sotsium i vlast*, No. 5 (37), 2012, pp. 71-75.

<sup>13</sup> See: V.D. Nechaev, *Regionalny mir v politicheskoy kulture sovremennoy Rossii*, Author's abstract of Ph.D. thesis, Russian Humanitarian University, Moscow, 1998.

<sup>14</sup> See: V.Kh. Akaev, *Sufizm v kontekste arabo-musul'manskoj kultury*, Author's abstract of Ph.D. thesis, Rostov State University, Rostov-on-Don, 2004.

ments and mutual claims: the events in Chechnia,<sup>15</sup> in the Prigorodny District of South Ossetia-Alania, the Karabakh conflict, etc. Under President Putin power grew even more centralized: the country acquired the institute of presidential plenipotentiary envoy to federal districts; certain federal constituencies were joined together to create larger units, heads of republics and regions were appointed, rather than elected by popular vote, etc.

At the current stage of political development we should expect regional myths tinged in corresponding geographic, territorial, mental and cultural hues.<sup>16</sup> In the Northern Caucasus, for example, the myths about ethnogenesis are still alive (their content depends on the constituency's national specifics); discussions of which of the local peoples are autochthonous and which are not are going on unabated. Not infrequently, public discourse is extrapolated on the institutionalized field of conflict behavior. For example, one of the republics added the telling name of Alania to the preceding name of North Ossetia, while the capital of Ingushetia, its closest neighbor, is called Magas. (In the Middle Ages the Kingdom of Alania spread out through the territory of both republics with the capital called Maghas [Magas]). Amid a social and cultural crisis, the archaization of self-identification adds vigor to the symbolic rhetoric used in political and social contexts.<sup>17</sup>

Ethnic groups and ethnic minorities are very sensitive, or even hostile to all sorts of cultural monuments and symbols that appear in public discourse. Their members have not forgotten that their rights were trampled upon; Stalinist repressions, deportations of individuals and entire peoples, ethnic stigmatization, territorial conflicts are still alive in the minds and are perceived as a historical injustice. Nationalist groups and public structures never hesitate to capitalize on these negative sentiments in their rhetoric. It should be said that the consciousness of all Caucasian peoples is strongly mythologized; it is traditional to the extent that all forms of modernization and social changes are interpreted as attempts at assimilation, as threats to national culture, customs, traditions and common law.<sup>18</sup> Cultural values shared by all Russians, not to mention European values, are treated as hostile and highly dangerous for the national tongues and national specifics. Ethnic elites are not alien to exploiting the "national trump card" in their political interests under the purely political slogan of defending national honor and dignity for the sake of entirely political aims.

Public opinion is formed by information obtained from open sources—TV, newspapers, radio, the Internet—which means that the results of an election cycle depend on information, whether objective or not. Many TV channels, up to and including NTV, TNT and REN TB, feed their audiences information on flying saucers, talking animals, clairvoyants' battles,<sup>19</sup> etc. The so-called special literature, which occupies bookshelves in book shops and figures prominently in the Internet, not only demonizes the non-systemic opposition but also deepens utopian ideas in the minds of Russians. Myths live for as long as their structure allows them. In recent times, the lifespans of many myths have become shorter; their ideological impact is losing its efficiency, while their subjects should articulate the interests of the masses while taking into account the interests and intentions of the elites.

<sup>15</sup> See: A.D. Osmaev, *Obshchestvenno-politicheskaia i povsednevnaia zhizn Chechenskoj Respubliki v 1996-2005 gg.* Author's abstract of doctoral thesis, Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography, Daghestan Scientific Center of Russian Academy of Sciences, Makhachkala, 2010.

<sup>16</sup> See: I.S. Bashmakov, "Regionalnaia mifologia kak instrument simvolicheskoy politiki v formirovanii territorialnoy obshchnosti Krasnodarskogo kraia," *Teoria i praktika obshchestvennogo razvitiia*, No. 2, 2011, pp. 183-186.

<sup>17</sup> See: M.E.Kh. Shamsuev, "Grazhdanskaia identichnost kak faktor bezopasnosti v makroregione (na primere Severnogo Kavkaza)," *Vestnik Rossiyskoj natsii*, Vol. 29, No. 3-4, 2013, pp. 121-137.

<sup>18</sup> See: M. Betilmerzaeva, A. Akhtaev, B. Sadulaev, A. Salgiriev, "Religion and State: Interaction and Sociocultural Transformations (The Chechen Republic Case Study)," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 18, Issue 1, 2017, pp. 124-132.

<sup>19</sup> See: I.E. Krolivetskaia, I.A. Ostapenko, "Stikhiynoe i organizovannoe v protsesse mifologizatsii massovogo soznania sovremennogo rossianina," *Nauchnyy almanakh*, No. 4-4 (18), 2016, pp. 128-132.

The elites of highly centralized countries forced to survive in geopolitical tension produce one myth after another to remain in power and retain their resources; they have no choice but to justify their conflicting behavior by threats of disintegration, by finding enemies at the country's threshold, etc. We all know that regular Russians are more concerned with the country's greatness than with the standard of living, their incomes and other boons.<sup>20</sup> Recently, the share of political and obviously propagandist TV and radio programs has increased. Public opinion is formed by the pro-government media, which means that there are no other sources of information and no food for contemplation and comparison. The vigor of anti-Western rhetoric in the media is increasing, while regular people cannot verify the information offered to them; likewise they cannot understand what is going on in the country. This breeds anxiety, skepticism and social apathy. The citizens of Russia are absolutely convinced that their country should play a very special role in the world. This delusion stems from the Soviet past, from its stereotypes of thinking and its successes.<sup>21</sup> The elites go out of their way to maintain mobilization sentiment and an emotional upsurge. Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that the ratings of people in power are steadily going up.

### *Conclusion*

Academic elite alone has enough experience, knowledge, competence and reputational resource to play an important role in myth-making. It took orders from the establishment to produce technologies in the form of expert conclusions, publications, etc. Its members control public discourse, join discussions, offer their arguments and insist on the official and ideologically verified position of the political elites. At the same time, today bureaucrats, civil servants and cultural figures are deeply involved in the political process designed to support certain myths. The composition of the symbolic elites, that is, the subjects of myth-making, is highly varied. Time has come to look closer at their quality and motivations.

The question is—"What should be done to lower the level of mythologization of public consciousness?" We should develop the institute of civil society, abandon media censorship, give our citizens a chance to freely generate and express their opinions. Democracy and modernization are impossible in a society dominated by clan relationships, traditionalism and reliance on the myths inherited from the Soviet past.

It is highly important to change the principles of replication and functioning of the elites, personnel policy should be open and social lifts should start working. In fact, the antagonistic nature of the elites and the fairly self-contained road to the top produce symbolic interactions by creating new myths in the public space.<sup>22</sup> Russia has entered a period of complicated social changes and is facing huge systemic problems: fairly tense relationships with Georgia, instability at the Ukrainian border, widening sanctions imposed by the EU, the U.S. and other countries, and military presence in Syria. Caught in a cobweb of growing international pressure, Russia should pursue a balanced and efficient policy. The political elites should harmonize the interests of power and society to create adequate conditions for all. They have all the necessary resources required to check the negative developments in the country, abandon the militant rhetoric and start talking to different groups inside the country and, later, to the rest of the world.

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<sup>20</sup> See interview of L. Gudkov. Website of Levada-Center, available at [<http://www.levada.ru/2015/12/16/lev-gudkov-ob-effektivnosti-propagandy-v-rossii/>], 5 February, 2018.

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>22</sup> See: A. Salgiriev, M. Betilmerzaeva, V. Gaziev, M. Soltamuradov, "Political Stratification within the Elites (A North Caucasian Case Study)," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 17, Issue 3, 2016, pp. 30-37.

Pluralism, independent media, high-quality education, abandonment of repressive measures towards the opponents will stabilize the political process. A new generation has come to the stage, yet the nature of power has not changed; meanwhile social institutions are being transformed, albeit slowly.

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## BUSINESS PARTICIPATION IN IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIALLY ORIENTED SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL ASIA AND THE CAUCASUS REGION

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### ABSTRACT

**T**he authors have concluded that the degree of engagement of the business community in resolving sustainable development issues is one of the primary factors of its long-term competitiveness. The paper discusses topical private



projects and initiatives aimed at attainment of socially oriented Sustainable Development Goals as delineated in the U.N. document in 2015.

**KEYWORDS:** *sustainable development, transnational corporations (TNC), Millennium Development Goals (MDG), Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), SDG classification, socially oriented SDG, corporate social responsibility.*

## *Introduction*

From the time of emergence of theoretical foundations of sustainable development in the 1960s-1970s, this concept began to embody the aggregate of challenges for transnational business operations. The pressure exerted by political elites and civil rights advocacy groups on large-scale business as a subject that is largely responsible for the state of the environment and the prosperity of consumers and society as a whole, forced the companies to critically assess their impact on the environment and the social sphere. With the evolution of the corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainable development concepts, which emerged practically simultaneously and began to develop interdependently over time, the private sector has incorporated them in its strategies, using them as the leading business operations principles. Ultimately, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>1</sup>, adopted by the U.N. in September 2015, has officially assigned private business one of the key roles in the process of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) delineated in the document. In recent years, international organizations, as well as established consulting and audit companies have been publishing an unprecedented number of programmed documents and reports, which emphasize the need to engage the business community in resolving global issues and analyze opportunities that open up for the most socially responsible companies. Today, the leading TNCs are already implementing large-scale projects aimed at the simultaneous attainment of an entire range of SDGs. It is beyond doubt that in the nearest future the best practices in the sustainable development sphere will gain popularity and exert a significant impact on the operations of the entire business sphere, inevitably engaging new players in this process—from giant corporations to small and medium-sized businesses.

The aim of this paper is to analyze meaningful business cases presented by one of the leading TNCs in the interests of attaining socially oriented SDGs in the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus region, as well as outlining the key tendencies that characterize the contemporary experience of business community participation in the resolution of socially meaningful problems in this region.

## **Methods and Materials**

### ***The Meaning of the Agenda for Sustainable Development for Business Operations***

2015 was a landmark year in the evolution of the sustainable development concept due to a number of circumstances. Having confirmed the new version of the global agenda, the international

<sup>1</sup> See: "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," available at [<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/285/75/PDF/N1528575.pdf?OpenElement>].

community has, first of all, officially recognized the fact that the concept of sustainable development constitutes a complex aggregate of interdependent challenges and threats, which concerns the interests of all of the countries and actors in the global economy without exception, and, secondly, it was the first time that a U.N. document encouraged the private sector to act.<sup>2</sup>

According to the experts of World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), it is the business community that will play the primary role in implementing the 2030 Agenda. This is stipulated by the fact that the private sector acts as the driver of economic growth, creates workplaces, and is the source of investments and the manufacturer of novel technologies and innovative solutions. Council executives believe that companies that structure their operational principles in accordance with the SDGs will be “better able to manage risks, foresee consumers’ new requirements obtain access to resources, and consolidate the foundation of sustainable supplies.”<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, the Council considers the new Goals an instrument that allows to link business strategies with global development priorities.<sup>4</sup>

First of all, business players that are participating in the implementation of any of the seventeen Goals, obtain such competitive advantages as efficient management of costs and risks, solidification of business reputation, as well as the establishment of strong ties with employees, consumers and other stakeholder groups. Meanwhile, it is apparent that the companies that actively promote the attainment of a maximum number of Goals will be able to provide a number of other advantages that affect the long-term viability of an organization. In connection with that, it is expedient to assume that in the near future an amplified interest in SDGs on the part of the private sector will lead to increasingly growing competition in the sustainability sphere of the corporate environment.

## Results

### ***Most Poignant Strategic Development Goals for the Countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus Region***

Participation of the private sector in the implementation of a number of socially oriented sustainable development goals had begun long before their official declaration in the U.N. documents. Over the last decades, the business community has allocated significant resources to the eradication of poverty as the “most complex social problem of a global nature”<sup>5</sup> and the improvement in health care quality in the least developed countries. These actions were taken in the framework of official development assistance programs and projects aiming at the attainment of 2000-2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDG). However, at that time, the Central Asian states, unlike countries of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, were not a priority region for the exertion of international efforts to resolve the key social problems.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, due to the combination of certain socioeconomic and political factors (high global energy prices, U.S.S.R.-era achievements in the social sphere), the countries of the region have managed to demonstrate impressive results in attaining many MDGs between 1990 and

<sup>2</sup> See: Ibidem.

<sup>3</sup> “Osmyslennye vlozhenia. Chastnye kompanii i investory dobivaiutsia tselei ustoichivogo razvitiia OON,” *Kommer-sant*, 19 December, 2016, available at [<https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3175681>].

<sup>4</sup> See: “Delivering on the SDGs: The Inclusive Business Approach,” available at [<http://www.wbcsd.org/Overview/News-Insights/Inclusive-Business-Insights/Delivering-on-the-Sustainable-Development-Goals-The-inclusive-business-approach>].

<sup>5</sup> *Osnovy ekonomicheskoi politologii*, Textbook, ed. by E.B. Zavalova, МГИМО-University, Moscow, 2015, p. 292.

<sup>6</sup> See: J.D. Sachs, *The End of Poverty. Economic Possibilities for Our Time*, The Penguin Press, New York, 2005, p. 339, available at [[http://www.economia.unam.mx/cedrus/descargas/jeffrey\\_sachs\\_the\\_end\\_of\\_poverty\\_economic\\_possibilities\\_for\\_our\\_time\\_\\_2006.pdf](http://www.economia.unam.mx/cedrus/descargas/jeffrey_sachs_the_end_of_poverty_economic_possibilities_for_our_time__2006.pdf)].

2015, including the eradication of extreme poverty (MDG 1) by 77%,<sup>7</sup> reducing child mortality (MDG 4) by 55%<sup>8</sup> and improving maternal health (MDG 5) by 44%.<sup>9</sup> According to the data provided in the 2015 final U.N. report on the Millennium Development Goals, the Caucasus and Central Asia region became the absolute leaders among developing countries in the literacy level among the 15-24 population, demonstrating a 100% level among both men and women in 1990, 2000 and 2015.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, the countries of the region are significantly behind the global level in ensuring ecological sustainability (MDG 7). In particular, 11% of the region's population lacks access to purified water sources.<sup>11</sup> Also, according to country classification by income, presented by the World Bank in 2017, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are classified as countries with income below the world average GDP per capita.<sup>12</sup> In addition, the final U.N. report mentions that the share of female population working as hired laborers in the non-agricultural sector comprised 44%<sup>13</sup> in 2015, while the share of women represented in national parliaments did not exceed 18%,<sup>14</sup> which testifies to the preservation the "fundamental reasons" of gender inequality<sup>15</sup> in the countries of the region, despite a certain progress in this sphere.

In that regard and in the framework of the updated 2030 U.N. Agenda, the following issues seem the most poignant: SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 6 (pure water and sanitation) and SDG 10 (reduced inequalities). In his recent address, Assistant United Nations Secretary-General for Economic Development Lenni Montiel had particularly emphasized the priority of confronting the issue of social inequality (SDG 10) for Central Asian countries.<sup>16</sup>

Let's examine the specific projects and solutions proposed by the business community with the goal of achieving socially oriented SDG in this region, on the example of Coca-Cola, a transnational company and one of the industry leaders in sustainable development according to the 2017 Dow Jones (DJSI) World Index.<sup>17</sup> Let's recall that the key social problems of humankind are formulated in detail in Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10.

## Discussion

### ***Business Participation Experience in Implementation of Socially Oriented SDGs in the Countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus Region***

Following the adoption of the 2030 U.N. Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, the U.N. Development Program and the Coca-Cola Foundation have launched a joint program *New*

<sup>7</sup> See: *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015*, U.N., New York, 2015, p. 14, available at [[http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015\\_MDG\\_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20\(July%201\).pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20(July%201).pdf)].

<sup>8</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>9</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>10</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>11</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>12</sup> See: *New Country Classifications by Income Level: 2017-2018*, World Bank Group, available at [<https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups>].

<sup>13</sup> See: *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015*, p. 30.

<sup>14</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>15</sup> See: *Ibidem*.

<sup>16</sup> See: "Kakie iz tselei ustojchivogo razvitiya naibolee aktualny dlja postsovetsskikh stran?" OON News, 25 September, 2015, available at [<https://news.un.org/ru/story/2015/09/1271221>].

<sup>17</sup> See: *DJSI Annual Review 2017. Industry Group Leaders 2017*, available at [<http://www.robecosam.com/en/sustainability-insights/about-sustainability/corporate-sustainability-assessment/industry-group-leaders.jsp>].

*World: Inclusive Sustainable Human Development Initiatives*<sup>18</sup>, implemented in the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus region, as well as in Africa. In the framework of the program for close cooperation with international and local noncommercial organizations, Coca-Cola and UNDP are developing innovative solutions aimed at solving poignant social problems: providing access to clean water, improving sanitary conditions, employing efficient water resource management practices, expansion of socioeconomic opportunities and rights of women and youth.

The *New World* program in Azerbaijan is focused on the struggle with gender stereotypes and the resolution of the issue of integrating the female population in socioeconomic activities. In the context of the two-step project being implemented in the Azerbaijan cities of Baku, Neftçala and Salyan, the partners hold trainings that teach young women the skills required for job placement, including basic literacy, using information resources for job searches, special aspects of resume preparation, passing a job interview, etc. Special Women Resource Centers were opened in Neftçala and Salyan, helping women to acquire and develop the skills required for active participation in social life and entrepreneurship. Participants' most promising business ideas receive financing from the project coordinators. The program also promotes an equal opportunity policy, and engages women with disabilities in educational programs and subsequent job placement. As of today, 452 program participants have been able to find jobs or launch their own business. In addition, funds allocated from the budget were used to improve the sanitary conditions in five rural schools and kindergartens of the city of Neftçala. The project creators conduct lessons devoted to gender equality for teachers and students in Azerbaijani schools with the purpose of overcoming stereotypes. The program is still operational and has received financing in the amount of \$277,000.<sup>19</sup>

Coca-Cola and UNDP have proposed a similar initiative in Uzbekistan, having launched a project on "attaining economic prosperity in rural areas" in 2015.<sup>20</sup> The Pastdargom district of the Samarqand region is the locus of the organizers' attention—most of this district's male population are work migrants and are permanently domiciled in Russia, while the female population is forced to look for employment in the shadow sector of the economy. The *New World* program in Uzbekistan targets the expansion of opportunities for women through teaching traditional handicrafts to the participants. A knitting studio with all the equipment and supplies required for creative work was opened in the framework of the project. Training courses for local women that teach national carpet-making techniques have also been launched. These activities allow the participants to develop their creative skills and, as a result, to obtain greater economic independence, including launching their own business. In addition, the project launched by Coca-Cola and UNDP in Uzbekistan involves measures on the modernization of the regional water supply, which provides access to drinking water for the region's 1,300 inhabitants. The organizers also held a series of hygiene-related educational trainings for the local population with the aim of preventing pollution of potable water sources and spread of infectious disease.<sup>21</sup>

The issue of access to potable water, hygiene and sanitation is especially poignant for the rural area inhabitants in Kyrgyzstan. In 2015, the *New World* program had launched a special project in the Karamyk village in the Osh region. Village residents were forced to spend an average of two hours daily on obtaining water from the nearest river. Moreover, the collection of water is particularly complicated during the winter, and from the medical characteristics' viewpoint the water is often unsuitable for drinking. In the framework of the Coca-Cola and UNDP initiative there was equipment installed at a distance of 6 km from the Karamyk village with the purpose of distributing water from the water source to water

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<sup>18</sup> See: "New World. Inclusive Sustainable Human Development Initiatives," The Coca-Cola Foundation & UNDP [URL: file:///C:/Documents%20and%20Settings/prepodgchp/%D0%9C%D0%BE%D0%B8%20%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%BA%D1%83%D0%BC%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%82%D1%8B/Downloads/NewWorld\_FinalBrochure\_2017.pdf]

<sup>19</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>21</sup> See: *Ibidem.*


columns located throughout the village. As a result, 2,800 village residents obtained unhindered access to clean potable water and were able to improve the quality of their life both from health protection and time management standpoints. In order to popularize this project, the project's creators organized visits to the Karamyk village for residents of other settlements, and also held integrated educational events on the issues of sanitation and hygiene with the goal of preventing the subsequent pollution of reliable sources of potable water.<sup>22</sup> A similar water supply infrastructure construction project has been launched for a thousand of rural residents in the Khatlon oblast and Murgab district of Tajikistan.<sup>23</sup>

One of the poignant issues in national agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan is the need to implement modern irrigation technologies and improve the functioning of water transport systems. Such measures are required for more efficient water resource management, as well as for restoring the productivity of abandoned land. In 2015-2016, a program that involved the installation of automatic irrigation systems in agricultural lands with an area of 120 ha was launched in the Kyzylorda region as part of the *New World* partnership. As a result of these measures it was possible to save 1 million cubic meters of water. Owing to the project organizers' initiative, 1,600 farmers were able to familiarize themselves with the best practices in the agricultural sphere in the framework of a special education course. 10,000 farmers have received educational materials on utilization of modern agricultural technologies that allow to expend water resources efficiently.<sup>24</sup>

Such educational events are becoming especially relevant in the context of the deteriorating Aral Sea, which is located in the Kyzylorda region. In 2015, the Coca-Cola Foundation and UNDP have launched a joint project on implementing sustainable water usage practices in the Aral Sea region with the assistance from the local ecological and educational center "Tabigat Alemi." A segment of the Sholakaryk channel spanning three kilometers in length was restored in the framework of the project that aims to improve land irrigation. Additionally, several thousand trees of particularly salt-tolerant species were planted by the organizers over an area of 14 ha with the aim of soil conservation. These events were accompanied by a wide-ranging educational campaign for children, female and male farmers on the issues of efficient water resource management and planting trees in deforested areas. The project resulted in the creation of new jobs in the forestry field, which proved highly sought-after among the workers of eighteen farming cooperatives.

Table 1

**Socially Oriented SDGs Implemented in the Context of  
the Partnership between Coca Cola and UNDP in the Countries of  
Central Asia and the Caucasus Region**

	Azerbaijan	Uzbekistan	Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan	Kazakhstan
	✓	✓	✓	✓

<sup>22</sup> See: Ibid., pp. 19-20.

<sup>23</sup> See: Ibid., pp. 37-38.

<sup>24</sup> See: Ibid., pp. 17-18.

Table 1 (continued)

	Azerbaijan	Uzbekistan	Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan	Kazakhstan
<b>3</b> GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING 	—	✓	✓	—
<b>4</b> QUALITY EDUCATION 	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>5</b> GENDER EQUALITY 	✓	✓	—	✓
<b>6</b> CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION 	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>8</b> DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH 	✓	✓	—	✓
<b>10</b> REDUCED INEQUALITIES 	✓	✓	✓	✓

## Conclusion

Summing up the above, we should like to note that as the result of the official assignment in the renewed U.N. Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals have become the mandatory criteria to be used in the foreseeable future to evaluate the activities of all organizations and institutions, including those in the business community. Today an increasingly large number of business players are aiming to make their own contribution to the resolution of humanity's global problems and integrate SDGs into their corporate strategies. In order to operate effectively under the conditions of ever-increasing competitiveness and satisfy the new requirements and standards, the business community has to evaluate the needs of their presence regions and analyze the experience of the companies that are pioneers in the sustainability sphere.

The analysis of the presented cases, which are implemented by the Coca-Cola Foundation, allows to distinguish several key tendencies that characterize the participation of the business community in the implementation of socially oriented SDGs in the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus region.

- First of all, most of the projects initially focused on specific Goals, ultimately promotes an entire range of other SDGs. It can be tracked on the example of the above-mentioned initiatives how the Coca-Cola Foundation makes various contributions to the implementation of practically all the socially oriented SDGs that are poignant for that region. As demonstrated in the cases in question, the most relevant projects for the population of the states of Central Asia and the Caucasus region are the ones related to resolving the issues in the framework of SDGs 5, 6 and 10.
- Secondly, the companies need to heed closer attention to the mechanism of multipartite partnerships, which allows to join efforts and share the expenditures with international organizations, as well as the representatives of the third sector. The example of cooperation between Coca-Cola and UNDP in the context of the *New World* program supports the validity of this statement.
- Finally, it is essential to emphasize the inclusive character of the initiatives implemented by the business community. All the projects encompass such macroeconomic problems as eradication of poverty (SDG 1) and the reduction of inequality (SDG 10). A high demand for services and goods can only be generated within a stable and prosperous society, which determines the special commitment of the private sector to the resolution of the socio-economic problems. It is precisely the regard for the above-mentioned factors and tendencies that will make the future business projects in the sustainable development sphere the most solicited and efficient for the companies from the viewpoint of the obtained competitive advantages.

**COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF  
ATTITUDES TOWARDS  
THE SOCIOPOLITICAL SITUATION  
IN THE CHECHEN REPUBLIC  
(BASED ON SOCIOLOGICAL DATA)**

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## A B S T R A C T

**T**he subject of analysis is the transformation of attitudes towards the sociopolitical situation in the Chechen society. The analysis is based on the data obtained through sociological surveys conducted by the North Ossetia Center for Social Research of the Institute of Socio-Political Research of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Department of Sociological Studies of the North Ossetia Institute of

Humanities and Social Research of the Vladikavkaz Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Government of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania in May-June 2003, as well as through joint research conducted by the North Ossetia Center for Social Research and the Department of Philosophy, Political Science and Sociology of the Chechen State Pedagogical University in May-June 2017.

**KEYWORDS:** Chechen society, transformation, evaluation of the sociopolitical situation, development, terrorism, criminogenic environment, political cultural space, unemployment, employment, educational system, security.

*I n t r o d u c t i o n*

Problems throughout Russia, which are engendered by social transformations, are projected onto all the constituencies of the Russian Federation in accordance with the historical and cultural features of various regions, including the Chechen Republic.<sup>1</sup> This region, which for a long time used to be one of the most dangerous and long-standing areas of ethno-political instability and social flux, is now one of the most successful constituencies of the Russian Federation, where very promising projects of both federal and republican level are being implemented.<sup>2</sup> The recent presidential elections of 18 March, 2018 and the global situation that has developed around Russia and its political trends are making the task of studying the social attitudes and the evolution of public opinion especially poignant.<sup>3</sup>

As the scientists note, the geopolitical and geo-economic importance of the Caucasian region determines the fact that the interests of many active entities of contemporary global politics intersect in this region. The ethno-political situation in the region becomes occasionally strained under the influence of both endogenic and exogenic factors, provoked by the unresolved problems of the recent centuries. The main reason behind the high level of conflict-readiness seems to lie in the bureaucratic ideological charge of regional policy, which does not resolve these problems, but merely camouflages them with the assistance of the concerned representatives of the local elites.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile,

<sup>1</sup> See: A. Salgiriev, "Mekhanizmy formirovaniya politicheskikh elit v Chechenskoi Respublike," *Globalny nauchny potentsial*, No. 17, 2012, pp. 82-85.

<sup>2</sup> See: A. Salgiriev, "Political Elites in the Context of the Ethno-political Processes in the Northern Caucasus," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 16, Issue 3-4, 2015, pp. 25-31.

<sup>3</sup> See: A. Salgiriev, M. Betilmerzaeva, V. Gaziev, M. Soltamuradov, "Political Stratification within the Elites (A North Caucasian Case Study)," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 17, Issue 3, 2016, pp. 30-37.

<sup>4</sup> See: A. Salgiriev, M. Betilmerzaeva, M. Soltamuradov, M.-E. Shamsuev, "Specific Interests of the North Caucasian Elites as a Conflict Potential," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 19, Issue 1, 2018, pp. 51-58.

without a clear understanding by the individual of his social, ethnic and civil identity,<sup>5</sup> which are determined by the historical conscience and historical memory,<sup>6</sup> a quality sociocultural continuum may not be formed.

The current political and economic situation in the country demands a deeper analysis of all of its aspects with the engagement of not only federal, but also regional research groups.<sup>7</sup> In particular, sociological research allows to obtain the most objective and transparent results, which may be used in predicting sociopolitical processes within the country via direct questioning of the respondents.

As part of the Chechnia in the Sociocultural Space of the Russian Federation: Ethnosociological Analysis project<sup>8</sup> in May-June 2017, joint research was conducted by the North Ossetia Center for Social Research and the Department of Philosophy, Political Science and Sociology of the Chechen State Pedagogical University. It entailed large-scale public opinion surveys that engaged all social strata of the Chechen society. Comparison of the two studies' results allows to obtain a dynamic image of the sociopolitical situation in the Republic and the social approval/disapproval of the political agenda of the federal and regional authorities.

The subject of this comparative study is the dynamics of social attitudes towards the socio-political situation in the Chechen Republic based on the data obtained in the two sociological surveys.

The goal of the study is to determine the scale and the nature of the transformation of attitudes towards the sociopolitical situation in the Chechen society.

The goal had stipulated the formulation of the following tasks:

- (1) Track the evolution of attitudes towards terrorism in the Chechen Republic in 2003 and in 2017.
- (2) Analyze the attitude to the Russian government's agenda in the Chechen Republic, which is aimed at its reintegration into the political and cultural space of the Russian Federation.
- (3) Clarify the shifting emphasis in the respondents' attitudes towards the most crucial issues that the Chechen Republic faced in 2003 and 2017.

The research utilized the quantitative data of questionnaire surveys.

The previous work attempted to give "the comparative analysis of the evolution of public opinion about the structures of power and administration in the Chechen Republic, as well as the dynamics of the chosen development course."<sup>9</sup> One of the primary research goals is, in particular, the analysis of the dynamics of the population's attitude to terrorism.

There is not an integrated definition of the concept of terrorism in the modern scientific and research discourse, with different researchers emphasizing various aspects of this phenomenon. For instance, in his definition of terrorism, M.Ya. Yakh'iaev emphasizes the fact that it is a "specific method of political activity that comprises employing methods of terror by certain social groups in their struggle against political opponents for the attainment of their social and political goals."<sup>10</sup> The

<sup>5</sup> See: L.Ya. Arapkhanova, "Migratsionnye problemy v Respublike Ingushetia," in: *Migratsionnye protsessy na Yuge Rossii: realii, problemy, perspektivy. Materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii, 26-27 maia 2008 g.*, Issue 2, ed. by A.V. Ponedelkov, SKAGS, Rostov-on-Don, 2008, pp. 92-94.

<sup>6</sup> See: M. Betilmerzaeva, V. Gadaev, Kh.-A.S. Khaladov, "Istoricheskoe soznanie v kontekste formirovaniia grazhdanskoi identichnosti," *Obshchestvo: filosofia, istoria, kultura*, Issue 11, 2016, p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> See: M. Betilmerzaeva, A. Akhtaev, B. Sadulaev, A. Salgiriev, "Religion and State: Interaction and Sociocultural Transformations (The Chechen Republic Case Study)," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 18, Issue 1, 2017, pp. 124-132.

<sup>8</sup> See: H.V. Dzutsev, *Sovremennaiia Chechnia: protsessy sociokulturnoi transformatsii. Etnosotsiologicheskoe issledovanie*, Monograf, 2nd enlarged and revised edition, ISPI RAS, Moscow, 2011, 396 pp.

<sup>9</sup> M. Betilmerzaeva, A. Salgiriev, M. Soltamuradov, V. Gaziev, "Sociological Studies of Institutional Trust in Chechen Society," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 19, Issue 1, 2018, pp. 66-76.

<sup>10</sup> M. Yakh'iaev, "Fanatism i terrorism," *Islamovedenie*, No. 4, 2010, p. 51.

speech of the U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres focused on the ethical and legal aspect of the phenomenon of terrorism, which is, in fact, “fundamentally the decline and destruction of human rights.”<sup>11</sup> Terrorism on a country-wide scale can, to a certain degree, be the reflection of the criminogenic situation in the country. In order to determine the general situation in the Republic, the respondents were offered the following question: “To what extent do you agree with the following statement: ‘Terrorism in the Chechen Republic is a concentrated reflection of the general criminogenic situation in the Russian Federation?’” (see Table 1). The responses in 2003 were distributed in the following manner: “completely agree”—52.3%; “mostly agree”—26.7%; “mostly disagree”—5.9%; “completely disagree”—6.9%; “not sure”—8.1%. The 2017 results were as follows: “completely agree”—44.0%; “mostly agree”—18.0%; “mostly disagree”—2.0%; “completely disagree”—10.0%; “not sure”—26.0%.

Thus, the number of respondents who either partly or completely agree with the statement that “terrorism in the Chechen Republic is a concentrated reflection of the criminogenic situation in the Russian Federation,” has decreased by 0.8% and 8.7%, respectively, and the share of those who completely disagree with this statement has increased by 3.1%. However, the significant share of those unsure of how to answer this question in 2017 is disturbing.

## Assessment of the General Situation in the Region

Table 1

**To What Extent Do You Agree with the Following Statement:  
“Terrorism in the Chechen Republic is a Concentrated Reflection of  
the General Criminogenic Situation in the Russian Federation”?**

Respondents' Answer	Share of Respondents Who Gave a Corresponding Answer, %	
	2003	2017
<b>Completely agree</b>	<b>52.3</b>	<b>44.0</b>
<b>Mostly agree</b>	<b>26.7</b>	<b>18.0</b>
<b>Mostly disagree</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>2.0</b>
<b>Completely disagree</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>10.0</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>26.0</b>

The dynamic changes of the responses to the question “What is your attitude to the Russian government’s agenda in the Chechen Republic, which is aimed at its reintegration into the political and cultural space of the Russian Federation?” are reflected in Table 2. In 2003, the respondents’ answers were distributed in the following manner: “completely approve”—20.9%; “mostly approve”—32.0%; “mostly disapprove”—16.2%; “completely disapprove”—16.6%; “another re-

<sup>11</sup> Secretary-General’s Speech at SOAS, University of London, on “Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights: Winning the Fight while Upholding Our Values”, available at [https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2017-11-16/secretary-general%E2%80%99s-speech-soas-university-london-%E2%80%9Ccounter-terrorism], 13 January, 2018.

“not sure”—12.9%. The 2017 results are as follows: “completely approve”—30.0%; “mostly approve”—32.0%; “mostly disapprove”—4.0%; “completely disapprove”—10.0%; “another response”—14.0%; “not sure”—2.0%.

In 2017, 62% of the respondents have completely or mostly approved of the Russian Federation’s agenda. The share of disapproving respondents had decreased to 14.0% against 32.8% in 2003. The dynamics of the “another response” and “not sure” responses are of interest. While the share of those who responded “not sure” decreased from 12.9% to 2.0%, the share of “another response” increased sharply from 1.5% to 14.0%. The content of the answers provided by this group of respondents requires a special analysis.

Table 2

**What is Your Attitude to the Russian Government’s Agenda  
in the Chechen Republic, Which is Aimed at its Reintegration into the Political and  
Cultural Space of the Russian Federation?**

Respondents’ Answer	Share of Respondents Who Gave a Corresponding Answer, %	
	2003	2017
Completely approve	20.9	30.0
Mostly approve	32.0	32.0
Mostly disapprove	16.2	4.0
Completely disapprove	16.6	10.0
Another response	1.5	14.0
Not sure / Refused to answer	12.9	2.0

“In your opinion, what are the most important problems that the Chechen Republic is currently facing?” (see Table 3). The responses to this question in 2003 were distributed as follows: “unemployment”—19.3%; “quick socioeconomic recovery”—22.8%; “restoration and construction of residential housing fund of the Chechen Republic”—27.9%; “protecting the population from social cataclysms, social vulnerabilities, respect for human rights”—7.6%; “weak education system”—5.6%; “complete restitution of financial damages to the population”—13.7%; “immediate reintegration of the Chechen Republic into the legal framework of the Russian Federation”—2.0%; “complete safety of the Chechen Republic population, peaceful life”—28.1%; “strengthening the Chechen Republic Ministry of Internal Affairs and other executive bodies”—6.3%; “electing the Parliament and President”—2.7%; “bringing back the refugees”—1.5%; “recruitment of honest professionals”—2.0%; “people’s health, quality of healthcare”—5.4%; “restoration of cultural centers”—4.1%; “restoration of the industrial sphere”—4.8%; “nation’s degradation and assimilation”—0.5%; “establishing law and order”—8.5%; “protection of low-income and disabled populations”—0.9%; “environmental issues”—1.1%; “restoration of agriculture”—2.4%; “fighting alcoholism, drug addiction and crime”—3.8%; “housing and utilities sphere (roads, electricity, gas)—3.0%; “numerous problems”—0.8%; “fighting terrorism”—2.7%; “corruption”—1.1%; “more stringent control over the expenditure of funds allocated for the restoration of the Chechen Republic”—0.5%; “resolving youth-related issues”—0.8%; “inter-nation and ethnic conflicts”—0.2%; “lack of a national idea”—0.2%; “not sure”—15.7.

The 2017 results were as follows: “unemployment”—62.0%; “quick socioeconomic recovery”—6.0%; “restoration and construction of residential housing fund of the Chechen Republic”—2.0%; “protecting the population from social cataclysms, social vulnerabilities, respect for human rights”—6.0%; “weak education system”—36.0%; “complete restitution of financial damages to the population”—12.0%; “immediate reintegration of the Chechen Republic into the legal framework of the Russian Federation”—4.0%; “complete safety of the Chechen Republic population, peaceful life”—4.0%; “strengthening the Chechen Republic Ministry of Internal Affairs and other executive bodies”—0.0%; “electing the Parliament and President”—0.0%; “bringing back the refugees”—0.0%; “recruitment of honest professionals”—16.0%; “people’s health, quality of healthcare”—30.0%; “restoration of cultural centers”—0.0%; “restoration of the industrial sphere”—22.0%; “nation’s degradation and assimilation”—6.0%; “establishing law and order”—10.0%; “protection of low-income and disabled populations”—18.0%; “environmental issues”—8.0%; “restoration of agriculture”—20.0%; “fighting alcoholism, drug addiction, and crime”—10.0%; “housing and utilities sphere (roads, electricity, gas)” —28.0%, “numerous problems”—16.0%; “fighting terrorism”—14.0%; “corruption”—32.0%; “more stringent control over the expenditure of funds allocated for the restoration of the Chechen Republic”—10.0%; “resolving the youth-related issues”—16.0%; “inter-nation and ethnic conflicts”—0.0%; “lack of a national idea”—2.0%; “not sure”—6.0%.

The evaluation of the dynamic changes in society’s attitudes towards the relative significance of specific issues is of a great research interest. In 2003, the respondents have named issue of complete safety of the Chechen Republic population, peaceful life (28.1%) as one of the poignant problems, while today the share of the Republic’s population that consider this problem one of the primary ones had decreased to 4.0%; restoration and construction of the residential housing fund was named by 27.9% then and 2.0% now; quick socioeconomic recovery was named by 22.8%, and 6.0% today. In 2017, in the context of a generally positive attitude towards the current sociopolitical situation in the Republic, the following issues have moved to the forefront according to the respondents: unemployment (62%); weak education system (36.0%); corruption (32.0%); people’s health, quality of healthcare (30.0%).

It is a welcome development that the respondents in the Republic no longer observe a problem like “inter-nation and ethnic conflicts.” The share of those who have a difficult time outlining any specific problems has also decreased from 15.7% in 2003 to 6.0% in 2017.

Table 3

**In Your Opinion, What are the Primary Problems that Chechen Republic is Currently Facing?**

Respondents' Answer	Share of Respondents Who Gave a Corresponding Answer, %	
	2003	2017
<b>1. Unemployment</b>	<b>19.3</b>	<b>62.0</b>
<b>2. Quick socioeconomic recovery</b>	<b>22.8</b>	<b>6.0</b>
<b>3. Restoration and construction of residential housing fund of the Chechen Republic</b>	<b>27.9</b>	<b>2.0</b>
<b>4. Protecting the population from social cataclysms, social vulnerabilities, respect for human rights</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>6.0</b>
<b>5. Weak education system</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>36.0</b>

Table 3 (continued)

Respondents' Answer	Share of Respondents Who Gave a Corresponding Answer, %	
	2003	2017
6. Complete restitution of financial damages to the population	13.7	12.0
7. Immediate reintegration of the Chechen Republic into the legal framework of the Russian Federation	2.0	4.0
8. Complete safety of the Chechen Republic population, peaceful life	28.1	4.0
9. Strengthening the Chechen Republic Ministry of Internal Affairs and other executive bodies	6.3	0.0
10. Electing the Parliament and President	2.7	0.0
11. Bringing back the refugees	1.5	0.0
12. Recruitment of honest professionals	2.0	16.0
13. People's health, quality of healthcare	5.4	30.0
14. Restoration of cultural centers	4.1	0.0
15. Restoration of the industrial sphere	4.8	22.0
16. Nation's degradation and assimilation	0.5	6.0
17. Establishing law and order	8.5	10.0
18. Protection of low-income and disabled populations	0.9	18.0
19. Environmental issues	1.1	8.0
20. Restoration of agriculture	2.4	20.0
21. Fighting alcoholism, drug addiction, and crime	3.8	10.0
22. Housing and utilities sphere (roads, electricity, gas)	3.0	28.0
23. Numerous problems	0.8	16.0
24. Fighting terrorism	2.7	14.0
25. Corruption	1.1	32.0
26. More stringent control over the expenditure of funds allocated for the restoration of the Chechen Republic	0.5	10.0
27. Resolving youth-related issues	0.8	16.0
28. Inter-nation and ethnic conflicts	0.2	0.0
29. Lack of a national idea	0.2	2.0
30. Not sure	15.7	6.0

Analysis of the answers to the question of a change in living conditions in the Republic in the last two years yielded the following results (see Table 4). In 2003, 47.5% of the respondents answered

“improved,” 10.0% answered “declined”, “remained the same”—33.8%; and 8.7%—“not sure.” The 2017 results are as follows: “improved”—56.0%, “declined”—6.0%, “remained the same”—12.0% and “not sure”—26.0%. Thus, the comparative analysis of the obtained data demonstrates a positive trend in the attitudes toward ongoing changes: 56% in 2017 against 47.5% in 2003, while the share of responders who think that living conditions have declined is decreasing—6.0% in 2017 against 10.0% in 2003. There is also a positive trend in the share of the response that states that living conditions “remained the same”—12.0% in 2017 against 33.8% in 2003. The only troubling issue is the significant increase in the share of people who are not sure about their response—26.0% in 2017 against 8.7% in 2003. We can generally observe a positive trend in the attitudes towards the living condition changes in the republic.

## Positive Change Trend

Table 4

**How Do You Think the Living Conditions  
in the Republic Have Changed Over the Last Two Years?**

Respondents' Answer	Share of Respondents Who Gave a Corresponding Answer, %	
	2003	2017
1. Improved	47.5	56.0
2. Declined	10.0	6.0
3. Remained the same	33.8	12.0
4. Not sure	8.7	26.0

The answers to the question of “What has improved in the living conditions in the Republic over the last two years?” are of much interest (see Table 5). The explication of the answers to this question demonstrates the evolution of the very nature of the changes experienced by the Republic. In 2003, 32.9% of respondents considered the changes in the social policy sphere to be the greatest, while in 2017 the most active development was taking place in the sphere of restoration and reconstruction of the city and the Republic, according to 36% of the respondents. The “turn towards peace, no military operations and voluntary return of refugees” took the second place in 2003, with a 9.5%; this item retained its spot in 2017, but the share of respondents that selected it increased threefold to 28.0%. The third place was taken by the “electricity and gas supply (housing and utilities sphere), it has become cleaner” with 6.9%, and in 2017 the share of respondents who saw an improvement constituted as much as 16%. Positive shifts in the attitudes towards living conditions in the Republic in 2017 compared to 2003 were notable in the following areas: “expansion of the scale and quality of education,” “opening of an Internet-center,” “normalization of the situation,” “improvement in the transportation sphere,” “opportunity to receive an education and study,” “more professional work of the law enforcement structures,” “economic situation,” “functioning of kindergartens, schools and other organizations,” “functioning of hospitals and healthcare services,” “functioning of enterprises,” “agriculture.” The only issue that demonstrated a negative trend is the resolution of the unemployment problem: according to the respondents, in 2003 the resolution of this issue was in the fourth place with 6.8%, while in 2017 it was only 6.0%.

Table 5

**What Has Improved in the Living Conditions  
in the Republic over the Last Two Years?**

Respondents' Answers	Share of Respondents Who Gave a Corresponding Answer, %	
	2003	2017
1. Social policy is working (pensions, wages, compensations, benefits, standard of living)	32.9	14.0
2. Issue of unemployment is being resolved	6.8	6.0
3. Turn towards peace, no military operations and voluntary return of refugees	9.5	28.0
4. Expansion of the scale and quality of education	3.6	10.0
5. Opening of an Internet-center	0.6	6.0
6. Electricity and gas supply (housing and utilities sphere), it has become cleaner	6.9	16.0
7. Restoration of the Chechen Republic residential housing fund	6.2	8.0
8. Normalization of the situation	5.0	22.0
9. Restoration and reconstruction of the city and the Republic	3.8	36.0
10. Improvement in the transportation sphere	2.6	8.0
11. Opportunity to receive an education and study	3.2	12.0
12. More professional work of the law enforcement structures	3.6	8.0
13. Nothing improved	7.6	8.0
14. Economic situation	0.9	6.0
15. Functioning of kindergartens, schools and other organizations	3.2	16.0
16. Functioning of hospitals and healthcare services	2.6	10.0
17. Functioning of enterprises	1.1	4.0
18. Agriculture	0.5	6.0
19. Not sure	33.8	26.0

Answers to the question “What specific areas of decline do you see in the Republic compared to two years ago?” (see Table 6) draw attention by the ambiguousness of the outlined problems and require a deeper analysis.



Table 6

**What Specific Areas of Decline Do You See  
in the Republic Compared to Two Years Ago?**

Respondents' Answers	Share of Respondents Who Gave a Corresponding Answer, %	
	2003	2017
1. Housing and utilities sphere (water, gas, roads, living conditions)	2.7	10.0
2. Obtrusive behavior of armed people	0.5	6.0
3. Disappearance and sale of young people, personal and public security	17.8	4.0
4. Legal vulnerability	5.1	14.0
5. Corruption	4.2	22.0
6. No decline in any area	8.0	22.0
7. Fear of the unknown	2.1	4.0
8. Absence of reconstruction	2.4	2.0
9. People's health, decline in the population's morale	1.4	12.0
10. Financial state and material wealth	1.7	10.0
11. People have no control over anything, no freedom of choice or freedom of speech	0,9	10,0
12. Nothing has changed	3.2	
13. Terrorism, explosions	6.6	2.0
14. Environmental situation	1.2	
15. Fight with crime, drug addiction, alcoholism	4.7	2.0
16. Nighttime lawlessness	2.6	
17. Strengthening the Chechen Republic Ministry of Internal Affairs and other executive bodies	2.4	
18. Complicated access to / insufficient education	0.6	4.0
19. Lack of stability	1.1	14.0
20. Humiliation of youth	0.5	12.0
21. The industry is recovering very slowly	0.6	10.0
22. Growing bureaucracy	0.2	14.0
23. Deterioration in the work of the Ministry of Education	0.2	2.0
24. Social conditions	0.2	4.0
25. Nothing is being done to bring the refugees back	0.2	
26. Not sure	50.6	24.0

### *Conclusion*

The results obtained in the sociological survey lead to the following conclusions:

- (1) the analysis of the attitude to the Russian government's agenda in the Chechen Republic, which is aimed at its reintegration into the political and cultural space of the Russian Federation, as well as uncovering the shifts in the emphasis placed by the respondents on various problems that the Chechen Republic faced in 2003 and 2017 demonstrate positive dynamics in the evolution of the relationship between the authorities and the society;
  - (2) unemployment remains one of the sensitive social problems for the Republic, a problem that demands attention at both regional and federal level;
  - (3) the observed disproportions in the attitudes to both positive and negative changes in the development of many social spheres in the Republic demonstrate the need for a closer interaction of the people and the authorities, with the aim of preventing a conflict of their interests.
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## RELIGION IN SOCIETY

THE RELIGIOUS AXIOLOGICAL SPHERE  
IN THE SOUTH OF RUSSIA

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## A B S T R A C T

**T**he author has studied the religious milieu in the South of Russia and analyzed the development of the religious axiological sphere as a complicated systemic entity, in which the secular and religious identities are intertwined. Reliance on an extensive set of social, philosophical, general scientific and specific methods of studies allowed to conduct a sociocultural analysis of the sphere of religious values in the South of Russia, interpreted as a sum-total of religious testimony to the existence of the domain of values, subjective reality of axiological conscience and results of creative activities. The sphere of religious values is transformed in both spatial and temporal dimensions of the social environment, in which

different religious values co-exist in a multitude of very different configurations. The religious situation in Russia as a whole, and in the South of Russia in particular, is fairly complicated: it demonstrates the pluralism in religious opinions, religiosity as a "current fashion" and interference of religious organizations in secular life and education. The region, however, stands apart from the rest of the country where the sphere of religious values is concerned: a higher declared level of religiosity (formal religiosity) than the countrywide average; very specific separation and cooperation models in the state-religion relations; domination of secular rather than religious identity; impact of religious values on personal axiological identities; the

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*role of interreligious dialog and the principle of non-violence in settling political conflicts* | *that help stabilize the region's social and political context.*

**KEYWORDS:** *axiological sphere, values, religious values, religious identity.*

## *Introduction*

In Russia, studies of axiological priorities are gradually moving to the fore as highly topical and, therefore, highly important, partly because in the 20th century, the country and its traditional social and cultural identities were subjected to an unprecedentedly wide, and even crippling destruction caused by a shift in key values. The resultant transformation of social conscience is manifested in changed axiological attitudes and social behavior.

Religious values, the most important of human values, form the core of a very special type, viz. the axiological sphere. At all historical stages, the religious world outlook, religious values and religious ethics defined and are still defining an inalienable element of culture. Religion plays an important role in all spheres of social life: it is a regulator of social relationships that adjusts all sorts of situations to the changing social (integrating and disintegrating) functions.

At all times, the South of Russia responded with difficulty to the changes in axiological priorities. The contemporary religious situation (which has taken several centuries to develop under the pressure of various material, canonical, cultural, geopolitical and other factors) is related to the very complicated system of different confessions' religious organizations.

Confrontation between axiological systems that may tip the balance between them, replacement of the traditional with the alien, up to and including religious values, and disregard for the spiritual and moral norms may greatly upset the seamless functioning of social and cultural institutions. Moreover, under certain conditions these processes may aggravate social conflicts and destabilize Russia's statehood, which makes the studies of the religious values sphere in the South of Russia, the spiritual foundation of social harmony, twice as important.

## **Methods and Materials**

Studies and correct interpretations of regional specifics of the religious values sphere at the conceptual sociological level are based on theoretical and methodological approaches. Systemic analysis methods were used, in particular, to conceptualize and identify the definitions of certain basic concepts. The essential methodological points were created by the ideas retrieved from the works of foreign and Russian authors dealing with the problems of religiosity and religious values.

General scientific methods—analysis, abstraction, synthesis, deduction, generalization, analogy and classification—were used at all stages of research as indispensable instruments of scholarly thinking.

Studies of the typical features of the religious axiological sphere rest on the basic provisions of sociocultural approaches as the fundamental methodological instrument of contemporary sociological studies.

The specific sociological method as an empirical research foundation stands apart among other special methods. It was used as a sum-total of methods of qualitative analysis of documentary sources or as secondary analysis of the results of sociological polls and sociological monitoring. The method of induction played a significant role in this study: all patterns of development of the religious axiological sphere in the South of Russia were identified through generalized empirical material (sociological studies of the religious values sphere).

The present study was initiated to verify the hypothesis stating that the sphere of religious values is a complicated systemic entity in which secular and religious identities are blended.

## Discussion and Results

Civilizational vectors were and remain strongly affected by sets of religious values even if their structure and meaning have been transformed. By values we mean “individual, group or social assessment of objects, ideas or situations. Values emerge in practical activities and as assessments of certain phenomena.”<sup>1</sup>

Religious values are present and function even in highly secularized societies, and even purely secular forms of life often implicitly rely on deeply rooted, albeit greatly transformed, religious motivations.

Religiosity is one of the universal forms of people’s motivated axiological choices. Even the thinkers critically disposed towards religion admit that the archetypes of faith and of the sacral have always been immanently present in everyday life, culture and communications. Ludwig Feuerbach, for example, looked at a man’s religious needs as compensation for his existential loneliness, and at religion as a vector of solidarity with the universe as the natural, social and frequently existential reality.<sup>2</sup>

The system of religious values is present in the core of any individual as a philosophical basis of all spheres and aspects of life activities: the axiological dimension reflects the ongoing sociocultural processes. By axiological sphere we mean any system, the essence of which is interpreted as a reflection of being, the eternal process of cognition and renovation of axiological ideas of a social actor in the dynamically developing social milieu.<sup>3</sup> The religious axiological sphere can be interpreted as a sum-total of religious evidence of the existence of the axiological domain, the subjective reality of axiological cognition, and the result of creative activity.

Values, including religious values, traditionally constitute the object of research of social sciences and humanities —sociology, political science, philosophy, psychology and axiology (the science of values).

It was in the first half of the 20th century that axiology came to the fore thanks to the efforts of the Neo-Kantian Schools—Baden, or Freiburg (W. Windelband and H. Rickert) and Marburg (H. Kohen, P. Natorp, E. Cassirer). A. Maslow, V. Frankl, E. Fromm, M. Rokeach, A. Toffler and others contributed much to the creation of applied axiological studies. Many other authors, including F. Znaniecki, W. Thomas, H. Spencer, and M. Weber, studied the importance of values in social sciences.

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<sup>1</sup> V.V. Kotliarova, *Paradigmy aksiologii*, SKNTs VSh IuFU, Rostov-on-Don, 2014, p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> See: L. Feuerbach, *Lectures on the Essence of Religion*, Harper & Row, 1967.

<sup>3</sup> See: M.S. Kagan, *Filosofskaia teoria tsennosti*, St. Petersburg, 1997, pp. 132-133.

Emile Durkheim<sup>4</sup> and Talcott Parsons laid the foundation for the studies of the religious values problem in social sciences; they, however, never discussed religious values per se, but treated them as a component of religious systems. Parsons' systemic approach presupposes that any religion is an axiological system, a very specific matrix of values superimposed, so to speak, on the individual multilayered psychological structure of man, while filling it with corresponding content.<sup>5</sup>

Max Weber proceeded from the assumption that the most important factors of social changes are rooted in cultural systems, religion being one of them. He demonstrated, more clearly than any of his colleagues, that the world religious movements were critically important both for the differentiation of the main types of societies and for the creation of the new types (through the institutionalization of values used as an important stimulus of certain types of changes in many spheres, including economy).<sup>6</sup>

The body of contemporary studies of religious values is fairly extensive. Contemporary theologians and Orientalists Jacques Waardenburg<sup>7</sup> and Louis Massignon<sup>8</sup> have analyzed the possibility of interreligious dialog; Jean-Paul Willaime has analyzed the degree of religiosity in Europe and the prospects of Christianity.<sup>9</sup> Many journals, *The Caucasus & Globalization* among them, dedicated at least one of their issues to the problem of religious values in the Caucasus.<sup>10</sup>

In the Soviet Union, axiological studies that began in the 1960s relied on the method of binary oppositions or dichotomies that discussed the subject-object (O. Drobnitsky) or subject-subject (V. Tugarinov) nature of axiological relationships. It was at that time that the discussion of values from the viewpoints of ethics, aesthetics, pedagogy and social psychology was unfolding (M. Mamardashvili, L. Stolovich, N. Chavchavadze, S. Rubinstein, M. Bakhtin and others).

Today, various aspects of an analysis of religious values attract a lot of attention. A. Agajanian and K. Russele edited a fundamental study of various forms of religious practices at the micro-level, in the context of everyday existence of religion.<sup>11</sup> Konstantin Kostiuik has analyzed the Russian World concept and the phenomenon of contemporary Orthodox fundamentalism.<sup>12</sup> Elena Zolotukhina-Abolina has analyzed the probability of combining the values of the everyday empirical world and the religious spiritual ideal.<sup>13</sup> V. Kotlyarova, P. Ponomarev, and A. Rudenko discussed traditional values as a national security factor in the South of Russia.<sup>14</sup>

The results of empirical studies of religious preferences in the Northern Caucasus carried out by H. Dzutsev and A. Dibirova<sup>15</sup> are highly relevant for the present article. The same fully applies to

<sup>4</sup> See: É. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Oxford World's Classics, Oxford University Press, New York, 2001.

<sup>5</sup> See: T. Parsons, "Sovremenny vzgliad na durgimovu teoriiu religii," in: *Religia i obshchestvo: Khrestomatia po sotsiologii religii*, Aspekt-Press, Moscow, 1996, pp. 170-190.

<sup>6</sup> See: M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Courier Corporation, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> See: J. Waardenburg, *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions. A Historical Survey*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1999; *Muslim-Christian Perceptions of Dialogue Today. Experiences and Expectations*, Peeters, Leuven, Sterling (Virginia), 2000.

<sup>8</sup> See: L. Massignon, *Les trois prières d'Abraham*, Cerf, 1997.

<sup>9</sup> See: J.-P. Willaime, *Europe et religions. Les enjeux du XXIe siècle*, Fayard, Paris, 2004.

<sup>10</sup> See: *The Caucasus & Globalization*, Volume 2, Issue 3, 2008, available at [https://www.ca-c.org/c-g/2008/journal\_eng/c-g-3/k&gE-03-2008.pdf], 22 March 2018.

<sup>11</sup> See: *Priklad i obshchina v sovremennom pravoslavii: kornevaia sistema rossiyskoy religioznosti*, ed. by A. Agajanian, K. Russele, Ves mir, Moscow, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> See: K.N. Kostiuik, "Russkiy mir': bogoslovskiy mysl i politicheskie eksplikatsii," *Vestnik PSTGU I: Bogoslovie. Filosofia*, Issue 3 (59), 2015, pp. 137-151.

<sup>13</sup> See: E.V. Zolotukhina-Abolina, *Filosofia obydennoy zhizni. Ekzistentsialnye problemy*, Fenix, LRNTs Fenix, Rostov-on-Don, 1994.

<sup>14</sup> See: V. Kotlyarova, A. Rudenko, P. Ponomarev, "Traditional Values as a National Security Factor in the Age of Globalization," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 18, Issue 2, 2017, pp. 87-95.

<sup>15</sup> See: H.V. Dzutsev, A.P. Dibirova, *Religia v strukture tsennostey naselenia respublik Severo-Kavkazskogo federalnogo okruga Rossiyskoy Federatsii*, ISPI RAS, Moscow; IPTsSOGU, Vladikavkaz, 2017.

the studies and projects carried out by S. Apajeva, A. Mamsirov and T. Tsoloev,<sup>16</sup> by M. Bilalov,<sup>17</sup> the All-Russia Center for the Public Opinion Studies (VCIOM), and Levada-Center.

The axiological-cultural approach of Moisey Kagan, who has analyzed the phenomenon of axiological sphere is also highly poignant: here I proceeded from the results of his analysis of the sphere of religious values as a structural-functional system of religious preferences, attitudes, identities, etc. presented in an abstract form; they crop up in different combinations and configurations in the social space's spatial and temporal dimensions.<sup>18</sup>

Russia is a poly-confessional country; its religious landscape consists of over 70 confessions and faiths, which is a positive phenomenon. The religious situation in the South of Russia, which has been unfolding for several centuries under the pressure of material, canonical, cultural, geopolitical and other factors, is a component part of the complex system of religious organizations of different confessions and faiths.

Today, the situation in the South of Russia and the North Caucasian region is unfolding amid a great number of economic, social and cultural factors. The South of Russia, an internal territory during Soviet times, became a borderline region in post-Soviet Russia, and was divided into the Southern and North Caucasian Federal Districts with 13 subjects (8 of which are republics) of the Russian Federation, living in highly complicated ethnic, cultural, political, legal and religious realities. Its population belongs to two world religions, Christianity and Islam, with their religious organizations occupying more or less equal shares of the region's confessional space.<sup>19</sup>

Religion plays an important role in the lives of the absolute majority of the region's population. According to the 2016 public opinion poll, 83.3% of the population of Chechnia and 82.3% of the respondents in Ingushetia agree with the above statement. The same fully applies to 63.6% of the Karachays and Circussians; 43.7% of Kabardians and Balkars, 41.9% of the population of Dagestan, 37.4% of the region's Russians and Russian-speakers, and only 19.5% of Ossets.<sup>20</sup> On the whole, the region's population is much more religious than the population of any other Russian region: according to VCIOM, the average level of religiosity in Russia is 55% (against 23% in 1990), that is, it has more than doubled.<sup>21</sup> The relatively higher level of religious feelings in the South of Russia as compared with the rest of the country is the most obvious feature of the religious values sphere.

It seems that the weight of religion in the public consciousness is explained by the fact that Russian authorities have created conditions conducive to the development and activities of religious organizations, propaganda of religious cults and rites and gradual penetration of religious feelings into all spheres of everyday life, as well as by the fact that Communist ideology has been finally pushed aside and by the desire to find religious foundations for Russia's further consolidation. This is gradually being realized: according to Levada-Center, in 2017, religious organizations were completely trusted by 48% of Russian citizens, a much higher share than the share of those who trusted the judiciary system. According to the same source, in 2013, the public prosecutor office had 26% of the respondents on its side; 21% trusted the judiciary system; four years later, in 2017, the figures

<sup>16</sup> See: S.S. Apajeva, A.Kh. Mamsirov, T.S. Tsoloev, "Severny Kavkaz: sovremennaia etnopoliticheskaia situatsia i perspektivy ee stabilizatsii," *Istoria: fakty i simvoly*, No. 4 (13), 2017, pp. 101-111.

<sup>17</sup> See: M.I. Bilalov, "Dukhovnye determinanty ustoychivogo razvitiia," *Iug Rossii: ekologiya, razvitie*, Vol. 11, No. 4, 2016, pp. 201-208. DOI: 10.18470/1992-1098-2016-4-201-208.

<sup>18</sup> See: M.S. Kagan, op. cit.

<sup>19</sup> See: K.M. Khanbabaev, "Etnokonfessionalnaia tolerantnost na Iuge Rossii," *Izvestia Dagestanskogo gosudarstvennogo pedagogicheskogo universiteta. Obshchetsvennye i gumanitarnye nauki*, No. 1, 2007, p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> See: H.V. Dzutsev, A.P. Dibirova, op. cit., pp. 31-32.

<sup>21</sup> See: Dannye VCIOM. Press release No. 2888 "Religia: za i protiv," available at [<https://wciom.ru/index.php?id=236&uid=115329>], 23 March, 2018.

were 33% and 26%, respectively.<sup>22</sup> No wonder that the authorities support religious organizations, a trend that allowed Iusup Jabrailov to write that “in the Northern Caucasus, in Chechnia and Dagestan in particular, the relationships between the authorities and religious organizations dominated by cooperation and separation models are gradually taking shape.”<sup>23</sup>

This statement seems feasible, since the following models of the state-religious relationship figure prominently in a secular state:

- Segregation, a model where authorities consider religion a negative social phenomenon, whose role in society should be maximally limited;
- Separation, a model where states and religious organizations lead their own lives and avoid interference in their respective spheres of activity;
- Cooperation, the most productive model where religious organizations and the state jointly address social issues.

There are reasons to believe that in the South of Russia the domination of the separation and cooperation models is the second most important feature of the religious values sphere.

Formal or nominal belonging to a certain religion and formal performance of rituals without a clear understanding of their meaning is the result of the high level of religiosity declared in the South of Russia: people try to fit into the regional context with no real spiritual unity with the religious teaching, thus, essentially, with no faith. I will reveal no secret by saying that this category is dominant among the self-proclaimed believers, which is confirmed by public opinion polls. In 2014, the public opinion poll carried out in Rostov-on-Don revealed that “2% of the Orthodox and 8.5% of the Muslim students regularly attend religious services; 1.5% of the former and 23.9% of the latter regularly observe religious rituals; 15.7% of Orthodox believers and 40.4% of Muslims pray every day.”<sup>24</sup> These people may be entirely ignorant of even the basic provisions of their religions.

There is a vast difference between what was said by the religious traditions about religious values in the past and what is being said today. It remains to be seen, therefore, whether religious ethics dominate the religious revival. I tend to agree with Irina Babich, one of the best experts in ethnology and anthropology, that “the process of acquiring religious identity is very slow: few local people describe themselves *as followers of any religion*.”<sup>25</sup> Identity is an attribute that speaks of an individual as belonging to a certain social entity, a certain religious community in our case. As a distinct form of social identity, religious identity perceives social reality as an image of a social world.

By this I mean that religious identity helps systematize information about the world to arrive at a clear understanding of its meaning. This creates a homogenous ontological image of the world that assumes a form of social, or, in our case, religious reality. Religious identity is, on the one hand, a derivative engendered by the social-cultural context and, on the other, it is a category that actively affects the process of an individual’s personal development, his adaptation to the cultural context of a religious system and the society as a whole. This means that in the context of studies of the religious values sphere, religious identity should be regarded as a subspecies of social identity.

In the context of growing religiosity, we should bear in mind that the Constitution of the Russian Federation “guarantees the freedom of conscience, the freedom of religion.” In the academic com-

<sup>22</sup> See: Dannye oprosa Levada Tsentra “Institutsionalnoe Doverie,” available at [<https://www.levada.ru/2017/10/12/institutsionalnoe-doverie-3>], 2 February, 2018.

<sup>23</sup> Iu.D. Jabrailov, “Islam i vlast na Severnom Kavkaze: putu sotrudnichestva,” *Islam v sovremennom mire*, Vol. 11, No. 4, 2015, p. 182.

<sup>24</sup> T.T. Tarasova, “Religioznost studencheskoy molodezhi krupnogo polikonfessionalnogo goroda,” *Vestnik luzhnogo nauchnogo tsentra*, Vol. 10, No. 4, 2014, p. 82.

<sup>25</sup> I. Babich, “The Russian State and Civil Society: A Dialog of Religions in the Northern Caucasus,” *The Caucasus & Globalization*, Volume 4, No. 1-2, 2010, p. 140.



munity there is a relatively popular opinion that the rights of atheists are violated by sacralization and clericalization spreading far and wide. Indeed, religion has found its way into education in the form of religious ethics courses as part of the school curriculum, into politics (direct or indirect agitation during election campaigns), etc. These trends are apparent in the South of Russia where religious rhetoric is used in numerous, sometimes mutually contradictory, contexts. On the one hand, Orthodox identity is used within the Russian ideological system; on the other, the Russian society is trying to adapt Islam to state ideology.

This means that the religious situation in Russia, and in the South specifically, is fairly complicated: there is pluralism of religious opinions, there is “religiosity as a current fashion” and interference of religious organizations in secular life and education. According to VCIOM, “many more people today than in the past mention the pernicious effect of promoting religious convictions—from 5% in 1990 to 23% in 2015—on society and from 3% to 18%, respectively—on their personal lives.”<sup>26</sup> This adds special importance to information about the course of religious (Islamic or Christian, depending on religious preferences) ethics as part of the school curriculum in the North Caucasian republics: “An average of about 15% of the respondents do not believe that this course is needed in the schools of their republics.”<sup>27</sup> This means that there are diverse religious views and that people in the South of Russia are not ready to perceive the social institute of education through the prism of religious values.

Today there is a certain tendency in Russia to reduce spirituality and morality to religion. It is often said that morality is impossible without religious sentiment, and that a morally educated person is inconceivable without a religious education. This brings to mind Voltaire’s “If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him.” Those who refuse to support religious organizations as a social institution and religion as a form of social consciousness are viewed as immoral and dissolute persons.

I am convinced that post-secularism does not imply that religion has triumphantly returned to all spheres of social life: rather, it is a new form of religious experience very much needed in the current entanglements of circumstances, conditions, emotional experience and reflections that call for certain decisions that, in their turn, require an axiological platform. In their classical forms traditional religions teach love, harmony, tolerance, mutual respect, which are common to all mankind irrespective of faith and, as such, they consolidate the Russian society.

Religion may help create a hierarchy of values which, in turn, will help separate the important from the unimportant in the life of man; will stabilize the trends in needs and interests, with the help of which a man confirms himself as an individual and a citizen; attains self-realization in various forms of activities and thus expresses his “axiological Self”.

Religious values are bipolar, which means that each positive value has an anti-value: good-evil, nobleness-baseness, sanctity-sin, sacralization-secularization, etc. Emerging value-oriented attitudes subsequently remain in people’s minds to adjust behavior and shape ideas about the world. This is fully applicable to personal assessments, which are rather telling in regard to an individual’s position in the social relations system, the nature of his needs, interests, ideals and their outcrops in the form of wishes.

Cultural dialog, which has been discussed repeatedly in numerous publications, may begin as a dialog between religions and religious organizations and is very much needed to overcome mutual incomprehension as a frequent cause of confrontations. This will promote tolerance between followers of different confessions, religious movements and organizations. The Russian society is growing

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<sup>26</sup> Danye VCIOM. Press release No. 2888 “Religia: za i protiv,” available at [<https://wciom.ru/index.php?id=236&uid=115329>], 25 March 2018.

<sup>27</sup> H.V. Dutsev, A.P. Dibirova, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

more and more aware of the fact that the state and the religious organizations should start talking to each other. According to VCIOM, in the last twenty-five years the society has radically changed its attitude to members of different religious teachings and sects: 40% of Russian citizens wanted to see them isolated in late 2014; in 1989, the share was a meager 7%.<sup>28</sup>

Members of the clergy are also involved in the dialog. Jacques Waardenburg has offered an example of Christian ecumenical theology that is open to Islam: his concept does not treat the Abrahamic religions as systems in their own right.<sup>29</sup> Judaism, Christianity and Islam are the three sub-systems of a homogenous system or, three partially intertwined systems. He is convinced that their main structural elements, namely, components, symbols and values, are the same or coherent.

Louis Massignon, an outstanding Catholic Orientalist, was the first to formulate ecumenical hermeneutics, within which Roman theology acquired Islamic theology as a partner in dialog.<sup>30</sup> He argued that true believers, and those with a prophetic gift in the first place, wish for salvation for everyone, which is accessible for all believers. He is convinced that God accepts the faiths of all followers of the Abrahamic religions—which include Judaists and Muslims along with Christians. They share very similar doctrinal foundations and are very close historically and culturally; they teach people to be tolerant, moderate, fair and virtuous and accept personal dignity, freedom of conscience and religion as basic values.

The so-called Islamic extremism challenges the interreligious dialog. In fact, this term is hardly correct (it is far more appropriate to discuss extremism in the Muslim milieu); it is used to describe the terrorist activities of all sorts of Islamist groups, which push aside the norms of international law in their fight for power. Muslims define terrorism as an extreme manifestation, or generalization, of extremism and as criminal activity spearheaded against human lives and the foundations of any constitutional order.

It should be said here that in both planetary-scale and local conflicts the destructive potential of religious impulses sometimes crops up to sanction intolerance, confrontation, isolationism or expansion and promote totalitarian or authoritarian relationships between the authorities and people. Some members of the expert community prefer to shift part of the blame onto the collisions of secularization. Jean-Paul Willaime, for example, has written: “Secularization of society is paradoxically responsible for these militant and cruel forms of religiosity.”<sup>31</sup> He is convinced that contemporary religiosity, nonclerical in nature, may sometimes push highly religious individuals (or closely knit groups of such individuals) to act autonomously without external pressure of any religious structure and select an extreme and highly rigid format of religious self-determination.

Russia’s political leaders have attained positive results and continue moving in the same direction in the South of Russia to prevent Islamic radicalization and overcome the already existing opinions about Islam as an inherently extremist religion<sup>32</sup>. According to VCIOM, in 2016, only 2% of Russian citizens looked at the Caucasus as the source of terrorism.<sup>33</sup>

Politicization of religious consciousness is clearly seen in the positive and negative aspects of a more active social role of religion. Mythologization of public conscience is one of the results of the

<sup>28</sup> See: Dannye VCIOM. Press release No. 2725 “Uroven tolerantnosti v Rossii: rastet ili padaet?” available at [<http://wciom.ru/index.php?id=236&uid=115070>], 15 February, 2018.

<sup>29</sup> See: J. Waardenburg, op. cit.

<sup>30</sup> See: L. Massignon, op. cit., pp. 171-193.

<sup>31</sup> J.-P. Willaime, op. cit., p. 126.

<sup>32</sup> See: A. Rudenko, V. Kotliarova, E. Polozhenkova, M. Shubina, Yu. Shestakov, G. Mogilevskaya, O. Sysoeva, “Religious Tolerance as a Factor of Spiritual Security in the South of Russia,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 17, Issue 2, 2016, pp. 37-46.

<sup>33</sup> See: Dannye VCIOM. Press release No. 3167 “Terroristicheskaia ugroza: monitoring,” available at [<https://wciom.ru/index.php?id=236&uid=115800>], 20 March 2018.

above. It should be said that in the near future this factor should come to the fore in the dialog between religions in the South of Russia. Coupled with the historically determined religious context, the current processes of politicization of religion accelerate the growth of outward signs of religiosity. By this I mean church/mosque attendance and participation in all sorts of religious rites as well as a more active religious awareness, primarily in the ethnocultural and political spheres. Defense of the traditional (up to and including religious) values can be described as an important trend that helps suppress radical and highly politicized religious sentiments in the South of Russia. In recent years, the share of those who support traditional values rose from 72% in 2004 to 86% in 2016.<sup>34</sup>

According to the Russian expert Konstantin Kostyuk, religious (Christian and Islamic alike) fundamentalism is building up an ideological program of its own based on the rigid anti-Western rhetoric; it criticizes everything, from Western forms of Christianity to the human rights concept, market economy, supremacy of the law and democracy.<sup>35</sup> Fundamentalists have created their own programs of political action; they acquired their own rhetoric on which they rely to condemn Westernized values as opposed to traditional religious values. This is one of the elements of their program of political action, in which religious traditions are pushed aside (to a certain extent) to give space to political slogans. The highly balanced national politics of the Russian Federation in the Northern Caucasus has changed the region's general sentiments: according to public opinion polls, over 80% of the polled population in the republics of the North Caucasian Federal District (60% among them are Chechens) believe that the use of force in political disagreements is unacceptable.<sup>36</sup>

In the open information space, the steadily growing influence of sociocultural exogenous factors, better described as challenges of all sorts and tempting examples of high living standards, consumer psychology, hedonistic lifestyle, etc. actualizes moral, first and foremost religious, determinants rather than the use of force, as well as the need to readjust social and economic behavior and to teach people to resist the tide of alien values both mentally and philosophically.

To a certain extent, faith mitigates the evaluation of the level of social tension when defending one's own rights and interests. In this context, Muslims demonstrate a more positive attitude, which points to Islam's huge potential of social adaptation.<sup>37</sup>

Historical experience has taught us that Christianity and Islam are organic parts of contemporary civilization. It should be said that novelties are invariably rooted in the past; this means that people should rely on religious values to adjust their lifestyle to the rapidly unfolding changes.

## Conclusion

The sphere of values is an inalienable part of human culture; it reflects the social actor's value-based attitude towards the world and vice versa. The sphere of religious values consists of an abstract image of the structured functional system of religious preferences, attitudes, identities, etc. Any transformations in this sphere affect both the dimensions of the social space—the spatial and the temporal—in which different religious values are arranged in a multitude of very different configurations.

The present stage of this sphere's development in the South of Russia has not only increased the quantitative indices, but also improved the quality of the religious milieu. Extensive forms of religious identity are emerging and gradually developing.

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<sup>34</sup> See: V. Kotlyarova, A. Rudenko, P. Ponomarev, op. cit.

<sup>35</sup> See: K.N. Kostyuk, op. cit.

<sup>36</sup> See: H.V. Dutsev, A.P. Dibirova, op. cit., p. 62.

<sup>37</sup> See: M.M. Mchedlova, "Religia, obshchestvo, gosudarstvo: vyzovy i ugrozy sovremennosti," *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya*, No. 10, 2016, pp. 110-118.

The sphere of religious values in the South of Russia demonstrates certain specifics:

- Higher level of religiosity as compared with the average level of religiosity across Russia;
- Manifestations of separation and cooperation models of the state-religion relationships;
- The declared high level of religiosity is responsible for formal or nominal religiosity;
- Social identity seen in the context of studies of the sphere of religious values determines religious identity;
- The social institute of education is not perceived through the prism of religious values;
- Post-secularism does not mean the triumphant return of religion into the social sphere but, rather the re-configuration of religious experience in an intertwining of circumstances, conditions, feelings and reflections about human life that call for decisions that require, in their turn, an axiological platform;
- Bipolarity of religious values helps create the axiological structure of a personality;
- A considerable part of those living in the South of Russia prefers interreligious dialog and supports the principle of non-violence as a method of settling political conflicts to preserve social and political stability in the region.

I believe that comparative analysis should be continued to identify the mutual influence within the traditional triumvirate of the religious, political-legal and moral values that, on the one hand, belong to their own axiological spheres and, on the other, are parts of the homogenous unit that we call the axiological sphere of society.

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