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REGIONAL POLITICS

THE ROLE OF THE SCO IN FORMING THE CENTRAL ASIAN SECURITY ENVIRONMENT: GEOPOLITICAL ASPECTS

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Of course it would be too declamatory to maintain that the Central Asian countries are acquiring a special significance in the international relations system, but we cannot deny the increased attention the global actors are focusing on them, mainly due to the geostrategic and economic potential of the region. The situation is complicated by the spasmodic development of certain processes in some of the region's countries, the roots of which can be found in political and economic problems, as well as in the abrupt changes that have been occurring in the Central Asian states since the day they acquired their independence. Along with this, a few particularly obvious trends should be noted, including the growing impact of security threats and challenges, which could lead to a dramatic reduction in security in the region and its transformation into what we could call the Asian Balkans. The main reasons for this are the military-political situation in Afghanistan, the aggravated political processes, and the socioeconomic tension in several Central Asian republics.

Among the threats which have already become traditional, we will note international terrorism, drug trafficking, destabilization, the spread of hostilities to contiguous territories, illegal migration, and the problem of refugees, the spread of religious extremism, and the possible establishment of military-dictatorial pro-Islamist regimes in the Central Asian states. Along with these, new threats to regional stability and security were manifested in the events of 2005 which drew the increased attention both of the region's countries and of foreign players—the change in power in Kyrgyzstan and the situation in Andijan. Of course, these events did not cause the situation in Central Asia to spiral out of control, but they were a warning sign to its states and neighbors, giving them reason to think seriously about how to deal with the growing snowball of regional problems.

The revved-up integration processes in Central Asia were a reaction to all these threats, with the emphasis on military-political cooperation and ensuring security. After all, due to the transnational nature of these threats and the low level of independence of each of the Central Asian republics, the region's problems cannot be resolved in isolation. Of course, thanks to the multilateral initiatives of recent years, a regional security system is beginning to form which to some degree is making it possible to overcome certain problems. However, it cannot be said that these processes are yielding effective results.

Against this background, we should single out the significance of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which is taking unusual approaches toward resolving the problems of the Central Asian countries, including in regional security. According to the SCO member states, the current threats in this sphere come from the five evils: extremism, terrorism, separatism, drug trafficking, and illegal migration of the population. The SCO's integration efforts are primarily aimed at jointly combating these threats. But at the same time, economic cooperation is gradually beginning to develop within the framework of the Organization.[1]

[1] See: V. Galiamova, "ShOS kak instrument obespecheniia bezopasnosti v Tsentral'noi Azii: perspektivy organizatsii v svete rezul'tatov sammita," *Analytic*, No. 4, 2005, p. 12.

Outcome of the SCO Summit in Astana and Geopolitics of the Region's States

On the whole, the evolution of the SCO is characterized by relatively high development rates, as well as a high level of mutual understanding and solidarity among its participants. Taking into account the fact that, until recently, China was conducting an isolationist foreign policy, and all the Central Asian republics, including the Organization's member states, were closed off from the outside world by the Iron Curtain, their ability to reach a stable level of trust in each other is impressive. This is shown in particular by the joint military exercises carried out for the first time in history with the PRC, which, along with other factors, makes it possible to consider the SCO an unusual formation.[2]

The Republic of Kazakhstan was interested in creating a similar structure with the participation of Russia and the PRC, since this meets its interests in building a multi-vector foreign policy and maintaining the balance of power in the region. In its foreign policy strategy, the Republic of Kazakhstan is striving to assume the position of a Central Asian integrator, and as practice shows, our SCO

[2] See: V. Galiamova, "ShOS i problemy bezopasnosti Tsentral'noi Azii" [www.kisi.kz/expol/sco07-05-05.pdf].

partners are responding positively to many of our republic's initiatives. An example of this is the summit of its member states which was held on 4 July, 2005 in Astana and which opened a new stage in the Organization's development. The positive outcome of the July meeting, as many experts emphasize, was ensured not only by increased cooperation in the fight against terrorism, but also by the first practical steps toward trade and economic cooperation. In our opinion, it is interaction in the development of the national economies and social sector that will create the real foundation in the fight against terrorism. For it, as we know, is propitiously developing under conditions of progressing poverty.

At a meeting of the Council of Heads of the Organization's countries, a Declaration of the Heads of SCO Member States and a Conception of Cooperation in the Fight against Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism were adopted.[3] What is more, priority tasks were confirmed at the summit, including the development of relations with other political and trade actors, as well as the main areas of activity of the law enforcement bodies and defense ministries. Questions were also discussed of the further development of mechanisms and measures necessary for having an adequate response to situations posing a threat to peace and security.

The adopted conception notes that the SCO member states will hinder the preparation and carrying out of terrorist acts on their territory, including those aimed against the interests of other states. This, as well as the agreement on the procedure for organizing and implementing joint antiterrorist measures in the member states, will give the activity of the Regional Antiterrorist Structure (RATS) a clearer and more targeted focus.

Another extremely important topic of the summit was the deployment of the U.S. and NATO military contingent in the Central Asian republics, which could essentially be characterized as an event of geopolitical proportion. It should be noted that the statement made on this problem was probably initiated by Moscow and Beijing, two regional nations primarily interested in the withdrawal of the U.S. and NATO armed subdivisions from the region. After all, after 9/11, when Washington began to carry out its plans to deploy military units in certain Central Asian republics, the SCO was still not strong enough to fill the geopolitical vacuum and act as a guarantor of security for the entire region. In other words, taking into account the subsequent development of events, it was a little late in its organizational formation. And since this structure as a mechanism for ensuring the secure development of the Central Asian countries, in close cooperation with the Russian Federation and PRC, was essentially formed after the U.S.'s entry into the region, it is now primarily trying to catch up.

When analyzing the results of the Organization's summits, as well as statements made in the format of bilateral meetings of the member state leaders, the following program theses can be seen in them: the absence of any intention to build another military bloc; the striving to reduce unilateralness in international relations; the rejection of a hegemonic policy; and non-acceptance of unipolarity.

It is understood that this scope of activity in the SCO is inherent only in Russia and the PRC. At bilateral meetings, their leaders repeatedly emphasized that they do not accept the superpower syndrome and interference in the affairs of other countries under the guise of human rights and humanitarian efforts, and they are also against imposing the standards of certain countries on others. There is no doubt that in this context, the finger is primarily being pointed at the United States, as well as at the stances of the Russian Federation and PRC. It stands to reason that these two regional nations have no burning desire to see, if not military adversaries, at least geopolitical rivals in the form of the U.S. and NATO so close at hand.

[3] See: S. Nesterenko, "ShOS: novy masshtab global'noi otvetstvennosti," *Kazakhstanskaia pravda,* 6 July, 2005.

We will remind you that at the first stage, Beijing and Moscow supported the Washington-led antiterrorist campaign of 2001. But the U.S.'s subsequent geopolitical campaigns in Eurasia—the long-term deployment of military bases in Afghanistan and the Central Asian republics, and the military campaign in Iraq, assessed today as intervention—have aroused the concern of both China and Russia, as well as of other countries in this vast area. Beijing and Moscow are united by long-term goals ensuing from their interest in ensuring stability in the vast expanse of Central Eurasia. Against this background, the manifestation of unilateralness in Washington's actions will be "quietly" blocked by carrying out a strategy of geopolitical pluralism. And from this viewpoint, the SCO's future as an international player may appear ambiguous.[4]

Naturally, the Russian Federation and the PRC do not want relations with the United States to deteriorate, but at the same time, without making any rash moves, Moscow and Beijing are trying wherever possible to clamp down on Washington's military-political presence in the region, and in the future to diplomatically push the U.S. bases out of its countries. A logical extension of Russian-Chinese policy in this area (by means of the SCO) was the July summit in Astana. For example, the third section of the declaration adopted at it notes in particular that the SCO supports and will continue to support the antiterrorist operation in Afghanistan. Based on these goals, several of the Organization's countries offered their land-based infrastructure for temporary deployment of the military contingents of the coalition states. But in its next item, the declaration points to the desire of certain SCO countries to have these military bases removed from Central Asia.

A diplomatically phrased paragraph in the document says: "Taking into account the completion of the active combat phase of the antiterrorist operation in Afghanistan, the SCO member states consider it necessary that the relevant members of the antiterrorist coalition take a decision on the deadlines for the temporary use of the above-mentioned infrastructure facilities and military presence on the territory of the SCO member states."[5] Despite the careful phrasing, its meaning is obvious—the SCO, primarily Beijing, Moscow, and Tashkent, do not want the U.S. military to stay on in the region. Of course, these sentiments are not intended to trigger off any radical changes in the balance of power in Central Asia. And although this request did not arouse a particular response, negative repercussions of the statement made at the summit were not long in coming, which was most noticeable with respect to Uzbekistan. After the May 2005 events in Andijan, it began to demonstratively distance itself from the West, since the insistent demands of the world community, in particular the EU and U.S., that this event be investigated began to increasingly irritate official Tashkent. And as early as July, it demanded that Washington withdraw its armed forces from the republic within six months.[6] We will remind you that the U.S. has been using the base in Khanabad since 2001, from the first days of the combat action of the antiterrorist coalition against the Taliban movement in Afghanistan. Incidentally, Tashkent's decision was voiced after the U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld received assurances from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan that Washington could continue using its military bases in these countries.[7]

The White House promised to withdraw its troops from Uzbekistan within six months, but in the summer, the EU tried to adopt sanctions against Islam Karimov's regime, and it is presumed that these attempts will be intensified. Admittedly, the U.S. has already withdrawn its subdivisions from Uzbekistan, but they have not entirely left the region. In this respect, it can be said that Tashkent essen-

[4] See: S. Kushkumbaev, "ShOS: popytki strukturirovaniia geopoliticheskogo prostranstva Tsentral'noi Azii," *Analytic*, No. 4, 2005, p. 18.

[5] Declaration by the Heads of Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 6 July, 2005.

[6] See: E. Grigorieva, "Tsentral'naia Azia khochet izbavitsia ot chuzhikh voennykh baz," *Izvestia*, 6 July, 2005.

[7] Based on RIA Novosti information, 7 July, 2005.

tially did not achieve anything by taking this tough stance, but only demonstrated the indeterminate and instable nature of its foreign policy.

As for Kyrgyzstan, it cannot permit itself such incautious steps today. On the one hand, its military bases are one of the important items of revenue to the state budget—official payments for the use of the Gansi air base located in Manas amount to 50 million dollars a year—and on the other, it is undesirable for Kurmanbek Bakiev's current fragile regime to spoil its relations with the West. In this way, Washington will not leave this base as long as it is needed there. What is more, the mass media have been publishing information that the United States is granting Kyrgyzstan an interest-free loan of 200 million dollars,[8] and this is essentially equal to 60% of the country's annual budget revenue.

And another thing, Bishkek refused to allow Beijing to deploy subdivisions of the PRC armed forces on its territory, motivating this decision by the fact that it has no intention of turning the country into a military-political testing ground for foreign contingents, that is, it is clearly taking steps toward the West. And Washington's relations with Islam Karimov's regime, on the contrary, are tending toward further aggravation, which could ultimately cause disagreement between two SCO member states, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, the relations between which are not distinguished by profundity and trust as it is. It is thought that Bishkek is in danger of being strongly swayed by foreign influences. The current government will only have perfunctory power, while all the domestic processes will be regulated by foreign forces. In our opinion, Kurmanbek Bakiev's regime should conduct a more cautious policy and think about the consequences of its every step.

It appears that Tajikistan will not oppose the U.S. military presence in the region either, which is also due to the significant financial support Washington is rendering it. For example, in 2005, the United States allotted the republic 44.5% of all the funds offered it in the form of foreign aid for financing programs in democracy, reform of the legal system and social sphere, defense of the state border, strengthening of the security structures, and so on.[9] In this way, Dushanbe is unlikely to protest against the U.S. military presence in Central Asia, at least in the foreseeable future. Admittedly, as Uzbekistan's recent experience shows, an alternative might appear unexpectedly.

Kazakhstan had to support the statement initiated by the SCO at the summit in Astana. Otherwise, all the integrated efforts of our republic would have fallen by the wayside, and this, of course, does not meet its interests. Due to the multi-vector nature of its foreign policy, Kazakhstan is developing military-political cooperation both with the SCO member states and with the West, in particular with NATO. If the country took a hard-line position regarding deployment of U.S. and NATO armed forces in the region, this would contradict Astana's policy with respect to the balance of power. The republic's leadership understands the importance of regulating the situation in Afghanistan and positively evaluates the efforts of the antiterrorist coalition. After all, Afghanistan is a bone of contention and source of threat not only to Kazakhstan's national security, but to all the countries in the region. At the same time, military cooperation with geopolitically polar structures harbors a potential danger for Kazakhstan, since some Central Asian republics may interpret this policy ambiguously. And although this question is still not urgent, taking into account the possible prospects, it should be kept in mind.

As many experts believe, the SCO's statement was called upon to show that the Organization's members, which differ in the nature of their regimes, have the same negative approach to the presence of U.S. and NATO military bases in Central Asia. But, in our opinion, it is premature and rather dangerous to make such equivocal assessments, and this statement has another meaning. The SCO's propos-

[8] Ibidem.

[9] See: "SshA beskorystno pomogaiut Tadzhikistanu v 10 raz bol'she, chem Rossia" [www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php4?st=1137790800], 21 January, 2006.

al to the states of the antiterrorist coalition, the basis of which is formed by the U.S. and NATO, is probably more an expression of its own geopolitical significance, comprehension of the Organization's power and influence in the region, which is giving it grounds for taking independent action in resolving its problems, including in fending off the threats to its security. Its accumulated political-legal and military-political experience is making it possible for the SCO to counteract these threats under its own steam, therefore the presence of foreign contingents in the region simply does not make sense.

It seems to us that at this stage, the Central Asian countries are already quite capable of independently resolving the security problems in the region. They already have the necessary potential, but most important, a clear understanding and comprehensive desire. And the ill-considered and frequently uncoordinated entry into their territory of foreign forces is arousing a natural reaction in these states to protect their own interests. In this respect, we believe that trends are currently being considered in the SCO toward strengthening the military component, that is, the Organization is acquiring the appearance of an unofficial military bloc. This is shown by the joint military exercises of the member states which became more frequent in 2005. The first Russian-Sino Peace Mission-2005 exercises, which took place between 18 and 25 August in the Far Eastern Military District of the Russian Federation and in the PRC, became a kind of demonstration of their own might and confidence within the SCO framework.[10] This indicates that regional cooperation in the fight against terrorism, separatism, and extremism, organized crime, and the drug business is moving to a higher level. Washington has refrained from making loud comments about these exercises, but its hints were unequivocally understood.

Russia's armed forces are continuing to resolve questions relating to raising tactical interoperability with the Uzbekistan army. This is confirmed in particular by the first joint exercises in the history of Russian-Uzbek relations held on 21-23 September, 2005 at the Forish test ground, during which tactics were improved for destroying subversive groups of international terrorists. It is obvious that this hint was addressed to Washington, stressing that the region's countries are quite capable of independently protecting themselves against terrorism.

In October, Moscow continued its military-exercise tour of the Asian region, but this time headed for India, which has obtained the status of observer in the SCO. The main goal of the Indra-2005 exercises held between 10 and 20 October was to carry out tasks aimed at organizing and increasing the efficiency of joint actions when carrying antiterrorist campaigns on land and at sea by the corresponding subdivisions of both countries, to improve cooperation in carrying out peacekeeping tasks, and to maintain stability in the region. All of these efforts by the Russian Federation can be evaluated as diversification of its military cooperation. What is more, it is trying to assume the role of a regional leader capable of taking responsibility in ensuring security.

In this way, regional processes are developing actively and gradually moving to a military level. Moscow, in all likelihood, is again trying to become the initiator of a so-called Big Game in Central Asia, gradually returning its states to the orbit of its influence, for which Russia has objective reasons. First, the White House, the Kremlin's main rival in the region, after becoming bogged down in Iraq and striving to implant democracy in it by military force, will continue to focus its main attention in this area in the foreseeable future. For example, in his speech on the U.S. budget for 2006, George Bush placed the emphasis on the military sphere and the country's security, where Iraq occupies a priority place. This is giving Moscow the chance to take advantage of the current situation to reinforce its foothold, which it is in fact doing by activating its military-political cooperation within the SCO and CSTO. But it would be unwise to underestimate the situation, since Washington always has

[10] Based on RIA Novosti information, 18 August, 2005.

an effective tool of geopolitical leverage up its sleeve—the North Atlantic Alliance, which is also represented in the region. Second, on 14 November, 2005, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov signed a military treaty, thus forming an alliance which confirms Moscow's influence in a republic that was a U.S. ally prior to the events in Andijan. At the same time, Vladimir Putin noted that "an alliance is the most trusting level of relations for sovereign states," adding that it "brings our relations to a qualitatively new level and makes them as close as they can be."[11] What is more, the Treaty on Strategic Partnership between Russia and Uzbekistan legally justifies the creation in the republic of a Russian military air base, which will technically be considered a CSTO base. But Uzbekistan is not currently part of this structure.

It is presumed that Tashkent, due to its latently developing political conflict with Washington and curtailment of financial and military support from the West, has been forced to turn to Moscow for help. Russia is capable of meeting the needs of the Uzbekistan army, as well as rendering Islam Karimov's regime the necessary military and political support. Of course, the mentioned Treaty has not been signed within the framework of the SCO, but both Russia and Uzbekistan are its members, which had an impact on strengthening the Organization's position. What is more, the Treaty expresses the logic of the July 2005 summit in Astana, where the first attempt was made to distance Tashkent from Washington. The U.S. did not comment on the signing of this document, but knowing the special features of American policy, it is not difficult to surmise how the White House reacted.

On the whole, in our opinion, official Moscow's policy is currently aimed at activating military-political cooperation within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which could strengthen the prevalence of Russian military standards in Central Asia. And this is very unfavorable for the West. What is more, the countries of the region are most likely ready for this cooperation due to their need to counteract the real threats of terrorism, extremism, the drug business, and transnational crime. At the same time, the danger exists of destructive trends within the SCO itself, which is primarily related to the relative polarization of the positions of its member states regarding the U.S. military presence in the region. Although at this stage, this is not having an effect on the interrelations among the SCO members, it is thought that certain preventive measures should be taken to resolve this problem. Secondly, this is related to the too close relations between certain countries within the SCO. This mainly applies to the intensifying Russian-Uzbek relations, which the other members of the Organization might assess ambiguously. These and other questions must be resolved by means of open coordination and not by hushing them up, which is only leading to aggravation of the situation.

On the whole, the current stage of functioning in the SCO shows that its founders are trying to move away from the traditional patterns of international relations characteristic of the hard-line geopolitical and military-political era. But world practice shows that without military support any strategy seems to have little effect.

As experts note, an important part of the Organization's activity is the fight against non-traditional challenges and threats, the use of gentle methods of collective security, a demonstrative rejection of forming blocs, and support of consultations and talks as a means of resolving mutual problems.[12] But all the same, the SCO will probably be forced to develop and strengthen its military-political potential, possibly as a geopolitical tool in the rivalry with foreign players.

The Organization's prospects largely depend on the foreign policy of the PRC and RF, which is not necessarily related to the Central Asian countries. Due to the fact that at the current stage Russia

[11] P. Finn, "Russia-Uzbek Military Pact Allows Mutual Use of Bases," *The Washington Post*, 15 November, 2005 [www.inosmi.ru/translation/223659.html].

[12] See: S. Kushkumbaev, "'Shankhaiskii protsess:' put k kooperativnoi modeli regionalnoi bezopasnosti," *Saiasat-Policy*, No. 7, July 2005, pp. 65-68.

does not possess sufficient economic resources to maintain its geopolitical influence in Central Asia, Moscow is sharing part of the responsibility for regional stability with Beijing. At the same time, no one wishes to see the SCO transformed into another military tool for realizing the geopolitical ambitions of certain countries—that was not what it was intended for.

Enlargement of the SCO: Problems of Drawing New Players into the Region's Geopolitical Orbit

Another historical event during the meeting in Astana was that three of the largest Asian states—India, Iran, and Pakistan—joined the common efforts of the SCO countries in the struggle against terrorism and in ensuring stability and economic development. At this summit, the noted states joined the SCO as observers. Mongolia received this status in 2004.[13]

Their joining the Organization will hypothetically make it the largest integration structure in the world, which will change the political, economic, military, and cultural architectonics on the European-Asian continent. In other words, an unusual alliance of nation-states and civilizations is being created, and this is the main difference between the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and other regional formations. But it is still premature to talk about its actual enlargement, since the regulatory-legal base of the SCO has not been entirely formed and the process of consolidating the current member states has not been completed. There are several contradictory questions here, for which it is unfortunately very hard to find answer today.

- First, Iran, India, and Pakistan are showing an increasing interest in economic cooperation with the Central Asian republics, particularly in the sphere of trade, transportation, power engineering, and energy resources. From this viewpoint, the noted states could become incorporated into the SCO structure, which could lead to changes in certain parameters of economic contacts. But in so doing, ground is being tilled for conflictive rivalry among the above-mentioned three countries, on the one hand, and between Russia and China, on the other, which are just as interested in the region's market. This could lead to a breakdown in the Organization's mechanisms.
- Second, South Asia, to which Iran, India, and Pakistan belong, is an even more contradictory region than Central Asia, with its rather acute and complicated differences of opinion and confused and protracted conflicts. Therefore it is very likely that as a result of these states joining the SCO, other accents in the Organization's activity will also shift, with possible distraction of attention toward the problems of South Asia. In this event, the SCO will not be able to make targeted use of its resources, which are rather limited anyway. And this, in turn, could give rise to new conflicts, into which the Central Asian republics will also be drawn.
- Third, India and Pakistan have nuclear weapons, and Iran is trying to obtain them, so their entry into the Organization could lead to a breakdown in the balance of its internal structure. And in this context, their integration into the SCO is very problematic. What is more, India has not joined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and the SCO countries declared that observation of non-proliferation conditions is one of the most important princi-

[13] See: S. Kushkumbaev, "ShOS: popytki strukturirovaniia geopoliticheskogo prostranstva Tsentral'noi Azii," p. 19.

ples for ensuring peace. The SCO could gain the reputation of a structure gathering nuclear states under its wing: on the one hand, Russia and China, on the other, India and Pakistan. And this will all happen against the background of Iran's attempts to create its own nuclear weapons. In the event this scenario pans out, the SCO could become more of a source of threat itself to international security than a tool for fighting it.

- Fourth, Iran is following its own domestic and foreign political course, which is quite difficult to coordinate with the stances of the Organization's members. What is more, the SCO could be drawn into a geopolitical conflict with the U.S. After all, relations between Tehran and Washington are extremely tense, and in light of the statements made at the summit in Astana, the Organization could assume the stance of an anti-American bloc. In other words, Iran's entry into the SCO could also be complicated by a whole slew of other problems.
- Finally, fifth, a very serious problem is the rather tense relations between India and Pakistan, and Iran and Pakistan. What is more, all these countries are interested in geopolitical domination in Central Asia, which is also aggravating their relations with the region's countries, as well as the Russian Federation and PRC. If we take an objective view of the desire of Islamabad and Delhi to join the SCO, an element of rivalry can also be seen even in this aspect, neither state wants to yield to the other in the political, economic, and military sphere. Before major positive changes appear in the relations between these countries, the SCO could become a victim of their multitude of contradictions and conflicts. What is more, the Central Asian republics, Russia, and China will also be forced in the SCO format to fight against the Islamist forces of Iran and Pakistan, since manifestations of religious extremism in the region are largely associated with these countries.

In this way, taking into account the enormous impact Iran, India, and Pakistan joining the SCO will have, the question arises of whether it is capable of handling this enlargement within its current framework. The organization simply cannot work realistically in this composition. After all, it has taken enormous efforts to normalize relations today and overcome the barrier of mistrust between the PRC, Russia, and the Central Asian republics.

However, if we hypothetically assume that Delhi, Islamabad, and Tehran will expand the format of their participation in the Organization, conditions will arise for reducing the conflict potential in the region, including between potential SCO participants, since they are clearly interested in its transformation into a permanently functioning structure which has an impact on international processes. According to several experts, expanding the geographic framework of the SCO will help to strengthen its economic and military-political potential, which will have a beneficial effect on multilateral cooperation and interaction in the region. But in so doing, a set of other problems might arise which are wider in scope and currently not characteristic of Central Asia. In all likelihood, in the mid-term, the countries with the status of observer in the Organization will not be able to become its permanent members due to the primary importance of the tasks aimed at building up the SCO's internal strength.

The question is how long they will accept this status, although resolution of this question will not have a significant influence on the development of the SCO. Today, it has entered a latent geopolitical standoff against the West by challenging U.S. interests, and this means that this question will be a hidden bone of contention for quite some time to come in forming the region's geopolitics. In this case, ill-considered enlargement of the Organization, particularly by including states that are polarized to each other, is introducing additional contradictions into its strategy and could lead to a slowdown in the cooperation processes and to the formation within the SCO of internal groups created on the basis of opposite geopolitical and other priorities.

* * *

Nevertheless, the SCO has enormous potential and good chances in the future of creating a regional security system equivalent to current international-political realities and trends, which will become one of the centers of the global security system taking shape, an intermediary link between global and subregional levels. Of course, we will only be able to talk about this with complete confidence in time, since the organization is still in its youth.

What is more, it should be kept in mind that there is a real danger of the Organization transforming into an incompetent structure which only perfunctorily unites its members, which have opposite economic and political goals, and becoming yet one more "paper-and-pencil" association in the world, including in the post-Soviet space.

As we have already noted, today the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is encountering serious challenges, and this is increasing the skepticism of experts regarding its efficiency. On the one hand, the internal trends holding back the strengthening of relations in all the designated areas must be overcome. On the other, the Organization is entering into the difficult process of forming Central Asia's geopolitics, in particular, we should note NATO's firm intention of including the region in a new system of cooperation, in which relations between the Central Asia and the North Atlantic Alliance would be distinguished by a more constructive nature.

The increased U.S. military presence in the region after 9/11 has led to the fact that the SCO is not playing a leading role in Central Asia in ensuring security and in the fight against terrorism. But according to the outcome of the summit in Astana, it can be noted that the Organization is willing to assume responsibility even in light of the geopolitical changes going on around the region.

It is thought that in order to resolve the range of current problems in the near future, the SCO should make a qualitative leap in one of two directions: either toward forming a military-political bloc, which will actually, instead of theoretically, maintain security in Greater Central Asia, or toward creating a full-fledged regional political-economic alliance along the lines of ASEAN. But the SCO is not a military bloc, which is emphasized in every way by all its member states. Here we need to pay attention to the unusual composition of the Organization. Only if it can draw up a specific regional strategy and, most important, put it into practice, without remaining at the level of bureaucratic paperwork, will this regional structure be able to provide answers to the transnational challenges facing its participants and play a dominant role in forming the region's geopolitics.

There is a quite widespread justified opinion in the expert community that today only the SCO and no other international formation is capable of providing the Central Asian states with the opportunity to create the most adequate model of interaction with each other and with the main foreign centers of power for ensuring security and development. The organization is presenting the regional players with the most preferable and attractive mechanism precisely because it is forming conditions for supporting stable political regimes in Central Asia and creating a favorable economic climate and safe environment in the military-political respect.[14]

As many observers note, today the SCO is playing a very important role in ensuring regional security in Central Asia. It has launched and is improving a mechanism of interaction among the military departments, is holding meetings of the defense ministers of the member states, is engaging in talks of General Staff delegations, and is carrying out bilateral and multilateral antiterrorist exercises. The summit in Astana clearly demonstrated that today the Organization is assuming the position of a mature alliance confident in its own strength which is already beginning to manifest its political ambitions and diplomatically making complaints against its opponents.

[14] See: V. Galiamova, "ShOS kak instrument obespecheniia bezopasnosti v Tsentral'noi Azii," p. 14.

Participation in the SCO is giving the region's countries the opportunity to strengthen their own security, diversify channels of cooperation with the big regional players, primarily the U.S., China, and Russia, and expand their influence on regional processes. According to official Astana, under the conditions currently existing in Central Asia only an international organization encompassing all the region's countries and aimed at resolving its specific problems can efficiently oppose the above-mentioned threats. Correspondingly, the search for an optimal balance of interests, harmonization of the main areas of foreign, economic, and military policy in Central Asia, and a real assessment of the possibilities of all the members involved in this project should become imperative in the SCO's activity in the region.

The Organization's member states should use their political, economic, and military resources to strengthen national security, state independence, and regional authority. The history of international relations is proving that there is nothing stable and eternal in the world of politics, everything is based on temporary national interests. Proceeding from this, the SCO can become a kind of catalyst for building a platform of constructive cooperation among the countries of the region to meet all the vicissitudes in geopolitical development that come their way.

CENTRAL ASIA IS A REGION OF FIVE *STANS*
Dispute with Kazakh Eurasianists

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A so-called Eurasian trend of foreign political thought born in Kazakhstan is gaining increasingly wider support in this country, the main argument of its proponents being "Kazakhstan borders on Central Asia, but it is not a Central Asian country. Ours is a Eurasian state strongly influenced by Europe and Western values. Contrary to what certain politicians and journalists assert, we are not another *stan.* Saudi Arabia is not our historical landmark: we look to Norway, South Korea, and Singapore."[1] This is what these people think about their country's place and role in the world after 15 years of independent development. They loathe the very name of their country, which ends in *stan.* The Eurasian trend of "anti-*stan*" rhetoric merits serious attention and profound analysis.

[1] D. Nazarbaeva, "Spetsifika i perspektivy politicheskogo razvitia Kazakhstana," *Biulleten No. 3, 2003,* Mezhdunarodniy institut sovremennoy politiki at the Institute's site [http://iimp.kz/index.php?action=show&art_id=150&from=5], 17 February, 2006.

On the *Stans'* Geopolitical Insufficiency

It is tempting to ask whether the concept of a Eurasian state can be applied to Kazakhstan. This invites the question of where the borders between Kazakhstan, which is "not a Central Asian country," and Central Asia proper lie, and another broader one about whether the Central Asian countries can cope without Kazakhstan.

The statement quoted above turned geopolitics and ideology upside down; it distorted the regularities of geopolitical transformation and the process of national self-identification. I will discuss self-identification ideology in the next section, but for now I would like to analyze the geopolitical implications of the above quotation.

Indeed, if Kazakhstan does not belong to Central Asia, where is its place? To which part of Asia does it belong? None of the sources describe it as part of say, northern Asia. Why should it move away from Central Asia? The answers to these questions might clarify the reasons why the country wants to detach itself from Central Asia, but they will hardly identify the geographical boundary between "Eurasian" Kazakhstan and Central Asia proper. In fact, Kazakhstan's Eurasian nature is nothing but a myth or, rather, a geopolitical provocation; the same applies to the idea of Eurasianism, which spells rejection of independence and withdrawal into Eurasian nonexistence.

Eurasianism is a conception and philosophy designed to formulate the principles of Russia's statehood; it is a philosophy of uniting lands for Russia and around it, therefore Russia alone is a Eurasian state. Neither Kazakhstan, nor any other CIS republic, belongs to this category. The Eurasian concept can be applied to the post-Soviet states only in the geographical context, it has nothing to do with the self-identification of either countries or nations.

The Soviet Union's disintegration was a geopolitical phenomenon, the results of which, that is, new unification or moving further away from each other, can be realized only as geopolitical events. The very first words of the Agreement on Abolishing the U.S.S.R. and Establishing the CIS say: "We, the Republic of Belarus, the R.S.F.S.R, and Ukraine, as founding members of the U.S.S.R. and signatories to the 1922 Union Treaty, bear witness to the fact that the Union of S.S.R., as a subject of international law and a *geopolitical reality* (emphasis mine.—*F.T.*), ceases to exist."[2] This condemned to death not only the Soviet Union, but also the Eurasian doctrine as a cornerstone of the inter-state union. It survived only as one of the possible versions of Russia's national ideology.

On the whole, the Eurasian doctrine is not a geographical sum of two continents; it is part of this sum, or, rather, the sum of its parts, the territory on which part of Europe and part of Asia are found. The Eurasian doctrine is a form of Russia's self-identification as a region. Russian scholar D. Zamiatin has written: "The Russian conquest of Central Asia was important not only and not so much because the metropolitan country found this territory valuable. What was important was its position in the newly emerging geopolitical expanse of Central Asia."[3] The author reminds us that General Mikhail Skobelev said that Russia conquered the Turkestan area by chance, as an operational base on its way to India.[4]

Central Asia might possibly return to Eurasia, to which it belonged as part of the Soviet Union, at some later date. But this will happen only after it restores, completes, and proves *its geopolitical self-identification*. In other words, it can only join Eurasia as a geopolitical entity of the five *stans*.

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[2] E.G. Moiseyev, *Pravovoy status SNG*, Iurist Publishers, Moscow, 1995, p. 111.

[3] D. Zamiatin, "Russkie v Tsentral'noy Azii vo vtoroy polovine XIX veka: strategia representatsii i interpretatsii istoriko-geograficheskikh obrazov granits," *Vostok*, No. 1, 2002, p. 48.

[4] Ibidem.

Not only Kazakhstani academics, but also their colleagues in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan studying post-Soviet realities and wishing to find a place for their countries in the world wrongly insist on the absolute nature of the gained sovereignty. The disintegration of the Soviet super-state and the appearance of independent states in its place bring to mind the Peace of Westphalia of 1648, when the term "sovereignty" was coined, while the newly independent states of the time laid the legal foundations of present-day international relations. Globalization, a fundamentally important factor, excludes this analogy. Among other things, globalization has weakened the principle of national sovereignty in favor of the universal legal principles of world order and regional integration models. This factor is partly ignored when it comes to discussing the status of the region as a whole and its countries. National-regional dualism is the key factor behind the self-identification of the Central Asian nations and regional geopolitics. In other words, the sovereignty of Kazakhstan and its Central Asian neighbors should be regionally determined.

At the same time, the quest of the Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO) members for unilateral, rather than common advantages created by the geopolitical position of the landlocked countries far removed from marine outlets is leading nowhere. None of these countries is self-sufficient geopolitically. In the past, they all were Big Game targets; today, they have become its subjects. *They may become targets once more if they fail to collectively recognize their geopolitical insufficiency and overcome it.*

Today, there is a fairly widely shared opinion that in the absence of the Center, the relations among the Central Asian countries will degenerate into conflicts; this opinion is probably suggested by the fact that despite the artificial and inevitably asymmetric administrative division of the region, it survived in Soviet times as a centripetal entity within the political formula Central Asia *and* Kazakhstan with de jure and de facto transparent administrative borders between the republics. Today, it exists as a relatively centrifugal entity within the CACO structure.

The border issue is the watershed between sovereignty and integration; there is another reality too: the countries are interconnected. For this reason, any discussion of the political and legal side of the border issue should take the regional context into account.

So far, scholarly studies of the development dynamics of the Central Asian geopolitical space in the context of its status in global geopolitical delimitation are still few and inadequate. Not much has been done to study how this delimitation will affect the local countries and the creation of a regional security system. Geographic knowledge and geographic data have come to the fore; it is still unclear to what extent the Central Asian geographic area, the ecumene, forms a common expanse of national self-identification and political self-determination of nations and regional states. So we cannot describe its external frontiers as their common borders. This and other issues should be studied in depth, otherwise all deliberations about identity outside the Central Asian ecumene will remain primitive and provocative speculations.

S. Kushkumbaev, a Kazakh political scientist, was quite right when he wrote that a certain amount of tension along the borders between political Central Asia and the extra-regional countries is manifested through objective trends of a narrowing of the Central Asian geopolitical complex. He concluded: "If these trends grow stronger in the future they might cause the region to disintegrate and make it even more amorphous. This variant will demand that the opposite trend take place in the local states in the form of planning integration processes."[5] Being aware that the total numerical strength of the Central Asian armies (including Turkmenistan) is much lower than the armies of their neighbors, the same author suggests that the local countries should increase their military cooperation and try to jointly protect their external borders.[6]

[5] S. Kushkumbaev, *Tsentral'naia Azia na putiakh integratsii: geopolitika, etnichnost, bezopasnost,* Kazakhstan Publishers, Almaty, 2002, p. 83.

[6] Ibid., p. 90.

This raises the question of whether the Central Asian countries can create an alliance of their own (from the viewpoint of the theory of alliances, blocs, and unions). In other words, can the region acquire a collective security system based on an alliance of its states? S. Kushkumbaev offers a positive answer: "Without open access to the world transportation system, the Central Asian states are, in fact, strategic partners."[7]

All deliberations about Kazakhstan not being a *stan*, but a Eurasian state, is another reflection of geopolitical de-rationalization based on Central Asia's distorted geographical image… In fact, this boils down to the choice between Kazakhstan's dependence and independence. This is not all. This is the choice between the dependence and independence of the *whole of* Central Asia!

This conception differs but little from the conception formulated by prominent Russian geopolitician Alexander Dugin, who, in his well-known book, divided Central Asia politically, geopolitically, and racially into three parts: Central Kazakhstan; the deserts of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and the mountains of Kyrgyzstan; and Iran-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India. According to the author, tellurocratia, that is Russia-Eurasia, should exploit this "natural" division to win the static warfare with thalassocracy, that is, with "Atlanticism." Describing Tajikistan as the key state in the geopolitical war in Central Asia, Alexander Dugin wrote: "It possesses all the major factors of the entire Russian 'Drang nach Suden,' that is, 'drive to the South," and added, "the actual border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan should not be seen as a strict line. This is not a fact given by history; it is a geopolitical task, since it would have been *in the interests of the Heartland to annul all strict limitations there and move the strategic line further south. The intermediate area should be restructured on the basis of ethnocultural, tribal, and regional boundaries* (italics mine.—*F.T.*)."[8]

At first glance, the merging of CACO and EurAsEC announced on 6 October, 2005 put an end to the history of Central Asia's independence and seemed to abolish the region's name. In fact, this "historical event" illustrated once more the permanent geopolitical tension in the region, which has been in evidence since 1991; it demonstrated the fundamental difference between a fragmented and a united Central Asia. The efforts to detach Kazakhstan from Central Asia are part of this large geopolitical and historical issue.

The EurAsEC founding fathers have actually perpetuated geopolitical instability in the form of large and small CISs (this became even more evident after the EurAsEC merged with CACO). In the absence of a fundamental conception and a *basic post-Soviet idea*, these structures cannot be stable. They are all united by one desire—to prevent further disintegration of the former Soviet superstate, or to be more exact, to prevent further distancing of the Commonwealth countries from Russia, which is this structure's core. This desire is not the basic idea; the EurAsEC members are united neither by a common idea about threats to their security, nor by their belonging to one region, their common origin, nor by their geopolitical status. They are members of other international organizations: some of them belong to the SCO, others are tied by bilateral treaties; still others belong to the Collective Security Treaty Organization, until 6 October, 2005 some of them were CACO members, etc.

The above has convincingly demonstrated that the geopolitical transformation of the post-Soviet expanse has not yet been completed; the same applies to national and regional self-identification. Kazakhstan should be neither Norway, nor South Korea, nor Singapore. Kazakhstan should not transform itself into another country or imitate other states. None of the states that delight the Kazakh

[7] S. Kushkumbaev, *Tsentral'naia Azia na putiakh integratsii: geopolitika, etnichnost, bezopasnost*, Kazakhstan Publishers, Almaty, 2002, p. 144.

[8] A. Dugin, *Osnovy geopolitiki. Geopoliticheskoe budushchee Rossii*, Arktogeia-tsentr, Moscow, 1999, pp. 354-355.

Eurasianists transformed themselves or imitated others. They can be admired mainly because they not only preserved their identity in the course of the reforms during the so-called transition period, but they also managed to harmoniously synthesize the national and the borrowed.

To Be or Not to Be a *Stan*?

Another Kazakh analyst S. Akimbekov has written in the same spirit of isolationism from unwelcome and "unstable" Central Asia: "We can talk about a vast space of instability to the south of Kazakhstan's borders. If the events in our 'southern underbelly' spiral out of control, Kazakhstan runs the risk of being confronted with numerous negative problems." Talking about the threats from the south, he concludes: "It would be wise to drop the terminological discourse about 'Central Asia' imposed on us from outside and pick up the old and very comfortable term 'Kazakhstan and Central Asia.'"[9] In this way, and probably unwittingly, the author plays into the hands of those geopolitical forces which wish to preserve the region's present, that is, fragmented status. On the other hand, the author seems to ignore that the region's old name contains a short, yet irremovable word *"AND"* which reflects Central Asia's historical unity. I do agree that a stop should be put to the terminological discourse about the term and the region's present name ultimately registered (and protected in the name of our independence).

I should say that the *stan* issue is by far an ontological one. Names may differ; in the Central Asian context this question can be formulated as "Whether There Will Be *Stans* at All?" This is a crucial question of national self-identification, foreign policy orientation and, finally, the country's independence, rather than of a high sounding name.

Strange as it may seem, President of Kazakhstan Nazarbaev invited the local countries to set up a Union of Central Asian States. While presenting an annual budget message to a joint sitting of the chambers of the Kazakhstani parliament, the President of Kazakhstan said: "A treaty on perpetual friendship between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan may serve as a firm foundation for such a union."[10]

The state formation and nation-building processes in all the Central Asian countries are unfolding under the strong impact of geopolitical factors, on the one hand, and ideological construction, on the other. This is confirmed by a comparative analysis of similar processes which took place in Central Asia. Early in the 20th century, the region's artificial division distorted and fragmented the natural historical process of national self-identification. This forced the political and cultural elites to plant in the minds of the people living within a single region new "imagined communities" (to borrow a term from Benedict Anderson) which were allegedly living in their native territories. As a result, the key idea of 1991—*political independence*—was perceived as *historical independence* of one another. This left the real historical and political *interdependence* of these countries and peoples in the shadows.

"The independence of each of the Central Asian countries will be even more precious if they develop according to the cooperative development principle; otherwise they risk losing much more and finding themselves left by the wayside."[11] To achieve this we should move away from the concept

[9] S. Akimbekov, "Tupik liberalizma. Kakuiu strategiu izbrat Kazakhstanu?" [http://centrasia.org/newsA.php4?st=1131088440 04.11.2005].

[10] [http://www.tribune-uz.info/news/], 18 February, 2005.

[11] S. Kushkumbaev, op. cit., p. 146.

of state- and nation-building to the concept of regional construction, whereby ensuring a political, economic, legal, organizational, and ideological backup. S. Kushkumbaev has correctly associated the success of Central Asian integration with the position of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.[12] He has also pointed out correctly that integration is limited, among other things, by the non-homogeneous nature of the region as a whole. "Optimal transparency in various spheres of political, social, economic, and cultural life of Central Asian society is impossible if the existing political systems which subjectify the processes largely remain the same."[13] Indeed, it is for the next generation of political leaders, who will replace the present ones, to shoulder the task of full-scale integration. If this new generation keeps saying that "Kazakhstan borders on Central Asia, but it is not a Central Asian country," they will bury both Kazakhstan *AND* Central Asia in the EurAsEC or similar structures of sham integration.

Even if the "Kazakhstan is not a *stan*" formula is correct it is applicable solely to its northern part, while the south has been always integrated into the rest of Central Asia. At all times, Southern Kazakhstan was part of all kinds of *Central Asian* polities: the state of the Shaybanids, the state of Amir Timur, the Bukhara and Kokand khanates, the Turkestan Autonomy. The first two leaders of the latter were Kazakhs Muhammadjon Tynyshpaev and Mustafa Chokai, who thought of independence as applied to the entire Central Asian community. Textbooks on the history of Kazakhstan describe the Turkestan Republic as a regional rather than a national-territorial autonomy, because it was not clear which of the local ethnoses of this multinational structure was the vehicle of autonomy. Its population was called either the "people of Turkestan," or "the Turkestanies," or "the Turkic toiling masses."[14]

I would like to remind those who want to detach Kazakhstan from Central Asia of the words of prominent Kazakh historian Prof. M. Abuseitova: "At all times, Central Asia was a fairly integral and specific cultural and historical region, because of shared historical destinies, geographic conditions, and shared cultural regularities. Shared ethnic and cultural processes were not the only important factor: the absence of internal borders made regular and wide-scale contacts inside the region possible."[15] Her studies of the history of Kazakhstan and Central Asia led her to the conclusion that the region's history should be regarded as an integral process. There are numerous historical facts that confirm this. In the 16th century, for example, the Bukhara Khanate, under Abdallah Khan II of the Shaybanid dynasty, developed close ties with the Kazakh Khanate. Today these ties could be described as a strategic partnership—in 1575, the two states entered an "oath-bound union" and promised mutual military support, friendly relations, and wide trade contacts.[16]

Another Kazakh historian Zh.M. Tulibaeva has written about the interlaced roots of contemporary Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Two neighboring peoples maintained close economic and cultural ties during prolonged peaceful and military contacts. The Kazakhs, who made up part of the population of the Central Asian khanates, roamed about the vast deserts and semi-deserts between the mouth of Amu Darya, the banks of the Syr Darya, and in the area of Tashkent; they tilled vast expanses in the valleys of Zaravshan, Kashka Darya, Chirchik, and Angren.[17]

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[12] S. Kushkumbaev, op. cit., p. 138.

[13] Ibid., p. 141.

[14] M.Kh. Abuseitova, Zh.B. Abylhozhin, *et al*., *Istoria Kazakhstana i Tsentral'noy Azii,* Dayk Press, Almaty, 2001, p. 522.

[15] M. Abuseitova, "Razvitie istoricheskoy nauki i izmenenie interpretatsii istoricheskikh sobytiy v stranakh Tsentral'noy Azii posle obretenia nezavisimosti," *Materialy mezhdunarodnoy konferentsii: "Novaia istoria Tsentral'noy Azii. Pereotsenka istorii, sovremennye problemy i podkhody," Tashkent, 13-14 sentiabria 2004 g.,* Tashkent, 2004, p. 15.

[16] See: G. Sultonova, *Sviazi Bukharskogo khanstva s Kazakhskim i Iarkendskim khanstavami vo vtoroy polovine XVI veka,* Author's summary of a candidate thesis, Tashkent, 2005.

[17] See: Zh.M. Tulibaeva, *Kazakhstan i Bukharskoe khanstvo v XVIII-pervoy polovine XIX v.,* Dayk Press, Almaty, 2001.

M. Abuseitova has correctly pointed out: "The sovereignty of the Central Asian independent states widened the breach of the single cultural and historical space; this resulted in the mystification and ethnization of the cultural-historical heritage, specific features and exclusiveness were overstressed contrary to historical facts and objective reality."[18] It was mystification of the cultural-historical heritage that prompted the formula "Kazakhstan borders on Central Asia, but it is not a Central Asian country." In the final analysis, this road leads to the loss of national independence.

The term "independence" here is used as the antinomy of political, economic, etc. vulnerability. The period of independence has already demonstrated that Central Asia is very sensitive to many domestic and external threats and challenges. The sensitivity threshold is determined by the modality of the new geopolitical Big Game with possible favorable or unfavorable results. As long as the region remains geopolitically vulnerable the concepts of "independence" and "national self-identification" will remain crippled and will differ little from such vague terms as the "Soviet people" or "socialism," two most frequently used political and ideological terms of our recent past. The region's damaged geopolitical integrity and conservation of the present state of affairs will become the main stumbling block on the road toward the Central Asian countries' international/geopolitical role as subjects, and will therefore inadequately limit their independence.

Our esteemed Kazakh colleagues say: Our state "is strongly influenced by Europe and Western values." This is an even bigger mistake than the talk about the Eurasian nature of Kazakhstan widely shared by Kazakhstani political scientists. For example, President Nazarbaev, who has spent over 15 years at the helm, was nominated for another term. His first term was extended for a period equal to another term; therefore while in democratic countries 15 years would be regarded as three full presidential terms, in Kazakhstan they are counted as two terms. Nursultan Nazarbaev will run for another term, which will be legitimized in full accordance with his country's laws. No matter how successful the country's leader, this should not be used as a pretext for adjusting the immutable democratic principle of changing leaders when the time comes. The situation in Kazakhstan speaks of the undemocratic nature of its political system, which is not much different from the authoritarian regimes of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and their neighbors. Kazakhstan is a classical Asian/Central Asian country with no trace of the benevolent influence of Europe and Western values.

Senior Associate of the American Foreign Policy Council E. Wayne Merry described Kazakhstan's political system in the following words: "These examples of oil-rich, but probity-poor states demonstrate that money flow can prolong a 'Big Man' in power for years, but the regime will ultimately fail due to the corrosion of social peace and the inability of the ruling clique to keep a firm grip on political realities."[19]

Kazakhstan's fear of a Color Revolution similar to those that have already taken place in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan does nothing to bring it closer to European democracies.

Finally, the academic community believes that because of its nomadic culture, the Kazakh people are more democratic than their neighbors, the land tillers of Uzbekistan in particular. Kazakhstan is probably more democratic than, for example, Uzbekistan, but not because its people were nomads. The Kazakhs abandoned the nomadic way of life long ago, partly because of urbanization and industrialization. In fact, division according to the archaic "nomadic-settled" principle can be used to distinguish Kazakhs from the northern, non-nomadic, but more democratic peoples (of Russia, European countries, etc.).

[18] M. Abuseitova, op. cit., p. 16.

[19] E.W. Merry, "The Politics of Central Asia: National in Form, Soviet in Content," in: *In the Tracks of Tamerlane. Central Asia's Path to the 21st Century*, ed. by D. Burghart and T. Sabonis-Helf, National Defense University, Washington, D.C., 2004, p. 39.

From this it follows that the influence of Europe and European values in Kazakhstan is not greater than in other Central Asian countries.

I would like to pay attention to another facet of the same problem, related to how the national self-identification process is treated. There is a fairly popular opinion in Central Asia that throughout the period of independence, two *stans*—Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan—have been competing for regional leadership. This is not true.[20] At the same time, this says that Kazakhstan is undoubtedly part of Central Asia. There was no rivalry, strictly speaking Kazakhstan could not claim leadership; only Uzbekistan could play this role because of its geopolitical, economic, social, cultural, and historical parameters. Today, when Uzbekistan has sacrificed this role and its independence by inviting Russia to join CACO in May 2004 and signing a union treaty with it in October 2005, Kazakhstan could claim the leading role. Today, Kazakhstan is gradually developing into the region's true leader; it will have to shoulder the burden of historical and strategic responsibility for it. Instead of looking for a non-existent place in the Eurasian system, it should take care of *its* Central Asia and do its best to reintegrate it.

Therefore the question "To Be or Not to Be a *Stan*?" leads to the question of "Whether There Will Be *Stans* at All?"

The Missionary Nature of the Eurasian "Trio"

The "non-*stan*," or Eurasian idea became a doctrine in November 2003 when the International Institute of Contemporary Politics (Kazakhstan) published a report entitled *Kazakhstan, Rossia, Ukraina: liderskaia troika Evrazii*[21] (Kazakhstan, Russia, and Ukraine: Three Leaders of Eurasia). The paper primarily deserves the academic community's serious attention. Here I would like to refute some of its theses.

It says "stability in Eurasia and democracy across the post-Soviet expanse requires an efficient system of partnership and *a joint regional leadership of the three largest CIS democracies: Kazakhstan, Russia, and Ukraine* (italics mine.—*F.T.*)." The "triple alliance" is justified by the fact that "in the course of 12 years, from the moment they acquired their new statehood, the three countries performed a huge amount of work and covered long and very similar roads.

- They acquired a new infrastructure of state institutions.
- They created market economy institutions.
- The number of people fully adapted to the new conditions has increased considerably and continues to grow.
- Stable political conditions indispensable for economic growth cannot be achieved outside international legitimacy, which itself depends on democratic choice. It has become clear that it was this choice that made the Eurasian Trio the leader."

All this equally applies to other CIS countries—the above is not the exclusive achievement of Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan.

[20] For more on so-called Uzbek hegemonism, see, for example, F. Tolipov, "Certain Theoretical Aspects of Central Asian Geopolitics," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 6 (12), 2001.

[21] It can be found at the Institute's site [http://iimp.kz/index.php?action=show&art_id=150&from=5], 17 February, 2006.

The paper says that the three countries face similar tasks, namely:

- They need an efficient state system.
- They need a system for moving money from the raw-material to the high-tech economic sectors.
- They need better conditions for personnel rotation to move the new generation of managers into the leading positions.
- Illegal migration should be stemmed—this means that Kazakhstan should fortify its southern frontiers, while Russia should do the same in the Far East.
- The three countries should be integrated into the global economy under conditions conducive to higher living standards and stronger human rights and freedoms.
- Civil society should be developed to encourage greater activity among citizens and to form state institutions of a new type.

In fact, all the other CIS countries, not only the "privileged trio," face the same problems.

The paper says with a great deal of pomp: "The security of the post-Soviet expanse in the context of the new global challenges primarily depends on our three countries, international terrorism, drug trafficking, uncontrolled migration, and domestic political strife being the major threats. The CIS might become incorporated into the global instability zone. This is a real danger that should be averted.

"It is for our trio to shoulder the responsibility for stability and promote the values of the civilized world across the CIS. We should bring democracy and security to our closest neighbors." (Italics mine.—*F.T.*)

This brings to mind the claims of the United States and the West as a whole to the role of democratic missionaries condemned and rejected by practically all the post-Soviet states. The trio's missionary claims are no better. It would probably be more correct and much fairer if the civilized world itself undertook the task of promoting its values.

"The security of the post-Soviet expanse in the context of the new global challenges" depends on *all* the countries of this expanse rather than *primarily* on Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan. Do those who wrote the paper imagine that the "Trio" could ensure security in such places of the post-Soviet expanse as the Caucasus and Central Asia?

The authors go on to say: "We believe that in the current situation equal mutual exchange of accumulated experience, as well as mutual support on the key, breakthrough issues would be more adequate to the tasks of national strengthening than domination of one country. In the final analysis, there should emerge a situation in which each of the countries would be able to use its partners' strong sides to address its own tasks." This primitive formula has been elevated to a political innovation; meanwhile, it is applicable to all the CIS countries. Why is their mutual support impossible? This so-called doctrine was invented to conceal the CIS' chronic disease—its impotence. This is not all. The doctrine ignores another important feature of post-Soviet realities: all attempts at "deeper integration" of some of the post-Soviet countries fail in the absence of *all* the other countries. Deeper integration of the chosen or "democratic leaders" will push the others away from the newly created "trio" and widen the geopolitical gaps in the CIS territory, which is dangerous for the trio itself. In other words, integration/reintegration across the post-Soviet territory can either be achieved with the participation of all the CIS countries, or not be achieved at all. Therefore, the joint leadership doctrine is a false doctrine.

Here is another extract from the same document: "On the whole, the system of 'joint leadership' of the three countries should become an ideological center and a pillar of all the other integration processes across the CIS." The role of an ideological center and a pillar of post-Soviet integration/reintegration belongs to one state only—the Russian Federation. The former Soviet republics will close ranks around Russia, which in the past served as the core of the Soviet system and today remains the

center of the post-Soviet expanse. The outcome of the rivalry of the centripetal and centrifugal forces inside the CIS largely depends on Russia. The former may become stronger thanks to Russia's obvious democratic success; the latter, because of the Kremlin's revived imperial ambitions. It is too early to talk about democracy's obvious success in Russia. This is testified by the fact that Moscow extends its support to the Central Asian authoritarian regimes threatened by Color Revolutions and demonstrates complete indifference to the future of democracy in these countries. I have already written that it is too early to speak about Kazakhstan's democratic success.

Finally, the report contains the following "pacifying" phrase: "Interaction of the 'trio' contradicts neither the European factor, nor the acting state organizations—the CIS and EurAsEC." The "triple union" doctrine, however, contradicts the geopolitical principles governing the transformation of the post-Soviet expanse, especially the conception (or doctrine) of the Central Asian independent alliance.

The paper's authors became lost in their own assertions when they said that the partner relationships within the "Eurasian Trio" would fortify their position when talking to united Europe. It is not clear why they need a stronger position at the talks with the EU, which is not designed to conquer or subjugate them or infringe on their sovereignty. The authors are looking for something with which to replace Kazakhstan's geopolitical insolvency (in fact, this is not limited to Kazakhstan and applies to all the post-Soviet states) with an even less geopolitically insolvent Eurasian conception. The Central Asian doctrine, which the Kazakhstani Eurasians prefer to ignore, is the only solvent geopolitical doctrine for Kazakhstan.

Conclusion

I have written above that *stan*-ism is a political rather than a philological issue. From the very first days of their independence, the local countries have been involved in a political experiment called Central Asian Cooperation/Central Asian Economic Community/ Central Asian Cooperation Organization. The integration project was put on the agenda in the most natural way and without any (external or domestic) pressure from the very beginning, back in 1991.

Politicians and analysts are erroneously convinced that the Central Asian states are different not only in the sociopolitical and economic, but also in the cultural respect, therefore strategic landmarks should be sought outside the region. We also might suggest with an ironic smile that Uzbekistan should also believe that its *stan* sounds derogative. Its leaders, at least, describe the U.S., EU, Japan, and Russia as their strategic landmarks. This is nothing but irony: when talking about faraway partners, the politicians and academics of Uzbekistan are more concerned with Central Asian communality rather than with its disunity.

It is regrettable that the Kazakh Eurasianists feel uncomfortable with the *-stan* suffix. It is even more regrettable that they look to faraway countries as their historical landmarks and tend to forget that Central Asia is their main historical landmark. This should become the meaning of what science calls the "big strategy" of any state, since Central Asia is the beginning and end of their common history. The word "Motherland" sounds the same in all local languages: Otan in Kazakh, Vatan in Uzbek, Ata-meken in Kyrgyz, and Vatan in Tajik and in Turkmen.

I would like to call on Kazakhstan and all the other regional republics which are still not former Central Asian countries to come back to Central Asia, come back to your Motherland.

Stay with us—be a *stan*.

RUSSIAN STRATEGY IN CENTRAL ASIA

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The mass unrest in Kyrgyzstan which escalated into an anti-government coup, the events in the Uzbek city of Andijan, and the presidential election in Kazakhstan, which also took place in 2005, drew the attention of the world community to the Central Asian countries. Whereby the situation in this section of the "arc of instability," which encompasses the south of the Russian Federation, is arousing very justifiable concern among Russians. After all, the matter does not concern some abstract corner of the earth, but a significant part of the former Soviet Union, four million square kilometers in area and with a population of more than 50 million people (seven million of whom are Russian-speaking citizens). Historical development and long years of coexistence with the peoples of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan have made Russia an interested party in their fates. This is shown by the special demands of official Moscow's foreign policy in Central Asia and gives rise to the need for its rapid and targeted adjustment.

Conceptually, Russia's strategy in the region is aimed at achieving the strategic goals envisaged in the foreign policy conception approved by the country's president. The following tasks are of paramount importance:

— ensuring that alternative security systems are not created in Central Asia without the Russian Federation's participation, and counteracting attempts by third countries to reinforce their military presence in this region;

— expanding Russian capital in the key branches of the economy of the region's republics, and ensuring the unhindered functioning of their transportation corridors and distribution lines, including those relating to fuel and energy;

— providing universal protection of the rights and interests of Russian citizens and compatriots, and strengthening the status of the Russian language and culture of Russia's nationalities;

— consolidating multilateral structures with the participation of the Russian Federation, and strengthening their key significance in ensuring stability and security on the state's southern borders.

When carrying out the designated tasks, not only must the objective difficulties created by globalization be dealt with, but also problems generated by local development. Globalization has reopened this region, since for several centuries it was closed off to the rest of the world by Afghanistan, Iran, China, and Russia. New actors have appeared with significant financial and military-political potential. As for the local specifics, their most distinguishing feature is monopolization of power by a narrow circle of people, the family-clan composition of the ruling elite, and the impetuous striving for a leader personality cult.

Russia's foreign policy efforts in Central Asia are concentrated in three main areas: bilateral cooperation, multilateral interaction on security problems, and economic integration.

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Russia's main military-political and economic partner in the region is Kazakhstan. The strategic nature of their relations is determined by its geopolitical position, immense economic and raw material potential, the significance for Russia of the unique Baikonur space-launch complex, and the presence of a more than 4-million-strong Russian diaspora in the country. Bilateral relations are characterized by active multifaceted cooperation and a stable contractual-legal base reinforced by more than 270 signed treaties and agreements. The main documents are the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance signed on 25 May, 1992 and the Declaration on Eternal Friendship and Alliance signed on 6 July, 1998.

Intensive political contacts are maintained at the highest level. For example, on 9-10 January, 2004, Russian President Vladimir Putin made an official visit to Kazakhstan, and on 17-19 January, 2005, Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbaev made a similar visit to Russia. At the beginning of 2006, Vladimir Putin took part in Nursultan Nazarbaev's inauguration and signed a Treaty on the State Border between the Russian Federation and Republic of Kazakhstan on 18 January.

In Russia's foreign economic relations with the CIS republics, Kazakhstan occupies third place after Belarus and Ukraine, and in Russia's total trade turnover with the Commonwealth states, this republic's share amounts to 15%. Russia's percentage in goods exchange transactions with Kazakhstan is 24.7%, whereby in the structure of Russian export, the leading place is occupied by production of the fuel and energy complex and machine-building. Interregional ties play a significant role in the development of bilateral economic cooperation. Border trade accounts for more than 60% of the total mutual trade turnover.

A key area of cooperation is the fuel and energy complex, including in power engineering (the energy systems of these states operate under parallel conditions), atomic power engineering (joint development of uranium deposits in Kazakhstan), the oil and gas industry (the transit of oil for export through Russia, the purchase and marketing of Kazakhstani natural gas for delivery to the markets of third countries, and the implementation of joint projects for developing hydrocarbon resources of the northern Caspian). Deliveries of raw materials to Russia have increased, including energy resources, ferrous metals, and agricultural products. Eighty to ninety-five percent of the coal, metal ores and concentrates, gas condensate, synthetic corundum, ball bearings, polymers, plastics, and textiles exported by Kazakhstan are sent to Russian, as well as 40-60% of the products from the non-organic chemical industry, machine-building complex, rubber, and wool. The export of grain has significantly risen by more than 700,000 tons. In 2003, Kazakhstan turned from an importer into a supplier of electric power to Russia (4 billion kWt/h), the cost price of which is twice as low as the Russian.

Cooperation is successfully developing in investments. As of January 2006, more than 1,200 enterprises with a share of Russian capital were operating in Kazakhstan. The joint company ZAO KazRosGaz founded in 2000 with the participation of Russia's Gazprom Company is actively developing its activity. The creation of a joint venture with Russia's Joint Energy Systems (RAO "EES Rossii") is being completed, which will work on the basis of the Ekibastuz Hydroelectric Power Plant-2. Bashneft, which has become the second Russian company after LUKoil in Kazakhstan's oil and gas sector, is carrying out drilling work in the south of the Aktiubinsk Region. Russian car factories are also noticeably stepping up their activity, whereby not only in the export of cars, but also in the expansion of assembly production at joint ventures created in Kazakhstan. A 2.6 billion dollar investment project of the Caspian Pipeline Consortium has been implemented.

Russia is using the Baikonur space-launch complex located in Kazakhstan, the rental term of which has been extended until 2050. On the basis of bilateral intergovernmental agreements signed in December 2004 and January 2005, a space missile complex called Baiterek is being created at this

spaceport and work is being carried out to create and launch Kazakhstan's KAZSAT communication and broadcasting satellite.

Delimitation of common borders of more than 7,500 km in length has been completed, and on 18 January, 2005, the presidents of both countries signed a Treaty on the Russian-Kazakhstan State Border in Moscow.

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As for partnership with Kyrgyzstan, its significance from Russia's viewpoint is defined by this state's geopolitical status in a region which is strategically important for the Russian Federation and has a large Russian-speaking population (approximately 550,000 people, 15,000 of whom are Russian citizens). The country's president, Kurmanbek Bakiev, is set for further strengthening bilateral relations, including in the military-political, economic, humanitarian, and other spheres, as well as for ensuring the rights of the Russian-speaking population. He clearly emphasized these intentions during meetings with Vladimir Putin in May in Moscow and in July 2005 in Astana. And on 4-5 September of the same year, Kurmanbek Bakiev made a working visit to Moscow, on the outcome of which a joint program statement by the Russian and Kyrgyzstan presidents was adopted. A corresponding contractual and legal base is being consistently formed. Under the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance of 10 June, 1992, more than 100 agreements were signed regulating specific areas of bilateral cooperation.

In 2005, the volume of bilateral trade reached 423,79 million dollars, which is 35% more than in 2004, although its commodity structure did not significantly change. The main articles of Kyrgyz export to the Russian Federation are cotton, tobacco, clothing, glass, sugar, and several types of electric equipment. What is more, at the end of 2003, deliveries of electric power began. The predominant import items from Russia are petroleum products, ferrous metals, lumber, paper, and transportation equipment. An important positive aspect is the gradual expansion of direct commercial ties at the interregional level, primarily with the participation of regions of the Urals and Siberia. Mutual trade is unable to develop more dynamically due to the low solvency of Kyrgyz economic entities, the underdevelopment of payment relations, differences in the regulatory-legal base of these countries regarding taxation, foreign trade activity, as well as in the sphere of financial-credit and fiscal policy, and reorientation of some of Kyrgyzstan's export, such as cotton and rare-earth metals, to other markets.

On a bilateral foundation and within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), military and military-technical cooperation is developing steadily, including with respect to the infrastructure and development of the Russian military base in Kant—the aviation component of the CSTO Rapid Reaction Collective Forces in the Central Asian vector. On 11 August, 2005, an intergovernmental agreement on the status and conditions for the presence of the Russian aviation base in Kyrgyzstan came into force.

Official Bishkek is confirming its interest in expanding cooperation in education, culture, and science. One of the most important factors of the Russian cultural-humanitarian presence in the republic is the Kyrgyz-Russian (Slavic) university which opened in 1993.

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On 25 May, 1993, Russia and Tajikistan signed a Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance. What is more, over 100 bilateral interstate, intergovernmental, and interdepartmental

agreements have been signed regulating cooperation in the political, economic, military, humanitarian, and other spheres.

The Russian Federation is one of Tajikistan's main trade partners. It accounts for 13.7% of the republic's entire foreign trade turnover. The main problems deterring growth in trade turnover between these countries are difficulties with the transportation of freight across the border and through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The numerous customs barriers and high transportation fees are leading to a significant increase in price of the products being delivered, and in some cases are even making traditional goods exchange economically inexpedient. Along with this, a serious hindrance is the low solvency of the economic entities of both sides, the debts between them, the non-streamlined nature of the financial support system of transactions and treaties, and the underdevelopment of the local banking sphere.

Until Russian President Vladimir Putin made an official visit to Dushanbe on 16-17 October, 2004, Russia essentially did not show any interest in the privatization projects in Tajikistan and was unwilling to create joint ventures. But during this visit, intergovernmental agreements were signed on early settlement by Tajikistan of its debt to Russia by transferring the control systems of the Nurek space area of 250 million dollars to the Russian Federation and investment of the rest of the debt of 50 million dollars in construction of the Sangtudinskaia Hydropower Plant-1. An agreement was also signed on the share of Russia's Joint Energy Systems in this process (the total investments by the Russian side amounted to 250 million dollars). In addition to this, the Tajikistan government and the Russian Aluminum Company signed an agreement on long-term cooperation envisaging this company's participation in the projects to finish building the Rogunskaia Hydropower Plant costing 550 million dollars (the ceremony to launch this work was held in Rogun on 26 September, 2005), to build a new and also modernize an active aluminum plant costing 600 million and 150 million dollars, respectively, and in other areas. In 2005, Russia's Joint Energy Systems and the Tajikistan Ministry of Power Engineering coordinated a plan-schedule for building the Sangtudinskaia Hydropower Plant to be carried out in four years. For this purpose, a joint Sangtudinskaia Hydropower Plant-1 joint venture was created. It was founded by ZAO Inter Russia's Joint Energy Systems with 75% of the shares in the authorized capital and the Tajikistan Ministry of Power Engineering with 25% of the shares. On 15 April, 2005, the official opening of the Sangtudinskaia Hydropower Plant-1 construction site took place. All in all, by the end of 2005, 55 joint Russian-Tajik enterprises were already operating in the republic, and the total amount of Russian investments is to be brought up to 2 billion dollars.

What is more, in May 2003, the Tajikistan government and Russia's Gazprom signed an Agreement on Strategic Cooperation which envisages the organization of geological survey and drilling work at Tajikistan's gas-bearing fields, the development and operation of its fields of blue fuel, and the construction of new and reconstruction of active pipelines. And in December 2004, a Program of Joint Action in the oil and gas industry was signed, according to which as early as 2005, both sides began preparing a feasibility report on survey and research work in the promising gas-bearing areas of Sargazon, Rengan, Sari-Kamysh, and Ialgimzak. At the beginning of 2004, the Resonance enterprise in Ekaterinburg signed a statement on the creation of the OOO Kanimansur Joint-Stock Company for refining "tails" of the Adrasmansky Mining and Enrichment Combine and the Western Kanimansur field for extracting silver and rare-earth metals. The Russian side is willing to invest 3 million dollars in these endeavors.

The Intergovernmental Commission for Economic Cooperation (ICEC) was created which envisages, among its priorities, cooperation in electric power and development of Tajikistan's natural resources. A bilateral working group was formed to analyze questions relating to finishing the construction of the Vakhsh cascade of hydropower stations, and prospects for creating joint ventures and financial-industrial groups on the basis of the Tajik Vostokredmet complex. What is more, within the

framework of the ICEC, sub-commissions on military-technical and interregional cooperation and on interaction in power engineering were formed. The draft of an agreement prepared as early as 2000 on further development of relations between the Russian Federation constituents and administrative-territorial units of Tajikistan is being reviewed, in which the main principles of interregional contacts are envisaged.

On 6 April, 2005, Tajikistan President Emamoli Rakhmonov made a working visit to Russia. During his talks with Vladimir Putin, the prospects for development of trade and economic relations, cooperation in power engineering, and interaction in the border area were discussed. And on 6 October of the same year, both presidents ceremoniously opened the Tajikistan Culture Days in the Russian Federation in Moscow.

Cooperation is also developing in the military sphere. After the interstate treaty of 16 April, 1999 came into force, the Russian 201st Motorized Rifle Division deployed in Tajikistan was transformed into a Russian Federation military base. And in the summer of 2005, Russian border guards transferred responsibility for protecting the Afghan section of the republic's state borders to the Committee for Protection of the State Border under the Tajikistan Government.

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Based on the current special features of its development, Turkmenistan is manifestly distancing itself from Russia by limiting bilateral cooperation to the necessary minimum level for its economy. The country's leadership is still relating with mistrust to everything Russian, believing that the actions of the Russian Federation are not promoting strengthening of the personal power regime, which is obviously the most important thing for official Ashghabad. The presidents of both states discussed the prospects for expanding relations between the two countries during Saparmurat Niyazov's visit to Moscow on 21-22 January, 2006, but there have been no practical shifts so far.

Among the more than 90 interstate, intergovernmental, and interdepartmental documents regulating bilateral interaction, agreements in the fuel and energy sphere dominate. The main one is the Agreement on Cooperation in the Gas Industry of April 2003 which envisages an increase in the export of Turkmen gas to Russia until 2028 and the implementation of joint projects in this sphere. In compliance with the agreement, 4.850 billion cubic meters of blue fuel were delivered to Russia in 2004. In the future, its deliveries are supposed to increase by 70-80 billion cubic meters every year.

After the slight upswing noted between 2003 and the beginning of 2005 generated by the implementation of projects in the gas sector, economic relations have been declining, with the exception of a contract costing 13 million dollars for modernization by St. Petersburg's OAO Power Machinery of the energy equipment at the Mary Hydroelectric Power Plant. This work has already begun. Other large-scale initiatives of Russian business have ground to a halt. For example, referring to insufficient funds, Ashghabad has put off indefinitely a contract entered with OAO Vyborgskiy Ship-Building Plant to build the Ekerem port on the Caspian, although the Russian company drew up and presented all the project documents to the customers. The question of the Turkmen side paying its debts to several Russian companies for goods and services delivered has still not been resolved. What is more, the republic has not responded to the proposal by Russia's economic entities on mutually advantageous partnership. All the accumulated problems have led to a decrease in bilateral trade turnover. In 2005, it amounted to 375.5 million dollars, which is 3.5% less than in 2004.

Negative phenomena are becoming aggravated in Turkmenistan's economy and finances, the situation in these spheres totally depends on the export of energy resources. According to the evalua-

tions of foreign experts, more than 50% of the country's population lives below the poverty line, unemployment reaches 30%, and in the unfavorable northern and northeastern regions to 70%. Against this background, social apathy is rising, and drug addiction, alcoholism, crime (primarily among young people), and infectious diseases are becoming increasingly widespread.

But the most distressing problem is the status of Russian-speaking citizens in Turkmenistan. And although the republic's president, Saparmurat Niyazov, halted implementation of a decree on the mandatory choice of one citizenship, either Russian or Turkmen, official Ashghabad is delaying making a decision on continuing the talks with Russia on this topic.

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Recently, relations have been successfully developing between Russia and Uzbekistan. For example, during Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov's working visit to the Russian Federation in June 2005, questions were discussed regarding the fight against international terrorism, the situation in Central Asia aroused by the May events in Andijan, and the current state and prospects for trade and economic cooperation, primarily in the fuel and energy complex. And during Islam Karimov's visit to Moscow in November of the same year, a Treaty was signed on alliance relations between Russia and Uzbekistan.

The Russian Federation, which accounts for approximately 19% of Uzbekistan's foreign trade volume, is its most important economic trade partner. Between January and June 2005, the volume of bilateral trade reached 806 million dollars (39.2% higher than the indices for the same period in 2004). Bilateral relations are regulated by approximately 150 treaties and agreements, including the Treaty on Intensifying Economic Relations for 1998-2007. An intergovernmental commission for cooperation in this sphere has been created, the eighth meeting of which was held in October 2005. But due to the changing circumstances, some of these documents are no longer pertinent. In the context of bilateral cooperation, official Moscow is striving to fill the Treaty on Strategic Partnership between the Russian Federation and Republic of Uzbekistan of 16 June, 2004 with real content, as well as ensure efficient cooperation in such areas as defense, security, and others.

Russian Federation companies are showing more interest in investing in the Uzbekistan economy. For example, as early as December 2002, Russia's Gazprom and the Uzbekneftegaz Company entered an Agreement on Strategic Cooperation. And in the near future, there are plans to sign a production sharing agreement (PSA) which envisages producing 5 billion cubic meters of gas a year at the fields in the republic's Ustiurt Region. Russia's OOO Tekhnik acquired 92% of the shares in the Uzbek Podshipnik Company. In April 2004, the Uzbekistan government and Uzgushtsutsanoat Association signed a memorandum with Russia's OAO Wimm-Bill-Dann (WBD) on attracting investments into OAO Toshkent sut (the Tashkent Dairy Combine). WBD is investing 7.3 million dollars in its modernization, which is to be completed in 2008. In August of the same year, OAO Moscow Telephone Network acquired 74% of the shares in the Uzdunrobit Company, the leading operator on Uzbekistan's mobile phone market with a total transaction sum of 121 million dollars.

In June 2004, a consortium of investors, of which OAO LUKoil and the Uzbekneftegaz Petrochemical Concern are members with a share of 90% and 10%, respectively, signed a PSA with the Uzbekistan government for the development of a group of gas fields, Kandym-Khauzak-Shady. The term of this document is 35 years, the total amount of investments will reach approximately 1 billion dollars and the annual production volume will up as much as 9 billion cubic meters. (In November of the same year, an act was signed on its entry into legal force.)

As of October 2005, 360 enterprises with a share of Russian capital are operating in Uzbekistan, and the representative offices of 66 Russian companies have been accredited, including Zarubezhneftegaz, LUKoil, Aeroflot, Transaero, and others. And several branches of Uzbek banks have opened in Russia, while more than 100 enterprises are operating, including around 70 joint ventures created with Uzbek representatives.

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One of the most important areas in official Moscow's strategy in Central Asia is ensuring national security, which is due to the unprotected state of Russia's southern borders under conditions of the growing transit of drugs from Afghanistan to the CIS republics, to Russia itself, and on to Europe. Along with the bilateral format, cooperation in these areas is also being carried out within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty (CST) signed on 15 May, 1992 in Tashkent by the heads of six CIS states: Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. In September 1993, Azerbaijan joined this treaty, and in December of the same year, Georgia and Belarus signed on. But in April 1999, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Georgia did not sign the statement on its extension, each stating its own reasons for this refusal.

In May 2002, the CST was transformed into the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), on 7 October of the same year, a Charter and Agreement on the Legal Status of the CSTO were signed, then all the member states ratified them and on 18 September, 2003, these documents came into force. The CSTO is helping Russia to coordinate collective measures in the fight against international terrorism, the illicit circulation of drugs and weapons, organized crime, illegal migration, and other threats to national security in Central Asia. In order to carry out these tasks, meetings of working groups and consultations of experts are regularly held to assess and analyze the situation in the CSTO's zone of responsibility.

An important step in developing cooperation in the fight against terrorism was the ratification in May 2001 of basic legal documents on the creation of a Rapid Reaction Collective Force Group (RRCFG) of the Central Asian Collective Security Region, their composition and deployment, formation, and functioning procedure. In compliance with the mentioned documents, in the summer of the same year, these subdivisions were formed. They have 1,600 members, one battalion each from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan, a commander has been appointed and a Permanent Operations Group of the RRCFG Headquarters has been created, which is deployed in Bishkek. In 2004, a decision was made on increasing the size of the RRCFG —Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia are to send another battalion each to swell the ranks, and Tajikistan will send two. But prior to this, on 23 October, 2003, an official opening ceremony of the Russian air base in Kant, Kyrgyzstan, took place, which reinforced the aviation component of the RRCFG.

Nevertheless, Russia's cooperation with the Central Asian states in security is developing under difficult conditions. An extremely serious problem in this area is achieving unity among the states of the region themselves. This is aggravated by their differences regarding definition of state borders and unresolved problems relating to the national minorities densely populating their territories who are the citizens of neighboring states. The existence of armed NATO forces in these states is also having a negative effect on the situation in the region. These include the U.S. military bases deployed in Dushanbe and Kulob in Tajikistan and in Manas in Kyrgyzstan. There is a Bundeswehr air base in Termez in Uzbekistan, the infrastructure of which regularly uses airplanes of the Dutch, Belgian, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, British, French, and Greek armed forces to transport servicemen and freight to Kabul.

During her trips around the Central Asian countries, U.S. State Secretary Condoleezza Rice confirmed the White House's intention not to leave this strategically important region when she spoke at the Gumilev Eurasian University in Astana, Kazakhstan on 3 October 2005. What is more, she stressed that the United States is willing to help the countries extricate themselves from regional self-isolation by integrating into world affairs, thus ensuring the possibility of drawing up their own political and economic strategy independently and freely, without a backward glance. In her opinion, it would be ideal to direct integration processes toward South Asia, include Afghanistan and Pakistan in them, and build a bridge over the Caspian and Southern Caucasus with direct access to Western Europe. In this event, Central Asia, according to her, could become a true crossroads of strategic commodity and financial flows and an economic magnet. Condoleezza Rice also spoke about retaining America's presence, including military, in the region on 11 October in Bishkek. In so doing, she insisted that a "race of interests" should not be set up among the different countries in Central Asia, where there should be enough room for everyone.

After the Americans withdrew their military contingent from the air base in Khanabad in November 2005 at Tashkent's request, the military base in Manas, Kyrgyzstan, occupied the leading place in the U.S.'s Central Asian group, where 3,000 of its soldiers and military hardware are stationed. A large amount of technical airfield, navigation, reconnaissance, and search-and-rescue equipment has been moved there, including helicopters; military cargo planes, electronic warfare planes and unmanned reconnaissance airplanes are located at the rented airfields. From the operative and strategic viewpoint, these facilities make it possible to control the entire region, including Afghanistan's air space, as far as the Indian-Pakistani border. The western regions of China and Kazakhstan's largest cities are also in the target range of U.S. fighter planes.

During the above-mentioned visit, Condoleezza Rice insistently emphasized that the U.S. bases in Central Asia are control points for the coalition forces, by means of which it is possible not only to ensure participation in the Afghan operation, but also resolve other questions, for example, in combating the consequences of natural disasters, and rendering medical and other humanitarian assistance. She defined the time the White House's military contingents would remain in the region very vaguely—until the end of the operation. But other official U.S. representatives have repeatedly admitted that Washington does not intend to withdraw from Central Asia, since it must increase its constant support of democratic institutions, local nongovernmental organizations, and independent mass media.

Official Moscow's stance regarding the U.S. military presence in Central Asia is ambiguous. Of course, Russia does not welcome the prolonged presence of NATO military contingents in a zone of its strategically important interests with respect to ensuring the Russian Federation's national security. Nevertheless, considering the threat of terrorism coming from Afghanistan as the most dangerous, the Kremlin believes that it and the White House have common goals in the region, and there is a sufficiently broad field of interaction with the Central Asian countries and other states of the international antiterrorist coalition for reaching them. Therefore, to intercept the drug threat coming from Afghanistan, Russia is interested in maintaining direct working contacts with NATO in this region. This kind of cooperation promotes the fight against terrorism, the spread in weapons of mass destruction, and drug trafficking.

What is more, according to Russia, the most promising area for strengthening security in Central Asia is multifaceted economic relations and the creation of a regional common market capable of putting an end to mass poverty. Carrying out these vitally important tasks will help to form effective democracy in the Central Asian states, as well as make a significant contribution to ensuring their civilized development. The local elite welcomes this policy, at least in words. But the implementation of integration projects is being detained by the above-mentioned struggle for leadership in the region between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, rivalry among the family clans in essentially every Central Asian state, and several other reasons. In this respect, it should be noted that until recently two very similar

structures functioned in the region—the Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO) and the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC). Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, without Russia, belonged to the first, and the same states (apart from Uzbekistan), Belarus, and Russia were members of the second.

In order to avoid this extremely expensive duplication, Russia entered the CACO in October 2004 and actively worked on specific proposals to unify the integration process. What is more, an analysis of the region's economic problems confirmed that not one of the major projects drawn up via the CACO—hydroelectric, transportation, food, and so on—could be put into practice. First of all, there are no mechanisms in the Organization for executing the adopted decisions, and second, implementation of these tasks is being hindered by the already mentioned struggle between the Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan presidents for supremacy in the region. In order to breathe life into the CACO projects, the Russian Federation suggested resolving the problem of hydroelectric regulation as the first step by creating a joint working group with the EurAsEC for drawing up a coordinated mechanism for monitoring the efficient use and development of the resources of the Syr Darya and Amu Darya river basins. What is more, even prior to this, on the basis of decisions adopted in April 2003 on joint measures to build hydroelectric facilities in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, the heads of the EurAsEC states coordinated questions of joint financing of this work—building the Sangtudinskaia and Rogunskaia hydropower plants in Tajikistan, and the Kambaratinskaia Hydropower Plant-1 and Hydropower Plant-2 in Kyrgyzstan.

Along with this, Russia proposed eliminating duplicated functions in other areas of the CACO's activity. A logical conclusion to this RF policy was the initiative on uniting this organization with the EurAsEC put forward by Russian President Vladimir Putin at the CACO summit on 6 October, 2005 in St. Petersburg. Incidentally, the participants in the summit unanimously approved this proposal. And at the next meeting of the heads of EurAsEC states on 25 January, 2006 in St. Petersburg, all the necessary formalities were coordinated. They primarily concerned Uzbekistan, since the other CACO participants are already EurAsEC members. In this way, a common international regional economic organization was created of which Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan are now members, with Ukraine, Moldova, and Armenia assuming the status of observers. This move should promote a revival in cooperation among the economic entities of Central Asia. In recent years, a free trade zone, without exemptions, has been created in the EurAsEC. With the formation of the Customs Union, an agreement is being carried out on unified measures of non-tariff regulation, and several international legal acts have been adopted aimed at conducting a coordinated customs policy and forming a common customs territory. The work of the EurAsEC is being carried out within the framework of the Priority Areas of EurAsEC Development for 2003-2006 and Subsequent Years approved by the heads of the member states. A schedule indicating the specific time limits for implementing the planned measures is appended to this document.

What is more, Russia and the Central Asian states are continuing to focus particular attention on further strengthening relations within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), to which Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan belong. Its growing authority, due to practical cooperation in trade and economic, scientific-technical, humanitarian and other spheres, has drawn the attention of several other major Asian states. In particular, India, Iran, Mongolia, and Pakistan obtained the status of observers in the SCO in 2005.

* * *

Implementation of the Central Asian vector of Russia's foreign policy largely depends on the extent to which official Moscow is capable of helping its partners efficiently resolve their economic

problems. As we have already noted, the most important ones are as follows: hydroelectric, transportation, food, unemployment, migration, ensuring national security (fighting crime, the drug threat, and terrorism), humanitarian (including secular education), and so on.

Based on the new geopolitical and geo-economic realities in the region and the shortage of resources, Russia must clarify its goals in it by adjusting its long-term strategy of action and the priorities for carrying it out. In so doing, the growing differentiation of the Central Asian republics should be kept in mind, as well as the potential conflicts in interests between the Russian Federation and other economic and political players, particularly the U.S., European Union countries, and China. The main format for implementing the Kremlin's strategy will apparently continue to be bilateral cooperation. Its goal is to activate economic relations in different forms, bilateral and multilateral, and at different levels, government and business. It also aims to gradually increase the degree of mutual dependence of economic structures, which will make it possible to create favorable prerequisites for transferring later on to closer integration forms of economic relations. Along with this, it is necessary to encourage border and interregional contacts, create joint ventures, and involve Russian private capital in carrying out pilot projects in Central Asia. With respect to certain commodities, primarily fuel and energy, it is expedient to consolidate positions on the foreign markets, reinforcing this process with corresponding interstate and intergovernmental agreements stipulating a special mechanism for production cooperation, such as privileged delivery conditions for cooperation production. And relations with partners should be built on mutual openness and willingness to take each other's interests into account.

In the multilateral format, the goal of Russian strategy should become the formation with participation of the Russian Federation of a regional economic group, and in the most desirable final version, the creation of the confederation on the basis of an economic and currency alliance, along the lines of the European Union, for which it is necessary to ensure more efficient participation of the Central Asian states in integration processes within the EurAsEC and the CSTO.

A significant, but still untapped, reserve of Russian foreign policy in Central Asia is the human rights sphere. Its potential can be realized by targeted financing of the nongovernmental institutions of a civil society advocating a real advance in democracy in the region and the protection of human rights. When carrying out these tasks, it is expedient, following the example of the U.S. and several EU countries, to create a special fund by involving federal budget resources to support the development of democracy and strengthen the sovereignty and independence of the CIS states, as well as several public funds which would finance work with the states of the region in the human rights sphere. Resource repletion of foreign policy in this area would make it possible to protect the rights and interests of Russian compatriots, and strengthen Russia's linguistic, educational, cultural, and information presence.

In relations with other economic and political players, particularly the U.S., the European Union countries, and China, it is important to follow a rational and clear foreign policy in order to prevent Central Asia from turning into a new battle field. And the most dangerous scenario of development for Russia is destabilization, the collapse of the current secular regimes in the region's republics, new interstate conflicts on their territory, and the rise to power of regional extremists.

RUSSIA'S POLITICS IN THE NORTHERN CAUCASUS: SYSTEMIC CRISIS AND HOW TO OVERCOME IT

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Today, the social and political situation in the Russian Northern Caucasus is becoming increasingly unstable. It is no longer the problem of a gradually rising number of terrorist and other extremist acts and radical political initiatives—it is a widespread systemic crisis of Russia's North Caucasian policy and its key elements (administration, appointments, and ideology). In the absence of anti-crisis measures, the continuing crisis trends are fraught with unpredictable results.

It would be methodologically wrong, though, to look at the region as the "breeding soil" of terrorism and extremism. The North Caucasian situation not only reflects the problems of Russia's domestic policies and its "ailments"—it makes them even worse. The re-division of property is accompanied by assassination of the losers; the power struggle goes hand in hand with ethnic and religious conflicts; and the privatization of power is tinged with clan and tribal hues.

Conflicts Reloaded

In 2005, several local ethnic conflicts (believed to be frozen since the mid-1990s) were reloaded. The Battle of Borozdinovskaia, in the course of which the Iamadaev brothers "mopped up" a village populated by ethnic Daghestanis, worsened the already bad relations between the Chechens and Daghestanis. The imminent reform of local self-administration caused another upsurge of ethnic tension between the Ossets and Ingushes in the Prigorodniy District, since one of the conflicting sides (the Ingushes) was convinced that its ethnic interests were endangered. The contested Prigorodniy District claimed by North Ossetia and Ingushetia united the anti-Ziazikov (read: anti-Kremlin) opposition in Ingushetia. In 2005, it tried to launch a regional "color revolution" in Nazran, but this attempt failed.

The far from friendly relations between the Ossets and Ingushes caused another round of the "arms race" in the Caucasus. In September 2005, Minister of Internal Affairs of North Ossetia Sergey Arenin suggested that civilians should be armed and united into groups to protect themselves and, as the minister put it, "people's squads" armed with hunting rifles would exercise public control over the law enforcement bodies; they were also expected to help prevent ethnic conflicts. The neighbors did not like it: Musa Apiev, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of Ingushetia, dismissed the idea as "doubtful" and said quite rightly that the civilians should be disarmed rather than en-

couraged to take up weapons. At the same time, Kazbek Sultygov, chairman of the Republican Committee for Refugees, wrote to President Putin suggesting that direct federal rule be introduced in the Prigorodniy District; by way of explanation he added that the Osset leaders were turning a blind eye to the mass illegal actions against the Ingushes. The North Ossetia leaders, in turn, submitted a report about the crimes committed by ethnic Ingushes in their republic. The Center preferred to let the events take their own course. It was not the Center's firm and principled position that softened the North Ossetian minister's initiative. Today, the Chermen checkpoint on the administrative border between North Ossetia and Ingushetia looks more like a fortress on a state border. However, the leaders of the single country to which both republics belong are painstakingly avoiding any political and legal assessments of the armed conflict between the Ossets and Ingushes which dates back to October 1992.

In March-April 2005, the "Circassian world" promptly closed ranks in response to the official statements about a possible unification of the Republic of Adigey and the Krasnodar Territory. In late May and early June 2005, tension between the Kabardins and Balkars grew worse under the pressure of the administrative-territorial changes in the Elbrus area. Until that time, Kabardino-Balkaria was the most peaceful among the North Caucasian republics—today it has become another terrorist area. Its terrorism did not arrive from Chechnia and Daghestan: jamaat Iarmuk exploits Islamic slogans together with ethnic (Balkar) ideas. The fragile stability maintained by late president of Kabardino-Balkaria Valery Kokov's political will may disintegrate with the unpredictable results after his retirement and death. It should also be noted that at one time the late president merely froze, but did not resolve the ethnic and political opposition between the two peoples; he equally failed to find an adequate answer to the radical Islamic challenges. In Karachaevo-Cherkessia, too, the revived ethnic factor brought to mind the early 1990s: the local Abazins and Nogais want ethnic districts of their own. This means that for the first time after the 1999 presidential campaign political apartheid has been revived.

The spring and summer of 2005 saw a series of ethnic clashes in the "Russian South." In March, leaders of the "new Cossacks" organized a series of Armenian pogroms in Novorossiisk; in August, two conflicts flared up one after another—between Chechens and Cossacks in the Remontnoe District (Rostov Region) and between Chechens and Kalmyks in the village of Iandyki (Liman District, Astrakhan Region). Both the regional and federal powers made the same mistake while trying to settle the conflicts: they demonstrated that they preferred to play down the ethnic side and dismiss the conflicts as banal everyday disagreements. The regional leaders, for their part, naturally wanted to diminish the real dimensions of what had happened, they entrusted conflict settlement to bureaucrats of the middle level in order to submit moderately optimistic reports.

The main problem is that the conflicts in the Don, Kuban, and Stavropol areas are growing fiercer and crueler with the increasingly radical demands. Federal power has obviously underestimated the ethnic conflict between the "new Cossacks" movement and the Meskhetian Turks, which, in the summer of 2004, prompted residents to leave the country for ethnic reasons, the first time this has happened since Jewish emigration. As distinct from the Jews, the Meskhetian Turks were prepared to stay behind with Russian passports. The ethnic and political situation on the seemingly peaceful lands of Southern Russia deserves close attention. If further ignored, the regional latent conflicts might cause the open conflicts to spread further afield. This will happen if the present "wait-and-see" policy continues: the Chechen conflict and the Daghestani crisis will spread to the "Russian South" while the problems now plaguing Chechnia and Daghestan will spread to the Stavropol and Kuban areas and the Rostov and Astrakhan regions. This will happen not only because the inflow of new workers will cause flare-ups of uncivilized rivalry among certain forces for social niches. Ethnic nationalism and religious extremism, as well as negative stereotypes together with the insults the local ethnic groups endured from the federal and regional powers will add fuel to the fire.

Today, some of the typically Caucasian conflicts have already been reproduced in the "Russian South:" between traditional Islam and the "revivalists" (Salafis and Wahhabis) and between different ethnic groups.

What is going on in the Northern Caucasus today brings to mind the "sovereignty parade" of the early 1990s, yet the similarity between the vast ethnic and political crisis of the Yeltsin era and the destabilization of the "fortifying the vertical" period is superficial. In both cases we are witnessing ethnic nationalism mobilizing its forces. In the 1990s, it was the Soviet past that caused the problems; it was not the Center's fault that the region suddenly woke up—it was the regional political communities that woke up the region. They forced the Center to pacify the Caucasus by trial and error: the Khasaviurts, treaties on the delimitation of power, bribing the regional elites, and the use of force. True, these tactics curbed the wave of ethnic conflicts everywhere, with the exception of Chechnia, yet the main problems persisted: high population density and resulting unemployment, tension over land, urbanization mountain-style (moving mountain dwellers down to the valleys); the archaizing of sociopolitical life, fossilized ethnic and confessional groups, different legal systems, and strong influence of customary law.

The problems Russian power is facing in the region were caused, in many respects, by its own mistakes and failures and its unwillingness to address the obvious problems. In fact, the state acts post factum, it is bringing more and more troops into the region, and organizing random raids and mopping up operations. This cannot uproot the causes of Caucasian terrorism and extremism. The efforts to fortify the vertical of power launched in 2000 in the Northern Caucasus were reduced to signing a new pact between the Center and the regional elites. The latter agreed to abandon the nationalist discourse as evidence of their loyalty to the Kremlin. In exchange, the Kremlin is turning a blind eye to the "petty" sins of the local regimes, therefore the cases of Budanov and Ulman are discussed in all newspapers while the "feats" of the Iamadaev brothers and Kadyrov's special purpose forces are passed over in silence. This plays into the hands of "corporate communities" which have their own interests in mind different from those of the Russian state.

The "Chechenization" of Chechnia alone, when power and control over the local resources were transferred to the local elite (which included recent fighters, among others), demonstrated that the Center and its institutes had no power in the region. The Center's vacillation over the Daghestani issue (ranging from forcing the local elite to accept direct presidential elections to reaching an agreement to drop the issue of elections in general) is a sign of the same weakness. In the Caucasus, the appointment of republican heads in the absence of public procedures and criteria will do nothing but increase corruption.

Systemic Separatism

"He is 29 years old, bearded, exhorts his troops to fight in the name of Allah, and speaks Russian with a heavy Chechen accent. Not long ago, that would have perfectly described one of Moscow's most bitter foes.

"But now, while his former comrades-in-arms dodge troops in the Chechen mountains, Ramzan Kadyrov is a hero of Russia, a frequent guest of President Vladimir Putin and a regional leader of the pro-Kremlin political party.

"Kadyrov is officially deputy prime minister of Chechnia,[1] but observers say the Kremlin has made him de facto leader—something, they add, it may come to regret.

[1] In February 2006, Ramzan Kadyrov became prime minister.

"Kadyrov's every move dominates local television reports. When his first son was born last month, the region enjoyed a public holiday marked by all-night salutes of machine-gun fire which left civilians cowering in their basements."

This abstract was borrowed from an article by Oliver Bullough of Reuters called "'Little Stalin' Kadyrov Runs Russia's Chechnia" and faithfully reflects the political atmosphere in "peaceful" Chechnia.

The system of power and administration became completely Chechen. After holding a parliamentary election in November 2005, Moscow let the local elite rule the republic and rewarded its loyalty by granting it considerable political and material privileges. In 2003, Moscow imposed a new constitution on Chechnia, which contradicted both the laws of the Russian Federation and the new rules Vladimir Putin had formulated for the Center and the regions. While many of the North Caucasian constituents (Adigey, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Daghestan) abandoned their bi-chamber parliaments within the frameworks of "leveling out the legal expanse," Chechnia acquired a bi-chamber parliament. Moreover, the parliamentary election was announced even before the status of three mountainous districts of Chechnia (Galanchozhskiy, Staroiurtovskiy, and Cheberloevskiy) was legally registered; they received their status while the election campaign was in full swing. Today, Chechnia has a president, a government, and a representative branch staffed with local people. Does this help realistic, rather than perfunctory, incorporation of Chechnia into the rest of the country? The policy of creating local ethnic power systems with the help of behind-the-scenes agreements in the absence of a strong civil society and real, rather than pocket, parties has already created a local elite that pursues its own line different in many respects from what Moscow wants. In this way, while fighting a-systemic separatism, federal power is supporting systemic separatism.

The new parliament will legalize all "oral agreements" reached on the administrative market. It will also legalize the Treaty on the Delimitation of Powers between the Center and the Republic, a "tasty morsel" for the republican elite. Politicians and political scientists were too engrossed in calculating the votes received by the republican committees of United Russia, the Communist Party, and the Union of Right Forces to realize that the new parliament had been elected not for the sake of the "long-suffering people." It was set up to complete the deal Moscow and Grozny concluded on the administrative market. The Treaty is the Center's special concession to Chechnia since similar practices were discontinued elsewhere in the country in 2000. Today, the status of Chechnia differs a great deal from that of Tatarstan and Bashkiria; the republic has acquired more "sovereign rights" than other republics. This means that the privatization of power in Chechnia is nearly over: it was carried out with the help of vox populi and elected deputies. As for terrorist acts and murders, they will not stop. In 2005, terrorism remained part of the political practice of "pacified" Chechnia. The transfer of power to the local people has been exported to Daghestan; the events in Borozdinovskaia, a Daghestani village in the Shelkovskoy District, are the best illustration of this. In fact, the systemic separatists under Russian flag are following in the steps of the a-systemic separatists when they try to play the role of an all-Caucasian hegemon, but under federal protection.

Their political appetites have not yet been satisfied. The Russian authorities have just finished reporting about the successful parliamentary elections in Chechnia when then acting premier of the Chechen Republic Ramzan Kadyrov offered another political initiative, which, if realized, may blast the Northern Caucasus. On 5 December, 2005, when speaking to the parliament, he announced that the republic's borders should be delimitated as soon as possible. The republic has been living without its borders far too long, for almost 15 years, he argued. In the meantime, the borders have been shifted at random, he added, as a result of which the republic has lost part of its territory. He also pointed out that "according to the Constitution of the Chechen Republic and the current laws of Russia," the new-

ly elected parliament was expected to draw the borders of Chechnia. This meant that the de facto leader of the republic confirmed that the highest representative body of power was expected to legalize privatization of power by the regional political allegedly pro-Russian elite. To start privatization, however, the borders of the property to be privatized must be known. This should be done according to the law rather than in keeping with criminal rules. Ramzan Kadyrov said further: "Our people are very much concerned with the territorial issue. We did our best to calm the people by saying that it should be resolved within the law. Time has come—the parliament should get down to business."

This was said not by opposition or radical nationalists. In the spring of 2005, when the political forces opposing President of Ingushetia Ziazikov demanded that the Prigorodniy District should be returned to Ingushetia, the local leaders and federal power dismissed the initiative as nationalist and extremist. Today, the politician, who is associated with the Kremlin and positions himself as Vladimir Putin's consistent supporter, is demanding that the map of the Caucasus should be changed. No response came from the federal structures; the Russian vertical of power passed over this statement in silence, just as it passed over the Borozdinovskaia events in silence, the Khasaviurt epopee of Ramzan Kadyrov (when his special purpose forces clashed with Daghestani militiamen)…

Daghestan is Waking Up

The year 2005 will go down in North Caucasian history as the year of Daghestan: the largest of the North Caucasian republics lived through more terrorist acts than Chechnia. There were about 80 terrorist acts in the first six months of 2005. These developments reveal the ideological, or theoretical and methodological impotence of those responsible for Russia's Caucasian strategy. The events of 1999 in Chechnia and around the "rebel republic" were described as a "terrorist threat," while the fight against it was called a "counterterrorist operation" and "struggle against international terrorism." These terms are inadequate; the Center, however, made an attempt to place the "Chechen crisis" in a system of coordinates and interpret the events of the mid-1990s in its own way. Officially, the upsurge of terrorist activities in Chechnia was blamed on foreign Islamist missionaries and political extremists wishing to make the republic part of worldwide jihad. In Chechnia, the Russian state was fighting not so much against separatism as against "world terrorism," which had inflicted huge losses on the Chechens themselves.

The events of 2005 in Daghestan received no systemic official interpretation, even an inadequate one. As distinct from the terrorist activities in Chechnia, the terrorist acts in Daghestan are not anonymous. In Chechnia, terrorism has declined slightly. After the Beslan tragedy, it took the form of a struggle of individual groups which no longer regard independent Ichkeria as their aim. Indeed, it is much wiser to become "systemic separatists" to receive guaranteed administrative privileges from Moscow. Today, separatism in Chechnia wants to preserve its small "territory of war" controlled by neither Russian nor Ichkerian powers. The 2005 terrorist acts in Daghestan were demonstratively personified: the Shariat jamaat assumed responsibility for all the political assassinations. For example, in March it declared a total war on officers of the law enforcement bodies "guilty of the murder of Muslims." The jamaat minced no words about its final aim: an Islamic state on the territory of Daghestan. Being aware of their influence and strength in the republic and across the Caucasus, the Islamic radicals launched an offensive.

Today, Daghestan is the most terrorism-ridden republic. What should Russia do about it? Should it launch another "counterterrorist operation?" How should it be waged? Who is responsible for the

rapid "Chechenization" of Daghestan: international terrorists, Wahhabis, or a third force? So far, we have no answers to these questions. Meanwhile, in the early 1990s, terrorism as a political instrument developed into a key political factor in these two republics. The methods were and are different: from the very beginning terrorism in Chechnia was tinged with separatism and anti-Russian sentiments. Despite the Islamist rhetoric of those who organized and carried out terrorist acts, it should be said that "defense of Islam and purity of the faith" were of secondary importance, pushed into the background by the idea of Chechnia's independence. Political scientist Omar Alisultanov was quite right when he wrote: "Islamic extremism was 'imported' from certain Arab countries and was brought to Chechnia by Daghestani radicals. During the first and second wars, this marginal trend gained popularity among the fighters in Chechnia. Supported by Islamic fanatics from other countries, some groups presented their struggle as a jihad against faithless Russia and announced that their main aim was to 'liberate' all the Caucasian Muslims and set up a Muslim state. Most of the separatists, however, despite their frequent appeals to Islamic values, used them to achieve their political, not religious aims."

In any case, in Chechnia, terrorism is inseparable from the ebb and flow of Russian policy. Terrorism in Daghestan is not so rigidly connected with federal policies. The Chechen separatists justify their aims by the need to stand opposed to federal and, to a lesser extent, republican power. In Daghestan, terrorism is aimed at Makhachkala; this should not dupe the Center—Moscow's turn will come. There are many Daghestanis fighting in Chechnia side by side with Chechens; the jamaat Shariat already announced that it has sent suicide bombers to Moscow. Today, Chechens and Daghestanis are carrying out terrorist acts for different reasons, the level of their ideological and political awareness is different; the level of passion that drives them is also different. In Chechnia, the fighters are struggling to preserve their "riot islands," while in Daghestan they are fighting for an Islamic mega-project. This means that the government still has a chance to change the situation by playing on the contradictions among those who organized "great upheavals."

Islamic Challenge

Daghestan was waking up in the wider context of the Northern Caucasus' recovered Islamic identity. In 2005, terrorism as political practice was reloaded. The tragic events in Nalchik on 13 October, 2005 demonstrated that from that time on the Russian State would not be standing against the defenders of "free Ichkeria," but against the members of the "Caucasian Islamic terrorist international." In this respect, the Northern Caucasus is following in the steps of the Islamic East. The Mid-Eastern and North African countries have left behind the "change of terrorist generations." It was in the 1960s-1980s that secular ethno-nationalists (Arafat and the PLO), which invariably wielded religious slogans and values as their main instruments, became the main entities of terrorist struggle. Early in the 1980s, the supporters of "pure Islam" (the Muslim Brothers and Islamic Jihad) came to the fore. With a certain lag, the Northern Caucasus will follow a similar road.

Early in the 1990s, during the notorious "sovereignty parade," the ideas of ethno-nationalism and ethnic self-identification prevailed in the region. The principle of ethnic domination became the central one in politics, management, and business. The radical ethno-nationalists never hesitated to use terror: it is a more or less old phenomenon in the republic. In the first half of 2005, Daghestan lived through 80 terrorist acts, while between 1989 and 1991 there were over 40 political murders and attempted murders in the republic; in 1992, there were 40 terrorist acts; and in 1993, about 60 murders and armed attacks were committed. There were several highly significant terrorist acts in the early 1990s. In June 1993, fighters of the Avar Imam Shamil Popular Front and the

Kazikumukh Lakh movement captured officials of the local military office in Kizliar and demanded that the special units of the RF Ministry of Internal Affairs should be removed from the city. As distinct from 2005, at that time all the acts were of an ethno-political rather than religious nature. The same can be said about the Chechen separatists who have been fighting for "independent Ichkeria" since 1991.

In the latter half of the 1990s, ethno-nationalism was replaced with the idea of "pure Islam." This happened for several reasons. First, the ethnic patchiness in the Caucasus makes ethno-nationalism a political utopia for the radicals. (This is especially true of places where none of the ethnic groups is numerically stronger than others, Karachaevo-Cherkessia being one such place.) Second, all efforts to achieve domination for "one's own" ethnos brings the ethnic elite to power; in a short time, it becomes corrupt and self-contained, absorbed with its own egotistical interests. This leaves the masses with the role of "rally goers." In the latter half of the 1990s, this brought to the fore the idea of radical Islam, or "Islam of prayers," as opposed to "Islam of the (burial) rites." According to political scientist Konstantin Kazenin, throughout its long history of being part of people's life, Islam caused disagreements between the traditional faith connected with the folk religious ideas and practices and the "pure" faith free from the "impurities" of the folk traditions. The same Islamic trend may present itself as traditional and pure. In the 19th century, Sufism played the role of "pure" Islam, while in the late 20th century this role belonged to Salafi (Wahhabism), the supporters of which declared a war on the "traditionalists," the Sufis.

This process spread to Chechnia (especially in the post-Khasaviurt period), Daghestan, and other Caucasian constituents of the Russian Federation, including its relatively peaceful western part (Adigey and Kabardino-Balkaria). The ideas of pure, or renovated, Islam were spread by bright personalities well versed in the theological fundamentals of Islam, who differed greatly from the conservative imams of the Muslims' spiritual administrations. In Adigey, this role belonged to Ramadan Tsey, a repatriate from Kosovo; in Karachaevo-Cherkessia, to Ramzan Borlakov and Achimez Gochiyaev; in Kabardino-Balkaria, to Mussa (Artur) Mukozhev; and in Daghestan, to the Kebedov brothers.

Pure Islam fits the Caucasian conditions perfectly; as distinct from "traditionalism," it addresses the supra-ethnic universal and egalitarian values, which makes it a "green communism" of sorts. Those who support "Islam of prayers" are not interested in teyp, clan, or ethnic affiliations. This makes it possible to establish "horizontal ties" among activists from different Caucasian republics. In the absence of a clear ideology and conception of national development in Russia, Salafi brought people together in the Caucasus. While the Islamic national project was developing as an anti-Russian one, many "renovation" leaders were not Russophobes and were prepared to accept Russia's jurisdiction in the Northern Caucasus if the region becomes completely Islamic. At the same time, the Caucasian "Wahhabis" reject the secular nature of Russian statehood and the Center's power structures. Gradually, quantity developed into quality: the radicals went over from propaganda to terror. By the early 21st century, ethno-nationalism was replaced everywhere (including Chechnia) with religious Islamic radicalism. In October 2005 in Nalchik and throughout the year in Daghestan, there was no talk about separation of Ichkeria from Russia, yet people's minds had been already captured by the idea of a special social-political reality without Russia and outside Russia.

This means that the nature of threats in the most unstable and conflict-ridden region of Russia changed radically—the Center will be threatened not only from Chechnia. In the near future, the entire region will become a field of uncompromising struggle. It is vitally important to correctly interpret the threat: the state's leaders should be fully aware of the enemy they have to fight and of its resources. Minister of Defense Sergey Ivanov spoke about a "bandit underground" which threatens the state; before that Vladimir Putin spoke about fighting bandits. Meanwhile Russia's power and its liberal-modernization project are threatened not by bandits, but by politically and ideologically motivat-

ed people well aware of what they want—as distinct from the corrupt and depraved Russian elite both in power and in the opposition.

Not all Islamic "renovationists" have already crossed the line which separates terrorism and the struggle against Russia from mere discontent with corruption and the closed nature of the local leaders. It is not too late to separate criminals from frustrated regional intellectuals and mere losers. It would be a fatal mistake to believe that all the opponents to the regional authorities are Wahhabis and Russophobes. If this is done, Russia will lose a large number of its citizens whose loyalty to the state will be replaced with loyalty to Salafi jamaats. The Center should abandon its idea that the fight for the Caucasus can boil down to social rehabilitation of the region. Money is not the problem—serious ideological confrontation is the main thing. The side with stronger nerves, willpower, and faith will win. Victory will go to those who have the more convincing arguments and the more attractive ideas and aims. Today, federal power is engaged in Russification of the local people, who can barely imagine themselves as citizens of the Russian Federation. Most of the local people concentrate on ethnic, confessional, and clan affiliation rather than on their Russian citizenship. To remedy the situation, the state should overcome apartheid inside the region and optimize migration inside the country.

To successfully address the problem, the Kremlin should revise its personnel policy: the Russian idea in the Caucasus should be entrusted not to people personally loyal to the president or to corrupt bureaucrats, but to politically motivated people (not only Moscow appointees, but also so-called Euro-Caucasians, people from the Caucasus resolved to carry out modernization rather than the tribal-traditionalist project). So far, throughout the post-Soviet period, Russian power preferred informal contacts to formal rules. This ended in loss of control over the situation and to a new "revival of the Caucasus" in 2005.

If the Center fails to disentangle the very complicated set of social, economic, and political problems of the Caucasus today in a systemic way, rather than through endless appointing and dismissing people and looking for scapegoats (the case of Dzasokhov who was found guilty of Beslan), tomorrow other forces will rule the region. The present scenario—everything in exchange for loyalty—will allow the local elites to fully privatize power in their republics. The people, brought up under the conditions that differ greatly from American and European democracy, might start fighting against such privatization with the help of Islamist and ethno-nationalist slogans. In this situation, it will be unclear whether to side with the over-exited mob of poor and intellectually limited people or with those who "privatized" power in the republic.

If Russia wants to remain in the Caucasus, there is no reasonable alternative to strengthening state power in the region. The state should remain there in the foreseeable future, since several federations of warlords is the only alternative. What does stronger state power mean? It does not mean that the local ethnic nomenklatura regimes and their corrupt links with Moscow patrons should become stronger, nor that local resources and power should be exchanged for superficial loyalty, nor that random passport checks and mopping up should be continued. The key to resolving the problems is to be found outside the Northern Caucasus. All projects hinge on one point only. In order to de-privatize such entities of the administrative market as Chechnia, Karachaevo-Cherkessia, Adigey, etc., Russia should become a real and strong state which cannot be bribed and which the peoples of the Northern Caucasus would be ready to serve.

POWER, REVOLUTION, AND BUSINESS IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY GEORGIA (*Part One*)

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There is the opinion that the method by which a political leader is replaced, or his own attitude to his possible loss of power, is part of his political heritage and affects the country's democratic development. If the first leader of a newly formed political system is replaced, this heritage becomes even more important.[1] The point is amply illustrated by fifteen years of Georgia's political independence. It changed its political leaders twice, each time with violence and violations of the Constitution. Each time the change was carried out under democratic banners, and each time authoritarian trends in the country's political system became more pronounced: after coming to power each of the new leaders wanted to preserve it. To achieve this, they sought for economic domination to get a grip on badly needed material and financial resources. So each of the new leaders tried to place private business under his political control. The Georgian Constitution, however, guarantees protection of private property; the new leaders are also limited by the liberal Constitution in many other respects, the country's financial and political dependence on the West, and its desire to integrate into the European structures. This forces each of the new leaders to use methods which will not damage the country's democratic image. Political pressure on the business community became especially obvious after the Rose Revolution; today it is barely concealed and rather harsh.

[1] See: David C. Brooker, "How They Leave: A Comparison of How the First Presidents of the Soviet Successor States Left Office," *The Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol. 20, No. 4, December 2004.

The Rose Revolution and the Post-Soviet Expanse

The world noticed Georgia when the Shevardnadze regime toppled and Mikhail Saakashvili came to power. The heads of certain post-Soviet countries watched the developments with apprehension, since they worried about the threat to stability in their countries too. It turned out that the revolutionary vector was aimed at neighboring states: Georgia became the center from which permanent post-Soviet revolutions were expected to spread elsewhere to wipe away, according to the domino principle, other post-Soviet governments. The Tbilisi events were repeated in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, where people took to the streets to remove the old leaders. Very soon, however, the tension subsided, yet the present Georgian political leaders still hope that other CIS countries will make use of their experience. President Saakashvili admitted this in so many words at the Unity of Democratic Choice forum:

"We are not against Russia," said he. "It is very important that dictatorship should be removed, the nation should wake up and deprive the dictator of its support. For this reason the creation of the Unity of Democratic Choice will bring only positive results."[2]

It turned out that the Georgian revolution led not so much to democracy as to stronger authoritarian trends in Georgia and across the post-Soviet expanse. It was under its impact that some of the former Soviet republics, Russia and Belarus in particular, introduced stricter legal norms relating to social and political activities and NGOs.[3] This is obviously an echo of Eduard Shevardnadze's sad experience. Indeed, many NGOs financed from abroad (Kmara being one of them) were actively involved in the Rose Revolution, while after its victory some of its members were appointed ministers and elected deputies. While still in power, Shevardnadze, aware of the mounting threat, made several feeble attempts to place NGOs under strict state control, while trying to preserve the democratic image of his country and his own reputation of a democrat and a friend of the West. This forced him to reject a law which would have allowed the state to control the financial sources of the Georgian NGOs.

Change of Leaders in Post-Soviet Georgia

Georgia is a semi-free country; for this reason two opposite trends—democratic and authoritarian—are constantly present on its political scene. The democratic elements—freedom of speech, elections, political pluralism, etc.—are not strong enough to let society control the government and demand that it should become accountable to society. At the same time, the authoritarian trend is curbed by the Georgian leaders' considerable dependence, political and financial, on the West. The Rose Revolution can be described as a result of the confrontation between these two political trends.

There is an obvious trend toward making such revolutions a regular feature of the political system and a regime-changing tool. Today in Georgia, it is still impossible to replace the country's leader by means of democratic elections—this is the main stumbling block on the Georgia's road to democracy. I have already written that the country has changed its political regime twice during the fifteen years of its independence not by means of democratic elections. President Gamsakhurdia was removed by a military coup; President Shevardnadze by the people, who took to the streets and captured the parliament. Only after that did the new leaders hold an election to make their power legal. Georgia's post-Soviet history, however, began with a democratic election which brought Zviad Gamsakhurdia, its first post-Soviet leader, to power. This was the beginning of the struggle between the democratic and authoritarian trends in the country's political history; with each change of government, the country moved away from its communist past; the closer the governments were to Soviet times, the less radical and more nationalistic they were. Gamsakhurdia, for example, postponed reforms which might have radically changed the state and economic structure.

The earliest post-communist elite did not hasten to develop the private sector; it was afraid of a new class of private owners who, by controlling the economic resources, might have created problems for the ruling class which had monopolized power. For this reason, the first president and his cabinet did not carry out privatization, leaving the country's economic structure basically communist. Gamsakhurdia did not adopt a new constitution; he preferred to adjust the Soviet constitution

[2] *Akhali taoba*, 2 December, 2005 (in Georgian).
[3] See: *24 saati*, 3 December, 2005; *Rezonansi*, 3 December, 2005 (in Georgian).

to the new political realities created by the nationalists in power and the Communist Party's loss of its leading role. The president and his inner circle carried out domestic and foreign policies which corresponded to the transition period and state capitalism which excluded shock therapy and deep-cutting changes.

While the opposition closed its ranks, the government tightened its political control over society; it limited the activities of the political parties, sought greater control over the media, TV in particular, and exerted ideological pressure on culture and education. The spiritual sphere of social life, delivered of Soviet and Russian elements, was filled with the ideology of Georgian messianism. The country moved toward totalitarianism, its first shoots clearly seen in the political system which had taken shape and which had already betrayed its bias toward ideological monism and the president's personality cult. Zviad Gamsakhurdia was publicly called the nation's spiritual leader; he himself obviously wanted to subjugate the individual to the national collective and suppress freethinking and political opposition as a component of it.

These efforts stirred up the opposition and split the ruling elite. The military coup which brought Shevardnadze to power was the natural outcome. In an effort to look legitimate, the new leader called the coup a democratic revolution; he introduced fundamental changes into the country's economic, political, and spiritual life. Privatization cut down the public and extended the private sector; the NGOs controlled by the pro-Western elite flourished on Western money; the media became much freer and a liberal Constitution was adopted. Property inequality divided the nation into the few rich and the destitute masses. Spiritual life changed too: Western values, which invaded the country en masse, pushed the old stereotypes and ideas aside. Corruption and smuggling reached huge dimensions; and privatization and private business developed under the ruling elite's political control. After coming to power through not strictly legitimate means, the new ruling class busily set about building up its economic basis to cement its position. The president helped create a class of private owners consisting of his own entourage and political allies. The law was violated, yet for political reasons, the government not only turned a blind eye to the irregularities, but also violated laws itself for the sake of its own stability. The business community, closely associated with the regime, was prepared to protect the president against all attempts to restore the deposed regime of Gamsakhurdia. (After the Rose Revolution, a parliamentary commission carefully studied the process of privatization and found that crimes which undermined the country's economy had been committed. For certain reasons, however, it preferred not to punish the companies guilty of such violations.) At the same time, there appeared a tradition of falsification of election results; corruption and smuggling became rampant, the gap between the nation's majority and the handful of rich widened. The president's prestige rapidly declined. This split the ruling elite once more and ended in a revolution.

The democratic institutions in Georgia had no influence on the government; the cabinet was functioning beyond the framework of public control. The country was ruled by bureaucratic executive structures, the main source of authoritarian trends in the country, which needed a public counterbalance to achieve a balance between the branches of power. The semi-freedom of the Georgian political system became more virulent as the country's political and economic dependence on the West grew. This was when Georgia decided to move toward integration with Western structures. The political elite repeatedly declared its devotion to Western values and standards and spoke about the country's civilizational proximity to Europe. In an effort to preserve his image of a democrat and a friend of the West, the president had to accept considerable freedom of the press and the opposition, as well as the NGOs funded from abroad.

It was under Shevardnadze that methods for indirectly curbing democratic developments were used, yet he failed to eliminate the democratic institutions which later played an important role in undermining his legitimacy, and in preparing for and carrying out the Rose Revolution. The new lead-

ers it brought to power took the sad experience of the deposed leader into account. To strengthen their position, the new rulers exploited the same old methods of indirect pressure on democratic institutions; they did this with more zeal and more openly than their predecessor. The Rose Revolution weakened the democratic institutions and strengthened the authoritarian trends. The power of the president became stronger while the parliament's powers were limited, along with freedom of the press. The media is experiencing much stronger administrative and political pressure; the same applies to business; fear and violence, as well as infringements on the rights of civil society keep the country in check.

The authoritarian trends, in turn, are checked by the elite's financial and political dependence on the West; there are still opportunities to preserve the democratic institutions and their struggle against the creeping authoritarian methods of state administration.

Strengthening of Presidential Power

Under the Constitution amended after the Rose Revolution, the president has the right to disband the parliament. This means that he has acquired more control over the legislative branch than his predecessors. The Constitution does contain all the indispensable checks-and-balances mechanisms; in real life, however, they proved ineffective because most of the deputies (their names are not known to the wide public) depend on the president for their political careers and political future. The right to disband the parliament obviously affects the opposition deputies as well: the deputies of a disbanded parliament lose the privileges due them as deputies, while their political future shows no optimism.

Under the Constitution, the president might be deprived of his post through impeachment, yet the process is too complicated to be practical. Indeed, to get the ball rolling the initiators need the signatures of 33 percent of the deputies. At the second stage, the issue is moved to the Supreme or Constitutional courts depending on whether the president is accused of breaching the law or of violating the Constitution. After receiving a court ruling, the parliament should decide whether to put the impeachment issue to the vote or not. If supported by at least 40 percent of the parliament, the impeachment issue is put to the vote. The president is removed from his post by no less than two-thirds of the votes.[4]

Theoretically, this norm placed the parliament above the judicial and presidential power, since it can ignore a court decision and act according to political considerations. I have already written that the power of parliament as a whole is balanced by the individual dependence of most of the deputies (or rather of their political careers) on the president. On top of this, most of them owe their businesses to the president as well, since not infrequently they violate the law in business activities and find themselves under double pressure.

The post-revolutionary Election Code based on the majority system is another pillar of the authoritarian system, under which the winning party gets all the seats in any given constituency.[5] Since the United National Movement as the ruling party possesses vast administrative resources, the opposition parties stand little chance of getting enough votes to be elected. This leads to a one-party parliament.

[4] See: Constitution of Georgia, Art 63.
[5] See: *Rezonansi*, 15 February, 2006.

Struggle for Independent Judicial Power

Under the Constitution, state authority shall be exercised on the basis of the principle of division of powers.[6] In real life, political leaders and executive power are obviously unwilling to realize this constitutional provision. Without practical implementation of this principle and without mutual control of executive, legislative, and judicial powers, democratization in Georgia cannot be consolidated. The executive branch dominates and controls the two other branches. Today, law is not all-important—the country has already acquired the mechanism of division and mutual control of the power branches. Informal relations have moved to the fore. Senior legal expert Uldis Kinis believes that fear is the main problem of the judicial corps in Georgia. Despite their theoretical freedom, the judges have to take into account what the other power branches think about their cases.[7] This says that there is a contradiction between democratic legislation and real division of powers, on which the legislative branch depends. This contradiction underlies the edifice of superficial democracy in Georgia. The country's political leadership exploits the shortcomings of the judges' practical activity to better control the judicial branch. The branch is commonly known, unfortunately with good reason, as corrupt, which means that corrupt judges are easily controlled. There are several factors which make it hard for the judiciary to become really independent: the criminal situation is highly complicated; on many occasions, the police and public prosecutors cannot complete cases to enable the court to pass fair judgments.

This allows public prosecutors to put pressure on the courts; the political leaders, who regard anti-criminal activity as a domestic priority, are adding to the pressure. The ruling elite uses control over the courts as a tool for preserving its power. After the Rose Revolution, the contradictions between the judiciary and political power branches developed into a hot political issue. This was the first time in Georgia's recent history that the judges publicly spoke about the pressure exercised by the political leaders. In November 2005, three judges of the Supreme Court—D. Sulakvelidze, N. Gvenetadze, and M. Turava—made an official statement about political pressure. The political leaders retaliated with accusations of lack of professionalism and flagrant violations of law.

The judiciary is gradually becoming an independent and active force able to keep executive power within legal limits and counterbalance its desire to expand its influence. The case of the three judges demonstrated that the Court of Justice and the Disciplinary Collegium were used as an instrument of political control over the judges. Members of the political majority—deputies N. Kalandadze (deputy chairman of the Legal Committee of the parliament) and N. Gvaramia (member of the same committee)—are also members of the Disciplinary Collegium, in which they act as a judge and prosecutor, respectively.[8] Ms. Mukhashavria, defense lawyer of the disgraced judges, expressed her distrust of both deputies as representatives of the ruling political force. She interpreted this as a violation of Art 5 of the Constitution, under which state power rests on the division of powers, and demanded that N. Kalandadze should be removed from the proceedings. Her protest fell on deaf ears.[9] The Disciplinary Collegium was caught falsifying the case and firing the judges illegally. According to the defense lawyer, it planned to institute proceedings against one of the judges without any grounds: the file contained no complaints to be used as a pretext for a disciplinary case.[10] Soon

[6] See: Constitution of Georgia, Art 5.
[7] See: *24 saati*, 28 September, 2005.
[8] See: *Akhali taoba*, 20 December, 2005.
[9] Ibidem.
[10] Ibidem.

after that, Complaint Number Three miraculously appeared out of nowhere amid the loose unnumbered pages of the file.[11] The defense lawyer pointed out that the Disciplinary Collegium might have been ordered by the country's political leadership to bring any of the judges to account. This case, she added, would surely draw protest from the lawyers. The lawyers, indeed, pointed out that complete subjugation of the courts to the political leadership made continued functioning of the defense lawyers pointless and added that justice in Georgia was under attack and that executive power, having "engulfed" the legislature, had come for the judiciary.[12]

The notorious Supreme Judges case showed that political power had the legislature under its thumb and that violations of the Constitution were inevitable. The Georgian Constitution says: "A member of the Government, an official elected, appointed, or approved by the Parliament, shall be entitled and, if requested, be obliged to attend the sittings of the Parliament, its Committee or Commission, to answer the questions raised at the sitting and submit a report of the work carried out. Upon request, such an official shall be heard by the Parliament, Committee or Commission immediately."[13] However, the judges "appointed or approved by the Parliament" who applied to the parliament for a fair hearing were turned down. According to the Constitution, "the President and the judges of the Supreme Court of Georgia shall be elected for a period of no less than ten years by the Parliament in accordance with the majority on the current nominal list as advised by the President of Georgia."[14] The Disciplinary Collegium banned N. Gvenetadze and M. Turava from the judicial corps; D. Sulakvelidze was warned, while one more judge, M. Isaev, was fired.[15]

The diplomatic corps and international organizations helped the judges; M. Turava was offered political asylum in the United States, Germany, and other countries.[16]

Struggle for Freedom of the Press

In Georgia, economic, political, and information powers are beginning to merge. Businessmen wishing to gain more political weight are actively investing in the information sphere (Patarkatsishvili, Ivanishvili, Gulashvili, and others have already acquired TV companies and publications). This process, which dates back to the pre-revolutionary period, is designed to create centers of power to challenge the political elite. On the other hand, political power is being transformed into economic and information power: after the revolution, the business community lost some of its influence in the information sphere to the political elite.

The media played an important role in the Rose Revolution by creating a negative image of Shevardnadze and his regime, a lesson the post-revolutionary government has already learned. Today it is busy neutralizing the hazards of the free press, which in the past deprived the country's rulers of public support. This explains the harsh and unceremonious treatment the press received from the powers that be. Today, it has become much harder to obtain reliable information from the government; not infrequently high officials, sure of impunity and the support of their superiors, insult journalists, or even use violence against them. Those in power refuse to respond to such cases; they use secret mechanisms to control the media while creating the impression of absolute freedom of the press. Those

[11] See: *Akhali taoba*, 20 December, 2005.
[12] Ibidem.
[13] Constitution of Georgia, Art 60:2.
[14] Constitution of Georgia, Art 90:2.
[15] See: *Akhali taoba*, 27 December, 2005.
[16] Ibidem.

who planned this have succeeded: the journalist corps split. Some of the journalists are fighting authoritarian trends in the country's political system, while others have to keep silence to preserve their jobs, even though they disagree with the country's leaders; there are journalists who cooperate with the government of their own free will.

By seeking control, political control in particular, over the media, the government has betrayed its authoritarian intentions. On 8 July, 2005, seventy Georgian journalists sent a letter to the Monitoring Committee of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly, diplomats accredited in Georgia, the international organizations working in our country, including those that defend journalists' rights, and the republican government.[17] They accused the country's leaders of being involved in closing down several publications and TV companies which, the journalists were convinced, had disappeared under political pressure. According to the *Alia* newspaper, the government has already managed to squeeze the electronic media into the format it needed because, the newspaper wrote, the journalist community was divided. Some members of the journalist community disagreed with those who believe that journalists' rights were being violated and agreed with the president's "improper" statements that the Georgian media let him down. The same newspaper wrote that these members of the journalist community deserved what they got, namely, falsified information. It was their choice: in democratic countries, such people are not considered journalists. There was a certain number of journalists who, while agreeing with those who wrote the letter, refused to sign it under pressure from their superiors. There were others who, though never instructed not to sign the letter, refused to sign it, since they were aware of the position of the company owners and the possible consequences.

Freedom of the press is an indispensable element of the government's democratic image. To turn this element into a democratic exhibit, the press should be rendered harmless in such a way as to leave the public convinced that the media are free from pressure and political control To achieve this in the absence of censorship and in the presence of constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression and the press, political power exploits the financial problems experienced by many publications; money is an instrument of pressure, including political pressure.

Journalists also depend on those who own the media; the owners, in turn, unwilling to come into conflict with the political leadership, become easy prey for the political leaders. The fact that journalists are absolutely defenseless in the face of the media owners decreases the degree to which the media is prepared to resist the government. Indeed, it is easy to find financial inconsistencies in any sphere of business, the media being no exception. This allows the government to keep the media owners and, through them, the journalists in check. Probably for this reason the authors of the letter said that self-censorship was a myth created by the government to conceal its true attitude toward the media and teach the public to mistrust them.

Despite the ruling elite's firm grip, the fact that the Georgian political regime is still semi-free in nature leaves the media more or less free to use this freedom to oppose the onslaught of authoritarianism. After the Rose Revolution the press lost many of its former possibilities.

(To be concluded)

[17] See: *Alia*, 8 July, 2005 (in Georgian).

KYRGYZSTAN AFTER THE REVOLUTION: POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT AND CHOICE OF FORM OF GOVERNMENT

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Struggle for Political Reform. Constitutional Conference Convened

In the wake of the March 2005 events, a Constitutional Conference of the Kyrgyz Republic was convened on the initiative of Ch. Baekova, chairperson of the republic's Constitutional Court, and a decision of Zhogorku Kenesh (the parliament). It met in Bishkek to discuss the political and constitutional reforms the country badly needed after the revolution. The one hundred and fourteen people who attended the conference represented the head of state, the cabinet, the deputies, and the civilian sector. Omurbek Tekebaev, speaker of the newly elected Zhogorku Kenesh, a very popular opposition member and leader of the Socialist Ata Meken Party, was elected the conference chairman.

At first, the political demands were moderate and boiled down to a political assessment of the events of 24 March and limiting some of the president's powers. The next president should be deprived of the right to organize referendums at will and to amend or change the Constitution. The premier, on the other hand, should be given more power when it comes to appointing ministers. It was decided to restore the parliament's former (105 against 75 deputies) numerical strength; and to elect two-thirds of its deputies on the basis of proportional representation as a step toward more developed party democracy. By 15 May, 2005, the amended Constitution was ready for publication. Supported by the civilian sector, it appeared in the local media.

Kurmanbek Bakiev, the prime minister and acting president, surprised many by remaining absolutely indifferent to the prospect of constitutional reform. He was busy readying for the presidential election, scheduled under parliamentary pressure for 10 June, 2005. Part of the country's political elite, however, insisted on immediate constitutional reform, after which the president (who would have different powers) could be elected.

The hastily organized election was fraught with another political crisis caused by the bitter rivalry between the North and the South. This would have deprived the republic of its revolutionary dynamics and democratic conquests. The revolutionary leaders spared no effort to pacify the democratically minded public, while the two recognized leaders who formed a "political tandem"—Kurmanbek Bakiev, who represented the South, and Felix Kulov, who represented the North—entered an agreement and promised to carry out the constitutional reform. The tandem won the elections with

about 90 percent of votes; Kurmanbek Bakiev became president, while Felix Kulov was presented to the parliament as a candidate for premier under the previous agreement between them.

What happened next defied logic, but we should hardly have expected anything different from the new rulers. The new elite turned out to be an exact copy of the old one. The years of independence taught it what to do. The disillusioned revolutionaries, politicians, and ordinary people all say: "This is the old power with new names."

After a short breathing space filled with denunciations of the old regime and former president Askar Akaev, the "new" power tried to disavow the political agreements concluded by the Bakiev-Kulov tandem and the obligations it had assumed. Its aims became clear to all: to bury in empty talk the deep-cutting constitutional reform the democratic public expected; to rehabilitate Akaev's constitution of 2003, and to impose on the nation their own idea of the country's political development, which would leave the shortcomings of the acting Constitution and the pillars of the authoritarian-clan system intact. Today, the "new" power consists of former communist functionaries of the regional and district level with the most primitive and largely utilitarian ideas about the political, economic, and international processes underway. They have no adequate strategies for getting out of the systemic crisis: primitive and financially unsubstantiated slogans about the need to revive industry and create new jobs in order to leave the present difficult period behind are all they can offer the nation.

The new leaders' anti-democratic intentions and the fact that leaders of the criminal world managed to come to the political proscenium in official capacities (with the new power's connivance or even active help) caused chronic political instability, which threatens the country's integrity. The public is deeply disappointed, anarchy and the mob reign in the country; power is impotent; property rights are flagrantly violated; re-division of property looms on the horizon; the state has lost its stability, while the Kyrgyz revolution lost face in the eyes of the world. Political adventurers are fishing in the troubled waters of post-revolutionary chaos; they are spreading discontent, hatred, and uncertainty. People are afraid of new political upheavals which might destroy the state.

The new power remains politically euphoric; it cannot formulate a new program and consolidate the nation. It wants no democratic or market reforms, therefore society is growing more and more radical while all sorts of political forces are becoming convinced that constitutional and political reform—up to and including fundamental changes in the present presidential-parliamentary system of government—is overripe. The democratic forces are convinced that this system of government has outlived itself; it has no development potential, has led the republic into a political impasse, and should be destroyed.

A large part of the Constitutional Conference, which split into those supporting the parliamentary and those in favor of the presidential-parliamentary form of government, insisted that starting in 2010 Kyrgyzstan should become a parliamentary republic. Within the span of twelve months, the country was twice plunged into a political crisis fraught with instability and disintegration caused by the attempts of criminal leaders to become legal. First, T. Akmatbaev, parliamentary deputy, was murdered in a penal colony (he was the third deputy to be killed after the revolution). His brother, criminal leader R. Akmatbaev, accused of organizing contract murders and criminal groups, was included on the "Wanted" lists. (He said that former president Akaev sought his services during the election campaign.) Relatives of the murdered deputy picketed the building of the parliament and demanded resignation of some of the country's leaders, including Premier Kulov and Speaker Tekebaev, whom they accused of organizing the murder. The picket stayed for several days, while wanted criminals were free to walk around the central square of the country's capital and threaten law-abiding citizens, deputies, and even the prime minister. The frightened law enforcement bodies remained passive; their heads and top generals were seen hobnobbing with leaders of the criminal world. It was the democratic forces—the NGOs and political parties—that defended the premier and forced Presi-

dent Bakiev to interfere, talk to the picketers, and convince them to leave the square until the investigation was completed.

The second crisis, likewise, was caused by the criminal world: its leader, the above R. Akmatbaev, after being completely acquitted in court on 24 January, 2006, threatened the premier at a press conference (sic!). Felix Kulov responded with a statement that the state had merged with the criminal world; power was passive, while some of the top politicians and bureaucrats profited from what was going on.[1] The expert community believes that this was an ultimatum to President Bakiev due to his passivity and inability to oppose the criminals' pressure. The premier said that since criminals enjoyed the support of high officials, in particular, of T. Aytbaev, chairman of the National Security Council, he himself would not shoulder any responsibility for carrying out anti-criminal activities. This statement was prompted by the fact that under the Bakiev-Kulov political memorandum, the president assumed control over the power structures.

Highly placed officials, including the top people of the public prosecutor's office, regularly infringed on the freedom of the press, they tried to scare journalists and even deputies of the parliament under the pretext of defending the president's honor and dignity and preserving political stability in the republic. This caused a veritable storm in the public and among some of the deputies.

After the Revolution: Gains and Losses

In the wake of the March events of 2005, the public felt there were more political rights and freedoms probably not because power wanted it, but because of the revolution: civil society and the public did not want to be trapped in an authoritarian system once more. The country is experiencing contradictory processes, whereby new, positive shifts have not yet removed the old habits and trends that pull the country back into the authoritarian quagmire.

According to the international Reporters without Borders organization, in 2005, Kyrgyzstan was 111th out of 150 world states in terms of freedom of the press, with Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and other Central Asian republics trailing behind it.[2] According to the RF embassy in Kyrgyzstan, during the first nine months of 2005, there were about 2,500 unsanctioned rallies and pickets in the republic.[3] Since 2000, Kyrgyzstan has invariably appeared among the "not free" countries in the *Freedom in the World* annual. According to an NGO, Freedom House, in 2005 the republic could be described as "relatively free," which did nothing but reflect the general improvement of the situation with respect to political freedoms and civil rights.[4] Kyrgyzstan has to work hard to fight corruption, carry out constitutional and judicial reforms, ensure the personal security of its citizens, etc.

The republic's ombudsman has pointed out that human rights were also violated on a massive scale in 2005, while the number of Kyrgyz citizens and foreigners who applied to him in 2005 reached an absolute maximum: 35,000 compared with 12,000 in 2003, and 15,000 in 2004. In 2005, only 27 percent of complaints were satisfied—the figure for previous years was 33 percent.[5]

[1] See: *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 27 January, 2006.
[2] See: *Vecherniy Bishkek*, 12 December, 2005.
[3] See: E. Shmagin, "'Rossia vsegda riadom'. Interv'iu posla RF v Kyrgyzstane," *Argumenty i fakty* (Kyrgyzstan), No. 3, 2006, p. 3.
[4] See: *MSN* newspaper, 23 December, 2005.
[5] [http://www.akipress.kg], 16 January, 2006.

After the 24 March events, people have been turning more frequently to the government for help: 4,000 applications in 2005 compared with 2,119 in 2004; they are obviously pinning more hopes on the new power.[6] The far from simple situation with corruption has become even worse. According to Transparency International, in 2005 the republic was the 130th in the world, it lost 8 points compared with 2004.[7] This is confirmed by the 2005 public opinion poll carried out by the Center for Public Opinion Studies, which demonstrated that 24 percent believed that their country was the most corrupt in the world; and 14 percent indicated that corruption in Kyrgyzstan was higher than in other countries. About 70 percent of the polled believed that corruption was the country's worst problem; there were 81 percent such people among businessmen; 76 percent among civil servants, and 83 percent among those employed by the law enforcement bodies. Eighty-three percent of the respondents believed that the militia was the most corrupt structure; 83 percent thought that it was the courts and prosecution structures; 81 percent, the traffic police; 80 percent, customs services; 79 percent, higher educational establishments; 78 percent, the taxation sphere; 65 percent, military conscription structures; 59 percent, the Ministry of Finance; 59 percent, medical services, 55 percent, bank and large companies; 53 percent, national security structures; 49 percent, the Cabinet of Ministers; 74 percent, the Presidential Administration, and 26 percent, schools.[8]

About 500 Uzbek citizens driven by the Andijan events of May 2005, cruelly suppressed by the powers of Uzbekistan, crossed into Kyrgyzstan to avoid massive repressions. Despite the demands of the Uzbek officials, Bishkek, supported by the world community, refused to deport them because of the threat of repressions and tortures that might be used against them in their homeland. Later, some of the European countries granted them refugee status. Today, there are four Uzbek rebels still kept in custody in Bishkek; Tashkent accuses them of grave crimes, while the UN HCR had already granted them refugee status.[9]

At the same time, post-revolutionary Kyrgyzstan spoiled its new political image by deporting Makhambet Abzhan, an opposition politician and youth leader who was falsely accused of grand larceny, to Kazakhstan in the winter of 2005.

The level of crime, one of the gravest threats to the country and its population, rose by 3 percent in 2005 compared with 2004; the number of grave and capital offences grew by 10 percent to reach a figure of over 4,500.[10] According to the republic's Ministry of Internal Affairs, 34 contract murders and six attempted contract murders with the use of firearms were registered in 2000-2005; only nine of them were solved. In 2000, there were three similar crimes; in 2001, one; in 2002, eight murders and one attempted murder; and in 2003, seven and two, respectively. In 2005, there were 24 organized criminal groups and four criminal communities acting in the country.[11] Last year set a record for political assassinations: after the March events, three Zhogorku Kenesh deputies—Zh. Surabaldiev, E. Baiamanov, and T. Akmatbaev—were killed one after another. In 2006, Raatbek Sanatbaev, twice champion of Asia in Greco-Roman wrestling and chairman of the republican Federation of Greco-Roman Wrestling, was murdered by a contract killer.

The government is taking measures to improve the standard of living by raising wages, pensions, and social allowances. So far this has not produced the desired effect. According to the republic's Ministry of Finance, the average monthly wage in the country was 2,446.8 soms, or $60.2; the minimal consumer budget being 1,832.91 soms, or about $45.[12] It should be said in all fairness

[6] [http://www.vb.kg], 1 December, 2006.
[7] [http://www.pr.kg], 19 January, 2006.
[8] See: R. Musurmankulov, "Kak obuzdat' chinovnika," *Argumenty i fakty* (Kyrgyzstan), No. 3, 2006, p. 4.
[9] See: *MSN*, 18 December, 2006.
[10] See: *Obshchestvenniy reyting*, 22 December, 2005.
[11] [http://www.akipress.kg], 16 January, 2005.
[12] See: "Zarplata rastet," *Delo No.*.., 11 January, 2006.

that in 2005, wages in the state sector were raised by 15 percent for medical workers and teachers; by 30 percent for people employed in the sphere of culture; by 50 percent for employees of the law enforcement bodies; and pensions were raised by 5 to 15 percent. The standard of living, rather low in itself, is still undermined by inflation. In 2005 alone, the price of some foodstuffs increased by 50-100 percent.[13]

Migration has also increased. According to the National Committee for Statistics, in 2005, 25,500 left the republic for Russia; this is 9,449 more than in 2004. At the same time, 2,600 people came from Russia to Kyrgyzstan, 809 more than in 2004.[14] In 2005, the GDP dropped by 0.6 percent compared with 2004.[15]

In 2005, freedom of movement was violated more than before: the country's leadership failed to supply about 340,000 Kyrgyz citizens with new passports, which deprived tens of thousands of trips abroad.[16]

By January 2006, the absolute majority of the political parties and civilian associations, staunch supporters of the parliamentary form of government, demanded that a referendum be held on the form of governance.

What is Best?

This is the core of all the political discussions. On 5 January, 2006, under pressure from the democratically minded public, President Bakiev signed a decree on Preparations for the Referendum of the Kyrgyz Republic, under which national voting on the constitutional order is to be carried out in the fourth quarter of 2006. It was pointed out that the nation and the power structures should be explained the differences among the three possible forms of governance—parliamentary, presidential, and mixed (semi-presidential).[17]

Back in November 2005, the head of state offered his own version of constitutional reform for national discussion, which had nothing in common with the alternative the Constitutional Conference discussed. He wanted nothing more than superficial changes: a majority-proportional election system, as well as uniting the Constitutional and Supreme courts and abolition of the death penalty. Civil society subjected the president's version to scathing criticism; members of Venetian Commission of the Council of Europe likewise showed no enthusiasm. This forced the president to drop his alternative, but he announced that he had received over 11 constitutional drafts and many other suggestions submitted by various groups.

In fact, the problem is not to select the absolutely best form of government, but to choose from among them the one best suited to Kyrgyzstan, its culture, history, and economy, as well as to the geopolitical conditions and domestic policies. The choice should be based on a careful analysis of Kyrgyzstan's past experience, the degree of maturity of its society, and the results of the country's 15 years of independent development.

The constitution should establish an efficient form of governance able to put an end to the current lack of prospects and the state's irresponsibility in the face of the nation. The government should meet several requirements: first, it should be democratic and correspond to popular will, while the elected officials should be responsible for their actions. Abuse of power should be minimized. Sec-

[13] See: D. Orlov, "Zarplata i zhizn'," *Argumenty i fakty* (Kyrgyzstan), No. 3, 2006, p. 8.
[14] [http://www.pr.kg], 19 January, 2006.
[15] [http://www.sk.kg], 27 January, 2006.
[16] [http://www.akipress.kg], 29 September, 2004.
[17] See: "Referendumu navstrechu," *MSN*, 10 January, 2006.

ond, it is important to assess the effectiveness of the conducted policy against the achievements of other countries.

The state should be able to deal with economic and political problems and to find a balance between society's growing requirements and the country's meager resources acceptable to the nation's majority. From this it follows that the constitution should make the state effective and dynamic, while the state structures should become more responsible. In turn, a government that meets the nation's expectations should feel popular support; otherwise the nation will turn to an alternative power that cares about the people.

Today, there are democratically minded people on the republic's political scene who can think flexibly, who can look far ahead, and who are prepared to abandon their personal interests for the sake of the country. Such people should be present in the parliament as political leaders; they can effectively govern the state as heads of parliamentary parties and factions. This is a consideration in favor of the parliamentary form of government.

Kyrgyzstan must overcome poverty and backwardness—not an easy task requiring a strong government. The system headed by the president elected by popular vote has demonstrated that the two-headed executive power is inefficient since the cabinet is changed too often. In addition, this form of government leads to conflicts between the president and the parliament. In fact, the rest of the world believes that the pure parliamentary system is much more conducive to democracy than the presidential system. International realities and the geopolitical situation have limited the choice to the democratic option.

Unlike countries with a parliamentary form of government, none of the new presidential or mixed (semi-presidential) systems formed between 1945 and 1979 managed to remain democratic throughout this period. Only five old presidential systems avoided revolutions and coups: the United States, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Columbia, and Venezuela, which have remained democratic throughout decades. Other presidential countries lived through twice as many military coups than the parliamentary states between 1973 and 1989.

Shortcomings of the Present Presidential-Parliamentary Form of Government

President Bakiev insists that he has nothing against the parliamentary or the presidential-parliamentary form of governance, despite the vast difference between them. The bureaucrats are all for the present form of government: they argue that the country is still not ready for the parliamentary form; that the political parties are not mature enough, that there is no adequate political culture, and that for many centuries the Kyrgyz lived under one leader, etc.

Their opponents active in civil society and political parties offer equally weighty arguments. The present system, they say, helps the president and the parliament avoid responsibility, since the voters never know whom to thank for, or to accuse of, the country's policies. The state bodies are not responsible to the nation; executive power cannot function properly in the absence of urgently needed laws, while the parliament cannot function without being responsible for what it does. In short, neither executive power, nor the parliament can function effectively.

In countries where the president is elected by popular vote, the head of state and the parliament receive their powers from the nation by means of general elections. Coexistence of two mutu-

ally independent structures causes conflicts between them which could end in an impasse or constitutional crises. The system has no democratic mechanisms of crisis settlement. To be effective, the president has to extend his powers at the expense of the parliament, which is also elected by popular vote. At the same time, the limited presidential term deprives the president of the chance to complete his reforms. This makes the system inflexible; it is unable to adjust itself to the political processes, while the parliament cannot control the executive branch and turns into **a** discussion chamber, rather than a lawgiver or a restraining structure. Contrary to the premier, in parliamentary governance, the president is invulnerable throughout his term. It is next to impossible to get rid of a head of state who has lost his voters' confidence. Impeachment is possible only if the president has flagrantly violated the law. It is a time-consuming procedure which depends on certain officials, some of them belong to the president's structures or are even his relatives or close friends.

The presidential system functions according to the principle of "winner takes all." After winning the presidential election, the winner acquires power over the whole of society and all the political forces for the duration of his term. Concentration of power does not encourage coalitions or compromises. Any person elected to his high post by popular vote is elated; he tends toward authoritarian methods of rule and nepotism, creates favorites, etc. Examples can be found across Central Asia and elsewhere. For this reason, the president's supporters are found in all the power structures, while other people in the same system have no official role to play and are deprived of access to executive power. The presidential system does not lead to public compromises and agreements, two indispensable democratic elements; by contrast, the collegiate nature of parliamentary democracy is perfectly adjusted to them.

Since the president's power rests on popular vote, the head of state remains convinced that he alone was chosen to speak for the people; he identifies those who voted for him with the rest of the nation and believes that his policies are accepted by all, while his opponents with their plans and actions speak for a small group and represent narrow interests. This leads to populism and potentially to fairly hazardous developments.

The presidential system tends toward authoritarian rule for the simple reason that it concentrates political power in the hands of one person. The president elected by popular vote and his closest circle may destroy the system's key advantage—the checks and balances mechanism. For this reason, most presidential republics in the developing world acquired superficial attributes which limit the powers of the president, parliament, and the judiciary, yet the checks and balances system is either absent or poorly developed. The president is accountable to no one; the division of power helps him to avoid accusations during the next election campaign. He can always shift the blame to the cabinet and the opposition-dominated parliament. It is commonly believed that under the presidential form of government power is frequently concentrated in the hands of one political party or one ethnos which looks after its own interests and serves its own needs. In such cases, the presidential form of government degenerates into an ethnic, clan, regional, etc. symbol of domination and subjugation, which multiplies problems in polyconfessional, polylinguistic, and polyethnic societies. Kyrgyzstan is one such country.

To survive in the Kyrgyz Republic democracy needs economic success. Some Western experts who have studied 135 countries across the world concluded that democracy could survive and develop even in the poorest countries, if they are able to move ahead, lower the inequality level, and enjoy a favorable international climate. The parliamentary form of government is the key to success: more likely than not democracy dies where there is no advance because poverty breeds dictatorship and leads to destitution.

From this it follows that the future of democracy in Kyrgyzstan depends on the parliamentary form of government.

The Parliamentary Form of Government

The parliament is the main body responsible for drafting and passing laws and forming executive power—the president and the government. The majority (34 out of 43 developed democracies) uses the parliamentary system, while most of the presidential countries are authoritarian regimes found mainly in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. It is commonly recognized that parliamentarianism creates more balancing mechanisms which help young states to incorporate diverse political forces into domestic policies.

Under the parliamentary system, the representative branch of power, which elects the president and forms the cabinet, dominates the entire political system. In other words, a purely presidential system is dominated by an independent president, while a purely parliamentary system is marked by mutual dependence and intertwined executive and legislative powers. The parliament forms the cabinet from members of the parliamentary majority. This makes the government a collective body in which decision-making depends on collective effort, while the premier is merely the first among equals. The president has practically no power: his right to disband the parliament or veto its decisions can only be realized if the cabinet agrees to this. His normative acts come into force when approved by a corresponding minister or premier who is personally responsible for them.

The parliamentary state is a state of mutual dependence: the government is accountable to the parliament, which, having passed a vote of no confidence, may order the cabinet's resignation. Executive power, on the other hand, may disband the parliament (in some countries the right belongs to the premier, in others, to the head of state acting on the prime minister's instructions).

The parliament's efficiency as a mechanism of democracy depends on its composition, the number of parties represented in them, and their stances. This makes the parliamentary system one of the variants of proportional representation. It gives social minorities the chance to be represented both in the parliament and the cabinet. The "winner takes all" principle is powerless here. Those who support the parliamentary system never fail to mention its other advantages, such as flexibility and adjustability to changing circumstances. The parliament may force discredited executive leaders (including cabinet members) to resign. It is commonly believed that the parliamentary system makes the government accountable to the nationally elected deputies and increases the executives' dependence on them. This leads to more efficient public control over decision-making and to greater transparency of the process itself.

On the whole, this system maintains democratic stability, which is three times more stable than under the presidential system, and develops without riots, revolutions, and constitutional coups. In economically weak countries, the chance of survival of the parliamentary system is twice as great as that of the presidential system. In fact, the parliamentary system is more frequently used by economically strong states, while the presidential one, by undeveloped countries.

The parliamentary system's advantages are much more obvious when coupled with a certain election system. Those who support parliamentarianism argue that the minority acquires the opportunity to be represented in the same way as the majority, which rules out one-party domination, and that coalition governments will become a norm. This calls for proportionate representation as the key to success.

The choice of form of government should be based on the conclusions of social sciences and the science of man. I have in mind political science and constitutional law. Constitutional engineering as a branch of science has repeatedly demonstrated that when applied thoughtfully it can bring the desired political results.

A parliamentary republic is not free of shortcomings either: it is not mobile; the cabinet is not stable enough while the parliament is less accountable to the nation; it is poorly fragmented politically, therefore the majority dominates the minority.

Why We Need a Parliamentary System

The need to introduce a parliamentary system in Kyrgyzstan is prompted not only by the sad experience of the presidential-parliamentary rule of the Akaev period. There are also certain historical, social, political, and economic factors, as well as national specifics, trends, and prerequisites. Here are some of them:

— For many centuries the Kyrgyz people lived under conditions of primitive democracy, for a long time they had no centralized state, monarchy, and bureaucracy as a social group;

— The country and its population are relatively small;

— There is not much time to spend on protracted development;

— Today, the information age has opened up vast possibilities; it has shortened distances and made it possible to use the latest achievements of political thought in real time, etc.

— The nation is fairly well educated, while its civil society is fairly developed.

— There are over 70 political parties, eight or ten of which have been on the scene for a decade or longer.

— There are numerous interest groups and a high conflict level in society caused by the absence of a well-developed middle class, by widespread poverty, unemployment, gender problems, etc.

— The country is in need of urgent political and economic modernization.

— The opposition's potential should be tapped in all spheres of life—the winner should not "take all," as happens in the presidential system.

— The democratic political system, political parties, and civil society should be encouraged to overcome the political heritage of tribalism and regionalism;

— There are charismatic political leaders, such as Bakiev, Kulov, Atambaev, Beknazarov, Otunbaeva, and others.

— The country's division into North and South, as well as the clan and client relations should be taken into account;

— The external factor and the threat of establishing an authoritarian regime (authoritarian neighbors) should not be neglected, nor should the neighboring parliamentary republics (India in Asia and Moldova in Europe);

— Reelection is not limited to a certain number of terms: people can be elected deputies, speaker of the parliament, or appointed prime minister;

— The country should avoid one dominating post, since the South would be displeased with the victory of a Northern candidate and vice versa.

* * *

After March 2005, Kyrgyzstan reached another turning point in its history and, probably, in that of Central Asia as a whole. The country has already missed its first historic chance, yet the nation's stubborn resistance to the authoritarian trend gave the country another opportunity to realize the widest possible political reform to modernize the state and its election and party system, make power more efficient and accountable to the nation, create a modern democratic society, and build a truly democratic, law-based, and open state with a genuine market economy. Nevertheless, this possibility does not guarantee success—much depends on how the political forces will use this chance.

GREAT BRITAIN'S FOREIGN POLICY AND IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM

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Introduction

The United States has been keeping a keen watch on Iran's nuclear research since the beginning of the 1990s. In so doing, Washington is claiming that under the cover of a national peaceful nuclear energy program, Tehran is steadily moving toward creating its own arsenal of nuclear weapons. As early as 1996, in response to the growing suspicions about the existence of such a program in Iran, U.S. Congress adopted the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act which envisages the introduction of harsh measures against foreign companies investing more than 20 million dollars in Iran's energy sector. But after the terrorist attack on the United States in September 2001 and Iran's blacklisting as a country sponsoring terrorism, the White House toughened up its policy against Tehran even more, striving to put a complete stop to research under its nuclear program. In this respect, based on the fact that Great Britain is the U.S.'s key ally in its global policy, it is expedient to take a look at official London's foreign policy approaches both toward Tehran's nuclear program and toward Iran on the whole.

Research Sources in Iran's Atomic Energy Sphere

Iran's political elite began thinking about organizing research in this sphere back during the rule of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi. This pragmatic head of state set about targeted modernization of

the country, acquired modern technology, and created new branches of industry, that is, he steered a course toward forming Iran's industrial, technological, and intellectual might. For example, as early as 1959, he acquired a 5-megawatt reactor from the United States for carrying out his first research work on nuclear energy. The shah essentially planned to build 23 atomic power plants before 1990. But according to experts from the Congressional Research Service, there is no evidence supporting the fact that Iran began creating its own nuclear weapons as early as the reign of the shah.[1]

After the end of the Iranian-Iraqi war of 1980-1988, Tehran renewed its work on the nuclear program on the initiative of the country's president, Hashemi Rafsanjani, whom the U.S. believes to be the father of the Iranian nuclear armament program. In particular, it insisted on Germany's Kraftwerke Union A.G., a joint Siemens and Telefunken venture, completing the construction of an atomic power plant in Bushehr, which began under the shah in 1974. It should be noted that the planned capacity of its two reactors was 1,200 megawatts each, and the total cost of the contract with this German company amounted to 4-6 billion dollars.[2] But under powerful pressure from the U.S., which suspected Iran of carrying out secret work to create its own nuclear weapons, the German company refused to renew the contract. Based on this, in January 1995, the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran signed a document with the Russian Federation Ministry of Atomic Energy on completion by the Russian side of startup-setup operations at the atomic power plant in Bushehr.

In 2002, the National Council of Resistance of Iran provided information that the country's leadership was organizing secret work in the atomic sphere at the Natanz underground nuclear center, a factory for the enrichment of uranium. And in 2004, a scandal broke out relating to the fact that in 1980-1990, Pakistani physicist Abdul Kadir Khan was providing Iran with information on enriching uranium and other materials for research in the atomic sphere. At that time (2004), official Tehran announced its plans to build several atomic power plants in the next 20 years, the total capacity of which would amount to as much as 6,000 MW. What is more, the country's administration repeatedly stated that it was not conducting research to create nuclear weapons.[3] But the United States continued to maintain that Iran was carrying out this work and demanded that it be prohibited.

Official London's Overall Approach to Tehran

It should be noted that British experts view the United Kingdom's policy toward Iran in the context of the country's overall strategy in the Middle East. And in recent decades, according to specialists, British policy is functioning as a bridge between the United States and the European Union, which is naturally having an effect on London's relations with the Middle Eastern countries. The same experts

[1] See: *Iran's Nuclear Program: Recent Developments*, Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress, 2 March, 2004.

[2] See: A. Ommani, "U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Iran and Iran's Nuclear Program," American-Iranian Friendship Committee, 20 June, 2005 [www.swans.com]; A. Koch, J. Wolf, *Iran's Nuclear Facilities: a Profile*, Center for Nonproliferation Studies, 1998; "Iran's Nuclear Program" [http://irans-nuclear-program.brainsip.com].

[3] See: "Iran Denies It's Building Nuclear Bomb," Associated Press, 7 August, 2003; Statement by Mr. G. Ali Khoshroo, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs, Second Session of the Prepcom for the 2005 NPT Review Conference, 29 April, 2003.

are critical of this strategy and believe that Great Britain should be mainly oriented toward Europe and consequently act on the international arena as a member of the European Union.[4] Incidentally, it is noted that Great Britain essentially has the same interests as the other Western states in Iran and the other Middle Eastern countries: ensuring continuous deliveries of oil to their markets; fighting radical political forces and intercepting threats posed by them both to regional stability and to stability in Great Britain itself; fighting terrorism; and preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction and their components. What is more, according to British experts, Great Britain has significant commercial interests in the region relating to the sale of state-of-the-art weapons systems to its countries. But based on mid- and longer-term prospects, the significance of this factor in official London's policy will most likely decline.

On the whole though, in relation to Iran and other Middle Eastern countries, British experts note two approaches in the United Kingdom's policy—diplomatic and strategic.[5] The diplomatic approach is aimed at maintaining good relations with the current regimes, as well as with the political forces which could potentially come to power, thus making it possible to avoid a possible confrontation with them in the future. This approach, like the need to carry out a policy oriented more toward Europe, has many supporters in the Foreign Office and in the leftist wing of the Labor Party and Liberal Democrats. While the strategic approach, according to the same experts, is focused on potential military, political, and ideological threats coming from the region's countries and consequently on the possibilities for smoothing out or opposing these threats. The aggressive anti-Western governments of the region's countries are viewed as such, and consequently in relations with them a policy of containment is recommended. Both this approach and the pro-American foreign policy of the United Kingdom as a whole are supported by the Prime Minister's administration and in certain circles of the Labor and Conservative parties.

As directly concerns Iran's nuclear program, Great Britain's political community is of the opinion that this country needs nuclear energy to meet its growing energy needs, in particular to preserve its non-renewable resources of oil and gas, that is, the main commodities of Iranian export. But, according to British experts, the question nevertheless arises of why a country with the richest supplies of oil and natural gas in the world is stubbornly developing a nuclear program, the goal of which, as it states, is to meet its energy needs.[6]

Main Trends

In contrast to the U.S., Great Britain had rather good relations with Iran at one time, even though the U.K. tended strongly toward America in its foreign policy. For example, in the mid-1990s, London supported the conception put forward by the European Union of establishing a "critical dialog" with Tehran on its nuclear program. In 2002-2003, British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (colloquially called the Foreign Secretary) Jack Straw made several visits to Tehran, during which he characterized Iran's political regime as a nascent democracy. What is more, Jack Straw underlined the presence of good bilateral cooperation and called for a constructive approach in this sphere. In other words, London's relatively "soft" approach toward Tehran contrasted sharply with Washington's hard-line policy in this area.

[4] See: J. Rynhold, "British Policy Toward the Middle East," BESA Perspectives, No. 11, 7 November, 2005 [www.biu.ac.il].

[5] Ibidem.

[6] See: "Campaign For Nuclear Disarmament, Iran and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty," July 2003, CND Briefing, London [www.cnduk.org].

This "softness" could have been caused by the fact that recently, particularly since the beginning of the joint military operation with the U.S. in Iraq, people in Great Britain have begun increasingly expressing their displeasure with the leadership's unconditional support of the United State's foreign policy steps. In particular, Jeremy Corbyn, a Labor MP from the House of Commons, sent the heads of the parliamentary house a written inquiry asking them to "declare some independence in our foreign policy rather than following George Bush from war to war." *The Guardian* published an editorial article at the same time in which Tony Blair was blamed for the deterioration in relations between Iran and Great Britain. As for the above-mentioned inquiry, British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw reiterated that the U.K. government still disagrees with the U.S. hostile policy toward Iran despite its closeness with the Bush Administration.[7]

Some experts noted that Great Britain even asked the United States to leave Iran alone. On this account, Jack Straw noted that his country would not interfere in Iran's internal affairs, emphasizing that official London's policy in this area differs from the American and warned Washington from interfering in Iran's internal affairs, explaining that the Iranians should sort out their domestic policy problems themselves.[8]

In September 2003, a discussion was held in the British parliament regarding London's policy toward Tehran, during which Sir Teddy Taylor (a Conservative Member of the House of Commons) said that it was a "huge error" to have negative relations with Iran. "Iran," he said, "is one of the most sensible countries in the Middle East." In response to this statement, Foreign Office Minister Chris Mullin "decoded" official London's foreign political approach toward Tehran, including toward its nuclear program. For example, according to the Foreign Office Minister, there is no doubt that Iran is a country of growing international importance, and he described the British government's policy toward Iran as pursuing a "constructive and when necessary critical engagement." He cited cooperation in such areas as the fight against drugs, the restoration of Afghanistan, and in efforts to stabilize Iraq. What is more, Chris Mullin said that the United Kingdom supported Khatami's reformist regime aimed at building a civil society based upon the rule of law. But he added that it would be wrong not to set out concerns about Iran, specifying there were worries about human rights, support for terrorist groups, the development of weapons of mass destruction, and Iran's nuclear program. What is more, the Foreign Office representative denied that Tony Blair's government was divided over the U.K.'s policy toward Iran.[9]

Official London's distancing from Washington's approaches to Tehran and its nuclear program was also discussed in November 2004, when British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, talking about the United States' possible military campaign against Iran, stressed that he could not imagine any circumstances "which would justify military measures against Iran. The United Kingdom would not support such a policy, if there ever were such a policy."[10] It is very likely that these words were also prompted by the severe criticism in the country of the activity of Tony Blair's cabinet due to his "attachment" to U. S. policy, that is, the Foreign Office wanted to demonstrate again its independence from Washington.

What is more, it is possible that in this way, the British Foreign Office was trying to emphasize not only its independence, but also its particular orientation toward Europe. We will remind you that at that time the European capitals, primarily Paris and Berlin, criticized the American and British military operation in Iraq, as well as America's approach toward Iran's nuclear program and

[7] See: "Straw Reiterates U.K. Disagreement with U.S. Policy toward Iran," *Payvand's Iran News*, 9 September, 2003 [www.payvand.com/news/03/sep/1048.html].

[8] See: *News*, 17 June, 2003 [www.lenta.ru].

[9] See: "U.K. Denies Divided Policy on Iran," IRNA, 18 September, 2003 [www.globalsecurity.org].

[10] P. Schwarz, "Europe Alarmed by U.S. Threats against Iran," 25 January, 2005, World Socialist Web Site [www.wsws.org].

toward official Tehran on the whole. Consequently, it is entirely possible that Great Britain was also showing its particular orientation toward Europe in its participation in the work of the so-called troika (EU3) which is holding talks on behalf of the European Union with Iran regarding the halting of its nuclear program.

This evaluation of London's policy is perhaps also confirmed by the fact that as early as June 2003, former British Secretary of State Robin Cook, when characterizing London's approach toward Tehran, said that the blind hate of the American administration headed by George Bush for Iran has weakened the reformers and done the religious conservatives a favor. British policy toward Iran should be aimed at supporting the reformers headed by Khatami. This will be both in our interests, and in the interests of the Iranians. This time we should make the White House understand that we do not intend to subordinate the interests of the British nation to the interests of the United States, which is oriented toward a policy of confrontation. Iran cannot become another Iraq.[11]

After a representative of the conservative wing of its political elite, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, came to power in Iran as a result of the presidential election in June 2005, as well as with respect to the decisions of the IRI government in January 2006 to remove the IAEA seals from some of the uranium-enriching equipment at the Natanz nuclear center in effect since 2004 and since modernization of this center began, a tendency toward rapprochement with Washington's hard line has been designated in official London's approaches toward Tehran. What is more, it is possible that victory of a hard-line supporter at the presidential election in Iran meant that the West's hopes for evolution of the political regime in Tehran were crushed to a certain extent.

For example, in an information broadcast by the BBC in January 2005, it was noted that while the U.S. is stubbornly insisting on discussion of the sanctions against Iran at the U.N. Security Council meetings, and is even threatening it with a military campaign, British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw spoke out in support of a carefully considered approach, saying that there is no need to hastily introduce such sanctions.[12] What is more, according to the results of the talks held in Washington, also in January 2005, Jack Straw said that despite the fact that the U.S. supports the idea of carrying out a military campaign against Iran, this question was not even discussed during these talks. Here it is pertinent to note that at this time the Foreign Office prepared a 200-page report, which reviewed the possible actions of the U.S. and EU with respect to Iran's nuclear program, in particular those rejecting any military campaign against official Tehran and recommending establishing talks with it.[13]

But the severe statements of the new Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, addressed to Israel, the U.S., and the West as a whole, in our opinion, essentially buried any hopes, at least for some time, of softening the political regime in Tehran, which also led to a toughening up of London's policy. In this respect, it should be noted that possibly with the aim of provoking a domestic political struggle in Iran and to strengthen the opposition to its current regime, in October 2005, more than 50% of the members of the House of Commons asked the British government to conduct a more adequate policy toward the clerical authorities of this country. In particular, a press release of the British Parliamentary Committee for Iran Freedom, prepared on 13 December, 2005 regarding this initiative, noted the need to remove the terror label from the Mojahedin-e Khalq, the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI), and the restrictions on its activity in Great Britain.[14]

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[11] See: "Robin Cook: So where are the Weapons?" *El Pais* (Spain), 6 June, 2003 [http://www.inosmi.ru/print/183096.html].

[12] BBC News, 25 January, 2006.

[13] See: "U.S.: British Foreign Secretary Says U.S. Committed To Diplomatic Approach Toward Iran," Radio Free Europe Liberty, 25 January, 2005 [www.rferl.org].

[14] See: "The British Parliamentary Committee for Iran Freedom," Press Release, 13 December, 2005 [www.ncr-iran.org].

This initiative was also supported by the House of Lords, which came forward with a corresponding address to the government on 31 January, 2006.[15] (We will note that before the 1979 revolution, Mojahedin-e Khalq conducted an anti-Western policy. But after Shah Mohamed Reza Pahlavi was forced to leave the country, it began organizing terrorist acts against the clerical regime in Iran.[16])

In this way, according to British experts from the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), after revival by the new IRI political leadership of work at the Natanz center, Tony Blair's government has decided to use "more stick and less carrot" in its relations with Iran. For example, during the debate on the Iranian nuclear program held in the British parliament in October 2005, the Foreign Office's Middle East Minister Kim Howells responded to calls from members of parliament for a tougher policy toward Iran with a cryptic message suggesting that "the government is no longer quite as certain that it will never strike Iran's nuclear facilities."[17]

Nevertheless, at the meeting held in London of members of the U.N. Security Council and Germany on 31 January, 2006, an agreement was reached to submit Iran's nuclear dossier to the U.N. Security Council for review, taking into account Russia's proposal to put off any action by the Security Council until March of this year.[18] And on the outcome of this meeting, British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw announced that the U.N. Security Council would not take any measures until March, when the IAEA was due to present it with a detailed report on Iran.

According to the British newspaper *The Guardian*, the U.N. Security Council could adopt a resolution envisaging extremely serious measures—from the application of sanctions to the use of force against Iran. But, the newspaper believes, it is very likely that the Security Council will propose that the IAEA continue monitoring Tehran's nuclear program while simultaneously demanding that it stop work on its uranium enrichment activities and proposing that talks be renewed.[19]

Brief Conclusions

According to the British newspaper *Financial Times*, Iran's nuclear policy is supported by ultra-conservative Ali Khamenei, who is the highest official making decisions on this program,[20] and official Tehran needs nuclear potential to achieve its far-reaching and broad-ranged strategic interests. In this respect, it can be presumed that Iran will continue steering its current course: skillfully maneuvering, playing for time, and balancing, in so doing, on the differences in strategic interests among the U.S., EU, Russian Federation, China, and the Islamic world. There is no doubt that possessing its own nuclear potential will raise Iran to an entirely different level of regional and global policy. Consequently, it will look for new opportunities to continue work on its nuclear program, in which it has already invested billions of dollars.

According to the Israeli newspaper *The Jerusalem Post*,[21] in the next 1.5-2 years, Iran will create its own atomic bomb, although officially it will deny this, stating that it has no such intentions. At the same time, Tehran announced its plans to build seven atomic power plants before 2025.[22]

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[15] See: "Iran: UK Parliamentarians, Jurists Call for De-proscription of PMOI," 31 January, 2006 [www.ncr-iran.org].
[16] See: Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization. Country Report on Terrorism. United States Department of State, April 2005.
[17] "Blair's New Tune on Iran," *Iran Focus*, 22 October, 2005 [www.iranfocus.com].
[18] This article was submitted to the editorial board at the end of February 2006.
[19] See: "Iran Nuclear Crisis Sent to Security Council," *The Guardian*, 1 February, 2006.
[20] See: "Crude Calculation: Why Oil-Rich Iran Believes the West Will Yield to Nuclear Brinkmanship," *Financial Times*, 2 February, 2006.
[21] See: "Putin's Plan for Conflict with Iran," *The Jerusalem Post*, 31 January, 2006 [www.jpost.com].
[22] See: *Iran's Nuclear Program: Recent Developments*, Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress, 23 November, 2005.

As for Great Britain's further relations with Iran, including with respect to Tehran's nuclear program, it is possible that despite its close relations with Washington, London will keep a certain distance from the U.S. But it is very possible that the United States and Great Britain will exert maximum efforts to activate the opposition functioning in Iran and to support the immigrant circles acting outside the country against the regime inside it.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND TRANSITION PERIOD

NATIONAL SECURITY AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN CENTRAL ASIA

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Once more it has become obvious that the national security and civil society structures in nearly all the Central Asian states are impotent. Political power cannot in the long-term perspective oppose interest groups wishing to penetrate local countries.[1] Meanwhile, NGOs are invited to deal with the vitally important issues of international security on an increasingly greater scale. How can the "third sector" be invited to deal with domestic and foreign threats and other deep-cutting political processes without damaging the democratic institutions? How can the state protect the fragile civil institutions from illegal pressure exerted by the power structures and establish viable civilian control? Finally, how can the state tune up the mechanism able to identify "points of contact" and efficient partnership for the sake of common national interests?

[1] Officials of all local countries, Kyrgyzstan included (where under Akaev the per capita number of NGOs was equal to the East European figures), admit that the institutions of civil society are still undeveloped. For example, President of Kyrgyzstan described the local "third sector" and its activities as "marking time" (K. Bakiev, "O partiyakh bez galstukov i bez obiniakov," Interview to the *MCH* newspaper [www.president.kg]).

I. The Necessary Conceptual Adjustments

The primitive formulation of national security as the "exclusive task of the power structures" and of civil society as the "inevitable alternative to political power" continue to interfere with positive social processes. The lower points of political evolution (the civil war in Tajikistan, the terrorist acts in Uzbekistan, the aborted assassination of the Turkmenian president, etc.) were accompanied by the

authorities' more or less sincere appeals to the nation to help the power structures and increase public vigilance. At these moments, the leaders temporarily abandoned their roles of demiurges of social change, while the local political elite skillfully exploited the national mentality (the ordinary people's immense trust in the authorities, psychological intolerance of those who oppose the government, the very specific legal culture, etc.) to strengthen law and order.

The "local" conceptual mindset must be re-adjusted in view of the major social and political events that swept the Muslim East in 2005. I am convinced that today national security should be interpreted as a system which minimizes interference in the spiritual and moral world of the nation's majority and ensures dignified conditions for the nation's continued existence. Civil society, on the other hand, should be described as a structure created by the dialectics of social development which minimizes the government's interference in its functioning and will gradually limit the role of the government as a law-governed state emerges. The "duet" of national security and civil society, be it realized as a conglomerate, sum total, system, or integral whole, makes it possible to supply the above-mentioned cooperation with a theoretical basis.

The following aspects can be described as "mental" constants of national interests (the interests of the lower order) which bring together the national security and civil society structures: their shared rejection of international terrorism, their disapproval of WMD proliferation, the need to prevent technogenic and ecological catastrophes, etc. The need to resolve the problems created by the rental economy, low political culture, spreading poverty, Islamism and chauvinism, and penetration of the "yellow" culture belongs to the national security's "non-traditional" components. This is an interest of the higher order connected with the need to make the political elite and civil society more intelligent. National security and civil society have many "points of contact" and can potentially cooperate with good results.

It was in the age of ideological confrontation that the "lonely" national security system was quite effective. Today, when society is facing the threat of a split of civilizations, it is the civil society institutions which can arrange, better than others, a dialog and bring harmony to national, cultural, and religious relations. The ruling elites of all the Central Asian states have recognized this: between 1991 and 2005 all the Central Asian summits invariably declared that the region needed a common popular front based on geographical proximity and civilizational kinship to fight extremism and terror.[2] Fifteen years of independence have demonstrated that popular diplomacy can create cooperation zones much better than official diplomacy.

There is a certain contradiction between the domestic nature of national security and the global nature of civil society which betrays itself in the region and outside it. First, as distinct from national security, civil society can be universal and equal and function "either for all or for nobody." Second, it has become clear that it can go ahead without state support and the state structures—a fact demonstrated in some of the CIS countries. Third, such a society prefers to keep away from the power structures in favor of public and political influence. Fourth, civil society as a rule does not lean toward national might and the balance of power—it relies on generally accepted international standards and international law.

II. The Recent History of the "First" and "Third" Sectors Partnership

The official policy of "rejection of the past" popular in Central Asia at the early stages of sovereignty made the social transformations somewhat chaotic. The statements which corresponded to

[2] On 11 September, 2005, President of Kazakhstan Nazarbaev said at the second Civil Forum that "the NGOs play a special role in ensuring personal and social security, as well as human rights and freedoms" [www.akorda.kz]. He described "high living standards" as the main aim of the government/"third sector" cooperation.

the Western standards issued by the local political leaders at that time contradicted the practical, "Soviet" methods of their realization, which inevitably worsened the situation in all countries. Industrial decline, more complicated political realities, social tension and the plummeting living standards of most of the nation widened the ideological gap between the intellectuals and the government. In this context, the numerous statements to the effect that "the country aimed to build a state ruled by law and the foundations of a civil society" were obviously premature and, in fact, compromised the idea.

The part of the national elites burdened by the material hardships of the transition period and shackled by the "transit" official national ideologies[3] lingered for a long time at the crossroads of hard social decisions. In the 1990s, the intelligentsia accepted an "unofficial" and in many respects unwelcome invitation to join a new sphere—the "third sector," which functioned on foreign grants. Between 1993 and 2002, the civil society institutions incorporated the best and most charismatic members of the educated classes and creative workers; this resulted in an intellectual imbalance between the government and the nongovernmental community in favor of the latter.

Gradually and spontaneously the civil institutions of the local states learned to function as generators of ideas conducive to crisis settlement and creation of a new regional order to help the Central Asian countries join the world community. Indeed, some of the world-famous writers from Central Asian countries promoted this process: Olzhas Suleymenov from Kazakhstan worked in the sphere of nuclear safety; Chinghiz Aytmatov from Kyrgyzstan was involved in preventing local conflicts; Ozod Sharafiddinov from Uzbekistan, in liquidating the repercussions of environmental disasters; and Loika Sherali from Tajikistan, in preserving territorial integrity. Today, the most respected former diplomats and political figures are promoting regional and interregional integration.

Transformation of tolerance into a factor of the political process achieved late in the 20th century was the best achievement of Central Asian civil societies and contributed to regional security. The creative intelligentsia, the moving force behind the "third sector," managed to preserve public rejection of aggression, annexations, wars, the use of force, riots, militarization, confrontation, terrorism, espionage, in short everything that contradicted long-term vitally important national interests. The local intelligentsia managed to teach their societies that personal, social, and state security could not exist separately; it also took part in finding a niche for their countries in the system of global and international security.

III. Common Threats to Both Sectors

There are five key issues in the total range of "points of disagreements" between the structures of national security and civil society in all the Central Asian republics: cross-border cooperation; information exchange; migration; demilitarization; and economic integration. This is not all that the two sectors should discuss.[4] It is in these spheres, especially in the Ferghana Valley, shared by four out of five Central Asian states, that the divergent national interests of the local states touch upon the common interests of the local civil societies. The "third sector" frequently runs up against

[3] In Central Asia, the tragedy of the man-in-the-street included, among other things, the hard task of abandoning Soviet cosmopolitism for the sake of positive nationalism. Political realities—Draw Apart to Unite—demanded difficult spiritual efforts and the willingness to discard old habits. Many proved unequal to this. The majority rejected the past, yet the future was too vague for the intellectuals to nurse optimistic expectations.

[4] The two structures treat the term "territorial integrity" differently, which is probably explained by its power and public "dimensions." The power aspect is more zealous, more conservative, and more rigid, while the public is more "far-sighted," more progressive, and more flexible. These are probably the two political extremes that create threats to national security of the second order.

the political vectors of international cooperation in the sphere of the simplest, educational and spiritual issues.

The common regional identity of the Central Asian civil societies is fairly developed thanks to the supranational phenomenon present in the practical political integration of the existing international structures (EU, EurAsEC, etc.). The same is probably responsible for the very specific and constructive policy of the institutions of civil society in relation to foreign diasporas. Meanwhile, there is the objective necessity (which the "third factor" has not yet grasped) to create national markets at the first stage in order to merge them at the next stage. It demands that civil society should adapt itself to the old and new threats, and to the risks and challenges of world politics. (In this way, society becomes a bridge between the individual and the state.[5])

As distinct from the national security structures, the civil society structures arrange relations among themselves horizontally, not vertically. In this way, they achieve efficient and equal cooperation among the partners. Small countries (all Central Asian republics belong to this category) profit from this a great deal when pursuing their foreign policies[6] in the context of unbalanced international cooperation typical of the local countries' relations with the world centers of power. Judging by what the local leaders say, the Central Asian political elite is aware of this.

The following opinion commonly shared across the post-Soviet expanse can be accepted in general: "The state is the key agent of change in Russia today, as well as in other countries going through a similar stage of economic development."[7] There is another seemingly erroneous opinion according to which the state and its leaders can ensure national security and realize their "monopoly on the sphere," while civil society is dangerous because it pursues disconnected aims, is ignorant of common interests, and might, therefore, destabilize the country. Meanwhile, in the globalization context, the state cannot claim the right to ensure national security single-handedly, either physically or morally. Hence the conclusion: national security is a result of cooperation and the balancing of group interests.

It seems that the structures with shared national interests can identify their common approaches to their realization. The following aspects should be stressed among the basic principles of cooperation of the national security and civil society structures: combination of centralized leadership of the former with control over them by the latter; timely identification, liquidation, and even prediction of threats and adequate responses to them; sufficient potential of the forces, means, and resources needed to ensure national security and their rational use; correspondence between the real level of readiness (training) for ensuring national security and the required level; and not damaging the international and national security of other countries.

IV. Western Expansion: Small Pros and Big Cons

It was late in the 1980s that the American experience of relations between the government and the "third sector" was brought to Soviet Central Asia by the Soros Foundation. We must admit that

[5] Obviously, national security should be ensured not only to prevent threats, risks, and challenges, but also to promote the individual, human rights and freedoms, and society's material and spiritual values. In other words, not only short-term, but also long-term national interests responsible for the agenda of partnership of the "first" and "third" sectors are involved.

[6] Significantly, Resolution No. 1624 of the U.N. Security Council approved by the jubilee Summit 2005 speaks, for the first time, not only of the states' responsibilities, but also of the need to tap civil society's potential (educational systems, the media, and the business community) to ensure military security. The systems of national security and civil society obviously share certain problems.

[7] Address by Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation S. Lavrov at Stanford University, San Francisco, 20 September, 2005 [www.mid.ru], 24 September, 2005.

Western charities were keeping the local academic communities and creative intelligentsia afloat during the most trying transition period, thus preventing an even greater brain drain and stimulating some of the academic branches. The same applies to the NGOs—the Western lead in their development is generally recognized. The United States and its allies created a developed "third sector" in Central Asia in which, until recently, charity prevailed over realization of the critical national interests in the oil- and gas-rich region.

Unfortunately, it was money from abroad that determined the image of many of the local NGOs. The public organizations caught grantomania, a new and hazardous disease. In fact, the local "third sector" was not to blame: grants created a seemingly shadow branch of public life with quasi patronage programs, strong personnel and considerable technical potential, specific parlance, far-flung geographic contacts, etc. This branch promotes a Western lifestyle in the region. (Network structures are another specific feature of this expansion.)

Today, foreign religious, mainly Christian, expansion is engulfing the region. Sponsored by the West, the missionaries bring new religious movements (in my opinion their number has increased 3.3-fold), most of them still unregistered. The state security structures are concerned with the spread of extremist information in Southern Kazakhstan, Western Kyrgyzstan, and Northern Tajikistan, which does nothing to promote tolerance.

The institutions of civil society treat the image of their countries in a special way. Despite its ideas of charity, the West is promoting the philosophy of individualism, which in principle rejects patriotism. The positive image of one's country (which demonstrates negative development trends) is seen as absolute nonsense: the entities of the imposed philosophy described themselves as victims of "the misfortune of being clever," while the individualists easily parted with the "unwashed country." The adepts of Western influence seem to be unaware of the pitfall: the local intelligentsia with its more or less Islamic conscience has never totally abandoned its love for the Motherland, therefore individualism has no chance in Central Asia.

It seems that by the mid-2003 the Central Asian official structures finally became convinced that the borrowed (fully or partially) patterns of switching over to democracy did not fit the local cultural and historical conditions. The leaders of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan were the first to recognize this. In their speeches they spoke about the need to protect the civil institutions from foreign influence. President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov pointed out: "The desire to plant democracy from outside without due regard for the specific features of states and nations will bring sad and grave results in the same way as this happened with the efforts of exporting communism."[8]

Political activities in any country should be absolutely transparent—this fully coincides with the spirit and values of Western democracy and civil society—historically unique structures different from the Central Asian analogies.[9] This means that the funding of political activities should be absolutely transparent. We cannot tolerate the NGOs being used for funding political activities, especially when the funding comes from abroad. This would obviously become "a foreign policy instrument of other states,"[10] "distort the national political process, and plant a mine under the future development

[8] I. Karimov, *Chelovek, ego prava i svobody, interesy—vysshaia tsennost*, Speech delivered at a gala meeting dedicated to the 13th anniversary of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan [www.press-service.uz].

[9] There are fairly considerable differences between the historical experience of the Central Asian and the Western states (the U.S. in particular). There were absolutely comfortable conditions in the United States, where a civil society grew from the grass-root level. It was based on the Protestant communities that had arrived from England. Today, however, there are certain contradictions between civil society ideals and national security needs. The Patriot Act is one of the examples.

[10] Russian President Putin put this in a nutshell when explaining his position on the improvement of the national laws related to the NGOs and their types of funding. There were different approaches to the problem in Russia, obvious even

of the country."[11] I would like to point out that even though the political parties in Central Asia belong to the civil society sector, under national laws the NGOs that form its core cannot go into politics or commerce.

Washington prefers to ignore the changed official position of the five Central Asian capitals on interaction between the local and foreign NGOs; it insists on its old political line in the region, in particular regarding civil society and national security. On 13 October, 2005, speaking at the Gumilev Eurasian National University in Astana, U.S. State Secretary Condoleezza Rice said: "True stability and true security are only found in democratic regimes. And no calculation of short-term interest should tempt us to undermine this basic conviction. America will encourage all of its friends in Central Asia to undertake democratic reforms."[12]

V. Taking Part in Strengthening Information Security

The events in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan confirmed that the civil institutions should be involved in ensuring information security. Indeed, in conflict situations it was not the opinion prevailing among the local people (or at least of a few sociological services and non-state media) that passed for "public opinion," but the opinions offered by the local branches of foreign and international NGOs (the International Crisis Group, the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, etc.). New relatively independent analytical structures began mushrooming under the "post-revolutionary" conditions, the Regional Politics Foundation in Uzbekistan being one of them. They were patterned on similar Russian non-state structures, such as the Effective Policy Foundation, the Politika Foundation, etc.

The civil society institutions should be invited to fight domestic information threats, such as blending of state and criminal structures in the communication sphere; inadequate budget funding; lower-than-ever efficiency of the system of education and upbringing; shortage of skilled personnel; and the fact that the Central Asian republics are trailing behind the world's leaders where the level of information awareness of the state structures is concerned. Western practices of involving retired politicians in international NGOs (such as Ulof Palme and Jimmy Carter) should be tapped to invite the "third sector" to help create the country's favorable image.

It is advisable to set up public alliances in Central Asia in the form of independent analytical centers to work in the security sphere. Such structures—the International Institute of Contemporary Policies and the Center for Political Research—are already functioning in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, respectively; they contribute to resolving regional and global problems and are active in the foreign policy field. They are staffed with retired officers of the power structures, as well as academics specializing in military security, world politics, and international relations. We can obviously set up NGOs for studying the state's problems independently from its power bodies.

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inside executive power. As a result the adopted amendments reflected public opinion to a greater extent [than the original version] (see: *Vstrecha V. Putina s predsedatelem Soveta po sodeystviu razvitiu institutov grazhdanskogo obshchestva i pravam cheloveka Elloy Pamfilovoy 24 November, 2005* [www.kremlin.ru]).

[11] S.V. Lavrov, op. cit.

[12] [usinfo.state.gov].

[13] [www.mid.ru].

VI. How Unity Can Be Strengthened

To influence decision-making in the national security sphere, civil society should be constantly aware of the opinions prevailing in the nation to be analyzed, generalized, and listed as a short enumeration of political alternatives offered as part of the state's foreign policy and defense programs. This is the road toward the most realistic state course, on the one hand, and public control over its realization, on the other. We should take account of Western experiences and all opinions about ensuring national security—from liberal pragmatism to healthy conservatism. A "club of rational discussions" can be set up to make this task easier.

Today, it is strategically important to ensure the security of civil society itself, that is, competitiveness, to use a Russian political term. What can be done to achieve this? Laws should be improved to allow citizens take part in political decision-making through polls, public hearings, public assessments, and referendums; we need structures that will implement political decisions related to civil society and be staffed with third sector members. There is the Public Chamber in Russia, the Council of Promoting Civil Society in Uzbekistan, the National Democratization Commission in Kazakhstan, etc.; public movements and charities need financial support; the NGOs should primarily be involved in fighting poverty and helping the needy; laws should be adjusted to develop public control in the form of public "inspections" and make it more effective, etc.

It would be short-sighted to deny the NGO sector wide financial support. Analyses have confirmed that the West spends nearly 10 times more than the Central Asian republics on public associations in the region. This is hardly conducive to "discontinuing the export of democracy," as the official structures insist. Many of the post-Soviet states accepted positive discrimination as the road toward equal starting conditions in the civil society sphere.[13] On the one hand, local public organizations should receive privileges, on the other, similar foreign structures will have to pay taxes. (To keep within the article's subject I shall not dwell on Russia's practice of setting up a Donors' Council.)

In the near future the Central Asian "third sector" will be able to fill the local niche of "soft security" and contribute to fighting drugs, homelessness, and environmental pollution. This is confirmed by a considerable number of NGOs working in these spheres on American grants. This sector can gradually acquire legal forms of effective civil control over the power structures. This is already taking place today in the form of the NGOs' involvement in parliamentary hearings in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, etc.

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The Central Asian countries have not yet acquired a middle class, the cornerstone of a civil society, yet the need to ensure national security is forcing the states to place higher demands on the "third sector." Civil society, which can help carry out this task, cannot be produced by a simple legal act—it is a long process. Time is needed, probably as much as 50 years; the main thing, however, is the state's effective activities, which would describe it as a social state. In the final analysis, the statehood of Central Asian countries depends on their ability to build a civil society.

COMMUNITY ELECTIONS IN RURAL AFGHANISTAN

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Introduction

One of the major rural reconstruction and local governance capacity development initiatives of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is the National Solidarity Program (NSP). This community empowerment program, which receives financial support from the World Bank and several other international donors,[1] was initiated in 2002.

NSP is in essence a "community-driven" development program that distributes blockgrants for community-owned rehabilitation projects, and governance learning. One distinguishing feature of NSP is that communities interested in joining the program first must *elect* a Community Development Council (CDC), locally referred to as *shura*. Once the CDC is established, it is being entrusted by the Government to spearhead socioeconomic development initiatives at the community level.

[1] By February 2005, The World Bank had contributed or pledged to contribute $240 Million; in addition, the following Governments either contributed or pledged to contribute the following amounts of money: Denmark: $9 million; Germany: $6.1 million; Japan: $11 million; Norway: $1.1 million; United Kingdom: $5.7 million; and United States: $10 million.

Rarely before in the history of Afghanistan—where illiteracy is high—have rural Afghans (neither men nor certainly women) experienced or participated in secret ballot (one man/women, one vote) elections.[2] The Government's decision to include rural communities in the NSP project identification, planning and implementation process; and to finance village project proposals by entrusting considerable amounts of money into the hands of village institutions, is also something unheard of in the history of Afghanistan.

[2] See: I. Boesen, *From Subjects to Citizens: Local Participation in the National Solidarity Program*, Afghanistan Research & Evaluation Unit (AREU), Kabul, 2004 (see also: L. Duprée, *Afghanistan*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1980.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze how the introduction of a secret ballot election process—that prohibits campaigning and electioneering tactics—has impacted the effectiveness of a major grassroots reconstruction effort in post-Taliban Afghanistan. The paper presents the history, goals and objectives of NSP; the NSP election process; and quantitative data from community elections held 1057 villages of 15 districts of the Afghan provinces of Bamyan, Farah, Herat, Kandahar, and Parwan. The paper also discusses the subjective dimensions of community members' NSP election experience; and concludes with an analysis how representative election processes can nurture and protect the integrity of grassroots-driven reconstruction efforts in post-conflict contexts such as rural Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's National Solidarity Program

Historical Antecedents

NSP has its roots in seven years of successful, Afghan-owned grassroots development action research facilitated by the United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-HABITAT), prior to and during the Taliban years from 1995 and 2001. During these years, UN-HABITAT facilitated the establishment of urban "community forums". The forums originally consisted of men and women representatives nominated by urban communities. After the Taliban had taken power in 1995, the forums had to be segregated—at least on the surface—into men and women community forums. Through a process of regular community consultations, these forums would initiate small-scale self-initiative projects that addressed urgent urban community infrastructure maintenance and protection needs. After the fall of the Taliban, then-Interim-President Hamid Karzai, in his Tokyo Declaration of January 2002, expressed the need to launch an "emergency community empowerment program" to assist Afghanistan's ailing rural populations. Given UN-HABITAT's successful model of facilitating Afghan-owned grassroots development initiatives, and encouraged by evidence collected by the World Bank[3] regarding the social and economic feasibility of community-driven development projects in post-conflict and developing countries, UN-HABITAT Afghanistan was invited in June 2002 to design a program that later was given the name of *Hambastagie Millie Paiwastoon*, or National Solidarity Program.

NSP implementation was eventually initiated by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD)—with UN-HABITAT as its first "Facilitating Partner" Agency—in 15 districts

[3] See: Ph. Dongier, J. van Dumelen, E. Ostrom, A. Rizvi, W. Wakeman, A. Bebbington, S. Alkire, T. Esmail, M. Polski, "Community-Driven Development," in: *A Soucebook for Poverty Reduction Strategies*, ed. by J. Klugman, The World Bank, Washington, DC, 2002, pp. 303—331.

of the Provinces of Bamyan, Farah, Herat, Kandahar and Parwan (covering altogether 1,066 villages, which amounts to 240,000 families, or 1.3 million people). Between July and December 2003, MRRD contracted 21 additional national and international NGOs who started to implement NSP in an additional 73 districts, raising the number of participating communities to 6,130. In 2005, NSP expanded to cover 187 (out of 388 districts), expanding the number of villages (and thereby CDCs) up to 11,000. Further expansion is anticipated for 2006.

NSP Goals, Objectives and Community Mobilization Strategy

The goal of the NSP is to reduce poverty through community empowerment. NSP seeks to accomplish its goal by promoting—on the one hand—good grassroots governance and institutional capacity development, by enabling CDCs to plan and implement socioeconomic development initiatives. On the other hand, NSP seeks to rehabilitate Afghanistan's rural infrastructure through the disbursement of blockgrants and technical assistance to CDCs facilitating community-based reconstruction efforts.[4] By forming and actively engaging CDCs in the roll-out of the NSP project planning and implementation process (see Table 1), "on-the-job institutional capacity building" opportunities were to be created, which facilitate "conscientization" and "transformational learning."[5]

Depending on the number of families residing in a village, communities were entitled to receive funding, ranging from US$10,000 up to US$60,000, to implement infrastructure reconstruction projects identified as a priority need by the community. In order to become eligible for an NSP grant, communities first had to elect their CDC. This requirement was to ensure that village governance institutions were truly representative, and reflective of the diverse needs and aspirations of all population groups residing in a community. In contrast to Western election practices, however, the NSP Operations Manual mandates a registration and election process that is free from political propaganda, electioneering and campaigning processes. This was done in order to ensure that elections will not create division or elitist usurpation of election results: "Prohibition of candidature and electioneering is critical to reduce the likelihood of elite capture and intimidation, recognizing that it will not remove it."[6]

NSP and the Establishment of Community Development Councils

Effective and sustainable socioeconomic development requires institutions capable of mobilizing, nurturing, managing and maintaining community-owned development initiatives.[7] In Afghani-

[4] See: Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), *NSP Operational Manual*, MRRD/World Bank, Kabul, 20 March, 2004.

[5] "Conscientization" describes a process "…in which men [sic!], not as recipients, but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness both of the sociocultural reality which shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality" (see: P. Freire, in: Sh.B. Merriam, R.S. Caffarella, *Learning in Adulthood: A Comprehensive Guide*, Second Edition, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 1999, p. 325. Transformational Learning is a development and change process of personal perspectives used in the interpretation of the meaning of one's experience, in order to guide future action (see: J. Mezirow, in: Sh.B. Merriam, R.S. Caffarella, op. cit., p. 319).

[6] Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), p. 15.

[7] See: M. Gramberger, *Citizens as Partners: OECD Handbook on Information, Consultation and Public Participation in Policy-Making*, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Paris, 2001; N. Uphoff, *Local Institutional Development: An Analytical Sourcebook with Cases*, Kumarian Press, West Hartford, 1986.

Table 1

NSP Implementation Process Used by UN-HABITAT

Phase 1:

Raising Community Awareness

- **Contacting Key Community Representatives**
- **Small Group Meetings for Discussing Community Assets and Problems, and the Feasibility of a Community Development Council, thereby Generating Demand for a Large Community Gathering**

Phase 2:

Establishing the Community Development Council

- **Holding a large community gathering for acknowledgement of community resources and problems, for the realization of the importance and need of CDCs to take charge of community project activities, and for agreement on the selection of a committee to supervise the CDC election process**
- **Electing and registering the Community Development Council**
- **CDC Mission Statement, and Endorsement of Mission Statement by Community Groups**

Phase 3:

Community Development Plan

- **Preparing a Community Development Plan & Establishment of the Community Fund Box**
- **Community Endorsement of the Development Plan**
- **Community Self-Initiative Project**

Phase 4:

Project Design & Submission of Project Proposal

- **Designing the Community Project(s)**
- **Community Endorsement of Project Design(s)**
- **Write-up of the Community Project Proposal(s)**
- **Submission of Community Project Proposal(s) to Government authorities**

Phase 5:

Project Implementation, Monitoring & Evaluation

- **Implementation, Monitoring & Reporting on NSP Project Progress**
- **Final Project Evaluation & Handover of Project**
- **Reflection on Project Learning Experience; Review of Community Development Plan.**

stan, the institution which best matches the definition of grassroots institutions is the "shura" which—in accordance with Islamic polity—is expected to practice *ijma* ("consensus seeking") and *shura* ("consultation") as preconditions for competent and fair governance performance.[8]

Yet, the traditional village shuras of post-Taliban Afghanistan frequently lacked the characteristics necessary for making them legitimate and effective NSP partner institutions. The traditional shuras' membership was often non-representative of its village constituency. Members happened to be appointees of commanders[9] or wealthy families, with a history of working for the interests of the powerful rather than the politically marginalized. Women were usually not shura members. Traditional shuras did not play a proactive development role in the community. During the past 22 years of war, they usually met to discuss emergencies, or they served traditional purposes such as funeral or wedding ceremonies, or reception of important guests. They lacked the mandate, as well as the capacity to design and carry out community project initiatives, or to facilitate village-wide community consultations.

The purpose of CDC elections was therefore to facilitate—by means of a secret-ballot election process—the emergence of a cadre of village representatives who had a majority-vote mandate. At the same time, a framework for village level consultative decision-making had to be introduced.

Introducing the concept of elections to Afghan rural communities was a challenge for multiple reasons: first of all, there was almost no precedent of holding elections in rural areas. Secondly, there is a high rate of illiteracy within Afghan communities.[10] Thirdly, the notion of women participating in the elections touched a sensitive nerve of Afghan men in many tribal areas. The fourth major challenge lay in the fact that the terms "elections" and "democracy" were deemed to be Western inventions; and therefore mistrusted by hard-core Islamists who suspected NSP to be part of a concerted Western attempt to undermine Afghan and Islamic values and culture. It was furthermore feared that local political parties ("tanzeems") could use NSP elections as a vehicle to bring divisive party politics to the village level; or that the government or commanders would use their political, military or financial means to influence the establishment of CDCs for their own political purposes.

Rather than mandating democratic elections, NSP "Social Organizers"—i.e. the field staff advising and coaching representatives of villages participating in NSP—first organized community-wide small-group gatherings where villagers would consult about their economic, social and organizational community problems. As a result, two proposals would emerge: one addressing the need and value of regular consultation on village development needs; and another one to have a smaller group of trustworthy and competent representatives who could make decisions on behalf of the community.

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[8] See: A.R. Moten, "Democracy as Development: Muslim Experience and Expectations," in: *Political Development: An Islamic Perspective,* ed. by Zeenath Kausar, The Other Press, Petaling Jaya, 2000, pp. 103—123.

[9] Commanders are military operators originally appointed by rural communities who wished to resist the Russian invasion. Afghans refer to this time as "Jihad Time." In order to be well-prepared for Jihad activities, commanders would—with community financial support—build and arm cadres of village soldiers who would fight under their command. Later, additional financial resources were obtained from Afghan political parties operating outside of Afghanistan (and which, in turn, would receive funds from international political interest groups) (see: A. Hyman, *Afghanistan under Soviet Domination, 1964-1991,* 3rd rev. edition, Pelgrave MacMillan Press, New York, 1992).

After the withdrawal of the Russians, in-fighting broke out in Afghanistan. As the Russians were gone, villagers were less inclined to sponsor military operations; in addition, the many years of war had already caused considerable material hardships. Whereas some wealthier commanders continued to secure financial support from abroad, less-fortunate commanders faced financial difficulties and began to claim village tax by force.

[10] According to UNICEF, Afghanistan's adult male population was—in 2000—51% literate, whereas female adults were 21% literate. Literacy in rural areas is obviously lower than in urban centers (see: United Nations Children's Fund, *The State of the World's Children 2005: Childhood under Threat,* UNICEF, New York, 2004, p. 132.

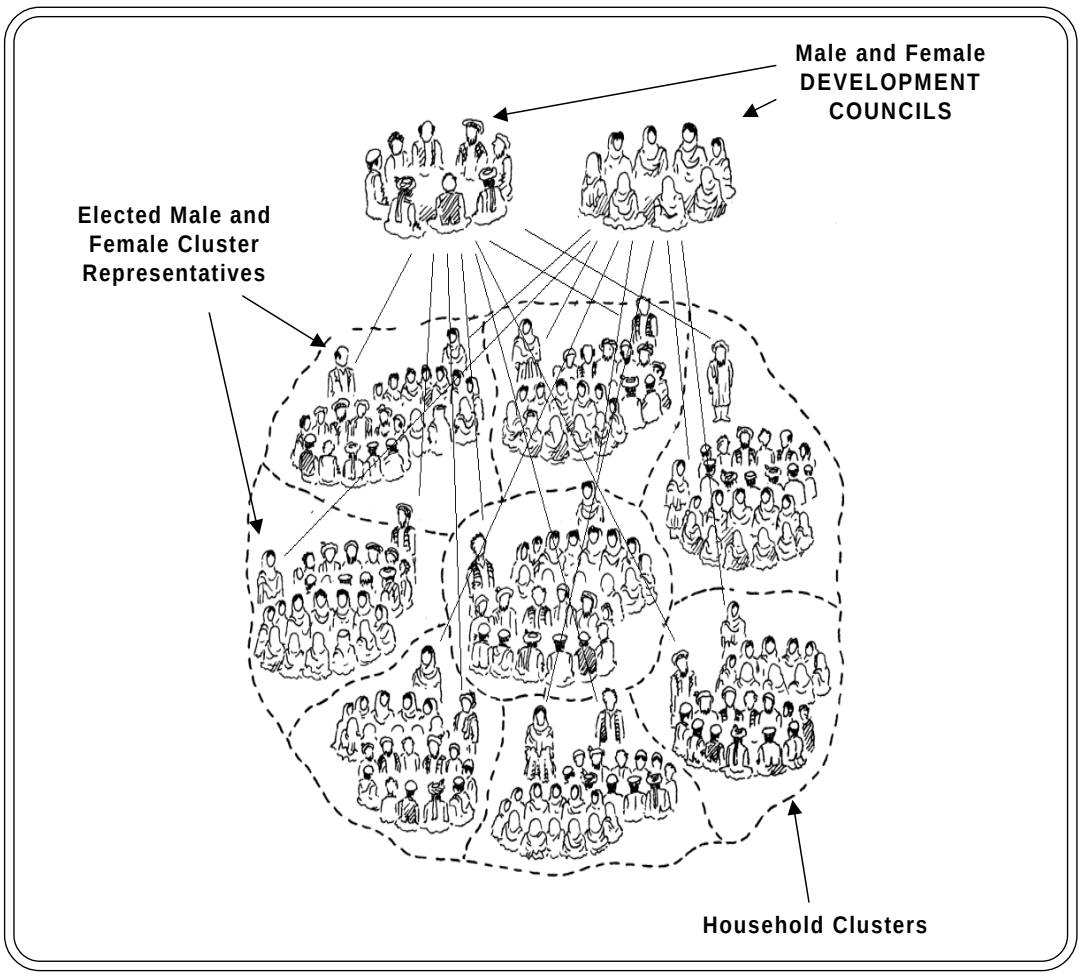
NSP Elections Process

In order to elect "cluster representatives," communities were divided into geographic clusters of 10-30 families, with an average of 6-8 persons per family (see Fig. 1). Any cluster member aged 18 or older was entitled to vote for one cluster representative, while serving as an eligible candidate at the same time.

Voting was done by casting stamped ballots, which were later counted by an appointed committee of tellers. Illiterate members would select a "secretary" of their choosing and dictate the name of their preferred candidate.[11] As the Religion of Islam emphasizes the importance of "just govern-

Figure 1

Development Council Elections



[11] In the Province of Kandahar, one community (where illiteracy was rampant) decided that the writing of the candidate's name on the ballot should happen outside the building where the vote was to be cast. After the ballot was prepared, the illiterate voter would enter the house where the ballot box was located. Next to the box, a child was seated which happened to know how to read and write. The child would then read the name of the ballot once again to the illiterate person casting the ballot so that the voter could be absolutely sure that the name written on the ballot by the "secretary" was indeed the name that had been dictated.

ance,"[12] and Islamic literature equally endorses the concept of just and service-oriented governance,[13] religious citations, poetry and proverbs were used to facilitate discussions about the importance of choosing reliable and competent CDC representatives.

The geographic (or spatial) cluster approach (see Fig. 1) helped to ensure that there was representation from each part of the community. Like almost everywhere in the world, settlements tend to be divided into "good" (e.g. "close to water") areas, and "not-so-good" areas (e.g. "far from water"). Elites (whether ethnic, political or religious) tend to accumulate and inhabit the "good" neighborhoods, rather than the "bad" ones. The purpose of electing council members on a cluster basis was to ensure that all cluster facets of the community were represented on the CDC.[14]

Notwithstanding the advice of political strategists who argued that campaigning and electioneering was necessary in order to introduce unknown candidates to the electorate (i.e., "people will not know who to vote for unless candidates campaign…"), it was assumed that in a cluster-based election, community members knew each other from a life-time of coexistence, and were therefore very well familiar with each others' personalities. Campaigning or electioneering was therefore discouraged and prohibited.

Prior to the elections, community members were asked to discuss character qualities and competencies considered crucial for CDC membership and a satisfactory CDC job performance. Usually,

Table 2

Examples of Desirable Characteristics & Competencies of CDC Representatives Commonly Identified by Communities

Characteristics:
■ Honesty
■ Likes the people
■ Open-mindedness
■ Fairness
■ Social sensitivity
Competencies:
■ Good communicator
■ Able to advocate
■ Able to mobilize the community
■ Able to take initiative

Source: Authors.

[12] See, for example: "Sura 57:25" in the *Holy Qur'ân—English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary*. Revised and edited by the Presidency of Islamic Researchers, IFTA, Call and Guidance (1413 H.). Al Madinah Al-Munawarah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Fahd Complex For the Printing of the Holy Qur'ân; see also *Hadith—Translation of Sahih Bukhari*, Transl. by M. Muhsin Khan, Vol.1, 3:56; Vol. 8, 78:619, available on [http://arthurwendover.com/arthurs/islam/].

[13] See, for example, *Nahjul Balaagha: Letters of Imam Alí b. Abi Taalib*, Chapter 18, available on [http://arthursclassicnovels.com/arthurs/islam/letrsnb10.html] (see also: Muslih-uddin Sheikh Sa'di Shirazi, *The Gulistan of Sa'di*, Transl. by Sir Edwin Arnold, 1899, Chapter 6, available on [http://www.intratext.com/X/ENG0160.HTM]).

[14] Whereas NSP originally mandated the establishment of one CDC per village, it was very soon recognized that women's voices were more likely to be surfacing in institutional settings where women were among themselves rather than together with men. MRRD therefore amended the one-CDC policy in 2004, in order to allow for women and men CDCs especially in those areas where the idea of mixed CDCs was unacceptable for cultural or religious reasons.

social organizers would recite a poem of Sa'di, or a verse from the Hadith that emphasized the importance of "good character," thereby jumpstarting brainstorming sessions about desirable "CDC Representative" characteristics (see Table 2 for an exemplary list). Immediately before casting their vote, social organizers and community activists assisting in the elections would remind voters once again to identify—in their "heart of hearts"—the individual that best matched the characteristics and competencies previously identified.

Data Collection Process

Throughout the 2003/2004 election activities, UN-HABITAT studied CDC election outcomes in the various provinces. In order to collect pertinent data, UN-HABITAT used questionnaires for verifying whether elections had been conducted in accordance with NSP principles. The questionnaires were distributed to NSP Social Organizers who would document election results during field visits carried out on a regular basis. The collected data was eventually entered into a database, and analyzed.

Election Results

In the following, information from 1,057 villages (out of 1,066 villages covered by UN-HABITAT) of 15 districts across five provinces will be presented. Since NSP outreach was organized in three subsequent implementation cycles lasting four months each, this data analysis also distinguishes between data collected during the different implementation cycles. Whenever villagers were not willing to disclose, for example, age and social status (this happened occasionally), percentages were calculated from the numbers available.

Election Statistics

By May 2004, a total of 1,774 CDCs had been elected. While 1,057 communities had elected male or mixed CDCs, 717 communities opted to elect female CDCs in addition to the male CDCs.

During the preparation for the election of the CDCs, 448,145 persons (approximately 42% of the total estimated population) were registered as eligible voters. Among them 59% were men and 41% women. As 57% of the Afghan rural population is estimated to be younger than 18,[15] a significant number of the village residents did not participate in the elections. Furthermore, particularly in the southern province of Kandahar—where cultural conservatism, and fear of Taliban retaliation are still very strong—women were not allowed to participate in the voting.

When the elections were conducted, 71% of the eligible voters actually voted, which is a significant turnout. More women (73% of eligible female voters) compared to 71% for men participated in the election. This was significantly higher than the minimum 40% participation mandated in the NSP Operational Manual.

A total of 15,365 persons were elected to the male and female CDCs, among whom 58% were men and 42% women. The percentage of female elected CDC members was just about equal to men in Herat and Farah (due to the fact that communities chose to elect male and female CDCs). In locations where only one CDC was established, male CDC members outweighed female CDC members.

[15] See: Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan, *Afghanistan—Progress of Provinces: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2003,* Central Office of Statistics, Kabul, 2003, p. 98.

The percentage of registered voters indicates that communities were open to support the CDC election process after having had the chance to discuss and endorse the rationale behind the CDC elections. In other words, it would have been impossible for such a large percentage of community members to register for elections, if the community as a whole was opposed to the process. The "surprisingly" strong participation of female voters is actually "not so surprising," if one considers that male registered voters often work outside the village and therefore may have been prevented from attending elections for work-related reasons. Women—on the other hand—could be contacted at their homes in order to request the casting of their ballots. Radio messages aired by the Government to prepare people for the October 2004 Presidential Election may have also helped to facilitate and enhance women's participation.

Literacy

On average, one in four elected members reported being able to read and write. Compared to only 19.9% reported as literate during the Cycle "1" village elections, the number of *literate* people being elected as CDC members holding a position of a CDC officer (chair, vice-chair, secretary or treasurer) increased to 35.8% in Cycle "3" (see Fig. 2). This is true for both male CDC members

Figure 2

Literacy within CDCs

		Number Literate				*Percent Literate*			
Position	**Gender**	**Cycle 1**	**Cycle 2**	**Cycle 3**	**TOTAL**	***Cycle 1***	***Cycle 2***	***Cycle 3***	***TOTAL***
Chair	Male	59	103	90	252				
	Female	13	17	38	68				
	TOTAL	**72**	**120**	**128**	320	**2.6**	**3.2**	**4.5**	3.4
Vice Chair	Male	47	105	80	232				
	Female	10	17	25	52				
	TOTAL	**57**	**122**	**105**	284	**2.1**	**3.3**	**3.7**	3.0
Treasurer	Male	45	97	114	256				
	Female	18	15	30	63				
	TOTAL	**63**	**112**	**144**	319	**2.3**	**3.0**	**5.1**	3.4
Secretary	Male	106	130	137	373				
	Female	65	66	98	229				
	TOTAL	**171**	**196**	**235**	602	**6.3**	**5.2**	**8.3**	6.5
Member	Male	164	237	340	741				
	Female	17	29	66	112				
	TOTAL	**181**	**266**	**406**	853	**6.6**	**7.1**	**14.3**	9.2
Total Literate	**Male**	**421**	**672**	**761**	1,854	***15.4***	***18.0***	***26.8***	***19.9***
	Female	**123**	**144**	**257**	524	***4.5***	***3.9***	***9.0***	***5.6***
	TOTAL	**544**	**816**	**1,018**	2,378	**19.9**	**21.8**	**35.8**	25.5
Total Count		**2,735**	**3,738**	**2,840**	9,313				

(with an increase from 15.4% to 28.8%), as well as female CDC members (with an increase of 4.5% to 9.0%).

It is noteworthy that rural communities in Afghanistan tend to elect capable elders as chairs (notwithstanding their illiteracy) because they are revered. Treasurers are being selected for their trustworthiness, which is appraised higher than literacy. Hence, if there is a lack of candidates who are trustworthy *as well as* numerate, then trustworthiness will be considered first when voting a CDC member into the CDC Treasurer's Office. As communities started to realize the responsibilities of these executive positions, more literate people were being elected as Secretary as Treasurers. Yet, the literacy level of treasurers continued to be lower than desirable.

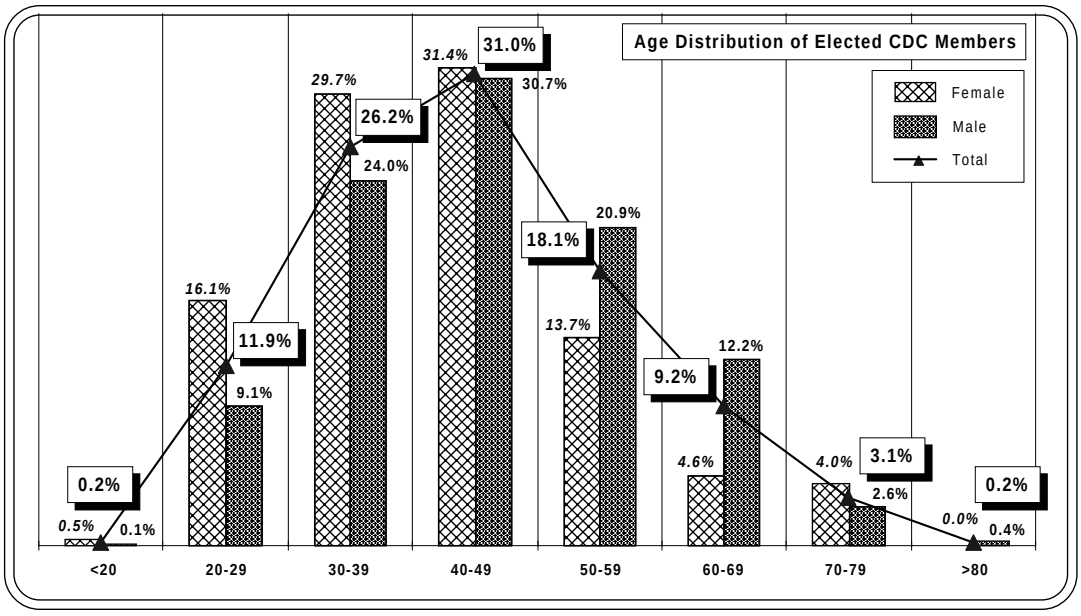
Age

While the majority of the elected members were below 50 years, female members elected to the CDCs were younger compared to male members. 66% of the male members elected were below the age of 50 while 78% of the female were less than 50 years old (see Fig. 3). This is significant for a culture where authority and competence is associated with a combination of personality and age, rather than education or skills. On the other hand, the need to elect literate community members onto CDCs, as well as the fact that only 8.6% of Afghanistan's rural population is estimated to be older than 50 years of age[16] indicates that the pool of eligible elders was already limited in size.

50% of the Secretaries and 46% of Treasurers were below 40 years of age. 60% of the chairpersons, 51% of the Vice Chair persons, and 50% of general members were between 40 and 60 years

Figure 3

Age Distribution of Elected CDC Members



[16] See: Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan, *Afghanistan—Progress of Provinces: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2003,* Central Office of Statistics, Kabul, 2003, p. 98.

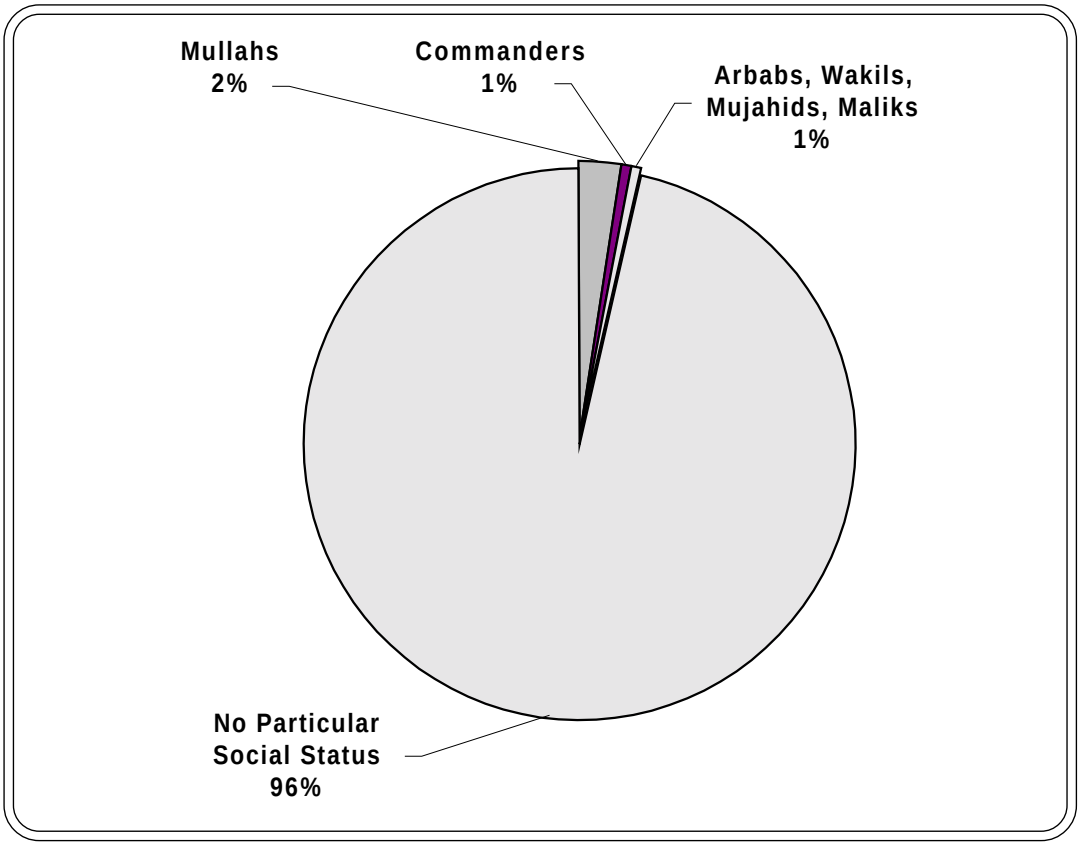
of age. During the first (Cycle "1") round of elections, there was a tendency amongst women and men CDCs to elect a younger person as Vice Chair and Secretary, while slightly older persons were elected as Chair, Treasurer or regular member. This pattern changed slightly by the third round of elections. One explanation for this phenomenon could be that—again—older people, while appreciated for their maturity, are less likely to be literate, and perhaps also less energetic than younger community members.

Social Status

Out of 13,684 total elected members for whom social status data was available, only 341 persons (2.5%) identified themselves as Mullahs and 73 (0.5%) as Commanders. Another 88 persons (0.6%) identified themselves as "Arbabs" (Landlord), "Wakils" (Neighborhood Representatives), "Mujahids" (Holy War Veterans), "Maliks" (Community Leaders), "Sayeds" (Descendants of the Prophet), or "Maolawees" (Preachers and Religious Scholars) (see also Fig. 4). Proportionately more Mullahs were being elected as CDC members than any other category. This may be due to the religious respect Mullahs enjoy, or demand, in rural communities; in addition, Mullahs are usually literate and effective communicators, and therefore very much wanted on a CDC.

Figure 4

Percentage of CDC Members of Special Social Status



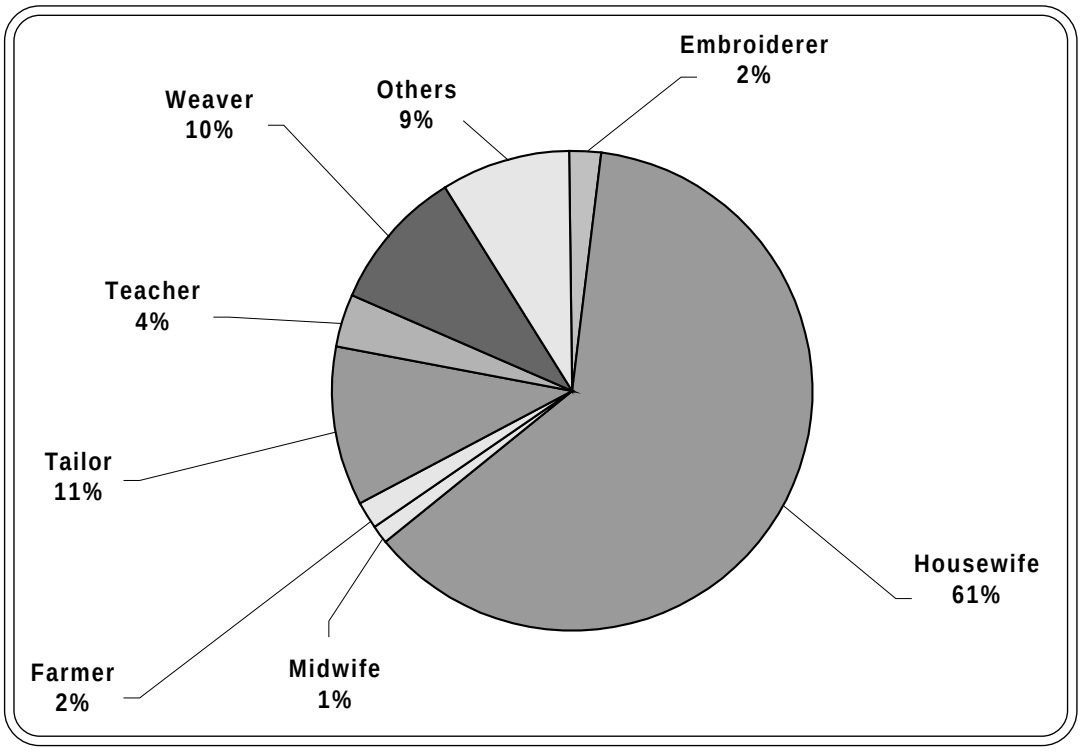
This low percentage of CDC members holding a socially significant rank is particularly interesting. Why is it—so one must ask oneself—that certain individuals treated in public with special respect and reverence—did not find themselves elected more frequently onto CDCs? Several answers are possible: Firstly, community members were initially very suspicious toward NSP and would not care to appoint traditional leadership figures to sit on an institution mandated by the only recently established Afghan Government. Secondly, the fact that voters could only vote for one member per community cluster automatically reduced the possibility of voting for more than one status person per cluster. Thirdly, secret ballot elections provided voters with the welcome opportunity to secretly express dissent with a traditional powerholder. Finally, both the Islamic admonition to not delegate authority to people of questionable character[17], as well as the "non-electioneering/non-campaigning" policy stated in the NSP Operational Manual may have resulted in fewer traditional powerholders ending up on the CDCs.

This notwithstanding, Cycle "3" election results indicate an increased number of commanders and mullahs being elected into CDCs. This increase is potentially worrying because it reverses a previous opening up of the traditional "power-grip" that allowed "regular" community members (such as ordinary farmers, women and younger people) to participate in local decision-making processes.

Various dynamics may have contributed to this phenomenon: Firstly, it may be possible that traditional powerholders were taken somewhat by surprise when NSP elections took place for the first

Figure 5

Professional Backgrounds of Female CDC Representatives



[17] See, for example: *Hadith of Bukhari*, Vol. 4, p. 56.

time. They did not anticipate the possibility that they might not be voted onto the CDC. Yet, observant powerholders of communities waiting to join NSP perhaps reflected, and then made sure to do whatever was deemed necessary in order to not suffer the same fate as their colleagues residing in Cycle "1" villages.

A second reason may be that UN-HABITAT staff—pressured by over-ambitious and unrealistic NSP project implementation time schedules—began to slacken in carefully discussing, facilitating and supervising CDC elections in the various Cycle "3" communities.

One can observe here a potential weakness in the overall NSP design. Unless community mobilization and election processes are allowed to take the time necessary for adequate training, frequent and regular visits, reflection and finally implementation, programs such as NSP will fail to produce the desired transformational impact.

Profession

63% of the male elected CDC members were farmers and ranchers, while 72% of the female CDC members were homemakers. The rest of the CDC members represented a very large range of professions.

Regarding women members, another 13% were either tailors, or silk-, wool-, or carpet weavers. The remaining 15% identified themselves either as teachers, quilt or embroidery producers, farmers, health workers (such as nurse or midwife), or students (see Fig. 5).

From the male CDC members not belonging to the farmer category, 11% identified themselves as teachers, 7% as shopkeepers, and 3% as businessmen. The remaining 16% of male elected members represented the following areas: civil service (nearly 6%), weavers (4%), traditional service providers such as drivers, technicians and mechanics (2%); landowners (2%); doctors, engineers or architects (1%); as well as students, laborers, retired or jobless members (less than 1%) (see Fig. 6).

Social and Emotional Dimensions of the NSP Election Experience

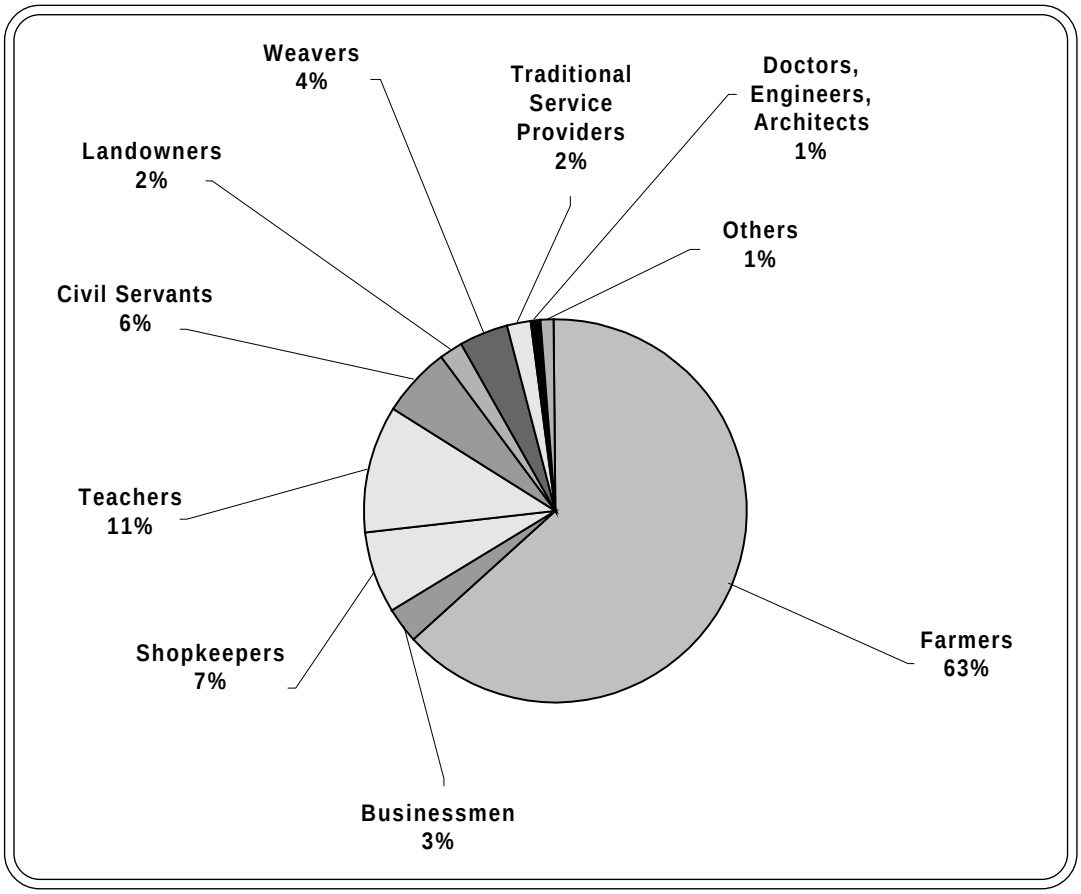
It is probably impossible for Western observers to ever appreciate deeply enough Afghan communities' bitter experiences of 20 years of war, humiliation, hardship material sacrifice, political betrayal and exploitation. Years of humanitarian and development aid have left people feeling marginalized and dependent on the decisions of foreign actors, and all too often prey to local elite capture.

It is therefore to the credit of the Government of Afghanistan and its Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development that NSP managed to build a new momentum of trust by recognizing villagers as deserving and equal partners in the process of a nationwide socioeconomic reconstruction effort. The CDC election component facilitated for most rural Afghans a first-time secret-ballot voting experience that indicated that their vote was valued, respected and appreciated.

The significance of NSP elections was probably felt even stronger amongst women, who—for cultural reasons—suffer an additional exclusion within the community context. In the words of one female Social Organizer: "NSP elections helped women rediscover their dignity of being a community member." At the same time, however, the inclusion of women into election processes created feel-

Figure 6

Professional Backgrounds of Male CDC Representatives



ings of anger and shame amongst the male population, which erroneously assumes that women's participation in public decision-making processes is anti-Islamic. [18]

Secret-ballot elections helped to take care of a significant *fear* factor prevalent in Afghan society, namely the threat of persecution, the risk of "loosing face," and social embarrassment. Secret-ballot elections enabled Afghans to vote for somebody else than the traditional powerholders, or "close relatives"—without having to lay open their real preferences, thereby avoiding to identify themselves in public (as it would be the case when leaders are appointed by the raising of hands). It has happened frequently that those publicly identified by community members as "their leaders" did only collect a handful of votes during the secret-ballot election process.[19] Secret-ballot elections effectively prevented

[18] Women's participation in building up social life of Muslim communities is a well-documented historic fact. The Prophet Muhammad used to consult on a regular basis with His wife Khadidja, a well-respected business woman. Women working outside their homes did so with the knowledge and approval of the Prophet; some women even participated in "Jihad'' (see: Mohammad Shabbir Khan, *Status of Women in Islam,* APH Publishing Cooperation, New Delhi, 2001, 110).

[19] In one instance, a community member who previously was employed by UN-HABITAT as a "Social Organizer," and who had been instrumental in setting up and facilitating NSP elections in his community, eventually found himself not elected onto the CDC. A subsequent attempt to declare himself "CDC President" was rejected by the CDC itself. He

disgruntled commanders from accusing CDC representatives to engage in a calculated attempt to depose the previous political establishment. This notwithstanding, NSP elections also provoked a backlash of aggressive responses from landlords who—realizing that NSP threatened the political status quo—began to attack or threaten CDCs.[20]

Conclusion

The National Solidarity Program has proven that secret-ballot elections—based on principles of universal suffrage and no-campaigning/electioneering policies—is a concept embraced by Afghan rural communities. Rural Afghans (women as much as men) certainly appreciate the privilege of having a say about who should represent their interests. They endorse the concept of elections not as a Western concept, but as a mechanism that facilitates the establishment of "just" governance structures, as mandated in Islam. The idea to prohibit campaigning or electioneering has added a special momentum to the NSP implementation process, in that it facilitated the emergence of a new cadre of community representatives that had previously been excluded from local decision-making processes.

Women's participation in NSP lags behind men's participation, due to cultural constraints, and an NSP policy that does not push boldly enough for women's participation and access to NSP blockgrants (out of fear of political repercussions). Women have nonetheless participated in elections even in conservative communities; men have consented to women participating in elections due to NSP policy pressure, or after men themselves had begun to appreciate the NSP elections experience.

The NSP elections process facilitated the establishment of Community Development Councils who effectively selected projects that addressed the socioeconomic needs of their communities. In addition, the cost-effectiveness of CDCs' overall project management performance was such that no outside contractor could have competed with the cost-efficiency demonstrated by the CDCs.

This notwithstanding, NSP is running the risk of loosing one of its major achievements, namely the emergence of a representative cadre of community representatives. NSP elections are based on a voluntary mutual consensus to abstain from manipulating other people's voting preferences, and by focusing on personal qualities and reputation rather than kinship ties, or political allegiances. But processes based on goodwill and spiritual exhortations—if not constantly re-visited and re-emphasized—can easily be jeopardized by powerholders choosing to impose themselves despite all odds. The perspective of a well-sized U.S. Dollar blockgrant—in a country exhausted from war, poverty, and oppressive social structures—makes it twice as difficult to stick to such principles.

There is also a clear danger that political pressure to quickly disburse large amounts of money, and to speedily rehabilitate community infrastructure will become an excuse for superficial, hurried, outsider-driven and exclusive decision-making and project implementation practices. The strengthening of local governance capacity at the community level requires just the opposite: extensive coaching, more "on-the-project" learning opportunities, and nurturance. This is the only way to cement NSP's "lessons-learned" in the minds and hearts of Afghan NSP community members.

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eventually turned to the Province Governor in an attempt to discredit the program as "anti-Islamic." The grievance was rejected.

In another instance, a community chose not to elect the Governor's father—who resided in the community—onto the CDC. When the election process had to be repeated three months later (due to a new influx of returning refugees) the Governor's father was elected onto the CDC; however, he was not voted into one of the four executive offices (chair, vice-chair, secretary or treasurer).

[20] In one instance, a local commander appeared with armed gunmen at a CDC/community gathering, demanding the CDC to dissolve and to turn over the NSP blockgrant money. Community members and CDC representatives refused to give in. An intense four-hour argument followed, at the end of which the commander decided to withdraw.

Another issue that requires urgent attention is the sustainability and future role of Community Development Councils in the administrative structure of the young Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. There are proponents which argue that CDCs—as local institutions with a popular mandate—deserve to be integrated into the new overall administrative structure of Afghanistan. Indeed, Afghanistan has seen little progress in the area of rural administrative structural development.[21] CDCs could close this gap by taking up local governance responsibilities (similar to the Panchayati Raj institutions in rural India), and by providing the electorate for outstanding District and Provincial Council elections.

Time will tell whether the Government of Afghanistan, NSP donors as well as implementing agencies are able to weather these challenges. For this paper's purpose it suffices to state, however, that Afghanistan's National Solidarity Program has been able to generate a *transformational "on-the-project" local governance learning process* that deserves the careful study of democracy scholars and development practitioners working worldwide.

[21] See: International Crisis Group, "Afghanistan Elections: Endgame or New Beginning," *Asia Report No. 101*, Kabul/Brussels, 21 July 2005, p. 25.

TRANSFORMATION OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM IN GEORGIA TODAY

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The newly independent states which arose in the post-Soviet expanse at the beginning of the 1990s immediately began transplanting to local soil the democratic constitutions and political systems officially approved in the West, particularly those with a semi-presidential and presidential rule.

But the practice of the transition period showed that mere declaration of Western-style constitutions in no way means the actual formation of a corresponding political system. Introducing the principle of division of power into the Basic Law does not guarantee it will function democratically in the way theoreticians understand it and as it is currently executed in countries with a developed democracy.

What actually happened in most of the transition states was that all power went to the executive bodies, and the legislative and judicial branches became their perfunctory appendages. Finding themselves back at the helm, the former nomenklatura leaders of the communist parties of the past Union republics acted like first secretaries of the Central Committee, since they were endowed with corresponding powers. So in many post-Soviet countries, the principle of division of power turned out to be stillborn. Only the corresponding articles of the republican constitutions remind us of its formal existence.

In this respect, it appears Gabriel Almond was right in his theory that it is impossible to transplant democratic political systems and liberal values to countries with a non-Western civilization, where the political culture has not evolved to the proper level. The constitutional declaration of democracy in these countries is purely token in nature as yet.

As for Georgia, we are seeing how the country is trying to adapt and fit its political system to reality in its constitutional law-making, whereby this is proving to be a rather complicated process. It has already passed through four stages, and each one was related to certain political changes. The first stage began on 9 April, 1991 with the adoption of the Act on Georgia's State Independence and ended on 21 February, 1992 with the announcement that the Constitution of 21 February, 1921 was to be restored. The second stage lasted from 11 October, 1992, that is, from the day of the parliamentary election to 1995. The third started from adoption of the Constitution of 24 August, 1995, and the fourth from the introduction of amendments to the Basic Law in February 2004.

According to the current Constitution, our country is a presidential republic in which state power is divided among the legislative, judicial, and executive branches. Each of them is independent and is guided in its activity by the provisions of the Basic Law and corresponding legal regulations.

As we already noted, constitutional reform was carried out in February 2004 after the revolutionary events of 2003 and the country became a semi-presidential republic. The purpose of reviewing the Constitution was to improve governance, strengthen civil society and democracy, and protect the political and social rights of its citizens regardless of their national, racial, and religious affiliation. Corresponding changes could be brought about by the need to restore territorial integrity, as well as by other realities. What is more, the constitutional changes which followed the revolution were aimed at legitimizing power and facilitating the debut of the new political elite on the juridical field.

In the words of D.Sc. (Law) Paata Tsnobiladze, constitutional reform in 2004 was an expression of post-revolutionary sentiments and, what is more, a necessity. In this case, the matter concerns realizing society's hopes for innovative changes and a better future, as well as the striving of the new government for institutional perfection and stability. However, there is no reason to believe that optimal constitutional reform has been carried out from the viewpoint of institutional perfection. Nevertheless, it is also a great injustice to believe that the former system which discredited itself should be retained.

In our country, discussions have been going on for more than ten years now about the form of state governance. The advocators of a parliamentary republic believe that this is the most democratic form of power, since it has justified itself in several European states, and in crisis situations has advantages over the presidential and mixed models. The advocators of the presidential and semi-presidential models, on the other hand, maintain that in order to deal with the chaotic processes and other collisions of the transition period, a state must have the ability to react quickly to a situation and make timely political decisions capable of ensuring flexible governance of the state.

From our point of view, the failures of the transition period in the political, economic, military, and cultural spheres were caused not so much by the shortcomings of the form of governance, as by the presence in power of a corrupted, neo-nomenklatura political elite with a low level of professional education. Therefore, such elements as political culture, political elite, political leader, party, and political ideologies must be analyzed in order to make a character study of the system. During transformation of the system, a significant role is played by the type of political culture in the country, which is an expression of society's political conduct. It contains elements of the culture of governance, whereas the level of political and legal consciousness of society, the country's political elite, and its individual citizens defines the quality of democracy, the way the political institutions function, and the uniqueness of the political regime as a whole. What is more, study of the transplantation process and subsequent modernization of the system is impossible if we do not analyze the special features and development trends of individual segments of this type of political culture.

The special features of Georgia's political culture, like those of other post-Soviet republics, are largely defined by the elements of patriarchic culture inherited from the totalitarian system. The Soviet political system was based on one ideology (Marxist-Leninist) and on the dictatorship of one party (communist), and functioned under conditions of total disregard for basic human rights. Civilian, political, and voting rights were of a declarative nature. The formation of a mobilizational psychology with complete disregard for the interests of the individual was considered the most important thing. Charles F. Andrain correctly defined the Soviet political system, which relied on administrative methods of governance, as mobilizational. The language of socialization between the upper and lower echelons of this system presumed unconditional obedience. "Executive governance" skills defined the development of the political process, which, in turn, formed a type of political culture based on power and subordination. The main role in the system was played by the totalitarian, ideologized entity. The political elite was presented as a united front of impersonal leaders. They were recruited from inside a closed system.

Elements of the totalitarian culture, including the nomenklatura political elite, play a crucial role in the transition period too. For the ruling elite, the principle of division of power was unacceptable, so it tried in every way to transfer it to the executive bodies. Traditions of the administrative-command system and totalitarian ideology were manifested most clearly during the rule of Eduard Shevardnadze's neo-nomenklatura elite. Incidentally, today too, elements of authoritarian culture play a decisive role in Georgia's political life. Power and the political regime are again associated with the president. The reasons for this lie not only in the constitutional changes of February 2004 and in the personal qualities of the head of state. A significant role here is also played by elements of the patriarchic culture which penetrate public consciousness and presume specific forms of power and subordination. Until the members of our society recognize that their civil activity and the creation of a government control mechanism are necessary conditions for developing democracy, the rulers will always place their will higher than the laws and practice authoritative methods of governance. Changing this situation requires time, during which, in addition to an economic upswing, liberal values should be ascertained.

In Georgia's political culture, a significant role is played by the historical feeling of trust in a charismatic leader. This is actualized from time to time. The ongoing search for a leader-savior in a small and poor country is acquiring special significance. First, retaining "relative independence" also presumes the presence of a strong leader (along with the support of large states); second, the anticipation of rapid changes in socioeconomic life is associated with the image of a leader-firefighter. In Georgia, dying for the sake of the czar-savior was historically considered a great virtue, and the Soviet regime only reinforced faith in the leader. In this respect, Stalin's era played a significant part. The patriarchic culture and search for a charismatic leader generated by it were successively embod-

ied in the images of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Eduard Shevardnadze, and Mikhail Saakashvili. Ideas of national independence were associated with Zviad Gamsakhurdia, of stabilization with Eduard Shevardnadze, and of improved social conditions with Mikhail Saakashvili. Each of them met the expectations of certain social strata.

Any charismatic leader, regardless of the hopes pinned on him, strengthens elements of the "eastern patriarchic" culture in the Georgian consciousness and promotes endorsement of an authoritarian regime. But in the republic, along with the patriarchic culture of subordination, elements of a culture of active co-participation exist. And the share of these elements significantly grew after the well-known events of 1978, 1989, and 2003.

Along with national ideals, civilian and social rights stimulated political activity, which is undoubtedly a positive trend. Strengthening elements of civilian consciousness raises the level of political culture and expands the possibilities of creative assimilation of European liberal values. It should be noted that in countries with a developed democracy, the high level of culture and education directly correlates to the level of political culture. In Georgia, this correlation is not observed: the level of political culture—the main prerequisite for confirmation of democratic institutions—does not correlate to the high level of culture and education, religious, and national tolerance. We see the reason for this in the material and social polarization of the population. What is more, if there is no civil society in the country, a patrimonial political culture again begins to play the determining role.

The development of a political culture is a long process related both to the situation in the economy and to the presence of democratic institutions. Elements of a patriarchic-thieves' culture play a negative role in the development of this process. It is not by accident that the expression "criminalization of politics and politicization of crime"[1] has become popular in our country. The thieves' mentality largely reinforces elements of the patriarchic culture and ultimately has a very negative impact on the political process. An affinity for the thieves' world has percolated into the works of well-known Georgian writers, and both in parliament and in the executive power branch criminal authorities are often resorted to during "showdowns." To be fair, it should be noted that Georgia's post-revolutionary authorities have achieved significant success in the fight against the criminal world. What is more, legal scholars, Professors G. Lobjanidze and G. Glonti, published a monograph about mafia bosses, in which they analyze this institution.[2]

Along with the special features of national-historical development, the country's geopolitical stance also has a significant influence on the East-West orientation. "A certain symbiosis of citizens' political participation," writes Professor Gogiashvili, "given the West-East orientation with the predominance of one of them (for example, with the dominating role of the Central Asian, Eastern cultural expanse—Russia, Kazakhstan, with an admixture of Western—the Baltic countries) is forming the political culture in the post-Soviet countries. If we analyze Georgia's position today from this viewpoint, there is reason to believe that in our country precisely Western political orientations and values are finding fertile soil in which to grow."[3]

Well-known domestic thinkers, Ilya Chavchavadze, Archil Jorjadze, Niko Nikoladze, and Noe Zhordania, believed that Europe is ours—our flesh and blood (Noe Zhordania), but they also believed that Europeanization of Georgia was only possible on national ground, based on national consciousness and the Georgian culture. Since the national culture cannot develop in isolation, close political, economic, and spiritual contacts are needed with other nations. Mutual enrichment is only possible when the national culture is ready for the creative perception and assimilation of other people's ideas. Otherwise we are dealing with imitation.

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[1] A. Tukvadze, *Politicheskaia elita*, Tbilisi, 1998, p. 205.
[2] See: G. Lobjanidze, G. Glonti, *Vory v zakone v Gruzii*, Tbilisi, 2004, pp. 177-178.
[3] *Diskussionniy klub "Gruzinskoe gosudarstvo". Collected Works*, Tbilisi, 2003, p. 30.

The West's, primarily the United States', economic, political, and strategic interests in Georgia are aroused not only by the geopolitical status of our country, an important role is also played by the pro-Western orientation of its culture, and the high level of education and tolerance of its people, including for different faiths. The prospect of integrating into NATO and the European Union is a historic opportunity, and if we do not take advantage of it, we will remain but a "relatively independent" state. The steps taken in this direction (joining the European Council, implementing the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline project) are significantly accelerating transformation of our political system. Integration with the West is also being activated by globalization, which, however, along with the positive factors harbors the danger of leveling out the primordial traditions of the national culture. "If an incorrect policy is carried out, we could lose our unique Georgian culture," noted President Mikhail Saakashvili in one of his speeches.

The country's ruling elite is entirely oriented toward the Western culture. This is responsible for the attempts to mechanically transplant liberal-democratic values for which Georgia has still not created a socioeconomic base. And what is more, its state institutions are only just beginning to form. To this should be added the historical striving toward Europeanization, but imitation on the way to Europeanization, wrote Noe Zhordania, is having a narrowing and sedating effect on the national consciousness.[4] Niko Nikoladze also noted that "there is no precedent in the world of a nation or society elevating itself with the help of others without exerting its own efforts."[5]

The views of the mentioned thinkers are particularly pertinent today. These people were brilliant representatives of the national culture, and at one time obtained a fundamental European education. They understood very well that when there is no middle class and civil society in a country oriented toward democratic values, there can be no grounds for talking either about the creative assimilation of liberal values or democratization. An analysis of Georgia's spiritual culture convinces us of the truth of the views of our famous ancestors. Today, elements of the Western culture are being circulated which are oriented toward imitation and in this process, along with the national mentality, a negative role is played by the government's extreme pro-Western orientation.

Under conditions of political pluralism, parties which differ in ideological orientation are appearing in the country, and the majority and proportional election system is being established. "But there are no clear differences in the political spectrum between the rightist and leftist forces," writes Professor Gogiashvili. "Despite the fact that some influential political parties are considered rightist, their political activity, based on pragmatic interests, is more in keeping with the leftist orientation."[6] We must agree with the fact that the names, practical activity, and declared ideological orientations of most political parties clearly contradict each other.

Another big concern is aroused by the dynamics of the relations between the opposition and progovernment structures: the concept of constructive opposition is essentially alien to the country's current political spectrum. Here the oppressive heritage of the totalitarian ideology is manifested, which excluded political pluralism and coexistence with other parties. A negative role was also played by the state coup, civil war, criminalization of politics, and as a result of all of this, confirmation in political life of the forced-change-in-power syndrome which is periodically manifested in extremist ideology. The ideology of radical opposition has a solid foundation in the social reality of our state, since a large part of the population does not have a job and lives below the poverty line. Under such conditions, people look to a charismatic leader or the contra elite for support. So the populist rhetoric of the radical opposition is highly valued.

[4] See: N. Zhordania, *Deiateli 60-kh i segodniashniaia zhizn. Sochineniia*, Vol. 2, Tbilisi, 1920, p. 196.
[5] N. Nikoladze, "Nashi nedostatki," in: *Gruzinskaia literatura*, Vol. 14, Tbilisi, 1967, pp. 99-101.
[6] O. Gogiashvili, *Politicheskie ideologii*, Tbilisi, 2004, p. 201.

In the political lexicon of the transition period, the concept of the "false opposition" has appeared. A classical example is the election campaign being carried out under token opposition between the center and the region by such parties as Union of Citizens of Georgia and Revival, which successfully divided the votes of the protest electorate. But the results of this kind of conspiracy were regrettable—a large region found itself outside the state's juridical field.

Radical opposition among political parties reaches a critical point at election time, when the absence of rules of the game acquires special significance. In developed countries, where the interests of individual social strata are taken into account, the rules of the political game have already formed. They remain within the framework of the constitution and do not interfere with the functioning of the political system. In our country, during the rule of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, radical representatives of the nomenklatura elite very successfully arranged a clash between certain national forces and the national minorities and, after the military coup and overthrow of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, occupied key posts in the upper echelons of power by falsifying the election. This resulted in the separatists stepping up their activity and loss of the country's territorial integrity. Similar trends are also observed today. The programs of some political parties (now there are approximately 150 of them) contain such provisions that if one of them wins the election, the state's independence will be seriously jeopardized.

During modernization of the political system, a decisive role is played by confirmation of liberal democracy. At first glance, all the prerequisites for this have been created: a Constitution which recognizes the main democratic values; a high level of education and culture of the population; national and religious tolerance; and a pro-Western orientation. But the social basis of a liberal and conservative ideology—the middle class—has still not been formed. What is more, the difficult economic situation, the disastrous rise in unemployment and poverty, and the lost territory are intensifying the radical opposition of the political structures and the ideology of a forced change in power and are leading to a search for a new charismatic leader. There is no impoverished country in the world with a developed democracy, not to mention the relative nature of our independence. So all the talk about democratization remains at the level of constitutional declarations and is only mentioned in the head of state's speeches.

Transformation of the political system is giving rise to new elites and political leaders. Even such concepts have arisen as "the ethnocratic, neo-nomenklatura, and business elites united around a charismatic leader." The system for recruiting members of the elites has totally changed. Qualitatively new sociopolitical and ideological orientations lie at the foundation of society's restructuring.

All three presidents of independent Georgia differed from each other in their political orientations, personal character traits, education, diplomatic and other skills, and they came to power as the result of elections held under extreme conditions.

Zviad Gamsakhurdia was a charismatic leader, the secret of whose charisma (along with his personal qualities) lay in his fanatical devotion to the idea of national independence. His rise to power was promoted by the political situation that developed and the biopsychic traits of the new leader: high intellect, moral convictions, and enormous emotional tension. This style was also retained during his presidential rule when against the background of radical contradiction with the opposition he appealed to the masses. But he was not successful in his main mission as a political leader—the mission of integrator, without the realization of which there can be no civil consent. The reasons for this were acute non-acceptance of the communist ideology, the personal character traits of the head of state and his followers, as well as the domestic and foreign political situation that developed in those years. As president, he and his political comrades-in-arms did not acquire the skills of professional diplomats, that is, the ability to maneuver and make compromises. What is more, they overestimated the country's economic possibilities, and their activity coincided with a disadvantageous international situation. In order to efficiently govern the state machinery, one of the merits of the past—participation in a national-liberation movement—was clearly not enough. But the political elite of the new government could not assimilate the basic wisdom necessary for rulers overnight.

After the Soviet system collapsed and the guild system for recruiting these specialists was eliminated, a new mechanism did not develop in the country for selecting the political elite. The constant appeals for revolutionary merits, patriotism, or for an overseas education in no way attract highly professional personnel into the government structures. The government of Zviad Gamsakhurdia declared a dissident past, nationalism, and patriotism as the determining criteria in recruiting the elite. People from the national movement took the places of the former nomenklatura. Most of them did not have any idea about how to govern the country and were full of illusions about the possibilities for realizing the country's natural resources. And as a result, a whole slew of mediocre scholarly, cultural, and literary figures arose in social and political life.

The country's first president was oriented not toward a unifying state idea, but placed the emphasis on counteracting the communist elite. Ideologically unacceptable values began to form in the country. The former nomenklatura, moderate forces from the national movement, and some of the intelligentsia formed a united front against Zviad Gamsakhurdia. Along with the immature national consciousness, inconsistency in carrying out national policy, and denial of the principle of inheriting power, a determining role in his overthrow was played by outside factors. Russia could not reconcile itself with this kind of political leader in the Caucasus. To this was added international isolation. With the support of outside forces, the country's oppositional and criminal structures overturned the lawful government, which resulted in a civil war and violation of the state's territorial integrity.

The romantic idea of national independence went down in value, which in the minds of most of the population began to be associated with the difficult socioeconomic situation. Pragmatic demands for stability and improvement of the economic situation appeared, and hopes for a better life were associated with the image of another charismatic leader—Eduard Shevardnadze.

In the political practice of this leader, a decisive role was played by his nomenklatura past, which presumed the use of administrative-command methods of governance. He again embodied a ceremonial leader appointed by Moscow who headed the elite of the executive power. In the years of his rule, the neo-nomenklatura elite was at the helm, mainly represented by former Komsomol and party employees, that is, the communist heritage was retained. Eduard Shevardnadze successfully used his Soviet experience—he discredited the national movement and its leaders, got rid of the criminal authorities, but could not get rid of the Shevardnadze-Ioseliani diarchy. The country experienced its greatest losses precisely during this period: the neo-nomenklatura political elite integrated with the criminals, the state's territorial integrity was destroyed, and, what is more, it found itself in the grips of an economic crisis.

The 1995 Constitution, presidential and parliamentary elections, Georgia's joining the U.N., and active support from the U.S. created favorable conditions for the neo-nomenklatura elite to carry out democratic reforms. But soon it transpired that the country did not have any political will, or the ability to carry out the reforms. The leaders of the ruling party, Union of Citizens of Georgia, could only function in the administrative-command mode. Independent creative thinking and an adequate response to the unexpected events and processes of the transition period were alien to them.

Eduard Shevardnadze was the embodiment of an authoritative political leader, which along with constitutional rights found its expression in strengthening the executive power.[7] And the neo-nomenklatura elite took advantage of its privileged position: it disposed of the budget and carried out privatization at will, and squandered and exported the nation's wealth. The country was immersed in total corruption. Opposition arose between political power and the people, while the principles of democracy and constitutional law were totally ignored. A distorted form of "Georgian democracy" formed, which was expressed, on the one hand, in unlimited freedom of speech, and on the other, in complete falsifica-

[7] Elected in 1995, the parliament adopted 307 laws, 9 of which were codes based on the president's legislative initiative (see: O. Melkadze, *Sovremennye problemy gruzinskogo konstitutsionalisma*, Tbilisi, 2001, p. 27).

tion of elections and corruption. The country found itself in a protracted socioeconomic and cultural crisis, while the promises to restore territorial integrity and return refugees home were depreciated.

All of this helped to strengthen the opposition movement of politicians just recently devoted to Eduard Shevardnadze. Zurab Zhvania, Mikhail Saakashvili, Nino Burjanadze, Georgi Baramidze, Mikhail Machavariani, Irakli Okruashvili, and others made a name for themselves in the executive and legislative power branches, while in society the role of the nongovernmental organizations supporting them rose. The Soros Foundation became particularly active, which invested a great deal of money in forming an open society and democracy in our country. The time came when the ruling elite, power bodies, and, first and foremost, the security structures could no longer efficiently execute the government's decisions, and standards of competency and interaction among the government structures were violated. What is more, the leading role in the opposition began to be played by politicians who had reliable financial support from abroad, and who just recently were active supporters of the existing regime. Some of the politically apathetic population went onto the side of the opposition, but its main support proved to be the socially unprotected part of the electorate, including representatives of the national minorities.

International institutions and foreign countries, primarily the U.S., assisted the opposition's financial and political reinforcement. With foreign and domestic support, it is taking advantage of the freedom of speech in the country and, through the mass media, is discrediting the official government at accelerated rates.

The political adversaries of the regime who rallied before the parliamentary election of 2003 around Mikhail Saakashvili, Nino Burjanadze, and Zurab Zhvania mobilized enormous financial and political resources in order to seize power based on falsification of the election, which had already become common practice. The strategic plan of action was thought out in advance, and during the mass demonstrations it was merely adjusted. In so doing, intensive consultations were carried out both with the country's political parties, and with foreign partners. During the November revolutionary events, Mikhail Saakashvili's role proved priceless. He became the organizer and inspirer of the revolution, the emotionality and sincerity of his speeches gave rise to a feeling of empathy and belief in a better future. Decisive factors in Eduard Shevardnadze's retirement were not financial and political support from certain forces, but Mikhail Saakashvili's enormous energy, his charismatic qualities. The people saw in him their representative and intrepid leader.

Under conditions of immense domestic and foreign support, the country's new leadership set about implementing widespread reforms and arresting corrupted officials. Admittedly, some of them were soon released—after paying impressive sums of money to the budget. Many representatives of the criminal world also found themselves behind bars. The government also achieved a certain amount of success in restoring jurisdiction over part of the country's uncontrolled territory. For example, against the background of the peace demonstration in Ajaria, its authoritarian leader Aslan Abashidze was removed from his post (incidentally, also with international support). Structural reforms also successfully began in the security departments. The formation of a patrol police force and its manning with honest and professional personnel proved an efficacious way to deal with the impunity syndrome. The people began to trust the keepers of order. The country's budget grew three-fold, and financing of departments increased, including the Ministry of Defense.

But there were also political errors, careless actions, and hasty decisions. In this respect, a sweeping program of revolutionary reform seems unrealistic. Fundamental restructuring should be carried out gradually, taking into account the mechanism of social security. After all firing thousands of people and appointing new personnel in their place, in so doing basing this on their party affiliation, has nothing in common with the concepts of Western democracy. Extremely significant blunders were also made when recruiting the political elite. The policy of Mikhail Saakashvili in this sphere is reminiscent of the actions of Zviad Gamsakhurdia. In both cases, we are seeing disregard for the principle of inheritance of power: Zviad Gamsakhurdia obtained a communist apparatus of officials and corresponding

political institutions, and Mikhail Saakashvili found, in addition to the neo-nomenklatura elite, a generation of new professionals (a relatively rich political market), and political institutions undergoing reform at his disposal. In our opinion, at the initial stage of its activity, this government was unable to take advantage of the opportunity it was presented. Perhaps this was an echo of the post-revolutionary situation. When selecting personnel, it takes into account revolutionary merits, diplomas from foreign universities, age, giving preference to young people. In this respect, many well-known figures of science, culture, education, and so on have found themselves outside the framework of public life. As a result, dilettantism and incompetence are being manifested in many spheres. Not one party, including the ruling one, is capable of filling all spheres of social and political life with its own staff. The current situation is reminiscent of the activity of the communists and Komsomol members of the 1920s, but in no way meets the requirements of today's level of professionalism.

Enough time has passed to be able to come to terms with the country's economic reform. The revenue coming in from mass privatization is clearly not enough to revive industry and agriculture, although strategically important state facilities were also in line for privatization. In medium and big business, "proximity to the authorities" is gaining the upper hand again. And this undoubtedly shows that business success still depends on the benevolence of the political elite. What is more, during this period, new jobs have not been created, nor new enterprises, and most important, the purchasing power of the national currency has dropped.

On the whole, the following can be said about the current political regime: the constitutional changes of February 2004 promoted the formation of a certain "Georgian model" of semi-presidential rule, in which the president's powers have significantly grown. To this should be added Mikhail Saakashvili's adherence to an authoritarian style of leadership. The one-party parliament and obedient judicial power are functioning in a non-democratic key. The privileges of the elite and executive power (wages and other attributes of civil service according to European standards) are widening the gap between the impoverished people and their rulers even more, the regime is deprived of its social fulcrum, and the upper political echelon which rose to govern the state on a wave of mass discontent and populist promises is gradually forgetting where it came from.

European Council experts have begun focusing their attention on our country's political regime. Their conclusions are zooming in on the insufficiency of democracy in Georgia. And domestic political scientists, not to mention the opposition, also believe that a super-presidential rule has formed in Georgia with an authoritative leader as the head of state. But some authors believe that this is expedient since extricating the country from its crisis and "learning the art of democracy" are only possible by concentrating power in the hands of a charismatic leader, who if necessary will have no qualms about resorting to dictatorial methods. This is what former Polish president Lech Wałęsa thinks, for example.

On the whole, the current transition period is characterized by contradictions. On the one hand, it is retaining the political stereotypes and traditions typical of the former system, and on the other, there are obvious trends toward forming and developing a new political system. Their interaction is giving rise to extreme situations and uncontrollable political processes. In this situation, a leader needs to have a rapid response, intuition, and staunchness in making decisions, which to a certain extent presumes an authoritative style of governance. But it should not go beyond the bounds of decorum and be formed in the style of a political regime.

From our point of view, going beyond the boundaries of the juridical field is dangerous at any level of society's social development. And Georgia's Constitution envisages supremacy of the law and building a law-based state as the priority assignments.

ELECTIONS IN THE TURKMENISTAN POWER SYSTEM

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Prologue

The Central Asian countries have failed to grasp the meaning of election campaigns as the central and inalienable element of democracy. The larger part of the region's ruling elite still looks at elections as an embellishment of authoritarian regimes of all hues. In Central Asia, the question of who will rule in the name of people—the reason why elections are carried out throughout the world—is discussed and settled in high places long before the nation is called to take part in a vote-casting spectacle.

Any spectacle requires directors and professional actors, the role of the latter being entrusted to political parties and prominent politicians. For some reason, the skills of the Kazakhstani actors are much higher than elsewhere in the region, therefore elections in Kazakhstan look more plausible.

No matter how well orchestrated, the spectacles do flop occasionally. The latest such flop took place in Kyrgyzstan in the spring of 2005. The script supplied by Akaev's team for the parliamentary election was discarded: the docile Kyrgyz audience was fed up with the old play. All of a sudden, the people climbed up onto the stage and made drastic changes to the script. This is a rare exception. Normally, elections in Central Asia follow the route laid by the communists when the Soviet Union was still alive. All that has changed is that different actors are presenting the same old play with new stage sets. Just as before, the authorities are determining the election results, not vice versa.

The Turkmenian Phenomenon

I have already written about the phenomenon of Central Asian elections,[1] yet for certain reasons I left the situation in Turkmenistan beyond the article's scope. I selected Turkmenistan as a subject of my present article because, although it belongs to the region, it is the least studied of the Central Asian states. It does not differ from its neighbors where elections are concerned, since the parliament and elections play no important role in local political developments: power belongs mainly or absolutely to the president. On the other hand, Turkmenistan is a rare exception in Central Asian (and the entire post-Soviet expanse, for that matter) post-Soviet political practices. Its political regime is unique: it has nothing in common with the authoritarian regimes of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, to say nothing of the moderate, semi-authoritarian post-Akaev regime in Kyrgyzstan.

Described in Western political terms, the contemporary Turkmenian regime can be called totalitarian. This is not an unambiguous definition: this regime is not a copy of the classical versions of the West European totalitarian regimes of Mussolini in Italy, Hitler in Germany, or Franco in Spain; it has

[1] See: A. Kurtov, "Presidential Elections in Central Asia," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 6 (18), 2002.

little in common with the Soviet communist totalitarianism either. The totalitarian regime of Turkmenistan has borrowed certain elements of Oriental despotic regimes and certain features of the new authoritarian regimes of contemporary agro-industrial states to become a special phenomenon with a totalitarian core. I have no intention, however, of supplying moral assessments.

As distinct from the above-mentioned totalitarian regimes, Turkmenian totalitarianism is not a product of civil wars or fierce domestic conflicts that can be described as coups (this happened at one time in Italy, Germany, Spain, and the Soviet Union). Turkmenian totalitarianism is not guilty of large-scale bloodshed in the course of political repressions. Contrary to what the Turkmenian opposition in exile is saying, the country avoided the use of force on a great scale. The regime used and continues to use force against its political opponents and subjects them to inhuman treatment. The scale of repressions, their intensity, and other qualitative and quantitative descriptions are important for academic reasons. What is important here is the fact that power in Turkmenistan rests on the threat of violence.

Turkmenian totalitarianism is a product of a relatively smooth transformation of the later version of the Soviet totalitarian regime. This is a regime of personal power of President Saparmurat Niyazov. All the other Central Asian political regimes failed to achieve a level of omnipotence of the head of state comparable to that observed in Turkmenistan.

The West European totalitarian regimes emerged at the stage of industrial society: the high organizational nature and manageability of business, as well as its close ties with the state machine made it possible to tighten control over society. Turkmenistan is not an industrial society; private enterprise is poorly developed, which suggests that we are dealing with a symbiosis of totalitarianism and despotism.

The very fact that the country has only one party—the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan (DPT)—looks like the best confirmation of the country's totalitarian nature. This party is not a political organization in the true sense of the word. It had no role to play in real politics and serves one of the embellishments of Turkmenbashi's power system. It is a totalitarian regime with total control over society as a whole and each of its members designed to force each and everyone to accept President Niyazov's values and collectivist ideas. The ideology itself is totalitarian, as well as the desire to impose on the nation a single ideological system formulated by the president in his writings and his main creative work called *Rukhnama*. It is in these spheres that Turkmenian totalitarianism manifests itself in the literal sense of the Late Latin word *totalitas,* which means integrity and completeness.

The populist and demagogical smokescreen conceals the fact that ideology in Turkmenistan is a set of ideas that justifies President Niyazov's right to realize his own policies. It is a totalitarian ideology because it claims to be the ultimate truth. In this form it is imposed upon people.

Chronology of Aggrandizement

The above will help us assess and appreciate the true place of elections in the system of Turkmenian power. Election campaigns can serve as an instrument of democracy if society is functioning in the system of economic, political, and ideological pluralism which, as distinct from totalitarianism, accepts a variety of forms of being, including multi-party systems, public figures, various ideas and opinions, the media, and possible development alternatives along with their varied assessments.

Rejection of pluralism limits human behavior alternatives and political choice to that permitted by the authorities. When applied to elections, this means that the voters are forced (by various means) to advance along a narrow corridor to a final destination chosen by others. They are forced to vote for those whom the authorities want to see elected. In different places this is done with varying degrees of cynicism, while the authorities are prepared, to different degrees, to use coercion to force the people to act according to pre-arranged patterns, rather than according to their own choice.

All the Central Asian countries have already created such "corridors of choice." In Kazakhstan, where this corridor is better lit and wider than elsewhere, the authorities allow many (but not all) opposition political structures to take part in the elections. The state leaders, however, do their best not to let the voters wander away from the pre-arranged course. In Tajikistan, the corridor is narrower, and opposition structures must go through a stricter screening process.[2] In Uzbekistan, the opposition has no chance of taking part in the elections. The screening methods are not important. What is important is the obvious reluctance to accept the key postulate: the nation has the right to elect its leaders and nobody should encroach on this freedom.

Turkmenistan is the best example of the above. Saparmurat Niyazov remains at the helm longer than any of his Central Asian colleagues. President of Kyrgyzstan Bakiev and President of Tajikistan Rakhmonov came to power after their republics had already gained their independence; the presidential powers of Karimov in Uzbekistan and Nazarbaev in Kazakhstan date back to Soviet times: March and April 1990, correspondingly.

Niyazov also became president in 1990, but before that he was First Secretary of the C.C. of the Communist Party of the Union republic longer than any of the above-mentioned leaders. Nazarbaev was elected First Secretary of the C.C. of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan in June 1989 when he replaced Kolbin, earlier appointed by Mikhail Gorbachev. Karimov filled a similar post in Uzbekistan approximately at the same time under similar circumstances: he replaced Nishanov, who was invited to Moscow to take the post of the Chairman of the Nationalities Council of the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet. Niyazov replaced Gapurov as early as December 1985.

This is important. First, from the political (but not legal) point of view Niyazov has been heading his republic ever since: it was the top party bureaucrats who ruled in the Soviet Union. At that time, however, the Politburo of the C.P.S.U. Central Committee controlled all the first secretaries in the republics.

Second, during the perestroika years, social and political life in the Soviet Union changed a great deal, while Turkmenistan hardly felt these changes: Niyazov, who came to power during the Soviet totalitarian period, fossilized its traditions and excluded any other alternatives. At first, he was merely following the commonly accepted practice instructions of the late Soviet period: while formally obeying the Politburo's general recommendations, he rejected all changes. It was at that time that the republic acquired a president; the first presidential election, with one candidate running for the post, took place on 27 October, 1990. The absolute majority of those who came to the polls, 1,716,278, or 98.3 percent out of the total number of 1,746,375, voted for Niyazov.

In an effort to prove that his legitimacy had nothing to do with the Soviet laws, Niyazov organized another presidential election as soon as his republic acquired independence and a new Constitution was adopted on 18 May, 1992. Once more he was the only candidate. It became absolutely clear that he treated elections as a fashionable embellishment of his rule, rather than as a democratic mechanism. In Turkmenistan, nobody expected to replace the ruler through popular vote: elections were seen as precious stones in the ruler's crown. The result was obvious: on 21 June, 1992 the share was even larger than two years previously (on 27 October, 1990): 99.5 percent.

The parliament was elected much later: in December 1994. By that time, it was no longer called the Supreme Soviet, as before, with 175 deputies, but the Mejlis with 50 "people's deputies." Since the country has only one political party—the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan, formerly the republic's Communist Party—there were no alternative candidates at the parliamentary election either. Compared with the C.P.S.U., which served as the Soviet Union's political linchpin, this party is a small

[2] The parliamentary election of 27 February, 2005 may serve as an example. There were six registered political parties in Tajikistan. As distinct from Kazakhstan, the Tajik leaders did not set up artificial opposition structures. A large part of the opposition is legal. There are some oppositional organizations, politicians, and journalists not allowed to work openly in the republic. They work clandestinely or in exile.

cog in the power system. No wonder the very first lines of its Charter say: "The Democratic Party of Turkmenistan (DPT) is a political organization which, under the guidance of Saparmurat Ataevich Niyazov (Saparmurat Turkmenbashi), will strive at the turn of the 21st century to strengthen the country's independence and its positive neutrality for the sake of building a democratic and secular state ruled by the law, and a fair society. In the age of Turkmenbashi, its motto is 'the policy of President of Turkmenistan Great Saparmurat Turkmenbashi is the course of the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan."[3]

Niyazov did not need the parliament as a structure of power; he never planned to share his power with it or with any other structure. He was not afraid that the parliament might oppose his plans as happened in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan in the first half of the 1990s, where the parliaments tried to check the presidents. Turkmenistan followed another route.

I am convinced that from the very beginning Niyazov did not want the nation to look at his post as belonging to the Western political and legal tradition, which describes the president as a hired worker with definite functions society has entrusted to him. Niyazov wanted to convince the nation that the country had been given a God-inspired chance of acquiring not a hired bureaucrat, but a unique and immensely talented leader. From this it followed that presidential elections were needed not to choose the best out of many, but to demonstrate the nation's gratitude to the leader and its readiness to follow him. Logically enough, the idea of a long presidency was promptly formulated, while the president preferred to simulate his reluctant obedience to popular will. He demonstratively rejected the suggestion that his mandate should be prolonged for five more years through voting in the parliament as not strictly democratic. The totalitarian regime required general approval through a referendum.[4] There were historical precedents: in the 1930s Hitler's unlimited power in Germany was also based on a referendum about merging the posts of president, Reichskanzler, and Führer.

On 15 January, 1994, 99.9 percent of the citizens with the right to vote came to the polls to take part in the referendum; 99.99 percent of them agreed that there should not be a presidential election in 1997 (only 212 people were against). In this way, Niyazov's power was extended to 2002. The referendum marked a turning point in the country's domestic policy: from that time on, presidential power was identified with one person only.

Having settled the issue to his satisfaction, Niyazov plunged into experiments in other spheres. In 1999, the Mejlis was elected on an alternative basis for the first time in its history: the ballot papers contained more than one name. The usual course was not disrupted, however: all the deputies were elected in the first round. In December 1999, long before the next presidential election was due, the Khalk Maslakhaty[5] issued a document on the Powers of the First President of Turkmenistan Saparmurat Turkmenbashi. Under Para 1 of the operative part, Niyazov was granted "the exclusive right to remain the head of state without time limitations."

Parliamentary Elections of 2004-2005

Turkmenistan's election laws do not digress far from international standards. Along with the country's Constitution, there are laws on Election of Deputies to the Mejlis of Turkmenistan endorsed back in the first half of the 1990s and on Guarantee of the Election Rights of the Citizens of Turkmenistan dated to 1999. From the formally legal point of view, the former contains relatively clear norms;

[3] *Ustav Demokraticheskoy partii Turkmenistana. The version adopted by its congress on 19 December, 1998,* Ashghabad, 1999.

[4] As distinct from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the referendum in Turkmenistan took place long before the president's term expired: Niyazov was obviously not afraid of losing his post—he wanted to add more luster to his totalitarian system.

[5] Khalk Maslakhaty is "the highest representative body of legislative power of Turkmenistan" with no analogies in the world.

the latter, however, is pure propaganda: its few articles are two pages long, while the norms promise nothing more than general references to the "laws of Turkmenistan."

Under this law, public organizations and meetings of voters[6] can nominate candidates; the latter have the right to carry out election campaigns, etc. It should be kept in mind though that such campaigns take place in a strictly controlled society kept within limits no one can transgress. There is no chance of setting up a new political party with parliamentary ambitions, even though the laws do not rule out such possibility.

The Turkmenian laws do not hold water from the formally legal stance either. This fully applies to the way the central commission for elections and referendums is staffed. It is set up on a decision of the Khalk Maslakhaty, a structure that defies the division of powers theory. The Central Election Commission, as well as the Khalk Maslakhaty, is staffed with functionaries. The laws limit election campaigns to a very short period.[7] This means that the campaign is too short to permit election platforms to compete; in fact, nobody needs such competition. The age qualification (25 years) for Mejlis deputies is high enough; the residence requirement is 10 years; there is also an institution of political disfranchisement similar to the Soviet practice abolished by Khrushchev. In other words, convicted criminals may be nominated as deputies no sooner than five years after their discharge from prison. Such people are regarded as suspects who have not yet redeemed their guilt.

Recently the number of observers was increased, yet this new circumstance never affected the already established practices. In the past, observers could only be selected from among those employed by the notorious National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights under the president of Turkmenistan; during the 2004-2005 elections, 200 observers from the loyal public structures (the DPT, National Trade Union Center, the Gurbansoltan Women's Union, named after President Niyazov's mother, and the Makhtumkuli Youth Organization) were allowed inside the polling stations. All of them confirmed that the elections were excellently organized and fully corresponded to all the legal requirements.[8]

The above-mentioned National Institute has supplied many thought-provoking facts. Here is one of them. The Institute published a certain document of a purely propagandist nature in the official press called "Election Laws of Turkmenistan and International Law"[9] to prove that elections in the republic were organized at the world's highest level or even better. Its authors wrote: "Turkmenistan is one of the few, if not the only, country in the world that publishes the programs of all the candidates not only in the local, but also in the national press." The people who wrote this expected that the men-in-the-street would readily believe this.

In fact, the programs that appeared in the national media could hardly be called programs. They were not different from all the other information that appeared daily in the newspapers. To prove the above, let me quote from the same issue which carried the Institute's boasts. Here is the text of a candidate[10] who ran from constituency No. 34 of the Lebap velaiat.[11]

"First of all, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the working people of the Saiat etrap[12] and my fellow countrymen, as well as to the party, trade union, youth, women's, veteran, and other organizations that nominated me as candidate to the Mejlis of Turkmenistan. I shall treat the wishes and interests of my electorate as the main factor of my efforts to use my knowledge and experience if I am elected to the people's parliament. As a deputy, I promise to indefatigably support and actively participate in carrying out the policies of the President of Turkmenistan Saparmurat Turk-

[6] According to the Turkmenian media, all candidates received unanimous support at the meetings which nominated them (see, for example, *Neytral'ny Turkmenistan*, 17 November, 2004).

[7] The nomination campaign lasted from 4 to 18 November; the candidates were registered by 24 November, while the first round of elections took place on 19 December.

[8] See: *Neytral'ny Turkmenistan*, 8 January, 2005.

[9] *Neytral'ny Turkmenistan*, 16 December, 2004.

[10] He was finally elected deputy.

[11] Velaiat—an administrative-territorial unit (region).

[12] Etrap—an administrative-territorial unit (district).

menbashi for the sake of the economic, social, political, and cultural prosperity of our state, improvement of the nation's well-being, and to reflect and protect the interests and expectations of our people.

"The National Program 'Strategy of Economic, Political, and Cultural Development of Turkmenistan until 2020' adopted by the 14th Session of the Khalk Maslakhaty will be the document I shall treat as my main duty to fulfill. There are other laws of historic importance: the Land, Water, and Taxation codes of Turkmenistan adopted by the 15th Session of the Khalk Maslakhaty. I am absolutely convinced that the task of elaborating associated normative acts will become the main task of all the Mejlis deputies of the new convocation.

"During the 13 years of its independence, under the wise guidance of President Saparmurat Turkmenbashi, the Turkmenian state has reached high development levels in all spheres and joined the ranks of the economically developed countries. By drawing on the noble traditions and customs of our ancestors and by repeatedly saying that man is the highest value of society and the state, the Great Serdar[13] is indefatigably working for the well-being of all people and the protection of human rights.

"Since the level of guaranteed social benefits is directly associated with the economy and the development of market relations, I promise to take an active part in elaborating laws promoting the economy's private sector and strengthening the class of landowners and businessmen.

"I promise to constantly study the interests of the people, to help develop health protection, education, and services, and to improve labor conditions and wages of the workers and *daykhans* (peasants.—*Ed.*). My participation in the election and the chance to become a deputy have presented me with a highly important task: the elaboration and adoption of new laws and improvement of the current normative acts require good training and constant learning. I shall do my best to raise my educational level and to consult with experts to be worthy of the high title of people's deputy.

"President of Turkmenistan Saparmurat Turkmenbashi is carrying out a very specific policy which, while relying on the Turkmenian people's centuries-old experience and culture, takes into account the world's experience of the development of mankind. I shall spare no effort to actively promote the course of the nation's leader. I regard the people's trust in me and the chance to participate in the cardinal changes in all spheres of public and state life carried out by the Great Serdar a great honor and huge responsibility. If I am elected deputy to the Mejlis of the third convocation, I shall do my best to be worthy of this high title."

Anybody familiar with Soviet rhetoric will easily discern familiar features in the above: the same references to the "decisions of the party and government," the same quotes from the leader, and the same servility.

According to the Central Election Commission of Turkmenistan, there were 140 candidates for deputy;[14] later the number dropped to 135 (according to the media, some of them voluntarily withdrew from the race).[15] On election day, there were 131 candidates[16] left, which meant that competition in the 50 constituencies was not stiff. There was no information about the organizations that nominated the candidates, but, according to indirect data, in Ashghabad 15 (the absolute majority) out of the 19 candidates registered in all six constituencies were nominated by meetings of citizens. The DPT City Committee, the Council of the National Trade Union Center, the Republican Council of the Makhtumkuli Youth Organization, and the Council of the Gurbansoltan Women's Union nominated only one candidate each. This confirms that, as distinct even from the Soviet version of political arrangements, parties and public organizations have no important role to play in Turkmenistan.

Still, for the first time in the country's history, the election to the Mejlis of the third convocation that took place on 19 December, 2004 and attracted 76.88 percent of the voters failed to produce all the required deputies. Only forty-three out of 50 were elected, while in seven constituencies a second

[13] This refers to S. Niyazov (*serdar* is "leader" in Turkmenian).
[14] *Neytral'ny Turkmenistan*, 24 November, 2004.
[15] See: *Neytral'ny Turkmenistan*, 1 December, 2004.
[16] See: *Neytral'ny Turkmenistan*, 20 December, 2004.

round was needed. Two deputies with the largest number of votes had to compete again.[17] This happened in one of the Ashghabad constituencies,[18] in two constituencies each in the Ahal and Dashoguz velaiats, and in one constituency in the Balkan and one in the Mary velaiat. All of these constituencies demonstrated common features: first, female candidates lost to men; and second, the candidates that filled lower administrative posts lost to those who were higher up the bureaucratic ladder. This obviously needs no elaboration.

Significantly, the Central Election Commission supplied only general information across the republic[19] and said nothing about the figures in terms of constituencies and candidates. The nation not only never learned the number and share of votes cast for each of the candidates, nor did it know the names of those elected in the first round. These practices on the part of the Central Election Commission are an obvious violation of the principle of election openness, which makes any reliable analysis impossible. It was probably for this reason that the media lost interest in the election campaign as soon as the final results had been published: the press, radio, and TV offered no election-related information. Only the Turkmenian Information Agency pointed out that the election "was a new landmark in the chronicle of our independence and demonstrated that Turkmenian society has reached maturity and achieved a high democratization level."

The second round, which took place on 9 January, 2005, attracted 72.24 percent of the voters. On 11 January, the media carried the final list of the elected Mejlis deputies which contained no information about the number of votes cast for each of them, nor was mention made of the structures that nominated them, their party affiliation, nationality, education level, or even their age. The list, however, revealed that most of them were civil servants. Fifteen deputies, or 30 percent of the total number, were in the Mejlis of the second convocation; 12 (24 percent) were civil servants, 1 (2 percent) was employed by the law enforcement structures, 10 (20 percent) came from industry and agriculture (mainly heads of enterprises and farms or of their smaller units), 2 (4 percent) worked in the public health sector, and 3 (6 percent) in education (secondary and higher education). The media and commercial banks were represented by 1 deputy, or 2 percent, each; DPT functionaries received 4 seats (8 percent), and functionaries of public organizations, 1 (2 percent).

Epilogue

In 2005, the country acquired a new version of its Fundamental Law and a new law on Election of Mejlis Deputies; the new documents contained no novelties. In February 2005, the president promised to bring the number of Mejlis deputies up to 120, yet in October, the new law contained the figure 65. President Niyazov resolutely rejected elections by party lists as absolutely unacceptable.

The spectacle played out at the 16th Session of the parliament was the apotheosis of the official attitude toward elections. The chairman of the Central Election Commission suggested that discussion of the draft law on Election of the President of Turkmenistan be removed from the agenda because of Niyazov's outstanding role as the nation's leader. The president objected, yet the deputies unanimously refused to discuss even the possibility of electing a new president.

It is obvious that Turkmenian political reality is following the Soviet tradition: the nation's leader is irreplaceable and must die in his post.

[17] These constituencies contained 230 polling stations.
[18] In the constituency in which President Niyazov also voted.
[19] See: *Neytral'ny Turkmenistan,* 4 January, 2005.

REGIONAL ECONOMIES

THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES ON THE MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE ACCOUNT SELECTION INDICATORS: GOVERNANCE IS THE MAIN CHALLENGE

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Promise of the Millennium Challenge Account

In March 2002, in Monterrey, Mexico, President Bush announced the creation of a bilateral development fund, the MCA, as the U.S. contribution to the United Nations Conference on Financing for Development. According to the plan, Bush pledged US$1.7 billion for FY 2004, US$3.3 billion for FY 2005 and US$5 billion for FY 2006, representing a 50 percent increase in the amount of aid focused strictly on development assistance.[1] This marshaled the largest U.S. foreign aid increase in decades. Steve Radelet wrote in *Foreign Affairs*, "This move was one of the greatest surprises of George W. Bush's presidency so far."[2] Indeed, the MCA could bring about the most fundamental changes to U.S. foreign assistance policy since the Kennedy administration.[3]

The author would like to acknowledge valuable comments provided by Professor Andrew Glassberg.

[1] See: B. Schaeffer, "The Millennium Challenge Account: An Opportunity to Advance Development in Poor Nations," *Heritage Lectures*, No. 753, 27 June, 2002.

[2] S. Radelet, "Bush and Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 5, 23 September, 2003, pp. 104-117.

[3] See: A. Natsios, "Challenging Orthodoxy: Changing Perspectives on Development." The Remarks by Andrew Natsios at the U.S. Agency for International Development, 21 October, 2002.

Historically, the bulk of U.S. foreign assistance did not have economic development as its primary purpose. Instead, it was based on foreign policy goals. Brainard *et al*. note that though development assistance was originally intended to address development needs, decisions on aid allocation were based on foreign policy priorities.[4] In other words, aid was given primarily to strategic partners though it depended on recipient countries whether they used aid for their growth. During the Cold War, foreign aid was mainly allocated to contain communism. For example, Taiwan, South Korea, Turkey, Vietnam, and others have received aid from the U.S. on this principle. In addition to the containment of communism, the aid was allocated to advance U.S. foreign policy in hydrocarbon abundant Middle East. As a part of the Camp David accords, Washington also provided a large share of ESF[5] to Egypt and Israel, which are considered the largest aid recipients up to this day.[6]

The allocation of aid on strategic considerations has continued to be the dominant *modus operandi* long after the end of the Cold War. For example, after the demise of the U.S.S.R, the U.S. has been very active in providing assistance to the formerly communist countries to advance democratic and free-market reforms. The political gains have been tangible as well. Eastern Europe and Baltic States have joined the European Union and popular democratic revolutions have occurred in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. However, outside of formerly communist countries, Middle East and South East Asia, the U.S. has somewhat lost coherent strategic rationale for aid allocation. The overall U.S. assistance to poor countries also fell by 25 percent.[7]

After 11 September, foreign aid gained attention again. The Bush administration pledged US$297 million to Afghanistan, US$600 million to Pakistan and US$250 million to Jordan to fight terrorism and promote democracy.[8] But the main surprise was the initiation of the MCA. In view of the increases in foreign assistance to post-war Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan to fight terrorism and to Africa to fight AIDS, the Congress could not commit itself to President's original generous pledge to initiate the MCA program. But it has still gone from vision to operation. The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) was established on January 23, 2004. The Congress managed to appropriate US$1 billion in FY 2004 and US$2.3 in FY 2005 to organize and pilot the MCA program. The President seeks US$3 billion for FY 2006, more than the FY 2005 level, but less than the original US$5 billion commitment for the third year.[9] Even if the real funding is lower than the originally pledged in Monterrey, it still represents one of the drastic increases in foreign assistance in a half a century, outpaced only by the Marshall Plan and the Latin America focused Alliance for Progress in the early 1960s.[10]

Other than marking a dramatic increase in bilateral aid, the MCA is also a drastically different aid allocation strategy. First, the MCA has a clearly defined objective to promote development. Second, the MCA emphasizes country ownership in development, recognizing that a country's own commitment, initiatives, policies and institutions play a substantial part in its development outcomes. Third, it is intended to allocate aid based on results. Finally, a relatively small number of recipient countries are selected based on their demonstrated commitment to development.[11] The MCC uses a set of *objective criteria of selection* to determine MCA eligibility.

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[4] See: L. Brainard, C. Graham, N. Purvis, S. Radelet, C. Smith, *The Other War: Global Poverty and the Millennium Challenge Account*, Center for Global Development and the Brookings Institution Press, 2003.

[5] Washington's aid accounting makes a key distinction between developmental assistance and geopolitical aid, which is distributed to strategic countries mostly as economic support funds (ESF).

[6] See: S. Radelet, op. cit.; L. Brainard, C. Graham, N. Purvis, S. Radelet, C. Smith, op. cit.

[7] See: S. Radelet, "Will the Millennium Challenge Account Be Different?" *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 2003, pp. 171-187.

[8] See: S. Radelet, "Bush and Foreign Policy," p. 108.

[9] See: L. Nowels, "Millennium Challenge Account: Implementation of a New U.S. Foreign Aid Initiative," CRS Report for Congress, Updated 1 July, 2005.

[10] See: S. Radelet, *Challenging Foreign Aid: A Policymaker's Guide to the Millennium Challenge Account*, Center for Global Development, 1 May, 2003; L. Brainard, C. Graham, N. Purvis, S. Radelet, C. Smith, op. cit.; L. Nowels, op. cit.

[11] See: Sh. Herrling, S. Radelet, "The Millennium Challenge Account: Soft Power or Collateral Damage," *Center for Global Development Brief*, Vol. 2, No. 2, April 2003.

The MCA Selection Indicators and Process

The MCA selection strategy is based on the *need* by countries for the funds and their *performance*. The need criterion is measured by income per capita set by the MCC. The performance criterion is measured by 16 selection indicators under the broad categories of "ruling justly," "investing in people" and "economic freedom" (see Table 1). To pass the performance criterion, countries must perform above the median in relation to their peer MCA candidate countries on at least half of the indicators on each of the three policy categories of "ruling justly," "investing in people" and "economic freedom" and score above the median on the corruption indicator. The only exception to the median approach is that for the inflation indicator a fixed ceiling of 15 percent and for civil liberties a fixed score of five are used. In addition to these objective criteria for selection, the MCC can exercise discretion in evaluating the indicators into a final list of eligible countries. Upon necessity, the MCC can also consider other quantitative and qualitative information to determine if a country deems eligible. The MCA appears to be the first program that employs pre-announced quantitative indicators to select recipient countries.[12] The indicator test builds on the idea that aid is most effective in countries with governments that are implementing sound development policies.

MCA Selection Process: The MCC Board of Directors determined 16 eligible countries for MCA funding in FY 2004.[13] On November 8, 2004, the MCC made its selection of FY 2005 eligible countries. The number and composition of FY 2005 eligible countries remained the same as in FY 2004 except that the Board chose one new country (Morocco) and Cape Verde was not selected because its per capita income exceeded the minimum requirement.[14] In FY 2004, the Board selected

Table 1

The MCA Selection Indicators

Ruling Justly	Economic Freedom	Investing in People
Civil Liberties	Country Credit Rating	Public Expenditures on Health/ GDP
Political Rights	Annual Inflation	Immunization Rates: DPT3 & Measles
Voice and Accountability	Fiscal Policy	Primary Education Spending/ GDP
Government Effectiveness	Trade Policy	Girls Primary Education Completion
Rule of Law	Regulatory Quality	
Control of Corruption	Days to Start a Business	

Source: The MCA Report on the Criteria and Methodology in FY 2005 and FY 2006

[12] See: S. Radelet, "Bush and Foreign Policy," pp. 104-117.

[13] FY 2004 MCA eligible countries are: Armenia, Benin, Bolivia, Cape Verde, Georgia, Ghana, Honduras, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Senegal, Sri Lanka, and Vanuatu.

[14] See: L. Nowels, "Millennium Challenge Account: Implementation of a New U.S. Foreign Aid Initiative," CRS Report for Congress, Updated 1 July, 2005: CRS-8.

ten countries on the basis of the predetermined objective criteria and used some discretion for other six countries.[15]

The number of MCA candidate countries has increased in FY 2006 because, regardless of wide criticism from academic and development community, the MCC has added the "lower middle income category" (LMIC) countries to compete for the MCA funds. For FY 2006, the MCC has selected 23 eligible countries. 20 countries are from the "low income category" (LIC)[16] and three are from the LMIC. 16 have been MCA eligible in FY 2005. Burkina Faso, East Timor, Gambia and Tanzania become MCA eligible for the first time in FY 2006 from the LIC. The selected LMIC countries are Cape Verde, El Salvador and Namibia.[17]

How Do the CIS Countries Rank on the MCA Selection Indicators?

Ranking of the CIS Countries in FY 2005: There are six in FY 2004, eight in FY 2005 and ten in FY 2006 MCA candidate countries from the CIS region (see Table 2). In FY 2004 and FY 2005, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia were not MCA candidates because they had higher income than the minimum requirement. Uzbekistan has been the only CIS country prohibited from receiving U.S. economic assistance under Part I of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. From the pool of CIS countries, the MCC has selected Armenia and Georgia as MCA eligible. While the selection of Armenia was based on its ranking on the objective indicators, the selection of Georgia was subject to controversy. Lucas and Radelet report that, in FY 2004, Georgia did not do well on "ruling justly," "investing in people" and "economic freedom" indicators.[18] Georgia also did not pass the control of corruption hurdle.

The MCC declared that it would select countries based on their performance and need for the MCA funds. In FY 2005, based on the overall differences between passed versus failed indicators, Georgia performed worse than Armenia, Moldova, and Ukraine and its corruption score was lower than in Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Ukraine (see Table 3). Obviously, if performance had been the main criterion for selecting Georgia, then Ukraine and Moldova would have been more qualified. If the need[19] had been the main criterion for selecting Georgia, then Moldova with two times less per capita income than Georgia would have been better qualified. It is obviously not clear why Georgia was selected instead of, for example, Moldova, which had higher need and better performance than Georgia.

One of the main arguments used to defend Georgia's selection is that it has established anticorruption agencies and pursued governance reforms (e.g., procurement transparency and unified treasury accounts) and declared its full commitment to democracy. However, Radelet comments, "[the selection of Georgia] ran directly counter to the core idea of the MCA that countries are chosen on the basis of demonstrated commitment to strong development policies, not on promises."[20] He rightly criticizes that this is a weak rationale because many countries have declared their fight against corrup-

[15] Bolivia, Cape Verde, Georgia, Lesotho, Mozambique and Sri Lanka.

[16] Armenia, Benin, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, East Timor, The Gambia, Georgia, Ghana, Honduras, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Vanuatu.

[17] See: MCC Press Release, "Millennium Challenge Corporation Board Names Fiscal Year 2006 Eligible Countries," 8 November, 2005 [http://www.mca.gov/public_affairs/].

[18] See: S. Lucas, S. Radelet, "An MCA Scorecard: Who Qualified, Who Did Not, and the MCC Board's Use of Discretion," Center for Global Development Working Paper, May 2004.

[19] The level of GNI per capita is an indication of the need for funds.

[20] S. Radelet, "A Note on the MCC Selection Process for 2005," Center for Global Development, 23 September, 2004, p. 5.

Table 2

GNI Per Capita for the CIS Candidate Countries in FY 2004, 2005 and 2006

FY04 CIS Candidates	GNI in 2002	FY05 CIS Candidates	GNI in 2003	FY06 CIS Candidates	GNI in 2004
Armenia*	800	Armenia*	950	Armenia	1,120
Azerbaijan	720	Azerbaijan	820	Azerbaijan	950
Georgia*	710	Georgia*	840	Belarus**	2,120
Kyrgyzstan	290	Kyrgyzstan	290	Georgia	1,040
Moldova	470	Moldova	470	Kazakhstan**	2,260
Tajikistan	180	Tajikistan	180	Kyrgyzstan	400
		Turkmenistan	850	Moldova	710
		Ukraine	780	Tajikistan	280
				Turkmenistan	1,340
				Ukraine	1,260
IDA ceiling	1,415		1,465		1,575

*Selected MCA Eligible Countries ** Lower middle income countries with GNI per capita of above $1,575 and below $3,255.

Source: *World Bank Development Indicators*, 2005.

tion and created anticorruption bureaus and instituted new laws, which do not necessarily lead to better governance outcomes.

It is believed that the administration granted eligibility to Georgia to support a geostrategic ally and a Western oriented President Saakashvili. Georgia was the first CIS country to replace the Soviet political elites by pro-U.S. oriented new leadership. Of course, while such a support of Georgia is justifiable from a U.S. foreign policy standpoint, it is not an appropriate use of MCA funds. Lucas and Radelet suggest that "the appropriate financial vehicle to support Georgia's transition is the State Department's Economic Support Fund, not the MCA."[21]

On 12 September, 2005, the MCC signed a five-year $295.3 million compact with Georgia to stimulate economic development in the poor regions, where more than half of the population lives below the poverty line. The program intends to benefit directly a half-million Georgians and quarter of the population of the country will benefit indirectly.[22] Apparently, granting an opportunity for Georgia to combat corruption and meet the objectives set by the MCA program is an investment into its future. At the same time, the MCC has been widely criticized for selecting Georgia in spite of its failure to meet the indicator test, which undermines the overall credibility of the MCA program.

[21] S. Lucas, S. Radelet, op. cit.

[22] See: MCC Press Release, "Millennium Challenge Corporation Signs $295.3 Million Compact with Georgia," 12 September, 2005 [http://www.mca.gov/public_affairs/].

Table 3

Performance of the CIS Countries in FY 2005

Countries	Ruling Justly	Control of Corruption	Investing in People	Economic Freedom	Passed Indicators	Failed Indicators	Missing Data
Armenia	Passed	Passed	Passed	Passed	14	2	0
Azerbaijan	Failed	Failed	Passed	Passed	7	9	0
Georgia	Passed	Failed	Passed	Passed	10	6	0
Kyrgyzstan	Failed	Equal	Passed	Passed	7	9	0
Moldova	Passed	Failed	Passed	Passed	13	3	0
Tajikistan	Failed	Failed	Passed	Failed	4	11	1
Turkmenistan	Failed	Failed	Passed	No Data	4	8	4
Ukraine	Passed	Failed	Passed	Passed	13	3	0

In terms of the ranking of other CIS countries in FY 2005, Ukraine and Moldova were high performers. Ukraine and Moldova passed all criteria except corruption. No doubt that Moldova would benefit immensely from receiving MCA funds because, despite its strong performance, it still has income per capita closer to the countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus. In terms of weak performers, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Azerbaijan ranked the lowest on most indicators. Turkmenistan was the worst case scenario, scoring "substantially below" on all "ruling justly" indicators. It also had missing data on two of the "investing in people" and "economic freedom" indicators. Tajikistan failed on all "ruling justly" and on five of the "economic freedom" indicators. Azerbaijan failed on all "ruling justly" with equal to the median indicators of rule of law and civil liberties. In Azerbaijan, it also took 123 days to start a business which is a substantial impediment to commence a business activity.

Overall, "ruling justly" and corruption were the most challenging barriers for the CIS countries in FY 2005. Half of the countries could not perform above the median on at least half of the "ruling justly" indicators. While Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine managed to pass "ruling justly" category, only did Armenia pass the corruption hurdle.[23] The control of corruption index is an aggregate gauge of bribery, the costs of corruption in doing business and the capture of the state by vested interests. These are the characteristics of corruption pervasive in all of the CIS countries with particular intensity in Central Asia. It is important to note that corruption is not only a symptom of weak governance but is also a hindrance to governance reforms. In an environment of rampant corruption, it is also much harder to jumpstart demand for governance reforms.

Ranking of the CIS Countries in FY 2006: Median per capita income in the CIS has increased by 45 percent while the minimum income requirement has increased by ten percent from FY 2004 to FY 2006. In FY 2006, two additional CIS countries (Kazakhstan and Belarus) are added under the category of "lower middle income" (LMIC) countries. Thus, except Russia and Uzbekistan, all CIS countries are MCA candidates in FY 2006.[24] For FY 2006, the MCC has again determined Armenia and Georgia as MCA eligible. In addition, it has added Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Ukraine

[23] Kyrgyzstan had equal to the median and Moldova and Ukraine fell slightly short of the median.

[24] Except Russia, which has a GNI per capita of $3,410, which is higher than the minimum requirement of $3,255 and Uzbekistan, which is subject to Section 577 of the FY2005 Appropriations Act, all of the CIS countries can compete for the MCA funds (see: MCC Report FY06, "MCA Report on Countries That Are Candidates for Millennium Challenge Account Eligibility in Fiscal Year 2006 and Countries That Would Be Candidates but For Legal Prohibitions." MCC Public Document on Identification of Candidate Countries, 2005 [http://www.mca.gov/countries/selection/index.shtml]).

to participate in the MCA threshold program for FY 2006. These countries, especially Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine, are also the top performers among the CIS countries on most selection indicators (see Table 4).

The CIS MCA Eligible Countries (Armenia and Georgia): Armenia scores higher than the median on 12, equal to the median on two and lower than the median on two out of 16 indicators. It does not fall "substantially below" on a single indicator. It has a strong showing on nine indicators with a clear advantage on "ruling justly" category in relation to its peer CIS countries. With regard to the progress from FY 2005 to FY 2006, it has invested more in education, with improvements in girls' primary education completion rate and education spending. Nevertheless, two indicators on which it still fails are in the category of "investing in people." In the area of governance, it has higher scores on government effectiveness and control of corruption. Yet, democracy indicators deteriorated within one year. John Danilovich has expressed his concern about lack of transparency and commitment to fair elections in the recent referendum in Armenia.[25] The MCC has promised to monitor closely Armenia's political process with a penalty of withdrawal in case its performance deteriorates further.

Georgia performs strongly on five indicators with particularly strong showing on democracy indicators. Because of the drastic efforts of the new government to undertake bold steps to fight corruption and improve governance, it has made the grade on the "ruling justly" category and advanced on most "economic freedom" indicators. It has also managed to improve on the most challenging

Table 4

Performance of the CIS Countries in FY 2006

Countries	Ruling Justly	Control of Corruption	Investing in People	Economic Freedom	Passed Indicators	Failed Indicators	Missing Data
LIC							
Armenia	Passed	Passed	Passed	Passed	12	4	0
Azerbaijan	Failed	Failed	Passed	Passed	7	8	0
Georgia	Passed	Failed	Passed	Passed	11	5	0
Kyrgyzstan	Failed	Failed	Passed	Passed	9	7	0
Moldova	Passed	Failed	Passed	Passed	14	2	0
Tajikistan	Failed	Failed	Passed	Passed	5	9	2
Turkmenistan	Failed	Failed	Passed	No Data	4	8	4
Ukraine	Passed	Failed	Passed	Passed	15	1	0
Uzbekistan	Failed	Failed	Passed	Passed	9	7	0
LMIC							
Belarus	Failed	Failed	Passed	Passed	5	11	0
Kazakhstan	Failed	Failed	Passed	Passed	9	7	0

Note: LIC = Low Income Category, LMIC = Low Middle Income Category.

Source: The calculations are based on the data from the MCA Country Ranking Dataset FY 2006.

[25] See: MCC Press Release. "Millennium Challenge Corporation Board Approves Armenia Compact but Expresses Concern Regarding Irregularities in the November Referendum," 19 December, 2005 [http://www.mca.gov/public_affairs/].

corruption hurdle from FY 2005 to 2006. Yet, it still comes short of the median and performs worse than Moldova and Ukraine. It is also vulnerable in the category of "investing in people." For instance, though health indicators have improved, primary education completion rate for girls has worsened and primary education expenditure is below the 20th percentile. Obviously, despite the progress, Georgia must do more to justify its being eligible for reasons other than its ranking on the selection indicators.

The CIS MCA Threshold Countries (Moldova, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan): The selection of Moldova and Ukraine as MCA threshold countries is very much welcoming considering their sound performance on most indicators. *Moldova* performs strongly in nine and passes all "ruling justly" indicators except corruption. It scores above the median on three of four "investing in people" indicators, with minor improvements in girls' education completion rate and the government spending on education in one year. On "economic freedom" category, it passes all indicators. Moldova is the closest country to become MCA eligible from the pool of CIS countries in future rounds.

Ukraine is a strong performer on eleven indicators. It scores well uniformly across three categories, demonstrating slight improvements on "ruling justly" indicators. For instance, while, in FY 2005, it had equal to the median scores on government effectiveness and rule of law, it performs above the median on these indicators in FY 2006. In terms of weak performance, it falls short on control of corruption, primary education spending and its inflation rate is close to the median. It is very likely that Ukraine will improve on corruption indicator and thus will pass the indicator test. However, Ukraine, unlike for example Moldova, has access to other sources of funding mainly in the private sector, which should be taken into account by the MCC.

In *Kyrgyzstan*, like in most CIS countries, the main challenge remains "ruling justly." It simply fails all "ruling justly" indicators but without "substantially below" scores. Government effectiveness and civil liberties are equal to the median and control of corruption is marginally less than the median. In view of its very weak performance on "ruling justly" indicators, the choice of Kyrgyzstan as a threshold country has been subject to criticism. For instance, Radelet has written, "Kyrgyzstan just has no business being a threshold country. It passes zero of the governance indicators—none—and scores particularly poorly on all the democracy related indicators."[26] As Kyrgyzstan does not have sound scores on the "ruling justly" category to be competitive in the next rounds and experts have rightly brought up the issue, the MCC has not provided a detailed explanation for selecting Kyrgyzstan as a threshold country. There might be several reasons why Kyrgyzstan has been chosen as a threshold country.

First, in spite of weak democracy scores in relation to other MCA candidate countries, Kyrgyzstan is often called the "Island of Democracy" with more or less vibrant civil society and freedom of press in comparison to its neighboring authoritarian regimes in Central Asia. Following Georgia and Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan has recently gone through its own "Tulip Revolution," which signifies a change in the long-standing political leadership. The MCC might have decided that Kyrgyzstan has the post-revolutionary momentum to initiate drastic governance and democratization reforms, as it has been the case in Georgia. As Daniel Fried, Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs, has stated, "There has been this year a major democratic advance in Kyrgyzstan where the newly elected leadership, elected in the fairest, freest elections that region has seen, is struggling with reforms."[27] Thus, the MCC might have expressed its generosity to support the newly elected Kyrgyz leadership in the same fashion it has supported Georgia. However, will this generosity transform into real institutional

[26] S. Radelet, "FY06 Threshold Countries—Some Disturbing Choices," MCA Monitor Bloc, 15 November, 2005 [http://blogs.cgdev.org/mca-monitor/].

[27] State Department, "Briefing on Secretary Rice's Upcoming Trip to Central Asia and Afghanistan," Washington, DC, October 2005 [http://www.state.gov/p/sa/rls/rm/2005/54624.htm].

and policy outcomes is a matter of time and political will of the newly formed Kyrgyz government. At this point, the new government is struggling to restore stability and order and it is hard to predict, which way it chooses to move forward.

Second, the MCC might have supported Kyrgyzstan because it has been a very strong political ally of the U.S. and hosts the only U.S. military base in Central Asia in between China and Russia and with proximity to Afghanistan. If this were factored in the decision-making of the MCC, then the so-called independence of the MCC from the U.S. government is very doubtful and this undermines the credibility of the program.

Finally, despite the failure of Kyrgyzstan on "ruling justly" indicators, it performs relatively well on "investing in people" and "economic freedom" categories. In the category of "investing in people," Kyrgyzstan passes all indicators. It also ranks relatively well on "economic freedom" indicators, with improved scores from FY 2005 to FY 2006. The only indicator of "economic freedom," on which Kyrgyzstan performs unsatisfactorily, is the budget balance, which is below the 20th percentile. Given Kyrgyzstan manages to improve its governance and fights corruption, it has the potential to compete for the MCA eligibility. It is also essential to pinpoint that Kyrgyzstan has been selected as a threshold not an eligible country and if Kyrgyzstan does not do well on "ruling justly" indicators, the MCC is likely to withdraw from supporting it. However, the MCC should have been more explicit and detailed in justifying its selection of Kyrgyzstan as a threshold country and should have stated its conditions upon which it would decide to withdraw from supporting it.

Other CIS Countries: The governance is the main challenge among the CIS countries, especially in Turkmenistan, Belarus, Tajikistan and Azerbaijan. Turkmenistan and Belarus are clearly the worst case scenarios, scoring "substantially below" on all "ruling justly" indicators. The dictatorial political system in *Turkmenistan* is graded with the lowest possible Freedom House rating of seven in political and civil liberties. It has not progressed on a single "ruling justly" indicator and its rule of law and corruption scores have worsened from –0.4 to –0.6 within one year. In terms of economic freedoms, it passes on inflation rate and budget balance but fails on regulatory and trade policy. Data on the costs and days to start a business are not available but Turkmenistan is more likely to fail than pass on these indicators because its overall index of regulatory quality is "substantially below."

In *Belarus*, the level of democracy is very disturbing, with the score of seven on political rights, six on civil liberties and -1.61 on voice and accountability. This largely reflects a dictatorial style of government by Alexander Lukashenko, whom Western NGOs accuse of suppressing human rights and the media. In spite of the state-led economy, Belarus barely makes on "investing in people" category, falling "substantially below" on public spending on primary education and health but passes on immunization and girls' primary education completion rate indicators. In the category of "economic freedom," it fails on the costs of starting a business and scores below the 20th percentile on regulatory quality and days to start a business.

Tajikistan scores below the 20th percentile on the World Bank Institute governance indicators and below the median on the Freedom House ratings. From FY 2005 to FY 2006, democracy indicators have not got better and government effectiveness and rule of law have even worsened. In the area of "investing in people," girls' primary education completion and immunization rates have improved but government expenditure on primary education and health have decreased as a share of GDP (with "substantially below" scores). In the area of "economic freedom," it gets above the passing scores on inflation, fiscal policy, and trade policy. The costs and days to start a business data are missing but Tajikistan is likely to fail on these indicators, considering it falls "substantially below" on the aggregate index of regulatory quality.

In *Azerbaijan*, "investing in people" indicators have picked up within one year. It could be due to its increasing oil exports and revenues which could have increased the government resources to spend more on education and health. Minor progress is evident on other indicators as well. For in-

stance, although Azerbaijan is still characterized by burdensome regulatory system, its quality of business regulations has reached the median and it takes slightly less days to start a business in FY 2006 than it took in FY 2005. The core problem in Azerbaijan is rampant corruption, ranking one of the most corrupt both in the WBI control of corruption index and the Transparency International's corruption perception index. Nevertheless, Azerbaijan has recently committed to improve governance and transparency in its oil and gas sector, which constitutes around 90 percent of all its exports, through the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). The basic idea behind the EITI is that transparency over payments and revenues generated by the development of natural resources (oil, gas and mining) must be used in an efficient, transparent and equitable manner. From the CIS region, Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan are implementing the EITI initiative and Kazakhstan has announced an implementation plan.

Uzbekistan is prohibited to participate in the MCA selection process. Nevertheless, even if it were allowed to compete for the MCA funds, it would still be far from being a likely candidate. It ranks below the 20th percentile on all "ruling justly" indicators. In particular, its level of democracy is very disturbing. At the same time, Uzbekistan has a strong showing on "investing in people" category and passes five of six of the "economic freedom" indicators.

The newly added "lower middle income" country of *Kazakhstan* does not qualify for the MCA funds either. Even if it were competing among "low income" countries, it still would not qualify for the MCA funds. While Kazakhstan easily passes "investing in people" and "economic freedom" categories, its quality of governance is poor. It falls "substantially below" in relation to its peer LMICs on all "ruling justly" indicators, with particularly low scores on democracy. However, notwithstanding its poor governance and widespread corruption, Kazakhstan has managed to grow dynamically in recent years due to huge exports of oil and political stability. Indeed, by all economic records, Kazakhstan has been the most dynamically developing country in the CIS.

At the same time, high growth does not mean that Kazakhstan should not improve its governance. Kazakhstan will benefit from improving its governance systems such as, public financial systems, state administration, anticorruption and transparency initiatives and rule of law. With sound governance and favorable business investment climate, Kazakhstan will encourage more foreign and local private investment. With sound governance, the people of Kazakhstan will benefit from the extraction and development of its rich oil resources and the government will be able to realize sustainable economic development with an eye to the future. Nonetheless, it needs to be taken into account that Kazakhstan can rely on its own internal resources to improve governance and does not urgently need the MCA funds, which is also the case for most low middle income countries added as MCA candidate countries in FY 2006. Obviously, it would be much more beneficial if the MCC has just focused on the low income countries.

Conclusion: Governance is the Main Challenge in the CIS

By and large, the selection of Georgia as an MCA eligible and Kyrgyzstan as a threshold country is more based on reasons other than their performance on the indicator test. However, Georgia's performance has improved substantially and given this continuity, Georgia might be able to pass the indicator test in next rounds. Kyrgyzstan is obviously far from qualifying as MCA eligible in next rounds and its selection as a threshold country is controversial. Nonetheless, given a generous consideration of Kyrgyzstan as a threshold country, the new Kyrgyz government is given a chance and re-

sources to rule justly and fight corruption to be competitive for the MCA eligibility in future rounds. The selection of Moldova and Ukraine as threshold countries is very much welcoming considering their strong performance. These countries are also likely to qualify as MCA eligible in next rounds. It would especially be helpful to Moldova, which has low income per capita and does not have access to other sources of money (as, for example, Ukraine).

Most other CIS countries are not likely to qualify for the MCA funds in next rounds given their very poor ranking on governance indicators. Overall, poor governance and pervasive corruption are the main challenges across the CIS region. For instance, while, in FY 2005, the CIS as a region performs above the median on all "investing in people" and on five of the "economic freedom" indicators, it fails on seven of the indicators from the WBI Global Governance Indicators Database (see Table 5). In FY 2006, once again, the governance indicators are the most challenging barriers. Out of eleven CIS countries, seven fail "ruling justly" and regulatory quality indicators. Ten countries fail the corruption test and most CIS countries rank low on the voice and accountability and rule of law indicators, meaning that citizens in the CIS not only lack civil liberties, independent media, and equal opportunity to participate in the selection of government officials but they also lack confidence in the laws, judiciary and enforceable contracts.

Table 5

Summary of the Performance of the CIS as a region in FY 2005 and 2006

	FY05	FY06		FY05	FY06
Ruling Justly	F	F	**Health Expenditures**	>	P
Political Rights	<	<	**Immunization Rate**	>	P
Civil Liberties	=	=	**Economic Freedom**	P	P
Voice and Vote	<	<	**Country Credit Rating***	>	>
Government Effectiveness	=	<	**Inflation**	>	>
Rule of Law	<	<	**Fiscal Policy**	>	>
Control of Corruption	F	F	**Trade Policy**	>	>
Investing in People	P	P	**Regulatory Quality**	<	>
Girls Primary Education Completion	>	>	**Days to Start a Business**	>	>
Primary Education Expend.	>	>	**# of Failed Indicators**	7	6

*In FY 2006, the Costs of Starting a Business is used instead of the Country Credit Rating.

Note: > above the passing score, < below the passing score, = equal to the passing score, P = passed and F = failed.

Source: Calculations are based on the data from the MCA Country Ranking Dataset FY 2005 & 2006.

Nevertheless, it is important to note a slight progress within one year. The CIS countries on average stand slightly better on the control of corruption and voice and accountability in FY 2006 than in FY 2005. But, even high performing CIS countries, such as Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine are far behind developed countries on most indicators of governance and still need to work hard to fight cor-

ruption. For instance, corruption scores for Armenia is 0.31 and 0 for Moldova and Ukraine, while it is around two for the U.S. and Canada. On average, the CIS countries are assigned a corruption score of –0.078 when an average score for the OECD countries is + 1.76 and + 0.07 for the neighboring Eastern Europe and Baltic States. The rule of law has an estimate of –0.013 for the CIS countries, which is very weak in comparison to the score of + 1.51 for the OECD countries. The two measures indicate that the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them is very weak in the CIS countries.

The same is true of other indicators of "ruling justly," with especially wide difference of voice and accountability estimate between the CIS and OECD countries. Thus, there is much room to improve the process by which the government is selected and the capacity by which the state provides public goods and services. Overall, all of the CIS countries need to focus on governance and institutional reforms not only to be competitive in the MCA program in future rounds but also to assure a better quality of life for their citizens. Unfortunately, unlike "investing in people" and some of the "economic freedom" related reforms, there is no quick fix for "ruling justly." It takes longer time, political commitment and will to initiate governance and institutional reforms.

CENTRAL ASIA: PORTRAIT AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF THE WORLD ECONOMY

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After the breakup of the U.S.S.R. and the formation of five independent states in the part of its territory now called Central Asia,[1] this region has assumed great importance not only in the system of international relations, but also in the world economy. The interest taken in Central Asia by the major powers is due in large part to economic factors: its vast area, diverse natural wealth, developed key branches of material production, and advantageous location in the path of transit of goods and services between Europe and the Far East and between North and South Asia.

In terms of many parameters of their natural resource and production potential, the republics of the region have a prominent place in the world economy. Unfortunately, information on this score contained in traditional and electronic publications is incomplete and insufficiently systematized, which limits people's knowledge about

[1] Geographically speaking, the name of this region is not flawless, because the northwestern part of Kazakhstan, which is included in Central Asia, is located not in Asia but in the far east of Europe (if we take into account the conventional boundary between them along the Ural River). However, the current name of this region with the inclusion of five countries is generally accepted in world political, geographical and country study literature.

Central Asia, lowers its investment attractiveness, and has a negative effect on the economic development of these countries. The purpose of this article is to furnish information about the potentialities of the Central Asian states in the world economy.

General Information

Central Asia (CA) occupies the central part of the Eurasian continent roughly equidistant from its eastern and western extremities. The total area of its five countries—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan— is 4 million square kilometers, and its population is over 57 million. Overall, the region has 3% of the world's area and 0.9% of its population, whose density is three times below the world average and 21 times lower than population density in neighboring South Asia. However, in some parts of Central Asia, such as the Ferghana Valley, this figure is many times higher.

Special note should be taken of the landlocked geostrategic position of Central Asia, the only region in the world none of whose countries have access to the World Ocean. The distance from the region's southern borders to the nearest seaports on the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf is 2,000 to 3,500 kilometers. The way to these seaports lies through the territory of other states (Uzbekistan and Liechtenstein are the only two countries of the world separated from the World Ocean not by one but by two states). At the same time, the CA republics are geographically remote from the largest and economically most developed parts of Eurasia that are of greatest interest to them as export destinations, in particular, the Far East and the countries of the European Union. Thus, the nearest EU countries lie about 4,000 kilometers away from the inner parts of Central Asia.

At the same time, the benefits of the region's transit position in the path of goods, services and passengers moving in both latitudinal and longitudinal directions are quite obvious. After all, Central Asia's immediate neighbors and countries bordering on them have a population of about 3 billion. These benefits are bound to increase with the completion of new transport routes: roads, railroads and pipelines.

Population and Labor Resources

Central Asia is a region of ancient civilization. Its peoples have made a tangible contribution to human progress, especially in astronomy, medicine, mathematics, philosophy, architecture, handicrafts, irrigated agriculture and other fields of creative and economic activity.

In terms of state structure, modern Central Asia is one of the few regions of the world all of whose countries are republics. Although the earliest states appeared here in ancient times, within their present borders and under their modern names the countries of the region are fairly young.

In view of their relatively low (by world standards) economic development level, the degree of urbanization in the CA countries is below the world average. In four of its five republics there are fewer city dwellers than people living in rural areas. Moreover, in 1990-2005, the proportion of the latter has increased in all the five countries. The typical resident of the region is a young person: the average age is about 20 years in Tajikistan, 22 years in Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and just over 28 years in Kazakhstan. Nevertheless, these republics differ markedly in terms of birth

rate per 1,000 population, with a twofold difference between its annual minimum (16 in Kazakhstan) and maximum (32 in Tajikistan). The sustained excess of births over deaths not only offsets the outflow of people from the CA countries, but also ensures an annual increase in the size of the population and labor resources.

People living in the CA countries have a fairly high (by international standards) education level. In particular, the more than 99% literacy rate for people over the age of 15, the mean years of schooling (10-12 years) and some other indicators characterizing the quality of labor resources are well above the world average. Since the peoples of the region have had to live and work in difficult conditions and to endure many hardships since ancient times (nomadic herding, extreme continental climate, farming on arid, artificially irrigated lands, merchant trade involving the need to cover long distances along the Great Silk Road), they have developed character traits of great value for economic activity, such as endurance, fortitude, capacity for work, industriousness, and thoroughness in decision making. The peoples of the CA countries have other excellent qualities as well: generosity, hospitality, collectivism, respect for elders, and a deferential attitude toward knowledge and skills.

The total economically active population of the Central Asian republics (calculated using the International Labor Organization method) is over 37 million, although the actual number of employed persons is smaller, largely owing to labor migration. Thus, about 1.5 million people from the CA countries, according to published data, are working in Russia alone. Most of their earnings they send back home to their families, so supporting the socioeconomic development of their countries. In Tajikistan, for example, remittances from migrant workers make up about 20% of GDP.[2]

One of the main assets of the CA countries is their higher education level and larger scientific and creative potential than those of countries with comparable per capita income. However, the decline in the funding of the public education system, falling education standards and emigration of researchers, engineers and other specialists caused by the economic recession of the 1990s have brought into focus the strategic task of maintaining the quality of labor resources as the region's intellectual capital and creating conditions for their further development.

Natural Resource Potential

In addition to the advantages of the region's transit location and its adequate and relatively high-quality labor resources, the CA countries have a powerful and diverse natural resource potential, as required for the efficient development of the key branches of industry and agriculture and for ensuring high living standards on this basis. Of course, the CA countries vary widely in terms of natural resource endowments but, given close cooperation and well-considered division of labor, the shortage of certain resources in some republics can be compensated by their excess in other republics.

The countries of the region have at their disposal 1.3% of the world's perennial crops (orchards, vineyards), over 2% of its cultivated lands and over 3% of their most valuable and productive kind, irrigated lands.[3] A comparison of these indicators with Central Asia's share of the world population (0.9%) shows that per capita availability of land—the basic means of agricultural production—is far above the world average. The same is true of pastures, most of which are low-yielding, but their total area is very large.

[2] See: *Central Asia Human Development Report*, UNDP, Bratislava, 2005, p. 10.
[3] See: *FAO Production Yearbook 2003*, Rome, 2004, p. 15.

The situation with renewable internal resources of fresh water is more complicated. The per capita figure for the region (3,600 cubic meters per year) is almost 50% below the world average. Moreover, this valuable natural resource, perhaps more than any other, is distributed between the CA countries very unevenly (with variations of over 50-fold). Nevertheless, given prudent use and fair distribution of water, the region's rivers (most of them cross-border) can meet the basic needs of all the five countries. Let us note for comparison that even Turkmenistan, which has less fresh water than the other four CA countries, has a higher per capita figure (210 cubic meters) than Saudi Arabia, Israel, Egypt or Jordan,[4] countries with relatively well developed agriculture in the main providing their population with foodstuffs.

Wide expanses of agricultural lands (some of them artificially irrigated), warm and sunny weather in flatland and foothill areas in the summer months, and the region's considerable length from north to south make it possible to reap rich harvests of many crops (ranging from barley grown in cool climates to subtropical figs) and to breed various domestic animals (including camels). In fact, forests are the only natural resource of which there is an acute shortage in all the CA countries. The proportion of forest area is six times below the world average. Besides, in view of climatic conditions the region's forests are mostly low-yielding and are not so much of economic as of environmental and recreational importance.

The countries of the region have a wide variety of mineral resources. Many deposits are of world importance, and some have no parallel on the Eurasian continent (such as the Muruntau gold deposit in the Kyzylkum Desert). By international comparison, the region's reserves of energy resources and nonferrous metals are particularly large. According to some estimates, proven recoverable reserves in the CA republics exceed 38 trillion tons of coal, 3.3 trillion tons of oil, and 6.7 trillion cubic meters of natural gas. To this must be added such important energy resources as uranium (whose proven reserves are close to 0.7 million tons) and hydropower (about 500 billion kW per year). But these resources are distributed unevenly: from 85% to 90% of oil and coal is concentrated in Kazakhstan, over 40% of gas in Turkmenistan, and close to 30% each in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan; Tajikistan has about three-quarters of the region's hydropower resources[5] (there are other estimates as well, such as those given in the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency's *The World Factbook 2005*).

Per capita availability of most energy resources in Central Asia is above the world average. In particular, this is evident from the fact that the CA countries with 0.9% of the world's population have almost 20% of world reserves of uranium and about 4% of gaseous and solid fuel. Ranking 61st in the world in terms of population (among about 200 countries), Kazakhstan is fourth in uranium reserves, eighth in coal reserves and 17th in oil reserves.[6] Turkmenistan, which is not even among the first 100 countries in terms of population, has the fifth largest reserve of natural gas in the world,[7] and Uzbekistan, which ranks 40th in terms of population, is 10th in uranium reserves[8] and 14th in reserves of natural gas.

Metals are the second most important component of Central Asia's mineral resource potential. Their reserves are most substantial in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. These two largest CA countries (in terms of population) have globally significant ore deposits of many ferrous, nonferrous, precious and rare earth metals. In particular, Kazakhstan has the world's largest reserves of chrome, 14% of zinc reserves (sixth place in the world) and over 4% of iron ore reserves (eighth place), and Uzbekistan has 5% of the world's gold (fourth place). In addition, these two countries stand out against the world

[4] See: *2005 World Development Indicators*, The World Bank, Washington, 2005, pp. 2146-2148.
[5] See: *Strengthening Cooperation for Rational and Efficient Use of Water and Energy Resources in Central Asia*, U.N., New York, 2004, p. 81.
[6] See: *Biulleten' inostrannoi kommercheskoi informatsii*, VNIIKI, Moscow, No. 13, 2005, p. 31.
[7] See: *Central Asia Human Development Report*, p. 96.
[8] See: *Der Fischer Weltalmanach 2004. Zahlen, Daten, Fakten*, Frankfurt am Main, 2003, S. 1263.

background in terms of their reserves of molybdenum, tungsten, silver and other ores. Two other CA countries are also high on the world list for some metals: according to various estimates, Kyrgyzstan ranks third in the world with 5% to 20% of world reserves of mercury, and Tajikistan ranks fourth with 3% of world reserves of antimony).[9] Even if we take into account the figures for each of the listed countries, we will find that per capita metal reserves in Central Asia are well above the world average, since the region's share of the world population is under 1%.

As regards the third most important mineral resource component—minerals for the chemical industry and other nonmetallic raw materials—here as well the CA republics have a prominent place in comparison with other countries. This applies, first and foremost, to reserves of phosphorites in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, bromine, iodine and mirabilite in Turkmenistan, sulfur and asbestos in Kazakhstan, and potassium salts and fluorite in Uzbekistan. The region also has numerous deposits of natural building materials: limestone, sand, gypsum, marble, etc.

Diverse natural landscapes of great beauty, numerous springs of healing mineral waters, etc., are another major component of the CA republics' resource potential, which is important for the development of tourism, recreation, sport and the health resort sector.

Role in World Production and Export

Given their diverse and abundant natural resource potential and their sufficient and high-quality labor resources, the CA countries occupy prominent positions in the world economy, including the production and export of many kinds of industrial and agricultural products. In assessing these positions, one should bear in mind that the countries of the region are predominantly agrarian-industrial ones. This is evident from the predominance of agriculture over industry and construction not only in the employment structure (in all the republics), but also in the structure of gross value added (in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan). At the same time, in the structure of GDP these sectors have given way to the service sector in all the CA countries (except Kyrgyzstan), and in Kazakhstan the share of the latter (53%) exceeds the total share of material production.[10] Incidentally, faster growth of the service sector as recorded in these republics is characteristic of the world economy as a whole.

Despite a significant decline in industrial production in the CA countries over the past 15 years, they still hold prominent positions in the world economy, mainly in the production of hydrocarbon fuels, nonferrous and precious metals, many types of industrial and agricultural materials, intermediate products, grain, fruits and vegetables, etc. Owing to the support given to strategically important, key industries and fuller use of existing capacity in some lines of production (oil, natural gas, gold, wheat, potatoes, fruits and vegetables, sugar, etc.), the region's share of world production volumes has increased. And owing to sectoral diversification of industry, the CA countries are now listed in world statistics as producers of goods that are totally new for them (the most impressive examples are cars and television sets). Today the CA republics produce over 17% of chrome, 16% of asbestos, 11% of uranium, 8% of manganese, 5-6% of natural gas, gold and silver, about 2% of oil and black coal, 1.5% of iron ore, and a significant part of other minerals produced in all countries of the world.

The list of agricultural products in whose production the share of the CA countries is well above their share of the world population is a long one. It contains not only fibrous materials, including cotton

[9] See: *Biulleten' inostrannoi kommercheskoi informatsii*, 2005, No. 60, p. 15; No. 77, p. 3.
[10] See: *Sodruzhestvo Nezamisimykh Gosudarstv v 2005* (Statistical Handbook), Moscow, 2005, p. 29.

(over 7%), wool and raw silk (over 3% each), but also essential foods such as wheat (about 4%), milk (2%), potatoes (over 1.5%), and also fruits and vegetables such as apricots (4%). The list of processed products is shorter. It is mostly confined to nonferrous metals (2.5-3.5% of refined copper, zinc and lead, over 1% of aluminum), some chemicals (such as sulfuric acid), textiles (cotton yarn), "vitamin" products (raisins, dried apricots, tomato paste), etc.

In some of the above-listed and other goods, the CA countries are among the world leaders. Thus, Uzbekistan ranks second in the production of karakul, fifth in uranium, sixth in cotton and tungsten, ninth in gold, and eleventh in natural gas.[11] Kazakhstan is second in the production of chrome and asbestos, fourth in titanium and vanadium, seventh in magnesium, zinc and manganese, ninth or tenth in silver, coal, bauxites and copper, and is among the world's major producers of ferrochrome. Kyrgyzstan is second among the leading producers of mercury, Tajikistan is fourth in antimony, and Turkmenistan, in raw silk. In addition, the republics of the region have a prominent place in world exports of certain fuels and raw materials, primarily cotton fiber (almost 20% of total world exports), zinc (4%), electric power and copper (3-3.5% each), wheat, gold and silver (over 2% each), oil and natural gas (over 1.5%), aluminum and cotton year (about 1% each).[12]

However, reliance on the region's powerful and diverse natural resource potential as the main source of revenue can result in sluggish development of science-intensive and high technology industries. The record of the world economy in recent decades shows that many countries in possession of abundant natural resources have been unable to use them efficiently and have thus failed to enter the path of dynamic socioeconomic development. Naturally, this does not mean that technological progress and structural shifts can only be driven by limited natural resources (as in resource-poor South Korea, Singapore, Israel, Mauritius and some other countries). A more fitting example for the resource-rich CA republics is the record of Mexico, Malaysia, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Chile, Costa Rica, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, which have used their large export earnings from oil, raw materials and agricultural products to create modern industries and service sectors.

Resource Dependence and Economic Efficiency

Unfortunately, the leading positions of the Central Asian countries are so far mostly limited to the natural resource sector. Although these countries have high technology industries and produce science-intensive, sophisticated products (such as wide-body aircraft, cotton pickers, cars, plastics and synthetic fiber in Uzbekistan, television sets and some other kinds of consumer electronics in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and, to a lesser extent, in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan), they do not determine the structure of output in the region or its place in the world economy. For passenger cars, for example, the CA countries' share is under 0.1%, and for television sets, 0.4%.

Industries producing products with relatively low (compared, say, to engineering) value added—fuel and energy, metallurgical, light and food—prevail in the industrial sector of all the five countries. The efforts being taken to restructure production and to ensure a higher degree of processing of local raw materials have yielded some positive results, but have not yet led to any radical changes in the sectoral composition of industry that would ensure if not a leading place for engineering, metal-

[11] Calculated from: *Industrial Commodity Statistics 2002*, United Nations, New York, 2004; *FAO Production Yearbook 2003; Biulleten' inostrannoi kommercheskoi informatsii*, 2005.

[12] Calculated from: *UNCTAD Handbook of Statistics 2004*, U.N., New York and Geneva, 2004.

working, electrical engineering, electronics and the petrochemical industry then at least a proportion comparable with those of the natural resource industries.

This also applies to exports. The main export items are fuel and foodstuffs (oil, gas, wheat, fruits), semi-finished products (cotton fiber, ferrous and nonferrous metals) and other low and medium technology products (textile yarn, gray fabrics, oil products). In 2004, for example, crude oil constituted 57% of exports from Kazakhstan; gold, 40% of exports from Kyrgyzstan; and cotton and gold, 49% of exports from Uzbekistan. Cars, electrical and other engineering products, petrochemicals, plastics, synthetic fiber, pharmaceuticals, finished fabrics, etc., still have an insignificant place in their export structure.

The region's largely resource-based economy and foreign trade with a prevalence of low value added goods and services (together with a number of other factors) account for the relatively low socioeconomic development level of the CA countries compared to the world average. This is evident, in particular, from the fact that their share of the world's gross national income (GNI) at purchasing power parity (PPP) (0.35%) is almost 2.6 times lower than the region's share of the world population. Even in Kazakhstan—the country with the region's highest PPP GNI per capita—this figure (according to the World Bank, $6,980 in 2004) is a quarter below the world average ($8,760).[13] Of course, the accuracy of these figures is open to argument, but this can hardly affect the basic conclusion about the relatively low level of economic development and corresponding living standards in today's Central Asia.

One of the reasons for such a state of affairs is the insufficiently effective use of the existing natural resource, technological-production and intellectual potential. The worst situation is with the energy intensity of the economy. The average figure for the CA countries is three times above the world average: while consuming about 1.2% of the total energy resources annually used in the world, the republics of the region produce about 0.33% of world GNI. Another example of the currently low efficiency of economic activity is that 2.5% of the world's cultivated area under grain crops at the disposal of these countries yields 1.25% of all the grain harvested in the world (i.e., a share twice as low).

Cooperation as a Factor of Progress

Apart from natural resource-based production and low economic efficiency, another factor impeding the economic development of the CA countries is the fairly low level of their mutual trade, production and investment cooperation. This is one of the reasons why the share of the total exports of goods and services of the CA republics (0.28% of the world total in 2004) is lower than their share not only of the population, but also of PPP GNI.

The inadequate level of mutual economic cooperation and limited communication routes for export of goods to international markets hold back the inflow of foreign direct investment (FDI). In most CA countries, per capita FDI figures are lowest among the post-socialist countries, with investments mostly confined to a narrow range of industries (fuel, raw materials, low and medium technology products).

It is not right to say, as some commentators do, that the main obstacle to mutual trade, economic cooperation and deeper division of labor in the region is the sectoral similarity of the national economies, including their natural resource orientation and supply of similar goods (energy resources, cotton,

[13] See: *World Development Report 2006*, The World Bank, Washington, 2005, pp. 294, 295.

nonferrous metals) to the foreign market, which inevitably results in competition between them. After all, in some industries the production and foreign trade profiles of the CA countries are different and complement each other. In regional nonferrous metallurgy, for example, Tajikistan is the only producer of primary aluminum, Kazakhstan, of refined lead, and Uzbekistan, of molybdenum and tungsten products. Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are major producers and exporters of hydrocarbon fuel, while Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan can supply low-cost electricity generated by environmentally clean mountain river plants.

General progress of the CA republics' productive forces could be promoted by concerted diversification of their national economies. New enterprises set up in these countries over the past 15 years (in the production of phosphorites, oil refining, manufacture of passenger cars, etc.) often turn out products already produced in other countries of the region in quantities sufficient to meet their common requirements and at acceptable prices. A coordinated approach would ensure more rational use of investment and prevent the unwarranted creation of excess capacity.

Closer cooperation ties are particularly important for the development of engineering, for cutting production costs and so ensuring more competitive prices. Thus, an arrangement to equip cars produced by the Asaka Plant (Uzbekistan) with rubber tire covers made by the Chimkent Tire Factory (Kazakhstan) would help to save tens of millions of dollars a year. The cost of technological changes for the production of new kinds of tire covers at the Chimkent Factory would be more than compensated by the huge difference in transportation costs (currently these covers are brought all the way from South Korea).

The integration of Russia, Belarus and the Central Asian countries (with the exception of Turkmenistan) within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) does not obviate the need to deepen and diversify cross-border trade in goods and services, investment and production cooperation between economic entities in the region on a mutually beneficial basis.

In the opinion of the authors of the Central Asia Human Development Report, the benefits from reducing trade costs, increasing remittances from migrant workers and more efficient use of water and energy resources could generate a regional economy twice as large 10 years from now. In particular, only by arranging joint management of regional water resources the CA republics could get an additional $1.7 billion (3% of their total GDP), and the overall quantifiable benefits from regional cooperation could amount to 5% of GDP.[14]

Development Prospects

In recent years, the economic situation in the Central Asian countries has markedly improved, largely owing to a business recovery in these countries and favorable world prices for their traditional export products. As a result, economic growth has accelerated, inflation has declined, and the unemployment level has stabilized. Suffice it to say that in 2001-2005 the average annual GDP growth rate in these republics was much higher than in the world economy as a whole (3.6%).[15] At the same time, judging by the data of national statistics agencies, in 2004 only two countries of the region surpassed the pre-reform level of GDP: Uzbekistan (120% compared to 1991) and Kazakhstan (over 116%). In Kyrgyzstan, this index was 87%, and in Tajikistan, about 60%[16] (the data for Turkmenistan are not published).

[14] See: *Central Asia Human Development Report*, Bratislava, 2005, pp. 1, 6.
[15] See: *Country Forecast Global Outlook*, November 2005, EIU, p. 3.
[16] See: *Ekonomika Uzbekistana. Analiticheskii obzor*, TsEEP, Tashkent, 2005, p. 2004.

Despite the difficulties associated with incomplete market reforms, structural adjustment of production and other internal and external factors, the economic development prospects of the CA countries are favorable. According to forecasts by the Asian Development Bank, GDP growth in 2006 is to amount to 8% in Kazakhstan, 7% in Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, 6% in Uzbekistan, and 5.5% in Kyrgyzstan,[17] which is at least twice as high as the world average. The forecasts of U.N. experts are even more optimistic: real GDP in 2006 is expected to increase by 8.5% in Kazakhstan, 7% in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, 5.8% in Kyrgyzstan, and 5% in Turkmenistan.[18] As a result, overall economic growth in Central Asia will be considerably higher than in the group of seven transition economy countries of Southeast Europe (5.9%) or in the CIS (6.2%); in the group of economically developed countries, this figure is 2.5%.

A consistent solution of existing problems, further deepening of socially oriented market reforms and more active integration processes will help to enhance the production potential of the Central Asian countries, to raise regional living standards, and to improve the socioeconomic positions of these countries and of the whole region in the world community.

[17] See: *Asian Development Outlook 2005*, ADB, Manila, 2005, p. 303.
[18] See: *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2006*, U.N., New York, 2006, pp. 129-130.

RELIGION IN SOCIETY

MUSLIM CLERGY IN THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL LIFE OF AFGHANISTAN

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Afghanistan's past greatly affects its present. This is especially true of the two state coups: the anti-monarchy coup of 1973, which brought Mohammad Daud to power, and the events of 1978, which brought the Marxist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) to power. They were followed by a protracted civil war and foreign military interference which consecutively created the regimes of the Islamic fundamentalist-mojahedin in 1992, which declared Afghanistan an Islamic state, and of the radical Taliban movement, which established a military theocratic regime in the form of the Islamic Emirate throughout most of the country. Late in 2001, it fell under blows delivered by the international U.S.-led counterterrorist coalition and the Northern Alliance.

The nation paid dearly for the years of devastating internecine war with loss of life, destroyed political, economic, and cultural infrastructure, an altered demographic situation, and millions of émigrés. (According to the U.N., there are about three million Afghan refugees in Pakistan alone.[1]) The wars and the kaleidoscopic regimes delivered a crushing blow to the centuries-old moral and ethical norms and traditional lifestyle of the Afghans, as well as to their habits and customs. Islam as an important part of the local lifestyle was no exception; the war affected the situation of the Muslim clergy and the Islamic institutions. Under the Marxist regime of the PDPA, the clergy was persecuted

[1] See: "Pul's planety," *AK-5,* 22 August, 2005.

and its members repressed. The anti-Islamic policy was especially cruel at the very beginning of the party's rule, when the clans of Mojaddidi, Waezi, Qiyani, and other respected religious figures suffered a lot. Under the mojahedin and the Taliban, the clergy was brought to the very summit of power.

The role of the clergy and its influence on the country's contemporary life stem from the nation's past. For a long time, between the 7th and 11th centuries, since the time when Islam finally established itself as the main religion of the local tribes, a multi-step social-economic hierarchy developed. It consisted of individual groups of clergy which differed in their level of material well-being and their influence on the popular masses. The ulamaye dini (the religious ulemas) occupied the highest steps of the structure. The group consisted of theologians—the maulawis, mudarisses-mutabahhirs (erudite persons), faqihs, etc. normally educated in the best Islamic centers abroad—Deoband in India, Al-Azhar in Egypt, and others.

The official clergy was recruited from this group; its members sit in the Ulema Council, the Ihtisab (Islamic morality police), the Court, and the Ministry for Islamic Affairs and the Waqufs. As bureaucrats paid by the state and supporting its policy, these people were not hugely popular among the common people.

The Seyyids, Hazrats, Hajehans, and Ishans are descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, or of the righteous caliphs. A British journalist Angus Hamilton, who visited Afghanistan at the time of Emir Habibullah Khan (1901-1919), wrote that "censure of Seyyid (a descendant of Muhammad), a learned theologian, or of the civilian authorities was punished with 20 strikes and a fine of 50 rupees.[2] As a rule, members of this group were connected with Sufi brotherhoods, while many of them filled high official posts. There are 16 Seyyids in the parliament today. Pirs and sheikhs—heads of the Sufi orders Naqshbandiyya-Mojaddidiyya, Qadiriyya, Chishtiyya, Suhrawardiyya, Tayfuriyya, and others—were highly respected. Each of the orders had spheres of influence of their own. The most influential of them—Naqshbandiyya-Mojaddidiyya and Qadiriyya—had murids not only in Kabul and other large provincial centers, but also in all small districts of the country. The murids were mostly noblemen: khans, tribal chiefs, top officials, rich merchants, and other wealthy people. In the past, there were royals among the murids; the Sufi brotherhoods lived on lavish donations.

The village mullahs, imams of village mosques, teachers and talibs of village madrasahs, owners of Sufi hanaqs, custodians of the mazars and other holy places (ziyaratgah) where saints were buried, etc. occupied the lowest step. They existed mainly on the donations of their parishioners or work they did on the side: they grew vegetables and flowers or did primitive construction jobs.[3] It was the most respected group of people who enjoyed authority and influence among the common folk, since they lived among the people and accompanied them "from cradle to coffin."

Historical documents contain ample evidence of the role religion and the clergy played in social and political life. All of its constitutions, from the first adopted in 1923 to the current one of 2004, testify that the history of the Afghans is a history of struggle between civilian and religious powers carried out with alternating success. The clergy fought stubbornly to retain its influence in the courts and schools, the traditional spheres of the Muslim clergy. An analysis of all the constitutions revealed that each time secular power retreated, the clergy fortified its position in the sphere of jurisprudence and education, and vice versa. With his court reform, King Amanullah Khan radically limited the powers of the Shari'a judges and delivered a blow to clerical influence in the judicial sphere.

It was the dissatisfied clerics who plotted against the king. "Those of the ulema who knew how to plant an idea about the king as an unfaithful person damned by the Most High in the minds of the people were especially respected," wrote Afghan historian Mir Gulyam Muhammad Gubar.[4] As soon

[2] See: A. Hamilton, *Afghanistan,* London, 1908, p. 128.
[3] See: *Azad Afghanistan,* No. 2, July-September 1999.
[4] See: M.G.M. Gubar, *Afghanistan na puti istorii,* Moscow, 1987, p. 166.

as the deposed king was replaced by Nadir Shah, the clergy restored its shattered position and even strengthened it: this was when the Council of the Ulema was set up and the Islamic morality police—Ihtisab—restored.

Later, in 1933 when Muhammad Zahir Shah became the king the clergy lost its influence in courts and schools for a long period of time until the downfall of President Najibullah in 1992. The 1964 Constitution adopted under Zahir Shah said that the "observance of religious norms and rites" was not obligatory, as it was under the previous Constitution of 1931. The clergy obviously lost its influence on social life.[5]

Part of the national elite did not limit its ambitions to schools and courts: guided by the principle of indivisible spiritual and secular power, it wanted to rule the country or, at least, to control the spiritual sphere in order to become incorporated into the country's political structure. Never strong enough to replace secular power, this part of the elite preferred compromises and cooperation. The top clerics remained loyal to secular power, at least while its corporate (read: economic) interests remained safe. But any hint of threat to its privileges and social status provoked a conflict with secular power under the slogan of protecting Islam against faithless rulers branded as "Godless" and "foreign puppets." Shah Shuja fell victim to this in 1842; the above-mentioned Amanullah Khan suffered the same fate in 1929, to be followed by Najibullah in 1992. British author Angus Hamilton wrote about this early in the 20th century: "Religion is the only seat of trouble from which rebels might emerge."[6]

At all times, the leaders of the Islamic ulema cherished the dream of finally turning Afghanistan into a "genuinely" Islamic state with secular and spiritual power concentrated in the hands of the clergy, which alone would decide the country's fate. Among the numerous testimonies of this there is a highly thought-provoking document. In 1920, Premier Sardar Abdul Quddus Khan asked the Kandahar ulema to offer their opinion about "constitutionalism and the Afghan constitutionalists" and received a highly revealing answer: "The Caliphate is the only acceptable form of statehood for Afghanistan since this form alone strengthens faith."[7]

The chimera is still alive: nearly 80 years later, the Taliban mullahs said in so many words that they regarded the Islamic Emirate they created as the first step on the road toward a world-wide caliphate. *Tulu-e afghan* (Afghan Sunrise), an official newspaper, said: "It is our cherished dream to see all Muslim countries in the world united into one, single and indestructible Islamic Caliphate and acting as one great force."[8]

The Muslim clergy of Afghanistan had another role to play: the mullahs and the ulema have always been a catalyst of popular unrest; they mobilized the masses to resist foreign aggressors.

Famous Sheikh Najm ud Din Ahund-zada, better known as Hadda Mullah or Hadda Sahib, Mullah Din Muhammad, known by his nickname Mushqi Alyam, Mullah Abdul Gafur Langari, Mullah Rashid Ahund-zada, Mullah Halil, and Mullah Muhammad, all of them common village clerics, are still remembered for their contribution to the three wars against Britain. Confronted with the fierce cleric-led resistance of the local people, the Brits had to admit: "Religious feelings against the British were very strong, while Islam, with which we clashed, proved to be a rock."[9] In 1979, too, it was the top Muslim clergy who launched a war against the regime of PDPA and foreign (this time Soviet) troops. On 26 January, 75-year-old Pir of Qadiriyya Mia Guljan Tagavi issued a fatwah that called for a jihad against the "godless PDPA government and its allies." According to other sources, it was Sebghatullah Mojaddidi, head of the Naqshbandiyya-Mojaddidiyya order, who pub-

[5] See: *Constitution of Afghanistan,* Kabul, 1964, pp. 24-25.
[6] A. Hamilton, op. cit., p. 115.
[7] M.G.M. Gubar, op. cit., p. 150.
[8] *Tulu-e afghan,* 30 October, 1996.
[9] M.E. Yapp, *The Revolution of 1841-1842 in Afghanistan,* Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, 1964, p. 374.

lished the fatwah that started the jihad. Soon after that, on 27 November, prominent religious figures and leaders of military-political groups of mojahedin (B. Rabbani, S. Mojaddidi, S.A. Gilani, M. Nabi Muhammadi, Y. Khalis, and G. Hekmatyar) met in Peshawar to announce a jihad that led to a fratricidal war and ruin.

Today, Afghanistan is living through another period of hardships: a large foreign military contingent is stationed on its territory, which has naturally stirred up popular discontent; Taliban members have not laid down their arms; ethnic tension has not been alleviated; there is no economic progress; and millions of refugees still remain outside the country, while illegal trafficking in drugs grown in Afghanistan has not abated. Under these conditions, we naturally want to know whether the Muslim clergy has retained its former ability to shape public opinion and to actively interfere in social and political processes. After all, political parties mostly based on shared ideologies or ethnic affiliation are stepping up their activities.

During the war, religion did not lose its influence on the people's minds. Here are the facts. Under the 2004 Constitution, Islam is still "the state religion" and remains unshaken. The same document registered the de facto leading position of Islam and its priority over secular power. Art 3.1 says: "None of the laws of Afghanistan shall contradict the laws and instructions of the holy religion of Islam."[10] Under the new Constitution, the clergy acquired legal power not only over education, but also over the entire ideological sphere, which affects the minds of people, primarily young people. Under Art 17, the state is duty bound to take all the necessary measures "to improve education at all levels, develop religious education, and regulate and improve the situation of the mosques, madrasahs, and religious centers." Art 45 is even more eloquent: "The state elaborates and carries out a single educational program based on the law of the holy religion of Islam and national culture and draws up a program of religious disciplines for schools (maqtabs) based on the Islamic persuasion present in Afghanistan." This means that religious disciplines will become the linchpin of teaching both in religious and secular schools (maqtabs).

On top of this, under the Constitution, the courts are still staffed with Muslim theologians, all of them with higher educational establishments behind them, and all of them with the Shari'a and the fiqh (Muslim laws) at their fingertips. The new Constitution followed the previous ones by granting the judges the right to apply fiqh under certain conditions. Art 130 allows the judges to use "the laws of fiqh of the Hanafi madhab" to pass "fair and the best possible sentences" if neither the Constitution nor other laws offer corresponding indications.

The new Constitution envisaged a compromise between secular and spiritual power, which could only be expected in a country where the former political-religious mojahedin leaders still carry a lot of weight and still have real power. Today they are known as the "jihad leaders" who headed "national resistance." No wonder the new Constitution established two new official holidays: 28 Asad (18 August)—the day of Afghanistan's restored independence—and 8 Saur (27 April, 1992)—the day when Islamic fundamentalist-mojahedin came to power.

There is another example that sheds light on the role Islam and Islamic clerics play in social life: in September 2005, people elected the parliament and the provincial councils. The election campaign was a very special one for several reasons: first the press, especially newspapers published in the capital, actively supported the clergy under titles such as "The Ulema's Decisive Role in Society, "Religion and Politics Cannot be Separated," etc. Most of the candidates made a special effort to point out that they descended from respected religious families, that they had a religious education and had taken part in the jihad. Others preferred to address the voters in mosques. Those who positioned themselves as democrats and human rights fighters never missed a chance to say that democracy and human rights

[10] Here and hereinafter the reference is to the Constitution of Afghanistan published in Dari in the journal of *Anghiza,* No. 3, January-March 2004, pp. 71-98.

should be realized within Islam and according to the Shari'a. The results were obvious: Islamic fundamentalists (mojahedin and pro-Taliban forces) received over half of the seats.[11]

Nearly all lists of deputies elected from the capital and the provinces contain the names of clerics—mullahs, maulawis, as well as respected Islamic leaders—seyyids, pirs, sheikhs, etc. Here are several examples. Mullah Taj Muhammad Mojahed represents Kabul; Maulawi Abdul Aziz, Badakhshan; Mullah Malang, Badhis; Maulawi Abdulhaqq, Pagman; Maulawi Sheikh Ahmad, Faryab; Maulawi Din Muhammad Azimi, Gur; Maulawi Hanif-Shah al-Hoseyni, Host; Maulawi Seyyid al-Rahman, Lagman; Maulawi Ataulla Lodin, Nangarhar; Maulawi Muhammad Islam Muhammadi, Samangan, etc.

When talking about the religious-political situation in the country, we should pay attention to a new factor. There is a developing confrontation between the conservative and orthodox part of the clergy opposed to the democratic changes and "Westernization" of Afghan society (associated in their minds with foreign military presence) and the reformist religious-political forces eager to use the achievements scored by human civilization to develop local society. They want to "open the doors of ijtihad" (which means free and independent interpretations based on the holy texts) as the main road leading to the "renaissance of Islam." By way of illustration let me quote from two newspapers. The *Payame mojahed* (Message of Mojahed) newspaper, published by the Mojahedin of Afghanistan, condemned the influence of Western lifestyle on Afghan society and asked with a great deal of sarcasm: "Are European dress, amoral films, and co-educational schools symbols of democracy? If this is true, the Muslims do not need such democracy."[12] Another Kabul newspaper *Mardom* (People), published by the Islamic Movement of the People of Afghanistan Party, called on the clergy "to open the doors of discussion, and not to stop up people's mouths" in an article called "Criticism is an Indispensable Condition of Religious Renaissance." The same article said that only the use of all the technical and scientific achievements would open new horizons and "would not allow religion to rot."[13]

To sum up the above:

- Islam is still a dominant force in Afghanistan and an integral part of the local way of life;
- During the war, the clergy sustained great human—many of its members, especially of the lower ranks, died in battles—and material losses.
- Despite the war (or even thanks to the war waged under the banners of jihad), the clerical elite and friendly political forces strengthened their position in the state power bodies and retained their influence over the larger part of the nation.
- We can expect the traditional trend toward a confrontation between secular and religious power to continue; it will probably assume new forms—opposition within the parliament in view of its present composition—and also appear in the policy pursued by President Karzai's government.

[11] [www.afghanistan.ru], 20 November, 2005.
[12] *Payame mojahed,* 22 August, 2002.
[13] *Mardom,* 4 September, 2005.

RUSSIA AND ISLAM: POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF THEIR DIALOG

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Islam is the youngest of the great world religions; as such it imbibed the vast spiritual and intellectual wealth of the preceding epochs. The Muslim world and its theological pillars (monotheism, religion as the Revelation, religion-based ethics, and veneration of Jesus and St. Mary) are much closer to the Christian European legacy than any other of the great world religions. Socially and culturally, however, the Muslim world is far removed from the Christian European legacy because it emphasizes loyalty to the umma rather than the individual's spiritual life.[1]

This is a dynamic religion with a rapidly increasing number of followers. Today, one-fifth of the planet's population follows Islam (1.3 billion), which comes second after Christianity. Muslims live in more than 120 countries of the world. Russia with about 20 million Muslims is one of them.[2] There are approximately 50 million Muslims in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

In the last quarter of the 20th century, Islam moved to the forefront of world history and confronted mankind with a host of paradoxical problems. Today it attracts much more attention than any other religion; it stirs up heated discussions and contradictory conclusions. This is explained by its sheer size, and its intensive and multisided cooperation with other civilizations. For this reason, a dialog of civilizations should become the prerequisite of a fair world order for the future.

The world of Islam is unique; the Muslims can be regarded as a single whole, irrespective of where they live and pray on the planet. Islamic integrity, however, is relative: Islam is both unified and diverse, therefore it is far from being integral for the simple reason that the Islamic nations speak different tongues and have vastly different cultures and customs. Practiced in different countries and regions, this religion is affected by local faiths and traditions and embraces a variety of cultures. Indeed, Islam practiced in Indonesia by the ordinary people has little in common with the faith of the French intellectual proselytes, yet, in the final analysis, it is one and the same Islam. Frederick Denny has rightly pointed out that the Muslims live in at least two cultural environments: the local culture of their native land in which they are born and which they imbibe along with their mothers' milk, and Islam and the Muslim culture acquired and consciously embraced.[3]

According to Dr. Dina Malysheva, Islam has gained a lot of political weight worldwide due to several factors. First, its practically unlimited oil and gas reserves (still the key strategic raw materi-

[1] See: E. Rashkovskiy, "Islam v dinamike global'noy istorii," *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia*, No. 6, 2004, p. 21.

[2] See: D.B. Malysheva, "Rossia i musul'manskiy Sever v vodovorotakh novogo miroporiadka," in: *Sbornik statey*, RAS, IMEMO, Moscow, 2003, p. 6.

[3] See: F.M. Denny, "Islam i musul'manskaia obshchina," in: *Religioznye traditsii mira*, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1996, p. 7 (Frederick M. Denny, *Islam and the Muslim Community (Religious Traditions of the World)*).

als) add huge geopolitical importance to Islam. Second, conflicts mostly flare up in Islamic countries, or in areas where Muslims and the followers of other religions live side by side. This has already given rise to a vast flow of Muslim refugees, who outnumber all the other refugees throughout the world. Third, the share of the Muslim population is rapidly increasing both in Russia's European part and Western Europe, where Muslims find it hard to blend with local cultures. There the man in the street has already associated Islam with a potential threat to the stable centuries-old social order rooted in Christian ethics and culture. Fourth, in the last few decades it was Muslims who either carried out or organized the terrorist acts that shook the world. Muslims are associated with the transnational religiously tinged terrorism, the culminating point of which was 9/11. No wonder ordinary people in the non-Muslim world associate Islam with suicide bombers. The above is responsible for the negative image of Muslims, which is especially true of Europe, Russia, and the United States. There are people, however, who see Islam, along with other religions, as part of mankind's cultural heritage and do not accuse the Muslims of instigating conflicts between civilizations or religious wars.[4]

No matter what, common folk in Russia and the West tend to identify the mounting wave of mass unrest, violence, and terror with Islam and its response to the current globalization trends. Terror and violence cannot be justified—it is very important, therefore, to achieve a profound understanding of Islamic reality and overcome the stereotypes of mass consciousness. The Koran and the Bible both say that God rewards everyone who voluntarily embraces good and rejects evil. I think that Dr. Georgiy Mirskiy was right in saying that the recent terrorist acts were not only, and not so much, outbursts of Islamic civilization's malice—they were, said he, a "malignant tumor" in its body. It contaminates not only the non-Islamic world—it also affects Islam, which has found itself in a qualitatively new global environment. Islamic conservatism and "Islamic" terror are two different things: terrorism survives not so much at the expense of religious ideas proper as at the expense of sociocultural, economic, and psychological factors.[5] It is wrong to classify Islam both as one of the world religions and as international terror. Terrorists have neither nationality nor faith; religious fanaticism which breeds mutual enmity and intolerance is equally dangerous for Muslims and non-Muslims. Indeed, one-fourth of the 9/11 victims who perished in the Twin Towers were born in Muslim countries. The terrorist acts in Saudi Arabia, the cradle of Islam, and Iraq, where the major Shi'a shrines are found, demonstrate that their initiators and perpetrators acting under the green banner of Islam accompanied by the Allah Aqbar chants are nothing more than criminals on the payroll of extremist organizations.

Russia's considerable Muslim population and the fact that it has had its share of terrorism in religious garb have moved the question about its relations with the Islamic world to the top of the national agenda. Russia's Islamic neighbors have already developed into an important geopolitical and foreign policy factor, therefore Russia should take a closer look at its own "Russian" Islam, which is moving to the fore in public and political life. Islam comes second after Christian Orthodoxy as a dominant confession; from time immemorial the Muslims have been identifying Islam with their national identity.

It was in the 8th century that the Slavs first met the Muslims, who by that time had emerged beyond the boundaries of the Arabian Peninsula. More likely than not this happened in Daghestan where the new faith and the Arabic tongue, which for the next 100 years served as the language of inter-national communication, were already firmly rooted. Russians met Muslims in the Khazar Chaganate, their eastern neighbor located in the Lower Volga and the Northern Caucasus. Until 735, when Islam acquired a large following among the local people and became the second official faith, Juda-

[4] See: D.B. Malysheva, op. cit.
[5] See: E. Rashkovskiy, op. cit., p. 26.

ism was the only official religion there. Late in the 10th century, Bulgaria replaced the chaganate on the Volga and Kama shores; the larger part of its population were also Muslims.

For many centuries the relations between Russia and the Islamic world were contradictory and far from simple: they abounded in wars, conflicts, mutual grudges, and mutual insults which bred mutual suspicions. Russia fought against Turkey 13 times; there were wars with Iran and military operations in Central Asia and the Caucasus. It was on the territory of a Muslim state, Afghanistan, that the Soviet Union fought its last war.

The Chechen conflict which flared up as part of power struggle across Russia and developed as an instrument used to divide state property threw the crisis in Russia's relations with the Islamic world into bolder relief. Certain forces spared no effort to present the conflict with no religious tinge as "Russia's new aggression against Islam," which added tension to the relations between the Russian Federation and the Islamic world.

Ethnopolitical conflicts threaten Russia's interests: the trends toward stronger regional separatism and wider ethnic conflicts still threaten Russia's territorial integrity and its statehood. The following also threatens ethnic relations in Russia: attempts to set up ethnic enclaves on Russia's territory; deepening social and economic inequality of peoples and ethnic groups; increased ethnic migration, and the growing number of refugees and forced refugees.

What can be done to relieve ethnic and political tension in conflict-prone places? First, the refugees' problems should be resolved by granting each nation the right to realize its national specifics rather than through territorial issues and claims; second, all military units should be disarmed once the armed conflict is over even if harsh measures are needed to achieve this; third, more money should be poured into specific programs and strictly controlled; fourth, the nation should know how the past looks today from the viewpoint of law and politics.[6]

Buddhist monk Nichiren, whose teaching served as the cornerstone of a Japanese influential public political organization Soka Gakkai, said at one time that those wishing peace for themselves should pray for the same for others. These words are vitally important for Russia, which needs to prevent its closest neighbors from becoming hotspots of ethnic and other conflicts. There is more and more talk in the Russian expert community about how the ruling Central Asian regimes should be supported to preserve their stability. This fully coincides with what the country's leaders want. In 2003, when speaking at an international conference called "Russia and the World Order," then RF Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov said: "Like any other country of the world, Russia wants a world order maximally adjusted to the interests of its security and sustainable socioeconomic development… The prospects of a new world order affect the interests of all states."[7]

As part of Europe and Asia, Russia can play a key role in ensuring security and prosperity on both continents; this is especially true of the CIS countries. Instability in the CIS's southern members endangers Russia's national security. The massive American and NATO military and economic presence in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the changes in the balance of interests of the world's leading powers in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus call for readjusted strategies in this part of the world. Russia's foreign policy should obviously be adapted to the new geopolitical realities. We are all aware that the Iraqi crisis has added importance to the so-called Caucasian-Central Asian arc, which is a sort of "southern security belt" for Russia.[8]

When talking to the Islamic world leaders, Russian President Putin invariably demonstrates that Russia is pursuing an active foreign policy in this part of the world. Indeed, in the past, Iran, Iraq,

[6] See: D.A. Munkozhargalov, "Etnopoliticheskie konflikty v sovremennoy Rossii: puti uregulirovania," *Rossiia i musul'manskiy mir*, No. 4, 2005, p. 38.

[7] See: D.B. Malysheva, op. cit., p. 67.

[8] Ibid., p. 68.

Syria, Egypt, Malaysia, Jordan, and the UAE all belonged to our sphere of cooperation; some of them belonged to our sphere of influence. We should not pursue our cooperation with these countries at the expense of our relations with the West and the United States. In fact, our contacts with the Muslim world should improve our relations with the West; they are not spearheaded against Israel either—they may help alleviate Mid-Eastern tension.

President Putin's statement about Russia's intention to join the OIC in Malaysia in 2003 at the OIC summit he attended as a guest surprised everyone, to say the least. Viewed from inside the country, it can hardly be called surprising: the problem of Chechnia, which for many years has been and remains the sore spot of domestic policies despite the statements to the contrary by the country's military and political leaders, is responsible for this. The president explained that at the first stage of its cooperation with the OIC, Russia might work as an observer.

It seems that OIC membership would add efficiency to Russia's relations with the Muslim world where joint opposition to political radicalism, extremism, and terrorism are concerned; Russia should find partners among the civilized Islamic forces and make them its allies. The context is still favorable: since Soviet times, the East has been treating Russia with respect. It is still unclear how the RF can work in the OIC, yet it is important for Russia to be inside an organization responsible for decisions that concern the entire Islamic world, and to be able to follow its development trends in order to protect its interests in the Islamic world and strengthen its security.

There are several more reasons why Russia should join the OIC: first, it will become involved in the dialog with the Muslim world, which will add weight to its role there; second, Russia will play a more effective role in crisis settlement in the Islamic world and in the countries where Christianity and Islam coexist; finally, as a European state, from the perspective of its culture and history, Russia would be able to explain European viewpoints on many issues (such as globalization) to the Muslim community. It might assume the role of an ideological and cultural intermediary between Europe and Asia. Russia's involvement and cooperation with the Muslim world may create better conditions in the economic sphere as well. So far, Russia has no vast economic interests there, yet OIC membership will offer Russia certain advantages as one of the countries that sell armaments to Muslim countries. Some of the Arab states—Syria, Iraq, Oman, the UAE, etc.—are showing a lot of interest in a grandiose project of which Russia is one of the sides. I have in mind the North-South transportation corridor, one of the ten largest geo-economic projects of the 21st century to be carried out in Eurasia.

Ramazan Abdulatipov, senator and a leading expert in Islam and Russia's relations with the Islamic world, was quite right when he said: "There are many other important organizations that unite the Muslim countries besides the OIC. We should be present there as well, while our involvement in the OIC will help us to accomplish this. If we want our country, home of over 20 million Muslims, to wield influence we should be present everywhere. Over time, the importance of the Muslim factor in world politics will increase, which means that Russia should not detach itself from the Muslim world."[9]

The scope of Russia's cooperation with the Muslim countries is still much narrower than it should be. This is partly Russia's fault: the young democrats who came to power along with Boris Yeltsin were looking at the West, while the Muslim world and the East were seen as terra incognita. Today, Russia is making up for lost time. Several years ago, a Russian-Arab Business Council with bilateral commissions was set up on the initiative of Academician Evgeny Primakov, Chairman of the Russian Federation Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

In 2004, the State Duma set up an inter-faction group called "Russia and the Islamic World: a Strategic Dialog" to draft laws, parliamentary decisions, and deputy inquiries with respect to Russia's relations with the Islamic countries and international Muslim organizations. The group intends to carry

[9] D. Suslov, "Ramazan Abdulatipov: Rossia nikogda ne borolas s islamom," *Nezavisimaia gazeta,* 17 October, 2003.

out parliamentary hearings, press conferences, round tables, etc. to discuss Russia's strategic cooperation with the Islamic world, problems of security, and economic and cultural cooperation. Russian and Muslim experts, prominent public figures, and academics will be invited to take part.

During Vladimir Putin's visit to Egypt, the sides reached an agreement on Russia's involvement in modernizing the facilities built with Soviet help; the Syrian debt issue was settled, which made it possible to revive economic cooperation between the two countries. I have already written that the Muslim countries are showing a lot of interest in Russia-made weapons and special equipment; some of these contacts are developing into practical cooperation. This means that the president's initiative to revive and develop contacts with the Islamic world is a well-planned step toward more balanced foreign economic relations.

As religious extremism becomes more pronounced, a dialog between Islam and Christianity is emerging as the most important international issue. Russia, which at all times favored good relations between Islam and Christianity, the two religions that underlie its statehood, can make an important contribution in this sphere too. It can and should support the idea of an inter-confessional dialog and promote it at all levels. Economic partnership with the Muslim regions is one of the aspects of this dialog, which means that in the near future the Near and Middle East countries, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia, and the Muslim part of the Southern Caucasus—in short, Russia's immediate and close neighbors—will remain in the sphere of its interests. We should not only strengthen our bilateral ties with Muslim countries, but also advance toward strategic partnership with the Islamic world as a whole. Economic cooperation is one of the instruments.

In the 1990s, Russia's economic contacts with the Islamic world were gradually disappearing because of Russia's vague foreign economic strategy, lopsided politics, vague national interests in various regions and in the world economic system as a whole, lack of a conception for restoring contacts with the Muslim countries, no foreign economic organizational structure, etc. To remedy the situation we should formulate our foreign economic strategy with respect to the Islamic world. Indeed, all Muslim countries have national interests of their own, even if their specific aims might differ. On the whole, all of them want to eliminate economic backwardness, develop high technologies, preserve their religious, political, and cultural sovereignty, ensure national security by buying the latest armaments, develop their own military-industrial complex, etc.

Under the new conditions, several roads are open for those countries that seek closer economic contacts with the Russian Federation at a higher level: first, realization of long-term projects in which the Russian side will be responsible for the larger part of technologies, as well as R&D, while the Islamic side will supply investments and marketing. Second, it is advisable to elaborate and implement large-scale business plans in which the Islamic side will not limit itself to investments, but will contribute to production as well. Third, investments of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and other OIC financial structures should be used to create, together with Russia, new industrial branches in the Muslim countries. The Russian Federation will also profit from the above, not only by developing its high-tech branches and creating new jobs, but also by funding its social and investment spheres.[10]

The Muslims of Russia want their country to establish better relations with all the countries of the world; they have their special interests in the Islamic world:

— new industrial investment projects created jointly with the IDB in Russia's Muslim regions, the products of which could be exported to the Muslim countries;

— target programs designed to create more jobs in the economically vulnerable Muslim regions to eliminate mass unemployment, primarily in the Northern Caucasus (carried out jointly with

[10] See: "Rossia i islamskiy mir: problemy, predposylki i perspektivy dolgosrochnogo vzaimodeystvia," *Rossia i musul'manskiy mir,* No. 6, 2005, p. 46.

international Muslim financial institutions and Russian business). It is very hard to integrate the Northern Caucasus, a region of special strategic importance for Russia, into the contemporary economic context: it requires huge funding. Only economic and political instruments can be used to defuse ethnic and religious squabbles; the war in Chechnia has amply demonstrated that the use of force creates more separatists and extremists who spare no effort to bring the local peoples closer on the anti-Russian platform;

— one of the Muslim regions of Russia should receive a banking center in which the OIC financial structures will also be involved;

— business forums under the aegis of the IDB and the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry should be organized in Russia's regions to help Russian businessmen establish contacts with the business community of the Islamic countries, etc.

There are certain subjective barriers that limit the scope of real investments, as well as the trends and tactics of economic cooperation with Russian business: imperfect laws related to foreign investments; still unregulated legal issues related to the purchase of land plots by foreign firms to build enterprises; inadequate information about potential economic partners; and the absence of legal norms related to Russian economic structures' full responsibility to their foreign partners. The list can go on: judicial protection on civil and arbitration proceedings in Russian legislation is ineffective; lawyers and notaries public have no civil liability; there are no adequate financial instruments of cooperation, including bank support, effective mechanisms of crediting trade and production operations, procedures of risk sharing and insurance, etc., nor are there any key Islamic banks on the Russian market.[11]

Russia's new policies across the post-Soviet expanse will be successful if it also uses such positive factors as the geographic proximity and economic and political dependence of the post-Soviet states on Russia. The Russian Federation can potentially use the domestic political problems of some of the former Soviet republics in its interests. Recently, Russia revived its military-political and economic ties with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan; large Russian companies—Gazprom, LUKoil, Wimm-Bill-Dann, and others, invest in Uzbekistan, etc.

Cooperation in the oil and gas sector is practically the only sphere where Russian investments in the southern CIS countries bring profits. The Russian oil and gas corporations are first, competitive on a global scale; second, they have advantages over other companies when it comes to Russia's presence on the local energy markets, since Russia is the region's main donor; and third, the oil and gas sector depends on Russia's pipeline system. On the strength of the above, Russian firms may expect a share in such projects along with the leading international corporations.

In view of the close economic, ethnic, social, and cultural ties between the Southern and Northern (Russian) Caucasus, Moscow should remain in the region to prevent an increase in instability and a new wave of threats to Russia's security. Our country obviously needs consistent stability in the Southern Caucasus and should help to form friendly and economically developed democratic regimes in the region. Security cannot be achieved by demonstrating solidarity with kindred nations and ethnoses abroad and people of the same faith: traditional contacts between states should be normalized, while states should display trust and equality in their mutual relations. The following can be done to defuse ethnic and religious tension inside the states: consistent economic reforms; creation of a middle class, which needs stability; and the planting of basic democratic principles and values, while the states' policy should develop national culture and restore national dignity.

There is the opinion in the expert community that the Islamic world is a global force which needs a strong and dynamically developing Russia with a great power status. This is more than a pragmatic

[11] See: "Rossia i islamskiy mir: problemy, predposylki i perspektivy dolgosrochnogo vzaimodeystvia," *Rossia i musul'manskiy mir,* No. 6, 2005, p. 50.

approach to the current global balance of power and not merely shared historical experience: the sides have identical or close geopolitical, economic, and other interests. Russia may acquire a natural partner in the Islamic world to address many of the important issues without which it would be unable to find itself a worthy place in the multipolar world. There is the opinion shared by many that it will be impossible to defeat international terrorism unless the world becomes once more balanced, multipolar, and fair. The recent terrorist acts in Russia demonstrated that, along with the Islamic world, Russia has become the main target of international terror and has also attracted the attention of the "third force" wishing to keep "the seat of war in the Caucasus" smoldering to be able to influence domestic developments.

Moscow has overcome the ideological confrontation of the recent past; it should prevent the triumph of those who want to split the world according to religious and civilizational features. President Putin spoke about this in April 2005 during his Middle East visit.

Professor Huntington wrote at one time that we should do everything to avoid a clash of civilizations; we should strive toward a dialog and resist attempts to replace the war on terror with a war on Islam; we should move away from ethnic discord and religious intolerance and encourage a dialog between Islam and Christianity. No wonder Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Alexii II, who supported Russia's initiative to cooperate with the OIC, said that the Russian Muslims are not followers of a "tolerated" faith: they are true allies of the Russian Christian Orthodox Church.

TERRORIST PRACTICES OF ULTRA-RADICAL SALAFI IN DAGHESTAN (*Case Study of the Jennet and Shari'a Jamaats*)

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Very soon after the events of August 1999, the Chechen warlords changed their tactics from direct clashes with the federal forces into surprise skirmishes in the rear and subversive acts. Since the RF power structures were present everywhere in the republic and controlled all, or nearly all, of Chechnia, the terrorist "resistance forces," which should be called "militants," "members of illegal armed groups" or "terrorists," stepped up their activities. "Terrorism" is understood as non-institutional resistance, when the assets and forces of one of the sides do not allow it to acquire legal forms and oppose the enemy on the front.

Certain forces in the West and certain Muslim thinkers prefer to regard the Chechen separatists as rebels, the "warriors of jihad," "resistance fighters," etc. For example, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a mujtahid well known across the Arab East, distinguishes several types of terrorism: civilian or

social terrorism when criminal armed groups ambush travelers on the road, use arms against them, and thus sow terror in society. The Koran is very severe with respect to them: "The punishment for those who wage war against Allah and His Apostle and strive with might and main for mischief through the land is execution, or crucifixion, or the cutting off of hands and feet from opposite sides, or exile from the land; that is their disgrace in this world, and a heavy punishment is theirs in the Hereafter" (Surah 5, ayat 33).[1] The second type of terrorism is colonial terrorism existing in two variants. The first is represented by French colonialism in Algeria, where the colonialists ruled the country together with the local people. The second, says Yusuf al-Qaradawi, is represented by colonialism that strives to destroy or assimilate the local population and take their lands away from them. America is the most graphic example of this, where the Conquistadors and then the English waged wars of extermination against the local Indians and drove them into reservations. The author says: "Terrorism means the use of force and violence against innocent people, against those with whom you have no problems, with the sole aim of planting fear in others. This is what terrorism means."[2]

In Daghestan, secret terrorist groups began making their existence known in 2000. Acting within the terrorist "jamaats," they looked at their enemies as representatives of "colonial terrorism" who contributed to the assimilation of the local people and destroyed their culture and traditions. This was more or less justified by what Yusuf al-Qaradawi said about this type of terrorism, de facto sanctioning this disgusting and very dangerous sociopolitical phenomenon.

In 2002, a terrorist organization called jamaat Jennet headed by Rappani Khalilov, a crony of well-known terrorist Shamil Basaev, came to the forefront with several terrorist acts. It specialized in assassinations of people employed by the law enforcement bodies—traffic and riot police, militiamen, and members of the security service and public prosecutor structures. In 2002-2005, assassinations were everyday features of life in Daghestan.

The ranks of the terrorist underground swelled with young men trained in the Salafi jamaats of the republic's cities and villages who sided with the veterans of combat and subversive activities in illegal armed groups (IAG). Varis Varisov, investigator of the public prosecutor office of Daghestan, said in our private talk that the members of the terrorist groups (jamaats Shari'a and Jennet) are mostly people earlier convicted for robbery, stealing, and other grave crimes. Despite their criminal past, these "guerillas" are consistently exploiting Islamic slogans, and appealing to the Koran and the Prophet to justify their terrorist acts, information about which normally appears on the Internet site of the Chechen separatists [www.kavkazcenter.com].

According to the republic's Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Shari'a jamaat is sowing terror; in this way it hopes to overcome the political system and liquidate its law enforcement structures—the militia and special services. In 2002-2005, it committed several crimes that echoed across the republic. It is fighting the existing political system to set up an Islamic Shari'a -based theocratic state.

Assassinations of officers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, especially those employed by the Administration for Fighting Extremism and Criminal Terrorism, began in September 2002 when the Administration's head, Colonel Akhberdilav Akilov, was killed. This was not the chance murder of a high-placed official; it was the beginning of murders of officers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs who had allegedly taken part in persecuting and repressing the Wahhabis. It was the militants of the Shari'a jamaat headed by Rasul Makasharipov (guide and personal Avar translator of Shamil Basaev in August 1999 when armed bands had invaded Daghestan from Chechnia) and the Jennet jamaat headed by Rappani Khalilov who carried out the terrorist acts.

[1] "Terror i nasilie," *Novoe delo*, No. 50, 12 December, 2002.
[2] Ibidem.

In 2003, the list of their crimes became longer: in August they murdered Major Tagir Abdullaev of the same Administration, while another officer, Salikh Shamkhalov, and his wife were shot to death in their car. On 6 September, there was a fire exchange on the slopes of Tarki-Tau at Makhachkala that cost four militiamen their lives. During the follow-up operations in the forest, investigators discovered a militant camp, a so-called hut, that showed signs of long being lived in. The Ministry of Internal Affairs was sure that the murders of the militiamen were planned there. In October, Zaur Bekbolatov, who worked for the Administration, and four more militiamen were murdered; in November, Administration Head Magomed Magomedov survived an attempt on his life: the mine planted at the side of the road did not detonate.

What can be said about the terrorist jamaats' social composition? At first they were staffed with people who knew next to nothing about Islamic subtleties and who had tasted pressure from the law enforcement bodies. In the latter half of 2005, however, members of the Muslim intelligentsia joined the terrorist underground. Iasin (Makhach) Rasulov, for example, started his career as a journalist, essay writer, and translator; he was a post-graduate student at the theology department of Daghestani State University, and member of the presidium of the RF Union of Muslim Journalists. After failing to fit into the new system of social and public relations, he turned to armed struggle and subversive acts to the great amazement of all who knew him. In any case, the media wrote about him as an active member of the Shari'a jamaat.[3]

There is no doubt that he acted under the immense influence of the Salafi ultra-radical ideas, which treat jihad as the beginning and end of the struggle against the "Qufr system" and its abettors as hypocrites (munafiqs). On 24 October, 2005 Iasin Rasulov and his cronies, Murad Lakhiialov and Gajimagomed Ismailov, were discovered in one of the apartments on Nasrutdinov Prospect in Makhachkala. The fight went on for nine hours; two of the riot police were wounded, but the local militia and special forces managed to kill the terrorists in a powerful onslaught. It should be said that Gajimagomed Ismailov was amir of the Shari'a jamaat; and Murad Likhiialov was his "right-hand man," who filled the post after Rasul Makasharipov was exterminated on 6 July, 2005 in a house on M. Gajiev Street in Makhachkala. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, they were among those who started a fire at the prosecutor's office of the Lenin District of Makhachkala; they were responsible for the murder of prominent Daghestanian political scientist Magomedzagid Varisov and Minister Zagir Arukhov, as well as for the blasts that destroyed militia cars. Murad Lakhiialov personally was posthumously accused of murdering Zagir Arukhov.

On 9 October, 2005, there was a fighting between jamaat Shari'a militants and Daghestani militia on Pervomaiskaia Street in Makhachkala. After several hours of fierce fighting, two servicemen of a special unit were killed, and two others were wounded. Finally, the terrorists were showered with grenades when an armored personnel carrier was brought to the house and large-caliber machineguns were used. Four of the terrorists were killed. One of them, Abuzagir Mantaev, defended his thesis in 2002 and received a Ph.D. (Political Science). His subject was "Wahhabism and the Political Situation in Daghestan." For some time, he worked in the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the European Part of Russia, under Mufti Ravil Gaynutdin, after which he moved to Makhachkala, where he joined the jamaat Shari'a in mid- 2005.

The fact that the Muslim intelligentsia, young men with higher education and academic degrees, takes part in terrorist activities says that Daghestanian society is in a crisis. A certain part of the local youth refers to itself as Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamaa (members of the Sunna and the community), that is, the Salafis, independent Muslims wishing to contribute to Islamization and to develop the "religion of Allah." For this reason, they are squeezed out of their social niches: they have either to leave the region, or to abandon politically active Islam, or become radicals and potential members of subversive

[3] [www.kavkaz-memo.ru], 12 September, 2005.

and terrorist groups. In this way, they are opposed to the state and accuse the state structures and the official clergy of their misfortunes.

The Sufi tariqats (the so-called traditionalists) also have real and potential "warriors of Islam" among their members. According to the fighters themselves (Dokku Umarov[4] in particular), tariqatists fight together with the Chechen "rebels," they spread the same ideology, and the same sacral history and theory of Islam as the Wahhabis. It should be said that Salafism is not the only doctrine that could turn extremist when pursuing its religious and political aims, therefore we should prevent Islam from becoming a teaching of extreme intolerance, xenophobia, and aggression. At the very least, we should stem the process. Religious-political extremism as a step toward subversion and terrorism is not limited to its socioeconomic component—poverty and unemployment—even though they are responsible for the radicalization of large numbers of young men.

It is not enough to explain the flare-ups of terrorist activities by increased funding from domestic and foreign sources. This is what some of the federal military commanders prefer to think—they reduce everything to money in an effort to prove that lack of ideas will finally destroy the "resistance movement." In so doing, they are pursuing several aims: first, they want to undermine the trust the militants enjoy among the young and their popularity—indeed, people who kill each other while sharing the spoils are moral perverts. Second, lavish donations from abroad explain and justify the failure to defeat the subversive and terrorist underground; money is responsible for the shoots of extremism and reproduction of the "resistance movement," not only in Chechnia, but also in Daghestan. In other words, those of the Center's representatives who concentrate on the economic factors keep ignoring (or rejecting) the other causes behind religious-political extremism. After 1999, force was used against the Salafi trend, while the real nature of each of the Salafi groups, either moderate or extremist, is absolutely ignored.

This happens across the entire Northern Caucasus: mosques are closed in Kabardino-Balkaria, while in Ingushetia, Karachaevo-Cherkessia, and Daghestan not only real and potential Salafis, but also praying people are often mercilessly persecuted. Finally, the military regime in Chechnia, in which the civilians have to live, as well as the special, so-called mopping-up, operations supply members of the public and certain clerics with a chance to lament the pressure to which Islam developing outside the state's control is subjected. This is what imam of the Idris-haji Echeda mosque on Malygin Street in Makhachkala thinks.[5] It was his home that militiamen, who had been informed (or, rather, misinformed by the imam's ill-wisher), searched for Murad Lakhiialov, a militant of the Shari'a jamaat, on 19 July, 2005. The mosque and the house were encircled by special units, while the adjacent streets were blocked off by armored personnel carriers and other military vehicles. After clarifying the circumstances, the officers left the mosque. It should be said that it is normal to find leaflets of all sorts, including those issued by jamaat Shari'a, in mosques frequented by real or former Salafi fighters, who look no different from the rest of the praying crowd. This was probably what brought the militia to the mosque on Malygin Street. This happens in the mosque on Kotrov Street, which was built using the money of the Khachilaev brothers—it is believed to be a Wahhabi mosque. No wonder the lists of Wahhabis grow longer. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Daghestan, recently "it detained 55 people, and 19 militants were killed during special operations. These people were suspected of being members of illegal armed groups or their accomplices."[6]

Along with other factors, religious-political extremism grows more active because of the ill-planned policies of the Center and the republican authorities. After 1999, "veterans of the Chechen

[4] [www.kavkazcenter.com].
[5] See: *Chernovik*, 29 July, 2005.
[6] [www.riadagestan.ru].

war and former jamaat members" appeared in Daghestan, including members of the so-called Islamic Jamaat of Daghestan. The authorities and the power structures deprived them of a chance to integrate into the social system and find a place in the social and economic sphere. The fate of amir of the Shari'a jamaat Rasul (Muslim) Makasharipov is a typical example. Liberated under an amnesty, he (according to my sources) was frequently blamed for crimes he did not commit. As a former Khattab interpreter (in August-September 1999), he was repeatedly called to the district militia station, where he was beaten up and subjected to degrading treatment. After one of such "visit," he turned to the militants, set up the Shari'a jamaat, and became its leader. There is another version of the same story, which, nevertheless, ended the same way. His former cronies suspected the "Khattab interpreter," who had been released from the prison too soon and too easily, of conspiracy with the special services.[7] To prove his loyalty to the cause of jihad and to remove himself from suspicion, he assumed leadership of the group that hunted militiamen who too actively persecuted the Salafis.

There is more than one factor that makes Islamic groups active fighters. A young man's Islamic identity should be taken into account, along with his economic and social status, his expressivity, moral and psychological makeup, attitude toward aggression, external pressure, etc. It was his expressivity and unbending nature aggravated by certain other reasons that brought Gazimagomed Ramazanov to the Shari'a band, where he was known as Mansur Tsudakharskiy. Under this name, on 28 July, 2005 he was killed during a special operation in Askerkhanov's house on Mir Street in Makhachkala.

The use of force and administrative pressure—the authorities' two preferred instruments—are factors which push young Muslims (irrespective of the Islamic trends they belong to) to the margins, where they join terrorist and subversive organizations. In 2000-2005, it was not Chechnia that lured the former fighter (this remained in the past, in 1995-1999). After setting up local bands, many preferred to stay in Daghestan. In 2004 and 2005, explosions, acts of subversion, and attempted murders (buckets of ammonium nitrate were often used) became especially frequent. Militia vehicles and cars carrying militia and riot police officers became the victims of "bucket terrorism." On 15 April, 2005, the prosecutor's office of the Lenin District of Makhachkala was destroyed by a blast; a month later, on 20 May, a blast in an apartment building entranceway killed Zagir Arukhov, minister for ethnic policies, information, and foreign relations, and his bodyguard. On 28 June, Magomedzagid Varisov, director of the Center for Strategic Research and Political Technologies, was killed; three days later, on 1 July terrorists organized a blast at a bathhouse that killed 10 servicemen of a special unit.

The Shari'a jamaat officially assumed responsibility for the murder of Magomedzagid Varisov by placing the following statement on the site of the Chechen fighters: "We executed an FSB official who spoke for the Kremlin and its Daghestanian puppets, one of the most active ideologists of the power of Russian qafirs and an active opponent of the Shari'a rule in Daghestan. As an agent of the special services, this qafir lackey carried out an active propaganda campaign against Allah and His Prophet (may peace and blessing be with him) on the pages of the local newspapers published by the puppets. He was a slave that served the occupants, the henchmen, and the butchers of his own people; he dared to insult the Islamic Jamaat Shari'a, the Legal Power in Daghestan. When we liquidated the puppet minister Zagir Arukhov, who was also a colonel of the intelligence service of the Russian Federation, Varisov wrote in one of his foul articles that we do not exist and that our statements 'are ad hoc statements from all sorts of virtual jamaats.'"[8]

The jamaat ideologists did their best to blacken the images of Daghestanian scholar Varisov and Minister Arukhov, who were presented not as mere qafirs, but also as "FSB officials who spoke for

[7] The author's field information.
[8] [www.kavkazcenter.com].

the Kremlin and its Daghestani puppets," and who not only opposed the rule of the Shari'a, but also doubted the existence of the terrorist underground. These and similar terrorist activities, accompanied by similar commentaries, were designed to stir up ideological sympathies among the local people, primarily young people. There is no doubt that certain social sections associate power with evil and present it as the worst, purely anti-popular manifestation of the corrupt political elite, which has become part of the mafia.

The Islamic circles regard a negative attitude toward the Shari'a as a sign of utter ignorance; in certain religious circles it causes animosity. Indeed, nobody dares to oppose the Shari'a, the law of Allah. Not infrequently, even militiamen say that they are not against the Shari'a. In Varisov's case, his allegedly anti-Shari'a sentiments were exploited to justify his murder and inform the sympathizers that the terrorist acts were a just retribution for "subversive anti-Islamic" activities.

There is the opinion that these two murders destroyed an important part of the republic's ideological and information front and that the terrorist underground was resolved to destroy its ideological opponents. This is not quite correct. Both Arukhov and Varisov were open people very easy to kill. Despite the numerous threats, the minister had only one bodyguard; Varisov had no bodyguards, despite the numerous threats he received over the phone. He was put under surveillance, yet his requests to the corresponding structures about bodyguards were ignored.

It seems that the terrorist jamaats owe their success to the "moles" in the law enforcement bodies, otherwise it is a mystery how the Shari'a jamaat learned personal details about the Ministry of Internal Affairs officials and the radio frequencies used by the militia. The republican leaders hastened to respond to this: on 6 March, 2005, Rustam Abdullaev was detained and searched. It turned out that he had a list of 140 officials of the law enforcement bodies who were to be executed, complete with their home addresses and phone numbers.[9] The militants issued the following statement: "The so-called Ministry of Internal Affairs of Daghestan was shocked to learn that we have a long list of its leaders and officials, complete with home and work addresses and phone numbers, who are to be executed. This is true: we have detailed information about all the heads and service officers of the so-called Ministry of Internal Affairs, Federal Security Service, and the Public Prosecutor's Office. We shall liquidate them one after another, since they are personally responsible for the persecution and murders of the Muslims." The jamaat acts not only as a political force, as the self-appointed "legal power of Daghestan." It poses itself as the "protector of all persecuted Muslims."

Andrei Novikov, deputy foreign minister of Russia dispatched to Daghestan after a series of terrorist and subversive acts carried out by the Shari'a jamaat, informed journalists that the law enforcement structures are dividing their time between crime detection and the economic situation. He finished his statement with the banal phrase that the channels through which militants get their money should be closed.[10]

This is important, but not all important. This cannot resolve the problem of religious-political extremism and terrorist groups. The latter have exploited ideological, political, social, and ethical prerequisites to set up independent mobile groups which do not need lavish or sustainable funding. In a climate of rampant corruption, it is easy to establish control over private businesses through threats and blackmail. According to Shamil Basaev, large sums come from the administration heads of the Chechen Republic.[11]

Judging by what Andrei Novikov said, the Ministry of Internal Affairs knows that the money comes from inside the republic, which makes the jamaats even more efficient: there is no need to cross borders and avoid customs inspection.

[9] See: *Novoe delo,* No. 27, 15 July, 2005.
[10] See: *Novoe delo,* No. 28, 22 July, 2005.
[11] [kavkazcenter.com].

Religious groups are growing more radical because of unprofessional civil servants. When talking about the causes of Salafism, Minister of Internal Affairs of Daghestan said: "None of the heads of militia stations inform me that an imam or any other man came to him to say that a Wahhabi visited his mosque and that measures should be taken."[12] In other words, the minister called on society and the religious groups of "traditional" Islam to identify the so-called Wahhabis and inform the corresponding services about them. Since neither the minister nor his colleagues mentioned the traits identifying a Wahhabi, it is for the Spiritual Administration of the republic's Muslims and the faithful to identify them themselves, but nobody knows how. This will send up social tension, will widen the gap in society, and will plant fear, suspicion, and hatred in people's minds, while mutual mistrust will cause mass depression.

Summary

After defeating Basaev and Khattab, who invaded Daghestan in 1999 from Chechnia, and liquidating the "Islamic enclave" in three Darghinian villages—Karamakhi, Chabanmakhi, and Kadar—the federal and republican authorities, while purposefully opposing religious and political extremism, launched a wide-scale ideological offensive on Daghestani Salafism with the use of force. Religious leaders and preachers have been invited to take part in the process.

A war was declared on extremism represented by the Wahhabis—the ideological and political opponents of the clergy. However, the people received no instructions on how to distinguish between Wahhabis and "Ihwanists" (supporters of the political strategies pursued by the Muslim Brothers), or between separatists and Islamic radicals who might act under the roofs of different groups and units. It was said more than once that Wahhabism should not be likened to extremism.

At the same time, much of what the Spiritual Administration of the republic's Muslims is doing drives Salafism away from the religious structures of Daghestan and the Northern Caucasus; Salafi groups are becoming more radical and more receptive to extremist calls and acts. This is especially true of the groups which have not yet found their way, forms, and methods. They might be tempted by extremism. If the originally peaceful Salafi structures (jamaats) find it hard to blend with society, they will become marginalized.

It should be said that in the Northeastern Caucasus, religious and religious-political extremism has become very obvious, while religious groups grow more and more radical under the influence of the military-political processes in Chechnia, as well as due to certain ill-judged steps by secular and religious leaders. This happened in the negative socioeconomic and sociopolitical (including socioethical) context, which ended in a catastrophic crisis of ethnic, religious, and cultural identity.

Driven to the extreme by the wide-scale use of force against the Salafis of Daghestan and other North Caucasian republics, militant units began guerilla warfare against the authorities after the active phase of hostilities in Chechnia had ended. This became obvious when the opposition developed from armed clashes between warlords and federal troops, as in 2000, into regular surprise subversive and terrorist attacks of short duration in rear structures.

Terrorist groups, so-called jamaats, appeared in the Northern Caucasus under the influence of Chechen militants and grew out of the local religious structures living under domestic and foreign pressure. In 2002, the Jennet group under Rappani Khalilov and jamaat Shari'a under Rasul Makasharipov entered into an active phase of their activities. Both leaders had fought in Chechnia; their jamaats specialized in the assassination of law enforcement officers: they attacked militia and riot police

[12] *Novoe delo*, No. 16, 23 April, 2004.

vehicles, militia, and FSB officers and employees of the public prosecutor's office. In 2002-2005, these attacks became an everyday feature of the republic's social and political life.

The fact that Muslim intellectuals such as Ia. Rasulov and A. Mantaev, young people with higher education and academic degrees, were involved in terrorist activities speaks of a grave crisis in Daghestani society. Some of the young men still associate themselves with Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamaa, that is, with the Salafis, independent Muslims, and are willing to take part in Islamization and the development of the "religion of Allah." Today, these people cannot find their niche either in Daghestan or in other North Caucasian republics: some of them prefer to leave the region, others have quit active social-political Islamic activities, while still others are turning radical and forming a so-called risk group, the members of which are gradually merging with subversive and terrorist structures.

EVOLUTION OF ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM IN THE NORTHERN CAUCASUS: KABARDINO-BALKARIA

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Today extremism and terrorism are seen as the two worst threats in the south of Russia; terrorists who exploit Islamic fundamentalist ideology for their own aims add even more tension. Indeed, some of the Muslim communities were tempted to embrace a more extremist, "jihad-related version" of their faith. This all started in the Northern Caucasus in the first half of the 1990s, while in Chechnia, the sociopolitical crisis aggravated by fighting accelerated the process.

The first communities of radical Islamic fundamentalists were less concerned with the revival of "true Islam" as with the terrorist ideas that inspired them: terrorist "missionaries" came to the region on the crest of the wave raised by the collapse of the old social and economic system and protest feelings caused by rampant crime. In 1996-1999, people in Chechnia shed their last illusions about the Shari'a, the ruling principle of the so-called Chechen Republic of Ichkeria. However, by the beginning of the 1999 counterterrorist operation, "the genie had been let out of the bottle." Indeed, by the mid-1990s experts had already registered religious intolerance and radicalism among the local Muslims throughout most Russian southern regions. These sentiments might have developed into a supra-ethnic ultra-radical ideology toward which destructive forces of all hues would gravitate. This movement, unacceptable in Russia, remained fairly limited, yet it attracted huge numbers of young people, which was potentially dangerous for Russian statehood.

The tragic events of 13 October, 2005 in Nalchik, the capital of Kabardino-Balkaria, demonstrated that the regional and federal authorities are equally concerned about the entanglement of contradictions. This is probably the most apt description of the so-called Wahhabi movement. Investigation of these events was one of the few examples of the willingness of the Center and the local authorities to be open, and showed that they were relying not only on the law, but also on civil society institutions. The facts that came to light during investigation and the pre-history of religious extremism in the republic supply enough information for an analysis of radical Islamism and its evolution in the Northern Caucasus divorced, to a certain extent, from the Chechen developments.

Islam in the western part of the Northern Caucasus is a very specific phenomenon: since the Middle Ages, the Muslims in contemporary Kabardino-Balkaria have been Hanafites. They belonged to the Hanafi madhab, one of the most flexible of the Islamic schools. It successfully adapted itself to the adat (common law) and secular power. During the years of Soviet rule, Islamic practices in Kabardino-Balkaria acquired much stronger traditions rooted in the folk culture of the two local peoples—the Kabardins and the Balkars. As distinct from the north-eastern part of the Caucasus, the clerics had much less influence there, while Soviet power undermined this influence even more. By 1927, when all primary Islamic schools had been closed in Kabardino-Balkaria, the autonomous republic was left with 224 mosques and 844 clerics (much fewer than in Chechnia). The local clergy enjoyed much less authority than in Chechnia and Ingushetia. Zakat, a Muslim tax, was a heavy burden on the rather poor households high in the mountains, yet a large part of it went to the clergy. This explains why Bolshevik support for the initiative launched by the most "progressive-minded" part of the local Muslims to transfer zakat to the needs of the poor undermined the clerics' positions even more. Evidence of this can be found in the local archives.[1]

In the 1990s, the wave of changes revived Islam: the number of mosques rapidly increased from 24 in 1992 in Kabardino-Balkaria to 68 in 1998.[2] By 2001, there were about 130 Muslim communities functioning in its territory. It should be said, however, that much fewer people in Kabardino-Balkaria diligently performed all the religious rites than, for example, in Daghestan and Chechnia. While remaining an important part of the local ethnic culture manifested in religious forms, Islam has not become the spiritual foundation of most of the local people and has no influence on their daily life. In those settlements where there are Muslims, there is normally either one or several mosques or buildings adapted for religious purposes. Only on rare occasions, though, do Friday services gather more than 100 people. As a rule, there are about a dozen regular (mostly elderly) mosque goers. For the number of mosques and the average number of parishioners, according to the 2005 figures, see the table on p. 146.

Only major holidays—Uraza-Bayram and Kurban-Bayram—and funerals attract large crowds. People come to honor the local traditions rather than to express their religious feelings. Fasting is not common, while diet bans are limited to pork; alcohol is frequently used. Even the funeral rites, normally a very conservative sphere, are acquiring new phenomena outside the Shari'a and adat. Today the money spent on burial and funeral repasts illustrates the family's social status, which forces the relatives to borrow heavily and spend years paying off their debts. So far the local clergy has failed to oppose this tradition: imams normally live alongside their parishioners, therefore their firm stand causes irritation and conflicts in families very much concerned with their social status. Finally, this opposition is fraught with a conflict with the local elders, the "guardians of traditions." It should be noted that despite the huge amount of printed, visual, and audio matter brought into the republic, as well as the large sums of money international organizations are pouring into Kabardino-Balkaria, the abso-

[1] See: E.V. Kratov, "Islam v Severo-Kavkazskom krae (1924-1934)," *Gumanitarnaia mysl Iuga Rossii* (*Krasnodar*), No. 1, 2005, pp. 113-114.

[2] See: *Tribuna Islama,* No. 9 (46), September 1998.

Table

Districts	Number of mosques	Of them closed	Parishioners
Nalchik	11	7	240
Baksan District	16		257
Town of Baksan	5		40
Zolskiy District	16	4	131
Prokhladnoe District	4		67
Terek District	3		31
Elbrus District	6		90
Urvan District	5		34
Chegem District	9	1	108
Cherek District	3		46
Lesken District	9		175
Total	87	12	1,219

lute majority of the local Muslims reject the extremist ideology. They were able to guess where the road charted by extremists is leading; not infrequently locals have driven extremist envoys away from their mosques.

At the same time, the problem of the Muslim umma affecting both the religious and sociopolitical situation has become clear. Rehabilitation of Islam, which restored some of its key social functions, provoked contradictions and even conflicts in the republic's public life. After receiving their education abroad, the first graduates came back to oppose what they described as unjustified domination of folk traditions and customs over the Shari'a. These polemics typical of nearly all the North Caucasian republics were aroused by the radical Islamism which struck root there and the radical manifestations of which were called Wahhabism in the press and expert reports.

The fundamentalists preferred the more rigid Hanbali madhab common in some of the Arab countries, where strict monotheism ruled out veneration of the saints and pilgrimages to their tombs and condemned superstitions and the local specifics of burial rites. In the 1990s, the Muslim community of Kabardino-Balkaria experienced considerable influence from the emissaries of all sorts of foreign organizations which never grudged money to promote their ideas. In 1993, an Islamic center was set up in Nalchik on the money of the SAR Foundation, which brought together young imams. Very soon they formed the core of the so-called Jamaat of Kabardino-Balkaria. At the same time, the severe or even ascetic demands imposed on the local Muslims contrasted with the lavishness with which the fundamentalists poured money into religious propaganda, including dissemination of religious, mainly imported, publications, and charities, including financial support of the Muslims. Amid the social and political instability and the ideological diversity associated with it, these missionaries easily recruited supporters, especially among the younger generation. In Nalchik, for example, the city mosque was mainly attended by young men between 14 and 35. Students of higher and secondary educational establishments displayed a lot of interest in Islam, to the extent that some of them asked for special

prayer rooms. In 1998, Artur (Mussa) Mukozhev, imam-hatyb of the mosque in Volny Aul, a Nalchik suburb, was elected leader of the jamaat that conflicted with the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Kabardino-Balkaria (SAM KB).

These developments testified to the fact that the forces resolved to destabilize the Northern Caucasus had already entrenched themselves in the region; radical Islam was expected to play an important role in the process. While keeping away from the official Muslim structures, its representatives started weaving a network under the guise of educational efforts and established contacts with like-minded organizations in neighboring regions and abroad.

The hostilities in Chechnia accelerated social radicalization, in part through religion. Great numbers of forced migrants in Kabardino-Balkaria added to the already radical sentiments of many Muslims. For material or ideological considerations, some of the local people even fought in Chechnia together with the militants. It was at that time that the Taqfir doctrine, which branded as apostate any Muslim who refused to share the radical ideas, gained momentum in the Northern Caucasus.[3] According to the member of an Islamist group, everything began with the sermons of a popular imam and religious publications. Gradually this preliminary education developed into practical training for a jihad. At this stage, the novices were expected to enlist like-minded people from among relatives and friends and to obey the "amir."[4] This was a paid "job," yet many of the conscripts, especially the younger people, cherished collectivism and involvement in an "important cause" more than money. Radical ideology justified extremist or even criminal acts. The documents of radical extremists hiding in the Bechasyn Plateau in the Karachaevskiy District of the Chechen Republic bordering with Kabardino-Balkaria revealed that the jamaat members had been encouraged "to present criminal groups with ultimatums, protect businessmen involved in gray business activities to force them pay zakat and work on the way of Allah … kidnap sons and daughters of those who live on the people's property while serving the unfaithful state,"[5] etc.

An analysis of social and psychological features of those involved in the events of 13-14 October, 2005 in Nalchik based on the information submitted by the law enforcement bodies made it possible to create the collective portrait of a participant in the radical religious-political movement in the republic. Information about 166 people was studied; 84 of them were killed in action; 50 arrested, while 32 are wanted. Eighty-seven percent of them were aged between 20 and 30; 13 percent were over 30; nearly 65 percent had secondary education; 20 percent, higher education; about 15 percent, special secondary education. Most of them, 51.8 percent, had no families, while 48.2 percent were officially married. Ninety-three people, or 56 percent, had been held administratively accountable, 38 of them had been brought to account 10 times or more. Eleven people had been under administrative arrest; 17 had been brought to administrative account when drunk; 56, or 33.7 percent, had been suspected of crimes and brought to court; 7 of them were acquitted during investigation or trial. In relation to 21 people, their criminal cases had been dropped during investigation or trial; in 8 cases, because of amnesty. Seven people had been brought to court for drug trafficking, 11 for illegal arms trade; 9 had been involved in cases of extremist or terrorist activity. Eight people had served terms in correction facilities; 25 had received suspended sentences; 14 had been listed as wanted. Fourteen were registered with the republic's medical institutions; 10 of them used drugs or toxic substances. Property-wise, 11.1 percent had permanent and 12.3 percent temporary incomes; there is no official information about the incomes of 76.5 percent of them; 58.4 percent had cars; 10 people were registered with taxation structures as businessmen; 37 had bank accounts; nearly all of those who took part in the attack had a place to live.

[3] See: L. Orazaeva, "Kabardino-Balkaria: nekotorye problemy v islame," *Kavkazskiy uzel*, May 2004.
[4] See: *Severniy Kavkaz*, 27 December, 2005.
[5] *Izvestia*, 13 May, 2002.

How did the republican authorities and the political elite treat religious radicalization of the local youth? There are several key factors. First, the "newly baked" political elite made up of the old Soviet nomenklatura, businessmen, and leaders of national movements came to the fore at the same time as the new Muslim communities, therefore the process of establishing new power structures, privatization, and property redistribution, as well as the flourishing of ethnic structures had several obvious and concealed things in common with the Islamist movement. The republican leaders had to take into account that Islam was an important part of the local spiritual heritage and culture, therefore religious communities should be free to function in their own way, lest the entire umma became discontented. The law of Kabardino-Balkaria on Banning Extremist Religious Activities[6] is a sure sign that the government is concerned about the religious extremist activities in the republic. At the same time, in the 1990s, when the political situation in the Northern Caucasus was aggravated by the Chechen crisis, it was hard to objectively assess all the processes taking place in the Muslim umma of Kabardino-Balkaria. With no consistent policies in the Northern Caucasus, the Center was unable to make relevant decisions; those that were made often contradicted state interests and played into the hands of businessmen or non-commercial organizations. This aggravated the conflict even more.

In August 1998, in the village of Hasania, units of the Kabardino-Balkaria Ministry of Internal Affairs destroyed an armed group of Wahhabis headed by a young man from this village, Anzor Atabiev, who had fought in Chechnia, and confiscated publications about the Islamic state.[7] Soon after that the comrades-in-arms of the late Atabiev shelled the ministry's building in Nalchik. The militia, which began a search for his "cronies," was unjustifiably cruel toward the faithful. In 2001, unknown authors disseminated leaflets calling on the people to support the idea of an Islamic state and promised that once established this state would abolish municipal payments, and raise pensions and social allowances. In fact, this was a call to a coup d'état.

The number of crimes perpetrated for religious reasons continued rising, which forced the law enforcement bodies to turn to the SAM KB for advice. Together they identified the weak points of their efforts to oppose radicalism: underfunding of the traditional Islamic institutions; the low theological level of the imams, and their declining authority and influence among the faithful. They were mostly old people unable to keep abreast of the times because of their low educational and professional level (their theological training and knowledge of the Arabic were wanting). They knew next to nothing about the developments inside and outside the country and the parishioners, the young ones especially, no longer found them interesting as preachers and companions. No wonder M. Mukozhev who preached in one of the largest Nalchik mosques was hugely popular; he made no secret of his radical ideas, while the SAM KB had nobody to replace him with.

The Spiritual Administration is doing its best to bring new blood into the local corps of clerics; young imams are sent abroad to receive higher religious education. Thirteen young men have already graduated; most of them are working at the SAM KB and the Islamic institute attached to it. This institute has already trained two groups of young theologians able to head the parishes, bring life into their activities, and attract the youth. The SAM KB, however, has no money to pay them salaries, even though many of them are prepared to work for 4,000 rubles a month. The mosques are functioning on donations and on money from the republican budget (not more than 300,000-400,000 rubles a year). Early in 2005, the SAM KB started a fund called "Din" (Religion) controlled by the republican authorities, which, according to the SAM KB leaders, did not make this fund very popular: many of the well-to-do Muslims prepared to donate do not trust the local bureaucrats, whom they suspect of spending the money on things other than religion.

[6] ITAR-TASS, 2 May, 2001.
[7] [strana.ru], 13 June, 2002.

The radical Islamists, meanwhile, were showered with money from NGOs, charities, and business structures connected with other countries. They had enough money to distribute free publications and use cars to reach far-away places.[8] It was back in March 1998, at the Third Congress of the Muslims of Kabardino-Balkaria, that the threat of religious extremism and sects, including the Wahhabi sects, was registered. There were attempts to make a scholarly analysis of the problem. Together with the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the RAS, the Institute of the Humanities of Kabardino-Balkaria organized ethnographic expeditions which analyzed the state of Islam in the republic and the level of religious feelings of its citizens. This brought to light a dangerous trend toward discriminating young Muslims under the pretext of fighting Wahhabism, evident at all levels—from the family to the law enforcement bodies. The academics pointed out the danger of young Muslims becoming convinced that freedom of conscience was possible only in an Islamic state.[9] The final report compiled by the Institute of the Humanities for the government of Kabardino-Balkaria said, in particular, that the older generation of Balkars and Kabardins was involved mostly in the external side of religion, while true believers were found mostly among the young. The report pointed out that it was precisely young people who were discriminated against in families and public institutions under the pretext of the anti-Wahhabi struggle. This dramatically lowered the level of religious tolerance and may destabilize the situation, the authors concluded.[10]

According to the republican Ministry of Internal Affairs, there were over 200 strong supporters of Wahhabism in the republic who enlisted young people; many of the Wahhabis had fought in Chechnia on the side of the militants. In the summer of 2002, an extremist group known as Jamaat Iarmuk was formed in the Pankissi Gorge (Georgia) from people from Kabardino-Balkaria, mainly from the village of Kendelen,[11] who fought together with the detachment of warlord Ruslan Gelaev. The unit known as the Kabardino-Balkarian battalion fought under amir Muslim Ataev, who was respected by his countrymen and known as a talented organizer and exceptionally strong man. He gathered about 30 like-minded people, the majority of them with fighting experience gained in Chechnia in illegal armed groups; several had even been trained for subversive activities. By 2003, the situation in the republic began to improve bit by bit thanks to the law enforcement bodies, which scored victories over illegal armed groups in Chechnia and neighboring regions. In November 2002, Gelaev's unit suffered huge losses in a battle in Galashki village in Ingushetia. Ataev and his people returned to Kabardino-Balkaria, where he enlisted several dozen people thanks to his active propaganda campaign. According to the law enforcement bodies, he contacted Shamil Basaev, who attached great importance to creating illegal armed detachments and seats of instability outside Chechnia. On 9 August, 2004, the members of Jamaat Iarmuk attacked militiamen in a forest in the Chegem District: two were killed, four wounded. The bandits carried submachine-guns, grenade projectors, and machine-guns. It was about the same time that religious extremists tried to gain control over several mosques in Nalchik and high in the mountains. All the groups applied the same pattern: first short yet active mudslinging at the local religious leaders; then radicals started arriving in large numbers. When popular discontent reached the desired level, the radicals provoked "free" elections of new imams and called the procedure "free expression of popular will." The scheme worked in some parishes, while the mosques became meeting-places of extremists for a time.

In this context, the law enforcement bodies had to close down 12 mosques—7 of them in Nalchik, as well as in the Chegem District, in the town of Baksan and the village of Dugulubgey; two fighter camps were discovered close to it;[12] about 60 people were detained. The SAM KB leaders ap-

[8] ITAR-TASS, 26 March, 2002.
[9] IslamInfo [http://portal-credo.ru/site/?act=news&id=10976&cf=].
[10] IA REGNUM, 17 June, 2003.
[11] Published on the site [portal-credo.ru], 14 December, 2004.
[12] See: *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 14 October, 2003.

proved this, yet the local faithful were displeased. To quench the barrage of criticism inspired by human rights organizations guided by information that human rights had been violated in the process, the Ministry of Internal Affairs informed the public that there were secret extremist groups (jamaats) in the republic using some of the mosques to hide arms.[13]

According to Iu. Ketov, Public Prosecutor of Kabardino-Balkaria, the problem of Islamic radicalism is especially pertinent in the Elbrus and Chegem districts, while in the town of Nartkala a "quiet" seizure of spiritual power by the Wahhabis had been prevented.[14] Since that time the republic has been living in an uncompromising confrontation between radical Islamists and the law enforcement bodies. The militia registered about 400 as Wahhabis; according to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 40 percent of them either had criminal records or were under surveillance as potential criminals.[15] According to the law enforcement bodies, the republic is already covered by a network of so-called jamaats, precursors of the "Islamic statehood" institutions. Most of them belonged to the Shura (council) under which a Shari'a court was functioning.[16]

Special security measures were taken on 22 April, 2004 at the Fourth Congress of the Muslims attended by clerics and heads of Muslim communities loyal to the SAM KB. The congress approved the only candidate for the post of mufti and decided that the Muslim community needed a single (centralized) leadership with the right to appoint the previously elected rais-imams, control their activities, and remove them from their posts.[17] In this situation, the radicals abandoned their efforts to establish control over the legal communities, many of them stopped attending mosques and went underground. A meeting of the Islamist mejlis decided to prohibit the jamaat members from attending the main mosque in Nalchik because all the official imams were allegedly unfaithful.[18]

The media and human rights structures actively discussed the situation; it turned out that the prohibition had not brought the desired results. Leaders of some of the Muslim communities complained to the federal structures and human rights organizations about violations of the rights of the faithful. The republican leaders had to re-open most of the closed mosques, but now under the strict control of the SAM KB; previously elected imams were appointed. The human rights structures drew the attention of the Russian and foreign public to the instances of arbitrariness perpetrated by the power and law enforcement structures toward young Muslims; they allowed obvious terrorists to openly state their ideas by publishing their appeals in the press. In the winter of 2005, an Austrian newspaper wrote: "Shortly before his death Iarmuk leader Ataev allegedly said: 'The gates of jihad remain wide open. They will be closed when our country, occupied by Russia conquerors, again belongs to our people.'"[19]

In October 2004, Nalchik was the scene of a large rally: people came to accuse the militia of the death of Rasul Tsakoev, a businessman well known among the Muslims.[20] The locally published book *Skvoz' prizmu islama* (Through the Prism of Islam) written by a certain Abd al-Hadi ibn Ali (the alias of 28-year-old Zaur Pshigotyzhev who lives in Nalchik) caused quite a stir. According to experts of the RF Public Prosecutor's Office, the book presents Islamic fundamentals in the most radical way, promotes religious intolerance, and absolutely rejects compromises with other religions; obedience to secular law was described as disobedience to Allah. The experts concluded that the book calls for the "establishment of worldwide rule of Allah, without excluding the use of force to achieve this." Ex-

[13] IA REGNUM, 6 August, 2002.
[14] ITAR-TASS, 12 January, 2003.
[15] Published on the site [portal-credo.ru], 14 December, 2004.
[16] Interfax, 14 September, 2004.
[17] [gazetayuga.ru], 29 April, 2004.
[18] Interfax, 3 December, 2004.
[19] *Die Presse* (Austria), 2 February, 2005.
[20] IA REGNUM, 11 November, 2004.

perts in theology from the Institute of the Humanities offered a similar opinion: "The author has proclaimed himself the only interpreter of the Islamic fundamentals and the Koran."[21]

In one of his interviews, M. Mukozhev, leader of the Jamaat of Kabardino-Balkaria, said: "The heads of the power structures are driving the Muslim community into a dead-end. Their actions suggest that they would like to unleash a war; they have outlawed from 400 to 500 people. As long as they continue using force against these people in defiance of the law, people will shed their faith in the hope of restoring their rights through legal means and might employ similar methods to defend themselves. By that time, the community will no longer be able to control the Muslims."[22] An anonymous address in the name of the republic's Muslims was even more radical: "In the fall of 2003, a war against Islam and the Muslims began in the republic. Thousands of Muslims fell victim to physical violence, while their religious feelings were hurt. The hostile state that occupied our Motherland outlawed the faithful, therefore we relinquish our responsibility toward it and consider ourselves free from obeying the laws of this hostile state. The servants of this state are henchmen of occupation and violence over the Muslims, therefore their property and blood are no longer banned."[23] These people called militants guilty of grave crimes "mojahedin," told "heroic" stories about their fellow countrymen who fought in jihad, those who died were described as shakhids. In mosques, young imams delivered sermons with strong political overtones. At one of the Muslim meetings that discussed the attitude toward the presidential election in the Russian Federation, Anzor Astemirov said: "You should always bear in mind that those who support an infidel will find themselves in his party on Doomsday."[24] The attack on the Nalchik State Drug Control Office in December 2004, as well as the killing of M. Ataev and some of his cronies sent the tension up. The tragic events of 13 October, 2005 demonstrated the hazards of the politicization of Islam.

It seems that the accounts of certain episodes that took place in the region, their interpretations, and the conclusions derived from what religious and public figures did or said do not give an objective picture of the very complicated processes in the religious sphere. More often than not, the media supply biased or even erroneously interpreted information, while certain experts use them to draw far-reaching conclusions which confuse the public. Those state authorities, including law enforcement bodies and public and religious figures who have had a taste of religious radicalism, are convinced that this phenomenon should be assessed as the sum-total of various factors typical of Kabardino-Balkaria. All conclusions about the problems of the local Muslims should not stem from what Wahhabi or traditional imams have to say or from militia reports based on individual events and tinged by specific circumstances. All the conclusions should be based on the decisions approved by all the sides involved. President of Kabardino-Balkaria A. Kanokov resolved to continue a dialog to overcome the contradictions and resolve the key socioeconomic problems.

The people of Kabardino-Balkaria have the right to voice their opinion, which should be treated as a priority when dealing with major social issues, otherwise the media and human rights organizations will be suspected of a lack of objectivity. After the tragedy of 13 October, 2005, this is fraught with the loss of public confidence in these institutions.

Most of those involved in these events, killed in street fighting, or detained by the law enforcement bodies are local young men who grew up and were educated in Kabardino-Balkaria. They all wanted to follow the rules of Islam and pattern their lives accordingly: when law and order was restored, the relatives of the killed militants asked the authorities to let them bury the dead, contrary to RF law which bans this with respect to terrorists. In fact, many of the local people were caught

[21] *Gazeta* newspaper, No. 36, 4 March, 2004.
[22] IA REGNUM, 29 August, 2004.
[23] *Severniy Kavkaz*, 29 November, 2005.
[24] Ibidem.

unawares by their relatives' involvement in terrorist activities; at the same time, they were irritated at the law enforcement structures. Some of the human rights organizations wishing to help the bereaved were drawn into a campaign of discrediting the republican leaders initiated by the forces behind the 13 October events.

Those responsible for the bloodshed in Nalchik continued exploiting Islam in their leaflets. Anonymous letters were distributed across the republic which said: "Under the current conditions of total terror against the Muslims, jihad has become 'fard-ul-ayn,' the prime duty of every Muslim."[25] Some of the media and some of the statements heard at human rights rallies did nothing to help investigate the events in a fair and dispassionate way—they were aimed at stirring up popular discontent and displeasure with the republican leaders. They never succeeded—the republican and federal authorities did their best to organize objective and open investigation of the events and of what the law enforcement bodies had done under the circumstances. This defused the arguments of those who were exploiting the feelings of the aggrieved people. The investigation brought to light, in particular, the unseemly role of Mukozhev and Astemirov, two radical Muslim ideologists. After sending the trusting young men to their deaths, they disappeared. This caused a wave of popular indignation which could easily be turned against all Muslims. The mothers of the dead militants say: "Astemirov said that our children remained loyal to their amir until their last second, while he himself betrayed them in an effort to save his life."[26]

The republican leaders have done all they can not only to return the life of the Muslim communities to normal and prevent political groups, extremist groups in the first place, from using religion to their own ends, but also to convince the public that they will do everything to achieve this. Soon after his inauguration, President Kanokov suggested that representation of most of the Muslim communities in the SAM KB, not only of those that the ruling elite found acceptable, should be extended. Dmitriy Kozak, plenipotentiary representative of the RF President in the Southern Federal Okrug, publicly warned against the danger of identifying Islamic communities with terrorist groups using Islamic rhetoric as a smokescreen. This satisfied the Muslim organizations across Russia. The events in Kabardino-Balkaria and the situation in Chechnia and Daghestan have shown that the confessional sphere should be freed from all political overtones; at the same time, the respected institutions of civil society should take into account the political position of believers.

[25] *Nasha versia,* 16 January, 2006.
[26] *Severniy Kavkaz,* 17 January, 2006.