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IDEOLOGY AND RELIGION IN POST-SOVIET SOCIETY

Ideology, whose demise has been heralded by *perestroika*, is again in demand now. During the past two decades attitude to it has radically changed. In December 1993 the Constitution of the Russian Federation was adopted, according to which ideological diversity is officially recognized in Russia. No ideology can be proclaimed as state or mandatory. Eighteen years later, in February 2011, the chairman of the National anti-terrorist committee and head of the Federal Security Service, A. Bortnikov said the following at a meeting with the heads of the local anti-terrorist commissions in Vladikavkaz: “We must win in the ideological confrontation with our foes.” This was in essence an open admission of the fact that our terrorist opponents were armed ideologically, and also that post-Soviet ideology was uncompetitive, that is, “we were losing all the way.”

Perestroika was against any talk about the need for ideology in post-*perestroika* society from the very beginning.

Its adepts and theorists regarded ideology as a brake on social progress. They suggested that we adhere to *laissez-faire* policy in the objective market mechanism which would correct everything by itself.

The place of ideology, in their view, should be taken by common sense which regards the world as it is, without any subjectivist “admixtures.” They considered ideology as a threat to the normal development of society. Certain philosophers have gone as far as to compare ideology to weapons of mass destruction, that is, in their view there are grounds to suppose that weak will and clear mind have been victims to its destructive force.

Recently, both society and the powers that be have begun to understand that common sense alone is not enough for the proper development and effective functioning of a state. Ideology is also necessary.

Ideology is a doctrine backing the struggle for power waged by definite groups in a state. It should substantiate their claims to be the main exponent of the people’s requirements and their defender. While doing this, a concrete political doctrine becomes, due to the efforts of its ideologists, a program expressing the interests of the whole of society.

Ideology can also be regarded as a sum total of the highest system-forming values of one or another society determining the behavior of its members. In this connection a question arises whether party pluralism is compatible with the presence of uniform ideology in society.

In the U.S.S.R. there was no political pluralism, but ideology in a broad sense of the word did exist. In western countries and the United States political pluralism and uniform ideology coexist quite peacefully.

Is ideology a permanent attribute of society and why is it needed?

Advocates of ideology saw its necessity in making “joint life of people tolerable.” (Vladimir Solovyov, Russian philosopher of the 19th century). The Soviet dissident and philosopher Alexander Zinovyev

saw one of the functions of ideology in that it poses “a common aim before the leaders of society, which, regardless of whether it is attainable or not, plays an enormous organizing role, shows ways for its achievement, and is the pivot of all system of orientation and philosophy.”

Demand for ideology directly depends on the state of society.

What ideology do we have at present? The well-known political scientist and head of the Center of Strategic Studies “Russia – Islamic World” Sh. Sultanov singles out three general national ideological models, each of which has its own text and language, its rules and technologies, ideologists, propagandists and supporters. He noted that the most vivid, popular, and “vociferous” is the “ideology of consumption,” or consumerism. “I consume, ergo I exist.” Another ideology is “criminal ideology,” and the third one is “ideology of survival.”

I would not separate criminal ideology from consumerism, they are closely connected with each other. Consumer ideology and criminal ideology are two communicating vessels. Consumer ideology, which can also be termed “elitist ideology,” has put forward such standards of life, which are unattainable by the overwhelming part of the population.

Consumer ideology includes apology of crime. Those advocating this ideology are fewer than the bulk of the population. But they have a much stronger influence on the masses of people.

Besides, the elitist ideological apparatus is working stably. It has changed its forms and methods in an attempt to present itself as a champion of ideological pluralism. Man and society should look on life in the light of this consumer ideology; such is the result of the painstaking work of this apparatus.

Sh. Sultanov speaks of “ideology of survival.” There are surviving people, they are in a majority, but there is no “ideology of

survival.” “Ideology of survival” should explain to people why most of them succeed to survive and also to justify all hardships and misfortune which befell them.

Elitist consumer ideology examines this problem in a social-Darwinist spirit, the essence of which was formulated by Friedrich Nietzsche, namely, “Give a poke to the fallen.” Survival depends mainly on those who need to survive, their nature, moral and physical preparedness and strength.

Historically, ideological support of the surviving people was taken up by religion. This is why demand for it, its importance is quite logical. It is also understandable if one takes into account the ideological weakness of the powers that be and of all their institutions, which are mostly concerned with the problems of the country’s sovereignty and stability, territorial integrity, financial situation, etc.

Can religion claim the role of ideology in a broad sense of the world? There are different views on it.

The first is as follows: religion and ideology are antipodes. Religion is opposed to ideology, and historical facts showing the transformation of Christianity into ideology interpret it as its degradation. Certain clerical figures assert that “Christianity as state ideology is a combination of two absolutely different ways and callings. Such experiments end tragically for the Church and the state.”

Philosopher Rafik Aliyev in his book “Faith and Love, Mind and Soul: Harmony or Contradiction” wrote: “When faith becomes ideology it can do too much. Man who perceives faith not only by his soul, but also by his mind becomes dangerous for surrounding people. He either ceases to accept society in which he lives, or begins to destroy this society only because it does not correspond to his faith, ideals and principles, which were instilled in him by his tutors – priests and religious leaders who turned him into a weak-willed slave-robot.” It

would seem that it is precisely reflecting mind that is a guarantee of independent thinking and deeds of man. However, things are different. Faith is always a purely personal, private matter. It is limited by man's contacts with God and demands only personal self-improvement. Faith demands to begin with oneself. Whereas ideology oriented to reason is aimed at improvement of society, its main function is to fight evil, and therefore it should resort to force and coercion. It is here that the main difference between religion and ideology lies. This is why forcing of religion or religious views is unacceptable. Neither the Church nor the state should resort to it.

But there can be cooperation between ideology and religion provided they retain their principles, specific features, realm, etc. There are points of coincidence. They include the common object of influence and the common task – to prevent and fight evil on this earth of ours.

*“Dialog religioznykh kultur kak factor bezopasnosti i stabilnosti: problemy i resheniya,”
Vladikavkaz, 2012, pp. 324–331.*

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**THE ARAB WORLD IN RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY:
METHODOLOGY OF APPROACHES
FROM REGIONAL POSITION**

Modern Russia, just as any other state, has formed several “circles of contact” in accordance with which it determines its foreign-policy priorities. Interaction with other countries can take place at a federal level, and also at regional one: cultural and near-to-border cooperation. The “close circle” of Russia's partners includes countries of the former Soviet Union (Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Baltic

countries, Central Asia and the South Caucasus). The second circle includes foreign countries directly bordering on the Russian Federation: China, Mongolia, the Democratic Republic of Korea, Finland and Norway. Then there are countries which do not border on the Russian Federation, but have common offshore zones, for example, Iran and Japan.

The present-day relations of Russia with other states are mainly based on geopolitical pragmatism, that is, concentration of energy and means on strategically important directions.

The Arab world is not included in the “near circle” of Russia’s partners. Among the geopolitical reasons for it is the absence of common borders, considerable geographical distance and the absence of the communications infrastructure, as well as high transport and transaction costs. The Arab countries are not included in integration associations with Russia’s participation, such as SCO. It is natural that many spheres of activity traditionally connected with the Arab region, for instance, trade in arms and technologies, are exclusively within the competence of the federal center and are not included in the activity of parts of the Russian Federation.

It is necessary to take into account a number of factors for determining the approaches of our country to the Arab region. The present Arab world took shape as a result of the redivision of the world between the victors of the last two world wars, and the borders of modern Arab states had been drawn under the influence of their colonial prehistory.

Another specific feature of the Arab region lies in its greatly heterogeneous character and its division into several subregions. In other words, twenty-two Arab states have twenty-two approaches to Russia. Accordingly, Russia should evolve twenty-two approaches to twenty-two Arab states. Atomism of the Arab region results in the

absence of a single center of force in the sphere of educational policy due to which there is no uniform strategy in the study and promotion of the Arab language, as compared, for example, to the activity of the Institutes of Confucius of the PRC. The situation becomes more complicated by the fact that the pro-western elites of the wealthy oil-producing Arab countries of the Persian Gulf regard the Russian Federation a rival on the hydrocarbon market and maintain close ties with the former metropolitan countries; as a result they do not have enough positive experience in relations with the Russian Federation. This can clearly be seen in the sphere of educational policy: by statistical data Russia accounts for about three percent of all Arab students studying abroad. The number of Arab students studying at Russian universities and institutes comprise 7.2 percent of all foreign students in Russia.

The “Arab spring” has resulted in the change of elites in many Arab states: many friends of Russia at the time of the bipolar world have lost their influence, and new elites cannot be regarded pro-Russian. A vivid example is difference between the Russian and Chinese position (veto in the UN on interference in the conflict in Syria) and that of the leadership of many Arab states.

The stereotype which has taken shape connecting the Arab nation exclusively with Islam is not quite correct. In essence, the Arab nation is a polyconfessional cultural-historical community: a considerable number of Arabs are Christians. The thesis of unity of the Arab nation cannot be always confirmed. Linguistic differences between various Arab dialects used in everyday life are so strong that sometimes people can hardly understand one another, and have to switch over to the classical literary Arabic, which relatively few know well enough. A great role in Arab society is now played by Arab emigrant

communities which now live in the United States and the European Union; in the Russian Federation they are practically none.

Following linear logic, the development of relations with the Arab region could interest those regions of the Russian Federation where Islam is widespread. However, there are many obstacles. Many Russian Muslims often have a complex of stable stereotypes concerning the Arab region which do not correspond to reality. This is because many Russian Muslims often perceive Arab culture through the prism of the history of religion. Sometimes Arabs are mistakenly taken for Turks or Persians by plain people due to the lack of knowledge. Meanwhile, modern Arabs greatly differ from the image created in medieval literature. Religious Islamic education, which is often the only source of knowledge about Arabs and the Arab region at a regional level, gives a picture of the golden age of Arab history and culture, ignoring the state of affairs in that part of the world at the present time. The nuances of the new and latest history of the Arab region and the present situation in this part of the planet at the level of regional elites are little known and insufficiently studied. Romanticization of Arab history and culture and too simple approaches to the subject disarm believers in Islam in the Russian Federation, deprive them of political immunity, which can make them an easy prey of Islamists. The above-said shows that the elaboration of approaches to the development of relations with countries of the Arab region at a regional level requires a thorough preparation.

The proposed strategy of regions of the Russian Federation with regard to the Arab region should be as follows:

In elaborating approaches it will be necessary to take into account the fact that Russian traditional Islam is deeply rooted in Eurasian culture, whereas Arab culture has Semitic Afro-Asian roots.

The role of disciples in relations with Arabs should not be played by any means; on the contrary, attempts should be made to present themselves as their teachers.

The experience of peaceful inter-confessional coexistence which distinguishes peoples of the Russian Federation should be shared with Arabs.

A pro-Russian Arab elite should be fostered. The Arabs who have received education at Russian institutes and universities should not only become exponents of Russian culture, but also of geopolitical interests of the Russian Federation upon their return to their Motherland. The value and self-sufficiency of Russian traditional Islam should be developed and its potential more widely used.

Many-vector regional foreign economic and educational ties should be preserved; along with the Arab region, relations with countries of the “close circle,” including China, the CIS countries and Iran, should also be developed.

“Rossiya i Arabskiy mir: istoriya i sovremennost. 16 Khakimovskiye chteniya,” Ufa, 2012, pp. 141–143.

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**SPECIFIC FEATURES OF STATE POLICY
IN REGULATING CONFESSIONAL RELATIONS
IN A POLY-ETHNIC REGION
(on example of Astrakhan region)**

The complex political situation in our time, greater influence of religion on political processes the world over, transformation of individual religious institutions into so-called political religion,

exacerbation of conflict situations in various regions conditioned by world migration processes and growing extremism, existence of permanent seats of tension connected with confessional differences, growing activities of new religious associations, sometimes of a totalitarian character, -- all this forces researchers to turn to the problem of state-confessional policy at all levels of its implementation.

World experience in building state-confessional relations and a multitude of models of their implementation, as well as a whole number of problem situations, and a complex legislative basis concerning freedom of conscience call for the need to think and realize all political processes taking place in this sphere. These circumstances make it incumbent to study regional experience of building confessional policy, especially in poly-ethnic regions. State-religious policy in a poly-cultural region is a complex system, which also concerns its formation.

At a mega-level the formation of confessional policy and the functioning of a system of confessional security in a region are influenced by globalization processes. At the present stage we can speak of interconnection of globalization and religious processes, thus, religion becomes one of the most important factors of globalization. In the view of the well-known political scientist E. Hanson, among the four basic political problems at the global level two have direct bearing on religion – these are the possibility to develop religious and cultural identity in the global communication system, and the preservation of the democratic rights of man in a broad range of the existing political regimes, including the right to freedom of conscience and religious activity. Any change of the situation in one of these spheres directly influences the state of another.

The global information area has opened access to information about religious variety in the mid-1990s. This variety in our region can be seen in the existence of non-traditional cults and free preachers,

mainly from abroad. Protestantism is on the move, as well as new religious movements and mystical groups in Astrakhan region. Some confessions were revived and restored in the 1990s through their inclusion in transnational global religious networks, for example, Buddhism among the Kalmyks living in the region.

The most important factor influencing confessional policy in the Astrakhan region is its geopolitical inclusion in the Caspian region and its close proximity to the Islamic world (Astrakhan region borders on the North Caucasus and the Caspian area). The lion's share of migration flows to Astrakhan comes from there, and it is mainly representatives of Muslim confessions.

At the macro-level, pride of place is taken by *national* religious policy. We can single out four types of relations between religion and politics within the framework of this macro-level: first, the dominating churches pursue the policy of state power creating the so-called *sacred canopy*; government and religious organizations compete for political influence on power within national community; religious organizations compete with one another; religious organizations pursue the policy of influence on national culture and protection of their cultural traditions from threats on the part of national or global culture.

At the macro-level a poly-ethnic region finds itself in the sphere of influence of federal state-confessional policy, which can hardly determine its own religious priorities, that is, whether we are an Orthodox Christian or poly-confessional country. If it positions itself as poly-confessional, its ideology and policy should be properly balanced, taking into account the interests of these confessions, social security of citizens and national security of the entire Federation.

The religious sphere in Astrakhan region is determined by the historical tradition of its formation against the backdrop of coexistence

of the three world religions, as well as the present correlation of Islam and Christianity, which is unique for Russia at the present time.

Among the positive factors of the religious situation in the region is attitude to religion as a means stabilizing ethical and world-outlook standards, preserving ethnic identity, and forming regional self-consciousness.

Regional state-confessional policy of poly-ethnic Astrakhan region has been built with due account of both the federal political trend in this sphere, as local specific features, among them close proximity of North Caucasian republics and a high level of confessional mosaic.

It should be said that the heads of government bodies of the region have carried on cautious and tactful confessional policy, diplomatically resolving conflicts between religious communities, including the Muslim community, with local authorities.

We should also note that most heads of religious confessions well realize the complex geopolitical situation in the region and the need for cautious, well-thought-out decisions.

The main factor of risk in the region is the geopolitical position of Astrakhan in the Caspian region, on the border with the Islamic world and at the crossroads of migration routes, which, naturally, raises the conflict potential of the region and the danger of spontaneous emergence of interpersonal and interethnic conflicts often connected with big migration flows.

Another factor of risk, practically usual for any poly-confessional territory, is the presence of transnational religious networks and associations, including of an Islamist character, which violate international legal standards and pose a terrorist threat.

We believe that regional state-confessional policy of the poly-ethnic Astrakhan region is aimed at creating a system of confessional

security and eliminating the ground for the flaring-up of ethnic and religious conflicts. Such policy is of primary importance for the preservation of national security of the entire country.

“Kaspiisky region: politika, ekonomika, kultura,”

Astrakhan, 2013, No 1, pp. 99–104.

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ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN PRESENT-DAY DAGESTAN

Islamic education is an important link in the polyphonic structure of culture of modern Dagestan, The role of Islamic education has especially grown during the period of total (western and Arab-Muslim) globalization, whose impact is strongly felt by Dagestani culture at present.

Despite the ethnocultural and verbal-communicative variety, the population of Dagestan has historically been united by common ethnogeny, ethnoterritorial contacts, economic and cultural ties, and ethnic trends to integration. Religion has been playing a special role in the mythological consciousness of Dagestani ethnic groups. Prior to the adoption of Islam Dagestani peoples had been divided by linguistic, ethnic and religious features, but consolidation of Islam on Dagestan’s territory contributed to unification of ethnic groups on the basis of religious identity. Along with the strengthening of its status, Arab-Muslim culture has firmly entrenched itself in the psychology and everyday life of Dagestani ethnic groups and merged inseparably with traditional culture and mythology. The word “Arab” in defining Muslim culture is not so much national as linguistic characteristic. “Arabic was the Latin language of the Muslim world,” A. Karmin, a Russian philosopher, once said.

Religious upbringing and education is one of the main components of Arab-Muslim culture. Examining the historical and cultural problems of education, pride of place in the creation of public higher educational institutions is given to Islam. Religious education in Islam was not necessarily bound with religious professionalization of graduates; future officials studied at madrasahs. Education at Islamic schools gave initial knowledge in both Muslim culture and natural sciences.

From the early 1990s Islam began to come back to world outlook and ideology of Muslim peoples in Russia. In the past decades the Arab-Muslim school has been revived on a new cultural-education foundation. The trend to reviving religious education, which emerged in the post-Soviet period, has been realized in the intensive process of drawing Dagestani people to studying at modern Arab-Muslim educational institutions. In the 1990s several hundred Dagestani men received education at Islamic universities of Arab countries: Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Libya, Iraq, Qatar, Jordan, Syria, Tunisia, and also in Turkey, Iran, Sudan, Malaysia and Pakistan.

Parallel with it, a network of Islamic educational establishments began to develop on the territory of Dagestan. The system of non-governmental Islamic education includes four stages: short-term course to study the fundamentals of faith and the Arab language; schools at mosques, madrasahs, Islamic higher educational institutions and universities.

Curricula retain canonic structure based on Islamic humanitarian disciplines. Thus, the Arab-Muslim educational system (especially in the medium grade – maktabs and madrasahs) corresponds best of all to the traditional educational model. Curricula at Islamic institutions of higher learning include the study of secular humanities (history, international relations, economics, local lore), exact and natural

sciences. Graduates from madrasahs and Islamic institutes and universities, depending on the courses they have studied, receive one of three specializations: the reader of the Koran; *imam-khatyb* (one who can read and translate Islamic literature into one's native tongue); *alim* ("specialist in Arab-Muslim sciences"). Offering a new methodological approach to the study of Islam in Russia, M. Prozorov, expert in Oriental manuscripts at the Russian Academy of Sciences, mentions "a low level of religious culture among Muslims themselves, a weak development of Islamic institutions, and the loss of Islamic legal culture. Politically, it conditioned national-political direction of Islam, socially – a great intellectual gap between secular and confessional Muslims.

The Institute of Theology and International Relations opened in Dagestan in 2004 was one of the first to train Islamic theologians and specialists in humanities with a more profound study of history and culture of Islam. There are several departments at the institute: theology and religious study, linguistics and intercultural communications, economics, informatics, and international relations. One of the specific features of this institute is the mandatory study of Islamic theology, foreign languages (Arabic and English), and technology of intercultural communications and interconfessional dialogue. Thus the institute provides an opportunity to get both secular and religious education.

It is indicative that teaching at modern Islamic educational institutions is conducted in Russian. Thus studies at these educational establishments are accessible to representatives of all nationalities of Dagestan, and take Islamic education to a polycultural level.

In 2007, the North Caucasian University Center of Islamic education and science was organized. Among its main tasks are coordination of work of all religious educational establishments of the region, help to them in creating the necessary textbooks and study aids,

introduction of modern scientific-educational and information technologies in the system of religious education, training and upgrading of imams and teachers of Islamic educational institutions, as well as their adaptation to the conditions and requirements of modern society.

On an initiative of this center, the Council of Islamic education of Russia was set up whose task was to elaborate educational standards for training Islamic religious figures at Islamic educational establishments in the Russian Federation. The center takes part in purposeful programs of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, the work of the Fund of support of Islamic culture, science and education, and in programs of international exchange of students and teachers. Contacts with Islamic centers of Indonesia, Turkey and Syria make it possible for graduates from the Institute of Theology and International Relations (bachelors of theology) to study at master's program courses at universities in these countries. The directorate of the institute plan to arrange probation and study courses for its graduates and teachers at universities of Egypt, Jordan, Malaysia and certain European countries, including at the theologian department of Cambridge University.

One of the forms of solving intraconfessional problems and alleviating tension in relations between "traditional" and "new" Islam can be a comprehensive program, which is ideologically and practically directed at improving the religious situation in the Republic of Dagestan. The format of this program has been suggested by M. Prozorov. We propose an adapted version of M. Prozorov's program acceptable within the framework of the national regional program "Islam in Dagestan."

This variant contains two ideologically and practically connected blocs: educational and publishing and enlightening.

In the former Islamic researchers and teachers of secular and Islamic institutions of higher learning in Dagestan are trained. Young Muslims who have received religious education outside the boundaries of the Russian Federation (in Egypt, Indonesia, United Arab Emirates, and elsewhere) may continue to study or work at these secular or religious institutions.

The latter is part of the regional, program “Islam in Dagestan.” In recent years a lot of mass literature about Islam has been distributed all over Dagestan. It is published by Islamic funds and often contains materials of extremist, confrontational character.. Besides, this literature is, as a rule, of a low quality and full of errors. As an alternative we suggest to organize a journal entitled “Islam in Dagestan,” which will publish high-quality articles by representatives of scientific Islamic studies. Apart from that, we would like to write, print and distribute books in a series “Muslim Enlighteners of Dagestan: History and Our Time.”

All these efforts and also a search for intra-confessional dialogue in Dagestan largely depend on solution of material, socio-economic and political problems, improvement of the system of religious education, and development of civil initiatives and civil upbringing and education.

“Realnost etnosa: obrazovaniye i etnosotsializatsiya molodezhi v sovremennoi Rossii.” St. Petersburg, 2012, pp. 269–273.

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**MONITORING ETHNO-POLITICAL SITUATION:
KAZAKHSTAN**

Demography and migration. Natural movement of the population (births, deaths, longevity).

According to the data of the Statistics Agency, the number of the country's population by November 1, 2011, reached 16 million 657,740., having increased by 215,781 in ten months.

The lion's share of the population surplus is due to its natural growth (211,520). Just as in previous years, the growth rates in regions depend on the ethnic composition of the population. Reduction of the population is especially noticeable in regions where the share of the non-Kazakh population is quite considerable. The growth of the rural population has noticeably surpassed the surplus of the urban population.

The balance of outside migration comprised 4,261 people, which is much smaller than the past indices (15,465) and (7,502), but bigger than the figure of the crisis year of 2008 (1,117).

According to a research work carried out by the Kazakh Institute of Strategic Studies, a purposeful policy is being pursued in Kazakhstan aimed at ousting the Russian-speaking population from the republic.

The quality of higher education in Kazakhstan is one of the reasons why even some people of Kazakh nationality prefer to leave the country. Another reason is an influx of labor migrants to the country. Kazakhstan becomes more attractive to migrants from Central Asia, which lays an imprint on the mentality of the local population.

Of course, one of the main reasons for leaving Kazakhstan is the worsening living conditions, especially in rural areas.

Power, the state, politics. On the whole, the doctrine and regime of power remained unchanged.

The beginning of 2011 was marked by smooth transfer of the idea to hold a republican referendum on prolongation of powers of Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev until 2020. At the end of the year the authorities dissolved parliament of the 4th convocation and

held pre-term parliamentary elections in January 2012. This was due, among other things, to the growing financial-economic crisis.

Relations between power and the opposition are exacerbating. Part of the opposition forces, including the Communist party and the unregistered People's party "Alga," have organized the "Halyk maidany" ("Popular Front") movement. In answer, the authorities banned the activity of the Communist party of Kazakhstan for six months.

Another possible rival of the ruling "Nur Otan" party at parliamentary elections was excluded from election debates.

In short, the authorities succeeded in avoiding the situation of direct confrontation in the sphere of legitimate political rivalry. But, judging by the events in Zhanaozen in December 2011, they failed to win people's trust and stop their protest movement.

Human rights and collective rights. Inasmuch as 2010 was the year of Kazakhstan's presidency at OSCE, international human rights organizations believed that the situation with human rights would improve in Kazakhstan. Improvements did take place in the republic, but only slightly. Their results disappointed human rights activists.

The unwillingness or inability of the authorities to resolve labor conflicts in some places have led to mass violations not only of labor and social rights, but also the right to freedom of speech and assembly.

Public order and control. In 2011 Kazakhstan came across such phenomena as open terrorism and cases of mass disobedience. From April to December 2011, there were eleven cases of terrorist acts and armed clashes with extremists with big casualties. Some of them had a religious tint connected with the ideas of "pure Islam."

In the town of Zhaozen in the western part of the country there were mass actions of protest with quite a few casualties (according to

official information, their number was 16, but according to rumors there were up to 70 people killed).

Production and prices. According to Statistics Agency, Kazakhstan retained economic development rates in 2011 at the level of the preceding year. The growth of the GDP in January – September 2011 amounted to 107.2 percent.

Industry – 103.5 percent, agriculture – 126.7 percent, construction – 114.5 percent, transport – 106.7 percent, communications – 118 percent. Inflation in December 2011 comprised 0.3 percent to November 2010, in December 2011 – 7.4 percent to December 2010. The index of consumer prices in January – November 2010 was 108.4 percent to January – December 2010.

Level of and difference in incomes. The average per capita nominal income in January – November 2011 was 48,500 tenge (U.S. \$329), with an increase by 116 percent compared to the previous year. The growth of real money income was estimated at 107.1 percent as against January – November 2010.

The figure for the cost of living was 15,461 tenge (U.S. \$105). The average nominal monthly wage amounted to 87,223 tenge in January – November 2011 (U.S.\$593), and grew as compared to the same period of the preceding year by 115.1 percent.

Employment and unemployment. The number of the unemployed in November 2011 was 477,600 and it grew compared to November 2010 by 100.7 percent. The number of the registered unemployed reached 89,000, and increased by 150 percent over the year. The level of unemployment was estimated at 5.4 percent in November 2011. The share of the unemployed in the general number of the able-bodied population is 14 percent.

Culture, education, information. The sphere of the domination of European culture has diminished due to the departure of a

considerable part of the non-Kazakh population and greater attention of the authorities to the purely Kazakh cultural sphere. The use of the Kazakh language has become broader in all spheres – from production to rest and recreation.

Religious life. Scandals of various kinds continued throughout the year caused by a ban on wearing headscarf at educational institutions. They took place in different regions of the country and were expressed by lone public protests in the press, in the streets, or by joint actions, as was the case in Ekibastuz and Chimkent.

The President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev expressed his position on the problem in a speech in the town of Turkestan on March 11 as follows: “I am against wearing headscarf, especially when it is on young girl-students. We have never had such tradition in our history.” And he mentioned Kazakhstan’s own path in this matter.

It should be remembered that Kazakhstan headed the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in 2011 and it had to interact with countries where other views on national specificities of adherents of Islam are widespread. This is why there is no mention of wearing headscarf in the text of the law “On religious activity and religious associations” signed by the President in September 2011.

This law has been harshly criticized by human rights activists in Kazakhstan and certain western countries, as well as by various religious organizations. The object of their criticism was the premise about stricter rules of registration of religious organizations and missionaries. In any way, one can see certain changes in the role of religion in society and in attitude to this role.

The language situation. The most vivid examples showing the dynamics of the language situation in Kazakhstan is a conflict, which took a legal form, on the occasion of closing down two Russian schools

in Temirtau, and also several statements of the authorities about a change of the role of the Russian language in Kazakhstan.

The question of expanding the role and use of the Kazakh language in the republic has been discussed in society lately. However, the number of people speaking Kazakh has not increased noticeably, and the number of those speaking Russian has not diminished either.

The country's leadership is taking care of bringing the language situation in line with the state program of the development and functioning of languages in the period from 2011 to 2017. It is planned that after the implementation of the program the share of the adult population fluently speaking and being able to read and write in the national language should comprise 20 percent by 2014, by 2017 – 80 percent, and by 2020 – 95 percent. The level concerning the Russian language should be the same, and the share of Kazakhs speaking and able to read and write in English should reach 20 percent.

The role of the mass media in socio-political life. The results of a survey carried out by the “Medianet” Center in 2011 have been published. Eighteen percent of those polled admit that the mass media are objective and tolerant in reporting conflicts connected with religious, ethnic and sexual minorities. The rest adhere to the view that in publishing materials on the subject the mass media usually take one of the sides of a conflict, and provoke, or hush-up a conflict.

At the same time, the mass media themselves constantly come across the attempts to restrict their activity. The law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On TV and Radio broadcasting,” in the view of a representative of the OSCE, violates the citizens’ right to receive and distribute information freely and strengthens state control over electronic mass media.

Contacts and stereotypes, changes in self-consciousness. The sphere of history remains a field of conflict as before. Many events of

the past and their assessment and interpretation cause controversial reaction in society. This is the most typical phenomena of Northern and Eastern Kazakhstan. More and more people speak of the need to bolster up intergroup tolerance, and at the same time advocate the preservation of national independence, traditional cultural and spiritual values and the national language.

Foreign conditions. Kazakhstan's participation in the activity of the Customs Union was an important factor of foreign economic development of the republic in 2011. By the economic results of the period between January and October 2011 the country's foreign trade turnover increased by 39.7 percent and comprised U.S. \$101.1 billion.

According to the data of the Ministry of economic development and trade, the export of commodities increased by 48.2 percent (U.S.\$71.7 billion) as against the same period in 2010. Import grew by 22.4 percent (U.S. \$29.4 billion). The positive balance of foreign trade amounted to U.S. \$42.3 billion, that is, 1.7 times more than in the same period of 2010.

Conclusions. Kazakhstan has come across new challenges in 2011 against the backdrop of the intra-elite struggle for power and the strengthening of power of the present authorities. At the same time there were more protests of the popular masses, religious extremism and terrorism were on an increase, and contradictions between the religious and secular principles became deeper.

Despite positive dynamics of economic development and the continuing progress of the social sphere, there are indications that society has already exhausted its inertia of using the already existing methods to regulate the political and ideological sphere and is now ready for more radical transformations. It should also be noted that the traditions of the authoritarian rule and conservative management diminish the effectiveness of positive decisions taken by the authorities.

We should note that the sphere of interethnic relations was more or less calm and quiet, thus confirming the viability of the “Kazakh model of interethnic and inter-religious accord.” Nevertheless, it is time to think of reforming and developing this model.

“Etnopoliticheskaya situatsiya v Rossii i sopredelnykh gosuderstvakh,” Moscow, 2012, pp. 578–586.

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RELATIONS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND KYRGYZSTAN AT THE PRESENT STAGE

From the beginning of its entry in the Russian Empire (1870 – 1880) Kyrgyzstan became its special part. The czarist government artificially divided the territory into Turkestan Governorate General and khanates, thus preventing Uzbeks, Turkmen, Kyrgyz, Kazakhs and Tajiks to become a new ethnic community. However, at the end of the 19th – beginning of the 20th century czarist Russia’s policy played an important role in the formation of the initial or primary educational system, which gave an impetus to Kyrgyz joining the values of Russian culture.

In 1884 Russian-aboriginal schools began to be opened, combining Muslim mekhteb and Russian primary school, with the introduction of Russian as the national language (obligatory subject), and allowing local inhabitants to study the foundations of Islam as the principal means to overcome the indigenous people mistrust in these schools and draw as many children as possible in them. By 1917 there were 17 Russian-aboriginal schools and two boarding schools at the Pishpek and Przhevalsk municipal schools.

In 1918 Kyrgyzstan was part of the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic within the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR). According to national-state demarcation of the Soviet republics of Central Asia the Kara-Kyrgyz Autonomous region was formed within the RSFSR on October 14, 1924 . On February 1, 1926, it was transformed into the Kyrgyz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic within the RSFSR, and on December 5, 1936, -- the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic within the U.S.S.R.

Soviet power radically changed the life of the Kyrgyz people. Equality between men and women was proclaimed in 1917, and polygamy and bride-money were banned in 1921. Important steps were made in combating illiteracy. The Kyrgyz written language was created by 1924. The Kyrgyz population's literacy reached 15 percent by 1926, and by 1939 this figure rose to 82 percent. During the years of Soviet power a system of people's education was formed. The mass media and cultural and educational institutions were organized. Literacy reached 99 percent.

Rapid industrial development took place in Kyrgyzstan in the 1920s – 1930s. By 1940 coal mines of the republic produced 88 percent of coal used in Central Asia. Non-ferrous metallurgy, the production of antimony and mercury, foodstuffs (especially sugar), and light-industry commodities developed successfully. Agricultural collectivization began to be introduced in 1929. Rich cattle-breeders and land-owners were arrested, tried and executed, their property and belongings confiscated. By 1941 there were about 300,000 cattle-breeding collective farms in Kyrgyzstan.

The industrialization of Kyrgyzstan proceeded hand in hand with the development of agriculture after World War II. More than 200 industrial enterprisers were created in Kyrgyzstan from the 1960s to the 1980s. The level of agricultural mechanization has also risen. During a

historically short period of time modern urban life, industry, and the infrastructure of transport and communications have been created.

Kyrgyzstan was distinguished in the Soviet economy by the production of non-ferrous metals, various branches of engineering, and highly productive animal husbandry. However, despite all qualitative transformations and new elements brought to the life of the Kyrgyz people, they retained certain traits of consciousness going deep into the past of Central Asia and formed under the impact of a number of factors.

Historically, Kyrgyzstan had always been a “crossroads” connecting Europe and Asia. The waves of ethnic migrants had moved in different directions. As a result, Central Asia became connected with all regions of Eurasia. And during the Russian and Soviet periods its ties with East Europe became broader.

Then “Great Silk Route” connecting China with India, and the Islamic and western worlds had largely determined certain specific features of the culture and mentality of the Central Asian people. They adopt and transform effects of outside influence and on this basis form their own specific world outlook and perception of the surrounding world.

According to historical sources, Central Asia had been a center of special nomadic civilization. There had been two great nomadic empires of the world in Central Asia – the Turkic Kaganate and the Golden Horde. The nomadic empires of the past had been striving to create a uniform civilizatory community through the formation of a developed infrastructure (transport, communications, and other systems). A developed infrastructure contributed to the expansion of the free-trade zone, economic growth and the emergence of intensive intercultural communications.

The Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union had realized the idea of “conservative revolution” in Kyrgyzstan, based on creation of seats of high culture and supported by traditional and coercive methods in agricultural economy (collective farms).

The post-revolutionary period in the history of Kyrgyzstan was a time of mastering modern Europeanized culture and education, but in their Russian version and often through the prism of Marxism-Leninism.

It should be noted that in Soviet times the Kyrgyz language and Kyrgyz culture were practically completely ousted by the Russian language. Kyrgyz culture was only used as something touristy. Inasmuch as the attracted culture was dominating, Kyrgyz culture was defined as more backward, which tended to form an inferiority complex among the indigenous people, and those who became “Russified” acquired a superiority complex. All this led to greater tension in society, all the more so since material inequality was growing all the time.

After the proclamation of independence in 1991 Kyrgyzstan came across economic difficulties connected with transfer to a market economy. Interethnic conflicts became more frequent and acute in the republic. Relations with the Uzbek minority in Osh region worsened considerably, and there were interethnic clashes with casualties. Similar developments took place in neighboring Tajikistan with regard to the Kyrgyz minority. All these problems, along with a considerable burden of foreign-policy problems of the Central Asian vector of the former U.S.S.R. (imprecise borders, Afghan conflict, growing Islamic fundamentalism, drug-trafficking, etc.) confronted the young Kyrgyz state in the post-Soviet period.

The disintegration of the U.S.S.R. has led to the factual collapse of economic ties between the Russian Federation and Kyrgyzstan,

simultaneously giving an impetus to the development and intensification of economic relations with other foreign countries.

By the time of the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. there were a democratic government and a developed multiparty system in Kyrgyzstan already. On May 10, 1993, Kyrgyzstan's own national currency – som – was introduced. Its parliament adopted laws on the privatization of state-owned enterprises and other state property, and in May 1993 a new Constitution of the country was approved. On December 24, 1995, new presidential elections were carried out in the country, which were won by Askar Akayev, who received 71.65 percent of votes.

The period between 1995 and 2001 was characterized by the strengthening of sovereign statehood of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. Numerous laws were adopted at the time, most of which (about 80 percent) were initiated by the government of Kyrgyzstan.

In the period from the proclamation of independence up to the “revolution of 2005” an administrative-clan system was created in the Kyrgyz Republic, which was a direct continuation of the Soviet system of distribution, the living standards dropped markedly, and family and clan relations were thriving.

The years 2005 – 2010 can be characterized as a period of the growing personal power of K. Bakiyev and his family. In the view of Kyrgyz and Russian political observers the Bakiyev family, having usurped power and economic levers, adopted all crucial decisions, disregarding the opposition, public sentiments and foreign partners.

The cooling of Kyrgyz-Russian relations exerted a noticeable influence on the development of revolutionary events in 2010. It had a profound impact on the sentiments of Kyrgyz society which displayed growing pro-Russian views after the events of 2005 – 2007. Economic dependence of most people in Kyrgyzstan on Russia caused feelings of

strong discontent with the Bakiyev regime which was largely responsible for the worsening relations with Russia. The revolutionary change of power in 2010 and the following transformation of presidential-parliamentary republic into parliamentary-presidential took place under the banner of returning the pro-Russian forces to power and strengthening interstate, military and economic relations, the peak of which was the signing of documents on greater Russian economic and military presence in the republic in September 2012.

It can safely be said that Kyrgyzstan owes its history as a sovereign state to Russia. Its people have traversed the entire path from the formation of a Soviet republic to a state with its own Constitution, parliament, president and government with mentality similar to that of the Soviet and Russian people, and the events in Kyrgyzstan resemble those taking place in some Russian national republics (Bashkortostan, Tatarstan).

In the modern history of the Kyrgyz Republic there have been three forcible changes of the heads of state, followed by changes of the configuration of the elites. Unfortunately, the constitutional and economic reforms have not resulted in the formation of a full-fledged independent state on the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic. A tangle of problems in the foreign-policy sphere (Afghanistan, drug production, sale and trafficking, problems of the Ferghana Valley and borders with the closest neighbors, economic crisis, interference of the U.S.A. and western countries in its internal affairs), as well as the absence of progress in solving the economic and social problems in the domestic life lead to the preservation of the “instability zone” in the first and “most democratic” state of Central Asia. All this determines the many-vector and complex character of relations between Russia and Kyrgyzstan.

Both states can coexist and successfully develop on condition of their all-round interaction and cooperation in the spheres of common interests. Speaking at a news conference on the results of an official visit of the then resident of the Kyrgyz Republic Askar Akayev to Russia in March 1996, the then President of Russia Boris Yeltsin assessed bilateral relations between Kyrgyzstan and the Russian Federation as a sample for other CIS countries to follow.

At present the foreign ministers of the two countries emphasize that they hold similar positions practically on all major international problems and closely interact at UN, OSCE, as well as at regional organizations – CIS, EurAsEC, CSTO and SCO.

The two countries try to help each other in the situation of economic instability of recent years. Russia granted credit of \$300 million on favorable terms to Kyrgyzstan on April 30, 2009. This money should go to developing many industries in the republic, which suffer in the conditions of financial instability. Besides, the Russian Federation pledged to invest \$1.7 billion in the construction of the Kambaratin hydropower plant, and also to grant Kyrgyzstan free financial aid to a sum of \$150 million. In turn, the Kyrgyz Republic pledged to close down the U.S. military base “Manas” on its territory, and hand over to Russia several buildings in its capital Bishkek to house a cultural center of the Russian Federation. However, the revolutionary events of 2010 prevented the implementation of these agreements.

In September 2012 President V. Putin of the Russian Federation and President A. Atambayev of Kyrgyzstan signed documents on setting up a Russian military base and building the Verkhne-Naryn cascade of hydropower plants and Kambaratin hydropower plant-1. Experts estimate the cost of these projects at \$4 billion. Apart from that, Russia agreed to write off Kyrgyz debt amounting to \$489 million. Besides,

Russia donated Kyrgyzstan a grant of \$25 million to support its budget. The Russian “Gazprom” Corporation is buying the Kyrgyz Company “Kyrgyzgaz” for a symbolic sum of \$1 million with an obligation to carry out modernization of the republican gas infrastructure.

The agreements signed in 2012 and those to be signed in 2013 are a natural sequence of Russian-Kyrgyz joint activity and made it possible to consolidate the Russian presence in Kyrgyzstan.

Kyrgyzstan is exceptionally important for Russia due to a whole number of important factors.

First. From the geopolitical point of view a greater part of Russia lies in Asia and borders on several states, which were parts of one and the same country for almost two centuries, whose development was oriented to and formed by Russia, and whose culture continues to be under Russian influence. A great many Russian-speaking people live in Kyrgyzstan. A considerable number of Kyrgyz people works or studies in Russia. Russia and Kyrgyzstan are participants in joint military-political and economic organizations created after the disintegration of the U.S.S.R.

Secondly. From the geostrategic view Kyrgyzstan is a key to the Central Asian region, which is part of the “instability arc” stretching from the Balkans to Indonesia and the Philippines. The military threats emanating from it are quite real because of the strengthening of separatism and international terrorism. Today these threats have transformed into military conflicts between the United States and their allies, on the one hand, and the international terrorist movements on the territory of several countries bordering on the region, on the other. Destabilization of the situation around the region is increased by the anti-Iranian campaign organized and carried on by the United States, as well as the permanent Indo-Pakistani conflict capable to transform into a war between two nuclear states. The conflict potential in Kyrgyzstan

itself has not been exhausted either due to existence of unresolved socio-economic problems, disputed border issues, and the motley national composition of the republic.

The strategic importance of Kyrgyzstan also lies in that it is a transitional zone between the North and the South of Asia, and the situation in it exerts a considerable influence on the situation in these two parts of the continent. It also influences stability along the southern borders of Russia, as well as its security in those parts.

Thirdly. After September 11, 2001, the struggle for Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia has acquired a global character. Its new development stage has begun, which is more closely connected with integration in the world economic and geopolitical relations. The great powers have confronted one another strategically in Central Asia. The main actors – the United States, Russia and the European Union pursue diametrically opposed aims. The United States and the European Union are striving to gain control over the rich energy resources of the region and prevent Russia to rally around itself the republics of the former U.S.S.R. again.

The interaction of Russia, the United States, the European Union and China in Kyrgyzstan is a complex intertwining and rivalry of the “great” for influence on the “minor”, and coincidence of the interests of these states and insurmountable contradictions, and elaboration of a common strategy in the globalized world.

Thus, relations between Russia and Kyrgyzstan are characterized by desire for continuity and stability. The two countries are connected by common history and age-old bonds of friendship between their people. The development of bilateral ties between states is a long and multifarious process, including movement toward one another.

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**TURKMENISTAN AND PROBLEMS
OF REGIONAL SECURITY**

The leadership of Turkmenistan, just as that of other Central Asian countries, is greatly concerned with the problems of strengthening regional security. At present the countries of the region are choosing the main partners in this process: Kyrgyzstan relies on cooperation with Russia, Uzbekistan is more oriented to the United States, other countries, including Kazakhstan, are ready to cooperate with both Moscow and Washington. A special position of Turkmenistan is determined, first, by the status of neutrality it has proclaimed, and secondly, the closest geographical, economic and cultural proximity to Iran, a country in the crosshairs of the United States and its allies. Besides, the Republic of Turkmenistan is a country of the Caspian region, which is now distinguished by growing tension.

Turkmenistan is deeply interested in the preservation of stability in Iran, which is its important economic partner, especially in the oil-and-gas sphere. In 2012 supplies of Turkmen gas to Iran increased several times over, comprising 30 percent of its entire export of gas. It was despite the introduction of economic sanctions against Iran by western countries and Turkmenistan's inability to receive payment in dollars or euros. (In accordance with an agreement signed in December 2012, Turkmen gas is supplied to Iran on the barter basis, that is, Turkmenistan receives machines and equipment, agricultural products, and certain services in exchange).

Cooperation between the two countries is also developing in the sphere of hydro-energy construction and engineering. After

negotiations between the Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan and the Minister of Energy of Iran in early May 2013, a decision was adopted on participation of Iranian companies in the construction of hydropower plants and electricity transmission lines in Turkmenistan. Thus, Iranian capital will take direct part in the implementation of the program of hydro-energy development in Turkmenistan during the 2013 – 2020 period, which envisages an increase of electric power generation by five times. As a result, the volume of its export is to grow considerably, including via the territory of Iran. Besides, it is expected that the commissioning of the Kazakhstan – Turkmenistan – Iran railway (so-called the “North – South” line) will give an additional impetus to the development of trade and economic relations between the two countries. Its construction is now nearing completion.

Ashkhabad and Tehran hold similar views on the problem of the Caspian Sea area, and also on the actions of Azerbaijan in the area. The Caspian region is becoming a tangle of contradictions, notably, between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, and between Azerbaijan and Iran. As is known, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan cannot divide two big oil-and-gas deposits in the Caspian Sea basin. Taking into account the situation around Iran, the growing militarization of the Caspian region can have extremely negative consequences for Turkmenistan, just as for other countries in the region. In September 2012 Turkmenistan carried out its first naval exercises. The republican naval and air forces, as well as special units of the Ministry of National Security and Ministry for the Interior took part in the exercises.

This step was a reply to similar exercises carried out by Azerbaijan some time earlier, which is actively developing military-technical cooperation with Israel. The latter helped Azerbaijan to produce unmanned aircraft used for observation of oil deposits disputed by Turkmenistan and Iran, and also alone the Azerbaijani-Iranian

border. In the view of the coordinator of the united expert network “Jeen” N. Kharitonova, “Tehran cannot exclude the possibility of an enemy using its airforce from the territory of Azerbaijan.” There is nothing surprising that Iran is stepping up the construction and deployment of its naval forces in the Caspian Sea at present.

Tension in the region has increased after the news that Kazakhstan agreed to allow the use of its Caspian port Aktau for transport-transit operations of NATO. President N. Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan announced this at a conference of the foreign ministers of the Istanbul Process on Afghanistan at the end of April. In essence, as Russian experts maintain, this means the creation of a naval base of the United States and its allies on the Caspian Sea, which runs counter to the agreement on non-admission of the military presence of non-Caspian countries in the region signed by the five Caspian Basin countries. Kazakhstan also actively participates in increasing its naval forces in the Caspian Basin. In the spring of 2012 it commissioned its first missile-armed vessel, and this year it plans to add another two such ships armed with more powerful and up-to-date missiles.

Taking into account these factors, one has to agree with the view of a Dutch expert on Central Asia A. Tibold, who believes that “Turkmenistan tries to show that it is ready to protect its interests and territories in case of a conflict between the West and Tehran.” However, people in the Caspian Basin countries taking part in the arms race in the region, judging by many things, are coming to realize the danger of the exacerbation of contradictions in the conditions of the growing terrorist threat. On April 15 a meeting took place of representatives of the five Caspian Basin countries at which they discussed the draft of an agreement on preventing extraordinary situations in the Caspian Sea and liquidating their consequences.

The exacerbation of tension in the Caspian region renders more problematic the implementation of the project of a Trans-Caspian gas pipeline, supported by the United States and the European Union, which is supposed to take Turkmen gas along the bottom of the Caspian Sea to Azerbaijan and further on, via Turkey, to Europe. The Russian Federation and Iran actively opposed this project, which was initiated in the early 1990s. As V. Putin stated at the RF – EU summit in June 2012, “Moscow will not consider legitimate any decisions on the Caspian region adopted without consensus.” Ashkhabad will hardly be ready to spoil relations with its leading economic partners. Besides, there are contradictions between the two rivals -- Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan -- standing in the way of the implementation of the project.

Another attempt to realize this project undertaken by the European Union at the beginning of 2012, has failed, and there are no sign of any progress in this respect. Moreover, Azerbaijan’s news service circulated a statement on May 10 to the effect that the project of the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline would not be implemented due to the withdrawal of direct sponsors, including the United States, from it.

Today relations with the Russian Federation are not among the main foreign-policy priorities of Turkmenistan. Nevertheless, despite the fact that Turkmen gas has ceased to be an important “energy factor” in the relations of the two countries, the Russian Federation remains an important energy partner of Turkmenistan. In 2012 the volume of Turkmen gas deliveries to the Russian Federation amounted to 10 billion cubic meters, and in 2013 the Russian “Gazprom” Company reduced it to 7.5 billion cubic meters. New spheres of cooperation are developing, for instance, ship-building. The Russian “Krasnoye Sormovo” shipyard has built four oil tankers for Turkmenistan, which transport crude oil and oil products in the Caspian Sea basin.

Although Turkmenistan is not part to the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) or any other integration association in the post-Soviet area, except the CIS, the country's leaders realize full well that the preservation of regional security is impossible at present without cooperation with Russia. During a visit of Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to Turkmenistan in April 2013 a cooperation program between the ministries of foreign affairs of the two countries was adopted. It envisages, among other things, regular consultations between the ministries concerning the situation in Central Asia and Afghanistan.

Recently, Turkmenistan has noticeably broadened ties with Ukraine and also with the most development neighbor in the region – Kazakhstan. Turkmenistan's parliament has ratified a program of military-technical cooperation with Ukraine for 2013 – 2014, which envisages an active participation of the Ukrainian side in modernizing and repairing arms and military equipment of Turkmenistan, the development of the repair base of the Turkmen airforce and naval forces, as well as increase of deliveries of military hardware, etc. to Turkmenistan. In February 2013 the President of Turkmenistan G. Berdymuhamedov agreed with the Ukrainian authorities on direct supply of Turkmen gas (up to 10 billion cubic meters) to Ukraine. However, some of these agreements cannot go into force without Moscow's approval, inasmuch as Turkmen gas can reach Ukraine only through the territory of the Russian Federation.

The joint use of the gas pipeline to China, commissioned in 2009, has been another factor contributing to the development of Turkmen – Kazakh relations. The recent visit to Kazakhstan of Turkmenistan's President G. Berdymuhamedov has given a fresh impetus to the development of friendly relations between the two countries. The visit was timed for the opening of a railroad haul

between Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, which is part of the railway line being built from Kazakhstan to Iran via Turkmenistan. One of the crucial subjects of negotiations was the Caspian Basin; it was confirmed that both Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan share the view that the Caspian Sea is the common patrimony of the five Caspian Basin countries.

However, the principal questions on the agenda of G. Berdymuhamedov's visit were those of ensuring regional security, that is, prevention of the spreading of extremist ideology, activities of criminal groupings dealing with drug trafficking, arms smuggling, slave trade, etc. Turkmenistan stated that it was ready to cooperate with Kazakhstan on these problems in a bilateral and multilateral format, jointly with other countries of the region and international organizations.

It looks likely that official Ashkhabad is going to take a more active part in ensuring collective security. Among other things, it displays greater interest in multilateral interaction within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which is largely due to the strengthening ties between Turkmenistan and China. (In 2012 almost half of all Turkmen gas export, amounting to 40.3 billion cubic meters, was meant for China. Within the next few years Turkmenistan plans to increase gas deliveries to China to 65 billion cubic meters).

However, official Ashkhabad considers the UN to be the main platform for multilateral cooperation, including in peaceful settlement of the situation in Afghanistan. The development of relations with this international organization has taken pride of place among the foreign-policy priorities of neutral Turkmenistan. A framework development program for Turkmenistan for the years 2010 to 2015 has been implemented within the UN framework. There was a meeting in April 2013, which discussed the results of the program implementation and

prospects of further interaction for the coming year. Besides, it became known that despite harsh criticism on the part of the UN Council on human rights, Turkmenistan has been elected vice-chairman of the European Economic Commission.

The President of Turkmenistan G. Berdymuhamedov has time and again spoken for a greater peacekeeping role of the UN and proposed to render more assistance to the newly-formed Regional center of the UN on preventive diplomacy for Central Asia. Special attention to Turkmenistan on the part of the UN can be explained by the fact that it is regarded as an important link in improving the economic life and general situation in Afghanistan. On April 18 – 19 there was the first meeting of the joint coordination working group on the construction project of the new Turkmenistan – Afghanistan – Tajikistan railway line, in which representatives of the three countries took part. The new railway line should be an important link of the international system of transit cargo transportation. To date, design work for the first 85-kilometer stretch on Turkmen territory has been completed.

Ashkhabad and Kabul have plans to construct a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan via Afghanistan to Pakistan and India. Turkmenistan's President G. Berdymuhamedov has recently reiterated the importance of this project and called for stepping up work on it. However, most experts believe that these plans are unfeasible due to the very unstable situation in Afghanistan and also rather complex relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan and between Pakistan and India. It would be more realistic to develop Turkmen-Afghan cooperation in supplies of Turkmen electric energy to Afghanistan for building big infrastructural projects in that country with the help of foreign investors.

“Rossiya i noviye gosudarstva Evrazii,” (Institute of World economy and International Relations, Russian Academy of Sciences), Moscow, 2013, pp. 91–96.

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**INTERESTS AND CHANCES OF RUSSIA
IN CENTRAL ASIA**

In the early 1990s Central Asia was for Russia something like an “uncoupled wagon,” but today the Moscow Kremlin is trying to couple this “wagon” to the Russian train as firmly as possible. Such course is conditioned, first of all, by political, and only then, economic, reasons. The economic value of Central Asia for Russia is not too great and it is determined, above all, by the latter’s interest in the transit of energy resources. The main aim of Moscow in the region is to create (or recreate) a zone of its special interests, turn these former Soviet republics into “satellites,” and restrict, if possible, the influence of outside “actors,” primarily the United States and China.

Kazakhstan occupies a special place in this political configuration. Russia’s relations with it are especially close, and President Putin’s efforts aimed at reaching post-Soviet integration are based primarily on Russian-Kazakh relations.

At the end of the past century Zbigniew Brzezinski wrote that Russia was too weak politically to be able to close the region completely for outside forces, and too poor to develop these regions (especially Central Asia) exclusively with its own forces. The situation has not changed practically at present either.

National Interests of Russia in the Central Asian Region

Russian interests in Central Asia are conditioned, first of all, by its desire to preserve its influence in the region, keep under its aegis the remnants of the post-Soviet area, and thus reaffirm its role of a Eurasian power, failing to be a world power. Such claims are one of the main

motives of the foreign policy of the Moscow Kremlin, which is suffering from inferiority complex in connection with the general weakening of its influence. The post-Soviet countries are, perhaps, the only place in the world where Moscow could claim leadership, although not absolutely, but with reservations. But even this area can be regarded the Wild Ass's skin.

Secondly, Russia's interests demand the preservation and maintenance of the regimes which are loyal to it and ready to develop relations with it. But to tackle this task is becoming ever more difficult. The foreign policy of Central Asian countries is distinguished by a many-vector trend, and the Russian direction has long ceased to be the only one. Turkmenistan has proclaimed its foreign-policy neutrality a long time ago, which was actually a challenge to Russia, and after a conflict with the Russian "Gazprom" monopoly in 2009 its relations with Moscow have noticeably cooled. Relations with Uzbekistan have also become more complex, because the latter is slowly drawing closer to the American foreign-policy orbit. Relations between Russia and Tajikistan are invariably marked by certain ambiguity: President Emomali Rakhmon wishes to be friends with Russia, but at the same time fears to enter into too close relations with it. Today Moscow feels better in dealing with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. However, friendship with these countries has a very pragmatic character

On the one hand, the Moscow Kremlin is interested in preserving authoritarian regimes close to it in spirit in the region. However, experience has shown that similarity of systems is not an a priori guarantee of political closeness. The authoritarian rulers of the Central Asian states remain loyal to their many-vector political course, and their foreign partners, above all the United States and the European Union, are ready to cooperate with the local regimes, disregarding their

dictatorial nature. At the same time Russia is developing relations with “protodemocratic” Kyrgyzstan, which renounced authoritarianism.

Moscow’s problem lies in that it is unable (or almost unable) to exert any tangible influence on the domestic political situation in Central Asian countries. Transfer of power in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, or elections in Tajikistan do not depend on it any longer. In this connection suffice it to recall Moscow’s attitude to the coming to power of Gurbanguly Berdymuhamedov in Turkmenistan in 2006. Moscow remained passive and silent during the first (“tulip”) Kyrgyz revolution in 2005, as well as during the second revolution in 2011. The level of Russian influence on the domestic policy of Central Asian countries will remain at a “Zero” level in the future, too, all the more so since the Kremlin elite is gradually losing personal ties with the local elites, which is very important in the post-Soviet countries.

Thus, the main task facing Russia is not to support the authoritarian regimes as such in Central Asian countries due to their similarity to the Russian model, but to evolve common economic and political aims, and, what is more important, to build relations with the new rulers – the ruling class and national business, all the more so since both are inseparable.

Thirdly, Russia is striving to contain the strengthening of foreign forces on the territory of Central Asia, primarily, the United States and China. Realizing that it is unable to prevent the activity of foreign actors, the Moscow Kremlin is striving to find a balance between rivalry and partnership with these countries.

Chinese expansion is formally economic and financial, above all. China helps create ramified transport and energy infrastructure which binds Central Asia to it and at the same time enables it to advance in the western direction to Europe. Characteristically, China is developing

relations with Central Asia on the “Russian field,” inasmuch as Russia also claims a leading role in the creation of regional infrastructures.

Answering the Chinese challenge, Russia is striving to preserve its influence through multilateral integration – the Uniform economic area, Customs Union, the future Eurasian Union (to be formed in 20150, as well as the Collective Security Treaty Organization. At the same time Russia takes part in joint projects with China, and Beijing does not object against this, inasmuch as it plays the leading role in them.

China ostentatiously avoids interference with the domestic policy of Central Asian countries. Beijing naturally proceeds from the premise that whoever comes to power in these countries will not risk to be at loggerheads with the powerful neighbor. The growing presence of China in Central Asia retards the economic activity of Russia, but Moscow accepts it as inevitability, emphasizing that Central Asia is a territory of partnership of the two countries. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) can be regarded a symbol of such partnership; true, people speak more about prospects of this organization rather than of its real achievements.

Having reconciled itself with Chinese “onslaught,” Russia opposes the United States energetically, trying to reduce its influence in the region.

The approach of the United States to Central Asia, formulated in the 1990s and later revised, boils down to supporting the sovereignty of the former Soviet republics, ensuring regional stability, preventing conflicts, as well as supporting democratization in economic development. These strategic tasks can be interpreted as a challenge to Russia at least because sovereignty in this case means greater independence of the Central Asian states from their former “metropolitan” country, and democratization – the creation of political

systems, which will correspond to western models to a greater degree. The United States helps reform local economies, which is something that Russia cannot do properly, inasmuch as it needs modernization itself. Russia alone is unable to ensure stability, but if it does tackle this task, it will do everything to make Central Asian countries renounce part of their sovereignty. Consequently, it would be more advisable for the governments of the Central Asian countries to turn to the “third forces” outside, thus ousting Russia from the region, partially at least. All the more so, since both the United States and China are interested in Russia continuing to bear part of responsibility for the situation in the region.

The withdrawal of the American troops from Afghanistan in 2014 will enhance the role of Central Asia in American strategy, inasmuch as Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan become a “territory of observing stability” in the south of the Asian continent on condition of the preservation and emergence of American bases there. (In 2011 rumors began to be circulated about the possibility of the emergence of a U.S. base in Kazakhstan, but soon they were disproved.) U.S. prestige will largely depend on whether it succeeds to minimize the costs of its withdrawal from Afghanistan and later contribute to solution of the Afghan crisis.

The presence of the U.S. military bases in Central Asia requires “unofficial approval” of China and Russia. Beijing does not seem to worry on this score so far. It does not comment on the problems connected with the preservation of the U.S. airforce base in Manas (Kyrgyzstan), and also the possible opening of a base in Khanabad (Uzbekistan), and another one in Tajikistan. The American military presence in Central Asia is even advantageous, in a way, to Beijing, because it contains the activity of Islamists in the region, which has a

positive influence on the situation in the Xinjiang-Uighur autonomous district in China.

The American bases in Central Asia do not present any direct threat to Russia because they are oriented southward. On the other hand, the U.S. military presence diminishes Russia's significance as the guarantor of regional security. Thus, it is Russia's prestige that is threatened, but not Russia as a state.

Finally, the national interest of Russia lies in containing drug-trafficking from Afghanistan through Central Asia and further on. In 2011 Afghanistan produced 5,800 tons of opium. Thus, Afghanistan and Central Asia have turned into a unified drug-enclave consisting of two parts: the producing part (Afghanistan) and transporting part (Central Asia).

Today, there is no effective "macro-system" to fight drug production and drug trafficking with Russia, the United States, China, Central Asia and Afghanistan participating. Moreover, instead of cooperation there is competition between projects submitted by the United States and Russia, which hampers joint actions in this sphere.

Besides, incomes from narcotic business in Central Asia are laundered by investments in local businesses, thus becoming a legal part of economic life. This makes the fight against drug trafficking senseless and undermines the health of people of Russia, where, according to official figures, there are three million drug addicts. From sixty to seventy-five tons of Afghan heroin comes to Russia via Central Asia annually. An additional complication of the struggle against narcotic business lies in that a reduction of drug production in Afghanistan and drug trafficking through Central Asia will inevitable cause the growth of drug production in the Central Asian region, inasmuch as just like in Afghanistan the cultivation of poppy and hemp

is already an important source of income for certain groups of the rural population there.

There will be more problems complicating the fight against drug trafficking if Kyrgyzstan enters the Customs Union. In the view of the director of the Central Asian center of drug-policy Alexander Zelichenko, “if the border between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan is controlled, the border between Kazakhstan and Russia is not, and the Russian authorities complain that more drugs are smuggled into Russia. The problem will aggravate when there is no border control between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.”

The problem of Central Asian migration is among the national interests of Russia for it can be regarded a challenge to both sides containing mutual advantages and mutual complications.

The exact number of migrants from Central Asia is not known, inasmuch as most of them come to Russia illegally. The number of migrants from Kyrgyzstan, according to various estimates, fluctuates from 400,000 to one million (Kyrgyzstan’s Ministry for the Interior gives the figure of 500,000). Migrants from Uzbekistan number from 600,000 – 700,000 to one or two million. According to the Minister for the Interior of Uzbekistan Bakhodyr Matlyubov, there were 220,000 Uzbek workers in Russia in 2007. The number of workers from Tajikistan is not known. In November 2011, the newspaper “Novaya gazeta” published different figures – one million, 1.5 million and two million.

Migration rather closely connects the former Soviet republics of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to the former metropolitan country. Up to 33 percent of the able-bodied people of Uzbekistan leave their country (primarily for Russia) in search of work, and the money the migrants send back account for from 15 to 59 percent of Uzbekistan’s GDP. According to statistical data of the Central Bank of the Russian Federation, the total volume of financial transfers of Tajik

migrants back home amounted to \$2.2 billion in 2010 (the volume of Tajikistan's GDP was \$5.6 billion. In 2011 Tajik migrants transferred \$2.96 billion, which was more by \$444 million than the record of 2008. The money from Tajik migrants received in their country comprised 45.5 percent of its GDP.

The influence of migration on relations between Russia and its southern neighbors are of a contradictory character. Migration contributes to the strengthening of contacts between the Russian and Central Asian communities, but at the same time it is a factor of mutual irritation and alienation. The attitude to migrants of Russian society is negative, which increases the sentiments of xenophobia and nationalism.

The Islamization of migrants has become a new (and quite negative) problem for Russia. In other words, previously people from Central Asia arriving in Russia in search of work did not show much interest in religion, whereas now, beginning from the early 2010s, the strengthening of Islamic identity in their midst is clearly observed. People from Central Asia keep a fast, regularly visit mosques (there are five mosques in Moscow, and the number of Muslims, including migrants, comprises up to 1.5 million, that is, the number of mosques is insufficient). Finally, radical sentiments penetrate in Russia through migrants from Central Asia, which is especially noticeable in the Volga-Urals region.

The State Duma has repeatedly discussed the question of the introduction of a visa regime for the Central Asian countries. In 2013 President Putin said that such regime would be introduced from 2015 for all countries, apart from member-states of the Customs Union, that is, Kazakhstan and Belarus. This will allegedly help solve the unemployment problem and reduce criminal activity in Russia. However, experts studying migration processes in Russia have long noticed that the toughening of the migration legislation leads to a

growing number of illegal migrants. It can hardly be expected that an acceptable solution to the migration problem will be found, which would satisfy both sides. Thus, relations between Russia and its southern neighbors will apparently worsen.

The national interests of Russia are inseparable from the problem of the transit of fuel-and-energy products through its territory. This problem goes beyond the bounds of the Central Asian problems as such, and is broader than the Caspian problem. For the first half of the first decade of this century the “Gazprom” Company tried to keep the export of Russian and Central Asian gas under control in the hope to preserve these countries in the sphere of Russian influence, but in effect it brought an opposite result. In December 2009, Chairman Hu Jintao of the People’s Republic of China opened the world’s longest gas pipeline between Turkmenistan and Xinjiang, which meant the end of the Russian monopoly on transporting fuel-and-energy resources from Central Asia. The big gas flow was now divided into several smaller ones, bypassing Russia. An inevitable and predicted diversification of routes has taken place, which was largely prompted by the well-known Russian-Ukrainian quarrel of 2008 – 2009 and an explosion in April 2009 (certain people in Ashkhabad hinted that the explosion was specially provoked by “Gazprom” in order to tie Turkmen transit to Russia). At present China surpasses Russia in purchases of fuel-and-energy products in Central Asia.

In the late 1990s it could be supposed that sooner or later the consumers of Russian hydrocarbons and also those who receive Russian gas through Russian transit would take care to open alternative routes: projects of such routes (the main one being Baku – Ceyhan) were examined at the time. However, stagnant inertia, drive to monopolization, inability to orient oneself quickly in new circumstances have weakened Russian positions in this sphere. If

“Gazprom” had acted more rapidly and flexibly and agreed to minor concessions, it could have retained its advantageous positions. Unfortunately, this was not the case, and Russia has found itself thrown out of the “project of the century” – the TAPI gas pipeline (Turkmenistan – Afghanistan – Pakistan – India), with a capacity of 30 billion cubic meters, which would become a strategic trunk pipeline connecting the Central Asian and South Asian regions. Turkmenistan has refused to cooperate with “Gazprom” in financing the project. Simultaneously, the Chinese National Petroleum Company stated that the volume of Turkmen gas to be supplied to China in 2015 would grow from 13.5 to 60 billion cubic meters, and the State Bank of China granted credit to Turkmenistan to a sum of \$4.1 billion. It can be viewed as a challenge to Russia, or as its own blunder.

Speaking of Russian national interests in Central Asia we did not mention stability in the region which, paradoxical as it might seem, is not the indisputable strategic imperative for Russia. Of course, on the one hand, stability in Central Asia formally remains the “sacred cow” of Russian politics, but on the other hand, political fragility plays into the hands of Moscow: a threat of conflicts in the region and tension on its southern borders give Russia a pretext to present itself as a guarantor against any threat.

Almost eight million Russians actually abandoned by their Motherland have found themselves outside the sphere of Russian interests. Russia does not render any tangible assistance and support to the Russian population and has not once used the “Russian question” as an instrument of bringing pressure to bear on its southern neighbors, despite the fact that in an event of any socio-political cataclysms the defenselessness of the Russian (or in a broader sense, the Slav) population may turn into a tragedy, especially if conflicts acquire a religious-political character.

Russia and Regional Organizations

In what way is Russia striving to realize its national interests in Central Asia? Moscow's strategy here is integration which it carries on with the help of the already existing and newly-formed regional organizations, not only with the participation of Central Asian countries, but also other countries in the post-Soviet area. The use of the possibilities of the CIS, the CSTO, the Eurasian Economic Community, and also the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is regarded very important in official Russian documents. The expert on Central Asia Roy Allison writes that Russia is trying to come out from the positions of "protective integration", that is, offers its services in integration, guarantees its advantages and its protection on condition of retaining the role of the integration center. Supremacy, or attempt at supremacy, of Russia in one or another organization does not remove contradictions between participants in it. Russia has always to think of consensus between all of them.

The Eurasian Union, which Russia began to set up in 2011, is to be the leading organization. Its predecessor is the EurAsian Economic Community. Apart from that, a decision was adopted in 2007 to form a Customs Union consisting of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia. The first supranational body – Commission of the Customs Union – began to function in the post-Soviet area. According to the first deputy premier of Kazakhstan Umirzak Shukeyev, the volume of mutual trade between the member-countries of the Customs Union increased by 57 percent during the first nine months of 2011, as compared to the same period of 2010. A uniform customs tariff was introduced within the framework of the Customs Union in January 2010, and on July 1, 2011 customs control on the borders between Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus was lifted.

On January 1, 2012, the Customs Union came into force, however, advantages from it will be seen and felt only after some time. It is believed that Russia loses up to \$1 billion annually within the framework of the Union. Besides, Russia pays about 90 percent of all customs duties there. Independent observers vary a great deal in their assessments of the Customs Union's activity. On the one hand, it is believed that the Union is a step forward to integration, and on the other, it is considered "a fence around the economies of its three member- countries." In the view of the leader of the Kazakh opposition party "Azat" Bulat Abilov, two-thirds of Kazakhstan's population are disappointed with their republic's entry in the Customs Union. Prices of fuel and prime necessities have risen by 15 percent in the two years of its operation. The opposition insists on adopting a decision of Kazakhstan's participation in the Customs Union only after a special referendum on the subject.

Migration presents a special problem. In 2012 free movement of labor force was introduced within the framework of the Customs Union. This is not of a too great importance for Russia and Kazakhstan. But in Belarus the number of people leaving for Russia in search of work will noticeably increase. Permission for free movement of labor force will increase migration flows from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, if these countries join the Customs Union.

Prior to 2011 integration was limited to a formal level. Its implementation was hampered by complex procedures inherent in the bilateral relations of Russia with its partners, particularly in the sphere of energy, and integration itself bore a halfway, unobliging character. Moscow's tactical error was its desire to draw in integration as many countries as possible for a long period of time. But gradually Moscow came to the conclusion that integration should be speeded up, because

the slowing down of the process will inevitably result in the weakening of Russia's positions.

In November 2011 President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko, President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev and President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev signed the Declaration of Eurasian economic integration, which should lead to the creation of the Eurasian Union in 2015, and also the Treaty on Eurasian Economic Commission. From January 1, 2012, this commission became a single supranational body regulating relations within the Customs Union. As President V. Putin said, "the point was to turn integration into an attractive project understandable, stable and long-term to citizens and business, which should not depend on ups and downs of the present economic situation." The Russian President made a reservation that "there was no desire to recreate the U.S.S.R. in any form."

Naturally, these three countries are interested in expanding the market. However, while signing the documents on the formation of the Eurasian Community, politicians and economists in Kazakhstan and Russia raised the question of its expediency. For example, in the view of the director of the Central Asian Institute of free market Mirsulzhan Namazaliyev, the Customs Union was advantageous to Russia, above all. "To enter such union for small countries, like Kyrgyzstan or Tajikistan, or even Ukraine, is not necessary. Kazakhstan, too, will lose if it enters the Union." The director of Alma-Ata Center of current research "Alternative" Andrei Chebotarev believes that the Eurasian Union is the most advantageous for Russia, "because it will allow it to regain its influence in the Central Asian region, inasmuch as the CIS has long lost its integration potentials..."

In 2011 President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan actually rejected the idea of Uzbekistan's entry in the Eurasian Community. He publicly expressed the view that the main aim of creating the Eurasian

Community lay in politics. He said: “Unfortunately, there are some forces in the post-Soviet area which cherish the idea of reviving the empire called the U.S.S.R in a new form...”

Indeed, Moscow prefers to keep silent about the political implications of the Eurasian Community, claiming that the future Union bears purely economic character. But economic interaction is unthinkable without political, and the economic superiority of Russia will inevitably entail political hegemony. Uzbekistan has clearly expressed its aversion to it. Evidently, Kazakhstan does not wish to return to Moscow’s control either. In April 2012 President N. Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan reemphasized that the aim was to create *only economic* Union by 2015.

.Speaking of the use of the Eurasian Community and Customs Union as instruments of political integration, the Russian expert Aleksey Vlasov notes that “the post-Soviet area should be consolidated economically, above all, and only then think of political aspects.” The Kazakh analyst Talgat Mamyraiymov believes that economically Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are of no interest to the Customs Union and Russia, and their inclusion in the Customs Union is exclusively of a geopolitical character.

Vladimir Paramonov, an expert from Uzbekistan, is more outspoken in his view about the future of Kyrgyzstan. He says that the latter would do well if it shares at least part of its political, economic and military sovereignty with Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus within the framework of the integration process, allowing them to do what it cannot, or does not want, do itself.

The West keeps quiet about this project, inasmuch as it believes that Russia has not enough strength to create an international organization capable to change the alignment of forces in Central Asia and at the same time to strengthen radically its positions there. Besides,

the economic opportunities of Russia are not great enough to make it a non-competitive partner of Kazakhstan or other potential members of the Eurasian Community. On the other hand, the latter is taken for, perhaps, the last attempt of Russia to create an obedient body controlled by it and try to restore, at least partly, the former sphere of influence. The former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has defined Russia's striving for integration by creating EAC and CU as "a move to re-Sovietize the region."

It is hardly likely that the new integration project will exert a radical influence on the economic situation in Central Asia. Evidently, it will have no tangible effect on the political situation in the region. Despite Russia's activity in this direction, this new integration project for Eurasia will remain a phantom just like its predecessor – EurAz Economic Community. The Eurasian Community may prove a "swan song" of the integration strategy not only of Putin's regime, but, perhaps, entire Russian policy in the southern, as well as the post-Soviet direction.

Russia motivates the creation of the Eurasian Community and the Customs Union by exclusively economic aims, whereas the formation of another association – the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) has purely political and military-political tasks before it. After the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. the first Treaty on collective security was signed by Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan on May 15, 1992. In 1993 it was joined by Azerbaijan, Belarus and Georgia. In 1999 only six countries – Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan signed the protocol of prolonging their participation in the Treaty for the next five years. Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan refused to sign it. In 2002 the Treaty was renamed "CSTO" which lent it greater respectability and status comparable to other influential international organizations. Membership in CSTO was a trump-card for the states of the region in

their dealings with foreign actors, primarily with the United States. For instance, when the President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov was harshly criticized for cruelly suppressing street riots in Andizhan in 2005, he “got offended” and lowered the level of relations with the U.S.A. by ostentatiously joining CSTO.

The main aim of CSTO, according to its Rules, is “the strengthening of peace and regional security on the basis of collective independence and territorial integrity of its member-states.” Among the main tasks of the organizations are “the fight against international terrorism and extremism, illegal drug trafficking and other psychedelic substances, arms proliferation, organized crime, illegal migration, and other threats...” Is CSTO capable to fulfill these tasks? This is not quite clear, inasmuch as this organization has never taken part in any military conflicts, drug trafficking continues to increase, and the problems of illegal migration become ever more acute.

In 2009 CSTO member-states adopted a decision to set up Collective forces of operational deployment in order to be able to rebuff aggression from the outside, fight terrorism and extremism, drug trafficking, and rectify consequences of extraordinary situations. The numerical strength of these forces is supposed to reach about 4,000 men. They will include highly mobile units with heavy machines and equipment, ten aircraft and fourteen helicopters based in Kant (Kyrgyzstan).

Uzbekistan, whose relations with the West have improved, has not signed the agreement on setting up these forces. It also spoke against Kazakhstan’s proposals to connect the national ministries for emergency situations, interior and special services with these forces.

The CSTO member-states buy Russian arms and military equipment at Russian domestic prices. These arms and equipment are simple to handle and familiar to Central Asian officers from Soviet time.

But their main problem is that they are rapidly becoming obsolete. This is why these countries may ultimately turn to those who could supply them with more up-to-date and effective weapons, and Russia may lose its monopoly in this sphere. Besides, lowered interest in Russian arms and equipment is also due to the fact that after the withdrawal of its troops from Afghanistan the United States may transfer certain amount of its arms and equipment to Central Asian countries.

The CSTO can be considered a guarantee of the preservation of Russian military objects in the post-Soviet area. In Kazakhstan it is the “Baikonur” spaceship-launching site, test-grounds of strategic anti-aircraft and anti-missile forces, the Kant airforce base in Kyrgyzstan, a naval base on Lake Issyk-Kul, and the 4th military base in Tajikistan.

The General Secretary of CSTO Nikolai Bordyuzha maintains that the situation in Central Asia continues to worsen and soon its member-states may find themselves face to face against the Taliban alone. In February 2009, a CSTO summit in Moscow adopted a decision to the effect that its member-states would react to outside threats, including those from Afghanistan and Pakistan. Of all CSTO member-states only Tajikistan has a common border with Afghanistan. Consequently, in an event of a hypothetical invasion of Uzbekistan or Turkmenistan, these countries will have to rebuff the onslaught against them with their own forces.

Russia would like to use the CSTO for maintaining the ruling regimes in the Central Asian countries. Despite differences between Moscow and these regimes arising from time to time, the latter more or less suit the Russian leadership. In turn, the rulers of Central Asian countries believe that Moscow, scared as it was by “color revolutions” of the 2000s and then the “Arab spring,” will be ready to support the governments of the Central Asian countries. In December 2011, at a meeting of the CSTO Council on collective security it was decided that

the forces and means of all CSTO member-states may be used for rectifying or suppressing an emergency situation on the territory of any one member-country, which will be unable to cope with it using its own forces and means. Thus, Russia will have an instrument for *legitimate* interference in the affairs of its CSTO partners.

The international organizations created by Russian efforts in Central Asia are unable to change the main tendency, namely, the lowering of Russian influence in the region. Its economic ties with Russia are decreasing, and now Moscow is placing its hopes on the Eurasian Union which it is trying to create. The Russian expert Andrei Grozin maintains that the Central Asian republics have no concrete and well-substantiated strategy related to regional military-political projects. More often they have in mind not aggression from the outside, but the internal threat from the local radical Islamist opposition.

Interest in Russian-Central Asian cooperation could be revived if the local business elites believe in that participation in such projects promises them real benefit. In that case some uniform Eurasian business elite could emerge in the post-Soviet area capable to become the driving force of cooperation with Russia. But attractiveness of Russian projects to Central Asia is not indisputable. Interaction can take place only at a government level and depends entirely on the position of the political figures at the helm of state at present. The political desires and aspirations of Moscow do not always coincide with the interests of the Russian business elite which has no geopolitical ambitions and measures everything by the amounts of money in western banks. It is not ready for an acute struggle for access to Central Asian resources.

Russian Foreign Policy Is “Minimized”

There is no region in the world today where Russia could act as the successor of the Soviet Union. This can well be seen by the recent

events in the Middle East where Russian influence boiled down only to support of Bashar Asad's regime in Syria. (True, in the spring of 2013, after a visit of the U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry to Moscow, it looked likely that Moscow was ready to change its position to a more flexible one, which was shown by its decision to hold, under the aegis of Russia and the U.S.A., a broad multilateral conference with participation of all conflicting forces in Syria). Naturally, the influence of Russia in Central Asia is much greater than in the Arab world, but the former is definitely diminishing. It is quite evident today that full-fledged cooperation of Russia with all countries of the region is a thing of the past. It looks likely that it will be concentrated on two countries – Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, with Tajikistan possibly joining it. Besides, while increasing its influence in one Central Asian country, Russia may lose it in another. Meanwhile, new forces become more active in Central Asia. For the first time in several centuries India and China become more successful and dynamic in Central Asia, and in Eurasia as a whole, than Russia.

Against this background another serious problem for Russian diplomacy is an acute shortage of professional personnel, people well-versed in the intricacies of the Central Asian region and having the knowledge of local languages (whereas in the United States preparation of such specialists has been going on systematically for many years).

Finally, a change of the regime is quite possible in all Central Asian countries, and political figures entirely oriented to Russia will hardly come to power in any one of them. This will create additional difficulties for Russia, all the more so since it has done very little (if at all) to create and strengthen a pro-Russian lobby among the younger generation of local politicians.

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