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Yuri Matvienko,

D.Sc. (Politics), Russian Academy of National
Economy and Public Administration under
the President of the Russian Federation

**PROCESS OF MODERNIZATION DURING
THE GLOBALIZATION EPOCH: CHOICE
OF STRATEGY FOR CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA**

Changes in the political leadership of the country coincided with Russian society's realization of the need for modernization, because after 20 years of reforms, the country was still at a crossroads.

Modernization, or sustainable and progressive development, is not possible without the implementation of a proper science policy.

We need accurate knowledge of the political structure of society, the role and abilities of the state and political institutions and organizations, active in the broad political spectrum of the country to carry on a successful political strategy. The events of the early 1990s have sharply changed the social structure and system of political governance of the country. This process coincided with global transformations related to the rapid scientific progress, social change in the nature of work and the crisis of the international institutions of management. Therefore, taking into account obscure global trends, many researchers prefer not to talk about the strategy of sustainable development.

Today, Russia is only at the beginning of a search for and elaboration of a national strategy for sustainable development and modernization. In recent years, the state and society have been removed from approaching the path of sustainable development. For this reason, the country has again faced the choice of political strategy.

The choice of strategy directly depends on the problems which should be solved in the course of modernization.

The need for modernization in general, and political modernization in particular, is due to different reasons in different countries. One of the reasons is the awareness of the need for innovations and dynamic development of global markets and the negative impact of economic globalization, causing the growth of wealth in some countries and increasing poverty in others. Another reason is the ongoing transition from paternalism to individualism, especially in developed countries, as the way of life, and in the system of socio-political relations. And the third reason is the destruction and rearrangement of cumbersome vertical bureaucratic structures and the transfer of powers to local authorities and citizens directly.

As for Russia, the question arises as to the grounds on which modernization processes supporting the continued development and strengthening of the country should proceed.

If we analyze various judgments and assessments of sustainable development, a real picture emerges, which reflects the interests of certain groups of society. The first group rejects the idea of sustainable development. Major financial and monopoly groups have been opposed the idea, because they do not want to lose their privileged position and a profit from an unequal exchange. This group may also include politicians and scientists (domestic and foreign) who believe that sustainable development is an attempt of the international financial community to take control over the transformation process of

international economic relations. Thus, they will retain a privileged position for the developed countries through the establishment of structures and mechanisms that reinforce the dominant position of the “golden billion”.

There is another group, which does not mind sustainable development and modernization in principle, but considers the idea as a kind of utopia at the time of the present crisis. They put to the fore ecological problems and exclude social mechanisms, which deepen material and cultural inequality on the planet. This provokes conflicts and leads to the destruction of the biosphere. Such position is correct formally, but in fact, it ignores the uncontrollable desire for profit, and political and social factors that lead to the destruction of the ecosphere.

The political, social, economic and moral nature of the problem of sustainable development requires adequate mechanisms for proper solutions. The understanding of this necessity becomes an important factor for modernization.

It is quite clear that the improvement of military technology increases probability of military conflicts in the modern world.

Illusions have been dispelled and consumer civilization has come to realize that natural development is limited only by the material and information resources. An economic crisis leads to a crisis in the global biosphere.

Modern technology has made the world interdependent in all spheres – political, economic and social. .

One of the common socio-economic values and motivations of work, which dominated in the second millennium, was to maximize profits. In the third millennium it should be replaced by the ethics of the noosphere, i.e. reasonably sufficient consumption as a basis for a stable life on the planet.

Deep disparities between states and peoples have reached the maximum possible dimensions on the planet. To maintain disparities by military means becomes dangerous in terms of political, economic and military efficiency. An agreement on control over resources is safer than their seizure by force of arms.

A universal recipe, probably, does not exist. However, it is possible to develop the overall modernization strategy and create a framework for development programs in society and space. If modernization implies the existence of restructuring ideas of modernized space, mechanisms of their phased implementation and means for their realization, then the modernization strategy involves evaluating the external situation and choosing the most effective alternatives at each stage.

At present, modernization planning is very similar corporate planning. After all, any region or state does not differ from a factory, a bank or a corporation, as the object of control. The problem is that not every plant manager has a strategic thinking. As long as the categories of strategic planning do not become the categories of strategic thinking for decision makers, one can hardly expect any big investment in the modernization of a country, including foreign capital.

Modernization of Russia should create conditions for post-industrialization. Otherwise, it makes no sense, as it does not solve any of the problems that Russia faces, and does not create a basis for further development.

Modernization is a process of socio-economic and political transformation of society, designed to overcome the crisis and leading to sustainable development.

A set of transformational measures is aimed at bridging the gap between the need for modernization and traditional forms of organization and the local community. The ultimate goal of

modernizing Russia is presented as a steady progress in improving the living conditions of the population due to its contribution to the world economy. This should lead to social stabilization and consolidation of society. The previous project of modernization left some non-Western countries a hope to reach the level of advanced countries, preserving national identity.

Today, it gives way to a new global project in which human life is no longer viewed on a national scale, but on a global one. The new project offers non-Western countries to exchange national sovereignty for the right to be included in the system and, therefore, the right to become a modern country.

Globalization is an objective process. As a result, the world is gradually losing its diversity. Some kind of homogenization of the world has been taking place, not only in production and economics, but in everyday life. In different countries, people are increasingly using the same means of transport and utilities, wear the same clothes, consume the same food, watch the same TV shows, and listen to the same music. Technologies, products, services, information and so on created by modern civilization are now part of the life of different nations, making them more similar to each other, but without losing identity.

It concerns especially the future of the Russian state. A basic understanding of the nature and complexity of globalization is that globalization is actually closely intertwined and multilateral processes with two quite different consequences.

On the one hand, globalization means a new level of interaction in the sphere of economics, politics and culture. It began to take shape during the last decades of the past century due to the emergence of global problems that have become a serious threat to the existence of mankind.

Solving these problems required considerable effort on the part of all countries – those that were in the two opposite socio-economic systems, and those, which belonged to the Third World. On the other hand, in the 1990s, globalization acquired its current social contours. The rich Western countries are becoming richer and the poor non-Western ones – poorer. In this situation, the problem of the understanding of their roles, functions, and prospects in the structure of a single global world has become particularly acute.

There are different points of view on the prospects of the Russian state in the era of globalization among Russian scientists. A liberal point of view prevails in political journalism and the electronic media. Liberal-minded authors approve all attempts at practical implementation of the basic principles of the liberal state system in the Russian society of the 1990s. The principles are as follows: natural and inalienable human rights as the basis of the social contract, division of powers, electoral authorities and public control over the institutions of state power, the market economy and minimal state presence in the economy, independent media, in other words, a free man in a free country. Russia's transformation into a liberal-democratic state is inevitable and is the most important result of the post-Soviet reforms of the country.

A great number of sociologists, political scientists, and economists, spend a lot of effort to prove that a liberal state is the destiny and salvation for Russia.

However, the process of liberalization of Russian society has slowed down since the beginning of this century. The political life of the country is now characterized by the strengthening of presidential power, the struggle against separatism in certain regions, the growing emphasis on Russia's national interests, patriotic subjects, etc. Certain Russian liberals now speak even of a crisis of democracy.

The left opposition maintains that separate actions of power are aimed at strengthening the state, but criticizes it for retarding the course of liberal reforms. Although some authors make directly opposite conclusions about the ways along which the Russian state should develop today. But all of them agree on one thing, regardless of their ideological positions: the actions of the current government are inadequate for the present historical stage.

Theoretically, the problem is formulated as follows: should the Russian government maintain the organizational principles that have evolved over the centuries? Is there a need for their conservation in the context of globalization in our time, or a complete change of the existing matrix, and the sooner it happens the better for the country's future.

Eventually, it is the question of changing or maintaining the historical type of Russian statehood.

If there is a problem of not just changing the particular form of the Russian state, but a historical type of Russian statehood, it is necessary to solve a number of interrelated tasks. First, to create a theoretical model of the traditional Russian state. In other words, to show the principles of working in all spheres of public life – power, property, social justice, etc.

Secondly, to reveal the essence of the liberal type of statehood replacing the obsolete state of the traditional type.

Thirdly, to show empirical interconnection of these types of statehood in the present-day life of Russian society.

Finally, would it not be the best solution for the country to return to the traditional type of statehood?

Traditional and liberal types of statehood and, accordingly, the specific forms of organization of the state are fundamentally different types of production and reproduction of social life. Many authors, not

only journalists, but also men of science, positively assess the traditional type of statehood. Authors of other ideological orientations come forth with many arguments against it. For instance, how a viable society can exist within the traditional type of Russian statehood, what internal and external factors determine the level of social viability, what statehood should be in terms of typology in today's environment so that society is viable and dynamic.

Considering the history of the existence of Russian statehood as a traditional state, it has great stability and viability. However, it has limited abilities and especially weak impulses for internal dynamic development. Therefore, it is impossible to speak of the priority of the traditional state, especially in comparison with the historically more advanced state of a liberal type. The question arises whether there is a possibility of transforming the traditional state into a viable liberal one in historical perspective.

Nowadays, with the rapid growth of globalization, all countries are ranked according to the level of their technologies. The U.S.A. has reached the stage of the information society, being at the top of the pyramid. The leading countries of Western Europe lag behind the United States. A number of countries in Europe and Southeast Asia are at the second level. The countries whose economies are based on exports of natural resources and energy, occupy the third level of the pyramid.

As for the Russian Federation, it is in a state of transition. How to improve the viability due to the radically changing conditions?

In the early 1990s it seemed that the complete destruction of the Soviet system would facilitate the transition to a new stage of the liberal order, but the growing chaos threatened with a complete breakdown of the Russian Federation by the end of the 90s. Theoretically, the result was predictable.

But, there is no objective need to abandon the idea of an independent national development for our sovereign state with a thousand years of history, even in the era of globalization. China is a good example of successfully implementing an ambitious social reform without renouncing their traditions.

Recently, a number of Russian researchers have stood for a synthesis of the traditional and the liberal.

But when and where traditional and liberal elements existed quite separately in society's history? The experience of modern China can help in this respect. Chinese socialism has become a historical form of traditional Chinese statehood, a civilized socialism, gaining great vitality after the reforms of Deng Xiaoping. Recently, effective measures have been taken in Russia to strengthen the vertical of power in order to build a bureaucratic apparatus controlled from top to bottom. Thus, the processes of liberal reforms are controlled, and consequences will become predictable. A radical transition occurs from an essentially liberal model to the ideology and practice of liberal conservatism.

However, a replacement model of reforming society has not resulted in a noticeable improvement of the economy, but promoted the elimination of many social guarantees and social protection of the population. This has led to the growth of both left and right protest movements and, as a result, the paradoxical alliance of right and left parties, united in the fight against the strengthening of the authoritarian power of the state and abuses of citizens' rights.

Social justice has always been the basis of traditional society. There is no place for social justice in the meaning of classical liberal doctrine. Many liberal conservatives adhere to this view today. There is only one rule for all. Freedom should be installed only within the formal framework.

What is to be done? This is the question to the political actor who can go further than the choice between radical liberals and liberal conservatives. The feedback between the first person of the state and nation, based on the principle of social justice, has always been supported by traditional Russian society.

The question of social efficiency ranks first for the Russian state, and economic efficiency obeys the problem of social efficiency. Thus, the development of a radical differentiation of Western society from non-Western ones is that western development begins with formal equality and moves toward a welfare state. As for Russia, it should be the opposite: first there is social protection and social rights of the population, which are necessary for the reproduction of human society and for the security of the state, and only then come incorporation, and adaptation of the liberal principles of economic freedom and formal equality to the realities of the country. This is not an ideal model, but the Western way has not been the only one. Social justice is the legislative recognition of the hierarchical nature of benefits and privileges to all social strata and groups.

The Russian authorities should build a social state, taking as a basis the principle of social protection of citizens and, more broadly, the principle of social justice. Only then will there be a viable society in Russia, ready to respond adequately to the challenges of the globalized world.

*“Rossiya XX vek. Politika, ekonomika, kultura,”
Moscow, 2012, pp. 345–353.*

Z. Khabibullina,

Political analyst, Ufa, Bashkortostan

**THE ROAD TO MECCA: REVIVAL AND
DEVELOPMENT OF MUSLIM PILGRIMAGE
IN POST-SOVIET RUSSIA**

At the end of the 20th century, after many years of reprisals and persecution of religion, Islam began to be revived and the culture and practice of Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca is revived, too. In present-day Russia the state authorities have taken the course to creating favorable internal and external conditions for the organization of hajj. The potential of administrative, material-technical, non-governmental, public and religious associations in all regions of Russia is extensively used for this purpose.

In Soviet years the main reason for restrictions of pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina was the absence of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Saudi Arabia, and due to this entry visas for Soviet citizens going on hajj had to be obtained through third countries. The number and composition of pilgrims were strictly regimented. Many people who had made hajj at the end of the 1920s were later arrested and tried. After the 1941–1945 war against Nazi Germany the attitude to hajj changed radically. Twenty-five persons from all four muftiates controlling the Muslim community of Soviet Russia: the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, Spiritual Board of Muslims of the Trans-Caucasus, Spiritual Board of Muslims of the North Caucasus, and Spiritual Board of Muslims of the European part of the U.S.S.R. and Siberia have been given permission to make hajj. The state security bodies checked and rechecked their loyalty. Hajj was allowed mainly to responsible government officials, men of culture and the arts, Communist party functionaries in Central Asian and Caucasian republics, and “reliable” clerics.

The opportunity for Russian Muslims to go on hajj freely appeared at the end of the 1980s – beginning of the 1990s. The first big group of pilgrims from the U.S.S.R. (about 1,500 people) arrived in Mecca for the first time in 1990. It was headed by the supreme mufti Talgat Tajuddin. Now Muslims living in 55 regions of Russia have the opportunity to go on hajj.

The number of those wishing to make hajj in Russia is growing by thirty percent on average with every passing year. The greatest number of pilgrims goes from Daghestan (80 percent), Chechnya is in second place, Ingushetia – third, the rest go from Moscow and the Volga and Ural area. Great popularity of hajj in the North Caucasus can be explained by specific features of Islam in the area, rapid rates of its revival, shorter distance from Saudi Arabia, and the activity of well-to-do patrons, the most well-known of them being Ramzan Kadyrov of Chechnya and Suleiman Kerimov of Daghestan. The North Caucasus has now surpassed the prerevolutionary development level of Islam (the number and composition of parishes, the scope of religious education, and popularity of hajj).

In view of the growing number of pilgrims to Mecca and Medina the problem of organizing hajj on a regional and countrywide scale has become quite timely nowadays. The number of Russian pilgrims to Mecca has increased many times over in the past two decades, and surpasses the official quota set by Saudi Arabia for all countries of the world in 1987 – one pilgrim from each thousand of Muslims living in a given country. In setting the quota for Russia, the maximal number of Muslims in the country was established at 20 million. This figure is fixed in the Russian-Saudi Protocol for receiving Russian pilgrims signed in Mecca in April 2009.

A coordination body of all spiritual boards of Muslims was set up in 2002; it was called the Council on Hajj at the Government of the

Russian Federation. It has to form hajj delegations and hold negotiations with the Ministry for Hajj affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on many questions connected with the arrival and stay of Russian Muslims in that country: transportation, board and lodging, food, financial problems, and also the problems of tourism, exchange of information, etc. At present this Council acts as a non-registered public association including representatives of the big spiritual boards of Russian Muslims. It holds regular meetings to discuss general problems bearing on hajj and support on the part of government bodies.

The most urgent problem for the Council on hajj is the distribution of the internal Russian quota for going on hajj. The Russian Muslims wishing to go on hajj have to register much earlier and wait for their turn for several years. It should be noted that quotas in Russia are issued not to regions, but to spiritual boards of Muslims. The boards get in touch with special tourist firms.

It should be said that the cost of hajj is quite high – from 80,000 to 300,000 rubles, depending on the region of Russia. Believers apply to the Spiritual Board of Muslims or a tourist firm, which has business connections with the appropriate Saudi bodies. The latter take care of all organizational matters: board and lodging, medical insurance, consultations for rites and rituals, etc.

On the whole, pilgrimage to Mecca is becoming a tradition with Russian Muslims, which can be explained by the development of the Muslim umma in the country and a rise in the people's living standards. Russian Muslims are now increasingly integrating in the world's Muslim community. Another feature is a turn of part of Muslim believers to orthodox trends, especially young people. The hajjis form an elite part of the umma and exert a certain influence on the process of politicization and radicalization of Islam. A hajji is treated by his co-

believers as a man closer to God and he enjoys greater respect among them.

Hajj is one of the main means of establishing closer contacts of this country's Muslim umma with Muslim communities of Asian and African countries. Hajj is regarded in present-day Russia as a pillar of Islam and a very important element of international religious ties.

“Rossiya i Arabsky mir: istoriya i sovremennost,” Ufa, 2012, pp. 70–72.

G. Guzelbayeva,

Sociologist, Kazan

ISLAMIC IDENTITY OF YOUNG TATARS IN THE REPUBLIC OF TATARSTAN

The revival of religious sentiments and the greater role of religion at personal and social levels have been observed in the world for the past several decades. Sociologists and politicians talk of “religious renaissance,” “deprivatization” of religion, and even of “desecularization.”

According to the data of a sociological survey carried out by the sociology chair of Kazan Federal University in February – March 2012, most inhabitants of the Republic of Tatarstan (89.5 percent) regard themselves Muslims or Orthodox Christians. Slightly over half of them believe in Islam.

Beginning from the early 1990s old mosques have been restored and new ones built. The number of people visiting them has steadily been growing, more Muslim publications have come off the press, new Muslim education establishments have been opened, and more religious organizations and Islamic initiative groups have been set up. More

Tatars observe religious rites and rituals now. This is the case of Tatar young people.

Sociological investigations of recent years give ground to assert that the level of religiousness among young educated people is rising more rapidly than in other socio-cultural strata. As to the Republic of Tatarstan, its capital Kazan has become the most active center of growing religiousness due to a great number of universities and other educational institutions.

Religious Consciousness (beliefs)

According to our sociological surveys in 2008 and 2011, it can be stated that the level of religious identity among young Tatars is sufficiently high. Almost 90 percent of Tatar young people consider themselves believers. Ninety-two percent of them assert that they believe in Islam, 3.8 percent – in another religion, and four percent say that they don't belong to any faith.

Practically, all Tatars are Muslims. Identification of the Tatars with Islam has become part of their ethnic identification. However, despite a high level of religious consciousness, far from all Tatars fulfill obligatory religious orders. Of all young people polled, 43 percent said that they adhere to religious values and correlate their deeds and thoughts to religious rules; 57 percent of young people call the values they cherish universal.

Religious Behavior (practice)

Talking of religious behavior, it should be noted that manifestation of faith among a considerable part of people usually boils down to rites and rituals connected with birth, marriage and death.

As is known, even non-religious people turn to religion at such crucial moments of life. Only four percent of young Tatars do not attach any significance to the ceremonies connected with these events.

A considerable number of Tatar young people like headscarves worn by girls and women. The degree of outward religiousness, especially in its ritual sphere, has become greater during the past two decades. More people now attend prayers at mosques, observe fasts and follow other rules and regulations prescribed by Islam.

Today, 19 percent of young Tatars perform namaz, but only five percent do it regularly – five times each day.

In general, Tatar young people attach certain importance to the presence of religion in their family life. Twenty-six percent of those polled said “No” to the question of whether they could marry a person of another faith. Forty-five percent of young people said they prefer to choose a spouse of the same nationality. This confirms the fact that the self-consciousness of Tatar young people is dominated by ethnic cultural values.

Young Tatars are tolerant to representatives of other religions. Sixty percent say they are quite friendly to them, and 35 percent are neutral.

A group of deeply religious Muslims can be singled out among Tatar young people, who account for six percent of all young Tatars and reveal a high degree of religious self-consciousness (Islamic identity). This is confirmed by their behavior oriented to Islamic canons: they believe in Islam, consider themselves religious, faith is their guide with which they try to correlate all their thoughts and deeds; they observe all rules and regulations of Islam – Muslim rituals for marriage and birth of a child, they pray and do namaz regularly, attend mosque, observe restrictions in food and clothes according to the Sharia law, and choose partner in life from among Muslims.

This group is relatively small, but it is growing, if rather slowly. Quite a few members of this group are included in public life, and their activity is often connected with Islam.

Most young Muslims hold the view that modern man has the right to choose religion and faith. Thus, the trend of new religiousness is observed among Tatar young people among whom adoption of faith and Islam is accompanied with personal inner striving for religion and combining observance of rites and rituals with profound religious thinking.

Finally, we'd like to put forward certain considerations connected with the growing religiousness of Muslims in Tatarstan.

Greater religiousness of Tatars as compared to Russians had always been noted both in prerevolutionary time and in the Soviet epoch. Today young Tatars more often than Russians regard their grandparents and parents religious people and speak of their "religious upbringing." Today Islam plays the role of a barrier against assimilation in another ethnic and another confessional community, which is important for the Tatars who are a minority in a country which insistently emphasizes its Orthodox Christian character. The Tatars answer this by the growing influence of Islam and greater Muslim identity. In Tatarstan propaganda of Islam is more active and more successful (as compared with Orthodox Christianity in Russia). This is also due to the work of missionaries from Arab countries and young people who have studied in Islamic countries.

Tatars, perhaps, more than representatives of other ethnic groups, see in religion a means of revival of ethnic culture. This is connected with the striving to preserve national identity which induced the Tatars to display a more positive attitude to Islam than the Russians to Orthodox Christianity.

The project “Islamic Identity of Tatar Young People in the Republic of Tatarstan” continued in 2012 and 2013.

*“Ucheniye zapiski Kazanskogo universiteta
Gumanitarniye Nauki,”
Kazan, 2012, vol. 154, book 6, pp. 76–86.*

Irina Beshta,

Senior instructor, Simferopol Scientific Center
(City of Simferopol)

**CONFESSIONAL EVALUATION OF IDENTITY
OF THE PEOPLE OF THE AUTONOMOUS
REPUBLIC OF CRIMEA**

The Crimea is a unique region of Ukraine in many aspects: geographical, historical, national, ethnic and religious. The Crimea is the crossing point of the histories of two world empires – the Ottoman and the Russian. It is the place of coexistence of the two major world religions – Christianity and Islam, and different ethnic groups connected by common historical experience, both positive and negative.

The disintegration of the U.S.S.R., the “socialist camp,” and the bipolar world has evoked not only mass migrations and repatriation of ethnic groups, but also a search for new identities by countries of the Black Sea region, during which nationalistic tendencies have grown rapidly, historical differences, interethnic and inter-religious conflicts have exacerbated, and competing national interests have emerged for all to see.

All these phenomena, processes and trends have touched, to a certain extent, the Crimea, and are now represented in its social medium.

An analysis of the latest investigations and publications shows that the problems of confessional measurement of identity of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea are not new. A great many essays, monographs, treatises, and articles in the mass media are devoted to confessional identity in its various manifestations: philosophical, social, political, etc. Individual works deal with the specific features of measuring this identity in multinational and poly-confessional regions, the Crimea being one of the most striking representative.

Despite a considerable knowledge of the problem under discussion, many aspects remain dubitable to this day, and this concerns not only political aspects, but also the philosophical-theoretical substantiation.

We begin with the very concept of “identity,” which is so widely used in philosophy, psychology, ethnology, and cultural and social anthropology today with different meanings and in different aspects. Most generally, it means the realization by one object (subject) of belonging to another object (subject) as part and whole, as particular and universal. The main characteristic feature and foundation of this concept is identity to itself, and among its differentiating characteristics there can be the language, ethnic stereotypes of behavior, religious affiliation, etc.

One of the first forms of man’s self-consciousness is religious identity, which is at the sources of the formation of other types of identity. Religious identity can be perceived as a form of collective and individual self-consciousness based on realization of one’s own affiliation with definite religion and forming perceptions about oneself and the world with the help of corresponding religious dogmas; however, even this idea of religious identity has lately been used loosely. One of the reasons for this is identification in academic literature and mass consciousness of the concepts of “religion” and

“confession,” which are often used as synonyms. However, this is not quite correct. People belonging to different confessions should adhere to different dogmas and perform different rites and rituals, that is, follow different social and religious practices.

Numerous sociological investigations reveal contradictions which cannot be explained, if the concepts of “religious identity” and “confessional identity” are considered synonyms. This is why it is necessary to perceive theoretically the processes going on in the spiritual sphere and touching on the problems of the formation of confessional identity, especially in such multicultural regions as the Autonomous Republic of Crimea.

At present there are 1,362 religious organizations of 52 confessions and religious trends registered in the Crimea (in 1988 there were 37), over 1,330 religious communities and nine religious educational institutions functioning there. Between 1991 and 2012, 166 hieratic buildings were constructed, including 80 mosques; 690 such buildings are used or owned by religious organizations.

A new confessional situation came into being in the Crimea after the proclamation of freedom of conscience in the early 1990s, recognition of the social value of religion, and the change of the socio-economic and political system. Religion has become an important factor of public and state life, the number of confessions, denominations and religious trends has grown considerably, as well as the number of their adherents. Apart from traditional confessions of the Crimea, which include Orthodox Christianity, Islam of the Sunna trend, Judaism, and also Catholicism and Armenian Apostolic Christianity, there are other religious currents.

The unique character of the religious situation in the Crimea, in contrast to the general situation in Ukraine, lies in that there is a considerable number of Muslims and a small number of adherents to

Creek Catholicism and Ukrainian Orthodox Christians and Uniate Apostolic Christians. More than three-quarters of the Crimean population (78.9 percent) consider themselves Russian Orthodox Christians, the next group is Muslim (8.8 percent), the rest is inconsiderable in number. However, the key definition is the words “consider themselves.” The point is religious identity in accordance with which a person feels his or her unity with a definite nation or ethnos developing within the ethical and everyday-life conditions of religion inherent in them. Far from all are ready to identify themselves with a definite confessional trend within the framework of the above-mentioned religions, observing definite rules and dogmas. Thus, religious rites and rituals in accordance with their confessional affiliation are performed daily by five percent of Crimean citizens only, and at different periods – 63 percent of the Crimean population from among those polled.

For the sake of justice it should be said that this is typical not only of the Crimean region. A change of self-identification features may be connected with the tendencies of historical development (in the Middle Ages significance of confessional identity prevailed, and beginning from the epoch of Renaissance linguistic and ethnic identity came to the fore). In the epoch of the dissemination of world religions emphasis on confessional identity could show the preponderance of universalistic tendencies. But in certain situations confessional affiliation can become the most important element of self-identification and a characteristic of the concept of “ethnos.” In particular, the Russians in the Crimea have now found themselves in a situation when their “Russianness” is not clear as far as its essence and value are concerned. And Orthodox Christianity comes to their rescue, not as a religion, but rather as a symbol of Russian originality and a spiritual value. Similar picture can be observed among the Crimean Tatars, whose eviction from

and return to the Crimea have considerably strengthened the positions of Muslims, their way of life and confessional foundations.

The specific features of the historical development of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea have influenced the time and age framework of the self-identification of the peninsula population. The share of believers grows along with their age, and the share of adherents of the Ukrainian Orthodox Christian Church also becomes bigger, whereas the share of faithful Muslims is lower in the older age group than in the younger and middle age groups. High moral standards and spiritual values are considered an inalienable component of traditional religious world outlook, and in this sense the traditional Russian confessions can become the most crucial factor capable to overcome the negative aspects of society's development at the present stage, such as despiritualization, moral crisis, disintegration of the family, and demographic problems.

In the course of religious revival the reproduction of confessional identity is taking place, that is, religious conversion through socialization, in which members of the family play the main role. The religious way of life comes out as an individual free choice.

A no less important aspect in the formation and development of confessional identity of the Crimean peoples is state policy in the sphere of religion at the national and regional level. It can be stated that inter-confessional relations in the republic have an openly political tint and are aggravated by inadequate actions of various official bodies.

On the whole, one can single out two groups of factors contributing to the aggravation of intra- and inter-confessional differences – intra-religious and social. The first group includes: doctrinal, dogmatic differences; the idea of confessional exclusiveness; fundamentalism and religious intolerance, which aggravates relations within and between different confessions; emergence of new religious

movements, as well as the asocial or extremist character of certain religious ways and habits; proselytism, bitter rivalry on the religious “market,” that is, struggle for parishioners, buildings and property, support on the part of the authorities, public leaders, the mass media, etc.

The second group includes social, external factors, and among them the following social phenomena and processes: religion becoming ethnic, that is, supporting nationalism and separatist movements, due to which ethnic conflicts acquire religious tint; politicization of religion, which is manifested in that different political forces playing a political card bring different confessions into conflict; weakness of the legislative base which regulates the interaction of the state and religious organizations; violation of the principle of freedom of conscience and faith on the part of the state or individual citizens.

In real practice these factors are often closely intertwined. However, cases of inter-confessional tension, which happen in the Crimea from time to time, are initiated not by rank-and-file believers, but by certain clerics and leaders of individual religious organizations, or even by the irresponsible and incompetent mass media. This is shown by the attitude of believers in the Crimea to alien religions: Christians have a positive attitude to Islam, and Muslims are neutral to Orthodox Christianity.

Summing up, it is possible to single out the following basic aspects of confessional measurement of identity of the peoples inhabiting the Autonomous Republic of Crimea:

Historical aspect, connected with a long period of denying religion as such and returning to its various confessions in recent years;

National aspect, characterized by the multicultural character of the region and its peoples;

Ethnic aspect, determining the formation and development of religiousness and confessional identity; the confessional self-

consciousness of present-day young people is not the determining factor in the development of ethnic self-consciousness and linguistic cultural orientation, which, by the way, has determined the distribution of Russian-language Islam;

Socio-political aspect, expressed in the use of inter-confessional relations in power struggle.

At present believers in the Crimea are distributed rather evenly in all groups of the population by age, sex, nationality, education, employment, etc. In modern society religiousness has lost the character of marginality of definite social groups, but become a spiritual quality equally inherent in all groups of the population, including the youngest, best educated, highly professional, and most active socially. At the same time the indices of the degree of religiousness and participation in religious life in the Crimea are much lower than the level of religiousness. This makes it possible to conclude that confessional identity of a greater part of believers bears a formal, declarative character and is not bolstered up by deep-going religious feelings, knowledge of dogmatic foundations and cult prescriptions of one's own religion corresponding to the level of religious behavior.

On the whole, confessional identity in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea has ceased to be the exclusive sphere of religious organizations. The active institutionalization of religions, on the one hand, has evoked certain expectations in society that traditional confessions are able to contribute to overcoming the spiritual and world-outlook crisis, and on the other hand, it posed a whole number of difficult problems to society, among them religious fanaticism, intolerance, aggressiveness, extremism, isolationism, escapism, etc. In the present conditions the formation of the confessional identity of young people is viewed as the most important theoretical and practical

task of society, whose solution could prevent a split between Orthodox Christian and Muslim believers.

This split is revealed, first of all, in an increase of the number of adherents of aggressive Muslim trends, whose representatives arrived from Arab countries (Wahhabis, for instance), which presents a threat not only to the Crimean Tatars, but to the whole of society.

Secondly, Muslims have no confessional unity, which can be seen in the presence of their three centers at the same time: Kiev, Donetsk and Simferopol.

Lastly, the Crimea is the venue of a confrontation between regional identity of the Orthodox Christian Slav population and ethno-confessional identity claiming the exclusive stratus of the “indigenous” Crimean-Tatar people.

Conclusions:

1. Any confession is a unity between religious consciousness, cult and religious organizations. However, a specific feature of the confessional self-identification of Crimean people is its non-conformity to identification by belief – non-belief. In the consciousness of many inhabitants of the peninsula confessional identity is a sort of original substitute for ethno-cultural identification, which is conditioned by the originality of the cultural-historical development of the region.

2. The confessional identity of the Crimean peoples is predominated by the element of tradition, and quite often it comes out as situational religiousness which is not a manifestation of deep and sincere faith, bears a spontaneous character and is revealed from time to time in definite, mostly unfavorable circumstances, and boils down to observance of certain traditional religious rites and rituals and manifestation of ethno-confessional stereotypes of behavior.

3. The globalization process of the modern world requires new approaches to the formation of personality and its self-identification in contemporary society. This is why one of the key directions of the upbringing of a modern-type personality should be the formation of tolerance, and its principle should creatively be applied to all social relations, including in the educational process. Special significance is attached to the formation of religious tolerance, which is a *sine qua non* of intercultural and inter-confessional dialogue without which such region as the Autonomous Republic of Crimea will not be able to exist.

“Obshchestvenniye nauki v sovremennom mire: voprosy sotsiologii, politologii, filosofii, istorii,” Novosibirsk, 2013, pp. 70–78.

M. Yahyaev,

D. Sc. (Philosophy), Daghestan State University

**REASONS FOR RADICALIZATION
OF ISLAM IN THE MODERN WORLD**

Islamic radicalism is an ideology and political activity based on it, which is characterized by the consolidation of the standards of “pure Islam” as related to the world of “untrue faith” within Islam itself, and also to the world of the “infidels” outside Islam. It is important that such radical Islam is a distorted form of Islam. It should not be identified with Islam as a world religion, or its any concrete trend or current.

Nevertheless, today radical Islam is a real important factor of the socio-political life of the world, and a serious opposition ideological and political force. The radically-minded sections of devout Muslims are an effective social force which considers it appropriate to use terror and illegitimate violence as a means to achieve the political aims it sets

itself. This force has a powerful potential aimed at spreading its extreme ideological tenets and extensively using political violence.

Radical Islam is spearheaded against the secularized societies of the western type. It despises and ignores the generally accepted norms of international law and does not recognize such standards as territorial integrity, state sovereignty, state borders, human rights and freedoms, and non-use of force to achieve political or social aims. The extremist wing of radical Islam presents the greatest threat to society and individuals because its activity today is the key factor undermining the socio-political situation as a whole and confessional situation in each region.

The main aim of Islamic radicalism is the change of the place and role of Islamic religion in the life of modern society. Its adherents and followers reject the values dominating in society and the political practice of a secular state structure and management as not conforming to the standards of Muslim religion. The radically-minded believers represent the most active, though a smaller, part of Muslim umma. Young people predominate in this social group as the most super active part of it. It is young people that imbibe radical ideas and translate them into life much easier and more rapidly than other sections of society.

Inasmuch as contemporary Muslim radicalism regards the West as the main enemy of Islamic civilization, it is ready to fight everything western. As asserted by many Russian analysts, Islamic radicalism is a “reaction to the policy of forcing the social order, way of life, culture and ethical standards of bourgeois Europe on other nations.”

The anti-western orientation of Islamic radicalism revealed itself in the political doctrine of the “Moslem Brothers” association, which was set up in Egypt in the 1920s by Hasan Al-Banna (1906–1949). This schoolteacher, who later became a prominent theologian, is regarded one of the first theorists of politicized Islam. The religious political

force he organized, which had opposed the traditional Egyptian monarchy, was oriented to the sufficiently educated but poor sections of the urban population, petty bourgeoisie, intellectuals, junior army and navy officers, individual clerics, students and senior-form school pupils.

Hasan Al-Banna saw the main task of his organization in protecting Islamic religion from atheism and secularism, and spiritual and moral degradation of Muslims which was taking place under the pernicious influence of the West and its values. He proceeded from the fact that Islam was the “faith and cult, the Motherland and nation, religion and the state, and the spirit and body of every Muslim.” He considered the political unification of the world of Islam in a single whole – “al-watan al-Islam” to be the crucial task and the major sphere of activity for the organization he set up. He believed that for the purpose it was necessary to carry out complete Islamization of social, state and personal life, Islamization based on returning to the initial precepts of Islamic religion. At the same time he allowed a possibility to interpret certain premises of the Koran and Sunna in the spirit of times.

In his view, all this should have strengthened the role of Islamic religion and Muslim umma in the modern world. The slogan of the “Moslem Brothers” was “God is our aim. The Prophet is our guide, death in the name of God is our supreme desire.” In the 1940s – 1950s the Egyptian “Muslim Brothers” association had a militant organization and committed terrorist acts against the country’s authorities.

The extremist wing of the Egyptian “Muslim Brothers” was represented by Al-Banna’s follower, one of the most outstanding ideologists of Islamic radicalism Seyid Kutb (1906–1965), who made a substantial contribution to the ideological concept “at-taqfir wa-l’-hijra.” He divided mankind into Muslims strictly adhering to the Sharia

law and “infidels” or “quffar,” but not into Muslims and non-Muslims, as traditionally accepted.

In his book “Social Justice in Islam” Kutb asserted that all social problems could be solved only on the basis of the Koran.

Islamic radicalism today is far from the basic development course of Islamic civilization. It is against any economic and socio-political modernization of Islamic society. It actively opposes any combinations of traditional Islamic values with socio-political and other doctrines in the West.

Radicalization of modern Islam began after the end of World War I when the creation of the colonial and semi-colonial systems in the Muslim world had ended. Islamic terrorism based on a radical ideological doctrine connected with Islamic religion was the answer to the forcible repartition of the territories inhabited by Muslims between the Entente countries.

At that time, the activity of the religious-political organizations opposing the colonial authorities was stepped up. They propagated radical ideology and actions and systematically resorted to violence and terror as a means to achieve their political aims. The “Muslim Brothers” organization was distinguished by the fanatical idea of restoring caliphate as a theocratic socio-political system based on the premises of the Koran and the Sharia law.

The Palestine problem is today a major factor of the politicization and radicalization of Islam. Radical religious organizations have begun to appear one by one among Muslims in the Middle East after the formation of the state of Israel, which set as their aim the destruction of that state and the creation of the Arab state of Palestine. These organizations use terrorist methods and means and are supported by many Muslim and Arab countries which regard the

existence of Israel as “penetration of Zionism in Palestine and a challenge to the Arab nation and Islam.”

The American expansion in the Middle East has exerted a great influence on radicalization of Islam. From the 1920s the United States has been expanding its presence in the region, which has turned into one of the major world center of oil extraction. U.S. strategic partnership with Israel increases radical anti-American sentiments and stirs fanatical hatred for everything western among Muslims. World War II and its consequences for the Arab world have led to the emergence of new reasons for radicalization of Islamic political organizations and the stepping up of their terrorist activity. Among them the socio-economic problems and their consequences (social stratification of Muslim umma, growing unemployment accompanied with a high birthrate, rampage of crime and corruption, increasing migration processes, etc.). All this created favorable ground for the development of the terrorist activity of extremist organizations.

The proclamation of the Islamic Republic in Iran in February 1979 provoked the emergence of radical religious-political movements in a number of Arab countries bent on the creation of a “world caliphate” and the “export” of the ideals of Islamic revolution. The senseless war unleashed by the Soviet Union in Afghanistan (1979–1989) has contributed to the strengthening of politicized Islam, provoked strong anti-Soviet sentiments among Muslims, and turned radical Islamist organizations into a powerful military-political force.

Among the most significant reasons for the intensification of Islamic radicalism, and the expansion of the sphere of its terrorist activity are the processes caused by the collapse of the world socialist system and the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. Above all, it is the bankruptcy of the ideas of socialism, which certain countries of the Middle East were oriented to. Besides, there has been the rapid

Islamization of countries of the socialist camp, republics of the former Soviet Union, and traditionally Muslim regions of the Russian Federation. All this has led to the rapid filling of the ideological vacuum formed after the collapse of communism with Islam of radical trends.

Thus, Islam of fundamentalist trends lying at the base of radicalism and contributing to growing terrorist activity has brought about the wide distribution and popularity of various destructive ideologies in the post-Soviet area. Radical Islamic theories and currents, particularly Salafism-Wahhabism, are based, among other things, on the idea of jihad, that is, the sacred war for faith.

The radical trends of politicized Islam today are supported by the increased military-political expansion of the United States in the regions possessing enormous oil reserves inhabited by Muslims and proclaimed the “zone of vital interests of America.” The military operation in Afghanistan, the removal of Saddam Hussein and his country’s occupation, the “Arab spring” of 2011, and the continuing “democratic processes in Arab states,” as well as other actions of the United States and its allies result in stepped-up terrorist activity of radical Islamic organizations all over the world.

Radicalization of politicized Islam in the modern world can largely be explained by the negative attitude of Muslim umma to many political, cultural and moral values of western civilization. The “creeping” westernization is causing a powerful protest of millions of Muslims, which is spearheaded not only against the West, but also against their own ruling regimes loyal to it. The onslaught of the West in the economic and political spheres, in science and technology, introduction of alien mores and morals and non-traditional social connections shatter and undermine the traditional values and customs and habits of Muslim umma. They lead to the painful break-up of the

traditional structures of Muslim society which is trying to adapt itself to the requirements of the present-day economic life and globalization processes with great difficulties.

The growing number of people drawn in radical religious movements is also due to the inner processes going on in many Muslim countries. Modernization of the economy and globalization American-style have resulted in the rapid impoverishment of the urban population and marginalization of the peasantry in Eastern countries. In recent decades most traditionally agrarian Arab countries have ceased to be such as a result of urbanization. Today, over 40 percent of the urban population is unemployed. In Egypt alone, according to the data of the Arab foundation of socio-economic development, there are about two million people without a job, mostly young with a secondary or higher education.

The situation in Southeast Asian countries (Indonesia, Malaysia), where Islam is more flexible in the conditions of a “globalized” and “capitalized” multi-confessional society, is much more favorable. Whereas in the countries of the Middle East, North Africa, South and Central Asia, in a vast area from Bangladesh and Pakistan to Morocco and West Africa, the situation is absolutely different.

The impoverished and desponded people tend to use the extreme means of expressing their social protest and more often turn to archaic egalitarianism and certain principles of the early Muslim community. Politically immature and inexperienced people hear speeches of their leaders who are inspired by destructive radicalism and tell them that the roots of all their misfortunes and poverty lie in neglect and oblivion of the Koran, the Sharia law, the behests of the Prophet, and the true precepts of Islam. A no small role in provoking such developments is played by the ideas of nationalism.

Confessional groups interested in the conservation or revival of the Sharia form of governance are the most active proponents of radical ideologies.

Islamic radicalism plays a definite role in the life of Russian society, too, nowadays. It is widespread in several regions of Russia with predominantly Muslim population, and different social sections are influenced by it. Islamic young people in the North Caucasus are distinguished by the most radical religious consciousness.

The reasons for their radicalization lie in the economic, political, social, ethnic and confessional processes characteristic of post-*perestroika* Russia. Radicalization of Islam was conditioned, to a great extent, by the destruction of many well-established social institutions and civil and family traditions, which took place in the 1990s, and the ideological and moral vacuum formed after the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. Social instability and everyday disarray poisoned the hearts and minds of believers. It was enhanced by the two “Chechen wars” and the following flare-up of extremist and terrorist activity in the North Caucasus.

However, we should note that radicalization of the consciousness of the Muslim population of Russia is taking place not according to the classical scheme when exacerbation of socio-economic problems brings to life ideology, then this ideology is accepted by the popular masses and is later expressed in radical practice. The logic of the emergence and confirmation of radical consciousness in the Islamic medium is somewhat different: in the situation of “ideological vacuum” propaganda of radical ideas in the form of salafism and wahhabism has resulted in radicalization of consciousness of part of Muslims who used the unfavorable socio-economic and political situation for undertaking attempts to implement radical ideas in public and everyday life.

At first, radical ideas of politicized Islam emerged in the North Caucasus, then slowly but surely they began to spread in other regions of Russia. Islamic radicalism became widespread among dissatisfied and marginalized sections of the population, criminal elements, and even representatives of government bodies. Its influence covered an ever greater geographical and socio-cultural area. Today radically-minded adherents of Islam can be met even among ethnic Russians, and the law-enforcement agencies find them in the Volga area, beyond the Urals and in the Russian Far East. Apparently, spiritual-ethical closeness and similarity of the socio-economic living conditions in many regions of Russia proved a favorable medium for radicalization of consciousness.

Previously, radicalization touched the consciousness of representatives of the marginal sections of society, criminal elements, drug addicts, and other persons “in hot water,” whereas subsequently the social base of radicalism became much broader. Today one can meet scientists and scholars, government and municipal officials, employees of law-enforcement agencies, and many others among radically-minded Muslim believers. Their appearance in this medium is widely used by ideologists of Islamic radicalism for propaganda purposes.

In this situation some intellectuals, near-sighted officials and certain mass media deny the fact that radicalism is determined by socio-economic, political and confessional reasons. They see the reasons for radicalization of Islam and the growth of Islamic extremism and terrorism in foreign financial and ideological influence, drawbacks in upbringing and education of children and young people, weakness of institutions of civil society, etc. No one would deny the significance of these factors. However, it is not they that determine radicalism of the consciousness of Muslim believers, but the causes of the economic,

social and political character. This is why deradicalization of Islamic consciousness requires complex solution of all these problems. But the authorities who proved unable to pursue a well-thought-out and consistent economic and social policy found nothing better than to switch over public opinion to the external factors and causes of secondary importance.

The reasons for radicalization of the religious consciousness of young Muslims in the North Caucasian region are many and varied, but the main ones are socio-economic and political. It is a well-known fact that the region has an excess working population, mass unemployment, property inequality, corruption, clan structure, and nepotism of enormous dimensions. Elections and appointments have long turned into buy and sell. Arbitrariness of government officials and representatives of the law-enforcement agencies have reached such dimensions that people prefer to protect their interests by illegitimate means, often using fire arms. These conditions are favorable for radicalization of the consciousness of Islamic young people who are being told to step on to the path of an armed struggle with the authorities and the constitutional pillars of a democratic secular state.

The concrete measures undertaken by the authorities for solving the problem of deradicalization of consciousness seem not only haphazard, but definitely insufficient. For example, it is planned to create 400,000 new jobs in the region with a view to providing employment to those who need it by 2025. But this figure is definitely too small even for just one republic – Daghestan. According to official data, more than 200,000 able-bodied people leave it for other regions of Russia annually in search for jobs. In some 15 years this figure will double due to natural population growth. And the unresolved employment problem will turn part of these people into the social base of religious radicalism.

Another factor radicalizing the consciousness of Islamic young people in the region is preference of the authorities to use forcible methods in combating people propagating radical ideas. Politicians and special force commanders determining strategy and tactics to oppose radicalism identify the problem of overcoming extremism as a social phenomenon with the struggle against individual extremists and combatants, thus demonstrating the absence of knowledge about the real state of affairs. Radicalism and extremism as social phenomena can only be overcome by comprehensive solution of the ripe economic, social and political problems, whereas concrete persons who have stepped on this slippery path and are not subject to correctional education should be eliminated by force.

The Russian state and its authorities lack understanding that pinpoint strikes and special operations against extremists, abductions and torture will not destroy the ideas of radicalism. Forcible opposition is, of course, necessary, but no less important is preventive measures to turn young people away from radical ideas. But the genuine struggle against and prevention of extremism and terrorism will only be effective if the causes of the emergence and spreading of radicalism as ideology and social practice are eliminated. If the activity of the state is oriented not to systemic qualitative changes of society working to overcome radicalism as a social phenomenon, but only to liquidation of extremists, the place of killed combatants will be taken by other fighters.

Evidently, radicalism in Islam is one of the global threats to human civilization as a whole, and to Russia in particular. Modern innovation technologies give radicals powerful means of destruction. Today, radical organizations, in contrast to previous epochs, can deal colossal damage to, and even completely destroy, the entire human civilization in accordance with their mad ideas and utopian programs.

This is why, apart from studying the essence and analyzing the sources, reasons and specific features of radicalism in the modern world, it is necessary to modernize society systematically and comprehensively, lending it new humanistic qualities.

“Islamovedeniye,” Makhachkala, 2012, pp. 4–14.

C. Olimova, M. Olimov,

Heads of the “SHARKH” Research Center (Tajikistan)

PROBLEM OF 2014:

A VIEW FROM CENTRAL ASIA

Generally accepted, that Afghanistan is a major threat to security in Central Asia.

Experts contend that the Taliban will return to Kabul once again after the withdrawal of the NATO forces, and with the support of their collaborators will fight against the existing regimes of Central Asia. It is assumed that the increase of drug trafficking and export of religious extremism will lead to greater chaos and violence in Central Asian countries. Based on this premise, the U.S., Russia, the European Union and to a lesser extent China believe that it is necessary to bolster up Central Asian security.

However, it is necessary to examine the situation in Afghanistan. First of all, the immediate danger of the Taliban invasion does not threaten Central Asia, as NATO will keep its military presence in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of troops, scheduled for 2014. The new NATO mission, aimed at training the Afghan forces, will consist of a military contingent about 10–15 thousand people in 2014. A forthcoming Afghan-American security agreement will define the format of the deployment of the U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

On the other hand, Russia has strengthened its military presence in the region, having concluded agreements with Bishkek on the military base in Osh, and having prolonged the operation of the 201 military base in Dushanbe for 30 years. China has also intensified its military might in order to protect its investments in Central Asia.

As for the ability of the Afghan security forces to assume responsibility after the partial withdrawal of foreign troops, it is still low. The present numerical strength of the Afghan forces is 352,000, which corresponds to the needs of the country. (Kabul plans to reduce it to 230 thousand for financial reasons by the end of 2014).

According to the U.S. Department of Defense, only one of the 23 brigades is able to engage in military operations on its own (there are from 3,000 to 5,000 men in a brigade of the Afghan army). Others depend on the all-round support of the coalition forces. Transfer of responsibility to the Afghan structures for maintaining security in the country continues. The implementation of the "national reconciliation program" is still going on (although with great difficulty). It is more successful in northern and western Afghanistan, but eastern Afghanistan is still dominated by the Taliban.

Afghanistan will have presidential elections in 2014. Perhaps, the situation will worsen dramatically during the election campaign. A great many people have no trust in the regime of Karzai. The Government of Afghanistan has not been able to create a balance between various groups of Afghan society and, what is worse, Afghan public opinion could not cope with the task of protecting national interests in the face of the foreign military presence. Obviously, power struggle will increase in 2014 between factions of the political elite against the background of the extreme weakness of the state and the absence of proper governance at all levels. Afghanistan will become a more convenient place for drug trafficking, terrorism and organized

crime. Another key point is resumption of the negotiating process and a search of a place for the opposition, in particular, the Taliban. Probably, the Taliban will continue to dominate only in eastern Afghanistan, but many groups of different ethnic origin and political orientation are involved in a struggle for territory. The main issue is relationship between the Pashtun and Tajik elites in Afghanistan, which will be supported by certain outside actors. In recent years, the military elite of northern Afghanistan has gone through severe trials, although the Tajik positions in the national army and security forces are still strong. Thus, there can be no talk of the revival of the Northern Alliance and it will be difficult to create buffer areas in the north of Afghanistan for the countries of Central Asia – Uzbekistan and Tajikistan – although Tashkent has been actively working in this direction.

There should be a balanced foreign policy of Western countries in the region to ensure the continued sustainable development of Afghanistan. If the confrontation between Iran and the West results in an open conflict, it will be fraught with the development of a negative scenario for Afghanistan. Iran has been worried over the fact that strategic partnership between the U.S. and Afghanistan may be used against it, and these fears have been used by the Taliban for its advantage.

Pakistan-US relations are also important. Pakistan plays its game with the Taliban due to its traditional confrontation with India.

Central Asian countries will erect barriers on the border with Afghanistan again if events develop in a negative direction. However, there is a positive aspect. The real danger will stimulate cooperation between the countries of Central Asia in the sphere of security, as it did in 1997–2002.

In 2002 Afghanistan and its neighboring countries signed the Kabul Declaration on Good-neighborly relations between Afghanistan

and Iran, China, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. This created a legal framework for cooperation in the sphere of security and reduced potential threats to it that might come from the territory of Afghanistan under any regime in Kabul.

The Central Asian countries, except Tajikistan, will not be subject to strong influence of Afghanistan if a new round of struggle for power begins there.

An analysis of the terrorist acts and activities of extremist organizations in Central Asia shows that security threats in Central Asia are internal. Religious extremism in Central Asia is a product of post-Soviet developments and is indirectly connected with religious radicals in Afghanistan. As for the negative impact of Afghan drug trafficking, the use of drugs in Central Asia has internal reasons: a weak government, alienation of people from the state, and absence of prospects for young people. It is only the strengthening of state institutions, fight against corruption and better work of law enforcement and security agencies that will improve the situation in the Central Asian countries as far as the drug problem is concerned. As part of the immediate struggle, a regional program to combat drug production and trafficking in Afghanistan and neighboring countries for 2011–2014 has been adopted, which involves cooperation between anti-drug agencies of Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Pakistan and Tajikistan. The Central Asian countries will face difficulties because of the Afghan factor in 2014. The need for additional safety measures, the strengthening of borders and adoption of Afghan refugees, who have already come to Tajikistan, are pressing issues of today.

The use of their geostrategic position and maximization of benefits from the buffer position between Russia, China, India, Iran,

and Pakistan, would have been very beneficial for the Central Asian countries nowadays.

However, the need to ensure their own security makes all Central Asian countries to strengthen not only the border with Afghanistan, but also all borders with other countries. So that it is not only an additional financial burden, but is also a factor preventing regional trade and economic development and worsening relations between the countries of the region.

Currently, due to continuing disintegration in the region, the Central Asian countries have been focusing on systemic security. Uzbekistan's withdrawal from the CSTO indicates that Central Asia has divided into two parts. The split has been due to Afghanistan. Tashkent believes that the CSTO is not able to provide protection against external threats from the south. Uzbekistan has also refused to participate in the first two conferences of “The Hearts of Asia” in Istanbul on the ground that the formula 6 plus 3 is the best format for a regional dialogue. Obviously, Uzbekistan continues to distance itself from world powers and regional security organizations, except the SCO. Tashkent’s orientation to bilateral relations and rejection of multilateral formats has undermined regional security efforts.

Increasing contradictions between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have also caused concern among Central Asian states. Economic competition between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, ethnic tension between the Afghan elites, and the struggle for water resources have worsened the situation.

The risks connected with disputes over water and energy will complicate any scenario on Afghanistan. Central Asian security is under threat due to the extreme deterioration of the Tajik-Uzbek relations, which has been sparked by fierce competition in Afghanistan's electricity market.

Afghanistan has become an important actor both as a consumer, and a potential opponent on the market of water resources in Central Asia, and it should not be underestimated. The Energy Minister Ismail Khan has spoken of the need to determine Afghanistan's share in the water resources of the Amudarya. Afghanistan has begun to consume water from the Amudarya according to the realization of an irrigation project in Kunduz since 2013.

Regional cooperation

Central Asian countries will be able to influence the situation in Afghanistan after 2014 and their potential should not be ignored. Regional cooperation will increase, having been aimed at the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Nowadays this work is carried on within the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the SCO and other organizations.

All countries in the region are associated with the SCO, either as members or partners in dialogue, or as observers. The program against terrorism has been developed within the framework of the SCO for 2013-2015. Supposed, the observer states, including Afghanistan and Pakistan, will be involved in this activity. The regional antiterrorist structure works. Despite the program and strategies developed by the SCO, Central Asian countries treat them with skepticism, because their implementation has been blocked by the absence of an effective response mechanism to the emerging threats. One of the new forms of cooperation concerning Afghanistan is the so-called Istanbul process, initiated by Afghanistan and Turkey with the participation of neighboring countries. This initiative has been strongly supported by the SCO. Kazakhstan, as an active participant in the project, has

expressed its willingness to hold in 2013 the next meeting of Foreign Ministers of the “Heart of Asia” – members of the Istanbul process.

From the foregoing it follows that:

1. There are no real reasons to believe that the reduction of the West's military presence in Afghanistan significantly worsen the security situation in Central Asian countries, except Tajikistan. Although, the situation in Central Asia will deteriorate along with destabilization in Afghanistan. First, due to the fact that these countries will have to spend more on security.

Secondly, many development projects, including energy and the infrastructure, will be frozen. Unstable Afghanistan remains a barrier to economic development in Central Asia. This is particularly disturbing, as Afghanistan is a growing market for goods from Central Asia and the field of fierce competition between the exporters of electricity from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

2. The existing programs evolved in Brussels, Washington, Moscow and Beijing to help the governments of Central Asian countries in the sphere of security are not effective and do not reach the goals proclaimed.

3. It is not clear what will happen to Afghanistan's statehood in 2014, when the U.S. and its Western allies formally exonerate themselves with the direct duty to ensure the security of Afghanistan and give it over to the Afghan government, but will not leave the country and the region. This will lead to a sharp decrease in the transparency of the Central Asian countries in the sphere of security and will increase tension in the region.

4. Tajikistan is an exception in Central Asia, i.e. it is the only country, which will depend heavily on the situation in Afghanistan for the following reasons:

(a) the length of the Tajik-Afghan border;

(b) similar language groups in Afghanistan;

(c) reorientation of trade to the South due to transport blockade of Uzbekistan. In 2000, the major importers of Tajik aluminum were the European Union and Russia, in 2010 – China and Turkey. Russia has retained its position as one of the biggest buyers of Tajik cotton. Trade with Afghanistan and China is growing rapidly. All this makes Tajikistan dependent on its southern neighbor;

(d) the need to seek allies in the debate on water and energy issues. We can assume that Tajikistan will cooperate with Afghanistan in the Amudarya water disputes.

Conclusions:

A number of serious problems have emerged in Central Asian countries because of the recent geopolitical changes, related to Afghanistan, These include its own economic opportunities and their protection, tough intraregional competition and the need to participate in a multilateral game between the big actors – the U.S., Russia, China, the European Union, as well as such regional leaders as Iran, Pakistan and India.

Now it is difficult to predict how the Central Asian countries will withstand this test.

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Institute of World Economy and International
Relations, RAS, Moscow, 2013, pp. 77–83.*

E. Ionova,

Ph. D. (Hist.), Institute of World Economy
and International Relations, Russian
Academy of Sciences

**STRATEGIC ALLIANCE OF KAZAKHSTAN
AND UZBEKISTAN IN GEOPOLITICS
OF CENTRAL ASIA**

The political picture of Central Asia is undergoing major changes, which is quite important for the future role of the main geopolitical forces – the United States, European Union, China and Russia – in the region. Along with the change of the external conditions connected with the withdrawal of the forces of the international coalition from Afghanistan, the alignment of forces in Central Asia is largely determined by the processes going on in the region. Thus, the exacerbation of contradictions between the Central Asian republics on the problem of using the water resources of the trans-border rivers was manifested in the confrontation between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, on the one hand, and Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, on the other. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan situated in the lower reaches of the Syrdarya and Amudarya are deeply concerned over the plans of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to build big hydropower complexes – Kambaratin and Rogun power plants.

Despite the existing treaty of eternal friendship between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, relations between them have not been serene for quite a long time. Uzbekistan was concerned with the growing economic influence of Kazakhstan in the region. Besides, both countries have different foreign-policy orientations. Kazakhstan has been actively cooperating with Russia in all integration associations in the post-Soviet area. As to Uzbekistan, while keeping membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (which can be explained by its

close economic ties with China, one of its main investors), it withdrew from the EurAsEc and then from CSTO, and tries to avoid participation in military-political undertakings within the SCO itself. Simultaneously, Uzbekistan is developing cooperation with the United States and European countries in the military-strategic sphere.

Nevertheless, as shown by the results of President N. Nazarbayev's visit to Tashkent in June, 2012, despite all differences, these two oldest leaders of Central Asian countries, whose career had begun in Soviet time, were ready to join efforts in the spheres of their common interest. Protection of the water resources has become the initial point of their present strategic rapprochement. This process began with a visit of Uzbekistan's President I. Karimov to Kazakhstan in September 2012, which was a sort of an answer to the Russian government's intention to render financial assistance to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in building hydropower plants.

The signing of a treaty on strategic partnership between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in June, 2012, as well as a package of bilateral agreements in the customs, law-enforcement and cultural spheres was a logical continuation of this process. During the negotiations between the two leaders it was emphasized that there were no insurmountable contradictions between the two countries. Both sides declared their readiness for the joint elaboration of a policy in the sphere of regional security, and also in the energy, transport-logistics, food products, and other spheres.

It should be noted that the events in the Middle East have shown the leaders of Central Asian countries a possible scenario of developments. In the view of the director of international programs at the Institute of National Strategy of Russia Yu. Solozobov, "there are rather clearly-pronounced attempts to turn the 'Arab spring' into a 'Turkic spring.' Strategic rapprochement between Kazakhstan and

Uzbekistan can be regarded as an attempt to forestall political turbulence in the region.”

In the course of the meeting of the two leaders it was emphasized that the drawing of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan closer together was aimed at lowering the level of participation of extra-regional players in solving problems in Central Asia. In I. Karimov’s words, “Kazakhstan’s potential is very high, and if Uzbekistan’s potential is added to it, our countries will have stronger positions which other states will have to reckon with. I think this is one of the main ideas which was a motive for signing this treaty.”

Experts assessed this statement as a message to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, as well as to Moscow, concerning their plans to build the above-mentioned hydropower plants. The position of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan was clearly expressed by A. Knyazev, expert on Central Asian affairs. In his words, “the rhetoric of Kyrgyzstan’s President Atambayev and the chorus of Kyrgyz national-patriots on the hydro-energy subject will force the leadership of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan think about opposition to such projects, or about how to make Moscow, which is financing this venture, heed their views.”

In essence, the main result of the meeting of the presidents of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan was that they officially declared that they have a special status of regional powers responsible for the security and development of Central Asia. In actual fact, this may lead to a split of the region, its division into blocs, and exacerbation of the situation in Central Asia, difficult as it is.

N. Nazarbayev called on his neighbors – Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan – before building the Kambaratin and Rogun hydropower plants to carry out a thorough survey and persuade people living in the lower reaches of the Amudarya and Syrdarya that they would always have enough water and electricity. Uzbekistan is especially worried by

Kyrgyzstan's and Tajikistan's plans to develop their hydropower industries, because it regards them as a threat to its irrigation system necessary for one of the key branches of its economy – cotton growing. The republic spends more than 90 percent of its entire water intake in the Amudarya basin on cotton growing.

Uzbekistan has signed international conventions (namely, the Helsinki Convention of the UN European Economic Commission on protection and use of transborder water runoffs and international lakes of 1992, and the UN New York Convention on non-shipping types of the use of international water runoffs of 1997), which declare equality in the development of common natural wealth, mutual rational use of transborder water runoffs, and due attention of the countries situated in the upper reaches of rivers to the interests and requirements for water by the countries situated in the lower reaches of rivers, and also solution of all disputed issues through dialogue.

Kazakhstan tends to orient itself to the generally accepted international principles of managing trans-border water resources, but not to the practice in this sphere existing in the region. For one, experts of the Kyrgyz analytical center “Prudent Solutions” believe that the national legislation of Kazakhstan on using water resources will, most probably, be reoriented to European standards, which presuppose a revision of regional documents in this sphere. Moreover, the center emphasizes that the exclusively subjective view of Central Asian countries on this problem as well as their unwillingness to agree to a compromise show that in the future, too, the Central Asian countries will need a supranational arbiter whose decisions will be heard and obeyed by all countries of the region. In their view, the aggravation of “water contradictions” in Central Asia is part of the course mapped out in a report compiled by the U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in March 2012, which presupposed turning water into a “political

instrument of pressure” and the U.S. readiness to come out as a third force called for “strengthening democratic principles” in order to resolve disputes over water resources, including those in Central Asia.

Thus, the water problem in Central Asia may serve as an example of turning regional economic interests into a factor of violation of the political balance, which has taken shape, and important political shifts. In the conditions of the exacerbation of the struggle for influence in Central Asia between Russia and the United States, the alignment of political forces in the region will largely depend on foreign-policy orientation of the Kazakhstan – Uzbekistan alliance. Evidently, the two strongest Central Asian republics have many common interests, apart from hydro-energy, the main one being the protection of national and regional security. They are ready to cooperate in this sphere with both Washington and Moscow. However, it should be borne in mind that more active behavior of the West in the region is conditioned not only by short-term tasks connected with the withdrawal of the NATO forces from Afghanistan, but also with long-term interests reflected in Washington’s strategy called “New Silk Route.”

This strategy presupposes joining the countries of former Soviet Central Asia to the sphere of influence of the United States and reorienting their economic ties to adjacent countries which are already under the U.S. aegis. The actions of the United States aimed at the implementation of its short-term tasks do not cause any objections on the part of Russia, all the more so, the countries of the region. In recent months the Central Asian republics have rapidly ratified agreements on granting transit routes for the withdrawal of military personnel, hardware and equipment from Afghanistan, according to which they are to receive about \$400 million.

However, consolidation of the U.S. positions in the region on a long-term basis contradicts Russian national interests, and also those of

the Central Asian republics themselves, which have many economic connections with the Russian Federation. Meanwhile, the policy of the United States toward Central Asian countries is distinguished by thorough and delicate work with regional leaders, and special methods for dealing with each country. Indeed, such countries as Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, which have a common border with Afghanistan and are greatly worried over the growing terrorist threat after the withdrawal of the U.S. forces from there, are more interested in American assistance. This is confirmed by the developments taking place in Afghanistan where terrorist and extremist groupings have intensified their activity near the border with these countries.

Washington's readiness to take upon itself responsibility for the protection of security of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan can become a basis for the long-term consolidation of the U.S. positions there. According to official sources, at a meeting of a U.S. government delegation with the heads of the military departments of Tajikistan in Dushanbe in March 2013, the American side "took into consideration the proposals of the Tajik side and expressed readiness to render assistance in combating possible threats." On June 3, a regional office of NATO was opened in the capital of Uzbekistan – Tashkent. It will be in charge of greater interaction with all NATO partners in Central Asia – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

The level of Uzbekistan's cooperation with NATO is steadily rising: the republic has received guarantees of supplying it with the latest NATO weapons, and its army has already switched on to NATO standards. Combined with Uzbekistan's withdrawal from CSTO and its unwillingness to participate in military-political undertakings within the SCO framework, this is a sign that the republic is becoming an outpost of the United States and its allies in Central Asia.

In the view of the Kyrgyz political analyst M. Sariyev, “this is a typical example of the ‘soft force’ politics. Step by step NATO is worming its way into the infrastructure of Central Asian countries. This is a slow-going, not too noticeable, but steady process. Take, for instance, the implementation of the ‘Partnership in the name of peace’ program. NATO has trained practically all high-ranking officers in Central Asian countries, who now represent a strong pro-western lobby in all our countries. At present, a new stage of NATO penetration in Central Asia and transformation of its military infrastructure has begun.”

A number of Washington’s economic projects aimed at weakening the economic ties of the Central Asian region with the Russian Federation have been planned for a long-term period. Among them is the creation of new transport corridors bypassing Russia. A case in point is the construction of a railway line in Central Asia which would connect Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan with Afghanistan. This will create “a new railway corridor for Central Asian countries free from Russian influence which will give them access to the world market, which has never existed before.” This line will be the alternative to the Russia – Kazakhstan – Kyrgyzstan – Tajikistan line, the construction of which was decided at the latest CSTO summit.

At present Afghanistan has two short railway lines connecting it with Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The first is 10-kilometer long and connects Serkhetabad in Turkmenistan with Turgundi in Afghanistan, which has been modernized by the former and after which its traffic capacity has doubled. At present, plans are under consideration to build another railway line connecting Turkmenistan with Afghanistan.

The 15-kilometer-long railway line from Termez in Uzbekistan, crossing the Amudarya River, to Hairaton in Afghanistan was prolonged at the expense of Uzbekistan’s budget by 75 kilometers to

Mazari-Sharif. It is planned to lengthen this route by another 230 kilometers to the town of Andhoi in the west of Afghanistan. A new railway line should also be laid out from Tajikistan to Afghanistan.

As a result there will be a new transport corridor from Central Asia, which will be 1,100 kilometers long, pass from the border with Tajikistan to the border with Iran and have branch lines on the border with Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

At present Kazakhstan becomes an object of a purposeful policy of the United States and its allies. Washington would like to see it, along with Uzbekistan, among the agents of its influence in Central Asia. All the more so since Kazakhstan is not only a developing country, but a locomotive of the economic development of the entire Central Asian region. For its part, Kazakhstan has also strengthened the western vector of its foreign policy. According to the mass media, meetings between Kazakhstan and U.S. officials at various levels were held last summer aimed at drawing Washington in Kazakh domestic political matters.

A notable event in early July this year was a visit of the Minister of foreign affairs of Kazakhstan E. Idrisov to the United States during which he had talks with several key figures of the American military-political establishment. Apart from that, he made a speech at a round-table discussion arranged by the U.S. Atlantic Council on the subject of “the present state and priorities of Kazakhstan’s foreign policy,” in which representatives of the White House administration, congressmen, leaders of analytical centers, including such figures as Z. Brzezinski and J. Jones, took part.

The range of bilateral cooperation between the United States and Kazakhstan is quite wide. However, during Idrisov’s visit talks were centered on the military-political sphere, in particular, the forthcoming

broad-range exercises within the framework of the NATO program “Partnership in the name of peace,” as well as economic problems. For one, the American side, emphasizing extensive relations between the two countries noted Kazakhstan’s contribution to major international processes which reflect principal interests of the United States in this region: the antiterrorist activity in Afghanistan and the granting of territory for the withdrawal of the NATO forces, the Iranian nuclear problem, and the policy of non-proliferation of nuclear weapon.

For his part, the Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan emphasized that Kazakhstan is a reliable regional partner of the United States in stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan. E. Idrisov noted that Kazakhstan had rendered help in the development of the Northern distribution network, supported the “New Silk Route” initiative, successfully arranged the ministerial conference of the Istanbul process, rendered humanitarian and technical assistance to Afghanistan, and helps logistically the U.S. efforts in transit to Afghanistan and back. It should be added that Kazakhstan, just as other Central Asian republics supported the resolution on Syria put forward by the United States and its allies, granting them *carte blanche* for regulating the internal conflict which was turned down by Russia and eleven other countries.

In the words of the head of Kazakhstan’s Foreign Ministry, relations between his country and the United States are living through a new development stage and have reached a high level, which is shown by the institutionalization of Kazakh-American ties. In this case we mean the activity of three bilateral commissions – on strategic partnership, in the sphere of energy, and the recently created commission on scientific and technical cooperation. During the visit of the Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan there was another meeting of the bilateral commission on strategic partnership at which the work of the defense departments of the two countries was discussed within

the framework of the five-year plan of cooperation for the years 2013–2017. A joint communiqué was issued on the strengthening of strategic partnership.

In the economic sphere the United States supported the idea of Kazakhstan joining the World Trade Organization and promised to render help in diversifying the Kazakh economy. Apart from that, Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister asked American legislators to lift the Jackson – Vanik amendment, which hampers the development of trade relations between the two countries. It should be borne in mind that the United States is important to Kazakhstan as a sales market for the latter's uranium products.

Last summer Britain became a strategic partner of Kazakhstan. A corresponding agreement was signed by President Nursultan Nazarbayev and the British Premier David Cameron, who visited Central Asia for the first time. Britain is one of the major trade and economic partners of Kazakhstan and holds third place after the United States and the Netherlands in the volume of direct investments (\$12 billion). The British Premier was accompanied by thirty business delegations, and during his visit contracts were signed worth about \$1 billion.

Evidently, the Russian Federation can oppose the strengthening influence of the West in Central Asia in several directions. First, by stepping up efforts to protect collective security within the framework of the multilateral international organizations – CSTO and SCO; secondly, increased interaction with Central Asian countries in preventing terrorist threats on a bilateral basis; thirdly, the strengthening of economic cooperation with the countries of the region, including granting financial aid to the countries which have demonstrated interest in strengthening relations with Russia.

Meanwhile, Moscow has faced a difficult choice in the question of supporting the hydropower projects of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, which has actually become the problem of choosing the main allies of the Russian Federation in Central Asia. Certain experts tend to see in the rapprochement of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan the beginning of the creation of a tripartite union of Russia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. A number of factors show the possibility of the development of such scenario.

First, there is Russia's treaty on strategic partnership with both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. If to regard the rapprochement of these two Central Asian republics in a broader context, that is, from the point of view of opposing the growing influence of Islamic extremism in the region, Russia becomes a participant in a new strategic alliance only by intensively pursuing its policy in the region. It may not be institutionalized, but implemented along the Moscow – Tashkent line and Astana – Tashkent line on a bilateral basis. It is to be remembered that last April during I. Karimov's visit to Moscow a package of documents on various spheres of cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Uzbekistan was signed – from the economy to interaction of the special services of the two countries.

Secondly, the significance of the economic factor does not diminish – there are close economic ties between Russia and Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The former continued to be the leader among the trade partners of Uzbekistan by the results of 2012 (it accounted for 29 percent of the foreign trade turnover of Uzbekistan). Last May Uzbekistan signed a treaty on a free-trade zone within the CIS framework. This is supposed to expand considerably the sales market for Uzbek commodities.

The visit of President Vladimir Putin to Kazakhstan last July, apart from solving mature problems in the outer space sphere, was

largely devoted to the further strengthening of relations between the two countries. It was also announced that preparations would begin for changing the basic treaty on good-neighborliness and cooperation, as well as the agreement on cooperation between the special services of the two countries.

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Today, when Russia is trying to prevent the growing influence of the United States in Central Asia, and China is increasing its presence in the region, the Central Asian countries face the task of determining their main foreign-policy orientations. The principal factors of the rapprochement of Central Asia and the Russian Federation are their close territorial proximity, common security problems, and complementarity of their national economies.

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Dina Malysheva,

D. Sc. (Politics)

CHALLENGES TO SECURITY IN CENTRAL ASIA

All countries on our planet meet with challenges to their security. They include not only terrorism, extremism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, drug trafficking, etc. There is also the deterioration of the environment, as well as global warming, destruction of forests, etc. Shortage of water is also a serious danger. All these global challenges and threats exist in Central Asia, too. Unfortunately, its countries are unable to find an adequate answer to these vital and endogenous challenges.

Among them are internal political and socio-economic instability, including interethnic and inter-clan tension, confrontation between the elites in these countries, impoverishment of the population, widening gap in the population's incomes and growing social disproportions, high level of unemployment, especially among young people, corruption, and inefficiency of state and government bodies.

There is also the threat of radical Islamism which is ready to develop rapidly in case of any political destabilization and use social problems for denouncing and destroying secular ruling regimes.

The drug mafia, apart from distributing poisonous death-dealing substances, is lavishly financing religious extremism.

There is also the problem of succession of supreme political power, inasmuch as there are no clearly defined rules of such succession.

Central Asia is also distinguished by conflictogenic interstate contradictions. Tension has been created by the plans of building the Rogun hydropower plant in Tajikistan and the Kambaratin hydropower plant in Kyrgyzstan on the trans border Amudarya and Syrdarya rivers. These plans cause deep concern of Uzbekistan, which is afraid of a reduction of water runoff in the rivers as a result of this construction.

Then there are unresolved border disputes which become a serious challenge to security. These disputes touch most republics of the region, especially Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, where ethnic overlapping and the absence of generally recognized borders are aggravated by a shortage of land and water, lending a pronounced socio-economic tint to these conflicts. Relations between these three Central Asian republics, which have exacerbated in the past years, do not exclude the emergence of new ethnic-territorial conflicts which are also due to the continuing growth of the population and difficult socio-economic situation.

Interstate conflicts are also provoked by nationalities and ideological problems, as well as territorial claims to neighboring states or to regional leadership (the latter is the case of Uzbekistan).

Along with the growing critical mass of internal problems, a serious challenge to security in Central Asia is presented by outside threats. Among them are trans-border criminal activity, terrorism and drug trafficking.

But the most serious external challenge to Central Asia in the near future is presented by the Afghan factor. If the Taliban returns to power in Afghanistan, it will become the center of radical Islamism.

The year 2014 may be the last for the U.S. – NATO military operation, which had the aim of destroying the Taliban movement, as well as the al Qaeda and other terrorist groupings.

The Central Asian countries, which are Russia's strategic partners by the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), as well as the Eurasian alliance under formation, are concerned over their future: will Central Asia become a region of storms and disturbances after the withdrawal of the international coalition forces from Afghanistan, or will it have an accepted stability level? They are deeply interested in such questions as to whether the U.S.A./NATO preserve the existing parameters of their military-political presence in post-Soviet Central Asia, reduce, or, on the contrary, increase it. Will there be interaction with the security services working under the aegis of Russia and/or China, and what forms and mechanisms of their participation, as well as other regional players (India, Iran, Pakistan) can there be in energy, transport and military-political projects?

Russia is striving for alleviating tension in Afghanistan and improving the situation there by 2014 in order to exclude the possibility of a repetition of the situation of the 1990s when the separatists and

terrorists in religious disguise in the North Caucasus received generous help from an Afghan-Pakistani source. Our country is interested in having the Kabul regime neither radically Islamist nor puppet-pro-American. All this calls for painstakingly watching the developments in Afghanistan, which are complex and unpredictable.

On the one hand, certain achievements have been reached in Afghanistan: new political institutions, the army and special services have been created which can ensure security independently. On the other, the main aim, that is, the destruction of the material-technical base of the Taliban, elimination of its leaders and isolation of commanders, has been achieved but partly. According to certain data, the Talibs control a considerable part of Afghanistan and put forward their own conditions in negotiations with the Karzai government. The radicalization of Pakistan has not been stopped either. The main forces of the Afghan armed resistance “Taliban”, its headquarters, the Islamic party of Afghanistan headed by G. Khekmatyar are stationed in Pakistan and closely connected with the influential Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence, ISI. True, there have been signs of increasing opposition on the part of Pashtuns to the political and military actions of the Taliban and attempts to put forward a new political project of national consolidation of Pashtuns on the eve of the forthcoming withdrawal of the U.S.A. – NATO forces from Afghanistan.

Negotiations with representatives of the Taliban carried on by the United States against this complex background concerning the future structure of Afghanistan will inevitably be accompanied with active armed actions. Due to the unceasing attacks of terrorists and militants on the servicemen of the international coalition these actions will be given pride of place throughout the entire transition period.

As to the defeat of international terrorists, which is another crucial task of the military operation in Afghanistan, it can not be

considered completely realized. The al Qaeda terrorist groupings have left Afghanistan and Pakistan, in the main, but they are now stationed in a number of countries of the Middle East and North Africa. Moreover, the Libyan venture of NATO in 2011 has given al Qaeda a possibility to develop its infrastructure in that North African country and spread it to secular Syria, where al Qaida militants are fighting against B. Asad's regime, actually along with western countries headed by the United States, the moderate Islamist Turkish regime, and the conservative Arab monarchies. Al Qaeda, which changed its place of residence, preserves its strongest anti-American and anti-Western spirit. It brings religious and ethnic intolerance, chaos, bloodshed and individual terror to the countries of the region, which is practically the only method of solving political tasks for the organization. This threatens the stability not only of the Middle East countries, but also the secular regimes of Central Asia, as well as the interests of the United States and the entire civilized world.

Having signed an agreement on strategic partnership with Afghanistan in May 2012, the United States has given that country the status of "chief ally-not NATO member" and promised assistance for a period of ten years after the withdrawal of the international coalition troops (that is up to 2024), with a view to making the Afghan security force, formed with the help of the United States and NATO, responsible for maintaining security. Thus, the U.S. and NATO military presence in Afghanistan will remain in Afghanistan after 2014, but "it will not have a combat character," according to an official version. It is not clear so far what the numerical strength and structure of such international contingent be, and whether it will be deployed (temporarily or permanently) in Afghanistan proper or also in the neighboring Central Asian countries.

The Pentagon intends to retain big military bases in Afghanistan – in Bagram (north of Kabul), Shindan (near the border with Iran) and in Kandagar (not far from the border with Pakistan). This shows that the functions of American – NATO servicemen will hardly be reduced to the officially declared aims. And so it can be supposed that there are plans, which the United States does not speak of openly, to use the logistic and military advantages in this strategically important Asian “Heartland” gained since 2001 for monitoring the situation and observing the behavior and actions of the American strategic rivals – Russia and China – and containing them if need be.

Relations with other regional players – India, Pakistan and Iran – will be viewed by the American administration not only in the light of ensuring regional security or maintaining stability in Afghanistan, but also in the context of the “agenda for the future of the U.S.A.” proclaimed by Obama in November 2011, according to which the Asia-Pacific region is considered the high priority of American policy. It is evident that this strategic message is addressed primarily to China, whose growing influence in Asia is threatening American interests, according to views current in the U.S.A.

In this connection the United States exerts every effort to lend proper significance to its main strategic partner – India (including through increased sale of arms and joint military exercises), which, as it is believed in Washington, can balance the growing military might of China. Interested as it is in American military technologies and sharing U.S. apprehension concerning China, India will also try to restrict Pakistan’s growing influence in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of the international coalition forces from there. Pakistan itself, without whose participation any negotiations on the Afghan problem will be fruitless, will closely be watching the preservation of its special role as the key player in resolving the Afghan conflict.

Despite its complex relations with Afghanistan and Pakistan, Iran could also become a positive participant in Afghan solution, taking into account its long-term interest in the formation in Afghanistan “after 2014” of a moderate government, which would not be hostile toward non-Pashtun Afghans (and Shiites). The negative position of the United States toward Iran, which will hardly change due to Washington’s nonacceptance of the Tehran regime, which proved relatively stable, lowers the chances to reach regional consensus on the problem of ensuring Afghanistan’s security. This does not remove the fact that all regional powers, despite rather complex mutual relations and those with the United States, are objectively interested in a stable and predictable Afghanistan.

In a short-term prospect, that is, up to 2014, the U.S.A. / NATO will try to use as much as possible transit and transport facilities of Central Asian countries. First, it is due to insufficient reliability of the southern supply route for the international coalition forces – via Pakistan, whose relations with the United States have noticeably deteriorated in recent years. Secondly, it is connected with an enormous amount of cargoes removed from Afghanistan. By the end of 2014, NATO will have to transport about 100,000 containers full of goods and equipment and 50,000 vehicles, one-third of which will have to go through the territory of Central Asia.

The United States is also interested in using the infrastructural possibilities of Central Asian countries in its strategy in Afghanistan. They were offered to become economic and energy donors of Afghanistan within the framework of major projects promoted by the U.S. administration in recent years (Greater Central Asia, New Silk Route), and energy projects (TAPI, called by the first letters of the names of the participating countries – Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India). The aim of these projects is to change the geopolitical format of

Central and South Asia within the framework of a new macroregion where there will be no place for Russia, China or Iran, and where international political processes, the security sphere and the energy-transport system will be under the U.S.A. / NATO control.

In view of the forthcoming completion of the Afghan campaign the United States and NATO open new opportunities for expanding military cooperation with Central Asian countries. In all, they were granted \$1.69 billion from the U.S. budget by the beginning of 2012. Given a total reduction of the U.S. military budget in 2012, the financing of program of military cooperation and security in Central Asia was increased by 74 percent. The Pentagon program to combat drug production and trafficking received \$109.5 million. Besides, the United States suggests that Central Asian countries should get part of arms, hardware and equipment removed from Afghanistan. Instead, the United States hopes to receive preferences in agreeing conditions of commodity transit along the northern route and further stay of its armed forces at military objects in Central Asian countries. It can be assumed that following the gift of machines and equipment to countries of the region they will play host to NATO and American military experts. A noticeable increase of western arms on the Central Asian market will entail requirement for training specialists, spare parts, modernization, etc., and as a result it can lead to Moscow's partners in CSTO getting used to arms and equipment from overseas. There is also a danger of these western arms and equipment falling into the hands of radical groupings, criminal elements, or drug barons.

According to a multipurpose Central Asian scenario, the main role in the Northern distribution network for transit of American-NATO cargoes from Afghanistan in 2012 is given to Uzbekistan. In anticipation of this decision the U.S. Congress lifted restrictions on military aid to it imposed in 2004. Its territory is regarded by the United

States as the most convenient for creating big transport hubs of regional importance and military bases functioning permanently. In this connection Uzbekistan's decision to suspend its membership in the CSTO at the end of June 2012 was not accidental. It was due to several reasons: the organization forbids its member-states to deploy foreign military bases on their territory without consent of other member-states; Uzbekistan hopes to receive guarantees of its security after the withdrawal of the coalition forces from Afghanistan; Uzbekistan was promised to be given a considerable amount of the coalition's arms, ammunition, military equipment, etc. which would be taken out from Afghanistan.

This step of Uzbekistan will hardly weaken the military capability of the CSTO, inasmuch as that republic has not participated in military cooperation in the organization's format, and in 2009 President Islam Karimov even refused to sign an agreement on the Collective rapid reaction forces of the organization. However, this decision of Uzbekistan, which borders not only on Afghanistan, but on all four Central Asian republics may impede the struggle with drug trafficking.

Attention paid by American-NATO politicians and military men to Tajikistan recently is conditioned not only by its geographical proximity to Afghanistan, but also a possibility to have a ramified military infrastructure created on its territory. Evidently, the Russian military presence in Tajikistan is an obstacle to this. (There are the Russian military base No 201 and "Nurek" in the Pamirs). The Tajik side signed an agreement on the conditions of the deployment of a Russian military base on its territory during the official visit of President Putin in October 2012. According to it, the Russian military base will remain in the republic until 2024. In exchange Russia

promised to re-equip the republican armed forces and train military personnel for them.

The third “front-line” state is Turkmenistan. Referring to its neutral status, it was the only country in the region which has not signed with the United States and NATO the agreements on transit from Afghanistan. Turkmenistan interests the leading global players by its great gas potential and major projects in the energy and transport spheres. Among them the TAPI (Turkmenistan – Afghanistan – Pakistan – India) project, which, if realized, might lead to big geopolitical shifts in the region of Central and South Asia. Evidently, the problems of democracy and human rights in Turkmenistan will not become a subject of any great concern (up to 2014) of the United States.

Kyrgyzstan remains in the zone of attention of the United States / NATO because there is the military base “Gansi” functioning there and renamed the Center of transit transportations in 2009. On the territory of this military object formally used for supplying the campaign in Afghanistan with military cargoes there is a big technical radar station for reconnaissance operation in the entire Central Asia and, what is especially important, in China. The numerical strength of the American military contingent there is 1,500 men and officers. Payment for the use of the center was \$151 million in 2011. No wonder that Kyrgyzstan favors the idea of using this object after 2014 under a new sign – Civil Center of transit transportations.

Kyrgyzstan supported the idea of using this object after 2014. This was announced by the President of the republic A. Atambayev in early 2012, thus crossing out his own promise given at the presidential elections in 2011 to have this American base withdrawn from Kyrgyzstan’s territory.

However, subsequently, the Kyrgyz leader said that he would like to turn the airbase into a civil airport. During the Russian-Kyrgyz high-level negotiations which took place in Bishkek in September 2012, documents were signed confirming the Russian military presence in the republic. A Russian military base is planned to be opened on the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic in 2017; it will include four military objects: a test site of underwater arms in Karakol, a military communication center in Kara-Balt, a seismic laboratory in Mailuu-Suu, and an airbase in Kant.

As to Kazakhstan, which held a priority place in the U.S., Central Asian strategy up to 2012, it will interest the United States / NATO in the transition period (up to 2014) as an exporter of energy raw materials due to its entry in the Customs Union and the Eurasian economic area, along with Russia and Belarus. This does not exclude attempts in the future to bring pressure to bear on Kazakhstan's leadership, via its western-minded elite, with a view to reorienting the republic from post-Soviet integration projects to programs lobbied and financed by the West.

If the American-NATO presence, both military and economic, expands in Central Asia, and the presently functioning Northern network is transformed into a transcontinental network, it will completely cover the territory of the former U.S.S.R. and will contribute to the implementation of broad strategic aims of the United States and its allies. The aim of such military-strategic undertaking will be containment of China, control over Afghanistan, elimination of Russia's "export monopoly," and reorientation of the security structures of the Central Asian and post-Soviet countries to the NATO structures.

The American military objects where they already exist (Kyrgyzstan) and where they may appear (Tajikistan) may lend certain confidence to these countries' governments. But the United States will

hardly be ready to take risks upon itself in case of an exacerbation of the internal political situation in these countries, or assume obligations to give long-term guarantees of security to its old/new strategic partners. The idea current in Central Asia at present that western military structures will be more effective for protection from external and internal threats than those of the CIS or CSTO may prove an illusion. There are also limits of using Russia as a factor allowing these countries to blackmail the American partners softly: such many-vector tactics may turn against those who took it up.

The possibility to realize its long-term plans in Central Asia for the United States depends on many factors: the world economic and political situation, ability to cope with the negative consequences of the economic crisis, and the image losses after the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The great geographical distance of the United States from the region and the unstable internal situation in its countries may become obstacles for a more active American involvement in Central Asian affairs “after Afghanistan.” European countries, too, may show greater interest in the energy resources of the region. In any case, the activity of all forces interested in Central Asia can be limited by the unpredictable and unfinished processes in the Middle East, which began with the coming of the “Arab spring.” Besides, an aggravation of relations with the two main powers in the Central Asian region – Russia and the People’s Republic of China – may be unprofitable and even harmful for the United States; these two countries may oppose any plans of the broadening of the military-political presence of the U.S.A. / NATO in the region, which will try to preserve stability there relying on the regional “collective security” structures.

In connection with the withdrawal of military troops from Afghanistan, the following possible scenarios of the developing situation in that country may be forecast:

A pessimistic scenario will show the further exacerbation of civil and interethnic confrontation in Afghanistan, right up to the outbreak of an armed struggle. One of its undesirable results may be the coming to power of the intransigent Talibs and the emergence of a situation like the one in the 1996–2001 period when Afghanistan became a haven for al Qaeda and other forces of international terrorism threatening Central Asia, Russia and the entire world. Such developments will definitely be a serious challenge to the countries around Afghanistan, primarily the Central Asian states. The most probable risk will be the spreading of military hostilities of a civil war to the territory of near-to-border Central Asian countries – and first and foremost Tajikistan. This will be accompanied with the mass flow of refugees from the territory of Afghanistan, which Tajikistan experienced in 1996–1997.

According to an optimistic scenario, after a certain aggravation of an armed struggle in Afghanistan and the departure of President Karzai from the residential post along with the withdrawal of the western coalition forces in 2014, a program of national reconciliation and reintegration will be implemented. A coalition government will be created on the basis of the Iraqi model and a consensus reached between the main political forces of the country. It will represent the interests of all people and forces of the country, both Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns.

The people of Afghanistan are tired of wars and hostilities. The Taliban has lost popular support because it gave shelter to terrorists from all over the world, thus bringing misery and misfortune to millions and death of thousands of people.

The regional and international medium now largely differs from what it was when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979.

The international community does not intend to abandon the Afghan people face to face with their domestic problems and will look for ways to finance the development of Afghanistan.

According to the negative scenario, the events in Afghanistan can lead to a chain of revolts, coups and civil wars in Central Asia and may require interference of allies by CSTO and SCO, which will definitely lead to greater economic and social tension in all their member-states.

In the event of the development of the situation in Afghanistan according to the optimistic scenario (“peaceful Afghanistan”), the Talibs, who are mainly Pashtun nationalists, will not spread the zone of their influence to the adjacent Central Asian republics, whose people are alien to them and will not support them. Even if the Talibs return to power in Afghanistan, their plans hardly envisage any breakthrough to Central Asia with a view to seizing its territories or establishing a caliphate in that region.

The main challenges to security in Central Asia will be due to its domestic socio-economic problems. There will be no direct connection between Central Asian states (except, perhaps, Tajikistan) with the processes going on inside Afghanistan – struggle for power, interethnic and interreligious conflicts, etc. All ethnic groups in Afghanistan are interested in strengthening their own positions within their own country, but not outside it. Another matter is if a threat to security in the region may be created by the militant Islamists based in Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as the “intransigent” elements from among the Islamic movement in Uzbekistan, and other such groupings.

Nevertheless, the Central Asian states should ensure themselves from threats from the Afghan direction – the growing drug trafficking and dissemination of radical religious trends. A combination of potential external challenges from Afghanistan with the really growing domestic political risks are especially dangerous for Central Asian

countries, because they can greatly destabilize the existing situation. A possible combination of the social and religious factors is also very dangerous. Islamic revolution hardly threatens any republic of the region, even despite the fact that the role of political Islam is very high in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. But Islamists getting considerable financial support from drug trafficking and from their “brethren in faith” abroad can create a general chaos in the region. To oppose such variant of developments the Central Asian states need, apart from a strong army and special rapid reaction forces, a strategy of response to challenges and risks from the outside, which can hardly be evolved without foreign assistance.

Tajikistan is the most vulnerable country from the point of view of security, for it has a long common border with Afghanistan passing through hardly accessible mountains, which is difficult to guard. After 2014, refugees and militants from among the Uzbek and Tajik population of Afghanistan may penetrate Tajikistan due to a civil war which may break out in that country. To be prepared for such turn of events the Tajik authorities should fortify their border with Afghanistan. The European Union could really help in this respect within the framework of its Border Management Program in Central Asia. However, since it is busy combating the economic and financial crisis whose outcome is not yet clear for the Union and the Eurozone, Tajikistan, just as other Central Asian countries, can hardly rely on its assistance. Neither can they hope for help on the part of international financial institutions (World Bank and International Monetary Fund). First, they also center attention on the crisis in Europe. Secondly, their activity to a great extent depends on the international situation. It is known that as soon as the United States began to regard Uzbekistan as its main strategic partner in Central Asia the World Bank told Tajikistan to suspend the construction of the Rogun hydropower plant

(Uzbekistan was against it). Five-and-a-half thousand Tajik workers have lost jobs as a result of it.

Tajikistan has suffered more than other Central Asian republics from attacks of members of transnational radical religious organizations, like IDU and al Qaeda. It should be noted that extremist armed actions in Tajikistan were quite frequent in 2010–2012, and they were mostly connected with domestic problems.

The popularity of the Party of Islamic Revival is growing in the republic. At present its membership comes to 42,000, women comprising more than fifty percent. This party has already drawn attention of the United States, which does not exclude a possibility of a dialogue with “moderate Islamists in Afghanistan and in the Middle East.

As to Kyrgyzstan with its permanent internal political instability and unresolved problems in the south of the country, any shocks, irrespective of their source, can trigger off a new political or interethnic conflict. The situation in the sphere of security can be aggravated by the military hardware and equipment from Afghanistan which the United States promised to leave in Kyrgyzstan after the withdrawal of its troops from that country.

The change of the format of the presence of the American-NATO troops in Afghanistan after 2014 will hardly tell on the internal political situation in Uzbekistan, where parliament adopted a law forbidding the deployment of foreign military bases and other objects on the territory of the country. It can be hoped that the republic will avoid serious political upheavals in the future. Until 2014 it will actively develop military-political cooperation with the United States for the purpose of thwarting internal threats and blocking possible efforts to destabilize the domestic political situation from without.

Neutral and closed Turkmenistan will be able to preserve the previous level of relations with the ruling regime of Afghanistan, irrespective of who is in power there. The construction of a gas pipeline for transporting Turkmenian gas and Central Asian energy resources to Pakistan via Afghanistan will contribute to the stable relations of Turkmenistan with Afghanistan. Turkmenistan will remain one of the most important transit routes for transporting Afghan cargoes, and Afghanistan will depend on Turkmenian fuel and electricity for a long time.

As to Kazakhstan, the level of threats and risks due to the possible outbreak of a civil war in Afghanistan is much lower due to its greater geographical distance from it. Nevertheless, any exacerbation of the situation in Afghanistan and unpredictability of its political future after the withdrawal of the U.S./NATO forces from there can negatively influence Kazakhstan whose southern part is closely connected with the rest of Central Asia. Destabilization in the Central Asian states bordering on Afghanistan can directly or indirectly touch on Kazakhstan's interests. In case of any direct military threat from Afghanistan, which is hardly possible, it can be assumed that Russia may take part in rebuffing it.

Kazakhstan, which has been considered an island of stability in Central Asia during the past several years, is now facing a host of problems. On May 17, 2011, a terrorist act took place in the town of Aktobe for the first time in the country's recent history. After that such acts were registered in several other towns and cities. From the beginning of 2012 there have been five anti-terrorist operations in Kazakhstan. Responsibility for the acts of terror was assumed by the previously unknown Islamist grouping called "Soldiers of Caliphate" ("Jund al Khalifah") which had ties with al Qaeda. According to certain sources in Afghanistan and Pakistan, ethnic Kazakhs have been sent to

Kazakhstan from these countries with a view to recruiting new members of terrorist groups and bringing pressure to bear on the local authorities. Terrorist acts have become more frequent after Kazakhstan has drawn closer to Russia, entered into the Customs Union, and began to build a uniform Eurasian area together with Russia.

Kazakhstan's authorities do not exclude the possibility of the use of the republic's territory for the illegal transit of arms and drugs, including with the help of Islamist organizations. Radicalization of Islam proceeds rapidly enough in southern districts of Kazakhstan where there is a numerous Uzbek diaspora. There is the danger of Islamists using social discontent for their purpose of radicalization of Islam.

Taking into account Uzbekistan's withdrawal from CSTO, Kazakhstan's border may become the southern boundary of CSTO, and economic integration within the Customs Union and uniform economic area can be strengthened by a military-political component. Theoretically, economic and political integration on the basis of the common economic area created by Russia and Kazakhstan can receive a new impetus in case of the emergence of new threats to security requiring mobilization and coordination of efforts in combating that threat.

In view of the fact that it is Russia and Kazakhstan that bear main responsibility for maintaining stability in the Central Asian region, it is necessary to start immediately a thorough dialogue to discuss ways and means to oppose the destructive global and regional tendencies and step up the activity of the security bodies.

There are inevitable difficulties along this road. They are partly due to the fact that the Central Asian countries are in no hurry to connect the problem of regional security with CSTO and SCO. Secondly, it may be explained by the still existing phobias of part of the

regional political elites which are harping on the subject of Russia's imperial schemes. Thirdly, it is connected with China's passive attitude to potential military threats to the region and its desire to reduce its activity in Central Asia exclusively to the sphere of energy, economy and trade. To this should be added contradictions on the water and territorial problems still existing in Central Asia and preventing the elaboration of a consolidated agenda on the vital interests of the states of the region.

On the whole, the effectiveness of the existing security structures operating in Central Asia within the CSTO and SCO framework leaves much to be desired. Yet, the system is working somehow. It allows its members not only to reach a consensus on rather difficult international problems, but also to solve practically the timely questions of regional security. If the countries of the region wish to preserve real sovereignty in the conditions of globalization, they should speed up integration processes. This also concerns Russia.

A serious obstacle for the formation of an effective security system in Central Asia is presented by selfish interests of individual countries or elitist groups, as well as ambitions of certain political figures and their unwillingness to recognize the fact that only collective actions can minimize the existing and potential threats and prevent confrontation bringing harm to the nations of the region. So far there is a serious lack of political will on the part of the leaders of Central Asian countries.

Russia has found its position on its own international priorities, and its actions are directed at creating a new reality in the post-Soviet area, which will allow it to minimize many risks and threats, including those coming from Afghanistan. This new Russian strategy covers Central Asia, too. In the military-political aspect Moscow does not

offer its Central Asian partners anything like “alliances against,” but calls for working together to oppose real threats.

Russia is vitally interested in maintaining stability in the region and neutralizing the Islamist threat. A reasonable alternative can be a deep economic integration initiated by Russia, which will contribute to the preservation of the secular character of the political systems of the states of the region.

The forthcoming withdrawal of military units from Afghanistan and transfer of responsibility for security in that country to the government in Kabul put Russia and the security structures it patronizes – CSTO and SCO – in the face of serious challenges. They will have to play more important role in Afghan stabilization. It will definitely be a subject not only of discussion but activity of SCO and its specialized bodies. This is why Russia is facing the task today to raise the role of SCO to the level of an effectively working international organization for fruitful regional interaction.

*“Voprosy bezopasnosti v Tsentralnoi Azii,”
Institute of World Economy and International Relations,
Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, 2013, pp. 5–18.*

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