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THREAT OF ISLAMISM

Radical Islamism is one of the most serious threats to public order and the state system of the Russian Federation. It is the main driving force behind the illegal armed formations (IAF), fighting in the North Caucasus for the last seven years. IAF motivated by ideas of political Islam became active in the Volga region (Tatarstan and Bashkortostan) in 2010 for the first time since the late 1990s. The ultimate goal of radical Islamists is to build an Islamic caliphate – a state based on Islamic ideology in the most rigid form – in the North Caucasus (ideally – on the entire territory of Russia).

The major trends characterizing Islamic radicalism in Russia as a whole, and in the North Caucasus in particular, are as follows:

- undermining the positions of traditional Islam by the physical extermination of the iconic figures of the Muslim community, which leads to disorientation of the ummah;
- gradual formation of a “united Islamic front” joining Islamists of the North Caucasus and the Volga region;
- formation of an eclectic Islamist ideology, as well as corresponding organizational structures;

– increased orientation to a foreign Islamic community (primarily Arab);

– active work of the federal Islamist lobby, popularizing and promoting Islamist ideas in the national mass media and state institutions.

These trends have been finally formed over the past two years. There is every reason to believe that these processes will determine the future evolution of the Russian radical Islamic community in the coming years. This phenomenon will inevitably have an impact on neighboring countries and regions (for example, on Azerbaijan).

Formation of a “Single Islamic Front”

Islamists, engaged in the fight against the Russian state in the North Caucasus, have started to spread jihad in the Volga region and in particular in the Republic of Tatarstan. This trend has taken shape in the last three or four years, coinciding with the qualitative changes observed in the Tatar Muslim community.

The decrees for the opening of the Volga and Ural fronts were signed by “Emir of Caucasian Mujahideen” Doka Umarov on July 9, 2006.

In November 2010, a special website “Vilayat Idel – Ural” appeared, which has been registered in the United States. Continuing to be a virtual project, it has gradually won many supporters.

The Tatar national movement includes many representatives of the younger generation and joined the radical Islamic movement in recent years, which may lead to complete fusion of nationalists and fundamentalists, with ideological dominance of the latter. The leadership of the Tatarstan Muslim community has been aware of the danger of such processes for the Tatar nation and Muslims of Tatarstan. They have actively opposed this and advocated the course to the “Tatar

mosque” with national characteristics of “Tatar Islam,” despite fierce opposition on the part of radical Islamists.

Over the past two years the tone of statements at Islamist forums (primarily Caucasian) and materials published by them has changed significantly with an emphasis on promoting jihad in the Volga region and frequent calls for its beginning.

The followers of Caucasian jihad try to aggravate the situation by staging provocations against the legitimate authorities in Tatarstan, using methods of information warfare and distributing material calling for active resistance in the information space. In 2012, a group of supporters of the “jihad until victory” appeared in Tatarstan, following the example of the North Caucasus. The situation in Tatarstan is similar to that in North Ossetia. No doubt, the attempts to provoke the situation in these republics simultaneously are not accidental, and are part of an overall plan to destabilize the country and connect the Islamic arc across the North Caucasus to the Volga region.

Formation of Eclectic Islamist Ideology

Distinction between the followers of different Islamic movements is becoming increasingly blurred. Eclectic ideology includes elements of both radical ideologies that are based on the violent confrontation with government agencies, as well as relatively “peaceful” Islamic movements that have previously been in a confrontation with one another. The activists of “Hizb ut-Tahrir” – the Islamic party banned in Russia – were in the forefront of the campaign against the so-called violations of the rights of Muslims in Tatarstan, unleashed by radicals. The North Caucasus Islamists are oriented to the global Islamic community, particularly the Arab. 3.3% of Ingush men and 2.3% of Ingush women have named Arabs as the most desirable

persons for marriage. This is an illustration of fundamentalist sentiments of Ingush young people.

The tendency of certain Arabization of culture is evident throughout the North Caucasus now. A manifestation of this trend is the Arab headscarf becoming more and more popular among Muslim women and girls in the North Caucasus and the Volga republics.

Impact of the “Arab Spring” and the Vigorous Activity of the Federal Islamic Lobby

The “Arab Spring” has definitely influenced the Russian Muslim community. According to activists of the federal Islamist lobby, Russia needs to change its attitude to the events in the Arab world, focusing on “improving relations” with the moderate Islamist organization “Muslim Brotherhood”, whose representatives have come to power in Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco.

According to these lobbyists, the Russian Islamic community ostensibly focuses on the general Islamic trend and Russia will actually have a “fifth column” inside the country, unless it changes its policy in the Middle East. At the same time Moscow has been urged to abandon support for Shi’ite Iran, which does not fit into the plans for the establishment of the Arab Sunni caliphate.

The “Muslim Brotherhood” has been recognized as a terrorist organization, and its activities were banned on the territory of the Russian Federation by the Supreme Court decision of February 14, 2003. Its aim is “the elimination of non-Islamic governments and establishment of Islamic rule all over the world by recreating the “Great Islamic caliphate,” first in regions with predominantly Muslim population, including Russia and the CIS. The attitude of the “Muslim Brotherhood” to Russia cannot be called friendly or at least neutral.

On October 12, 2012, Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the ideologist of the “Muslim Brotherhood” and of “moderate Islam,” made a statement on Qatar TV that Moscow was the number one enemy of Islam and Muslims, because it was against the Syrian people.

The International Theological Conference on “Islamic Doctrine against Radicalism” was held in Russia on May 25–27, 2012. It adopted the Moscow Theological Declaration of Muslim scholars on jihad and the use of the Sharia and caliphate, combining the contents of a few private theological findings (fatwas).

The conference was organized by the International Center “Al Vasatyyya” (Kuwait), its subsidiary – Scientific and Educational Center “Al-Vasatyyya Moderation” (Russia), the International Union of Islamic Scholars with the financial support of the Foundation for Support of Islamic science, culture and education, and the Akhmad Kadyrov Foundation. Several hundred Islamic scholars of world stature, and Islamists and experts from 23 countries of the Muslim world participated in the conference.

The declaration of the conference stated that the murders and explosions committed by fanatics in the North Caucasus and other regions under the banner of jihad and fight against apostates (by whom they mean all loyal to non-Muslims) are not jihad and have no relation to it.

All of these trends point to the seriousness of the intentions of the fundamentalists. It is clear that they will pay close attention to the North Caucasus and the Volga region in order to disseminate radical Islamist ideas there. The aggravation of the struggle of traditional Islam with the Islamists, supported by financial injections from the Arab East, is inevitable.

The development of the Russian ummah should include strengthening the position of traditional Islam and orientating Russian

Muslims to domestic rather than foreign Islamic authorities. In addition, it is necessary to isolate the federal Islamist lobby and prevent promotion of absurd ideas about establishing relations with the notorious Islamist fundamentalists .

“Moskva,” Moscow, 2014, No 1, pp. 174–178.

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SPECIFIC FEATURES OF FINANCING TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS

Terrorism is one of the most crucial problems of the modern epoch. It has always existed, but during the past two decades it has acquired qualitatively new features, which turn it into a global threat to all mankind. In contrast to traditional terrorism, which did not threaten society and did not touch its vital activities, modern terrorism is highly technological and can cause a systemic crisis in any state with a developed information infrastructure. Apart from this basic feature, modern terrorism also has certain specific traits. They touch on ideological and organizational aspects of the activities of terrorist groupings. Ideologically, modern terrorism includes unprecedentedly broad Islamist component in all its structures. Organizationally, it is no longer confined to a definite territory, is not centralized, and has a large number of independent groups scattered all over the world.

It is not surprising that “new terrorism” has recently become an object of a thorough investigation. Experts are interested in the changes

taking place in terrorist groupings, their ideological doctrines, organizational structures, as well as forms and methods of their activities. Unfortunately, the financial backing of terrorism is analyzed less painstakingly. Meanwhile, it is quite evident that the modern terrorist movement would have been unable to exist for such a long time without lavish financing. The main task of the authors of this article is to reveal the sources and specific features of financial backing of terrorism in the North Caucasian region of Russia. In the past two decades the financing of terrorist groupings have considerably changed. This was due to two factors: globalization of the economy and transfer of many terrorist groups to a network structure.

It should be noted that the globalization factor and its role in the transformation of the economic nature of terrorism has long been an object of the economic and political discourse. In particular, the documents of the World conference on transnational organized crime and terrorism (Naples, 1994) pointed out that the emergence of transnational criminality and modern terrorism were largely a consequence of the formation of the world economy. Interdependence of states and the volumes of mutual trade and international investment activity are growing enormously within the framework of the rapidly developing world economy. The formation of international financial networks and international calculation systems makes it possible to carry on complex currency and monetary transactions using bank and credit structures of several countries. The scope of migration and formation of multinational metropolitan cities go hand in hand with the evolution of the world economy. Globalization of the economy and the network principle of the organization of criminal groupings have substantially changed the nature of terrorism. Thus, in the present conditions terrorism can hardly be subdivided into domestic and international.

The present-day financial system largely determines the possibility of carrying on terrorist activity. The financing of modern international terrorism and its individual regional clusters, including the North Caucasian seat, uses many channels. The scope of financing, the structure of its sources and their correlation constantly change. This circumstance seriously hampers discovery and liquidation of these channels.

The so-called infrastructural aims of financing usually include: training of militants on the territory of certain countries, creation of their own bodies (funds, companies, banks, insurance offices, etc.) in the credit-financial and commercial spheres, infiltration of government and state structures, recruitment of persons capable to prepare and commit terrorist acts, payment for propaganda activity, maintenance of training camps, procurement and storing of arms, explosives, means of communication, awards and compensation to perpetrators of terrorist acts and families of those killed in terrorist operations.

Recruitment, reconnaissance, procurement of the means of transport, and information in the mass media about the terrorist acts committed are regarded the most important aims.

One of the specific features of modern terrorism is that today terrorist attacks can cause a considerable damage at comparatively low cost. In other words, the volume of financial means does not always depend directly on the importance of aims.

Today, the sources of financing terrorist organizations can be divided into two main groups: foreign and domestic. The former may be both state and non-state. The first represent direct support from foreign states. The second include means received from commercial organizations abroad, persons and diasporas, as well as foreign terrorist groupings. Among the sources of domestic financing are incomes from legal and illegal business, help from rich terrorist cells, and racket. It is

important to note that in the past decade globalization of the economy and transfer to a network structure of organization have transformed the role of the financial sources of terrorist groupings. The share of receipts from abroad has diminished along with an increase and diversification of domestic sources. Thus, terrorist groupings become more independent financially. Terrorist organizations can be divided into two categories. The first includes those which have emerged on the religious and ideological basis. Such terrorist organizations are like the mafia in many respects: they are illegal, have resources of force, and are built on personal trust. This is why they can easily be introduced in the sphere of criminal activity typical of organized crime. For example, terrorists in Latin America are closely connected with cocaine trafficking, Asian terrorist – with heroin trafficking, and West African groupings – with diamond smuggling. As a result of merging with criminal business terrorism becomes commercialized and acquires features of the ordinary mafia. Gradually, the fight “for the idea” is replaced with the fight for the “long dollar.” It is more difficult to combat such mafia terrorism than the mafia itself or ordinary terrorism; this terrorism is more bellicose and bloodthirsty than the traditional mafia, and more wealthy than terrorism of traditional type. It is possible to search for and find compromise with “ideological” terrorists, but compromises are not possible with mafia terrorists.

Meanwhile, both categories of terrorist groups have common characteristics, which radically distinguish them from the mafia. First, criminal business is not an end in itself for both of them. Secondly, terrorist groupings use their financial means differently than the mafia. Lastly, transborder terrorism is more important and widespread now than other types of criminal business connected with international activity. On the whole, an analysis of the sources, forms and methods of financing modern terrorist organizations makes it possible to reveal a

whole number of important tendencies in this sphere. Most important is the existence in a majority of terrorist organizations of a powerful, highly efficient, stable and ramified financial base founded on diversified inner sources. Another feature worth noting is the merger of incomes received from legal and illegal business and foreign sources of financing.

The economic base of terrorists in the North Caucasus, just as in other regions of the world, consists of two components: the means coming from abroad and those received from inner sources. The correlation of these two components has constantly changed. In the course of the first Chechen war (1994–1996) foreign sources prevailed. The extremists received financial means, as a rule, through corresponding non-governmental structures (foundations, non-governmental religious-political organizations, etc.). At present this channel of financing has become secondary. The level of financial dependence of the North Caucasian extremists on foreign sponsors has been steadily declining during the 2000s. It was partly due to an increase of financing Islamist militant fighters in many countries of the Middle East and North Africa.

However, experts emphasize that today financial assistance to the North Caucasian underground is coming from international terrorist centers and radical Islamic organizations in the Muslim world and in western countries. Financial assistance to the North Caucasian terrorist underground is delivered by special couriers. But radical Islamists also use a ramified network of international financial transfers of capital. This system is widely used in the Middle East and Southeast Asian countries. It can also be used in certain regions of the Russian Federation through numerous money-changing and small trade centers belonging to private persons, among whom are quite a few citizens of Middle East countries. These people have ties with foreign non-

governmental organizations and their helpers from among local residents. Internal sources of financial assistance to radical Islamists include illegal oil and gas business, criminal incomes (racket, abduction of people, arms and drug smuggling, financial machinations, incomes from prostitution and gambling, etc.), which was especially typical of Chechnya.

The system of financing network terrorist groupings of the North Caucasian underground is changing. It depends less on outside transfers, and becomes more autonomous. In the conditions of almost total corruption, it is not too difficult for the criminal underground to establish control over firms and commercial enterprises, just as over some local government officials. Thus, the main source of the flows of money to criminal gangs and terrorist groupings is total racket. Practically, the entire private business in certain southern regions of Russia has been levied with “terrorist tax.” Entrepreneurs and officials live in constant fear for their life, and the instruments of state protection prove ineffective. It happens sometimes that corrupt government officials receive a “share” of incomes from criminals for their services.

On the whole, an important feature of the financing of North Caucasian terrorism is its existence as a stable and sufficiently independent system based on a multilevel budget. The formation of this budget takes place at the expense of the “tax on jihad.” The Islamists levy it on businessmen and officials in North Caucasian republics, and also on their fellow-countrymen residing elsewhere. The essence of this system boils down to extortion based on ideological and theological tenets.

As is known, “tax on jihad” is not an “invention” of North Caucasian radical Islamists. It has been practiced almost everywhere in the Middle East and Central Asian countries. For example, during the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan, similar tax was paid to bandits

by government and party functionaries, including ministers, members of the Revolutionary Council and Politburo of the ruling People's Democratic party.

In the North Caucasus such extortions under theological cover were widespread during the first Chechen war. But by 2010 this practice acquired a systemic character. However, quite often separatism and radical Islamism were simply a cover for ordinary criminal activity, mainly racket, counterfeit money production, drug trafficking, etc.

Under the impact of certain circumstances, the key of which are globalization processes, transfer to network organizations, and curtailment of foreign assistance, the character of this process has undergone essential changes. At present financing is made through a ramified network constantly changing its geography and structure. As to the tendencies of recent years, mention should be made of a reduction of foreign transfers, and increase and diversification of domestic sources. And finally, it is the gradual financial "optimization" of the activity of the bandit underground, which has now switched over to self-restraint and thriftiness due to harsh pressing on the part of the state.

"Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodniye otnosheniya," Moscow, 2013, No 4, pp. 79–86.

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AZERBAIJAN – WHAT LIES AHEAD?

As expected, the incumbent President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev scored a decisive victory in the presidential elections on October 9, 2013, having gained over 84.6 percent of all votes. This result was

not doubted, although international observers criticized the organization of elections.

However, the principal question is “What should be expected further on?” One can safely say that by 2018 (the end of the third presidential term of office of Aliyev) Azerbaijan will become quite a different country.

In the early 1990s, when Azerbaijan just gained independence, it was a poor, war-ravaged country. Since then it has traversed a great path. In the past several years, after the commissioning of the Baku – Tbilisi – Ceyhan oil pipeline in 2006, its economy has greatly developed, and today Azerbaijan’s GDP equals \$70 billion, or 20-odd times more than in the mid-1990s. At the same time Azerbaijan has time and again been heard in the international arena. In January 2012 it became member of the UN Security Council, and that very year it was the venue of the regular Eurovision contest.

Within the next five years Azerbaijan will definitely come across new problems. The correlation of demand for and supply of energy carriers on world markets and, accordingly, Azerbaijan’s strategic priorities have begun to change. The local public will, most probably, discuss socio-economic problems more loudly and demand political freedoms. The leadership of the country will have to react and adjust to the new reality more rapidly.

The next stage of the development of Azerbaijan, which coincides with Aliyev’s third presidential term of office, will definitely be more difficult than the previous ones. The oil boom in the country will soon end, but Azerbaijan will try to compensate it by becoming a big supplier of gas to Europe.

In foreign policy Azerbaijan is balancing between its bigger neighbors, with the energy bearers being the key factor in its relations

with them. Its relations with the southern neighbor – Iran – are cool, and with Russia – pragmatic.

Turkey, whose language is very close to the Azerbaijani language, is definitely its best partner. Baku is ready to sign a big gas deal with Ankara. But their relations are not too serene as they could have been expected. This is partly due to a sharp difference in the ideological views of the moderate Islamist R.T. Erdogan and openly secular I. Aliyev who do not trust each other implicitly. Although Turkey helps Azerbaijan “to go west,” the neighbor is not always included in Turkey’s priorities. Thus, Azerbaijan’s leadership became surprised and angry when Turkey began the process of normalizing relations with Armenia in 2008 and 2009. And it was only yielding to pressure of Baku that Ankara abandoned these attempts.

It should also be said that relations between Azerbaijan and Russia are somewhat enigmatic. In August 2013 President Putin visited Baku with a delegation of high-ranking Russian officials. Both countries, whose political and economic models are much alike, publicly declare friendship and cooperation in a number of spheres, but at the same time have certain suspicions concerning each other’s intentions.

In the 1990s Azerbaijan was the main channel of the penetration of Islamic fighters from abroad in Chechnya to take part in the Chechen war. In our days Moscow and Baku cooperate in their efforts to make the border between the two countries impenetrable so that Islamists should not worm their way into Daghestan. Moscow has published information recently about the sale of a big consignment of weapons to Azerbaijan. While in Baku, President Putin said that the volume of military-technical cooperation between Russia and Azerbaijan was worth \$four billion.¹

However, there are less positive aspects in the relations of the two countries. In 2012 Azerbaijan actually forced Russia to close down the Gabalin radar station, having asked an exorbitant rent for its lease.

Domestic political factors can also prevent achievement of foreign-policy aims of Russia. For instance, the Azerbaijani mass media and parliamentarians constantly accuse Russia of backing Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, in the course of which Azerbaijan has lost a considerable part of its territory.

Azerbaijan reacted rather painfully to the events in the Moscow suburb of Biryulevo in October 2013 when an ethnic Azerbaijani and citizen of Azerbaijan Orkhan Zeinalov killed a young Russian. This provoked an explosion of aggression and violence which had an anti-migrant and xenophobic character in Russian cities. Orkhan Zeinalov was apprehended and taken to custody in a brutal manner, which was shown on Russian TV.

Azerbaijan is also striving to build good relations with the West, primarily on the basis of cooperation in the sphere of energy and security.

In 2018 the Trans-Adriatic gas pipeline is to be commissioned, along which no less than ten billion cubic meters of gas will be supplied by Azerbaijan to Europe. According to forecasts, the export of oil from Azerbaijan will diminish by that time (it is already less than the peak index of 2010).

The construction of the Trans-Adriatic gas pipeline will make Azerbaijan a strategic partner of the European Union. However, for the United States the strategic value of Baku in 2018 will also diminish. At present one of the most important transit routes to Afghanistan passes through Azerbaijan, but by that time the withdrawal of the U.S. troops from Afghanistan should be completed. Perhaps, the relations of Washington and Tehran will improve. This means that the United

States will be less concentrated on containing Iran with the help of its neighbors, Azerbaijan included.

The former U.S. Ambassador in Azerbaijan Richard Kozlarich, speaking about the situation, said that in connection with the changes in the sphere of regional security (along with the withdrawal of the western coalition forces from Afghanistan and in view of the situation on the oil and gas markets) Azerbaijan comes across growing competition on these markets and its significance in the world has diminished in the past few years. From this follows that Azerbaijan will have to create a new foundation for maintaining positive relations with the West, the United States in particular, as well as with its close neighbors.

Inasmuch as Azerbaijan's neighbors will remain the same within the next five years, the problem of Nagorny Karabakh, which is 25 years old, will remain the most acute one for both Azerbaijan and Armenia. Public opinion polls show that this unresolved territorial dispute remains problem No 1 for all rank-and-file Azerbaijanis. Almost twenty years after Azerbaijan's major defeat in the military confrontation with Armenia, the Karabakh problem is still at a dead end, and, as a western diplomat in Baku has noted recently, this is precisely the problem on which President Aliyev should be especially cautious.

In recent years the government of Azerbaijan has augmented the military budget to \$4 billion a year. It is to surpass the entire state budget of Armenia. President Aliyev asserts that he wishes to solve this dispute by peaceful means, but his country retains the right to resort to force, in long-term perspective, with a view to returning the territories lost. Meanwhile, the ceasefire line, or the contact line, remains the most dangerous militarized zone in Europe. Each side has deployed there more than 20,000 troops against each other, as a result of which

skirmishes break out quite frequently, which take a toll of over thirty lives annually. Thus, this conflict can hardly be called “frozen.” Although the degree of real violence is not too great, the level of rhetorical violence is threateningly high. Both parties, especially Azerbaijan, use an exclusively bellicose language on any disputed issue. A greater part of this aggressive rhetoric is nothing more than a political show; it should be noted that ultimately both Armenians and Azerbaijanis get along quite peacefully not far from the zone of conflict – in Georgia. Anyway, wrathful rhetoric undermines hopes for a peaceful solution of the problem.

To maintain peace around Karabakh becomes more difficult with every passing year. The Armenians are gradually getting used to being masters of this land now and are not inclined to agree with the formula “land in exchange for peace,” which could be taken as the basis for a peace agreement. The leader of Azerbaijan is confronted with unreal, overstated expectations in society, when its considerable section advocates a solution of the problem by the use of force. Meanwhile, all external forces are striving to avert a new potentially destructive conflict because of this disputed land.

All this means that the most probable scenario of the forthcoming developments in the next few years will be the preservation of the existing situation, which is “neither peace nor war,” although a possibility of a new flare-up of military hostilities caused by somebody’s miscalculation or political crisis is growing with every passing year and calls for the most serious attention.

Opaque Policy

Ten candidates took part in the elections on October 9, but only two of them had real weight: the incumbent president and the candidate from the united opposition Jamil Gasanli.³ The fact that Aliyev stood

for the third term caused heated arguments. Previously, the president of Azerbaijan could stay in office two terms, that is, in 2013 Aliyev should have resigned. However, in March 2009 he organized a constitutional referendum⁴ whose results allowed him to stand for the third term in succession.⁵

Gasanli gained 5.5 percent of all votes and came second. Representatives of the opposition claimed that their candidates became victims of falsifications. They were supported by the most influential group of observers from OSCE who stated that the election results were distorted because of restrictions of freedom of expression, meetings and associations, which did not allow them to ensure equal conditions for all candidates. The election campaign was accompanied by frequent complaints of candidates and voters about intimidation and restrictions with regard to the mass media.⁶

The election results reflect the existence of complex problems in the ranks of the Azerbaijani opposition. The two latest election campaigns had demonstrated their very poor organization. Many leaders of the opposition were veterans of the short-lived government of the Popular Front (1992–1993), whose popularity had fallen during the past years. True, the opposition managed to put forward a single candidate, a very respected person, Rustam Ibragimbekov, film director of international renown. Despite the fact that he was highly valued by Geidar Aliyev and his son Ilham Aliyev, Rustam Ibragimbekov sharply criticized the present government of Azerbaijan for corruption and the situation concerning human rights,

However, Ibragimbekov had to withdraw his application because he had dual citizenship – Azerbaijani and Russian. He tried to renounce the latter, but could not make it in due time. Then the opposition put forward the 61-year-old Jamil Gasanli as its candidate.

But neither before nor after the elections the opposition could bring many people out in the streets. It is difficult to say whether it was due to the lack of popular support or simple fear. Of course, the Azerbaijani opposition has to work in rather unfavorable conditions. The opposition parties are not allowed to hold meetings in the center of Baku, they have a very limited access to TV and radio, and moreover, some of opposition activists have been arrested recently.

In 2013 the government used very harsh measures against all dissidents. The two leading opposition politicians, Ilgar Mamedov and Tofik Yagublu, were arrested in February under false charges and are still in custody. An open persecution campaign was unfolded against journalist Khadiji Ismailova, who was active in denouncing corruption among the Azerbaijani elite.⁸

The “Human Rights Watch” organization has published a paper about the onslaught against democracy in Azerbaijan, which asserts that the government of the republic is undertaking coordinated efforts to restrict the political activity of the opposition, punishes those who criticize its actions or accuses it of corruption, as well as steps up control over non-governmental organizations.⁹ In reply, Elnur Aslanov, a high-ranking official of the presidential administration, called this paper “politically motivated” and stated that the “Human Rights Watch” works on assignment of various foreign centers.¹⁰

All this goes to show that political rivalry in Azerbaijan in the coming years will, most likely, be possible only within the ruling elite.

The former president Geidar Aliyev had been the leader of Azerbaijan from the end of the 1960s up to 2003, first as the leader of the communists and then (with a short interval) as the elected president. He created a vertical of power within the framework of which he personally controlled every serious decision, and gained enormous authority.

Under his son, who became president in 2003, the system of power has somewhat changed. Having been elected president for the third term Aliyev Jr will emerge from under the powerful shadow of his father, who had been elected president only for two terms. Ilham Aliyev will be able to push aside several influential veterans from his father's team, such as the 75-year-old Ramiz Mehtiyev, the head of the presidential administration.

He will hardly be able to maintain total control, like that established by his father, inasmuch as the enormous growth of national wealth during the past few years made it possible for other political figures to muster strength. The present political system is more oligarchic, and quite a few ministers, like Kemaleddin Geidarov (Minister for emergency situations) or Ziya Mamedov (Minister of transport), who have access to economic resources and regional support, hold very strong positions in it.

It is rather difficult in such countries as Azerbaijan to follow the ups and downs of public opinion, yet, there are data showing that the incumbent president is as popular as ever, and public discontent is mostly spearheaded against the oligarchs.

According to the "Caucasian Barometer-2012" public survey data, 83 percent of those polled in Azerbaijan trust the incumbent president implicitly or partly. Forty-nine percent of the respondents answered that the government "treated them justly," and 39 percent disagreed with these words.

People's discontent comes to the fore in Azerbaijan not too often. At the beginning of 2012 there were several scattered protest manifestations of various groups of the local population. These demonstrations were conditioned mainly by socio-economic and local problems. Shannon O'Lyre, professor of geography of Kansas University, emphasized that these public protests were mostly caused

by local problems: for instance, a mosque was closed somewhere, or a relative of a local official was not apprehended after committing an act of misdemeanor, or local traders protest against the emergence of new traders on their market, etc. But sometimes, public protests are caused by common national problems. For example, in January 2012 an unsanctioned protest meeting took place in Baku caused by the death of a soldier due to bullying.

Professor O'Lyre explains why people do not present claims to the supreme leadership of the country by the fact that President Aliyev's power seems too firm to them, Perhaps, they prefer to express discontent with local problems because, as they believe, they might have a chance to change the situation.

Observers in Azerbaijan adhering to different views agree that so far society does not see an alternative to the present ruling elite. Professor Brenda Sheffer of Haifa University, expert on Azerbaijan, asserts that Azerbaijani society has made a choice in favor of stability which is ensured by the present leadership. She says that most people in the world living through the "Arab spring" recognize the fact that an ineffective state cannot ensure human rights satisfactorily, and that an effective power, even with definite drawbacks, is better than instability and lawlessness. The idea of gradual evolution of the political system is more popular in Azerbaijan and enjoys broad support of the public, and the idea of a sharp change of ideology seems unattractive.

In the view of the active democrat Khikmet Gajizade, the opposition cannot exist and function in a system, which existed in the U.S.S.R. under Leonid Brezhnev. It is possible to talk of two hundred brave activists who still try to protest and who can be called "dissidents..." But they have no broad popular support. Although, even according to the official data, there were 200,000 people who voted for

Gasandi (unofficially, there were many more of those who voted for him).

Political Islam continues to be an unknown quantity. Officially, Azerbaijan follows the example of Kemalist Turkey – secular state in which most inhabitants are Muslims. Baku is one of the few Muslim cities in the world where one may not hear the voice of a muezzin calling the faithful for prayer. Nevertheless, it can be seen that many Azerbaijanis, especially young people, prefer a more vividly expressed Muslim identity. This is shown, among other things, by the growing number of young men attending mosque, and girls wearing headscarf.

Most Muslims in Azerbaijan are Shi'ite. Azerbaijan fears the increasing influence of Shia Iran in the South and rebel-Salaphites from the North Caucasus in the North. But by suppressing various outward manifestations of Islam the government of Azerbaijan has only worsened the situation. In November 2011 it introduced a ban on wearing headscarf and closed down several mosques. However, this removed only outward signs of militant Islam but not its causes, and drove dissidents underground.

Azerbaijan is calm and quiet outwardly, but the situation may change within the next five years. And the main reason for this will definitely be economics.

After several years of constant economic growth, the main problem facing Azerbaijan in the near future is as follows: is its present economic model stable, which largely depends on the export of oil...

Thanks to the incomes from the export of oil transported along the Baku – Tbilisi – Ceyhan oil pipeline, the growth rates of Azerbaijan's economy between 2005 and 2007 were the world's highest. But now oil extraction is going down. Speaking in Washington in September 2013, Gyulmira Rzayeva, expert from the Center of Strategic Studies in Baku, stated that beginning from 2015–2016 oil

extraction would noticeably diminish. The incomes reached their peak in 2010 and are now going down, although the State Oil Foundation set up in 2001 was meant to support the state budget in case of such reduction.¹¹

A slump of the world prices of oil will deal a blow at the economies of Azerbaijan's neighbors rich in oil – Iran and Russia, rather than Azerbaijan itself. This is said by Brenda Shaffer. This is due to the fact that Azerbaijan regularly includes in its state budget the lower price of oil than its actual price. Besides, Azerbaijan has a comparatively small population, and this is why it will be able to keep government services to the population at a proper level, even if the price of oil falls down. Whereas countries with a big population whose economy is also based on the export of oil, like Iran and Russia, will have it more difficult to maintain the level of social services at the previous level, especially if the price of oil goes down for a long time, Brenda Shaffer added.

Although Azerbaijan succeeds in softening the effect of a short-term lowering of incomes from sales of oil, it has to consider the new grim reality, namely, that the easy time of great incomes from oil is coming to a close. In order to cope with this problem Azerbaijan is going to become a big exporter of gas within the next five years.

The European Union has for many years already promoted the “Nabucco” construction project for transporting gas from the Shah Deniz deposit in Azerbaijan to countries of Central Europe. This is a sufficiently big project, although all its economic pros and cons have not yet been studied thoroughly enough. This pipeline is to start in Greece and pass through the territory of Albania and the Adriatic Sea to Italy. According to Lorain Rusekas from “IHS Cambridge Energy Research Associates, the most important aspect of the project is that the route of the pipeline will go directly from the Caspian Sea to Western

Europe. The realization of the second stage of the Shah Deniz project will make Azerbaijan a big supplier of gas.

Meanwhile, the state-owned oil and gas company of Azerbaijan “SOGAR”¹² is expanding its activity in the world and will remain one of the players in European energy politics. It is a serious investor in Georgia and Turkey. Recently, “SOGAR” has bought two-thirds of the shares of the Greece’s gas-distribution network.¹³

Although TAP is more modest and smaller than “Nabucco,” it is less vulnerable to fluctuations of demand for gas in Europe. The experience accumulated during work on the Baku – Tbilisi – Ceyhan project makes it possible to evaluate the prospects of the Trans-Adriatic gas pipeline optimistically.

However, compared to the oil market, the world gas market is more volatile and incomes on it are lower. According to Gyulmira Rzayeva (September 2013), whereas Azerbaijan received about \$800 per 1,000 tons of oil previously, it will get about \$50 per 1,000 cubic meters of gas. This is a vivid example of the great difference between the country’s incomes from oil and gas. Even according to the most optimistic forecasts, within the next decade the country will receive for gas less than half of what it earns from the export of oil at present. Meanwhile, there are other producers and exporters of hydrocarbons catching up with Azerbaijan, for example Algeria, countries of the East Mediterranean, Northern Iraq, as well as countries producing liquefied natural gas in other regions of the world.

The more incomes from oil and gas go to the state budget of Azerbaijan, the more questions are asked in society as to how these incomes are distributed. The volume of corruption in the country is a matter of serious concern of the Azerbaijani people. For instance, a big scandal broke out in 2012 when the former university rector, who had fled to France, circulated damaging information about selling and

buying seats in the country's parliament.¹⁴ In 2012, Azerbaijan held 139th place (out of 176) in the index of corruption level determined by the "Transparency International" organization, being at the same level with Russia.¹⁵

According to the view of O'Lear, an analysis of the experience of countries in a similar situation, that is, those largely depending on the export of oil, shows that the uneven distribution of benefits from the oil rent enables the ruling political elite to ignore the problems of improvement of the state management system with a view to creating the basis for affluent society.

Ilham Aliyev begins his third presidential term of office in a relatively safe situation. Azerbaijan is now living through a period of an unprecedented prosperity. It has succeeded to sign an important international agreement envisaging supplies of gas directly from the Caspian Sea to the European Union.

However, the political system of Azerbaijan remains close and non-transparent and this causes serious concern, because the experience of the leaders of two neighboring countries (Erdogan in Turkey and Putin in Russia) shows that even leaders whose power seems unshakeable, come across dangerous and unexpected challenges seemingly coming out of nowhere. To stay immovable when the surrounding world is changing rapidly is not a way out for the Azerbaijani leadership. The next five years will be crucial for Azerbaijan, it will have to adapt to changes and implement reforms necessary for solving absolutely new economic and international problems.

In September 2013 several experts on Azerbaijan were asked to answer the following question: "Is the Azerbaijani economic model stable?" Here are their answers.

Gubad Ibadoglu, member of the directorate of the Center of economic research (Baku):

“Yes, for a short term, but risky for medium-term and long-term prospect.”

Richard Kozlarich, former U.S. Ambassador in Azerbaijan:

“In the context of stagnancy or reduction of the export of energy carriers and absence of a serious economic diversification in the non-energy sector the present economic model does not look stable. If the economic model is unstable, the present political system based on corruption will experience serious overloads.”

Lorain Rusekas, senior adviser of the company “IHS Cambridge Energy Research Associates”:

“Yes, possibly for some ten years, but not for a long-term period, because the Azerbaijani model is based on the incomes from the export of oil, which are dwindling gradually. Most likely, Azerbaijan will turn into a big exporter of gas, and incomes from it will help it survive. But it is quite possible that in view of the downfall of the world prices of oil, Azerbaijan will show the general trend of a gradual reduction of incomes from hydrocarbons export. This will be accompanied with smaller investments of oil money in the local economy, which will have an adverse effect on the development of other sectors.”

Brenda Shaffer, professor of Haifa University and invited researcher at Georgetown University:

“More than half of all incomes received from the export of oil is transferred to the State Oil Fund thanks to which the country with its relatively small population can withstand possible price shocks. In contrast to oil export, incomes from the realization of gas projects are received after some time, usually in more than ten years. However, the implementation of new projects of gas export will give an incentive to economic activity and creation of new jobs. A considerable part of the

Shah Deniz deposit is in gas condensate, and export of this product can bring in rapid profit, whereas the export of natural gas involves the construction of pipelines, and it takes long time to receive the first profit.”

Notes

- ¹ <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-08-13/azeri-russian-arms-trade+billion-amid-tension-with-armenia.html>
- ² <http://carnegieendowment.org/2013/06/19/new-narrative-for-karabakh-conflict/gb2e>
- ³ http://hiostory.bsu.edu.az/en/content/jamil_poladkhan_hasanly_248
- ⁴ <http://humanrightshouse.org/Articles/10357.html>
- ⁵ http://www.rferl.org/content/Azerbaijani_Parliament_Approves_Referendum_On_Presidential_Term_Limit?136+057.html
- ⁶ <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/106901>
- ⁷ <http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/azerbaijan-opposition-candidate-arrested-ahead-presidential-elections-2013>
- ⁸ <http://www.freedomhouse.org/article/smear-campaign-escalates-against-azerbaijani-rferl-reporter>
- ⁹ <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2013/09/01/tightening-screws>
- ¹⁰ http://en.apa.az/xeber_azerbaijan_s_presidential_administration_198788.html
- ¹¹ http://www.jamestown_org/press/events/video-azerbaijan-and-the-southern-gas-corridoe-energy-security/
- ¹² <http://www.invest.gov.tr/en-US/infocenter/news/Pages/220513-sogar-signs-turkey-refinery-deal.aspx>
- ¹³ <http://abc.az/eng/news/76138.html>
- ¹⁴ <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/01/how-to-buy-a-seat-in-azerbaijans-parliament/267065>
- ¹⁵ <http://www.transparency.org/country#AZE>

“Pro et Contra,” Moscow, 2013, November, pp. 76–87.

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THE U.S. AND EUROPEAN UNION'S POLICY IN CENTRAL ASIA

(Comparative analysis)

On November 6, 2012, the incumbent President from the Democratic party, Barack Obama, won the elections and gained the right to the second term of office.

During the next few years Central Asia will be of interest for the United States as a transit region for withdrawing manpower and military hardware and equipment from Afghanistan (and also as potential customers for purchasing or leasing American military equipment from Afghanistan). In case of an exacerbation of political and strategic relations between the United States and China the value of Central Asia as the place of access to China's rear will sharply increase.

President Obama's policy toward Central Asia up to 2017 can be influenced by the following factors (apart from the Afghan and Chinese): the strengthening of Islamic radicalism and terrorism, a large-scale and prolonged conflict with Iran, greater rapprochement with Russia within the framework of Putin's course aimed at reintegration of the post-Soviet area, and unpredicted change of power in certain Central Asian states.

Principles, Methods and Tasks of Obama's Central Asian Policy

In the traditional approach of the United States to Central Asia there are three aspects worth mentioning: "balanced strengthening," "democracy above all" and "security above all."¹

The principle of “balanced strengthening” is undoubtedly supported by the present administration. It boils down to the need of the U.S.A. to adhere to a course aimed at balanced realization of all its strategic aims (policy, democracy and energy resources) and use a multidimensional approach to solving the problems of security and democracy, and ensuring economic interests.

The “democracy above all” principle conforms to official assertions that the war against terrorism and democracy are not mutually exclusive aims. Adherents to this principle criticize the Central Asian policy of Washington for the fact that its words are at variance with deeds: it loads democracy and at the same time sacrifices it to security interests. The supporters of the “democracy above all” principle believe that the emphasis of the American administration on such security problems as the war against terrorism sends a wrong signal to the leaders of the Central Asian countries and gives them grounds to consider that the White House’s moderation in its support of political and economic reforms in these countries is a reward for their support of the U.S. war against terrorism. Thus, these countries’ leaders may regard the American support of the cause of democracy and human rights a matter of a far-off future.

The supporters of the “security above all” principle disagree with the “democracy above all” principle. They recognize a great significance of democratic reforms for stability in Central Asia and the implementation of American interests in the region. But they do not believe that at present the United States should concentrate its main efforts and resources on establishing democracy in Central Asian countries. On the contrary, they maintain that Washington should diminish its rhetoric about democracy, and try to better understand the complex situation in countries of the region, and cooperate with them in the fight against terrorism for the sake of the national interests and

long-term strategic aims of the United States. Due to a special position of Central Asia, it is a hub of intercrossing interests of big powers, which seriously complicates the situation in the region. In these circumstances the United States should be very cautious in its support of democracy in Central Asia.

As to the U.S. policy in Central Asia in the sphere of political and economic liberalization, and protection of human rights, it will hardly be changed. An annual report of the U.S. Department of State published on March 11, 2010, on observance of human, economic and political rights defines Uzbekistan as a country with the gravest situation concerning human rights, (the report specially notes the use of child labor, strict control over the mass media, and further strengthening of authoritarianism).

Managing political risks connected with hydrocarbons' supply, as well as distribution of direct investments abroad has always been considered a priority of American foreign policy, and has been part of the U.S. foreign economic strategy. At the jubilee summit of NATO in Strasburg in 2009, its members decided that "energy security" was one of NATO priorities. This has led to the creation of the rapid-reaction forces in the Caspian region.

The persons in charge of working out the U.S. Central Asian policy in the Obama administration believe that it is necessary to overcome internal structural contradictions of their policy and solve three crucial problems. The first is to dispel apprehensions and distrust of the Central Asian countries toward U.S. efforts to establish democracy in the countries of the region. In this connection it seems that prior to the implementation of its Central Asian policy the White House should strengthen its contacts with the governments of regional countries in order to improve its image there. Another challenge to the

United States is Russia, which does not agree with the U.S. policy and will obstruct it. And the third is Afghanistan.²

On the whole, American experts are skeptical concerning the implementation prospects of the concept of “Greater Central Asia” which the administration of President George Bush Jr. left to Barack Obama to deal with. Nevertheless, this concept is listed as an aim of the foreign policy of the present administration.

As to the interconnection of the projects “Greater Middle East” and “Greater Central Asia,” their realization depends on how successfully Washington will pursue its policy in the Middle East, as well as on the development of the situation in Afghanistan. Taking into consideration the latest events in the Middle East, one can say that that United States has not given up their attempts to implement these “megaprojects.” Thus, the integration of Central Asia as a united region in the Euro-Atlantic area remains on the agenda of the U.S. long-term strategy.

On the whole, the “Greater Central Asia” project is but part of Washington’s strategic planning aimed at the transformation of entire Eurasia into a vast geo-economic area, which will include the Caspian region, Central Asia, Middle East and South Asia. Thus, the United States can theoretically lay the foundations for creating a “sanitary cordon” in the South along the perimeter of the borders of Russia and China, and the geopolitical field of the participants in regional rivalry has been broadened in the interests of the White House.

The principal amendments of the U.S. policy in the region include:

- Reinstatement of a number of posts and units in the administration and the setting up of the Department of South and Central Asia;

- Attempt to integrate Central and South Asia with an emphasis on the role of Afghanistan, with a view to forming “Greater Central Asia”;

- Plans concerning the “North – South” transport corridor for diversifying the export of energy resources from Central Asia;

- Use of different approach (from strategic point of view) to different countries of the region with a view to turning Kazakhstan into a “corridor of reforms” and “regional leader”;

- Greater emphasis on the role of education and non-governmental organizations in the promotion of democracy in Central Asia with a view to removing fears caused by the development of democracy in the region.

American analysts maintain that opposite factors act in the Central Asian regions: each country is striving to overcome its own internal difficulties – the United States attempts to increase its influence, while Russia restricts its attempts. Certain states of Central Asia can simply be bought, while others decided to wait for Moscow’s permission to sign a deal with the United States. No matter what agreements Washington might sign – whether on transit through the Caspian Sea or directly via Russian territory, access to Afghanistan from the North is not possible without agreement with at least one Central Asian country.

The previous American administration has not stated so far that its policy toward Central Asian countries needs serious amendments or revision. However, recognition of the errors made requires this. American experts single out three serious errors in the U.S. policy in Central Asia: in solving problems of regional countries the United States has not even tried to coordinate the positions of its various government offices; Washington has not properly understood the specific features of the countries and peoples of Central Asia and

the region as a whole; the United States has not even tried to coordinate its efforts with actions of other outside actors.

After coming to power the Obama administration was expected to revise thoroughly its strategy in Central Asia, particularly, it was hoped that it would renounce its “Greater Central Asia” concept. All the more so, since the war in Afghanistan made it necessary to use the transport routes passing through Central Asia.

To keep its grouping in Afghanistan Washington needed reliable route through the territory of CIS countries, inasmuch as cargo transit in connection with political instability in Pakistan and difficult relations between Islamabad and Delhi becomes practically unfeasible from the point of view of security. To date, in connection with the spectacular plans of the Obama administration to broaden the American military presence in Central Asian countries, the latter will play a vital role in supporting military operations in Afghanistan.

U.S. plans on Afghanistan have increased hopes in Certain Central Asian countries for greater American assistance and more investments. Yet, fears remained concerning Washington’s use of anti-terrorist operations for entrenching its military grouping in Central Asia, just as it did in 2001–2002.

Another problem of American policy in the region, which needs amendments on the part of the Obama administration, is the U.S. attitude toward CSTO. The White House believes that this organization is controlled by Russia and to establish relations with it would mean to recognize it as a legitimate member of the international community. Thus Washington will have, at least at a minimal level, to maintain contacts with the Russian Federation on the most crucial problems emerging in Central Asian countries. This would speed up the development of relations with the countries of the region and give

Moscow to understand that in actual fact Washington is not striving to pursue its interests, disregarding other states.

Moscow holds the view that the problems involving the deployment and functioning of Russian military objects in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are created by certain pro-American politicians in these countries. In Kyrgyzstan among such politicians are Roza Otunbayeva, and in Tajikistan – H. Zarifi.

It could be imagined how Obama's policy toward the region will develop. Evidently, an attempt should be made to eliminate previous drawbacks in Washington's Central Asian policy. Primarily, this concerns better coordination of the work of the Department of State and the Pentagon.

On the whole, the Obama administration has inherited a powerful enough base from its predecessors for exerting a profound and regular influence from the position of "soft power." We mean various foundations and their branches, information and cultural centers, American "corners" and councils, etc. In all, there are many such resource centers of the United States in the region: in Kazakhstan – 22, in Kyrgyzstan – 15, in Tajikistan – 9, in Turkmenistan – 5, and in Uzbekistan – 1. (Besides, the "Voice of America" radio has daily broadcasts in the Uzbek language).³

However, as is known, the Obama administration did not have a clear-cut concept of its policy in the region. All interests of the United States in Central Asia are concentrated on the military operation in Afghanistan. The significance of the region for the U.S. administration stems from the possibility to arrange and protect the transit of military cargoes for the coalition forces of the U.S. and NATO in Afghanistan. In April 2010 Obama's attention was drawn to the region in connection with the developments in Kyrgyzstan. The White House took a position which presupposed responsibility of Russia (leader of CSTO) and

Kazakhstan (chairman of OSCE) for stability in that republic and the region as a whole.

Cooperation between the United States (jointly with the European Union) and Central Asian countries in the sphere of energy remains a priority task for the White House. Emphasis will be laid on the further “Americanization” of the Caspian region and reorientation of the flows of Caspian oil-and-gas resources to Europe. The United States, along with its partners in the European Union, will continue to exert efforts to lay out trunk oil and gas pipelines from this region to European markets, bypassing Russian territory.

In March 2011 a highly-placed official at the U.S. Department of State said that American policy in Central Asia also includes annual consultations with each country of the region. One of the aspects to be discussed is the freedom of the mass media, conscience, and political gatherings. Washington is out to persuade the authorities of these countries in that they need to create economic and political opportunities for young people (with due account of the developments in the Middle East).

The United States would not like to come to the point where it will have to choose between the present-day leaders or the forces of revolution overthrowing governments. The United States will come out against the Central Asian authorities’ attempts “to crack down on people and restrict freedoms.”⁴

Apart from that, in its Central Asian strategy the United States has to consider the Chinese factor. In March 2011 the deputy Secretary of State Robert Blake in charge of relations with Central Asia, visited China. The two countries discussed the aims of the United States and Beijing in the region. Central Asia is an important market for Chinese goods, and three Central Asian states border on China. Washington studies the possibilities of cooperation with China in the region. On the

other hand, the United States would like China to take a more active part in Afghanistan's rehabilitation.

Although due to the financial crisis and a drop of the world prices of energy-carriers one can expect a curtailment of a number of energy projects in the Caspian basin lobbied by the United States, this region, including Central Asia, will inevitably remain an arena of rivalry with Russia for the spheres of influence.

Nevertheless, there is a certain coincidence of interests of the United States and Russia in the region. Political destabilization will have negative consequences for the United States in its global strategy. For the Russian Federation as a regional power a tangible threat will emerge of a destabilization of its southern borders.

According to certain experts, the United States will soon have to choose between the following alternatives: pipelines from Kazakhstan bypassing Russia; transport routes of delivering hydrocarbons bypassing Iran; transportation projects of energy resources which will limit China's access to resources of Central Asia.

Evidently, it is impossible to follow all three alternatives at once. In medium-term perspective, the United States will be able to rely on Russian transportation projects.

In its relations with Russia concerning Central Asia the United States could use the following method: to persuade Moscow that regionalization is the only alternative to "Islamization" or to the Central Asian region getting into the sphere of Chinese influence.

Central Asia and the European Union

After the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. Central Asia, just as the entire post-Soviet area, has virtually become part of "political Europe," that is, a region in the sphere of the geopolitical interests of the European Union.

In the first half of 2007 Germany took the post of the Chairman of the EU Council. One of the major tasks on its agenda at the time was the revision of the European Union's policy in Central Asia.⁵ In June 2007 the EU Council adopted a new Strategic document on Central Asia prepared mainly by Germany. It reflected shortcomings and positive aspects of European policy in the region. According to the document prepared on May 31, 2007, which was entitled "The EU and Central Asia: Strategy for New Partnership" and covered a period between 2007 and 2013, the aims of the EU in the region were as follows: to ensure stability and security of its member-countries; contribute to reducing poverty and raising the living standards; assist in every way possible regional cooperation between the states of Central Asia and between them and the EU, especially in the sphere of energy, transport, higher education, and environmental protection.

The strategic aims of the European Union and practical tasks of reaching them were formulated in the following way:

- The threat of Islamic radicalism should be taken very seriously and the states of the region, especially Uzbekistan, should be given all assistance possible in strengthening their law-enforcement agencies and implementing radical reforms of the entire security system;

- Afghanistan should be given more attention, especially its role in the economy and security of Central Asian republics, whereas transcontinental trade should be developed in all directions, not only toward Russia and Europe;

- Turkey might be a important connecting link through which Europe might get an opportunity to exert its influence on processes going on in Central Asia, and cooperation with Ankara on these issues should broaden;

- Cooperation with the reformist forces in the governments and parliaments of Central Asian countries should be strengthened.

At present European experts have come to the conclusion that the Central Asian strategy of the European Union may prove ineffective. True, it is too early to assess the effectiveness of this strategy.

It is indicative that European politicians sincerely believe that the establishment of stable democratic and secular regimes in countries of Central Asia and the South Caucasus will make it possible to create a sort of “security belt,” which will separate Europe from the unstable regions of the Islamic world. On the whole, there is no concerted opinion among European analysts whether Central Asia is really very important to the European Union. Of course, the EU countries actively support participation of their companies, above all, energy ones, in developing the resources of the region in order to ensure the uninterrupted supply of oil and gas from Central Asian countries.

Actually, the European Union has not achieved a single one of its strategic aims set in the 1990s: poverty still exists, just as resistance to reforms; the situation with human rights and the level of democracy are unsatisfactory; the energy interests of the EU are still unprotected. In the sphere of security the European Union is still marking time. Europe should be more self-confident and display more realism in its policy in the sphere of human rights and democracy.⁶ Besides, the EU could better coordinate its strategy with other international actors, particularly NATO and OSCE.

Speaking of the strategy of Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries with regard to the European Union, one should proceed from understanding the nature of Europe’s interest in cooperation with countries of the Central Asian region and community of interests of the EU and CA. Naturally, Central Asia is of interest to the European Union primarily as a stable source of natural resources. On the other hand, European countries as NATO members play a no small role in the struggle against the threats emanating from Afghanistan. Besides,

the EU does not welcome the dominant role of the United States in Eurasia and intends to consider the role of Russia in the region. Experts have now been saying that it is precisely the European Union that can play the role of counterbalance (inasmuch as Russia keeps aloof) to the growing domination of China in Central Asia. All these factors should be taken into account in forming the position of Central Asian countries toward the European Union.⁷

Evidently, the relations of the European Union and Central Asia in the near future will be influenced by geopolitical factors and the geo-economic situation. Among these factors are the new strategy of the United States in Central Asia, unclear development prospects of the military-strategic situation in Afghanistan, relations between Russia and the West, the world economic crisis, and the growing importance of energy resources and food security. These factors can exert both positive and negative influence on the development of relations between Europe and Central Asia. Much will depend on the political will of the actors in this complex geopolitical situation themselves. But there can be no doubt that both Europe and central Asia are interested in each other.

Revision of Central Asian Eurostrategy

The leading European experts on Central Asia have submitted two types of recommendations for the European Union: general strategic and narrower technical recommendations.⁸

They admit that security problems are especially timely for both Central Asia and the European Union: they include their own energy security, the necessity of diversification of energy supplies, and the Afghan problem.

Cooperation between the European Union and Kazakhstan merits special attention. The Republic of Kazakhstan is the key country in the

region, which is interested in broadening its ties with the European Union, which has been expressed in its strategic program “Road to Europe.” Kazakhstan’s chairmanship in OSCE in 2010 opened opportunities for a more active foreign and political policy, for one, greater political convergence with the EU.

The European Union emphasizes that it expects serious political decisions and changes from Kazakhstan. This can exert a positive influence on the entire Central Asian region, become a great strategic achievement, and contribute to a breakthrough in relations between the EU and Uzbekistan.

The concept of regional cooperation used by the EU in Central Asia should be revised. The EU should devote greater attention to the opportunities opened by the cooperation of Central Asian countries with their neighbors outside the region (East Europe, Russia, China and South Asia), where the EU has special geopolitical interests (for instance, in the sphere of energy, transport and security). In actual fact the EU already uses the concept of more open regionalism, mainly through projects connecting Central Asia and the initiative (“Eastern Partnership.”)

Assessing the reasons for the failure of EU policy in Central Asia, European analysts come to a conclusion that the problem lies in the fact that strategic interests are too broad, this is why the main aim is out of focus, and the instruments of activity are a varied and vast set of normative aims and technical means. The European Union does not have a potential for implementing a strict security policy, and this is why it bases its foreign policy on contributing to the development of a normative world order with a special emphasis on human rights, international law, regional cooperation, and international bodies.

European strategists believe that Central Asia is the only place in the world in which all big powers of the planet – Russia in the North,

China in the East, South Asia in the South, and Europe in the West – display great interest; of course, the United States is politically present there, too.

Differentiated Approach to Central Asian Countries

U.S. and EU relations with Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan (as the chairman of OSCE) had the most active contacts with the United States in 2010. Although Central Asia is important for the United States, primarily from the point of view of supporting and implementing the operation in Afghanistan by coalition forces, and also because of supplies of energy resources to the world markets, Kazakhstan is for Washington an ambitious, influential, and in contrast to some of its neighbors, predictable political player not only in Central Asia, but in the entire post-Soviet area.⁹

In crisis time the interest of American companies has increased in developing the promising markets, Kazakhstan being one of them. Thanks to the introduction of industrial-innovative strategy by the government of Kazakhstan, investment companies and banks of the United States have intensified their activities. The United States holds the view that Kazakhstan's entry in the Customs Union should not have a negative effect on its possibility to join the World Trade Organization.

At present, American agro-industrial companies, as well as firms dealing with medical equipment plus educational institutions from the United States would like to invest in projects on Kazakhstan's territory. However, it would seem that the existing percent ratio of investments in the oil complex and other branches of Kazakhstan's economy will not change. Sixty-five percent of American investments in the republic will

be channeled in oil and gas branches and accompanying transport infrastructure.

During the years of the development of bilateral economic relations the United States has invested in Kazakhstan's economy \$14.3 billion (from 1993), mainly in the oil-and-gas industry and accompanying services. However, at present export from the United States in Kazakhstan has dropped to the level of 2005 and amounted to \$600 million for 2009, although there was a time, when it reached \$ 1 billion. Of this sum 40 percent was spent on equipment for the oil-and-gas branch, 25 percent – to transport machines and equipment, and the rest – on computers, communications, electronics, and chemical industry.¹⁰

Kazakhstan is regarded by American analysts as the most important, influential and biggest state in the region. Its territory is too vast to be controlled by a small population. Moreover, Kazakhstan has a long border with Russia and depends on it in terms of transit of oil and natural gas to the West. Perhaps, this situation will change when infrastructural projects begin to work. Kazakhstan is anxious to find export alternatives for its rich energy resources, including via the Caspian Sea and to China.

When the United States and NATO succeeded to agree with practically all key states bordering on Afghanistan on transit of military cargoes for the coalition forces, the question arose about inviting new countries and military contingents to this operation. Kazakhstan was regarded for this role already at the beginning of 2008.

On November 13, 2010, Kazakhstan and the United States signed an additional agreement on air transit through its territory for goods delivery to Afghanistan. On December 3, 2010, Kazakhstan adopted a decision to send its military instructors and engineers to the International forces of assistance to security in Afghanistan. This was

said by Hillary Clinton who made a trip to several Central Asian countries at the time.

Evidently, the United States is an important partner of Kazakhstan in the sphere of investments (the total sum of American investments in Kazakhstan's economy has exceeded \$15 billion), in the fuel-and-energy complex and high-tech.

It is of principal importance for the United States that Kazakhstan is not only the key link in foreign policy of Central Asian countries, but also a major partner. Washington highly assesses the friendly policy pursued by Kazakhstan toward the United States.

At present unique opportunities open for broadening and deepening economic relations between the European Union and Kazakhstan with a view to ensuring a more active participation of Kazakhstan in the progressive system of international relations.

In the view of European experts, the system of power of the Republic of Kazakhstan is a complex structure consisting of different groups with different priorities. Nevertheless, the country's authorities aim at the modernization of their state and its many-vector foreign policy includes the European direction. Besides, it is evident that Kazakhstan is trying to reduce its dependence on the powerful neighbors – Russia and China.¹¹

The “Road to Europe” program adopted at the beginning of 2009, as well as its chairmanship of OSCE in 2010, are indications of Kazakhstan's interest in cooperation with Europe.

The European Union and Kazakhstan wish to broaden their policy of good-neighborliness and eastern partnership, and the EU treaty signed in Morocco, as well as an agreement with Ukraine demonstrate similar intentions.¹²

The new agreements can include all functions of the European Union, as well as the spheres of foreign policy, security, judicial and

legal system, and internal affairs. Prospects in the sphere of trade are limited at the present stage in connection with the fact that Kazakhstan has entered into the Customs Union with Russia and Belarus. In this case a treaty on free trade between the European Union and Kazakhstan becomes possible only in case of its being signed by all three members of the Union.

The European Union also has to examine the possibility of drawing Kazakhstan more comprehensively in “Eastern partnership.”

On the whole, the EU should actively encourage Kazakhstan in its efforts to develop relations with the Council of Europe and participate in the work of the Parliamentary Assembly in an observer status, including full-fledged membership in the Council of Europe based on serious political reforms and better observance of human rights. The European Commission should contribute to a more active participation of European institutions in the work of the new technical University in Astana.

Relations of the United States and European Union with Kyrgyzstan. From the point of view of rivalry between the United States and the Russian Federation in the post-Soviet area and other Eurasian regions, the measures for possible curtailment of the constant presence of the U.S.A. in Kyrgyzstan seem quite logical, inasmuch as they reflect deep contradictions between the two sides.

Prior to the events in April 2010, which led to the overthrow of K. Bakiyev, the then president of Kyrgyzstan, the American side worked on the problem of opening another military object on Kyrgyz territory – a training center in Batken region of Kyrgyzstan. Its cost was estimated at \$5.5 million. Earlier the American side earmarked several million dollars for the construction of training centers for the Kyrgyz special forces.

In May 2010 the assistant of the U.S. Secretary of State J. Croll, in charge of relations with Central Asia, visited the region. He had consultations with representatives of the new Kyrgyz leadership, as well as Moscow. That visit showed Washington's concern over the development of the situation in the country, which could create a threat to stability in the region and U.S. interests there. As to economic assistance to Kyrgyzstan, the United States intended to work jointly with international organizations: UN, OSCE, IMF, and the World Bank. At the same time the United States continued to work on the programs which they implemented in Kyrgyzstan prior to the revolution there, supporting the development of democracy, economy, and the free independent mass media. The United States rendered technical assistance to holding a referendum and subsequent elections.

It is indicative that in June 2010 the Pentagon temporarily suspended the refueling of its military planes, which helped carry on military operations in Afghanistan. In June of that year Kyrgyzstan was visited by the NATO representative for Central Asia and the Caucasus R. Simmons. As a result, in the summer of 2010 the then President of the country Roza Otunbayeva, without parliamentary and government approval, prolonged the term of deployment of the U.S. base at Manas airport.

According to certain information, Roza Otunbayeva has secretly reduced the rent for leasing the Manas airforce base for the American side from \$150 million to \$60 million. Moreover, she assured Hillary Clinton, the Department of State Secretary, in December 2010 that the new Kyrgyz leadership would do everything to ensure the smooth functioning of the American center in Kyrgyzstan.

In March 2011, Roza Otunbayeva visited Washington and asked the United States administration for economic assistance. It could be in the form of investments by American companies, or purchases of

Kyrgyz commodities for the needs of military operations in Afghanistan. During her visit to the United States Roza Otunbayeva also said that Kyrgyzstan was ready to open an American training center in the south of the country.

In the elections of December 2011, Almazbek Atambayev became President of Kyrgyzstan. Political games around Manas continued. At its first news conference A. Atambayev declared his firm intentions to fight corruption, close down the airbase of the United States, and raise the living standards of the Kyrgyz population. After coming to power President A. Atambayev officially stated that he intended to curtail the operations of the U.S. Center of transit transportation at Manas airport by 2014.

In March 2012, the U.S. Secretary of defense Leon Panetta arrived in Bishkek. The main subject of his negotiations with the Kyrgyz leadership was the fate of the Manas base. It was quite important for the coalition forces operating in Afghanistan since the transit routes via Pakistan were closed.

Bishkek informed Washington that after 2014 there should not be a military base of the United States in the country, and the airport in the capital should become a civil enterprise. It is quite probable that the ultimate fate of the U.S. military object in Kyrgyzstan will be solved in a broader context of Russian-American relations.

European experts, while assessing the situation in Kyrgyzstan, maintain that the country's economy is weak, and the main active economic life is concentrated in its capital – Bishkek. Negative consequences for the export of goods have arisen for Kyrgyzstan after Kazakhstan and Russia joined the Customs Union. The country has a sufficient hydropower potential, in which big investments have been made. But this sector also has considerable difficulties.

Since 2005, after the revolution which has brought to power another clan instead of the previous one, the scope and opportunities for political freedoms has constantly been reduced.

Within the framework of the program of dialogues on human rights in Kazakhstan, the European Union intends to demand that Kyrgyzstan fulfill the following conditions: stop persecution of the opposition members; liberalize the legislation on freedom of assembly; cease the practice of persecution of human rights activists and human rights organizations; investigate cases of torture in prisons; cease persecution of journalists and guarantee their safety; stop intimidation of non-governmental organizations by the authorities.

Relations of the United States and European Union with Uzbekistan. The situation is different in relations between the United States and Uzbekistan. The latter has long been an important link in the entire Central Asian security scheme of the United States. However, Washington has not been trusting Tashkent for quite some time. Empty phrases about the common fight against international terrorism and assistance in carrying out operations by the coalition forces in Afghanistan cannot conceal considerable circumspection which the U.S. leadership feels with regard to Tashkent's policy.¹³

Uzbekistan is regarded by Washington as the central and very important player in the Central Asian region. This state has regional hegemonic aspirations and is capable to throw a challenge to Moscow. There are big Uzbek diasporas in all neighboring countries, which gives Tashkent a possibility to interfere in the policy of each of these states. Besides, Uzbekistan is self-sufficient in terms of food and energy, in contrast to other post-Soviet countries of the region, except Kazakhstan. In contrast to the latter, Uzbekistan does not border on Russia, but on Afghanistan.

In actual fact, it is the most important potential partner for the United States. Uzbekistan not only has highway and railway connections with Afghanistan, but there is also a Soviet military base deployed on its territory, which has already been used by Americans. To boot, Uzbekistan has demonstrated quite convincingly that it does not fear Russia. This fact deserves special attention, in the view of American analysts.

Uzbekistan's significance for the United States is grater in connection with the fact that at the present stage it is possible to deliver many NATO and American cargoes by the shortest and most reliable routes via Uzbek territory.

However, personal contacts between the U.S. leadership and the President of Uzbekistan leave much to be desired. There has been no stable and reliable dialogue between Washington and Tashkent so far. Besides, Washington is also aware of the fact that President Islam Karimov is a slightly "enigmatic" figure for other leading world players in this region – Russia, China, and the European Union countries. This is why Washington will continue to develop its relations with Tashkent as much as possible.

Inasmuch as the United States has decided to use the "Northern corridor" in its Afghan transit, which is on the territory of Russia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, it was Uzbekistan that became the key link for the NATO operation. The Manas base in Kyrgyzstan will be replaced by the Navoi airfield in Uzbekistan, which will be reconstructed and modernized by South Korea.

Relations between the United States and Uzbekistan slightly warmed in 2009, and in the following year the former offered Tashkent cooperation in programs of supplying the American troops in Afghanistan. Tashkent gave Washington an opportunity to supply its forces via the Navoi airport. Tashkent's orientation to the United States

and the West may change the structure of influence in Central Asia, weaken Russia's influence there, and give an incentive to Uzbekistan to fight for regional leadership. However, experts believe that these processes cannot be regarded as a change in Tashkent's geopolitical orientation. They are rather a tactical ruse of Islam Karimov, who sees closer cooperation with the United States and the European Union more advantageous to Uzbekistan.

At the end of January 2010 President Karimov signed a Plan of cooperation with the United States. This document was based on the results of the first round of Uzbek-American political consultations. Washington relies on interaction with Uzbekistan in the political, economic and social spheres, as well as in the problems of security. The point dealing with the sphere of security envisages training and upgrading Uzbek officers at leading U.S. military educational establishments.

Within the framework of cooperation in ensuring peace in Afghanistan the United States and Uzbekistan will exchange information about threats to peace and measures to prevent them connected with the transit of non-military cargoes through the North distribution network to Afghanistan, including within the framework of the implementation of the construction project of a railway line between Hairaton and Mazari Sharif. Uzbek companies have already built eleven bridges along the Mazari Sharif – Kabul route and are about to complete a 275-mile-long high-voltage transmission line from Termez to Kabul. The cooperation plan also includes various agricultural, industrial and energy projects. Uzbekistan's initiatives in the sphere of regional security and the creation of a Contact group "6+3" on Afghanistan under the UN aegis are also envisaged by the plan.

In the economic sphere the United States intends to broaden assistance to Uzbekistan in modernizing its irrigation systems, restoring degraded lands, and drawing new technologies to raise agricultural crop yields.

The project of a Trans-Afghan corridor through which Uzbekistan will get an access to ports on the Indian Ocean serves as the basic argument in the present foreign-policy rapprochement between Karimov's government and Obama's administration. Uzbekistan emphasizes its key role in a peaceful settlement of the situation in Afghanistan. But, while doing this, Uzbekistan does not intend to turn into a docile "customer" of the United States in Central Asia. Uzbek officials ably prod American representatives to cooperation, at the same time keeping them at a reasonable distance.

After the events in Kyrgyzstan Washington is, evidently, afraid of Tashkent's interference in the situation in that republic in case of the continuing ethnic conflict in South Kyrgyzstan, with a view to helping fellow-countrymen living there and preventing the "export of revolution" to Uzbekistan. At the same time, in an event of a large-scale destabilization of the region, the United States does not exclude a more active role of Tashkent as the most influential military force in the Ferghana Valley.

In 2012 President Karimov made a decision to withdraw from alliances with Russia, such as EurAsEC and CSTO. European experts believe that the lifting of sanctions against Uzbekistan in 2009 (ban on arms sales) introduced after the Andizhan events in 2005 was a controversial decision. The European Union hoped that this step would be an incentive to the implementation of reforms. Human rights activists adhere to diametrically opposite views, maintaining that the lifting of sanctions gives a wrong signal to Uzbekistan's regime. In any case, refusal from sanctions showed the readiness of the European

Union to work with Uzbekistan and the need to make cooperation effective. The next logical step should be the opening of a mission of the European Union (work has been going on in this direction), which will include a section of public information. Uzbekistan with its secret service inside the country and strong borders between regions is an extremely difficult partner for the European Union. Nevertheless, Tashkent has claims to leadership in the region and works for improving its image abroad. It is explained, among other things, by its central position in the region and the biggest population. However, these claims can be satisfied only if it becomes more open for the outer world and liberalizes commercial activity and agriculture inside the country. In its political dialogues with Tashkent the European Union can actively lobby such changes, and also try to persuade the Uzbek regime to adopt more tolerant stand toward regional cooperation, especially in the matter of water resources. Uzbekistan has blocked or refused to take part in a whole number of projects to manage water resources carried on by the European Union.

Within the framework of the program of dialogues on human rights in Uzbekistan the European Union intends to demand that Tashkent fulfill the following conditions: release from prison human rights activists and prisoners of conscience; liberalize the accreditation process and work of non-governmental organizations in the country; guarantee freedom of speech and independent mass media; adopt conventions banning child labor; bring electoral laws in line with the requirements of OSCE; cooperate with the UN on human rights issues; lift restrictions for coming in and going out of the country; stop the practice of arrests of religious leaders on the basis of frame-up charges of terrorist activity; conduct independent investigation of reports about torture in prisons and punish those responsible; adopt a law allowing people to engage in free economic activity in any spheres (political,

economic and cultural); liberalize cooperation between the civil sector and international organizations; adopt legislation regulating the work of law-enforcement agencies' activities.

Relations of the United States and European Union with Turkmenistan. As western observers note, recently a new area has emerged for rivalry between Russia and the United States – Turkmenistan.¹⁴ The point is the construction of a new trunk gas pipeline (Nabucco, or Caspian pipeline). Besides, competition is going on for the training of military personnel and supplies of military hardware and equipment. Russia continues its attempts to draw Turkmenistan in military cooperation, for example, to take part in the Unified anti-aircraft defense system of the CIS. Meanwhile, the United States continues to show interest in deploying its air bases on the territory of Turkmenistan.

Turkmenistan takes an important place in the transport-transit corridor for the United States due to the continuing operation of the coalition forces in Afghanistan. It is also important for the United States to broaden cooperation with Turkmenistan not so much for its own needs as for insuring energy security of Europe. American companies intend to increase their participation in developing Turkmen deposits. Contacts between Turkmenistan and American companies have intensified after an international business-forum on the problems of hydrocarbons extraction held in Ashkhabad in March 2011.

If supply routes to Afghanistan should bypass Russia, Turkmenistan will play a significant role in these American plans. However, Turkmenistan is not too eager to come closer to the United States. The situation may change if personal contacts between President Obama and President Berdymukhamedov are established. The new President of Turkmenistan has shown himself an active player in the international arena: he has visited for the first time the NATO

headquarters in Brussels where the two sides agreed to broaden their ties in several key spheres.

The Pentagon hopes to develop cooperation with Ashkhabad. In June 2008, two high-ranking U.S. Navy commanders visited Ashkhabad and conducted negotiations with Turkmenistan's Minister for defense and also the head of the border-guard service. However, the country's leadership, fearing for its power, behaves cautiously and does not take open steps to establish military cooperation with the United States.

The latter, along with the EU, hopes that Ashkhabad under the new leader will become more "pro-western-oriented." The main task for the West is, as before, to reorient gas flows from Turkmenistan to Europe and lower gas dependence of that republic on the pipelines passing through Russian territory. A representative of the U.S. Department of State regularly arrives in Ashkhabad and each time tries to persuade the Turkmen President that partnership with Washington in the energy sphere, above all, is very important.

The American side gives Turkmenistan to understand that the more actively it cooperates with American companies, the more actively Washington will develop its political and military ties with Ashkhabad. The Afghan operation of the western coalition forces and the indirect participation of Turkmenistan in it (transit and supply services) make it possible for the latter to expand business and investment partnership with the United States and the European Union.

Turkmenistan's leadership has suggested to the European Union that it consider the variant of gas supply from Turkmenistan to Europe via Iran (using the recently built gas pipeline from Davletobad with a capacity of 12 billion cubic meters of gas a year), bypassing Azerbaijani territory. But the United States was against the idea. At the

same time it favors the construction project TAPI from Turkmenistan to India via Afghanistan and Pakistan.

European experts note that the new president of Turkmenistan has undertaken a number of cautious steps aimed at improving the situation in the country¹⁵. Among other things, its population now has the right to travel around the country quite freely. The decrees of the previous leader on curtailing school and university education have been repealed.

Nevertheless, Turkmenistan remains an extremely authoritarian state in which there are no political opposition and freedom of expression, and the activity of non-governmental organizations engaged in political problems and human rights issues is banned. Many experts write that the local population is well aware of the rules of relations with the authorities, and there are no prerequisites for the emergence of any political dialogue or opposition movements.

On the whole, Turkmenistan has entered the 21st century completely isolated from the surrounding world, having spent an enormous amount of resources on spectacular construction projects in its capital Ashkhabad. In these circumstances the broadening of relations between the European Union and Turkmenistan seems a very difficult task, despite the fact that a temporary trade agreement has come into force, and dialogues on human rights issues with the country's authorities have been going on.¹⁶ The first step along the way to improving and strengthening the image of the European Union is the opening of a mission without diplomatic status and the "House of Europe" in Turkmenistan.

In 2009 the government of Turkmenistan adopted new discriminatory measures banning Turkmen students to go abroad for studies. The students who were studying abroad had to return home

because the Turkmen special services subjected their families to pressure and intimidation. Upon return they were blacklisted.

The European Union could offer to buy Turkmen gas which could be delivered to Baku via the Caspian Sea. Turkmenistan displays a growing interest in pursuing a many-vector policy in the sphere of gas export.

The European Union intends to demand that Ashkhabad fulfill the following conditions within the framework of the program of dialogues on human rights issues; stop the practice of collective punishment; release members of the families of the arrested persons from prison; ban forced labor of prison inmates in health-hazardous conditions; create favorable medium for the development of culture and traditions of national minorities; create favorable conditions for the work of the independent mass media and ban censorship; guarantee the formation and activity of public organizations; change the legislation on non-governmental organizations; stop persecutions of dissidents and public figures; allow citizens to travel abroad freely, especially students; establish economic transparency standards in the sphere of using incomes from gas export.

Relations of the United States and European Union with Tajikistan. Tajikistan whose border with Afghanistan stretches for 1,200 kilometers was required for pursuing the antiterrorist operation “Indomitable Freedom.” In early 2002 the Republic of Tajikistan opened an air corridor for flights of NATO military-transport aircraft.

Washington preferred not to deploy its military bases close to the barracks of the Russian division No 201. Although American experts called on the White House for deploying operational units in Tajikistan in order to increase control over drug sales and trafficking and support U.S. troops in Afghanistan in case of the strengthening of the Taliban movement. The deployment of the U.S. military forces should have

been used as the first step in spreading American influence on India, as a measure which would have laid the foundation of security relations between New Delhi and Washington.

In 2003 Tajikistan became the last country of Central Asia which joined the “Partnership for Peace” program. The broadening of cooperation with the United States was also expressed in the fact that Tajikistan did not prolong a treaty with Russia on guarding the state border, and in reply Washington offered Dushanbe to modernize its border guard units, ensure joint border protection, and set up Tajik-American border posts. However, the United States has done nothing to guard the Tajik border, and it has not taken part in modernizing the border-guard service of the republic.

The United States has long stopped to criticize E. Rahmon for his domestic policy, for it has mainly been watching the developments in Afghanistan, namely, the events around the Afghan mission of the coalition forces. At the present stage Tajikistan is important for the United States not as an object of advantageous economic investments, but as a strategic springboard in the Afghan direction. The United States renders a considerable economic assistance to Tajikistan: it has built two bridges across the Pyandzh River, connecting Afghanistan and Tajikistan. This is very important for the latter, because it may have an access to the shores of the Indian Ocean through Afghanistan some time in the future.

The present situation concerning cooperation between the United States and Tajikistan is changing radically, inasmuch as the Afghan operation is foreign-policy priority for the Obama administration. The Americans could offer Tajikistan broader cooperation, including the deployment of its military bases on its territory. In turn, Tajikistan has a variant to condition its assistance to the United States on

Afghanistan by a number of economic projects profitable for that Central Asian country.

In February 2009 E. Rahmon visited the NATO headquarters in Brussels, where he stated that NATO was one of the major components in ensuring security in Afghanistan, and it should more actively cooperate with such neighboring states as Iran and especially Tajikistan, because it has a lengthy border with Afghanistan. Tajikistan gave its consent to use the country's railways and highways for transit of non-military cargoes to Afghanistan.

The United States has offered the Tajik leadership various assistance, including credits exceeding \$1 billion (which could be increased in the future).

In early February 2010 bilateral political consultations between Tajikistan and the United States took place in Washington. Among the subjects discussed were the political and economic situation in the region, the implementation of water, energy and transport projects and the situation in Afghanistan. In experts' view, Tajikistan is gradually turning in the direction of the United States, since it has long been waiting vainly for assistance from Moscow.

The United States gives grants to Tajikistan for the development of institutions of civil society, implementation of reforms of local self-government bodies, state border protection, and fight against drug trafficking. On the whole, Washington welcomes Tajikistan's turn away from Moscow's influence, however, it expresses growing concern over Tajikistan's rapprochement with Iran, and greater influence and economic presence of China in that country. But the special strategic value of Tajikistan for the United States is its close proximity to Afghanistan.

Besides, the United States has not put aside the question of a possible military operation against Iran. Due to this it may offer

Tajikistan either the exclusive leasing of the Aini airport, or its joint use with the Tajik military. In exchange the United States could agree on some fixed payment for leasing, as well as financing a whole number of economic projects in Tajikistan in the sphere of energy, transport and road and tunnel building.

According to certain sources, there is an American lobby among President E. Rahmon's entourage. As long as the Americans stay in Afghanistan, they will increase their presence in Tajikistan.

In the view of certain experts in Brussels and contrary to the opinion of certain independent experts, Tajikistan is a weak, rather than an insolvent, state. That country suffers from abject poverty and deficit of electric energy, especially in winter time, despite its great hydro-energy potential. Besides, there is a constant threat of destabilization, inasmuch as Tajikistan borders on Afghanistan whose population consists of 35 percent of ethnic Tajiks.

European assistance to Tajikistan is provided mainly by the European Commission, as well as the German government. Assistance is rendered mainly in the budget and social spheres.

There are possibilities for work of organizations of civil society, which makes possible dialogues on human rights carried on by the European Union. At the same time, there is evidence that human rights are infringed in the country. This is why one of the EU projects could be support of establishing political dialogues with representatives of the Islamist movement.

Within the framework of the program of dialogues on human rights in Tajikistan the European Union intends to demand that Dushanbe fulfill the following conditions: provide access to people representing civil society and Red Cross kept in Tajik prisons at present; ratify the optional protocols to the Convention against torture; ratify the Convention on discrimination of women; ban the use of child

labor in cotton-picking; introduce an article banning torture in the Criminal Code; reform the system of access of poor people to lawyers' service; compensate forced resettlement of people in connection with the state needs.

The State and Prospects of U.S. Policy in Central Asia

Thus, U.S. policy in Central Asia has a largely inertial character. The Obama administration continues the policy pursued by its predecessors, although with amendments in accordance with sharp changes in the current situation. The main components of this strategy include due consideration of the Afghan problem, moderate support of non-governmental organizations, symbolic rhetoric on human rights, support of pipeline projects bypassing Russia and Iran, broader cooperation with regional countries in the military sphere, and emphasis on cooperation with Kazakhstan outside bilateral frameworks.

In the foreseeable future one may expect greater concern of Washington over the strengthening of the positions of China and Iran in the region. Possibly, this factor may contribute to the positions of the United States and Russia in the region drawing closer.

If the Taliban establishes control over entire Afghanistan, the situation in Central Asia may develop according to an unpredictable scenario. Taking into account the fact that there are quite a few foreign fighters in the ranks of the Taliban, it is not excluded that they may try to turn Afghanistan into a big training base for the "terrorist international," which will be striving to destabilize the situation in adjacent regions.

This may mean that Central Asian countries will be on the "front line" of defense of Central Eurasia. Inasmuch as the border of the region with Afghanistan is quite lengthy and passes mainly in almost

inaccessible mountain area, it will be very difficult to make it impenetrable. Proceeding from this, it is in the interests of Central Asian countries to support the operations of the United States and NATO in Afghanistan.

At present American experts call for establishing cooperation with Moscow in Central Asia for the implementation of Washington's strategic interests and renouncing the former U.S. strategy aimed at isolating and ousting Russia from the region. They support the idea of the Central Asian "round table," that is, a high-level dialogue between the states of the region and their neighbors – China, Russia, Turkey and Iran. In the sphere of energy policy the United States should not concentrate exclusively on the well-known routes of the transportation of oil and gas, in the view of experts, and should support Russian and international projects, including those which can connect the region with East Asia.

Thus, American long-term strategic interests in Central Asia are as follows: to contribute to stabilization of the region by its democratization and drawing in globalization processes; to prevent any state (primarily Russia and China) to gain exclusive political influence in the region.

The U.S. policy in Central Asia should preserve continuity. Accordingly, this approach should also be applied to Kazakhstan. Barack Obama and his administration are bent on continuing the course aimed at preserving the achievements of "reset" in relations with Russia. As to China, the United States pursues an extremely cautious policy toward it.

However, there is a number of factors which can sharply activate the U.S. policy in Central Asia. These factors include:

- Unpredicted worsening of the situation in Afghanistan and unexpected change of the schedule of the withdrawal of American and coalition forces from that country;

- Large-scale and prolonged conflict with Iran which will inevitably touch the countries of Central Asia, the Caspian basin and the Caucasus;

- The U.S. transfer to containment strategy of China and its encirclement by a ring of strategic bases, including in Central Asia;

- Greater worry of Washington caused by the excessive integration of post-Soviet states with Russia within the framework of the Customs Union, Eurasian economic partnership and the Eurasian Union;

- Development of the situation by an unpredicted scenario, which will be unacceptable to Washington, of transferring power in certain republics of the region.

In these conditions Kazakhstan will have to be guided in its relations with the United States for the foreseeable future and a long-term period by definite principles. They include support of western initiatives aimed at stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan (especially after 2014). It would also be expedient to support all anti-nuclear initiatives of President Obama in the international arena.

Kazakhstan is capable to render technical and logistical support to the withdrawal of American military units and equipment from Afghanistan, and also to take part in adaptation of the already used American and NATO military equipment within the framework of the military-technical exchange of CSTO.

Kazakhstan may assure Washington through diplomatic channels and at official level, if necessary, of its integration with Russia bearing an exclusively economic character. It seems that in the interests of national security and stability of Central Asia it is necessary to monitor

American-Chinese relations thoroughly. And in case of a hypothetical conflict between the West and Iran Kazakhstan should distance itself from the conflicting parties and take serious measures to strengthen its security within the framework of CSTO and SCO.

At the same time, the United States will hardly become the only dominant force in Central Asia. The real goals: energy security, proximity to the main seat of terrorism (Afghanistan and Pakistan), fight against the sale and trafficking of arms and drugs, drive for transparency of socio-economic development – all this requires firm obligations and their strict fulfillment. Besides, the worsened Russian-American relations may block American policy in this region, at least for a short-term period.

The State and Prospects of EU Policy in Central Asia

The EU strategy has made considerable amendments to the concept of regionalism, which the EU used in Central Asia. The main distinction was the practice of regional summits, which discuss political issues and security problems, as well as meetings at various levels for discussing specific subjects: education, ecological and legal issues, etc. The European Union invariably comes out in favor of regional cooperation.

Nevertheless, regionalism in Central Asia has narrow bounds. Regional cooperation can have positive prospects only if it is part of a broader economic openness. Such crucial aspects of cooperation in Central Asia as border-guarding, transport corridors, water resources, etc. are not confined to this region, but go beyond the boundaries of Central Asia and acquire transcontinental scope. Border protection envisages, primarily, the fight against drug trafficking in Central Asia,

which is in essence a transshipment point on the way from Afghanistan to Russia, Europe and China.

Brussels believes that it would be expedient to turn to political priorities of Central Asian states themselves. In the process of its modernization Kazakhstan develops ties with the West and introduces the “Road to Europe” program. Turkmenistan, while remaining a closed repressive regime, intends to expand its gas export in all directions: to the North in Russia, to the East in China and to the South in Iran, and if the EU decides to make a serious offer to Ashkhabad, it may also export its gas to the West in Europe. Kyrgyzstan’s economy directly depends on the flows of Chinese goods via its territory to Kazakhstan and Russia. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are interested in developing relations with southern countries via transport corridors passing through Afghanistan and Pakistan to the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean.

The European Union should turn greater attention to new geopolitical players: Russia, the PRC, India, and Central Asian countries. The latter occupies a unique position as a vast region without an access to the Sea and squeezed by four geopolitical giants: Russia in the North, China in the East, India in the South, and EU in the West.

The main meaning of the EU strategy toward Central Asia is a search for opportunities to include Central Asia in the global concept of European foreign policy. The European Union has a well-tested system of relations with most regions of the world: Tropical Africa, Southeast Asia, Latin America, Central Asia, the nearest neighbors of united Europe, and also with such big countries as China, India and Russia. Brussels is looking for ways to unite all these parts in a single vector and find a place for Central Asia in this system.

European strategists are well aware of the fact that globally Central Asia is an underpopulated region. Nevertheless, its geographical position at the crossroads of the interests of all global

political players in the epoch of a change of the world order determines its great geopolitical importance.

Brussels is sure that Central Asia does not pose a direct threat to the security of the European Union. However, there are three indirect factors which could have influence on the European Union. The first is instability of energy supplies. The second is “Al Qaeda” and “Talibanization.” And the third is drug smuggling.

The concept of regionalism applied by the European Union to Central Asia can acquire more “extravert” forms, when the region is regarded in a broader geographical context.

In the view of European analysts, there are at least three opportunities for joint work of the European Union, Central Asian states, and such interested countries as Russia, China, the United States, India, and others.

First, it is cooperation in averting threats from Pakistan and Afghanistan, particularly, the export of drugs and radical extremism. Secondly, it is the problem of water resources, which could be resolved with the help of an international consortium, in which all big players would take part. Thirdly, it is optimization of transcontinental transport trade routes.

The European Union could get an observer status in the SCO upon a proper invitation. As an alternative, the format of regional meetings of the European Union with Central Asian countries could be broadened by including representatives of Afghanistan, Pakistan and India in it. Finally, European strategists believe that inasmuch as the EU now has evolved Central Asian strategy, it should become a component part of the world view of the European Union.

Notes

- ¹ See: *Guan Tian R.* Ot vnutrennego k vneshnemu: ugrozy dlya politiki SShA v gosudarstvakh Tsentralnoi Azii [From the Internal to the External: Threats to U.S. Policy in Central Asian Countries] // “Tsentralnaya Aziya i Kavkaz.” 2009, No 2, pp. 103–117.
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HISTORY OF CONFLICT OVER WATER RESOURCES IN CENTRAL ASIA IN THE POST-SOVIET PERIOD

Water resources are unevenly distributed in Central Asia. The main source of drinking water in the region is rivers originating in the mountains of Tien Shan and Pamir-Altai. The construction of dams, increased water withdrawals for irrigating agricultural lands, the creation of large and small reservoirs and canals without preventing infiltration and evaporation of water – all this has led to a serious shortage of water resources in the plains region. The Aral Sea is a vivid example that has almost disappeared from maps. As is known, the main reason of the Aral crisis is almost complete stop of flow of water from the Amudarya and Syrdarya, the two great rivers of Central Asia. The Syrdarya flows into the Small Aral Sea, separated from the Large Aral Sea, only in the full-flowing seasons.

It is the legacy of the Soviet period that is usually blamed for this state of affairs. Is it really so?

Let us turn to history for an objective assessment of the situation and in order to find a solution. The Central Asian region has an arid climate and is located in the zone of risky agriculture; its irrigation canals had been dug back in the Neolithic era. As water disappeared, people migrated in search of it. There are many ruins of former settlements and channels in Central Asia: some cities died, others were built in new locations. The most favorable places for settlements were river oases. The most ancient settlements existed in the river valleys of Murghab, Zarafshan and Tedjen. The Amudarya and Syrdarya are particularly important for the desert zone of Central Asia, providing water from mountains to the largest oases in the Aral Sea area.

Big irrigation and drainage construction work was developed after the establishment of Soviet power in the region. Huge reservoirs of fresh water in the mountains were created for irrigated agriculture. Dams were built not only for agriculture but also for electric power generation. The water management system became closely intertwined with the power system in the region, and large hydropower installations were built in the Unified Energy System of Central Asia (UESCA). The internal administrative borders drawn on the ethnic rather than on economic principle were of no importance in terms of water and energy management.

In general, the improvement of living conditions led to a rise of birthrate and a decrease of mortality. As a result, the population has increased dramatically: about six million people lived in the region in the early twentieth century, whereas the figure for the early 21st century was 62 million (2010).

The agricultural sector is the main consumer of water resources throughout the world. As to Central Asia, agriculture accounts for 89–92% of the total water consumption.

The problem of water can be solved, in part, by the use of modern means of resource savings. The countries of the region could avoid water shortages if they resorted to fundamentally new technologies (industrial and postindustrial) and sound management. Israel may serve as an example – its agriculture is one of the most economical in the world in terms of water consumption. Israeli agronomists grow water-intensive plants feeding them with brackish water, using drip irrigation, including point irrigation of plant roots, and treat wastewater.

The system of management created in the Soviet Union made it possible to avoid water shortages by reducing significantly economic

costs, overproduction (in particular, electricity), and resource consumption.

Based on the common interests of the region, irrigation and drainage facilities were under construction, which were linked with the Unified Energy System of Central Asia (UESCA).

The hydro construction projects of the upstream Central Asian republics worked not only for irrigation, but also for electricity generation, although the main operating mode was correlated with the interests of agriculture in the downstream republics – Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. This interdependence made it possible to carry on the exchange of services between the water-scarce, but energy-sufficient Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, on the one hand, and water-sufficient, but poor in other natural resources, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, on the other. All questions concerning the distribution and division of water resources were tackled by the Ministry of Water Resources of the USSR in the 1970s and 1980s.

When the reservoirs of hydropower stations of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have accumulated enough water in autumn and winter, the stored water flowed to the downstream republics of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan for irrigation during the agricultural season. This system was based on definite quotas of water for each republic. The water and energy problems in Central Asia were solved successfully by regional cooperation. This approach made it possible to avoid additional financial and resource expenses. This was particularly noticeable during the concerted operation of power systems within the Unified Energy System of Central Asia. Location of countries in different time zones and energy peak loads were optimally considered parallel with the operation of the countries' power systems, which allowed them to share reserves without duplicating them, as it were, in the case of the systems working in isolation. The optimal schedule

allowed them to combine the advantages of thermal and hydropower generation, reducing their costs and resource consumption. The benefits of this system are obvious, if work is properly organized.

The well-established system of regional water and energy division has become loose after the collapse of the USSR and the proclamation of national sovereignty of the republics of Central Asia. Political boundaries of the former Soviet republics have become important, but the economic structure, created earlier, has ignored them. Each of the newly-formed countries has sometimes abused interests of its neighbors during the operation of the agreed-on system in the same way as participating countries were not ready to sacrifice any of their interests. Accumulated mutual discontent has been expressed through violations of commitments and presentation of new demands. Energy costs have been set arbitrarily by each party, which led to new disputes. Price difference between summer and winter electricity, electricity produced by hydropower plants and thermal power plants, belated payments – all these factors complicated the implementation of the agreement between them. The greatest losses were suffered by Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan due to constant violations of mutual contracts. Constant failures have occurred in the supply of energy to downstream countries in winter, because the actual electricity consumption in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in summer was less than calculated and fixed in the contracts.

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan had to switch hydropower stations from irrigation over to energy mode and thus use all accumulated water that flooded the territory of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Precious water from the Syrdarya and Amudarya is periodically channeled to two man-made lakes on the territory of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to reduce the effects of winter floods.

Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan now receive less water during the agricultural season, and the Aral Sea has deteriorated further as a result of failure to fulfill earlier mutual agreements.

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan realize that water is their main resource and insist on payment for storage and supply of water. They put forward the question of revision of quotas of water with the support of World Bank experts, while their opponents insist on the formula “Water is common treasure and access to it should not be restricted”. All parties concerned have formulated their arguments, quite logical sometimes, but this did not lead to an agreement. Thus, the situation has become more complicated, because of absence of a common political course on water issues and the gradual elimination of old economic models.

Interstate disputes on water issues also had a negative impact on the energy system of the region. The upstream countries, faced with a dramatic shortage of energy, began to take electricity from the Unified Energy System of Central Asia in addition to illegally transferring energy to the needs of reservoir operation. This has led to frequent failures in the regional power supply system.

Turkmenistan was the first country, which became openly dissatisfied with the unstable situation, withdrew from the Unified Energy System of Central Asia in 2003, and switched over to parallel operation with Iran due to its geographical position and power capacity.

North Kazakhstan also stopped the parallel operation of the Unified Energy System some years later, reducing the existing connection to the power system of Russia. South Kazakhstan continued to work parallel with the rest of Central Asia.

Tajikistan was disconnected from the Unified Energy System in 2009 at the demand of Uzbekistan, which had a favorable territorial position in the center of the energy system. Tajikistan decided to

overcome the problem by completing the construction of the Rogun hydropower plant, the largest in the region, which had been started, and then frozen in Soviet time. Uzbekistan categorically opposed resuming this construction project, regarding it as a threat to its national interests, including environment problems, food safety and the alignment of forces in the region. Uzbekistan periodically organizes a transport blockade of Tajikistan because of the conflict over the Rogun hydropower plant.

The Soviet system of management, and later the World Bank calculations, showed that it was work in irrigation, but not in the sphere of energy that would bring the greatest benefit to all partners, provided there was a fair payment for the storage and supply of water for upstream countries. But this option becomes less likely.

The conflict over water and energy resources is closely related to many other problems of the countries in the region which do not consider it possible to tackle them by returning to the Soviet, though modernized, economic system. Now each country relies on its own strength and help from a foreign donor. Intra-regional cooperation is carried on in a very limited extent.

Every country in Central Asia tries to solve its own complex of water problems without the help of neighbors. The downstream countries build new reservoirs and dams, develop projects and look for sponsors for the construction of cascade hydropower systems that will store water for irrigating downstream fields and generating electricity during the cold seasons.

Reorientation from regional to national levels significantly increases the overall cost of dealing with water scarcity, but does not solve the problem of saving water resources. The Soviet model had significant flaws, but solved the problem of limited water resources in the region better.

Today it is necessary to act at several fronts to solve all existing problems.

First, the Central Asian region should be considered as an entity from the economic point of view, which entails the need to create a workable political and economic union.

Secondly, it is extremely important to introduce new energy saving technologies.

And thirdly, it is no less important to solve the problem of overpopulation in the region.

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