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V. Sidorov

**CERTAIN ASPECTS OF MODERN ECONOMIC
RELATIONS IN CENTRAL ASIA**

The most urgent problems today are the speedy implementation of the integration process on the CIS territory and a search of touch points, which would make it possible to assess the development prospects more objectively. This trend is becoming increasingly clear in Central Asia.

It should be admitted that at the stage of gaining political independence, forming one's own statehood, joining the world community and international financial bodies, and creating one's own financial-economic systems – budget, tax-and-customs, currency, etc. – Russia has failed to preserve and develop political, economic and social community answering the interests of the post-Soviet countries. Centrifugal tendencies have gained the upper hand, while integration tasks have moved to the background.

Central Asian countries began to pursue a course oriented to Western support, as well as support of the Turkic-language world, preserving at the same time a vast scope of interaction with Russia. However, economically, it does not go beyond the bounds of minor investment projects and foreign-trade cooperation.

At present, Chinese credit expansion in Central Asia throws a major challenge to the geopolitical interests of Russia. The countries

of the region, fearing Russia's desire to preserve political and military control over them and living in the conditions of a deep economic recession, prefer to practice the most convenient form of cooperation, namely, to sign bilateral agreements on establishing free trade regimes.

The break-up of the geopolitical space dominated by the U.S.S.R. had a profound impact on Central Asia.

Meanwhile, pursuing its geostrategic goals Russia cannot but search for closer cooperation with partners in the non-western world because the modern world demands united efforts in expanding markets.

Although Russia has limited opportunities as a pole of attraction, it still retains a solid weight in the entire post-Soviet area and is, as before, the guarantor of security and a center attracting labor migration.

It is important that Russia and the Central Asian countries are facing similar tasks of developing and modernizing the economy, and one of the sources of this lies in regional integration.

In this connection the idea of agreed-on modernization of national economies and the formation of the Eurasian innovative region look promising enough with a view to achieving world technological leadership in certain innovative segments.

An effective economic integration in the Eurasian region would have quite a few positive consequences. Among them acceleration of the rates of mutual trade, economic growth and reduction of transaction expenses; higher competitiveness of commodities, firms and national economies, growth of innovative potential as a result of greater competition on the domestic market of countries; increase of the flow of foreign investments from the countries, which are members of an integration union, as well as from third countries; smoothing

of differences between countries in the living standards and quality of life of the population.

The expansion and deepening of integration processes within the framework of the uniform economic area, as well as the Eurasian Economic Union is also important for Russia in connection with the growing competition between integration projects for the Central Asian region lobbied by the United States, the European Union and China, which are economically more advanced than Russia. The Eurasian Union, where Russia is playing the key role, may become in the future a serious regional actor uniting production capacities of the Russian and Belorussian economies with the natural resources and transit possibilities of Central Asian countries. In that case the Eurasian Economic Community would be a major economic subject connecting China and Southeast Asia, which will become one of the main driving forces of world development along with the European Union. The creation of this union is extremely important for the strengthening of positions in interaction with China within the framework of projects and organizations where Russia and Central Asian countries directly intercross (SCO, for example).

Another sphere is a rapidly broadening base for combining the Eurasian Economic Community project and the Chinese initiative, namely, the “Economic Belt of the New Silk Road,” which will give additional benefits to Central Asian countries.

However, while implementing such ambitious integration project as the Eurasian Economic Community, we should be prepared for the need to solve quite a few problems concerning regional cooperation, the presence of numerous seats of international tension, unresolved border issues, contradictions between geopolitical orientations, and inability to find solution to water and energy disputes. Tension in relations between countries has also an economic character. For

example, Kazakhstan does not abandon attempts “to stifle” Kyrgyzstan and redirect trade flows from China. On the other hand, Uzbekistan systematically obstructs continental trade in order to weaken Tajikistan and block its desire to become the energy exporter to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

A multitude of contradictions at a geopolitical level determine economic and geostrategic models, some of which undermine the effectiveness and cooperation of regional organizations. At present most regional organizations of Central Asia are only platform for contacts and discussions, as it were. The final documents adopted at summits are, as a rule, nothing more than declarations of intentions devoid of any mechanisms of realization. This is why their functioning does not exert any tangible influence on local normative culture.

The absence of mechanisms of realization does irreparable harm to regional organizations which engage in economic activity. The most indicative in this respect is the problem of management of water resources undermining relations between Central Asian countries.

After the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. the exchange of energy between Central Asian republics has dropped sharply and has not reached the previous level. Although the states of the region well complement one another (three countries mine oil and two countries generate hydroenergy), cooperation between them has not reached a constructive level. Negotiations on the problem of exchanging water for oil and gas regularly fail. Moreover, the questions of the distribution of water resources have been turned into a geopolitical weapon, and Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan hope to bolster up their positions with regard to Uzbekistan, because they are disappointed by the fact that neither Russia nor China supports their position openly.

Geopolitical rivalry undermines economic integration projects. The fate of the ambitious TRASECA project is rather indicative.

Despite the great interest of the parties concerned in the project, it failed to redirect cargo transportation along the “East – West” route even after considerable modernization of the regional transport-logistical network.

Neither Russia, nor China, nor the United States can unilaterally force their rules of the game on Central Asian countries, but not one of them is insured from the sudden loss of influence in the region. Besides, many new actors have emerged on the regional scene, such as the European Union, Japan, South Korea, Turkey and India. Each of them wishes to be a sample for development. Main rivalry is going on between the West and Russia – China and between Russia and China. Despite the difficulties encountered by the West in the formation of regional institutions equal to those formed by Russia and China in Central Asia, there is a strategic triangle between Russia, China and the United States. Each of them wishes to attain privileged relations with two other powers, inasmuch as any alliance between two of them weakens the positions of the third power.

Thus, Washington does not want to see the emergence of any strategic alliance between Moscow and Beijing, whereas Moscow is concerned over the growing interdependence of the economies of China and the United States. Meanwhile, Beijing was on the watch during the prospected rapprochement between the U.S.A. and Russia.

The United States regards Russia as its main competitor from the point of view of influence in Central Asia. China is not considered as a factor in Washington’s Central Asia policy.

Quite a few American experts are pleased with the fact that Russia has lost its monopoly on hydrocarbons of Central Asia due to the construction of Chinese pipelines. Russia adheres to a model emphasizing containment of the United States, ignoring the growing Chinese influence. Beijing, in its turn, would like Russia to control

Central Asia but not the United States, and is also pleased that Russia and America are busy trying to neutralize each other, which gives China more freedom in its trade and investment policy.

Russia and China as the two main foreign factors in Central Asia demonstrate a dual policy of cooperation and rivalry at one and the same time. The SCO embodies their good relations and is taken by the two countries for a useful mechanism for negotiations. From the Russian point of view, the SCO binds China to display versatility and allows Moscow to restrain Beijing's ambitions in Central Asia without confronting it. From China's point of view, the SCO opened the possibility of legalizing and institutionalizing Beijing's presence in the region.

Now China may use contradictions between member-states and groups of influence to its advantage, avoiding accusations of expansionist policy. On the other hand, the SCO is playing the role of a buffer contributing to solution of disputes by peaceful means, and can direct competition between the two dominating states toward achieving more advantageous solutions. Nevertheless, Chinese-Russian partnership in Central Asia has a dual, ambiguous character. In essence, it is an alliance of convenience which stems from mutual support of the existing regimes for the sake of stability and containment of western influence.

As far as security is concerned, China recognizes Central Asia as a region situated in Russia's sphere of influence. The military presence of Russia in the region does not pose any problem for China, which, in essence, needs Moscow's support in order to stem its own domestic separatist movements, as well as to contain western influence within the framework of growing rivalry with the United States. In this way Beijing would like to preserve Russian strategic domination, wishing Moscow to bear the brunt of expenses for ensuring military security and

guaranteeing the survival of unstable regimes at the time when China concentrates its efforts on economic activity. Strategically, Russia emerges victorious from competitive struggle with China.

From 2002 China has been advocating the transformation of the SCO into a vast free trade zone which will provide institutional and multifarious platform for its economic expansion in the region. Nevertheless, the idea of the SCO as a free market which is advocated by China does not find support from Central Asian countries. They fear that the rapidly growing market will place them under Chinese economic protectorate, preferring cooperation in the energy sector and Chinese investments opportunities.

The creation of a transport corridor between China and Europe via Russia and Central Asia, export agreements on electric power and hydrocarbon transit are of interest to all SCO member-states. Other proposals put forward by China are received with great caution.

At present, when the Ukrainian crisis and the subsequent reaction of the West to it have changed world politics for many years to come, Russia should increase efforts to form its own stable zone of influence on the basis of broad political and economic cooperation.

It is necessary to display flexibility and agree to equal cooperation with China, using the SCO potential and the possibilities of combining the projects of Eurasian economic cooperation and the Chinese “Economic Belt of the New Silk Road.”

The latter is especially necessary for Russia due to the possibility of expanding its sphere of influence on other countries and their unification, and also due to the need to take into account the national economic interests of the countries of the region and considerable economic presence of China in the Central Asian region. China has become the biggest trade partner of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, second for Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, and third for Tajikistan. The total

volume of China's trade with the Central Asian countries exceeds \$50 billion.

Generally speaking, the SCO should become a platform for the construction of the "Economic Belt of the Silk Road," which will considerably increase its role in protection of regional security and economic development and make it possible to create a transport network uniting East, West and South Asia on the basis of cooperation between China, Russia and Central Asian countries. With due account of these strategic prospects Russia's foreign policy toward Central Asian countries and China should proceed from the need to start the functioning of the Eurasian Economic Community as quickly as possible, which will bolster up negotiation positions of the organization within the framework of the SCO, and the latter itself on the Eurasian continent.

Of course, for balancing the interests of the SCO member-states within the framework of this organization, taking into consideration the possible increase of the number of member-states by Mongolia, India, Pakistan and Iran joining it, the Russian Federation should use all variants of relations, search for new means and methods of interaction with competing projects of geopolitically friendly states. It will be in Russia's interests to support China in its growing rivalry with the United States and Japan in East Asia.

As to another competing integration project – one of the "New Silk Road" patronized by the United States, it seems possible to regard it unacceptable for the Russian Federation and countries of the Eurasian Economic Community. Although it contains a certain "positive" component for it is aimed at channeling investments for the transformation of Afghanistan into a regional hub and a link between South and Central Asia, its main geopolitical component is the formation of a system of transport corridors from East to West, and

consequently to redirect the flow of cargo along the routes separating Central Asia from the Russian Federation. This contradicts the fundamental principle of SCO which regards security and economics as the two cornerstones of the organization in ensuring its guarantees.

In conclusion, we'd like to note that the "Economic Belt of the Silk Road" is the most preferable for Russia and for the Eurasian Economic Community. This is a great systemic project presupposing the enhancement and strengthening of political contacts, construction of a uniform road network, establishment of trade connections, and organization of currency flows, and popular support.

One of the forms of consolidation of the Central Asian countries, including within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Community, should be broader near-to-border cooperation. Inter-regional and near-to-border cooperation becomes one of the main catalysts of the integration role of Russia in relations with neighboring states. Such way is distinguished by high economic efficiency and it does not need big investments. According to expert estimates, the volume of the GDP in these countries may increase by no less than 30 to 50 percent.

Besides, the outlet of regions to the markets of the member-countries will make it possible to better use the opportunities of the free trade zone. Democratization of public life and economic reforms also create objective prerequisites in the CIS countries for a more active participation of regions in international economic ties. The development of friendly, good-neighborly relations between Russia and China, on the one hand, and between them and the Central Asian countries, on the other, lays a solid foundation of strategic interaction in the implementation of major integration projects of the Eurasian Economic Community and the "Economic Belt of the Silk Road."

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THE CRIMEA AND RUSSIAN-TURKISH RELATIONS

Considerable geopolitical changes started to happen in the Black Sea region in 2013–2014. The Ukrainian nation was divided into two opposing camps through increased Western influence, and as a result, Ukraine found itself in a crisis situation. The Crimean Peninsula, (most of its population has Russian roots), was incorporated into the Russian Federation by the results of the referendum in March 2014. The Turkish Republic took the situation ambiguously, as it had always shown interest in the Crimea.

The Crimean peninsula has long-standing historical ties with Turkey – it had been the territory of the Crimean Khanate until the end of the 18th century. The Russian and Ottoman empires had been fighting for control of the northern Black Sea coast during that period. In 1783 the Crimean Khan Shahin Giray abdicated, and the Crimea became part of the Russian Empire, according to the Manifesto of Catherine II. The subsequent Russian-Turkish war of 1787–1791, which ended with the complete victory of Russia, and the Iasi peace treaty in 1791 consolidated the position of Russia in the region. Since then, the impact of the Ottoman Empire, and later of Turkey, had been minimal on the Crimean peninsula. The Crimea began to attract attention of Turkey again in the early 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union, but at present it has to take into account the interests of the neighboring countries – Russia and Ukraine.

Russia is the main partner of Turkey on the key issues of regional cooperation in the Black Sea. Russian-Turkish relations have reached the level of strategic partnership a few years ago and are successfully developing in many spheres. Trade turnover between Turkey and Russia is well ahead of that of other countries of the region and has prerequisites for further growth (\$33 billion in 2013). Turkey is the major consumer of Russian natural gas: in 2012 it bought 70 percent of its total annual consumption in Russia.

The two countries cooperate in the economic sphere, security, transport, environment, culture and tourism both at a bilateral level and within the framework of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. Turkey also has economic interests in Ukraine, which ranks second in terms of trade in the Black Sea after Russia. Trade turnover between Kiev and Ankara amounted to \$6.7 billion in 2013, moreover, export from Ukraine is twice as great as import from Turkey. The main import from Ukraine includes products of ferrous and non-ferrous metallurgy, in particular, non-alloy steel, rolled metal materials, aluminum and wheat. Turkey delivers citrus, oil products, motor vehicles, plastic products, electrical equipment, etc. According to the Turkish Foreign Ministry, more than 400 Turkish construction, tourism and textile companies work in Ukraine.

The Western vector can well be seen in the overall foreign policy of Turkey. This is due to its half-century membership in NATO and its desire to join the European Union. The Republic of Turkey supports the West, which is confirmed by its President R. Erdogan. The next day after the referendum in the Crimea, he said: "If a decision on this issue is made within the framework of NATO, Turkey will definitely join it".

US analysts believe that the crisis over the Crimea will bring Turkey to the West and create tension in Russian-Turkish relations, but at the same time evaluate the reaction of the Turkish Republic as a very

low-key or “tacit.” Turkey is the key ally of the United States, which controls the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles under the Montreux Convention of 1936, and is a “corridor for projecting US power in the Black Sea,” according to American views.

However, official Ankara's position on the referendum in the Crimea, and its accession to Russia appear to be rather cautious than pro-Western. It lies in non-recognition of the election results, support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine, calls for observance of the principles of international law, protection of the rights and interests of the Tatar population, and the preservation of security in the region. Turkey offered to take every opportunity to find a suitable solution to end the current crisis in Ukraine in accordance with the UN Charter, “within the framework of democratic principles and on the basis of independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and political unity of the country”.

Turkey is mainly focused not on politics, but on social and national issues, that is, respect for the rights of the Tatar population in the Crimea, which is about 15 percent of the total population of the peninsula, according to experts. The Crimean Tatars have Turkic roots, and there is a big Crimean Tatar diaspora in Turkey. The Crimean issue was actively used during the election campaign in Turkey.

There are many different organizations for help and support of the Crimean Tatars, which operate both in Turkey and abroad. Branches and representative offices of the Union of Culture and Mutual Aid have been opened in many Turkish cities, and they are actively engaged in the protection of the rights of the Tatars living in the Crimea.

On the one hand, the Republic of Turkey attaches great importance to the welfare and security of the Crimean Tatars, and on the other, the internal policy of the state does not provide much

freedom for minorities, such as education or publishing books in their native language. Although a large number of different peoples live in Turkey, they are educated in the Turkish language and do not require additional privileges. Therefore, the question of support to the Crimean Tatars is used to attract more public attention and increase ratings, rather than to give real support to a national minority in the Crimea.

Russia has taken real steps towards socio-economic reconstruction of the new region soon after the referendum. On March 21, 2014, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree “On Measures for the Rehabilitation of the Armenian, Bulgarian, Greek, Crimean Tatar and German Peoples and State Support for their Revival and Development.”

The deportation in May 1944 was a tragedy for the Crimean Tatar population. Now this fact is often mentioned in the anti-Russian rhetoric in order to increase the level of negative attitude of the Crimean Tatars to Russia, but the reasons for deportation are deliberately silenced. The state security bodies of the USSR took this decision because many Crimean Tatars participated in World War II on the side of Nazi Germany.

As for Ukraine, it has not adopted such a decree for more than 20 years of the Crimea being part of that country. The law should not only have improved the situation of the local population, but also brought together Russia and Turkey on the issue. An example of the positive implementation of this law was the fact that the Crimean Tatars were able to celebrate the end of the holy Muslim month of Ramadan – Uraza Bayram holiday – officially for the first time in 2014, which was not possible under Ukrainian government.

Russia has provided a guarantee of the Crimean Tatar language as the second national language, one in conjunction with the Russian language in the Crimea since 2014. The Crimean Tatars were given the

right to preserve their culture, traditions and religion, and also received a 20 percent quota in the government of Crimea.

In addition to political and social spheres, the security sector should be considered as well as the balance of power, beginning to change in the Black Sea region. There has been a big problem for the Russian Black Sea Fleet for many years – its base in Ukraine. Appropriate agreements on the Black Sea Fleet were signed in 2010 which extended its stay from 2017 for 25 years.

On April 2, 2014, the President of Russia signed a law on denunciation of several Russian-Ukrainian agreements: on the parameters of division of the Black Sea Fleet, on terms of keeping the Russian Navy in the territory of Ukraine and related settlements between the two governments, as well as the Kharkov agreements completing all formalities for the Crimea joining the Russian Federation. The Black Sea Fleet has now received an opportunity for development, which cannot but worry the Republic of Turkey, whose fleet is the strongest in the Black Sea.

The situation in the Black Sea region continues to remain stable at the end of six months from the date of the referendum. Turkey now takes decisions on the basis of its national and economic interests, and its pro-Western foreign policy is not so unequivocal as it has been. A confrontation in the Black Sea region will be detrimental to Turkey, because any conflict with its participation would imply the involvement of NATO ships, which would directly reduce Turkey's position as a regional leader.

In accordance with the Montreux Convention, military ships of non-Black Sea states cannot stay in the Black Sea for more than 21 days. American and French ships have come into the waters of the Black Sea on a regular basis since the Crimea's joining to Russia, according to the desire of the West to increase its military presence in

the region. The Republic of Turkey cannot be accused of explicit promotion of the West, Turkey has not violated the provisions of the Convention, has not neglected its obligations, and “it is also wrong to talk about tensions or a crisis between Turkey and Russia”.

Turkey did not join the sanctions against Russia, since the value of the Russian-Turkish economic relations is very high and economic benefits outweigh historical ties with the Crimean Tatars. Turkey had the opportunity to increase the supply of vegetables, fruits, dairy and meat products to Russia after the introduction of our retaliatory sanctions against suppliers from Europe. In September 2014, the ministers of economy of Russia and Turkey discussed the possibility of establishing a mechanism of mutual settlements in national currencies, including increasing trade turnover in the above areas.

There were three telephone conversations between the leaders of Russia and Turkey, right before and after the referendum in the Crimea, to discuss the crisis in Ukraine, the events in the Crimea and the position of the Crimean Tatar community. A common understanding has been reached for bolstering up the neutral position of Turkey, and the constructive dialogue between President Putin and President Erdogan has returned to its natural course.

The conflict situation around the Crimea has not been reflected in such important sectors of cooperation like tourism. The economic benefits of tourist streams are obvious and cannot be ignored by the Turkish side. In early April 2014 the Government of the Republic of Turkey established new rules for the period of validity of the passport of a foreign citizen visiting Turkey – 4 months, instead of three as before. Taking into account the popularity of the Turkish resorts in the May holidays, Russian tour operators were concerned about possible problems with the tourists. However, according to the official report on the website of the Embassy of the Republic of Turkey in the Russian

Federation, the implementation of the law was postponed to the end of the year, and Russian citizens could visit Turkey on the old rules.

The Crimean issue has become another test of the Russian-Turkish relations. This is not the first time that political differences could hamper the development of relations between Russia and Turkey. But as practice shows, the moderate policy of Turkey has as before distinguished bilateral relations.

Turkey's reaction to the events in the Crimea was restrained and, to some extent, uncertain. On the one hand, it did not recognize the results of the referendum as the whole of the West, and on the other, it did not join the Western sanctions against Russia. It seems that the Republic of Turkey will not take someone else's point of view on this issue till the very last, because it is necessary to maintain good relations with both Western countries, and with Russia.

The issue of the rights of the Crimean Tatar population is important for Turkey. It is connected with the fact that the large Crimean Tatar community lives in Turkey, and some descendants of the Crimean Tatars occupy a high position in the Turkish society. Therefore, the Republic of Turkey will pay great attention to this issue as "soft power" and humanitarian cooperation occupies a prominent place in Turkey's foreign policy, through which Turkey promotes its policy to other countries.

Such a restrained position of the Turkish Republic is preferable for Russia, as it does not violate the previously reached agreements in many fields of Russian-Turkish relations and provides an opportunity for further cooperation in the region.

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FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN KAZAKHSTAN

From the time of the proclamation of its independence Kazakhstan has been creating and developing institutions of civil society in its regions and towns. During the past years of independence about 18,000 non-governmental organizations have been set up, most of which function quite successfully rendering a wide range of services to society. The civil institutions successfully work in political, social, ethnic-cultural, economic and cultural spheres of the life of the state and society.

Among the prerequisites for the formation and functioning of civil society are the economic independence of citizens and a multitude of forms of ownership and real opportunities of people for independent economic activity. The articles about legal and democratic state in the Constitution of Kazakhstan are the political and legal foundation of the formation of institutions of civil society.

In the general political system of the country the state as the main link objectively interacts with the civil sector of society in order to achieve accord and stability on the basis of compromise decisions. Consequently, the task of civil society is not only to be the mediator between the individual and bodies of state power, but also to become an important mechanism of the implementation of social programs and development plans of the country.

Civil society in the Republic of Kazakhstan has passed two historical periods in its formation and development.

First, in the early 1990s democratic reforms began in all post-Soviet countries, which ended with a radical change of the socio-political system. The first institutions of civil society at the time were independent trade unions representing the interests of workers of the non-governmental sector of the economy. Then the Coalition of social protection came into being. It united 28 different organizations, parties and movements for joint work to tackle acute social problems on a consolidated basis and on social partnership.

In December 2000 the law “On social partnership” of the Republic of Kazakhstan was adopted, which dealt with problems of coordination of the interests of state power, employers and employees as part of government policy. Thus, the questions of social partnership acquired the legal status as a matter of government importance. An important event for the formation of the institutions of the civil sector was its First Forum with the participation of President Nursultan Nazarbayev of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2003. An important event some time earlier, in December 1994, was the presidential decision to set up a republican tripartite commission on social partnership.

The National Commission on problems of democracy functioned in the republic in 2003 – 2005. Its work contributed to democratization of social relations and the development of institutions of civil society in Kazakhstan.

The second stage of the development of civil society in the republic began in August 2006, when the “Concept of the development of civil society in the Republic of Kazakhstan for the period of 2006–2011” was adopted. It defined the concrete ways and means and mechanisms of the process.

By the beginning of the second stage there were 5,820 officially registered non-governmental organizations of various types in Kazakhstan. They included twelve political parties, 3,340 public

foundations, 1,072 associations of legal entities, 471 cultural centers, and 3,340 religious associations representing more than forty confessions. Apart from that, there are 6,646 mass media of the most diverse forms of ownership.

The law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “on state social order” adopted in April 2005 granted opportunities to non-governmental organizations to take part in the implementation of various social projects on the basis of new relations between state power and society. To date, the non-governmental sector of Kazakhstan includes 18,000 such organizations employing 550,000 people; in all, about 35,000 non-commercial organizations have been registered in the republic.

Kazakhstan’s non-governmental organizations tackle tasks of rendering help and services to separate categories of the population, organizing various material and cultural functions jointly with state bodies with a view to improving the socio-economic and political situation and raising the living standards of the population and the level of mutual understanding and social accord in the republic.

The non-governmental organizations work successfully in South Kazakhstan region (460 such organizations are registered there).

It should be noted that the main task of non-governmental organizations is not to draw or redistribute profit. The sphere of their activity stretched from ecology, human rights protection and social services to problems of adolescents.

Among the South Kazakhstan non-governmental organizations is the “Civil Alliance of SKR” which is very active in the political and cultural life of the region. Another organization is the language center “Inter Press IH” concentrating its activity on the study of foreign languages. There is also the foundation helping farmers and entrepreneurs.

An important event in the history of the Kazakh non-governmental sector was the Second Republican Forum, which was attended and addressed by the President of the republic Nursultan Nazarbayev. He suggested a number of measures for the development of the civil sector and defined the tasks of government bodies for greater interaction with the population.

In October 2007 the Third Forum took place in Astana which served as an effective platform for a dialogue between power, business and non-governmental organizations.

The Civil Alliance of Kazakhstan carried out a sociological survey of the current state and prospects of the development of non-governmental organizations in the republic. On its basis it can be concluded that this sector has passed the period of its formation and entered a development stage, which is a milestone in the history of civil society in Kazakhstan.

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AFGHANISTAN AND NEW UNCERTAINTY. CHALLENGES TO RUSSIA AND CENTRAL ASIA

The presidential elections in Afghanistan and the withdrawal of the military contingents of the United States and NATO in 2014 will hardly have a positive effect on the situation in that country. The new President of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani in his inauguration speech singled out the key problems facing his country: security, continuation of peace process, effective struggle against terrorism and narcotic drug production, economic crisis. He also proclaimed an ambitious reform of state power and government bodies.

Fragile National Unity

The effectiveness of the government of national unity will largely be determined by a balanced regrouping of the forces within the Afghan elites and their ability to answer properly the present-day realities. Political consensus in power bodies and their internal consolidation determine the firmness and stability of the positions of central power and the efficiency of their efforts aimed at achieving national reconciliation and negotiations with armed opponents. The fact that the inauguration of the President became possible not only (and not so much) due to general national elections, but also as a result of prolonged political bargaining (with the participation of Washington, UN and certain neighboring countries) only confirms the assumption about difficulties of the government, whose initial structure seemed rather weak. Will the new coalition be firm, will it be efficient enough despite the differences between its main participants, primarily, the

President and the Prime minister – only time will show. National consensus on the future of Afghanistan will require not only energetic and vast work with representatives of the national-ethnic political elites, but also elaboration of slogans capable to consolidate society for effective resistance to the Taliban. In any case, to solve domestic economic and political problems when it is also necessary to fight the armed opposition is extremely difficult for Kabul. The tandem of Ashraf Ghani – Abdullah Abdullah is weak, and the country may become fragmented by the ethnic factor, primarily, along the “North – South” line (Pashtuns – Non-Pashtuns). Apart from the general Pashtun-Tajik confrontation between the supporters and opponents of the two leaders there are views on the possible intra-Pashtun tension (between tribal groups). In eastern regions of Afghanistan the cause of growing tension may be infringement of the political and financial-economic rights of Abdullah’s supporters due to the growing influence of Ghani’s supporters. Certain observers believe that interference of Kabul’s foreign partners may be required in order to avoid another impasse of local power. All the more so, since the coalition agreement does not provide for mechanisms of resolving disputes.

A destructive outside factor capable to aggravate the situation is not only repercussions of the “Arab spring” in the Middle East, but also the activity of the ISIL. The ideology and methods of reaching their aims, tactic of practical actions, fanaticism, aggressiveness and cruelty of functionaries and militants of ISIL resemble the Taliban movement in the latter half of the 1990s. This creates a foundation for coordination of actions not only in Afghanistan, but also in adjacent regions of Central and South Asia, North-East China, in the Caucasus, and elsewhere. Many experts maintain that up to ten percent of the ISIL militants are men of Caucasian origin, some of them came from Khanty-Mansi district, Novosibirsk and the Volga area. So far there has

been no open penetration of ISIL in Afghan territory. However, in a number of enclaves, including in the North of the country, their religious-propaganda literature can be found, and the Pakistan wing of the Taliban has openly proclaimed itself an ally of the ISIL.

The general situation in Afghanistan continues to remain tense, although recently the activity of the Taliban has become somewhat weaker. This makes it possible for the government to consolidate its bodies in order to step up opposition to the Taliban and its supporters.

At the same time there is no cohesion and proper coordination in the ranks of the national armed forces and the security units. Combat ability of the Afghan armed forces suffers from lack of discipline and professionalism. Desertion and the recruitment of servicemen by the Talibs are one of the most serious problems of the Afghan army. Besides, their agents penetrate the army and police, and it harms the efficiency of the Afghan armed forces. Difficulties of combat training are also conditioned by the low level of literacy and interethnic tension. Such state of affairs suites the armed opposition.

In his inaugural speech President Ashraf Ghani called on his opponents, and especially the Talibs and the Islamic party to start political negotiations, excluding Mullah Omar. However, it is not clear yet what the general strategy of Kabul will be like. In any case, the recipes of the previous administration of Karzai, when the “peaceful Talibs” who gave up armed struggle were granted certain privileges, proved ineffective. There was no adequate reaction on the part of the enemies of the present regime in the country, who refused to engage in any dialogue while the foreign troops remained there.

The first pressure test of the new rule will be parliamentary elections in 2015. Future deputies will reflect the renovated alignment of forces as a result of the activity of the coalition government. The

parliament will, probably, be influenced by the present armed opposition.

Foreign-policy Priorities

A new stage of foreign-policy maneuvering of Kabul seems quite important, because at the concluding phase of the withdrawal of foreign troops Afghanistan enters a period of uncertainty. In order to solve the tasks facing the country's government it is necessary to evolve and pursue a well-thought-out and balanced foreign policy, which would ensure all-round support from outside. Of the five foreign-policy priorities the main one is the development of relations with the neighboring and Muslim countries. Then there are countries in the West and Asia, primarily China, India and the monarchies of the Persian Gulf. The list ends with international bodies. Russia is not mentioned, the new authorities of Afghanistan do not regard it as a priority.

At first glance it seems strange that Washington is not singled out as a special category (despite the bilateral agreement on cooperation in the sphere of security signed on September 30). However, it may show Kabul's desire to try to distance itself from the odious past in Afghan-American relations. On the one hand, the Afghan authorities continue to depend on the United States a great deal, and on the other, they realize full well that they better display activity in other directions, too.

After Washington has decided to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan and made public its doctrine of greater military-political attention to East Asia, American interest in that country has diminished. Nevertheless, the influence of the United States and NATO countries is still quite great. It is quite probable that the present course is aimed at reducing expenditures and responsibility for the situation after 2014. The new liabilities of the Obama administration include the granting to Kabul of not only definite military support, but also financial

assistance, and an agreement on cooperation in the sphere of security becomes the main document for the near future. It determines the status of a small contingent of American troops in Afghanistan, along with several bases and logistics hubs, which can be used to support the Afghan government with force.

The document envisages the training and supply of the Afghan security forces, as well as financial aid to government bodies and the state budget. However, American experts predict a considerable reduction of the U.S. economic presence in Afghanistan. The preservation of a U.S. military contingent not only gives Washington the levers of influence on Kabul, but also allows it to monitor the general situation in the region.

These opportunities are bolstered up by an agreement with NATO signed by Kabul envisaging additional deployment of up to four thousand servicemen. At the NATO summit in September 2014 Afghanistan was promised \$5.1 billion dollars in 2015. Within the framework of a new mission called “Resolute Support” to be started next year material and financial assistance will be rendered to the armed forces of Afghanistan, as well as other forms of “political and practical cooperation” will be carried on. Germany and Italy have already announced their readiness to dispatch their servicemen to Afghanistan.

Realizing that the new agreement with Washington may cause circumspection among certain neighbors of Afghanistan, particularly, China, Iran and Russia, the Afghan leadership emphasizes that the foreign military presence will “positively influence the situation in the region and will not harm security of any country.” Yet, in order to minimize apprehension of its neighbors Kabul should watch closely the actions of the United States on its territory and pursue an active, but

cautious and balanced policy in the region. This is important, inasmuch as Afghanistan itself is still suspicious of the foreign military presence.

Kabul intends to develop its eastern policy and this is why it should take into account sentiments not only of its own population, but also those of its important regional partners. There have already been political contacts with India and Pakistan which have always influenced the domestic situation in Afghanistan: Islamabad politically and New Delhi economically. Iran also expects certain intensification of relations with Afghanistan. Certain analysts think that a definite vacuum of power after the withdrawal of the U.S. and NATO contingent from Afghanistan can have a negative influence not only on that country, but also on Pakistan. Taking into account a special significance of relations with the latter for the domestic situation in Afghanistan, Islamabad was visited by President Ashraf Ghani in mid-October (right after his visit to Beijing).

China looked favorably on Afghan-Pakistani rapprochement. The visit to Islamabad of the Afghan President was preceded by agreements on increasing mutual trade from \$2.5 billion to \$5 billion, and also a stay in Kabul of the commander-in-chief of the Pakistani army Rakhil Sharif. Permanent contacts with the United States were supplemented with brief visits to Kabul by the Premier of Britain, President of Turkey, and Minister of economic cooperation of Germany.

Negotiations have begun with members of the Organization of Islamic cooperation on financing number of energy projects, including regional and transit transportation through Afghanistan. The biggest of them – *CASA 1000* – deals with transportation of electric energy from Tajikistan to Afghanistan and Pakistan, which is to be finished by 2017. The idea of a considerable increase of electric energy supplies from Turkmenistan to northern districts of Afghanistan (up to 33.5 billion kW/h by 2030) has again received a political impetus.

Agreements have been reached on a consortium of interested states for financing the construction of a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan, Pakistan and India (TAPI), which was discussed from the latter half of the 1990s and which became a hostage of the geopolitical games of the United States in the Caspian Basin and Central Asia.

Proliferation Risks

The prospects of Afghanistan concern its Central Asian neighbors. There can be no stability and security in this volatile region, without a solution of the Afghan problem. Too many old problems complicate the life of people there, among them the use of water resources, territorial disputes, and complex ethno-national situation. The further destabilization of Afghanistan will inevitable be felt in Russia through Central Asia. The growing number of migrants from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan serve as a nutrient medium for pressure brought to bear on our country. Already now more and more cases become known of recruiting mercenaries and setting up illegal centers of the distribution of extremist ideas on Russian territory. There is information about the emergence of ISIL cells in various regions of Russia and its recruiting centers. Afghanistan's neighbors fear that the activity of transnational terrorist groupings there, along with the growing drug production and trafficking will threaten the neighboring states. The concentration of terrorist and criminal organizations in some northern and north-western provinces of Afghanistan is another cause of concern.

The Tajik-Kyrgyz direction is considered the most vulnerable. According to certain experts, terrorist groupings in Kyrgyzstan merge with criminal elements and special services. This exerts destructive influence on the adjacent Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The complex situation in Kyrgyzstan and the lack of proper control over the situation

in parts of Tajikistan create additional opportunities for growing instability and greater threats to other Central Asian states and to Russia. Recently, Turkmenistan has also expressed concern over the situation in Afghanistan. In certain border districts of that country, groupings of Afghan Turkmen of pro-Taliban orientation have become more active, and their programs include claims of parts of the territory of South Turkmenistan.

Russia and its Central Asian partners in the CSTO adopt additional measures for strengthening their southern borders and create plans of joint actions in case of emergency. They should act in the interests of the multilateral structure of this organization and departure from predominantly bilateral military-political and military-technical relations of Russia with other member-countries of the CSTO. A serious problem is suspension by Uzbekistan of its membership in the organization, and in order to fill the vacuum it is necessary to step-up military cooperation with it of individual member-states.

One of the specific features of the foreign policy of the post-Soviet states of Central Asia is their desire to gain profit even from minimal compromises. Mutual circumspection of historical roots, national egoism, and different interests in Afghanistan prevent the elaboration of common approaches to the Afghan problem. Exaggerated perception in the countries of the region of the great powers' role in resolving local problems lead to temptation to shift responsibility for the state of affairs on to the outside forces. Unwillingness to pursue an independent policy of security, and excessive concentration on solution of domestic problems will lower the strategic importance of this region for Afghanistan (in contrast to such neighbors as China, Pakistan and Iran).

Another serious obstacle in the way of coordinating policy within the framework of the CSTO and directly toward Afghanistan is the

aggravation of Moscow's relations with the West, which promises to last long. Russia's course has evoked an ambiguous reaction among its Central Asian partners, which was the most pronounced in Astana (Kazakhstan) and Tashkent (Uzbekistan). They fear the growing "imperial ambitions" of Moscow which may move them toward greater tactical interaction with Washington, which the latter can use in Afghanistan. Such maneuvering of partners will inevitably worry Russia, which will lower the effectiveness of interaction in the Afghan affairs.

Recently, Beijing has become concerned over the development of the situation in Afghanistan after 2014, and its possible destructive influence on the North-Western districts of China. This is confirmed by more frequent anti-government demonstrations in the Xinjiang-Uighur autonomous district of the PRC, above all, growing separatism and the activity of the "Islamic movement of East Turkestan." From the economic point of view, Afghanistan is interesting to China primarily as a supplier of raw materials. Beijing has undertaken no small efforts to entrench itself in the oil-bearing districts in the North of Afghanistan and in the development of one of the world's biggest copper ore deposits. However, the implementation of the project was retarded by the general instability in Afghanistan and its transfer to the districts bordering on China. This contributed to growing turbulence in the Muslim enclaves of the PRC, including due to the activity of the "Islamic movement of East Turkestan," as well as illegal penetration of Afghan narcotic drugs to China. All this predetermines Beijing's greater attention to the political aspects of the Afghan problem and, accordingly, its growing interest in Afghanistan, which is positively viewed in the West.

The key aspect of the October meetings of President Asraf Ghani in China was, naturally, the problems of security, including the joint

struggle against terrorism and drug trafficking. The Chinese side was assured of Afghanistan's readiness to strengthen interaction in the struggle against Uighur separatism and extremism. In turn, Kabul was interested in support and assistance in its dialogue with Islamabad, taking into account rather close relations between China and Pakistan. The PRC supported the intention of the Afghan authorities to set up the negotiation process with the armed opposition. Adhering to a cautious position toward the Taliban Beijing has always considered them a "real political force which would be present for a long time on the Afghan political scene." On October 31, 2014 the Chinese side planned to initiate the setting up of a committee to support the Afghan authorities in holding negotiations with the armed opposition. However, having a cool reaction of some participants in the Istanbul process, Beijing took off its proposal.

Russia and Various Formats

The main task for the near future is to ensure peace in Afghanistan, prevent the proliferation of instability, terrorism and narcotic drugs from its territory and help it in economic development (the recent conference of donors in London has shown unfeasibility of foreign financial donations to that country). In this matter Russia's interests coincide with those of China and Central Asian countries, which provide broad opportunities for their active interaction. Washington's desire to use its presence in Afghanistan and, accordingly, in Central Asia after 2014 for ensuring its geopolitical interests in the "soft underbelly" of Russia and China gives an impetus to the coordination of their policy in the region, including for counteraction to the disproportionate presence of the United States there.

At the same time Washington can take a course to strengthening interaction with Central Asian countries and China to the detriment of

Russian interests. In any case, the West approved cooperation in the U.S.A. – China – Afghanistan triangle.

In view of the fact that all Central Asian countries (except Turkmenistan) are members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), challenges from the South inevitably predetermine the greater activity of SCO and the need to pay closer attention to the elaboration of a concerted political course in the Afghan affairs by the SCO member-countries. This was proved by the latest summit of the organization in Dushanbe in mid-September, where the problems of Afghanistan took pride of place on the agenda. The SCO has no institutional military possibilities for ensuring regional stability and security. In this context, it would be expedient to step up in every way possible the political component of SCO functioning in the Afghan direction. Later on, when joint economic activity is discussed, the economic component could be added to the political one. The present chairmanship of Russia in the SCO contributes not only to its further strengthening and expansion (due to Pakistan and India joining it) and its higher regional and world status, but also to greater attention to the problems of Afghanistan.

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BEHIND THE SCO SUMMIT IN DUSHANBE

The summit of the heads of state of the SCO member-countries held in Dushanbe on September 11–12, 2014, has not justified all hopes of experts. However, it has moved forward the SCO project overburdened as it is with numerous obstacles.

The higher level of mutual understanding of the participants in the meeting was due to a complex of regional and global threats and challenges, which resulted from the ill-considered policy of the West (primarily, the United States as the chief moderator of this policy) in the Maghrib countries, the Middle East, and especially in Ukraine. Yet, there is nothing unexpected or paradoxical in it. If we remember history, the very foundation of the SCO was conditioned by a whole range of similar factors, although with different emphases.

Positive Results

The main problem discussed by the summit was the ensuring of regional security. Apparently, the SCO member-countries have now come to realize that the main problem of global and regional security is the U.S.-initiated process of the formation of a new system of international security, which is dominated by the policy of “double standards”, as well as the rule of force and its use bypassing the UN Security Council.

This policy is becoming ever more concrete, and the number of countries whose political regimes do not suite this process is steadily growing. As a result, the spheres of the use of armed force to defend national interests expand, arms race is on the upgrade, and the wave of terror is sweeping over the world as an answer to the attempts to establish American domination.

There is another factor which should not be ignored. In the modern world there are many countries whose national armed forces, police and special services are unable to guarantee security. The same can be referred to international organizations and institutions, such as the UN, OSCE, NATO, etc.

Naturally, this cannot satisfy the member-states of the SCO, especially in the conditions when they are induced to take the side of

the strong and deprived of the right of free choice. Inasmuch as the United States and Europe reject the idea of creating a common area of security put forward by Russia, it is time to tackle the formation problems of a regional security system.

This was the keynote of the discussion at the Conference on interaction and measures of trust in Asia in Beijing in May 2014. This idea was also emphasized at the latest summit of the SCO by the most influential member of this organization Xi Jinping. He emphasized the need “to develop high responsibility and self-consciousness of community concerning the destiny and common interests of the organization whose members should act in one direction in the name of peace and stability in the region and the world. They should concentrate their intentions and strength and sincerely cooperate with all forces and contribute to improvement of the SCO mechanisms, all-round cooperation, greater openness and better life of the peoples of the region.”

Xi Jinping put forward four theses. First of all, he noted that the SCO member-countries bear responsibility for ensuring security and stability in the region.

In his view, it is necessary to concentrate on the struggle with religious extremism and Internet-terrorism for which purpose to give the Regional anti-terrorist body of the SCO the function of fighting drug production and trafficking and set up a Center of opposition to challenges and threats to security for coordinating all efforts in the struggle with the “three forces of evil.”

Secondly, the Chinese leader emphasized that it is necessary to make joint development and prosperity the main aim, and principal attention should be concentrated on trade and investments, regional integration and the creation of a uniform trade, investment and transport-logistics area. It is necessary to achieve unity of views on

the setting up of the financial structure of the SCO, strengthen coordination of energy policy and cooperation in ensuring security of transnational oil and gas pipelines; improve coordination of food policy and raise the capacities of the food industry basis; to evolve a “Plan of actions of SCO partnership in scientific-technological sphere.” China decided to increase the volume of the foundation of “China – Eurasia” economic cooperation to \$5 billion.

Thirdly, it is necessary to maintain all-round contacts and humanitarian exchange, broaden the possibilities of the SCO in distributing international information and strengthening cooperation between the mass media, and also facilitate personnel training and its exchanges in the spheres of social policy, state management and legal procedures. The Chinese side intends to ensure an opportunity to train two thousand government officials and managerial and technical personnel from the SCO member-countries in 2015–2017, as well as to invite to China fifty young leaders from SCO countries on probation annually.

Fourthly, it is necessary to broaden exchanges and cooperation with the outside world. China welcomes the desire of the countries which comply with the SCO criteria to join the organization. Interaction of the SCO member-states with observer-countries and partners on dialogue and their cooperation should be strengthened. The SCO should cooperate more actively with the UN and other international, as well as regional organizations. The Chinese side welcomes the active participation of the SCO member-countries and partners on dialogue in the construction of the “Economic Belt on the Silk Road” which is to broaden transport-communication possibilities and give an incentive to the industrialization process of a new type.

Of course, what was said by Xi Jinping can be interpreted as the desire of the Chinese leader to promote his idea of the formation of

the “Economic Belt on the Silk Road,” and it is true, in part. But it cannot be denied that today the role of the moderator of the formation process of the Asian security concept belongs to China. Xi Jinping’s theses have been reflected in the declaration adopted on the results of the summit. Evidently, they will also be reflected in the “Development Strategy of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization up to 2025.”

Another key problem discussed at the summit dealt with cooperation in the sphere of transport and logistics. In his statement President V. Putin proposed not only to use the transit potential of the Russian Trans-Siberian and Baikal-Amur railway lines, but also to form a network of motor roads, including the transport corridor Europe – Western China, connecting the ports of the Yellow Sea with ports of Leningrad region. In his view, the next step should be endorsement of the program of coordinated development of motor roads of the SCO member-countries, whose project was presented by the Russian side to its partners in April 2014.

The third key problem touched on expansion of the SCO. The summit approved the order of the procedure of granting the status of a member-state of the organization and revised the memorandum on the obligations of the state wishing to join it. Thus, a legal basis was created for increasing the number of participants in the SCO.

It was to be expected that at the next summit in Ufa in the summer of 2015 Pakistan and India would become permanent members of the organization. In the view of the Chinese delegation, India and Pakistan joining the SCO would serve its further development and these two countries would make every effort to ensure security and development in the region. It is possible that similar status will be given to Mongolia, too. V. Putin’s and Xi Jinping’s visits to Mongolia and a Chinese-Russian-Mongolian dialogue organized within the framework of the SCO summit in Dushanbe speak in favor of this idea.

Judging by the assessment of this dialogue by Xi Jinping, there is complete mutual understanding and many touch points between these three countries.

True, the geopolitical significance of the broadening of the SCO notwithstanding, there are quite a few questions still unanswered. Especially now, when it is quite evident that in its present composition the SCO is not an effective enough instrument. There are many doubts as to whether the SCO should be expanded. First, simultaneously with adoption of new members the zone of the SCO responsibility becomes broader and the range of problems to be tackled becomes more complex. With due account of the fact that the sphere of problems is already complex enough and there are no answers to the timely problems of security, a question arises whether it should be made still more difficult.

Secondly, a legitimate question arises as to how to overcome the “conflict of interests” within the framework of one organization, without turning a not too effective mechanism of ensuring regional security into a banal talkfest. In essence, despite definite positive aspects in relations between Asian countries, there are countries which are in direct confrontation with one another (India – Pakistan), or countries which are geopolitical rivals (China – India), or countries (Iran) which will bring a host of problems with them, which the SCO is not ready to resolve as yet. A no less serious problem is one of opposing the threat of Islamic fundamentalism and extremism and at the same time reconciling the interests of secular (though Muslim) regimes with the interests of Islamic regimes.

Thirdly, it is necessary to have a clear-cut answer to the question as to how the functions of the SCO are connected with the prospects of the broadening of this organization. To date there are no proper answers to these questions, on the contrary, at the expert level one can find

directly opposite views. Turkey is a case in point. Being a partner on dialogue, Turkey is an active NATO member and has its own views on world problems, which is why it is quite evident that the views of SCO members and those of Turkey may be radically different.

Fourthly, a possible change of the alignment of forces in the organization (economically) should also be taken into account, especially in view of adoption of Pakistan, India, and, possibly in the future, Iran in the organization as permanent members.

Finally, it can be predicted that the adaptation process of potentially new SCO members will also present certain problems. Even today, when the nucleus of the organization is formed by post-Soviet republics, the mechanism of adoption and, what's more important, of implementation of decisions works far from smoothly. Adoption of new members to the SCO will inevitably complicate relations between the participants in the organization and may contribute to its excessive bureaucratization. In that case there can be a variant of gradual changing the SCO into an important, respected and influential "club," and nothing more, for holding political discussions and economic forums.

Thus, the expansion of the SCO should not become an end in itself or, all the more so, be detrimental to it and replace the real meaning of its existence. It is necessary to adhere to the strict observance of conditions and liabilities of the countries – candidate members.

To date one of the key problems of the SCO is the absence of practical actions and effective mechanism of reacting to challenges and threats to the area uniting these states. If the SCO is able to offer and realize a complex of measures to minimize negative processes connected with the financial-economic crisis, its image will change and,

accordingly, the attitude to this organization on the part of the population of its member-countries will also change.

This means that the development prospects of the SCO are connected with the two key aspects: on the one hand, its greater role in the formation of a new structure of Eurasian security, and on the other, in the establishment of effective economic cooperation and implementation of joint economic projects of major importance for the population of the region.

The fifth definite achievement of the past summit was a relative consensus on the main international problems. Support of the Russian position in its conflict with the West on Ukraine merits special attention, although this support can hardly be called unambiguous. The final declaration emphasized that the heads of state favor the speediest restoration of peace in Ukraine and continuation of the negotiation process with a view to completely resolving the crisis in that country. They welcome the Protocol on the results of the consultations of the tripartite contact group concerning joint actions aimed at the implementation of the peace plan of the President of Ukraine and the initiatives of the President of Russia.

Nevertheless, it should be admitted that the absence of mentioning the “Crimean problem” in the discussion within the framework of the summit and in the adopted documents is a testimony to the participants’ support of the position of Russia. This was most clearly expressed in the words of President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan, who emphasized that the interests of Russia in the region should have been taken into account.

Behind the Façade of the Summit

Despite the general positive results of the Dushanbe summit, it should be noted that they do not solve the basic problems of the SCO,

do not answer the questions about the organization's future and its role in resolving conflicts in the zone of its responsibility.

President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan mentioned in his speech at the summit the unresolved border problems between the SCO member-states, the food problem and the shortage of water which is a serious factor influencing stability and security in the region. He turned attention to the projects and initiatives whose realization is retarded due to differences between the SCO priorities and the national interests of separate SCO member-countries, and also because of the absence of financial resources.

It is difficult to argue about this. Although the SCO has now been playing one of the key roles in the current security system in the Central Asian region, the effectiveness of its activity leaves much to be desired. Especially in view of the challenges and threats to regional security which are not directly connected with international terrorism or narcotic drugs business.

The future of the SCO is still more vague, if we take into account regional problems, the SCO position on some of them, and its ability to solve them. It should be admitted that so far the SCO member-states have no common attitude to these challenges and threats to regional security. And without this it is not possible not only to evolve a long-term development strategy of the organization, but also the strategy of ensuring security in the SCO area.

The organization is burdened with a host of inner problems, part of which cannot be solved so far. These problems not only negatively influence the effectiveness of its functioning, but also narrow down the range of its possibilities in localizing regional threats and challenges. The most crucial question as to how effective the SCO mechanisms are to counteract the main threat of today – political extremism and

interference of the third forces in the process of change of power in the zone of SCO responsibility – is still open.

In the present conditions, when the problem of continuity (or transfer) of power is the main one in each state of Central Asia, and the activity of rival groups is on the upgrade, the possibility of political destabilization of individual countries, or the entire region, for that matter, is quite real. This is why the question as to how the SCO should behave toward the acting political elites in opposition and what it is prepared to do in case of the emergence of a “color revolution” in one of the states of the region should be dealt with already now.

This is one of the most difficult questions. The full-fledged participation of the SCO in solving domestic political conflicts, which can arise in its member-countries, is hardly possible even theoretically. The limited character of the SCO possibilities is not only due to the absence of the corresponding mechanisms and legal basis in the organization. The main problem is that regional conflicts themselves have no solution in principle. Although for the sake of justice it can be said that the SCO has a host of opportunities of positive influence on the situation in the region and prevention of a negative scenario of developments.

First, the SCO is an additional platform for carrying on a multilateral dialogue between the Central Asian countries with the participation of observer-states.

Secondly, this is a structure in which countries have the greatest number of touch points and, consequently, a possibility to reach consensus in the spheres close to the timely problems of national security.

Thirdly, the arsenal of political and diplomatic measures at the disposal of the SCO is seldom used so far, including such an important factor as the prestige of the leaders of its member-states.

Fourthly, the SCO is able not only to create a favorable surrounding for Afghanistan in the region, but also maximally to block the export of narcotic drugs and ideas of radical Islamism from there, as well as sharply narrow down the foreign financial aid to the Afghan opposition and render Kabul considerable economic assistance.

There are three main problems in the way of practical realization of this idea. First, will NATO agree, in its cooperation with Russia and the SCO, to go further than granting the latter a transport corridor for cargo deliveries to Afghanistan? Secondly, will the SCO be able to avoid participation of its collective forces in the anti-terrorist operations in Afghanistan, confining itself exclusively to economic projects? Thirdly, will the SCO and NATO be able, separately or jointly, (without the participation of the CSTO) to change the situation in Afghanistan and ensure security in the region? So far, there are no clear-cut answers to these questions.

The SCO potential is not used properly for rendering a positive influence on the socio-economic processes in the region. The reason is quite simple – national egoism and commercialization of foreign policy. It is due to this reason that the image of the SCO in the public opinion of the states of the region is close to zero. Another difficult problem having an impact on the future of the SCO is ambiguity of Russia's policy toward the CIS in general and the countries of Central Asia in particular, as well as geopolitical and geo economic consequences of the Ukrainian crisis.

Evidently, there will hardly be even “patched-up peace” between Russia, the United States and Europe in the near future. Russia's desire to play a greater role in the international arena, and in the post-Soviet area, is not welcome by its western partners. No one wishes to see Russia as a strong and independent political actor, and the West is doing everything possible to prevent the restoration of Moscow's influence in

the traditional regions of its domination – the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the CIS as a whole.

This can be reflected on the general situation in Central Asia, especially on the integration processes sponsored by Russia. In any case, the level of apprehensions caused by the unpredictable character of Russia's policy and the possible negative influence of the western sanctions imposed on Russia on the economies of the countries of the region has a tendency to grow.

The “harsh clinch” between Russia and western countries seriously limits the opportunities of pursuing a many-vector policy and places the states of the region in a situation of difficult choice of foreign-policy priorities. Another serious problem is the growing might of China and its desire to play a more important role in the world, as well as the strengthening of its positions in the Eurasian region, which cause greater concern not only in the West and in Russia, but also in Central Asian countries. Three circumstances should be taken into consideration in this respect.

First, it is necessary to oppose the economic and trade penetration of China in the region, which neither Russia nor the countries of the region can oppose. Moreover, this is unfeasible, taking into account the fact that economic interaction with the Heavenly Empire is of a mutually advantageous character, and China for us is a more desirable partner than we for China.

Secondly, China is not regarded by the political establishment or the population of Central Asia as a source of potential threats any longer. Moreover, it is now viewed as a welcome foreign-policy and foreign-economic partner, as well as a worthy alternative to Russia and western countries in the sphere of ensuring regional security.

Thirdly, the specific features of relations between Russia and China in the SCO area is a major factor. On the one hand, the Russia –

China tandem has been formed quite distinctly. Moreover, Russia and China talk, apparently quite justly, about “strategic interaction.” However, on the other hand, rivalry between them becomes ever more pronounced not only for access to the resources of the region, but also for the countries situated in it.

Although China is keeping a pause, not wishing to enter into a direct confrontation with the United States and Europe, and supporting an illusion in Russia that it is the latter that plays “the first fiddle” in the Central Asian region, the Chinese press expresses anxiety ever more frequently over the increasing presence of Russian companies in Central Asia. Similar view can be seen, but with regard to China, in the Russian mass media. A number of Russian experts are quite right in asserting that the strengthening positions of China in Central Asia do not answer Russian national interests.

There is no doubt that China will strive to promote its own interests, and they may enter in contradictions not only with the interests and strategy of the West or Russia, but also with those of the countries of the region. In any case, the speed with which China digests Central Asia evokes many questions among the public of the region. This is why it is advantageous for the Central Asian countries to pursue the strategy envisaging China’s growing interest in the region with a view to giving an incentive to the development of the economies of the region, on the one hand, and on the other – the creation of conditions ensuring the limited presence of China in Central Asia in strategic perspective.

The most promising way will be the effective use of China’s geographical advantages and the emerging unified Eurasian economic area. They may include motor roads and railways connecting the SCO member-states. In this context the initiative put forward by Xi Jinping concerning the formation of the “Economic Belt on the Silk Road” and

combination of the potentials of the SCO and the European Economic Union may be quite timely. True, there should not be excessive euphoria in relations with China (I observed this both in Russia and in Central Asian countries), pride of place should be given to one's own national interests, inasmuch as the point is the integration project, which includes the countries possessing incommensurable economic potentials and financial opportunities.

Another aspect is major water and ecological projects the need for which is felt in China, Russia and Central Asia. Besides, it is precisely in the sphere of ecology that prospects open for creating a mechanism of scientific-technological cooperation and introduction of scientific and technical innovations in production.

The third aspect is joint projects connected with ensuring food security of the SCO member-countries. There are corresponding natural conditions and proper scientific basis for the implementation of these projects. This subject is very timely today. Moreover, it is in the field of agricultural production and its processing that the Central Asian countries can realize the task of the development of really competitive sector of the economy.

The fourth aspect is cooperation in the field of ensuring regional security and the fight against "the three forces of evil." The most crucial problems for the near future are as follows:

Localization of threats and challenges coming from Afghanistan for the regional and national security of China, Russia and the Central Asian countries;

Active opposition to the activity of religious extremist groups and penetration of foreign religious emissaries in China, Russia and the Central Asian countries;

Creation of conditions preventing the growth of political and religious extremism in the SCO member-states;

Continuation of the fight with international terrorism and suppression of attempts of terrorist groups to penetrate in the territory of the SCO member-countries, as well as prevention of citizens of these countries from taking part in terrorist activity abroad;

Creation of conditions preventing the growth of nationalism and ethnic and regional separatism in the SCO area.

The fifth aspect is the broadening of cooperation in the sphere of energy and oil and gas refinery. On this basis the relations of strategic partnership are developing between China, Russia and Central Asian countries.

The SCO as an authoritative international organization should become an active participant in the process of radical transformation of the world financial system. The economic cooperation of the SCO countries in the sphere of global and regional economic security in order to oppose the world financial crises and neutralize their consequences for the economies of the SCO member-states could be very promising. Moreover, the aggregate potential of these states makes it possible to tackle the broader problem and plan to create a system of SCO influence on global financial stability as the basis of security in all its aspects, including social, political, ecological, etc.

* * *

The above-said considerations open the prospect of turning the SCO not only into an effective regional organization, but also an organization whose opinion will be heeded by the world community. The present problems of global and regional security and the socio-economic problems of the SCO member-states directly connected with them open up a prospect of turning the organization into an effective structure of cooperation in the sphere of security and in the economic

sphere with a positive image not only of a regional, but also global importance.

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THE PLACE OF UZBEKISTAN IN U.S. CENTRAL ASIAN POLICY

From the time of the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. the United States has regarded Uzbekistan as the key power of the region, having the largest population and military force in Central Asia, situated at the crossroads of the main transport routes, and prone to rapprochement with the West. Tashkent regarded the U.S.A. as an alternative to Russian influence, a condition of building an independent national state, a source of investments and technologies, and also a means of strengthening security against the backdrop of an upsurge of radical Islamism. Relations between the two states developed unevenly and passed through several stages.

1992–2005: The U.S.A. as an alternative to Russia

The United States and Uzbekistan established diplomatic relations in February 1992. In March 1992 the U.S. Embassy was opened in Tashkent and in February 1995 – the Embassy of Uzbekistan in Washington. The first personal meeting of Islam Karimov and Bill Clinton took place in June 1996.

In the 1990s Uzbekistan granted American companies the right to develop gold ore deposits and sale uranium on foreign markets, and also allowed western non-governmental organizations and the western mass media to work in the republic. Tashkent demonstrated its loyalty to America on a number of disputed questions of the international agenda (for example, in November 1995 it voted together with the United States and Israel against the UN General Assembly resolution denouncing the embargo against Cuba).

In 1999 Uzbekistan refused to prolong the Treaty on collective security with Russia and joined the GUAM patronized by the United States and using anti-Russian rhetoric in the CIS area. For its part, the United States actively supported the Uzbek projects of “alternative integration” of Central Asia without the Russian Federation, which proved abortive due to contradictions between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

In 2001 an American military base was opened in Khanabad and donor aid was considerably increased. In March 2002, during a visit of President Islam Karimov to the United States, the two sides signed the Declaration on the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework between the United States of America and the Republic of Uzbekistan.

At the same time relations between the two countries were not too serene. They were spoilt by the desire of the White House to reform the regime in the republic by interfering in its internal affairs through non-governmental organizations and mass media, and contacts with the opposition. To support loyal politicians in Uzbekistan resource centers

were set up which rendered various technical assistance. On August 20, 2002, the U.S. Department of State issued a special report which outlined the task to ensure the strengthening of political parties, opposition journalism, and printing facilities in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, that is, the countries of the region where there were American military objects. In 2003 the U.S. Congress banned direct aid to the central authorities of Uzbekistan within the framework of FREEDOM Support Act until they demonstrated considerable progress in democratization.

2005–2008: Andizhan and Crisis of Relations

Militant fighters of the radical Islamist organization “Akramiya” attacked the city of Andizhan in the Ferghana Valley on May 13, 2005. They seized hostages and a number of administrative buildings. As a result of the counter-operations of the Uzbek special forces, the city was freed from the fighters, but about 500 civilian people were killed. Despite the definite ties of “Akramiya” with the extremist terrorist underground of Afghanistan and Central Asia, western diplomats and expert community interpreted the events in Andizhan as suppression of popular unrest against the ruling regime and sharply condemned the actions of the Uzbek authorities.

The leading mass media in Europe and the United States openly sympathized with the terrorists (moreover, it was found that the BBC journalists were in the militants’ headquarters during the operation).

The “Akramiya” grouping received arms and ammunition from neighboring Kyrgyzstan where a “tulip revolution” took place in March of the same year, which inspired the opponents of Islam Karimov. After the May events in Andizhan dozens of militants pursued by the Uzbek law-protection agencies and special services fled to Kyrgyzstan. In July 2005, under pressure of the United States and its European allies,

President K. Bakiyev of Kyrgyzstan, ignoring the demands of its neighbor Uzbekistan, allowed these militants to flee to Romania. As the expert of the American Brookings Institute Fiona Hill noted, Islam Karimov was absolutely sure that the attack on Andizhan had been prepared with the help of international organizations, including the non-governmental organizations sponsored by the United States.

In contrast to the European Union, which denounced Tashkent in May 2005 and imposed sanctions on it in November, the U.S. reaction was more complex and prolonged. The White House demanded that an international investigation be held, and tried to gain concessions from the Uzbek authorities which would have eased the situation of the opposition Uzbek groups loyal to Washington. However, the pressure brought to bear on Uzbekistan's leaders had an opposite effect.

Dozens of people have been arrested, brought to trial and sentenced on the Andizhan affair, including opposition figures and non-governmental organizations' employees. Uzbekistan demanded that the United States dismantle the Khanabad military base, which it did in November 2005, after which Uzbekistan resumed its membership in the CSTO. Islam Karimov denounced certain documents pertaining to Uzbek-American relations and abolished privileges granted American corporations in Uzbekistan. The gold-mining Newmont Company was deprived of its assets. Some leading western non-governmental organizations in Uzbekistan had to close down their offices in Uzbekistan.

2008–2014: New Approaches of the Obama Administration

Inasmuch as President Karimov was not satisfied with quite a few Russian projects in the sphere of collective security and post-Soviet integration, the next rapprochement of Uzbekistan and the United States

was only a matter of time. At first the task of resuming closer contacts with the U.S. leadership was entrusted to Uzbekistan's Ambassador to the U.S., A. Kamilov, who was greatly helped in achieving this goal by Bukhara Jews (a Judaist religious community in the U.S.A. and Canada).

President Islam Karimov demonstrated his readiness for a dialogue with the West at a summit of the North Atlantic alliance in Bucharest in April 2008.

Officially, the normalization of relations became possible after the election of Barack Obama to the post of the U.S. President in November 2008. Washington's new strategy envisaged the economic rehabilitation of Afghanistan largely due to the strengthening of ties with neighboring countries (Greater Central Asia and New Silk Road projects) and the intensification of military operations against the Taliban, for which purpose it was necessary to open additional supply channels for the coalition forces from the North (the Northern network of supplies). Closer cooperation with Central Asian countries, and first and foremost with Uzbekistan, was one of the key elements for achieving this goal.

In 2009 Tashkent joined the Northern network of supplies and had the first bilateral annual consultations with the United States in Washington. Programs in the sphere of security were revived and economic projects of mutual interest were thoroughly discussed, particularly, on the development of the infrastructure between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. The United States softened its human rights rhetoric and preferred to distance itself from direct participation in resolving water-and-energy conflict between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in 2010, having transferred the issue to the World Bank. In November 2010 the Assistant U.S. Secretary of State R. Blake stated in

the U.S. Congress that Uzbekistan was now “the key partner in US efforts in Afghanistan.”

Further on, the White House redistributed financial resources earmarked to Uzbekistan for a broader participation in the sphere of security. Officially, from 1992 to 2010, more than \$970 million were allocated for the implementation of the Department of State and USAID Agency projects in Uzbekistan. In 2012 – 2013 their financing was reduced, but simultaneously expenses along the Pentagon line grew to hundreds of millions of dollars.

At the same time the Andizhan experience has left a considerable imprint on Uzbekistan’s establishment’ perception of American approaches, perhaps, setting the limits to rapprochement of the two sides. Despite certain outward liberalization the government of the republic has consistently pursued a harsh course toward the foreign non-governmental organizations. Prospects of possible new deployment of military objects of the United States are still rather vague, although Uzbekistan suspended its participation in the CSTO in June 2012, it has published the concept of foreign policy containing the elements of neutrality, according to which Uzbekistan renounced participation in military-political blocs and the granting of its territory for deploying foreign military bases.

In turn, American diplomacy, which became more cautious to Uzbekistan, did not refuse from using its traditional instruments. The republic is subjected to criticism in the annual reports of the Department of State on the human right conditions, and it is included by the White House in the list of countries violating human rights and not satisfying the standards of preventing slave trade. Uzbekistan is included in the level “Tier 3”, which threatens it with economic sanctions. Among big American non-governmental organizations working in Uzbekistan there is the National Democratic Institute (NDI),

whose projects are oriented to deputies and functionaries of the state apparatus.

American representatives maintain contacts with the Uzbek opposition abroad, for one, the People's Movement of Uzbekistan, an association of a number of Uzbek political organizations in exile, which proclaimed as its aim the overthrow of Karimov's regime. This movement may become a useful instrument for Washington in the future in case of an aggravation of the socio-economic situation or a political crisis in Uzbekistan

Trade and Economic Cooperation

At present Uzbekistan is interesting to the United States economically as a state having a common border with Afghanistan. The development and strengthening of ties with it may help economic rehabilitation of Afghanistan within the concept of the New Silk Road. The concept published by the Obama administration in the summer of 2011 is aimed at forming a new economic region uniting Central Asia, Afghanistan and South Asia (India and Pakistan). It presupposes the creation of an infrastructure connecting them, and also liberalization of mutual trade. This should not only make the secular government in Kabul more stable and lower its requirements for outside donations, but also weaken economic orientation of Central Asia to Russia and China. The idea of the New Silk Road finds favorable response among Uzbekistan's leadership which sees in it an opportunity to expand sales markets for Uzbek commodities in Afghanistan and carry out modernization of its transport system at the expense of foreign donors.

Uzbekistan welcomes the initiatives of international donors to increase electricity generation and supply electric current to Afghanistan. It also intends to step up its own electricity generation and export electric energy in the southern direction.

A factor increasing economic attractiveness of Uzbekistan for the United States is the presence of great reserves of oil, gas, uranium and gold in the bowels of its earth. However, access to them for western companies is hindered by the restrictive measures of the Uzbek government, unfavorable investment climate, geographical distance, and competition with Russian and Chinese corporations.

For one, American transnational companies are not represented in the mining and transportation of hydrocarbons in Uzbekistan, where Russia and China are working actively in this sphere. In the production of gold Uzbekistan holds fourth place in the world in deposits and seventh place in the level of mining. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union and with a view to developing natural resources the leadership of the republic has set up a joint venture with one of the world's biggest producers of gold – the American Newmont Mining Corporation – called Zarafshan-Newmont with 50 percent of the shares belonging to each party. In 2006, against the backdrop of the exacerbation of relations with the United States, the authorities of Uzbekistan abolished tax privileges for the joint venture and claimed \$49 million, after which the enterprise was closed by a court decision.

Further on, the Uzbek leadership continued its policy of concentrating gold mining in the hands of the state, having pushed aside the British Oxus Gold from the “Khandiz” gold ore deposit. Uzbekistan's relations with western partners in uranium mining were different. (Uzbekistan holds seventh place in the world in uranium reserves). Even after the Andizhan conflict commercial relations were not broken with the American-German company ‘Nukem’, now an affiliation of the North American uranium giant Cameco.

At present China and India also display a great interest in coming to the Uzbek uranium market, and they will have to uphold their positions in stiff competition with Nukem.

Along with gas, gold and uranium, a key source of hard currency for Uzbekistan is its cotton. The republic holds sixth place in the world in the production volume of cotton and third place in its export, which is a state monopoly. The United States is itself one of the biggest producers of raw cotton and textiles in the world, and it has recently called for limiting access of Uzbek cotton to western markets, accusing Uzbekistan of using child labor on cotton fields. Under the influence of the American administration and trade networks in Europe about a hundred companies and networks in Europe and the United States have refused to buy Uzbek cotton and cotton textiles. Thus, it can be seen how the United States uses political instruments for the aims of unfair competition.

On the whole, despite certain projects, the trade potential of the United States with Uzbekistan remains small (135th place among trade partners in 2013).

Washington has traditionally advocated the speediest entry of Uzbekistan in the World Trade Organization. The republic made the initial application back in December 1994, but then “froze” negotiations with the organization. The principles and rules of the WTO contradict the harsh restrictive measures in the trade sphere adhered to by Uzbekistan in recent years. Officially, Tashkent regards the process of joining the WTO as long-term one and fears undermining its national automobile and textile industries.

Repeated rapprochement of Uzbekistan and the United States in military-political problems was accompanied with growing western investments in the Uzbek economy. This process was encouraged by the two governments. The key project was the creation in 2008 by the U.S. General Motors and the Uzbek concern UzAvtosanoat a joint venture under the name GM Uzbekistan, with a capacity of 250,000 cars a year (the share of the American side – 25 percent). However,

subsequently the direct American investments in the Uzbek economy began to dwindle continuously (up to \$71 million in 2012).

The activity of western investors is retarded by currency restrictions, complex customs and administrative procedures, corruption, and other factors inherent in the Uzbek economy.

In order to bolster up bilateral business projects the American-Uzbekistan Chamber of Commerce was set up in 1993. In 1997 another independent association of foreign business was organized in Tashkent – AmCham Uzbekistan, representing the influential American lobby group – Chamber of Commerce of the United States.

Military-technical Cooperation in the Security Sphere

Uzbekistan maintains close military-political contacts with the United States. The republic is interested in American participation in rearming its army and balancing Russian influence in the sphere of military-technical cooperation and liquidating armed groupings based in Afghanistan and Pakistan and fighting the secular regime in Tashkent. Washington regards Uzbekistan as a suitable platform for deploying its military objects and infrastructure for carrying on combat operations in Afghanistan and transportation of cargoes, as well as a potential military-political ally having the biggest armed forces in the region.

In the 1990s a series of terrorist attacks and the movement of the Taliban closer to the Uzbek border became an impetus for rapprochement with the United States. It was also prompted by the weakness of Russia, which was waging a war in Chechnya on its own territory. In 1999 Uzbekistan withdrew from the CSTO and stepped up its relations with the United States.

Under the treaty of October 2001 Uzbekistan granted the airbase Khanabad near Karshi to the United States. This base was to be used for supporting combat operations in Afghanistan. About 1,500 U.S. men and officers, including “Green Berets,” were deployed there. . At the same time the United States increased the volume of its military aid to Uzbekistan. But in 2003 the U.S. Congress reduced this aid, connecting it with the progress in reforming I. Karimov’s regime. The dual character of the U.S. position on Uzbekistan was clearly revealed in the White House reaction to the Andizhan crisis in May 2005. Having assessed Washington’s approach as a violation of partnership relations Tashkent demanded that the United States dismantle its base on Uzbek territory By November 2005 the United States transferred part of its personnel to the international “Manas” airport in Kyrgyzstan.

In 2006 Uzbekistan returned to the CSTO. Nevertheless, it regarded membership in it formally, avoiding to assume greater obligations in the sphere of security. In 2008, after the election of Barack Obama to the post of the U.S. President, Uzbekistan decided to draw closer to the United States. A new agenda was worked out, including two central points – opening of corridors for supplies of the American troops in Afghanistan by joining the Northern network of deliveries, and U.S. participation in the rearmament of the Uzbek army and special services.

Having a convenient infrastructure close to the northern part of Afghanistan, Uzbekistan became the key link of various cargo deliveries to that country. By 2013 about 70 percent of all cargoes for the U.S. grouping in Afghanistan were transported through Uzbekistan. At the same time the United States increased its purchases of food and other commodities for the needs of its own and the Afghan armies.

In addition to land communications, the U.S. administration, with mediation of South Korea, achieved the opening of an air supply

channel via the Uzbek airport Navoi in May 2009. In contrast to Kyrgyzstan's Manas used by Americans up to July 2014, the agreement on Navoi dealt exclusively with civil cargoes, and banned the presence of American servicemen on Uzbek territory and flights of U.S. military planes directly to Afghanistan.

According to press reports, negotiations took place between the United States and Uzbekistan in August 2012 on the possible creation of storehouses on its territory for keeping American equipment and arms near the Afghan border.

Another sphere of cooperation between the two countries was U.S. participation in training and equipping the Uzbek special services. Uzbekistan has the biggest paramilitary forces in the region, whose numerical strength reaches 67,000 men and officers, plus 20,000 the national guard units.

Speaking on the occasion of the Day of the defenders of the Motherland in January 2013, President Islam Karimov emphasized that "rearmament and re-equipment of the armed forces is a priority for the country. For this purpose it is necessary to improve and broaden the scope of international military-technical cooperation with foreign partner-countries." Accordingly, consultations with the U.S. administration took place in Washington in January 2013. As western mass media reported, Uzbekistan is interested in a broad range of modern arms and ammunition, including mine-sweepers, bullet-proof vests, navigation equipment, night vision devices, small arms, wheel armored cars, helicopters, drones, etc.

In February 2013 the U.S. Department of State officially announced that the United States would supply Uzbekistan with part of the commodities mentioned, namely, those unfit for "reprisals against peaceful population." Washington's initiative was supported by Britain,

which promised to supply “Leyland DAF” trucks and spare parts to “Land Rover” worth of \$700,000.

Another priority for the Uzbek leadership is the use of the U.S. potential in fighting the terrorist groupings striving to overthrow the secular ruling regime in Uzbekistan, which have earlier been ousted to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Judging by certain signs, both sides carry on joint operations. Additionally, the United States implements in Uzbekistan a program of personnel training for special services and law-enforcement agencies.

Thus, despite mutual mistrust still existing after the Andizhan crisis, the United States and Uzbekistan have succeeded to restore a high level of cooperation, primarily in the military-political sphere. However, it is quite difficult to forecast the dynamics of the further mutual relations of the two countries, inasmuch as they will depend on the two factors constantly present in Uzbek policy in recent years. First, who will take the post of President in Tashkent after Islam Karimov? And secondly, what the situation in Afghanistan will be like.

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