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Robert Landa,

Dr. Sc. (Hist.), Professor, Chief Researcher,
Institute of Oriental Studies

POLITICAL ISLAM AND EAST – WEST RELATIONS

Political Islam is the third wave of the Islamic world resistance to colonialism of the West over the past 200 years. The first wave was pan-Islamism, which sought to unite Sunni Muslims mainly under the auspices of the Ottoman sultan-caliph. But pan-Islamists have not coped with the task and almost went into oblivion after the disappearance of the Ottoman Empire in 1918. The second wave was nationalism, which achieved political sovereignty for the countries of Islam, almost everywhere in the 1920–1960s. They were forced to apply for new technologies to the same countries of the West, from which they got rid of with difficulty. They quickly realized that there was no necessary funding for the development of the economy and overcome the technical, cultural and other retardation, as well as qualified personnel to get rid of the legacy of colonial rule, to ensure the growth of the national economy and spiritual life of people.

It seemed that nothing has changed. But remember that the world of Islam has gone through two world wars, violent social struggles and battles for independence in the first half of the 20th century. Muslims demanded respect for their religion and culture, their rich history and national dignity. The West did not want it, trying to keep the same

balance of forces. In addition, the West simply do not understand the East, entrenched in the imperial arrogance and the belief in the superiority of its own civilization, morals and way of life. The unwillingness and inability to find a common language with the world of Islam gave rise to political Islam, which included experience of pan-Islamism to unite the Muslims, modern forms of political organization of mass, agitation and propaganda, inherited from nationalism, the latest information and military technologies, borrowed from the West, as well as modern methods of missionary, union, party and other activities. They coordinate their activities in different countries and even on different continents, possess technical and other achievements of the West, using their skill against the West. Some adherents of political Islam, realizing their power and influence, began to support the extreme methods of struggle, that is, for the destruction of not only Western countries, but also countries of the East, if they were not guided by the “revelation of Allah”¹. Extremists began to emerge among the supporters of political Islam in the process of strengthening its influence.

Muslims are concerned, that there is only per cent of their co-religionists among all scientists of the world. Investments in the field science are 7 times lower than of the global level. The total gross domestic product of 56 countries – members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) is less than that of France. Once, in the 9 – 15th centuries, Damascus, Baghdad, Cairo, Cordoba and Granada were the beacons of science and culture for the whole world (as centers of the Muslim country Al-Andalus). All this can not help, but give rise to the inferiority complex among Muslims, resentment, nostalgia for past glory and long hegemony of the Arab-Islamic civilization in the world. But it would be wrong to believe that the modern world of Islam is

unwilling or unable to cope with intolerance and extremism, according to the West².

The majority of Muslims in the world do not support the extremists. Adherents of extreme measures do not prevail among the followers of political Islam even. But no one asks himself in the West: why do more and more Muslims support ideology and practice of political Islam? Why do fresh fighters get in the place of the retired political Islam activists immediately? Because the most peaceful and patient among them see what is happening and realize much better now than before, the essence of political and economic dependence their countries from the neo-colonialists, the mechanisms of social and moral oppression of, the sophistication of new forms of exploitation.

Someone is able to wait patiently for changes for the better, and someone does not want or he has no possibility to wait. Rural and urban social lower strata of the population (more than a third of Muslims from Morocco to Bangladesh) can not simply wait and be patient as they are desperate and prone to the most extreme methods of social and political protest, in many cases, according to numerous observations of witnesses and sociologists. This applies to Pakistan, Lebanon, Morocco and Algeria, and the Palestinians – to a greater extent, two-thirds of whom were indigent refugees in the camps of the United Nations at one time³.

They all support political Islam today. Some of them – morally and through political means (we call them moderate), the other – radically and by force of arms (we consider them extremists), but they all think alike. Extremists may become moderate, and vice versa, depending on the course of events, as we have seen in recent years in Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia and other countries. The origin of the current crisis of Islamic civilization, are not in the struggle of these movements. It is not necessary to demonize manifestations (or consequences) of

deeper phenomena, rooted in the dark ages, first of all, a thousand-year tradition of the military-religious confrontation, accumulating mutual claims, fears and phobias, all the manifold and the bitter legacy of centuries of uneasy coexistence in the struggle and mutual suspicions of the Muslim East and the Christian West. How can the negative part of this legacy be overcome? It should not be violence, especially war, blockade, the imposition of alien concepts and beliefs to Islam world. People of the West (especially the United States) for centuries can hardly comprehend, and more often they can not comprehend the unacceptability of “Western standards of life” for the world of Islam. All failures are derived from numerous problems in the relations between western and eastern countries, especially Islamic ones.

The Western world looks at the world of Islam with fear and bewilderment, qualifying Islam as a religion of hatred and hostility, as a source of constant threat, without understanding the causes of Islamic extremism and terrorism. This anxiety is beginning to spread to other non-Muslim countries. Hardly the process of globalization will adjust and set all in the places. Moreover, the different countries take part in this process, with the dissimilar problems, interests, different geopolitical position (often opposing). Many countries, especially the Islamic world, see globalism of egocentric neo-colonial policy of the United States and its satellites for the overall picture of globalization⁴.

Globalism and the imperial ambitions of the West, the neocolonialist approach to solving of almost all problems in bilateral relations are important and actual problems, the essence of social and political life for the people of the East, especially Muslim. Unresolved contradictions and conflicts due to the lack of prospects for a positive outcome gave rise to Islamic extremism. This policy plunges people in frustration, pushes them to desperate acts, as noted by the Lebanese

Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri in 2001⁵. Al-Hariri was not anti-American or anti-Westerners in general. On the contrary, he was one of the richest billionaires and prominent politicians in the Middle East, closely related with the business community of the West and the Arab world. And that is why he was well aware of the inevitable consequences of short-sighted, irresponsible and selfish policy of, the US and its allies turning the Middle East into a hotbed of constant threat to international security. Political Islam is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, which arose due to the evolution of the world of Islam and the merger of a number of processes of the evolution, politicization of a growing and impoverished Muslim population, assimilation of others revolutionary experience and developing their own one, compounding this experience with traditions of the political culture of the Islamic world (theocracy, jihadism, Sufism, nationalism) and borrowed “Western” forms of struggle (parties, unions, cultural and other associations, charities and other foundations, the media of all kinds, and so on). Islamic fundamentalism appeared at the same time as a natural stage of formation of religious and political consciousness of Muslims, and their reaction to the threat to their socio-cultural identity because of the pressure from the West⁶.

It represents yet another “return to the roots” of Islam, caused by simultaneous occurrence of the West in the fields of economy, politics, morality, diplomacy, technology, and the “Westernization” of life, customs, social relations between people in the course of its difficult adaptation to the requirements of the update of economic mechanisms and the globalization of the world economic ties. In fact, a direct result of these processes were not only the introduction of new technologies and renovation of production, improving cultural and living standards of local elites, but rapid growth of poverty, high rate of destruction of the peasantry and the abundant growth of the lower classes of the

eastern city by a gigantic mass of the rural marginals. About half of these people remain unemployed or people without specific training, which makes many cities of the East in a social powder keg⁷.

Social discontent is manifested to a lesser extent in those regions where the modernization and Westernization (and globalization) are less painful on the historical, socio-cultural and other reasons (including religious). But the situation is quite different in North Africa, the Middle East, South and Central Asia, where Islamic fundamentalism has gained foothold in the vast area, from Pakistan and Indonesia (and India, with more than 100 million Muslims) to Morocco and West Africa, and also in the communities of Muslim immigrants in Western Europe and North America.

It will be wrong to equate Islamic fundamentalists and extremists. Islamic extremists condemn the moderate fundamentalists for “political disorientation” concessions to the authorities, “reducing the capacity of revolutionary Islam” (the list of charges of extremist groups, “al-Jihad al-Islam” and “Al Qaeda” in 1970–1980th to the “Brotherhood Muslims” in Egypt and the association “Jama'at al-Tabligh”). The leader of “al Kaide” Ayman al-Zawahiri called the oath of the Muslim Brotherhood to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in 1987 the “political and ideological suicide”, in 1998 he condemned for the lack of “major figures” among freed from prison 7000 Egyptians, who had been accused of Islamism. This was the formal reason, and actual one was the fact that such measures could reduce the tension in the society, improve the image of the government and stimulate the evolution of many Islamist from extremism to moderation, making them forget that the country “is not run according to Sharia”, and a peace treaty was signed with Israel⁸. In contrast to the moderate Muslim fundamentalists defending their religious, ethno-national and socio-cultural identity by peaceful means, the extremists condemn those

who are engaged “only religion”, call units of Muslims with other forces as an “alliance with Shaitan.” They make unrealistic demands to the West to create an atmosphere of hatred and intolerance. Therefore, right-wing circles and chauvinists of the United States, France, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands have long been united against Muslims in the West⁹.

At the same time moderate Islamic fundamentalists may be quite peaceful people who respect law and order, reject violence and fully converted to the protection of traditional Islam, comply with the regulations of the Koran and Sharia, respect and strictly perform all the rites of their religion. Many fundamentalists believe that Muslims who perform multiple and expensive rites prescribed by folk Islam (i.e. Sufi), but do not follow the five pillars of the faith faithfully, moving away from Islam. However, the line between peaceful and non-peaceful fundamentalism is often blurred in this matter. Fundamentalism is sharply politicized, meeting the resistance of the traditional clergy and the ruling political elites. But this does not necessarily lead to Islamic extremism, according to many¹⁰.

Political Islam is a reflection and expression of Islamic fundamentalism in political practice. It can be radical and moderate. Many in the West do not bother to such a differentiation by combining all kinds of Islam and encouraging the Islamic world “to get rid of its corrosive cancer.” But this is an illusion. Muslim East is experiencing some quite natural phase of historical development, namely political Islam for more than half a century. It can “get rid” not earlier than the tasks of this phase will be carried out. Much depends on the good will of the West to reach an agreement with the trends of modern Islam, willing to achieve their goals in a peaceful way and political (not military) means.

Political Islam can have a great influence without domination in a country today. The ruling elite of any Muslim state is forced to reckon with the factor of its presence and its impact on society from within. “Re-Islamization” of the constitutions in countries such as Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, Syria shows it. The massive influx of young intellectuals and students, physicists and mathematicians, to the relevant organizations testifies to this. They are concerned with the solution of political problems, but with the help of religion, and in line with its logic. It has not been observed earlier, and became possible under the domination of political Islam in the minds of people. Educated Muslims in the late 20th – early 21st centuries denounced “the decline of the state, the corruption and the enrichment of the ruling elite,” directly related to the neo-colonialist policy of the West in the Islamic countries¹¹.

The US launched a military operation against the Taliban in Afghanistan, and at the same time also took a course to expand its military presence where possible, including Central Asia and the Caucasus, as well as on the military suppression of Iraq, Syria, Libya and intimidation of such Islamic countries as Iran, Sudan, Yemen, Lebanon. Washington actually took a course on a purely military solution (according to its understanding of) all the problems of the Islamic world, especially in the Middle East by giving itself the right to accuse of “supporting terrorism” anyone whose policy does not arrange the US, for whatever reasons. But this course has no prospects, since it does not weaken but strengthens Islamo-extremism, provoking the growth of the relevant moods in the Muslim world, and reinforces the position of those forces that organized the September 11, 2001 in the US and received moral support, if not most, than too many Muslims in different countries. Of course, strikes on Islamic-extremist underground in the West and in the countries where the extremists are

supported (or can find it), will give some results. But the problems are not resolved, diverse and deep roots of Islamic extremism will not be destroyed. In addition, the United States and its closest allies have not shown much interest even to studying and understanding of these roots.

Consequently, the confrontation between the West – East will continue, but its Muslim component will retain its value in full. Some in Western Europe is aware of this. Paris, London and several other European centers are trying to pursue a more soft line of Eastern policy, trying to overcome the “traditionally skeptical” attitude of the peoples of the East, about which Turkish Prime Minister R. Erdogan (the leader of the moderate Islamist party) said in September 2004. France builds relationships not only with the Arab world, but also to Malaysia, a very distant country. A thorough study of Islam and Christian-Muslim relations is carried out in the UK, Spain, Germany, efforts are made to improve the mutual understanding of people of East and West. European Union countries take care of education, economic and cultural development of their former colonies, as well as provide the conditions for people from these colonies – migrant workers, students, interns, focusing on formal equality, economic, technical and cultural cooperation. However, even these efforts are not radically change the situation¹².

The reason is that a lot of migrant workers from Eastern countries often do not take root in the West, can not adapt to unusual conditions for them, become embittered and marginalized, finding neither habitation, nor job. There is an environment, favorable for the growth of crime, terrorism and Islamo-extremism. Especially that distrust to Muslims and fear of them flared up with particular force in the West again after 11 September 2001, extended not only to the poor and refugees, but also in the more affluent part of the immigrants from Eastern countries – students, employees and entrepreneurs. The

problem of Islamic extremism, as well as relations with the East, is in a different way in Russia and the CIS. The relationship between Islam and the Soviet government largely preserved what was in them for many centuries before 1917, namely a permanent combination of elements of conflict and cooperation, a relatively tolerant nature of interfaith relations (late 18th century), the gradual evolution of hostility and repression of the Stalin period to more calm, loyal and mutually beneficial compromise. Traditional rejection of Western civilization, especially its moral and psychological, ideological and mental aspects that unite Islam and Orthodoxy, has played its role. One should not forget that the “Sovietization” of the East was accompanied by the modernization of the Russian society, the significant growth of the economy, educators and social guarantees, the beginning of the formation of civic consciousness, especially Muslims, and the flowering of their cultures. There was rapprochement of Muslims in personal and socio-cultural plan with the other ethnic groups of the Soviet Union, especially Russian. The proportion of mixed marriages has reached 25–30% of their total number in the Muslim republics of the Soviet Union¹³.

Islam had many common socio-psychological and philosophical systems with the postulates of socialism, particularly those relating to the priority of collectivism over individualism, targeting primarily on social justice, the perception of the authoritarian power of the state as the norm of political culture. There was not even a protest against the collectivization of agriculture, in most cases, (coinciding with the traditional way of life of the community) moreover it was adapted to local conditions mainly, up to the conservation of waqf land in the Muslim regions of the Soviet Union, especially in Central Asia. Creating national and state autonomies in Muslim territories (the first time in the history of the majority of Muslims in the USSR), and the

promotion of traditional local identities (albeit with certain limitations) played a significant role. Undoubtedly, that there was integration of the Muslim elite into the social system of the Soviet society for decades. The Muslims of the USSR approved Soviet support to the anti-colonial and anti-Western movements. So the “amazing tolerance of Islam” was quite logical in the USSR¹⁴. Moreover, the legacy of the pre-revolutionary and Soviet times continues to live in the post-Soviet space.

In general, despite the collapse of the Soviet Union and the crisis in all spheres of life in Russia and the CIS generated by them, the society has survived, although the process of its revival and strengthening is inhibited. It is surprising that Islamo-extremism has not played a has not taken a more significant role and has not taken a more prominent place, taking into consideration the systemic crisis that struck at the same time the economy, politics, ideology and morality of the entire post-Soviet space, as well as countless conflicts, territorial disputes, quarrels, extracted from the depths of history, and claims between peoples. Nevertheless, its manifestations are observed almost everywhere, and Islamic fundamentalism still has certain positions now (in some places – getting stronger) among the Muslims of the Volga and Dagestan (mostly as an expression of opposition of the younger generation to the more traditional majority). No less serious role of Islamic fundamentalists in Central Asia and the Northern Caucasus (called “Wahhabis”) is associated mainly with the strongest ideological, financial, military and human support of the relevant international communities, primarily the “Hizb-t-Tahrir al-Islam”, “Al-Kaide”, “Dzhabhat en Nusra”, “Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant”, as well as their secret allies. There are the ruling elites of some Muslim states and many informal religious structures, some circles in the West, which expected to displace the Soviet Union, and then Russia, from the East

with the help of Islamic extremists, and then to solve their own problems (with their help) in the Balkans (Bosnia, Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro), in Africa (“pushing” France from the Maghreb, Libya and Egypt), and the Middle East (to oppose Islam extremists to Baathists in Iraq and Syria, secular nationalists in Lebanon and Palestine, the Kurdish movement in Turkey, Iran and Iraq¹⁵). The international dimension of Islamic extremism dominates today. But it is wrong to ignore the internal causes that have played a role, particularly in Russia. These are environmental disasters (for example, the actual death of the Aral Sea), mass unemployment of the early 1990s and the unprecedented decline in production in a number of areas (in Chechnya – 4/5), the position of the old clergy, loyal to the Soviet party workers and prevented a religious self-expression to young nationalists. Somewhere there was a high level of organized crime as a result of the criminalization of religious and clan system, as well as the persistence of painful memories of the Caucasian War 1817–1861 and the deportation of Muslims of the North Caucasus in 1944–1956.

All these factors, used by opponents and competitors of Russia, pose a threat to its integrity. The socium is tested for strength, and withstands the test for the second time already (after 1917–1922). Forces, opposing Islamic extremists have intensified along with them in Chechnya and neighboring republics (Ingushetia, Dagestan, North Ossetia). If the trend of the past years continues, Islamic extremism will have no chance in Russia. Longtime inter-civilization communication and cooperation between Russia and Islam are working on it. Geography, history, economics, politics and geo-strategy, interaction and mutual understanding, based on common work and common interests, mutual learning and mutual respect in the process of living together for nearly 1,000 years pull together Muslims and non-

Muslims in Russia¹⁶. The action of these objective factors will largely depend on the subjective factor – the policy of the Russian authorities and all opponents of extremism and terrorism, political skill and their ability to respond adequately to the challenge thrown by history.

The escalation of tension in the world since the beginning of the 21st century, conducted by the US complicated the strengthening of relations between Russia and the Islamic world. The US aggression in Afghanistan in 2001, Iraq in 2003, the bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999, provoking the Georgian attack on South Ossetia (in fact – to Russia) in 2008, promoting a series of coups in the guise of the “Arab Spring” in 2010–2014 were open the US claim for world domination. Having overthrown the governments of Egypt, Tunisia and Libya (formally via the Islamists), the United States began almost open war against Syria, then against Yemen. This is the final stage, which lasted over half a century and full of intrigues, conspiracies and provocations, the struggle for the elimination of the national Arab regimes created in the era of Nasser, 1952–1963, when almost all the Arab countries freed themselves from colonial regimes. Neither the US nor the traditional European colonizers nor the surviving Arab monarchies wanted this.

Formally, the United States and Western countries deny any involvement in the activities of Islamic extremists. They conduct military operations against them (usually unsuccessful). But these operations only disguise the true goals of the neo-colonialists. Otherwise, why did they destroy the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq and Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, which led a relentless struggle with the extremists? Why did they promote the arrival of Islamists to power in Egypt and Tunisia? Why do they support the so-called opposition in Syria, do not hide their links with Islamic extremists? The leaders of these countries “do not listen” to the United States, had good relations

with Russia were a constant threat to the main US allies in the region – conservative pro-Western monarchies. That is why the US is trying to “restructure” the entire Middle East according to its model, which in fact turns into anarchy, ruin, plenty of human victims¹⁷ and the main thing – the moral, social and political outrage, while the United States unsuccessfully trying to derive any benefit for the fifth year.

The problem of Islamic extremism is inseparable from the state of relations between East and West today. Full settlement of these relations is possible only as a result of a fundamental resolution of the contradictions that have accumulated as a result of centuries of rivalry, war and colonialism. As for relations between Russia and the East, Russia and Islam, their specificity and uniqueness of different estimates and require a different approach. The main problem in their settlement – is the uncertainty of the consequences of socio-political, economic and ideological crisis experienced by Russia in the 1990th, and the negative impact from the outside. In other words, the resolution of existing problems still largely depends on the correct choice and the future success of the political, socio-economic and foreign policy strategy of Russia.

The future of Islamism, both moderate and extremist, much depends on how the particular situation in each of the Muslim countries will develop, its economy and external relations will be developed, public institutions and mechanisms will be stable in a particular country. As this is about the East, not only ethnic and class conflicts, cultural differences and all sorts of outside interference, but also different degrees of dominance of the traditional factors will influence and influence for a long time, on the nature and outcome of these processes.

The instability of the socio-political and environmental conditions is the norm in the Islamic world today. No wonder that

a number of meetings between the experts of the US and the Soviet Union (until 1991) was devoted to the analysis of the major internal forces motivating for change in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq, as well as the balance of the aspirations for change and control systems, strengthening political stability of these countries. Attention was paid to the search for contradictions and stability in Syria, Egypt, Yemen, Jordan, and the whole Middle East and North Africa¹⁸.

The secret of instability of the Islamic East is largely enclosed in instability of the non-Muslim West, affecting the world of Islam and introducing in it (besides the modernization of the economy, modern science, culture and new technologies), racial and religious discrimination, the struggle of classes and groups, ethnic strife, social unrest and political excitement, interstate and civil wars, often ending revolutions, social and political disasters. Introduced from the outside contributes to further destabilizing of eastern societies, distortion, deflection, termination or reverse of many developing processes in the East, connecting with even more rich set of eastern contradictions and conflicts.

Political Islam is practically dominated in the Muslim East today. Its ignoring has led to formation of the extremist wing of this ideology, which seeks to adopt its principles through terror and violence. The longer the hostility continues between the East and the West, the more dangerous and more powerful the extremists are. The West does not understand it, or tries to use that to its advantage, which can be characterized as irresponsible adventure.

This turns our planet into a desperate battle field, which is not conducive to the solution of acute social, political, economic, technological and cultural challenges facing the East in general and the Muslim East in particular. Bases for establishing the new relations between the East and West is impossible without solving these

problems. They can only achieve this by combining their efforts and possibilities for long-term and equitable cooperation in all areas of relations. Political mutual trust is necessary first of all. Otherwise our planet will burn in the flames of inter-religious, inter-ethnic, ideological, geopolitical and other wars in the next century.

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L. Gayazov,

Research associate, Institute of History named
after S. Mardzhani, Academy of Sciences
of the Republic of Tatarstan

FEATURES OF TATAR TRADITIONAL ISLAM IN THE POST-SOVIET PERIOD

The religious component has become increasingly important in the Russian society. It is important to analyze the development of the religious sphere of society. The study of the religious situation in the post-Soviet period can be done using the concepts of M. Epstein. He identified three forms of the concept of “poor religion” for religious reflection of society in the post-Soviet period: traditionalism, neo-paganism and “poor religion” [17].

Islam can be described within the concept so that the main specific of Russian Islam is the extremely low degree of religiosity of the former Soviet Muslims and their level of knowledge of Islam [1, p. 411].

The phenomenon of “poor religion” in relation to the Tatars can be discussed in the context of not the post-Soviet period only, but the whole of the colonial period, which began after the conquest of Kazan in 1552. High Islamic culture was reduced to the level of domestic

Islam as an urban culture was destroyed, and they gradually became the rural people. Recurrent waves of Christianization led to the impoverishment of culture. The Tatars had lost their spiritual traditions with its every wave that led to the “impoverishment” of their religion.

The Tatars had to lead a secluded life for self-preservation in the colonial period. Confessional social and domestic identities were the basics of worldview, and ensure the preservation of the nation. But the rural character of the development led to the disappearance of intellectual and spiritual elite of the Tatar people. Despite the almost universal literacy, the Tatars did not have their own theological school. There has been a certain revival with the rise of “Orenburg Mohammedan Spiritual Assembly” in 1789, which became the spiritual center of the Muslims of Russia and led to the emergence of theologians at the Tatar people.

The Tatars had to go to Central Asia for basic education due to the lack of theological centers in their own country, but Central Asia experienced intellectual stagnation at the turn of 18–19 centuries. Thus the Tartars could not accept the new ideas of time without the high intellectual tradition, because of their centuries-long isolation. But they were receptive to the new ideas and their strong dependence on the alien ideas stems from here.

The inability to accept the received knowledge has led to the European orientation of Jadidism, alien to Islam. The final transformation of the Tatar identity occurred in the Soviet period. A key role was played by replacing the Arabic alphabet to the Latin script first and the Cyrillic alphabet then. This replacement of the alphabet has resulted in the loss of Islamic component in the Tatar identity [17, p. 207].

Thus, the “poor religion” is essentially the “Tatar Islam” since the loss of the Tatar statehood, the destruction of the institutions of the Tatar people development up to the present day.

Mythological Stories in Tatar Traditionalism

Traditionalism is a very complex and ambiguous phenomenon in the Tatar society of the post-Soviet period. Epstein defines it as follows: “The first form is a” religious revival”, that is: the society returns to its previous state before the spread of atheism,“ converts bring emotional fervor and dogmatic ignorance, romance of protective nationalism and messianic hope in the lives of their churches, but still remain within the traditions, slightly narrowing or expanding them” [17].

These features are characteristic of Tatar traditionalism in full. As for the commonly used definition, those religions are called by the term “traditional” that have long existed in the territory of a state, forming its socio-political and cultural character” [2, p. 23].

The Tatars religious traditionalism is associated with its main ideologist – Imam V. Yakupov, a book publisher. Basic theoretical principles of traditional Islam are presented in his book “To Prophets of Islam.” According to his research, the traditionalism in the post-Soviet period is one of the trends in the religious life of the Tatar society, along with neo-paganism, and “poor religion”.

Thus, the idea is postulated that the Tartars have apprehended Islam initially as “prophetic.” The ideologists of the Tatar traditionalism had an opportunity to call “Tatar” Islam as the most appropriate, with such concepts as “pure Islam”, “Islam tradition”, “Tatar Islam”, “good Islam” and so on [19, p. 4]. V. Yakupov introduces the term “prophetic” Islam, in other words – Islam professed by Prophet Muhammad and his companions. He states that the

ancestors of the Tatars – Bulgars, represented by their leader Aydar Khan, accepted Islam from the companions of the Prophet in 9 of the Hijra already.

The concept of the Tatars “Prophetic” Islam is based on the Tatar legend of the three companions. According to the legend, the Prophet has sent three of his companions to spread Islam among Bulgars. Once the daughter of Khan Aydar became ill and no one could heal her. Then the Vizier suggested to seek help from the Companions of the Prophet, who were famous healers. They cured his daughter, and the khan with his people accepted Islam. But scientists proved in their writings convincingly that this legend had nothing to do with historical reality [8, 13, 14].

Muslims turn to the legend in the past, and it was considered normal: first, the basic identity of the Tatars was confessional, and secondly, there was no historical school of the Tatars and oral folklore was the only form of historical consciousness, expressed in the form of myths and legends. Today it is unacceptable to build concepts on the basis of legends, with the development of historical science. Especially that Shihabuddin Marjani, Tatar theologian and founder of the Tatar historical science, called for writing an objective, unbiased, not mythological history [19, p. 5]. He believes that the Tatar mythical creatures are jinns, and explains their presence in the Tatar fairy tales as if the influence of Islam [19, p. 6].

However, V. Yakupov does not restrict his research to this legend only, but he resorts to the mythologizing of history. In particular, he denies the pagan period in the history of the Tatar ethnic group, assuming that the adoption of Islam has affected the quality of the faith so that it is not necessary to mention certain pre-Islamic beliefs [6; 5, pp. 17–18].

In other words, he believes that the Tatars have always been monotheists and they did not have the pagan period. This position has been criticized by the scientific community [19, p. 4]. According to Islam, all prophets were Muslims, in other words, Islamic prophetic line began with Adam and ended on the prophet Muhammad. The Prophet was sent to every nation and to the Tatars as well. According to V. Yakupov, the Tatar people learned these covenants and immediately became follower of the Prophet Muhammad and accepted his Sharia when he appeared on earth in the 7th century [22, p. 7].

V. Yakupov has a similar approach in relation to other issues. He writes that the Tatars were able to convey the pure prophetic Islam to modern times, without distortion of the heresies of later times, 18 and later centuries. The Tatars received Islam from the Prophet's companions, and store it as Amanat.

The Samanid State played an important role in spreading Islam in the Middle Volga [12, p. 424]. The researchers emphasize that Islam penetrated into the Middle Volga region through Central Asia due to the trade relations [4]. Two theses are followed from this statement. First: the Tartars embraced Islam directly from the Prophet, and not through Central Asia, second: Tatar Islam has not changed to this day.

The first point concerns the manner of adoption of Islam by our ancestors. Modern researchers came to the conclusion that the adoption of Islam by the Bulgars was not a one-time event, it was spread over quite a long period. It happened after the beginning of the Arab-Khazar wars, after the conquest of Khazar Khanate in 737 by armies of the Arabs. As for the second point, the assertion that the Tatar Islam has not changed to this day, is incorrect. Firstly, this thesis contradicts the logic of the historical process. The whole book culture, state and institutional system were destroyed, most spiritual teachers were killed after the fall of the Khanate of Kazan. The progressive development of

Islam among the Tatars was interrupted by the events [17]. Secondly, M. Epstein wrote that the militant atheism of the Soviet Union has formed several generations of faithless people. Is it possible to revive traditional forms of religion, if it has passed a long way of persecution and denial?

Essence of the Tatars traditional Islam

The Tatars traditional Islam has been criticized in many publications recently. D. Garayev says that the project “Tatar Islam” never took place, as well as the concepts of “Russian Islam” and the “Euro-Islam” before it. Muslims believe that the authorities have imposed these stillborn projects. The phrase “traditional Islam” is used today, but as you know, every tradition is defined by continuity. And there is a temporary gap in almost 100 years! Almost all had been lost for a century [3].

Expert I. Saet says that Islam is education above all, like any other religion. Tradition is not transmitted through texts, it is the key difference between traditional Islam and non-Muslim sects. The tradition is passed from person to person, it is a historical axiom, although the text of the Koran and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad are extremely important. The teacher is the main figure in the tradition, and not just a lecturer or teacher who read the lessons. He is the one who educates the students on his own example, creates an environment in which they live, which they are saturated and are able to pass on the tradition [11].

Sufi tradition is precisely the oral tradition [16, p. 426]. Former traditional Tatar Islam that ancestors passed down from generation to generation, even under the tsarist regime, almost died in the Soviet Union. Most importantly, the totalitarian regime has destroyed tradition

of knowledge transfer, the Muslim education system. The chain has been interrupted, the years of persecution was fatal to the tradition [11].

There is a statement by M. Kemper, that half of Tatar imams were Sufis before the revolution [23]. A. Karibullin claims that Sufism was practically the only form of Islam, not only among the peoples of the Volga-Ural region, but also in many other parts of the Muslim East [7, p. 133]. Sufism was authentic traditional Islam of the Tatars. The inability of the Tatars religious leaders to endow the concept of “traditional Islam” with the right content is an example of the “dogmatic ignorance,” as M. Epstein says.

V. Yakupov has concluded that the Tatars did not work out their own original version of Islam. Countless arguments about Jadidism are a set of concepts that have not been able to find supporters of theological incoherence of Jadidism. The meaning of Jadidism is undefined until now. Every scholar in Kazan has its own understanding of the word, which does not coincide with the views of others. The Tatars are divided into supporters of the pre-revolutionary Hanafism, Wahhabism, hizbuttahrira and other trends in the confessional terms, but their own theological model is not visible. The lack of consolidation on religious grounds does the Tartars just human raw material for foreign Muslim projects. Formulation of “Islamic ideas” is important for the Tatars, as never before, and would allow determine their place in the ummah, directions and prospects of development in the framework of Islam, understand who are the partners and allies, and who – opponents in the Muslim ummah on the basis of this idea [20].

Specifics of the Tatars traditionalism

The Messianic aspirations are the characteristic features of the religious situation in the post-Soviet Tatarstan. V. Yakupov suggests that the Tatar intelligentsia and the government should recognize the

need to preserve and develop the Tartar version of Islam, while there is a monopoly on this genuine spirit of the Koranic Islam. This positive experience can be replicated throughout the world, particularly in Europe. The ancestors preserved its prophetic spirit and the whole world will gradually go to it [20].

There is a strong influence of the ideas of nationalism, including on the Tatar religious figures. V. Yakupov considers this a unique case of Islam preservation in the centuries-old Christian occupation and forcible baptism. So there is something real, basic, close to the prophetic ideal of Islam professed by the Tartars, which makes it so stable, in spite of the remoteness from the centers of Islamic civilization. The absence of significant deviations and heresies, the attraction to moderate and adequate understanding of Islam are amazing and inexplicable at first sight [18].

The phenomenon of ethnization of religion is observed in the traditionalist discourse. The ideologists of the Tatars traditionalism tend to spread it not only among the Tatar people, but they believe that Islam of the Tatars can serve as the ideological basis for the rest of the world. It should be noted that the phenomenon of ethnization of religion of the Tatars appeared not in the Soviet period, but in the pre-revolutionary epoch, and dates back to the pan-Turkic movement [9, p. 405].

Ethnization of religion is a key trend in the Tatar traditionalism. There is no appeal to a universal Islam, but Islam binding to the region. All other Islamic trends seem false in this discourse and are subjected to harsh criticism. Islam in foreign packaging is not entirely harmless (Wahhabi-Salafi, Tablighi, Nursi), because these young adepts are beginning to identify themselves as part of these societies, and Russia and Tatarstan are enemies for them, for the expansion of the territory, and nothing more [19, p. 28]. V. Yakupov admires the purity of Tatar Islam [21, p. 509]. He especially criticizes “Arab” Islam, which defines

as a “Wahhabi-Salafi”, arguing that it is incorrect to represent the national problems of the Arab tribes as common Islamic [19, p. 29].

V. Yakupov writes about the need to separate nationalistic and actual Muslim in Arabism [24, p. 114]. This thesis is in contradiction with apologetics of the Tatars traditional Islam, represented as the most “pure”, and the claim that it has the potential to spread to the whole world. Thus, the phenomenon of ethnization of religion and the phenomenon of messiahship can be seen in the Tatar traditionalist discourse. The concept of M. Epstein describes the specifics of the religious situation in Russian society after the collapse of the Soviet Union pretty accurate. It allows analyze the religious sphere of the Tatar people, because it is an integral part of the Russian society.

Conclusion

The concept of Tatar traditional Islam has not been developed within the post-Soviet period, as follows from the analysis of Tatar religious discourse. The Tatars religious leaders resorted to mythologizing, used historical subjects in order to compensate the absence of the concept of the Tatars religious revival in some degree. Religious consciousness has been subject of ethnization. All of this is explained by the phenomenon of “poor religion”.

The religious identity of the Tatar people was in a deformed shape to the post-Soviet period, so close relationship of religious and ethnic identities are not surprising. The Tatars religious figures in the post-Soviet period did not realize that religious revival is possible only with the help of other Muslim societies, as the Tatars traditional Islam is a living tradition, that has been destroyed during the Soviet period.

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I. Fedorovskaya,

Senior Researcher, sector of “Russia
and the new states of Eurasia”, IMEMO RAS

THE SOUTHERN GAS CORRIDOR AND AZERBAIJAN

Nowadays Southern Gas Corridor (SGC) is one of the most important energy projects of the European Union to ensure diversification of both suppliers and transit of energy resources and thereby strengthen the EU's energy security. The European Union is one of the largest consumers of gas in the world. Today, the EU, Turkey and Balkan countries consume about 360 billion cubic meters of gas annually, which is 17% of global consumption. According to the forecasts, gas demand will double in Europe by 2030 – up to 775 billion cubic meters. In 2013, the share of imports in total consumption was 64%, and by 2030 it will reach 80% in Western Europe, according to the calculations.

Domestic production of natural gas in Europe is less than 2% of world production of this energy resource. European countries have made significant progress in the development of alternative energy sources and energy efficient technologies, but these efforts have not led to a significant reduction in gas consumption in the EU until now.

Today gas in Europe is produced in the UK, the Netherlands and Norway. However, gas reserves are almost exhausted in the UK and the country is not even able to cover its own needs and is a net importer of gas. The Netherlands are ready to supply not more than 30 billion cubic meters of gas per year to neighbors. Norway is a major supplier of gas among the European countries, providing up to 30% of the EU gas (115 billion cubic meters of gas per year). However, not all is well there. According to experts, gas output in Norway will gradually decrease after the peak in 2020, and its export potential may be reduced

to 90 billion cubic meters per year by 2030, with the increase in gas consumption in the country¹.

Thus, the EU covers its gas needs mostly through imports, more than 80% of the imported gas comes via pipelines mainly from Russia. In 2014, the EU imports 40% of natural gas from Russia, and 66% of Russian gas supplies were carried out in the EU via Ukraine. It should be kept in mind that Russia covers the demand for gas of Sweden, Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Bulgaria at 100%, of Germany – at 40%².

Of course, there is also liquefied natural gas that is delivered by tanker from Algeria (14 billion cubic meters per year), Qatar (30 billion cubic meters per year) and Nigeria (12 billion cubic meters per year), but Europe should not expect a significant increase in imports in this case. The gas reserves are insignificant in Algeria and Nigeria, besides the domestic consumption of these countries is growing, there are serious internal political problems, and Qatar is focused on the rapidly growing market of the Asia-Pacific region to a greater extent.

The current leadership of the European Union comes from the fact that the presence of the dominant supplier of hydrocarbons – Russia, pumping its gas through Ukraine, the current transit monopolist, – creates significant risks to Europe's energy security. The issue rose sharply enough a decade ago after the Russian-Ukrainian gas wars in 2004 and 2006, when half of Europe was left without heat in the dead of winter.

The EU has developed its own criteria for energy security, which are in need of diversification, as well as overcome the over-reliance on a single supplier, and to ensure security of energy supplies. Europe intends to get access to three different gas sources for each country of the region through the construction of gas pipelines within a reasonable time.

Europe has come to the conclusion that the most promising among the alternative gas suppliers are the Middle East, the Caspian region and Central Asia. According to recent calculations, the reserves of the Caspian littoral countries (Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan) and Uzbekistan are 21 trillion cubic meters of gas. At present, only a small portion of these volumes is extracted, while Europe gets nothing³. The European Union has developed an ambitious plan of building an entire network of gas pipelines under the name of “Nabucco” in the region. However, serious investors considered the risks of construction excessively high, besides it was not clear what gas and in what volumes will flow through the pipe.

The European Union considers projects on terms more realistic and less expensive, after the failure of the ambitious “Nabucco”. The idea of the Southern Gas Corridor has appeared, on which is expected to deliver gas to Europe from Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Northern Iraq, Iran (in the case of the lifting of sanctions), Israel and Egypt via Turkey and bypassing Russia. The estimated length of the pipeline is 3,500 kilometers.

The expansion of the South Caucasus gas pipeline “Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum” is assumed under the project. Then gas will go to Bulgaria on The Trans-Anatolian gas pipeline (TANAP), which construction launched in April 2015. The Trans-Adriatic branch of the pipeline (TAP) will be built for further transportation of gas via Greece and Albania to Italy. Variant of the Trans-Caspian pipeline is also considered to bring gas from Turkmenistan to Europe. The declared cost of the project is about \$ 45 billion.

Southern Gas Corridor project could also get caught up in negotiations and discussions, if it was not Russia, which became the catalyst for the beginning of its implementation. Moscow understood the danger of such a monopoly gas transit country like Ukraine. A plan

for the construction of a gas pipeline system for the transportation of Russian gas to bypass the western neighbor was developed and named on routes – the North and South Stream. The first branch of Nord Stream has been laid quickly and is already operating, the second is under construction.

As for South Stream, then Russia has had to abandon the project, because of the claims of the European Union. The EU considered that the pipeline did not meet the conditions of the “Third Energy Package”, according to which the companies engaged in the extraction of gas, could not be owners of pipelines laid on the territory of the EU.

But “Gazprom” was not satisfied with this situation. At the same time, Russia did not give up the idea to deliver gas to Europe from the south, abandoning South Stream. The idea of “Turkish Stream” has arisen, which would provide gas transportation capacity of 63 billion cubic meters per year through Turkey. However, this project is at the concept stage only, not even a plan.

All this has forced Europe to revisit the Caspian region, first of all, Azerbaijan, which occupies the 10th place in the world reserves of oil and gas per capita. The country is able to produce gas at a stable level for more than 90 years. Gas production increased by 6 times in 10 years – it amounted to 5 billion cubic meters in 2003, and 29 billion cubic meters – in 2014.

Azerbaijan is very interested in the construction of the Southern Gas Corridor, as the country becomes a major supplier of energy to Europe. Furthermore, President Aliyev said that the project of energy security, laid the foundation of a new format of cooperation in Eurasia. It was created a trilateral format of the Turkish-Azerbaijani-Ukrainian partnership in the first phase in the energy, transportation, political, economic, strategic areas (referring to the existing gas pipeline Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum). The accession of Greece, Albania and Italy to this

process will expand this format more and ultimately a very serious new format of cooperation is formed in the Eurasian region. Therefore, the Southern Gas Corridor is not just an energy project but a major political initiative⁵.

The field “Shah Deniz” will be used to supply gas to Europe, its proven reserves are 1.2 trillion cubic meters of gas and 240 million tons of condensate⁶. Initially, the development of the offshore field started in 1993, soon after Azerbaijan gained independence, and then it was called loudly: “Contract of the Century”. Azerbaijan sent all the forces for development of the oil industry at the time – because its oil reserves are incomparably greater than gas and the priority has always been the development of the oil industry.

Only in December 2013, the project participants (the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan (SOCAR), BP, Statoil, LUCOIL, NICO, Total and TPAO) announced the adoption of the final financial decision on the second stage of development projects within the framework of the plan of the Southern Gas Corridor.

The construction of the Southern Gas Corridor is well under way at the moment⁷. Azerbaijan is not worried due to sanctions in the framework of the “Third Energy Package”, because, firstly, it is not a gas producer and a transit country for gas at the same time, and secondly, it is not a 100-percent owner of both the field and the pipe, though SOCAR is the primary equity participant in the project NANAP (58%) (Turkish Botas – 30%, British BP – 12%). In addition, the European Commission withdrew the project Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) from the application of the “Third Energy Package” for 25 years⁸.

It is expected that the gas in the amount of 6 billion cubic meters per year will be supplied to Turkey by the end of 2018 and first deliveries in Europe will begin in 2019, but the SGC, will reach full

capacity in 2020. Maximum capacity of the pipeline should amount to slightly more than 30 billion cubic meters of gas per year by 2026.

However, not all experts are optimistic in estimating the timing of the project. Many of them note, that neither Turkey (which claims to be the “energy hub” of Europe), nor Greece or Albania has the appropriate transit infrastructure, including facilities for the reception and storage of the planned volumes of gas. If the Turkish Stream starts work on a par with SGC, then Turkey will be in a difficult situation, since Ankara is not ready to accept such amount of gas.

The main problem of the project at the initial stage of its implementation is that supply of 10 billion cubic meters of gas per year from Azerbaijan will hardly change the structure of the European gas consumption. Moscow does not have to worry with such volumes of deliveries: it will remain the main supplier of gas to Europe in the medium term. But as for the long term, the EU will have access to richer in gas countries, such as Turkmenistan, Iraq and even Iran with the Southern Gas Corridor.

The reserves of Turkmenistan are estimated at 17.5 trillion cubic meters of gas, and it could become a major supplier of gas to Western Europe, joining the SGC through the Trans-Caspian pipeline. Emissaries of the EU, together with Azerbaijan have repeatedly discussed the prospects of cooperation in the gas sphere with the Turkmen leadership. However, Ashgabat feared a negative reaction not only from Moscow, but from Beijing. Turkmenistan is not ready to take risks, considering Chinese market a priority.

There is a possibility to connect the north-Iraqi gas fields (2 trillion cubic meters) to the Southern Gas Corridor in the long term, however, the north of Iraq – Iraqi Kurdistan is constantly drawn into regional war and on the brink of armed conflict because of chronic disagreements with Baghdad. So, the practical implementation of any

energy project comes up against security problems, even though Europe is interested in the existence of gas fields in northern Iraq.

As for Iran, where the world's largest gas reserves are (33 trillion cubic meters), it will take years to establish trade partnership with this country in the field of gas supply (in the case of the lifting of sanctions). Tehran is interested in the markets of its eastern neighbors, and will claim to the dominance of the European gas market, if happens to enter it. It is unknown, which leadership carries greater risks to Europe – Russia or Iran. So Iran is unlikely to fit into the concept of the Southern Gas Corridor in the medium term.

Israel (where large gas reserves have been discovered in the shelf) expressed readiness to export gas to Turkey on the existing pipeline for further delivery to European countries, but only if there is a settlement of the Cyprus issue.

Thus, Azerbaijan is the only reliable supplier of gas to the EU through the Southern Gas Corridor for today, but its gas resources are limited. Therefore, the Southern Gas Corridor can be considered as a long-term European project, which is more political in nature. Brussels seeks to show Moscow its real steps to find alternative gas suppliers, and demonstrates a willingness to oppose the monopoly of “Gazprom” in the European market.

It is difficult to undermine the position of Russia, but the leaders of the EU will continue the policy of a partial replacement of the Russian Federation of their gas market in the face of the current cooling of relations between Moscow and European countries. This is a serious challenge for the Russian government and “Gazprom”, as the country's revenues are largely dependent on gas and oil. So Russia is constantly faced with the need to defend its export niches in the gas market of the EU and to actively seek new market opportunities for hydrocarbons outside Europe, primarily in the East Asian area.

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L. Gusev,

Ph.D. (Hist.), Senior Research Fellow,
Analytical Center, Institute of International Studies,
MGIMO (University)

BASIC DIRECTIONS OF COOPERATION BETWEEN RUSSIA AND KAZAKHSTAN IN THE FRAMEWORK OF EURASIAN INTEGRATION

The development of integration cooperation within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union is an essential component of the strategy of Russia in the international arena. Kazakhstan is one of the key partners of Russia in the Eurasian integration. So, the strategic aspects of approach of the government of Kazakhstan to the development of Eurasian integration should be considered for further discussion on overcoming some of the contradictions that prevent the optimum results of Eurasian integration on the post-Soviet space [7].

Kazakhstan firmly supports the deepening of integration, however, this process is accompanied by the development of other “vector” of foreign policy (particularly in China and the Asia-Pacific region, the West and Islamic countries) [9]. This policy allows

Kazakhstan to “balance” between the interests of various parties in order to strengthen its own independence and for modernization [5] under the current political system in the country combining political mono-centrism and effective attraction of foreign investment [8]. The multi-vector foreign policy of Kazakhstan may be in the future a kind of “limiter” for the expansion of cooperation within the Eurasian Economic Community (EAEC) [6, s. 116–124].

President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev was the first to propose the idea of creating a new integration association in 1994 – the Eurasian Economic Union [23, p. 311]. Afterwards he repeatedly returned to it and advocated this idea both in his country and at the international level. The first attempt to create the Customs Union (the CU) was made a few years after that speech. The program of measures for its formation was prepared in 1996. It is expected to sign the relevant documents. However, it did not take place. However, it did not take place, since different economic interests of the participating countries have prevented them to agree on a general list of tariff and non-tariff exemptions from the free trade regime, to unify the provisions of the bilateral free trade agreements, applicable to the present, and the relevant protocols on exemptions from this regime. The failure of the Eurasian integration then led to the emergence of new restrictions and barriers in mutual trade.

The second attempt to form the Customs Union was undertaken in 2006 and leadership of Kazakhstan has actively supported this idea again. The basic decision on the establishment of the CU of three countries was made at the Council of the Eurasian Economic Community in August 2006. Three states – members of the Eurasian Economic Community (Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus) launched an initiative on the formation of the Customs Union at the summit in Sochi. The participating countries agreed to apply a common customs

tariff and other common measures regulating trade with third countries at the same summit. the CU of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan had to start acting in 2011.

Kazakhstan started to make significant efforts to create legal and economic framework for the activities of this structure immediately. At the end of January 2009 the Senate of the Parliament of Kazakhstan ratified a number of agreements on formation of the CU with Russia and Belarus [26]. In May 2009, Secretary General of the Eurasian Economic Community, a representative of Kazakhstan, Tair Mansurov reported to the President of Kazakhstan, that the three states had already agreed on 88% of all the required documents, and the intensive negotiations were continued for agreement of the remaining ones. He suggested that the heads of the states would approve customs codes of the Eurasian Economic Community and the CU by the end of 2009 [31].

Kazakhstan continues active participation in the CU after its formation. Initially, this activity has brought good economic dividends. Two-time growth of trade turnover occurred from 2010 to 2012 between Kazakhstan, on the one hand, and Russia with Belarus – on the other. The volume of trade of Kazakhstan with its partners in the Customs Union has been amounted to \$ 24.5 billion [2]. However, the negative economic trends were already evident at the time. In particular, inflation began to grow faster (“exporting inflation” from the Russian Federation), food prices rose, trade imbalances began to take shape in the relations with Russia.

Despite some everyday challenges (such as significant growth in food prices due to the launch of the CU), the attitude of the citizens of Kazakhstan has always been positive to this structure. There was a survey in the second half of 2013 and 67% of the population

perceived the presence of Kazakhstan in the Customs Union as well as its work positively [16].

As for the main objectives and expectations from Eurasian integration, (As noted by Zara Mihranyan, a political scientist and expert on Central Asia) they are the following:

Ensuring of its own leading positions among the countries of the Eurasian region by integrating with the Russian economic power, the use of the territory of the CU as an area of free transit.

Guaranteed access to Russian pipelines, regardless of the political and economic situation, due to which there is a possibility of differentiation of export deliveries of energy resources from Kazakhstan at no additional cost to the alternative routes.

The use of the unified energy system of the Russian Federation in order to cover energy deficiency of some industrial regions of the republic with its own lower-cost electricity, which forms a stable foundation for the modernization of the electrical capacitance of industries of Kazakhstan and expansion of electricity exports to Belarus by transit through Russia.

Promoting the implementation of national programs for the development and modernization of Kazakh industry by facilitating access to cheaper Russian raw materials, infrastructure, Belarusian and Russian technologies.

Support and development of export of agricultural products both in Russia and on the international markets with the use of the transit potential of the Customs Union [32].

President Nursultan Nazarbayev has repeatedly stressed the inevitability of integration into the CU and its profitability for the Kazakh economy. For example, the government should adjust fiscal policy, improve the quality of the planning and execution of the state budget in the face of deteriorating economic conditions [25].

N. Nazarbayev also noted that the volume of the domestic market was limited, and it is necessary to expand the market space for further growth of the economy [25].

In 2013–2014 the leadership of Kazakhstan became increasingly concerned about a trade imbalance in relations with other actors in the Eurasian integration. It is interesting to consider the attitude of the Government to customs duties in the Customs Union in this context. Thus, the Ministry of Economy planned to submit proposals for the unification of import duties to the participants of the CU as early as 2013 [15]. Kazakhstan was going to insist on unification of export duties on oil products. Minister of Finance said that Kazakhstan has given a total of 26 bn Tenge import duties more than it has received from Russia and Belarus on September 1, 2013.

Since 2012 the growth rate of imports has been higher in Kazakhstan than in Russia and Belarus, and in this regard the revenue growth of import duties has been more in Kazakhstan than in these countries [12], that contributed to the outflow of foreign exchange from the country.

Exports of Kazakhstan to Russia decrease, while imports from it increase. Kazakhstan exports of Russian goods worth 2.4 times more than its exports to Russia. This growing trade imbalance causes serious resentment among certain circles of the Kazakh elite. In September 2013, the Agency for Protection of Competition stated that more than 30 different access restrictions of Kazakhstan businessmen to the markets of the CU were found. The dissatisfaction is expressed by the fact that Russia is promoting its own interests and goods on the market of the CU at the expense of the economic interests of Kazakhstan [24]. Deputies say that the territory of the Customs Union has quickly become the perfect scheme for the transfer of funds in offshore [30].

By the way, the Central Bank of Russia has expressed the similar criticism, and there is some foundation.

However, the Russian-Kazakh economic relations continue to grow stronger. There are new dimensions to them, such as migration. Formerly there was no mass labor migration from Kazakhstan to Russia, but now more and more young people from the south are going to Russia to work [19]. According to the Russian Federal Migration Service, there were more than 600 thousand citizens of Kazakhstan in the Russian Federation at the end of August 2013. They were more than migrants from neighboring Kyrgyzstan. The sudden influx of Kazakhs in Russia is connected with the creation of the CU that provides free movement of labor in the territories of the participating countries. Meanwhile, increased migration has both a positive impact (strengthening economic and cultural ties), and a negative one (ethnic tension). Therefore it is necessary to consider all aspects of the development of Russian-Kazakh integration and make efforts to alleviate the problems.

Kazakhstan in general tried to stick to a common customs policy within the CU at the first stage of confrontation between Russia and the European Union (before the active phase of the crisis in Ukraine). The imposition of the embargo on Moldovan wines may be mentioned in this context [14]. In autumn 2014, Astana also promised that the goods, prohibited by Russian sanctions, would not pass through its territory to Russia (in particular, foodstuffs from the EU). Kazakhstan, however, did not support the Russian sanctions in full against the EU and Ukraine.

Kazakhstan actively cooperates with Belarus, although the two countries do not conceal the fact that this cooperation is a result of their proximity to Russia, rather than their own strategic choice in favor of each other. At the same time, the common interests at the political level

have been identified between the two countries. Currently, Belarus and Kazakhstan are carried out a similar policy toward Russian retaliatory sanctions against the EU and Ukraine.

The key points of cooperation between Belarus and Kazakhstan were scheduled during the official visit of President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko to Kazakhstan on October 3–4, 2013. The day before he was interviewed by Kazakhstan TV channel 24 KZ and noted that the Eurasian Economic Union would start working in 2015, despite the uneven the willingness of countries to it [3, p. 63–71]. Member States needed to carry out mutual promises and avoid pressure on each other, to seek new forms of integration and cooperation. According to Alexander Lukashenko, the CU fell behind in the development of other integration associations of the world, particularly the EU. He pointed out that instability in the Middle East could become a threat to the CU, especially for Kazakhstan. He noted that Barack Obama's promotion of the idea of “American exceptionalism” was dangerous and unacceptable.

It should be noted that the trade turnover of Belarus and Kazakhstan fell to \$601.9 million (92.6% of the results of the previous year) in January-August 2013. This occurred against the background of the global economic crisis and falling trade level between the former Soviet republics. There were also the Belarusian-Kazakh talks on cooperation in the petrochemical sector. Currently, Kazakhstan (using the status of a member of the EEA) solves the problem of access to Russian infrastructure, enabling it to supply large volumes of oil to Belarus and “to transit” the Kazakh raw materials through the country into the European Union [17]. This is one of the strategic points in the interest of Astana to integration with Russia and Belarus.

Ways of solving the problem of bilateral relations between Russia and Kazakhstan (particularly in terms of trade imbalance) were

scheduled at a meeting of Vladimir Putin and Nursultan Nazarbayev at the 10th Forum of Interregional Cooperation of Kazakhstan and Russia, in November 2013. The two presidents discussed the development of bilateral cooperation and interaction between Kazakhstan and Russia in the framework of integration associations. Prospects for strengthening inter-regional and cross-border cooperation, expansion of partnership in the fuel and energy, aerospace, nuclear and agricultural fields were discussed [18]. The President of Kazakhstan emphasized that industrial cooperation was one of the most important areas of cooperation. Mechanical engineering, mining and metallurgical complex, uranium and chemical industry were named among the successful examples of interstate cooperation of the two countries. N. Nazarbayev said that more than 50 joint Kazakh-Russian projects are implemented and planned for implementation in his country, totaling about \$ 6 billion. Expanding the range of production of competitive products with high added value is of great importance for both countries. The development of co-operation extends beyond of industrial sectors only.

Russian-Kazakh inter-regional cooperation is developing on different channels and with the support of many institutions of Kazakhstan. This is one of the priorities of foreign economic order. The representative of the president and the government in the South Kazakhstan region has agreed with the Moscow region at the beginning of December 2013 on the allocation of land plots for the construction of logistics centers for domestic producers of agricultural products. The South Kazakhstan region also plans to build a number of logistics centers in Yekaterinburg, Siberia and Belarus [3].

Another example of cross-border cooperation (the Russian side) is the construction of a road to the Kazakh border in the Chelyabinsk region, which began in 2010. The construction process has gone much

faster because of accession of Kazakhstan to the Customs Union. It was decided to make the asphalt road to the border with Kazakhstan with a total length of 27 km. The cost of the works is about 100 million rubles [4].

There is a process of creating joint Russian-Kazakh enterprises. In late 2013 the presentation of the joint Kazakh-Russian enterprise “Astyk Trans” was held in Astana. Carriage of Grain Company was established on a parity basis between “Kaztemirtrans” – a subsidiary of JSC “NC Kazakhstan Temir Zholy” and “Rusagrotrans” – the largest operator of Russia in the field of rail transportation of grain cargo. The main directions of export of Kazakhstan grain are the CIS countries, the European Union, the Middle East and Central Asia. Regular consumers are Azerbaijan and Georgia [27].

The Customs Union also contributes to other forms of cooperation. The national public procurement regime of the EAEC is carried out with the participation of Kazakhstan from January 1, 2014. Thus, the national public procurement regime applies to all three countries of the Customs Union. This norm is established by a tripartite agreement on the state (municipal) procurement. This is one of the key documents on the formation of an international treaty basis for the EAEC. The agreement is aimed at ensuring equal mutual access of economic entities of the CU to the national public procurement markets, diligent competition, efficiency and transparency of the procurement process. The volume of public procurement market of the countries – partners in the EEA was approximately \$ 198 billion, and the state procurement market of Kazakhstan – \$ 7.6 billion in 2012 [29].

At the same time, the economic rapprochement of the members of the CU has not received development in the ideological sphere. Thus, Russia's proposal to create a single history textbook for the

countries of the Eurasian Union in the framework of the CU has been discussed for several years.

The Ministry of Education of Kazakhstan sees a number of difficulties in creating such a textbook related to different interpretations of some important events by countries – participants of the Eurasian Union. The essence of the problem is the difference between interpretations of historical events in the Russian Empire (colonial conquest or voluntary integration with progressive consequences). The issue is especially important for Kazakhstan as a universal textbook is created for schools and universities (it will be easier for schools and more complicated for schools, but according to the order of President Nursultan Nazarbayev, the essence of interpretations should be the same). This unification is already causing a lot of methodological problems. It is believed that the number of problems will increase sharply in the case of coordination this textbook with Russia. The purpose of this textbook is to strengthen the independence of Kazakhstan and its statehood and coordination of the textbook was not included in the original plans of the Kazakh leadership [1].

Creation of the EAEC leads to the further development of Russian-Kazakh cooperation. The formation of the EAEC is a complex and contradictory process. It takes place in a difficult geopolitical situation, coupled with the growth of confrontation between Russia and the West in connection with the aggravation of the situation around Ukraine. In this context, there is an active campaign in Kazakhstan in recent years, supported by the local liberal pro-Western circles against further rapprochement with Russia. There are views on the “possible loss of sovereignty” and “potential territorial claims on the part of Russia.” Recent events around Ukraine have resulted to a nervous reaction to any mention of the statehood in Kazakhstan. The statement

of the President of Russia, that Nursultan Nazarbayev created a state on the territory, “where the state has never been” [20], led to a mass public action “Send a history textbook to Vladimir Putin” [21].

August 25, 2014, N. Nazarbayev said in an interview to the Kazakh TV channel “Khabar” that Kazakhstan had the right to withdraw from the EAEC, if the rules of the treaty were not be executed. Independence – that's the most important wealth of Kazakhstan [22].

Kazakhstan's leadership is forced to implement a careful multi-vector policy due to the complex geopolitical situation. However, the official leadership of Kazakhstan does not support anti-Russian campaign in the media, especially in the context of the events in Ukraine. However, we can assume that Astana uses the mood to bargain for some kind of position within the EAEC.

In general, the President N. Nazarbayev considers EAEC to be one of his own achievements. In general, President Nursultan Nazarbayev considers EAEC one of his own achievements. Nevertheless, the risk of rising nationalist sentiments against EAEC is related to the inevitability of transfer of power, if not in the short term, then in the medium one.

* * *

Kazakhstan was obviously interested in Eurasian integration in all the years of its independent existence. The country's leaders, personally President Nursultan Nazarbayev, have positioned themselves as leaders of the integration movement in the post-Soviet space. This is combined with a multi-vector foreign policy. This multi-vector policy is supported by a significant part of the elite. Claims of Kazakh leadership to some imbalances of Eurasian integration contribute to such an emphasis. Kazakhstan also does not want to bear the economic

losses from mutual sanctions of Russia and the West in connection with the conflict in Ukraine.

A number of media with the filing of the elite have expressed some criticisms, despite the official support of Eurasian integration in the press, rather strictly controlled by the state. There is a strong disappointment of the Customs Union in Kazakhstan, as the most of the population has not received any benefits or advantages from it. Indicators of the food industry, light industry, machine building show, that there is a decline in production due to excessive import of Belarusian and Russian goods for today [15]. The criticism is particularly has tightened against Russia in the media and on the Internet in connection with the current complicated geopolitical situation in the post-Soviet space. It is unable to slow down the process of integration of the Russian-Kazakh now, but this criticism, as well as a certain attitude of the elite, should be considered, since they can play a role in a possible change in the power structures of the country due to the advanced age of the President N. Nazarbayev.

It is advisable to keep in mind the following facts in terms of the overall analysis of the situation in Kazakhstan in the context of integration processes in the region near the Russian territory:

- Formation of system of integration relations occurs against the differentiation of the interests of the States Parties, and strengthen the position of the various factions of the national elites associated with multi-vector foreign policy (this is especially true for Kazakhstan).

- Promotion of Eurasian integration is accompanied by an extension of involvement, of an external regional environment (China, Western countries) in two-way interaction with the closest Russian partners – Kazakhstan, Belarus, Armenia.

- Prospects for the major formats of integration in the economic sphere are defined as objective moments (in particular, interest in

deepening the traditional complementarity of the economic systems) and subjective factors (in particular, the multi-vector political interests that are dominant among the ruling circles of Russian partners).

- The integration factor is based mainly on the Russian resource potential at the moment. Kazakhstan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia frequently delay decisions aimed at overcoming the expensive (for Russia) interaction formats.

- The system of multilateral economic cooperation of the EAEC member states is not able to block completely the negative incentives emanating from the environment for a sustainable economic integration of the core post-Soviet space. But, on the other hand, the negative external impacts are not able to stop the onward development of Russian-Kazakh integration processes.

Russia should take into account the claims of Kazakhstan to the process of Eurasian integration (in particular, the problem of trade imbalance and access to the Russian market) and maintain a regular dialogue with it on this subject. However, Moscow could emphasize that Eurasian integration is a mutually beneficial process, not a way of getting subsidies and preferences from Russia. It is necessary to take into account the irresistible multi-vector of Kazakhstan's foreign policy in the Russian-Kazakh talks. Kazakhstan does not intend to integrate with Russia at the expense of other major “vector” of its foreign policy (focus on China, Western countries). It is necessary to develop Russia's influence on the Kazakh elite, bearing in mind that the factor of the President N. Nazarbayev – the initiator and supporter of the process of Eurasian integration – may disappear from the political scene at some time in the future. Formation of the pro-Russian elite in Kazakhstan using the instruments of “soft power” is in the interests of Moscow. Russia may use the influence of Kazakhstan in the Central Asian countries which actively cooperate with Kazakhstan in the political and

economic spheres, for the further promotion of Eurasian integration. Russian policy in Central Asia should be focused on Kazakhstan as far as possible and take into account the interests of Astana, in particular, its rivalry with Tashkent for regional influence.

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A. Zuev,

postgraduate student, Nizhny Novgorod State Linguistic University named after N.A. Dobrolyubov

**ROLE AND PLACE OF AFGHANISTAN
IN IMPLEMENTING GEOPOLITICAL GOALS
OF THE US**

The Central Asian region, particularly Afghanistan, is the most strained, not only in military sense, but also in the geopolitical one today. Interests of major international actors are facing in the pursuit of the main goal – the implementation and further dissemination of their own values. The United States has been trying to create an effective government in Afghanistan for two decades, acting as a world leader. However, the following question arises: to what extent is the region important for the administration of Washington, if the invested funds do not justify the result?

Firstly, there is a convenient territorial location, the largest copper and iron ore deposits of Eurasia, as well as oil and gas resources in Afghanistan. The potential of the region has been difficult to study for a long time because of its extreme poverty. Besides, according to experts Afghanistan can turn into a lithium Saudi Arabia in the near future. Hence, Afghanistan (exhausted by crisis) can supply the US with resources in the future. It is likely that the Taliban becomes more active after the withdrawal of the main body of troops of NATO, as they want to take control over the investigated area with mineral deposits. Perhaps it will lead to intense competition between the groupings, and will ensure a civil strife in the country.

In other words, if the policy of the United States has affected consolidation and strengthening of many nations in Afghanistan since 2001, then the same tribes may encounter each other in 2015.

China and India also have a particular interest in the region in the context of natural resource wealth. These countries have already signed the contracts with the administration of Kabul concerning the development of copper and gold deposits. But the United States will monitor such economic operations, both now and in the future.

Secondly, the Central Asian region is an integral part of the New Silk Road. Implementation of this strategy will lead to the creation of a single market and transport corridors in Central and South Asia. The United States declares serious intentions to help the region in economic and military formation in the future, engaging in troop withdrawal from Afghanistan.

“Forging stronger economic ties across this region is a key element in our long-term strategy for Afghanistan. If you look at the map, you see why Afghanistan has been fought over and part of the great game for so many generations because of its very strategic position right in the middle of this trading route.” – Said the former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton [Chuvakin 2014].

In other words, the United States demonstrates how important this region is for it. Moreover, the White House administration, feeling the threat from neighboring Asian countries declares that implementation of new projects will require large expenditures and time. Accordingly, the presence in the region is inevitable to monitor over the implementation of these plans.

The US has already helped to establish National Railways and developed a national plan of railway communication in the framework of this project. There is a process of creating the system of electric mains and the construction of the Turkmenistan – Afghanistan – Pakistan – India (TAPI) gas pipeline to deliver natural gas from Turkmenistan. It is likely that Afghanistan will become a member of the WTO in the future. Particularly the White House administration

highlights China's investment, which naturally will be a leader in the trade there, in the words of Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Lynne Tracy. [Kaufman 2013]. Stephen Blank, professor of the US Army War College, said that Afghanistan can count on their support after the withdrawal of US troops, as well as on the development of the military potential of the country, while trade route, passing through the Central Asian region, is important for the United States. However, the amount of allocated funds will be greatly reduced, as Kabul should already cope with its own internal challenges and threats to its national security. Max Manvaring and Robert Blake believe that the real threat is the nature of the Central Asian region [Saifullin 2013]. An external stimulus has already occurred, and now everything is in the hands of the Afghan government.

Similar opinions justify the activities of the United States and remove the responsibility from it for the failure of the Afghanistan campaign. Moreover, it does not matter how much the White House has invested in Afghanistan, but how much has withdrawn from there. It is clear that Afghanistan will not be able to raise Western democracy alone. Obama is betting on it. Despite the refusal of the former Afghan President Hamid Karzai to sign the security agreement, the commander of the international military force in Afghanistan (ISAF), General Joseph Dunford, planned to leave, an impressive military contingent in the region, initially. Now the anti-terrorist campaign under the leadership of NATO has failed and the United States is looking for every possible way to stay in the region. Only now the attitude to the Government of Afghanistan became serious during the stay of the US in Central Asia.

Moreover, there is an opinion that the United States funds the creation of threats to civilians to demonstrate still unstable situation in Afghanistan and the need for active military and economic activities

outside. In addition, the drug problem is especially acute here. It is well known that nothing can be grown in Afghanistan, except the opium poppy and cannabis, so the widest drug traffic is held here, which is a source of corruption in many regions of the world, and especially in the republic. This issue is a priority at this time and has not yet found its solution. In early February 2014, the Committee on Foreign Affairs US House of Representatives stated that the administration in Washington could not solve the problem of drug trafficking for the whole Afghan campaign. Moreover, the United States has not developed any strategy to combat this problem after their departure from Afghanistan, and are trying to involve Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to the solution of this problem. However, these countries do not show any interest [Severov 2014]. This problem has become another cause of saving US troops in Afghanistan. In addition, the active work of the White House for the promotion and development of economic flows helps to preserve the status quo. As a result, the antiterrorist operation recedes, and economic and military development of the region comes to the forefront. As a result, analysts are divided into two camps: the first advocate for the presence of US troops and the full strengthening of the position in the region; others believe it is worth to limit their involvement in the affairs of the region, and that it is necessary to carry out the required programs only. This will help to make the policy more efficient and reduce costs. Afghanistan is largely responsible for the solution of this issue, as well as the latest decision is up to it. The US does not mix the policy pursued in Afghanistan, with their policy in Central Asia, if one of them fails. Thus, the fight against terrorism and the destruction of al-Qaeda, as well as democracy and freedom were the main official reasons for the introduction of US troops in Afghanistan. However, the intervention had a deeper meaning: it was the penetration and consolidation in the region for the

use of ready resources and develop new ones. It is important to note that the actions of President George W. Bush became the subject of harsh criticism, as the hidden meaning of these actions could not be seen from the outside, but only bombardments were seen, which led to mass casualties among the civilian Afghan population. President Obama has changed the approach to the implementation of the campaign and made a bet on the geographical location of Afghanistan. The United States, while remaining in the region, implements a policy of containment against competitor countries (China, Russia, Pakistan and India), and monitor the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

It can be concluded that the Afghan campaign of the United States has failed: the objectives have not been achieved, despite the enormous resources invested in the solution of internal problems of the region. However, the range of future tasks was extended and incredibly compelling reasons were found now, that will ensure the presence and control of the United States in the region. The US military presence in Afghanistan will be provided in the near future all the same, because Opium fields as a source of huge revenues may go back to the Taliban, but this is unacceptable for the United States.

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A. Frolov,

D.Sc (Politics)

TURKEY – SYRIA: METAMORPHOSES OF MIDDLE EAST POLICY

«The best is the enemy of the good»

September 17, 2009, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said at a solemn reception in honor of the Syrian delegation headed by President Bashar al-Assad “that Syria is more than just a friend of Turkey, it is a brother ¹.” Turkish-Syrian relations have reached their historic climax by that moment, and anyone could hardly assume that the two countries would be on the brink of war soon and Turkey would be ready to interfere in the civil war of Syria as the most likely external force.

I. Shaky Ground

Turkish-Syrian antagonism is rooted in the imperial colonial past. Turkish-Syrian relations have always been very complicated and

often been settled by non-peaceful means, because of the territorial disputes first of all. In 1921, France gave Turkey part of the territory of Cilicia after the war (which Syria is still considered its own territory), leaving behind the Sanjak of Aleksandretta. Furthermore, France transferred Turkey the Sanjak of Aleksandretta on the basis for the mandate of the League of Nations, which became the Turkish vilayet Hatay. Relatives have lost the right to see each other and celebrate religious holidays. Syria has not accepted this decision, and the matter was subsequently often the reason for many of strife.

The second problem relates to the water management. Turkey controls the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, and can use water resources as a means of pressure against Syria and Iraq². Syrians feared that Ataturk Dam, built in 1989 by Turkey, will be used as a possible lever of pressure. 850 cubic meters of water per second flowed in Syria, before the construction of the dam. The Turks took the obligation to supply a minimum of 500 cubic meters with the beginning of its construction. It significantly reduced the flow of water, and has caused many economic and agricultural problems in Syria. In 1988 there were reports of sending a special squad of Syria to undermine the dam.

The third problem relates to Turkey's membership in NATO, and even earlier in the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). That is what makes it possible for Syrians to speak of Turkey as a “seat-belts” of America in the Middle East, considered as a potential rival and opponent.

But the most significant issue in the relations between the two countries was the Kurdish issue, and more specifically, the support of the Kurdish movement by Syria, which was especially manifested after the establishment of the Kurdistan Workers Party (the PKK) in 1974. This support was motivated by a desire to have a lever of pressure on

Ankara in resolving territorial issues. The most difficult time in relations between Syria and the PKK has become since the early 1980s, when the Kurds started to get weapons, logistical support, financial and diplomatic cover. Turkey accused Syria if not in the direct participation, but at least in encouraging the smuggling of drugs, marijuana and hashish from the Bekaa Valley across the border. Turkey built protective constructions along the border to limit smuggling. In 1998, the two countries were on the brink of armed conflict. Ankara accused Damascus of harboring the PKK militants, that used the Syrian banks to finance their activities in Turkey. Ankara deployed additional troops to the Syrian border and made the border strip mining. The parties settled the controversy in the same year, they signed an agreement in the border city of Adana. Syria closed several bases of the PKK, blocked accounts of its functionaries, and Turkey demined border strip, according to the agreement. It was decided to develop cross-border trade and simplify crossing of the border during religious holidays. Then, the sides signed a number of agreements that were entered into the legal framework of their relationship – about the fight against terrorism, protection of investments, avoidance of double taxation, customs cooperation, as well as in health care, rail, air and maritime transport, as well as in the energy sector , housing, tourism, and cargo transportation. Syria was the first Arab state, which has signed an agreement on creating a free trade zone with Turkey³. In December 2003, Syria has given Turkey the persons involved in terrorist acts in Turkish cities, which was highly appreciated by Ankara.

Syria had its own reasons to establish relations with Turkey. Its conflict with Israel remained unresolved actually. Syria was able to maintain some kind of delicate balance in Lebanon. The Americans overthrew Saddam Hussein in neighboring Iraq, and there was no

common border with Iran supporting it. The breakthrough in relations with Turkey looked good in such a hostile environment.

In early 2004 there was the first visit of the President of Syria to Turkey⁴. A year later, Turkish president Ahmet Sezer went to Syria for a return visit and was awarded an unusually warm reception. Syrian media especially noted that the visit was carried out against the will of Washington preventing such contacts. The two leaders noted the unity of positions of Turkey and Syria on issues related to postwar reconstruction of Iraq, the preservation of its territorial integrity, the Middle East peace process and the assessment of the situation in Lebanon. Both presidents stressed the need to implement UN Security Council resolutions by Israel, the liberation of the occupied Arab territories, preparation of a basis for the creation and proclamation of an independent Palestinian state as soon as possible. Turkish Culture and Tourism Center was opened in Damascus.

Turkish leaders were not afraid of sharp criticism from the Syrian opposition in the United States requiring help the Syrian people, not the Syrian regime. One can not deny the evolution of the Syrian regime towards democratic transformation, though slow, but evident. It is evident in the spread of the dosage of freedom of speech in the newspapers, on radio and television, the emergence of the country's exchange currency items, Internet, mobile phone and so on. The internal causes of change the vector in the policy of Turkey and the bias towards Islam is well studied, particularly in the works of V. adein-Rajewski⁵. It is necessary to focus on the foreign policy dimension of these processes in detail.

2. Neo-ottomanizm from test of strength to route actions

In 2001, Ahmet Davutoglu, a professor at Bilkent University, published the book “Strategic Depth”, which formed the basis of Ankara's foreign policy. In fact, the work proposed to adopt the theory of Neo-Ottomanism – the dominant role of Turkey within the former Ottoman Empire. A prolific professor was noticed, and his book became published for mass circulation. It found a response among ordinary Turks believed that their country was worthy to play a greater role in the world. In 2003 A. Davutoglu was given the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary. In 2009 he became Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey and had the opportunity to realize his foreign policy concepts in practice, as the main neo- ottomanist in the country. His ideas resonated with R. Erdogan. Experts believe that the next demarches of Turkish foreign policy can be explained by the implementation of the theory. 6 In August 2014 A. Davutoglu became the prime minister of the country, strengthening his influence even more.

Since then, the book has been republished more than 70 times, but not been translated into foreign languages. Perhaps Turks were well aware that these concepts could alienate the neighbors of Turkey. Neo-Ottomanism has spread in Turkey due to the fact that pan-Turkic ideas did not have considerable resonance. In the 1990s, Turkey actually failed their “peaceful offensive” in Central Asia and the former Soviet Muslim republics. The patronage of Turkey has not been realized on these countries, since it was necessary to provide funding, but the possibility of Turkey were limited in this regard (especially in comparison with the Asian superpower like China, for example). As a result, only the Turkish cultural centers remind of the former ambitions of Ankara.

Contacts between Turkey and the Arab world were developed both in theory and in political practices, appropriate funds were allocated for this purpose. At the same time Turks carefully avoided to mention the word “Ottomanism”, although the Informative part of their policy corresponded to it more and more.

Rapprochement of Turkey and Syria was not only an obstacle to Iran (an old competitor of Turkey), but also influenced the reorientation of the ruling political regime in Damascus. It was extremely difficult to implement in another way, as Syria has been strongly linked with Israel through a solution of the Golan Heights. Syria was the only Arab country at that time, where the Turks had at least some chance to succeed.

Turkey allowed sharp aggravation of relations with Israel for the sake of deepening relations with Arab countries. In May 2010 the “Freedom Flotilla” consisting of 6 vessels and 600 people went with humanitarian aid for the Palestinians, locked in the Gaza Strip in defiance of a ban by Israel. Turkey allocated a military boat to escort the humanitarian convoy. 16 people were killed in an Israeli strike on the convoy. Turkish Foreign Ministry announced this action a flagrant violation of the foundations of the international law and that it would have irreparable consequences for relations between the two countries⁷. Thus, Turkey has joined the Arab countries, bringing relations with Israel to the lowest post-war level.

The value of the Arab direction of Turkish politics increased with its slowdown in the European direction. In 2010, Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan said that Turkey's relations Arab world had huge potential⁸. In 2011, Turkish Prime Minister R. Erdogan appealed to the Arab audience, saying that the Turks and the Arabs would determine the formation of the world in the future, if they could create an alliance on the basis of Islam. Erdogan suggested that the Arabs forget the

differences of 19th and 20th centuries, when Arab nations revolted against the rule of the Ottoman Empire, and remember the historical community, linking the Arabs and Turks. This community was based on the joint fight against the aggressors, according to Erdogan⁹. The Turkish prime minister said that Turkey did not have any claims to the Arabs. A. Davutoglu, who accompanied him, said that Turkey was the gravitational center of attraction for the Arab world¹⁰.

Erdogan's speech made dual impression on the hosts. Moreover, he opened the secret thoughts of Arab leaders, voicing their main enemy – Iran (citing leaks “Wikileaks”), but said that Turkey will maintain a special relationship with Iran, without explaining the nature of these relationships¹¹. It was evident that kings and sheiks of the Gulf listened to the honored guest out of politeness, because they possessed enormous financial resources and were already "center of gravity" of the Arab world. On the other hand, the Arab rulers were clearly concerned about the fact that Erdogan was able to win the sympathy of the “Arab street”, and his trips to the Arabian Peninsula, as well as in other Arab countries, were not quite so harmless.

As a result, there was only one perfect partner for Turkey in the Arab world, to which it could extend its influence – a neighbor Syria. But B. Assad feared on such a rapid rapprochement with Turkey, especially Ankara openly imposed its values, including in the field of political culture and ideology.

However, there has been progress in relations between the two countries. In 2008 the Turkish-Syrian Joint Energy Company was founded. Further, the countries agreed on the need for the creation of the Interstate Council for Strategic Cooperation. The Council included the collaboration of the ministries of foreign and internal affairs, defense, economy, oil, electricity, agriculture and health. The struggle against terrorism was among the objectives of the Council¹².

In 2009 it was canceled visa regime between Turkey and Syria. In 2010, the joint Turkish-Syrian military exercises were carried out on the territory of Syria, near the Turkish border¹³. In 2011 Ceremonial laying of the first stone in the dam on the Orontes River on the border of the two countries, their leaders, was the last splash of the Turkish-Syrian friendship.

Two questions remained fundamental in the relations with the neighboring country for the Turks. Firstly, they realized that the armed forces of Syria were in need of modernization, which could carry out only with the help of Russia under the circumstances, and here the influence of Turkey, was limited. Secondly, Ankara a priori considered Syria as a junior partner. Both of these considerations formed the basis of the subsequent deviation of Turkish policy.

3. Looking back to the factor of “Arab revolutions”

Turkey has seen the new opportunities of rapprochement with a wide range of Arab countries in the process of “color revolutions” that swept across a number of Middle Eastern states. R. Erdogan went to the biggest Arab country – Egypt in early 2011. He was met by the head of the Council of the Armed Forces Mohammed Tantawi and Prime Minister Isam Sharif. Radicals from the organization “Muslim Brotherhood” particularly happily met Erdogan (later, in March 2014, the Egyptian authorities sentenced more than 500 members of the organization to the death penalty). Then the Turkish Prime Minister visited two more countries of victorious revolution – Tunisia and Libya, becoming a kind of “hero of the Arab street.” As noted by some experts, Erdogan made a step toward his dream – the resumption of the Ottoman Empire disintegrated in 1917¹⁴.

The Syrian Revolution occurred later than the other Arab revolutions: the Alawite clan firmly held the reins of power. In 2011 the first protests began. In the beginning they were quite peaceful, but tough confrontation happened a month later, after the involvement of Islamist groups in the process, developed into a civil war. Turkey started to think about changing a friendly but uncontrollable Assad's regime to another, weaker and more controlled. However, these calculations were wrong in the sense that the Arabs would go the way of the formation of political systems similar to the Turkish – first, and that a new alternative to Assad regime in Syria would be more controlled – Second.

Some experts consider that the Syrian-Turkish armed confrontation began with the first days of the riots in Syria. R. Erdogan welcomed the revolution, first calling Assad to step down, and then the opposition to overthrow him (though he called Assad a close friend of his recently). In September 2011, R. Erdogan announced of Turkey accession to the US sanctions against Syria during a meeting with US President Barack Obama in Washington, as Damascus, in his words, has launched a campaign of anti-Turkish propaganda.

Of course, the problem of refugees created additional difficulties for Turkey, but it was as a result of Turkey's policy to encourage opponents of the regime. The West, represented by the United States, France, and some of their allies believed that the closure of airspace over Syria was necessary (as it has done over Libya), as well as a military operation, the importance of which was assigned to the Turkish armed forces. Soon the reason for the closure of airspace was presented – Turkish spy aircraft was shot down in June 2012. In early October 2012, in Ankara, there were calls to avenge the blood of the dead after Syrian shelling of Turkish border areas and the deaths of five Turkish military. Apologies from the Syrian president did not affect the

situation. It was assumed that the situation with the shelling looked like a provocation on the part of the Syrian rebels, possibly carried out with the support of the Ankara¹⁶.

Turkey called on NATO to defend NATO member state, the Turkish parliament at an extraordinary session gave the government extraordinary powers in the course of the year unilaterally, including the right to carry out air strikes and ground operations in Syria without the participation of the Arab countries or NATO partners.

Ankara has opened its doors to the Syrian opposition, forums and congresses have been held to discuss options for confrontation to Assad. Turkish authorities coordinated action of ethno-confessional and clan groupings, aimed at overthrowing the regime.

At the beginning of September 2012, R. Erdogan named B. Asada a political corpse¹⁷, and advocated the establishment of no-fly zone in the north of Syria. Assad called his former partner “new Ottoman sultan,” which “seeks to impose its rule the region as it was in the days of the Ottoman Empire.”

Commenting on the situation at the border, the Turkish Minister for EU Affairs, E. Bagis said that Turkey could level Syria with land after the incident with the downed spy aircraft. But Turkey had no problems with the people of Syria¹⁹.

Turkey, having the most powerful army among the states of the Middle East at the time of the confrontation, spent almost 15 times more for military purposes than Syria. It had an overwhelming advantage in the navy, and a significant advantage – in the number of personnel, aircraft, ground troops. Syria has maintained an advantage in artillery guns and tanks. The collision with Turkey to Damascus, mired in armed conflict with the rebels, was unpromising and unprofitable in all respects. However, the possibility of any conflict is determined with not only quantitative parameters and quality of weapons. In addition,

the transfer of responsibility for a ground operation in the hands of the armed opposition is threatened the protracted nature of the armed conflict²⁰.

Another important factor is the experience of warfare. The Syrian army regularly participated in the war from the beginning of its formation in the 1940s. The last major conflict involving Syria was the war in the Persian Gulf. Turkey was at war last time in Cyprus in 1974. It is obvious that the Syrian armed forces and the high command were better prepared. Accordingly, Turkey lost Syria in terms of combat experience²¹. There is another internal factor: this war is more familiar to Syrian society, rather than for Turkey. It would be a precedent of participation of Turkish troops in the conflict on the territory of the Arab State in the case of direct military support for Syrian rebels by Turkey for the first time in decades.

May 9, 2013 Turkish Prime Minister made a statement on the use of chemical weapons by Assad regime. The next day, a similar statement was made by US Secretary of State John Kerry²². The situation began to resemble the one that preceded the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. In August, Washington said that the US was preparing to attack Syria even without the support of allies.

Promotion of Turkey in the Arab world was braked on this background where the country continued to be considered a foreign element. R. Erdogan's shuttle diplomacy stopped to be welcomed in the region. In August 2013, the Egyptian authorities gave R. Erdogan understand that they were not satisfied with his arrival in Egypt because of his support for the Muslim Brotherhood.

In September 2013, Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed to Barack Obama during a meeting of “twenty” to deliver military-chemical potential of Syria under international control. This proposal

was accepted by the United States. The threat of direct military intervention in Syria was pushed back.

The Turkish invasion of Syria did not take place for several reasons: apprehensions of Washington due to the possibility of unpredictable course of events, Russia's tough stance, a certain level of combat capability of the Syrian army. However, the principal obstacle to Turkish intervention arose in Turkey itself – about 80% of Turks were against military intervention into the internal affairs of Syria²³. B. Assad took into account this fact by saying in an interview with Russian television in 2012 that the Syrian-Turkish war was unrealistic, since the most of the Turkish people do not want war²⁴.

Soon disagreements between the allies in the anti-Iraq coalition have arisen. In October 2013 R. Erdogan told Barack Obama about the decision to close the Turkish corridor for the supply of arms from the United States and NATO to Syrian rebels. The reason was Washington's support for the protest movement in Turkey. A year later, the US Vice President Biden, accused Turkey in the direction of hundreds of millions of dollars and tens of thousands of tons of arms to anyone willing to fight “against Assad – groups” “Al-Nusra”, “Al-Qaeda ” and jihadists who came from other parts of the world²⁵. Turkish President responded to the accusation that there was no support to terrorists²⁶.

4. Turkey and the “Islamic State”

Turkey received two opponents as a result of its policy in the southern direction, one is the Assad regime and the second – the Islamic State (ISIS). It has been indirectly involved in the creation of favorable conditions for the formation of ISIS as one of the main sponsors of the opponents of the Assad regime. Thus, there was one optimal solution from Turkey in this situation – to resist them both as to

restore normal relations with Syria would have already failed, and ISIS did not share ideologies of neo-Ottomanism.

As a result, Turkey found itself in a difficult position. On the one hand, the drift of the Turkish leadership towards Islamization of the country allowed to use the support of Islamists acting in different parts of the Muslim world. On the other, ISIS hostility towards the Western allies of Ankara and Ankara itself was not in doubt. There was a danger that militants of ISIS and other radical Islamist groups can shift their operations on Turkish territory, or to find a lot of supporters there in the case of support for the US military operations.

Observers noted that the meeting of Foreign Ministers of the United States, Iraq, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and the countries of the Cooperation Council of Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) in Jeddah in September 2014 and where the strategy for action against ISIS was developed, had a defective character as a result of the absence of representatives of Syria and Iran²⁷.

Initially, the Turkish leadership informed its allies of non-participation in air and ground operations against ISIS directly. However, it indicated that it would participate in the joint actions, provide logistical support and reconnaissance data share with the coalition forces. The Turkish leadership did not detailed the results of the talks with the US emissaries purposely for their public its declaration was limited to general phrases about the need to combat terrorism in the region. Moreover, Turkey did not abandon plans for a no-fly zone near the border with Syria, as well as the idea to send troops into Syria, controlled by loyal radical groups, in order to cut them off from the radicals of ISIS and “Dzhabhad en-Nusra”²⁸ However, the last idea was not supported by the Americans.

The situation in Turkey has changed after the capture of the hostages of the Turkish by Islamists in Iraqi city of Mosul, the approach

of combat units of ISIS to the Turkish border, and intensifying their action in the Kurdish areas. Turkish Kurds announced their intention to launch military action against Islamist militants on their own, and their leader Abdullah Ocalan threatened, that the truce of his party and Turkey would end if the Turkish Government allowed killing his brothers. Moreover, ISIS militants invaded the tomb of Suleyman Shah, grandfather of the founder of the Ottoman Empire Sultan Osman I, located in the Syrian province of Aleppo, and captured Turkish soldiers, guarding it.

ISIS itself does not intend to rely on Turkey, according to a statement of its head Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Besides, the leader of ISIS believes that the modern Turkish state should be wiped off the face of the earth as well, because it destroyed the caliphate in 1924²⁹.

As a result, Erdogan declared that ISIS radicals had nothing to do with Islam, it was not enough to eliminate them with airstrikes, and ground operation would be necessary³⁰. In October 2014 the Turkish parliament in accordance with the request of the government authorized to carry out operations abroad, against militants of ISIS in Syria and Iraq. Accession of Turkey to the diverse coalition of the United States, Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar and the UAE allows Ankara to maneuver, as all the main actors are trying to turn the situation of ISIS and Syria in their favor.

Experts see the main motivation for actions of the Turkish leadership in preventing the creation of another Kurdish autonomy (like Iraq), with the help of the Americans, but in Syria now³¹. Two Kurdish autonomies at the borders of Turkey, will be perceived as a direct threat to its unity and national security. Turkish critics of the official policy believe that the Turkish government is trying to approach the problem of the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad on the other hand, by joining the

coalition, that this policy has no prospects for Turkey and will have extremely ambiguous consequences for her. In fact, Turkey has not been at war in the territory of a single Arab state, if a precedent is created, it can dramatically aggravate the relations with other Arab countries, for which the idea of neo-Ottomanism is unacceptable.

* * *

The struggle of the US and its Western and Arab allies with ISIS is a completely new form of warfare, that does not fit in all the previous frame. The United States decided to set aside \$ 8.8 billion for the current fiscal year, to fight against the Islamic state, carries a wide expansion of the territory of Iraq and Syria. Moreover the US strikes at the territory of both Iraq and Syria, without asking official permission from Damascus. Leaders of ISIS threaten with retaliation to Americans and their allies. This fight will be a serious challenge not only for Turkey, but also for its ideological concepts, including the theory of neo-Ottomanism.

In general, the era of the "Arab spring" has not become a period of major foreign policy successes and breakthroughs for Ankara, but created a lot of new challenges in the region. Turkey fails to strengthen its position in the Arab world as it was 100 years ago. It continues to be a foreign element for the Arab world.

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**Отдел маркетинга и распространения
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