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**IN THE VICE OF IDENTITY: ISLAMIC COMMUNITIES
IN THE RUSSIAN MUSLIM WORLD**

Russia will be one of the biggest Muslim countries (in absolute figures) in the European area by 2030, as is shown by the demographic forecasts of experts of the American group "Pew Research Center." According to calculations of the authoritative sociological center, it is expected that the growth rates of the Muslim population of the Russian Federation will have the index of 0,6% annually for the next two decades, whereas the non-Muslim population of the country tends to diminish annually by the same figure, on average.

Factors of Growth of Muslim Umma in Russia

There are several factors contributing to the growth of the Muslim population in the Russian Federation. We shall single out five of them.

1. Traditions of Russian Muslim women to give birth to two and more children.

2. Great number of marriages of Muslim women and comparatively small number of divorces.

3. Low incidence of abortions.
4. Favorable reproductive age of Russian Muslims not more than thirty years).
5. Increasing naturalization of foreign Muslims on Russian territory, which contributes to favorable solution of demographic and economic problems.

The Number of Russian Muslims will Increase due to Unification of the Crimea with Russia

Most Muslim communities in the Crimea are Hanbalites, which is traditional for most Muslims of the Russian Federation and some neighboring countries. Unification of the Crimea with Russia makes the country's Muslim umma a single whole, as it was prior to the disintegration of the U.S.S.R.

Taking into account the presence of certain problems concerning the national identity of the Crimean Tatars, the Russian political leadership had to turn to resources and possibilities of Islamic non-governmental institutions and Muslim "people's diplomacy." The initiatives of respected representatives of the religious, political and intellectual elites of Russian Muslims are aimed at disclosing the potential and advantages of consolidation of society to be seen and felt by the "new citizens" of the Russian Federation in the person of Crimean Tatars and to work out jointly a position which would make their life worthy and prosperous.

The leaders of the Russian Muslim umma more and more frequently turn to historical reminiscences more than one hundred years old. The well-known Crimean Tatar enlightener Ismail Gasprinsky (1851–1914), who was highly respected by the Turkic community of Russia as one of the greatest Muslim reformers of the 19th century and regarded as the Father of the nation, called for cooperation between the

Russian people and peoples of Muslim culture for mutual benefit almost 120 years ago.

The decision of the reunification of the Crimea with Russia adopted in 2014 was approved by most Russians (96%) and is today the turning point in the destiny of the Russian Muslim world.

The Islamic Element of the Russian Cultural Code

One of the main authors of the discourse of national identity, President V. Putin of the Russian Federation expresses the view that “Russian Muslims have always been united in their service to society and their state.” Similarly, traditional, Islam which became an important factor of socio-political life and made an invaluable contribution to the spiritual and cultural development of Russian society, should acquire a positive image as a “spiritual component of all-Russian identity.” This was said, among other things, by V. Putin in Ufa, where the 225th anniversary of the decree of Empress Catherine the Great to set up the Spiritual Assembly of Muslim Law was solemnly marked. During a meeting with Islamic leaders on October 22, 2013, he defined Islam as “an important element of the Russian cultural code and an inalienable organic part of Russian history.”

These words are logically connected with the main trend of the modern political processes in Russia. It becomes evident that most political problems acquire social significance only when they are given religious meaning, and religious intentions become in-demand above all in the political area. Rapid socio-cultural and political shifts lead to the fact that under their influence the political aspect of national identity is ousted by the demographic, cultural, linguistic and religious ones.

However, President V. Putin has time and again confirmed his respectful attitude to religion as a whole and to traditional Islam, in particular, and more than once characterized the Russian Muslim umma as a significant factor in the socio-political life of the country. He did not support the creation of general Russian identity exclusively on the basis of ethnic and religious features. In his view, this method will not be productive in such big polyconfessional and multinational state as the Russian Federation. The necessary condition of the preservation of the country's unity, as the President maintains, is the formation of civil identity on the basis of common values, patriotism, civic responsibility and solidarity, respect for law, and involvement in the Motherland's destiny without losing connections with one's ethnic and religious roots.

Today, the drive for identity causes an active communicative activity of Muslims in the social area of Russia, which is a unique example of cooperation within the framework of the Russian-Muslim world, in answer to the establishment of such an order in which concepts of identity of the dominant groups are mainly reproduced.

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EVOLUTION OF TRADITIONAL ISLAM

WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF RELIGIOUS SAFETY

OF THE VOLGA FEDERAL DISTRICT

The situation in international relations remains stable and controlled, according to the latest report of the Central Apparatus of the FSS¹.

The necessary facilities have been created in parts of the district, so that Muslims and Orthodox Christians, as well as members of other faiths feel safe and secure, on one condition, mandatory for all, that is, if they do not break the law².

The number of people, who believe that ethnic and religious conflicts are possible in Saratov, Samara, Nizhny Novgorod and Perm is about 20 percent of the population for today, according to recent sociological research, and this is a fairly high rate³.

The President of the Republic of Tatarstan noted that traditional Islam came across a number of serious threats in the district in 2012–2013: religious extremists attempted to kill the ex-Mufti of the Republic of Tatarstan Ildus Faizov, killed his deputy Waliullah Yakupov, set out several Orthodox churches on fire, and committed other terrorist acts. Radical sentiments in society are on an increase, whereas tolerance is decreasing, especially among young people, prestige of religious leaders is falling, whereas aggressive extremist content in the Internet is rising. Although the level of migration is high, there are few adaptation programs for migrants. All this calls for closer work with the authorities, especially with the Chief Federal Inspector in the Republic of Tatarstan and other territorial bodies.

Experts of the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISS) maintain that the Volga Federal District has faced a number of threats on religious grounds in recent years, which have both objective internal and external causes. The gradual evolution of Islam and its role in socio-political relations is believed to be the most serious threat to religious safety in the area. Replacement of the traditional system of values and beliefs of Islam and the continuing attempts to introduce the ideas of radical extremism, especially among young people, give grounds for serious concern. There are several reasons for this process.

1. The crisis of confidence in traditional Islam among young people. The collapse of the Soviet Union had a major impact on the world outlook of the Muslim youth. Unconventional beliefs have replaced the ideology of communism and filled religious vacuum. Only a few clerics have been trained for hundreds of thousands of Muslims

in Soviet times. Religious norms alien to Russian Islam have been promoted in madrasahs by priests and other men who arrived from Arab countries. Religious illiteracy is a major cause of radicalism and departure from traditional norms, according to the head of the Independent Analytical Center for Religion, Law and Policy Daniar Muradilov. Religious knowledge, moral purity, self-improvement, search for peace and harmony with others, respect for other confessions, combined with personal spiritual feats in the name of God and for the good of the people, are of great importance for young people. These eternal values cannot be acquired only in the process of learning; the experience of religious life and spiritual values are passed from generation to generation.

The murder of spiritual leaders of traditional religions in Russia looks causes profound indignation. Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church has noted that civil peace in our country has been tested for strength. It should be admitted that there have been attempts to intimidate the leaders of Islam preaching the traditional views of Islamic theology in Russia and fighting against radical Islamic ideology even at the cost of their own lives.

2. The crisis of the traditional structures of Islam in Russia.

The official Islamic structures are often characterized by incompetence, conservatism, and passivity in dealing with the most important issues of our time. These weak points of the spiritual structures are not internal problems of the Muslim community, but an important issue of the public, especially when disappointed young people go underground.

The Muslim Ummah recognizes the existence of this problem to date. Legal nihilism and alienation of the Muslim clergy and Muslim intellectuals are also among many problems causing concern. Russia has enough experts and professionals in this field, but they are scattered, and there is almost no intra-communication within the

Ummah⁴. Indeed, the fragmentation of the Russian Ummah is a real problem, the cohesion of Russian Muslims is the order of the day.

3. Alienation of young people from traditional Islamic values.

There has been a dangerous trend among Muslims in the Volga region. The older generation of Muslims still adheres to traditional theology and religious practices, but young people, many of whom have been educated abroad, introduce new trends of religious culture. The number of adherents of non-traditional version of Islam is already more than a thousand people in Kazan alone; there are both parishioners of mosques and representatives of the Muslim clergy among them.

There is the view that the existence of foreign schools of Islam is not dangerous for Russia. However, the followers of Salaphism introduce and preach not only religious ideas, but also political and social traditions of Arab society which does not tolerate dissent and other forms of religion and prohibits many spiritual practices. This doctrine is contrary not only to the traditional values of Islam in Russia, but also the laws of our country. If the Salaphite doctrine develops freely, conflicts and violence will inevitably occur in this country. This ideology should be officially banned in Russia as one running counter to the Constitution.

Moreover, the Quranic spirit of Islam is most adequately expressed in the Russian Islamic practice, according to most Russian and foreign Muslim scholars. Most Islamic countries are looking for an answer to the question of adaptation of Islam to globalization and democracy, choosing between a return to traditionalism or modernization of Islam. Russian Islam has long found answers to these questions in the process of evolution of the Russian state in the possibility of a compromise with the secular authorities and adaptability to the multi-religious environment. For centuries, Russian Islam has

generated the principles of humanity and tolerance, having a great spiritual potential and cultural attractiveness.

Russian Muslims have not yet returned to mass Islamization for today, but it will certainly happen, causing a powerful spiritual phenomenon which would be attractive to the entire Muslim world. There is awareness among Arabs and Turks that Russian Muslims have spiritual treasures, and this is why many people travel to us and books of our scholars are carefully studied and published abroad.

4. The problem of theological education of Muslim young people and Muslim clergy. Hundreds of Russian Muslims go abroad every year to get Islamic education in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, since Russia has not yet developed a system of Islamic education. Damir Khayretdinov, Rector of the Moscow Islamic University, believes that Muslim foreign education increases the qualification level of the Muslim clergy, who gain greater experience and knowledge of a civilized approach to the study of Islam, especially when a Muslim has already qualified in the field of Islamic theology. However, about seventy percent of the students, who have returned to Russia after studying abroad, cannot perceive the true knowledge of Islam⁵. Foreign Islamic education is not a panacea. The level of teaching of the Arabic language in the above-mentioned countries is not comparable with the Russian school of Oriental studies, which is at a rather low level.

Moreover, Russian students are faced with all sorts of difficulties in foreign Islamic centers. Only a small percentage of them go through the entire training course, many leave after the first year. The Volga Federal District has attended to this problem quite seriously long ago. Mikhail Babich, Presidential Plenipotentiary in the Volga Federal District, notes that the modern Islamic high schools in Russia will be quite useful, especially for rural imams who have either primary

religious education, or do not have any at all, which compromises their credibility among rural young people, many of whom join extremist organizations quite often⁶.

Nowadays, 95 Muslim educational institutions, seven higher educational institutions and 31 madrasahs, state-supported, are registered in Russia. The three-level program of Islamic education will be tested in the near future as part of a pilot project in the Volga Federal District. The main goal of the program is the creation of a domestic system of modern Islamic education in Russia, the republics of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan. Two training centers were already functioning, and more than two hundred imams completed their education there in 2013. The number of imams has been planned to increase by several times for this year, and about three thousand imams should be retrained by 2017.

5. Religious incompetence of the mass media. Religious incompetence of the mass media exacerbates the situation. A disoriented man “drowns” in the flow of religious information and often becomes a victim of sects, crooks and extremists. Radical structures affect the immature minds of young people through distorted interpretations of religious and historical sources, taking advantage of their illiteracy, and deform the value system of the younger generation.

Unfortunately, propaganda and recruitment of young people into radical Islamist structures have continued through the mass media and the Internet. The influence of pseudo-religious structures covers more and more territories and extends to more stable regions, where the Islamists involve students in extremist groups.

It is necessary to instill tolerance towards different confessions, to use the mass media resources wisely in order to avoid the manipulation of the consciousness of the younger generation, and to

ensure stability and prosperity of our multicultural secular state in the future.

6. The role of migrants in the distribution of extremist ideas.

The flow of migrants from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan plays a crucial role in the growth of the population of the Volga Federal District. These regions provide three-quarters of the migration growth rate, which is two and a half million foreigners a year. In this regard, the measures of the social integration of migrants should be improved to create civilized conditions for their stay in the country. Many migrants have little knowledge of the Russian language, have no idea about the customs and traditions of the Russian regions, and do not know the laws and rules, which raises concern of the local population.

It is evident that radical religious and nationalist ideas are exported by migration flows. The active process of creating organizations, alternative to the existing national and cultural structures, has taken place in the migrants environment. Moreover, certain radical religious organizations and political figures have begun to use migrants to their advantage. Some experts believe that Russia may find itself in the situation of Europe, where radical religious ideas are disseminated as the ideas of tolerance toward immigrants.

7. The activity of radical Islamist organizations.

The Volga Federal District is a zone of interests of the two organizations at once: Khizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami and the Caucasus Emirate, that tend to separate the regions of traditional residence of Muslims from Russia and to create a World Islamic Caliphate. The terrorist act in Volgograd shows a new trend, namely, the recruitment of terrorists among non-Muslims, as it has been done by Dmitry Sokolov, ethnic Russian. Primarily, the recruiters are interested in young co-religionists who have few prospects for the future and no clear rules of life and moral principles⁷. New religious movements, which attract people with

comprehensibility of the world and the lack of deep spiritual practices, are active on the territory of the Volga Federal District. Rais Suleimanov, an expert of the Institute of National Strategy, believes that the problem with radical organizations directly depends on the arrival of missionaries from abroad after the collapse of the U.S.S.R. Dissemination of radical ideas depends on three factors: the willingness of the population to take this ideology, the degree of activity of the preachers, and the response of the regional authorities to the activities of the preachers. Russia's borders and its federal districts are no obstacle for the Islamists, who have established close connections with the radicals of the Urals, the Volga, the North Caucasus, and the CIS countries⁸.

8. Interethnic tension in the PFD. Forces, interested in inciting sectarian and ethnic tensions, in creating centers of instability for the use of religious and nationalist fanatics for political purposes, have always existed in the world. Their main methods for incitement of hatred and hostility, such as lies, propaganda and misinformation, have not changed for centuries, but they did not have effective technologies to disseminate information some time ago. The possibilities of the Internet are increasingly used to influence the consciousness of target groups, as it is free from the moral and legal restrictions, liability and commitment, and as it is an indispensable mechanism for unhindered anonymous supply of data and consolidation of social groups⁹.

The age-old traditions of peaceful coexistence of different religions and nationalities are gradually destroyed by means of the information warfare. Evidence of the purposeful information warfare is the continuing growth of provocations aimed at undermining stability, security, and traditional values of good neighborliness, and peaceful interaction of ethnic groups and religions in certain regions of the country.

President Vladimir Putin spoke about the people, provoking the political tension in Russia, that “they are a kind of amoral International, which includes uncontrolled insolent natives of some southern regions of Russia, corrupt law enforcement officials who protect the ethnic mafia, the so-called Russian nationalists, and various separatists.”

Since the Volga Federal District is characterized by multi-ethnic and multi-religious composition of the population, as well as a large number of religious organizations and great migration flows, the problem for the district is particularly relevant. M. Babich reported that at present, the region is working hard to create equal conditions for the life of all people, regardless of their nationality and faith. Russia has signed a federal law that defines the responsibility of the heads of regions and municipalities for the state of interethnic and interfaith relations¹⁰.

Inter-ethnic harmony and stability is the subject of constant painstaking work of all state and public institutions. Tatarstan allocated more than 21 million rubles in subsidies to strengthen the unity of the Russian nation and ethnic and cultural development of the peoples of Russia with a view to implementing the Strategy of the state national policy of Russia in March 2014¹¹.

In 2012, the Department for domestic policy under the President of the Russian Federation was formed. The Interdepartmental Working Group on Ethnic Affairs is to tackle current issues.

Sociological research and monitoring of the situation are taken continuously, which makes it possible to respond adequately and promptly to changing situations. All district heads and other officials have attended special training courses. The standards of Islamic religious education, evolved at the initiative of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims, are now being considered by the President¹².

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**ETHNIC ELITES AND ETHNOCRACIES
OF THE NORTH CAUCASUS:
INTERACTION WITH INSTITUTIONS
OF MODERN SOCIETY**

At present Russia is living through a deep social, political and cultural transformation, which can have a decisive influence on its entire future history. One of the factors supporting disintegration tendencies and contributing to the functioning of Russian society as a state of crisis is ethnic tension. Periodic conflicts caused by rivalry for access to status and resources, in which republican elites have been drawn, street violence of ethnic origin, etc. are a reflection of the acute character of interethnic relations.

Such circumstances, which have emerged in the epoch of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, serve as one of the main reasons for the efforts of the authorities to maintain social peace and accord in the country, but they hamper the implementation of the urgent tasks of modernization.

The titular ethnos (nation) is a notion inherent in Russian social science and social practice, it fixes coincidence between the title of an ethnos and a given territorial-state unit (Kalmyks in Kalmykia, Tatars in Tatarstan, etc.). Despite the fact that the titular ethnos is not necessarily the autochthonous ethnos on the given territory or ethnic majority, this phenomenon of titular ethnos has been, and is used now, for substantiating and bolstering up advantages, especially in the political sphere by the ethnic principle. Although the concept of “titular ethnos” can be used to denote any people whose name coincides with the name of the state (Portuguese, Spaniards, Italians, and others), in practice this term is used to define ethnopolitical processes in Russia, in the post-Soviet area, sometimes in China, and it refers not to the entire state, but to its separate parts having ethnic names. The question arises from time to time as to correctness of the titular name of the Russian people and proposals are put forward – from the constitutional confirmation of their titular character to the creation of the “Russian Republic” within the framework of the Russian Federation.

Thus, the original development of Russia at the present stage is also distinguished by profound social instability connected with several directly opposite processes. The first is civil consolidation and cultural integration of society, the second is a multicultural “disintegration” of the Russian people who have not been completely consolidated and experience centrifugal pressure on the part of ethnic structures.

It should be noted that the forms of expressing interethnic tension in Russian society have changed profoundly recently. The 1990s were

characterized by the sharp growth of separatist tendencies, and the uplift of ethnic self-consciousness of the peoples of Russia was accompanied by demands to grant them the rights of maximal political self-determination, right up to proclamation of nationhood of one's people, whereas in the early 2000s the theme of secession was pushed to the background. This was due to the resolute and consistent policy of the post-Yeltsin political elite of the state. Using both political and forcible means the authorities either cut short separatist attempts, or achieved platonization of claims for sovereignty of regional leaders for the parts of the Federation headed by them.

However, at the beginning of the first presidential term of office of V. Putin another negative tendency became quite pronounced, namely, a tendency for fragmentation of the uniform Russian political and legal area. Seats of local power came into being in regions which did not display a desire to maintain closer relation with the federal center and, on the contrary, functioned largely autonomously. These processes of degradation of managerial ties and subordination tended to grow, which violated the necessary balance in the political system. This problem was described in special literature in the following way: "Previously the main worry was caused by separatist tendencies in republics, whereas now it is caused by the growing trends toward autarchy in Russian regions, which became a cause for alarm among analysts and political elites. Previously, a "sound dose" of decentralization was regarded as an important element of political democratization, taking into account the experience of the many-year tradition of the hyper-centralization of state power, whereas now Russia faced the unmanageable process of the "splintering" of central power. The striking weakness of the Russian state, as well as instability and unpredictability in the process of adopting decisions, primarily, form the basis of the growing self-assurance of regional elites and encourage

regions to act independently, often throwing direct challenge to central power. This tendency causes apprehensions that Russia may in the future turn from federation into confederation, and, if the worst come to the worst, may be thrown back to the period of medieval chaos and conflicts, to the epoch of “apanage principalities.”¹

On the whole, it can be noted that this catastrophic forecast has not been justified. The complex of measures undertaken in the period of Putin’s presidency to strengthen “the vertical of power”, despite doubts and criticism voiced by numerous experts so often, produced definitely positive results, including in the sphere of the nationalities question, and “curbed the appetites” of the regional establishment. L. Smirnyagin justly points to the fact that “when the new President of the country came to power, rapid centralization of management began in Russia, and it took place within the bounds of strict symmetry. Certain changes were also introduced in the electoral system.”²

At the same time, despite these changes there are still risks connected with the weak functioning and bad quality of managerial mechanism. And it is too early to talk of harmonization of interethnic relations. The problem is that “different ethnopolitical and economic situations and also different systems and styles of management have taken shape in parts of the Federation.”³ In most republics, due to various reasons (historical, demographic, social, ethnocultural, and even religious) representatives of the “titular” nation cannot be regarded ruling, irrespective of whether they constitute a minority or majority (even the biggest ethnic group). The leadership of these republics and their ruling bodies, including the elected ones, is not of a mono-ethnic character. However, as emphasized by V. Tishkov in 2001, in certain North Caucasian republics “pseudo-federalism” has acquired some features of “ethno-clan regimes”⁴. In North Caucasian republics the notions of regional and ethnic elites coincide.

Ethnic elites are part of the political class formed on the ethnic principle. Ethnic elites include representatives of the titular nation. The ideological prerequisite of the formation of ethnic elites is nationalism, ethnicity and ethnocentrism, which explain why political elites are formed not on a party or professional basis, but on the ethnic principle. The existence of ethnic elites is a sign of high politicization of ethnicity, when it is a source of the formation of political institutions, as well as political rights and privileges. The activity of ethnic elites should be assessed on the basis of whether they contribute to the development of their regions and whether they are really interested in the stabilization of the socio-political situation. However, in the conditions of growing destabilization and the growing threat to their status, ethnic elites may, willy-nilly, use the mechanism of ethnopolitical mobilization and fan ethnic conflicts.

The struggle between elites is a universal characteristic feature of all societies. One of the instruments of this struggle is the expulsion of rivals by one or another criterion, among which ethnic affiliation holds a prominent place. The struggle of elites leads to the phenomenon called “playing the national card.” In this context ethnic affiliation of a participant in this struggle turns into either a great advantage (“ours”) or a great drawback (“alien”).⁵ In the conditions of the North Caucasus the political mobilization of the population has been carried on by elites on the ethnic basis, which contributed to confrontations between elites or conflicts between clans. The interference of the federal authorities in these conflicts concerned only the elimination or softening of their consequences. However, the factors conducive to the exacerbation of the nationalities problem and interethnic contradictions remained virtually untouched.

During the past years the situation has not changed for the better. The North Caucasian region continues to be a zone of high ethnic

tension, and corruption and nepotism continue to thrive in the local bodies of power. The ethnocratic tendencies which have taken shape in North Caucasian republics have not only been eliminated, but, on the contrary, have strengthened. In certain republics “typical dictatorial regimes characteristic of Central Asia rather than Eastern Europe are thriving. Instruments of power in the region lose their functions, and terrorism is increasing as a result of all these processes.”⁶

Thus, interaction between the federal center and regional elites in the North Caucasus leaves much to be desired. This concerns specific features of local ethnocracies and the formation of ethnic elites, because it is they that are responsible for the awakening of emotionality and politicization of the national sentiments of popular masses.

It should be noted that inasmuch as the concepts of ethnocracy and ethnic elite are closely connected, the genesis of ethnocracy as a form of political rule cannot be defined without analyzing the specific features of recruiting ethnic elites. Ethnocracy has never been born below or developed by itself; it is a product of ethnic elites. The latter are traditionally regarded by political science as stable groups having access to power resources and the opportunity to use them as they think fit.

Sociologies, political analysts, ethnologists, etc. have time and again tried to explain the social nature of North Caucasian societies and their relations with the surrounding world. However, satisfactory answers to many questions have not been obtained so far. Difficulties in the interpretation of local realities have cropped up largely due to the fact that mountain societies are organized quite differently than social structures within “big” Russia.

Traditionalism as a driving force of cultural life, domination of tribalism in politics, and priority of concrete rules and practices, but not

abstract, formal-legal reasons and standards are often incomprehensible for many theorists of modern society.

The main obstacle for the creation of a coherent concept of stability of North Caucasian ethnocracies is the absence of an adequate analytical scheme with the help of which it could be possible to comprehend properly the events taking place in the region. Even those researchers who take the Caucasus as the main subject of their work, but not as an appendage to the history of Russia, often find themselves in a difficult position as soon as they touch on the fundamental problems of its historical development. The bulk of special literature devoted to the North Caucasus is devoted to very narrow problems and is not oriented to the modern methods used by social sciences. It is confined to describing phenomena and enumerating facts.

This narrow specialization is unproductive, inasmuch as the study of regional ethnocracies, including in the North Caucasus, could contribute to a more profound interpretation of considerable number of major questions of general sociological and political character. This article is an attempt to deal with the problem using institutional development models of traditional society to explain its political originality.

Experts on the North Caucasus are often engaged in creating generalized concepts, but sometimes pay little attention to details. In order to analyze and explain the historical process in the region it is necessary to test theoretical models on concrete ethnological material. Such approach will make it possible to better understand and explain political phenomena, besides, it will show how some or other features and standards of social evolution were or will be implemented in social practice.

The North Caucasus is a zone of prolonged interaction of two different cultures having stable ideological concepts and views about

themselves and their neighbors. For over two hundred years mountain societies were fighting the world's biggest country, even having been included in it and having partly accepted its culture, and defended the superiority of their cultural values and way of life. Such ethnocentrism is well-known and there is nothing surprising in it, however, manifestations of ethnic sentiments and self-identity of inhabitants of the North Caucasus are too great and sophisticated.

Recently, attempts have been made to connect the sources of interethnic tension in the Caucasus with the archaic political and legal way of life in the region, and rebirth in a distorted form of traditional practices preventing economic modernization and integration of the Caucasian peoples in Russian society.

According to M. Astvatsaturova, ethnocracies in the North Caucasus have historical roots connected with traditional canons and general laws of North Caucasian peoples. The clan system exists in North Caucasian societies irrespective of political regimes, power doctrines, government policies, or party construction.⁷

Mountain peoples of the Caucasus have always been distrustful toward all and sundry reforms and innovations. At the same time the North Caucasian ethnic groups have demonstrated throughout their history ability to adapt to changes in difficult, even crisis, circumstances and shown their talent for social creativity and cultural dynamism.

Traditionalist societies have always been striving to establish priority of their culture, religion and the economic and social structure, rejecting other forms of collective life as false or inferior. These societies are directed to reproduction of the already existing social forms, blocking all innovations. However, traditionalist society is always divided into groups – ethnic, confessional, clan, family, etc. The clan structure is a way and means of the functioning of traditional

society, and a manifestation of its social order. Conflicts between separate subgroups are a typical and ordinary phenomenon of traditional society.

The well-known ethnologist V. Bobrovnikov examines Caucasian specificity through the prism of theory of legal pluralism, according to which the state is not the monopolist in the sphere of production of legal standards and rules, and there can be coexistence of various forms, both state and non-state, of systems of norms and regulators. In his view, “transformations” which took place in the region in the course of the past one-and-a-half and two centuries have led either to the strengthening of legal pluralism (in the latter half of the 19th century and early 20th century, as well as in the post-Soviet epoch), or to the formation of hidden poly-legal pattern⁸.

Despite their autonomous character, the societies of the North Caucasus have maintained constant contacts between themselves and with a more distant social environment. If we examine political entities in the North Caucasus in isolation, it might seem that they emerged and collapsed haphazardly, however, if they are analyzed in the general regional context for a prolonged period, they will reveal a host of striking regularities connected, among other things, with the cycles of power in Russia. For one thing, Shamil’s Imamatus was an adaptive answer of Caucasian ethnic groups to the military-political challenge of the Russian Empire.

Mountain societies put forward political elites in the crisis conditions, which cement, as it were, political area. At the same time, it should be taken into account that opportunities for reforms exist only within the framework set by the cultural-historical context.

Following the problem of political interaction of Russia with the North Caucasus, we come across a more difficult problem of cultural communication. The significance of events taking place as a result of

the influence of different cultures on one another is often interpreted quite differently. Differences in the picture of the world make their relations especially problematic. In this context it should be noted first of all that mountain societies have shown themselves quite capable to manipulate the Russian system of power, often taking its forms, but rejecting its essence.

One of the means of conservation of Caucasian traditionalism is the form of the state structure of Russia. The asymmetrical forms of relations between the federal center and parts of Russia of different types are a factor of politicization of ethnicity. “True federalism,” as the foundation for the exclusive rights of national state units, becomes, apparently, one of the main political problems of today’s Russia. The model of federalism functioning in Russia has not contributed to softening ethno-confessional tension in the country and proved unable to create an atmosphere of ethno-political consensus in Russian society. Moreover, Russian federalism, mixed as it really is, contains a well-pronounced ethnic dominant engendering a number of political and legal collisions.

Most proposals on reforming Russian federalism were unfeasible and proceeded from the premise that there is no alternative to federalism in Russia.

This thesis has been taken, and is taken now, for granted. Federalism is regarded as something sacral. There can be no talk of any variants of national-territorial organization of the country.

At the same time, relations between the center and regions, including ethnic ones, is a broadly discussed problem. In certain countries (for example, the People’s Republic of China), with a view to improving relations between the center and “national” territories, national-territorial autonomies within parts of the country built on territorial principle are created, but not national parts of the federation.

According to the PRC Constitution, a national autonomy is created in districts of compact residence of national minorities. Self-government bodies are organized and autonomous rights are granted. Districts of national autonomy are an inalienable part of the People's Republic of China.

A unitary state with national-territorial autonomies is a stable enough formation guaranteeing the implementation of state power over the entire territory of the country, which deals effectively with separatist tendencies and is able to ensure protection of the rights of national minorities. The autonomy is, as a rule, deprived of most attributes of nationhood, but at the same time it can have certain additional rights.

A specific feature of national-territorial autonomy existing in the People's Republic of China is that it does not have a character of national statehood, but is in its nature an administrative autonomy. For the first time in China's history it gives the center an opportunity to establish control of the state over all national-territorial autonomies, and at the same time to contribute to the development of each one of them. In other words, the institution of national-territorial autonomy helps consolidate the country and become a guarantee of its integrity, as well as ensures state support to national-territorial autonomy.

Of course, the nationalities problem in China cannot be considered completely resolved. Complex problems still remain in Tibet and in Xinjiang-Uighur district. Nevertheless, Chinese experience in solving relations in the interethnic sphere is worthy of study, and its certain aspects may be taken into consideration in elaborating the strategy of nationalities policy in Russia.

It should be noted that Russia has its own experience of the formation of the inner structure of the state through establishing autonomies, and it has positive aspects. The point is to revive on a new

basis the idea of forming autonomies, but with due account of the new experience obtained in the 20th century.

The Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) proclaimed federation is a unitary structure with autonomies. In accordance with the Constitution of 1978, it consisted of 16 autonomous republics, five autonomous regions and 10 autonomous okrugs (areas), along with territories, regions and cities of republican subordination.

Many problems encountered by Russian society in the sphere of interethnic relations at the present stage are rooted in the specificity of the state-territorial structure of the Russian Federation. Ethnic federalism, which is actually one of the principles of the state-territorial organization of the Russian state, contributes to the politicization of ethnicity, does not allow the country to extricate itself from the impasse of endless claims of ethnic subjects to one another and to the country's authorities, and keeps ethnic tension at a sufficiently high level.

Reorganization of the federative system on the administrative-territorial basis is hardly feasible now due to the opposition of ethnic elites and the inadequacy of the legal backing of such reform. The means to solve the nationalities question should be sought in a cautious transition on to the path of a unitary state with national-territorial autonomies.

The change of the status of ethnic entities can be regarded as the first step in abandoning politicized ethnicity in Russia. There are signs that the Russian political elite at present is gradually ceasing to interpret federalism as a universal means to resolve interethnic problems.

Notes

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- ⁴ Ibid. – P. 31.
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*“Elitologiya Rossii: Sovremennoye sostoyaniye
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CENTRAL ASIA AFTER MAIDAN

The Crimean-Ukrainian crisis has ended the transition period in the global system of international relations and marked the beginning of a new epoch, whose distinguishing feature is the multipolar structure of the modern world. Experts are now convinced of the Ukrainian events having an extraordinary influence on Central Asia and Kazakhstan in the not-so-distant future.

Projections of the crisis, whose catalyst was Ukraine's signing an agreement on association with the European Union instead of its joining the Customs Union headed by Russia, are different. Accordingly, the models of behavior of the states and non-governmental actors in Central Asia are also different.

Nazarbayev's Eurasian Choice

The main blow at the anti-Russian and anti-integration front is dealt at Kazakhstan, which is actively drawn in the Eurasian project. The most vivid example of the manifestation of Russophobia in Kazakhstan could be found in the April issue of the magazine "Zhuldyzdar otbasy Atsyz adam," which was devoted to the 125th birth anniversary of Adolph Hitler and attempted to rehabilitate the former German fuehrer in the eyes of Kazakhs. "In his certain actions Putin seems to outdo Hitler," the journal wrote.

The Communications and Information Agency of Kazakhstan immediately reacted to this publication, having stated that the editorial office of the magazine violated Article 164 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan dealing with fanning social, national, race or religious enmity. The maximal penalty for this crime is prison term up to twelve years. It is indicative that the subjects of Nazism and nationalism, integration and relations with Russia have been raised at the highest state level. Within the framework of the XXI session of the Assembly of the peoples of Kazakhstan, President Nursultan Nazarbayev stated that interethnic relations are not the field for political games. "These are human destinies. They should not be postponed, all the more so, ignored, especially when they are cynically used by any political group as an argument in the struggle for power. This is dangerous for the state, for the people, for each person. Everybody

should realize that chauvinism or nationalism is separated from open neo-Nazism by a very thin margin, which can easily be crossed.” The head of state called on Kazakhstan’s people always to remember “the great sacrifices which the peoples of the entire CIS had made during the Great Patriotic war for victory over the “brown plague.”

Nazarbayev gave to understand quite clearly that he regarded the choice made by Kazakhstan correct. “I maintain that the integration choice made by any country is a question of people’s welfare. It is only integration that is based not on the current political situation, but on pragmatic interests which creates conditions for employment and business. It is to integration of this type that Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarus are striving for within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union. It is planned to sign a historic treaty on the creation of such integration association in Astana. These three countries are integrated in order to withstand global competition. And there is no doubt that it will be tough.

Nazarbayev’s position is quite clear: the head of state wants to protect Kazakhstan from the threat of destabilization, which will proceed according to a tested scenario. The West, primarily the United States, has a negative attitude to Kazakhstan’s desire to take part in Russian integration projects. There is no doubt that attempts to shatter the situation in Kazakhstan, and also in Belarus, will be made in the nearest future.

Contrary to outside ideas, anti-Russian sentiments in Kazakhstan aren’t widespread. The section of the “creative class” (from extreme nationalists to radical ecologists and intelligent liberals sponsored and financed by western foundations) does not exert any noticeable influence on public opinion in the country. The absence of the protest potential in the country was demonstrated, among other things, by the attitude of Kazakh people to the unrest in Zhanaozen in December

2011. The use of force against people taking part in anti-government manifestations was received calmly enough outside the region where they took place, and the incident has now been forgotten.

Soon after the President of Kazakhstan has defined the main development vector of the country, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Nisha D. Biswal arrived in Astana, the capital of the country. The official aim of her visit, according to information, was to discuss research problems of Kazakhstan's mountains and glaciers with the help of sputniks, as well as the results of the negotiations between President Obama and President Nazarbayev at the Hague. (It is indicative that Ms Biswal has not been received by anyone from the country's leadership, except the Foreign Minister Erlan Idrisov.)

The real purpose of her visit was to draw Kazakhstan in Afghan projects and the project of transporting oil to India. The United States is interested in the maximal reorientation of commodity and financial flows from the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China to the South. Actually, the idea is to revive the old concept of "Greater Central Asia," which is now called "The New Silk Road." This project can be part of broader plans of the United States to reduce, or altogether stop, the export of energy resources from Kazakhstan (and Turkmenistan) to China. In the words of Nisha D. Biswal, Washington would like to see Central Asia tied more closely with South Asia via Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The Kazakhstan leadership displayed a restrained attitude to American proposals. Commenting on the results of her visit to Kazakhstan, Nisha Biswal did not conceal her disappointment. She said that the United States would like Kazakhstan to have favorable, positive and mutually beneficial relations with Russia, but they should

not be exclusive. However, nobody in Kazakhstan's capital is going to follow this advice.

Kazakhstan's domestic policy is often a continuation of its foreign policy. Its pro-Russian positions turn the country into the main object of U.S. activity in the region. However, the weakness of the pro-American lobby in Kazakhstan's capital and the absence of a real opposition make any internal destabilization of the situation hardly possible. This is why Washington is eyeing up neighboring countries which could be used as springboards – Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan.

Formation of Geopolitical Axis Moscow – Tashkent – Astana

Rethinking of foreign policy is taking place in Uzbekistan, too. Early last March Uzbekistan's Foreign Ministry issued a statement, in connection with the events in Ukraine, on impermissibility of foreign interference in internal affairs of states. This message was addressed not only to Russia. Besides, Uzbekistan does not consider a possibility of its participation in the Customs and Eurasian unions and it suspended its membership in the CSTO, but this does not mean that Tashkent distances itself from Moscow, Astana and Minsk. Uzbekistan is striving to become the key actor in the region for which it has all grounds.

The history of all post-Soviet integration projects in Central Asia shows that talks of common history, culture and unity of regional powers is, unfortunately, nothing but a myth. Central Asian countries have united within the framework of uniform state formations only by force from the outside, be it Genghiz Khan, Tamerlane, the Russian Empire, or the U.S.S.R.

In the view of the leadership of Uzbekistan, Russia is unable to play the role of the unifier of Central Asian countries so far. Tashkent can hardly give any other assessment of Russia's role in Central Asia.

It has not supported Russian initiatives up to now, because from the 1990s Uzbekistan has mainly relied on bilateral relations. Without Uzbekistan, the region is broken and deficient. If it is not possible to set up an integration alliance, it would be expedient to form an axis of countries capable to ensure regional security. The Ukrainian crisis could become a catalyst for the creation of the geopolitical axis Moscow – Tashkent – Astana, which is objectively necessary for the region. Such construction would strengthen and consolidate the regional geopolitical and geo-economic area and would allow it to evolve a common effective strategy of Central Asia toward the United States and the West, as well as the People's Republic of China.

The development of relations with Russia is of principal importance for Uzbekistan. Suspension of its membership in the CSTO does not mean much actually. Considerable experience has been accumulated over many years in daily exchange of information between the special services and other special agencies of the two countries. There is a fundamental legal basis of Russian-Uzbek relations – the Treaty on strategic partnership of June 16, 2004, and also the Treaty on allied relations between Uzbekistan and Russia of November 14, 2005. Tashkent hopes that soon Moscow will define more precisely its positions in the region, which will enable Central Asian countries to define their foreign policies more precisely.

Bilateral interaction of Uzbekistan and Russia, in contrast to multilateral formats (particularly, the CSTO) makes it possible to solve the arising problems more rapidly and effectively. This is why the country's leadership has a cautious attitude toward multilateral formats. Tashkent is convinced of Belarus and especially Kazakhstan's participation in the Customs Union having a host of negative consequences. Hence, integration projects may lead to social tension and growing nationalism in the country.

The possibility of destabilization scenarios of the “Arab spring” or “Ukrainian Maidan” type is negligible in Uzbekistan. The events in Andizhan in 2005 showed the reaction of Uzbekistan’s authorities to such attempts. There are less well-known, but no less characteristic examples. But the threat of outside interference is quite real for all countries of the region. Tashkent watches closely how the process of merging the extremist and terrorist groupings with organized criminal groups and state bodies, including special services, in Kyrgyzstan, is going on. Uzbekistan is situated in the center of the region and its stability directly depends on developments in the neighboring countries.

Afghan Project: Chaotization of Central Asia

Afghanistan, definitely, presents a serious challenge to the Central Asian countries. The developments in that country and neighboring states should be viewed through the prism of the well-known project named by Washington “Greater Middle East.” The events of the “Arab spring,” and now the “Russian spring” prove correctness of such approach. World history, at least in its key regions, has finally become based and dependent on projects. Not a single revolution in any country of the world, beginning from 1789, has been a consequence of a sudden social protest. The events which bring about the change of power practically always include an external factor. Special technologies are evolved, which have become quite intricate and sophisticated by the beginning of the 21st century.

Afghanistan is also a project with its own special history, traditions, etc. In the early 2000s this project changed its structure and acquired new dynamics.

Unfounded fears connected with the forthcoming withdrawal of the U.S. and NATO troops from Afghanistan have nothing to do with

the real tendencies existing in the Afghan direction. The most probable development scenarios of Afghanistan for the foreseeable future is a split of the country into ethnopolitical enclaves which will be in a state of confrontation, and even war, with one another. After presidential elections in that country experts predict a sharp deterioration of the ethnopolitical situation. The point is that growing political self-consciousness of ethnic minorities, primarily, the Tajiks, enters into irreconcilable contradiction with the desire of the Pashtun elite to preserve and strengthen its dominant positions in the country. The forthcoming fragmentation of Afghanistan is of dual importance for the Central Asian republics.

Irrespective of the final results of Afghan elections, an agreement on cooperation between Kabul and Washington is a question of time only. According to this agreement, there will be nine complete military bases of the United States remaining in the country: in Kabul, Bagram, Mazari-Sharif, Gerat, Kandagar, Shurab (Gilment), Gardez, Jelalabad and Shindand. Apart from that, the United States will have the right to use the international airport of Kabul and Great for military purposes, and also the right for military presence in land border posts Torham and Spinbuldak (border with Pakistan), Turgundi (border with Turkmenistan), Hairaton (border with Uzbekistan), and Sharhan-Bandar (border with Tajikistan).

Under this agreement the United States will not be responsible for ensuring security in the country, shifting it on to the Afghan national forces (ANDSF). However, as stated in the draft agreement, the parties recognize that American military operations may be carried on in Afghanistan against “Al Qaeda” and organizations affiliated with it, if the interests of the anti-terrorist struggle call for it. In essence, the United States will have the right to wage military actions as it thinks fit.

It is easy to imagine the development of the situation in Afghanistan after the ANDSF begin to maintain law and order. Different national affiliation of servicemen, forced mobilization (in some cases), low level of military training and discipline, corruption in the officer corps – is a far from complete list of problems making the ANSDF almost completely ineffective. But, perhaps, the most serious challenge, will be mass desertion (up to 50,000 men refuse to serve in the Afghan army and special services annually). Quite often men are recruited by the enemy – the Taliban.

The training of high-ranking officers is a difficult task, which is due to a low educational level of Afghan society. The security forces are unable to handle intricate equipment, take charge of logistics, or plan military operations. Remaining without serious support of the United States, they will disperse, some will join the Taliban, others may enter paramilitary units of provincial feudal lords (there are still quite a few such people).

It is not clear how situation will develop in the North-West of Afghanistan and what role the recognized leader of Afghan Uzbeks, General Abdul Rashid Dustum will play. Some experts believe that in an event of a split of Afghanistan into warring enclaves, the zone controlled by Dustum may become a buffer for Central Asia. However, according to rumors, General Dustum is paralyzed and is now staying in Turkey or prolonged medical treatment.

The situation in the North-West of Afghanistan may be destabilized by Turkmen ethnic groupings. One of them called “Taqfir” is directly connected with the Pashtun Talibs. Turkmen units are constantly fighting for power, and the situation along the border with Turkmenistan is considered the most dangerous.

Besides, Kazakhstan, Russia, the CSTO and SCO have no systemic ties with government bodies in Ashkhabad, capital of

Turkmenistan. The behavior of the latter is unpredictable and causes great concern. An additional problem is the ideology of pan-Turkism which is widespread among Turkmen and Uzbeks. To boot, Saudi emissaries working in conjunction with local mullahs and imams in a vast area from Gerat to Mazari-Sharif are engaged in active propaganda of Wahhabi ideas.

Thus, Central Asian rulers should be very cautious and vigilant and thoroughly watch the situation in Afghanistan, doing everything possible to prevent centrifugal tendencies being transferred to the territory of the former Soviet republics.

Effect of the “Afghan Domino”: Weak Links of Regional Security

Outwardly stable Turkmenistan may show the effect of the “Afghan domino.” For many decades already the bodies of power in the republic have been dominated by representatives of one and the same tribe (Teke, or Akhal-Teke), which is causing growing discontent of other tribes (Iomuds, for example). They inhabit western parts of Turkmenistan, where quite a few gas deposits are situated. Inasmuch as gas extraction is the main sector of the economy in the republic, separatist sentiments in Western Turkmenistan are quite strong. The situation is aggravated by the fact that there are big Turkmen diasporas in neighboring countries. In the border districts of Afghanistan live about one million Turkmen of the Iomud tribe, and border areas of Iran are inhabited by about 1,300,000 Turkmen, who are not members of the Teke tribe. The total figure of Turkmenistan’s population is about five million.

The development of conflict processes in South-western Afghanistan and a possibility of their moving to the territory of Turkmenistan make it possible to forecast the formation of a crisis axis Afghanistan – Turkmenistan with possible transfer to the Caspian

regions of Kazakhstan and subsequent development in the direction of the Russian Caucasus, and the Volga and Ural areas. The countries included in this axis could tackle the problems of security of the region and properly react to the growing Chinese presence in the Caspian basin and in Central Asia, as well as to the attempts to prevent it on the part of the global rivals of the PRC.

In contrast to Turkmenistan, simple “Afghanization” or “chaotization” is not threatening Uzbekistan. But a split of Afghanistan will inevitably entail serious risks requiring asymmetrical answers, – drug production and drug trafficking, as well as the training of terrorist groupings for actions outside the boundaries of Afghan territory.

The notorious Islamic movement of Uzbekistan is based precisely in Afghanistan; it has long become an international terrorist grouping and can easily turn its “bayonets” against Tashkent. As to drug trafficking, about 80 percent of narcotic drugs get to the republic not directly across the Afghan border (which is thoroughly controlled now), but from the territory of Tajikistan, and especially Kyrgyzstan, whose borders are relatively open.

Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan are the weakest links of regional security. The leadership of Tajikistan does not comment on the situation in Ukraine and tries to ignore the sentiments of society which supports the unification of the Crimea with Russia. The authorities increase their pressure on the remnants of the opposition, which should show that the former have learnt the Ukrainian lessons. Due to the geographic isolation of Tajikistan, integration processes in the post-Soviet area are not too important for the republican leadership, and it still has enough time to adopt a necessary decision. Nevertheless, Dushanbe depends a great deal on Moscow in a whole number of vital spheres: from protection of security to the position of Tajik labor migrants. No wonder, the Tajik authorities do not take part in anti-

Russian rhetoric, all the more so, they are simply unable to commit any anti-Russian acts.

On the other hand, official Dushanbe cannot support Russia's position directly. The interests of Tajikistan are intertwined with the interests of the United States, other western countries, and Ukraine. Tajikistan has time and again declared its adherence to many-vector policy. A no small role in Dushanbe's policy has been played by the question connected with the construction of the Rogun hydropower plant. The point is that the turbines for it have been ordered at several industrial enterprises of Ukraine. This is why Tajikistan is closely following the developments in Ukraine's South-East.

As to the effect of the "Afghan domino," Tajik experts close to President Rahmon discuss plans of foreign forces on the creation of an Ismailian state in the Pamirs and an Islamic state in the Ferghana Valley. The ruling regime can establish law and order only with the help of special military operations, as was the case of the Gorno-Badakhshan autonomous region in 2012. Although victory in the presidential elections in the autumn of 2013 was scored by Emomali Rahmon, which showed the ability of the local political elite to mobilize itself and its supporters, Tajikistan should evolve a more precise and clear-cut position on the question of its participation in the integration projects initiated by Russia.

The Trojan Horse of Central Asia

In Kyrgyzstan the positions of power are very weak. President Almazbek Atambayev practically does not control the situation in the country. Main decisions are adopted by several groups of influence in the presidential apparatus, the government, certain ministries, and partly in parliament. The questions of foreign policy are tackled

and promoted by lobbyists of western interests, among them Sapar Isakov (head of the foreign policy department of the presidential apparatus), Erlan Abdyldayev (Minister for foreign affairs), and Farid Niyazov (adviser of the President).

It is indicative that a visit to Bishkek of Nisha D. Biswal, the Assistant U.S. Secretary of State on South and Central Asia, coincided with the appointment of Djoomart Otorbayev to the post of Premier. Some time ago he worked as a senior counselor at the European Reconstruction and Development Bank and a member of the supervisory council of the American University in Central Asia and President of the Rotary Club. Dj. Otorbayev is considered a politician of clearly pro-western orientation, and his appointment increases pro-western trends and sentiments in the Kyrgyz political establishment. Hence, it can be predicted that the difficult process of Kyrgyzstan's entry into the Customs Union will be retarded, and Russian-Kyrgyz relations will gradually become cooler.

The United States has a powerful instrument of bringing pressure to bear on President Atambayev, if he tries to draw closer to Moscow, namely, a non-system (non-parliamentary) opposition, whose backbone is the grouping of Ravshan Zheenbekov – National opposition movement. Zheenbekov is an outspoken pro-American politician. His movement includes many Kyrgyz politicians who are not in power at present. Among them the former mayor of the city of Osh Melis Myrzakmatov, the former head of the “Ata Zhurt” party Kamchibek Tashiyev, and the former attorney general Azimbek Beknazarov.

Besides, there are quite a few non-governmental organizations of pro-western orientation. The questions of Kyrgyzstan's entry into the Customs Union, sale of “Kyrgyzgaz” to “Gazprom”, and possible purchase of the controlling block of shares of the “Manas” airport – these are the main irritants for pro-western activists. To boot, the socio-

economic situation in the country is deteriorating, which means that pressure on Atambayev becomes more real, and we may soon hear demands for his resignation.

It is indicative that the pro-government mass media in Kyrgyzstan connect Nisha Biswal's visit to Bishkek with the stepping up of anti-government activities. Although there were no indications of any contacts between her and the opposition, many experts and analysts believe that after her visit there can be changes in the U.S. policy toward Kyrgyzstan.

Kyrgyzstan has long become a place where various opposition forces designed to destabilize the situation in the neighboring countries are based. It was in the Kyrgyz city of Osh that fighters were trained in 2005, who staged an uprising in Andizhan in Uzbekistan. After its suppression they fled to western countries via Jalalabad region in Kyrgyzstan. In resort townships on the shore of Issyk-Kul Lake representatives of American and European non-governmental organizations regularly hold conferences, seminars and training sessions for representatives of the opposition from all Central Asian states.

True, in recent time the activity of the United States Agency for international development, Conrad Adenauer Foundation, George Soros Foundation, and other international organizations has moved to the south of the republic, farther away from the Bishkek authorities, despite the fact that the latter turned a blind eye to their activities. Even local non-governmental organizations receive 70 percent of their means from the budget of foreign countries, 20 percent – from the budget of transnational commercial companies, and only 10–15 percent – from donations of private persons. These organizations often violate the existing international standards, for instance, they launder criminal incomes used to finance extremist and sometimes terrorist activities in other countries.

The Russian Pole and Collapse of “Many-vector Policy”

A general analysis of the situation in Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan makes it possible to conclude that these three countries will soon turn into one conflict zone in the near future. This suggestion is corroborated by the low level of state border protection between Afghanistan and Tajikistan, and between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Doubtless, a negative development of the situation in the region will make an impact on Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. It is not excluded that Russia and Kazakhstan may take part in the military mission of the CSTO, which can only add fuel to the flames of conflicts. As a result, Central Asia may really become part of the “Greater Middle East,” which is in a state of permanent armed confrontation. In this connection, regular exacerbations of Tajik-Uzbek, Tajik-Kyrgyz and Uzbek-Turkmen relations can hardly be called accidental. According to experts, if resumption of an interethnic conflict in the south of Kyrgyzstan coincides with tension along the Tajik-Uzbek border, this may lead to the destabilization of the entire region.

As to the attitude to Russia and to Eurasian integration, it differs in different Central Asian countries. Nevertheless, certain common features can be singled out. Speaking at the conference on security in Munich in February 2007, President Putin expressed his view on the role of Russia in the area of the former U.S.S.R. and in international politics as a whole. At the Munich conference the President of Russia reproached the West for the first time and outlined problems and conditions on which Russia was ready to cooperate with the United States and Europe.

For the CIS countries, including those in Central Asia, it meant that the time of balancing within the framework of many-vector policy is coming to a close, and soon they would be asked to finally determine

their foreign-policy priorities. There were few people who received this signal correctly, just as the next signal, namely the war with Georgia in August 2008 and recognition of independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The Ukrainian crisis has finally crossed the “T’s” and dotted the “T’s,” although it creates a certain discomfort for the ruling Central Asian elites. Tension between Russia and NATO countries grows, the CSTO states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan) and their allies (Uzbekistan) will have to decide rapidly whether it is worthwhile to continue cooperation with the alliance. All the more so, since the developments in Ukraine have clearly shown that despite bellicose rhetoric, neither the United States nor NATO are prepared to interfere in conflicts in the post-Soviet area.

The existence of the spheres of influence of the great powers and satellite-countries has always been a feature of international affairs. Russia’s actions in the Caucasus in August 2008, annexation of the Crimea and subsequent actions in Ukraine force the post-Soviet elites to abandon the many-vector policy. The new realities of the rapidly changing system of international relations narrow down the field for maneuvering. Regional actors will be forced to act in the situation of conflict between global actors.

In order to work out a reasonable foreign-policy strategy the countries should realize what aims each of the foreign actors pursues. The following fact should be taken into consideration: we live in the epoch of degradation of international law and international institutions, some of which have been drawn in the realization of political plans of certain powers (UN), or which have become instruments of interference in the affairs of sovereign states (OSCE).

It should be recognized that events of the past years – dismemberment of Yugoslavia, recognition of the independence of

Kosovo, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and a split of Ukraine taking place now show that international law is not able to play the role of a legal regulator of international relations any longer. All the more so, since we mean the law which incorporates two opposing principles: territorial integrity and self-determination of peoples. And there are no guarantees that such precedents presupposing a change of borders and recognition of different separatist projects would not be repeated in any region of the world, including in Central Asia.

The present global financial crisis means at the same time the aggravation of the crisis of classical liberal democracy. Globalization led to the final devaluation of all universalist projects of the modern epoch – liberal-democratic, socialist, and others. New realities are a world in which leading actors compete with one another in a bitter struggle with the systemic crises of capitalism. And each global crisis, as a rule, ends with a global war for the redivision of the world, access to the sources of fuel and energy, communications, and other strategic resources.

An analysis of modern international processes requires not only a geopolitical, but also geo-economic approach. The new level of ties and communications makes traditional means and instruments of implementing the interests of the state and capital useless. The geo-economic paradigm puts to doubt the doctrine of national interests formulated in the epoch of geopolitics. Today, the national states should largely take into account regional and world processes.

All this demonstrates the need for radical changes in foreign-policy concepts of developing countries and semi-industrial countries which definitely include the states of the Central Asian region. These changes should be connected with the guarantee of the rights of ethnic minorities, and problems of territorial integrity and national security.

The Central Asian countries should determine which foreign center of force they will rely on. Russia and China could become the

geo-economic pole for them. Everything depends on whether a country is capable to submit other actors to its external and internal interests. Russia demonstrates now that it is capable to do this. Perhaps, it will be able to complete the gathering together of lands, including all former Soviet republics of Central Asia in the European project.

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**SPECIFIC FEATURES OF POLITICAL
LEADERSHIP IN CENTRAL ASIA ON EXAMPLES
OF UZBEKISTAN AND KAZAKHSTAN**

The role of political leaders becomes more decisive in the modern political process. Actually, politics has now become personified. The phenomenon of political leadership connected with the mechanisms of managerial functions used by concrete subjects of power should be studied more thoroughly. The functioning of different social structures and society as a whole depends on the effectiveness of managerial actions of political leaders.

The political leader today is a man who constantly talks about values and promotes them. These values cause emotions among people and create mental cards. That is, the point is not formal leadership, but actual one. If there is not such communication, then it is only a nominal leader, or simply political manager.

In the 21st century the political leader is a collectively created product. Image is created by political strategists, and a decision is worked out by experts. The leader has the decisive chance to take

responsibility upon himself and to commit an act in a certain border, existential situation.

The President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov represents the type of a leader-administrator. His specific features include:

Prolonged stay in power which is personified, and the preservation of conflicts and balance between different clans.

As a result, great corruption, closeness of policy, and absence of channels for expressing dissatisfaction.

This is why in the conditions of a crisis greater courage and resoluteness are needed to suppress it, and in “time of peace” stricter control over the population and the “disobedient,” which takes the form of reprisals.

However this power has support of the population because it lives in a relative order and security, and has certain mentality and local ideology aimed at the creation of a civic nation. He is ambitious and regards power as a resource which can be used, spent and augmented. Besides, he is able to adjust situations in which he finds himself, he is distinguished by resoluteness, active behavior and certain aggressiveness. There is nothing surprising in that he succeeded in bolstering up his power by legal and administrative measures.

His main problem is the absence of a successor. The daughters are incapable to succeed him. Lola is in the sidelines, and Gulnara evokes displeasure, even hatred of too many people. She is involved in big corruption scandals, but pretends to fight corruption. She makes surprising, even stunning statements from time to time. But there is a number of candidates from among people close to Karimov. For example, Rustam Inoyatov, who initiated a campaign against Gulnara Karimova. In recent months certain presidential powers have been transferred to the parliament and prime minister.

The President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev is a charismatic leader. He is tolerant and cunning, but when the matter does not concern Kazakhstan he can make blunders. At the beginning of his career he effectively used the nationalist sentiments of people living in the south of the republic and succeeded in consolidating them. The country is ruled by one man – the President and his family.

Nazarbayev is a very strong leader, able politician and knowledgeable and experienced manager, although with certain drawbacks. However, the question of a successor remains open. All fears and expectations of the Kazakh people are connected with this problem. The political elite, businessmen and plain people worried that the new head of state will be inferior to Nazarbayev. Thus, he serves as a sample for determining a candidate for next presidency. Despite criticism and possible negative assessments, Nazarbayev will remain an example of a harsh ruler, who did not allow chaos and anarchy and strictly controlled all actions of the elite.

In conclusion it should be said that Nursultan Nazarbayev is a political and national leader who takes into account all specific features of Kazakh society, and national mentality of each ethnos living in Kazakhstan. This is confirmed by many years of his staying in power. He prevented interethnic clashes and succeeded in achieving steady development of his country. He made Kazakhstan attractive for foreign investors. At the same time concentration of too much power in the hands of one man and reliance on and privileges to a small group of men close to the ruler can have disastrous consequences.

What is it that unites both I. Karimov and N. Nazarbayev?

They are the product of one epoch and graduated from one Soviet political school, hence, their role as reformers and fathers of the nation.

A specific feature of both them is the big role of clans played in their countries, eastern mentality, popular support, personification, and absence of a successor. There are expectations connected with the complete idealization of the present leader, or with the diametrically opposed view (for example, expectations for the coming of Islamists existing in the Ferghana Valley). Since there are no mechanisms of ensuring succession, it is necessary to note the presence of conflicts, and in future, the possibility of a split on the basis of ethno-confessional features.

The common feature of both presidents is their political psychology and different political orientation. Nursultan Nazarbayev tries to promote Kazakhstan's status in the international arena. Hence, its presidency at the OSCE in 2010 and entry in the Customs Union, whereas Islam Karimov is mainly oriented to the domestic problems of Uzbekistan.

*Written specially for Bulletin
"Russia and the Moslem World".*

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**SPECIFIC FEATURES OF FORMATION
AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE POLITICAL
SYSTEM OF MODERN UZBEKISTAN**

After the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. the former Soviet republics, including those in Central Asia, particularly Uzbekistan, have been forced to find their own ways of socio-economic and political development. The specific features of their political systems can be explained by their history, civilizational specificities, as well as peculiar features of their political culture. Without studying the specificities of

political processes, political systems and their components it will not be possible to have an adequate idea about the political life of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Besides, the understanding of the specific features of the political culture of Oriental societies creates favorable conditions for the practical establishment of mutually advantageous relations. To date, it is especially important for the Russian Federation, whose main aim is to preserve and strengthen its presence and influence in the region.

At present, one of the elements of political life in the region is the forthcoming natural cycle of the renovation of ruling elites, which can be followed with changes in mutual relations between countries. In connection with the coming changes it is necessary to have an idea about the alignment of forces in the political arena of Uzbekistan and possible development scenarios.

The main stages of the formation of Uzbekistan's political system were the period of the Russian Empire, the Soviet period, and the period of independence.

Uzbek territories had been conquered and colonized by the Russian Empire in the 19th century. Under Russia's influence capitalist relations began to develop in Central Asian territories, which influenced the transformation of traditional society. The industries, which had been created, were oriented to processing cotton raw materials, and this laid the foundation for the future economic trend of the region.

Among the main results of the Soviet period was the creation of prerequisites for the emergence of political elites. It can be explained by the fact that the historical and geographical division of Uzbekistan into regions has led to the division of the Uzbek ethnos into clans. Up to now the clan division is of major importance and has a great influence. Three clans played a considerable role in the Soviet and post-Soviet political process: Tashkent clan, Ferghana clan, and Samarkand-Jizak clan.

The Soviet structure of state and government bodies was adapted to traditional society. Nevertheless, in the Soviet period traditional community relations and reliance on traditional, informal stable institutions, such as makhalla or court of kazis, were preserved. The Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic continued to preserve the community system, collective responsibility, and respect for the elderly and the rich. Apart from that, one of the specific features of Uzbekistan's political system in the Soviet period was relative non-interference of the center in its affairs in exchange for loyalty of the local leaders.

Talking of the epoch after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, it should be noted that despite the presence of democratic institutions, power is unicentric, and there are no actors who could change the situation at present.

This is also shown by the structure of the institutional subsystem. According to its Constitution, the Republic of Uzbekistan is a sovereign democratic republic. The President is defined by the Constitution as the head of state and the head of executive power. Despite the proclaimed division of power, he remains the key figure because his powers are vast in all three spheres (legislative, executive and legal). It is indicative that the Constitution does not say anything about the impeachment procedure, which fact makes the power of the president actually absolute and immutable.

Despite the fact that the President is elected for a term of five years and can remain at this post not more than two terms in succession, Islam Karimov has been the head of state for 23 years already (since 1991). This is due to that in March 1995 the republican parliament adopted a decision of holding referendum concerning the prolongation of Karimov's presidential powers up to 2000, on the results of which he remained at the head of the country. This decade was practically not counted, and beginning from 2002 the term of

presidential powers was prolonged to seven years, thus Islam Karimov stayed at his post up to 2007, and then he was re-elected up to 2014. It is indicative that in 2011 the presidential term of office was curtailed to five years.

The legislative branch is represented by Oliy Majlis (parliament) consisting of two chambers – Senate and Legislative chamber. At present there are representatives of four political parties in the chamber (according to the 2009 elections): Liberal-democratic party of Uzbekistan (53 seats), People’s democratic party of Uzbekistan (32 seats), Democratic party of Uzbekistan “Millii tiklanish” (31 seats), and Social-democratic party “Adolat” (19 seats).

Despite the presence of four parliamentary parties in the main body of legislative power, a multiparty system and political pluralism in Uzbekistan is a rather relative concept. The opposition parties were not represented during the election campaign, and besides, the parties which position themselves as such are in reality illegal. On the whole, the opposition is weak and does not have any real political influence. It should be said that the emergence of some parties was a spontaneous phenomenon and conditioned, judging by experience, not by the interests of a definite section of society, but the necessity to ensure the proper conditions of holding elections required by law.

It is quite possible that by the new elections new parties may emerge, or old ones will be united. Nevertheless, there are no prerequisites for any radical changes of the system. One of the reasons is the absence of a constructive opposition. Despite a harsh character of the political regime, illegal opposition organizations do exist. Among them is the “Erk” party, which is more organized as part of the Popular movement of Uzbekistan, and “Birlik,” although the latter is less active and practically does not take part in the country’s political life.

There is another major component of the institutional subsystem – the mass media. Despite the proclaimed freedom, there is a semi-secret list of “prohibited subjects,” such as criticism of the President and his family, human rights violations, activity of the opposition parties and movements, and the events in Andizhan. Practically the entire non-governmental television of Uzbekistan is united in the National Association of electronic mass media. But they do not touch the banned subjects, either, and are mainly working for popular entertainment.

The functional and cultural subsystems, just as the institutional one, are among the most important elements of the political system.

Cultural subsystems are largely determined by political culture, and the latter in Central Asian countries differs a great deal from western culture. Democracy and freedom in the western sense are alien to it. A specific feature of the political culture of the Uzbek people is the so-called makhalla. This is a sort of people’s gathering, a meeting having deep-going historical roots. It is precisely there that political socialization takes place and basic values are reproduced. Islam Karimov himself in his speeches and programs has repeatedly turned to makhalla as one of the major components of Uzbek society. Nevertheless, feedback to higher bodies is difficult.

It should also be noted that traditions of paternalism, inherent in any Muslim society, are still preserved in Uzbekistan. A greater part of the country’s population believes that the state is a system of the just distribution of social benefits, and regards it as a guide leading the country along the road to general welfare. This can be explained by Oriental and Muslim culture, according to which state power is taken as an institution called upon to bring up people in the spirit of virtue. Apart from that, the socio-political consciousness of Uzbeks is distinguished by the feeling of organic connection with their leader.

As to the functional subsystem, which includes methods of wielding political power, attention should be turned to election campaigns and the functioning of the party system. A retrospective analysis shows that presidential election campaigns were distinguished by formal policy options (de facto, non-competitive option), which is characteristic of authoritarian regimes. This fact is confirmed by parliamentary elections in which the ruling party (National-democratic party of Uzbekistan – the successor of the Communist party of Uzbekistan, and later the Liberal-democratic party of Uzbekistan) always wins.

It should be noted that the existing parties have been created by the existing ruling power and become active, mainly, during election campaigns, which shows their loyalty to the ruling regime.

Examining separate elements of the socio-class structure, attention should be turned to the political elite, the recruitment of which is an important part of the functional subsystem. The political elite of Uzbekistan is one of the deeply closed elites of Central Asia. Its main distinctive feature is territorial or clan affiliation. Despite the attempts to weaken the clan system in Soviet time (for example, the “cotton affair”), it was not only preserved, but became even stronger. After the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. the old clan system has not disintegrated, this process is retarded in the conditions of strong presidential power and centralized regulation of the economy. According to certain estimates, clans have played a significant role in the transition process and adoption of many political decisions.

Thus, on the basis of this research a conclusion can be drawn that the political system of modern Uzbekistan is drawn to the authoritarian type of political systems, if the regime is taken as the basis of classification. This is confirmed by the facts cited here: undivided authority, absence of real opposition, and only de jure existence of democratic rights and freedoms, including the independent mass media.

Nevertheless, despite the abortive attempts to destroy this system from the outside, no prerequisites can be observed for a radical change of the regime and the entire political system. Besides, there are no strong political actors opposing the regime.

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STRUGGLE FOR WATER RESOURCES

**AS DETERMINANT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
IN CENTRAL ASIA**

In the early 21st century mankind came across the looming crisis of natural resources, including water resources. High growth rates of the world's population and general consumption put to doubt the prospects of the further successful development of humanity. The rapid increase of the use of water resources leads to reduction of the level of food supplies. Deterioration of the quality of water and its pollution become a real threat to life.

The timely character of this article is determined by a number of circumstances.

First, the need for a comprehensive analysis of the relations between the republics of Central Asia in the post-Soviet area concerning the problems of the distribution of trans-border water resources. Being one of the regions with vast water resources, Central Asia suffers from its incorrect and unequal use. The situation is worsened by the fact that the distribution process of hydro-resources, which used to be managed by a single center, has been stopped due to the disintegration of the U.S.S.R., and the proclamation of independence of the Central Asian republics.

Secondly, the need for using special approaches to regulation of the existing differences between the states of the region in the use of water resources. The latter have always been an inalienable part of the economies of the countries of the region. Most of them are agrarian countries, and consequently, they urgently need irrigation of their sowing territories. In view of the fact that almost all hydro-resources are contained in trans-border rivers flowing through the territory of several republics, any change in the use of water or construction of hydro-projects inevitable lead to a conflict situation with adverse effects on neighboring states.

Thirdly, the interests of substantiation of the means and methods of a stable and safe development of Central Asian countries, which is quite important for Russia. Due to its geographical and political and economic conditions the region is natural continuation of security of Russia and the CIS in the south. In this context, the water problem comes out as one of the reasons for its destabilization and exacerbation of relations between these republics.

In the course of investigation of *first point tasks* it was established:

1. The problem of water resources in all its aspects is one of the most serious global problems of our century.

2. To date, 97,5% of all volume of water is water of seas and oceans, only 2,5% is fresh water.

3. A specific feature of this problem lies in the tendency to spread to new regions, touching an ever greater number of people.

4. In the conditions of the high growth rates of population there is the growing potential of the emergence of new water conflicts (the Crimea, the Middle East, Central Africa and Central Asia are vivid examples).

5. At the present stage the measures and efforts to regulate the problem of shortage of water are definitely inadequate, despite a multitude of various international treaties and conventions.

6. It can safely be said that water will become a priority of politics in the 21st century. It should be added that in 2000 one of the UN resolutions called the supply of water and access to its consumption a priority in the progress of mankind.

In studying the causes of the shortage of water in Central Asia it was revealed that it is due to two factors: natural (local topography, mountain water supply of rivers) and manmade (anthropogenic).

As we see, there are two groups of states: of the upper reaches and of the lower reaches. Accordingly, the former are donors, and the latter – acceptors. Most countries of the region are agrarian.

The causes of the water crisis in Central Asia are primarily connected with human activity:

1. High growth rates of the population (several times over since the beginning of the 20th century).

2. Increase in irrigated land areas (agrarian economy).

3. Water as a free-of-charge resource (in contrast to oil or gas).

4. The standards used in the distribution of water existing from Soviet time, which are now obsolete.

5. The states of Central Asia concentrate exclusively on their own interests in the distribution of water.

It was established in the research process of the international relations of the states of the Central Asian region in this issue:

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were forced to bear the brunt of maintaining their hydro-projects independently, whereas Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan declared their unwillingness to finance them, but insisted on the preservation of the old system of water distribution.

In this connection tension arose between these countries in the following direction:

1. Along the Syrdarya River (Toktogul reservoir of Kyrgyzstan; limited energy resources).
2. Along the Amudarya River (similar difficulties with energy in Tajikistan, the Rogun hydropower plant).

The causes of this situation:

1. Absence of consensus between the states of the upper and lower reaches.
2. Disunity between water management structures.
3. Recommendatory (advisory) character of regional structures of water management.
4. Absence of real intergovernmental institutions of the integrated management of water resources.
5. Absence of objective sides coming out in the role of mediator in negotiations on water problems.

In studying different approaches to solution of the problems of water shortage in Central Asia the following ones have been singled out:

1. International support (in the person of the World Bank 1945, the UN, Asian Development Bank 1966, European Development Bank 2006).
2. Transfer of institutional experience (Berlin water initiative in 2008).
3. Proposals and help of the World Bank.
4. Transfer of part of the runoff of Siberian rivers to Central Asia (major water-economy reorganization of a vast territory, which entails colossal expenditures with unknown effectiveness).
5. Concept of the Institute of Water-resource Management (process of coordinated management and development of water

resources worked out by the International Coordination water-economy commission).

Russia's presence in this context is based, above all, on the interests of the preservation of stability in the region, because water is a potential threat of conflicts which can have a negative impact on our southern borders.

Thus, on the basis of the above material we can formulate the following recommendations, which can be taken into account in working out and implementing a policy by bodies of state power in the Russian Federation.

The following theoretical recommendations can be offered:

To formulate a concrete position on the Central Asian region (especially in the sphere of using water) and seal it in the basic official documents;

To take part in negotiations on disputed questions connected with water resources in the role of mediator;

To complete the building project of the Vakhsh cascade of hydropower plants in Tajikistan on the Amudarya River and the Naryn hydropower plant in Kyrgyzstan;

To render assistance in technical service and restoration of projects for irrigation of sown areas;

To control the state of water resources (by monitoring from outer space);

To render assistance in hydro-geological prospecting for underground waters.

To realize that in the future it will be necessary to improve the mechanism of interstate negotiations on the protection of the environment and water resources of Central Asia.

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