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GLOBALIZATION AND GEOPOLITICS

GLOBAL FORECASTS AND DEVELOPMENT REALITIES OF THE WORLD-SYSTEM OF GLOBALISM

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ABSTRACT

In the 21st century, which is becoming an era of radical change in the human environment, globalization is shaping the development vector of every country in the world.

Today, long-term forecasts of global development for the next 25 and 50 years rely on strictly imperative norms; the "break-through into the future" scenarios should proceed from the actual unity of the world and take into account the transition-transformation nature of its development.

Global transformation has no end; the social and economic convergence of countries with different levels and characteristics of development is a new phenomenon that calls for in-depth political and economic study. The expert community has already concluded that recurring crises of overproduction will alternate with non-cyclical crises of overconsumption of resources, while the accompanying new technologies of social production and economic relations will become even more dynamic.

KEYWORDS: *globalization, world-system of economic globalism, global neo-convergence of the developed and developing socioeconomic systems, global forecasting, global neo-industrialization.*

Introduction

Today, for the first time in human history, the fate of all states and all peoples, great and small, is determined by the world's global development: "One cannot live in a global society and be free from it." All long-term forecasts, strategies, and development programs of individual countries aimed at the next 50 years should take into account that the peoples of the world, sharing a common destiny, must survive and develop together.

This is especially true of the 21st century, which has already demonstrated a trend toward global transformations. Many countries, the United States, China, Japan, Russia, and India, have already busied themselves with global forecasts. The time has come to set up an International Institute of Global Forecasting and corresponding national centers as part of the U.N. structure.

The third report *Mapping the Global Future* published under the National Intelligence Council's 2020 Project in December 2004¹ and the fourth (latest) report *Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World*, published under the National Intelligence Council in November 2008, at the height of the world economic crisis,² offered forecasts of possible developments.

The time has come to assess them in the context of current reality. The authors and commentators agree that the future will catch unawares those who limit themselves to dissecting the past: "Discussions of the past are an intellectual anesthesia, a mirage which detracts from intellectual efforts needed to grasp the meaning of much more important processes directly related to the future."³

Linear extrapolations of the present into the future are equally useless. Prof. Robert L. Hutchings of the United States wrote in the Introduction that today the world needs a "leap of imagination" more than at any time in the past and stressed that "opening our minds" becomes an imperative.⁴

In their forecasts of global trends until the year 2025, the Americans proceed from uniformity and homogeneity of the developing world, an approach that supplied the authors with an objective picture of the current changes. It became clear that the world was developing through transformations and accumulation of changes, which made it ready for another leap. From this it followed that all countries living amid global changes go, in fact, through the process of transformation. The developed countries, the group that comprises the key geostrategic actors (the globalizer countries), and the rest of the globalizing world, are all transition countries.

At each stage of human history there are objective global trends, the identification of which is an important element of geostrategic thinking.⁵ The globalization and other factors that came to the

¹ See: *Mapping the Global Future*, Report of the National Intelligence Council's 2020 Project, available at [http://globaltrends2030.files.wordpress.com/2012/08/global-trends_mapping-the-global-future-2020-project.pdf].

² See: *Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World*, Report by the National Intelligence Council, Washington, 2009, available at [<http://www.aicpa.org/research/cpahorizons2025/globalforces/downloadabledocuments/globaltrends.pdf>].

³ A.I. Utkin, V.G. Fedotova, *Budushchee glazami natsionalnogo soveta po razvedke SShA: globalnye tendentsii do 2025 goda*, INES-MAIB, Moscow, 2009, p. 6.

⁴ *Mapping the Global Future*.

⁵ See: Z. Brzezinski, *Strategic Vision: America and the Crisis of Global Power*, Basic Books, New York, 2012, p. 1.

fore in the post-Cold War period have not yet fully manifested themselves. They became accelerated when the Soviet Union fell apart, when globalization of Asia and Eurasia became more obvious and the trans-Atlantic relations assumed different forms.

The globalization and corporate integration underway in the world economy will exert even stronger influence.

According to the authors of the 2004 report: “The very magnitude and speed of change resulting from a globalizing world—apart from its precise character—will be a defining feature of the world out to 2020.”⁶ One can hardly agree with the authors, however, that the world “has already been transformed.”

Reconnoitering the Future

It seems that global transformations, irrespective of the scope, speed, and depth of the changes they cause, are practically endless. On the other hand, global economic transformations and social and economic convergence of systems and countries of different development levels are less vague.

The authors of the *Global Trends 2025* report have rightly concluded that integration and economic and social convergence of the West and the East and of Europe and the Euroatlantic community with Asia and Eurasia have accelerated. It has become clear that social and economic convergence will spread far and wide to become a global phenomenon into which Africa and Latin America (Brazil and Mexico) will be also drawn.

There is every reason to forecast that the information system and the Internet will also become globalized. This will invigorate global monopolist competition and force the countries drawn into it to double their strategic efforts. Security and prosperity, two main goals of all countries, will not allow them to remain isolated from the dynamics of global development.

The future of the United States, China, India, and Russia, as seen by the authors of the *Global Trends 2025*, is open to discussion. It is impossible, for example, to agree with authors who say that Russia will choose a version of state capitalism rather than follow the Western liberal development model. Today, nearly 93% of public property in Russia has been privatized, while the corporate-oligarchic system has seized state power and remains in control. A country whose GDP has shrunk to 1.6 to 2% of GWP will not survive another transformation. Russia’s continued weakening will give some of the Eurasian countries the opportunity to launch their penetration strategies.

The authors’ conclusion that in the next 12 to 15 years America will lose its world domination looks doubtful, to say the least. One tends to agree with Zbigniew Brzezinski, an outstanding geo-strategist of our time, who predicted in his *The Choice: Global Domination or Global Leadership* that the era of American domination will be transformed into an era of global domination and, later, into an era of “global leadership.” Its huge resources and its huge potential will allow the U.S. to remain a driving force behind the global processes, even if modification of the “American” geo-economic world zones cannot be excluded.

Washington will not come forward with a new Marshall Plan for Russia and the other transition countries of Eastern Europe. Nor it is likely that the U.S. and Western Europe will overcome their fairly sharp disagreements; the contradictions among the United States, Russia, and China will become more aggravated. Put in a nutshell this will be “the partner-adversary of my partner-adversary is my partner” situation.

⁶ *Mapping the Global Future*.

This makes competitive socialization and environmentalization of global development led by the United States inevitable. China, India, Russia, and Brazil will remain developing countries with a very low per capita GDP and per capita production and consumption. The United States, on the other hand, will never overcome the punishing momentum of super-consumption of all types of resources—material, financial, etc.

In the foreseeable future, China, which is rapidly developing anyway, will add dynamics to its economic expansion to move from its “world factory” to “world investor” status. China has already accumulated over \$2 trillion of currency holdings to be used as an instrument of global expansion. Its pressure on the “global front” will depend on the scope of its domestic markets and domestic consumption. To be successful, China needs large national corporations relying on the state for support.

The above suggests that, in the future, the typically Chinese socially-oriented capitalism will become globalized.

Until the end of the first quarter of the 21st century, India, which by that time will be a global giant, will continue to suffer from two ills: massive poverty and wide social gaps. It will insist on socialization of development on the basis of the state capitalism strategy it has been following for many years now.

India and China will have to bridle demographic growth and provide enough food for everyone.

The social orders of these two countries, as well as of the Arab states, will most likely compete on the global foodstuffs markets (grain markets in particular) for the simple reason that grain can be stored for indefinitely long periods of time, which means that “he who owns the bread, commands the world.”

The intensively globalizing world economies will have an increasing demand for American global leadership, which is seen as assurance against recurring crises and a promising way to level out financial and economic imbalances and promote convergence of different development models. America, however, will grow more and more tired of this burden.

This means that new global leaders will move or be pushed to the fore and that very soon the U.S. will lose the status of sole world leader. Global oligopolies will appear at a faster pace, while world leadership will remain the main item on the global development agenda.

In the next twenty to twenty-five years, China, with its highly efficient social and economic system and mounting military might, stands a good chance of becoming the most influential country in the multipolar world.

In the foreseeable future, Greater China and India will remain countries with a high level of poverty and low per capita GDP.

The authors of *Global Trends 2025* concluded that “the global shift in relative wealth and economic power is now under way—roughly from West to East.”

Forecasting a New Global World Architecture

Global socialization of development has produced another important and expected effect: unprecedented growth of the size of the middle class: by 2025, it will be 1.2 billion strong (16% of the world's population).

We should never forget, however, that the gap between the rich and the poor is widening; this is especially obvious in India, China, the U.S., Latin America, and North Africa.

The authors of *Global Trends 2025* warn that globalization and integration will continue spreading at a faster pace toward the East and the South. As the main mega-trend of development, globalization will envelop the entire non-Western world.

It is expected that globalization (global integration) and neo-convergence will positively affect economic growth, development, and the living standards of many countries. On the other hand, globalization will produce grave economic and political crises and shocks.

The processes, both negative and positive, generated by globalization will be irreversible and affect world development. In our age of information and high technology, a global war may be the only way to stop these trends. The countries badly hit by globalization will respond with unprecedentedly active anti-globalist movements.

The American experts sound overly optimistic. The authors of *Mapping the Global Future* have written that “the world economy is likely to continue growing impressively: by 2020, it is projected to be about 80 percent larger than it was in 2000, and average per capita income will be roughly 50 percent higher. Of course, there will be cyclical ups and downs and periodic financial or other crises, but this basic growth trajectory has powerful momentum behind it.” The American experts (and their Russian colleagues for that matter) are probably duped by the fairly worn-out slogan “a rising tide lifts all boats.”

It seems that in the period ending in 2025, cyclical crises of overproduction will be replaced by non-cyclical crises of overconsumption of resources which, in the final analysis, will cause a general systemic crisis of the emerging world-system of globalism.

The authors of *Mapping the Future* forecasted that the “rising powers [China, Japan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brazil, Mexico, etc.] will see exploiting the opportunities afforded by the emerging global marketplace as the best way to assert their great power status on the world stage.” This will add vigor to economic and political rivalry between the traditional and new leaders.

Caught in these opposing trends, “Eurasian” Russia will try again and again to spread its control and influence in the super-region of the former Soviet Union by imposing all sorts of integration projects and using all sorts of instruments of economic and political pressure. Moscow might try to interfere with European integration of some of the Soviet-successor states, Ukraine, a country with rich natural and economic resources, an extensive transportation and communication infrastructure, and the vast potential of a skilled workforce, being one of the examples.

In the period until 2025, we can expect that the role of high “global” technology and the newly emerging social-technological production method in economic growth and higher competitiveness will increase.

In view of the already obvious trends, we can say that the level of competitiveness of individual countries will be determined by their investments in global integration and technological innovations.

Countries that create and use the latest high technology will acquire obvious long-term competitive advantages, while those that remain tied to traditional technology will be doomed to degradation.

Russia and Ukraine, two industrial giants of the past that have become de-industrialized in the last 25 years, are slipping toward degradation.

In the near future, the success of any country will depend on its ability to create its own investments and use them to promote breakthrough high technology in order to progress by enlarging investment reproduction.

The main role in mobilization strategy belongs to the state, which should manage technological and economic development and stimulate internal integration among the state, science, and the business community.

This is especially true of transition countries such as Russia and Ukraine, which have considerable production and scientific potential, but lack the state-corporate system indispensable for their technological and economic competitiveness.

Instead of modernizing their social, economic, and production infrastructure, these countries have acquired an oligarchic system, the sole purpose of which is to grow rich on exploiting the obsolete economic and industrial complex.

Japan, China, India, South Korea, Malaysia, and Indonesia, on the other hand, are actively developing state-corporate entrepreneurship based on technological breakthroughs and large investments. They are catching up with, or have even outstripped, America and Europe in terms of basic production and technological indices.

The above suggests that at some time in the future the world will be plunged into fierce rivalry over investments and financial resources. As the world leader, the United States will go on attracting new loans with even more energy; this will increase the global financial imbalance and the burden of America's sovereign debt. It might easily exceed the \$20-25 trillion level; dollar emission will unfold together with the level of "dollarization" of the economies of other countries.

Amid the chronic systemic global crisis, the dynamically developing economies of China, India, Japan, and others will find it hard to oppose the growing world financial imbalance. Until 2025, neither the euro nor the yuan will become alternative, or at least parallel, world currencies; they stand a good chance, however, of enlarging the sphere of their influence.

All big countries and integration alliances will be seeking tighter control over markets and resources; this is fraught with dangers for national and global economic democracy, socialization of development, and freedom of business activity.

"Dollarization" of national economies will become irreversible; the liberal development model tested for viability and strengthened by the powerful new globalization processes will survive and remain dominant.

Asian globalism (the developing sub-system of the macro-system of globalism) is moving to the fore; it is steadily growing more and more mobile and more and more concentrated; investments in science and high technology are growing at a fast pace against the background of self-restricted consumption of the regional leaders, China and India in particular.

The Asian giants, which have formed a capacious market by Asian standards, can compete with Europe and the United States. It seems that we are seeing the dawn of a new era that has challenged the "golden billion" through greater involvement of the Asian workforce in the global economy. This means that in the foreseeable future the general makeup of globalization and its development vectors might change.

These forecasts give rise to the entirely legitimate question of whether convergence and non-conflict development of the Euro-Atlantic and Asian trends of world globalization is possible?

Financial and technological sub-systems make American globalism strong; Asian globalism is strong due to its mobility and self-restriction. American globalism seeks total Westernization of global development, which should be described as its weakness.

A compromise between the Euro-Atlantic and Asian trends requires a rational correlation between globalization and Westernization; it is necessary to identify the main trends of the modernization strategies of Asia and Latin America.

Most of the expert community has agreed that globalization (including Asian globalization) is an equivalent of global modernization and neo-industrialization, which can develop without becoming totally Westernized.

As Kenichi Ohmae put it, Asian globalization, as part of worldwide globalization, obeyed the laws of global competitive market.⁷

⁷ See: K. Ohmae, *The Borderless World: Power and Strategy in the Interlinked Economy*, Harper Business, New York, 1990, 223 pp.

He has concluded that the state is irrelevant in terms of its economic role: "The unfettered movement of [industry, information technology, and individual consumers] makes the middleman role of nation-states obsolete;" this is not confirmed by practice and by the core interests of the absolute majority of nations.⁸

The nation-states will undoubtedly preserve their core role in the near future (until 2025) and in the more distant future. We should differentiate between the two meanings of the denationalization concept: it is either associated with setting up transnational and global corporations and their networks or with decline of the state. This may create a false impression that global corporations and their alliances would prefer the latter alternative.

Those who support the idea of so-called hyper-globalism suggest that nation-states should be replaced with "regional governments." They are convinced that the right to make strategic decisions should belong to transnational companies and regional governments.⁹ They call on the world to set up a new world structure in disregard of national borders, that is, a world-system of globalism.

It seems that the mega-system is being built by the globalizer countries and the 75 thousand-strong army of international corporations. The final touches will be added at the turn of the 22nd century, a time of systemic global crises and conflicts. Today, and until 2025, the world-system of globalism remains a "national American project"¹⁰ launched by the United States to "entrap" the global economy for its corporations.

Today, the ideology of globalization is no longer rooted in the principles and regularities of organic (natural) global integration and modernization, but in the principles of globalist fundamentalism, one of the faces of totalitarianism. This explains the use of force (enforced globalization) which inevitably stirs up the resistance of many countries and many political forces; as time goes on, the process will gain momentum.

In theory, globalization, which leads to technological modernization and whips up competition, is conducive to greater labor productivity. In fact, global monopolies spread their control far and wide over the markets, which widens the gaps in labor productivity and efficiency (competitiveness) of production of the developed and transition states and, therefore, in the comparative development dynamics. The transition states are steadily falling behind.

Neither Russia, nor the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Ukraine being one of them) managed to fully integrate into the global markets because of the low competitiveness of their economies and the mounting deficit of investments.

The globalizer countries are engaged in successful super-concentration of investments in the developed northern countries. Eighty-one percent of global investments go to the United States, the U.K., Germany and Canada, which is explained by their strong state policy. A steady and growing concentration of global capital is obvious in the OECD countries.¹¹

It is obvious to everyone that other countries are deliberately and resolutely kept away from the global markets and globalization and integration. "Globalization for the globalizers" will go on, at least in the first half of the 21st century, until the key globalizers decide that outsider countries rich in resources can also be useful. Very much as before, Russia and Ukraine will linger at the bottom of the list of candidates for competitive integration into the global markets because their raw materials (hydrocarbons and minerals) and semi-finished products (grain, pipes, and rolled stock) do not meet the standards of the monopolized global markets. Gazprom of Russia completely depends on its European partners and is, therefore, extremely vulnerable.

⁸ See: K. Ohmae, *The End of the National State*, The Free Press, New York, 1995, p. 5.

⁹ See: L. Kaplan, "Meanwhile on the Left..." *The National Interest*, Spring 2000, pp. 146-158.

¹⁰ J. Gray, *The False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism*, The New Press, New York, 2007, p. 6.

¹¹ See: L. Weiss, *The Myth of the Powerless State. Governing the Economy in a Global Era*, Cambridge, 1999, p. 186.

Widespread corruption and the inability to promptly adjust to the harsh competitive conditions in the global markets push the economies of most transition countries (Russia and Ukraine included) aside. The governments of Soviet-successor states cannot abandon the administrative command system of economic management, which guarantees the sale of low-quality products. They cannot create and implement adaptive dynamic globalization strategies and modernize their economies, nor are they able to coordinate and control the foreign economic operations of their national-global corporations on a high-tech basis.

On the other hand, the governments of transition states have no power over global TNCs and international banks operating in their territories; this intensifies national capital outflow and undermines the Russian and Ukrainian economies.

The transition and developing countries attract global capital with super-profits; in the last 30 to 40 years, the United States and other globalizers (OECD members), attracted by the cheap workforce, guaranteed mass marketing, and super-profits, have been actively relocating their industries to China, Brazil, Mexico, India, and Indonesia.

Industrial outsourcing has done nothing for the economic and social systems of the developed countries; according to the expert community, by 2020, only 10% of the total population of the United States will be employed in industry. The domestic markets of the U.S. and other globalizer countries are becoming less and less open, which means that globalization might become one-sided, in short, "globalization is not for the globalizing countries."

In the United States, for example, 82% and 90% are employed in branches and services working solely for domestic consumption, respectively.¹²

The United States, European Union, and Japan, the major economic zones, export no more than 12% of GDP.

There is an obvious trend toward setting up a global economic system on the basis of transnational corporations to function side-by-side with the national economies of the globalizer countries. On the one hand, it will protect the U.S., EU, and Japan from excessive openness and competition and, on the other, will allow them to implement the strategy of globalization management formulated by President Clinton in his time. We all know what will come of this.

In the first half of the 21st century, confrontation among the countries of North America, Europe, and Southeast Asia and the imbalance of their economic statuses obvious in the 20th century will go on and acquire even sharper contours. Their governments are keeping the global markets under strict control. "Contrary to the expectations of some theorists, the information revolution has not greatly decentralized or equalized power among states. If anything, it has had the opposite effect."¹³

In Lieu of a Conclusion

The above suggests the following:

1. Globalization is a real, dominating, and irreversible process; in the 21st century, it will continue to grow and reach incredible worldwide social and economic dimensions. The most developed countries will continue this expansion; until 2025, globalization will be "enforced on the globalizing countries." The globalizer countries and TNCs will be tightening their monopoly on the markets, which will destroy the markets, economic systems, and governments of the developing and transition states.

¹² See: R.Z. Lawrence, "Workers and Economists: Resist the Binge," *Foreign Affairs*, No. 3-4, 1996.

¹³ R. Keohane, J. Nge, "Power and Interdependence in the Information Age," *Foreign Affairs*, No. 9-10, 1998, p. 89.

In their own markets and within their own economies, the globalizer countries will pursue a “restrained globalization” strategy, i.e. development and strengthening of domestic markets. The income received from the sale of goods and services in the international and global markets during the first half of the 21st century will not exceed 15% to 25% of their GDP and GNP, while concentration of real investment capitals in the club of the super-developed “global countries” of the North and “golden billion” will be 80% to 90%.

Some of the global countries (the U.S. included) will go on increasing their debts as a form of attracting money and exploitation of the “weak” countries and their national economies.

In these conditions, the globalizer countries will remain highly competitive; this, however, will aggravate the economic, social, and political confrontations between the super-developed and weakly developed (falling behind, developing, and transition) countries.

2. During the active phase of globalization, the latter half of the 20th-first half of the 21st century, the gap between the liberal theory, philosophy, ideology, and propaganda of globalization, on the one hand, and its real strategy and practice, on the other, became much wider. This will bring to light the huge difference between globalization as an objective process of global integration and enforced globalization as realized by global TNCs and globalizer countries in their financial interests.
3. In the 21st century, the super-developed powers and global TNCs will increase their pressure on the globalizing countries (they employ mechanisms of global rivalry and exploitation on which they have a monopoly). The struggle for oil, gas, foodstuffs, and drinking water will become exacerbated together with the policy of “globalization enforcement” carried out in the interests of TNCs.
4. Neither the developing nor the transition countries, nor countries with an average development level will be able change the course and scope of the process—they should take this opportunity to join the process.

Skepticism and catastrophic forecasts are useless and counterproductive; everything the theorists and left-wing theoreticians say about globalization as an erroneous project of the United States that will destroy national economies and international integration economic structures sounds like senseless incantations. Today, Asian and even Eurasian globalism is moving onto the world scene together with American globalism.

The contradictory unity and conflict of their economic interests are a no less important reality than the traditional Euro-Atlantic globalism. Today, total globalism is taking shape before our very eyes.

5. A new mode of production, absolutely adequate to the technological and information realities, is emerging. This means that in the first half of the 21st century, globalization processes will intensify, grow, and acquire new organizational, economic, social, and political forms. Today, a real mega-system is taking shape and developing into a universal world-system of globalism.

For objective reasons, the U.S. and the small group of rich countries allied with it will not be able to retain control over the globalization processes. The global and monopolized system is highly explosive to the extent that it may undermine the very powerful internationalization processes underway in the world. This means that the interests of globalizing developing and transition countries should be taken into account to a greater extent.

The laws of internationalization and globalization will gradually force the super-countries to open up their economies and markets and join the processes that lead to a new world-system of globalism. In an effort to remain at the head of globalization, they will internationalize their capital, investments, and technology.

6. Most of the transition countries of Eastern Europe (Russia and Ukraine among them) have missed the opportunity to achieve convergence (the Chinese model could have served as an example) of the market systems based on state and private-corporate property. They have “razed to the ground” their mobilization industrial and economic systems and failed to create contemporary market mechanisms. This has given rise to corruption-oligarchic systems of “wild” capitalism of the period of primary accumulation of capital.

Having missed the first stage of reverse transformation, the people living in the transition post-Soviet countries and their elites should keep their governments under strict control to avoid degradation and pauperization which, otherwise, will be their fate.

Their main strategic task is domestic markets and competitive economic, production, and technological systems and institutions geared toward effective regional and global integration.

Complete openness of the national markets is a great mistake: they are flooded with imported and frequently counterfeit goods. This undermines domestic production and, therefore, should be discontinued. The transition countries should urgently formulate adaptive strategies of stage-by-stage inclusion into global integration based on raising their economic competitiveness, stimulating domestic production, and enlarging their domestic markets. This is their historically conditioned social and economic imperative.

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP IN THE GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT OF POST-SOVIET SPACE*

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ABSTRACT

The Eastern Partnership (EP) program should be viewed as another attempt to reformat the post-Soviet space along anti-Russian and anti-Eurasian lines and a response to Moscow's integration activities. This is not the first attempt of its kind: the

West has already tried other geopolitical and geoeconomic tools. The final aim, however, has remained the same: Russia's domination and possible integration of post-Soviet regions irrespective of form, even economically adequate, should be prevented by all means.

* The article was written in the last days of February 2014.

KEYWORDS: *Eastern Partnership, European Union, Eurasian integration, CIS, Customs Union, geopolitics.*

Introduction

Throughout 2013, Europe was waiting for the third EU summit of Eastern Partnership. Its specter had been haunting Eastern Europe since January 2013, when it was announced that in November 2013 six post-Soviet republics—three in Europe (Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova) and three in Transcaucasia (Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan)—would announce what was expected to become their historic decisions.

The stormy events in Ukraine, which began a week before the Vilnius Summit, went on until the end of 2013, and resumed early in 2014, left the summit no chance, but the Eastern Partnership program survived.

It was formulated by the Polish Foreign Ministry in cooperation with Sweden in 2008 when the Kaczynski brothers, confirmed anti-Russian politicians who called the tune in Poland, declared that their country would become a link between Europe and the post-Soviet countries. The program “offers a framework for deepening and strengthening relations between the EU and its partner countries, for speeding up their political association, economic integration.” Russia, which interpreted this as a confrontational formula, objected by saying that Poland was trying to spread the EU influence into the CIS (read: Russian) responsibility zone; what followed looked very much like a tug-of-war.

In fact, the program was yet another attempt to reformat the post-Soviet space along anti-Russian and anti-Eurasian lines largely prompted by President Putin’s persistent and determined efforts to speed up integration that had become obvious in the mid-2000s.

The EP was not the first program of its type—it was predated by all sorts of geopolitical and geo-economic projects—TRACECA, GU(U)AM, the New Silk Road, Greater Central Asia, the Black Sea-Caspian Region, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, the Nabucco gas pipeline, etc. All of them were devised, launched, and some of them implemented to reformat the post-Soviet space to prevent Russia’s domination and unification of at least some of the formerly Soviet regions in any form, even if economically acceptable.

Eastern Partnership looked more tempting than its predecessors: the European Union posed as the most successful integration project; as distinct from the United States and NATO, it never pushed forward its geopolitical ambitions. Potential partners were invited to engage in economic integration with Europe, all the more logical because many of the post-Soviet states identified themselves as European.

They joined the project in anticipation of an association agreement with the EU, which presupposed profound and comprehensive free trade. As distinct from other free trade agreements, the European Union invited its future partners to adopt a considerable part of so-called *acquis communautaires* (laws, rules, and norms of the European Union), which meant integration into the economic and legal space of the EU and weaker trade contacts with other partners, of which Russia was one.¹

In the summer of 2013, the political struggle caused by the approaching summit scheduled for November was growing more and more vehement. Ukraine was confronted by a far-from-easy and

¹ See: S. Charap, M. Troitskiy, “Russia, the West and the Integration Dilemma,” *Survival. Global Politics and Strategy*, No. 6, 2013, pp. 7-28.

far-from-pleasant choice between an association agreement with the EU and the Customs Union. The first presupposed a free trade area with the EU, which excluded Ukraine from the free trade area of the Customs Union and Common Economic Space (CES). Kiev had been shuffling the Eurasian and European cards for several months before Moscow demonstrated that it meant business (special mention should be made of the positions of two other capitals, Astana and Minsk).

Less than a week before the Vilnius Summit, Ukraine refused to sign the already initialed association agreement, leaving the European political community baffled. The explanations that followed were incoherent and fairly contradictory: at first Kiev complained about the unacceptable conditions of the proposed agreement and then shifted the blame onto Russia and its pressure.

Eyewitnesses say that the passions that flew high in Vilnius brought to mind the Bucharest NATO Summit of April 2008 when Ukraine and Georgia expected to be offered the NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP). To prevent this, President Putin went to Bucharest to persuade the Western leaders to avoid radical steps. Moscow managed to win some time. It is interesting to note that at that time some Ukrainian political scientists were very critical of the obviously pro-Western course of the Ukrainian regime.²

Four months later, the Russian-Georgian war buried (probably forever) Georgia's hopes of joining NATO. Two years later, Russia and Ukraine signed the so-called Kharkov agreements. It stands to reason that Moscow regards the free trade area being offered its neighbors as a threat to its own economic security (this is especially true of Ukraine, a close trade partner of the Russian Federation) no matter what the EU's real intentions are.

Even though the EP program has no military dimensions, Moscow and Brussels became locked in a struggle for geopolitical influence on the above-mentioned six Soviet-successor states.

In the latter half of 2013, when it became clear that Kiev was serious about its intention to sign the agreement and join the free trade area, their rivalry reached its highest point. Russia got down to business: it used time-tested (bans on certain Ukrainian products exported to Russia) and newly invented methods (comprehensive ban on Ukrainian export to the Russian Federation); nor did it forget about gas.

Ukraine: Between the West and the East

Geographically, economically, and geopolitically, Ukraine is the No. 1 player in Eastern Europe. In the early half of the 1990s, it preferred a multivectoral foreign policy; in the latter half of the same decade, it steered toward integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures.

Russia is insisting on closer and stronger ties with Ukraine for several reasons.

- First, its geostrategic consequence cannot be underestimated: allied with Ukraine, Russia becomes a Black Sea power with an outlet to the Balkans and much stronger positions in Central and Southeast Europe, the Black Sea Basin, and the Mediterranean.
- Second, Ukraine is home to millions of ethnic Russians whom Russia is not going to leave to the mercy of fate.
- Third, Russia moves its gas to Europe across Ukraine.

² See: V.N. Smirnov, "Ukraina v svete sovremennykh vyzovov globalizatsii," *Novaia i noveysyaia istoria*, No. 4, 2008, pp. 26-40.

Ukraine comes second after Russia as the most important state among the former Soviet republics. American scholar Samuel Huntington pointed to Ukraine's special geopolitical location on the "civilizational fault line."³

Everyone agrees that Ukraine was and remains critically important for CIS geopolitics. Here is what Zbigniew Brzezinski, a well-known American expert in geopolitics, said in his famous *The Grand Chessboard*: "Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire."⁴ This explains the vehemence with which all the post-Soviet republics have responded to the political crises in Ukraine fraught with a changed development vector.

Early in the 21st century, Russia and the West were locked in bitter geopolitical rivalry for control over Ukraine; the presidential elections of 2004 ended with the drama of the first Maidan and the Orange Revolution. Victor Yushchenko, a pro-Western politician who wanted to see Ukraine in the orbit of NATO and the EU, became president. The Russian expert community, on the whole, agrees that the choice between Russia and the Western zone of influence has been gaining ever-increasing political weight in Kiev.⁵

The West, on the whole, wants to see Ukraine in its sphere of influence for several reasons: it is a tool to be used to contain Russia's geopolitical ambitions. The West expects that, after detaching Ukraine from Russia and including it in its orbit, it will prevent a neo-Russian empire in the post-Soviet space. Washington wants to use "post-Kuchma" Ukraine to neutralize Russia's political and military-political impact in the CIS.

The European Union wants to see Ukraine in its sphere of influence; Brussels keeps Ukraine at arm's length in full accordance with the strategy the West European countries imposed on the EU. This presupposes that Ukraine's desire to join the WTO should be encouraged; the visa regime should be simplified; and duty-free trade should be accepted. Nothing is said, however, about its future EU membership. Brussels wants a zone of economic and political stability based on common (European) values to be spread across the EU and its immediate neighbors.

Gas supplies are one of the major concerns of the European Union: it receives gas from Russia via Ukraine, which means that Brussels does not want a conflict with Russia over Ukraine—energy security comes first.

Since 2004-2005, the relations between Russia and Ukraine have been going from bad to worse. Ukraine is doing everything to prevent Russia from building its influence in the CIS. Yushchenko, as a radically pro-Western politician, clearly wanted to detach Ukraine from Russia to join NATO and the EU. Early in 2008, the Ukrainian leaders tried, in vain, to speed up the process with the help of the United States, Poland, and the Baltic countries.

The main Western integration structures (the EU and NATO in particular) saw the initial conditions indispensable for Ukraine's full-scale integration as their strategy course, while trying at the same time to contain Russia and keep it at a distance. In the final analysis, much was done to reorientate the people and elites toward Western axiological values, social norms, and integration. Amid the financial crisis, Ukraine hoped that the Western financial institutions would come to its rescue to help stabilize the national currency and economy.

We all know what happened after the Vilnius Summit; a week before the summit the Ukrainian opposition poured into Maidan (the square in the center of Kiev.—*Ed.*) to protest against what was

³ S. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, A Touchstone Book, New York, 1997, p. 37; *Na fone "oranzhevoi revoliutsii": Ukraina mezhdru Vostokom i Zapadom: vchera, segodnia, zavtra*, ed. by K.F. Zatulin, The Institute of CIS Countries, Moscow, 2005, 240 pp.

⁴ Zb. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Basic Books, New York, 1997, p. 46.

⁵ See: N. Rabotiazhev, "Ukraina mezhdru Rossiei i Zapadom: opyt geopoliticheskogo analiza," *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia*, No. 9, 2008, pp. 75-83.

presented to the nation as a rejection of “European choice.” A full-scale political crisis or, rather the 2004 Orange Revolution reincarnated, erupted as soon as Yanukovich returned from Vilnius. The struggle for power became obvious and vehement.

Had Ukraine signed the association agreement and joined the free trade area (which was part of the proposed arrangement), this might have become the dividing line in the history of the post-Soviet space, although no instant economic or constitutional changes would have followed. People in Ukraine would have discovered that life had not improved or that it had become much worse.

The association agreement gave Ukraine the opportunity to change its orbit (in full accordance with the zero sum game logic). Russia and the West have returned to it, which means that a different outcome of the summit would have been interpreted as Moscow’s crushing strategic defeat.

Russia had to act and it acted. Throughout 2013 Ukraine was being informed, from all quarters, the Kremlin included, that if it joined the Customs Union it would gain at least \$6 to \$12 billion: Russian gas would cost three times less; there would be no export fees on oil products, while its foodstuff exports would enjoy a preferential regime. On top of this, after switching to the common customs tariff, Ukraine could have counted on compensations.

Moscow had either to return Ukraine to its geopolitical orbit or radically revise its relations with Brussels. It could have joined the EU system and integrated Ukraine into it as an equal partner. It seems that on the way to Vilnius Yanukovich, at heart, expected the latter. In Vilnius he learned that Europe would never accept this scenario.

Kiev hoped to remain in two free trade areas, of the EU and the CIS, nothing new for the rest of the world, but not for the post-Soviet space. It seems that Ukraine tried to capitalize on its special status to set up a tripartite regulating mechanism, which potentially could have served as a platform of discussion of a free trade area from Lisbon to Vladivostok.

The events went in a different direction. Moscow increased its pressure on Kiev; it warned it that if and when Ukraine joined the EU free trade area Moscow would start revising the CIS free trade conditions for Kiev. Brussels, in turn, refused to talk to Moscow in the tripartite format.

Moscow was guided by the following considerations: if the tripartite talks were limited to discussions of the free trade area, the Russian leaders would prefer to stay away. If Moscow had the opportunity to formulate a wider agenda, this format would move the bilateral Russia-EU relations out of stagnation.

It could not be excluded that failure of the dialog idea and fiercer protectionism would force Ukraine to leave the CIS free trade area and would probably bury the CIS.

The process was launched some ten years ago by a series of color revolutions; association agreements with the EU tempted several CIS countries and forced Russia to insist on “either the CIS or the EU” with no other options.

At first, Yanukovich looked at the “defrosted” dialog with Brussels as a factor that consolidated his position in the no-nonsense haggling with Gazprom and Putin; later, Poland’s diplomatic game convinced him that he could place the stakes on an association agreement with the EU.

If Ukraine joined the European economic and political sphere, it would produce a great effect at a minimum cost for European taxpayers. The fairly capacious Ukrainian market might have helped the export-oriented European economy (German in particular) recover from the crisis. As an associated member, Kiev could not count on subsidies, a privilege limited to full EU members.

Yanukovich and the Ukrainian political elite needed association for psychological reasons; national interests were pushed aside and forgotten. The Ukrainians wanted to “become Europeans” in their own eyes, a status impossible within the Eurasian Customs Union of Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. The presidential team and the Ukrainian political elite were nurturing illusions and succumbed to an obviously inadequate idealistic idea about the European Union and its intentions regarding Kiev.

It seems that the president and his advisors saw through the “rules of the game” formulated in Warsaw, Berlin, and Brussels at the eleventh hour; this left them no time for diplomatic niceties. To

escape from the trap, the president had to announce his decision a week before the summit and in an undiplomatic manner.

In Vilnius, the Ukrainian president tried to beat a retreat to soften the blow: he promised to sign the agreement in March 2014, but the negative scenario was already underway; the EU hinted that it was not ready to start tripartite talks.

The opposition called its supporters to Maidan; Victor Yanukovich not only failed to solve some of the problems in Vilnius, he swept them under the carpet and created new headaches.

The EurAsEC and the Customs Union were two important steps on the road toward closer economic integration into the post-Soviet space; without Ukraine this process becomes lightweight and shallow. Economic rivalry across the post-Soviet space might become exacerbated, while the positions of Ukraine and Russia in the rapidly unfolding geopolitical battle for the resources of Northern Eurasia will be weakened. From this it follows that the choice of trends and forms of integration of Ukraine with Russia and the EU has become critically important for the future of Europe and Northern Eurasia.⁶

We should bear in mind that in the near future domestic policy will not allow Ukraine to join the Customs Union.

There are three possible scenarios of future integration processes in Ukraine.

- First, it might speed up its EU and NATO membership at the cost of worsened relations with Russia.
- Second, it might remain devoted to its “bi-vectored” integration with the EU and Russia: it will be closely associated with the EU (and remain outside NATO) while remaining economically dependent on Russia.
- Third, the split elites and the split nation will not allow Ukraine to become fully integrated either into the EU or into the EurAsEC: it will remain a “geopolitical space” between the EU and the EurAsEC.

By the late 2000s a new player, China, had arrived in the region. Andrew Wilson has put its role in a nutshell: “China’s new role in Eastern Europe gives Ukraine more wriggle room, as does a weak and introspective EU, a distracted U.S. and a more mercantilist Russia.”⁷

Some think that “there have been certain signs of an emerging new political and ideological phenomenon, which could be called ‘East Ukrainian Europeanism.’ In contrast to Ukrainian ethnic nationalism, of which Western Ukraine is the stronghold, East Ukrainian Europeanism wants to create a political nation that unites all citizens irrespective of language, religion, or ethnic affiliation on the platform of sovereignty and with the strategic goal of Ukrainian admission to the EU in combination with exclusive relations with Russia.”⁸

Belarus: Driven into an Impasse

In Vilnius, Belarus surprised no one: its relations with the EU and the West have a long and far from simple history.

⁶ See: V. Pantin, V. Lapkin, “Vnutri- i vneshnepoliticheskie faktory integratsii Ukrainy s Rossiei i ES,” *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnoshenia*, No. 11, 2012, pp. 50-56.

⁷ A. Wilson, “Between Adolescence and Adulthood. Ukraine at Twenty: What Have We Learnt?” *Russia in Global Affairs*, No. 1, 2012.

⁸ D. Yefremenko, “Life after Vilnius. A New Geopolitical Configuration for Ukraine,” *Russia in Global Affairs*, No. 4, 2013.

An attentive observer of Belarusian foreign policy will conclude that its unilateral devotion to Russia is skin deep: from time to time Minsk, Moscow's closest ally, demonstrates that it can balance out its foreign policies.

Belarus is of critical importance for Russia's defenses, security of the CSTO members, efficient anti-missile and air defenses, and the military-political stability of the CIS countries in general. As the direct neighbor of NATO, it is the westernmost outpost of the CIS. Its military-industrial complex remains the most important component of the CSTO's military-technical might.⁹ Its advantageous geographic location has made it a transportation and logistics hub of the EurAsEC and the Customs Union and the "gates" to the EU. The pipelines that cross its territory bring hydrocarbons (Russian and Central Asian) to the EU; stronger integration within the Customs Union and the CES makes the republic's positions even stronger.¹⁰

The economic and political closeness of Belarus and Russia has been institutionalized: no other state in the world belongs to an equally large number of alliances with Russia's participation: the Union State, EurAsEC, CIS, Customs Union, Common Economic Space, and, in future, Eurasian Union. In the last decade, the ideas of stronger integration (up to and accepting the Russian ruble as common currency or even forming one state) lost their former popularity, although they remain on the bilateral agenda.

The two countries have a similar set of features peculiar to them both and to no other post-Soviet state. On 1 January, 2012, Belarus joined the CES EurAsEC and thus assumed responsibility to reform its economy within the emerging common market of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia. Its military strategic importance for Russia cannot be overestimated if we bear in mind the history of previous confrontation in Europe. Minsk is an active and consistent participant in military integration within the CSTO. Moscow and Minsk favor the coalition approach; in other words, this is a symbiosis of the armed forces of the two countries and an imitation of a single joined force. This cuts down military spending and optimizes the control and command system. The two countries have signed over 30 treaties in the military sphere.¹¹

Since 2001, Russia has poured about \$50 billion into Belarus in the form of preferences for fuel and raw material supplies, which speaks of long-term strategy. To a great extent, subsidies are related to the idea of a union between Russia and Belarus.

In an effort to remain politically independent of Moscow and preserve his country's sovereignty, Alexander Lukashenko acts "on the sly"; this may compensate for possible losses if Russia revises the economic element of the two countries' bilateral relations. In this event, Minsk should be ready to face another wave of economic and energy pressure.

For a long time, the Belarusian leadership remained convinced that the European Union was not seeking a regime change, but would be satisfied with its evolution through harmonizing positions and that partnership with Brussels would not cost Belarus its sovereignty. This explains why Minsk regularly tried to find a way out of the impasse in which Minsk found itself because of the EU and Western strategy designed to minimize its foreign policy contacts. The Belarusian political establishment has no choice but to resist the pressure of Brussels, Warsaw, and Vilnius; it is watching Ukraine and Moldova (which are also the participants of the Eastern Partnership program) drift

⁹ See: S. Astakhova, "Voenno-tekhnicheskoe sotrudnichestvo Rossii i Belorussii," *Rossia i novye gosudarstva Evrasii*, No. 3, 2009, pp. 61-69.

¹⁰ See: S. Astakhova, "K uchastiiu Belorussii v Tamozhennom Soiuze," *Rossia i novye gosudarstva Evrasii*, No. 1, 2010, pp. 64-71; idem, "Belorussia v poiskakh novykh ekonomicheskikh partnerov," *Rossia i novye gosudarstva Evrasii*, No. 2, 2010, pp. 73-79.

¹¹ See: E. Tsedilina, "Rossiysko-belorusskie otnosheniya i interesy bezopasnosti RF," *Rossia i novye gosudarstva Evrasii*, No. 3, 2009, pp. 18-35; S. Astakhova, "Voennoe sotrudnichestvo Belorussii i Rossii," *Rossia i novye gosudarstva Evrasii*, No. 3, 2013, pp. 50-57.

toward the EU while trying to arrive at a more acceptable form of international cooperation in the region.¹²

The main obstacles on the road to economic integration between Russia and Belarus are the different economic mechanisms, different models of market reforms, and the fact that these differences are too serious and the gaps too wide to be bridged any time soon. It seems that President Lukashenko will resist Moscow's efforts to "push" him into a real union state to the bitter end.

Close association with Russia sets Minsk apart from the other members of the EP program. The EU has introduced sanctions against Belarus to punish it for lack of democracy, even though on the eve of the Vilnius Summit the list was shortened and the term extended for another year. Throughout 2013, there were rumors that President Lukashenko might be invited; a miracle did not happen: Foreign Minister Vladimir Makey came to Vilnius to represent his country.

He carefully explained Minsk's official position, pointed out that in its present state the Eastern Partnership program stood no chance of being effectively implemented, and added that what had been done so far caused "mixed" feelings in his country. It is argued that the partners were pushed toward a "false choice" between the content and pace of modernization and the forms and modalities of cooperation and integration strategies. Minsk did not want new dividing lines in Europe.

In fact, the country is dissatisfied for several reasons.

- First, cooperation within the EP program was worsened by the far from good relations between Minsk and Brussels; this became especially obvious after the 2010 presidential election in Belarus. The EU returned to its methods of coercive diplomacy (limited contacts and sanctions against official persons, journalists, and private business). Seen from Minsk, this was an attempt to interfere in the country's internal affairs and demonstration of double standards.
- Second, Minsk was badly disappointed with the results: there was no promised macro-financial aid and support of infrastructural projects in the multilateral dimension. The European Commission did not respond to the projects devised by Belarus, Lithuania, and Ukraine; it insisted, instead, on its preliminary political conditions.
- Third, institutionally, Belarus did not become a full-fledged member of the Eastern Partnership program; it was and is discriminated against. It is kept away from the program's bilateral dimension, which means that the country is partly involved in the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). The country is excluded from the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly because its parliament has not been recognized as legitimate. As distinct from other countries, its president is not invited to the EP summits.

This explains the skepticism that reigned in Belarus on the eve of the Vilnius Summit: The political community would have been mollified if the president had been invited to the summit and the country as a whole asked to engage in more pragmatic cooperation. It would have also been happy if the EU dropped its habit of lecturing on the human rights issues.

Štefan Füle, Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy, dampened the hopes by saying that the European Union would be ready not only to consolidate bilateral relations, but also to start talking about revising the program and extending financial support to promote modernization as soon as Minsk released its political prisoners and rehabilitated them.

In March 2012, he initiated the European Dialog on Modernization of Belarus, which envisaged exchange of views and opinions between the EU and Belarusian civil society and political opposition

¹² See: *K Novoy Tsentralnoy Evrope. Preodolenie krizisa Tsentralnoy Evropy cherez stroitelstvo novogo makroregiona. Proekno-analiticheskiy doklad*, Project head Yu.Yu. Tsarik, Minsk, 2013, 23 pp.; M. Laumulin, "Belorusskaia politologia v poiskakh vykhoda iz geopoliticheskogo tupika," *Kazakhstan v globalnykh protsessakh*, No. 4, 2013, pp. 27-41.

on the needed reforms. It was expected that the sides would talk about political and judicial reforms, human contacts, economic policy, trade, and market relations.

It should be said that while moving toward Europe, Minsk will never sever its relations with Russia for the simple reason that it will never receive from the EU what it receives from Russia: multibillion subsidies in exchange for imitated integration and political declarations of eternal friendship. Against the background of the Kremlin's annual energy grant of nearly \$10 billion, the meager 600 million euros for six EP countries look like a mere pittance.

On the other hand, Minsk has never hesitated to use its relations with the EU as a trump card in its talks with Moscow and as a possible source of loans and investments. Today, the EU can do nothing to stimulate reforms in Belarus. In the absence of direct economic advantages, Minsk has every reason to dismiss the integration project as insignificant.

The Belarusian experts are very critical of the EP program and EU policy in general, which fails to stimulate changes in the EP partners. The program fell into the gap between the two main trends in EU policy: expansion and the so far vague foreign policy.

Brussels has failed to fulfill the conditions declared by the EP program, which strongly affected the entire atmosphere. In 2012, the EU revised its EP policy to introduce the "more for more" principle: more integration with the EU for more progress in reforms. The EU, however, remains politically inconsistent for certain geopolitical and economic reasons.

In other words, the European Union remains on the side of some countries even if they fail to fulfill their obligations, while others (Belarus being one of them), which Brussels finds less important in the context of its geopolitical and economic preferences, are left out in the cold. The fact that there are political prisoners in Belarus is used to introduce sanctions against officials and enterprises, although an identical situation in Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Russia does not limit contacts with their leaders.

There is the opinion in Minsk that the wide gap between the geopolitical rationality of European politicians and their sham democratic idealistic statements has undermined the authority of the EU as a global player (to say nothing about the EP program).

The Vilnius Summit could have allowed Minsk to restore political relations with Brussels, had the Belarusian leadership been inclined toward fine gestures, while Brussels demonstrated patience and offered attractive stimuli for cooperation. In real life, relations were driven into an impasse.

Armenia: Facing a Dilemma

Armenia established friendly or even allied relations with Russia; at the same time, it was determined to rely as much as possible on the United States and Europe to partly compensate for its orientation toward Russia in the security sphere. Erevan has already received weapons and military equipment from Russia, money to develop its economy comes from the United States, foodstuffs and humanitarian aid are provided by the European Union (until March 1993 it reached Armenia via Turkey), and fuel for its fighting army is supplied from Iran.

Its multivectoral (albeit fairly limited) policy, "complementarism" in Armenian political parlance, is one of the country's basic foreign policy principles. For many years it gave Armenia the opportunity to adequately respond to threats and challenges in a fairly narrow geopolitical corridor. For some time it was closely connected with the balance of power between the regional and non-regional actors that developed in the 1990s: its military-political alliance with Russia and multidimensional economic processes did not arouse any opposition from the other external actors even though Erevan maintained contacts with the United States, the EU, etc.

Armenian experts insist that Armenian complementarism is very different from the multivectoral policies of other Eurasian countries. Consistently implemented from the first days of Armenian independence, it proved to be more successful in Armenia than elsewhere; the presence of Armenian diasporas in Russia, the U.S., and European countries, as well as influential Armenian communities in Iran and elsewhere in the Middle East also helped.¹³

The European Union would like to see the Southern Caucasus in its sphere of economic, cultural, and political domination; it is Armenia's important partner, although Brussels has not made much progress to date in institutionalization, which leaves much to be desired: the cooperation projects within the ENP and EP are not effective enough.

On the eve of the summit, the Armenian media discussed the possible effects of Erevan's lower representation (a minister instead of the president) in view of the planned visit of Russian President Putin. Armenia's response to suspended European integration was much less vehement than in Ukraine: small and scattered rallies demanded that President Sargsian sign the association agreement.

In September, Armenia announced that it wanted to join the Customs Union and be involved in building the Eurasian Union. Russia and Kazakhstan immediately agreed, while Minsk was in two minds: Armenia looked like a rival of Belarus as far as Russia's grants and subsidies were concerned.

Under the pressure of what can be called a blockade and the disappointment of the failed (fairly high) expectations of strategic partnership with Moscow, Armenia could have acted in a way that Russia could have interpreted as a geopolitical U-turn away from Moscow. Indeed, most of the industrial enterprises that Russia received as payment for Armenia's debts are still idling; the repeated requests for \$2 billion to revive the Armenian economy have fallen on deaf ears. A grant intended to minimize the losses caused by the higher gas prices has not arrived. There is another, even more important, factor: Russia sells its weapons to Azerbaijan.

On the other hand, Russia is involved in building the Armenian stretch of the Iran-Armenia gas pipeline; it pays for rehabilitation of the Sevan-Hrazdan Cascade Hydropower System; in 2008, the Armenian railway was transferred to Russian business under a concession treaty.

It should be said in all justice that, at first, President Sargsian intended to initial the agreement at the Vilnius Summit. According to what he said (he probably planned to play the trump card as Ukraine had done), his decision to join the Customs Union did not mean the end of the dialog with Europe. During his previous presidential term, Sargsian worked hard to convince the voters that the country's Russia-ensured security combined with association and wider cooperation with "democratic Europe" would create no problems at all.

Brussels, however, thought differently: it hinted that after deciding to join the Customs Union Erevan had lost its opportunity to initial the association and free trade area agreement. Tactically, Armenia will profit from joining the Customs Union: it will receive cheaper gas, free access to the markets of Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus, and stronger regional security. Russia will gain no economic advantages, but will satisfy its political interests.

Erevan was confronted with a dilemma: it could not retreat from its previous decision to initial the agreement without marring its international image as a reliable state. If it turned out that it was Moscow that had forced Armenia to act against its national interests, the Armenian public would change its opinion about Russia.

The Armenian elite regards its alliance with Moscow as temporary and enforced by the far from friendly geopolitical environment, having Turkey as a neighbor, and the country's de facto state of war with Azerbaijan. The Armenian top crust does not associate its future with either Russia or the

¹³ See: S. Minasian, "Vneshniaia politika postsovetsoy Armenii: 20 let odnovremennno na neskol'kikh stuliakh," *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia*, No. 1, 2013, pp. 85-92; R. Melikian, "The Eurasian Union, European Union and Armenian Complementarism," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2, 2013, pp. 46-55.

CIS integration structures. The new generation associates the future of their country with the EU and NATO. Armenia could remain Russia's friend, but not ally, along the way, but Russia, in turn, should not interfere with Armenia's advance toward Europe.

From the very beginning Europe warned Armenia that it would not be able to join two formats and that, therefore, it should either accept Moscow's patronage or the economic dividends of the European Union.

On the other hand, the top crust was in turmoil: at the latest presidential election, Raffi Hovannisian, the pro-Western opposition leader, reaped 37%, a highly impressive result.

In Russia, little is said about Armenia and the related problems; yet as soon as it became clear that Armenia intended to initial the association agreement, President Putin hinted that no economic dividends could compete with Russia-ensured security. He was heard and understood; it was with heavy heart that the Armenian president set out for Brussels.

The Georgian Dream

In November 2003, the Rose Revolution brought to power new political leaders led by Mikhail Saakashvili; they were even more open than their predecessors about nationalism and the pro-Western political vector and more convinced that Georgia's future lay outside post-Soviet space and was associated with the EU and NATO.

Its leaders and ideologists were convinced that Georgia should detach itself from the old mentality that is dying hard in all post-Soviet republics to become a quintessence of Western liberal "soft power" or, rather, a model of its successful implementation in a given country to be reproduced across the former Soviet space. The United States and West European countries, which wanted to create transportation corridors between the Caspian/Central Asia and Europe bypassing Russia, devised the TRACECA project, in which Georgian was expected to play the key role.¹⁴

On 1 October, 2012, the parliamentary elections in Georgia changed a lot in the country's foreign and domestic policies. Brought to power by the parliamentary elections, Bidzina Ivanishvili was determined to normalize relations with Russia.

Shortly before the Vilnius Summit, Mikhail Saakashvili, a vehemently pro-Western politician, left the political stage: an impressive political U-turn. Very much as expected, in Vilnius, Georgia, represented by incumbent Giorgi Margvelashvili, initialed the association agreement.

Throughout the last year of his presidency (when he lost part of his previous powers), Saakashvili held forth about the dangers of returning to the sphere of Russia's influence.

Early in 2013, Stratfor, an American private analytical company, published a forecast for the year 2013, in which it warned the Georgians about the negative effects of a foreign policy volte face; this was undisguised pressure pure and simple.

The authors were obviously convinced that the coming to power of very rich Ivanishvili and his Georgian Dream Party would increase Russia's influence in the republic, mainly because the anti-Russian camp was weakened by the loss of Saakashvili, its leader. The report said that in 2013 Georgia might find itself in a quandary since other regional players (Azerbaijan) might be dissatisfied with the new political reality. There was a leak: it was alleged that head of the First Department of the CIS Countries of the Russian Foreign Ministry had made a statement to the effect that the Georgian authorities had started negotiations on resuming their CIS membership. Tbilisi was indignant.

¹⁴ See: Th. de Waal, *Georgia's Choices. Charting a Future in Uncertain Times*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2011; D. Fean, *Making Good Use of the EU in Georgia: The "Eastern Partnership" and Conflict Policy*, September 2009, IFRI, 22 pp.

Prominent Russian political scientist and Editor of *Russia in Global Affair* Fyodor Lukyanov asked in his article, which appeared in *Rossiskaia gazeta* on 6 February, 2013, titled “Do we Need Georgia?”: “Do we need to return the relations with Georgia to an acceptable level?” and answered: “In fact, NATO is no longer that important; there are no prospects of a closer union in the same way as there are no interests that could have justified extraordinary efforts. This is all true from the mercantilist point of view. On the other hand, no matter what, Georgia remains very close to Russia culturally and historically. In the contemporary world, where community has become skin-deep and where alienation on fundamental issues is coming to the fore, it is unwise to squander these ‘assets,’ to say the least.”

To escape enslavement by Turkish and Azeri capital, Georgia needs the Russian market and Russian investments. Russia needs a stable, predictable and, at the very least, non-hostile neighbor on its North Caucasian border and free transit of goods to Armenia. This means that restored CIS membership, probably followed by membership in the Customs Union, etc. remains on Russia’s political agenda.

The Western capitals looked unconcerned about Georgia’s new Russian course, which means that the process was either initiated or, at least, approved by the West.

In the spring of 2013, Georgia and the United States invigorated their military contacts. Georgia could have more effectively used its transit and transportation functions and intensified regional and inter-regional cooperation if it decided to extend the functioning and planned transportation and energy corridors to Russian territory and to switch them to Armenia. The Georgian leaders intend to demonstrate that the anti-Russian transport and communication projects in the Caucasus have not lost their importance.

We need to remember that any attempts by Georgia to move closer to Russia are stymied, something the EU and the United States did not allow Saakashvili to forget. Today, Ivanishvili and Margvelashvili are in a similar position.¹⁵

Unique Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan, which belongs to several civilizational-historical and geopolitical entities, stands apart from all the other post-Soviet states. On the one hand, it is part of the Greater Caucasus; on the other, it is closely tied to Iran by their common history: for several centuries it was part of the Persian civilization. In view of the obvious demographic expansion of Iranian Azerbaijan, this factor has not lost its pertinence. Ethnically and linguistically (since 1991 also politically), Azerbaijan is closely connected with Turkey, as well as the Turkic Central Asian republics. It figures prominently in Caspian geopolitics and, finally, despite two decades of active de-Sovietization and de-Russification, Azerbaijan is still part of the post-Soviet space with all of its common and individual features.¹⁶

Its Russian community of 160-170 thousand is the largest in the Southern Caucasus, while Russia is the permanent or temporary home of up to 1 million (or even 2 million according to unofficial count) Azeris. Some of them have built multi-million fortunes.

The republic has preserved the largest area in the Southern Caucasus of the Russian language and culture. On the other hand, Baku and Moscow, which are developing economic and cultural ties, disagree on many political and military issues.

¹⁵ See: A. Nursha, “Itogi parlamentskikh vyborov v Gruzii i evolutsia vneshnepoliticheskikh ustanovok gruzinskogo rukovodstva,” *Kazakhstan v globalnykh protsessakh*, No. 1, 2013, pp. 39-57; L. Di Pippo, *Between Hesitation and Commitment: The EU and Georgia after the 2008 War*, A Joint Transatlantic Research and Policy Center, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, Washington, D.C., 2010, 59 pp.

¹⁶ See: S.E. Cornell, *Azerbaijan since Independence*, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 2011, 483 pp.

As distinct from Armenia, Azerbaijan, an oil-rich country, is free to pursue its own foreign policy without looking back at Russia, the West, and Iran. As distinct from the Central Asian countries, Baku does not use its relations with the West and China to compensate for its excessive dependence on Moscow (and vice versa). Not infrequently, Azerbaijan tries to capitalize on the disagreements among the power centers (without siding with any of them) in its interests and draw Turkey into the game. It relies on petrodollars and its role in the energy and communication projects to play these foreign policy games.

President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev attended the Vilnius Summit; he pushed aside the warnings coming from the expert community that the republic would gain nothing from its association with the EU; shortly before the summit, Brussels had been biting critical about the presidential election in Azerbaijan.

The Azeri delegation arrived in Vilnius firmly convinced that no documents with the EU should be signed and no promises should be given to the Customs Union. Baku concentrates on cooperation in the energy sphere to diversify energy supplies to Europe to lower its dependence on Gazprom of Russia. The Azeri leaders have correctly decided that since Europe badly needs the Transadriatic gas pipeline, it should not be worried about the elections in Azerbaijan. In the next 25 years, Azerbaijan will supply Europe with 10 billion cr m every year under the Shah Deniz-2 project.

On the eve of the summit, Azerbaijan officially disproved all allegations that it was declining associate membership under Russia's pressure. Baku announced that it needed and would insist on a document better adjusted to the level of its cooperation with the European Union; it invited Brussels to sign an agreement on partnership that presupposed mutual respect and equality of the sides. Baku pointed out that the conditions under which the associated country may aspire to become a member were unacceptable.

The relations between Azerbaijan and the EU had been going from bad to worse since early 2013. In February, Baku accused Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and Štefan Füle, Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy, of interfering in Azerbaijan's domestic affairs: they called on the Azeri authorities to ensure prompt, fair, transparent, and independent investigation of the arrests of deputy head of the Musavat Party and the leader of the Republican Alternative Party.

In March, Baku invited the OSCE to readjust its mandate in Azerbaijan to limit its involvement to the role of project coordinator; interpreted as an effort to interfere in the cooperation between the OSCE and the local NGOs, this did nothing for relations between this European structure and Baku.

A big pipeline game, however, is going on. In April 2013, the Nabucco Consortium offered the Shah Deniz Consortium 50% of shares in the Nabucco-West pipeline, which seriously aggravated Baku's relations with Moscow. Azerbaijan refused to extend the lease of the Gabala Radar Station; Moscow responded by cancelling the agreement on moving Azeri oil via the Novorossiisk oil pipeline.

It is interesting to note that Baku is a past master in manipulating EU energy interests. SOCAR of Azerbaijan bought Greek gas transportation company DESFA in violation of the notorious third energy package, under which one and the same company should not be engaged in production and transportation. Baku buried the much promoted Nabucco together with the European eastern energy strategy geared toward diversification of gas supplies to the regions that so far depend on Russian gas.

In the last few years, Baku has poured a lot of money and effort into setting up its lobbies in the European Union; this means that in the future it might tie together energy supplies and the Karabakh issue.

Relations with Russia are not smooth either; Azerbaijan regularly attends the CIS summits mainly to maintain contacts with the presidents of the other post-Soviet countries.

Baku deliberately stays away from the Customs Union and the CSTO (within which Russia is allied with Armenia, a sworn enemy of Azerbaijan). With huge oil and gas reserves, Baku can afford

to be independent of Moscow on the foreign policy scene. In 2010-2012, Moscow and Baku signed several contracts on arms deliveries; the first, worth \$4 billion, began being implemented in 2013.

The Gabala Radar Station was closed in 2013—Russia's only military facility (or, rather, military base) in Azerbaijan. It was functioning as the Daryal information-analytical center to avoid the constitutional ban on foreign military facilities in Azeri territory.

Today, Azerbaijan is no longer fascinated by tens or even hundreds of millions of dollars, recently seen as unbelievably huge sums. This means that the radar station was closed out of principle: Baku could not tolerate the most favored nation regime Russia had extended to Armenia in military cooperation. Moscow, however, no longer needed the station, but responded in kind.

In May 2013, it discontinued the oil transit contract. Baku is fully aware that so-called post-Soviet integration (in any form) was not initiated by Kazakhstan, Belarus, or any other post-Soviet country. The process was initiated by the leaders of Russia who seek to ensure Russia's internal interests rather than to pursue foreign policy aims.

In August 2013, President Putin came to Baku on a working visit; we do not know what the two presidents talked about, but we can guess that they discussed Iran's military activity in the Caspian, the Middle Eastern developments, and the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement. In October, Moscow officially supported Ilham Aliyev at the presidential election. The last few months before the election transformed Azerbaijan into a hub of international activity: Western politicians and heads of CIS states replaced each other in Baku with kaleidoscopic speed.

On 9 October, 2013, Aliyev was elected president for the third term running; as could be expected, the OSCE ODIHR severely criticized the election campaign; the United States and the U.K. added their share of the same. The ODIHR, however, went too far: its extremely biased report caused disagreements between it and the OSCE, European Parliament, and PACE observers.

Azerbaijan has demonstrated a lot of skill and inventiveness when adjusting its strategy to the phobias of the United States and the European Union related to Russia's "oil and gas weapon" and the ambitions of the "energy empire." It is seeking ways to balance out Moscow and the Armenian lobby in the United States and Europe and to draw certain circles in the West to its side in order to finally resolve the Karabakh conflict in its favor.

At the same time, EU membership is not among Baku's priorities. On the eve of the Vilnius Summit, it suspended its participation in the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, a component part of EP, to register its protest against Point 32 of the resolution of 23 October, 2013 of the European Parliament on the European Neighborhood Policy, which said in part that "the latest presidential election, held on 9 October, 2013" in Azerbaijan "once again failed to meet OSCE standards."

To sum up, the relations between Russia and Azerbaijan are highly contradictory even if both sides want to maintain them at a constructive level. Moscow, however, is not ready to abandon Armenia and side with Baku on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. Today, Russia and the West prefer the status quo, which means that Moscow will try to preserve the precarious balance between Erevan and Baku.

Cooperation between Russia and Azerbaijan is anything but consistent; relations between the two countries might become better or much worse depending on what Baku wants.

Russia consistently supports the people in power in Azerbaijan, while Azerbaijan can hardly hail Russia's stand on Nagorno-Karabakh.

Strategic oil and gas pipelines across Georgia and Turkey could liberate Azerbaijan from dependence on Russia. Its advantageous geographic location and rich natural and financial resources make Azerbaijan important for Turkey and Russia.¹⁷

¹⁷ See: G.B. Vagif, "Azerbaidzhan v orbite mirovoy diplomatii," *Rossia i musulmanskii mir*, No. 9, 2011, pp. 74-81; M. Kolesnichenko, "Azerbaidzhan v sisteme mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniy," *Rossia i musulmanskii mir*, No. 3, 2012, pp. 81-89; E. Mekhdiev, "Geostrategicheskie interesy NATO v Azerbaidzhane," *Rossia i musulmanskii mir*, No. 10, 2009, pp. 77-89;

Moldova on the Road to Europe

Today, Moldova's foreign policy is a mixture of Russian, European, and Rumanian factors. Like Georgia, Moldova has a headache of its own—an unrecognized territory called Transnistria. From time to time, Washington turns its attention to Moldova mainly because it borders on Ukraine, which seems to be unsure of its geopolitical orientation.

The latest sociological polls in Moldova reveal that the public has shifted its interest from European integration to the Russia-initiated Eurasian Union. During his visit to Brussels in November 2010, Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova Vlad Filat, leader of the Alliance for European Integration, officially confirmed for the first time that his republic wanted to join the EU. Later, in his address at the EU-Moldova Forum held in March 2011, he outlined the measures that would make Moldova a European country: it should acquire an efficient economy, build a law-governed state, reform its defense and security structures, and uproot corruption. The frantic efforts at Rumanization failed to uproot the idea that the country should join Europe as an independent and united state.¹⁸

The Social-Democratic Party of Moldova and the Party of the Communists of the Republic of Moldova insist on the country's membership in the Customs Union. They are counting on lower prices for Russian gas, direct access to the capacious Russian market, investments, a better status for Moldovan labor migrants in Russia, and settlement of the Transnistria question.

Today, Moldovan trade with the EU is asymmetric: within the agreed quota Moldovan products are not taxed in the EU, while duties are imposed on European products in Moldova. This, however, does not help products from Moldova gain popularity in the European Union because of their inferior quality. Local observers say that the agreements which the Moldovan leaders signed in Vilnius (association, the free trade area agreement, and liberalized visa regime) can be described as important steps. In the next few decades, however, Moldova will remain outside the EU.

Within the East European context, economic cooperation between Russia and Moldova is of great importance. In 2013, Moldova joined the CIS free trade area under a corresponding agreement; the republic is part (together with practically all the Balkan states—Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, and Macedonia) of the East European free trade area. Some experts think that Moldova can become a mutually advantageous trade corridor between the CIS and Eastern Europe.

According to Dirk Schuebel, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Moldova, Brussels would not object to Moldova's membership in the Customs Union, but would abolish the preferential trade regime.¹⁹

Seen from Brussels, Moldova looks like the next EU member; while Ukraine is lobbied by Poland, Moldova has Rumania on its side. There are suspicions that Bucharest is determined to return its lost territory. Some countries (Moldova in particular) do not hail the prospect, so Rumania started talking about reunification within the European Union. Pro-Russian experts are convinced that Rumania is in no hurry to settle the border issues precisely because of the planned Anschluss.

The republic's new leaders, who came to power four years ago, made Moldova the best possible partner for the EU within the EP program; Prime Minister Iurie Leancă confirmed the republic's course toward European integration; he added that Kiev's sudden volte face might prove useful to

R. Musabekov, "Where Fields of Attraction Overlap. Azerbaijan between Turkey and Russia," *Russia in Global Affairs*, No. 3, 2011; E.E. Nuriev, "Rossiisko-azerbaidzhanskie otnosheniia v sovremennykh politicheskikh realiiakh," *Problemy natsionalnoy strategii*, No. 1, 2011, pp. 95-119; P. Hanna, "Azerbaidzhan: probka v Kaspiyskoy butylke," *Rossia i musulmanskii mir*, No. 7, 2011, pp. 71-78; S. Cherniavsky, "Rossia i Azerbaijan v postsovetitskiy period," *Rossia i musulmanskii mir*, No. 11, 2011, pp. 47-57.

¹⁸ See: Yu.V. Belikova, A.L. Bovdunov, "Moldavia-Rumania: perspektivy sblizhenia," *Problemy natsionalnoy strategii*, No. 2, 2011, pp. 70-86.

¹⁹ See: S. Astakhova, "Moldavia v ozhidanii peremen," *Rossia i novye gosudarstva Evrazii*, No. 1, 2012, pp. 89-94.

Chisinau: Brussels might have even better and clearer offers for Moldova: a visa free regime might be exchanged for an initialed association agreement.

In May 2013, European emissaries in Moldova finally set up the Pro-European Coalition to neutralize the communists who were trying to pull the country into the Customs Union, set up a more or less stable parliamentary majority, and put together a pro-EU cabinet. This was when Brussels arrived at the unprecedented decision to offer the republic associated membership.

The relations between the European Union and Moldova were far from easy: early in 2013, the Moldovan leftist powers were pushing the country toward a referendum on Customs Union membership; certain problems will loom on the horizon in the near future. Pro-Russian Transnistria and the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia create certain problems: the Gagauzes insist on guarantees that Moldova will not be unified with Rumania within the European Union. In view of the republic's extreme poverty, even Russia's very limited financial support to the recalcitrant regions suffices.

On the eve of the Vilnius Summit, Chisinau was a stage of huge rallies of those who wanted to see the country in the Customs Union. Every year Moldovan guest workers in Russia transfer over \$2 billion to the republic; this sum is practically equal to Moldova's annual budget and is more than what Moldovan guest workers in the EU can manage. People want to be sure that the chosen integration course will make their lives better; the country's foreign policy course comes second.

It should be said that on the whole and at all times the people in Moldova remain leftist-minded: the Alliance for European Integration should thank the EU and the United States for its three years in power. They funded the pro-European part of the Moldovan elite and lavished all kinds of grants and loans on the republic. As the recognized leader of the Eastern Partnership program, Chisinau went to Vilnius fairly sure of the results.

Experts have already warned that even though Moldovan wines are exported to the EU countries under a special quota, associated membership (to be introduced within the next twelve months, according to EU politicians) will do nothing for wine exports: Europe produces good and high quality wines in its own territory. This means that Moldovan wine-growing and agriculture will suffer or even die.

Here is another telltale fact: every year 700-800 Moldovan families apply to the Russian Migration Service in Chisinau for an exit permit to Russia. A free trade agreement with the EU will open the gates for big business from Europe, which will bury local small businesses—shops, cafes, and even apiaries. Their owners across the country are trying to get rid of them before it is too late.

Moldova pays more for Russian gas than the other CIS countries (\$400 per 1 000 cu m on average). After it joins the Customs Union, the price will drop by half, which means cheaper gas and heating for the people. Even if the price of gas climbs up over time, it will still be lower than what Europe pays.

Moldova could become a window for investors wishing to work in the Customs Union markets; its membership will guarantee it tens of thousands of jobs in the first few years, which would begin the country's revival.²⁰

The Moldovan expert community is convinced that Moscow wants to draw their country into the Eurasian Union using Transnistria by way of blackmail. It will capitalize on the sentiments of the communist electorate of Moldova and on the referendum initiated by the Social Democrats about unification with the Eurasian Union to make Transnistria more attractive. Moldova will be invited to form a federative state with Transnistria. This is a new model of spreading Russia's influence in the region, which perfectly fits Vladimir Putin's integration plans in the CIS. Recent and active Rumanization has split the Moldovan society into two camps.²¹

²⁰ See: L. Fokina, "Moldova na pereputye mezhdru ES i TS," *Rossia i novye gosudarstva Evrazii*, No. 2, 2013, pp. 43-52.

²¹ See: S. Astakhova, "Moldavia posle prezidentskikh vyborov: problema Pridnestrovia i otnoshenia s RF," *Rossia i novye gosudarstva Evrazii*, No. 2, 2012, pp. 43-54.

In August 2012, a Coordination Center for Eurasian Integration was opened in Chisinau to ensure a systemic approach to Eurasian integration and extend financial support to the republic's most promising economic branches.²²

Meanwhile, the political crisis in Moldova has been worsening; political life is in chaos, even though the country continues moving toward integration with the EU. After signing the agreement in Vilnius, the country moved closer to its European destiny; observers note that Russia, albeit indirectly, is responsible for this success: Brussels demonstrates leniency toward countries that persist in European integration despite Moscow's pressure.

Secretary Kerry came to Moldova a week after the Vilnius Summit; Chisinau interpreted this as a sign of support of the country's European dream, especially obvious against the Ukrainian background.

As soon as Russia pulls its peacekeepers out of Transnistria, the Rumanian and Moldovan nationalists will abandon all pretence and start using force. Rumania and Moldova will accelerate the unification process, which will raise a wave of Rumanian nationalism and give rise to ethnic and territorial conflicts in East European and other countries (old and new NATO members). Moldova, Rumania, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey (there are their ethnic minorities in Moldova and Rumania) will inevitably be drawn into the conflicts; if exacerbated the Transnistrian conflict will suck Russia and Ukraine into the turmoil as well.

Twenty years of independence have proven to be too short a period for Moldova to identify its priorities and development vectors because of the policies pursued by all the Moldovan presidents, M. Snegur, P. Luchinsky, and V. Voronin, the Alliance for European Integration, and Nicolae Timofti, the present president of Moldova. After twenty years of independence, the country has found itself in an impasse because the choice of development strategy was highly politicized.

Conclusion

The Vilnius Summit demonstrated that European strategy in the post-Soviet space is short-sighted: two countries out of six remained within the EP program, Belarus moved away long ago; Azerbaijan prefers to keep at a certain distance; and Armenia prefers Moscow. After many years of persistent efforts, the EU is left with Georgia and Moldova, two countries burdened with numerous problems. As for Ukraine, it is beginning to drift again toward Russia and the Eurasian integration structures.

It is too early to say that Mr. Brzezinski's nightmarish prophesy—"without Ukraine (and Belarus.—*M.L.*), Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire" and will never restore its geopolitical status—is coming to pass.

The future of the Eurasian Union is dim²³; its opponents are numerous; they should not be sought for in the West or among its alternative structures, but among the corrupt bureaucrats of the post-Soviet counties.

The regional elites are growing rich on transborder deals and on grants from the center; this is true of Russia, as well as of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine.

The post-Soviet elites, those which are not drawn into integration and those which participate in it and have remained in power since 1991, will never part with their sovereignty. Kazakhstan and

²² See: L. Fokina, op. cit.

²³ See: T. Bordachev, E. Ostrovskaya, A. Skriba, "The Choice and Challenge of Eurasian Integration. How to Make It Equally Beneficial and Effective," *Russia in Global Affairs*, No. 4, 2013; M. Simon, "Revnost i somnenia. Obraz evraziyskoy integratsii v evropeyskom mediiynom prostranstve," *Rossia v globalnoy politike*, Vol. 11, No. 5, 2013.

Belarus broadly hinted at this at the Minsk Summit in October 2013 and at the meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Union in Moscow in December 2013.

This means that Europe and the West will succeed, more or less, to split Eurasia, since many (if not all) post-Soviet countries need to counterbalance Russia for tactical or strategic reasons.

THE CASPIAN REGION AT THE CROSSROADS OF GEOPOLITICAL STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

The author concentrates on the geopolitical games in the Caspian region and identifies the factors that have remained prominent in the last twenty years and, in fact, determined the developments in this part of the world, viz. oil and gas reserves, the scope of their industrial production, and the recently built export pipelines as geopolitical instruments of the Caspian states and

extra-regional players. He analyzes the geopolitical aims of Russia, the European Union, the U.S., and China, the key players responsible for the Caspian geopolitical context, to conclude that the region's geopolitical, social, economic, and political future, as well as its interstate relations largely depend on the pace at which oil and gas is produced and pipeline projects implemented.

KEYWORDS: *geopolitics, Caspian region, foreign policy, Caspian states, hydrocarbon resources.*

Introduction

In the last 20-odd years, numerous and varied factors,¹ including the efforts to finally agree on the Caspian Sea's international legal status, its mounting militarization carried out by the coastal

¹ See: The Caspian Region concept is discussed in detail in I.S. Zonn and S.S. Zhiltsov, *Novy Kaspiy. Geografia, ekonomika, politika*, Vostok-Zapad, Moscow, 2008, 544 pp.

states, and environmental problems, have changed the geopolitical situation in the region. Preservation of the Caspian's biological diversity is one of the outstanding issues. Hydrocarbon resources, their level of production, and transportation routes have been and remain the region's main geopolitical factor.

Much has been written about the region's future; the strategies of the Caspian and non-regional states and the interests of oil and gas companies have been scrutinized by many authors, yet the rapidly changing geopolitical situation on the Caspian shores calls for fresh approaches and revised assessments.

The production and export of Caspian hydrocarbons has become global; today, the world energy market is waiting for even larger (if all sorts of forecasts prove correct) volumes of oil and gas, while the region can expect a new round of geopolitical rivalry. It will go on for decades and will require new pipeline projects.²

Here are some of the issues that might shape the region's future.

- The first is its energy potential, that is, the current state and possible future of hydrocarbon production. Highly politicized throughout the 1990s, the fuel and energy factor is responsible for a gross overestimation of the region's geopolitical contribution to the West's energy security. The wide disparities in the assessments of the region's hydrocarbon resources add an edge to its far from simple geopolitical context.
- Second, the pipeline infrastructure, its present state, and development potential are closely connected with oil and gas production. As one of the key elements of the geopolitical strategies of the Caspian countries and also of the EU, the U.S., and China, they should be carefully analyzed.
- Third, the geopolitical strategies of the new Caspian states, the foreign policies of which are geared toward the energy factor, need fresh approaches.
- Fourth, the highly dynamic geopolitical changes in the region are caused by the cardinal changes of the extra-regional players' geopolitical strategies. This means that previous forecasts and assessments must be revised and readjusted.

The academic community operates with a wide range of definitions of the Caspian. I have selected one of them, which limits the Caspian region to the littoral states (Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan) and will concentrate on the latter three, the "young" Caspian Soviet successor states.

Resolved to acquire their share of the Caspian Sea, together with its rich natural reserves, they concentrated on the delimitation issue.³ Seen from Russia and Iran, the region is important, but not all-important as a foreign policy issue. The Caspian energy resources found mainly on the coasts of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan⁴ make the sea their key economic factor.

Finally, the rate of production and the pace with which pipeline projects (in which the three countries are involved) are implemented will significantly affect the region's geopolitical dynamics. In the Caspian countries, export of hydrocarbons is a strategic linchpin.⁵

² See: S.S. Zhiltsov, I.S. Zonn, *Kaspiyskaia truboprovodnaia geopolitika: sostoianie i realizatsiia*, Vostok-Zapad, Moscow, 2011, pp. 52-63.

³ See: I.S. Zonn, M.Kh. Glyants, "Kaspiyskiy maiatnik (Vzgliad v proshloe, chtoby poniat budushchee)," *Vestnik Kaspiia*, No. 4, 2002, pp. 80-102.

⁴ See: B. Syrlybaeva, "Sotrudnichestvo prikaspiyskikh gosudarstv v neftegazovoy sfere: problemy i perspektivy," Information and analytical journal *Analytic* (Kazakhstan), No. 5, 2009, pp. 58-69.

⁵ See: S.S. Zhiltsov, "Kaspiyskiy region: hotspots," *Analytic*, No. 3, 2012, pp. 26-29.

Preliminary Results

During the years of independence, all the geopolitical players involved in the game have scored certain points. Oil and gas are produced in greater quantities, and there are new export pipelines that move Caspian hydrocarbons to external markets. The energy factor has helped the Caspian states diversify their foreign policy contacts; the oil and gas from newly developed fields have contributed to their economic and political stability.

They have capitalized on the increased interest of Western oil and gas companies to resolve domestic and foreign policy problems; in fact, oil and gas has supplied the three countries with a key to economic development. It comes as no surprise that the share of the fuel and energy complex in the total volume of industrial production is steadily growing. For obvious reasons the Caspian countries overestimated their hydrocarbon resources: this is pumping money into their fuel and energy complexes and invigorating their economies.

At the earlier stages of their independent development, the Caspian countries and non-regional players concentrated on production and transportation; both neighbors and world powers alike wanted to be involved, in one way or another, in exploration, survey, production, and export of the Central Asian and Caspian energy resources.⁶

Oil and gas production in the Caspian proved much harder than expected, which caused repeated revisions of forecasts. It turned out that access to the steadily increasing production of Caspian hydrocarbons required new and better technologies. As could be expected, new rich and economically promising fields attract a lot of attention.

The West, which in Soviet times was kept away from the Caspian, has currently gained a lot of geopolitical influence. Western companies decide what fields should be developed and what pipelines they will need. They, however, have been treating Caspian oil and gas primarily as a foreign policy instrument, and only then as an alternative source of fuel, albeit of secondary importance for the next decades. It was a “dish” to be tried later.⁷ They needed direct and uninterrupted access to the Caspian fields and no less reliable transportation routes to export additional volumes of oil and gas. This explains why, at the early stage, the Caspian hydrocarbon assessments occupied different places in the policies of the Caspian and Western states.

Very much as in the past, today Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan are pinning their hopes on increased volumes of production. This has prompted forecasts that in the next ten years the Caspian states will join the ranks of the world’s largest oil and gas suppliers with increased amounts of produced and exported hydrocarbons. There was a lot of talk about the Caspian reserves being comparable to those of the Gulf and the North Sea; the Caspian was seen as an alternative to the functioning centers of oil and gas production.

The Caspian states, or rather their elites, have mastered the game of inflated forecasts: they were used to attract foreign investments, to negotiate new pipeline projects to preserve social and political stability at home, and to remain in power. This explains the regularly revised (and inflated) assessments.

The problems that worry the Caspian countries and the region’s production dynamics do not suggest that the region is and can become an alternative to the main areas of production. Making the Caspian hydrocarbons globally important has raised many questions; there is a more or less common opinion that the reserves are big but no rival to the Gulf and are nowhere close to become a fully

⁶ See: E. Tianle, “Rol Tsentralnoy Azii v energeticheskoy strategii Kitaia,” in: *Tsentralnaia Azia: problemy i perspektivy (vzgliad iz Rossii i Kitaia)*, Collection of articles, ed. by K.A. Kokarev, D.A. Alexandrov, I.Yu. Frolova, Russian Institute of Strategic Studies; Chinese Academy of Contemporary International Relations, RISI, Moscow, 2013, p. 145.

⁷ See: I.S. Zonn, *Kaspiy: illiuzii i realnost*, Moscow, 1999, 467 pp.

fledged alternative source for the world oil market.⁸ Moreover, Russian experts who do not agree with the deliberately inflated assessments have been successfully ignored.

Despite the dubious nature of the assessments of oil and gas reserves, the Caspian countries have tried to use them to consolidate their independence and address social and economic problems.⁹ Amid the unfolding geopolitical struggle, the Caspian countries and the West have pushed aside the much more modest figures and obstacles on the road to Caspian energy resources. This explains why, having achieved a certain level of production, in the early 21st century the Caspian countries came face to face with technical and technological problems.

Encouraged by the fantastic assessments of their oil and gas riches, the Caspian countries moved offshore without waiting either for decisions on the international legal status of the sea or for geologically confirmed information about the reserves. As could be expected, later it became clear that the region needed a new pipeline infrastructure.

It was easy to manipulate the figures of hydrocarbon reserves in the Caspian because the geology of the local fields has not been adequately studied. Moreover, optimistic assessments of the possible volumes of production and export ignored numerous objective problems, which the Caspian countries and international consortiums had to address and resolve before moving further.¹⁰

Inflated assessments led to inflated forecasts of the production level. The Caspian countries built their foreign policy strategies according to the published figures in expectation of moving to the fore in hydrocarbon exports.

It was not enough to produce oil and gas, they had to be moved to the market, which meant a new pipeline infrastructure. The inflated figures, which bred inflated expectations, inspired the new Caspian states to seek ways and means to lower their dependence on Russia's pipeline domination. "Diversification" became the key word: the Caspian states looked at their hydrocarbon riches as a key to greater independence and closer relations with the West. They readjusted their foreign policies accordingly: for many years, oil and gas and transportation issues dominated the relations between Russia and the West.¹¹

In the last two decades, the Caspian region has acquired several new export pipelines: the Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline, a gas pipeline between Baku and Erzurum, and the pipelines that connect the region with China and Iran. This has changed the geopolitical situation in the Caspian.

In the first decade of the 21st century, information about the depleting oil reserves in the North Sea and confrontation between the West and Iran, excluded from discussions and the implementation of production and transportation projects, pushed the Caspian hydrocarbons into the limelight.

Today, the new configuration of international relations and the fresh forecasts of oil and gas production in the main exploitation regions have led to a revision of the role and prospects of the Caspian region. In the near future, its hydrocarbons cannot be accepted as a potential reserve of global importance; they remain, however, an important factor of regional energy-related policies.

After becoming relatively independent from Russia in terms of energy export routes, the Caspian countries have gained little freedom in this respect. They have found themselves under the pressure of the Western states and their oil and gas companies, which have their own ideas about energy strategies. The strongest players have "divided" the Caspian hydrocarbon reserves; the European

⁸ See: V.I. Kalyuzhny, "Speech at the Caspian and Black Sea Oil and Gas Conference, Istanbul (Turkey), 27 May, 2003," *Vestnik Kaspia*, No. 3, 2003, pp. 7-12.

⁹ See: I.S. Zonn, op. cit.

¹⁰ See: S. Zhiltsov, "Kaspiyskaia energeticheskaia igra," *NG-Energiya*, 14 January, 2014, p. 11.

¹¹ See: S.S. Zhiltsov, "Epokha geopoliticheskikh truboprovodov," *NG-Energiya*, 13 April, 2011.

Union, Russia, and China are competing for stronger control over the Caspian oil and gas fields and export routes. Western and Chinese oil and gas companies, which can rely on political support from their state structures, figure prominently in the region.

The Chinese Wave

China's Caspian policy is the result of a slow yet steady and persistent process. Before moving into the energy sector, Beijing was very active in trade and the economy as a whole, which created prerequisites for gradual reorientation of the local countries' foreign policies.

The steadily growing demand for energy resources has forced Beijing to turn its attention to Caspian oil and gas, a region where China has long-term strategic gas-related interests.¹²

The Chinese demonstrated a lot of persistence in buying hydrocarbon fields and refinery facilities; they organized deliveries of equipment, services and, recently, drilling.

China has been consistently increasing its share in the energy sector of the Caspian countries, which speaks volumes about Beijing's geopolitical aims, the rapidly developing Chinese economy, and its steadily mounting demand for fuel. According to different sources, China's share in Kazakhstan's energy sectors has topped 25 percent; an impressive result of consistent foreign policy supported by impressive financial backup.

Until recently, Beijing had been increasing its presence in the old nearly depleted fields; in recent years, however, it has shifted its interest to new oil and gas fields in the Caspian region, hoping to satisfy its fast-growing appetite for hydrocarbon supplies. It is particularly interested in the offshore fields of Kazakhstan: it has already paid \$5 billion for a share in Kashagan, one of the offshore oil and gas deposits in the Kazakhstan sector of the Caspian, and promised to invest even more in infrastructure.

China has long been and remains interested in Kazakhstan and its hydrocarbon riches: in September 2013, during the visit of the Chairman of the PRC to Kazakhstan, the Chinese side confirmed its interest in agreements totaling \$30 billion. The leaders of the two countries signed a Declaration on Strategic Partnership, which presupposed greater cooperation between the two countries, particularly in the energy sphere. Beijing remained as eager as ever to be part of energy projects, develop new fields, and produce more oil and gas.

China is moving into the Caspian energy sector with cheap loans and investments in infrastructure. In recent years, Astana has received about \$20 billion in loans for its energy projects.

Its active involvement has allowed China to lower oil and gas prices; today it haggles with Russia over hydrocarbon prices from a much stronger position.

The pipelines that China has planned and built to move energy resources to its territory are an important element of its energy policy; Beijing is determined to take control over the natural riches of the Caspian region to use them in its interests. It is steadily enlarging the pipeline infrastructure. In September 2013, China extended a loan to Turkmenistan for another branch of the functioning pipeline in order to expand its presence in the Caspian energy sector. The first branch was commissioned in 2009, and the third will be commissioned in 2014 to bring the volume of exported gas up to 65 billion cu m (an increase of 25 billion over the planned capacity of 40 billion cu m).

¹² See: L. Timofeenko, "Energeticheskaya politika Turkmenistana v Prikaspiyskom regione," *Analytic*, No. 5, 2009, pp. 13-18.

At the Crossroads of Integration Strategies

Multilateral economic cooperation is another tool China is using to complement its bilateral cooperation. In the last ten years, it has been very active within the SCO; until recently, it was believed that Russia and China had identical interests in the Caspian and Central Asia.¹³ As an SCO member, Russia has been concentrating on regional security and multisided anti-terrorist cooperation; the idea that together Moscow and Beijing can prevent America's infiltration in the region has been very popular in Russia for some time now.

Beijing, which has sided with Moscow in this respect, has also been pursuing its own policy in disregard of Russia's interests. So far, the energy cooperation between the two countries, an alternative to the oil and gas exports to Europe as seen from Moscow, has stirred up little enthusiasm in China. Today, when China has gained access to the Caspian hydrocarbons out of reach of Moscow's influence, energy cooperation between China and Russia has lost much of its former potential attraction. Beijing can insist on lower prices for Russian energy resources, while expanding its involvement in the development of hydrocarbon deposits, building new pipelines, and increasing economic cooperation with Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan.

From the very beginning, Beijing has been determined to tip the balance of power in Central Asia and the Caspian: their energy resources are too important both politically and economically to allow Russia to expand its influence in both regions. Likewise, China has no soft spot for the European Union, which has been offering itself as a partner in the new pipeline projects. Beijing does not need them: it wants to acquire all the oil and gas the eastern coast of the Caspian can produce.

As a SCO member, China can spread far and wide in the Caspian countries: its trade and economic expansion have finally brought it to the energy sector. Its stronger position has readjusted its political accents: regional cooperation in several, including the energy, spheres has been pushed aside—since then China has been seeking a changed balance of power. It wants sustainable access to local oil and gas and involvement in infrastructural projects as its two priorities in Eurasia.

This means that Russia's plans to set up a Eurasian Economic Union contradict China's long-term interests: Moscow will not stop at increasing economic and energy cooperation—it will move further to preserve its influence in Central Asia and the Caspian region.

Beijing confronted Moscow's persistence with its own efforts to expand its energy cooperation with all the Caspian countries, Kazakhstan in particular. Economic cooperation and active involvement in the development of hydrocarbons are the tools expected to persuade Astana to revise its foreign policy priorities; Beijing can also capitalize on the problems pestering the Customs Union today.

The gap between the geopolitical interests of China and Russia and their determination to gain access to the raw materials of the Caspian region have added an edge to the rivalry between the two countries. Integration projects may widen the gap still further. China is determined to adjust the SCO to its interests by shifting the accent from regional security to greater economic and energy cooperation through projects expected to push it to a leading position. A Free Trade Area within the SCO is one of the projects China has been insisting on for several years. Chinese experts describe Russia's tepid attitude to multilateral cooperation within the SCO as one of the highest stumbling blocks on the road to a free trade area.¹⁴

¹³ Two of the five Central Asian states (Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan) are also Caspian states. In recent years, the term the Caspian-Central Asian region has become quite common.

¹⁴ See: D. Xiaoxing, "Evraziyskiy soiuz i SCO," in: *Region Tsentralnoy Azii: sostoyanie, problemy i perspektivy rossiysko-kitayskogo vzaimodeystviia*, Collection of papers, ed. by E.V. Suponina, B.M. Volkhonskiy, RISI, Moscow, 2013, pp. 18-19.

The time when Russia's integration projects were rejected for political reasons is becoming a thing of the past. China is absolutely open about its intention to pay a high price for its absolute control in the Caspian and Central Asia.

Its energy strategy is long-term and multisided. It buys aggressively to move into the oil and gas industry of the Caspian countries. Unlike other foreign investors, China is setting up JVs, which suits the Caspian countries: they try to use the strong and strengthening rivalry between the leading powers in their interests to diversify their exports and balance out Russia's policies and America's ambitions.

China is interested in the fuel and energy sphere of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan because of its huge economic significance; it is, in fact, a key to China's greater political weight in these countries. It is steadily moving in the chosen direction by increasing its share in the oil and gas sector of these countries. Today, although not the biggest among the shares of other players, it will increase in the near future to make China the leader. It will go on buying the most promising facilities in the Caspian oil and gas sector and will spare no effort to draw the Central Asian countries, including Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, two Caspian states, into its sphere of influence.¹⁵

When operating in the energy sector of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, China never lets geopolitical issues out of sight: it is concerned about the growing presence of the United States and the European Union, and the West in general, in the region. It wants to replace Russia as an exclusive supplier of regional energy resources. This means that, under the pressure of China's rapidly growing ambitions and its readiness to compromise when it comes to new oil and gas, transport and infrastructural projects, competition between the Chinese, Western, and Russian companies working in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan will become even fiercer.

American Strategies in the Caspian

As soon as the Soviet Union fell apart, non-regional states turned their attention to the newly opened Caspian region. America, the EU, and China all claimed leading positions in the region in general and in the energy sphere in particular.

American and European oil and gas companies were especially excited about the prospect of developing Caspian hydrocarbons. Turkmenistan with its huge gas reserves and Kazakhstan with considerable oil deposits looked especially enticing. Azerbaijan, or rather its hydrocarbons, was another target of attention.

Numerous international consortiums set up for the purpose hastened to stake out the potentially most promising oil and gas deposits. Their task was facilitated by the energy policy of the new Caspian states, which needed Western money to explore for hydrocarbons and to produce and export oil and gas. At the earlier stage, the money of Western oil and gas companies proved to be all-important in developing the Caspian energy reserves.

At the state level, the Caspian became one of the pivotal points of America's foreign policy. Washington did not hesitate to extend the political support needed to organize oil and gas production and transportation. The West hoped to turn the export routes toward Europe in order to decrease the Caspian countries' dependence on Russia.¹⁶

¹⁵ See: S.S. Zhiltsov, "Tsentralnaia Azia na peresechenii geopoliticheskikh interesov: itogi i perspektivy," in: *Aktualnye voprosy bezopasnosti v Tsentralnoy Azii: materialy X Ezhegodnoy Almatinskoy konferentsii* (g. Almaty, 6 iyunya 2012 g.), ed. by B.K. Sultanov, Kazakhstan Institute of Strategic Studies at the President of the RK, Almaty, 2012, pp. 29-36.

¹⁶ See: S.S. Zhiltsov, I.S. Zonn, *SShA v pogone za Kaspiem*, Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, Moscow, 2009, 200 pp.

American interest in the Caspian is mainly geopolitical; in recent decades Washington has partially satisfied it through new pipeline projects, including by extending considerable political support to the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline project.

Acting in the Caspian region, the Americans plan to strengthen the statehood and independence of the states determined to develop market economies and weaken their ties with Russia. Washington is seeking better commercial advantages and stronger positions for American private capital; it aspires to help resolve regional conflicts by establishing political, economic, and military contacts among the newly independent states. It paid particular attention to setting up special units to protect the energy communication lines. In addition, Washington hoped to make the local states less dependent on Russia by ensuring an uninterrupted flow of Caspian oil and gas to the world markets. Americans wanted control over the transportation routes that connected the Caspian with the world market.

The Obama Administration is pursuing practically the same aims in the Caspian and with respect to its energy resources as those formulated in the 1990s. The American president prefers to follow the course formulated by Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. Barack Obama has not shown any special interest in the region.¹⁷ Under different presidents, America's Caspian policy formulated practically twenty years ago remains the same.

The EU Extends Its Presence in the Caspian

In the last few years, Washington has shifted the "responsibility" for implementing pipeline projects to the European countries and pushed them to the front line. The European Union had spent some time trying to formulate its Caspian policy, which, at first, was anything but dynamic. It was in the late 1990s, when the first assessments of the huge oil and gas reserves were made public, that Brussels finally found its bearings in the Caspian context. To a great extent, it followed in the footsteps of the United States, which concentrated on pipeline projects.

It turned out, however, that the ambitious plans for diversifying export routes ran into serious problems. The EU's initial intention to decrease its dependence on Russian gas by opening new transportation routes shifted to the political field, where this purely economic issue became an end in itself. The foreign policy of the Caspian and European states and the issues related to energy production and transportation were pushed aside and safely forgotten.

The EU put the Nabucco project on the table to move Azeri gas to Austria and Germany. From 2002 onwards the project remained the core of European energy policy in the Caspian. After a while, however, it turned out that Azerbaijan (the main source of gas to be sent by Nabucco) did not have enough gas to sell. Turkmenistan did not want to be involved in the economically dubious venture, particularly since the project caused a political "allergy" of sorts in Beijing. At the turn of 2013, the EU had to revise its policy; it moved away from global to more modest pipeline projects. In 2012, Brussels produced a shorter version of the same project called Nabucco West, stretching from the Turkish-Bulgarian border across Bulgaria, Rumania, and Hungary to Austria. There was not enough gas to fill this pipeline either.

These failures are of an objective rather than political nature; so far, the newly developed gas fields cannot produce enough gas to fill the planned pipelines. On the other hand, the European Union cannot reach a consensus among its members on what should be done in the Caspian. At the negotia-

¹⁷ See: "Tsentralnaia Azia v usloviakh geopoliticheskoy transformatsii i mirovogo ekonomicheskogo krizisa," in: *Materialy VII ezhegodnoy almatinskoy konferentsii*, Almaty, 2009, pp. 33-35.

tion table, the Caspian countries and their European partners have been pursuing their own aims in disregard of what the other side wants. This is confirmed by the fact that different pipeline projects were initiated outside the EU.

The Caspian countries saw their chance to join the pipeline race. Turkey and Azerbaijan were the first to recognize the opportunity offered by the failures of Brussels' pipeline policy to come forward with their own pipeline projects designed to bring gas to Europe. The Trans-Anatolian Gas Pipeline (TANAP), which was to transport gas from Azerbaijan to Turkey's western borders, was one of them. Approved by the EU, it can be regarded as a foreign policy victory of Azerbaijan, which needs more transportation facilities to sell the gas produced within the second phase of the development of Shah Deniz. It is expected that in 2019-2020 (when the pipeline is commissioned), Azerbaijan will be ready with the needed 16 billion cu m of gas.

Cooperation between the two countries in the energy sphere can be described as a response to Brussels' energy policy, which failed to arrive at coordinated decisions and implement the project. TANAP is a local project that suits the interests of Azerbaijan and Turkey in particular. Baku will acquire a new export route, while Ankara will have another alternative source of fuel and greater involvement in gas supplies to Europe.

In June 2013, a consortium set up to develop the gas condensate Shah Deniz field accepted the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) as the main route by which Caspian gas would reach Europe. This ended a fairly long period of discussions of all sorts of alternative routes. The pipeline will cross Greece and Albania and reach Italy across the Adriatic. The project discussed at length throughout 2012 and 2013 was finally supported by Norwegian Statoil, German E.ON, and Swiss Axpo.

If implemented, it will bring up to 10 billion cu m of gas to Europe after 2019-2020; the initial volume is too small to affect the balance in the European gas market. It is expected that by that time, Europe will be using considerable amounts of liquefied natural gas and certain amounts of shale gas.

TAP, which raised a wave of enthusiasm in Europe, left many important questions unanswered: it may affect the geopolitical balance in the region. Unlike Nabucco, which was expected to bring Caspian gas to big consumers, TAP will bring gas to Greece and Italy, fairly modest consumers, which means that the pipeline will not bring gas to Europe in general. Everything said so far about the possible expansion of TAP's capacity is unfounded because the market is too small. To reach bigger European markets, TAP would have to be expanded with new branches, an expensive and time-consuming task.

The Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline is another pet project of Brussels; it is working hard to promote and ultimately implement it in the hope of moving Turkmen gas to Europe. Active negotiations have gradually drawn Turkmenistan into the orbit of Brussels' economic interests; however, it is not so much funding the Trans-Caspian Pipeline needs as enough gas. Today, Turkmenistan is pumping its gas to China and Iran and sees no reason to be involved in a project fraught with political disagreements with its closest neighbors and China's displeasure.

Russia in the Caspian

In the post-Soviet period, Russia strove to preserve its geopolitical control over the Caspian states; it wanted continued domination in the energy sphere, as well as in the production and transportation of hydrocarbons from the new Caspian states. Caspian oil came to the fore in the world market and as the cornerstone of the local economies.¹⁸

¹⁸ See: G.I. Starchenkov, "Neft Kaspia i puti ee transportirovki," in: *Musulmanskie strany u granits SNG*, Institute of Oriental Studies, RAS, Kraft+, Moscow, 2001, p. 298.

Russia insisted on continued application of the free navigation and fishing regimes (in the latter case, outside the ten-mile coastal zone) and prohibition of navigation under flags of non-Caspian states established by earlier treaties. Moscow wanted to preserve the “common waters” principle as the starting point for the sea’s new legal status; it was also concerned about preserving biological resources, particularly sturgeon. In fact, in the absence of a new treaty, Russia invited the Caspian countries to accept conditions under which they could not carry out any operations without seeking consent from Moscow and Tehran.

By the beginning of the first decade of the 21st century, Russia had managed to solve the problem of the Caspian international-legal status on a tripartite basis (with Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan) and preserve cooperation in the energy sphere by persuading the Caspian countries to move part of their exported hydrocarbons across Russia.

The Caspian is one of the all-important regions for Russia; this is confirmed by the fact that it is mentioned in several key documents, including the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation to 2020 adopted on 12 May 2009 which said, in part: “The resolution of border security problems is achieved by creating high-technology and multifunctional border complexes, particularly on ... the Caspian.”

Russia has been concentrating and continues to concentrate on preventing offshore trans-Caspian pipelines and developing its own Caspian resource base; it is still looking for a solution to the riddle of the international legal status of the Caspian on the basis of the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea, which regulates all types of activities of the coastal states. Russia is trying to keep the non-Caspian states, America and the EU in particular, away from the region.¹⁹

In recent years, Russia has been promoting its strategic interests through bilateral relations with the Caspian states; it is concentrating on the development of new oil and gas fields and transportation routes, which allows it to preserve its key position in the region.

Russia’s Caspian policy has covered a long road from ad hoc moves to a consistent and fully substantiated strategy. Moscow is actively involved in many of the regional problems, including the international legal status of the Caspian, environmental problems, preservation of biological resources, and mounting militarization.²⁰ The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation says the following about Russia’s Caspian policy: “Russia’s approach to comprehensive interaction with its partners in the Black Sea and Caspian Sea regions... takes into account the need to strengthen the mechanism of cooperation among five Caspian states on the basis of collectively taken decisions.”²¹

Iran in the Caspian

For a long time Iran’s Caspian policy was limited to the problem of the sea’s international legal status and efforts to gain a foothold in the pipeline transportation systems. From the very beginning, Iran agreed with Russia that the sea and its resources should be used jointly by all the Caspian states.²²

¹⁹ See: *Tsentralnaia Azia i Kaspiyskiy region: riski, vyzovy, ugrozy*, Collective monograph ed. by B.K. Sultanov, Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies at the President of the RK, Almaty, 2012, p. 89.

²⁰ See: S.S. Zhiltsov, “Politika Rossii v kaspiyskom regione: sovremenny etap,” *Vestnik RUDN. Politologia*, No. 2, 2013, pp. 71-92.

²¹ *Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation approved by President of the Russian Federation V. Putin on 12 February 201*, available at [<http://www.mid.ru/ns-osndoc.nsf/1e5f0de28fe77fdcc32575d900298676/869c9d2b87ad8014c32575d9002b1c38?OpenDocument>].

²² See: *Tsentralnaia Azia segodnia: vyzovy i ugrozy*, ed. by K.L. Syroezhkin: A monograph, KISI at the President of the RK, Almaty, 2011, pp. 412-413.

Tehran believes it important to preserve control of the coastal states over the sea and to keep non-regional states away. This explains why it is consistently building up its naval forces on the Caspian.

As distinct from the new Caspian states, Iran, very much like Russia, does not depend on Caspian energy resources. Its economy relies on the hydrocarbons produced in the south; its northern coastal part is poorly explored, was believed to have practically no oil and gas and, therefore, attracted little interest. Tehran's newly acquired interest, fed by the recent discoveries of oil and gas in its sector of the Caspian, has opened a new stage in the development of the Caspian's hydrocarbon resources.²³ There is a recently discovered and potentially promising Sardar Jangal gas deposit with expected, but not confirmed, reserves of 1.4 trillion cu m of gas and 2 billion barrels of oil. Tehran is contemplating increased cooperation with the Central Asian states in exporting their hydrocarbons.

In recent years, Iran has been increasing its involvement in the transportation projects of the Caspian countries; it has stepped up its cooperation with China in the energy sphere: Beijing relies on Tehran for its energy security.

Conclusion

The preliminary assessments of the rates of energy production and implementation of pipeline projects in the Caspian and the degree to which the non-regional states are involved in the process show that the region has entered a new stage of its geopolitical development. Today, the geopolitical situation is vague: the dynamics of energy production is hard to assess, yet expectations of higher volumes of oil and gas will intensify the geopolitical struggle between local and non-local countries for control over the pipelines, an important geopolitical instrument.

The geopolitical race began as soon as the Soviet Union left the stage; the Caspian moved into the focus of attention of many countries and oil and gas companies lived through the fever of the 1990s. In the first decade of the 21st century, the fever subsided: oil and gas from newly developed deposits were exported by newly built pipelines. Today, the region has come close to a new stage of geopolitical rivalry, the course of which depends on the pace with which the coastal states develop their most promising oil and gas fields.

The geopolitical situation may change in the next decade: Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan will begin industrial production of their hydrocarbon reserves to load the functioning pipelines. If this happens the planned pipelines expected to enlarge the geographical scope and increase the volumes of Caspian energy resource export will be implemented and shape the geopolitical situation in the Caspian. The region has reached a crossroads: production and exports will mostly affect the race among non-regional states for access to local hydrocarbons and control over their export.

²³ See: L. Timofeenko, "Osnovnye priority strategii Irana v Kaspiyskom regione," *Analytic*, No. 6, 2012, pp. 32-42.

THE ROLE OF NON-REGIONAL POWERS IN CENTRAL ASIAN WATER AND ENERGY NEXUS

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ABSTRACT

Water as the least regulated issue is currently one of the key security factors in Central Asia. Although some efforts are made to regulate water through the establishment of a regional water regime, yet it remains unresolved. It has been stated that the involvement of international actors can have a positive ef-

fect on the solution of the problem. The analysis in this article shows that non-regional powers do not necessarily play a positive role in Central Asia. The water and energy nexus is often used by external powers as a geopolitical tool to influence regional countries for own political and economic interests.

KEYWORDS: *Central Asia, water, energy, water regime, foreign powers, geopolitics, hydraulic system, Syr Darya, Amu Darya, Nurek, Sangtuda, Kambarata.*

Introduction

In the meantime, while much attention is paid to the problem of fuel resources, the geopolitical meaning of water resources is underestimated. Water is the strategic resource as oil and gas. As such, it is necessary for all countries in ensuring the well-being of their population and in ensuring social as well as domestic activities. When countries do not have sufficient water, water turns to be a strategically important resource. Its use becomes an element of international relations, as the issues of distribution of water supplies and their effective use become an instrument of public policy.

Central Asia is, in terms of water resources, perhaps the most vulnerable region in the world. It is located in the arid zone and is highly dependent on water supply. The situation is also complicated by the fact that main water resources of the region are transboundary in nature. As one of the key issues, water is unfortunately the least regulated and the most dangerous factor for the regional security. The “hydro-politics” in Central Asia becomes viable as the demand for regional water resources will increase in the future.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Central Asian region attracted the attention of several world powers due to its rich energy resources, terrorism and Afghanistan issues. Today, there are a number of non-regional powers that have a significant influence on current political and economic processes in the Central Asian countries. The interesting question is here how the competition between powers for “influence areas” affects the regional cooperation in Central Asia.

In the present work, we wish to examine the role of non-regional powers in relation to water and energy nexus. The aim of this work is to assess the involvement of non-regional powers in the Central Asian water and energy policy and their role in the formation of regional water regime. To explore the selected topic thoroughly, the following four cases are investigated: the role of Russia, Iran, China as well as EU and U.S.

The paper is divided into five parts: the first part is dedicated to Russia’s geopolitical activity in the region. The rest part examines the Iranian, Chinese and American-European roles in Central Asia. At the final stage, the work makes some concluding remarks.

The Role of Russia in Central Asia

Foreign policy of Russia is defined in regard to the post-Soviet space with the concept of “near abroad.” The concept interprets all of the post-Soviet space in sub-regional terms. Russia has not worked out separate strategies for the post-Soviet regions and thus there is no any specific strategy toward Central Asia.

Nevertheless, the country has significant economic and geopolitical interests in Central Asia. Especially when it comes to the regional water and energy issues, Russia is committed to large hydro-energy projects in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan; but has no clear vision about its role in the solution of water management problems in Central Asia. Russia is indirectly involved in a regional conflict through its increasing investment projects.

Russia’s most successful project in hydro-energy sector in the region is the project of the Sangtuda 1 HPP on the Vakhsh River in Tajikistan, which is implemented with full participation of Russian investment. The investment in the construction of the Sangtuda 1 HPP constitutes more than 16 billion rubles.¹ As such this represents the largest investment project of Russia implemented in the post-Soviet space.

In October 2004, during the travel of Russian President Vladimir Putin to Tajikistan an Inter-governmental Agreement on the terms of participation of the Russian Federation in the development of the Sangtuda 1 HPP was signed. The construction of the station was initiated in April 2005 and the first unit was launched by January 2008. In May 2009, the station was ready for full operation. The capacity of the station is 670 MW. 75% of the shares belong to the Russian company Inter RAO UES.

¹ See: *Sangtuda-1*, Official website [www.sangtuda.com], 18 July, 2013.

The Sangtuda 1 HPP is one of the fifth hydropower plants on the Vakhsh River and is one of three largest hydropower plants in Tajikistan, along with the Nurek HPP (3,000 MW) and the Baidapasa HPP (600 MW).² The Sangtuda 1 HPP provides about 15% of electric power capacity of Tajikistan and reduces about 30% of the seasonal energy deficit.³ The main consumer of Tajikistan electrical energy is a state-owned power utility company, Barki Tojik, which distributes energy among population and businesses. After commissioning of the Sangtuda 1 HPP, the Barki Tojik ran into debt to Sangtuda 1 HPP,⁴ which is the main issue in Russian-Tajik negotiations at the intergovernmental level.

Together with the agreement on the construction of the Sangtuda 1 HPP in the fall of 2004, the company Russian Aluminum (RUSAL) signed an agreement with the Tajik government on the terms of participation in the development of Rogun hydroelectric plant. The construction was expected to be conducted by the company RUSAL that was planning to use the electrical energy power for the Tajik aluminum plant TALCO. However, the Tajik government did not sell RUSAL the aluminum plant, as it brings the major part of export income of the country. Besides, the contradiction emerged between RUSAL and the Tajik government on the height of the dam. RUSAL insisted on the height of 285m, and the Tajik side on 385m, which allows producing of 13.4 billion kW per hour. Therefore, the Russian company has decided not to participate in this project.

Russia invests also in the construction of hydro-energy objects in Kyrgyzstan. According to the preliminary agreements reached during the 2008 visit of President Dmitry Medvedev to Bishkek, Russia was to become the main investor in the development of Kambarata HPP on the river Naryn. The main aim was to export electricity from Kambarata HPPs to the neighboring countries. In February 2009, Russia and Kyrgyzstan agreed that Russia provides free assistance to Kyrgyzstan, in the amount of \$150 million for the support of the national budget of Kyrgyzstan.

The end of 2011 was marked by the interesting strategic proposal of the Director of the Federal Drug Control Agency of Russia (FDCAR), V. Ivanov. According to the proposal, the economic interests of Russia in Central Asia were connected to the hydro-energy sector because of the security reasons, i.e. fighting against drugs spread and illegal migration. The core of this proposal lies in the formation of a Russian company for cooperation with the countries of Central Asia in the form of an open joint stock company. The 51% of the shares will be owned by the state, and 49% will be handed over to large public and private companies, such as RusGidro ET, Rosneft, Gazprom, Inter RAO UES, Sberbank, Rostekhnologii, and Rossatom. The participation of companies from Central Asia in the project is also stipulated.⁵

Interests of Iran in Central Asia

Neo-conservative government, which came to power in Iran in 2005, united the paradigms of foreign policy of the previous governments: the achievement of the status of regional power (doctrine of the last Shah Pahlavi), maximum pragmatism in the economy (conception of President Hashemi-

² See: *Sangtuda-1*, Official website [www.sangtuda.com], 18 July, 2013.

³ See: Ibidem.

⁴ See: Ibidem.

⁵ See: A. Shustov, "Moderniziruet li Rossia Tsentralnuiu Aziiu? Gosnarkontrol nastavaet na masshtabnykh investitsiiah v regione," 29 March 2012, available at [http://www.stoletie.ru/geopolitika/moderniziruet_li_rossija_srednuju_aziju_2012-03-29.htm], 18 July, 2013.

Rafsanjani), (and consistent integration into the world economy (idea of President Khatami).⁶ Iran relies in its foreign policy on these doctrines and so far has developed a clear vision toward the Central Asian region. The Iranian foreign policy toward Central Asia is less dependent on domestic policy and ideology of the individual countries. Instead, the pragmatic economic interests of regional politics of Iran in Central Asia are determined by the increasing of antagonism in relations with the United States and the expansion of the American involvement in Central Asia. In the last ten years Iranian diplomacy in the Central Asian region is aimed, among others, at economic projects to overcome the foreign political and economic isolation.

In the energy sector Iran's interests are mainly the expansion of participation in the promotion and delivery of energy resources, which includes, among others, strengthening the geopolitical and geo-economic position on the Caspian Sea; increasing Iranian gas and oil deliveries to the European and Asian markets and transformation of Iran to the transit country in the region; participating actively in formation and functioning of the unified electric power generators in the Middle East; using of the results of international activities in the energy system to overcome the problems of Iran's fuel shortage.

Realization of these interests is seen not only in oil and gas sector, but in the common hydro-energy projects. Deputy Minister of Energy, Dr. Reza Amrollahi, mentions the priorities of Iranian policies directed at the electro-energy sector of Central Asia. They include direct electricity exports to neighboring countries (especially to Turkey and Iraq), the electric energy imports (mainly from the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus), the seasonal and daily exchange of electric energy between Iran and the neighboring countries, use of Iranian capabilities for transit of electric energy.⁷ In order to ensure stable electricity flow from Central Asia, Iran strengthens its positions by the direct investment in the construction of new power plants and development of international power grids.

The largest project with Iran's participation in Central Asia is the construction of the hydroelectric power station, Sangtuda 2 with a capacity of 220 MW on the Vakhsh River in Tajikistan. The station was projected in the 1970s and the construction started at the end of the 1980s. However due to the civil war and lack of finance, it was stopped in the early 1990s. In 1995, the Iranian government declared a willingness to invest additional \$180 million in the project of development of the hydroelectric plant and in January 2005 Russia, Tajikistan and Iran signed the protocol on the development of HPPs of Sangtuda 1 and Sangtuda 2.

In February 2006, the construction of hydroelectric power station Sangtuda 2 was initiated. At the end of 2011, the hydroelectric power station Sangtuda 2 was enacted. During the ceremony of commissioning the power plants, Tajik President Emomali Rahmon stated that after the launch of Sangtuda 2 HPP, Tajikistan intends to increase the annual output of electric power in Tajikistan to 1 billion kW per hour. According to the agreement, 12.5 years after the commissioning of the station, it will be under the possession of Iran, and after the expiry of this period, the station will pass into the ownership of Tajikistan. The Sangtuda 1 and Sangtuda 2 reduce the country's one-third energy deficit by increasing export opportunities in the amount of up to 1 billion kW per hour, and improving the use of the commercial potential of domestic hydro resources to 3%.

Moreover, Tajik government is committed to the attraction of investments to the construction of Rogun and Shurobad HPPs on the Vakhsh River; and it tries thereby to involve Iranian investors. Planned capacity of the Shurobad HPP is 850 MW and 3,600 MW is for the Rogun HPP.⁸ The com-

⁶ See: A. Knyazev, "Regionalnaia strategii Irana v Tsentralnoi Azii: evolutsiia i priority," 2005, available at [http://www.knyazev.org/stories/html/chang_200508.shtml], 18 July, 2013.

⁷ See: R. Amrollahi, "Rol Irana v obmene regionalnoi elektroenergii," *Amu-Darya*, No. 17, 2005, pp. 87-94.

⁸ See: "Osnovnye pokazateli Shurobadskoi GES," Gosudarstvennyi komitet po investitsiiam i upravleniiu, 2012, available at [<http://gki.tj/ru/investment/map/hydropower/25>], 18 July, 2013.

missioning of the Rogun HPP would enlarge twice the production of electric power in Tajikistan.⁹ As was mentioned above, according to the agreement signed between the Tajik government and Russian aluminum company RUSAL in October 2006, RUSAL was to invest about \$1.3 billion for the expansion of the Rogun hydropower plant. The construction did not begin, and in September 2007 Tajik government cancelled the deal. Tajikistan has decided to continue the construction of the hydropower plant independently through the attraction of investments by the World Bank and other investors. With regard to these projects, Iran repeatedly stated its desire to participate.¹⁰

Iran invests currently in the construction of small hydropower plants in Tajikistan. For example, in March 2012 during the visit of Tajik President E. Rahmon to Iran, an agreement was reached on the beginning of the construction of Aini HPP. The protocols were signed in the fall of 2007 between the Ministry of Energy and Industry of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Ministry of Energy of Iran “on the construction of the Aini HPP on the river Zeravshan, and the Shurobad HPP on the river Vakhsh.” The joint consulting company has prepared the feasibility report of new hydro-energy projects, including the projects of small HPPs such as Aini, Shurobad, and the tunnel Chormagsak. Planned capacity of the Aini HPP is 150 MW.

Iran has also declared its intention to participate in the construction of the other small HPPs in Tajikistan, such as Nurobod 1 and Nurobod 2, which are located in the flow of Hingob. These projects and the construction of Aini HPP must have been invested by China previously, but China decided not to participate because of the interests of Uzbekistan. In fact, Uzbekistan strongly resist against Tajikistan’s hydro-energy projects.¹¹

The construction of hydropower plants in Tajikistan is addressed not only to meet the energy deficit within the country but also for the export of electricity to neighboring countries. Iran supports the idea of the formation of a united regional electric power system in the Middle East, and participates in the development of the system of the power lines. The largest project in the area is the construction of a transmission power line from Tajikistan to Iran via Afghanistan: Sangtuda–Rogun–Kunduz–Mazar-i-Sharif–Herat–Mashhad.¹²

Iran is currently one of the largest investors in Tajikistan. The major share of investment falls straight to the hydro-energy sector, the development of which Iran sees as the advantage of regional significance. However, it should be noted that the interests of Iran focus not on Central Asia, but rather on the Near East and the Southern Caucasus. Except Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, Iran’s cooperation with other Central Asian countries is very limited. Kyrgyzstan, for example, is still not in Iranian interests and commitment.

Chinese Presence in the Region

The geopolitical presence of China in the region is based on the logic of establishment of an attractive appearance for neighboring countries. In contrast to Russia and the United States which are

⁹ See: T. Valamat-Zade, “Tajikistan Energy Sector: Present and Near Future,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 1 (49), 2008, pp. 90-91.

¹⁰ See: “Iran gotov uchastvovat v zavershenii stroitelstva Rogunskoi GES v Tadjikistane,” *CA-NEWS*, 2012, available at [<http://www.ca-news.org/news:6164/>], 18 July, 2013.

¹¹ See: A. Yuldashev, “Iran postroit v Tadjikistane eshche odnu GES—Aini,” 15 August, 2011, available at [<http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1313431260>], 18 July, 2013.

¹² See: “Ministry energetiki Tadjikistana, Irana i Afghanistana dogovorilis o stroitelstve LEP, prohodiashchei po territorii treh gosudarstv,” Iran.ru, 1 September, 2008, available at [http://www.iran.ru/rus/news_iran.php?act=news_by_id&news_id=53106], 18 July, 2013.

seen as an imperialist hegemony in the region, China has a different image in front of the Central Asian countries. China is perceived in Central Asia as a reliable and generous lender who does not put conditions in terms of politics and democracy.¹³ China uses the strategy of gradual penetration into foreign markets and has specific and effective economic levers in the region.

China's share in the global economy has grown strongly over the last thirty years, from 1% to 8%. Today, China is the second largest consumer and third largest importer of oil: it consumes about 35% of imported oil in the world.¹⁴ China's dependence on energy imports will increase further in the future and in order to maintain this intensive economic growth, China needs additional energy reserves. Central Asia in this sense is an attractive region as the energy supplier for China and therefore China tries to penetrate the energy industry of the region.

For example, it is interesting to observe the Chinese presence in Kazakhstan. In 2005 China purchased a Canadian company PetroKazakhstan for \$4.14 billion and owns now 67% shares of PetroKazakhstan. In addition, by the end of 2006 the Chinese CITIC Group bought 100% share of Nations Energy Company Ltd. for \$1.9 billion.¹⁵ It was further reported that the Chinese have bought half of the shares of KazMunayGas.¹⁶ In September 2009, the Chinese government foundation, the CIC, bought about 11% of the shares of JSC KazMunayGas Exploration and Production. At the same time, the Chinese company, Sinopec won a tender for the continuation of the modernization of the Atyrau oil refinery and committed to build a complex for the production of aromatic hydrocarbons for \$1.04 billion.¹⁷ In April 2009, during the official visit of President of the People's Republic of China an agreement was signed, where the Chinese government gave a loan of \$10 billion to Kazakhstan.¹⁸ China's share in Kazakhstan's oil and gas industry is growing rapidly. For comparison, in 2010 China's share in the oil sector of Kazakhstan was only 20%, while in 2011 it reached more than 40%.¹⁹

China's energy presence is also seen in other Central Asian countries. For example, in Uzbekistan, China's financial resources are focused exclusively on development of natural resources. Uzbekistan, once the third largest natural gas producer in the Soviet Union, is currently destination for many Chinese energy companies. During Soviet times, Uzbekistan produced more than 10% natural gas (natural gas reserves now according to estimates represent more than 1 trillion cu m).²⁰ According to some experts, in the period from 1992 to 2002 the Uzbek-Chinese trade turnover amounted to about \$136 million per year. (Just over 2% of the foreign trade turnover of Uzbekistan.) After 2003 though this figures began to change. In 2005, China and Uzbekistan signed 20 investment and credit agreements, which were worth over \$1.5 billion, including \$600 million in oil and gas industry.²¹ During the visit of President Hu Jintao to Uzbekistan "the first framework agreement, where Uzbekistan

¹³ See: V. Panfilova, "Ne tolko truby. Pekin zasypal Tsentralnuiu Aziiu lgotnymi kreditami," 16 December, 2009, available at [http://www.ng.ru/cis/2009-12-16/7_pekina.html], 18 July, 2013.

¹⁴ See: V. Dergachev, "Osobennosti kitaiskoi geopolitiki," *Vestnik analitiki*, No. 2, 2008.

¹⁵ See: M. Ogutchu, K. Ma, "Energeticheskaya geopolitika. Kitai i Tsentralnaya Azia," 23 November, 2007, available at [<http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1195811040>], 18 July, 2013.

¹⁶ See: Ibidem.

¹⁷ See: Sh. Turgunbaev, "Perspektivy prisutstviya Kitaya v Tsentralnoi Azii," 24 September, 2010, available at [<http://www.ia-centr.ru/expert/8968>], 18 December, 2012.

¹⁸ See: Ibidem.

¹⁹ D. Yuvachev, "Kitai idyot, emu—dorogu!" *Politika i obshestvo*, 9 November, 2009, available at [<http://www.nomad.su/?a=3-200911090233>], 18 July, 2013.

²⁰ See: M. Ogutchu, K. Ma, op. cit.

²¹ See: "Eksperty: Okhlazhdenie v 2004-2005 godu otnosheniy Uzbekistana s Zapadom pridalo moshchnyi impuls ego ekonomicheskim svyaziam s Kitayem," *IA Regnum*, 2006, available at [<http://www.regnum.ru/news/1219170.html>], 18 July, 2013.

obliges to supply up to 10 billion cu m of gas to China”²² was signed between the holding company Uzbekneftegaz and China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC). Active Chinese presence in gas and oil production are also observed in the Aral Sea areas of Uzbekistan. According to some experts, CNPC has provided \$209 million for a drilling rig.²³

In Turkmenistan, the bulk of China’s financial resources are set up in the oil and gas industry. During the visit of President of Turkmenistan to China in April 2006, the Chinese companies received the access to the development of oil and gas fields in Turkmenistan. At the end of 2008 the total volume of China’s financial resources invested in the economy of Turkmenistan constituted about \$1.15 million.²⁴ The most important event in Chinese-Turkmen relations was the start of operation of a pipeline from Turkmenistan to China in 2009. Being 7,000 km in length, the designed capacity of this pipeline makes up 40 billion cu m. About 30 billion cu m out of this was given by Turkmenistan. For the launch of the pipeline in June 2009, China granted Turkmenistan a loan of \$3 billion.²⁵

Even Kyrgyzstan is affected strongly by Chinese influence. On 12 January, 2010, during the visit of the head of the Central Agency for Development Aid, Investment and Innovation, M. Bakiyev, to China, the Protocol on Construction of 500 kV Datka-Kemin was signed in the amount of \$342 million. In this context, it was explained that the new lines will bypass the Central Asian energy ring. In addition, it was reported that Beijing was suggested to participate in the construction of the Kambarata 2, and the modernization of the production of polycrystalline silicon for solar power.²⁶

The control over the huge part of the Central Asian energy reserves and ability of political pressure allows Chinese to play an important role in the treatment of water issues in the region. China’s influence on the energy sector affects military and political dimensions that are directly related to the regional security. For this purpose China can make a good use of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The principles of the Declaration of the Heads of the SCO Member States of 6 June, 2005, allow China to influence stationing of foreign military bases in the territories of SCO member states.²⁷

U.S. and EU activities in Central Asia

The foreign policy and the geopolitical interests of the U.S. and the EU in Central Asia are almost similar. Both actors are geographically separated from the region and therefore cannot play the geopolitical role such as Russia, China and Iran. Almost a year after the adoption of the EU Strategy

²² See: “Uzbekistan i Kitai: na puti k novym vershinam sotrudnichestva,” 5 June, 2010, available at [http://www.jahon-news.uz/rus/rubriki/politika/uzbekistan_i_kitay_na_puti_k_novim_vershinam_sotrudnichestva.mgr], 18 July, 2013.

²³ See: E. Ahmadov, “Sino-Uzbek Relations and the Energy Politics of Central Asia,” *CACI Analyst*, 14 November, 2007.

²⁴ See: “Vsplesk ekonomicheskoi aktivnosti KNR v Turkmenii proizoshel posle poiavleniia dolgosrochnogo strategicheskogo interesa k gazovym resursam,” *IA Regnum*, 2012, available at [<http://www.regnum.ru/news/1218305.html>], 18 July, 2013.

²⁵ See: *Ibidem*.

²⁶ See: G. Mikhailov, “Debiut mladshogo Bakieva. Obeshchannoe Moskve Bishkek gotov otdat Pekinu,” 14 January, 2010, available at [http://www.ng.ru/cis/2010-01-14/6_bakiev.html], 18 July, 2013.

²⁷ See: A. Khojaev, “China’s Central Asian Policy (*Based on Chinese Sources*),” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 3 (45), 2007.

for Central Asia and the entry of the Obama administration in Washington, some new EU and U.S. policy initiatives are observed in the region. The current American-European geopolitical interests in the Central Asian region can be explained by two important challenges: First, the diversification of energy resources has been one of the key points on the agenda of the 21st century. The Central Asian region, with its rich fossil made attentive both the EU and U.S. Particularly, the recent global energy crisis and the EU's heavy dependence on Russian gas have increased their interests in the Caspian region and Central Asia.

The U.S.-EU interests in Central Asia are encouraged by the presence of coalition forces in Afghanistan and also their intentions to promote democracy and human rights in Central Asia. However, the former has been explained several times to be the highest priority for the foreign policy of the U.S. and EU. The US expressed to change the dialog with Central Asian governments and thus close eyes temporarily to the human rights abuses and persecution in the Central Asian countries. The U.S. needs guarantees of a safe withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan from the region and also hopes to find regional partners for the solution of the Iranian problem.

Regarding the water issue in Central Asia, the EU insists especially on the potential negative effects of climate change in Central Asia. However, it defends the position of downstream Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan regarding the management of water resources in the region. The EU opposes the construction of large dams on the regional rivers. The official representative of the European Union for Central Asia, Pierre Morel, said in April 2009 that "the EU is concerned about the unequal distribution of water resources in Central Asia and recommends that regional countries review their positions on the water." He proposes to build in the region small hydro power plants because the construction of large hydraulic systems of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan on the transboundary rivers can cause enormous damage to the economic, social and environmental situation of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.

Since 2010, the activities of the United States have intensified in the political life of Uzbekistan. President Islam Karimov's action plan in January 2010, to improve bilateral relations, as well as the 2010 visit of the U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke to Uzbekistan showed the convergence between the U.S. and Uzbekistan. Although no specific plans were announced, it was said in this Action Plan that Uzbekistan allowed the communication in high-level political consultations with the U.S. In addition, the Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Uzbekistan as a member of the delegation of U.S. businessmen early in 2011. The participation in the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) opened new significant economic opportunities for Uzbekistan's military-technical cooperation with the U.S.

Not only in Uzbekistan, but also in Tajikistan, the U.S. became active. For instance, Holbrooke expressed intentions to strengthen the relations with Tajikistan and its role in conflict resolution in Afghanistan. He offered the readiness to discuss water and energy issues with the Tajik government.

In Kyrgyzstan, Holbrooke led talks on a continued presence of the military base in Manas, and about renewal of American loan to build a military training center in Batken in Southern Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, Washington is seeking through the program "Partnership for Development Greater Central Asia (Great Central Asia)," which was initiated by the U.S. to be a part of the process of earning the energy resources in the region. For example, the American AES Corporation obtained the right to participate in the construction of channels to deliver electricity from the region to Afghanistan and Pakistan. This company works closely with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to be able to export electricity to the south.

Washington is also interested in the construction of the hydropower plant Dashtijuma in Tajikistan. Tajikistan hopes to attract investments from American and Pakistani companies to get finances for the construction of the hydropower plant. Dashtijuma can annually produce more than

15.6 billion kWh electricity. The plant is to be built on the river Panj, on the border with Afghanistan. The realization of this project would significantly increase electricity exports from Tajikistan to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The Geopolitical Game in the Region

The involvement of several non-regional powers in the region influences currently negatively overall cooperative situation in Central Asia. The competition for energy resources and the different interests of foreign powers hampers the cooperation of regional countries to form a functioning water and energy regimes. This is clearly to observe in a variety of political events in the region. For example, close Iran-Tajik partnership hurt the hydro-political relations between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan over the building of the Tajik hydropower stations, in which Iran will participate as an investor. Apart from that, Iran has confronted several times with the problem of transit through the territory of Uzbekistan to Tajikistan. Although Iran has declared its neutrality in Uzbekistan-Tajikistan conflict, it nonetheless backs up Tajikistan. To some degree the dialog is hindered between the Uzbekistan and Tajikistan due to the belief in Tajikistan that there is political and economic support by Iran. In general, one may think that Iran was interested in the formation of a regional power supply system and a regional cooperative regime. However, Iran is interested more in the regime formation in the Middle East but not in Central Asia.

By participating in hydro-energy projects in Tajikistan, Russia strengthens the conflict between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. A good example that illustrates this was the aggravation of Russian-Tajik relations in January and February 2009. During the official visit to Uzbekistan in 2009, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev highlighted with regard to intensifying conflict that the interests of all Central Asian countries must be considered in the solution of water and energy problems. This statement led to a political-diplomatic demarche in the Tajik press, in which it accused Russia for renouncing formerly reached agreements with Tajikistan.

In February 2009, Russia promised Kyrgyzstan a loan of \$1.7 billion for the construction of Kambarata 1 HPP, but this was interrupted shortly because of tightness in the Russian-Kyrgyz relations. Russia accused Kyrgyzstan in the futile consumption of Russian loans and in the use of money for the formation of a commercial investment fund. Apparently, the money for the construction of Kambarata 1 was used for presidential elections, won by K. Bakiev in July 2009. Among the reasons for the dissatisfaction of Russia analysts also called the cancellation of the closure of American military base in Manas airport, as well as the desire of Russian participation in some key projects, where Bishkek tried to replace it with China.

On other hand, the U.S. managed to maintain the Manas airbase in Kyrgyzstan by increasing threefold the annual rental charges. This had direct implications on domestic politics of Kyrgyzstan. The former president Bakiev, who gave Russia his word for the closure of Manas in exchange for funding Kambarata 1, did not dare after dialog with the Americans to close the Manas airbase. This ended with Bakiev's fall in the government and violent uprising in the country. Many associated this event with the direct intervention of Kremlin.²⁸ It is claimed that Russia has tried to involve itself in massive hydroelectric projects and open up its military base in Osh. At the same time, it tried to expel the U.S. Manas air base from Kyrgyzstan.²⁹ According to the report by the International Crisis Group,

²⁸ See: E.P. Kraak, "Power Nexus Skews Kyrgyz Dam Demand," 21 April, 2012, *Asia Times*, 18 July, 2013.

²⁹ See: S. Blank, "Is a U.S. Strategy for Central Asia Emerging? CACI Analyst, 17 March, 2010.

the distribution of the airbase was part of the agreement for the financing of Kambarata 1. In return for financing, Russia proposed to obtain the 50% stake in the Kambarata 1.³⁰

Moreover, in 2009 under the CSTO rapid reaction force, Kyrgyzstan and Russia agreed upon the stationing of the second Russian base in Kyrgyzstan. However, the agreement was stalled. There were three possible interpretations for this delay.

- Firstly, the planning and bureaucracy stayed on the way.
- Secondly, Russia and Kyrgyzstan had different opinions on the location and financial arrangements. Whereas Kyrgyzstan insisted on Batken as a preferred location for the base, Russia preferred the southern city of Osh, which houses the international airport.
- Thirdly, it was due to the delay in provision of funding for the construction of Kambarata 1 by Russia and the announcement of the American military center creation in Batken.

On 9 March the U.S. Embassy in Bishkek announced that the U.S. would invest \$5.5 million for the construction of a military training center. The announcement came the day before the meeting of the U.S. Central Command Commander, David Petraeus with Bakiev, where they discussed the bilateral efforts about Afghanistan and the continuing of U.S. presence in Manas. Thus, the military center was to continue to form the Kyrgyz armed forces in order to minimize the radical, terrorist and drug trafficking activities in Central Asia. The center was to be located in the Batken province in the Kyrgyz part of the Ferghana Valley.

In this context, also Uzbekistan's opposition to military bases near its borders could be the reason for the delay of the Russian base in Kyrgyzstan. This could explain why Kyrgyzstan insisted on the formation of military center near the border with Uzbekistan. Russia supports now Uzbekistan's demand for international feasibility study of the Tajik Rogun and Kyrgyz Kambarata 1 dams. Possible concerns about the growing of U.S. and Uzbek military cooperation and Kyrgyzstan's failure to comply with the promises on the fate of the U.S. base in the country could have caused Russia's rapprochement with Uzbekistan and delay of the loan in the amount of \$1.7 million for the construction of Kambarata 1.

Conclusion

The geopolitical competition of international players currently has negative implications for water management, as each new hydraulic system that is built without the consensus of all parties will have serious consequences for neighboring countries. The continuation of current trend in Central Asia promises following scenario in the development of water and energy nexus. The downstream countries (Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan) will continue to use water actively on irrigation purposes, causing in the region a permanent energy crisis, whereas the upstream countries (Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan) will use water solely for the purpose of energy-generating, resulting in a shortage of water resources in the lower parts of river basins.

Central Asia is one of the most interdependent regions in the world. It is not possible for regional countries to overcome the common regional problems by avoiding cooperation with each other. Each republic must try to understand the domestic needs of neighboring countries and rely on the others for the proper operation of water mechanisms. The particular interests of regional states can have negative impact in the long term for all involved actors and make them vulnerable to non-regional powers. The influence of outside forces can worsen the situation in the region, as they will

³⁰ See: E.P. Kraak, op. cit.

act due to their own political and economic interests. The Central Asian water crisis is a regional problem and the countries must seek solutions within the regional framework.

All in all, the solution for the water and energy nexus depends on the willingness of countries to cooperate. Since there is no effective international mechanism for resolving disputes regarding regulation of water resources, the mutual interests of regional countries cannot be considered. The solution of water and energy nexus requires primarily the willingness of states using water resources of transboundary rivers, in order to enter into constructive negotiations with a view to find mutual acceptable solution.

THE NEW GEOPOLITICS OF AFGHANISTAN AND THEIR IMPACT ON IRANIAN NATIONAL SECURITY

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ABSTRACT

The military intervention in Afghanistan following the 9/11 attacks of al-Qa'eda terrorists provided an opportunity for U.S. politicians to materialize their long-awaited dream of the monopolar world predicted by scholars like Fukuyama after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the bipolar world. Fukuyama, among others, believed that American liberal thought would be universally accepted and this would eventually lead to U.S. global domination.

The attitude of al-Qa'eda and the Taliban, on the one hand, and Afghanistan's strategic position, on the other, were not what U.S. officials needed for this purpose. However, Afghanistan could be used as an instrument to put pressure on Russia, Iran, China, and India. The Taliban's deplorable abuse of basic human rights, women, and narcotic drugs, etc. could justify the U.S.'s presence as a defender of human rights. Although Afghanistan was invaded in 2001,

and despite primary victories, the war is still going on more than 13 years later, and intervention is still continuing despite the change in U.S. administration. As a consequence of this occupation, the new geopolitics of this region are emerging with the presence of

NATO forces, the continuing war, the incompletely suppressed Taliban forces, and the increase in insecurity for Iran and Pakistan. While at the same time, the Afghan mujahidin forces are being replaced by technocrats.

KEYWORDS: *Iran, the U.S., geopolitics, national security, the Taliban, Afghanistan, NATO.*

Introduction

Following Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in the 1980s, U.S. attention was drawn to this region. The U.S. tried to turn this war-torn country into a Vietnam for the Soviet Union. To do this, the U.S. started supporting the mujahedin against the Soviet forces, providing them with financial aid, as well as sophisticated weapons.

However, after the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan, the status of Afghanistan changed in U.S. foreign policy, losing its priority. This change, in turn, opened a venue for regional and traditional players, e.g. Iran and Pakistan, to have a more active role. After the fall of Najibullah's communist regime in 1992 and at the beginning of the mujahedin rule, Iran was the most important player in Afghanistan. However, the emergence of the Taliban, which resulted in the fall of Kabul in 1994, made Pakistan the major player in Afghanistan.

For a long time, the Taliban's brutal measures and human rights violations, especially against women and minorities, was not seriously dealt with by international community. It was only after the 9/11 incident, which endangered U.S. national security, that a serious stand was taken against this regime, resulting in the fall of the Taliban and the occupation of Afghanistan.

Although Iran played a positive role in containing the Taliban, the direct presence of the U.S. in Afghanistan and occupation of this country changed the traditional geopolitics of this region and was considered a threat to Iran's national security, especially on its eastern borders, resulting in new security concerns for the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Research Method

The method of this research is descriptive-analytic. Published books and scholarly articles in different scientific journals were used. Interviews of governmental officials were another source for gathering data in this research.

Question of the Research

What is the Impact of Afghanistan's New Geopolitics after 11 September on Iran's National Security?

Research Hypotheses

Some elements of Afghanistan's new geopolitics, such as semi-stability and the anti-Taliban movement, have led to new opportunities, other elements, such as the increase in opium production and insurgency, have led to threats, while still others, like the U.S. presence, have had an ambiguous effect on Iran's national security.

Conceptual Framework: Reviewing the National Security Concept

National security is an applied concept in political science. Since it can be misused by governments as a legitimizing tool, it has always been applied with many ambiguities. A national security concept is ambiguous by definition due to its legitimizing impact on government actions. For example, it could be confined to national threats in order to be understood by audiences more easily.¹ We can see an example of this in the U.S.'s national security doctrine when former U.S. president George W. Bush transformed it from a deterrence-based doctrine to one based on preventive/preemptive warfare. Every act in this type of preventive war deals with immediate threats, hence the national security concept was confined to national threats.

Efforts to define the national security concept go back to the time when the nation-state concept was developed, and, since then, different definitions have been proposed. They include simple definitions, such as the view offered by John Morner, who defined security as "relative disengagement from harmful threats," and more complex ones, which include factors like determining future prosperity, independence, and cultural creativity.²

This paper intends to review the functionality of the security features affected by the new geopolitics of Afghanistan, which, in turn, affect Iran's national security at the macro-level. Therefore, common factors in all definitions of national security proposed or emphasized by scholars and experts in security issues have been extracted. In this paper, these fundamental factors have been used as the basis of future analyses. The common factors of these definitions can be divided into five categories. They will be considered in two general groups of limiting factors and threatening factors.

A. Threatening factors include those factors that threaten the innate components of a system. Those factors are as follows:

(1) Factors that undermine security; they are offered in the definitions of scholars like Barry Buzan, Akbar Rahman, etc. They include:

— Threats related to territorial integrity — separatism or aggression against part of a country.

¹ See: E. Goldman, "New Threat, New Identities and New Ways of War: The Source of Change in National Security Doctrine," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 2001, pp. 43-76.

² See: A. Rabiei, *National Security Studies: Introduction of National Security Theories in Third Word*, Institute for Politics and International Studies, Tehran, 2004, pp. 11-43 (in Farsi).

—Threats related to national sovereignty — undermining or partitioning the ruling government.

—Threats related to national solidarity — undermining culture, traditions, and so on.

- (2) Ideological factors are those that prevail in countries where politics are overshadowed by ideological behavior. Although these factors can be reduced to cultural factors in the non-ideological countries, in the case of countries such as Iran, ideology affects politics as much as geography does. Moreover, ideology results in creating a zero-sum game because, as many scholars, such as Richard Cooper, Frank Traeger, and Frank Simone, have pointed out in their definition of security, it is possible to bargain over interests, but it is meaningless to bargain over ideology.

B. Limiting factors are those factors that, at first glance, do not seem to threaten national security at the macro level. However, there are three characteristics that can transform limiting factors into threatening ones.

- The first characteristic is the ability to delegitimize the system, which appears to be a bigger problem for ideological regimes.
- The second characteristic is that these factors are of a multi-dimensional nature, so neglecting any of these dimensions may result in the unprecedented appearance of other factors creating a more complex problem. This can serially create a domino-type problem, showing the overall ineffectiveness of the system. For example, in a country lacking political stability or with fragile stability, its economy will be affected by instability, causing unemployment, for example, which, in turn, will result in an increase in crime, including drug trafficking. Finally, this can lead to insecurity in the country, its neighbors, the region, and even the whole world.
- The third characteristic is related to the growing trend of these factors. This may have an impact on a region in the early stages and cover the whole country in the later phases.

As illustrated before, limiting factors are those factors that affect a country's performance potential and could make the system inefficient and paralyzed. They include political, economic, and cultural factors.

Afghanistan Developments and Iranian National Security

Afghanistan is one of the very few countries that has never been under the direct colonization of other countries and this fact remains in the memory of each and every Afghani. A country that defeated the British Empire in the 19th century and the Soviet Union in the 20th century is now struggling with the U.S. Afghanistan has been called the cemetery of the superpowers.

The new geopolitics of Afghanistan is the main pillar of this paper, which tries to examine the fixed and variable parameters involved in forming this concept in the politics of Afghanistan and its effects on Iranian national security. The historical background has been considered in the review of these new geopolitics as far as the variable parameters are concerned.

Afghanistan and Delay in the Formation of a Nation-State

The delay in the formation of a nation-state in Afghanistan goes back into the history of this country and is regarded as one of the most important factors in shaping the new geopolitics of Afghanistan. Due to its geographic location, Afghanistan has always been a disputed area, the borders of which were exchanged among Iran, India, and state formations in the territory of Turkestan. Hence, it was never an independent entity.³ Except for "Herat," which was regarded as one of Iran's provinces,⁴ Afghanistan does not even identify itself as being a province of Iran, India, or Turkestan.

Ahmad Khan Abdali, an Afghan (Pashtun) commander in Nader Shah's Army (King of Iran), staged a rebellion after Nader's death, proclaimed an independent state, and captured Kabul and Kandahar. His territory only covered the Pashtun populated areas. By the time the British Empire entered Afghanistan, Herat was also annexed to those two territories, mainly to build a buffer state for colonized India against Iran and Russia.

The northern border of present Afghanistan was a consequence of the Great Game played by Britain and Russia, a term usually attributed to Arthur Conolly (1807-1842), an intelligence officer of the British East India Company's Sixth Bengal Light Cavalry. It was introduced into mainstream consciousness by British novelist Rudyard Kipling in his book *Kim* in relation to British-Russian relations. The Afghans did not have much of a role in shaping what is called Afghanistan today. The country was shaped within a short span of time of about fifty years mainly due to the weakness of Iran's rulers and the games played by outsiders. So it can be said that its identity has not been shaped yet. Three different races and ethnicities of Uzbeks, Farses, and Pashtuns began living in a country where none of them had a common history or identity. Even now after 250 years, these people live separately in different cities or different colonies within the cities.

Religion can be regarded as the next factor causing the delay in the formation of a nation-state. Located on the eastern frontier of the Islamic world, religion has always been a prominent factor in shaping Afghanistan's identity. While many ethnic groups are Shi'ites, many more are Sunnis, and the difference in religion is supported by the difference in ethnicity. This difference between religion and ethnicity has prompted riots. An example of this was observed when the Taliban entered Mazar-e-Sharif, where more than 6,000 were slaughtered and 15,000 went missing.

A: Non-State Building and its Implications for Iran's National Security

"The lack of security in Afghanistan has prevented any investment for production and it has resulted in huge unemployment. This in turn has caused new immigration of Afghans to Iran and the unwillingness of 1.7 million Afghans living in Iran to return home."⁵ Further, the government's measures to send these Afghans back home have come up against three obstacles.

³ See: P. Mojtahedzadeh, "Geography and Politics in Real World," *Political & Economic Ettelaat* (Tehran), No. 11-12, 1997, pp. 34-45 (in Farsi).

⁴ See: A. Partov, "Paris Pact: The Tragic Story of Afghanistan Separation from Iran," *Political & Economic Ettelaat* (Tehran), No. 1-2, 2009, pp. 14-23 (in Farsi).

⁵ F. Adelkhah, O. Zuzanna, "The Iranian Afghan," *The International Society for Iranian Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 2, 2007, p. 142.

- First, due to the poorly guarded borders, Afghans deported across the Afghanistan border will return to Iran. The cost of keeping them away from Iran is much higher than what the government budget allocates for this purpose or the aid granted by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).
- Second, the ad hoc plans to return these immigrants to their homes are usually postponed a few weeks after their inception due to the intervention of the Afghanistan government. Hamid Karzai's intervention suspended such a plan in 2008.
- Third, there is a popular belief that there are no borders in the Islamic world. There are some who believe that being a Muslim alone gives one the right to live in Islamic countries and that Muslims have no need for a visa to live in Iran. Although this belief does not have many supporters now owing to the public's willingness to deport illegal foreign nationals, it prevailed in the first decade after the victory of the Islamic revolution in 1979, concurrent with the Soviet attack on Afghanistan.

Iran itself suffers from a high unemployment rate, which was registered as 12.5% in 2009.⁶ According to a study conducted in 2004, "more than 3 million Afghans have been living in Iran."⁷ Recent statistics show that 1.5 to 2 million Afghans live in Iran at present, whereby about 50 percent of them can be considered able-bodied.

Since the average job creation capacity in Iran is 350 thousand jobs per year, this large population has caused many problems in dealing with unemployment. Since most of these Afghans work for minimum wages, the wage level has been kept low. However, Afghans do not have utility and other municipal expenses, nor do they pay taxes, so Iranians who work in the same jobs for such low wages suffer a lot. This process has increased the number of people who live below the poverty line in Iran.⁸ But as the poverty line in Afghanistan covers more than 53 percent of the population, Afghans think that Iran has much better working conditions than Afghanistan.⁹

These illegal migrants are also creating a security problem. The different culture, as well as their inability to establish an identity in the host country, has created a new dimension to this problem, "the involvement of some Afghan nationals in social crimes."¹⁰

B: Implications for Iran's Social Status

Yet another dimension to the immigration problem is marriages—even illegal ones. "Statistics offer a different number for Afghan marriages registered in Iran, which varies from 300-500 thousand."¹¹ "The average population growth rate among Afghan families is as high as 4.7%,"¹² and most of those families demand Iranian birth certificate for their children. This is how Afghans residing in Iran believe they can guarantee their stay in Iran. Although the government has notified the

⁶ [www.indexmundi.com/iran/unemplimentrate], 11 February, 2011.

⁷ "Analysis of Afghanistan's Geopolitical Role in Iranian National Security," *Strategic Defense Studies Quarterly*, No. 19, 2004, p. 104 (in Farsi).

⁸ [www.indexmundi.com/iran/unemplimentrate], 21 March, 2011.

⁹ [www.hous.gov\internationalrelation\105th\ap\wsap212982.htmwww.indexmundi.com/afghanistan/populationbelowpovertyline], 12 May, 2011.

¹⁰ "Analysis of Afghanistan's Geopolitical Role in Iranian National Security," p. 140.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 23.

¹² F. Adelhah, O. Zuzanna, op. cit., p.143.

registration offices about the difficulties created by registering these marriages, the problem still continues. One consequence of these marriages, which are mostly unregistered, is that when those married Afghans are deported, they leave their families in Iran. Thus children born in Iran are not entitled to an Iranian birth certificate or Iranian nationality, which means they are not allowed to study in Iranian schools. At best, they will be able to register at Afghan schools, which is extremely expensive. Since they do not have Iranian birth certificates and are considered illegal immigrants, they mostly do not attend any school.

This is a complex problem at the macro level because those children who consider themselves to be Iranian are unable to study at any school. They will be illiterate, nor do they have any form of ID. However, they have grown up in Iranian society and do not want to go and live in Afghanistan. They are very good target for the drug traffickers, mafia, and criminal groups active in the region.

This problem is further complicated by the fact that these families need support. Even if an Iranian woman is married to an illegal foreign national, she is still an Iranian national and entitled to have her rights as a citizen. This problem has also affected the international private laws practiced in Iran. Iran has been forced to add an exclusion clause concerning Afghan migrants to the law on blood and soil that is practiced there for obtaining citizenship.

Although free education for Afghans could potentially pave the way for the continuation of these marriages, the Iranian government wants these children (under certain conditions) to study in Iran and become familiar with this country's society and culture so that when they return to Afghanistan they can play a positive role and upgrade their culture as well.

The Role of the Central Asian States (CAS) in the New Geopolitics of Afghanistan

With the fall of the Soviet Union, the Central Asian states, including Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan, became independent. Iran was among the first countries to recognize their independence and, since these countries are located on Iran's geopolitical borders, building close cultural, political, and economic relations with them became a priority of Iran's foreign policy. Although these countries have a virgin and ready market for investment, the difference in technological level between them and Iran has limited Iran's maneuvering power in the economic sphere.¹³ Some experts believe that the ECO (Economic Cooperation Organization) is a useless organization. Afghanistan does not have close relations with those countries and lacks the potential to build strong economic relations.

The appearance of these five new countries in the north of Afghanistan can be considered an important issue for Iran with respect to its national security, as well as its ideology. In terms of national security, issues related to the Central Asian States can be divided into both limiting and threatening factors. There are two important issues about this new paradigm for Iran. The first one is re-

¹³ See: M. Haghighi, "Obstacles to Integration in the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)," *Middle East Quarterly* (Tehran), No. 7, 1995, pp. 140-142 (in Farsi).

lated to the U.S.'s presence in these countries, which Iran considers a threatening factor for its national security, while the second factor relates to the oil and gas resources in CA, which can be regarded as either a limiting or a threatening factor, or both.

A: The Presence of U.S. and NATO Troops in the CAS

The Near East is defined as a region constituting the Arab world, Israel, Turkey, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. This region has the largest sources of fossil fuel, which makes it so attractive to the global powers. This is a region where the U.S. has key allies and important interests.

As U.S. national security strategists emphasize, the CA region is a part of the Greater Near East where the U.S. has many interests. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the U.S. tried to prevent Russia becoming a world power, so its presence in the former Soviet republics, and even encouraging its allies to do the same thing, was an important agenda to pursue. As a consequence of this agenda, the U.S. had a military base called Manas in Kyrgyzstan (now it is the Transit Center), forces from Germany acting under NATO cover were stationed at an air base located in Termez (Uzbekistan), and until 2002, there were French troops at a logistic center located in Tajikistan. Even the Netherlands have tried to obtain permission to deploy their F-16 jets in the Bishkek airport (Kyrgyzstan).¹⁴

Iran considers the presence of these troops as a limiting factor for its national security because although Iran hoped and expected to have a wide range of economic, political, and cultural relations with these countries soon after their independence, unfortunately this did not happen. Iran's eagerness to have a cultural impact on these countries could not match Russia's political dominance over them. Moreover, the political influence that Iran hoped to have through inviting them to become members in the ECO was not effective because these countries had other foreign policy priorities. For example, at a summit meeting of the Economic Cooperation Organization in 1996, Uzbekistan threatened to leave the ECO if Iran continued to politicize this organization.

Meanwhile, the U.S.'s presence in CA minimized Iran's chances of exploiting the potential that emerged in the region after the fall of the Soviet Union. Now the Americans are able to move easily between their bases in Afghanistan and Central Asia. Before the September 9/11 attacks, U.S. troops could only reach this region through air routes, but now they have widened their influence in the region to the extent that they can move on the ground as well. The U.S. is now a big economic partner of these countries. The extreme economic weakness of these states, as well as the broad financial capacity of the U.S. and its western allies can undoubtedly intensify western influence in this region. For example, Tajikistan, which shares a common language, culture, and civilization with Iran and logically should be Iran's biggest economic partner, enjoys this partnership with Austria, France, and the U.S. in terms of import and with Sweden, Norway, and Austria in export.¹⁵ In general, Iran feels that the U.S.'s military presence in this region has weakened its bargaining power in regional policy.

Iran is trying to overcome its isolation in foreign policy, mainly created by the tension in relations with the U.S., by stressing regional convergence or regionalism. Despite Shahram Chubin's view¹⁶ (he says U.S.-Iran relations are facing a paradoxical stage with both sides choosing between

¹⁴ See: I.I. Pop, "Russia, EU, NATO, and the Strengthening of the CSTO in Central Asia," *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 3, 2009, p. 285.

¹⁵ See: M. Haghighi, op. cit., p. 1024.

¹⁶ Cm.: Sh. Chubin, "The Iranian Nuclear Riddle after June 12," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 1, 2010, p. 163.

bad and worse), it can be said that there is no paradox in U.S.-Iran relations. Iran has shown its eagerness to play an active role in solving regional problems, despite its differences with the U.S. Iran has shown that stabilization in Afghanistan and the region is important and has played an active role as far as this region is concerned.

Iran's isolation has confined its ability to play a more active role in the region. Iran could use its good offices due to the existence of a common culture, but its maneuverability has been limited by this isolation factor, which can be considered a limiting factor of its national security.

The next problem faced by Iran as a result of the U.S.'s presence and its easy access to the region through Afghanistan is the activities of Washington's allies, especially Israel. Israel's presence on the Iranian borders is considered a threat to its national security. The Saudis too are supporting the extremist Wahhabis, which is considered a threat to Iran's national security.¹⁷ Saudi Arabia encourages this religious movement through financial support, although in our opinion, this support will only create violence and hatred in this region and increase the differences between the Shi'ites and Wahhabis. The rise of Wahhabism in CA could also jeopardize any Iranian investment activities, officially or unofficially.

B: Energy Pipeline Passing through Afghanistan

Emphasizing the importance of energy in this region in its 2005 report, the International Energy Agency (IEA) indicated several factors. Those factors include:

- Growth in the global economy and population during the next 30 years will be the primary cause of the increasing demand for energy.
- It is estimated that world energy requirements will increase by 66 percent over the next 30 years.
- During this period, fossil fuels will continue to be the most important source of energy.
- Today, the security of energy supply is the top priority and a matter of concern for energy policymakers.¹⁸

This region is estimated to possess approximately 60 billion barrels of oil reserves equivalent to 11 years' consumption of the whole Europe. According to other estimates, total reserves amount to about 200 billion barrels of oil.¹⁹ Tables 1 and 2 below show the total oil and gas production of the region in 2009.

The tables show that the countries of this region have a high capacity for generating energy, especially in the gas industry. Accessing these resources has been the primary target of Western countries and oil companies. One of the major projects belonged to UNOCAL, which began negotiations with the Taliban on constructing a pipeline from Turkmenistan to Pakistan through Afghanistan.²⁰ This research does not review the motives behind the U.S attack on Afghanistan, or the extent to which it might be energy-oriented. However, the reemergence of construction of the Turkmenistan-

¹⁷ See: M. Haghighi, op. cit., p. 1052.

¹⁸ See: B. Amirahmadian, "Rising of Strategic Euro-Asian Territory," *Hamshahri Diplomatic*, No. 84, 2006, p. 73 (in Farsi).

¹⁹ [www.hous.gov/internationalrelation/105th/ap/wsap212982.htm], 2 May, 2011.

²⁰ See: A. Cohen, C. Lisa, G. Owen, "The Proposed Iran-Pakistan-India Gas Pipeline: An Unacceptable Risk to Regional Security," *Heritage Foundation*, 2008, pp. 2-6.

Table 1

**Production Volumes of Gas
in the Central Asian Countries (cubic meters)**

Country	Natural Gas	Year of Estimate
Uzbekistan	59,100,000,000	2010
Turkmenistan	42,400,000,000	2010
Kazakhstan	20,200,000,000	2011
Tajikistan	38,000,000	2009
Kyrgyzstan	15,400,000	2009
Source: [www.indexmundi.com].		

Table 2

**Production Volumes of Oil
in the Central Asian Countries (bbl/day)**

Country	Oil	Year of Estimate
Kazakhstan	1,608,000	2011
Turkmenistan	216,000	2010
Uzbekistan	87,000	2010
Kyrgyzstan	946	2010
Tajikistan	220	2010
Source: [www.indexmundi.com].		

Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline under another project called TAPI was a matter of concern for Iran in a different way. First, if this project becomes operational, Iran would lose its transit revenues, while Pakistan would earn \$14 billion during a 30-year period, which, in turn, would be a limiting factor for Iran's national security.

The second effect of any such pipeline is that it would omit Iran from the regional equations in the energy sphere. If the gas of this region passes through Iran, it could connect world energy security with Iran's security.

The U.S. and the Presence of NATO Troops in Afghanistan

Although U.S. strategists like Henry Kissinger believe that the U.S.'s presence in this region was necessary prior to 9/11, this incident paved the way for the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan. Afghanistan was occupied by U.S. and NATO troops in a short time. Many reasons have been listed for the start of the war, from a way to stabilize U.S. hegemony to a war for energy. Many experts

suggest that the war was an effort by the Bush administration to please oil companies and guarantee the security of energy flows.²¹ Other reasons were also given, such as fighting the terrorism hubs, or a war to promote democracy and human rights.

In the new geopolitics of Afghanistan, the U.S. and NATO presence has had considerable effects on Iranian national security based on threatening and limiting factors.

Before the 9/11 incident, Iran and Pakistan were considered two of the most important players in the geopolitics of Afghanistan, and the internal players on the political arena in Afghanistan mostly advocated for them. Then personalities such as Ismail-khan, Rabbani, Khalili, and Masoud were among the supporters of Iran policy, and Pakistan tried to play the Pashtun's cards. However, before the U.S. attack on Afghanistan, the most powerful political character of Afghanistan, i.e. Ahmad Shah Masoud, was killed during a suicidal operation by al-Qa'eda. Rabbani, despite his sympathies with Karzai's new government, was removed from power. Ismail-khan, a close ally of the new government, was called a warlord and unfit for the democratic process (although he was eventually appointed to head one ministry).

The new government formed in Afghanistan is built of two layers. The first layer is composed of those Afghans who lived in the United States, which includes Karzai as the best known one. The second layer includes those Afghans who do not have any direct connection with the U.S. but have had relations with U.S. allies such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan. Provincial and second-rank officials like General Dostum or General Fahim, whose orientation toward the United States has emerged gradually, are included in this group.

During Afghanistan's 2009 presidential election, which concurred with the first year of Obama's presidency, Abdullah Abdullah was considered Obama's intellectual representative, but Karzai kept his place as president. We can conclude that Iran has always had a representative in the Afghanistan's political environment, even before 9/11, but now it is somehow isolated in the new geopolitics of Afghanistan.

The Drug Mafia and Regional Security

Opium poppy production has historically been a problem in Afghanistan, which, in turn, has caused many problems for Iran. After the U.S. appeared in Afghanistan, it was expected that this problem would be solved. However, opium poppy production was not stopped, rather it has increased several times. According to U.S. figures, in 1997 and during the Taliban rule, 1,700 metric tons or, according to the United Nations, 4,600 metric tons of narcotics were produced in Afghanistan²²; "while the figures show that during Karzai's rule in 2005 more than 6,100 metric tons of narcotics were produced."²³ The areas under opium poppy cultivation also have grown considerably. It can be shown that the U.S.'s presence in the new geopolitics of Afghanistan has increased drug production. This growth is even higher than in 1990 (when Afghanistan was not under occupation). According to the statistics published by the United Nations, in 1990 the aver-

²¹ See, for example: A.H. Sadri, "Geopolitics of Oil & Energy in CA," *The International Studies Association 50th Annual Conference*, New York, 2009, pp. 15-18.

²² See: GAO/ois-00-12r, *Southwest Asia Heroine Production*, 21 June, 2000, p. 12.

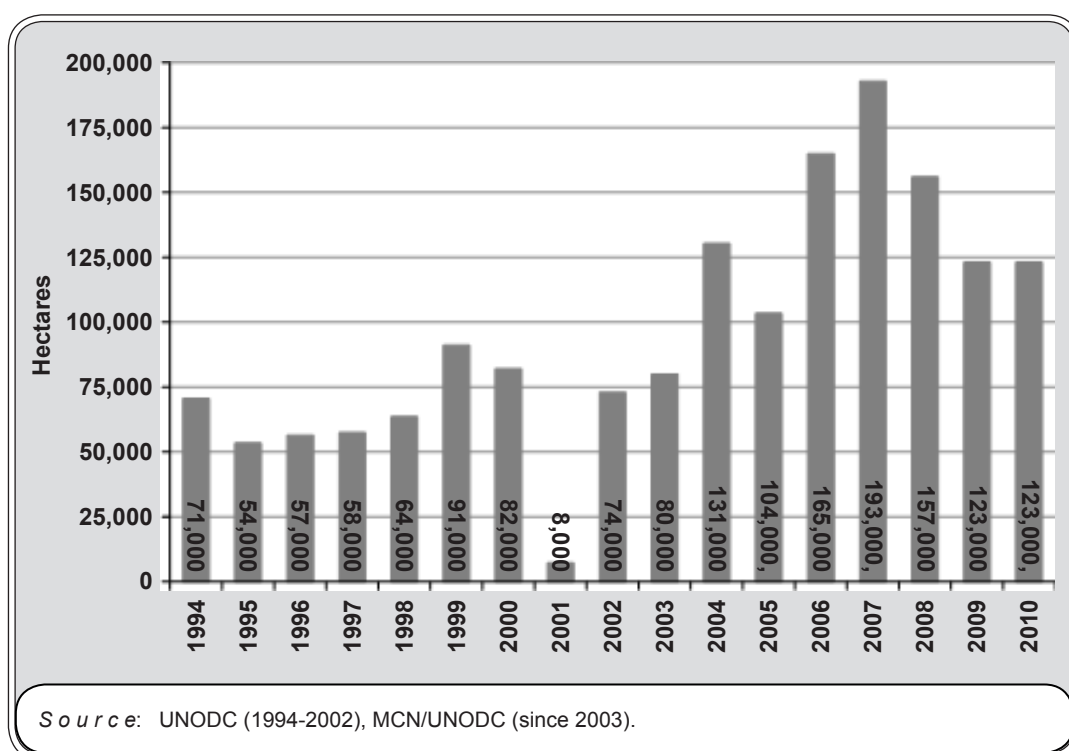
²³ H. Kruetzmann, "Afghanistan and the Opium World Market: Poppy Production and Trade," *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 5, 2007, p. 615.

age areas under opium poppy cultivation were estimated to be 60,000 hectares, but this increased to 123,000 hectares in 2010. Only in 2001 did the areas under opium poppy cultivation decrease to 8,000 hectares compared to 82,000 hectares the previous year as a result of the Taliban declaring its production illegal. Since the collapse of the Taliban regime in 2002, the areas under opium poppy cultivation have risen considerably to the extent that they reached 123,000 hectares in 2010.²⁴

This problem can cause much insecurity in Iran and is regarded as a threatening factor for Iran's national security. Figure 1 shows the areas under opium cultivation in Afghanistan from 1994 to 2010.

Figure 1

**Opium Cultivation in Afghanistan,
1994-2010, ha**



According to U.N. statistics, this huge amount has resulted in an inflow of \$1.3 billion to Afghanistan, which is equivalent to half of the country's GDP value for 2000.²⁵ Given the lateral consequences, the total amount is much more than the calculated one. The costs include transfer, security, as well as hygienic issues. The amount of smuggled weapons and armaments revealed discloses the extent of the security threats to Iran's national security.²⁶

²⁴ See: *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan: An International Problem*, UNODC, New York, 2003.

²⁵ See: *Ibidem*.

²⁶ See: M. Bolvardi, "Poppy Production in Afghanistan and its Impact on Iranian National Security," *CA and the Caucasus Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 49, 2005.

The Presence of Foreign Powers in Afghanistan and Iranian National Security

As some experts suggest, the costs and consequences of direct and overt action against Iran are so high for the U.S. that this option is not seriously considered by Iranian strategists. However, the U.S.'s presence in Afghanistan and the new geopolitics created by it have increased the possibility of U.S. involvement in provoking anti-Iran groups in the region and create instability in Iran's eastern regions. The U.S.'s hostile policies against Iran within the new geopolitics of Afghanistan are considered a threatening factor for Iran.

In 2010 and during the U.S.'s presence in Afghanistan, Abdolmalek Rigi, a terrorist implicated in many bombings and operations against innocent people, as well as the police force in two of Iran's provinces, Sistan & Baluchistan and the Kerman provinces, was captured. The evidence offered and the statements by Iran's minister of intelligence showed that Rigi had close connections with the Americans. He confessed in his interrogations that the U.S. even gave him a passport and promised to protect him in Afghanistan.

Failure to Defeat the Taliban

Another element within the new geopolitics of Afghanistan is the continuation of the Taliban's presence and their power to change the political scene there. During Karzai's visit to Pakistan in 2009, he directly requested negotiations with them. The continuity of the Taliban's presence in Afghanistan proved that the war, whose aim was to wipe out terrorism and later extended to Iraq, is not over. Today, the Taliban group has not only not weakened, it has retained its potential. Although the Taliban seems to have lost sovereignty in Afghanistan, it retains its influence in the regions located on Afghanistan's border with Pakistan (mainly among the Pashtuns).

The U.S.'s new strategy declared by the Obama administration has divided the foreign wars into two categories: the Bad War (the war in Iraq) and the Good War (in Afghanistan). This strategy demands the commencement of negotiations with the Taliban. This in turn reflects a weakness and the failure to reach a favorable result in Afghanistan.

The U.S.'s failure to suppress the Taliban group and the continuity of its presence on Afghanistan's political arena, as well as the emphasis placed on talks with the moderate Taliban, who are able to provoke a struggle against Iran, have all had consequences for Iran's national security, including the expansion of Wahhabism and provocation of anti-Shi'ite sentiments.

At present, thousands of religious schools in Afghanistan and Pakistan are training extremists who treat the West, especially the U.S., as their main enemy. Their other targets include Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. As a result of U.S. policies toward these groups and its tendency to use them as leverage against Iran, the future of security in the region, as well as world peace is considered doomed.

Conclusion

The new geopolitics of Afghanistan have been mostly affected by the U.S.'s presence. This has created limitations for Iran's national security. The U.S.'s hostile policy toward Iran has decreased Iran's ability to have an influence and play a positive role in the region. The emergence of new players

in Afghanistan and the decreasing influence of two traditional players, Iran and Pakistan, have affected Iran's national security. These effects have been shown in terms of both threatening and limiting factors. At the same time, the new geopolitics of Afghanistan have also created some opportunities for Iran's national security, such as removing al-Qa'eda and the Taliban from power in Kabul.

Iran's traditional tools and leverages on Afghanistan policy have been dramatically reduced in the new geopolitics in Afghanistan to the extent that they are no longer considered determining factors in Afghanistan politics. The new geopolitics have provided Iran with good opportunities in the economic sphere, and Iran can be a bridge for international aid to Afghanistan. The role of Shi'ite groups, which traditionally favor Iran, has become more prominent in Afghanistan's new geopolitics, while the chances of their rival to repress them have been diminished.

GEORGIA'S FOREIGN POLICY AFTER THE OCTOBER 2012 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The author looks at the key foreign policy trends and changes that became obvious after the parliamentary elections of October 2012.

The article's first part describes Georgia's foreign policy under President Saakashvili when Georgia received its first conceptual documents—the National Security Concept and the Military Doctrine—both geared toward Europe and the closest possible cooperation with NATO, revised regional relations, and a new agenda.

The second part deals with the changes in Georgia's foreign policy that took place after the presidential elections of 1 October,

2012, when the opposition Georgian Dream Coalition won the majority of seats in the Georgian parliament and the post of prime minister for its leader, Bidzina Ivanishvili. The newly emerging relations between Georgia and Russia and the efforts of the Georgian leaders to resume their dialog with Moscow are also analyzed.

The concluding part offers an overview of Georgia's relations with the European structures, its progress toward an association with the European Union, the course of the talks, and the way this association will affect the main spheres of the country's life.

KEYWORDS: Georgia, Mikhail Saakashvili, foreign policy, the Rose Revolution, the Georgian Dream, Bidzina Ivanishvili, Abkhazia, South Ossetia.

Introduction

As an independent state, Georgia, very much like other Soviet successor-states, has had to look after its national interests; this has meant a long and torturous road of state-building and conceptualizing of its foreign policy. The country has lived through a civil war, settled its ethno-political conflicts, and survived the socioeconomic and political crises that slowed down its movement in the chosen direction.

Throughout Georgia's long history, foreign policy has been and remains one of the focal points. During the two decades of its independence, Georgia has travelled a road from anti-Russian (anti-Soviet) sentiments, which dominated under Zviad Gamsakhurdia (the country's first president, 1991), to the more or less balanced relations with Russia and the West established under President Eduard Shevardnadze (1995-2003).

The Rose Revolution marked another U-turn: the "young reformers" led by Mikhail Saakashvili upturned the results of the 2003 parliamentary elections, rebelled against the president's policies, and forced him to resign.

After coming to power, the "revolutionaries" and "young reformers" steered the country toward the West, which damaged Georgia's relations with Russia and pushed the country into a war with it in August 2008. It ended with Russia recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia; diplomatic relations between Moscow and Tbilisi were discontinued and have not yet been restored.

On 1 October, 2012, the opposition Georgian Dream Coalition won the majority of seats in the Georgian parliament and the post of prime minister for its leader, Bidzina Ivanishvili. From their very first days in power, the new people in Tbilisi announced that they were determined to partly revise the country's foreign policy, move away from the anti-Russian course of the previous government, and drop its provocative rhetoric. They remain devoted to strategic relations with the United States and well-balanced good-neighborly relations with Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey. After coming to power, they put partner and friendly relations with the EU and NATO and Georgia's further integration with them on the agenda.

Georgia's Foreign Policy under President Saakashvili

The main foreign policy trends pursued by the Georgian Dream Coalition were formulated and consolidated when Mikhail Saakashvili and his United National Movement party were in power.

Mikhail Saakashvili came to power on the wave of protest rallies in November 2003, which, after starting as scattered events of the opposition dissatisfied with the results of the parliamentary elections, developed into mass riots, clashes with the police, and a regime change. The "young revolutionaries" led by Saakashvili found themselves at the helm. These events went down in history as the Rose Revolution.

A couple of months later, early in 2004, the new Georgian leaders launched reforms designed to adjust the country to Western standards. They wasted neither time nor words to inform the country that they saw no alternative to pro-Western foreign policies, NATO membership, and affiliation with the EU. This did nothing for the already far from simple relations between Russia and Georgia.

Very much in line with international practice, the Georgian leaders formulated and put on paper the country's foreign policy priorities and identified the national security threats. After twelve months

in power they completed, with U.S. financial and technical support, and presented to the public the National Security Concept adopted by the parliament on 8 July, 2005.¹ The document outlined Georgia's foreign policy priorities as: "a 'strategic partnership' with the United States, Ukraine, Turkey and Azerbaijan, a 'partnership' with Russia, and 'pragmatic cooperation' with Armenia."

The catastrophic August 2008 war with Russia stirred up talks about the need to revise, at least partly, the 2005 Concept; on 23 December, 2011, the parliament, with a majority of 150 votes "for," passed and approved the document's new version.²

As could be expected, the new document described Russia as one of the main threats to Georgia's national security; it referred to the "occupation of Georgian territories by the Russian Federation" and "the risk of renewed military aggression from Russia," as well as "terrorist acts organized by the Russian Federation from the occupied territories." The changes to the New Concept were related only to relations with Russia and the way it was perceived by the Georgian leaders and Georgian public.³

Part 5 entitled "Integration into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union" can be described as one of the central points of the new document, which says, in part that "accession to NATO is an important foreign policy objective of Georgia." At the same time, the Concept pointed out that "the military aggression by the Russian Federation could not alter Georgia's course toward democratic development and NATO integration" and that "since 2004, Georgia has achieved significant progress in cooperation with NATO."⁴

The Concept paid a lot of attention to relations with the United States as Georgia's strategic partner: "Georgia continues to deepen its strategic partnership with the U.S., a fact reflected in the U.S.-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership signed in January 2009."⁵ The document presupposes cooperation in the security sphere.

Under the signed agreements, Washington pledged to shoulder some of the expenses needed to modernize the armed forces and upgrade Georgia's defense capability. After the defeat of August 2008, the Georgian leaders, encouraged and supported by their Western partners, the U.S. in particular, began reforming the country's Armed Forces. Between 2009 and 2010 Georgia received about \$32.2 million of non-repayable credit from the United States to cover its military needs.⁶ According to available information, in 2014 the U.S. will cut down its aid to \$12 million⁷; in 2012-2014 Washington will allocate \$44.4 million of aid.⁸ The Western donor-countries allocated \$4.5 billion to restore the military and civilian war-damaged infrastructure.

The new National Security Concept continued to describe the relations with neighbors (Turkey and Azerbaijan) as strategic and with Armenia as "close cooperation" and said: "Georgia believes that the establishment of a common approach to the region's future development is extremely important.

¹ See: "National Security Concept Finalized," *Civil.ge*, 15 May, 2005, available at [<http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=9887&search=>], 5 December, 2013.

² See: "Georgia's New National Security Concept," *Civil.ge*, 23 December, 2011, available at [<http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24299&search=>], 5 December, 2013.

³ See: "National Security Concept of Georgia," available at [<http://www.nsc.gov.ge/files/files/National%20Security%20Concept.pdf>], 5 December, 2013.

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ "SShA i Gruzia podpisali khartiyu o Evroatlanticheskom sotrudnichestve," *Rosbalt*, 9 January, 2009, available at [<http://www.rosbalt.ru/main/2009/01/09/608456.html>], 5 December 2013.

⁶ See: J. Melikian, "Military Reforms and Stability in the Southern Caucasus," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 11, Issue 2, 2010.

⁷ See: "SShA urezhut ob'em bezvozmezdnoy pomoshchi stranam Tsentralnoy Azii i Kavkaza," *EurasiaNet*, 11 April, 2013 [<http://russian.eurasianet.org/node/60006>], 2 March 2014.

⁸ See: "Tsentrlnaya Azia i Kavkaz: Washington nameren sokratit assignovaniya na okazanie zarubezhnoy pomoshchi," *EurasiaNet*, 17 February, 2011 [<http://russian.eurasianet.org/node/58554>], 2 March 2014.

Deepening regional cooperation and developing a common economic space and market would promote the stability and well-being of the region.”⁹

Under President Saakashvili, the liberal economic reforms transformed Georgia, a predominantly agrarian country, into an importer of agricultural products¹⁰; Turkey seized the opportunity to become Georgia’s largest trade partner by supplying Georgia with its products to fill the deficit the latter was experiencing. In 2007, the two countries signed a free trade agreement.

Azerbaijan is not far behind: both countries belong to the leading group of three biggest trade partners and investors. This is confirmed by the following figures: in January-October 2013, Turkey’s export to Georgia amounted to \$1.1 billion, while Georgia’s foreign trade turnover reached about \$1.2 billion.¹¹ During the same period, Azerbaijan moved into second place among Georgia’s trade partners with a total trade turnover of over \$1.06 billion.¹²

Georgia is a link between Turkey and Azerbaijan; cooperation with both countries is good for tourism and trade, which brings economic gains and geopolitical advantages. It is planned to commission the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway in 2014.

Two pipelines—the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline—bring Caspian hydrocarbons to the Turkish and European markets across the Georgian territory.¹³

Political relations between Georgia and its two main trade partners have been developing in full accordance with its economic dependence on Turkey and Azerbaijan.

Georgia’s foreign policy prior to the parliamentary elections of 2012 can be summarized as follows:

1. The pro-Western vector and integration with NATO and the EU are still the main priorities.¹⁴
2. Military-strategic relations with the United States, which lost its former interest in the Southern Caucasus after the Democrats came to power, continue to be pertinent.
3. In the last ten years, at the regional level, Georgia has been demonstrating its consistency as a transit country, a so-called geopolitical crossroads, a Caucasian hub at the junction of the North-South and West-East axes. However, the financial crisis, as well as monopolization of power and economic assets, caused discontent in Georgia, which led to a democratic change in power, an unprecedented event in the country’s recent history.

Foreign Policy after the October 2012 Parliamentary Elections

The parliamentary elections of 1 October, 2012 brought about a change in the government, the country’s domestic situation, and its foreign policy. On 25 October, 2012, the parliament en-

⁹ “National Security Concept of Georgia.”

¹⁰ See: “Vladimir Papava: Zigzagi reformirovaniya ekonomiki postsovetsoy Gruzii,” available at [<http://bizzone.info/articles/1382134945.php>], 7 December 2013.

¹¹ See: “Melsida Lomidze: V yanvare-oktyabre ob'em eksporta iz Gruzii v Turtsiyu povysilsya na 25%,” available at [<http://newsgeorgia.ru/economy/20131129/216167269.html>], 7 December, 2013.

¹² See: “Melsida Lomidze: V yanvare-oktyabre eksport iz Gruzii v Azerbaidzhan povysilsya na 11,2%,” available at [<http://newsgeorgia.ru/economy/20131128/216162812.html>], 7 December 2013.

¹³ See: “Michael Cecire: Zero Problems 2.0: Turkey as a Caucasus Power,” 20 September, 2012, available at [<http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/12354/zero-problems-2-0-turkey-as-a-caucasus-power>], 5 December, 2013.

¹⁴ Until the Agreement on Association with the EU and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement are signed.

dorsed the government program For a Strong, Democratic, and United Georgia, and the Georgian Dream Coalition led by Ivanishvili¹⁵ pledged to realize it. It outlined the foreign policy priorities of the governments of Ivanishvili and Irakli Garibashvili, who became prime minister after Ivanishvili. The program offered a glimpse of the new government's social, economic, and foreign policies.

An analysis shows that the main foreign policy vectors have not gone far from those outlined in the National Security Concept 2011: "The determination to join the EU, Euro-Atlantic orientation, and integration with NATO are the stated priorities of the government."

"Georgia will maintain relations with the United States as its main ally, according to the terms defined by the Charter of Strategic Partnership."¹⁶ Relations with neighboring countries remained the same, with minor adjustments. The prime minister and other top officials started talking about a more balanced foreign policy in the Southern Caucasus.¹⁷ The new government dropped the anti-Russian rhetoric of the previous regime and said that "Georgia will try to initiate a dialogue with Russia using international mechanisms, with the objective to work out a strategy of gradual reduction of the crisis in bilateral relations."

On 12-14 November, 2012, the Georgian prime minister paid his first official visit to Brussels to confirm that the EU remained Georgia's foreign policy priority and its importance for implementing Georgia's foreign policy tasks.

To preserve well-balanced relations with his Georgian neighbors and in line with the policies of the previous government, Ivanishvili visited Baku on 26 December, 2012, Erevan, on 17-18 January, 2013, and Ankara on 9 February, 2013. Some of his statements, however, caused negative responses in Azerbaijan and Armenia.

While in Baku, he openly doubted the usefulness of the Baku-Tbilisi-Akhalkalaki-Kars railway project, which was interpreted in Baku as an unfriendly statement.

In Erevan, he praised the complementary model of the Armenian foreign policy course, which caused negative feelings in the parliamentary minority.

These statements could be interpreted as a hint at possible changes in Georgia's foreign policy vector. On the other hand, this was probably an attempt to negotiate lower prices on Azeri gas sold to Georgia and till the soil for possible talks with Russia.

No matter what prompted these statements, the opposition United National Movement headed by then President Saakashvili vehemently criticized the premier and doubted that the course toward European integration would survive. On 21 January, at the winter session of PACE in Strasbourg, Saakashvili outlined the domestic situation in Georgia after the elections and pointed to the wide gap between the foreign policy goals of the previous and present governments.¹⁸

The efforts of the former president and his team to discredit the new government in the eyes of Western partners and the failure to see eye to eye on many issues forced the new government to start working, in January 2013, on a document to demonstrate that the pro-Western trend of Georgia's foreign policy remained intact. Early in February, after heated debates, the parliamentary majority invited the United National Movement faction to discuss and sign an inter-factional agreement on the

¹⁵ See: "Parlament Gruzii utverdil pravitelstvo Ivanishvili, Natsdvizhenie progolosovalo protiv," *Novosti-Gruzia*, 25 October, 2012, available at [<http://newsgeorgia.ru/politics/20121025/215293033.html>], 5 December, 2013.

¹⁶ "Government Program for A Strong, Democratic, and United Georgia," available at [http://government.gov.ge/files/41_35183_108931_4.pdf].

¹⁷ See: "Gruzia On-line: Ivanishvili schitaet uspesnoy vneshnyuyu politiku novykh vlastey," available at [<http://www.apsny.ge/2013/pol/1360110723.php>], 5 December 2013.

¹⁸ See: "In PACE Speech Saakashvili Slams Govt," *Civil.ge*, 22 January, 2013, available at [<http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=25666>].

country's foreign policy. The document was discussed and passed by a unanimous vote on 7 March, 2013.¹⁹

It consists of 19 points, each of them related to the national interests of Georgia and the main foreign policy trends. Point 3, for example, pointed out that "integration into the European and Euro-Atlantic structures represents the main priority of the country's foreign policy course. For the purpose of achieving membership in the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Georgia will take further steps to build and strengthen democratic institutions, as well as establish a governance system based on the principle of the rule of law and supremacy of human rights."

The document (Point 9) followed the government program and the National Security Concept 2011: "Georgia carries out its relations with the United States under the terms defined by the Strategic Partnership Charter." Point 14 of the agreement pointed out that "deepening bilateral political and economic relations with neighboring Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey are important. Georgia should continue implementing mutually beneficial political and economic relations;" this means that the new government was following the course charted by its predecessor.²⁰

In order to achieve irreversible and sustainable economic development, Georgia refused to join those international organizations, the charters of which contradicted Georgia's priorities. This excluded its membership in the CIS, EurAsEC, the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, and the planned Eurasian economic union.

Point 4, in turn, says: "Georgia's European and Euro-Atlantic foreign policy course, first and foremost, serves sustainable democratic development and the country's security and is not directed against any other state." This meant that Georgia would persist in its efforts to revive contacts with Russia.

At the same time, according to Point 18 of the document, Georgia would follow its consistent foreign policy to earn respect of its territorial integrity and sovereignty: "Georgia should not either have diplomatic relations or be in a military, political, or customs alliance with a state that recognizes the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia."

Point 11 deals with Georgia's relations with the Russian Federation: "Georgia carries out a dialog with Russia using the international mechanisms available at the Geneva International Discussions, as well as in the bilateral framework. The goal of this dialog is to resolve the conflict, as well as establish and develop good-neighborly relations."²¹

An unbiased analysis of the behavior of the Georgian leaders and their fairly balanced approach to this problem suggests that they are working hard to minimize the risks that might interfere with their attempts to establish relations with Russia. This can be done in the bilateral Karasin-Abashidze format and at the Geneva Discussions on security and stability in the Caucasus, the final aim of which is a treaty on the non-use of force by the conflicting sides (Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Russia, and Georgia); representatives of the United States, the EU, U.N., and OSCE are also involved in the process.

A closer look at Russian-Georgian relations reveals that they are developing in bilateral and multilateral formats. In October 2012, the new people in the Georgian corridors of power offered an important initiative: they instituted the post of special representative of the Georgian prime minister for relations with Russia to start a dialog with the Russian Federation. On 1 November, 2012, the then prime minister Ivanishvili appointed former ambassador of Georgia to Russia (2000-2004) Zurab

¹⁹ See: "Parliament Adopts Bipartisan Resolution on Foreign Policy," *Civil.ge*, 17 March, 2013, available at [<http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=25828>].

²⁰ See: *Ibidem*.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

Abashidze to this post.²² Russia appointed Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia Grigory Karasin to an identical post of Russia's representative.

Bidzina Ivanishvili believes that Georgia, having started this dialog, took the first step toward normalizing relations with Russia. He had to specify, however, that "as far as diplomatic relations are concerned, it won't happen fast... It will take a long time and it won't be an easy process," because his country could not accept Russia's position on Abkhazia and South Ossetia.²³ He also pointed out that the format of the Geneva Discussions on security and stability would be preserved and continued.

The new people in power in Georgia initiated a Russian-Georgian dialog, which later became known as the Karasin-Abashidze format. The official representatives met for the first time on 14 December, 2012 in Geneva; to distinguish this format from the format of the Geneva Discussions (more on this below), it was decided to make Prague the meeting place.

To sum up the five meetings (the fifth took place on 21 November), we can say that the sides discussed practically the entire spectrum of questions related to trade and economic, cultural, and humanitarian cooperation.

According to Zurab Abashidze, in 2013, the format of Russian-Georgian talks permitted the sides to discuss about 80% of the agenda, including restored trade relations (Georgian agricultural products, wines, and mineral water were returned to the Russian market), transport (the Verkhny Lars-Kazbegi checkpoint resumed its round-the-clock functioning in the summertime), and cooperation in the humanitarian and cultural sphere (the number of joint cultural, sports, scientific, religious, and other events is on the rise, including the participation of Georgian athletes in the Sochi Olympics-2014). The special representative also pointed out that cargo haulage by truck would be resumed soon (so far, there is a visa problem for Georgian drivers). This means that the remaining 20% of the unsolved problems are related to the visa problem.²⁴

The Russian Foreign Ministry said in its statement: "The overall constructive and amicable atmosphere of these meetings, held since December 2012, allows successful resolution of practical issues."²⁵

In mid-June 2013, in an interview with the English-language TV channel Russia Today, President Putin touched upon relations with Georgia. He said that Moscow intends to fully restore relations with official Tbilisi; cooperation between the law and order structures of both countries could become the first step to a visa-free regime.²⁶ The talks scheduled for 2014 will show whether the agenda will be completely fulfilled.

The Geneva Discussions, an earlier format, ensure contacts between the conflicting sides. I have already written that a treaty on the non-use of force among Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Russia, and Georgia with the participation of the United States, EU, U.N., and OSCE has been and remains the main issue.

The Geneva Discussions brokered by the EU, U.N., and OSCE have been going on since October 2008; two workgroups are engaged in parallel talks on security and humanitarian issues.

The latest, 25th, round took place on 5-6 November, 2013; the four previous rounds, in 2012 and 2013, were carried out by the new leaders of Georgia.

²² See: "PM Appoints Special Envoy for Relations with Russia," *Civil.ge*, 1 November, 2012, available at [<http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=25407>].

²³ Ibidem.

²⁴ See: "Abashidze i Karasin reshili 80% problem v otnosheniyakh RF i Gruzii," *Rosbalt*, 14 November, 2013," available at [<http://www.rosbalt.ru/exussr/2013/11/14/1199612.html>], 5 December, 2013.

²⁵ "Georgian, Russian Diplomats Meet in Prague," *Civil.ge*, 21 November, 2013, available at [<http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=26712&search=>], 7 December, 2013.

²⁶ See: "Putin: RF namerena v polnom ob'eme vosstanovit otnosheniya s Gruzией," *RIA Novosti*, 11 June, 2013," available at [<http://ria.ru/politics/20130611/942850870.html>], 7 December, 2013.

So far, the Geneva talks have not produced significant progress in bilateral relations between the conflicting sides; in addition, no agreement on the non-use of force can be expected any time soon.

“Non-use of force and international security arrangements represent one of the key issues regularly discussed at the Geneva talks. Work on the draft of joint statement on non-use of force continued, but as Georgia’s chief negotiator put it, ‘irreconcilable differences’ made it impossible to make progress.”²⁷

The Russian side points to Georgia’s unconstructive position, which insists that the joint document should contain a Russian statement on the non-use of force.²⁸

During the few latest rounds the Georgian side repeatedly raised, within the workshop on security issues, the question of the barbed-wire barriers Russian military were building along the administrative border of South Ossetia and the ditches dug along the administrative border of Abkhazia.²⁹ This happened in 2009, but the Georgian media started paying them particular attention in the last six months, which does nothing for the far from stable relations with Russia.

“In her address to the OSCE ministerial council in Kiev on 6 December, [2013], Georgia’s Foreign Minister Maia Panjikidze called for ‘intensified diplomatic efforts to persuade’ Russia to reciprocate Georgia’s unilateral non-use of force pledge.

“Georgia made a unilateral non-use of force pledge in November 2010 and since then has been calling on Russia to reciprocate, but the latter refuses, saying that it is not a party in the conflict between Tbilisi and the two breakaway regions.

“Yet, unfortunately, against the background of the restored economic and cultural relations, Russia has further intensified its illegal activities. As we speak, Moscow continues to impose barbed-wire, fences and other artificial obstacles along the occupation line in the Tskhinvali and Abkhazia regions of Georgia, dividing peoples, families and communities,” Panjikidze said.³⁰

“Asked about Georgia, Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told journalists on the sidelines of the OSCE ministerial council in Kiev on 5 December: ‘If we continue working pragmatically, I do not see any obstacle to developing relations in the economy, trade, energy and humanitarian sectors, and culture. But if we want to fully normalize relations, I cannot offer anything new except for the need to recognize the reality that exists in this region’.”³¹

These statements made on the eve of the 26th round of the Geneva Discussions held on 17-18 December, 2013 show that the political issues on the Georgian-Russian agenda cannot be resolved and that the sides insist on two different approaches to the problem.

After the recent presidential elections in Georgia, which gave Giorgi Margvelashvili, representative of the Georgian Dream Coalition, an impressive victory, the new government, headed by former Minister of Internal Affairs of Georgia Garibashvili, announced that it would follow the foreign policy course outlined by the Ivanishvili government in the program For a Strong, Democratic, and United Georgia. Very much like its predecessor, the new government remains devoted to the European development vector and the country’s territorial integrity as its main priorities.

Vano Machavariani, the recently appointed foreign policy advisor to the president of Georgia, was fairly positive: “We do hope that there is enough potential in the Geneva Discussions to invigo-

²⁷ “Twenty-Fourth Round of Geneva Talks,” *Civil.ge*, 29 June, 2013, available at [<http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=26225&search=>], 7 December, 2013.

²⁸ See: “Novosti-Gruzia: RF pridaet osoboe znachenie novomu raundu Zhenevskikh diskussiy—MID,” available at [<http://newsgeorgia.ru/russia/20131031/216042019.html>], 7 December, 2013.

²⁹ See: “Novosti-Gruzia: Ivanishvili svyazyvaet ustanovku ograzhdeniy u ‘granitsy’ s Abkhaziyey i YuO s Olimpiadoy v Sochi,” available at [<http://newsgeorgia.ru/politics/20130925/215911429.html>], 7 December, 2013.

³⁰ See: “Georgian FM Address OSCE Ministerial Council,” *Civil.ge*, 6 December, 2013, available at [<http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=26765&search=>], 7 December, 2013.

³¹ See: *Ibidem*.

rate the talks on specific issues. It is very important to widen the Abashidze-Karasin format to work on the diplomatic issues related to the economy, finances, investments, etc.”³²

In Lieu of a Conclusion

By way of concluding my overview of the foreign policy course Georgia has been pursuing since 2003, I will discuss its integration with the EU, which has remained consistent over the last ten years. Much has been said and written on the subject.

On 22 July, 2013, the new government of Georgia and the EU summarized the latest round of talks within the Georgia-EU Association. Brussels was informed that the talks on a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA),³³ which was part of the Association Agreement, “had been successfully completed.” The European Commission issued a statement which said: “The comprehensive FTA, negotiated in just 17 months and seven rounds, will see Georgia gaining better access to the EU market for its goods and services... The Agreement is expected to boost the inflow of European direct investment to Georgia thanks to an open, stable and predictable policy-making environment.”³⁴

EU Foreign Policy Chief Catherine Ashton and Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy Štefan Füle welcomed “the substantive completion” of the negotiations on the Association Agreement between the EU and Georgia.³⁵

The Association Agreement between Georgia and the EU was officially initialed by Foreign Minister of Georgia Maia Panjikidze and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton on 29 November, 2013, at the Vilnius Summit of Eastern Partnership,³⁶ an outstanding event in Georgia’s foreign policy of recent years. The same day, George Kvirikashvili, Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, and Karel De Gucht, European Commissioner for Trade, signed the part of the document related to the comprehensive free trade area.

The sides have reached the stage at which the document, before being signed, must be discussed with and approved by the EU member states, a far from simple process. Georgia hopes that this will happen in 2014. When ratified, this document will replace the 1996 Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation now in force and will create a new legal framework for cooperation between Georgia and the EU.

On 29 November, President of Georgia Margvelashvili said that “many generations of Georgians” were fighting for the initialing and signing of the Association Agreement. “Today, we have moved closer to the future in which we will belong to the family of European countries.”³⁷

The document, which is 1,000 pages long,³⁸ can be conventionally divided into three parts.³⁹

³² “Vano Machavariani: Format peregovorov Abashidze-Karasin po normalizatsii rossiysko-gruzinskikh otnosheniy dolzhen byt rasshiren,” available at [<http://www.pirveli.com.ge/rus/?menuid=8&id=8635>], 7 December, 2013.

³³ The DCFTA talks between Georgia and the EU began in February 2012.

³⁴ “EU, Georgia Conclude Free Trade Talks,” *Civil.ge*, 22 July, 2013, available at [<http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=26297&search=>], 7 December, 2013.

³⁵ See: “EU Hails ‘Substantive Completion’ of Association Agreement Talks with Georgia,” *Civil.ge*, 25 July, 2013, available at [<http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=26303&search=>], 7 December, 2013.

³⁶ See: “Golos Ameriki: Gruzia parafirovala soglashenie s Evrosoyuzom,” available at [<http://www.golos-ameriki.ru/content/georgia-vilnius/1800445.html>], 7 December, 2013.

³⁷ Ibidem.

³⁸ See: “EU-Georgia Association Agreement,” available at [http://eeas.europa.eu/georgia/assoagreement/assoagreement-2013_en.htm], 7 December, 2013.

³⁹ See: “Gruzia na poroge assotsiatsii s ES, nezavisimye eksperty predosteregayut,” RIA Novosti, available at [<http://ria.ru/world/20131128/980200098.html#13865075584993&message=resize&relto=register&action=addClass&value=registration>], 7 December, 2013.

- The first part deals with political matters and opens the road to cooperation on the protection and strengthening of common European values, the rule of law, democracy, and human rights; respect for the principles of international law, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and inviolability of internationally recognized borders; promotion of peaceful conflict resolution; strengthening of political dialog and cooperation in realizing domestic reforms; strengthening of regional stability and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; fighting organized crime, money laundering, drug trafficking, etc.
- The second part, related to industrial branches, covers the problems of modernization of all spheres and introduction of European standards in transport, energy, agriculture, tourism, health protection, and other spheres.
- The third part deals with the DCFTA. The two sides set up a free trade area (DCFTA), which will remove tariff barriers and settle a great number of problems related to food security and policies in the field of competition, protection of intellectual property, and customs issues.

On the whole, the foreign policy course has survived the regime change; after coming to power, the new leaders concentrated on preparations for the signing of an Association Agreement with the EU; this means that the European vector has been and remains the cornerstone of Georgia's foreign policy. Time will show whether the new leaders of Georgia will move consistently toward integration with the EU; today the Georgian government has the parliamentary opposition and the majority of the country's population on its side.

RELIGION IN SOCIETY

RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL ELITES IN THE NORTHERN CAUCASUS: FORMATION, IDEOLOGICAL CONTRADICTIONS, AND PRACTICAL OPPOSITION

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ABSTRACT

This article highlights the main factors relating to the formation of the religious and political (Islamic) elites in the Northern Caucasus caused by Gorbachev's perestroika, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the reforms conducted in Russia, the creation of an ideological vacuum, and the birth of market relations. The sociocultural context that formed has given rise to an Islamic revival, the penetration of Salafi (Wahhabi)

ideas into the region, and the formation of a neo-clergy that is not only claiming a leading role in the religious life of Muslims, but also active participation in politics, right down to preparing a state coup.

Today, the official and unofficial Muslim elites of the Northern Caucasus are in a state of confrontation; despite this, certain steps are nevertheless being taken to establish relations.

KEYWORDS: *elites, religious and political elites, traditional Islam, the Northern Caucasus, Russia, Islamic revival, Sufism, Salafism, Wahhabism, conflicts, contradictions, formation of the clergy, neo-clergy.*

Introduction

The word “elite” implies the part of society that, possessing real power, has an influence on social processes; it can be official (formal) or unofficial (informal); the representatives of the latter do not possess power, but have sufficient levers of influence on society. The elite is an important and inseparable part of society, often oriented toward resolving the economic, political, and religious-cultural assignments it has to deal with.

This research focuses on the formation of a contemporary religious and political elite in the Northern Caucasus and the conflict between the formal (made up of representatives of traditional Islam), officially supported by the regional power bodies, and informal clergy (Salafi-Wahhabi), examined from the viewpoint of their ideological positions.

The Formation of New Religious Elites

The formation of religious elites in the Northern Caucasus has a long enough history that can be broken down into several stages.

- The first stage is related to the activity of the clergy that headed the national liberation movement of the mountain dwellers against the expansionist czarist policy, whereas after it was repressed, it adapted to the changed political, economic, and social conditions.
- The second stage came during Soviet times; it is characterized by pandering to the traditional Muslim clergy, which was followed by repressions.
- The third stage was generated by Gorbachev’s perestroika, ideological pluralism, and the formation of different parties and movements in the Soviet Union.

During perestroika in the Muslim regions of the Soviet Union, an Islamic revival began, which was manifested in believers being liberated from political and ideological restrictions; religious ideas that paved the way to radical and extremist movements became widespread.

The factors listed below played a decisive role in the Islamic revival in the Northern Caucasus:

- (a) liberation from the communist dictate and formation of conditions for Muslims to freely engage in religious rituals;
- (b) building mosques, opening Islamic educational establishments, publishing religious literature, and so on;
- (c) penetration into the region of politically oriented nontraditional Islam trends;
- (d) opposition between the local religious traditions and ideas of Wahhabism.¹

¹ Different aspects of this problem were analyzed in some of our publications: V. Akaev, “Religious-Political Conflict in the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria,” in: *Political Islam and Conflicts in Russia and Central Asia*, Utrikespolitiskainstitutet, Stock-

The following trends can be traced in the spiritual-religious sphere of the Northern Caucasus: dogmatic theology, fiqh of the Shafi'i and Hanafi madhhabs, Sufism (Tariqa), and the Salafi movement.²

It should be noted that Salafism was not widespread among the believers of Daghestan and Chechnia either in czarist or in Soviet times, and very few people in the region knew about it. As for the Shafi'i and Hanafi madhhabs, as well as Sufism, they have a long history in the Northern Caucasus.

Since the end of the 1980s, certain religious people have become much more active in the Northern Caucasus. For example, the Islamic activists of Daghestan have often accused the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the Northern Caucasus (SAMNC) headed by mufti M. Gekkeev (a Balkarian by origin) of corruption and alienation from the spiritual needs of ordinary believers.

This deprived M. Gekkeev of his post and caused the SAMNC to break down into several republican spiritual administrations (muftiates): the Chechen-Ingushetian, Kabardino-Balkarian, Karachaevo-Circassian, Adighe, and North Ossetian. Representing the religious interests of Muslims, they determined the domestic and foreign policy of their communities and their relations with the government.

This structural split had its pluses. The republican muftiates began paying more attention to their republic's internal religious problems: mosques were built, religious schools opened, the number of Muslim pilgrims increased, and printing of the Quran and other religious literature was established. Ordinary people and all kinds of sponsors, including foreign, began offering financial assistance.

The activity of the supporters of Wahhabism, who remained underground during Soviet times, has been having a significant influence on the formation of a nontraditional Muslim clergy. These supporters became legalized when the All-Russia Nongovernmental Religious-Political Organization (the Islamic Revival Party [IRP]) was established on 9 June, 1990 in Astrakhan. All of its program documents set forth tasks aimed at restoring Islam among the Soviet peoples who traditionally confess this religion, ridding the religious practice of Muslims of everything imposed from the outside, and returning to the original sources—the Quran and Sunnah.³

According to its ideology, the IRP was a Salafi organization that called for rejecting the traditional Islam practiced among Soviet Muslims and returning it to the canons that existed during the time of the Prophet Mohammad and the first righteous caliphs.

Avarians A.-K. Akhtaev, B. Kebedov, and A. Kebedov, Azerbaijani D. Heydar, Tatar V. Sadur, and Russian S. Dunaev, as well as Chechens I. Khalimov and A. Deniev participated in establishing the IRP. As Zelimkhan Yandarbiev notes, the latter was elected as regional leader, but was soon replaced, since he was "unable to cope with the organizational functions required of him and his actions diverged from the party's goals and tasks."⁴

Representatives of different ethnicities took part in the IRP congress: Tajiks, Uzbeks, Karachaevs, and so on. As K. Khanbabaev notes, "A.-K. Akhtaev was elected chairman (amir) of the IRP Coordinating Committee, and A. Kebedov and B. Magomedov (Kebedov.—V.A.) became the party coordinators in the Northern Caucasus and Daghestan."⁵

holm, 1999, pp. 47-58; idem, "Mufti Kadyrov: Person, Religious Figure, Politician," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 5, 2000; idem, "Conflicts between Traditional and Non-traditional Islamic Trends: Reasons, Dynamics, and Ways to Overcome Them (based on North Caucasian documents)," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2 (50), 2008; idem, "The Conflict between Traditional and Non-traditional Islam in the North Caucasus: Origins, Dynamics and the Means for its Resolution," NUI Working Paper, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, Oslo, 2008, 20 pp.; idem, *Radical Islam in the Former Soviet Union*, ed. by G. Yemelianova, Routledge, London, New York, 2010, pp. 62-81, etc.

² See: A. Malashenko, *Islamskie orientiry Severnogo Kavkaza*, Moscow Carnegie Center, Gendalf, Moscow, 2001, p. 59.

³ See: I. Ermakov, D. Mukulsky, *Islam v Rossii i Sredney Azii*, Lotos, Moscow, 1993, p. 176.

⁴ Z. Yandarbiev, *Chechnia—bitva za svobodu*, Lvov, 1996, p. 482.

⁵ K.M. Khanbabaev, "Etapy rasprostraneniya vakhkhabizma v Dagestane," in: A.M. Abdullaev, M.M. Omarov, Z.S. Arukhov, et al., *Alimy i uchenye protiv vakhkhabizma: Sbornik*, Dag Book Publishers State Unitary Enterprise: Makhachkala, 2001, p. 108.

Later some participants of that forum with moderate religious-political views about the spread of the idea of Salafism (fundamental values) began taking specific political steps. While A. Akhtaev continued to support the moderate wing of Wahhabism (Salafism), B. Kebedov and his student A. Angutaev (a member of the IRP and leader of the Daghestani Muslims living in Astrakhan) went the route of religious radicalism and extremism.

The activity of A. Akhtaev, who had both a secular and religious education, was of an enlightening and ideological nature; he called on the Muslims of Daghestan and Chechnia to remain faithful to the Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet Mohammad. As for B. Kebedov and A. Angutaev, they were aggressive toward their opponents and in favor of the political consolidation of Muslims and of creating an Islamic state (as the only possible organization of the Muslim Ummah).

The members of the IRP who moved to Daghestan, Chechnia, Ingushetia, and Karachaevo-Circassia successfully opposed the corruption of bureaucrats and the official clergy who supported Sufi (or national) Islam; they were able to draw some of the young people to their side.

As well-known researcher of the emergence and spread of Islam in Daghestan K. Khanbabaev noted, "... at the end of the 1980s, illegal formations of a religious-political fundamentalist Islamic trend appeared in several cities and districts of Daghestan and Chechnia, which was subsequently called Wahhabism."⁶

I would like to clarify at this point that underground unions of Wahhabis were not created in Chechnia. However, there were illegal religious schools where the Quran was taught, although their relation to Wahhabism is still unclear.

After the IRP was formed, Wahhabi groups (jamaats) began emerging throughout the Northern Caucasus that created their own educational and, later, terrorist centers. Young people, primarily from poor families, were recruited for studying the "pure" religion and military affairs necessary for building a so-called Islamic state.

This was precisely how the religious-political Wahhabi elite and its social base was formed. Some of the young people from Daghestan, Chechnia, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachaevo-Circassia fell under its influence. They proved to be particularly perceptible to the social and religious innovations.

Goals of the Salafi-Wahhabi Clergy and Conflict with Traditional Islam

The social changes that occurred after the collapse of the Soviet Union destroyed the entire former way of social and personal life and led to the formation of an ideological vacuum. Market relations, democratic values ... and corruption began to develop in the post-Soviet expanse. The Wahhabi leaders expressed acute discontent about the changes going on and called for creating a fair society, which could only be built, as they claimed, within the framework of an Islamic state. They found fertile ground for their propaganda among young people.

In this way, the Wahhabis pursued extremely far-reaching goals: they intended to weaken the influence of traditional Islam on society, push the official clergy to the periphery of religious and public life, overturn secular power, restore Shari'a values, and build an Islamic state by carrying out religious-political propaganda among young people.

⁶ K.M. Khanbabaev, op. cit., p. 105.

As former chairman (mufti) of the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic (SAM KBR) Sh. Pshikhachev notes, “at the end of the 1990s, several alarming factors prompted me to reflect on the spread of Wahhabism in Kabardino-Balkaria at that time, as well as on the need to fight this essentially anti-Islamic phenomenon.”⁷

He goes on to claim that in those years, most leaders of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic regarded the position of the official clergy as an attempt to disavow the opinion of their opponents (i.e. the Wahhabis) in society’s eyes, or as an internal “showdown” within the republic’s Muslim Ummah.

Sh. Pshikhachev gives the following example: “When in 1996, a certain A. Kazdokhov came to Nalchik with a group of young believers from Baksan with the intention of ‘replacing’ the leaders of the SAM KBR, and then declared for all the world to hear that he was ready to present 600 bayonets capable of ruining the life not only of the SAM leaders, but also of the republican government(!), the power structures failed to make an adequate response.”⁸

He explains the absence of response from the KBR government as follows: “Chaos and ‘democracy’ reigned in the country, amid which the church, separated from the state, was forced to solve government tasks by itself in order to prevent the country from falling apart and its people being destroyed.”⁹

At the beginning of the 1990s, conflict situations between the official and unofficial clergy arose frequently in Daghestan, Checheno-Ingushetia, and Karachaevo-Circassia. This was related to the activity of the Wahhabis, who were opposed to traditional Islam, regarding it as misguided thinking (*bid’a*). They called on Muslims to follow the way of “pure” Islam, considering themselves to be its exclusive vehicle. This is what happened in Tatarstan and the Volga Region where the young clergy (neo-clergy), who had received their education in Egypt and other Muslim countries, were in favor of setting traditional Islam to rights. They felt it should be reformed and brought into correspondence with Salafism, which demands strict adherence to the Quran and Sunnah.

In Daghestan, the mufti of this republic, S. Abubakarov, was actively opposed to the new clergy in the form of Wahhabis, as was the spiritual leader of the Muslims, Sufi Said Afandi al-Chirkawi.¹⁰ Thanks to their joint efforts, supported by the government, the plans of the Wahhabis, who were set on seizing the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Daghestan (SAMD), were undermined. The newspaper *Dagestanskaia pravda* reported on a meeting between members of the SAMD and representatives of the Federal Security Service, during which it was agreed that coordinating joint actions were needed to oppose Wahhabism.¹¹

Mufti of Daghestan S. Abubakarov¹² admitted in an interview in February 1998 that at the beginning of the 1990s, he and the Wahhabis were defending the right to freedom of confession and wanted land to be allotted for building mosques,¹³ but soon understood that “these people were pawns in someone else’s game.” Later he said: “A little more than six years have passed and now we have night fighting, shooting in broad daylight, taking hostages... The situation has gotten out of hand.”¹⁴

⁷ Sh. Pshikhachev, “Osnovnoi prichinoi napadeniia na Nalchik bylo to, chto ... ono dolzhno bylo proizoiiti pri liubykh obstoiatelstvakh, v liubom, dazhe samom idealnom obshchestve,” *Severny Kavkaz* (Nalchik), 15 November, 2005.

⁸ Ibidem.

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ This Sufi sheikh, who enjoyed great respect in Daghestan, was killed at the end of August 2012 in his home during a terrorist act organized by Aminat Kurbanova (Saprykina). The criminals were able to organize a double terrorist act, as the result of which 14 people were killed and more than 100 injured in the sheikh’s yard that day.

¹¹ See: *Dagestanskaia pravda*, 16 March, 1994.

¹² He was killed during a terrorist act carried out in August 1998 near the Juma mosque in Makhachkala.

¹³ See: L. Lavrova, *Moe oruzhie—slovo*, Interview with the mufti of Daghestan Sayidmuhammad Abubakarov, *Rodina*, Special Issue, No. 1-2, 2000, p. 192.

¹⁴ Ibidem.

Meanwhile, the conflict between the official clergy and the government (defense and security structures), on the one side, and the Wahhabis, on the other, escalated into a civil war that is still going on in Daghestan to this day.

Wahhabism became legalized in Chechnia when Djokhar Dudaev came to power. In 1992, an Islamic Center was set up at the Promavtomatika NGO in Grozny, which became a place for regular meetings of Wahhabis, at which Daghestanis A. Akhtaev and B. Kebedov, Chechen A. Mataev (one-legged Akhmad from Bachi-Yurt), as well as lecturers invited from Muslim countries spoke; they explained the essence of “pure Islam” (that is, Wahhabism) and jihad to the young people.

I. Khalimov, M. Udugov, I. Umarov, and Zelimkhan Yandarbiev, who all occupied high government posts under Djokhar Dudaev and Aslan Maskhadov, were active participants in the activity of this center. At one time, it was they who raised the issue of introducing Shari‘a rule in Chechnia. The official clergy responded by saying that a transfer to this type of rule should be carried out gradually, keeping in mind how ready the population was for this and the corresponding conditions.

As Zelimkhan Yandarbiev noted, even before the beginning of the Russian-Chechen war of 1994, the “need to build an Islamic Chechen state of Ichkeria” was taken into account.¹⁵ When clarifying his words, he said that the Congress of Chechen People held in November 1994 at the Presidential Palace in Grozny posed the question of changing the name of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria to the Islamic Republic.¹⁶ It should be made clear that it was not the official clergy of Chechnia that pursued this goal, but the supporters of Islamic reforms who espoused the ideology of Wahhabism.

During and after the first Russian-Chechen war (1994-1996), the Wahhabis taking active part in the fight against the federals became much more active in Chechnia; they described it as a jihad aimed at bringing Islam to victory in the Caucasus.

Djokhar Dudaev, who was not receptive to Wahhabism since his relatives adhered to the values of traditional Islam, forced mufti of Chechnia M. Alsabekov, and then his deputy Akhmad Kadyrov (appointed instead of M. Alsabekov), to declare a gazawat against the Russian army before the beginning of the hostilities.

During the hostilities, the following situation developed in Chechnia: newly formed Shari‘a courts functioned in the territory controlled by Djokhar Dudaev and his supporters, while secular ones operated in the territory controlled by the federals.

After 6 August, 1996, when Grozny was liberated from the federal troops, the situation in Chechnia drastically changed. The federal power structures were eliminated; judicial functions were performed by military field courts consisting mainly of Wahhabis. Accusations were primarily made against those who cooperated with the Russian government, that is, carried out “illegal acts.”

The secular courts created in Grozny during 1995-1996 were paralyzed and later, in October 1996, disbanded by a decree of acting President of Ichkeria Zelimkhan Yandarbiev. The same decree established a Supreme and district Shari‘a courts in Ichkeria, the judges mainly being representatives of Wahhabism.

B. Kebedov, who moved to Gudermes in 1997 after he was “exiled” from Daghestan with his followers by the law-enforcement structures of this republic, carried out training of the leaders of the Shari‘a courts. Leader of the Daghestani Wahhabis B. Kebedov called his move to Chechnia “hijra.”

The establishment of Shari‘a courts in Ichkeria carried out under Zelimkhan Yandarbiev’s decree was the legal foundation for the consolidation, religious-legal training, and strengthening

¹⁵ Z. Yandarbiev, *Chei khalifat?* Gabala, 2001, p. 74.

¹⁶ See: Ibidem.

of the positions of the supporters of Wahhabism who pushed the Sufi clergy to the periphery of social life.

This aggravated relations between the Wahhabis and representative of the official mufti Akhmad Kadyrov in 1996; at times they became conflictive in nature. In his public statements made at parliament meetings, among other places, Akhmad Kadyrov said that the Wahhabis were extremists who had nothing to do with pure Islam and presented a threat to society and the state.

When analyzing the relations between traditional Islam and Wahhabism in Daghestan, K. Khanbabaev wrote that “from 1995 to 1999, clashes between followers of traditional Islam (Tariqa followers) and the Wahhabis were regular and often ended in bloodshed and death.”¹⁷

It is important to note in this respect that the well-known Daghestani political and religious figures opposed to the Wahhabis, among whom are mufti S. Abubakarov, ministers M. Gusaev and Z. Arukhov, deputy mufti A. Tagaev, institute of theology director M. Sadykov, deputy mufti of the KCR I. Bostonov, and many other, were killed with the participation of Islamic radicals and extremists.

Since the end of the 1990s, trends have been noted in the Northern Caucasus that can be called a “shoot-off” of the educated representatives of traditional Islam who uphold “the religion of their ancestors.” Today this religion in no way fits Russian modernization and world globalization, and is considered the main hindrance to the social and democratic reforms.

At the beginning of 1998, leaflets from a certain “Headquarters of the Central Liberation Front of Daghestan” were spread in Daghestan calling on Muslims to drive the Russian troops from the republic. They also stated that mujahedeen had begun liberating the Caucasus “from the Russian occupants—executioners of the people.”¹⁸

In order to create an Islamic caliphate in the Caucasus, a Congress of the Peoples of Ichkeria and Daghestan (CPID) was created in Grozny in April 1998 headed by Shamil Basaev. Its members were Khattab, B. Kebedov, M. Udugov, Adallo, I. Khalimov, M. Tagaev, Z. Yandarbiev, M. Mukozhev, and others.

One of the most important tasks of this organization was to liberate the Muslims of the Caucasus from the Russian yoke. Stating there was no legitimate power in Daghestan, its representatives repeatedly threatened the pro-Russian leadership of this republic, accusing it of repressing the local Muslims. Over time, the activity of the CPID acquired an extremist-terrorist nature.

On 14 July, 1998, a major conflict occurred on the basis of a domestic argument in Gudermes between the Wahhabis of B. Kebedov and the guards of S. Yamadaev. Field commanders A. Baraev and Abdul-Malik Mejidov, who headed military Shari‘a structures made up of Wahhabis, supported B. Kebedov.¹⁹

Representatives of traditional Islam began coming to Gudermes from all over Chechnia to help the guards. Mufti of Ichkeria Akhmad Kadyrov, who criticized the extremist activity of the Wahhabis, also spoke out in support of the traditionalists. In turn, President of Ichkeria Aslan Maskhadov called on the mosque imams and local power bodies “to drive the Wahhabis from their territory.”²⁰

In the meantime, the Wahhabis moved to Urus-Martan, where they established another terrorist center, the most active members of which were the Akhmadov brothers, who committed cruel crimes in Ichkeria and beyond.

¹⁷ See: K.M. Khanbabaev, op. cit., pp. 114-115; E.F. Kisriev, *Islam i vlast v Dagestane*, OGI, Moscow, 2004, pp. 148-149.

¹⁸ Quoted from: I.P. Dobaev, *Islamsky radikalizm v mezhdunarodnoi politike*, Rostov-on-Don, 2000, p. 182.

¹⁹ V.Kh. Akaev, *Islam: sotsiokulturnaia realnost na Severnom Kavkaze*, North Caucasian Scientific Center, Higher School Publishers, Rostov-on-Don, 2004, p. 159.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 160.

In order to eliminate the threat posed by Wahhabism, representatives of the traditional Muslim clergy of the Northern Caucasus created a Coordinating Center in Nazran (Ingushetia); it included the muftis of Daghestan, Chechnia, Ingushetia, North Ossetia-Alania, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Karachaevo-Circassia. Mufti of Ingushetia M. Albogachiev was elected for a year term as chairman of the center called upon to carry out peacekeeping assignments in the region, achieve stability, and stop Wahhabism from spreading.²¹

On the initiative of mufti of Ichkeria Akhmad Kadyrov, a Congress of Muslims of the Northern Caucasus was convened in Grozny on 25 July, 1998. This forum, which was the first after the collapse of the Soviet Union to unite representatives of the traditional Muslim clergy of the Northern Caucasus, severely criticized the activity of the supporters of Wahhabism, and recognized the trend itself as anti-Islamic and extremist. For example, Akhmad Kadyrov openly stated that many power structures of Ichkeria had been contaminated by Wahhabism.²²

The Daghestani Wahhabis stood for the Shari'a-ization of society; the so-called Kadar Zone, where Darginians lived, became the starting point of this process; it included the villages of Karamakhi, Chabanmakhi, Kadar, and Vanashimakhi. As R. Silantiev testifies, "at the beginning of August 1998, the Wahhabis set up armed posts on the road into Karamakhi, and on 15 August declared that a separate Islamic territory, which lived according to the laws of the Shari'a and did not recognize the Russian Constitution, had been created around the villages of Karamakhi, Chabanmakhi, and Kadar."²³

This caused a flare-up in the religious-political situation in Daghestan. The republican authorities were faced with the task of returning the Kadar Shari'a enclave to Russian jurisdiction; the solution to the problem proved rather ingenious.

On 3 September, 1998, Sergey Stepashin, who was Russian Minister of Internal Affairs at the time, came to Karamakhi and made several conciliatory statements. Cautioning against pinning "Wahhabi" and "extremist" labels on people, he said: "We have freedom of confession ... we will help you peacefully in every way we can, I give you my word. No one will fight a peaceful population." He was presented with a sheepskin cloak and dagger and seen off with three exclamations of "Allah akbar."²⁴

However, literally a year later (in August-September 1999), the "Islamic republic" in the Kadar Zone was eliminated during combat action between the Wahhabis and troops of the Russian Defense Ministry.

Religious radicals, which the North Caucasian Wahhabis undoubtedly were, posed a threat not only to citizens confessing traditional Islam, but to societies with multicultural traditions in general. They used illegal methods to establish their influence among the Muslims. They regarded anyone who did not accept their ideology and carried out violent acts against them as their enemies.

Wahhabism in the Northern Caucasus evolved not only toward religious, but also political extremism. The Wahhabis acted aggressively toward the representatives of traditional Islam, right down to using physical force. They openly engaged in confrontation with the authorities and the official Muslim clergy. Representatives of the official clergy, in turn, supported the authorities and took steps to oppose Wahhabism.²⁵

²¹ V.Kh. Akaev, "Sufizm i vakhkhabizm na Severnom Kavkaze," Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, *Applied and Urgent Ethnological Research Studies Series*, No. 127, RAS, Moscow, 1999, p. 16.

²² V.Kh. Akaev, *Islam: sotsiokulturnaia realnost na Severnom Kavkaze*, p. 163.

²³ R.A. Silantiev, *Islam v sovremennoi Rossii*, Encyclopedia, Algoritm, Moscow, 2008, p. 296.

²⁴ A. Cherkasov, "Tango nad propastiu," available at [http://www.polit.ru/article/2004/09/07/1999/].

²⁵ See: V.Kh. Akaev, *Sufizm v kontekste arabo-musul'manskoi kultury*, Dissertation for a doctor of philosophical science diploma, Rostov-on-Don, 2004, p. 337.

Chechen Wahhabis A. Baraev, M. Tsagaraev, and the Akhmadov brothers were known as murderers and kidnappers, their victims also being foreigners. According to available data, A. Baraev and the Akhmadov brothers kidnapped four foreigners, who were later executed.

The supporters of North Caucasian Wahhabism are also thought to participate in international terrorism.

The terrorist acts in Buynaksk, Moscow, and Volgodonsk (1999), as well as in Kaspiisk (2002), which caused the death of several hundred citizens and significant destruction, are attributed to A. Gachiiiev and several Daghestani Wahhabis. It should be noted that although Chechens did not participate in these acts, some representatives of the official power bodies and media declared that these acts bore a Chechen mark.

A. Gachiiiev is also notorious for the fact that he organized groups of Wahhabis in certain population settlements of the Karachae Republic and has repeatedly entered into conflicts with representatives of traditional Islam, accusing them of all kinds of sins. This has aggravated the religious and political situation in the republic.²⁶

The extremist and at times criminal activity of the leaders of Wahhabism and their followers has paralyzed political and spiritual-cultural life of the population of Daghestan and Chechnia.

In the summer of 1999, the Chechen field commanders and Wahhabis headed by Shamil Basaev made an attempt to overthrow Aslan Maskhadov. This attempt was prevented thanks to strong opposition by Vice Premier of Ichkeria Khamzat (Ruslan) Gelaev, who was a follower of traditional Islam.

Soon Wahhabis and militants headed by B. Kebedov, Shamil Basaev, and Khattab, striving to create an Islamic caliphate in the Caucasus, moved their field of operation to Daghestan. As K. Khanbabaev notes, "from the beginning of 1998 to August 1999, armed contingents of Wahhabis carried out repeated attacks on checkpoints and border contingents along the entire perimeter of the Daghestani-Chechen border."²⁷

In July 1999, religious extremists headed by M. Kuramagomedov and B. Magomedov (Kebedov) made a forceful attempt to create an independent Islamic territory (similar to Karamakhi) in the population settlements of Echeda, Khvainikalo, Sildi, and Gakko of the mountainous Tsumada district of Daghestan. But their actions were intercepted by the joint efforts of the law-enforcement bodies and Russian Ministry of Defense. Finding themselves surrounded, the Wahhabis turned to Basaev and Khattab for help, who entered the Botlikh district on 7 August with 2,000 fighters.

This incendiary campaign raised a wave of accusation not only in Daghestan, but also in Chechnia. Mufti Akhmad Kadyrov, who represented traditional Islam, called on Ichkerian President Aslan Maskhadov to take every possible step to prevent the Wahhabis driven from Daghestan from entering Chechnia, but this was all in vain.

After ousting the Wahhabis from Daghestan, the federal troops began full-scale combat action; the exceptionally brutal and destructive second Russian-Chechen war began. The crimes committed during this war were not assessed properly by the world community. For the second time in four years, the Chechens were subjected to violence and insult; the republic's economy and social sphere were totally destroyed, and the population was deprived of elementary conditions for normal living.

Mufti Akhmad Kadyrov, an open opponent of the Wahhabis, played an important role in stopping the hostilities and carrying out rehabilitation of destroyed Ichkeria. On 12 June, 2000, he was appointed as head of the administration of the Chechen Republic by a decree of the Russian president, and on 5 October, 2003, he was elected president.

²⁶ See: *Ibid.*, p. 338.

²⁷ K.M. Khanbabaev, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

Akhmad Kadyrov exerted a great deal of effort to consolidate Chechen society; he achieved amnesty of the fighters, restored the republican power bodies, and strengthened traditional Islam. In his religious and political activity, he relied on the followers of the tariqahs (Qadiriyya and Naqshbandiyya), particularly the Qadiriyya wird of sheikh Kunta-haji,²⁸ which was widespread among the Chechens after the end of the Caucasian war.

In addition to the Qadiriyya and Naqshbandiyya trends, representatives of traditional Islam represented by Sufism made up the social foundation of Akhmad Kadyrov's struggle against the Wahhabis' religious extremism and terrorism. This was why the role of the traditional clergy began growing stronger during his presidency.

This policy also continued under Ramzan Kadyrov. As of today, the activity of the so-called Wahhabi jamaats in Chechnia has been entirely intercepted.

The joint efforts of the power bodies and official clergy of Chechnia were able to minimize the influence of Wahhabism on young people. Traditional religious values are being revived, mosques and hafiz schools are being built, and the ziyarats of Chechen sheikhs and ustazes are being restored. It should be noted that in the past, such undertakings were carried out using the modest funds of ordinary believers.

Whereas in the Chechen Republic (CP), the wave of religious radicalism and extremism declined, in neighboring republics it, on the contrary, began to gain momentum. This is explained by the fact that many Muslim radicals and Wahhabis were driven from Chechnia to Dagestan, Ingushetia, and Kabardino-Balkaria. Conflicts began emerging with increasing frequency in these republics related to the contradictions between the official clergy and the leaders of "pure" Islam (or Salafism), who accused the first of supporting a corrupt government and not wishing to defend the interests of the Muslims. Moreover, the official clergy was largely blamed for the social injustice that existed.

As I. Tekushev writes, "after A. Pshikhachev headed the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Kabardino-Balkaria (SAM KB) in 2002, the republic's Muslim community split into two hostile camps—Muslim traditionalists (or conservatives), on the one said, and Salafis, on the other."²⁹

The Salafis of Kabardino-Balkaria accused mufti A. Pshikhachev of being in cahoots with the special services and demanded his dismissal. In 2003, dozens of mosques were closed down in this republic where young Muslims opposed to the official clergy gathered who upheld the ideology and practice of Salafism. Appeals were made at their meetings not to succumb to the SAM KB, and religious groups were organized similar to Daghestani and Chechen jamaats. As a result, the official clergy in the person of mufti A. Pshikhachev accused the Salafis of radicalism and extremism.

At the beginning of 2005, a conflict came to a head in the KBR between the official clergy (as represented by the muftiate) and the authorities, on the one hand, and the leaders of Wahhabism, on the other. This conflict escalated into the tragic events that occurred in Nalchik; they are described in detail in a book called *Islam in the Northern Caucasus: Past and Present*, published in 2011 in Prague.

In it, I. Tekushev writes: "The conflict between the SAM KBR and the community that confessed revived Islam (Salafism) began way before the time when A. Pshikhachev took the post of head

²⁸ V.Kh. Akaev, *Sheikh Kunta-haji: zhizn i uchenie*, Grozny, 1994, 128 pp. In this book, the author gives a detailed description of the life, activity, arrest, and exile by the czarist authorities of Chechen sufi Kunta-haji Kishiev, follower of the Qadiriyya Tariqa, analyzes his religious and philosophical teaching, and notes his role in the spiritual life of the Chechens.

²⁹ I. Tekushev, "Okhota na religioznykh deiateley, ili Strelba po traditsionnomu islamu," in: *Islam na Severnom Kavkaze: istoria i sovremennost*, ed. by I. Tekushev, K. Shevchenko, Medium Orient, Prague, 2011, p. 143.

of the SAM KBR. But it was when he took this post that the contradictions existing in the community escalated into open opposition.”³⁰

The above-mentioned conflict gained momentum after the Salafis began calling for the elimination of destructive funeral customs and rituals, withdrawal of Islam from oblivion, and its transformation into a full-blooded functional system. M. Mukozhev and A. Astemirov, who received an Islamic education in Arab countries, were the leaders of the Salafi community in KBR. It was the SAM KBR that sent them there to study.

The Salafis began being brutally repressed by the defense and security structures. They were arrested, beaten, tortured, kidnapped, and sometimes had crosses shaven on their heads. This situation prompted representatives of the opposition Islamic youth (600 people) to send the federal authorities a written complaint about the tyranny of the defense and security officers, but no steps were taken.

As I. Tekushev notes, “after all the ways to stop the violence were exhausted, the radical wing of the community headed by A. Astemirov joined the ranks of the Chechen fighters and one hundred people attacked the republic’s defense and security structures. On 13 October, 2005, between 9.00 and 10.00 in the morning Moscow time, Islamists attacked several facilities in Nalchik at once. This resulted in 87 of the attackers being killed by defense and security officers, while 112 peaceful residents and 35 policemen were killed and 100 people were injured, 85 of them, law-enforcement officers.”³¹

Executive director of the International Islamic Mission, Deputy Chairman of the Coordinating Center of Muslims of the Northern Caucasus Sh. Pshikhachev (the brother of A. Pshikhachev, who was killed in 2010 in a terrorist act) shared with *Severny Kavkaz* readers his opinion about the events that took place in Nalchik on 13-14 October, 2005. He claims that “the main reason for the attack on Nalchik was that ... it had to occur anyway, even in the most ideal society.”³²

The events in Nalchik resulted from the clash between representatives of official (traditional) and unofficial (Salafi-Wahhabi) clergy, whose religious-political contradictions had acquired a hostile nature. The official clergy was unable to overcome the opposition of the Salafi leaders, but the cruel repression by the authorities of religious radicals gave rise to protest moods that turned into an armed uprising.

According to experts, there is a perceptible rise in the Russian Northwestern Caucasus in the number of communities adhering to Islam, whose members are primarily young people. Very often their activity opposes the traditional Islamic principles, as a result of which they are subjected to repression by the authorities, particularly the law-enforcement bodies.

As E. Kisriev notes, recently in Adigey, not only national movements, but also rejuvenated Islam, have become much more active,³³ which is caused by the statements of several well-known politicians about the republic possibly uniting with the Krasnodar Territory “within the framework of region enlargement.” The cited author means the spread of Islam or, to be more exact, of Salafism among the youth of the Northwestern Caucasus, where rumors are circulating about the Republic of Adigey possibly becoming absorbed by the more economically powerful Krasnodar Territory.

Such rumors often have some substance, so they could well arouse the discontent of the religious and political elites of Adigey, the generator of which is young people oriented toward Islamic values.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 144.

³¹ Ibid., p. 145.

³² *Severny Kavkaz*, 15 November, 2005.

³³ See: E.F. Kisriev, “Islam i natsionalnye otnosheniia na Severnom Kavkaze,” in: *Islam v Rossii: Vzglyad iz regionov*, Aspekt Press, Moscow, 2007, pp. 83-84.

Strike against Inter-Islamic Conciliation

A standoff is still going on in Daghestan between the official clergy supported by the authorities and the radically oriented leaders of Wahhabism who head the jamaat. Despite this, in 2012, talks began between the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Daghestan and the leaders of Salafism (Wahhabism). This dialog seemed to bring the sides closer together with respect to achieving peace and consent in Daghestan.

Sufi sheikh Said Afandi al-Chirkawi took active part in the conciliation process. In 2010, it was he who addressed the Wahhabis who had retreated into the forests with the following words, "Leave the forests to the wild animals! Return to the human environment!" In the spring of 2012, he directly initiated a dialog in the central mosque of Makhachkala between the moderate Salafis and representatives of traditional Islam. On 28 August, 2012, sheikh Said Afandi al-Chirkawi was killed in a terrorist act carried out by Aminat Kurbanova (Alla Saprykina). According to a more frequently expressed version, this murder was committed in order to prevent the reconciliation between the traditional Muslim clergy and supporters of Salafism-Wahhabism.

Now the mouthpiece of religious and political extremism and separatism has been taken up by the Imarat Kavkaz movement headed by D. Umarov, which hopes to create a virtual state formation called the Caucasian caliphate. On 14 May, 2012, an International Caucasian Congress (ICC) was held in Istanbul, which was the first major political campaign of the supporters of Imarat Kavkaz at the international level.

A special declaration adopted at the Congress noted that the ICC does not acknowledge the authority of Russia and its puppet regimes (Kadyrov, Magomedov, Kanokov, Evkurov, and others) and declares them illegal. Only the Imarat Kavkaz was recognized as legal. The Congress participants declared that D. Umarov, as amir of the Imarat Kavkaz, is the successor of the Caucasian military and political leaders, beginning with the times of sheikh Mansur and imam Shamil.

It should be noted that such political games were aimed at destabilizing the political situation in the south of Russia, including in the Northern Caucasus. This pursues the goal of uniting the separatist and religious extremist forces scattered throughout the Caucasus, Turkey, and European countries under Islamic slogans.

With respect to the radicalization of certain Muslims in the Northern Caucasus, experts of the Center of Situational Analysis of the Russian Academy of Sciences state the following: "In Chechnia, the uniqueness of the situation is largely determined by the fact that Ramzan Kadyrov (continuing the policy of his father Akhmat-haji) is acting as an ethnonational leader. He can be regarded as a conductor of the Islamic project that has the potential to overcome the excesses of radicalism by placing the stakes on traditional approaches that oppose Wahhabism and Salafism. But against the background of the general Russian ethnonational crisis (ideology and practice of nation-state formation), this project, unless it is adjusted, has no clear prospects."³⁴

Wahhabism is perceived as a progressive phenomenon only because it is incompatible with traditional Islam, which, incidentally, cannot be regarded as an obstacle to modernization. Traditional Islam is based on the local ethnocultural characteristics of the region and has internal adaptation potential. It is close to Russian sociocultural values, which differ significantly from those of Islamic radicalism manifested in reality as so-called Wahhabism. Without state support of the traditional (of-

³⁴ *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 4 April, 2012.

ficial) clergy, both the Northern Caucasus and the country as a whole would hardly be able to withstand the aggression of the religious radicals.³⁵

This situation has developed in the Northern Caucasus due to the antigovernment activity of the leaders of Wahhabism who are striving to use Islam against the traditional clergy and local authorities. The government-supported official clergy, which conserves the religious ethnocultural values and traditions of its ancestors, recognizes Wahhabism as a real power that threatens its own existence.

Conclusion

The formation of religious and political elites in the Northern Caucasus has been caused by different factors (historical, socioeconomic, military, and so on) related to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the appearance of new Russia.

These drastic changes have determined the spiritual emancipation of the Muslims in the region, their political activity and mobility, as well as the infiltration of nontraditional Salafi (or Wahhabi) ideas. The formation of a new type of clergy has begun that has set itself the goal of replacing traditional Islam with “pure” Islam and also creating an Islamic state in the Caucasus. This idea was embodied in the project of creating a virtual state called Imarat Kavkaz.

The opposition between the official and unofficial clergy (moderate Salafis) in the Northern Caucasus, which still exists, cannot go on for long. Both sides are well aware of this, so they are looking for ways to come together and retain their status quo.

The reconciliation process that began in Daghestan was interrupted by the murder of Sufi sheikh Said al-Chirkawi, but Chechnia, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Karachaevo-Circassia recognize the need to continue it.

Consent can be reached in the Northern Caucasus by overcoming religious radicalism, extremism, separatism, and, most important, strengthening unity among the Muslims of the region.

The young people living in the forests of Daghestan, Ingushetia, and the KBR must be returned to peaceful life. The matter primarily concerns those who have not committed crimes, but do not accept the corrupted authorities and diverge with the traditional clergy for ideological reasons.

The dialog that began in Daghestan between the official clergy (Tariqa followers) and Salafis has defined the general position, which requires that the sides observe a special agreement based on recognition of the Quran and Sunnah, the four madhhabs, the ban on Muslims disparaging each other, calling each other insulting names, denouncing fellow believers, and so on. It seems expedient to create a joint body for discussing and resolving contradictory issues.

However, due to the above-mentioned circumstances, the dialog has been interrupted. It stands to reason that its revival will play an important role in achieving peace and consent in Daghestani society and in the Northern Caucasus as a whole. It is obvious that there is no point in continuing the conflict.

³⁵ See: V.Kh. Akaev, “Chechensky kapkan dlia vakhkhavitov,” available at [<http://newsland.com/news/detail/id/707172/>].

ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN KYRGYZSTAN

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ABSTRACT

The author surveys the Islamic education system in Kyrgyzstan after the republic gained its independence, assesses its current state and the problems relating to this sphere, and offers her recommendations on how to upgrade its efficiency.

KEYWORDS: *Kyrgyzstan, Islamic education, Islamic university, Islamic institute, madrasahs, faculty of theology, Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kyrgyzstan, mudaris, imam-khatib, muftiat, State Commission for Religious Affairs, Islamic educational establishments.*

Introduction

The atheist ideology of Soviet times collapsed to give way to revived religiosity in Kyrgyzstan: the number of legal religious establishments and organizations is on the rise. The Constitution and the legal documents relating to the freedom of conscience and religion have been readjusted according to international regulations.

The republic's liberal legislation¹ and the efforts of local Muslims and foreign missionaries over the 20-odd years of independence have helped Kyrgyzstan arrive at Islamic diversity.

According to the State Commission for Religious Affairs (SCRA), in January 2013, there were 1,791 Islamic establishments in Kyrgyzstan: 9 kaziats, 1,674 mosques, 10 higher religious educational institutions, 67 madrasahs, 49 Islamic funds, centers, and alliances, and 3 missions of foreign confessions.² The growing number of Muslim cultic and educational establishments speaks of the rising religiosity and popularity of Islam.

The Muslim community, which is actively seeking ways and means to become involved in public and political life, has set up all sorts of Islamic NGOs engaged in human rights, education, and the social sphere: AdepBashaty, Dil-Murogu, Mutakallim, Islakh, Taiba, the Congress of the Central Asian Muslims, etc. They are working toward a revival of Islamic traditions and culture and promoting the interests of the country's religious majority.

¹ See: Law of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan on the Freedom of Religion and Religious Organizations of 16 December, 1991, No. 657-XII, *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 1 February, 1992.

² See: Current records of SCRA KR. Spravka o kolichestve religioznykh organizatsiy v KR na 01.12.2013 g.

At the same time, the religious sphere has acquired many problems created by the disintegrated economy, mass poverty, deep-cutting spiritual crisis, and mounting social tension. The state structures are deeply concerned: the banned Islamic political parties and movements (Hizb ut-Tahrir, IMU, and Aqromiyya), extremist Jihadist-Taqfir-like movements (Jaishul Mahdi, Djund-ul-Khalifat, Ansarullah, and At-Taqrir-Wal Hijra), apolitical international structures (Tablighi Jamaat, Nurzhiler, Akhmadiyya, and others), and the violent extremism of proselytes are stirring up a lot of problems that call for urgent attention.

They are causing disagreements among the republic's Muslims, intensifying the struggle for control in jamaats and for top posts and resources, spreading radical ideas, and pushing young people to engage in armed struggle and terrorist acts. Muftis have been appointed and replaced with kaleidoscopic speed: since 2010, several muftis were removed amid loud scandals that reverberated far and wide across the country, which did nothing for social stability in the country.

It should be said that there are two opposing opinions about the future of Islam in Kyrgyzstan. Some members of the political elite are openly religious and do not conceal their ideological preferences. They recommend making Islam, along with its principles and regulations, part of social life; their opponents prefer the formula "the less the better."

Both groups, however, are convinced that high-quality Islamic education is the right answer to many problems. The Muslim community needs clearly formulated rules and unambiguous legal, ethical, and ideological dividing lines drawn with due account for the specifics of the Hanafi madhhab; much depends on the level of knowledge, theoretical background, and qualification of the clergy.

Islamic Education in Kyrgyzstan

Islamic education and its problems discussed in this article are very important for Kyrgyzstan and its post-Soviet Central Asian neighbors: about 80 percent of their religious population are Muslims.

At the turn of the 21st century, the scope of religious education in Kyrgyzstan increased: the functioning religious organizations started opening educational establishments to train clergy and to preserve and spread their religious doctrines and practices.

Whereas in the 1990s, the Kyrgyz Republic had no religious educational establishments, today, there are 93 of them: 77 are Islamic (1 university, 9 institutes, and 67 madrasahs) and 16 are Christian (7 higher and 9 secondary schools).

Religious education in Kyrgyzstan has lived through two stages.

- The first, from 1993 to 2008, created a wide and still widening network of Islamic educational establishments; corresponding administrative decisions were passed even faster.
- Since 2008, religious education is being institutionalized on a countrywide scale.

The Hazreti Umar Islamic Institute, the first educational establishment, was opened in Bishkek in May 1993 on the basis of the madrasah at the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Kyrgyzstan (SAMK). Later, on 19 June, 2003, the 2nd Kurultay of the Muslims of Kyrgyzstan transformed it into an Islamic University and appointed well-known spiritual leader Abdushukur Narmatov as its head.

The university (with 400 students studying annually) offers a five-year course given by 40-odd lecturers (some of them have PhD and Doctor of Science academic degrees); between 1993 and 2013, 197 students graduated with degrees in Islamic theology, the Shari'a, and Arabic.

It boasts of an excellent material and technical base, excellent library, and excellent professorate.

All sorts of foreign Muslim charities have given money and dispatched teachers to the first higher educational establishments in the republic.

In 1992, the Muradie Turkish cultural charity opened a madrasah, which was later transformed into the Arashan Institute of Theology. Its director, R. Shamilov, described its purpose as follows: “activists of the Turkish diaspora and compatriots working at Turkish offices in Kyrgyzstan were determined to help the children orphaned by the deplorable events in Osh.”

Very much in line with its stated purpose, the pupils could count on free accommodation, free food, and free training—a very attractive option for the generally impoverished population. Any teenager who wanted to study Islam, even if he did not contemplate it as his future profession, but was prepared to embrace it as a way of life, could apply and be accepted.

In 1993, the state set up several educational establishments together with Kuwait and Iran (the latter was soon closed because of lack of students), and Osh State University opened a theological (Islamic) faculty funded by the Turkish Diyanet Vakfi Foundation.

In 2007, I. Arabaev Kyrgyz State University opened a faculty of theology; in 2011, the Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University did the same. These secular higher educational establishments offer education in full conformity with state standards formulated by the Ministry of Education of the Kyrgyz Republic, but the students are encouraged to follow the way of life of their foreign teachers, who strictly obey all Islamic norms.

In 1998, the republic acquired two Islamic institutes: Alim in the village of Ken-Bulun, Ysyk-Ata District, Chu Region and Khazreti Osmon in Kara-Balta.

A year later, the Abdyjapar Institute was opened in the village of Furkat, Kara-Suu District, Osh Region)

Three more Islamic institutes—Amir Khamza in Tash-Kumyr, Jalal-Abad Region; Lukman al-Khakim in Tokmak and Rasul Akram in Bishkek (Ulan quarter)—were opened in 2002.

In 2008, there were seven institutes in the KR: five functioned in the Chu Region and two in the Osh and Jalal-Abad regions; they offered tuition to 744 students. Forty-seven madrasahs were opened in different parts of the country: 14 in the Osh Region; 12 in the Chu Region; 10 in the Batken Region; 5 in the Jalal-Abad Region; 2 in the Naryn Region; 2 in the Talas Region; and 3 in Bishkek. The youth of the Issyk Kul Region, in which there were no higher or secondary Islamic educational establishments, was deprived of the chance to obtain a religious education.

On the whole, at that time, the number of madrasah students ranged from 15 in the smallest to 180 in the largest school.

It should be said that many of the Islamic educational establishments had to cope with numerous problems: there were not enough trained teachers; curricula were biased, the material and technical base practically non-existent, etc., which made it hard for the graduates to integrate into secular society.

By early 2014, 77 private Islamic educational structures hired 438 teachers and lecturers to educate 4,565 future Muslim clergy.³

The Islamic educational establishments that functioned from 1993 to 2013 trained 2,989 specialists (149 every year) qualified to serve as imam-khatibs, mudarises, kaarylyks, and experts in the Shari‘a and Arabic.⁴

³ See: Current records of the Committee of the Zhogorku Kenesh, Kyrgyz Republic, for Education, Science, Culture and Sport. “Kratkaia informatsia SAMK o sostoianii islamskogo obrazovania,” in: *Materialy Parlamentskogo slushania “O sostoianii religioznoy situatsii i religioznogo obrazovania v Kyrgyzskoy Respublike”*, 5 marta 2013 g.

⁴ Calculated by the author on the basis of the Current Records of SAMK by 1 March, 2013.

They were evenly spread across the country: there are 4 Islamic higher educational establishments, 35 madrasahs, and 1 parish school of the Russian Orthodox Church in the south and 6 Islamic higher educational establishments, 30 madrasahs, 7 Christian higher educational establishments, and 9 schools in the north.

The correlation between the share of Islamic educational establishments (82.8 percent of all educational establishments) and the share of the faithful Muslims (over 80 percent of the total population) looks justified. Christian educational establishments comprise 17.2 percent of the total number.

The steadily increasing number of Islamic educational structures has not been accompanied by rising teaching standards. In 2012, 4 institutes and 37 madrasahs (2 Islamic institutes and 8 madrasahs in the city of Osh and the Osh Region, 6 madrasahs in the Jalal-Abad Region, 3 madrasahs in the Batken Region; 1 madrasah in the Issyk Kul Region, 1 institute and 3 madrasahs in the Naryn Region, 3 madrasahs in the Talas Region, 1 institute and 14 madrasahs in the city of Bishkek and the Chu Region), which constituted over half of all Islamic religious educational establishments functioning in the country, were inspected for the quality of teaching.⁵

The workgroup was satisfied with the results: it reported that “there are very good Islamic higher educational establishments and educational structures with good accommodations, high level of teaching, and adequate material and technical base. On the other hand, some of the educational establishments are in a lamentable state with no basic living and teaching conditions.”⁶

The commission compiled a document which pointed out, in particular, that “the majority of the Islamic educational establishments were set up by our compatriots; they function on the money supplied by local people and parents. Several such structures have permanent sponsors among the foreign funds and religious organizations operating in the republic. Four of the inspected institutes and 37 madrasahs hire 287 teachers and lecturers with very different educational levels (there are self-educated people among them and also people with secondary and higher religious education); they teach 2,602 students aged between 16 and 27 (there are 707 girls among them, or about 27 percent of the total number) at day and evening courses.”⁷

When interviewed by the workgroup, the heads of all the educational structures asked for state financial and material support for their plans to add secular disciplines to their curricula and pointed out that they needed equipment, reduced prices on municipal services, etc.

The interdepartmental workgroup suggested that:

- Islamic universities and institutes accept only those students who have completed secondary education and can present corresponding documents and that the madrasahs accept students with no less than nine years at secondary schools;
- Donations and investments be accumulated to support institutes of Islamic education;
- The institutes and madrasahs work according to common educational standards and curricula;
- The pilot Islamic educational establishments be licensed on a voluntary basis with state support.”⁸

⁵ See: iCurrent records of SCRA KR. Information about the results of studies of the state of religious education in the Kyrgyz Republic carried out by an Interdepartmental workgroup (set up in accordance with the decision of the Government of the KR of 28.02.2012 as a follow-up of resolution No. 61-p of ZhK of the KR “On the State and Development Prospects of Religious Education in the KR” of 04.11.2011 No. 1279-V.)

⁶ Ibidem.

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ Ibidem.

This means that at the first stage of their functioning (between 1993 and 2008), the Islamic educational structures demonstrated the following:

- Spontaneous growth of their number, which outstripped corresponding administrative decisions;
- Inadequate material base and shortage of teaching and methodological materials;
- Lack of permanent funding;
- No rules or clear legal, ethical, and ideological delimitations;
- Biased education that concentrated on religious disciplines; the curricula of Islamic institutes and madrasahs were practically identical;
- No qualified theologians and mudarises.

Problems and Contradictions Created by the Practice of Teaching Citizens of Kyrgyzstan in Foreign Islamic Educational Establishments

On the one hand, young men can freely enroll in religious educational establishments in other countries and travel on tourist visas, private invitations, and money provided by their parents, sponsors, or intermediaries. This means that religious freedom, liberal laws, and democracy have become facts of everyday life in the Kyrgyz Republic. On the other hand, this uncontrolled process contradicts the Decree of the President of the KR of 14 November, 1996⁹ and the Fatwa of the SAMK.

Most of those who study abroad prefer Egypt, Turkey, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Yemen, Russia, and other countries.

In 2004, 600 Kyrgyz citizens studied abroad; in the early 2014 there were about 577 of them (assessment by SCRA KR); between 2007 and 2012, 119 of them left the country according to the required procedure, while 458 travelled illegally. According to M. Murzabaev, who heads the analytical department of SCRA KR, “this information is not exhaustive because many people travelled on private invitations.” This means that young Kyrgyz prefer to study religion abroad.

The Islamic educational structures of Egypt, Al-Azhar al-Sharif University being the best in the Muslim world, have the largest number of Kyrgyz students; in fact, their number has been growing steadily from 185 in 2004 to 287 (an increase of 1.5-fold) in 2014.

Along with religious education, the university offers secular education at 41 faculties (medicine, agriculture, etc.) to students from more than 100 countries.

According to the officials of the 10th Main Administration of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the KR (GU MVD KR), “theses graduates stand apart from many others by their moderate opinions

⁹ See: Decree of the President of the KR of 14 November, 1996 on Realization of the Rights of the Citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic to the Freedom of Conscience and Religion.

and loyalty to the official powers and the state. Recently, however, students have appeared who, after arriving in Egypt, refuse to enroll at Al-Azhar and study at private language courses controlled by Salafis.¹⁰ We should not forget that the position of banned radical Islamic organizations is fairly strong in Egypt.

Turkey is another attractive country. In 2004, there were 76 Kyrgyz studying at religious educational establishments in Turkey; in 2014, there are over 200 of them. Young Kyrgyz are attracted by Turkey's historical, linguistic, and geographic proximity, its secular government, and its reasonably good education. Graduates are much more secular-minded than those who studied in other countries.

Recently, experts¹¹ and clergy¹² have started talking about the Turkish model of relations between the state and religion as most suitable for Kyrgyzstan, with minor adjustments to its social, political, and cultural specifics.

It is suggested at the state level that imams should be treated as state officials: they should be paid wages and become eligible for old-age pensions.

Pakistan and its religious educational establishments hold third place as the most attractive option. From time to time, experts and analysts deem it necessary to warn about the dangers of Islamic education in little-known institutes. "This is especially true of Pakistan where the radical wing of the local clergy patronizes 10 to 15 thousand madrasahs."¹³ Judging by the steadily growing number of students—a three-fold increase (from 15 to 153) between 2004 and 2014—the warnings remained ignored. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the KR, many of the Kyrgyz students of private madrasahs in Pakistan coached by unofficial leaders join all sorts of non-traditional trends or the Tablighi Jamaat.¹⁴ Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, which have had a similar problem, deemed it necessary to recall their students.

Saudi Arabia, a country of prevailing Wahhabism, ranks fourth in terms of the number of students from Kyrgyzstan. Wahhabism belongs to the Hanbali maddhab of Sunni Islam; it is intolerant of novelties, rejects freedom of opinion in religion, and is extremely strict when it comes to everyday practices and Shari'a norms.

The Muslims of Kyrgyzstan (and the majority of the Muslims of the post-Soviet Central Asian states, for that matter) belong to the Hanafi theological and legal school of Abu Hanifah, a highly tolerant trend that accepts secular law as an additional and independent legal source. This simplified business practices and everyday life.

In the last ten years (between 2004 and 2014), the number of Kyrgyz students in Saudi Arabia has increased from 43 to 133. They prefer Islamic universities in big cities—Mecca, Medina and Al Riyadh—and graduate as confirmed Wahhabis of the Hanbali maddhab.

There is certain number of Kyrgyz students in Syria, Kuwait, Jordan, UAE, Libya, and Iran.

Not infrequently, small children (aged from 9 to 14) are sent abroad to study religion. I. Davuza, born in 1995, was sent to a Pakistani madrasah in Jamba Arabia. After 17 years of study, he could barely read or write.

¹⁰ Ibidem.

¹¹ See: R. Weitzel, "Vliianie Turtsii na Islam v Tsentralnoy Azii," 1 November, 2013, available at [<http://www.islamsng.com/sng/analytics/7367>].

¹² See: "Kyrgyzstan: aktiviziruetsia deiatelnost religiozno-ekstremistskikh organizatsiy," 16 August, 2012, available at [<http://www.paruskg.info/2012/08/16/66789>].

¹³ V. Belokrenitskiy, "Krizis pakistanskoy gosudarstvennosti: primety i posledstvia," available at [http://www.perspektivy.info/_2009-12-25.htm].

¹⁴ See: Current records of the Committee of the Zhogorku Kenesh, Kyrgyz Republic, for Education, Science, Culture and Sport. Informatsia 10-go GU MVD KR "Obshchaia religioznaia situatsia v KR," in: *Materialy Parlamentskogo slushania "O sostoianii religioznoy situatsii i religioznogo obrazovaniia v Kyrgyzskoy Respublike"*, 5 marta 2013 g.

In 2009, Uralbek u. T. and Nurmamat u. A (both born in 1996) left for Kuwait.¹⁵ In June 2013, the fact that 10- or 12-year old children from the villages of Bayzak and Chaek of the Naryn Region were sent to Islamic schools in Bangladesh caused a loud scandal.¹⁶

The Azattyk Radio (the Kyrgyz service of Radio Free Europe) learned after prolonged and careful investigation that most Kyrgyz students studied at the Kakrayil Mosque in Dhaka (Bangladesh), a well-known center of Davaatism and the Tablighi Jamaat movement.

There are over 10 thousand madrasahs scattered across Bangladesh, the pupils of which take part in political rallies to demand de-secularization of the country. Their graduates are poorly educated and are less developed than their contemporaries. The number of those who support Wahhabism is steadily growing.¹⁷

This suggests a question: Why are Kyrgyz children sent to madrasahs in Bangladesh at the tender age when intellectual, esthetic, moral, and axiological preferences are just being formed? After all, this will affect their future behavior. Their education is not limited to religious knowledge; children might acquire radical feelings that have nothing in common with the Islamic traditions of their motherland. This means that they might split the Muslim community of Kyrgyzstan.

The SCRA believes that “many of those citizens of our republic who have completed their education come back to set up secret communities of the faithful (khujira) to spread religious teachings unknown in the Central Asian countries. They draw the youth and women into a very dangerous process. More than that, the radically-minded Muslim women have been organizing special female educational groups, which intensifies religious radicalization.”¹⁸

A more careful investigation revealed that many parents rely on incomplete or unreliable information about foreign educational establishments, which means that they choose them at random.

This is equally true of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan, secular countries with common historical, intellectual, and cultural traditions. It seems that a single network Islamic University with unified academic curricula, a single methodological and attestation council, magistracy, post-graduate and doctorate in Islamic studies should be set up to educate a Central Asian Islamic intelligentsia and an academic elite.

Educational Level of Muslim Clergy and Mударises

In 1997, according to the decision passed by the 1st Kurultay of the Muslims of Kyrgyzstan, the SAMK and the State Commission for Religious Affairs at the Government of the KR launched a process of attestation of the imams and mudarises (madrasah teachers) to encourage them to further study, raise their authority among the laity, and strengthen the unity of Islam in the republic.¹⁹

¹⁵ See: Current records of SCRA KR. Information about the results of studies of the state of religious education in the Kyrgyz Republic, 2013.

¹⁶ See: “Zachem kyrgyzskikh detey otpravliaut v medrese Bangladesh?” available at [<http://rus.azattyq.org/content/medrese-ucheba-malchiki-bangladesh/24622169.html>], 22 June, 2012.

¹⁷ See: “Kyrgyzskie ucheniki tainstvennykh medrese v Bangladesh,” available at [<http://rus.azattyq.org/content/kyrgyzstan-bangladesh-medrese/25086376.html>], 26 August, 2013.

¹⁸ Current records of SCRA KR. Information about the results of studies of the state of religious education in the Kyrgyz Republic, 2013.

¹⁹ See: “Imamy derzhat ekzamen,” *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 14 August, 1997, p. 3.

Attestation included three degrees:

1. The highest—knowledge of the Shari‘a, tafsirs of the Quran and hadiths of the Prophet in Arabic.
2. The middle—knowledge of the Shari‘a and the tafsirs of the Quran and hadiths of the Prophet in translation into Turkic languages.
3. The lowest—general knowledge of the Shari‘a.

The examinees were expected to demonstrate their skills in performing Muslim rites in full conformity with the Abu Hanifah maddhab.

In 1997, attestation in the Naryn Region revealed that 30 members of the clergy stopped at the lowest degree, three reached the middle degree, while 18 passed conditionally, and 11 imams failed. In the Issyk Kul Region, the figures were 64, 5, 33, and 17, respectively, and one imam earned the highest degree.²⁰ Despite the fairly harsh conditions, the clergy agreed that attestation was very much needed.

Today, there are about 50 madrasahs in the republic; none has passed the attestation²¹; this means that their diplomas are not recognized by the republic’s state structures. In 2007, the head of the State Agency for the Religious Affairs said: “There are 2 thousand mosques in the republic, with up to 12 thousand clergy serving in them; about 70 percent of them are self-educated with no formal specialized education.”

In this connection, the State Committee for National Security and the Zhogorku Kenesh were asked to draw up a set of documents and organize special training for the imams.

In 2007, the Islamic University and the Faculty of Theology of Osh State University organized training for the first group of 30 clergy; they were taught advanced courses of theology, Quranic studies, and Arabic and were invited to master accounting to be able to compile budgets at the mosque or even at the SAMK level.

Table 1 shows that in 2008 1,346 (68%) out of total 2,062 clergy members took part in attestation; 715 (32%) stayed away for different reasons. Nine hundred and eighty-two (72.9%) passed, while 90 (6.6%) failed.

On the whole, 79 (5.8%) passed with highest points, 163 (12.8%) attained the second category, 763 (56.6%) the third, and 282 (20.9%) passed conditionally, while 90 (6.6%), failed. The faith of eight examinees proved doubtful: they had probably wandered into the profession by sheer chance.

Those who failed were removed from their posts; those who passed conditionally were expected to sit exams at their kaziats three months later.²²

The clergy of the republic’s capital Bishkek and of the Chu and Talas regions demonstrated a lot of activity. The clergy and the kaziat of the Jalal-Abad Region were less than eager (47%).

The attestation commission ranked the regions according to the results: the Bishkek and Chu kaziats showed the best results, followed by the city of Osh, the Nookat, Uzgen and Kara-Suu districts of the Osh Region, the city of Jalal-Abad was the third, while the Kadamjai District of the Batken Region came fourth.

In 2013, the 10th Main Administration of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the KR checked the level of religious education of imams in all regions; the results are shown in Table 2.

²⁰ See: Ibidem.

²¹ See: T. Kalamatov, “V Kyrgyzstane vse medrese dolzhny proyti attestatsiu,” available at [<http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php4?st=1189437480>].

²² See: *Islam madaniyaty*, 27 May, 2008, pp. 1-2.

Table 1

**Attestation Results for the Kyrgyz Republic
(May 2008)**

No.	Regions	Total Number of Imams and Mudarises	Took Part in Attestation	Passed	Did not Take Part in Attestation	Causes		Passed by Categories			Conditionally Passed	Failed	The Faiths Proved Doubtful
						Valid	Invalid	I	II	III			
1.	City of Bishkek	86	75	72	11	6	5	23	25	24	2	1	
2.	Chu	236	194	131	42	12	30	15	23	93	48	8	7
3.	Issyk Kul	129	91	47	38	9	29	3	8	36	32	12	
4.	Talas	107	86	33	21	7	14	3	4	26	45	8	
5.	Naryn	138	95	62	43	13	30	—	6	56	26	7	
6.	City of Osh	63	46	40	17	3	14	8	2	30	5	1	1
7.	Osh	573	376	295	196	21	175	16	43	236	54	42	
8.	Jalal-Abad	487	232	178	255	—	255	3	26	149	47	7	
9.	Batken	243	151	124	92	10	82	8	26	113	23	4	
10.	Total	2,062	1,346	982	715	81	634	79	163	763	282	90	8

Source: Islam madaniyaty, 27 May, 2008, pp. 1-2.

Table 2

**Religious Life in Kyrgyzstan's Regions
(Statistics, 2013)**

No.	Regions	Number of Mosques	Number of Namazkans	Imams without Religious Education	Number of Underage Visitors
1.	City of Bishkek	44	11	9	150-1,000
2.	Chu	252	16	144	2,000-2,500
3.	Issyk Kul	118	47	98	1,000-1,100
4.	Talas	100	17	32	80-100
5.	Naryn	90	20	36	470-500
6.	Osh	722	6	386	2,300-8,500
7.	Jalal-Abad	587	40	456	500-1,100
8.	Batken	314	24	265	346-478
9.	City of Osh	58	5	33	80-200
10.	Total	2,285	186	1,459	6,926-15,478

According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the KR, in 2013, the situation in the sphere of religious education practically remained the same: “1,459 out of 2,285 imams of mosques do not have a special education.”²³

Many of the Islamic educational establishments were set up on Arab money; however, Turkish specialists are engaged in training and upgrading the qualifications of imams. It should be said that recently Turkish influence has become much more noticeable among the Muslim clergy of Kyrgyzstan. Many officials, researchers, and experts are inclined to borrow the Turkish experience of establishing relations between the state and religion. This is easily explained by the similar history, culture, and traditional specifics of the religious spheres of both countries. Heads of the Islamic educational structures are of a similar opinion: they heavily rely on the Turkish methodology of teaching Islam.

Institutionalization of Islamic Education

I have already written that in 2008 the second stage of reforms of the system of Islamic education began and is still going on.

²³ Current records of the Committee of the Zhogorku Kenesh, Kyrgyz Republic, for Education, Science, Culture, and Sport. Informatsia “O sostoianii religioznoy situatsii i religioznogo obrazovaniia v KR,” in: *Materialy Parlamentskogo slushaniia “O sostoianii religioznoy situatsii i religioznogo obrazovaniia v Kyrgyzskoy Respublike,” 5 marta 2013 g.*

Institutionalization began with the new Law on Freedom of Religion and Religious Organizations. Passed on 31 December, 2008, it radically differs from the previous one. Art 6 deals with religion and religious education: the rights and duties of religious organizations that set up and run educational establishments; requirements of the teachers and lecturers; a ban on individual teaching of religion, etc.

This means that from time to time, the problem of religious education and reforms has been raised at the state level.²⁴ The reforms could not be carried out in the absence of a strategy of religious education (there was no continuity in formulating the strategy of the development of religious policies either) and amid the revolutions of 2005 and 2010, which changed the regimes and replaced the SAMK heads.

In 2008, the Eurasian Fund, officials of the SAMK, and experts of the Center of Social Studies at the American University of Central Asia pooled forces and financial resources to implement a project called Integration of the Institutes of Islamic Education into Wide Public Circles and the Problems of Modernization of the Islamic Educational Institutions.

Working together, these structures produced the Development Concept of Islamic Education and a teaching program for the subject of Islamic theology, which included both religious and secular disciplines and recommendations on how the quality of Islamic education in the republic can be improved and how its standards can be integrated into Kyrgyz society.

It was pointed out that the state had to fund, at least partially, the process of introducing secular disciplines into the curricula of Islamic educational structures. The project remained on paper for lack of money.

In 2008-2009, the draft law was discussed by the SCRA KR on the basis of the general model of religious education suggested by Kanybek Osmonaliev, the then head of the State Commission for Religious Affairs.

In 2013, Kanybek Osmonaliev, as Chairman of the Committee of Zhogorku Kenesh for Education, Science, Culture, and Sport, drafted a law expected to create the standards of religious education, organize educational activities, fortify the material and technical base of educational establishments, and register foreign educational establishments (centers, missions, and departments). The draft suggested that all religious educational structures should add from 30 to 40 percent of secular disciplines to their curricula²⁵ to make their diplomas acceptable by the state and provide a broader education for the Islamic intelligentsia.

On 5 March, 2013, the Kyrgyz parliament organized hearings on the religious situation and religious education in the Kyrgyz Republic. The audience listened to speaker of the Zhogorku Kenesh A. Zheenbekov, his deputy T. Zulpukarov, and Vice Premier of the KR K. Talieva. They agreed that the law would solve the problem of compatibility of the secular and religious diplomas to allow graduates of religious educational establishments to be employed in science, education, and civil service.

Many of the religious leaders, including those belonging to the SAMK and ROC, were dead set against the draft. Mufti R. Egemberdiev argued that "the law will not only fail to solve the problems, it will even multiply them" and that "the Law on the Freedom of Religion and Religious Organizations still in force has a Section 'Education and Religion' that can simply be supplemented."²⁶

²⁴ See: *O monitoringe deiatelnosti gosudarstvennykh organov v realizatsii religioznykh prav i svobod*, ed. by O.Sh. Mamyusupova, State Commission for Religious Affairs under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek, 2004, p. 190.

²⁵ See: Current records of the Committee of the Zhogorku Kenesh, Kyrgyz Republic, for Education, Science, Culture and Sport. Informatsia "O sostoianii religioznoy situatsii i religioznogo obrazovaniia v KR."

²⁶ Ibidem; *Suggestions and amendments of the SAMK to the draft law of the KR on Religious Education and Religious Educational Structures*.

State licensing and state standards of religious education, of which much was said in the draft law, invited vehement polemics. According to the demands of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic, all educational establishments should have an adequate material and technical base, adequately educated teaching staff, a building that meets all architectural requirements, a developed infrastructure of classrooms, latest information and computer technologies, libraries, etc. Each faculty should have at least two Doctors of Science and each chair at least two PhDs among their teachers and lecturers.

Many of those who headed Islamic educational establishments knew only too well that they would not live up to these requirements and, therefore, would not be licensed.

On the one hand, it was up to the SAMK to formulate requirements and suggest measures that would improve the quality of Islamic education and strengthen material and technical base: state accreditation of diplomas would allow graduates to enroll in civil service and introduce Islamic values into everyday life.

So far, Tursunbek Bakir uulu, deputy of the Zhogorku Kenesh, is promoting Islamic values practically single-handedly. His election program stresses his determination to introduce Islamic ideas into the economy, politics, and everyday life.

On the other hand, all 77 Islamic educational establishments are private property, the owners of which are not alien to attracting money from foreign Muslim sponsors and centers convinced that a system of Islamic education is the best object of their donations.

Unlike some of its neighbors, Kyrgyzstan has not yet acquired state Islamic educational establishments to compete with the privately owned. The heads of the private Islamic schools and universities referred to the experience of the Russian Federation when talking of state support of the teaching of secular disciplines in Islamic educational establishments.

On 24 December, 2013, the heads of private Islamic schools addressed the republic's leaders with an open letter in which they expressed their concern about criticism of Islam. They asked for state support and said that "the sides need a constructive dialog rather than criticism and accusations. This alone can help preserve peace and harmony in the state."²⁷

At the same time, discussions of the draft law urged the SAMK to complete its Concept of Islamic Education and Reform of Its System. It created curricula and programs for the subject of Islamic Theology to be taught at madrasahs and higher educational establishments. SAMK officials inspected all of them to find out that several madrasahs fell short of the standards; they were closed.²⁸

In 2008, the republic began trying to institutionalize the Islamic education system; in 2010 these efforts were interrupted by a revolution and regime change.

The process was restarted in 2013 when all Islamic educational establishments were structured and united into a single multi-layer system:

- primary Islamic Koranic course at mosques;
- secondary Islamic educational establishments (madrasahs);
- higher Islamic educational establishments (institutes and universities);
- post-graduate structures.

The SAMK came up with a draft concept of Islamic education and a *program of action*:

- The council of the Ulema and the Muftiat of the SAMK should create and approve educational standards for the subject of Islamic Theology for each level of Islamic education;

²⁷ "DUM Kyrgyzstana: Islam v respublike v poslednee vremia stal ob'ektom ostroy politizatsii," 27 December, 2013, available at [<http://www.islamsng.com/kgz/news/7401>].

²⁸ Interview with assistant of the mufti Yu.A. Loma, 24 December, 2013.

- Elaborate curricula in full conformity with the standards of Islamic education;
- Introduce secular disciplines into the curricula of the Islamic educational establishments.

A workgroup of experts acting under the SAMK (muftiat) aegis is expected to shoulder the main burden for implementing this concept. An integrated system of Islamic education will appear in two or three years. The program will be implemented in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education of the KR.

Institutionalization of the system of Islamic education has not been completed; in the future, state accreditation and licensing will increase their prestige, put them on an equal basis with the other educational establishments, either state or municipal, and change their status, which will make them eligible (within certain limits) for state support.

Conclusion

The above suggests the following conclusions:

The developing system of Islamic education in Kyrgyzstan will allow the state to snatch the initiative from foreign educational establishments (in the sphere of Islamic education and theological courses in secular universities). It is advisable to set up a single Islamic University network for all post-Soviet Central Asian states to train masters, PhD candidates, and doctors of science in Islamic theology and create regional Islamic intellectual elite.

To successfully deal with *the confrontation between secular and Islamic ideas about the world and the mounting threat that the religious and ideological dividing lines might finally coincide with the social division* created by de-secularization of society, the absence of state ideology, and the low living standards of the greater part of the nation, the state should *help the Islamic clergy* set up a high-quality Islamic education system complete with secular components.

The draft Law on Religious Education and Religious Educational Establishments, which aroused a lot of interest across the country, invigorated the process of licensing the Islamic educational establishments when the SAMK joined the process.

The above points to certain problems that can be resolved with the help of the following measures:

- Heads of the Islamic educational establishments and the SAMK should join forces to amend the law and offer their addenda;
- The Islamic schools and universities should be invited to undergo voluntary licensing, which will make them more competitive;
- The law should be amended in order to give religious universities a chance to offer their programs for state accreditation.

It is advisable to set up a Fund of Islamic Culture and Education under the President of the KR to maintain permanent contact with international Islamic organizations. This fund will be able to accumulate the money coming from abroad to promote Islam in the Kyrgyz Republic by funding the pilot Islamic educational establishments, creating a structure designed to upgrade the qualifications of the clergy and preachers, and carrying out regular study of the religious traditions of the Kyrgyz people, in which the clergy and academics will be involved together.

The tradition of fairly weak religiosity among the Kyrgyz that goes back into history, and the 70-odd years of state atheism cannot but affect the current situation: the Kyrgyz are not alien to em-

bracing other religions, the clergy and common Muslims are known to violate the Shari‘a, religious attributes and symbols are used for personal purposes (in business practices and amassing wealth), and shaman and Tengrian relicts are popular, while there is a fairly contradictory attitude to Islam. This means that the religiosity of the Kyrgyz is a very special phenomenon. The formula “Muslim according to nationality” is extremely superficial and, more likely than not, does not go farther than certain attributes and formal observance of rites.

NATION-BUILDING

THE ROLE OF THE INSTITUTION OF INTERNATIONAL OBSERVATION IN IMPLEMENTING INTERNATIONAL ELECTION STANDARDS IN THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the legal foundations and methodology of the activity of international observers who are following the preparations for and holding of elections. It studies the international obligations in keeping with which the election system of the Kyrgyz Republic is developing. It carries out a comparative analysis of the participation of international observers in the

Kyrgyz Republic presidential elections held in 2009 and 2011.

The article also presents a brief review of the recommendations for Kyrgyzstan to carry out its international obligations in the election system given by such organizations as the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the CIS Observer Mission.

KEYWORDS: *Kyrgyzstan, institution of international observation, international observers, international election standards, election process, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), CIS Observer Mission, Kyrgyz Republic Central Election Commission.*

Introduction

Free and honest elections are an inviolable part of a democratic state. They are an important way to legitimize state power, as well as an efficient means of screening and “cultivating” a democratic sociopolitical elite.

The quality of the election legislation, its correspondence to international standards, and experience in holding democratic elections are extremely important in successfully solving such responsible tasks.

International observation of elections is carried out in order to support a fair election process that corresponds to the generally accepted standards of civil and political human rights protection in the world community.

The task of this observation lies in the assessments and recommendations that are given at the end of the elections. They help to adhere to international obligations and ensure political stability in the country as the foundation of its further development.

International election observation expresses the interest of the international community in holding democratic elections as part of democratic development, including respect for human rights and the rule of law. International election observation, which focuses on civil and political rights, is part of international human rights monitoring and must be conducted in keeping with the highest standards of impartiality concerning national political competitors and must be free from any bilateral or multilateral considerations that could conflict with impartiality.¹

Foreign (international) election observers first appeared in 1857. At that time, diplomats of France, Great Britain, Russia, Prussia, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey observed the plebiscite held in the disputed territory of Moldavia and Walachia.

This is when the institution of international observers was established. Until the mid-20th century, their activity was periodic; international observers did not become a permanent institution until after the end of World War II.

Institutionalization of International Organizations of International Observation

After the end of World War II and the formation of the U.N., international observers became a permanent institution. At the end of the 1940s, U.N. experts kept tabs on how well the elections were

¹ See: *Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation* of 27 October, 2005, OSCE Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, available at [<http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/104325>].

run in Western Germany and Korea. This practice became particularly widespread during the collapse of the colonial empires (1950s-1960s) and after the end of the Cold War (1990s).²

International observers were enforced institutionally in 1992; at that time, a special structure was created in the U.N. called upon to appoint them for observing elections—the Electoral Assistance Group soon transformed into the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department for Political Affairs. The Group's tasks included technical support of the activity of Deputy Secretary General for Political Affairs appointed as U.N. Coordinator for Electoral Assistance.³

Today, the main task of the Division is to examine and evaluate requests, which include the following:

- rendering electoral assistance;
- establishing and observing U.N. standards with respect to holding elections;
- carrying out missions for assessing needs;
- rendering assistance to different organizations (including organizations of the U.N. system) in planning events relating to elections;
- developing operating strategies for electoral components of international peacekeeping operations;
- assisting the organization of international election observation;
- ensuring succession in U.N. activity in the electoral sphere.

In so doing, the activity of the Electoral Assistance Division was directly related to rendering help in holding election campaigns and carried out on the basis of requests addressed to the U.N. from different states of the world. In so doing, the Electoral Assistance Division is endowed a leading role in planning, selecting mission staff, and carrying out observation. Today, the countries of the world are making active use of the possibility to obtain electoral assistance from the U.N.

In addition to the above-mentioned U.N. Division, election observation is also carried out by a multitude of different international organizations. As participants in international conventions and declarations, they support and promote the principles of free, fair, and genuine elections. The matter concerns such organizations as the European Union (EU), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Organization of American States (OAS), Organization of African Unity (OAU), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), the Secretariat of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the CIS Executive Committee, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), and others.

The activity of numerous nongovernmental organizations is also related to supporting democracy and protecting human rights.

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) has the most experience in international observation. What is more, this is one of the leading world institutions in human rights.

The ODIHR has a mandate for rendering assistance to the OSCE Member nations, which is aimed at ensuring “full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, to abide by the rule of law, to promote the principles of democracy and ... to build, strengthen and protect democratic institutions, as well as to promote tolerance throughout society” (Helsinki Document, 1992).

² See: *Zakon.kz*: Information portal/Foreign Election Observers. Collection of Facts, available in Russian at [<http://www.zakon.kz/96573-inostrannye-nabljudateli-na-vyborakh.html>], 2 November, 2007.

³ See: *Mezhdunarodnye izbiratelnye standarty*, Collection of Documents, Ed-in-Chief, PhD Law A.A. Veshnyakov; Sc. Ed. D.Sc. Law V.I. Lysenko, Ves mir Publishers, Moscow, 2004, 1,152 pp.

One of the areas of the ODIHR's activity is observing the OSCE's adherence to its obligations in the election sphere and rendering assistance aimed at improving the electoral processes. Quite often it is carried out jointly with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and other associations.

This activity is supplemented by measures carried out on the results of election observation; they are aimed at assisting the implementation of recommendations contained in the reports of the ODIHR missions. Also, election legislation is analyzed, corresponding reference guides and recommendations are published, and election observers are trained.

The office has drawn up and is introducing a comprehensive election observation method based on a long-term approach that implies an assessment of all the main components of the election process.

In 2012, the ODIHR engaged in election observation efforts in 55 of the 57 OSCE Member nations. The only OSCE Member nations still not encompassed by these efforts to date are the Holy See and Mongolia, which joined the Organization at the end of 2012.⁴

On the one hand, the collapse of the Soviet Union and formation of the CIS opened up new opportunities for the former Union republics, on the other, the newly independent states were faced with the task of revising the existing legislation and bringing it into harmony with the generally accepted principles and regulations of international law.

In order to reach the set goals and tasks for implementing and adhering to world election standards in the CIS expanse, the CIS Mission of Observers began carrying out international election observation. This Mission consists of representatives of the CIS Secretariat and CIS Interparliamentary Assembly, as well as parliamentary deputies of the CIS countries and other state agencies.

The CIS Interparliamentary Assembly is mainly engaged in international election observation issues within the framework of this Mission. Members of the parliaments of the Commonwealth Member nations follow the election processes in the CIS in the capacity of international observers. They also invite Member nations of other international organizations. Observers and experts analyze the election legislation, draw conclusions, point out achievements and shortcomings, etc.

One of the key subdivisions of the Interparliamentary Assembly—the International Institute for Monitoring Democratic and Parliamentary Process and Suffrage Protection in the CIS (IIMDP) of the Interparliamentary Assembly of Member Nations of the CIS (IIMDP IPA)—coordinates the election observation efforts. The decision on its establishment was made at a visiting session of the IPA CIS Council held on 10 February, 2006 in Kiev (Ukraine).

The institution's main tasks are:

- exchanging information on adherence to human rights;
- summarizing experience on developing democracy and parliamentarianism;
- carrying out election monitoring in the Commonwealth states and beyond;
- training international observers.

Between 1994 and 2013, the IPA CIS organized around 90 visits of election observer groups to the Commonwealth Member nations. In addition, nine seminars and conferences were held for international observers.⁵

National laws, generally accepted world principles, and international law regulations in organizing the election process and international obligations of the state in which elections are being held are the legal basis of the activity of international observers.

⁴ See: Annual Report for 2012. OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

⁵ See: The International Institute for Monitoring Democratic and Parliamentary Process and Suffrage Protection in the CIS, IPA CIS, available at [http://iacis.ru/international_institute/].

One of the cornerstones of the contemporary institution of international observers is the universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948. For example, Art 21.3 of this document reads: “The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.”⁶ According to the U.N., “election observation is one of the most transparent and methodical ways to promote and encourage democracy and human rights.”⁷

In 1990, the OSCE adopted the Copenhagen Declaration, which indicates that any elections must correspond to seven main criteria; they must be “universal, equal, fair, secret, free, transparent, and accountable.”⁸ It should be noted that the Copenhagen Declaration was recognized as one of the basic international documents setting forth the principles for holding democratic elections in the OSCE Member nations and essentially throughout the whole world. The declaration contains not only a set of tools aimed at holding genuinely democratic elections, but also envisages a wide range of obligations for the OSCE Member nations in the context of respect for human rights.

The OSCE obligations also emphasize the importance of elections in ensuring citizen rights to participate in the administration of their country. The provisions on the role of periodic free elections to support political rights are also included in the International Pact on Civil and Political Rights and in the European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights.

The evolution of the contemporary world has led to the need to develop more detailed methodology in the election observation process. In April 1999, the *ODIHR Election Observation Handbook* was drawn up and approved. It describes the general election observation methods and offers a practical guideline for holding them.

This document also envisages enlarging the ODIHR’s sphere of activity and reorienting it toward achieving long-term election observation. The ODIHR Election Observation Handbook also emphasizes that the presence of observers enhances the integrity of the election process: from involving the media and registration of voters and candidates during the election campaign to the final stage of the elections, vote count, tabulation of the results, and the elected candidate taking up his post.⁹

The Handbook consists of 14 chapters and examines a wide range of issues relating to the activity of international observers, including:

- observer code of conduct;
- appointment of a Special OSCE Coordinator;
- activity of the Head of the Election Observer Mission from the ODIHR;
- long-term and short-term observation procedures;
- preparation and publication of preliminary and final reports with recommendations.

Another document that regulates the procedure of international observer activity is the Recommendations for International Election Observers of the CIS. This document was adopted on 7 December, 2002 by the Interparliamentary Assembly of Member Nations of the CIS; it specifies the status

⁶ *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Adopted by Resolution 217 A (III) of the U.N. General Assembly of 10 December, 1948.

⁷ *Election Observation*, Published by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Warsaw, 2005, available at [<https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/17165>].

⁸ Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE of 1990.

⁹ See: *ODIHR Election Observation Handbook*, Published by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Fifth Edition, Warsaw, 2005.

of international observers, establishes their powers, and defines the guarantees corresponding to the performance of their functional obligations.

On the whole, as the developers note, these recommendations are called on to help the CIS international observers to professionally assess how fully and precisely the national election legislation is being adhered to and whether the practice of scheduling, preparing for, and holding elections corresponds to the Constitution and international obligations of the state, as well as to the generally accepted principles and regulations of international law on holding democratic elections.¹⁰

So we have a whole set of methods drawn up by prestigious organizations (including the U.N., OSCE, Council of Europe, European Parliament, CIS, and others) for carrying out high-quality international election observation and protecting electoral rights and basic citizen freedoms ratified by the country holding them.

In addition to analyzing these documents, international observers should acquaint themselves with the provisions of the constitution of the state in which elections are being held that regulate elections or organize the election process, with the laws that establish the procedure for holding them, and other legislative acts.

As a rule, material and financial support of the activity of an international observer (travel expenses, accommodation expenses, communication services, and so on) is financed by the side sending him (or at his own expense).

International Obligations of the Kyrgyz Republic in the Election System

From the time the Kyrgyz Republic (KR) acquired its independence and sovereignty, the country's authorities have been steering a course toward democratization of social life; in connection with this, the need has arisen for reforming many of its spheres.

One of the indices of democratic development is the adoption and implementation of international principles and regulations declared by such organizations as the U.N., the Council of Europe, and so on.

A necessary condition for maintaining and developing the democratic processes in the country is its participation in international and interregional organizations. In so doing, it assumes obligations for adhering to international regulations, which should be reflected and enforced in its legislation.

For example, since it declared its sovereignty, the Kyrgyz Republic has assumed international obligations relating to reorganization of the election system. This means the need for drawing up national election legislation and carrying out election campaigns that correspond to the generally accepted principles and regulations of international law.

After joining the OSCE in 1992, Kyrgyzstan pledged to adhere to the generally accepted international law principles and regulations in human rights and election law and bring them into harmony with its own legislation.

Election standards were set forth in numerous agreements that the republic signed and ratified; one of them is the International Treaty of 29 June, 1990 titled "Document of the Copenhagen Meeting

¹⁰ See: *Recommendations of the Parliamentary Assembly of CIS Member Nations for International Election Observers of the Commonwealth of Independent States*, St. Petersburg, 2002.

of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE” (hereafter referred to as the Copenhagen Document).

This document says that the participating States declare that the will of the people, freely and fairly expressed through periodic and genuine elections, is the basis of the authority and legitimacy of all government. It also sets forth that in the OSCE participating States, elections must be free, fair, and transparent, be based on the principles of the rule of law in keeping with universal and equal suffrage by secret ballot that guarantees the right to elect and be elected.¹¹

Throughout the CIS, election regulations and principles are also based on the Convention on Standards of Democratic Elections, Electoral Rights and Freedoms in the CIS Member Nations. It should be noted that Kyrgyzstan is one of the first CIS member nations to ratify the Convention on Standards of Democratic Elections, Electoral Rights and Freedoms.¹²

After signing and ratifying this mandatory Convention, Kyrgyzstan assumed obligations for bringing the election legislation into harmony with the standards contained in it, as well as for improving the election legislation, election systems, and introducing modern voting technology.

Thus the main election standards adopted in 1990 in Copenhagen at the Second Meeting of the Conference on Human Dimension and in 2002 in Chisinau at the meeting of the Council of CIS Heads of State (who signed the Convention on Standards of Democratic Elections, Electoral Rights and Freedoms in the CIS Member Nations) emphasize the central role of elections in ensuring citizen rights to participation in the administration of their country.

On the whole, as an analysis shows, the obligations to the OSCE and the CIS Convention can be expressed in the seven main words associated with democratic traditions: universal, equal, fair, secret, free, open, and responsible.¹³

- The principle of **universality** implies ensuring access of voters and candidates to efficient, impartial, and discrimination-free registration. Citizens who have reached the corresponding age and meet the registration conditions should have the right to participate in elections.
- The principle of **equality**, which is called upon to ensure equal representation, requires that all voices have equal weight. In other words, voters should have equal and efficient access to the polling stations.
- The principle of **fairness** is called upon to create equal conditions for all participants in the election process, but should at least ensure voters’ access to information on all the candidates and their programs.
- The principle of **secrecy** can only work if the voter is able to fill out his ballot paper and place it in the ballot box in privacy.
- The principle of **freedom** should ensure citizens the opportunity to make their choice without intimidation, as well as the certainty that their right to the freedom of self-expression, gathering and association will be adhered to throughout the entire voting process.

¹¹ See: *Existing Commitments for Democratic Elections in OSCE Participating States*, Warsaw, 2003, p. 7.

¹² See: Law of the Kyrgyz Republic of 1 August, 2003, No. 13 *On Ratification of the Convention on Standards of Democratic Elections, Electoral Rights and Freedoms in the Member Nations of the Commonwealth of Independent States* signed on 7 October, 2002 in Chisinau.

¹³ For more details, see: *Existing Commitments for Democratic Elections in OSCE Participating States*, Warsaw, 2003; Law of the Kyrgyz Republic of 1 August, 2003, No. 13, *On Ratification of the Convention on Standards of Democratic Elections, Electoral Rights and Freedoms in the Member Nations of the Commonwealth of Independent States* signed on 7 October, 2002 in Chisinau.

- The principle of **openness** presumes holding elections in correspondence with laws based on the principles of universality and openness. The vote count should also be open and subject to confirmation, beginning at the polling station, continuing through the middle links of the election commission, and ending with election commissions at the national level; this limits the possibility of falsification of the election results.
- The principle of **responsibility** requires that all those elected, and who assume their assigned posts, recognize their responsibility to the voters.

In 1997, reformation of the voting system began in Kyrgyzstan aimed at bringing the voting procedures into harmony with international requirements and standards. Two consecutive stages can be singled out in this process that encompass 1997-2000 and 2001-2005, respectively. During this time, two State Programs for Improving the Kyrgyz Republic Election System were adopted and elaborated.

The Decree of Kyrgyz President of 8 July, 1997 On the State Program for Improving the Election System of the Kyrgyz Republic (hereafter referred to as 1997-2000 State Program) served as the legal basis for the 1997-2000 State Program.

The main tasks of this program include:

- further improvement of the Kyrgyz Republic election system, use of new approaches to organizing and holding elections and referendums, and elimination of existing shortcomings;
- use by entities of the election process of political election campaign methods carried out within a democratic framework;
- public control over the preparations for and holding of elections, timely determination of election results, tabulation of election results, and their publication.¹⁴

In order to specify and systemize electoral rights and form a democratic regulatory framework established on world and domestic experience, a draft of the KR Code of Laws on Elections and Referendums, as well as the Main Guarantees of Adult Suffrage, was drawn up within the 1997-2000 program.

A significant step on the way to ensuring adult suffrage was the adoption on 29 May, 1999 of the Code of the Kyrgyz Republic on Elections in the Kyrgyz Republic (hereafter referred to as Election Code). It enforced the principles of mandatory and regular elections, the openness and transparency of all voting operations and, primarily, the transparency of commission work at all levels, which would ensure efficient use of the mechanism of responsibility and control over elections and create a safety screen against abuse by their individual participants.¹⁵

For this reason, the Law on Presidential Elections of 31 August, 1991 and the Law on Elections of Deputies to the Zhogorku Kenesh of 12 January, 1994 that were in effect until the Elections Code was adopted ceased to be valid.

The results of the 2000 parliamentary and presidential elections provided further food for thought on the current legislation and taking measures to specify and stipulate certain provisions of the Election Code. This was reflected both in the final documents of the Central Election Commission (hereafter referred to as the CEC) and in the final report of the ODIHR. The recommendations of the OSCE/ODIHR and other international organizations were taken into account when drawing up the new State Program for Improving the Kyrgyz Republic Election System for 2001-2005 (hereafter referred to as the 2001-2005 State Program).

¹⁴ See: *State Program for Improving the Election System of the Kyrgyz Republic for 1997-2000*, Approved by Decree of the Kyrgyz Republic of 8 July, 1997 DP No. 207.

¹⁵ See: *Code of the Kyrgyz Republic on Elections in the Kyrgyz Republic* of 29 May, 1999, No. 39.

This program determined the most important structural and procedural elements of the voting process and was established keeping in mind the basic vectors for organizing and holding elections and referendums given below:

- improvement and further development of the election legislation and the regulatory and legal framework of the Kyrgyz Republic election system;
- legal enlightenment of different categories of participants in the voting process;
- creation of a legal, informative-analytical, and educational infrastructure of the voting process in the Kyrgyz Republic;
- further development of the potential of the Shailoo State Automation System.¹⁶

The years 2005 and 2010 saw an overthrow of the government in Kyrgyzstan. The media named these events the Tulip and National revolutions, which also affected changes in the regulatory and legal framework of the election legislation.

The new version of the Election Code adopted in 2007 in correspondence with the KR Law No. 158 of 23 October, 2007 hardly differed from the old one. As for the 2010 events that accompanied adoption of the new Constitution and transfer to the parliamentary form of rule, they entailed changes in legislation, including election legislation.

For example, in 2011, new laws were adopted that regulated the procedure for organizing and holding elections of the president and deputies of the Zhogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic, as well as the activity of agencies ensuring the preparations for and holding of elections and referendums in the republic.

In June 2011, the Kyrgyz parliament adopted new laws: the KR Constitutional Law on Elections of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic and Deputies of the Zhogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic (of 30 June) and Law on Election Commissions for Holding Elections and Referendums of the Kyrgyz Republic (of 24 June).

When analyzing the new legislation for its correspondence to international elections standards, observers from the CIS Mission noted that “the basic principles for holding elections of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic are enforced in the Constitutional Law on Elections (Art 2) and include principles of Universal, equal, and direct suffrage, as well as free, voluntary, and secret ballot.”¹⁷

For example, the principle of universal suffrage is enforced in Art 3 of the Constitutional Law on Elections. The indicated article contains a provision according to which active suffrage at presidential elections belongs to KR citizens who have reached the age of 18. In turn, passive suffrage belong to KR citizens who are not national of a foreign state, are no younger than 35 and no older than 70, have a command of the state language, and have been living in the republic for a total of no less than 15 years (Art 50 of the Constitutional Law on Elections).¹⁸

Art 4 of the Constitutional Law enforces the principle of equal suffrage. The provisions of the same law are aimed at ensuring its realization. These provisions enforce additional forms of voting, the application of which guarantees certain categories of voters equal opportunities to participate in elections of the KR president. The Constitutional Law on Elections envisages early voting (Art 32), as well as voting outside the voting premises (Art 33).¹⁹

¹⁶ See: *State Program for Improving the Election System of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2001-2005*, Appendix 1 of Decree No. 177 of the Kyrgyz Republic President of 30 May, 2001.

¹⁷ *Conclusion on the Correspondence of Legislation Regulating the Elections of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic to International Standards of Suffrage*, IPA CIS, IIMDP IPA CIS, St. Petersburg, October 2011.

¹⁸ See: *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ See: *Ibidem*.

A voter who is unable to come to the polling station he is registered at on voting day has the right to vote early on the basis of a written statement and documents envisaged by the Constitutional Law on Elections on his pending absence in the KR on voting day.

Moreover, the district election commission organizes voting outside the voting premises. This type of voting is used for citizens who are on the voter list but due to their health or disability are unable to come to the polling station, or those who are in hospital or held in detention as suspects or accused on voting day.

The principle of secret ballot also belongs to the basic principles of the system of international standards of democratic elections. It was enforced in the Constitutional Law on Elections (Art 6), which says that voting at elections in the Kyrgyz Republic is secret and excludes the possibility of any control over the expression of citizen will. Adhering to the secret ballot procedure is guaranteed by the provisions of the Constitutional Law on Elections that require polling stations to have individual cubicles.

Moreover, Art 2.1 of the Constitutional Law on Elections enforces such an important principle as the freedom of elections. Individual provisions of the law prohibit carrying out campaign agitation accompanied by a propaganda war, national, ethnic, racial, religious, or interregional hostility, gender or other social supremacy, appeals to seize power, violent change of the constitutional system, violation of the state's integrity, and use of photos or videos portraying the state and political figures of other states and other forms of abuse of media freedom prohibited by Kyrgyz laws (Art 28.2).

It is easy to see that Kyrgyz legislation reflects the basic voting standards declared in international documents.

Regulatory and Legal Framework and the Participation of International Observers at the Kyrgyz Presidential Elections in 2009 and 2011

Before 1999, the election process in Kyrgyzstan was regulated by the following regulatory and legal documents:

- the Law of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan on Elections of the President of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan of 31 August, 1991, No. 566-XII (in the rendition of the KR Law of 29 September and 5 October, 1995, No. 22-I);
- the KR Law on Elections of Deputies to the Zhogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic of 12 January, 1994, No. 1380-XII.

These documents enforced the general principles for preparing for and holding elections (including the principle of transparency), which found their reflection in the following formulations: "Elections are free and carried out by means of universal, direct, and equal suffrage by secret ballot" and "The deputies of the Zhogorku Kenesh ... are elected ... on the basis of free, universal, and equal suffrage by secret ballot during direct elections."²⁰ However, there were no regulations in the legislation that make it possible for both local and international observers to participate in elections.

²⁰ *Law of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan on Elections of the President of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan* of 31 August, 1991, No. 566-XII (in the rendition of the KR Law of 29 September and 5 October, 1995, No. 22-I); *Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on Elections of Deputies to the Zhogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic* of 12 January, 1994, No. 1380-XII.

The Election Code adopted in 1999 introduced the concepts of “observer” and “international observer.” The procedures for accrediting and sending invitations to international observers, as well as their rights, obligations, and term of office are regulated by KR legislation.²¹

As noted above, when new Constitutional laws regulating presidential and parliamentary elections were adopted in June 2011, the legal status of several regulatory documents rose. At the same time some restrictions on the activity of international observers were removed.²²

So whereas according to the Election Code of 1999, an international observer had the right to “publicly express his opinion about KR election legislation, preparations for and holding of elections, as well as hold press conferences and address media representatives only after the voting is over,” in correspondence with Art 10.3 of the new Constitutional Law on Elections of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic and Deputies of the Zhogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic of 30 June, 2011, these restrictions were removed.

So, since 1999, international observers have been able to follow the organization and holding of parliamentary and presidential elections in Kyrgyzstan. As Ambassador of the OSCE Center in Bishkek, Sergey Kapinos, noted, “the team of OSCE observers has been engaged in monitoring the elections in Kyrgyzstan since 2000; all of that time reports have been drawn up with recommendations on how to improve the election legislation.”²³

Between 2000 and 2011, both an increase in the number of international observers and the geographical scope of their participation in elections have been noted. On the day of the presidential election held on 29 October, 2000, there were around 7,384 observers from candidates, and 6,063 from nongovernmental and public associations, **268 international observers**, 226 from parties and 10 media representatives.

At a similar election in 2005, the voting was monitored by **947 international** and more than 15,000 local observers. There was also a trend toward an increase in the number of observers at subsequent presidential (2009 and 2011) and parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan.

Today, the activity of international observers in Kyrgyzstan is regulated by Art 10 of the KR Constitutional Law on Elections of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic and Deputies of the Zhogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic of 2 July, 2011 and Art 8 of the KR Law on Elections of Deputies to Local Keneshes of 14 July, 2011.

For example, Art 1 of the KR Constitutional Law on Elections of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic and Deputies of the Zhogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic gives the following definition of **international observer**: “An international observer is a person representing a foreign or international organization that acquires the right to carry out observation of the preparations for and holding of elections in the Kyrgyz Republic in correspondence with the established legislative procedure.”

In correspondence with the indicated articles of the laws, international observers are accredited by the CEC on the basis of an invitations sent by the President, Zhogorku Kenesh, Government, and CEC itself after official publication of the decision on scheduling of the elections. Proposals on sending invitations can be submitted by international and national noncommercial organizations specializing in questions of election legislation and elections, as well as in the sphere of human rights protection.

²¹ See: Art 18 of the *Code of the Kyrgyz Republic on Elections in the Kyrgyz Republic* of 29 May, 1999, No. 39.

²² See: Art 10 of the above-mentioned law.

²³ “The OSCE: Kyrgyzstan Needs Codes on Elections and Media Ethics,” available in Russian at [<http://www.vb.kg/253380>], 2 December, 2013.

The election legislation of Kyrgyzstan says regarding terms of office that “the term of office of an international observer begins on the day he is accredited by the CEC and ends on the day the election results are officially published.”²⁴

The above-mentioned laws also regulate the rights and obligations of international observers. For example, when organizing and holding elections, observers from international organizations and foreign states have the right to do the following:

- (1) publicly express their opinion on the preparations for and holding of elections;
- (2) hold press conferences and address media representatives;
- (3) hold a photo session and also make video and audio recordings without violating the electorate’s secret ballot;
- (4) wear non-campaigning badges indicating status, last name, first name, and name of organization they represent;
- (5) observe the formation of elections commissions of all levels;
- (6) observe the compilation of voter lists;
- (7) observe voter accounting;
- (8) observe information support of elections.

International observers also have the right to move around freely and visit any polling stations and elections commissions.

At the same time, they do not have the right to use their status for engaging in activity unrelated to observing the preparations for and holding of elections. If an international observer violates the Constitutional Law or KR legislation, the CEC has the authority to recall his accreditation.

Comparative Analysis of the Participation of International Observers at the Presidential Elections of 2009 and 2011

This article conducts an analysis of the participation of international observers at the presidential elections of 2009 and 2011. In so doing, the changes that occurred in the election legislation after the 2010 events were taken into account.

For example, in 2009, the elections were held on the basis of the Election Code, while in 2011 they were held on the basis of the new Constitution and new Constitutional Laws on Kyrgyz presidential and parliamentary elections.

The early presidential elections of 2009, at which the main candidate was current KR president Kurmanbek Bakiyev, were held in a more or less stable sociopolitical situation. In 2011, it significantly changed. This was promoted by a whole series of factors. The matter primarily has to do with the change in power in April 2010, formation of a Provisional Government and new CEC, transfer

²⁴ Art 10 of the *Constitutional Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on Elections of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic and Deputies of the Zhogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic* of 2 July, 2011 and Art 8 of the *Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on Elections of Deputies to Local Keneshes* of 14 July, 2011.

from a four-level (precinct, district, regional, and central) to a three-level (precinct, territorial, and central) structure of elections commissions, as well as the ethnic clashes that occurred in June 2010 in the Osh and Jalal-Abad regions of Kyrgyzstan.

A study of the statistics of the presidential elections of 2009 and 2011 in the KR shows the extensive participation in them of observers from foreign countries and international organizations. For example, the CEC accredited 516 observers from 48 countries and representatives of 29 international organizations, including the OSCE/ODIHR, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, SCO Secretariat, CIS Executive Committee, CIS Mission, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, National Democratic Institute, International Republican Institute, International Foundation of Electoral Systems, Russian Public Institute of Electoral Law, European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations, OSCE Center, CEC of the CIS Countries, and embassies of foreign countries (accredited in the KR).²⁵

At the end of the 2009 presidential election, the international observers made official statements on their results and held press conferences. On one of them, head of the CIS Mission, CIS Executive Secretary S. Lebedev said that the presidential election in Kyrgyzstan was open and free, and this can be considered an important factor of further democratization of society.

According to the Mission, the presidential candidates were provided with equal conditions for campaigning, which is an important element ensuring the democratic nature of the elections. In so doing, the media gave balanced and objective coverage of their activity.

In its final statement, the CIS Observer Mission noted that the presidential elections held on 23 July, 2009 in KR were open and free and met the regulations of the country's election legislation. The Mission also stated that they were held in keeping with the constitutional rights and freedoms of citizens and were an important factor in further democratization of the country's social life.

Representatives of the SCO observer mission also assessed the elections. Its official statement noted that conditions were created everywhere for free expression of the will of citizens, while the elections themselves were honest and transparent.

The assessment of the elections by the OSCE ODIHR Mission differed slightly from the one made by the CIS Observer Mission. The OSCE ODIHR Mission admitted that several of the elements of the election process were positive, meaning the active participation of civil society in the election, the transparency and accountability of the funding campaign, offering candidates free air time, and so on.

However, the OSCE ODIHR observers noted that during the campaign several violations were allowed consisting, for example, of significant prejudice of the state media supporting the current president (while coverage of his rivals in the electronic media was incomplete and biased).

The OSCE ODIHR Mission also stated that despite several insignificant efforts to clarify the voter lists, their quality and authenticity continued to be a reason for concern. Moreover, the Mission negatively assessed the amendment to the KR Election Code envisaging elimination of marking voters' fingers, which was an important protection measure against repeat voting.

The Mission recorded ballot-box stuffing, domination of the ruling party over the election administration, and instances of use of the administrative resource and repeat voting.

One of the key elements in the statement of the OSCE ODIHR Mission was confirming the need to revise the KR Election Code and bring it into harmony with OSCE obligations.

The final report of the OSCE ODIHR Mission noted that the presidential election held on 23 July, 2009 in Kyrgyzstan did not comply with the key obligations within the framework of the OSCE for holding democratic elections, particularly with respect to the obligation to guarantee equal suffrage.²⁶

²⁵ See: "Press Center," available at [www.shailoo.gov.kg].

²⁶ *The Kyrgyz Republic. Presidential Elections of 23 July, 2009*, Final Report of the OSCE ODIHR Mission on Election Observation.

At the 2011 presidential election, the KR CEC accredited 792 observers from 47 international organizations representing 57 countries of the world and more than 100 representatives of foreign media for carrying out monitoring of the election process.²⁷

This election campaign was to have shown the extent to which the principles of international law and democratic values were adhered to and how successful peaceful transfer of power would be. Moreover, the international observers were to make an assessment of the KR's new election legislation.

Summing up the election results, international observers noted that including the representatives of political parties and local self-government bodies in the election commissions, as well as the presence of a large number of observers at the polling stations significantly promoted the transparency and openness of the voting process.

According to the CIS Mission of Observers, Kyrgyzstan passed the test for adhering to international election standards. An analysis of the country's election legislation carried out by the Mission's experts showed that it meets the provisions of the Convention on the Standards of Democratic Elections, Electoral Rights and Freedoms in CIS Member Nations signed by Kyrgyzstan.

They also noted that the basic principles for holding elections have been enforced in the Constitutional Law and include universal, equal, and direct suffrage, as well as free, voluntary, and secret ballot.

The CIS Observer Mission admitted that in the last two years, KR election legislation has been supplemented with provisions aimed at further improvement and democratization of the election system.²⁸

The assessments of the OSCE ODIHR mission were more cautious. Its final report noted that the elections were held peacefully, but the shortcomings identified underscored the need to raise the honesty of the election process in order to strengthen democratic practice in keeping with international obligations.

The elections were held within the framework of the new legislative framework, during the elaboration of which many recommendations of the former OSCE ODIHR Mission of Election Observers were taken into account. Nevertheless, as ODIHR observers note, "...the legislative framework still does not correspond to some of the obligations to the OSCE."²⁹

Despite the fact that the statements of international observers made on the results of election monitoring are of a recommendatory nature, they are nevertheless extremely important for improving the country's election system.

The compilers of the new legislation took into consideration the recommendation concerning improvement of the voters lists (additional voters lists were cancelled and voting is now carried out only according to the main lists). Changes such as voting outside the polling station one day before the election and the possibility of voting according to voting address (that is, at an address that is not the voter's permanent residence, where he expresses the desire to vote no later than 10 days before the election), which ensures the principle of equality.

The OSCE ODIHR Mission also mentioned several additional changes that were taken into account in the new KR election legislation. For example, the decision to create a united voter registra-

²⁷ See: "Information on Accreditation of International Observers," available in Russian at [http://shailoo.gov.kg/index.php?module=content&page=Informaciya_ob_akkreditacii_mejdunarodnyh_nablyudateley__Informaciya_ob_akkreditacii_mejdunarodnyh_nablyudateley&pagelang=ru].

²⁸ See: *Statement of the CIS Observer Mission on the results of observing the preparations for and holding of the Kyrgyz Republic presidential election*, available in Russian at [<http://www.cis.minsk.by/news.php?id=402>].

²⁹ *Final Report of the Election Observation Mission of the OSCE ODIHR*, Presidential Election of 30 October, 2011, Warsaw, 10 January, 2012.

tion system under the aegis of the CEC was positively assessed. By way of positive changes, the Mission pointed out the adoption of amendments to the legislation cancelling the possibility of citizens being entered on the voters' lists on voting day. Moreover, voters have the right to vote at their actual address of residence, and not at their permanent registration address. According to experts, these changes made it possible to ensure that more migrant voters could participate in the voting than at previous elections.

The OSCE ODIHR Mission thought the publication by the CEC of the preliminary election results on its website (the night after the election) as they came in from the polling stations to be a very positive step.

The Mission gave several priority recommendations in its final assessments aimed at improving the election process in the KR within the framework of realizing international voting standards.

- The CEC should draw up comprehensive regulations on the voter registration system;
- The CEC should carry out an analysis of and clarify the last renewal of voter lists;
- The CEC should raise the quality of training of members of the voting commissions;
- The CEC should make changes to the voting legislation relating to ensuring equal coverage of candidates in news and information programs (as well as independent editorial coverage of campaign undertakings);
- The CEC should formalize the procedures for making appeals at all levels of election commissions and draw up standard complaint forms;
- The CEC should examine the possibility of removing restrictions of candidates' rights (remove the maximum age limit, restriction on the requirement of residence in the country for the last 15 years, and not permitting people with criminal records depending on the gravity of the crime committed) in order to achieve greater correspondence to obligations within the OSCE.
- Election legislation should envisage unhindered observation of the entire election process in keeping with the obligations within the OSCE, while the rights of observers should not be restricted by CES decisions or administrative barriers. In particular, the CEC's decision on not accrediting international observers until 30 days before the elections should be cancelled and carried out on a declarative basis.

The CIS Observer Mission also gave some recommendations regarding further improvement of the KR election legislation:

- Clearer articulation of the procedure for forming territorial and precinct commissions and the number of their members;
- Determination of the maximum number of voters in a precinct and increasing the number of members of precinct voting commissions;
- Clarification of the personal identification documents a citizen must present to receive a ballot paper due to the imprecise formulation of terms in the legislation;
- Re-examination of the provision of the Constitutional Law regulating voting outside the voting premises (allowing such voting on election day);
- Improvement of the procedure for forming voter lists in order to ensure they are complete and authentic. In no event permit instances of unjustified exclusion of voters from lists.³⁰

³⁰ See: *Statement of the CIS Observer Mission on the results of observation of the preparations for and holding of Kyrgyz Republic presidential elections.*

On the whole, the OSCE ODIHR noted that the KR regulatory and legal framework does not fully correspond to all the obligations to the OSCE in terms of freedom of expression, transparency of the funding campaign, restriction of the rights of candidates, and the large number of reasons for annulling their registration, including after the elections.³¹

The statements of international observers show both the positive and negative results of reforming the KR election system, which must undergo a certain amount of further improvement. The recommendations offered on the results of election observation are actively promoting the formation of new regulations and principles of international law in the state's national legislation.

Conclusion

Reform of the election system that began in 1997 and prompted the adoption of two state programs has laid the foundation for forming a legal, information-analytical, and educational infrastructure of the voting process in KR. On the whole, it has promoted an improvement of the election system, as well as the use of new approaches to organizing and holding elections and referendums in Kyrgyzstan.

Election legislation drawn up in compliance with international standards, the recommendations of international observer missions, and the adopted obligations has improved each time.

When the Election Code was adopted in 1999, such concepts as "observer" and "international observer" were introduced into the voting process. The Election Code regulates the procedures for accreditation and sending invitations, as well as questions relating to activity, terms in office, status, rights, and obligations of international observers.

In addition to this, in June 2011, new Constitutional laws regulating presidential and parliamentary elections came into effect. They raised the status of regulatory and legal documents and removed certain restrictions on the activity of international observers.

Thus, the process of state-building and Kyrgyzstan's integration into the world community has been accompanied by laying the foundation of electoral law. In so doing, the general democratic voting standards declared by international legal documents have been comprehensively taken into account and obligations adopted for their realization.

When examining the dynamics of change in the participation of international observers at the elections in the republic between 2000 and 2011, an increase in their numbers and geographical representation can be noted.

When analyzing the statements of international observers on the results of two presidential election campaigns in KR (2009 and 2011), it can be noted that in some cases they are dramatically different. On the whole, the significant assistance rendered by the institution of international observation must be noted, the activity of which is having a great impact on improving the election system in light of implementing international standards and principles.

The member nations of international organizations asked to adhere to one of the fundamental principles of the Copenhagen Agreement that calls for fair treatment and drawing up of observation methodology and methods.

It stands to reason that a unified methodology and method of professional activity of international observers demands comprehensive discussion and adoption by all participants in the election process. The regulations and principles for organizing and carrying out international observation should be identical for all independent organizations engaged in monitoring the election process.

³¹ See: *Final Report of the OSCE ODIHR Election Observation Mission*, Presidential Elections of 30 October, 2011, Warsaw, 10 January, 2012.

In light of the above, we think it necessary to open joint international observer training centers. Their activity should be based on methodological principles that should be the same for all international election observers.

When talking about international observation, it is also important to note that the current differences in approaches and principles for assessing election campaigns can be overcome by regular theoretical discussions.

DEMOCRATIZATION IN POST-SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA: AMERICAN IMPACT

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ABSTRACT

The author analyzes how the Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan) are moving toward democracy, as well as the political and geopolitical reasons behind the United States' interest in the region triggered by the Soviet Union's disintegration and Washington's desire to consolidate its position in the post-Soviet space. It was determined to realize its interests by planting democratic values in the newly independent states and urging them to orientate themselves toward democratic principles when shaping their policies. In this way, the Central Asian countries could count on Washington's political support and economic aid.

In an effort to enter the world scene as democratic states, the Central Asian countries built state structures that relied on constitutions describing them as democratic states; they created a party and election system and passed laws on the freedom of speech, glasnost, etc. This, however, has not transformed the post-Soviet Central Asian republics into paragons of democracy: the clan system is very much alive in the corridors of power; Soviet mentality remains predominant among state officials (practically all the top figures preserved their posts in the newly independent states); and the influence of Russia and the authoritarian traditions inherited from the past is still very obvious.

KEYWORDS: *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Central Asia, the U.S., democratization.*

Introduction

As part of the Soviet Union, the Central Asian republics and the United States were involved in the Cold War as opponents or even adversaries. When the Soviet Union fell apart, American diplomacy wisely concentrated on all the post-Soviet states to prevent Russia's stronger position in the post-Soviet space and in Central Asia in particular.

In the post-Cold War era, America, which no longer needed its military superiority but still had to keep potential rivals in check, armed itself with the self-imposed duty of promoting liberal democratic values as an alternative method for preserving its hegemony.

Strong and sustainable political parties dedicated to the idea of democracy were seen as the main instrument of democratization. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI) were drawn into the process with programs "that promote the rule of law and respect for human rights, strengthen the unity and effectiveness of the democratic forces in transitional societies, encourage dialogue among different sectors of society, and advance solutions to national problems."¹

Washington's interests in Central Asia presupposed that the regional states should be encouraged to rely on democratic principles when establishing their new independent policies as a condition for America extending its political support and economic assistance.

As independent states, the local countries, their common history notwithstanding, were developing along different paths. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan looked to the West. Despite the numerous and serious shortcomings in forming democratic institutions, they stood apart from their Central Asian neighbors in terms of their more or less identical plans to become modern states and acquire corresponding mechanisms through social, economic, and political reforms.

The United States assessed the degree of the region's democratization by what was accomplished in these three states. Washington used the same democratization mechanisms in all the Central Asian countries, however the results differed from country to country. Here I will offer an overview of the processes unfolding in each of the three republics mentioned above and their specifics.

Kazakhstan

The U.S. was the first state to recognize independence of Kazakhstan (which stirred up no enthusiasm among the local people and the republic's leaders) on 25 December, 1991; in January 1992 it opened its embassy in Almaty, the republic's capital at the time. Simultaneously, the NDI began its work in the republic to help citizens of the newly independent state learn more about their rights, duties, and involvement in the election and political processes.

Nursultan Nazarbaev was elected president of Kazakhstan with a huge majority of 98 percent.² His only opponent failed to gather the 100 thousand signatures needed to join the race.

President George W. Bush, who invited his newly elected colleague to visit Washington, started bilateral relations between the two countries, which announced that they had launched "new relationships." The sides signed the Agreement on Trade Relations, the Bilateral Investment Treaty on

¹ *National Endowment for Democracy Strategy Document*, January 1992, Washington D.C., p. 4.

² See: "History of Presidential Elections in Kazakhstan since 1991," Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the United Nations, available at [<http://www.kazakhstanun.org/press-releases/history-of-presidential-elections-in-kazakhstan-since-1991.html>], 28 August, 2013.

Reciprocal Encouragement and Protection of Investments, a memorandum on mutual understanding, and a joint statement on the avoidance of double taxation.

From the very beginning, the sides proceeded from the conviction that security of Kazakhstan was a *sine qua non* of stability in Asia. In December 1992, the two states signed an agreement concerning the activity of the peace corps of the United States in the Republic of Kazakhstan, under which American volunteers contributed to carrying out the social and economic reforms in Kazakhstan. The republic received considerable assistance from charity and humanitarian organizations.

President Nazarbaev deemed it necessary to reorganize the party system in the republic to move it closer to true democracy; he transformed the republic's Communist Party, which had lost legitimacy and popular support anyway, into a socialist party. The new name for the old party duped no one since the top figures and the party's political makeup remained the same. This meant that the country needed new political parties: the state's democratic nature proclaimed in Art 1 of the Constitution of Kazakhstan ("The Republic of Kazakhstan proclaims itself a democratic ... state")³ required a multi-party system. The People's Congress of Kazakhstan set up by the president on 5 October, 1991 at the Constituent Congress was registered with the Ministry of Justice on 31 December, 1991⁴; in 1992, another party appeared, the People's Unity of Kazakhstan; a year later President Nazarbaev became its leader. Two pro-presidential parties that followed the same political course could not pass for a multi-party system. In 1994, the parliament was elected for the first time on a multi-party basis; the People's Unity of Kazakhstan, the president's party, won the majority of seats.

International observers could not agree on the degree of the elections' democratic nature and transparency. The OSCE insisted that the results be annulled because of numerous frauds, cases of simultaneous voting for several candidates, and because of the opposition's limited access to the media and the very short election campaign, which had not allowed the parties, movements, and candidates to properly present their programs.⁵ The United States, on the other hand, represented by an NDI delegation, concluded: "In certain instances, changes in the system may be necessary, not because they are required by the international norm but to increase public's confidence in the election process."⁶

In 1994, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher visited Kazakhstan; later the same year, President Nazarbaev met President Clinton in the White House to sign a treaty under which Kazakhstan joined the nuclear non-proliferation treaty to become a non-nuclear state. "The Administration is showing its appreciation to Mr. Nazarbaev by announcing plans to more than triple aid to Kazakhstan, from \$91 million this year to \$311 million next year. Some of it will be used to dismantle warheads. The Administration will sign more than half a dozen cooperation agreements with the Kazakh leader on economic, military and space matters... Administration officials want to use Mr. Nazarbaev's visit partly to show that they are paying more attention to the former Soviet republics other than Russia."⁷ In February 1995 at the Washington Summit, President Clinton said that Kazakhstan was "critical" for democracy in Central Asia.⁸ In 1994, America and Kazakhstan signed the Demo-

³ [http://www.akorda.kz/en/category/konstituciya].

⁴ See: "Politicheskie partii Respubliki Kazakhstan," *Tsentralnaya Azia i Kavkaz*, No. 8, 1997, available at [http://www.ca-c.org/journal/08-1997/st_19_par_kaz.shtml], 29 September, 2013.

⁵ See: O. Tokhtanbayev, *Kazakhstan: Transition to Democracy?* The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences of Bilkent University, Ankara, September 2001, 48 pp.

⁶ *NDI Pre-Election Report. The March 1994 Elections in Kazakhstan*, 22 February, 1994, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, available at [http://www.ndi.org/files/345_kz_94preelection.pdf], 11 September, 2013, p. 16.

⁷ S. Greenhouse, "Clinton and Kazakh Chief Each Filling a Need. Washington," *New York Times*, 13 February, 1994, available at [http://www.nytimes.com/1994/02/13/world/clinton-and-kazakh-chief-each-filling-a-need.html], 4 October, 2013.

⁸ See: *The Parliamentary Elections in Kazakhstan*, Kazakhstan, Almaty, 7 March, 1994, 103rd Congress, 2nd Session, A Report Prepared by the Staff of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, p. 15.

cratic Partnership Charter between the United States of America and the Republic of Kazakhstan, in which the sides pledged to be guided by the principles of democracy, private property, free market, the rule of law, and respect for human rights and basic freedoms.⁹

In the latter half of the 1990s, however, the United States became concerned with the lack of progress in democratic reforms and human rights protection in Kazakhstan; Washington was very irritated by the decision to replace the presidential election of 1995 with a referendum that extended Nazarbaev's presidential term to 2000.¹⁰

The 1999 law on the media was another important step toward stronger democratization; it opened access to information for private persons, allowed privately owned media, and banned censorship.¹¹ In the West, however, the law caused mixed feelings; American analysts doubted that the law would be scrupulously observed; they pointed out that, in practice, the government interfered with the development of independent media and functioning of the multi-party system and that the president had gained more power at the expense of the parliament.

The 1998 financial crisis in Russia demonstrated that in a country with a high level of corruption it is hard, if possible at all, to control economic liberalization unaccompanied by corresponding political reforms. The degree of democracy in Kazakhstan corresponded to the level of American economic assistance; American diplomats were increasing their pressure to establish punishments for the Kazakhstan officials guilty of violations of human rights and infringements on political competition. Prior to 2000, this created new dynamics in the relations between the United States and Kazakhstan, whose leaders were not overjoyed by America's criticism of the political system in their country, which cooled down Washington's previously warm attitude toward its close ally.¹²

In 1998, the U.S. Department of State summarized the efficiency of all the branches of power in Kazakhstan in its Kazakhstan Country Report on Human Rights Practices: "The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens in some areas, but serious problems remain in others. Democratic institutions are weak. The Government infringed on citizens' right to change their government, notably in its flawed conduct of preparations for the January 1999 presidential election... Government tolerance of the independent media markedly deteriorated; freedom of assembly sometimes was restricted... Domestic violence against women remained a problem. There was discrimination against women, the disabled, and ethnic minorities."¹³

Plainly speaking, Kazakhstan was not progressing toward liberal democracy, while the United States was becoming even more outspoken about the need for democratization in the newly independent states.

After he took the helm, George W. Bush steered the country toward greater geopolitical involvement in the region, this course becoming known as the policy of long-term involvement. Washington, which had set itself the task of bringing about a regime change, very soon arrived at the Color Revolution tactics.¹⁴

⁹ See: *Khartia o demokraticheskoy partnerstve mezhdu respublikoy Kazakhstan i Soedinennymi Shtatami Ameriki*, Washington, 14 February, 1994, available at [http://kazakhstan.news-city.info/docs/sistemi/dok_perbaz.htm], 15 September, 2013.

¹⁰ See: S.R. Roberts, *Kazakhstan and the United States: Twenty Years of Ambiguous Partnership*, The Atlantic Council of the United States, Washington, D.C., 2011, p. 4.

¹¹ [http://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=30015965&sublink=20000], 7 October, 2013.

¹² See: S.R. Roberts, op. cit., p. 4.

¹³ *Kazakhstan Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1998*, U.S. Department of State, Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 26 February, 1999, available at [http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/1998_hrp_report/kazaksta.html], 20 September, 2013.

¹⁴ See: D.V. Dorofeyev, "Tsvetnye revolyutsii' v Tsentralno-Aziatskom regione v kontekste vneshnepoliticheskoy strategii SShA," *Kultura narodov Prichernomoria*, No. 125, 2008, p. 51.

Early in 2003, the American legislators discussed several bills in which the governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan were described as “dictatorial and tyrannical.” A year later, President George W. Bush doubled the budget of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) to step up American interference in the domestic affairs of the Middle East and Central Asia.¹⁵

The relations between the two states remained quite successful because there were no strong anti-American feelings in Kazakhstan and no perceptible threats to the country’s independence; a certain amount of coolness, however, could be detected. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who visited Kazakhstan on 12-13 October, 2005, insisted on more radical political reforms.

As an independent state, Kazakhstan has been pursuing a fairly consistent foreign policy immune to all sorts of pressure. As the actual leader of post-Soviet Central Asia, Astana has to take the lessons learned from the Color Revolutions into account.¹⁶ It seems that Kazakhstan became the region’s leader in the sphere of economic modernization and democratic changes amid the persisting internal instability in Kyrgyzstan and international isolation of Uzbekistan. This means that Kazakhstan may replace Kyrgyzstan as the “island of democracy” in the region and Uzbekistan as the United States’ privileged Central Asian partner.

Kyrgyzstan

In December 1991, Askar Akaev was brought to power by democratic, even if uncontested, elections. Thus the country embarked on the road of democratic changes: while the Soviet Union was still alive, Akaev was the republic’s most active leader and supporter of the policy of glasnost, perestroika, and democratization.¹⁷

Fully aware of the fact that, as a small state with no natural riches, Kirghizia needed a strong patron, especially at the early stages of its independent existence, President Akaev worked hard to attract the attention of the world community to the republic’s intellectual and political potential.

Art 1 of the Constitution adopted on 16 December, 1991 described Kyrgyzstan as “a sovereign, democratic, secular, unitary and social state governed by the rule of law.”¹⁸ From that time on, the United States, which had already established bilateral relations with Kyrgyzstan, began to encourage its movement toward democracy, rule of law, and respect for human rights.

“The United States Department of State and the Helsinki Commission have found that Kyrgyzstan has the best record on human rights and respect for ethnic minorities in Central Asia. A number of political parties have been organized, including a nascent Communist Party, and all are permitted to publish newspapers and hold meetings unimpeded by state interference. Freedom of religion has also been established, with Christians, Jews, Muslims, and even Hare Krishnas able to practice their religions and to disseminate their views without restriction. The only limitation placed on religious activities is that religions cannot organize their own political parties. Thus, the Islamic Renewal Party, which has a presence in most other Central Asian republics, is banned in Kyrgyzstan.”¹⁹

¹⁵ See: M. Laumulin, “U.S. Strategy and Policy in Central Asia,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 4 (46), 2007, p. 50.

¹⁶ See: L. Skakovsky, “Kazakhstan v mezhdunarodnoy politike,” *Mezhdunarodnye protsessy*, available at [<http://www.intertrends.ru/nineth/013.htm>], 11 December, 2013.

¹⁷ See: E. Huskey, “The Rise of Contested Politics in Central Asia: Elections in Kyrgyzstan, 1989-1990,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 5, July 1995, p. 828.

¹⁸ Constitution of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan.

¹⁹ *Kyrgyzstan: Political Conditions in the Post-Soviet Era*, INS Resource Information Center, 1993, p. 1.

Freedom House, one of the prominent NGOs, likewise approved the country's progress toward democracy; in its annual report, it highly assessed its achievements in the sphere of civil rights and duties.²⁰

"By 1993, Akaev had created powerful international images of his republic, painting it as an 'island of democracy in a Central Asian sea of authoritarianism' and portraying himself as a founding father of Kyrgyz democracy."²¹

Kyrgyzstan, which badly needed American aid to improve its economic situation, proclaimed a course toward democratization; the United States, in turn, supported President Akaev who, however, was building a regime of his personal power.²²

Democratization and accelerated progress toward market economy (shock therapy) attracted American economic aid to Kyrgyzstan in steadily increasing volumes.

In Kyrgyzstan, the press was much freer than anywhere else in the region; in 1994, however, censorship was restored. Two opposition newspapers, which criticized the president, were closed; several others were brought to court.²³

On the whole, 4.5 million people living in the republic approved of the president's democratic initiatives, even though they regarded him as a weak person ill-suited for presidency in a country plagued by problems.

The clan structure, family ties, and personal power of the president, who controlled politics and the economy, interfered with the democratic processes in all the countries of the region. This inevitably fortified authoritarianism and made democracy impossible.

The 96.2 percent of the votes in favor of the president's longer term in power cast at the 1994 referendum initiated by the president was a direct outcome of the trends described above. The Constitutional Court of Kyrgyzstan, contrary to the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on Referendum in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan of 1991, confirmed the referendum's legitimacy.²⁴

In 1995, Akaev carried the presidential elections with 72.4 percent of the votes cast.²⁵ The world community and the OSCE were in two minds: officially the state followed the declared democratic principles, while in fact it refused to respect human rights and infringed on the freedom of political parties, civil society and the media. There were positive changes, but Kyrgyzstan failed to observe some of the OSCE rules related to the democratic nature of elections or remedy the negative trends identified earlier at the parliamentary election.

In 1998, the Constitutional Court of Kyrgyzstan ruled that Akaev could run for president for a third time; in 2000, 74.45 percent of the voters elected him president for five more years.²⁶ "In 29% of precinct vote counts observed, precinct result protocols were prepared in pencil or PEC members signed blank protocols."²⁷ Later the Office of the Prosecutor General of Kyrgyzstan pointed out that

²⁰ See: A. Akaev, "Central Asia's Democratic Alternative," *Demokratizatsiya*, No. 2 (1), 1994, p. 14.

²¹ K. Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*, Cambridge, New York, 2006, p. 177.

²² See: Yu.V. Bosin, "Supporting Democracy in the Former Soviet Union: Why the Impact of US Assistance Has Been Below Expectations," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 56, 2012, p. 4.

²³ See: Y. Bingol, "Nationalism and Democracy in Post-Communist Central Asia," *Asian Ethnicity*, Vol. 5, No. 1, February 2004, p. 50.

²⁴ See: "Generalnaia prokuratura Kyrgyzskoy Respubliki otnositelno obrashcheniy byvshikh sudey konstitutsionnogo suda Respubliki zaiavliaet sleduiushchee..." Generalnaia prokuratura Kyrgyzskoy Respubliki, available at [http://www.prokuror.kg/index.php?option=com_newscatalog&view=article&id=126&Itemid=149&lang=ru], 2 October, 2013.

²⁵ See: K. Collins, op. cit., p. 236.

²⁶ See: *Kyrgyz Republic Presidential Elections*, 29 October, 2000, OSCE/ODIHR Final Report, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Warsaw, 16 January, 2001, p. 14, available at [<http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/kyrgyzstan/15802>], 20 August, 2013.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 13.

the Constitutional Court had grossly violated the Constitution by allowing the president run for presidency for a third time.

“The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens in many areas, but serious problems remained. The Government limited citizens’ ability to change their government, and there were serious irregularities in the October constitutional referendum. There were credible reports of police abuse and brutality. Prison conditions are very poor, and there were some cases of arbitrary arrest and detention.”²⁸

According to Richard Hoagland, who served as Ambassador of the United States to Kyrgyzstan, by the mid-2000s, civil society in the Kyrgyz Republic had become more developed than in any of the other Central Asian countries. This explains why Kyrgyzstan alone contested the results of the parliamentary elections, even though between December 2004 and March 2005 Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan had also elected their parliaments. The opposition, which wanted to remove the authoritarian regime, and the United States, which wanted weaker Russian influence in the region by unbalancing the Russia-China-India triangle and strengthening the democratic traditions in Kyrgyzstan, were satisfied with the Tulip Revolution, which unseated Akaev.²⁹

The opposition and Kurmanbek Bakiev, whom the Tulip Revolution made president, stood no chance of remaining in power: in 2010, popular unrest, known as the “revolution of the yellow tulips,” overturned the new and even more corrupt and more authoritarian regime. For the first time in history, a Color Revolution was caused by sociopolitical transformations in the state and the intolerably high corruption level rather than by the election results.³⁰

Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan is another of the newly independent countries that tried its hand at democratization. “Uzbekistan held a referendum on independence and its first direct, contested presidential elections on 29 December, 1991. According to the republic’s Central Election Commission, over 98 percent of voters cast ballots for independence, and—more important—86 percent voted for Islam Karimov as president.”³¹

In August 1991, that is as soon as the republic became independent, the U.S. established diplomatic relations with Uzbekistan and supported its sovereignty and independence; in 1992, it opened its embassy in Tashkent.

It took the sides some time to arrive at fairly active cooperation: the Uzbek leaders resolutely rejected Washington’s attempts to influence its domestic policy through the embassy. President Karimov repeatedly criticized American diplomats who maintained contacts with the opposition and supplied Washington with unreliable information.³²

²⁸ *Kyrgyz Republic Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1998*, U.S. Department of State, The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 26 February, 1999, available at [http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/1998_hrp_report/kyrgyzre.html], 24 August, 2013.

²⁹ See: D.V. Dorofeyev, op. cit., p. 52.

³⁰ See: “Gosdep SShA: revoliutsia v Kirgizii—sledstvie korruptsii, a ne borby Ameriki i Rossii,” *Novosti v mire*, 28 May, 2010, available at [<http://www.newsru.com/world/28may2010/kirg.html>], 7 December, 2013.

³¹ *The Referendum on Independence and Presidential Election in Uzbekistan: 29 December, 1991: Tashkent and Samarkand*, Uzbekistan, United States, Congress, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, The Commission, 1992, p. 1.

³² See: A.A. Trynkov, “Otnosheniya mezhdru Uzbekistanom i SShA,” in: *Uzbekistan: obretienie novogo oblika*, Vol. 2, ed. by E.M. Kozhokin, Rossiyskiy institut strategicheskikh issledovaniy, Moscow, 1998, p. 226.

The visit of U.S. Defense Minister William Perry to Uzbekistan in April 1995 marked a turning point in the relations between Washington and Tashkent. The American pointed to the strategic importance of Uzbekistan, supported the course toward democratization, and described the country as an “island of stability.”³³

When speaking at the opening ceremony of the Soros Foundation Information Center, Sharon Weiss, Deputy American Ambassador to Uzbekistan, hinted that her country was prepared to help Uzbekistan to become a society of equal citizens with equal opportunities.

Very soon after that, President Clinton and President Karimov met in Washington. The American president pointed out that his country was determined to cooperate with Uzbekistan on a broad range of issues. He specified that because of Uzbekistan’s key role in the region, the two countries would cooperate not only in the economic, but also in the political sphere.³⁴ It should be said, however, that President Karimov came to the United States as a guest of several big American companies, not on the president’s invitation.

In August 1996, speaking in front of the parliament, Karimov pointed out that democracy was his aim, that the country needed an opposition, and that the state was gradually moving away from authoritarian methods of governance.³⁵

In 1996, the public opinion poll conducted by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems registered that 43 percent of the polled were satisfied with the parliament.³⁶ Later, when in 1997 and 1998 the small business sector shrank by 70 percent, the share of people satisfied with the government dropped accordingly. Continued authoritarian rule undermined the democratic initiatives; President Karimov discontinued the democratic reforms allegedly to fight terrorism. Since half of the republic’s population had hailed the democratic reforms, the people disapproved of the reverse movement; freedom of speech and freedom of the press remained limited. According to an international human rights organization, over 7,000 people who openly disagreed with the government were sent to prison.³⁷

Despite the fact that the Constitution described Uzbekistan as a democratic state and despite the efforts undertaken in 1998 to convince the world community that the country was actively moving toward democracy, the U.S. Department of State wrote in its 1998 report: “Uzbekistan is an authoritarian state with limited civil rights... In practice President Islam Karimov and the centralized executive branch that serves him dominate political life. The executive branch dominates the Oliy Majlis (Parliament)... Police and NSS forces used torture, harassment, illegal searches, and wiretaps... The Government severely limits freedom of speech and the press. A new law increases government oversight of the media. Although the Constitution expressly prohibits it, press censorship continues and the Government sharply restricts citizens’ access to foreign media. The Government limits freedom of assembly and association. The Government continues to ban unauthorized public meetings and demonstrations. The Government also continues to deny registration to independent political parties as well as to other groups that might be critical of the Government. For example, the Government denied registration to the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan (HRSU), citing technical deficiencies in its application... The Government limits freedom of religion.”³⁸

³³ F.S. Starr, “Making Eurasia Stable,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75, No. 1, January/February 1996, pp. 80-92.

³⁴ See: A.A. Trynkov, op. cit., p. 288.

³⁵ See: Ibid., p. 229.

³⁶ See: “Uzbek Opposition Figures Urge Caution on U.S. Support for Karimov,” *Eurasianet*, 27 March, 2002, available at [<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/civilsociety/articles/eav032702.shtml>], 11 August, 2013.

³⁷ See: B. Tursunov, *Security and Stability in Uzbekistan: Challenges, Threats and Solutions*, Defense Academy of the United Kingdom, Conflict Studies Research Center, 1998, p. 2.

³⁸ *Uzbekistan Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1998*, U.S. Department of State, The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 26 February, 1999, available at [http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/1998_hrp_report/uzbekist.html], 14 September 2013.

“Since the 1994 parliamentary elections in Uzbekistan, the legislative framework for the election of deputies to the Oliy Majlis [in 1999] was improved. However, further improvements are necessary to meet OSCE commitments. In particular, the law on the Elections for the Oliy Majlis, the law on the Central Election Commission, the law on political parties, and the laws regulating the functioning of the mass media should be reviewed.”³⁹

“Following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, the government allowed the U.S. and Germany to station their troops in Uzbekistan, hoping to gain international recognition and financial support. International pressure on Uzbekistan to commence political and economic reforms was insufficient and inconsistent... In 2002, the regime permitted a leading human rights group to register, announced amnesties for political prisoners, and increased its participation in international organizations... This positive trend was halted in late 2003 after the Rose Revolution in Georgia. The government tightened control over institutions that might have been able to contribute to a Velvet Revolution in Uzbekistan. International organizations were required to re-register, leading to the closure of the Open Society Institute in Tashkent.”⁴⁰

In March 2002, the U.S. and Uzbekistan signed a Declaration on the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework, which envisaged certain measures to ensure “consistent implementation of democratic and market reforms in Uzbekistan.” In May 2003, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) formulated several demands expected to improve the human rights situation in Uzbekistan. Tashkent did nothing at all to comply, which shows that the Central Asian regimes’ understanding of what is expected of them and the ambitious plans of the West, which wants real changes, are worlds apart.

Conclusion

The newly independent states across the post-Soviet space opted for their own roads of development and their own domestic and foreign policies. Today, it has become abundantly clear that this is a hard road to hoe. The pro-Western vector of foreign policy brought Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan into the camp of democratic states. For several reasons (political, economic, and social), their first attempts were not successful. The international community continues to view them as Soviet successor states, yet slowly but surely their formal legal basis and its implementation are gradually moving them closer to democracy.

As independent states, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan adopted constitutions that described them as democratic states that have respect for and observe basic human rights and freedoms; they passed laws on the freedom of speech and the freedom of association.

The United States recognized their independence as soon as the Soviet Union ceased to exist and opened its diplomatic missions in all of them. This launched active bilateral cooperation with each of the three countries stipulated by their consistent democratization.

The domestic and foreign policies of the newly independent states differed from country to country. Kazakhstan, which remained under strong Russian influence until the default of 1998, which limited Russia’s economic impact, invigorated its economic contacts with the United States and, as a result, its movement toward democracy.

³⁹ *Republic of Uzbekistan Election of Deputies to the Oliy Majlis (Parliament)*, 5 & 19 December, 1999, OSCE/ODIHR Limited Election Assessment Mission, Final Report, available at [<http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/uzbekistan/14770>].

⁴⁰ *Uzbekistan Country Report*, BTI 2010, available at [http://www.bti-project.de/uploads/tx_jpdownloads/BTI_2010_Uzbekistan.pdf], 10 December, 2013.

President Akaev of Kyrgyzstan, who spoke about his country as the bulwark of democracy in the region, relied on American governmental and nongovernmental aid to strengthen democratic traditions in the country, despite the fairly influential Soviet apparatchiks in the corridors of power and the still lingering Soviet mentality.

Uzbekistan was the last of the Central Asian countries to establish diplomatic relations with the United States. Active cooperation began in the mid-1990s only to end together with the democratic initiatives cut short by President Karimov.

In the early years of the 21st century, democracy in Central Asia was further developed and consolidated, a process encouraged by the wave of Color Revolutions in the post-Soviet space. Central Asia was part of these dramatic developments, sure evidence of its recently acquired democratic traditions. The local people, no longer citizens of an authoritarian state, are moving toward a society capable of protecting its civil position and democratically opposing all the infringements on human rights.

Despite the far from easy task of formulating the priorities of their domestic and foreign policies, three countries out of five—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan—have gone further than their neighbors toward democracy, even though so far they cannot be described as democratic states in the true sense of the word.

INFLUENCE OF THE ETHNIC FACTOR ON THE FORMATION OF AFGHAN STATEHOOD

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ABSTRACT

The formation of a unified state in Afghanistan is deeply affected by the many ethnic contradictions that are greatly hindering its current development. They primarily relate to building a multiethnic state, the traditional domination of the Pashtun feudal elite in the power structures, the place and role of the non-Afghan peo-

ples in the country's economic and political life, and the relations among the main ethnic groups that populate the country.

This article examines the sources of these ethnic problems as the centralized state completed its formation in Afghanistan and how they are expressed in the country's current historical mythology.

KEYWORDS: *Afghanistan, formation of the Afghan state, border delimitation, competition among powers, Afghans and non-Afghan peoples.*

Introduction

The events going on today in Afghanistan date back to the end of the 19th century. This was when formation of the centralized state was completed and feudal fragmentation, internecine wars, and intertribal discord came to an end. This was also when ethnic problems arose in Afghanistan that continue to take their toll on the country's sociopolitical life. They primarily relate to building a multinational state, the traditional domination of the Pashtun feudal elite in the power structures, the place and role of the non-Afghan peoples in the country's economic and political life, and the relations among the main ethnic groups that populate the country.

The nature and direction of the development of the sociopolitical processes going on in the country today, as expressed in its current mythology and official historical science, can only be understood and assessed by looking at the initial formation of a united Afghan state.

Formation of the Afghan State

In 1747, Ahmad Shah Durrani established the first independent Afghan state with its capital in Kandahar. It was transformed into the Durrani Empire as a result of numerous conquests. This state became the nucleus for uniting the lands of the Pashtun tribes, later taking control over other territories populated primarily by non-Afghan peoples.

The emergence and development of feudal relations among the Pashtun tribes created the prerequisites necessary for forming the state. This was also promoted by external factors, like the collapse of the Great Mongol Empire in India, the downfall of the Nader Shah Empire in Iran, and the internecine wars in Central Asia.

The Durrani nation was an example of tribal statehood. It was based on the political power of a group of Pashtun tribes called abdali (durrani), whose position was strengthened by the crisis experienced by the traditional state-building and administration system.

The state established by Ahmad Shah and his successors was distinguished by the expansionist nature of the foreign policy it pursued. While Ahmad Shah Durrani was still alive, the Afghan khans, after conquering Northwest India, Baluchistan, Khorasan, Siistan, and Balkh (for some time), reached Merv and Badakhshan. According to well-known Orientalist I. Reisner, "the Afghan conquests were an expression and consequence of the development of feudalism in Afghan society and an attempt by the khans to alleviate the class contradictions and use military strength ... to conquer and plunder neighboring countries."¹

¹ I. M. Reisner, *Razvitie feodalizma i obrazovanie gosudarstva u afgantsev*, U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, Moscow, 1954, p. 343.

At the beginning of the 1750s, the troops of the Afghan shah subdued numerous khanates along the left bank of the Amu Darya, which became independent dominions after the fall of the Nader Shah state. By the mid-19th century, small dominions of Badakhshan, Kunduz, Andarab, Kholm, Mazar-i-Sharif, Balkh, Bamiyan, Aqcha, Sar-e Pol, Andkhui, Maymana, and Shibarghan existed on the left bank of the Panj-Amu Darya.²

The Afghans' power in the territories they conquered was unstable; Ahmad Shah had to keep his troops in a state of permanent combat-readiness. After a successful campaign in 1752, Balkh became the residence of the Afghan governor, where a military station was set up. However, try as they might, Ahmad Shah and his successors were unable to ultimately subdue these khanates. As for Badakhshan, the power of the Afghan emirs was unstable and short-lived there too. As G. Arandarenko noted, Badakhshan did not "lose its independence until 1869 and ultimately fell under the control of Afghanistan."³

The regions of Badakhshan, Kunduz, and South Turkestan situated on the left bank of the Panj-Amu Darya, which became "Afghan Turkestan," were subdued during the rule of emir Abdurahman Khan as a result of the merciless combat action and harsh repression of the population's resistance.

All of those who were against establishment of the Afghan emir's power were severely punished, the nobility and merchants particularly so, which was done for the edification of the rest of the population. For example, when Badakhshan was conquered, the emir's soldiers captured 50 merchants, who were accused of organizing attacks on the military convoys and stations. The emir instructed for all of their merchandise to be seized and their saddles and horses given to the cavalymen and artillery. As Abdurahman Khan admitted himself, despite the large ransom offered for each one, "I have ordered for them to be fired on by cannons since they have committed many crimes against my innocent people. This punishment was carried out."⁴

Two circumstances promoted the military achievements of the Afghan conquerors. First, these small khanates were cut off from their historical and ethnic base, deprived of the support of home Bukhara, and were backed up against the Amu Darya, so had no place to run. Second, after the second unsuccessful attempt to conquer Afghanistan (1878-1880) and in the context of Russia's rapid advance into Central Asia, Great Britain began rendering material and military support to the Afghan emir fighting to take possession of the northern regions.

As P. Alexeenkov noted, "contemporary Afghan Turkestan was separated from Bukhara with the active help of Great Britain and turned into an Afghan province."⁵ So there could be no talk of any voluntary striving or desire of these khanates to become part of the Afghan state.

Despite the successive periods of prosperity and decline of the Durrani nation, as well as the dynastic struggle for power among the various Pashtun tribes and clans, the numerous expansive campaigns and wars to conquer territories populated by Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmen, and other non-Afghan peoples continued right up until the end of the 19th century. As Kazakh scientist S. Akimbekov noted, "a Pashtun state was gradually formed from the state of the Pashtun tribe of abdali, which later, as Pashtun ethnic self-awareness grew, began claiming the role of a national state for all the Pashtuns."⁶

² See: S.N. Iuzhakov, *Afganistan i sopredelnye strany*, St. Petersburg, 1885 (quoted from: S. Shumov, A. Andreev, *Istoriia Afganistana*, Moscow, 2002, p. 65).

³ G.A. Arandarenko, *Dosugi v Turkestane (1784-1889)*, M.M. Stasiulevich Printing House, St. Petersburg, 1889, p. 513.

⁴ *Autobiography of Abdurakhman Khan Emir of Afghanistan*, Published by Sultan Magomet Khan, in 2 volumes, Vol. 1, St. Petersburg, 1901, p. 55.

⁵ P. Alexeenkov, *Agrarny vopros v Afganskoy Turkestane*, International Agrarian Institute, Moscow, 1933, p. 22.

⁶ S.M. Akimbekov, *Afgansky uzel i problemy bezopasnosti Tsentralnoi Azii*, Revised Second Edition, Almaty, 2003, p. 21.

The Influence of Large Power Competition

The competition that continued throughout the 19th century between Great Britain and Russia to establish, strengthen, and divide the sphere of influence in this region also promoted completion of the formation of the centralized state of emir Abdurahman Khan. The British Empire wished to secure its dominion in India, which was why it stepped up its activity in the talks with Russia held in 1871-1885 to define the northern borders of the Afghan state.

As a result, the sides were unanimously convinced that “in order to preserve good relations between them, it would be desirable to prevent direct contact of their dominions in Central Asia and ... establish neutral territory between the dominions, the immunity of which should be equally binding on both powers.”⁷

Russia expressed its willingness to recognize Afghanistan as neutral territory and pledged to refrain from interference in this country's affairs. It should be noted that in their struggle to gain control in the Central Asian region, Russia and Great Britain were pursuing almost the same political goals. In so doing, the latter particularly focused on the Afghan and Baluchi tribes living on the border with India.

When defining the gist of Great Britain's policy toward Afghanistan, I. Reisner wrote, “Afghanistan was to become a sufficiently consolidated state formation to prevent Russia from breaking off its northern provinces piece by piece, and remain backward and economically isolated, otherwise ... it would be ... a threat to India, particularly in the event of its unification with so-called independent tribes.”⁸

Great Britain regarded Afghanistan with its backwardness, lack of roads and communications, retention of tribal relations, and feudal economy as a buffer state capable of reliably protecting India from possible intervention by Russia.

In order to ensure the security of its dominions, the British government exerted maximum effort to delimit the northern borders of Afghanistan as quickly as possible. As for the country's internal situation, the British authorities long vacillated in choosing its future ruler and at first intended to divide Afghanistan into small vassal principalities. This is shown by a letter that Abdurahman Khan received from political agent L. Griffin on 14 June, 1880. It said: “As for the borders ... the whole of the Kandahar region can go to a separate ruler. For these exceptions, the government is willing to offer you the opportunity to establish full and strong power throughout Afghanistan, including Herat, as the former emirs from your family used to enjoy.”⁹ This letter also said that the British government did not guarantee Abdurahman Khan possession of Herat, but did not intend to hinder any steps the emir took to control this region either.

So after their defeat in the second Anglo-Afghan war, the British colonizers lost hope of fully subjugating Afghanistan. Therefore the British government considered establishment of control over this country's foreign policy and possession of its eastern regions populated by Pashtun tribes a great success. In so doing, the British government made skillful use of the hostility and rivalry among the representatives of the royal family.

Relying on the support of the non-Pashtun population of the northern and central regions, emir Abdurahman Khan created a vast 100,000-strong army and was recognized by the British authorities

⁷ *Afganskoe razgranichenie. Peregovory mezhdu Rossiei i Velikobritanii 1872-1885*, Part I, Publication of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, St. Petersburg, 1886, p. 2.

⁸ I.M. Reisner, *Afganistan*, Komakademia Publishers, Moscow, 1929, p. 93.

⁹ *Avtobiografiia Abdurahman Khana emira Afganistana*, Vol. 1, p. 226.

as the legal head of Afghanistan, with which, however, the Durrani tribe and sardar M. Ayub Khan did not agree.

Completion of the Formation of the Centralized State

In 1881, Abdurahman Khan extended his power to Kandahar and Herat, which meant that the borders of his dominions coincided with those that existed under emir Shirali Khan. In the 1890s, emir Abdurahman Khan succeeded in subduing Hazarajat and Kafiristan. During the last decade of the 19th century, emir Aburahman Khan, who received external support, completed subjugation of the country. As I. Reisner notes, as a result, Afghanistan took on “the appearance of a multiethnic patchwork state.”¹⁰

Delimitation of the eastern borders of the Afghan state became the subject of long talks between representatives of the British authorities and emir Abdurahman Khan. In November 1893, under the threat of a new war, an agreement was imposed on Abdurahman Kahn, under which he recognized the power of the British authorities over a large part of the territory populated by the Pashtun tribes, which essentially proved to be outside the borders of the Afghan state.

In this way, as early as the end of the 19th century, British India was separated from Afghanistan by a buffer zone, which subsequently came to be called the Durand Line. This buffer zone divided the territory populated by the Pashtun tribes into equal parts.

After Afghanistan acquired its independence in 1919, the country's authorities made an unsuccessful attempt to have the agreement on the Durand Line revised. In 1947 (after Pakistan was formed), this line became the state border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The part of the territory of the Pashtun tribes that went to Pakistan became part of its Northwest Frontier Province. According to different sources, approximately 25-28 million Pashtuns live there (more than 15% of the Pakistan population). This is much more than the number of Pashtuns in Afghanistan itself, which amounts to approximately 12-14 million people (42% of the population).¹¹

Afghanistan has never recognized the Durand Line as a state border. Moreover, beginning in the 1950s, Afghanistan's foreign policy was primarily targeted at supporting foreign Pashtuns. “The Pashtunistan problem” became the most difficult and contradictory issue in relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Things even went as far as armed clashes on the border of the two states.

As already noted above, by the end of the 19th century, formation of the centralized state was completed within those borders that encompass the present-day territory of Afghanistan. The national composition of the country's population was multiethnic; the numerous tribes and peoples of Afghanistan spoke in a multitude of languages and were at different stages of socioeconomic development.

According to Russian researchers N. Aristov and A. Snesev, at the turn of the 20th century, the size of the Afghanistan population fluctuated within the range of 4-7 million people, while according to the assessments of foreign scientists (for example, English scientist Fisher), it did not exceed 6 million.¹²

¹⁰ I.M. Reisner, *Afghanistan*, p. 95.

¹¹ See: Dictionaries and encyclopedias at Academic, available in Russian at [http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/ruwiki/137943#cite_note-5], 20 December, 2013.

¹² See: M.A. Babakhojaev, “K voprosu o natsionalnom sostave naseleniia Afganistana v kontse XIX v.,” in: *Ocherki po novoi istorii Afganistana*, Fan, Tashkent, 1966, p. 6.

Uzbek scientist M. Babakhojaev, who researched this topic, came to the conclusion that "...despite the fact that there was rather intensive emigration of non-Afghan tribes and nationalities from Afghanistan to neighboring countries in the period under review, most of the population in the centralized state that developed at the end of the 19th century consisted of non-Afghan peoples."¹³

Assimilation of the Northern Regions: “Afghans” and “Non-Afghans”

As early as the rule of emir Abdurahman Khan, mass migration of Afghan tribes to the western, northern, and northeastern regions of the state, in which Tajiks, Hazara, and many nationalities of Turkic origin (Uzbeks, Turkmen, etc.) had lived from time immemorial, began. At the same time, the indigenous peoples were resettled in the Afghan interior in order to prevent their discontent and armed uprisings. This policy was supported by the subsequent rulers of Afghanistan and continued right up until the fall of the monarchic system in 1973.

So by the time it acquired its independence, Afghanistan was a multiethnic state. The population of this country acquired its ethnic diversity from being located in the Central Asian region where all kinds of different peoples have lived from time immemorial.

On the other hand, for many centuries, the territory of Afghanistan was an arena for the Great Migration and the struggle against countless conquerors.

German geographer K. Ritter noticed this as early as the first half of the 19th century. In his work *Iran*, he wrote in particular: "The convergence of foreigners and fragmentation of natives into tribes and hordes has meant that ... until the present day, Afghanistan has been a throng of peoples, sending its population out of its colony with the greatest gentleness and subjecting it to all kinds of changes and overthrows..."¹⁴

After formation of the state, problems began emerging in relations among the main nationalities of Afghanistan. At that time, due to the increased competition between Great Britain and Russia, which was expressed in delimitation of Afghanistan's borders, the "separated" peoples (Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmen, Baluchi, and so on) living mainly beyond its borders were forcefully annexed by this state. Later, they settled in the territory of neighboring states—Pakistan, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan.

The Ethnic Factor in Establishing the State of Afghanistan in the Eyes of Historians and Ideologists

There are several historical works that deny the ethnic diversity of the population of Afghanistan. Certain researchers in Afghanistan itself doubt the country's multiethnic nature. In their works,

¹³ M.A. Babakhojaev, op. cit.

¹⁴ K. Ritter, *Iran*, Part I, Translated and supplemented by N.V. Khanykov, The Imperial Academy of Sciences Printers, St. Petersburg, 1874, pp. 382-383.

they focus attention on the outstanding features of the Pashtuns and the exclusive role they played in establishing Afghan statehood.

For example, as early as the end of the 1930s, professor at Kabul University Najibullah claimed in the preface to his work *Ariana or Afghanistan. A Brief History of Afghanistan* that all the nationalities and peoples of Afghanistan are “Afghans” and comprise a “single Afghan nation.” The author called all the states existing in Antiquity and the Middle Ages (before the formation of the Afghan state in 1747) “Afghan” and declared that the Afghans should take historical credit for the material and spiritual culture created by the joint efforts of all the peoples living in the country.¹⁵

Other Afghan scientists believe that only the Pashtuns are the aboriginal residents of Afghanistan, and all the others (non-Pashtun peoples) are “newcomers.”

Some scientists think that “some of the Pashtun tribes” are Tajiks. According to others, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmen, and other ethnic groups populating the northern provinces of Afghanistan appeared after Central Asia was conquered by Russia and the civil war (1920s).

Attempts to distort historical reality are still going on today. An example is a book by S. Afgan called *The Second Sakao* published in Pashto by the Center of Afghan Culture in Germany. Later, it was translated into Dari and published in Kabul. The author of the book looks at the entire history of Afghanistan of the 20th century from the position of great Pashtun chauvinism and ignores the existence of the non-Afghan peoples. Without dwelling on the content of this book, we will only note that in the appendix, S. Afgan defines the tasks for preserving Afghanistan’s national unity and territorial integrity. Along with supporting the traditional demands of the Pashtun nationalists to recognize all citizens of the country as “Afghans” and making Pashto the only state language, he advocates adopting tough and essentially opportunistic measures.

In order to ensure the security of the northern regions, S. Afgan suggests creating a “security belt” out of the Pashtun tribes of the southern, southeastern, and eastern provinces along the border regions with Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan, as well as around the most important cities and communication facilities.¹⁶

The book also notes that “as a result of the intrigues of external enemies, the Panjshir Valley was often used against the rest of the population of Afghanistan.”¹⁷ According to the author, in order to prevent these intrigues, the local inhabitants of the valley (Tajiks) should all be moved out and Pashtun tribes settled there.

It should be noted that not only are representatives of the foreign Pashtun diaspora supporters of preserving national unity by taking similar drastic measures, the same position is also held by certain circles, primarily official, within Afghanistan itself.

Attempts at direct falsification and distortion of historical reality aimed at giving the Afghans credit for all the achievements of material and spiritual culture of the country’s past are not confirmed by a single fact. The settlement of tribes and peoples in the territory of Afghanistan in the Middle Ages and in Modern Times can also be clearly seen in historical chronicles and from the testimonies of contemporaries.

V. Grigoriev, who is one of the first Russian researchers to study the history of the peoples of Afghanistan in his appendices to K. Ritter’s *Geography*, which address the question of the composition of the indigenous population of Afghanistan at the beginning of the 19th century, wrote that it “...consists of two main strata: (1) of the predominating people who occupied it in historical and even

¹⁵ See: T. Najibullah, *Ariana yo Afgonistan. Ta’rihi muhtasare Afgoniston* (Ariana or Afghanistan. A Sort History of Afghanistan), Al-Azhar, Peshawar, 1379, pp. 12-20.

¹⁶ S. Afgan, *Sakavii duvvum* (The Second Sakao), Dorulnashr, Kabul, s.a., p. 156.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 160.

relatively recent times, Afghans, and (2) of peoples living in the country before it was occupied by Afghans and mostly subdued by the latter: Tajiks, Swati, Gindki, Siahpushi, and so on.”¹⁸

Later in the section titled “Newcomers of the Old and New Times,” V. Grigoriev mentions a “third branch” of the population consisting of the remnants of the hordes that came to this country with different conquerors: Arabs, Kyzylbashi, Indians, Armenians, Jews, Hazara, Jaghatai Turks, and so on.¹⁹

In his work *The Development of Feudalism and State Formation among the Afghans*, well-known Orientalist I. Reisner proved the illegitimacy of the claim of several Afghan historians about the exclusive role of the Pashtuns. His conclusions were based on the study of numerous historians, historical chronicles, the works of Russian Orientalists, and the testimonies of English and European travelers who visited Afghanistan during the first half of the 19th century.

He wrote that in the 11th century (and later) the settled population occupying the territory that is now part of Afghanistan mainly consisted of Tajiks in the region between the Hindu Kush and Sulaiman Mountains and various Indian nationalities between the Sulaiman Mountains and the middle reaches of the River Indus. As for Afghans, “they were initially located in the region of the Sulaiman Mountains and were nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes... and were at a much lower level of socioeconomic development.”²⁰

Even earlier, I. Reisner noted: “Afghans could not be the bearers of ‘higher culture’ in Antiquity and the Middle Ages because they transferred much later than others from the communal-ancestral system to class society and feudalism. The class system evidently arose in the 16th-17th centuries, and statehood in the first half of the 18th century. The Afghans, who developed into a nation later than others, were inevitably subjected to the cultural impact of other peoples of India, Central Asia, and Iran, and also of the Tajiks and Uzbeks.”²¹

The Afghan state (on the part of its rulers and Afghans in general) managed to overcome the dynastical struggle in the first half of the 19th century among various clans of Pashtun tribes and retain its statehood primarily thanks to the centrifugal efforts of the Tajiks. According to Kh. Nazarov, it was precisely due to this factor that feudal fragmentation was surmounted and a centralized Afghan state was formed: the country triumphed over dismemberment and retained its territorial integrity.²²

In Lieu of a Conclusion

Afghanistan is the homeland not only of Afghans (Pashtuns), who gave the country its name, but also of all the nationalities and ethnic groups populating it long before the formation of the state itself in the mid-18th century. In other words, its multiethnic character is not the result of Afghanistan’s development over the last one or two centuries, but of its historical peculiarity. This is shown by the numerous monuments of historical writing and by the evidence of Chinese and Arab travelers,

¹⁸ K. Ritter, *Zemlevedenie Azii. Geografiia stran Azii, nakhodiashchikhsia v neposredstvennykh snosheniakh s Rossiei. Kabulistan i Kafiristan*, Translated and supplemented by V.V. Grigoriev, St. Petersburg, 1867, p. 592.

¹⁹ See: Ibid., pp. 636, 642.

²⁰ I.M. Reisner, *Razvitie feodalizma i obrazovanie gosudarstva u afgantsev*, p. 102.

²¹ I.M. Reisner, “Reaktionnye idei v sovremennoi istoriografii Afganistana,” *Bulletin of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences*, No. 5, 1948, p. 109.

²² See: Kh. Nazarov, *K istorii proiskhozhdeniia i rasseleniia plemen i narodov Tsentralnoi Azii*, Irfon, Dushanbe, 2004, p. 86.

as well as of Europeans who visited Central Asia and the Middle East in the Middle Ages and in Modern Times.

For a long time, the thesis on the ethnic majority of the Pashtuns in Afghanistan was used to justify their political supremacy over the country's other peoples. Such claims cannot be sufficiently substantiated if only because in the past there was no way to determine the size of the population or its ethnic composition. A population census has never been carried out in Afghanistan that has encompassed all of its strata. The statistics available do not fully reflect the real picture and are more of an approximate nature.

REGIONAL ECONOMIES

WHAT IF RUSSIA SHUT OFF UKRAINE'S GAS AGAIN? A COMPUTABLE GENERAL EQUILIBRIUM MODEL

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ABSTRACT

This paper asks the question: what would happen to the economies of the world should Russia completely shut off natural gas shipments to the Ukraine. Significant findings of this model include the following:

The impact of the gas shutoff is overwhelmingly concentrated in Ukraine and Russia, whose economies would suffer GDP declines of 2.47 percent and 2.16 percent, respectively. Perhaps surprisingly, the model suggests Eastern Europe would experience only a small decline in GDP (0.13 percent) and Western Europe's GDP would be unaffected. The GDP of gas-producing republics of the Other Former Soviet Union (FSU), major gas suppliers through the Rus-

sian pipelines, would decline by 0.75 percent.

While the impacts to overall GDP are possibly smaller than expected, effects to individual industry sectors in many countries are quite large. One response of Ukraine and Europe to the cessation of Russian gas is an attempt to replace supplies with domestically-produced gas. While output of natural gas decreases by 4.86 percent in Russia and 11.6 percent in the Rest of the Former Soviet Union, gas production increases in Ukraine, Eastern Europe, and Western Europe by 140.1 percent, 88.1 percent, and 12.0 percent, respectively (though note that each region starts with a small base). Production of

natural gas increases in Africa (6.9 percent), the Middle East (5.2 percent), the United States (2.0 percent), and the Rest of the World (2.2 percent).

Industry sectors within the Ukraine are forced to adjust to the decrease in gas imports. While output of Ukrainian domestic gas increases by 140.1 percent, Ukrainian output of many sectors significantly decrease, including Heavy Manufacturing (–12.5 percent), Light Manufacturing (–5.3 percent), Utilities and Construction (–5.0 percent), capital goods (–4.7 percent), and processed food (–2.4 percent).

While Russia suffers a major decline in its massive gas industry (–4.9 percent), the domestic surplus of gas provides for cheaper production in other Russian industries. Russian output in several sectors significantly increases, including that in Heavy Manufacturing (3.9 percent), Light Manufacturing (3.1 percent), Oil (1.0 percent), and extraction (1.5 percent). Perhaps surprisingly, other than in natural gas produc-

tion, the industry sectors of Eastern and Western Europe do not experience significant changes.

The gas shutoff decreases gas supply in several regions, resulting in significantly higher gas prices, including those in Ukraine (27.6 percent price increases), Eastern Europe (14.5 percent), and Western Europe (4.7 percent). Greater supplies lower prices in Russia (–5.0 percent) and the other gas-producing republics of the FSU (–3.6 percent).

A shutoff of Russian gas would directly result in a decrease of aggregate gas imports by volume to Ukraine (–48.3 percent or –\$3.4 billion), Eastern Europe (–33.8 percent or –2.1 billion), and Western Europe (–2.9 percent or –1.1 billion).

Russia's shutting off gas to Ukraine would hurt Russia the most, with a net welfare loss to Russia of \$11.8 billion. Other large welfare losses would accrue to Ukraine (–\$722 million), Eastern Europe (–\$469 million), and Western Europe (–\$1.37 billion).

KEYWORDS: *Russia, Ukraine, natural gas, energy economics, computable general equilibrium (CGE), development, Global Trade Analysis Project, GTAP.*

Introduction

A significant factor in the current political tensions between Russia, Ukraine, and Western Europe is the massive flow of natural gas from Russia and Central Asia through Ukraine's gas pipelines. Citing unpaid bills and other issues, Russia has periodically threatened to shut off the flow of gas to Ukraine, affecting gas supplies to much of Eastern and Western Europe. Critics accuse Russia of using such threats as a bargaining tool to lure Ukraine away from political and economic alliances with the EU and the West. Irrespective of Russia's motives, the cutoff of gas supplies would affect the economic wellbeing of much of Europe. This paper employs a computable general equilibrium model to analyze those effects. While the effects are significant, the model would suggest a smaller impact than the popular press might suggest.

1. Background

Russia provides approximately a quarter of the natural gas consumed in the European Union; approximately 80% of those exports travel through pipelines across Ukrainian soil prior to arriving

in the EU.¹ Disputes between Ukrainian oil and gas company Naftogaz Ukrainy and Russian gas supplier Gazprom over natural gas supplies, prices, and debts have escalated into serious international political and economic disagreements between governments. Repeated disputes erupted in the 1990s, and in each of the winters from 2005 to the present. The dispute during the winter of 2008-2009 was especially serious, and resulted in widescale shutdowns of Russian gas shipments. The countries of Eastern Europe warned of millions of apartments without heat, while businesses across Europe complained of disruptions to production and national output.

In the Fall and Winter of 2013, Ukraine's leaders have been navigating relations with East and West. While a trade agreement with the EU appeared in the offering, Russia's disapproval and financial incentives appear to have convinced Ukraine to forgo such alliances with the West. The threat of a gas shutdown might also have played a role in convincing Ukraine to maintain its closer relations with its former Soviet partner. Popular press has suggested gas shutdowns would cause economic calamity for Ukraine and parts of Europe. This paper is aimed at quantifying that effect.

2. CGE Model for Natural Gas Trade

What would be the macroeconomic effect of Russia's totally stopping natural gas shipments to the Ukraine? The section is broken into several parts, including,

- (a) a background of CGE models;
- (b) the Global Trade Analysis Project (GTAP);
- (c) the structure of this paper's model,
- (d) model results;
- (e) model limitations and future research.

2.1. Background of General Equilibrium Models

General equilibrium, a concept which dates back to Leon Walras (1834-1910), is a pillar of modern economic thought. General equilibrium recognizes that there are many markets in an economy, and that these markets all interact in complex ways with each other. In rough terms, everything depends on everything else. Demand for any one good depends on the prices of all other goods and on income. Income, in turn, depends on wages, profits, and rents, which depend on technology, factor supplies and production, the last of which, in its turn, depends on sales (i.e., demand).²

Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) modeling specifies all economic relationships in mathematical terms and puts them together in a form that allows the model to predict the change in variables such as prices, output and economic welfare resulting from a change in economic policies. To

¹ See: "EU Reaches Gas Deal with Ukraine," BBC News, 1 August, 2009.

² See: T. Hertel, R. Keeney, M. Ivanic, A. Winters, "Distributional Effects of WTO Agricultural Reforms in Rich and Poor Countries," *Economic Policy*, April 2007, pp. 289-337.

do this, the model requires information about technology (the inputs required to produce a unit of output), policies and consumer preferences. The key of the model is “market clearing,” the condition that says supply should equal demand in every market. The solution, or “equilibrium,” is that set of prices where supply equals demand in every market— goods, factors, foreign exchange, and everything else.³

A CGE model is a closed system. This means that no production or financial flow escapes the system and none are created outside of the system. In basic closure terms, we assume output will equal income. Households, businesses, the government, and the financial sector, and the foreign sector are all connected by real flows and financial flows. Intuitively, the idea of a “general” equilibrium is captured; any given market is connected to all of the other markets for the system.

Over the last 25 years, CGE models have become an important tool for analyzing economic issues, including trade policy, taxation policy, technological growth, energy policy, environmental issues, and even warfare. This development is explained by the ability of CGE models to provide an elaborate and realistic representation of the economy, including the linkages between all agents, sectors and other economies. While this complete coverage permits a unique insight into the effects of changes in the economic environment throughout the whole economy, single country, and especially global CGE models very often include an enormous number of variables, parameters and equations.⁴

CGE modeling is a very powerful tool, allowing economists to explore numerically a huge range of issues on which econometric estimation would be impossible; in particular to forecast the effects of future policy changes. The models have their limitations, however. First, CGE simulations are not unconditional predictions but rather “thought experiments” about what the world would be like if the policy change had been operative in the assumed circumstances and year. The real world will doubtless have changed by the time we get there. Second, while CGE models are quantitative, they are not empirical in the sense of econometric modeling: they are basically theoretical, with limited possibilities for rigorous testing against experience. Third, conclusions about trade and other policies are very sensitive to data assumption. One can readily do sensitivity analysis on the parameter values assumed for economic behavior, although less so on the data, because altering one element of the base data requires compensating changes elsewhere in order to keep the national accounts and social accounting matrix in balance. Of course, many of these criticisms apply to other types of economic modeling, and therefore, while imperfect, CGE models remain the preferred tool for analysis of many global issues.

2.2. The Global Trade Analysis Project

One of the most widely-used CGE models is the GTAP Model. The Global Trade Analysis Project (GTAP), with headquarters at Purdue University, has organized a consortium of national and international agencies which provide guidance and base-level support for the Project.⁵

GTAP is a multi-regional CGE model which captures world economic activity in 57 different industries of 66 regions. The underlying equation system of GTAP includes two different kinds of equations. One part covers the accounting relationships which ensure that receipts and expenditures

³ Ibidem.

⁴ See: M. Brockmeier, “A Graphical Exposition of the GTAP Model,” *GTAP Technical Paper*, No. 8, October 1996, Minor Edits, January 2000, Revised, March 2001.

⁵ See: *Global Trade Analysis Project (GTAP)*, Department of Agricultural Economics, Purdue University, 2008, available at [<https://www.gtap.agecon.purdue.edu/about/consortium.asp>].

of every agent in the economy are balanced. The other part of the equation system consists of behavioral equations based upon microeconomic theory. These equations specify the behavior of optimizing agents in the economy, such as demand functions.⁶ Input-out tables summarize the linkages between all industries and agents.

The mathematical relationships assumed in the GTAP model are simplified, though they adhere to the principle of “many markets.” The simplification is that thousands of markets are “aggregated” into groups. For example, transport and communications services, financial services, banking, defense, health, education, and other services appear as a single industry, listed as simply “services” in this model. In principle, all the relationships in a model could be estimated from detailed data on the economy over many years. In practice, however, their number and parameterization generally outweigh the data available. In the GTAP model, only the most important relationships have been econometrically estimated. These include the international trade elasticities and the agricultural factor supply and demand elasticities. The remaining economic relationships are based on literature reviews.

2.3. Structure of this Paper’s Model

The model employed in this paper is that of the GTAP project. While the core database has 57 sectors and 66 regions, we have aggregated the matrices to simplify the world into just nine sectors (plus capital investment goods), nine regions, and five factors of production. This aggregation is described in Table 1. The data is first, “calibrated,” meaning the model is solved for its original equilibrium prices and volumes in all markets. This baseline is meant to represent the economy as is, before

Table 1

Data Aggregation

Regions	Sectors	Factors
Russia	NaturalGas	Land
Ukraine	Oil	UnSkLab
EastEurope	Agriculture	SkLab
WestEurope	Extraction	Capital
FSU	ProcFood	NatRes
MiddleEast	LightMnfc	
Africa	HeavyMnfc	
U.S.	Util_Cons	
RestofWorld	Services	
	CGDS	

Source: Generated by the author.

⁶ See: M. Brockmeier, op. cit.

any shock takes place. Thousands of equations are created, each representing supply and demand conditions in markets inside each region, including markets for goods, services, factors of production, savings, government expenditure, and more. Equations are also generated for trade of all goods between each of the regions, separately created for each industry. The calibrated result is a large set of simultaneous equations, of which the solution matches the existing prices and quantity levels of the economy.

A “shock” is then introduced to system. Mathematically, a “shock” is the alteration of a single parameter or variable in the giant system. That change acts like a stone thrown in a pond, with waves created throughout every one of the thousands of equations in the system. The model is re-solved with the one autonomous change, and the effects on the system are then measured.

The “shock” in this model is a complete stoppage of Russian gas shipments to Ukraine. This includes shipments originating in the Russian Federation as well as transshipments of gas from former Soviet republics in Central Asia, from which gas is piped by Russia’s Gazprom to and through Ukraine. While the framework of the standard GTAP model does not provide for specifying an exogenous export quota (zero in this case), this model accomplishes the same gas trade stoppage with prohibitively high tariffs on trade of gas from Russia and Central Asia. The tariffs are modeled at the level high enough to result in zero exports of Russian gas. The change in gas supplies will affect production and consumption in Ukraine and all of Europe. Possible economic effects will be seen in GDP, prices, employment, consumption, imports, exports, and overall economic welfare. The role of a CGE model is to quantify the direction and magnitude of these changes.⁷

3. Model Results

A computable general equilibrium model can generate an enormous array of matrix results. In this model, results are grouped into the following sections:

- (1) output and income;
- (2) prices;
- (3) international trade; and
- (4) welfare effects.

3.1. Output and Income Effects

The impact of the gas shutoff is overwhelmingly concentrated in Ukraine and Russia, whose economies would suffer GDP declines of 2.47 percent and 2.16 percent respectively (see Table 2). Perhaps surprisingly, the model suggests Eastern Europe would experience only a small decline in GDP (0.13 percent) and Western Europe’s GDP would be unaffected. The GDP of gas-producing republics of the Other Former Soviet Union (FSU), major gas suppliers through the Russian pipelines, would decline by 0.75 percent.

⁷ For more on economic efficiency and taxation, see, Campbell R. McConnell and Stanley L. Brue, *Economics: Principles, Problems, and Policies*, 16th Ed., McGraw Hill Publishing, 2006.

Table 2

Real GDP

qgdp	Percent change
Russia	-2.16
Ukraine	-2.47
EastEurope	-0.13
WestEurope	-0.01
FSU	-0.75
MiddleEast	0.01
Africa	0.02
U.S.	0.00
RestofWorld	0.00
Source: Generated by the author.	

While the impacts to overall GDP are possibly smaller than expected, effects to individual industry sectors in many countries are quite large (see Table 3). One response of Ukraine and Europe to the cessation of Russian gas is an attempt to replace supplies with domestically-produced gas. While output of natural gas decreases by 4.86 percent in Russia and 11.6 percent in the Rest of the Former Soviet Union, gas production increases in Ukraine, Eastern Europe, and Western Europe by 140.1 percent, 88.1 percent, and 12.0 percent, respectively (though note that each region starts with a small base). Production of natural gas increases in Africa (6.9 percent), the Middle East (5.2 percent), the United States (2.0 percent), and the Rest of the World (2.2 percent).

Table 3

Industry Output by Region
(percent change)

qo	Russia	Ukraine	EastEurope	WestEurope	FSU	MiddleEast	Africa	U.S.	RestofWorld
NaturalGas	-4.86	140.14	88.06	12.01	-11.6	5.15	6.92	1.98	2.24
Oil	0.97	-1.64	0.01	-0.01	0.71	-0.09	-0.17	-0.02	0
Agriculture	-0.12	-1.31	-0.1	-0.04	-0.01	-0.16	-0.12	-0.03	-0.01
Extraction	1.49	-4	-0.06	-0.02	1.17	-0.18	-0.18	-0.02	-0.01
ProcFood	0.28	-2.38	-0.13	-0.03	-0.15	-0.12	-0.1	-0.01	-0.01

Table 3 (continued)

qo	Russia	Ukraine	EastEurope	WestEurope	FSU	MiddleEast	Africa	U.S.	RestofWorld
LightMnfc	3.12	-5.25	-0.17	-0.06	2.72	-0.54	-0.51	-0.05	-0.01
HeavyMnfc	3.87	-12.45	-0.32	-0.08	2.94	-0.81	-0.82	-0.05	0
Util_Cons	0.05	-4.98	-0.12	-0.06	-0.16	-0.03	0.09	0.01	-0.04
Services	-0.86	-0.31	-0.09	-0.02	-0.19	-0.05	-0.12	0	-0.01
CGDS	-0.6	-4.68	-0.43	-0.07	-0.63	0.06	0.34	-0.01	-0.05

Source: Generated by the author.

Industry sectors within the Ukraine are forced to adjust to the decrease in gas imports. While output of Ukrainian domestic gas increases by 140.1 percent, Ukrainian output of many sectors significantly decrease, including Heavy Manufacturing (-12.5 percent), Light Manufacturing (-5.3 percent), Utilities and Construction (5.0 percent), capital goods (-4.7 percent), and processed food (-2.4 percent) (see Table 4).

Table 4

Ukrainian Output

qo	Percent change
NaturalGas	140.14
Oil	-1.64
Agriculture	-1.31
Extraction	-4
ProcFood	-2.38
LightMnfc	-5.25
HeavyMnfc	-12.45
Util_Cons	-4.98
Services	-0.31
CGDS	-4.68

Source: Generated by the author.

While Russia suffers a major decline in its massive gas industry (-4.9 percent), the domestic surplus of gas provides for cheaper production in other Russian industries. Russian output in several

sectors significantly increases, including that in Heavy Manufacturing (3.9 percent), Light Manufacturing (3.1 percent), Oil (1.0 percent), and extraction (1.5 percent). Perhaps surprisingly, other than in natural gas production, the industry sectors of Eastern and Western Europe do not experience significant changes.

3.2. Prices

New levels of domestic gas supply and demand determine prices in each region (see Table 5). The gas shutoff decreases gas supply in several regions, resulting in significantly higher gas prices, including those in Ukraine (27.6 percent price increases), Eastern Europe (14.5 percent), and Western Europe (4.7 percent). Greater supplies lower prices in Russia (–5.0 percent) and the gas-producing republics of the Other Former Soviet Union (–3.6 percent). The model suggests gas price increases in Africa (2.0 percent) and the United States (0.7 percent), while price declines in the Middle East (–2.9 percent).

Table 5

**Market Price of Natural Gas
(percent change)**

pm	
Russia	–5.04
Ukraine	27.55
EastEurope	14.45
WestEurope	4.68
FSU	–3.63
MiddleEast	–2.87
Africa	2.03
U.S.	0.72
RestofWorld	0.53
<i>Source:</i> Generated by the author.	

3.3. International Trade

A shutoff of Russian gas would directly result in a decrease of aggregate gas imports by volume to Ukraine (–48.3 percent or –\$3.4 billion), Eastern Europe (–33.8 percent or –2.1 billion), and Western Europe (–2.9 percent or –1.1 billion) (see Tables 6 and 7).

Table 6

Imports by Sector
(percent change)

qim	Russia	Ukraine	EastEurope	WestEurope	FSU	MiddleEast	Africa	U.S.	RestofWorld
NaturalGas	23.84	-48.31	-33.83	-2.94	-10.72	55.62	21.31	-3.47	2.08
Oil	4.1	-13.63	-0.25	-0.09	2.82	-0.49	-0.78	-0.07	0.01
Agriculture	-4.55	-1.64	-0.13	-0.01	-1.79	0.24	0.36	0.05	0
Extraction	1.68	-11.18	1.1	-0.04	1.15	0.7	-0.19	-0.01	0.01
ProcFood	-3.37	0.18	-0.09	-0.01	-1.59	0.17	0.29	0.06	0.03
LightMnfc	-3.02	-3.06	-0.16	-0.02	-0.76	0.17	0.29	0.04	-0.01
HeavyMnfc	-2.47	-0.71	-0.07	-0.03	-0.19	0.1	0.24	0.05	-0.01
Util_Cons	-3.82	1.68	0.87	0.05	-2.44	0.75	0.69	0.04	0.05
Services	-4.51	1.29	-0.09	-0.01	-2.44	0.35	0.38	0.06	0

Source: Generated by the author.

Table 7

Natural Gas Imports (\$m)

qim	
Russia	132.23
Ukraine	-3,428.46
EastEurope	-2,100.75
WestEurope	-1,108.3
FSU	-498.12
MiddleEast	-468.83
Africa	49.99
U.S.	527.87
RestofWorld	518.43

Source: Generated by the author.

3.4. Welfare Decomposition

Table 8 presents the overall welfare decomposition from the CGE simulation. The welfare decomposition is essentially a consumer surplus concept, broken down by gains or losses to consumers from efficiency gains, factor endowments, technological improvements, terms of trade effects, and the savings-investment mechanism. According the CGE model results, Russia's shutting off gas to Ukraine would hurt Russia the most, with a net welfare loss to Russia of \$11.8 billion. Other large welfare losses would accrue to Ukraine (−\$722 million), Eastern Europe (−\$469 million), and Western Europe (−\$1.37 billion).

Table 8

**Welfare Decomposition
by Region (\$m)**

WELFARE	Allocative Efficiency	Factor Endowment	Technological Change	Terms of Trade	Savings and Investment	Total
Russia	−10,872.0	0.0	0.0	−1,783.5	804.3	−11,851.1
Ukraine	−1,347.5	0.0	0.0	596.4	29.1	−722.0
EastEurope	−493.6	0.0	0.0	22.5	1.9	−469.2
WestEurope	−1,158.1	0.0	0.0	−14.6	−198.5	−1,371.2
FSU	−25.6	0.0	0.0	152.4	−20.3	106.5
MiddleEast	−11.4	0.0	0.0	256.2	−112.2	132.6
Africa	100.7	0.0	0.0	646.1	−43.4	703.5
U.S.	41.0	0.0	0.0	123.0	−87.5	76.5
RestofWorld	−4.2	0.0	0.0	−12.9	−368.6	−385.7
Total	−13,770.6	0.0	0.0	−14.3	4.7	−13,780.2

Source: Generated by the author.

4. Model Limitations and Future Research

This experiment raises several methodological questions. The largest issue would be the static nature of this CGE model. It is a counterfactual simultaneous equations model which introduces a one-time shock to an economic equilibrium, and then measures a new equilibrium. A more dynamic model would better capture effects over time, such as the accumulation of capital stock, investment

flows, and economic growth over a longer period of time. The long-term effects of trade liberalization on capital mobility, investment spending, infrastructure, productive capacity, and other long-term economic phenomena are not completely captured in a static CGE model.

Other issues involve the ability of Ukraine to trade gas.

- First are the import substitution elasticities specified in the model. The model results suggest that Ukraine and Europe would over time be able to substitute Russian gas imports with gas from other suppliers.
- Second, a related issue is country of origin and transshipments. The model does not well specify the quantity of gas which goes through a third country on its way to Ukraine or Europe.

This would be partially covered by an examination of import substitution elasticities, but further research and estimation of elasticities would likely provide useful results for examining Russia's gas shutoff effects.

ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS IN CENTRAL ASIA: FACTORS, INTERDEPENDENCE, AND INTEGRATION PROBLEMS

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the problems of integrating the Central Asian states into the transportation and communication sphere, as well as the factors influencing this process. It analyzes the trends in building alternative transportation corri-

dors and reveals their development advantages and prospects.

It presents a comparative year-by-year analysis of the changes in the interdependence of the transportation sectors of the region's states.

KEYWORDS: *Central Asia, regional transportation system, alternative transportation corridors, international transportation projects, diversification of transportation routes, transportation interdependence, national transportation policy.*

Introduction

Recently, the Central Asian (CA) states, which are striving to diversify their transportation routes, particularly in the China-Europe direction, are taking active steps to implement different projects. This also entails overcoming the transportation and communication deadlock some have found themselves in.

This situation is promoting economic development of the region's states, on the one hand, and is creating numerous problems, on the other. Differences in the foreign policy views and interests of the region's states are hindering the successful implementation of major projects. Due to the unpredictability of their efforts, assessing the development prospects for the regional transportation system is quite a difficult task.

Main Factors

Globalization of the world economy is helping to strengthen relations among countries in all spheres; however, along with creating favorable additional conditions for development and progress, it is also giving rise to a great many negative consequences.

Today, the main factors influencing the development of transportation integration in the CA states are as follows:

■ *Contributing factors:*

- The natural and geographic location of the region, i.e. its potential to become a land bridge for movement between Europe and Asia;
- Existence of enclaves in the territory of the region's states;
- Interest of all the region's states in diversifying the existing transit-transportation corridors;
- Availability of the necessary conditions for meeting the states' need for cooperation in the context of the economic trade slump;
- Possibility of developing trade relations;
- Implementation of geo-economic projects by the world's developed countries related to the region's transportation infrastructure;
- Interdependence of transportation communications of the region's states.

■ *Hindering factors:*

- Lack of direct access to sea ports;
- Unofficial transit fees and artificially high duties;
- Lack of correspondence among the CA countries' transportation policies;
- Insufficient financial investments for implementing transportation projects in the region;
- Political instability in some countries of the region;
- Continuing instability in Afghanistan and Problem 2014 relating to this country;
- Lack of political integration and unsuccessful completion of all initiatives to introduce it in the region;

- Lack of a single mechanism (organization) for coordinating the region's transportation system;
- Underdevelopment of the industrial and production sectors in some countries of the region, and dependence of the economies of some of them on energy resource exports;
- Significant differences in the development levels of the transportation infrastructure of the region's states (see Table 1);
- Contradiction in the interests of the leading states of the world in implementing transportation projects in the region;
- Existence or construction of competitive transportation corridors that bypass the territory of the region.

According to the logistics performance index developed by the World Bank, the quality of trade and transport related infrastructure in the CA states does not correspond to current requirements. Moreover, the competence and quality of logistics services (e.g. transport carriers, customs brokers) are not sufficiently developed.

Table 1

**Ranking of CA States according
to the Logistics Performance Index**

	2007	2010						
	General	General	Customs	Infrastructure	International shipments	Logistics competence	Tracking & Tracing	Timeliness
Ranking of states (out of 155 states)								
Afghanistan	150	143	104	139	141	141	128	146
Kazakhstan	133	62	79	57	29	73	85	86
Kyrgyzstan	103	91	71	118	39	107	132	106
Tajikistan	146	131	147	128	127	125	141	98
Turkmenistan	n/a	114	119	101	137	111	126	65
Uzbekistan	126	68	107	70	83	89	63	50

According to the estimates of U.N. ESCAP, inefficient border crossing procedures increase the time required to deliver commodities along the Silk Road routes by 40%, which encumbers a rise in trade volumes among countries of the Eurasian continent. In addition, unofficial payments imposed along the way and at the border crossings account for 30% of the freight costs.

The differences existing among the region's states are largely caused by particular features of their transportation strategies.

For example, the Turkmenistan National Development Program until 2020 places the priority on developing transit corridors that will connect the country with Pakistan (together with Iran).

Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan are interested in launching an Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan-China rail corridor. However, due to the shortage of internal financial investments in its Kyrgyz section, implementation of this project is currently on hold.

Keeping in mind that Tajikistan is experiencing a transport deadlock, the country's government is paying particular attention to the southerly direction; there are plans to use Afghanistan as a transit territory for reaching the Iranian ports without going through Uzbekistan.

It should be noted that the enclave factor plays both a positive and negative role in the region's integration processes. On the one hand, it bodes well for establishing friendly relations among the states, but, on the other, it promotes the emergence of disagreements among them. For example, some of the states might make use of the enclaves to realize their own interests, establish additional requirements for the entry and exit of citizens, cargo movement, and so on.

There is another factor that would seem to have two opposing aspects; this is building alternative transportation corridors that bypass neighboring countries. However, from the viewpoint of diversifying transportation corridors, the creation of new routes promotes competition and the development of infrastructure. There is also every reason to presume that the more independent the transportation spheres of the region's states become from each other, the less often disagreements will arise among them.

Alternative Corridors

Today, several projects are being implemented to restore the Great Silk Road that envision building transportation corridors alternative to the traditional routes.

Within the CAREC program until 2017, there are plans to launch 68 projects totaling \$22,656 billion (see Table 2).

Table 2

**CAREC Projects and Investments until 2017
in the Transportation Sphere**

Participating Country	Number of Projects	Cost of Projects, \$m
Turkmenistan	2	654
Azerbaijan	3	2,324
Tajikistan	5	1,146
Mongolia	5	2,497
Kyrgyzstan	8	819
Afghanistan	8	1,452
Pakistan	14	5,515
Uzbekistan	18	3,408
Kazakhstan	5	4,791
Total	68	22,656

Source: [<http://www.carecprogram.org/ru/index.php?page=11th-carec-transport-sector-coordinating-committee-meeting>].

These projects are primarily financed by six different multilateral partner institutions of the Program: the Asia Development Bank (ADB), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), the U.N. Development Program (UNDP), and the World Bank (WB).

A comparative analysis of the traditional and alternative corridors shows that the latter have certain advantages (see, Table 3).

Table 3

Comparative Analysis of Several Traditional and Alternative Transportation Corridors

TRADITIONAL (in use)	Description of Traditional/Alternative Corridors		ALTERNATIVE (planned for use in the future)
	Total Length (km)	Expenses on 1 Tonne of Freight (\$)	
Kashgar-Shanghai-Tehran	13,880 / 3,500	160 / 90	Kashgar-Osh-Termez- Herat-Tehran
Cheliabinsk-Nakhodka-Mumbai	17,140 / 6,500	150 / 110	Cheliabinsk-Tashkent- Herat-Chah Bahar-Mumbai
Tashkent-Dushanbe-Herat-Chah Bahar*	about 2,800-3,000 / 2,500-2,700	125 / 90	Tashkent-Termez-Herat-Chah Bahar*
* The data on these corridors differ.			

For example, if we compare the potential of the Trans-Afghan Transportation Corridor (TATC) and the traditional Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran route, the former provides the shortest route to the Persian Gulf. For example, the length of the Tashkent-Termez-Karachi route amounts to 2,500 km, while the Tashkent-Termez-Bander Abbas route is 3,100 km.

In addition, according to the preliminary estimates, the delivery of one tonne of freight to the Bander Abbas port via TATC costs \$10-12 less than via Serakhs through Turkmenistan.

The development of economic relations with Afghanistan will make it easier for Uzbekistan to reach the South Asian markets via the Khairaton-Mazar-i-Sharif rail routes.

The main link of the future route called upon to promote the development of socioeconomic and cultural relations between the two countries will be the railroad that joins Termez (Uzbekistan) and Mazar-i-Sharif (Afghanistan), which is a large economic center. Uzbek railroad workers completed its construction at the end of 2010.

Putting TATC into operation will make it possible, in particular, to increase the volumes of Uzbek export to Afghanistan, which, in turn, will lead to a further increase in commodity exchange between the two states.

The Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan-China rail road project has fairly good economic prospects in the Chinese direction. A Memorandum on Joint Research and Design Work for its construction was signed as early as 1997.

Completion of this rail road is associated with a significant increase in the participation of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in continental transit. According to experts' estimates, at the initial stage alone freight traffic could reach around 5 million tonnes a year, and later amount to 17-20 million

tonnes a year.¹ What is more, this transportation corridor will give the region's states an opportunity to link up the railroad networks of China by a shorter route. At the same time, the dependence of the Uzbek transportation system on that of Kazakhstan and Tajikistan will decrease, since building the Angren-Pap railroad will open a direct corridor from the PRC.

However, for a whole number of reasons, things have gone no further than project development so far.

Most of the planned projects are largely aimed at strengthening the independence of the region's states in the transportation sphere, with respect to both internal and external traffic. Building the Osh-Batken-Isfan highway, bypassing the Sukh enclave (Uzbekistan), is a good case in point. Another example is the Angren-Pap railroad corridor mentioned above, which will cross the Kamchik Pass (the project feasibility report will be complete in 2013 and construction will begin in 2014).

All of these projects will promote diversification of the regional transportation routes.

For example, the Tejen-Serakhs-Mashhad railroad built in 1996 provided the countries of the region with the opportunity to reach the open sea by the nearest route through the port of Bander Abbas, which reduced their dependence on the Russian transportation system.

An important route ensuring an alternative to the Trans-Siberian transportation corridor is the Dostyk-Khorgos-Alashankou rail crossing that links CA with China. In addition, implementation of the planned China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan corridor will make it possible to decrease transportation expenses on movement in the eastern direction.

Particular mention should be made of the Western Europe-Western China highway among those projects being planned or already under construction.²

In June 2013, construction of its separate sections that pass through the Zhambyl and South Kazakhstan regions of Kazakhstan was finished. In particular, 111.9 of the 494-km 4-lane highway with a reinforced concrete surface have been put into operation under the project in the Zhambyl Region, and another section (24 km) of this transit corridor has been completed in the South Kazakhstan Region.

Some analysts say that this highway is called upon to redirect some of the freight traffic between the EU and the PRC to Kazakhstan. This could turn the country into one of the most important international transportation and transit hubs.

At the same time, some experts are inclined to think that the difference in opinion of the sides interested in building this corridor on several essential issues and the problems this is causing could hinder final construction of the highway.

At the 12th sitting of the Council of Heads of Government of the SCO Member States held in November 2013 in Tashkent, Deputy U.N. Secretary General and Executive Secretary of ESCAP Noelin Heiser said that more efforts should be made to restore the Silk Road. She also noted that the CA states serve as a bridge between Europe and Asia and that their development is of critical significance for the entire Asian region. Restoration of the Great Silk Road will help to strengthen integration and cooperation in Eurasia.

The transcontinental Lianyungang-St. Petersburg route is to be launched in 2017. It is to be equipped with the most up-to-date equipment, including an intelligent system and several logistics centers.³

¹ See: "Rail Branches with a Transnational Trunk Line from China to Europe," available in Russian at [<http://www.tokmak.kg/nevkg/akonomkg/5307-zheleznodorozhnye-vetki-s-transnacionalnoj.html>], 12 January, 2010.

² This highway passes through the following cities: St. Petersburg-Moscow-Nizhny Novgorod-Kazan-Orenburg (RF)-Aktobe-Kyzylorda-Shymkent-Taraz-Kordai-Almaty-Khorgos (RK)-Urumqi-Lanzhou-Zhengzhou-Lianyungang (PRC). It is 8,455 km long, 2,233 km of which pass through the RF, 2,787 km through Kazakhstan, and 3,425 km through the PRC.

³ [<http://www.12news.uz/news/2013/11/30/>].

According to expert assessments, the journey from the port of Lianyungang on the eastern coast of China to St. Petersburg and the borders of the European countries will take around 10 days (if the sea corridor through the Suez Canal is used the journey will take up to 45 days, while it will take 14 days via the Trans-Siberian Railroad).

The Kazakh side is also participating in the project to lay the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran⁴ (Uzen-Kyzylkaia-Bereket-Etrek-Gorgan) route; this corridor passes along the east coast of the Caspian Sea, bypassing Uzbekistan.

In May 2013, the Kazakhstan Temir Zholy National Company reported the opening of a direct rail route between Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan along the 146-km-long Bolashak (Kazakhstan)-Serkhetiaka (Turkmenistan) route.

In turn, Iran reported that it was putting the Gorgan-Inche-Barun section of the railroad into operation, which will link the country's mainlines with Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, and further with Russia and China.

At present, the Turkmen Ministry of Railroad Transportation is working on connecting the town of Bereket and the etrap (district) center of Etrek on the country's border with Iran.

It was reported earlier that the length of the railroad leading from Bereket through Gyzyлгаia to the border with Kazakhstan, where Serkhetiaka is located, amounts to 444 km. This means that a 150-km section between Bereket and Etrek remains to be built. However, there is no information about the precise deadlines for completing this international railroad.

The Kazakhstan government is talking about its plans to restore the Great Silk Road, the main task of which will be to increase the carrying capacity of the country's railroads. This step by Astana is related to building the China-Kazakhstan-Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey-European countries transportation corridor.⁵ It is expected that establishing multimodal transport under this project will significantly accelerate the carriage of goods from China to Europe.

For this purpose, two new railroads began being built in Kazakhstan in 2012. For example, on 3 July, 2012, during a direct national televised linkup, Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbaev launched construction of the Arkalyk (the Kostanai Region)-Shubarkol (Karaganda Region) and Zhezkazgan (Karaganda Region)-Beyneu (Mangistau Region) rail branches. As Kazakhstan ex-minister of transport A. Kusainov noted, if the Zhezkazgan and Beyneu railroad stations are joined, the carriage of goods from the PRC will be ensured a shorter route for reaching the port of Aktau. The rail-ferry complex will make it possible to transport goods in train carriages to the port of Baku (Azerbaijan) and on to Georgia, Turkey, and Europe.

It should also be noted that Georgia and Turkey are hindering further development of this project to some extent. In particular, they have not signed an intergovernmental agreement on the Silk Wind multimodal block train. This halted implementation of the Memorandum on the Principles of Joint Activity for Developing the Transportation Network and Organizing Good Carriage using the Silk Wind multimodal block train signed in 2012.

After it became clear that the PRC government was focusing its attention on building the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan-China international railroad, the Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan-China project became less urgent. Nevertheless, the Tajik side is trying to actively advance road and rail transportation

⁴ The total length of the route is 934.5 km, 130 km through Kazakhstan, 722.5 km through Turkmenistan, and 82 km through Iran. This railroad will make it possible to optimize the movement of petroleum products from the Caspian Basin to the countries of the Middle East and reduce the journey length by more than 600 km and travel time by two days compared to the existing route. The carrying capacity of the railroad amounts to 400,000 passengers and 10 million tonnes of freight a year.

⁵ The route is a total of 4,192 km with an estimated travel time of 12 days. The project presumes implementing new infrastructure facilities: a straightened Zhezkazgan-Beyneu (Kazakhstan) railroad, Aliat international sea port (Azerbaijan), Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey) railroad, and a project for the Marmara railroad tunnel line (Turkey).

projects in the southerly direction. It should be emphasized that such initiatives so far remain at the level of talks and various statements.

In particular, on 20 March, 2013 in Ashgabad, the presidents of Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan signed a memorandum on mutual understanding regarding the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan railroad construction project.⁶ In June 2013, Turkmenistan began building its section of the railroad, but this in no way testifies to further implementation of the project.

Despite the striving of certain CA republics to implement transportation-communication projects in their territories, Uzbekistan remains one of the main transit states both for regional and for non-regional countries.

Moreover, work has begun in Uzbekistan on building a new electrified Angren-Pap railroad route,⁷ which is to be completed in 2016.

Transportation Interdependence of the Regional States

The level of interdependence among the regional states in the transportation sphere during the first two decades of this century has changed and will continue to change as follows (see Table 4):

Table 4

Changes in the Level of Interdependence of the Transportation Sector of the CA States in the Last Two Decades

Vector of Bilateral Dependence	Level of Bilateral Dependence at Specific Times		
	Before 2000	At present	Before 2020
Uzbekistan's dependence on Tajikistan	High	Average	Low ^a
Tajikistan's dependence on Uzbekistan	High	High	High
Uzbekistan's dependence on Kyrgyzstan	Low	Low	Average ^a
Kyrgyzstan's dependence on Uzbekistan	Average	Average	High ^a
Uzbekistan's dependence on Kazakhstan	High	High	Average ^a
Kazakhstan's dependence on Uzbekistan	High	Average	Low ^b
Uzbekistan's dependence on Turkmenistan	High	Average	Low ^c
Turkmenistan's dependence on Uzbekistan	High	Average	Low ^b
Kyrgyzstan's dependence on Kazakhstan	High	High	Average ^a

⁶ The length of the route amounts to around 640 km, the Tajik section is 50 km, the Turkmen section is 90 km, and the Afghan section is 500 km long.

⁷ The new electrified Angren-Pap railroad route will pass through the Kamchik Pass at more than 2,200 meters above sea level.

Table 4 (continued)

Vector of Bilateral Dependence	Level of Bilateral Dependence at Specific Times		
	Before 2000	At present	Before 2020
Kazakhstan's dependence on Kyrgyzstan/Tajikistan	Low	Low	Low
Kazakhstan's dependence on Turkmenistan	High	Average	Average ^{bc}
Turkmenistan's dependence on Kazakhstan	Average	Average	Average
Tajikistan's dependence on Kazakhstan	High	High	High
Tajikistan's dependence on Kyrgyzstan	Low	Low	Average ^a
Tajikistan's dependence on Turkmenistan	High	High	Average ^c
Kyrgyzstan's dependence on Turkmenistan	Average	Average	Low ^{ac}
Kyrgyzstan's dependence on Tajikistan	Low	Low	Low
Turkmenistan's dependence on Kyrgyzstan/Tajikistan	Low	Low	Low
^a In the event of successful implementation of the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan-China project, including the Angren-Pap section of this project. ^b In the event the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran project is launched. ^c In the event the Trans-Afghan transportation corridor is completed and launched.			

In order to determine the integral level of transportation dependence of the individual regional states, each of the dependence levels was given an index. High dependence corresponds to 1, average to 0.5, and low to 0.

Then the transportation dependence of each of the countries will look as follows (see Table 5):

Table 5

Level of Integral Transportation Dependence of Each of the Countries and Its Change during the First Two Decades of the 21st Century

State	Overall Index of Dependence Level of State at Specific Times		
	Before 2000	At present	Before 2020
Kazakhstan	2	1.5	1
Turkmenistan	1.5	1	0.5
Uzbekistan	4	2	1
Kyrgyzstan	2	2	1.5
Tajikistan	3	3	3.5

Table 5 shows in particular that in terms of level of dependence on other regional states, Uzbekistan is, on the whole, at an average level. In so doing, it retains its dependence on Kazakhstan (see Table 6).

Table 6

**Main Transportation Corridors Used
by the Republic of Uzbekistan**

Destination Point	Transit Countries	Distance, km
Far Eastern ports of Russia	Kazakhstan	8,610
Northeastern districts of China, South Korea	Kazakhstan, Russia	7,160
Western and central districts of China, ports in the east of the PRC	Kazakhstan	6,402
Baltic states	Kazakhstan, Russia	3,849
Port of Mersin in Turkey	Turkmenistan, Iran, Turkey	3,800
Ukraine and Belarus, East European countries	Kazakhstan, Russia	2,978
Port of Ilichevsk, Ukraine	Kazakhstan, Russia	2,964
Trans-Afghan corridor to the ports of Iran	Afghanistan	2,176
Turkey and European countries via Baku-Akhalkalaki-Kars railroad	Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey	2,158
Southeast Asia, Persian Gulf, and India via the port of Bandar Abbas in Iran	Turkmenistan, Iran	2,109
Transcaucasian corridor to the ports of Poti and Batumi	Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Turkey	2,025
Western China via the Andijan-Osh-Kashgar railroad	Kyrgyzstan	439
Source: [http://www.mfer.uz/transport_i_logistika/mejdunarodnie_transportnie_koridori/].		

The most dependent states of the region are Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

In Lieu of a Conclusion

Whereas in 1990-2000, the level of interdependence of the transportation sectors of the CA states was rather high, several projects implemented during 2001-2010 promoted a reduction in this interdependence to an average level. Moreover, when the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railroad, soon to be launched, goes into operation, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan will acquire alternative corridors in all directions.

On the whole, before 2020, there will be an abrupt drop in the transportation dependence of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan (when the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran route is launched), as well as of Uzbekistan (when the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan-China, particularly the Angren-Pap railroads and

the Trans-Afghan in the long run are launched). Kyrgyzstan will have the opportunity to connect directly with China by rail. As for Tajikistan, it still does not have any real opportunities to decrease its dependence on Uzbekistan in the transportation sphere.

It should be noted that the above-mentioned transportation projects are alternatives; they can promote both an increase in transit freight movement through CA, as well as diversification of the routes leading to the sea ports.

Putting alternative routes into operation in CA may at first cause disintegration in the transportation sphere. But in the future, competition should improve the transportation infrastructure in the region.

It is possible that the above-mentioned projects will create threats to regional security and give rise to new disagreements among the CA countries, but in the long term each of them will be able to choose the transport route that best serves their export-import and transit operations.

FROM THE ARAL TO ROGUN: THE WATER SITUATION IN THE AMU DARYA BASIN TODAY

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ABSTRACT

Recently, the problems related to water usage in the Central Asia Region have not left the pages of the media and Internet websites. Particular attention is being focused on the most urgent topic—building hydropower stations on the upper reaches of the Amu Darya and Syr Darya

rivers, which are the region's main water arteries.

This article presents an analysis of the water situation in the Amu Darya Basin, including the reasons for the shrinkage of the Aral Sea. It draws a picture of how water resources form, are distributed, and used in

the Amu Darya Basin, and gives probable forecasts of the potential positive and negative consequences of building the Rogun Hydropower Plant, keeping in mind the influence of the current global challenges and threats for the region. It draws attention to

the weak regional cooperation and the possible development of negative trends caused by limited integration. The difficulties associated with stable water supply to the region's countries can only be avoided by establishing cooperation among them.

KEYWORDS: *water resources, water relations of the Central Asian countries, water rights, interstate water distribution, the Aral Sea, environmental protection, the Rogun Hydropower Plant, interstate water cooperation.*

Introduction

The Amu Darya is the largest river in Central Asia (CA); it runs from the Pamir to the desiccated Aral Sea and supplies five countries of the region with water—Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The basin of this great river also encompasses Iran, from where its former tributaries run into Turkmenistan territory.

In CA conditions, water is the wellspring of food and energy production. As the size of the population grows, as well as due to climatic changes and the state of the environment, these countries are beginning to gain a better understanding of the importance of water resources.

The way water is used in the region's countries is dictated by their natural climatic conditions. Whereas in the lower reaches, farming consumes the most water, in the mountains of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, where the area suitable for land irrigation and hydrocarbon energy reserves are limited, it is mainly used for producing electric energy.

When the Central Asian republics were part of the Soviet Union, all of their engineering and communications infrastructure, industry, and even production facilities functioned as a single state system. After they acquired their independence and the former economic ties were broken, this system became one of the main reasons for an unprecedented economic slump in all the region's countries and caused tough competition among them. This was manifested most graphically in the use of the vast hydropower potential of the mountain rivers of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The matter primarily concerns the Vakhsh River, the second largest tributary of the Amu Darya after the Panj.

The numerous meetings, talks, and discussions between the upstream and downstream countries of the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers have not led to an agreement. This is slowing down development of the vast potential of the cheapest and purest electric energy source in the world. It should be noted that not only are Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan interested in this development, the international community is too. It is expending enormous efforts and funds today to reduce the emission of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

The Main Hydraulic Characteristics of the Amu Darya River

The Amu Darya is formed from the confluence of the Panj and Vakhsh rivers. This river stretches for 2,540 km from the source of its main tributary, the Panj, while the basin occupies an area of

309,000 sq. km. The tributaries of the Amu Darya, the Kafirnigan, Kunduz, Surkhan Darya, and Sherabad, are formed and merge with it in the middle reaches. The Amu Darya does not have any more tributaries further down its course toward the Aral Sea. The Amu Darya is mainly fed by snow-melt water, therefore the maximum discharge is seen in the summer and the minimum in January-February.

According to the long-term average annual data, 78.46 cubic km of water forms in the Amu Darya Basin a year. Internal-drainage water courses are also included in the total volume of its water resources (due to their hydrographic pull toward it); among them are such rivers as the Zeravshan (with a long-term average annual runoff of 5.27 cubic km), the Kashka Darya (1.34 cubic km), and the Murgab, Tejen, Atrek, and northern rivers of Afghanistan—Khulm, Balkhab, Sari Pul, and Kay-sar (the total volume of their runoff is equal to 4.86 cubic km). The total runoff of the mentioned rivers, keeping in mind subsurface and unaccounted surface runoff, amounts to 11.51 cubic km (see Table 1). Thus, the runoff the Amu Darya itself amounts to 66.9 cubic km.

Table 1

**Formation of the Surface Runoff of
the Amu Darya by River**

River	Surface Runoff, cubic km		Subsurface Inflow, cubic km	Total	
	Accounted	Unaccounted		Volume, cubic km	Percentage
Panj	33.4			33.4	42.6
Vakhsh	20.1	0.05	0.07	20.22	25.8
Kunduz	3.47	0.01		3.48	4.4
Kafirnigan	5.49	0.12	0.05	5.66	7.2
Surkhan Darya	3.63	0.06	0.22	3.91	5.0
Sherabad	0.23			0.23	0.3
Kashka Darya	1.34		0.07	1.41	1.8
Zeravshan	5.27		0.03	5.3	6.8
Rivers of North Afghanistan	2.01			2.01	2.6
Rivers of Turkmenistan	2.79			2.79	3.6
Total	77.73	0.24	0.44	78.41	100

Source: Clarification of the Scheme of Comprehensive Use and Protection of Water Resources of the Amu Darya River, U.S.S.R. Ministry of Land Reclamation and Water Management, Moscow, 1984 (in Russian).

More than 80% (62.90 cubic km) of the runoff of the Amu Darya is formed in Tajikistan; 6% (4.70 cubic km) in Uzbekistan, 2.24% (1.90 cubic km) in Kyrgyzstan, 3.5% (2.79 cubic km) in Turkmenistan (with Iran), and 7.9% (6.18 cubic km) in Afghanistan (see Table 2).

Table 2

**Formation of
the Surface Runoff of the Amu Darya
by Basin Country**

Country	Water Resources Entering the Amu Darya	
	Volume, cubic km	Percentage
Kazakhstan	—	—
Kyrgyzstan	1.90	2.42
Tajikistan	62.90	80.17
Turkmenistan (with Iran)	2.78	3.54
Uzbekistan	4.70	5.99
Afghanistan	6.18	7.88
Total	78.46	100

Source: Main Water Strategy Provisions of the Aral Sea Basin, Tashkent, 1996 (in Russian).

Socioeconomic Value of Water Resources in the Amu Darya Basin

Development of the countries of the Amu Darya Basin depends on the river's water resources. They are indispensable in terms of energy and water supply and promote prosperity, food safety and employment of the population.

At the current stage, agriculture and the hydropower industry are the main water consumers in the Central Asia Region. Only around 7-10% of water resources is used to meet nutritional and industrial needs and develop the fishing industry and other sectors.

The hydropower industry uses only potential hydropower (without changing its amount or reducing its quality). This branch has special significance for Tajikistan, where more than 98% of electric energy is generated at hydropower plants. At present, the main problem in Tajikistan's energy sector is not enough water in the winter, when the natural river runoff is reduced to a minimum, as well as an insufficient volume of regulating reservoir capacity. This prevents long-term regulation of river runoff in favor of all the countries of the Amu Darya Basin.

The lion's share of water resources in the Amu Darya Basin (from 85% to 95% depending on the country) is used in irrigation farming (see Table 3). Irrigation farming began developing in the Amu Darya Basin in the 1960s; it mainly became widespread in the downstream countries that have extensive flatlands.

Table 3 does not include data on Afghanistan, where, according to different sources, more than 300,000 hectares of land are irrigated in the Amu Darya river basin. In particular, according to data

Table 3

**Area of Irrigable Land
in the Amu Darya Basin in 2000
(by Country)**

Country	Irrigation Area	
	<i>thou. hectares</i>	Percentage of total area
Kyrgyzstan	22	0.48
Tajikistan	469	10.31
Turkmenistan	1,735	38.16
Uzbekistan	2,321	51.04
Total	4,547	100
<i>S o u r c e: Assessment of the Influence of the Rogun Reservoir on the Water Regime of the Amu Darya River, Scientific Information Center, Interstate Commission for Water Coordination, Tashkent, 2007 (in Russian).</i>		

from the World Bank,¹ at present 385,000 hectares are irrigated in this zone with a presumed increase to 443,000 hectares, including 148,000 hectares directly from the basins of the Amu Darya and the internal-drainage Khulm, Balkh, Sari Kul, and Shirintagao rivers.

Fundamental Legal and Institutional Principles of Interstate Use of the Water Resources of the Amu Darya River

As early as Soviet times, a “Scheme of Comprehensive Use and Protection of Water Resources” was compiled for the Amu Darya river basin to assess the available water resources and land suitable for irrigation. This Scheme kept in mind further development of agriculture, industry, and other branches of the national economy, as well as population growth. It was drawn up by the Central Asian Hydro-Engineering Institute of the Cotton Industry under the U.S.S.R. Ministry of Land Reclamation and Water Management (Tashkent), which at that time had a regional status. Later, such schemes were used to determine the potential irrigation areas and corresponding limits of water intake for each republic.

The Scheme for the Amu Darya River was repeatedly re-examined and revised keeping in mind the comments and proposals of the region’s republics. In 1984, this led to compilation of a clarified

¹ See: M. Ahmad, M. Wasiq, “Water Resource Development in Northern Afghanistan and Its Implications for the Amu Darya Basin,” *World Bank Paper*, No. 36, 2004.

scheme approved by Protocol No. 566 of the U.S.S.R. Ministry of Land Reclamation and Water Management of 10.09.1987.

According to the Alma Ata Agreement of 1992 and the Nukus Declaration of 1995, the limits established by Record No. 566 were taken as a basis for further distribution and use of the water resources in the Amu Darya river basin.² These documents still play a determining role in managing the water resources of the interstate rivers in Central Asia and declare recognition by the region's countries of earlier established procedures and conditions of inter-republican water apportioning and water distribution. In particular, Part 1 of the Nukus Declaration titled "Adhering to the Principles of Sustainable Development" notes: "We agree that the Central Asian states recognize previously signed and valid agreements, contracts, and other regulatory acts that regulate relations among them regarding water resources in the Aral Basin and adopt them for unconditional execution."

In order to resolve problems relating to regulation, rational use, and protection of the water resources of the region's interstate sources, the Central Asian countries, guided by the Alma Ata Agreement of 1992 and current regulatory documents, created an Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (ICWC) on parity conditions.

The ICWC, the members of which are the leaders of the water management bodies of the CA countries, is called upon to adjust the set interstate limits and coordinate corresponding reservoir operating regimes in keeping with clarified forecasts (depending on the actual water content and the water management situation that has developed). For this purpose, four sittings are held at which water intake limits from the stem of the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers are approved for the summer and winter periods. Control over the management of the most important water intake facilities on the rivers was transferred to Amu Darya and Syr Darya Basin Water Management Organizations as early as 1987.

The Amu Darya Basin Water Management Organization, which has national branches in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, is engaged in executing the decisions of the ICWC regarding the management and use of the water resources in the Amu Darya Basin.

Interstate Water Apportioning in the Basin of the Amu Darya River: Limits and Their Adjustment

During Soviet times, inter-republican water apportioning in the basin of the Amu Darya River was carried out on the basis of decisions of the Scientific-Technical Council of the U.S.S.R. Ministry of Land Reclamation and Water Management and in correspondence with the above-mentioned "Scheme of Comprehensive Use and Protection of Water Resources."

When compiling this scheme, primary attention was given to the existence of water resources suitable for use. According to estimates, the volume of water resources available in the Amu Darya Basin, consisting of surface, subsurface, and recycled waste and collector and drainage water, amounted to 93.42 cubic km/year.

² See: *Agreement on Cooperation in Joint Management of the Use and Protection of Water Resources of Interstate Sources*, 18 February, 1992, Almaty, Kazakhstan and *The Nukus Declaration of the Central Asian Heads of State*, 20 September, 1995, Nukus, Uzbekistan.

Water apportioning among the countries is shown in Table 4. These data, which relate to the entire Amu Darya Basin, including the internal-drainage Zeravshan and Kashka Darya rivers, also reflect recycled water and unavoidable runoff discharge and losses.

Table 4

**Distribution of the Water Resources Available
in the Basin of the Amu Darya River**

Country	Water Resources Coming into the Country	
	Volume, cubic km/year	Percentage
Kyrgyzstan	0.42	0.5
Tajikistan	10.63	12.61
Turkmenistan	27.07	32.1
Uzbekistan	46.2	54.79
Total	84.32	100
<i>Source: Protocol No. 566 of the U.S.S.R. Ministry of Land Reclamation and Water Management (1987) (in Russian).</i>		

The schemes also established the volume of water resources for intake directly from the stems of the Amu Darya Basin rivers at the level of their complete exhaustion. It was presumed that this level would be reached by 1995-2000.

The proportion of water apportioning among the countries with intake of water directly from the stem of the rivers is shown in Table 5.

Table 5

**Distribution of Water Resources
from the Stem of the Amu Darya River**

Country	Water Resources Coming into the Country	
	Volume, cubic km/year	Percentage
Kyrgyzstan	0.40	0.60
Tajikistan	9.50	15.40
Turkmenistan	22.0	35.80
Uzbekistan	29.60	48.20
Total	61.50	100
<i>Source: Protocol No. 566 of the U.S.S.R. Ministry of Land Reclamation and Water Management (1987) (in Russian).</i>		

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination has been making annual adjustments to the fixed water quotas keeping in mind the water level forecast

for the particular year. Table 6 shows the averaged data with respect to the fixed quota adjustment for 1992-2010.

Table 6

**Distribution of ICWC Water Resource Limits
from the Stem of the Amu Darya River**

Country	Water Resources Coming into the Country	
	Volume, cubic km/year	Percentage
Kyrgyzstan	0.202	0.36
Tajikistan	8.8	15.61
Turkmenistan	20.1	35.62
Uzbekistan	21.3	37.74
The Aral and Aral Region*	6.014	10.67
Total	56.4	100.0
* By a decision of the ICWC member states, the Aral and Aral Region together are recognized as a separate consumer on a par with countries.		
Source: Data of the Amu Darya Basin Water Management Organization for 1992-2010.		

All the data on available water resources, on intake from river stems, and on limits adjusted by the ICWC are given in Table 7.

Table 7 shows that between 1992 and 2010, the average limits were much less than those set by the Scheme. In addition, the limits of all countries dropped, while the percentage of the Aral Sea (along with the Aral Region) rose almost two-fold. In so doing, the total limit was significantly reduced. Keeping in mind the percentage of the Aral Sea and Aral Region, it amounts to a total of only 56.4 cubic km/year, or 91.7% of the total limit established, with water intake from the river stems (61.5 cubic km/year). And if we take the limit with the percentage of the Aral Sea as the basis (64.65 instead of 61.5 cubic km/year), this figure will drop to 87.2%.

Thus, the difference between the limits set by Protocol No. 566 and the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (1992-2010) amounts to 8.25 cubic km/year (64.65 – 56.4 cubic km/year). It should be noted that based on long-term observations, the Scheme envisaged average annual runoff losses from the streams of the rivers and reservoirs in the Amu Darya Basin equal to 3.85 cubic km, and they too were not included in the total volume of available water resources. Correspondingly, runoff losses should not be included in the volume of 8.25 cubic km/year, so, keeping this in mind, the difference will reach 12.1 cubic km.

It is also worth noting the difference in established limits both in percentage and in the absolute calculus. In percentages, the data for Kyrgyzstan (an almost two-fold decrease from 0.6% to 0.36%) and Uzbekistan (a decrease from 48.2 to 37.74%) significantly differ. Whereas for Kyrgyzstan this decrease does not have a great effect on the absolute indices (0.2 cubic km/year), for Uzbekistan it is an impressive amount (decrease in limit by 8.3 cubic km/year). A decrease in limit of 0.7 cubic km/year is seen in Tajikistan, and of 1.9 cubic km/year in Turkmenistan.

Table 7

**Distribution of ICWC Water Resource Limits
from the Stem of the Amu Darya River
(A Summary Table)**

Country	Available Water Resources		Water Resources from River Stems		Adjustment of ICWC Water Resource Limits	
	Volume, <i>cubic km/year</i>	Percentage	Volume, <i>cubic km/year</i>	Percentage	Volume, <i>cubic km/year</i>	Percentage
Kyrgyzstan	0.42	0.5	0.40	0.60	0.202	0.36
Tajikistan	10.63	12.61	9.50	15.40	8.8	15.61
Turkmenistan	27.07	32.1	22.0	35.80	20.1	35.62
Uzbekistan	46.2	54.79	29.60	48.20	21.3	37.74
The Aral and Aral Region*	3.15**		3.15**		6.014	10.67
Total	84.32	100	61.50	100	56.4	100

* By a decision of the ICWC member states, the Aral and Aral Region together are recognized as a separate consumer on a par with countries.

** The Scheme established the limit for the Aral Region and Aral Sea as sanitary flow augmentations in the amount of 3.15 cubic km/year and it was not included in the total volume of available water resources. When this index is included, the total volume of available water resources will be equal to 87.47 cubic km/year, while the overall limit of water apportioning directly from the rivers will amount to 64.65 cubic km/year.

The ICWC limits were mainly established in keeping with the forecast data of hydrometeorological services. The analysis presented shows that at the interstate level, the current system for monitoring the formation of water resources, their use in the economy and for sanitary-environmental purposes, as well as runoff losses is in need of improvement.

Actual Use of Limits

Both objective (natural climatic) and subjective factors (managerial, organizational, economic, and so on) influence use by the individual countries of the basin of the limits established every year by the ICWC.

Objective factors in Tajikistan include the mountainous terrain, sloping land, areas with steep inclines, high natural draining, and relative absence of salinity of the irrigated soil. The main subjective factors are paid water supply to consumers, the high cost of spare parts for pumping power equipment, significant agricultural outlays, and breakdown of the unified Soviet irrigation farming management system.

By overcoming the influence of these factors, Tajikistan was able to save a large amount of agricultural water. Although water resource management system is still undergoing improvement, annual economy of water has already reached 1.54 cubic km. In the last 5-6 years, this figure amounted to 1.8 cubic km, or around 20% of the limit.

Use of the annual ICWC limits by other countries of the basin (without Afghanistan) (see Table 8) also depends on different factors inherent in one or the other of them. In so doing, free water supply, inefficient irrigation and drainage infrastructure, salinized soil, and inefficient watering methods mainly lead to wasteful use of water even in low-water years.

Table 8

**Adjusted ICWC Limits and Actual Water Use
in the Amu Darya Basin**

Country	Water Resources Coming into the Country, cubic km/year		
	Limit	Actual	Percentage
Kyrgyzstan	0.202	0.008	4
Tajikistan	8.8	7.3	83
Turkmenistan	20.1	18.7	93
Uzbekistan	21.3	20.2	95
The Aral and Aral Region*	6.014	8.1	135
Total	56.4	54.31	
* By a decision of the ICWC member states, the Aral and Aral Region together are recognized as a separate consumer on a par with countries.			
Source: Data of the Amu Darya Basin Water Management Organization for 1992-2010.			

Water consumers on the middle and lower reaches of the Amu Darya most often encounter problems relating to the distribution of water resources. They experience particular difficulties when there is not enough water runoff to maintain the ecosystem of the marshes and natural delta zones of the Aral Sea. Despite the efforts undertaken, it is not possible to avoid the disproportions in water consumption.

An analysis of the data of the Amu Darya Basin Water Management Organization showed that a significant channel imbalance is noted in the Kelif-Samanbai section. In 2008-2010, its total amount in this section amounted to 32.1 cubic km, or more than 10 cubic km a year.³ This is a very large figure, it is almost 1.5-fold higher than the amount of water actually used by Tajikistan.

This gives rise to the question: where is such a large amount of water going? Filtration and evaporation losses are excluded since, as noted above, they were taken into account back in Soviet times when drawing up the Amu Darya Scheme and were equal to only 3.85 cubic km (and were only from the streams of the rivers and reservoirs throughout the entire Amu Darya River Basin).

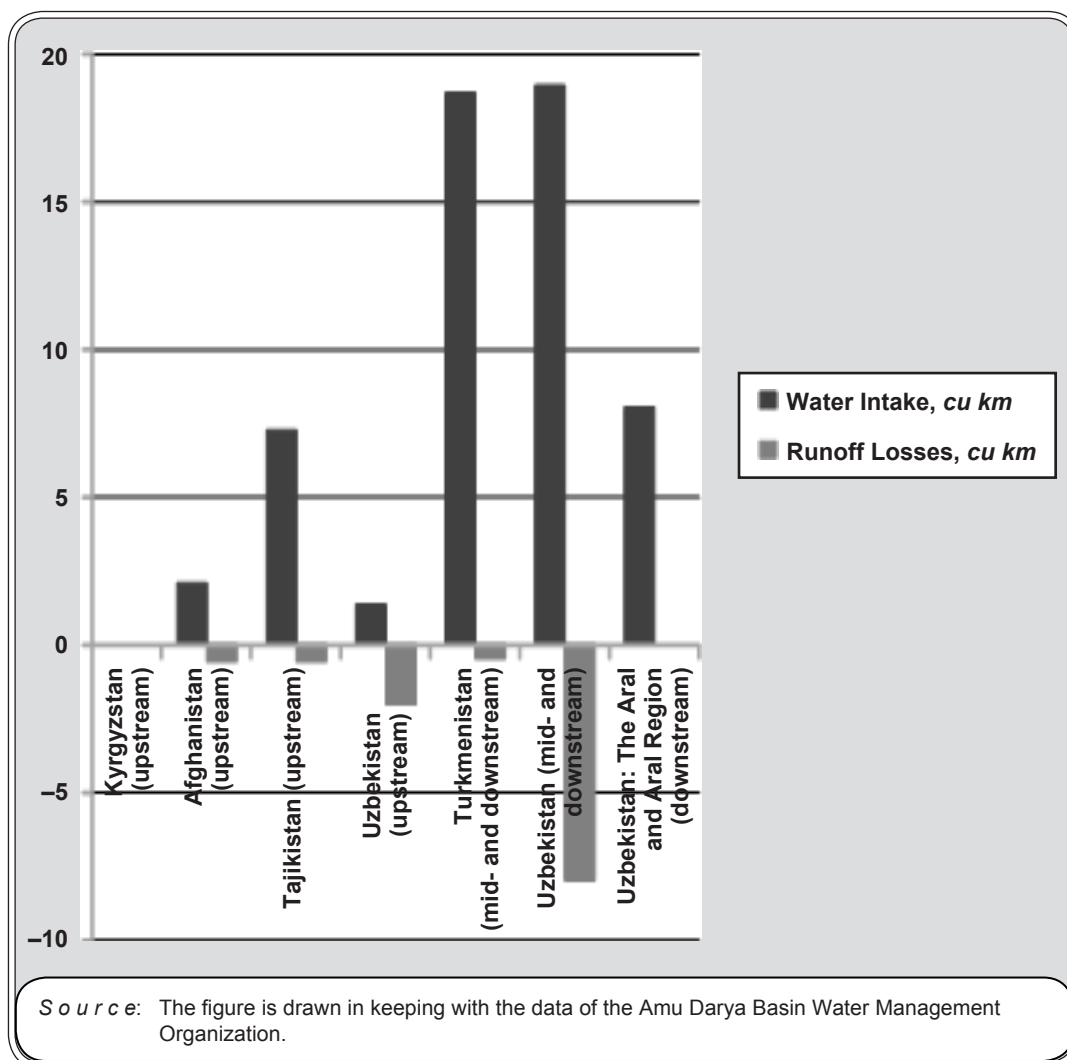
Due to a misunderstanding of the situation, the high water intake in the upstream countries is often given as the main reason for insufficient irrigation water and deterioration of the environmental situation on the lower reaches of the Amu Darya (including desiccation of the Aral Sea).

Figure 1 clearly shows in which part of the basin the main water intake and so-called water losses occur. It is entirely clear that the upstream countries cannot play a significant role in improving the water supply and the environmental situation in the lower reaches of the Amu Darya.

³ See: Report of the Commission Sitting on a Data Analysis of the Amu Darya Basin Water Management Organization, 17-19 February, 2011, Tashkent.

Figure 1

**Volume of Water Intake
in Different Countries of the Basin**



Weak management, poor quality planning, and inefficient use and unreliable control of water use plan performance in the mid- and downstream countries have caused the water supply problems on the lower reaches of the Amu Darya.

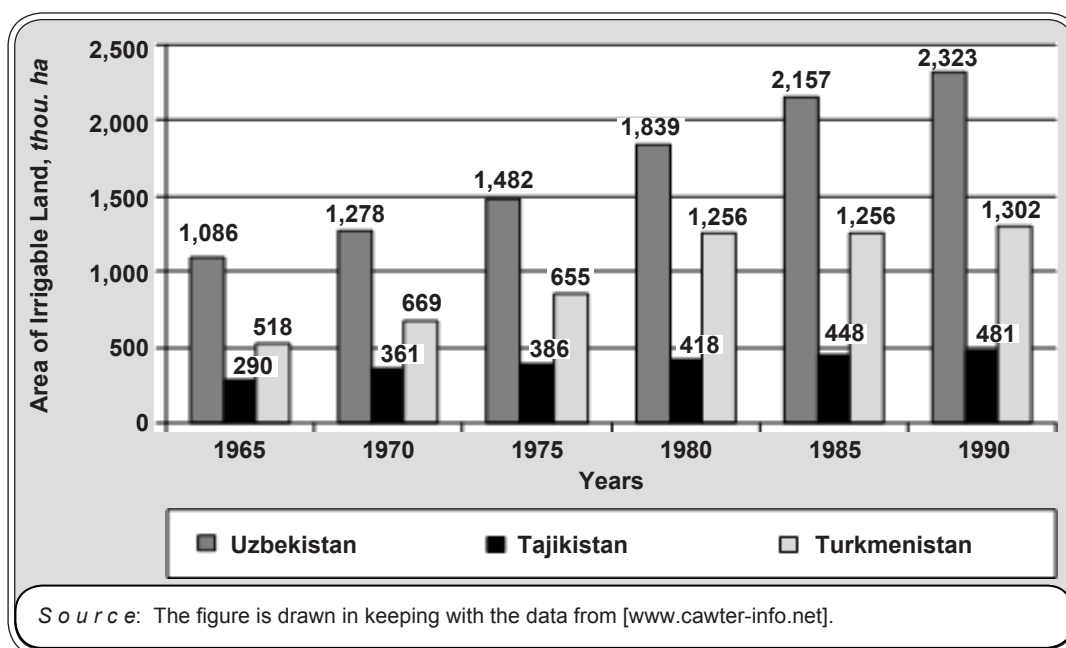
Environmental Aspects

The main components of the ecosystem are water and land. Water plays a much more important role in retaining the environmental balance in an arid zone than in zones with sufficient moisture. The environmental problems in the Amu Darya Basin began as a result of intensive expansion of the area

of irrigable land that occurred in the 1950s-1980s; over the span of three or four ten-year plans, this area increased from several hundred thousand to 2.3 million hectares (see Fig. 2).

Figure 2

**Increase in the Area of Irrigable Land in the Amu Darya Basin
in the Downstream Countries**



Despite the fact that the Scheme established irrigation limits for each of the basin's countries, according to some information, the unofficial development of new land continues. For example, according to V.A. Dukhovny and A.N. Sorokin,⁴ as early as 2000, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan exceeded the limits for irrigable land area established by the Amu Darya Scheme by 47,000 and 385,000 ha, respectively. In so doing, the areas of irrigable land in these republics reached a total of 4,547 thou. ha.

The increase in area of irrigable land led to an increase in water intake, particularly since the specific water consumption per hectare of land in the Amu Darya Basin is very high and is much higher than the corresponding international indicators. As of today, between 12,000 and 18,000 cubic meters of water per hectare of land is used for irrigation in the Amu Darya Basin, which leads to an increase in the amount of salinized and swampy land. The river basin is becoming more salinized down stream. This is largely related to the abundant watering and unprecedented accumulation and rise in mineralized groundwater.

In order to carry out leaching operations on this land in the winter and improve its productivity, the downstream countries of the Amu Darya Basin had to use additional billions of cubic meters of water which, without reaching the Aral Sea, are diverted into special reservoirs. The latter are located in hollows and depressions and cause the level of groundwater to rise even more.

⁴ See: V.A. Dukhovny, A.N. Sorokin, *Otsenka vliianiia Rogunskogo vodokhranilishcha na vodny rezhim reki Amudarii* (Assessment of the Influence of the Rogun Reservoir on the Water Regime of the Amu Darya River), Scientific Information Center, Interstate Commission for Water Coordination, Tashkent, 2007.

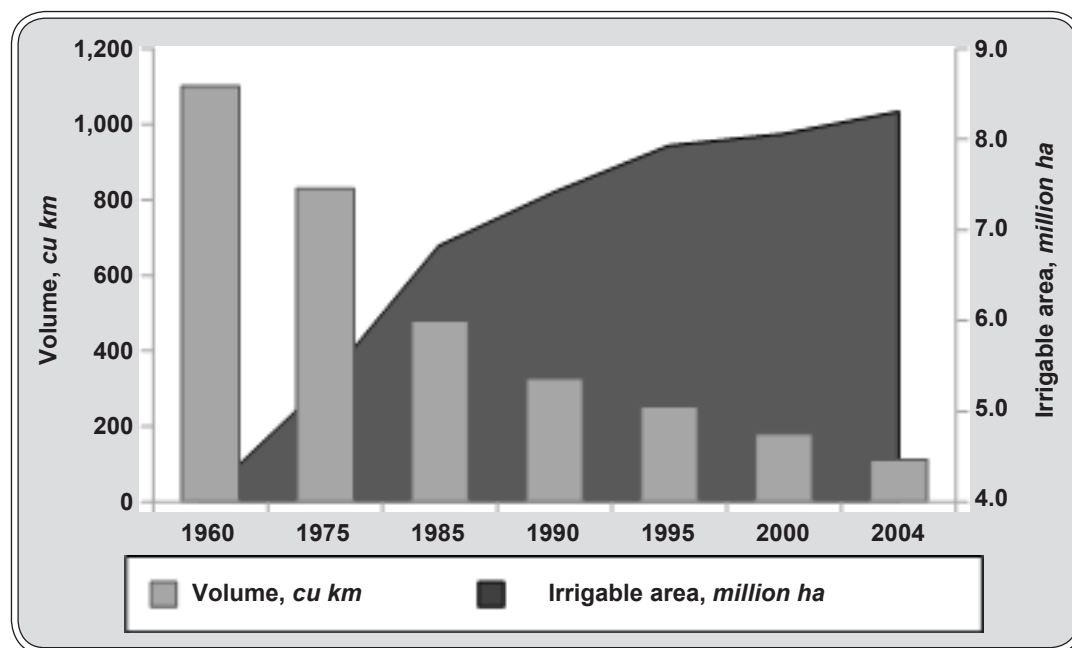
The salination of increasingly larger areas of land in the Amu Darya Basin can be stopped by using water-saving and other modern irrigation technology, as well as modernizing the rest of the irrigation-drainage infrastructure. This would also save large amounts of water, the supplies of which are shrinking with each passing year due to climate changes, while the growing population is making an increasing demand on them.

Problem of the Aral Sea

The Aral Sea, once the fourth largest internal saltwater lake in the world, is shrinking due to assimilation of its water resources and development of irrigation farming. At the beginning of the 1960s, up to 60 cubic km of water reached the Aral Sea from the region's two main rivers—the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya. In so doing, keeping in mind precipitation and evaporation, a certain balance in the level of the sea was retained. However, the increase in area of irrigable land caused an increase in water intake from these rivers, which ultimately led to desiccation of the Aral Sea (see Figs. 3, 4).

Figure 3

Change in the Volume of the Aral Sea and Increase in the Area of Irrigable Land in the Aral Sea Basin

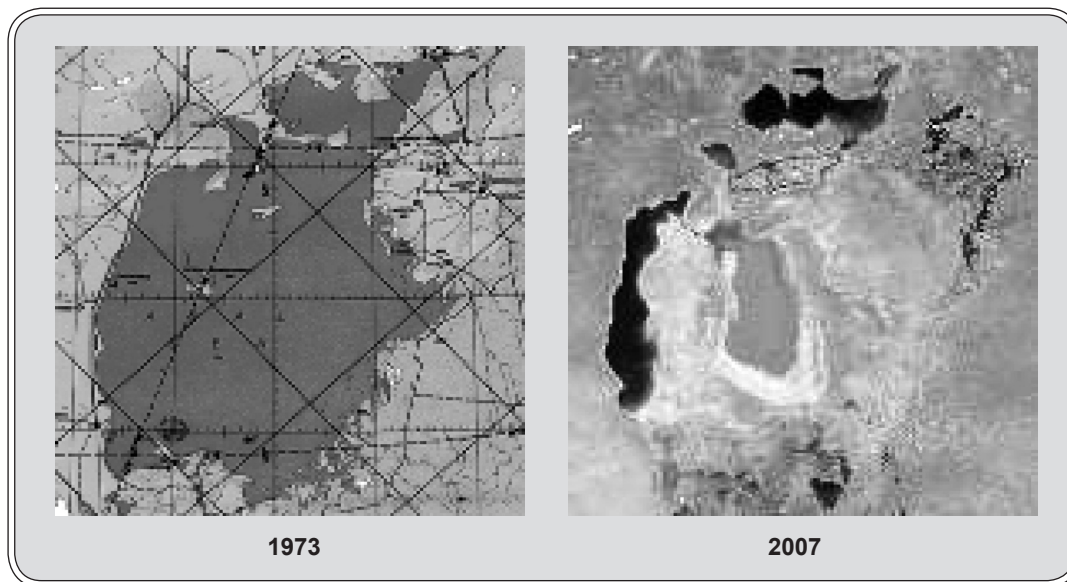


Between 1960 and 2000, the irrigable area in the region increased almost two-fold, reaching more than 8 million hectares⁵; the matter primarily concerns downstream countries with large areas of flatland.

⁵ See: Data from the Scientific Information Center of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination, available at [http://www.icwc-aral.uz/general_ru.htm].

Figure 4

Change in Area of the Aral Sea from 1973 to 2007



As early as Soviet times, a certain quota of water was established that had to enter the Aral Sea from both of the mentioned rivers in order to save it. For example, the Schemes of Comprehensive Use of Water Resources stipulated an average quota of 6.42 cubic km, including 3.15 cubic km from the Amu Darya River (these quotas could vary depending on the water volume for the year).

Every year, the region's countries supply huge amounts of water for the Aral Sea and the Aral Region. According to ICWC data, in 1992-2010, the average annual water supply volume to the Aral Sea and the Aral Region amounted to 14.9 cubic km, which is 2.3-fold higher than the quotas set by the schemes. In so doing, the actual annual average water supply for the same period amounted to 17.2 cubic km, being twice as high as the actual annual water intake of Tajikistan from the Amu Darya and Syr Darya basins.

The Aral Sea should also receive additional unused annual water quotas from other countries, including 244.3 million cubic meters from Kyrgyzstan and 1,495.46 million cubic meters from Tajikistan (average data for 1992-2010). A simple arithmetic calculation shows that keeping in mind the unused quotas, the Aral Sea should receive an additional quota of around 19 cubic km of water every year.

However, reality presents a very different picture. The Aral Sea neither receives its due quota, nor the unused water from Tajikistan and Afghanistan. The reason is that a large portion of the water is lost as a result of the inefficient irrigation systems, which barely reaches 30-40%. The largest losses in filtration and lowest efficiency indices are seen in the middle and lower reaches of the Amu Darya. The research carried out showed that only 20% of the total water volume is productively used, while the other 80% is irretrievably lost.

All of this has led to the previous volume of water in the Aral Sea shrinking more than 10-fold (from 1,015 to a little more than 90 cubic km), while its area has decreased almost 6-fold (from 68,000 to 12,000 sq. km). It is obvious that an increase in water intake volume due to lagging irrigation technology and the rapid population increase in the water consumption countries is inevitably leading to the sea disappearing completely.

The existing data show that desiccation of the Aral Sea has already become irreversible. Its restoration is impossible without impermissible detriment to the economies of the region's countries. In so doing, the main blow will be dealt to the downstream countries, where more than 85% of the region's irrigable land is located.

Building Hydropower Plants and Their Contribution to Improving the Socioeconomic and Environmental Situation in the Basins of Interstate Rivers

The world's developed and developing countries that have common river basins are actively cooperating with each other in the joint use of water and hydropower resources, promoting a general increase in prosperity. The need for and benefit of this cooperation is confirmed by a whole series of examples, among which the agreement between the U.S. and Canada on the Columbia River, between the U.S. and Mexico on the Colorado River, between SAR and Lesotho on the Orange River, and others can be mentioned.

More than 450 dams with hydropower stations and a total reservoir volume of around 77 billion cubic meters have been built in the basin of the Columbia River, which produces half of the electricity used by the northwest districts of the U.S.⁶ (see Fig. 5). The hydraulic engineering installations on the river protect the population settlements from flooding, supply the irrigation systems with water, and create conditions for navigation and the cultivation of valuable fish species. The revenue received by the U.S. and Canada from mutual cooperation amounts to hundreds of millions of dollars.

Ten comprehensive reservoirs located in the Colorado River Basin supply the irrigation systems and many branches of the U.S. and Mexican economy with water. The total regulating volume of only two of them (Lake Powell and Lake Mead) amounts to approximately 73 cubic km/year, which is four times higher than the average long-term runoff of the Colorado River (18.6 cubic km/year).⁷

According to some estimates, the absence of cooperation in joint use of CA's water and hydropower resources, which leads in particular to a lack of price coordination for electric power, leads to losses at the interstate, regional and international levels in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan alone of no less than \$160, 280, and 800 million, respectively. In the current economic conditions of the region's countries and with the high level of poverty of their population, such omissions are impermissible. In this respect, I would like to note that nature has blessed Tajikistan with unique geomorphologic and hydraulic resources for producing hydro power and their integrated use in the interests of all the countries of the Amu Darya Basin.

However, the water supply situation is deteriorating from year to year, which is related to population increase and climate change. For example, according to experts, during the 20th century, the region's glacier resources shrank by almost 30%, and this trend is steadily continuing. The forecasts presume further melting of glaciers and a change in river runoff from insignificant (5-10%) to extremely significant indices (10-40%) in the long term.

⁶ See: *Columbia Riverkeeper. Columbia River Facts*, available at [<http://columbiariverkeeper.org/the-river/facts/>].

⁷ See: Ch. Cullom, Colorado River Programs Manager, *Binational Water Management in the Face of Climate Change and Increasing Demands: Examples from the Colorado River System—United States and Mexico*, 8/25/2013 (PPT-Report Presentation).

Figure 5

Reservoirs in the Columbia River Basin



The CA countries have a high demographic potential. Their population is growing at an annual rate of 1.5-2%; as of today, more than 60 million people live in the region. It is obvious that popula-

tion growth will lead to an increase in water consumption, which, according to some estimates, will reach 15-20% by 2030.

At the same time, natural runoff resources in the Aral Sea Basin have been totally exhausted. Today their total use amounts to 130-150% in the Syr Darya Basin and to 100-110% in the Amu Darya Basin. The region's economy is developing in conditions of a growing water shortage.

This situation cannot help but cause alarm; in addition, it could lead to very serious consequences. Urgent measures must be taken to adapt to the severe climate changes and to ensure stable management of water resources.

As the International Water Management Institute (IWMI)⁸ report points out, one such measure is building reservoirs and using them to ensure water safety and productivity of farm land (in conditions of fluctuating water volume of the rivers under the impact of climate change). The simplest calculations show the efficiency of building such reservoirs in mountainous regions, from which it is clear that evaporation and filtration losses, just like environmental costs, in such reservoirs are much lower than in reservoirs in flatlands.

Further Construction of the Rogun Hydropower Plant and Its Importance for Regulating the Runoff of the Amu Darya and Improving the Socioeconomic Situation in the River Basin

Disputes about further construction of the Rogun Hydropower Plant are still going on today; they mainly focus on the possible change in the water supply and the environmental situation in the downstream countries. In so doing, the public is deprived of reliable and consistent information.

In order to obtain a realistic picture, it is enough to carry out the simplest calculations based on the following basic data:

1. Average long-term runoff of the River Vakhsh—20.1 cubic km/year.
2. Total reservoir volume—13.3 cubic km.
3. Available capacity—8.6 cubic km.
4. Projected dam height—335 m.

According to high dam construction technology, reservoirs should not be filled at an accelerated rate. What is more, as the experience of building the Nurek Hydropower Plant shows, erecting dams of such dimensions will take at least 15 years.

On the other hand, Tajikistan, keeping in mind the position of the downstream countries, is planning to fill the reservoir using its own quota from the Amu Darya, amounting, as indicated above, to more than 1.5 billion cubic meters a year. According to some estimates, the annual water intake from the runoff of the River Vakhsh will amount to around 1.2 cubic km/year. Depending on the water

⁸ See: *Water Storage in the Era of Climate Change: Addressing the Challenge of Increasing Rainfall Variability*, IWMI, 2010.

content of a particular year, it will either be down or up (in order to avoid the likelihood of flooding). In low-water years, Tajikistan, at the request of the downstream countries, could supply water from the accumulated amount in the reservoir with subsequent compensation filling in high-water years.

The calculations show that 1.2 cubic km/year amounts to 4% of the runoff of the Amu Darya river in low-water years and 2.3% in normal water years (not counting the Zerafshan River), while in particularly high-water years it will be 1.0-1.5%. However, keeping in mind that construction of the Rogun reservoir will take at least 15 years, it can be presumed that its filling will have a minimum effect on the overall runoff of the Amu Darya. The results of the model analysis to be performed by independent consultants currently compiling a feasibility report of the Rogun Hydropower Plant will help to provide the most accurate forecast.

Tajikistan has repeatedly stated at different official levels that during filling and operation of the Rogun Hydropower Plant, the right of the downstream countries to water resources will not be infringed upon. Correspondingly, the Tajik side has confirmed its adherence to the agreements reached on water apportioning and consistency of the water discharge regime in keeping with the quotas set by Protocol No. 566. This position is the main condition for conducting an independent expertise of the Rogun Hydropower Plant project and modeling the filling and operation of its reservoir.

Completion of the Rogun Hydropower Plant and reservoir and their subsequent use in the economic life of the region will be a driving force behind the development not only of Tajikistan, but also of other CA countries. Implementation of the Rogun Hydropower Plant projects and building the high-voltage CASA-1000 power transmission line will help to resolve many interstate problems. For example, CASA-1000 will make it possible to export electric power to Pakistan and Afghanistan in the summer when water is needed for irrigation in the downstream countries.

In this way, the following goals will be reached:

1. The downstream countries will receive their water intake quota from the Amu Darya in the sufficient amount and at the necessary time, and the available reserves will make it possible to supply the irrigable land with enough water even in dry years.
2. By using the capacities of the Nurek and Rogun hydropower plants, Tajikistan will be able to produce additional electric power for meeting the needs of its population in the winter and, at the same time, save a sufficient amount of water for irrigation in the summer.
3. Surplus summer electricity via the CASA-1000 power transmission line will be exported to the countries of South Asia, Central Asia, and Russia. This can promote significant economy of oil and gas reserves now used by the countries of the region for generating electricity. It should also be noted that further intensive consumption of these non-renewable resources will lead to their rapid exhaustion.
4. The production of environmentally pure electric energy will reduce carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere, which today is one of the key tasks for transferring to a green economy.
5. The electricity produced by the Rogun Hydropower Plant will be several times cheaper than that generated at thermal power stations. The use of expensive electric energy leads to a rise in the price of the manufactured product, including in conditions of pump irrigation. At present, the indicated price difference is, in most cases, compensated for by the state, but this cannot go on forever.
6. Due to climate changes and glacier shrinkage, reservoir capacity will partially act as compensator, ensuring water security in the region.
7. The tandem of the Nurek and Rogun reservoirs can play a significant role in reducing the risk of flooding in the lower reaches of the Amu Darya.

8. Implementation of the Rogun Hydropower Project and CASA-1000 projects, in addition to everything else, could speed up integration; the countries linked by this power transmission line will begin cooperating more intensively among themselves.

As follows from the above, delay in construction of the Rogun Hydropower Plant will deprive the region's countries of great advantages. Implementation of this project would undoubtedly resolve many socioeconomic and environmental problems, as well as strengthen interstate cooperation, which is a key factor not only of sustainable development, but also of regional security.

MASS MEDIA

PRESS SYSTEMS IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS: IMPEDIMENTS IN THE TRANSITION TO “DEMOCRATIC JOURNALISM” IN ARMENIA, AZERBAIJAN AND GEORGIA

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the contemporary press environment and existing research on the press—including the role of new media in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and

Georgia. In the early 1990s, these successor states emerged from the dismantled Soviet empire to form new governments, press systems, and other national institutions. Each

was nominally committed to developing free enterprise-based economies and democratic governance. The article discusses the press after they became part of the U.S.S.R., critiques the three national press environments, and examines how rapid expansion of social

media use is blurring traditional definitions of journalism. Last, it concludes that significant obstacles remain to development of functional, effective press systems that can maintain economic and political autonomy and plurality in the South Caucasus.

KEYWORDS: *Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, press environment, new media, post-Soviet, press freedom.*

Introduction

As in all former colonized nations, the transition of the historically subjugated South Caucasus states—Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia—to independence and democratic governance inherently requires freedom of expression, whether individual, collective, or mediated by news organizations. In democratic theory, a leading normative belief is that guaranteeing press rights helps ensure that free media will play a watchdog role over government and over nongovernmental influence-wielders and over actual and perceived power sources in a society. Whitten-Woodring wrote that press freedom “has long been considered crucial to democracy because the news media provide a fundamental informational linkage between mass publics, elites, and governments.”¹ Relly put it this way: “Democratic theory suggests that a free news media and access to public information are associated with an informed electorate in what ultimately constitutes a feedback loop to government... This model is based on the assumption that citizens will access government-held information on their own or through news media monitoring and ultimately hold government accountable through free and fair elections.”²

Certainly, nowhere in the world is freedom of expression absolute. Government controls, cultural and social constraints, economic and political impediments, self-censorship, and journalists’ professional and ethical standards inevitably lead to explicit and implicit obstructions of press freedom. Barriers include mandatory or self-imposed restrictions on content; regulation and licensing of media outlets, individual journalists, or both; and balancing fundamental but conflicting social, cultural, and religious values.

This study addresses press freedom in the South Caucasus—constraints, infringement, and concerns about present and future journalism—during the turbulent, almost quarter-century since these countries regained independence. Journalists there continue to report serious problems practicing their profession. The region’s media situation carries implications for other post-Soviet and post-authoritarian countries on their own difficult path toward democratic and transparent governance, toward informed and participatory citizenries, and toward supporting a corps of journalists able to carry out their responsibilities to their audiences and the public at large.

¹ J. Whitten-Woodring, “Watchdog or Lapdog? Media Freedom, Regime Type, and Government Respect for Human Rights,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 53, 2009, pp. 595-625.

² J.E. Relly, “Do Journalists Have Information Access? Exploring News Media Freedom and Colonial Heritage in 42 Nations,” Paper presented at the annual conference of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Denver, CO, 4-7 August, 2010.

The Pre-Independence Press in the South Caucasus

Little academic research in the early post-Soviet years focused on the mass media in the South Caucasus. Rather, discussion of the region was usually wrapped into broader studies of former Soviet republics, former Warsaw Pact countries, or both. However, journalists in the South Caucasus have struggled to achieve and maintain press freedom throughout their histories as part of broader struggles against invaders and occupiers. For example, the South Caucasus suffered harsh press censorship and suppression of national languages under czarist Russification policies established in the 19th century. Thus it is impossible to separate these current press systems from the long experience of serving as appendages of first Russian Czarist and then the Russian-dominated Soviet systems.

This section uses the historical narrative method to explain the evolution of the region's press since independence. Historical narrative is appropriate here because it goes beyond the mere recitation of facts. Rather, it supplies a strong sense of existing tensions and resolution of those tensions to capture important elements of time and place.³

Each country entered the Soviet era with its own press history and with its own experience of the press as a tool for political communication. For example, one scholar wrote that Armenians were "among the first to use the press to fight for nationalism," their journalism "has been mainly revolutionary" since the late 18th century, and in 1902 they became "the first Near Easterners to enter communism by developing Bolshevik journalism in the Caucasus" through the activities of revolutionaries.⁴ Those revolutionaries included Stepan Shahumian, founder of the first Bolshevik organizations in Armenia and Vladimir Lenin's advisor on the Caucasus. Between 1902 and 1920, the Armenian Bolsheviks established twenty-three newspapers, including some in the territory of contemporary Georgia and Azerbaijan.

After the Bolshevik Revolution, journalists in the new Soviet Union became "agents of social intervention" because their work intentionally and mandatorily helped sustain the world's largest multiethnic federation for more than seven decades.⁵ That role became the assigned task of journalists in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia after Bolshevik Russia annexed those countries and incorporated them in 1922 into the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic. In 1936, Joseph Stalin separated them into the Armenian, Azerbaijan, and Georgian socialist republics.

Kulikova and Ibraeva described the pre-1991 press situation across the U.S.S.R. this way: "Available was a broad hierarchical network of print media, from the central level to the lowest one, which unified journalists of the Soviet breed, who were capable of serving the party and were not accustomed to professional freedom. There existed a multi-decade tradition in the relations between the media and government, where the government communicated with the media in a monologue-style."⁶ Party leaders recognized reporters and editors as intellectual workers critical to social and economic change. Many belonged to party elites who received such rewards as cars, superior housing, dachas, paid vacations to the Black Sea or other recreation areas in the U.S.S.R., and—to a limited

³ See: R. Marius, *A Short Guide to Writing about History*, Second edition, Harper, New York, 1995.

⁴ See: K. Mooradian, "The Press and the Sword: Armenian Journalism since 1512," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, Vol. 47, December 1970, pp. 746-757.

⁵ See: R. Shafer, E. Freedman, "Journalists as Agents of Social Intervention: Three Models," *Journal of Development Communication*, Vol. 18, Issue 1, 2007, pp. 16-28.

⁶ S. Kulikova, G. Ibraeva, *The Historical Development and Current Situation of the Mass Media in Kyrgyzstan*, Occasional Papers 1, Geneva, Switzerland, Cimera Foundation, 2001, p. 20.

extent—travel abroad. Political dissent was rare because of the party's overwhelming control and the addiction to such perks, political power and social status.⁷

Hopkins presented a list of Soviet values and virtues used as guidelines for journalists:

- (1) party orientation (*partiinnost*), meaning conscious acceptance of the press as a politically partisan institution required to express party philosophy and goals;
- (2) high level of ideology (*vysokaya ideinnost*), referring to spiritual reinforcement of the media with Marxist-Leninist theology;
- (3) truthfulness (*pravdivost*), or truthful transmission of information;
- (4) popular orientation (*narodnost*), reminding the mass media of their responsibilities to the masses, and of the people's access to state-owned press;
- (5) mass character (*massovost*), meaning the press serves the masses while functioning among them; and
- (6) criticism and self-criticism (*kritika and samokritika*), requiring the press to critique weaknesses and failures of party and government, as well as its own performance.⁸

In their agency role, journalists advanced socialist experimentation. At home, they generated popular support for "five-year" and other centralized economic plans. In foreign affairs, they rallied the citizenry against Nazi Germany's aggression and toward eventual victory in World War II. Later, they supported the USSR's Cold War engagement with the West.⁹ Soviet-era South Caucasus journalists and their counterparts across the empire were entrusted with affirmative missions to encourage unification of disparate cultures and reduce religious conflicts, especially potential religion-based terrorism. To do so, they needed cross-cultural knowledge and sensitivities to promote homogenization of citizens whose demographics included deeply diverse language, religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. One result: the U.S.S.R. generally succeeded in instilling a sense of patriotism and national identity among its citizenry.

Pervasiveness was another core attribute of the press. Publications and broadcast channels reached virtually all households—no matter how remote—with the same message. Wyka described it as "saturation" and "absolute penetration of the potential public."¹⁰

This was a press system. Altschull wrote, that "...dismissed Western notions of fairness and balance as mere pretenses and held that objectivity was possible only under the banner of Marxism-Leninism."¹¹ The Soviet approach conflicted with the international professional ethic that journalists be independent observers, recorders, and analysts, avoiding ideological and political biases, while practicing fair, balanced, ethical, accurate, and fact-based reporting.

Because the South Caucasus socialist republics belonged to the Moscow-imposed national press system, the most important newspapers were party and Komsomol organs appearing in national languages and Russian. For example, the three largest Armenian dailies in 1970 came from the Armenian Communist Party Central Committee and Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic Supreme Soviet; Armenian Communist Party Erevan city committee and city Soviet of Workers' Deputies; and Armenia's Young Communist League Central Committee.¹²

⁷ See: E. Androunas, *Informatsionnaya elita: korporatsii i rynek novostey*, Moscow State University, Moscow, 1991.

⁸ See: M.W. Hopkins, *Mass Media in the Soviet Union*, Pegasus, New York, 1970, p. 34.

⁹ See: S. Antonova, R. Shafer, E. Freedman, "Journalism Education in Russia: Contemporary Trends in a Historical Context," *Journal of Global Mass Communication*, Vol. 4, Issues 1-4, 2011, pp. 133-151.

¹⁰ A.W. Wyka, "Berlusconization of the Mass Media in East Central Europe: The New Danger of Italianization?" *Internet Platform for CEE Research*, Vienna, 2007, p. 1.

¹¹ H.J. Altschull, *Agents of Power: the Media and Public Policy*, Longman, White Plains, NY, 1995, p. 377.

¹² See: K. Mooradian, op. cit.

The clash between ideologies and pragmatism spilled over after independence when many news outlets became mouthpieces for political parties and ambitious individual politicians. These nascent governments inherited a shared mass media legacy in which journalists and their news organizations remained products of Soviet training and agents for social change and monopolistic political theology. Thus it would require a major metamorphosis for media outlets and their staffs and owners—both state and private—to evolve from propagandists to independent practitioners of fair, balanced, accurate, and objective reporting and presentation of news and information. Not surprisingly, the road to this transition proved difficult. Journalists would need to dodge potholes and maneuver around detours if they were to validate the watchdog role of the press in fostering political diversity and government transparency and if they were to achieve high press freedom ratings from outside media watchdog groups.

Our research indicates that metamorphosis has yet to occur. Post-independence constitutions and statutes enshrined press freedom but have not brought it about. Even so, such enactments highlighted an end to the monopoly of communist ideology and control over the mass media as “the party cause.” New statutes established that legal mechanisms, not party decrees and resolutions, would regulate the press—in theory but not in practice, as the record since 1991 shows.

Press Freedom in the South Caucasus in the Post-Soviet Era

This article now examines how journalists in the South Caucasus emerged from such a constrained communist press system and dealt with obstacles to both nation-building and constructing effective press models suited to the region in light of cultural and religious conditions. Using 2012-2013 data and reports, it draws from domestic and international press rights and human rights organizations, including the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Freedom House, International Press Institute, and Reporters sans Frontières (RSF); from multinational agencies such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); and from foreign governments such as the U.S. State Department. It is also informed by 2012-2013 news reports¹³ in domestic and international media such as the Institute for War & Peace Reporting, EurasiaNet, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), and Transitions Online about press restrictions, relevant legislation, and press rights activism.

Independence brought massive changes. As the Soviet Union collapsed, “the wide masses found themselves in an ocean without aim or direction,” Muminova wrote. “As a result, everything that [Soviet] people had done before 1991 became senseless. The media of all Union republics (later the newly independent states) reflected the situation in a very similar way: confusion, degradation or even paralysis of power, and worsened material and financial conditions.”¹⁴ New regimes to varying degrees used the press as a tool to develop what Muminova labeled a “national mentality”: national identity and a sense of statehood—and in some countries creation of new national mythologies, cults of personality, or both. South Caucasus journalists were ill-prepared to play a major role in building democracy, according to Kvesitadze, who said the Georgian press lacked professionalism, erudition

¹³ Individual news stories are not cited unless quoted from.

¹⁴ F. Muminova, “National Identity, National Mentality, and the Media,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 5 (17), 2002, pp. 131-132.

and knowledge of democratic values necessary to fulfill this mission.¹⁵ Most importantly, the sense of statehood and the national interest were as alien to Georgia's press as to the whole of Georgian society. The press was expected to play a crucial role in bringing these ideas to the public, which was in a vacuum after the Soviet Union dissolved. A study of Armenian national commercial radio news programming found that Western experts often introduced its journalists to Western "notions of objectivity, newsworthiness, and competition" but noted, "While [W]estern and local trainers tended to reinforce the idea of media's 'watchdog' function in society, they did not warn the recipients about the dangers of blind acceptance of the 'objectivity' myth."¹⁶

Nor were the newborn countries monolithic, despite their shared press history. Richter noted, "Since the early 1990s, the post-Soviet states have increasingly diverged in the way they define the essence and boundaries of freedom of mass information. In some—Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, and Ukraine—the definition and its practical implementation have in large measure moved toward the [W]estern model... But in others, they are predominantly 'negative.'"¹⁷

Divergence from the Western model of "democratic journalism"—more precisely, Western models, plural—was visible early on. For example in 1995, two Azerbaijani journalists were sentenced to prison for publishing a satirical journal after what the president of the Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe characterized as a "'normal Soviet-style trial' where the judge 'was more aggressive than the prosecutors,' where the defendants had been jailed in isolation for the previous six months, and where eight to twelve armed soldiers were in the courtroom."¹⁸

And in 1996, the Georgian Ministry of Communication revoked the license of the independent television station that was the first to broadcast nongovernmental news; it had been licensed for only two weeks, "but the government feared the competition would reduce revenues for the state television operation."¹⁹

All three constitutions contain press freedom provisions. Azerbaijan's Article 50.2 states, "Freedom of mass media is guaranteed. State censorship in mass media, including press, is prohibited." Georgia's Article 24.2 provides, "Mass media is free. Censorship is prohibited," while its Article 24.4 provides a qualifier by allowing press freedom to "be restricted by law and by the conditions necessary in a democratic society for the guarantee of state and public security, territorial integrity, prevention of crime, and the defense of rights and dignities of others to avoid the revelation of confidentially received information or guarantee the independence and impartiality of justice." Article 27 of Armenia's Constitution of 2005 says in part, "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of speech, including freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media, regardless of state frontiers. Freedom of media and other means of information shall be guaranteed." However, Article 19 says, "Attendance of representatives of media and public may be excluded from all or part of the trial with a view to protecting the public morals, public order, state security, private life of participants of the judicial proceedings or the interests of justice."

Press constraints draw criticism about all three countries. Some are reflected quantitatively by international nongovernmental organizations such as RSF, Freedom House, and International Re-

¹⁵ See: E. Kvesitadze, "The Georgian Press Today," *Central Asia & the Caucasus*, Vol. 3 (15), 2002.

¹⁶ G. Torosyan, K. Starck, "Renegotiating Media in the Post-Soviet Era: Western Journalistic Practices in the Armenian Radio Programme Aniv," *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics*, Vol. 2, Issue 2, 2006, pp. 209, 211.

¹⁷ A. Richter, "Post-Soviet Perspective on Evaluating Censorship and Freedom of the Media," in: *Measures of Press Freedom and Media Contributions to Development: Evaluating the Evaluators*, ed. by M.E. Price, S. Abbott, L. Morgan, Peter Lang, New York, 2011, p. 166.

¹⁸ D. Mills, "Post-1989 Journalism in the Absence of Democratic Traditions," in: *Eastern European Journalism: Before, During and after Communism*, ed. by J. Aumente, P. Gross, R. Hiebert, O.V. Johnson, D. Mills, Hampton Press, Cresskill, NJ, 1999, p. 132.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 131.

search & Exchanges Board (IREX) (see Table 1). The latest Freedom House report cited “positive developments” in Georgia and Armenia, although not enough to change their overall ratings.²⁰

Table 1

**Press Freedom Ratings
by International Nongovernmental Organizations,
2013**

Country	Reporters sans Frontières (of 179 countries)	Freedom House	International Research & Exchanges Board
Armenia	74	Not free	Borderline unsustainable mixed system/near sustainability
Azerbaijan	156	Not free	Unsustainable mixed system
Georgia	100	Partly free	Near sustainability
Sources: Reporters sans Frontières (2013); International Research & Exchanges Board (2013); Freedom House (2013).			

Qualitative critiques come from human rights and press rights NGOs and multinational or non-Caucasus governmental agencies, including the CPJ, Human Rights Watch, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, and International Freedom of Express Exchange.

An Overview of Press Freedom Conditions in Armenia

The U.S. State Department found that violent attacks on journalists continued in 2012, including an attack on a journalist who was filming outside a polling place, “but there were fewer libel suits and smaller damage awards based on a 2011 Constitutional Court recommendation against disproportionately high fines. It reported that print media “published differing viewpoints” but “continued to lack diversity of political opinion and objective reporting.” It said, “Most publications tended to reflect the political leanings of their proprietors and financial backers,” and few newspapers “operated as efficient and self-sustaining enterprises.” Broadcasters in particular “feared reprisals for reporting critical of the government,” including lawsuits, threats to their licenses, tax inquiries, and loss of advertisers. “Fear of retribution led to a high degree of media self-censorship.”²¹

There appears to have been little significant change in the media environment since the ruling coalition kept its parliamentary majority in the May 2012 elections. Two journalists were reportedly assaulted while reporting on the election, according to an international NGO that also observed, “Politically motivated defamation lawsuits no longer appear to be a problem, but media pluralism is

²⁰ See: Freedom House, *Freedom of the Press 2013*, p. 8.

²¹ “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012: Armenia,” U.S. State Department, 2013, available at [http://www.state.gov].

lacking.”²² That said, Freedom House said Armenia’s score improved “because media coverage of the parliamentary elections was generally more balanced than in previous election periods, opposition parties made greater use of online media, harassment and violence against journalists declined compared with the last election year, and there was a dramatic reduction in defamation or slander complaints against journalists.”²³

Meanwhile, a recent survey²⁴ found that virtually identical proportions of Armenians partially or fully trust (47 percent) the press or partially or fully (48 percent) distrust it. National television was “simultaneously the most trusted [55 percent] and distrusted [42 percent] source of information;” 55 percent of respondents reported that national TV is not independent of the government. More than three-quarters of respondents believed that media owners influence content, and political affiliation is viewed as a prime factor in this. Nevertheless, Armenians have a strong desire for a free media, and 80 percent say that television should be able to broadcast what it wants.

An Overview of Press Freedom Conditions in Azerbaijan

According to Human Rights Watch, “The atmosphere for political activists and independent and pro-opposition journalists [has grown] acutely hostile.”²⁵ The U.S. State Department said newspapers, including opposition and independent outlets, expressed a wide range of opinions on government policies, it said, but “most media practiced self-censorship and avoided topics considered politically sensitive.” Its report said, “The broadcast media adhered to a pro-government line in their news coverage” and “foreign broadcasters, including the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, and the British Broadcasting Corporation remained prohibited from broadcasting on FM frequencies.”²⁶ As an international media development NGO noted, “An impressive number of over 5,000 TV channels, radio stations, and newspapers does not translate into a pluralism of views... Only one television station provides anything approaching balanced reporting.”²⁷

Journalists continue to be assaulted and kidnapped in Azerbaijan. For example, when a journalist was beaten in 2012 while filing a confrontation involving employees of the state oil company, the company criticized the assault but accused the journalist of provoking the violence. Some have been arrested and imprisoned. In March 2013, the chief editor of an independent newspaper received a nine-year sentence for extortion and taking a bribe from a former member of parliament. The following month, a court imposed an eight-year sentence on the editor of a religious news website for what press rights defenders say was his coverage of events involving Muslims. In 2012, authorities charged a pro-democracy blogger and photographer with “hooliganism” and assault for purportedly insulting

²² “World Report 2013: Armenia,” Human Rights Watch, 2013, available at [<http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2013/country-chapters/armenia?page=1>].

²³ *Freedom of the Press 2013*, p. 8.

²⁴ See: K. Pearce, *Armenian Media Landscape: Formative Research for the Alternative Resources in Media Program*, Survey Report, 2011.

²⁵ “World Report 2013: Azerbaijan,” Human Rights Watch, 2013, available at [<http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2013/country-chapters/azerbaijan>].

²⁶ “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012: Azerbaijan,” U.S. State Department, 2013, available at [<http://www.state.gov>].

²⁷ *Media Sustainability Index 2013: The Development of Sustainable Independent Media in Europe and Eurasia*, International Research & Exchanges Board, Washington, D.C., 2013, p. 147.

and injuring police at an unauthorized political rally. Also in 2012, the editor-in-chief of a weekly minority-language newspaper was falsely charged with spying for Iran and possession of heroin. Although the regime in 2012 released fifteen people regarded as imprisoned for exercising freedom of the press or of speech, at least six remained behind bars at the end of the year.

The governmental structures themselves use the media to undermine their critics. For example in April 2012, an independent investigative reporter who hosts a RFE/RL program went public to attack what she claimed was a blackmail attempt; Khadija Ismayilova, who has reported about high-level corruption, criticized prosecutors for failing to properly investigate whoever sent intimate photographs to local newspapers and posted a sexually explicit video online. Two years earlier, an illegally obtained video of two other journalists at a hotel appeared on nationwide television in an effort to disgrace them.

As for news organizations, the State Department, described how an independent newspaper “faced closure due to financial strains reportedly caused by fines imposed in defamation cases, by the unwillingness of companies to advertise in the newspaper, and by the takeover of its distributor’s kiosks.”²⁸

An Overview of Press Freedom Conditions in Georgia

In October 2012, Georgia experienced its first peaceful election-based parliamentary change since independence when an opposition coalition defeated the ruling party. The ability of the press to disseminate political information in the run-up was strengthened by legislation that required satellite content providers and networks to carry all TV stations that broadcast news for the sixty days leading to the election. That allowed the three pro-opposition private channels to deepen their penetration in urban areas served by cable networks.²⁹ Nine years earlier, the press also played a role in a different type of regime change—the country’s 2003 Rose Revolution that ousted a corrupt and authoritarian presidential administration.³⁰ Even so, the regime of President Mikheil Saakashvili, who took power in 2003, took strong anti-press freedom steps of its own, such as closing a private television station in 2007 and blocking Russian websites and television stations when Russian troops invaded the country in 2008.³¹

There are recent reports of press constraints and intimidation. For instance, in July 2012, ten news agency and television reporters were injured while covering a public meeting in Karaleti, one of several incidents of verbal and physical harassment in the Shida Kartli region. Separately, a photographer who had been accused of espionage and was freed under a plea bargain, said authorities had pressured him to make a false confession. The U.S. State Department reported that “direct or indirect government influence over the most watched countrywide media outlets remained a problem” despite the active presence of independent media. It also cited reports of verbal and physical attacks on jour-

²⁸ “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012: Azerbaijan.”

²⁹ See: “World Report 2013: Georgia,” Human Rights Watch, 2013, available at [<http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2013/country-chapters/georgia>].

³⁰ See: D. Anable, “The Role of Georgia’s Media—and Western Aid—in the Rose Revolution,” *Press/Politics*, Vol. 11, Issue 3, 2006, pp. 7-43.

³¹ See: J. Barrett, *Media Relations in Georgia with the Government*, Research Report, International Research & Exchanges Board, 2008.

nalists, such as detention and beating of a journalist taking pictures of a police station, confiscation of cameras and “intimidation of journalists by government officials due to their reporting.”³²

In addition, survey research shows that Georgians cite three principal reasons why the press “is not free to express various political views: government pressure, corrupt media; and media not reporting “bad news.”³³

As of spring 2013, legislators were reviewing proposed amendments to the broadcasting law to “ensure greater pluralism and transparency in the work of the public broadcaster” and require the public broadcaster “to carry the signal of other broadcasters as part of its network.”³⁴ In addition, Freedom House identified Georgia’s press environment as noticeably improved in 2012 because of “increased political diversity in the television market, including through the return of Imedi TV to its previous private owners.”³⁵

On the financial front, the State Department said only a few newspapers were viable commercially and noted that the outgoing government gave pro-regime television stations disproportionate tax reductions, while “opposition-leaning stations reportedly paid most or all of their taxes due to fear that they would be fined or closed if they did not.”³⁶

Even so, Georgian journalists and media experts have been optimistic about the future. They credit television coverage of a prison abuse scandal for “seal[ing] the fate” of President Saakashvili’s political party in the 2012 parliamentary elections when an opposition coalition won a majority of seats. “Political competition opened the field for greater pluralism,” a media development NGO said, “but also revealed the difficulties of establishing apolitical media firms and outlets in Georgia.”³⁷

The issue of Georgian market support for independent media can be viewed as a proxy for the same question in the other two countries. Wilcox identified key impediments to a sustainable advertising-supported press system in Georgia: lack of qualified advertising professionals; lack of independent auditing of listenership and circulation; a “skewed advertising market where an estimated 80 percent of the total advertising spent in the nation go to the two major TV stations, which are generally perceived as ‘pro-government’ in news coverage and ownership;” perception of the press as “more polemic than fact-based,” and declining newspaper circulation.³⁸

Of course, the type of censorship and physical and legal harassment of journalists remains fundamentally unchanged since social and new media emerged. The next section of our research addresses issues of control and censorship of web-based media and social media that is proliferating throughout the South Caucasus.

Social Media and the Blurring of “Journalist” Lines

It is clear that the South Caucasus region is increasingly going online, although the degree of movement varies among the three countries and within each of them. Overall, the Internet penetration

³² “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012: Georgia,” U.S. State Department, 2013, available at [<http://www.state.gov>].

³³ “Georgian National Study, November 9-21, 2012,” International Republican Institute, Baltic Surveys Ltd. / The Gallup Organization, and Institute of Polling and Marketing, 2012, available at [http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2013_February_8_Survey_of_Georgian_Public_Opinion_November_9_21_2012.pdf].

³⁴ “OSCE Media Freedom Representative Presents Legal Review of Georgian Broadcasting Law Amendments,” Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Representative on Freedom of the Media, Press Release, 25 March, 2013, available at [<http://www.osce.org/fom/100312>].

³⁵ *Freedom of the Press 2013*, p. 8.

³⁶ “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012: Georgia.”

³⁷ *Media Sustainability Index 2013: The Development of Sustainable Independent Media in Europe and Eurasia*, p. 161.

³⁸ D.L. Wilcox, *The Potential of the Advertising Industry in Georgia to Sustain an Independent Media*, Scholar Research Brief, International Research & Exchanges Board for CEE Research, Vienna, 2012, p. 1.

rate as of 30 June, 2012 was calculated as 28.4 percent in Georgia, 50 percent in Azerbaijan, and 60.6 percent in Armenia.³⁹ Interestingly—and in a trend replicated across much of the world—traditional media in Georgia are going online, both to disseminate Internet versions of their stories, visual material, and audio material through their own websites and to post information on blogs and Facebook and, via YouTube, to exchange video information.⁴⁰

A more complex situation arises from the proliferation of social media outlets such as blogs and websites. Also the escalating ease of access to such outlets by would-be communicators blurs traditional borders between “journalists” and “non-journalists,” whether in democratic, semi-democratic or non-democratic countries. This trend raises critical questions for governments seeking to control free expression and dissent, for press rights advocates seeking to defend free expression, and for the citizenry deciding whom to trust as a reliable and credible source of news and information about public affairs. These questions include: who is a journalist? how can information and communication technology (ICT) be used to fill the civil society role of journalism in non-democratic countries? and can governments justifiably regulate ICT without impairing the free expression rights of the press and of non-journalists?

As Bowe, Freedman, and Blom observed, “Around the world, social media offer an informal virtual space for citizens who feel disenfranchised to connect socially. But for those who live in countries such as the three former Soviet republics of the South Caucasus—where free expression is curtailed and official news outlets are under government censorship—...ICT offers an increasingly important alternative vehicle for political expression...”⁴¹ The importance of such alternative venues for public discourse is evident. In Azerbaijan, for example, “in the absence of freedom in the traditional media, blogs are used to comment on political developments, and YouTube to post videos showing mass protests and crackdowns at rallies.”⁴² And Chedia observed, “In the last few years, the Georgian electronic media have abandoned political issues to concentrate on entertainment, which means that the political parties and political figures have moved, albeit partially, to the virtual sphere to discuss public and political issues; this, in turn, has encouraged the social media.”⁴³

That avoidance—whether by choice or by force—of public affairs coverage by traditional media, coupled with increased availability of technology, explains in part why the public is turning increasingly to non-traditional media as sources of information and opinion. For example, most Armenians own mobile phones, many of which are used for Web access. Sixty percent of Internet users have social network profiles, with the Russian site Odnoklassniki about 6.5 times more popular than Facebook; and one-third own personal computers.⁴⁴ The same study found that 67 percent of Armenians do not read online newspapers or have an opinion on their trustworthiness. Also, there are significant differences in new media and social media access in the capital area compared to other parts of a country.

But even more telling in its implications is public attitude toward these alternatives to traditional or mainstream media. On the one hand, Pearce reported: “Armenians are overwhelmingly unsure of the independence of online sources,” with 61 percent unable to express an opinion on whether social networking or online newspapers are trustworthy. “However, Armenians who did offer an opinion were much more likely to believe online sources to be independent[t] of government and

³⁹ See: “Internet Usage in Asia,” Internet World Statistics, 2013, available at [<http://internetworldstats.com/stats3.htm>].

⁴⁰ See: B. Chedia, “The New Media and Transformation of the Public Political Sphere in Georgia,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 12, Issue 4, 2011, pp. 143-150.

⁴¹ B.J. Bowe, E. Freedman, and R. Blom, “Cosmopolitanism and Suppression of Cyber-Dissent in the Caucasus: Obstacles and Opportunities for Social Media and the Web,” *Journal of Media Sociology*, Vol. 3, Issues 1-4, 2011, p. 6.

⁴² *Media Sustainability Index 2013: The Development of Sustainable Independent Media in Europe and Eurasia*, p. 147.

⁴³ B. Chedia, op. cit., p. 144.

⁴⁴ See: K. Pearce, op. cit.

business influence.”⁴⁵ On the other hand, a U.S. State Department report about Armenia said, “Online Web sites were the country’s most independent information sources. Social media, such as Facebook and YouTube, exerted a small but growing influence on social discourse.”⁴⁶

In addition, mere access to the Internet does not automatically mean that citizens regularly use it as a source of political information. A national survey conducted in November 2012—the month after Georgia’s parliamentary election triggered a regime change—found that 41 percent of respondents read political news on the Web at least once or twice a week, and only 16 percent did so daily; 42 percent reported never reading political news online. The percentages were smaller for Internet users who obtain other forms of online political information at least once or twice weekly; watch political videos (28 percent); read political blogs (21 percent); visit party websites (14 percent); participate in political discussions (3.5 percent); and communicate with politicians (2.8 percent).⁴⁷

Some scholars urge caution against having high expectations for ICT as a transformative force from authoritarianism to democracy in the region. “ICTs are almost always associated with utopic visions that imply societies will become more egalitarian and encourage new forms of communication practices that will transform the relationship between governments and the demos,” Buente and Hajibayova write in a study of digital citizenship in the South Caucasus. “However, nation states that place a high priority on controlling information within their regimes demonstrate an impressive ability to shape the development of ICTs in ways that further centralization and restriction of citizen freedoms.”⁴⁸

In its annual *Freedom on the Net* report, Freedom House⁴⁹ ranks Georgia as “free” and Azerbaijan as “partly free” in terms of Internet access and controls. The report does not include Armenia but the U.S. State Department (2012a) human rights report for 2010 said, “There were no government restrictions on access to the Internet or credible reports that the government monitored e-mail or Internet chat rooms. Individuals and groups could engage in the expression of views via the Internet, including by e-mail.”

Despite Georgia’s “free” rating by Freedom House’s *Freedom of the Press*⁵⁰ report, bloggers and other Internet users in that country have been concerned about an existing 2011 law that they say permits police to monitor e-mails—including those of political dissidents—without a court order.⁵¹ Recent events also raise questions about the degree of Internet freedom in Azerbaijan, including the arrest of journalists. A local advocacy group, the Institute for Reporters’ Freedom and Safety, said they include the executive director and the editor-in-chief of Khayal television, a contributor to the newspaper Millatim, bloggers, and top editors at two news websites. An aide to the president, however, told an Internet Governance Forum in November 2012: “Bloggers are not persecuted in Azerbaijan and not one is in prison at present. . . . They can easily express themselves. That proves there is freedom of the [I]nternet in Azerbaijan.”⁵²

Governments have technological means to deny access to particular content within their borders, such as blockage of servers and domains; mandatory licensing or registration of Internet sites;

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 8.

⁴⁶ “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011: Armenia.”

⁴⁷ See: “Georgian National Study, November 9-21, 2012.”

⁴⁸ W. Buente, L. Hajibayova, “Digital Citizenship in the South Caucasus: A Comparative Analysis between Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan,” Paper accepted by the 7th GigaNet Symposium, Baku, Azerbaijan, 5 November, 2012, pp. 2, 3.

⁴⁹ See: “Freedom on the Net,” Freedom House, 2012.

⁵⁰ See: *Freedom of the Press 2013*.

⁵¹ See: M. Vardiashvili, “Georgian Web Users Fear Intrusive Controls,” Institute for War & Peace Reporting, 24 June, 2011, available at [<http://iwpr.net/report-news/georgian-web-users-fear-intrusive-controls>].

⁵² I. Abbasov, “Web Freedom Claims Ring False in Azerbaijan,” Institute for War & Peace Reporting, 10 November, 2012, available at [<http://iwpr.net/report-news/web-freedom-claims-ring-false-azerbaijan>].

encompassing these forms of communication in libel law; and surveilling individual Internet accounts.⁵³

Perhaps the most famous anti-social media event came in Azerbaijan where two bloggers were charged with “hooliganism” for their YouTube posting of a video showing a donkey giving a mock government news conference. The arrest of Adnan Hajizade and Emin Milli drew international attention. Their defense lawyer attributed political motives to the charges, but authorities countered that it was simply a criminal case. Both men spent more than a year in jail. After his release, Milli told Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty that he was uncertain about the reasons for his arrest but assumed it was for “just for telling the truth, for free thinking, for free expression, and this video was part of it.” He described himself as a cross between a social activist, blogger and politician and said he planned to continue blogging and added, “I think Internet deprivation is a new form of torture for people of our generation.”⁵⁴ Milli told an interviewer, “A new-media revolution is taking place in Azerbaijan.”⁵⁵

Meanwhile, regimes increasingly use social media to promote their own agendas, disseminate their own viewpoints, attack their own critics, and bypass independent and oppositional media by taking their messages directly to the public. For example, by fall 2011, the Georgian prime minister had 24,744 virtual friends on Facebook, the parliamentary speaker had more than 20,000 and the mayor of Tbilisi had 42,815. In response, Speaker David Bakradze said, “Any power that thinks it necessary to communicate regularly with the people should use the social networks.”⁵⁶

A government’s role can be more sinister than merely building a roster of social media “friends,” according to a study in Azerbaijan by Pearce and Kendzior. In what is labeled “networked authoritarianism,” they found that the regime manipulated digitally mediated social networks and dissuaded frequent Web users from political activism, such as supporting protests. Even so, they cite the rising number of Facebook users as evidence that the regime’s “campaign against social media has so far been unsuccessful.”⁵⁷

Conclusion

Independent journalism along the lines of Western models remains severely impaired in the South Caucasus by broadly-held societal views of the appropriate role of the mass media in comparatively young and developing countries such as the three we focus on in this study.

Instead of the independent watchdog role generally accepted in the West, ordinary citizens and governmental officials in the South Caucasus region often argue that the press should serve as an agent of state-building and nationalism and that its principal duty is not owed to the citizenry but to the country and its government of the moment. One ramification is that many citizens are led to believe that the press should not be fully free to criticize government and public officials. That attitude, in turn, poses a substantial obstacle to securing public support for sustainable, independent media organizations.

⁵³ B.J. Bowe, E. Freedman, and R. Blom, op. cit.

⁵⁴ K. Ismayilova, “Freed Azerbaijani Blogger Says Year without Internet Was ‘Torture,’” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 19 November, 2010, available at [http://www.rferl.org/content/Freed_Azerbaijani_Blogger_Says_Year_Without_Internet_Was_Torture/2224983.html].

⁵⁵ C. Bigg, “Azerbaijani Opposition Blogger Says ‘Democratic Revolution’ Is Approaching,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 6 March, 2013, available at [<http://www.rferl.org/content/donkey-blogger-emin-mili/24921148.html>].

⁵⁶ B. Chedia, op. cit., p. 145.

⁵⁷ K.E. Pearce, S. Kendzior, “Networked Authoritarianism and Social Media in Azerbaijan,” *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 62, 2012, p. 295.

At the same time, incidents of press rights violations, new restrictive legislation, and operational impediments to transparent governance should continue to raise concerns and protests from media rights defenders and multi-governmental entities such as the OSCE.

Meanwhile, mass media scholars and advocates should remember that Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia have their own rich histories, religious heritages, cultural values, political environments, and governmental structures, relationships with neighbors, and economic resources and imperatives. Thus it is unrealistic and, indeed, dangerous to assume that one size—one model of press constraints, regulations, and rights—will fit all three. Thus we can expect the pace of improvements in the mass media situation to be uneven and uncoordinated within each country and within the region.

As for future research, the South Caucasus provides mass media scholars with a venue for a wide range of qualitative and quantitative studies into topics relevant to authoritarian and post-authoritarian journalism and communication. Among them are questions of media economics and financial sustainability; social media use; journalism ethics and practices; advertiser influence on news content; government and nongovernmental control of content; media agenda-setting; the roles of independent, state-owned, and oppositional press; university-level journalism education; professional development; self-censorship; newsroom diversity; minority media; cross-border collaborative reporting projects; and access to information.

For example, how do professional journalists see themselves, their jobs, and their media organizations? How do journalists cover public affairs, particularly controversial topics and issues, and how do they use sources and strive for—or ignore—fairness and balance? How well do university journalism programs prepare students to succeed in the rapidly changing world of mass media? How are the Internet and social media reshaping the ways the region's citizenry get news, including ways that bypass traditional media? What impact does the foreign press—from Russia, Western Europe, the United States, Turkey, Iran, and elsewhere—have on domestic news agendas? What economic models might prove viable in the region? How do NGOs attempt to influence news coverage?

Scholars should continue to examine public attitudes toward the press, including levels of trust and credibility. That includes analyzing whether they coincide or conflict with journalists' on-the-ground experiences and media analysts' observations. Attitudes surely change in the context of political and other events. To illustrate, a series of fifteen national surveys in Georgia between October 2005 and November 2012 found that from a low of 10 percent to a high of 20 percent of respondents believe that their mass media are "totally free" for purposes of expressing "various political views" without "government control over media content." Those who believe the press is "somewhat free" hit a low point of 35 percent in June 2009 and peaked at 56 percent right after the October 2012 elections. During the same period, those who believe the press is "not free at all" ranged from a low of 7 percent to a high of 16 percent; there was a 4 percent improvement from 14 to 10 percent between the pre- and post-2012 election surveys.⁵⁸

Finally, what are appropriate roles for trainers, educators, and organizations from outside the region in advancing journalism skills and press freedom? Journalism, press rights advocacy, civil society groups, and news organizations, provide training and instruction for professionals and university students in the region. So do the OSCE and U.S. government-sponsored programs. Among them are Fulbright and other media scholars from the United States who teach university journalism students and Western professionals who conduct trainings at such institutions as the Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management in Tbilisi, a joint venture of the International Center for Journal-

⁵⁸ See: "Georgian National Study, November 9-21, 2012."

ists and the Georgian Institute for Public Affairs, and the Caucasus Media Institute in Armenia, which offers courses on media technology and journalism techniques and workshops for mid-career journalists. In their study of an Armenian radio news program, Torosyan and Starck cautioned that “journalists in post-communist countries should avoid blind acceptance of assistance and expertise without examining the ideological strings attached to foreign aid... Armenian journalists should have as much decision-making power as American or European consultants or administrators who decide what kind of training or textbooks should be used in those countries.”⁵⁹ Therefore it may be useful for researchers to explore the practical and long-term impact, if any, on South Caucasus journalists and news organizations—of Western trainers who promote “democratic journalism”—so-called “media missionaries.”

⁵⁹ G. Torosyan, K. Starck, *op. cit.*, p. 215.