

MODERN CENTRAL ASIA:

REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY & CAPACITY BUILDING

(Collective Monograph)

Edited:

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ЗАМОНАВИЙ МАРКАЗИЙ ОСИЁ: МИНТАҚАВИЙ УЗАРО БОГЛИКЛИК ВА САЛОҲИЯТ
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**Dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the
University of World Economy and Diplomacy**

*«...we will pay special attention to cementing the centuries-old friendship, good-neighborhood relations, strategic partnership and mutual trust with Central Asian states. This is the priority of our foreign policy. The difficult conditions of the pandemic have once again demonstrated how much we need each other and are interconnected».*¹

*Shavkat Mirziyoyev,
President of the Republic of Uzbekistan*

¹President ShavkatMirziyoyev's Address to the Oliy Majlis, December 29, 2020.
(Official web-site of the President of Uzbekistan. URL: <https://president.uz/en/lists/view/4057>)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE.....	3
---------------------	----------

PART I.

SECURITY & CAPACITY BUILDING IN MAKING.....	10
--------------------------------------------------------	-----------

CENTRAL ASIA AT THE CROSSROADS

<i>Sodyq Safoev.....</i>	<i>11</i>
--------------------------	-----------

SHAPING SUSTAINABLE CENTRAL ASIA: BIOREGIONAL APPROACH

<i>Michael R. Edelstein.....</i>	<i>22</i>
----------------------------------	-----------

POLITICAL LONGEVITY: INDISPENSABILITY OR LACK OF ALTERNATIVE?

<i>Irina D. Zvyagelskaya.....</i>	<i>30</i>
-----------------------------------	-----------

CENTRAL ASIA IN SEARCH OF INTEGRATION

<i>Ulugbek Khasanov.....</i>	<i>45</i>
------------------------------	-----------

WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN; RIGHTS AND REALITIES

<i>Rukhsana Iftikhar.....</i>	<i>58</i>
-------------------------------	-----------

FEATURES OF NATO APPROACH TO AFGHAN CRISIS (between 2014-2020)

<i>I.Yakubov.....</i>	<i>69</i>
-----------------------	-----------

AFGHAN CONTEXT OF U.S. NATIONAL INTERSTS

<i>Yulduzhon Imomova.....</i>	<i>81</i>
-------------------------------	-----------

PART II.

TRANSFORMATION PROCESSES IN CENTRAL ASIA.....	90
------------------------------------------------------	-----------

KAZAKHSTAN AND SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVES

Bulat

<i>Sultanov.....</i>	<i>91</i>
----------------------	-----------

THE ROLE OF ETHNOCULTURAL TRADITIONS IN THE NEW CENTRAL ASIAN POLITICS

<i>Orazio Maria Gnerre.....</i>	<i>142</i>
---------------------------------	------------

GLOBALIZATION VS REGIONALIZATION: CENTRAL ASIAN APPROACH

<i>Ivan A. Safranchuk.....</i>	<i>155</i>
--------------------------------	------------

"SOFT POWER" AS A POLITICAL INSTRUMENT: IMAGE DISCOURSE (UZBEKISTAN's CASE)

<i>Mokhira Saidazimkhujayeva</i>	162
GREEN TRANSFORMATION IN CENTRAL ASIAN PRIORITIES	
<i>Shakhnoza Askarova.....</i>	172
RENEWABLE ENERGY AND ITS EFFECT (REGIONAL CASE)	
<i>Surayyo Kushbakova.....</i>	182
 PART III.	
MULTILATERAL COOPERATION IN CENTRAL ASIA.....	187
MODERN SPECIFICS OF CENTRAL ASIAN ECONOMIC COOPERATION (CAREC)	
<i>Adil Khan & Muhammad Ijaz.....</i>	105
KAZAKHSTAN AND PROSPECTS FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION IN CENTRAL ASIA	
<i>Bulat Sultanov.....</i>	124
INTERNATIONAL MULTIPARTY MEDIATION (TAJIK PEACE PROCESS CASE)	
<i>Mavluda Nurmetova.....</i>	188
CENTRAL ASIAN CONTEXT IN THE EAEU POLICY: PROSPECTS AND PROBLEMS	
<i>Takhmina Mamadaliyeva.....</i>	197
SPECIFICS OF RUSSIA - CENTRAL ASIA POLITICAL RELATIONS	
<i>Olimkhon Tashpulatov.....</i>	206
CHINA’S THINK TANKS IN SHAPING FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS CENTRAL ASIA	
<i>Abbos Bobokhonov.....</i>	219
NATIONAL CYBERSECURITY IN PRISM OF "DIGITAL UZBEKISTAN- 2030" STRATEGY	
<i>Azamat Nematullayev</i>	235

In lieu of Preface

The Development Strategy of Uzbekistan for 2022-2026² uses a completely new approach and introduces a system for evaluating the effectiveness of planned reforms based on the level of achievement of development goals.

In particular, the Development Strategy envisages the achievement of about 100 goals within the framework of 7 priority areas of development of the country. In order to fully understand the essence of this document, I think it is necessary to pay special attention to the following fundamental issues.

Firstly, the recent elections of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan have created completely new conditions for domestic political development and the implementation of foreign policy tasks. The main result of the election is that the majority of the population of Uzbekistan has shown unprecedented high political activity and supported the renewed domestic and foreign policy pursued under the leadership of President *Shavkat Mirziyoyev*. Elections have become a factor in uniting society and ensuring the stability and development of the country. This has created the necessary conditions not only for the continuation but also for the deepening of democratic reforms in Uzbekistan.

Secondly, the election campaign has clearly shown that over the past five years, Uzbekistan has undergone a radical change in the country's development model. A new political and social environment has been created in Uzbekistan. The reforms are primarily enjoyed by the younger generation: they have felt the changes in the education system, the economy, the labor market and the opportunities for promotion (social elevator). Today, the principles of liberalization, freedom of speech and press, openness and transparency are taking root

² Uzbekistan's Development Strategy for 2022-2026 // 2022 — 2026 - Yillarga Mo'ljallangan Yangi O'zbekistonning Taraqqiyot Strategiyasi O'zbekiston Respublikasi Prezidentining Farmoni, 28.01.2022 yildagi PF-60-son 1 <https://lex.uz/uz/docs/-5841063>

in our society. It was once again emphasized in the President's speech that this was irreversible.

Thirdly, the initial stage of modernization of our society related to the implementation of primary tasks has been successfully completed. The next stage of the reforms will undoubtedly be related to the implementation of more complex, fundamental political and economic reforms.

As noted by the President, "The New Development Strategy of Uzbekistan marks the beginning of a new stage in our national development." Its central idea is that the democratic reforms supported by our people will be resolutely pursued. Most importantly, the priority principle of "human dignity" will remain the main focus of the activities of all levels of government in our country."³

From now on, activity in our country will be organized on the basis of a new principle "*man - society - state*". The strategic goal of our society is to build a modern, sustainable, based on a social market economy, a secular democratic state governed by the rule of law, a society in which human beings, their interests, rights and freedoms are practically highly valued and achieve sustainable environmental development. The Development Strategy for the next five years is based on these principles and clearly defines the main goals of the country's development in seven areas. Considering environmental problems, it will be possible to increase the energy efficiency of the economy by 20% and reduce the amount of harmful gases emitted into the air by 10%.

As the modern international system is radically transformed and becoming more complex, fundamental changes are taking place in the world economy and the international financial system, new transnational threats and risks are emerging, and the process of training diplomats and the vector of scientific research need to change dramatically.

³ Ibidem

When we talk about the New Renaissance, one of its decisive factors is the openness to the world and the wide range of external relations. It is no coincidence that the renewed foreign policy of Uzbekistan today is aimed at the uniform development of all aspects of foreign relations. During the years of reforms, in 2017-2021, significant work has been done to formulate and implement a renewed foreign policy of the country. The nature and content of diplomatic activity have changed radically. At the same time, the situation in our region and around the world is changing rapidly. This requires a proportional improvement in our foreign policy. This requires further intensification of activities to promote the interests of our country at the international level.

It is important to strengthen the existing positive trend in the region, strengthen mutual trust in Central Asia and ensure that the process of developing cooperation becomes a permanent feature. It is essential to continue to actively involve Afghanistan in the overall regional process in Central Asia. The democratic reforms being carried out in our country have aroused great hopes in our society. Despite the existing problems, this policy is supported by our compatriots and is highly valued internationally. The new Development Strategy of Uzbekistan has undergone a nationwide discussion. A development strategy is a program of practical action. It is safe to say that the good results of today's far-reaching violent endeavors will not wait long. I think that in a few years we will be able to see the brightest results of the Development Strategy.

Dr., Prof. Sodyq S. Safoev,
First Deputy Chairperson of the Uzbekistan's Senate
Rector of the University of World Economy and Diplomacy

PART I

CAPACITY BUILDING IN MAKING

CENTRAL ASIA AT THE CROSSROADS

Dr., Prof. Sodyq S. Safoev

*First Deputy Chairperson of the Uzbekistan's Senate
Rector of the University of World Economy and Diplomacy*

ABSTRACT: *Over the course of the past three decades, the role of Central Asia has drastically changed, once more in its history. We have witnessed this region's evolution from political non-existence, to becoming an increasingly important actor on international arena again. Located at the very heart of Asia, and being a key midpoint of the Islamic World, Central Asia has become an integral part of Eurasian and global processes.*

KEYWORDS: *New Uzbekistan Development Strategy, Central Asia, Regional Development, Human & National values, Regional Connectivity, Capacity Building, Civil Society, Supremacy of Law, National Resilience, New Neighborhood Policy, Foreign Policy.*

Until just recently, the term “Central Asia” was treated mostly as a historical and geographical definition with quite unclear borders and even more unclear political prospects. These prospects, as a rule, were considered a part of this or that version of the “Great Game”, among big powers competing with each other to gain influence over the region, while the Central Asians were left to act as passive objects in this game.

Even the very name used for the region varied drastically at different period. It was called Transoxiana by the Greeks and Romans, Western Land by ancient Chinese, Maverannahr by the medieval Arabs. Meanwhile Iran distinguished itself from Turon and subsequently the linguistic approach led to the region being called Turkestan. Sometimes it was named Inner Asia, to more broadly link it Mongolia, Western China, northern India and southern Siberia. During the Soviet period, for instance, the region was to the contrary limited to the so called Soviet Central Asia referring only for four republics: Kirgizstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

It has now become evident that Central Asia is starting to reclaim its geostrategic role in the world, which it once played until the dramatic change of the major trade routes and then the subsequent expansion of the Russian Empire kept it from playing an active role in international relations. Before that, as it was

defined by Arnold Toynbee, “the Oksa-Yaksart basin was like a turning point or a center for all roads of the world to converge. Its natural conditions, - he stated, - helped to turn the region into an international crossroads.”

It was here that the vital interests of the four largest regions of Eurasia – the Middle East, the South-Asian subcontinent, the Rus, transformed in the 17th century to Russia, and China – were interlaced. In between each and every one of them, Central Asia was at the center of highly developed systems of mutual strategic interests in political, economic, cultural, and military affairs.

Mutual correlation and interdependency were so matured that the development of Central Asia often had a fundamental impact on the state of affairs in the aforementioned regions.

Today the countries of Central Asia are forming their identity and building independent policies not only with the countries of these regions, but with other parts of the world as well. They can no longer be regarded as just an appendage of another nation’s idea of statehood.

There is no reason to doubt that Central Asia will become an important element in the balance of power in the very heart of the Eurasian landscape, affecting a wide range of economic and political interests as well as global security considerations. At the same time, an unstable, disunited Central Asia could create severe problems for an increasingly interdependent world.

There is another factor that determines the unique role of Uzbekistan and the other countries of Central Asia in contemporary world. Due to the dramatic turn of history, the original Asian region, with predominantly a Muslim population, became a direct participant of the European process within the framework of OSCE and other intra-Eurasian processes. This is not only creating opportunities for these states, but a gateway of inter-civilizational dialog for the whole world as well.

* * * * *

History unambiguously shows that the golden ages of Central Asia coincided with the times of its most intensive ties with the rest of the world. And to the contrary, when these ties were weakened, Central Asia was doomed to harbor backwardness, obscurantism, bloody feuds, and as a result poverty and vegetation.

At the heart of the previous CA renaissances was the emergence of a common economic, cultural, humanitarian space in a vast region. Long-distance trade played a major role in the rise and prosperity of Central Asia. The Great Silk Roads served not only as a means of trading goods, but also as an exchange of cultures, ideas, scientific discoveries, bridging distant nations and civilizations.

Approximately one hundred years ago, a prominent scholar Wilhelm Barthold, wrote a profound piece dedicated to the history of Central Asia. He analyzed the factors behind the astonishing achievements of the Central Asian civilization in medieval ages. He predicted that there would be a revival of Central Asia's role as an important region, where its distinguished position in history and culture of world civilization would be restored. According to him, Central Asia would rise from its ruins, and take on an integral role once international trade routes restarted to cross the region again.

* * * * *

Hence, the foreign policy of the new Uzbekistan is aimed at cultivating multidirectional dialog and cooperation in foreign relations – with the East and West, North and South. It has started restoring its historical place in world civilization: and a decisive factor of this revival is the country's openness to the world.

Immediately after his election in 2016, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev instigated systemic high-level regional dialogue. It enabled to create a fundamentally new political atmosphere in Central Asia.

The main goal is to turn Central Asia into a zone of stabile and sustainable development, to create an atmosphere of trust, mutual respect and good-neighborliness. In recent years, Uzbekistan's trade turnover with its neighbors has drastically increased.

If a few years ago Central Asia was considered a “zone of strategic uncertainty”, today we can look at its prospects with a greater optimism.

A number of Uzbek initiatives are aimed at resolving the conflict in Afghanistan. Relations with the other CIS countries, our traditional partners, have reached a new level in all dimension. Together with China – key trade partner – Uzbekistan is an active participant in the Belt and Road initiative. A major step was taken towards building closer ties with Europe. Country attained a beneficiary status in the EU's Generalized System of Preferences - "GSP+". This was a result of intense work and successful summits in Paris, Berlin and high-level meetings

in Tashkent. Across the pond, President Mirziyoyev's visit to Washington and the meeting at the White House marked the beginning of a new era of strategic partnership between Uzbekistan and the US. Uzbek-Turkish relations have also taken a fresh breath of air. The two states signed strategic bilateral agreements, committing to joint projects aimed at modernizing Uzbekistan's road infrastructure as well as power and manufacturing facilities. Visits by President Mirziyoyev to Seoul and Tokyo have opened up absolutely new horizons of partnership with the Republic of Korea and with Japan. Intense dialogue with the leaderships of India and Pakistan have paved the way for the development of relations between Central and South Asia. Last July a very successful conference on Regional Connectivity took place in Tashkent where high-level representatives from more than 40 countries took part.

At the same time, the situation in our region and around the world is changing rapidly. This requires a continuous and corresponding adjustment in countries' foreign policy.

* * * * *

What are the foreign policy priorities of Uzbekistan in the years to come?

First, it is important to consolidate the existing positive trends in the region, to make the process of strengthening mutual trust and broad-based cooperation in Central Asia irreversible.

Second, it is extremely important to continue to solicit the active involvement of Afghanistan in the regional and global processes. Already two generations of Afghans have not seen peace. Long-term peace in that country can only be achieved through national consensus, public contract, and inclusive government. It is important to keep Afghanistan in the spotlight of the international community. We cannot repeat the mistakes of the past and leave this long-suffering country to the mercy of fate. It is necessary to continue the implementation of strategic economic and infrastructure projects in Afghanistan. This will not only increase the potential for the involvement of the entire region in international economic relations, but also open up new opportunities that can contribute to the peace process in Afghanistan.

Third, a top priority should be green diplomacy. Its essence lies in the promotion of international initiatives and the implementation of multilateral programs in the field of environmental protection and solving the growing environmental problems of the region and the world.

Considering the fact that Central Asia is the region which influences the formation of climate in greater Eurasia, the advancement of ideas on how to influence climate change here will have a global impact.

* * * * *

So, with respect to CA's geographical crossroads' puzzle, the priorities are more or less clear. It is not a case with respect to paradigm of social development.

According to professor Bernard Lewis, Central Asia and its bordering regions in Eurasia principally can choose between four concepts for development: socialism, nationalism, Islamism or secular democracy. There are no other options, he stated.

Almost two and a half centuries ago, Adam Smith tried to explain why some nations achieve wealth and others fail. Yet, today the gap between rich and poor countries has grown even larger. Still philosophers and economists are trying to find answers to questions such as: Why are some countries developed while others are not? What is "development" all about? How do we measure social "progress"?

According to Max Weber, development is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization, and by "disenchantment of the world". In modern society, he wrote, an individual acts based on cost-benefit analysis; there is no room for mystery, and faith, and traditions in governance.

An American economist Walt Rostow developed a conceptual model, according to which progress occurs in five basic stages: and concludes in an "Age of mass consumption"

So, are economic growth and consumption the main signs of modernization?

Of course, not. The process of modernization should not lead to spiritual impoverishment, dominance of consumerism, or, affluenzia, word composed from affluence and influenza, in other words a pandemic of unrestrained pursuit of material goods. As early as in the 14th century, a great scholar Ibn Khaldun, in his monumental work, "Muqaddimah" (or "Prolegomena"), noted that the pursuit of luxury irreversibly carried the seeds of destruction.

Economic growth is vital but not an end in itself. Revenues of society are only a means towards a larger goal. Consequently, the level and even rates of GDP growth cannot be the sole benchmark of progress.

Francis Fukuyama showed that people strive not only for their material well-being; he seeks psychological comfort. The latter is primarily associated with self-respect or recognition of the self-worth of an individual. The right to free elections, equality before the law, system of freedoms are inherent properties of social progress.

According to him, “social trust” is a key feature of a developed society. It is manifested both at the individual and at the social levels: trust toward government, public institutions and the state as a whole, trust toward business and civil society. That is why, the decisive moment in the origin of a modernized world was the emergence of such institutions as private property, social contract, and a stable system of commercial law.

All developed societies are industrial (none of them is based on agriculture), urbanized (having absolute majority of population leaving in cities), educated and inclusive (where all segments of society can and are participating in political life).

Modernized societies meet five criteria: they contain inherent mechanisms that ensure constant dynamic development; democracy is a political form of their very existence; they are mobile in all terms; a person has the ability to adapt to a constantly changing environment and acts rationally, does not focus on traditional or religious ideas.

The theory of modernization assumes that there are some common tendencies around the world, patterns that allow traditional societies to turn into modern ones. But that’s is not about a one-size-fits-all transformation of the East into the West.

* * * * *

It is clear that modernization creates a number of serious challenges.

Actually, as the history shows, societies arise in response to challenges: there is triad of social development: challenge-response-development. By identifying and conceptualizing these, one can comprehend the notion of development.

So, what kind of major challenges can Central Asian societies face over the medium-term perspective?

1. The principles of secularism versus the growing role of religion

The role of religion in societies is increasing worldwide. And here the point is not only in the ideological vacuum to be filled in certain states. Religious fervors are one of the most fundamental characteristics of human nature.

After all, religion so far is the only way of overcoming eternal contradictions between the egocentricity of an individual and interests of the society as a whole. The main problem lies in Islam's inclination towards regulating all aspects of social life. This provides fertile ground for political Islam, which by definition hardly might be combined with the principles of secularism.

The state's rigid regulatory policy towards religion has proven to have been counterproductive. Today, the Uzbek government appeals to promote Enlightened Islam. Thus, the burning issue is: what does that mean? Does it mean that modern Islam should evolve, somehow adapt to the environment of the modern world and learn to exist in the fourth technological revolution era?

2. Hard requirements of globalization versus national interests

For millions of people, globalization is associated with hopes of a better life, with the right to have their own choices and freedoms by means of obtaining firsthand information, with possibilities to travel freely, and with opportunities to receive better education in the best universities, to get better employment abroad with higher salaries and motivation.

At the same time, we all are perfectly aware that globalization has its cost and these are not cheap. Increasing the role of supra-state international institutions weakens national statehood, its democratic institutions. Anti-globalists are convinced that globalization contributes to such problems as global warming, environmental pollution, scattershot migration, unemployment, and the erosion of traditional values.

But globalization is a process that cannot be ignored, stopped or deferred. The choice is either you put up with the "hard jacket" of globalization or you are sidelined from current global trends, which will make you suffer the consequences.

3. National interests versus necessity of regional integration

In the modern world, only voluminous markets can encourage substantial and sustainable flow of investments and secure high economic growth. Moreover, it is obvious that in CA no country can capitalize its natural endowments on its own. Equally, no country is able to solve major problems such as transportation,

ecology, energy, etc., by itself; all of them today need concerted multilateral efforts.

But regional integration means not only gaining but giving up as well. The governments must be ready to delegate some of their exclusive prerogatives to newly formed organizations and reduce some of their regulatory functions. It is not always easy, but there is no other way.

A vital factor of successful regional cooperation is shared principles and values. So, on the one hand, there is an understanding of absolute inevitability of regional integration and, on the other, – reluctance to share power.

4. A conflict between the needs of political modernization and the needs of ensuring sustainable development.

All countries of our region are undergoing systemic political and economic changes – namely, modernization. It is a highly challenging, painful process breaking the very foundations of traditional societies and way of life. There is no other path toward progress, but it cannot pass smoothly. There will unavoidably be resistance.

Modernized societies without exception are based on the values of democracy and open society. The question is: can we be “tolerant towards intolerance”, can we be liberal and democratic towards fatal enemies of liberalism and democracy?

How the countries of the region will handle this paradox will show their level of maturity and their real potential for modernization.

5. The challenge of sustainable development versus generational change of political elites

Generational change is inevitable. The new always replaces the old.

Today the very demography of our region preordains the fact that the majority of the electoral constituency are young people. They are at the social and cultural forefront and are driving force behind massive changes. The new generation wants more openness and transparency, accountability and engagement. They are challenging key values and ideas that defined the previous status quo.

Generational change is inevitable, but it comes at a price. What worked well for one generation may fail for another. The political instincts shaped by the previous generation’s experience may ultimately be of great value to them. This

is one of the major controversies that CA societies will face in the near future – how to manage generational change while ensuring continuity and consistency.

There is old wisdom that say: science without the young is a tragedy and science without the older generation is a farce.

6. Industrialization versus ecology

The reality is that most of the CA countries are falling behind the curve with respect to industrialization. History does not know any prosperous country relying primarily on agriculture. But there is again the price to pay. There cannot be industrialization without harm on ecology.

In Central Asia, the rate of global warming is twice that of the world average. The growing shortage of water resources in the region is an acute problem and it can and must be solved collectively.

What is left of the Aral Sea has become the epicenter of an ecological catastrophe. I am convinced that the problem of the Aral Sea should be classified as one of the greatest challenges to the planet.

* * * * *

How is modernization going on in present-day Uzbekistan?

Uzbekistan, under the leadership of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, has embarked on ambitious reforms aimed at ensuring genuine political and economic modernization. No doubt, it is changing the political environment in all of Central Asia and will have an impact far beyond.

The main objective is obvious – to build a secular, democratic state based on the rule of law, open civil society and socially oriented market economy.

The main driving force behind this aspiration is a clear understanding of the following fundamental factor: in order to address the challenges of these turbulent times, political and economic reforms must be accelerated, not reversed.

As the recent developments in many regions have demonstrated, non-modernized states are weak and vulnerable.

More than ever before, there is a systemic understanding in Uzbekistan that no long-term sustainable development is possible without deep political changes and without profound modernization of the political system.

At the core of all this, lies the concept of decentralization of the state governance system. It has four main dimensions of redistributing power and functions.

1. From executive – to other branches of power.

This means overcoming one of the most prominent features of the previous system – an unlimited domination of a single political force, manifested in a monopoly of power.

Much needed actions have already been taken to ensure transparency and accountability of the authorities. The composition of Government has drastically changed. Younger, more open-minded and reform-oriented individuals, many of whom are graduates of the world's top universities, have been appointed to key positions in Government.

At the center of these renewals is the expansion of the Uzbek Parliament's influence.

2. From the center – to the regions.

The task of this aspect of decentralization is to redistribute powers and functions between different levels of the power structure.

Functions of the state governance system in such areas as education, health care, environmental management, protection of cultural heritage, local transportation, and social utilities have been delegated to the local authorities. The division of fiscal responsibilities among the different levels of government has accompanied this redistribution.

3. “From government – to business”.

The main goal of this aspect of reforms is to limit direct state intervention into the economy through liberalization, support of entrepreneurship, improvement of investment climate.

Renunciation of using the levers of direct control over the economy is perhaps one of the most serious challenges from the point of view of governmental officials.

During the last few years, Uzbekistan's economic growth has outpaced the world average despite internal and external shocks, and current reforms will build on that strong foundation.

4. From government – to civil society.

Over the administrative-command system period, institutions of civil society were practically crushed by the totalitarian regime. Important resources of social progress and human development such as energy and activity of population were non-existent.

Meanwhile, the experience of developed countries has clearly demonstrated that a society's modernization demands political and economic pluralism, a developed civil society, and strong institutions of democracy.

As a matter of fact, the transformation of political and economic systems in transitional countries has undermined the ability of governments to carry out important social programs and roll-out sustainable human development projects.

Obviously, a state cannot address social issues of all varieties without the support and involvement of society. The role of non-governmental organizations should rise. They must be viewed as full-fledged partners of government.

In present-day Uzbekistan, political engagement of the population and non-governmental organizations is increasing. Mass media is becoming more active and independent.

Top priority is given to the issues of culture and education.

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The main asset of Uzbekistan is its people – bearers of the traditions of an ancient civilization, a civilization of Creativity, Entrepreneurship, Trade and Openness. Our civilization relies on the simple presumption that trade is something that benefits all, but which in turn requires one simple thing – unrestricted flow of people, ideas, goods and services.

In the very blood of our nations there lies interest in other cultures, faiths, and languages, as well as respect for other people regardless of their ethnic or religious origin.

SHAPING SUSTAINABLE CENTRAL ASIA: BIOREGIONAL APPROACH

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Abstract: *Central Asia is historically united by many factors, including biogeography, the melting pot of the Silk Road legacy, the Soviet yoke and the continuing environmental and social disasters it caused, and the potential to act in unity to create a region forged by Sustainable Development to play a leading role in a changing world. There are significant opportunities but they depend on addressing significant challenges. And the way that these challenges are addressed will open or close various doors to the future.*

Keywords: Central Asia, bio-geography, environmental challenges, Aral Sea disaster, climate change.

Central Asia is historically united by many factors, including biogeography, the melting pot of the Silk Road legacy, the Soviet yoke and the continuing environmental and social disasters it caused, and the potential to act in unity to create a region forged by Sustainable Development to play a leading role in a changing world.

There are significant opportunities but they depend on addressing significant challenges. And the way that these challenges are addressed will open or close various doors to the future. One cannot create a sustainable future without addressing the legacy that you have inherited. Of preeminent concern is water. The region is united by its shared dependence on the Amudarya and Syrdarya, by the common disaster of the Aral Sea, spreading desertification, challenges to food security and issues of internal and cross-boundary contamination. To build the future that we want, we must address our common realities.

Thus, the author offers a clear framework for addressing the negative legacy and environmental challenges faced by the region that open doors to a sustainable future, with an emphasis on the Aral Region and water, food security and contamination and a focus on bioregionalism, strong sustainability and creating positive interdependencies. These are issues that cannot be addressed by any nation in the region alone. Resilient models of cooperation must be built that allow

for mutual action and result in mutual benefit. An additional key element is making innovative learning opportunities available to our young people. These elements are essential to a strong economy, healthy lives and regional security. The future of the region depends upon it.

A reframing is required a shift of focus. Imagine a typical map showing Central Asia. The boundaries of the five states are prominent. Now we refocus, the states blur, and the outline of the Aral Sea basin becomes dominant, from the headwaters of the two great rivers Amu and Syr to the final destination of the waters, from mountain to sea. This reframing serves to refocus on the common identity and future of the region and away from any divergence of national interest. The bioregion unites what the nation-state can easily sunder.

We are all aware of the current Bonn Climate Negotiations. The vanishing of the Aral Sea over half a century offers perhaps the best “dry run” or rehearsal for a mega scale climate disaster that we have seen to date. And everyone here knows that the results are beyond catastrophic. Illustrated is a system of accelerating change where a tipping point passes that prevents any hope of return. The result was the desiccation of the sea and the death of all connected living systems, a tragedy that is being replicated at this moment at numerous places around the globe. The Aral Disaster may not be reversible, but the message is clear for these other sites—turn back before it is too late.

Now we know beyond doubt that Global Climate Change is a human- caused phenomenon. But it is not the primary cause of the Aral Sea Disaster. That Disaster goes beyond human cause. It was a designed event, a desired outcome, a willed death, a premeditated murder. The perpetrator was the Soviet Union. The cause, a vision that dramatically contradicts the mural of nature in balance on the Registan.

Stalin is quoted as saying “Any drop of water flowing down the Syrdarya or Amudarya that reaches the Aral Sea is a wasted drop of water.” With a similar assessment, Soviet scientists and planners wrote the Aral off. They followed the edict of the Virgin Lands Initiative, “We cannot wait for favors from nature—our goal is to take them from it.” Under Khrushchev, Central Asia was deemed a Virgin Land, needing a purpose, a way to serve the nation. It was determined that the best service was to become the primary cotton producing region for the USSR. Central Asia’s semi-arid steppe was reshaped as a cotton belt, fed by irrigation and using labor from a new farmer transplanted to the region. The limited rainfall in the region was not seen as an impediment. Through modern alchemy, irrigation waters could be taken from the two mighty rivers and turned into white gold. In

effect, the Syr and Amu rivers would be diverted away from the Aral Sea to fill the water tables of Uzbekistan's agricultural heartland.

The Syrdarya had obviously shrunk dramatically in a relatively short period of time. The Amudarya and Syrdarya had been transferred from an endpoint in the Aral Sea to an end point dispersed across the upper water tables of the Uzbek heartland. As massive amounts of water on the order of 70% escaped from irrigation systems, the water filled up the ground bringing the water table to the surface, serving as a transport for salts and minerals previously caught up in the deeper soils abutting the bedrock. The snow-covered fields we had seen were actually covered by crystalized salts. Farmers had to literally wash the salts off the field in order to plant their crops, relocating the salt through the stream into the next field. Briny ponds and lakes had sprung up across a wide area where the water table spilled out onto the surface at a sufficient scale. Some birds from the Aral Sea had successfully relocated to these new bodies of water. Deserts appeared to be spreading and adjoining. A short dust storm illustrated how particulate matter was spread across the landscape and posed a health hazard.

In the ancient city of Khiva in Khorozem, where I found air quality to be poor and how far soil fertility had declined due to salinization. It became clear that continued farming of the kind practiced would kill the soils altogether if continued.

Now the Aralkum, the Aral desert, the "sands" of the unanchored landscape blow freely and far. Heavily constituted of salts and contaminated with pesticides, these blowing winds create toxic air pollution for humans and other life forms, contaminate additional farmlands and water bodies and the salts are implicated in intensifying the effects of global warming by speeding up the melting of the glaciers high up above the headwaters to the east and south. In our session, it was reported that salt has been found in women's breast milk. One suspects the pesticides are there as well.

And that was it. The Aral Sea was not in its original basin. Instead its waters had been diverted across the lands between the rivers and soaked into the water table or evaporated into the dry atmosphere. Waterlogging, salinization, pesticide runoff, blowing winds of spreading deserts, emergent brine ponds. The transformation of a massive region in little more than half a century illustrates the power and rapidity of climate change. The journey and its implications are discussed in depth in a volume I edited shortly afterwards [1].

But, even as it is an important dry run for how climate change occurs, the Aral disaster was not caused by global climate change. It illustrates a second cause

of climate change that is more regional and local. Together, the two forms have put the squeeze on nature, both pushing in coincident and mutually-reinforcing directions.

Changes to stratospheric gas balance, albedo and other factors have produced a global phenomenon that changes the conditions affecting every place on earth.

On the other side, the replication of local and regional practices carried out in parallel by people across the globe creates another front in climate change.

Neither force is natural. The first was under our control when we could have limited greenhouse gasses to less than 350 ppm. By modifying combustion of fossil fuels. The second even more clearly represents human will and even design, as we saw with the Aral disaster, and was initially firmly under our control. In both instances, we have now entered positive feedback loops, or gone past tipping points—points of no return.

There are four important take away points here.

1. The Aral Sea disaster is human caused and even deliberate.
2. The disaster is not confined to the formal sea bed but rather envelops the region, uniting the entire Bioregion.
3. The disaster is not just about the desiccation of the Aral Sea, but about a complex of factors including salinization, desertification, wind erosion and polluted air and water.
4. The Aral Disaster was not caused by Global Climate Change, per se. Rather it is the result of human misbehavior on a massive scale. It is a regional climate disaster that is being replicated worldwide.
5. Thus, we can see Climate Change as a phenomenon that is being driven simultaneously from the atmospheric and biogeochemical realm of earth dynamics and by behavior at the regional human scale. Both global and regional climate pressures are of human origin. In this sense, Climate Change is a top down and a grassroots phenomenon. The effects of the two dynamics are interactive and probably multiplicative. Said another way, the Aral Sea was in no way a natural phenomenon or an “Act of God.” Rather it was caused by a human mind-set that saw nature as malleable to human whim, the Aral Sea and its fish as expendable to the desire for cotton. It is not clear that the mind-set has really changed yet, even of the landscape has.

WHAT TO DO NOW

The first response to the Aral Sea disaster is to recognize the need for a new logic. For example, old logic suggested that to fix the problem, we needed a source of water that might refill the empty seabed. Extensive discussion and even planning work surrounded capturing Russian rivers that flow north to the Arctic Sea and diverting them instead to the Aral Basin. Of course, this would wreak havoc throughout the areas robbed of these diverted waters and on the Arctic Region which has emerged as one of the globe's most stressed regions because of Global Climate Change.

Alternatively, I continually hear about the virtues of diverting the Volga River to fix the Aral. This action would doom the already troubled Caspian Sea, leading to a disaster of much larger scale than the Aral Disaster.

Solving one problem by causing even greater adverse consequences can hardly be considered a real solution. Frankly, the adverse impacts and entropy caused by both ideas would exceed the benefits. Even were the Aral saved, an outcome that would not be guaranteed, much worse destruction would occur.

Of course, giving up either of these water sources might have been possible under the banner of the Soviet Union, but to expect Russia to do so is naive.

However, abandoning such "solutions" requires an admission that some seem unwilling to make. There is no feasible way to bring back the lost Aral Sea. Forget it. It is important not to view the Aral disaster as a concluded historical event but as a chronic continuing event. Disasters never end, they just move on to their next phase. Thus, the Aral disaster is a continuing crisis.

Thus, allowing the continuation of the blowing toxic winds coming off the Aralkum and the spreading of this dead landscape with its erratic and uninhabitable climate conditions is intolerable. Neither is a continuation of the irrigation/waterlogging/salinization/pesticide dynamic that has diminished soil fertility and contaminated drinking water across the nation. So doing nothing is also not an option. Action is required.

Abandoning yesterday's logic, what is the new logic needed to guide effective response? I have already suggested that the region needs to be understood and thought of as a "bioregion" rather than as compilation of the national interests of five independent states (six if Afghanistan is also considered). As new initiatives are planned, such as the upcoming convent for the Syrdarya and Amudarya, there is an opportunity to enact this shift of frame.

The bioregion is defined by the two rivers that contribute the bulk of the water to Central Asia as they flow from their headwaters to their endpoint, once the Aral Sea. In the view of Michael (Mickey) Glantz, one of the most astute long term students of the region, the conception of “From the Mountain to the Sea” is applicable here (as everywhere) as an organizing concept for action needed to integrate and protect bioregions and maintain their health. I co-ran a workshop on bioregionalism with Mickey at Rio+20 in 2012, a conference where some Central Asia states also brought forth elements for bioregional action (a glacier keeper concept and a green economy plan).

The major approach to addressing the Aral disaster, write large, is the application of a field called permaculture, which essentially uses nature and natural principles to heal nature. The goal is to re-establish healthy nature where it is most likely to succeed. I like the idea of an ecosystem by ecosystem approach to the disaster because, rather than throwing a large-scale solution at a large-scale problem, a mismatching of scale is more appropriate. In other words, I believe the Aral disaster needs to be addressed at a small to intermediate scale but simultaneously in many places. Small scale approaches can afford to fail, while we learn from those failures. And when success occurs, we can build on what works. And when enough small-scale ecosystems are established, these patches of nature can be infilled to create large living systems. And, it may be that nature is already experimenting in the Aralkum, with some plants able to establish themselves successfully in the harsh conditions. By looking for such natural experiments and then building upon them, nature becomes a lead partner in the process of restoration.

These are step, that, with capacity building, can be undertaken by local populations that have suffered from a dearth of work and meaning since the Aral Sea disappeared. By empowering people and giving them the task of clean-up, and compensating fairly, a new cottage industry is created. Elsewhere in the U.S., contaminated sites have opened up opportunities for workers to do clean-up activities. The same can happen here.

The goal here is to restore living systems in place of dead desert, stabilizing soils and lessening wind erosion, with its attendant pollution. Reduction of salt in emergent lakes, phytoremediation of pesticide residues and salts from soils, and other effects can be employed to bring the desert back to life. The Aral Sea is not restored, but living systems, perhaps eventually able to foster clean water supplies and attenuate micro climates, will be created. This system can be used beyond the

Aral Sea bed per se, addressing salinization and desertification throughout the region.

Already experiments done under the United Nations have seen tree planting in the Aral Region done by local residents to act as windbreaks. Steps are also being taken by the Uzbek Government in conjunction with the UN to introduce a better diversity of food crops requiring less water and pesticide application than demanded by a cotton monocrop. Similarly, efforts have been introduced to use of drip irrigation and other water saving techniques that can help reverse the transfer of river water into the water table, stopping new salinization events. As an effort is made to clean up existing legacy of problems, it is necessary not to create new problems in doing so. These efforts complement the suggestions made here. Only, it is time to unleash activities at a scale commensurate with the problem and to assure that they are staffed and funded to succeed.

As such activities occur in the Aral and agricultural regions, parallel efforts are needed upstream to protect glaciers and forests and in Turkmenistan to decrease evaporation from large-scale surface storage of water.

Years ago, the Club of Rome sought to understand why its path breaking study called Limits to Growth had met with such resistance Limits was arguably the first major research effort pointing toward the need to fashion a sustainable future from among alternatives. In a subsequent study, the Club of Rome reasoned that the kind of learning engaged in by society limits or opens up its potential for meeting changed conditions effectively. While most education, they found, simply maintains the culture as is, what they termed “Innovative learning” instead prepared people to anticipate change and participate in directing it. What is required to meet challenges such as the Aral Sea disaster is a generation of generalists well prepared to think innovatively. The deep understanding of Central Asia as a bioregion is a foundational step.

There is an additional need to consider how the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals will be achieved in a region where ecological footprints are growing and bio-capacity diminishing. How can food systems be made secure in a water impaired region? How can dependence on fossil fuels be avoided by growing the renewable energy sector and curtailing dependence on gasoline and natural gas? How can housing be developed so as to protect and maintain community? And the bazaars protected to maintain local food production and economies? How can industrial pollution be curtailed in order to protect human and ecosystem health?

In this regard, I recommend that the Central Asian nations jointly undertake a special Environmental Impact Assessment designed to examine the limits and abilities of key living systems and the potential for sustainable growth and change. This sustainability assessment would examine the threat to habitability within the region and the potential for feasible mitigations. Done properly, it would further serve as a Sustainability Plan offering a decision-making blueprint for future innovative management of the entire system.

Living nature must be restored and sustained using renewable sources of powers if the bioregion that defines Central Asia is to be resuscitated. This end is within your collective grasp.

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POLITICAL LONGEVITY: INDISPENSABILITY OR LACK OF ALTERNATIVE?

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Abstract: *The issue of leadership in various states and different political systems remains the subject of much academic research. Questions about where people with special leadership qualities come from, how they are integrated into the elite, how they participate in the formation of regimes, and how regimes in turn help shape a particular type of leadership, are not always easy to answer.*

Of special interest is the phenomenon of political longevity in formally democratic systems. The reasons for it may be linked to certain public demands and/or to the established dominance of a single party and ideology as well as a shortage of experienced and authoritative politicians representing a political alternative. This paper attempts to examine this issue in relation to Israel, where the longest-serving political Prime Ministers have been the founder of the state David Ben-Gurion^[1], and Benjamin Netanyahu.^[2]

WHERE THE LEADERS COME FROM

The reasons for the two politicians' coming into politics, into the traditionally narrow and closed circle of the Israeli political elite, were different; their careers were also shaped by different factors. Each of them, within the framework of the existing political system in Israel, contributed to the creation of their own regime, relatively authoritarian under the first Prime Minister and more technocratic under Netanyahu. A Russian political scientist A.P. Tsygankov rightly points out, 'a regime is undoubtedly a set of state structures that allow the ruling class to exercise its powers. In some cases, there may be an institution of multipartism and well-developed civil society structures, while in others political decisions are made and implemented by the regime using fundamentally different structures and mechanisms, without any alignment with the public interest. ...

⁴ A View from the Outside: Russian Experts About Modern Israel (Collective Monograph) Published by Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences – IVRAN 2021

regime, as compared to the system, has its own temporal characteristics. ... the same political system can function in different regimes. ®

This conclusion is crucial for understanding how Israel's political system was built up under inherently different regimes, which, in accordance with the demands of the time and the availability of resources, proposed their own mechanisms for addressing the most important problems for society, primarily security issues. Meanwhile, despite the inherent multiparty system, separation of powers, strong civil society and other democratic characteristics of the Israeli political system, decision-making is carried out by a narrow circle of people, various kinds of shadow and 'kitchen' cabinets. Moreover, the Prime Minister may hold several posts simultaneously, among which the post of defense minister remains the most influential.

The credibility of a leader is defined by his ability to find answers to society's most pressing questions, to be convincing, to ensure that no one else can do the job better. Ben-Gurion did not just share the public's particular security concerns, he also was able to offer military and security solutions. Netanyahu, who came to power when the might of the Israeli army could no longer be questioned, has also emphasized security in his political program, turning the slogan of the center-left Avoda party 'territories for peace' into 'peace for security'. He has masterfully exploited public frustration over attempts to resolve the Palestinian problem and concerns about new threats, which has enabled him to remain as Prime Minister longer than his great predecessor.

Ben Gurion's emergence as a politician is closely linked to the era of the search for national identity and the building of a state that did not exist in the modern era. Historical reminiscences about the ancient kingdoms of Judea and Israel could only conventionally be seen as legitimizing Jewish claims to Palestine. The members of the European Jewish communities had no continuous routine history of life in Palestine, no close connection with this ancient land, no names of heroes left in living popular memory that previous generations could still remember, no common language in which they could speak and write. All this was in fact created under the influence of the Zionist doctrine, born out of broader European nationalism.

The creation of a Jewish state in Palestine required passionately committed people, ready to make sacrifices and suffer for the sake of statehood. Such people also needed leaders with qualities that were far from ordinary, since the goals required complete dedication.

Thus, the chairman of the World Zionist Organization (WZO), Chaim Weizmann, carried out the political task using his own authority and the organization behind him as the resource. He negotiated with the British government for the establishment of a Jewish 'national home' in Palestine, which meant getting the rights to buy land and ensuring an influx of immigrants. His efforts contributed to the emergence of the Balfour Declaration in November 1917.^[4]

As for Ben Gurion, he carried out the practical and organizational tasks of establishing and strengthening the dominant political party, forming quasi-state structures and illegal (Haganah) or semi-legal (Palmach) armed formations. Unlike Weizmann, who was estranged from life in Palestine, Ben Gurion controlled the main political and power resources of the Jewish community (Yishuv), which enabled him to count on its support and make decisions of both tactical and strategic nature.

The formation of the future Israeli elite followed a scenario in which the most active representatives of political parties, trade unions, volunteer organizations and military groups were promoted to its ranks. The elites do not always emerge from the state apparatus or large corporations. In a weak state or in the state in the making, or in revolutionary turmoil, a new elite is recruited primarily from 'the armed forces, trade unions, the media, NGOs, any social movement and so on. However, according to the Brazilian researcher Matias Lopez elite theory acknowledges that elites may come from anywhere, as long as they find the necessary tools to exercise power...However, elite theory limits elites to a necessary minority. Therefore, provided with the necessary tools, *anyone* but not *everyone* could eventually become a member of the elite'.^[5]

In other words, personal qualities are the main driving force. It is not the routine reshuffling of political figures or the process of succession, but persistence and charisma that pave the way to the top for the strongest and most ambitious. Ben Gurion certainly possessed charismatic traits - the ability to lead people, to make them believe in themselves. This type of legitimacy was described by Max Weber. To sum it up, according to him, the charismatic fold is an extraordinary personal gift (Gnadengabe) or charisma, the total personal devotion as well as personal trust evoked by the leader in his followers. A man of this type is regarded as inwardly 'called upon' to lead people; the latter obey him because they believe in him.^[6]

Perhaps only David Ben-Gurion belonged to the ranks of charismatic politicians in Israel, because of his own leadership qualities and because society

needed the Leader and, finally, because he fairly quickly lost his political rivals, who progressed with him from young idealists to bureaucrats and apparatchiks. Some of them died, some drifted away, some were politically marginalized. Thus, Ben Gurion found himself alone at the top of the state pyramid he had created. The last of the old guard with whom Ben Gurion forged the Israeli state was the Speaker of the Knesset, Yosef Spinzak. In 1952, after the death of the first president of Israel, Chaim Weizmann, Spinzak tried to run for president. Ben Gurion rejected his candidacy^[7] - he was not so much afraid of political rivals as he was trying to prevent the rise of those who had known him in his youth and for whom he was not an unquestionable authority.

Benjamin Netanyahu was not overly charismatic, but had a strong personality which ensured his political career. Netanyahu used to point out that he did not belong to traditional politics. Most of his political life was spent outside the Likud party. In that sense, he was not a traditional apparatchik. Nor was he from the military system. Party activists tend to divide society into Left and Right, friends and foes. Netanyahu insisted in his interviews that this was not the case with him.^[8]

POLITICAL ACTIVISM AND POLITICAL SUCCESSION

The process of Ben Gurion's becoming a political leader was taking place over decades. The political struggle in which he was engaged required him to maneuver and at the same time stick to his principles. His active work in the most influential Zionist parties and organizations eventually brought him to the political top of the future Israeli establishment.

In his long political life, Ben-Gurion has never sought universal recognition. He always took positions that seemed right to him, and which were sometimes at odds with the mainstream. During the First World

War he had already taken a special position concerning service in the British army which became a source of controversy in the Yishuv. Not all Palestinian Jews were sympathetic to military cooperation with Britain, as they did not want to alienate the Turkish authorities on whom their life in Palestine depended. Russia was fighting alongside Britain and France during the war, and under these circumstances the Ottoman authorities deported Russian subjects from Palestine. One solution to avoid this was for the Palestinian Jews to adopt Turkish citizenship, however, this automatically meant that they were conscripted into the Turkish army. Other choice would have put the whole Zionist project at risk, since deportation would have led to a drastic reduction in the small Jewish

population. Under the circumstances, some Zionist activists, including the young Ben Gurion, took the initiative to become Turkish citizens and serve in the Turkish army.^[9] Later, convinced that Turkey was losing the war, Ben Gurion joined the Jewish Legion established within the British army.

A decisive role in the World Zionist movement of the first half of the twentieth century and in the development of Palestine was played by the socialist movement. At the end of the 19th century, the Poalei Zion Party (Workers of Zion) was established in Russia, uniting Marxists and socialists. The party proclaimed as its goal class struggle and common ownership of the means of production. The general ideological platform was the concept that the Jewish proletariat, while sharing the fate of the world proletariat, nevertheless faced specific problems, and that these could only be solved by concentrating the Jewish working class in Eretz Yisrael. Ben Gurion rose to the top, taking the classic path of a functionary: first working for a political party (Poalei Zion), then working in the secretariat of the Histadrut trade union as well as editing a trade union newspaper. In 1930 he became a head of the new socialist Mapai party, which for many years dominated the political system in Yishuv and later Israel.

In 1929 the Jewish Agency was established to co-operate with the British administration in Palestine in matters relating to the creation of a 'national home'. D. Ben-Gurion was also head of the EA's executive committee from 1935 to 1948.

But Ben-Gurion would not have become a recognized leader had he been content to do only bureaucratic work. Unlike many, he possessed strategic vision and the ability to choose the right course of action. In May 1942, in New York, he took an active part in developing the 'Biltmore Program'. It was seen by Ben Gurion and his supporters as a crucial step towards the reorientation of the Zionist movement from Britain to the United States. In its final clause, the Biltmore Program 'declares that the new world order that will follow victory cannot be established on foundations of peace, justice and equality unless the problem of Jewish homelessness is finally solved. The conference urges that the gates of Palestine be opened; that the Jewish Agency be vested with control of immigration into Palestine and with the necessary authority for upbuilding the country, including the development of its unoccupied and uncultivated lands; and that Palestine be established as a Jewish Commonwealth integrated in the structure of the new democratic world. Then and only then will the age old wrong to the Jewish people be righted'.¹¹⁰¹

Unlike activists in the Zionist movement, Chaim Weizmann believed that the possibilities for cooperation with Britain were far from exhausted. He was highly critical of the 'Biltmore program'

In fact, the 'program' charted a radically new course chosen by Ben Gurion and his associates, whose success depended on Ben Gurion's willingness to take responsibility for its implementation. In the words of Ben Gurion's biographer, Michael Bar-Zohar, he started to chart a new path - the path of militant Zionism, away from England, a turn toward America, a mobilization of American Jewry, a demand for the immediate establishment of a state, a call for a powerful Aliyah The Ben-Gurion line, in spite of its unquestionable radicalism, proved to be more viable and more in line with the immediate political objectives.¹¹¹

Ben Gurion also secured his place in Israeli history because he was associated with some of the most momentous decisions, which lent a special symbolism to his long service to his country. For example, he insisted on the immediate proclamation of the State of Israel and announced the Declaration of Independence on 14 May 1948.^[12]

Netanyahu's political fate was only partially subject to the logic of elite recruitment from party and social structures. Unlike the founding fathers, the unknown migrants from the outskirts of the Russian Empire who later became the Israeli elite, he belonged to it by birth, as a member of the so-called generation of princes. His father, Benzion Netanyahu, was not only a famous historian, but also a revisionist activist. He even worked as the personal secretary for the founder of the movement, Ze'ev Jabotinsky. Thus, Benjamin Netanyahu could claim attention from the right-wing Likud bloc, the successor of revisionist ideas.

However, before Netanyahu took up party work and was elected to the Knesset, he received prestigious education in the US and, most importantly, had got political experience. The then Israeli Ambassador to the US, Moshe Arens, liked the young, well-educated, and ambitious Benjamin. In 1982, he appointed him deputy, and in 1984 Netanyahu became Israel's ambassador to the UN. In 1988 Netanyahu became a member of the Knesset on the Likud list. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir appointed him deputy foreign minister. Netanyahu eventually began a battle for leadership in the Likud, and he managed to overtake another 'prince; Benny Begin, the Herut right-wing party founder Men- achem Begin's son. Perhaps the conservative party apparatus initially underestimated Netanyahu's determination to win without fail. In fact, for the elderly Likud bureaucrats, he was a godsend. Young, charming, with a brilliant English, he attracted the attention of the voters, who were getting tired of the 'old guard'. In

1992 Netanyahu became head of the Likud. In the direct election for the post of Prime Minister in 1996 he won a decisive battle with Socialist Shimon Peres.^[13] The margin was slim, but Netanyahu became Prime Minister for the first time, the post he was to contest many times - in 2009, 2015, 2019, 2020 and 2021.

AUTHORITARIANISM AND AMBITION

One important feature of Ben Gurion's political style was his own brand of authoritarianism. 'The typically observed consequences of authoritarianism result from an *interaction* between authoritarian predispositions and threat.'^[14] There is no doubt that Ben Gurion possessed the traits of an authoritarian leader who did not tolerate objections and pushed for his own approach to most political problems. The testimony of Ben-Gurion's loyal disciple, Shimon Peres, who became President of Israel at the end of his career, is quite saying in this regard. 'I once asked him (Ben-Gurion), 'When did you feel that you were a leader?' He answered me: 'when I looked around me and saw that I had no one to ask.'^[15] Was the Old Man (as Ben Gurion was called) sincere when he uttered this phrase, or was he already thinking about his place in history? At any rate, this phrase, to a great degree, epitomizes the Israeli first Prime Minister.

Another reason for Ben Gurion's authoritarian style was his group affiliation. Before the creation of Israel Ben Gurion belonged to a rather narrow circle of like-minded Zionist socialists, who worked under the difficult conditions of the British Mandate. After independence, the Prime Minister became increasingly oriented towards the Israeli military establishment, repeatedly holding the post of Minister of Defense in addition to that of Prime Minister, and surrounding himself with army officers and bureaucrats from the Ministry. He trusted and promoted members of this group, often at the expense of people with no military experience. Both groups constituted fairly closed corporations with their own rules. Group identity may, depending on the hierarchy built within it, become a source of authoritarianism.

One can agree with the New Zealand researcher John Duckitt, a scholar of authoritarianism, that 'measures of patriotism and nationalism, indexing group identification at the level of the society or nation, have invariably shown very powerful correlations with traditional measures of authoritarianism... Moreover, if authoritarianism is viewed as reflecting the intensity of individuals' group identification and their consequent commitment to group cohesiveness, then a formal definition of authoritarianism follows quite readily. On this basis,

authoritarianism is simply the individual or group's conception of the relationship which should exist, that is, the appropriate or normative relationship, between the group and its individual members'... One possible model would be 'the belief that the purely personal needs, inclinations, and values of group members should be subordinated as completely as possible to the cohesion of the group and its requirements.'^[16]

This state of affairs, characteristic of both mafia groups and cohesive revolutionary units, tend to endow the leader with authoritarian traits. Interestingly, Ben Gurion was attributed the following statement: 'I don't know what the people want, but I think I know what is good for them.'^[17]

In comparison, Netanyahu can hardly be called an authoritarian ruler, but he has always shown himself as a politician with a huge ego. He has been known to be disinclined to consult even his advisers, to assume that his own assessments of the situation are almost always correct, and to push through his own decisions. Perhaps these traits, or possibly a personal experience, led the Israeli journalist Yoel Markus to describe Netanyahu as 'charismatic, driven, from an extremely ambitious family, egocentric, a lone wolf, the kind of person you might say has no God.'^[18]

Ambition and determination are considered the main features of Netanyahu's character. Once Netanyahu experienced a great family tragedy. His elder brother Jonathan was the only Israeli commando who died in 1976 during the hostage rescue in Entebbe.^[19] Jonathan Netanyahu became a national hero in Israel, and Benjamin, according to a common belief, tried all his life to be worthy of his memory. He found his own way of doing it.

Perhaps this, too, has determined his political trajectory. He always tried to be the best, he set himself hard goals, achieved them, was not satisfied with partial success and never gave up. 'Netanyahu sees the game of politics as governed by the 'laws of the jungle,' where the strong survive and the weak fall by the wayside. To him, achievement of the goal justifies any political means... In most cases, he does not act out of aggression, malice, or cruelty. His dominance and manipulation stem from cold, rational calculation, directed solely at achieving goals at any cost'.^[20]

Reaching his goals at any cost did not always translate into public support for Netanyahu. At times he realized that he had overreached himself. He reached a difficult point in November 1995, when a far-right radical assassinated Prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, who had been trying to resolve the Palestinian problem

and had sanctioned direct negotiations with the PLO. These talks and their subsequent results, which became known as the 'Oslo process, led to a revival of far-right activists and parties. For them even a partial withdrawal from the West Bank was unacceptable. The territorial issue was actively exploited by the Likud, which strongly criticized Rabin and whipped up a lot of hysteria about the West Bank. In describing the role of the Israeli right in the events leading up to the assassination, Israeli researcher Itamar Rabinowitz wrote that Netanyahu attended all major rallies organized by the right, including those in which Rabin was portrayed as wearing a Nazi uniform. On 5 October 1994, for example, he spoke at a rally organized by the Likud against the signing of an agreement with the Palestinians. The rally quickly turned into pandemonium and the crowd began shouting 'Death to Rabin!' . The main motive for criticism against Netanyahu was that he failed to condemn the electrified crowd for unacceptable and dirty tricks and thus de facto justified them.^[21]

Rabin's murder prompted Netanyahu to lower the degree of confrontation sharply and join the Likud in supporting Shimon Peres PM candidacy as Peres had been working closely with Rabin. In fact he did not have long to wait for his own premiership. In 1996 he defeated Peres in a direct election as Prime Minister.^[22]

Netanyahu skillfully exploited not only his oratory skills and youthfulness, but also the real fears of the electorate, faced with the intensification of the terrorist attacks from Hamas and Islamic Jihad that came before the elections. In reality, the struggle for security has always been at the top of his political agenda, and the terrorist attacks gave added logic to his fight against the Oslo process.

THREAT RESPONSE

Both Ben Gurion and Netanyahu consistently emphasized the issue of security and tried to reduce the threats to the state primarily and almost exclusively by force. In fact, the willingness of the leader to escalate in response to the threat, may also be seen as dictated by authoritarian behavior. The willingness to promptly respond to any security threat provided public support for both PMs thus allowing them to resort to rather harsh methods and to entrust the decision-making process to a narrow circle of confidants. At the same time, the threats under Ben Gurion and under Netanyahu were different, their respective perceptions of these threats were also different, and they had different resources at hand for deterrence.

Ben-Gurion tended to exaggerate the danger of new wars. He cited the relative weakness of the state and the army during his rule, the small population, the absence of reliable allies, and Israel's non-involvement in military-political alliances. It is no coincidence that the Israeli historian Nir Kedar calls David Ben-Gurion a 'security-minded leader'. According to him, this image 'is also reflected in his conduct during his fifteen year tenure as premier and defense minister: his custom of wearing a khaki uniform; his tendency to glorify the IDF as one of the greatest achievements of the Zionist project; his favorable bias towards former army commanders and defense ministry people ('Ben-Gurion's boys') whom he surrounded himself with and promoted at the expense of other equally talented young men who lacked a military background; and, finally, the all pervasive sense of national emergency that he and his close associates inculcated in the country'.^[23]

Ben-Gurion did everything in his power to defy international pressure and the divisions within the Israeli elite in order to develop Israel's nuclear potential, which has never been openly acknowledged by the Israeli leadership. The war with the Arabs on three fronts at once remained a constant nightmare scenario for him. It is this perception of reality that determined his political downfall.

On the eve of the 1967 Six-Day War, Ben-Gurion showed a lack of realistic assessment of the situation - retired from the government, without any reliable information and cut off from the decision-making process, he had no idea of the dramatic changes that had taken place in the Israeli army and of its newly acquired capabilities. Even less was he able to evaluate the military potential of the Arab states, since the intelligence services were reluctant to share vital information with him. The old statesman was convinced that the war would last for months and would require many casualties, and so he resisted the outbreak of it in every possible way. While at the beginning of the war Ben Gurion was still perceived by many as a most prominent leader of the country, a kind of savior, to whom the wider public would turn in danger, several days later he was a retired politician, an old man, whose time had passed; the fierce battle for Israel was fought by others - they had the laurels of victory.^[24]

When Netanyahu was in power the threat of Israel's destruction (which was a nightmare for society in the early years of independence) had long been removed from the agenda. Peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan; the development of informal ties with some Gulf countries and a process of 'normalization' started in 2020; the increasing political marginalization of the Palestinian problem have all contributed to this.

In the view of many Israelis, the Palestinian problem has been gradually becoming an Israeli domestic issue. In reality, this has an increasingly destructive effect on Israeli society, unleashing the most radical, extremist, nationalist forces, which are prepared to go to extremes. For this expanding electorate, Netanyahu was for a long time a most sought-after politician.

Finally, Israel's special relations with the US, which are very different from the US-Israeli relations under Ben Gurion, also play a role in strengthening the premier's position. While the first prime minister was never even invited to the US for an official visit, Netanyahu could count on Washington fulfilling all its obligations regardless of the tensions on certain issues. Since the second half of the 1980s US-Israeli relations have been institutionalized in the framework of strategic cooperation. Trump's rise to President opened a whole new page in the relations between the two countries. The unilateral decisions to recognize the Syrian Golan Heights as part of Israel and Jerusalem as Israel's capital, the pro-Israel plan to resolve the Palestinian problem (the 'Deal of the Century') were a clear demonstration of his political and personal preferences.

The notion of an existential threat was revived, however, when Iran was named Israel's main enemy. Iranian leaders did indeed at times make harsh and irresponsible remarks about Israel. Reaching an agreement on the nuclear issue was hoped to appease Israel, but it did not. On December 12, 2017 Israel and the US signed 'a far-reaching joint memorandum of understanding providing for full cooperation to deal with Iran's nuclear drive, its missile programs and its other threatening activities'.^[25] The document crowned intensive talks between representatives of the major Israeli and American intelligence and defense chiefs.

The Israeli leadership welcomed the US withdrawal from the nuclear deal with Iran in 2018. In its view, even the remote prospect of Iran possessing nuclear weapons would destroy Israel's nuclear monopoly, and Israeli political and military leaders were prepared to go to extreme lengths to prevent this.

The Netanyahu government highlighted the Iranian threat since Iranian forces appeared in Syria. Israel accuses Iran of strengthening ties with Lebanon's Hezbollah in an attempt to build a 'corridor' from Iraq through Syria to Lebanon, of intending to establish a permanent foothold in Syria. Israel's response has been constant shelling and bombing of Iranian targets in Syria.

The importance of security threat in political mobilization was demonstrated in the April 2019 Knesset elections. The ability to counter threats has become a crucial element not only of the Likud agenda, but also of its

opponents, the Kahol-Lavan (Blue and White) bloc, created by former Israeli Chief of General Staff Benny Gantz and bringing together a number of retired senior military officials. The emphasis on security undoubtedly won votes for the new bloc, which unexpectedly managed to garner as many votes as Likud. In the end Likud and Kahol-Lavan won almost equal numbers of seats in the Knesset, although Netanyahu had the advantage in coalition building.

However, Netanyahu was not able to create it, because of the intransigent position of Avigdor Lieberman, the leader of Yisrael Beiteinu party. Netanyahu believed that he could get Lieberman to compromise. 'Netanyahu was almost certain of this,' a senior politician was quoted, suggesting that the Prime Minister may not have taken the Israel leader seriously. Perhaps he thought that, as usual, everything would 'blow over in the 90th minute'^[26]. Since this did not happen, and no coalition was formed, the President had to delegate the formation of a coalition to another candidate. This displeased Netanyahu the most, and he initiated the dissolution of the Knesset. New elections were held in September 2019.

During the election campaign, Netanyahu tried to make the most of his foreign policy credentials to raise his domestic profile. It is hardly a coincidence that Donald Trump's 'Deal of the Century' was announced just before the election in order to boost the Israeli prime minister's popularity by emphasizing the special relationship between him and the American president.

Relations with Russia remain no less important to Netanyahu. He attempted to convert them into a strengthening of his political position on the eve of the election. The release of Naama Issahar and her return to Israel on the Prime Minister's private jet were to emphasize the success of Netanyahu's skillful negotiations.

Nevertheless, in October-November 2019, neither Benjamin Netanyahu nor Benny Gantz were able to form a government coalition - both lacked votes to win a parliamentary majority. Blue and White overcame the Likud by a single seat. Nonetheless, the Likud received the mandate from the President but again failed to form a government. Gantz also failed. The President passed the mandate to the Knesset members for 21 days. After no other candidate was offered, the Knesset was dissolved.

In March 2020, the third election was held. This time, Likud gained more seats than Blue and White. Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic in Israel worsened, which precipitated negotiations for a national emergency government. In the end, Benny Gantz decided on an emergency government in alliance with

incumbent Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the right-wing parties that traditionally support him. Netanyahu could stay in power for 18 months, until the autumn of 2021. Benny Gantz would have then been entitled to take over. In fact, this arrangement was never in the cards.

The Prime Minister had no plans of passing his position to Gantz. 'In retrospect, it became clear Netanyahu had one significant tactical maneuver up his sleeve. Under Israeli law, a national budget must be passed by a specific date, and if no budget passes by that predetermined date, the Parliament is automatically dissolved... the reason Netanyahu refused to pass a budget was to give himself the maximum flexibility regarding when new elections would be held — in such a way that would deprive Gantz from serving as Prime Minister in the interim'.^[27] Following a failed budgetary vote in December 2020, the government coalition collapsed yet again.

The results of the March 2021 parliamentary elections ended Benjamin Netanyahu's record-breaking term as Prime minister when the Knesset voted to approve the new government formed by Yamina leader Naftali Bennett and Yesh Atid chairman Yair Lapid^[28].

The political crisis that erupted was indicative of Netanyahu's main trait - a desire to win at all costs, to find a way out of a seemingly hopeless situation. His defeat was primarily a personal one. All sorts of political achievements that Netanyahu could put on the table did not affect the eagerness of the public and the elites to get rid of him. He was no longer trusted or respected even by his former confidants. According to a Russian scholar Lyudmila Samarskaya, 'being involved in several criminal cases (on corruption, abuse of public trust and fraud), he sought to remain in power even though his removal from the post of Prime Minister became almost the main election promise of many old and new Israeli parties'^[29]. In other words, Netanyahu's desire to keep power by plunging the country into a series of elections just to save himself from the Israeli Themis have caused growing public dissatisfaction.

Political longevity is not an exclusive feature of Israel's political system. It can be found in both authoritarian and democratic regimes. However, if in the first group longevity is provided by the political system, which does not provide for turnover and only imitates elections, then in formally democratic systems it has to be earned. For the same leader to be able to prolong his stay in power through elections, he or she needs public trust and support. This is often won when an

'emergency' situation arises, a real or exaggerated threat, which gives carte blanche to the candidate for the highest office. It makes such candidate seem to have no alternative, empowers him and encourages (apart from personal qualities) authoritarian tendencies. The entry into the elite, the presence of a narrow and reliable circle of like-minded people, personal background and charisma also play a role. In the Israeli case, the growth of ethno-nationalism, the increasing role of right-wing parties and religious institutions, internal conflicts and external challenges determined the type of leader that was in demand.

At the same time, a long stay in power poses serious challenges even for the most popular politicians. Such leader is gradually losing touch with reality: Ben Gurion was sure that he knew what the people needed, but found himself in the end being far behind the dynamically developing social and military-political processes. The uncontested politician is becoming boring to the public. The younger representatives of the elite are also getting tired and irritated of him seeing no future for themselves under his no-ending rule. As a result, no merit can be a guarantee of lasting popularity and loyalty. People want to see new faces even if these long-awaited personalities may turn out in many respects inferior to their mighty predecessors.

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CENTRAL ASIA IN SEARCH OF INTEGRATION

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ANNOTATION: *The factors that led to the development of a new strategy, significant changes in regional policy, the priorities of the strategy, and the likelihood of their execution in the nations of the region will all be examined. There will be research done on the region's common problems and how the EU experience could be used as a guide. It addresses the requirement for EU expertise in promoting regional integration while considering the various developmental stages of the region's countries. The outcomes of the EU's neighborhood policy and the shift in foreign policy from normative power to principled pragmatism are particularly mattering. This transition was sparked by the emphasis on how close neighbors affect the security, immigration, terrorism, and economic health of Europe while also offering a practical plan for addressing more pressing issues of regional and global security.*

KEYWORDS: *Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia, Model of Development, Capacity Building, Regional Connectivity, Economic Resilience, Geopolitics, International Cooperation, Regional Integration, Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent States.*

Introduction

The Central Asian states, as well as the broader post-Soviet region, were charged from the start with addressing some of the most difficult problems that affected almost every part of their daily lives. Naturally, the leaders of the nations that made up the former Soviet Union attempted to draw on existing world experience when performing this job within the framework of integration goals.

One way or another, the hard situation in those years pushed the post-Soviet states to create various forms of integration. If only for this reason, it is too early to make definitively negative assessments of the prospects of this process. Definitely, we can only say that in the way of its implementation according to the European model, there are so far insurmountable objective and subjective obstacles.

In the post-Soviet space, processes of different significance and direction were taking place, negatively affecting the integration of the Commonwealth

states. The Commonwealth states had to overcome the severe consequences of the political collapse of a single state and the all-Union national economic complex, the rupture of established production, technological and economic ties between enterprises, the destruction of a single financial and monetary system, etc. The process of establishing state institutions of power and management was complex, reforming economic and social relations.

Market reforms in the Commonwealth states, considering their national specifics and orientation, further strengthened the negative results of the collapse of a single state and a common economic space, since their target was fundamental changes in the socio-political system and the system of economic relations [5].

With the general focus of reforms on the creation of a socially oriented market economy, the change of economic relations in the post-Soviet states is carried out according to various scenarios based on different approaches to the choice of priorities, stages and timing of their implementation, the mechanisms and tools necessary for this. This circumstance objectively reflects the differences in the socio-economic situation of states, the correlation of socio-political forces, national characteristics and traditions, the expectations of the population and the degree of its readiness for reforms.

Institutional transformations in the states of the Commonwealth are limited mainly to the tasks of power and strengthening of existing political regimes, bringing the economy out of the crisis into a phase of stabilization and recovery, and reducing social tension in society. Market transitions are carried out to the extent that the leaders of states and part of the emerging national elite understand the potential dangers of conservation of the old or new, but deformed, flawed political and socio-economic relations, and at the same time are limited by the fact that these reforms seriously affect the interests of existing and emerging new elite groups, and are also fraught with tendencies to destabilize society.

Unsettled interstate and interethnic, or even military conflicts between Russia and Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Armenia (Nagorno-Karabakh), in Georgia (Abkhazia, partly Adzharia), Moldova (Transnistria), Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan⁶ do not contribute to the integration processes in the post-Soviet space. In its

⁵ Shumsky N. Prospects for Post-Soviet Integration and the Commonwealth of Independent States. - Society and economy. 2015, No. 11-12, p.274.

⁶ See Sébastien Peyrouse, Jos Boonstra and Marlène Laruelle, "Security and development approaches to Central Asia. The EU compared to China and Russia," EUCAM Working Paper 11, 2012, 16. An example in this regard is the 'Community Security Initiative', which has been launched jointly with the OSCE in the aftermath of the 2010 crisis in Kyrgyzstan.

current state, the CIS is unable to resolve them either by economic or political means. Russia, without claiming to be the only peacekeeper, provides the main assistance in maintaining peace and stability in the zone of these conflicts, while not always receiving proper support and understanding from other Commonwealth states.

On the one hand, in economic terms, most of them cannot exist in isolation. Specialization, participation in the international division of labor and, consequently, trade with other states is the only way for them to economic well-being. On the other hand, it is in Central Asia, for example, that a capacious common market can be created, especially given the significant reserves of most types of natural raw materials, the existence of a single transport network, the experience of creating and operating a single electric power system, and main oil and gas pipelines.

REGIONAL SEGMENTS

The Central Asian region of the Commonwealth consists of five Central Asian republics that were part of the USSR: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan with a total area of 4 million square meters. km, with a population of over 50 million people, including about 5 million Russian-speaking population. The new states of Central Asia have common historical roots in terms of belonging to the Eastern civilization. The peoples inhabiting them, except for the Tajiks and related ethnic groups, mainly belong to the Turkic-speaking group.

Historically, it is difficult enough to draw boundaries between these peoples, and the ethno-national situation in the region was largely complicated precisely by the arbitrary establishment of administrative boundaries in the Soviet period. The peoples of the Central Asian countries, for the most part, profess the Islamic religion. At the same time, it should be noted that despite the important role of Islam in shaping the cultural community of this region, the degree of Islamization of the republics is very different.

The problems of acquiring state identity, maintaining sovereignty and territorial integrity, as prerequisites for integration, were common to all states of the Central Asian region. In the current post-Soviet configuration, these republics never existed as independent states. Since in the USSR the borders between them were established according to the administrative principle, and for centuries the territorial formations that had been formed were in the nature of valley-oasis

associations there is a danger that the process of sovereignization may develop further into separatism, reinforced by ethnic and clan conflicts.

In fact, even during the period of Soviet power, the ruling elites in the Central Asian republics were very sensitive to the question of which historical regions representatives get access to the levers of real power. In principle, what is happening here is a kind of paradoxical fusion of the system of completely feudal and clan-based views on power, which was established back in the Soviet period, with nationalist mindsets. To the greatest extent, this issue escalated in Tajikistan, where “localism”, coupled with clan struggle and confrontation between various ethnic groups, led to the civil war of 1992-1997, which practically destroyed the economy of the republic and affected the situation in neighboring states.

In principle, the republics of the region face a common task: to prevent any violation of territorial integrity, including on the territory of neighboring states, which would be very dangerous in terms of setting a precedent. Of particular importance in this regard is the destruction of one of the important "Soviet" pillars of the political and economic stability of the states of Central Asia - the system of protecting strategic security from external and internal threats.

As analysts from Central Asia note, “in the early years of independence, the picture of the foreseeable future of the Central Asian states was, for their governments and, to a certain extent, for public opinion, more or less clear. For the states of the region, the Turkish version of development was attractive, where a society with a Muslim population chose a secular path of development, a democratic political system and a market economy”⁷. However, the weakness of Turkey itself revealed over the past period, primarily in the economic and civilizational fields, has led to a gradual weakening of the attractiveness of the image of Turkey and the Turkish model of development in the region. Largely under the influence of the specified sum of factors and, we repeat, the consequences of socio-political development during the Soviet period in the Central Asian states, with the exception of Tajikistan, a rather uniform political system has now developed. It manifests itself as “authoritarianism with fragments of political pluralism and some freedoms” in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and as totalitarianism in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.”⁸

The crisis phenomena of the 1990s, which engulfed the economy and social sphere of the Central Asian states in the conditions of disruption of the

⁷ Esenov M. Central Asia on the Threshold of the 21st Century. Central Asia and the Caucasus. // www.ca-c.org/datarus/esenov3/1998-shtml

⁸Ibid.

economic ties established within the former USSR and the search for optimal models for reforming national economies, turned out to be deep and protracted, as in the CIS as a whole. Quite indicative are some statistical data that very clearly characterize the social processes of those years. Throughout Central Asia in the 1990s, there was a serious general economic breakdown and a decline in production, while Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were in the worst position in terms of macroeconomic indicators. In Kyrgyzstan, the republic's GDP was 1995. 50% of level 1990. There was a decline in both industrial production (in 1995. - 35% of level 1990), and agricultural (by 43%). In Tajikistan, the decline in material production in 1991. amounted to 12.5%, in 1992. - 33.7%, and in 1993 and 1994. there was a catastrophic recession: the damage from the civil war was estimated at 7 billion dollars, and the fall in industrial production in various industries was 50-80% 9. Gross capital formation decreased in all countries, especially in Kazakhstan - in 1991-1996 gross fixed capital formation decreased by 2.8 times 10.

In addition, the collapse of the Soviet administrative system deprived the new states of their usual "backdoor" ways in solving emerging problems. Thus, in Turkmenistan, the program "Grain" put forward by the leadership of the republic, the implementation of which assumed the achievement of grain independence and the provision of free bread in 1997, was failed. But if in the past the problems of the created deficit were solved by directives with supplies from state reserves, then in independent Turkmenistan a wave of bread riots swept due to the lack of bread. Tension in society was relieved by large supplies of flour from Iran. 11

As for the realization of the foreign trade potential for solving the problems of economic development, in this area the Central Asian states faced the same difficulties as the rest of the post-Soviet countries. In the former USSR, the economies of the republics were heavily dependent not only on inter-republican ties, but also on allied state subsidies. The trade turnover of the Central Asian republics with other former Soviet republics accounted for an average of over 87% of their total exchange with the outside world¹². Naturally, the countries of

⁹ Annakulyeva G. Trends in the Development of the Central Asian Society. Central Asia and the Caucasus. www.ca-c.org/datarus/annakulyeva/1998-shtml

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Dzhabiev A. N. Economy of Turkmenistan: ways and directions of development Central Asia and the Caucasus. www.ca-c.org/datarus/dzhabiev/2013-shtml

¹² European Commission, Central Asia. DCI Indicative Program 2011–2013, Brussels, 2011, 14–15

the region tried to overcome the difficulties that arose in connection with the rupture of inter-republican ties primarily by expanding mutual trade, searching for new markets and trading partners, as well as attracting foreign capital to implement large projects for the construction of new and reconstruction of existing enterprises. Nevertheless, we note that their initial hopes for serious financial support from Western countries and international economic organizations were far from being fully realized, which, at a difficult stage in the formation of young states, preferred to take a wait-and-see attitude.[13]

Soon after the Soviet Union was destroyed in 1991, the idea of a Central Asian union was born. Even though all nations joined the newly established Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), further regional cooperation was deemed necessary.[14] They were unable to take part in the integration process because Tajikistan was engulfed in the Tajikistani Civil War (1992–1997), which was fought between government forces and different Islamist rebel organizations backed by the Taliban. Turkmenistan chose against joining the CIS or Central Asian integration in favor of maintaining its neutrality. On September 23, 1993, the remaining three republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan signed a pact to construct an economic union. On February 10, 1994, a "one economic space" was declared, and on July 8, 1994, an Interstate Council with an Executive Committee was established. The Central Asian Union is open to all CIS members, in theory.¹⁵ The Union was given a military component as well. Tajikistan joined the CAU as an observer in 1996 while still engaged in civil conflict. A Council of Defense Ministers was established, and a peacekeeping force was established under the auspices of the UN. In September 1997, the peacekeeping force conducted its first training exercises on the soil of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The five former Soviet Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan would form a new Central Asian Union, according to a proposal made by Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev on April 26, 2007, to create an economic and political union akin to the EU¹⁶. The presidents of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan have thus far signed a document establishing an "International Supreme Council" between their two countries. A Treaty of Eternal Friendship has also been signed between

¹³ Esenov M. Central Asia on the Threshold of the 21st Century. Central Asia and the Caucasus. // www.ca-c.org/datarus/esenov3/1998-shtml

¹⁴ Rumer, Boris; Zhukov, Stanislav (1998). [Central Asia: The Challenges of Independence](#). New York: M.E. Sharpe. p. 104. [ISBN 9780765632982](#). Retrieved 5 April 2018

¹⁵ Ibidem

¹⁶ Ibidem

Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. A free trade zone will also be established by Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

Even though the planned new union had the support of the presidents of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan by 2008, former Uzbek leader Islam Karimov flatly rejected it. But integration was once again discussed after Karimov's passing in 2016. Organizer and host Nursultan Nazarbaev of Kazakhstan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev of Uzbekistan, Sooronbai Jeenbekov of Kyrgyzstan, Emomali Rahmon of Tajikistan, and Akja Nurberdiowa of the Turkmen parliament participated in the new Central Asian Summit on March 15 in Astana. The meeting was hosted at the Aqorda Presidential Palace by President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan. The leaders of Central Asia met for the first time in nearly ten years at this summit.[17]

It is impossible to deny the existence of objective prerequisites that determine the necessity and reality of the integration of the Central Asian republics. There are a number of objective prerequisites that dictate the need to expand cooperation between the Central Asian republics. From the point of view of geographical position, all the republics are located in the central part of the Asian continent, far from the seas and oceans, as a result of which their geopolitical position is equally unfavorable, since they are completely dependent on neighboring states in terms of access to trade routes. In any perspective, the well-being of these countries will be linked to the stability in certain states and the nature of relations with them.

In addition to the above-mentioned prerequisites for the integration of the Central Asian republics, economic prerequisites play perhaps the main role. Despite the fact that the economy of the republics, within the framework of the all-Union division of labor, had a largely one-sided agrarian and raw material specialization (taking into account their natural and climatic conditions) and served primarily the needs of the Union and other republics, many experts believe that in the course of the country's economic integration could largely complement each other: Turkmenistan was mainly focused on gas production, Uzbekistan - on cotton growing, Kyrgyzstan - on sheep breeding, Tajikistan - on hydropower.

On the other hand, it should be noted a number of factors that also have an ambiguous effect on the development of foreign economic relations of regional states, their economy as a whole and, accordingly, on the implementation of integration. For example, the region has rich reserves of such minerals as oil, gas,

¹⁷<https://www.euractiv.com/section/central-asia/news/fri-astana-hosts-little-publicised-central-asia-summit/>

gold, uranium, zinc, etc., but they are unevenly distributed throughout the region: Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have the largest reserves. This circumstance, as well as the high costs associated with the process of extraction and processing of resources, should have pushed the countries of the region to strengthen cooperation in this area, but so far, rivalry is more likely to be seen in this area, as, for example, the development of the situation on the legal status of the Caspian Sea shows.

The creation of the Central Asian Community, and especially the Treaty of Eternal Friendship, in principle, laid the necessary legal basis for the development of integration in the region.

It appears that the region is moving toward unification at the moment, which will enable the Central Asian states to quickly find solutions to their challenges, especially those related to bolstering security. According to last year's data, Kazakhstan's GDP at purchasing power parity was \$460.7 billion, Uzbekistan – \$202.3 billion, while Turkmenistan – \$94.8 billion, Tajikistan – \$25.8 billion, and Kyrgyzstan – \$21 billion. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have had mutually complementary economies since Soviet times, including such industries as water use, energy, transport, agriculture, telecommunications, etc. All this creates a good basis for the revival of the Central Asian Union, which will allow Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to create a kind of "safety cushion" in the economy. Moreover, unlike the EAEU, it will be possible to try to involve not only Tajikistan in this association, but also Turkmenistan, with which Uzbekistan has developed good relations in recent years.[18]

However, recent efforts to advance regional integration did not exclude the creation of fresh foreign policy trajectories. The OSCE, Organization of the Islamic Conference, and Economic Cooperation Organization all accepted new members from the region's five states (it also includes Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Azerbaijan and Afghanistan). With other international financial institutions like the Asian Bank, Islamic Development Bank, World Bank, IMF, and EBRD, communication has been established.

After 2016, the foreign policy and good neighborliness of Uzbekistan opened the door to regional cooperation, which became an important impetus for further strengthening relations with the regional countries. For example, over the past period, many changes have taken place in and around the region, while some

¹⁸ Shustov A. Will Tashkent and Astana revive the Central Asian Union? / Eurasia Expert, February 21, 2017 <https://eurasia.expert/vozrodyat-li-tashkent-i-astana-tsentrarno-aziatskiy-soyuz/>

issues have come to the fore, and some have lost their relevance. Such changes in the political, economic, social, cultural and other.

Regional cooperation helps the Central Asian states to better manage their interdependence, unlock and increase their potential for economic growth, influence in international affairs, and assert their independence and uniqueness.

The countries of the region, being traditional and natural parties to the negotiation process, maintain balanced and constructive relations with representatives of the Afghan government, which determines it as the main force in the international security system, where Central Asia has occupied and will continue to occupy an important determining position. In particular, this is clearly seen on the example of several international platforms: The International Contact Group on Afghanistan, the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group, the 6+2 and 6+3 Contact Groups initiated by Uzbekistan and rehabilitated by the head of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev in the framework of the High-Level International Conference on Afghanistan: "Peace Process, Security Cooperation and Regional Interoperability", held in March 2018.

Most likely, the Trans-Afghan logistics project "Termez - Mazar-i-Sharif - Kabul - Peshawar" promoted by the Republic of Uzbekistan in the near future can become the main transport route connecting the states of Central Asia along the shortest route (only 760 km.) to the Karakorum corridor and further to the Pakistani to the seaports of Karachi-Qasim and Gwadar, thereby reducing the length of almost all existing transit networks in the region by 30% with a projected throughput volume of cargo transportation of at least 15-20 million tons per year. The significance and effectiveness of the trans-Afghan project is associated with the synchronization of the construction of the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan-China railway, which connects China with the countries of Central Asia along an alternative trans-regional route (433 km), in which the international community is heavily interested.

Conclusion

The closely coordinated efforts of countries in the international arena in collaboration with such entities as the European Union on such matters as the peace and sustainable development of Afghanistan will undoubtedly strengthen the stability in Central Asia. Describing the regularity of such trends, S.Safoev, First Deputy of the Senate of the Republic of Uzbekistan noted that today there is "... the need to create a legal and, in the future, an institutional framework for interaction on key issues of the international agenda and, first of all, to promote

the socio-economic reconstruction of Afghanistan. The main factor in making the favorable environment in Central Asia irreversible is the strengthening of confidence-building measures. It is important to formulate principles, conceptual foundations for understanding the essence of processes, in the development of which a significant role is assigned not only to state and non-governmental, but also to private, business structures"¹⁹.

The emergence of a new political environment in the area shows that the Central Asian nations' process of closer involvement in bolstering peace and stability in the region has become an objective reality, and openness in relations with one's nearest neighbors lays the groundwork for sustainable development throughout the entire world.

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¹⁹ <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2022/05/13/afghanistan/>

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WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN; RIGHTS AND REALITIES

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ABSTRACT: *This paper focuses on the women rights in Afghanistan after the fall of America in August 2021. The basic rights of Women are confiscated by the Taliban regime and their survival is at risk in this Islamic state. The basic argument in this paper is Afghan women are stuck between the abuse of the Taliban state and action of the international community which is pushing Afghan government to minimize the desperation of the Afghan women. Taliban government is depriving women from jobs in education sector. Workplaces are segregated and even what kind of mobile phones women must use if they are working declared by the organizations. I argued that Afghan government is hiding the actual situation in Afghanistan by circulation the fake news on international media that women can continue their jobs and continue their educational activities in a usual manner in Afghanistan. Women are becoming virtual prisoners in their homes and Taliban is taking basic rights of the half of its population (Women). The reports of human rights watch, the interviews of human rights activities are the source data of argument in this paper. The interviews common Afghan women who are facing problems in their daily life and interviews of working women provides the picture of insecurities in general and workplaces. This paper is also based on information of the Newspapers and digital media. In the end the efforts of NGO funded by international community will also highlight.*

KEYWORDS: *Taliban, Hijab, Mahram, Ghazni,*

INTRODUCTION: American troops left Afghanistan after 20 years of its occupation. After declaring this all men who shared hands in hands are happy with the transfer of power to Taliban. Women who comprised half of the Afghan population were not seen anywhere. How this take over conveys the true idea of representation? With the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the nightmare has started for Afghan women. 20 years back when American took over, Laura Bush, the first lady launched the idea, “to fight for the dignity of Afghan women.” Through this agenda women got education, right to work and participate in the public sphere. Women rights faced many bumpy strikes in Afghanistan. Government introduced many developments program during 1960. Women were allowed to

travel freely. They could enter their homes with strangers and able to make choice of their education and work life. Girl scout scheme was introduced during 1970 but it disappeared as Taliban took over in 1990. Most of the racial form of Islamic regime was imposed by Taliban. Human rights especially women right were brutally violated.

In 2001 Taliban issued an order to ban the women who drive cars and women were harassed as they publicly appear. Women were restricted to wear full clothes especially the socks. Those women who wore black gloves and socks were beaten and public with AK47 and sent them to home to wear white socks which were less visible in public. The situation changed after American occupation. Although this came under the western mission of civilizing the uncivilized people. Women participation in the public life of Afghanistan was visibly seen in the 2005 when Khotal Mohammadzadi became the first women general in Afghan national army and Malalai Joye became woman parliamentarian in the national assembly and Azra Jafri became the country mayor in 2009. In 2008 35% of girls were enrolled in the schools but this led to the acid attacks on women by Taliban in many provinces of Afghanistan. But women got something out of it in all these years. (Masoma, 2002)

All rights of getting education, to move freely, to do their jobs and get equal share in the state mechanism is about to ruined by the Islamic imposition of Amar bil Ma,aruf wa nahian un Munkir. The state orders of wearing Hijab on all public places is implemented by zeal and zest. Women in Afghanistan are facing violence, work harassment, restriction on public mobility. The liberalism which is the complete agenda of modernity not required in the country like Afghanistan. Women hold a press conference recently in Kabul. The participants were parliamentarian, Director of Afghan women network (1996), representative of Afghan women educational center (1991) and group of educated Afghan women was there. These women demanded “an immediate and permanent killing of civilians, sexual slavery of women, practice of forced marriages” and the women organizations demanded the development and empowerment of women. Women leaders in Afghanistan will not remain invisible. The women asserted that there must be gender equality in the peace negotiation otherwise it will bring disasters results in Afghanistan. Taliban policies hammering the women rights are:

Taliban put ban on the primary and secondary education of women.

Higher education and its curriculum are more focused towards religious studies.

Gender segregation on workplaces.

Women are not allowed to use their cell phones.

Women must wear hijab on all public places. (The Taliban,s war on Women, 2021)

The future looks very dark, narrated by a woman who worked in a government organization. I have seen many dreams to get my master's degree and to work for the betterment of my family. But at that time, Taliban do not allowed girls to finish their high schools. Already many of the girls left their schools due to public announcement of the Taliban commandos that women should not leave their houses without guardian and there is no need to go to schools and jobs. Taliban dismantled police force in the ministry of women affair and created more insecurity. They are targeting those Afghan women who were working in foreign organizations and previous government. Most of the women are facing serious mental health conditions like fear, anxiety, hopelessness, insomnia, and sense of loss. (Dupree, 2022)

Women in Afghanistan are a soft target to kill. According to Afghanistan security and defense department, 20 international militant groups are present in Afghanistan and most of them are attached only on soft targets through which they are gaining their target of fear and insecurity. In 2020 many of the human rights activities, parliamentarian and negotiators were attached including Fawzia Koofi but she survived, and she participated in the peace talks of Doha. In American regime women got more training skills and expertise and Palwasha Hussain indicated that women in Afghanistan have more experience than 1990, s and there is more awareness about women rights. This awareness is not limit among Elite classes now the women are more aware on grass root levels. They are striving for their right especially the right to education and freedom of mobility. Taliban recent decree is to cover the faces of women in public places and even on media, "The women must wear chador(head to toe Burqa) , it is traditional and respectful" Afghan supreme leader Hibatullah said, in order to avoid provocation . Women have no important work outside the home its better to stay in home, he further added. When Afghan interior minister was interviewed by Christian Amanpour of CNN about imposing ban on women to go outside their home then he replied that "we keep naughty women at homes". It is very controversial to define naughty women in the words of interior minister. After explaining the naughty women those who are controlled by the outsiders. He further cleared that Taliban want the Islamic law as the soul of the government as "national, cultural and traditional principles". According to this decree if women should not cover their faces outside the home, their close relatives and father could

be imprisoned or fired from the government jobs. Daud Naji, who is former government official wrote on twitter, Taliban had introduced such Hijab which is not suitable for working in offices and in public fields. The official of the Taliban announced that women in Afghanistan are expected to stay in homes and if they want to go out, they must use loose clothing and Burqa is preferably good for them. Taliban has imposed the ritual to wear hijab by women. It abolished women identity, the issue is not veil but the elimination of women from public sphere. (George, 2021)

Nahid Farid, former parliamentarian comments, Veil is symbol of gender apartheid. Veil is not the end, now Taliban has a strict and larger plan to subjugate women in Afghanistan like in March a woman can board in the plan only when she has the company of a male. The dress code of female after the age of 14 also introduced in the female educational institutions and ministry of education issued a statement for the dress-code, promotion of virtue and prevention of vice”. In Kabul Taliban seem to be more tolerant but in other cities they become violent in the case of dress code. The guardian (Mahram) is required for the movement in public. Those women who have the guardian home they can travel through transport. During the Afghan crisis many of the male migrated to Iran and other neighboring countries. Now many of women who do not have mahram in their homes, their public movement is restricted. In the health department where female and both are working Taliban has issues certain restriction like; the dress of the nurses, to work separately from male health worker, to talk with the male in angry tone and not to evoke sexual desires in them. In the recent announcement all female journalist and anchor person on TV must wear veil or hijab on TV screens. This decree is created insecurity among women either this decree is only for TV, or they are going to lose their jobs soon. The ministry of Voice and Virtue clearly conveyed that it is a final verdict and there is no room for discussion. According to Afghan press most of the women have seen to cover their faces and many of their male colleagues donned face masks to show solidarity with women. In Kabul only 700 female journalists formally working in private TV and radio stations and international federation of journalist announced a march which showed 87% of women journalist are facing discrimination in Afghanistan and 60% of women journalists lost their job under Taliban regime. (Taliban orders Female Afghan TV presenters to cover their faces, 2022)

Taliban have worsened the crisis for women. The women who were in army and police are targeted. In the province of Ghazni , they have to leave the place. The lives of the women activities are in danger. Taliban killed 2 female

police officers in Ghazni two days before when the province falls in the hands of Taliban. Taliban has issued orders to those organizations worked for the women rights, not to engaged with human rights, women rights, and other issues. They can only work in the health sector. In the official meetings the Taliban leader do not talk to women. The asked male personnel to convey them, whatever problem women have, don't raise your voices, don't talk to us, write your problems, so we can read them men should not hear women voice." Women are not allowed to get access to technology. Women are not allowed to carry smart phones as it polluted the minds of women. A health worker said that they conveyed if phone is very much necessary than women should keep Nokia phone without any application. Male shoppers and trailers are not allowed to interact with women, and it is conveyed to the women that they should sew their clothes by themselves. Women are allowed for the socialization outside their houses an`d this decree is communicated to every mosque. Taliban is not only issuing the orders but checked its implementation. The guards in schools, hospitals and Imam in mosques convey their fed back to Taliban Scots. In health care doctors are scared from female patients. Even in the case of lady doctors, they are not allowed to work in private clinics. Female health workers which were double under American regime, now it is hard to find them out. Every woman patient needs Mahram even in the case of emergency. Male doctors are allowed to ask the condition of women from their guardians. A medical student conveyed if a woman in pregnant and she does not have guardian with her, she would not be able to get treatment in the hospitals. (Harrison, 2021)

In the field of education, Taliban is depriving girls off education. There are 27 girls secondary schools in the 34 provinces of Afghanistan. Teachers are concerned about the girl's attendance, but girls asked that their schools would reopen soon. Girls from 7 to 12 must stay their homes. The date of the opening of universities are still not clear. Many universities in the different cities are still closed. Only the girls in primary schools are allowed to go to schools but they are worried about their future. Private schools are opened but they are a bit expensive, and parents are not able to pay the fee of their children due to the economic crisis in the country. Teachers did not get their salaries. This crisis also affects the learning abilities of the students as teachers told, many of the students come to schools hungry. Many of the girls do not afford to buy schoolbooks and stationaries. (Taliban Impose gender Segregation at universities in Afghanistan, 2021)

Taliban also changed the curriculum in schools. Religious texts are made compulsory and physical education, sports, civil rights, fine arts, and social studies are removed from the school's curriculum as it is considered unnecessary. Soraya Peykan , a female professor in Kabul university gave an interview to international media and said that Taliban deliberately confiscate the basic rights of the women and the want to use Afghan women as bargaining chip for the better negotiation to international community but Afghan conflict is no longer receiving the international spot light. (www.ohchr.org, 2021)

All universities in Ghazni province are closed. Many of the female students studding medical they are at their homes, and they do not know what happened in future. Primary and secondary schools are opened but girls' attendance in these schools are very low after the orders of Taliban to stay women in their homes. Private schools in Afghanistan are also opened but parents are not able to send their children at schools due to the financial crisis in the country. Taliban took the control of many academic institutions that's why students are very much scared. The teacher said that we were very afraid of Taliban in the beginning but now we are used to it.

The working women have to face different kinds of difficulties as they are on low profile now. Preventing women from will increase the economic issues in families as Afghan women are working in government institutions, health care, education and even in state capacity. Former senior judge Fawizia Amini gave an interview to Hard Talk BBC in which she said , The Taliban had institutionalized discrimination again Afghan women and they are denying our fundamental rights. Former women police officer Zala Zazia said, the international community put pressure on Taliban to ensure the rights of women in Afghanistan and they must do everything to for the women participation in Taliban government. The Taliban cannot ignore the half of the population of Afghanistan. The women who are doing their business must shift it to some male. Women are not allowed to go outside without their father, brothers, and husband. They are not allowed to go outside with their friends. Women are missing their professions, their work, and their freedom as they are so much isolated in the society under Taliban. The violence against women and girls is increasing in Afghanistan. For the last twenty years under the sway of American control women right organization built up a courtyard support system. Now it has totally collapse. Those who were involved in women right activities are receiving threats. There were 27 women safe houses in working conditions but now few are working but under extreme pressure. Girls are forced to marriage even before the age of 16 now. The humanitarian crisis in

Afghanistan is at on highest peak especially for those who are losing their families. Due to huger large families are adopting patriarchal structure to offer their daughter into marriage and receiving something in return. (Koofi, 2022)

Women who led their household and do not have any male member receiving the demand of a bride for the Taliban fighters and they are able to get good social status in return. The right to work is subjugated since Taliban got power. The definition of the work is again interpreted by Taliban. Those women who are journalist and women who are working on Radio and TV station are out of job now. Women entrepreneurs who are doing their work in the market forced to shut their business. Women lost their freedom of expression. A protest session was led in Kabul in the recent past demanding the basic rights of women. Financial bottle neck and insecurity after Taliban regime reached 65%. Those who demonstrate in this procession were torture, imprisoned and murder. This led to poor mental health and traumas in life of many Afghan women, and they are not providing them the physiological help to come out of it. The young girls who are victims of these incident are not able to survive. Those girls who are married at the age of 14 and 16 are not able to bear the burden of childbirth and the mortality rate is increasing. It is sticking to 638 cases per million in case of still births in 2020 and it is highest in the world. In Afghanistan 4 out 10 children die before their first birthday. (Reid, 2021)

In this social set up women are desperately in need of their basic human rights. All international organization, NGO, and UN should pressurize Taliban to at least meet the international standards of human rights in Afghanistan. Donor countries must insure the rights of girls and women. This humanitarian crisis will lead towards the collapse of basic right in Afghan society. Mostly the institutions of human rights, women protection and women empowerment like human rights commission, the ministry of women affairs and civil society organization are abolished by Taliban. In fact, the basic right to choose, express, to work and move are banished, and women are not able to take part in the public life, but women are not ready to give up as it is expressed by female activist Zohra Zaheer. The provincial women network (PWN) is a key partner in the gender equality in work since 2015 and it is financed by the Dutch Ministry of foreign affairs in Afghanistan recently reviewed that this organization need the support of international community and donor's countries to safeguard the rights of Afghan women. In every province of Afghanistan this network is tackling violence against women and boosting the participation of women in very sphere of Afghan life. As in the Herat province government has announced that women should stay inside

their homes, but women are still trying to be organized themselves. The funds for the outdoor activities are not sufficient. In the province of Qandahar, individual women are helping each other, I am not allowed to support the cases of violence against women, abused women are not able to go anywhere. Currently they do not have legal support. In this scenario we are doing what we can do best possible, added by the woman activist. In Daikundi, the Central Afghanistan, the situation is better as they said, we feel free as compared to the other provinces of Afghanistan. Women have right to move and speak freely. All human rights organization are facing the problems of lack of funds even the program of PWN is on the verge of collapse although it must be end in 2024. Director Marco Savio of Cordaid Afghanistan said, “we want to use very opportunity big or small to keep alive our women empowering activities to support Afghan women in these hard times”. They are in all places in Afghanistan if they disappear it would be a blow for woman and overall, for civil society. If they shut down once than it would have been very difficult to restore, he added. In Paktya, another province of Afghanistan one women said that we have achieved a lot in the past 20 years. Now we need the support of international organizations and donors to save all these achievements, said Najla Ayoubi, former judge, and chief of coalition program. (Jamshaidi, 2022)

The high representatives of European Union and G7 ministers expressed their strongest opposition against the Taliban restrictions in Afghanistan especially for closing girls’ schools and abolishing women rights. Human rights watch is arguing people mostly diplomats to show their support in favor of women rights in Afghanistan. Taliban assured international law to respect the women rights in Afghanistan and they will provide them humanitarian assistance including education and health care. But this task will not be necessarily fulfilled by the religious groups in Afghanistan. Under international law Afghanistan ratifies the provisions of CEDAW (the convention on the eliminations of all kinds of discrimination against women 2003. Donors should put political pressure and monitor it during the time of their aids timeline to fulfill the targets of women rights. Through this they can insure equality in this region.

Recommendations:

Women should be given the right to educate themselves. All schools, colleges and universities must reopen with the permission that women can continue their education.

Women can move freely in the society in the dress which they like.

Women should take part in all kinds of work and employment.

Women seats in all institution will reinstate and women ministry should be reactivated.

The harassment of Taliban on all level must be stop immediately.

The condition of guardian especially for health facility must be removed.

Donors can play their role in such conditions:

Support for the livelihood of the women especially create opportunities for the women of employment for women.

Community based education programs must be introduced by the NGO, s and international donor's agencies.

Mental health services for the women in Afghanistan for those who are really in need of these services.

Protection from the gender-based violence and discrimination.

Support for the women who are facing persecution in and outside Afghanistan.

CONCLUSION: A new chapter of women resistance is emerging in Afghanistan by women and the members of the civil society who are protesting the Taliban regime. Women aren't quiet now they were 20 years back. They know their rights and they are calling for them. Women are comprised the half of the population of Afghanistan, and it is very difficult for Taliban government to ignore them. Taliban must review all the orders issued for the restrictions and stop this fake propaganda that women freedom is the agenda of the west. It is for the better future of Afghanistan is that women should participate in the public life, she must get education, she has the freedom to express and move freely in the society. She can work for her and the future of the family. It is not the agenda of west. It is agenda of a human society.

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FEATURES OF NATO APPROACH TO AFGHAN CRISIS

(between 2014-2020)

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ABSTRACT: *The study of NATO activities in the period from 2014, the end of the war was announced by the US administration, and 2020, when an agreement was concluded between the US and the Taliban on the complete withdrawal of foreign forces from the country and the simultaneous start of peace negotiations, is also of interest in the context of analyzing the prerequisites for the formation of the current situation in Afghanistan, which is difficult to objectively analyze without taking into account the history of the presence of the forces of this military-political bloc and the goals that were originally set for them.*

INTRODUCTION

The problem of Afghanistan is one of the most acute and chronic in modern international relations. The Afghan conflict lasted a total of over 40 years, of which about half of the period is associated with the presence of the United States and NATO in this country.

At present, the conflict in Afghanistan seems to be over, and the Taliban government that came to power is able to control the situation in the country and minimize threats to its Central Asian neighbors.

The study of NATO activities in the period from 2014, the end of the war was announced by the US administration, and 2020, when an agreement was concluded between the US and the Taliban on the complete withdrawal of foreign forces from the country and the simultaneous start of peace negotiations, is also of interest in the context of analyzing the prerequisites for the formation of the current situation in Afghanistan, which is difficult to objectively analyze without taking into account the history of the presence of the forces of this military-political bloc and the goals that were originally set for them.

Of interest are the features of the NATO mission in the context of the complex interests of intra-Afghan political forces and political processes in the

country, as well as the role of external actors that had a direct impact on events in the country.

The role of NATO in the conflict in Afghanistan in 2014-2016

The Afghan conflict arose at the height of the Cold War and was the result of the confrontation between the USSR and the USA. The ten-year presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan failed to resolve the conflict, and after the withdrawal of Soviet troops, the country plunged into a protracted and bloody civil war on the periphery of world politics.

The current phase of the Afghan conflict begins in 2001, when the United States, in response to the September 11, 2001 attacks, led a military campaign against al-Qaeda and the Taliban. The military action was supported by NATO, for the first time in history, applying Article 5 of its Charter, which obligated to use the mechanism of collective security to protect one of its members.

NATO forces were first deployed in 2001 following a request for assistance from the Afghan authorities and a mandate from the United Nations Security Council, which authorized the creation of a force to assist the Afghan government in maintaining security in and around Kabul. surrounding areas - in particular, to allow the Afghan authorities, as well as UN personnel, to work in a safe environment.

As mandated by the United Nations, ISAF's main goal was to enable the Afghan government to provide effective security throughout the country and to create new Afghan security forces to maintain order in the country so that Afghanistan would never again be a safe haven for terrorists.

By 2014, the conflict in Afghanistan continued to be in a "stalemate" situation. The announced end of the active phase of hostilities led to the need to reformat the NATO mission in the absence of sufficient progress to turn the tide in the military campaign against the Taliban.

Occurred in 2014 The presidential elections in Afghanistan were designed to demonstrate success in building a new state. A prolonged conflict between the two main candidates led to the formation of a national unity government headed by President A. Ghani and chief executive A. Abdullah, allowing the nominal unity of the country to be maintained. Against this backdrop, Afghanistan is facing growing fragmentation along ethnic and territorial lines.

The NATO-led Resolute Support Mission (RSM) in Afghanistan was launched on 1 January 2015 following the completion of the ISAF mission. RSM provided further training, advice and assistance to Afghan security forces and agencies.

Approximately 10,000 troops from 36 NATO and partner countries have been deployed to support the RSM. The focus was on training, advising and assisting in ministries related to security, in the country's institutions and among senior army and police officials.

Key features included:

- support for planning, programming and budgeting;
- Ensuring transparency, accountability and oversight;
- supporting commitment to the principles of the rule of law and good governance;
- supporting the creation and maintenance of processes such as force generation, recruitment, training, management and development of personnel.

The decision to launch a follow-up NATO-led non-combat mission to continue supporting the development of the Afghan security forces after the end of the ISAF mission in December 2014 was jointly agreed by allies and partners with the Afghan government at the NATO summit in Chicago in 2012. This commitment was reaffirmed at the 2014 NATO Wales Summit.

The legal basis for the RSM was provided by the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), which was signed in Kabul on 30 September 2014 by the President of Afghanistan and NATO's senior civilian representative in Afghanistan, and subsequently ratified by the Afghan parliament on 27 November 2014.

SOFA determined the conditions under which NATO forces were deployed to Afghanistan under the Resolute Support program, as well as the actions they carried out in accordance with this agreement.

The agreement between NATO and Afghanistan to establish a new mission was welcomed in United Nations Security Council Resolution 2189. Adopted unanimously on December 12, 2014, it emphasizes the importance of continued international support for the stability of Afghanistan.

In December 2015, at a meeting of NATO foreign ministers and their RSM partners, it was decided to maintain a RSM presence, including in the regions of Afghanistan, throughout 2016.

A little later, it was decided to allocate over 11,000 troops from 39 countries of NATO allies and partners to support the Resolute Support mission after 2016. The mission continued with a regional approach in Kabul and Bagram and at existing coalition bases in Jalalabad, Kandahar, Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif. "Resolute Support" remained focused on Afghanistan's security ministries and institutional development, as well as training, advising and assisting efforts with Afghan conventional forces at the corps level and Afghan Special Operations Forces and Air Force at the tactical level.

The United States has retained approximately 8,400 troops in Afghanistan since 2016. The U.S. military structure has retained the core security cooperation, counterterrorism efforts and platforms that have been central to the president's post-2016 plan, and has also retained additional capacity to train, advise and assist IRA security forces.

Within NATO, US forces continued to perform two tasks: first, they had to maintain a counter-terrorism capability in Afghanistan in order to attack enemy forces.

Second, the United States supported NATO's efforts to train, advise and assist with the Afghan security forces.

In 2016, ANDSF performance and performance improved from the previous year, showing their ability to adapt and evolve. Afghan forces have been able to repel attacks, recapture Taliban-held territories in Kunduz, Baghlan and Uruzgan provinces, and have shown some effectiveness in providing their own combat support, including close air support.

Moreover, Afghan leaders have shown a willingness to implement difficult but necessary reforms, such as the development of a Sustainable Security Strategy that better allocates ANDSF resources to protect strategic territory.

After 2016, the Resolute Support mission was to become more carefully tailored to focus on those critical Afghan capabilities that were slower to develop, such as intelligence, logistics, air force, and command and control.

U.S. President B. Obama also promised to recommend to his successor that the United States continue to seek funding for ANDSF at close to its funding level through 2020.

These funding commitments would allow ANDSF to maintain its authorized strength of 352,000 personnel until 2020, while the Afghan government, the US, and the international community would implement cost-cutting measures to reduce ANDSF's costs.

NATO has pledged its support to IRA President A. Ghani to eradicate corruption by enacting anti-money laundering regulations, working to recover Kabul Bank assets and stopping illegal purchases from the interior and defense ministries.

At the same time, the NATO mission failed to solve a number of fundamental problems. In the security realm, the conflict remained at an impasse. There was still "divided loyalty" in the Afghan security forces. Strong ethnic and tribal attachments were a constant problem. There is also a high rate of desertion and "inactive" soldiers within the Afghan forces, which has sometimes led the national army to be referred to as "ghost soldiers".

Corruption remained another chronic problem. Problems in the security forces are associated with high levels of corruption. The problem of "loyalty to sell" remained a problem. The fact that the Afghan government increasingly used volunteer militias to assist the Afghan local police also pointed to the danger of failing to control the forces that were on the country's budget.

Poor training was another reason for the weakness of the Afghan security forces, especially in intelligence gathering, and similarly, the more aggressive stance of the Taliban was indicative of better intelligence work. When the NATO ISAF mission was in operation, data collection took place at a different level, while the IRA security forces lacked similar surveillance and intelligence capabilities.

The problems identified in the Afghan security sector are linked to problems that are also shared by other sectors of government: tensions in government over unity between two rivals (President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah) who made decisions independently of each other.

An important dimension is the support of relations with Pakistan. According to US Congressional Research Service expert K. Thomas, Pakistan

was considered as the most significant neighbor in terms of ensuring the security of the IRA.

NATO backs the government in Kabul, but despite the distrust and tensions between Islamabad and Kabul, it should be kept in mind that Pakistan is supplying international military forces in Afghanistan. Kabul also carries out trade on preferential terms through Pakistan under the Transit and Trade Agreement between the IRA and the PRI.

Thus, on January 1, 2015, a new NATO Resolute Support mission began in Afghanistan. Unlike the previous mission, NATO's objectives were non-combat. The forces of the alliance participated in assisting the Afghan security forces, their training and infrastructure development.

Despite some successes, mainly in maintaining the Afghan National Army and preventing large-scale Taliban gains, the NATO mission failed to address a number of fundamental problems, including improving the combat capability of the Afghan security forces and combating corruption, ethnic problems and the remaining split within the Afghan government.

Features of the NATO mission during the period of President D. Trump

On February 29, 2020, after more than a year of official negotiations between the US and the Taliban, the parties entered into an agreement laying the groundwork for the withdrawal of US and NATO military forces from Afghanistan, as well as negotiations between Kabul and the Taliban. This event can be considered the main one during the presidency of D. Trump, but his presidential term began with a tougher line, which NATO obeyed.

Even according to the optimistic estimates of American commanders, the conflict in the IRA was at an impasse. In our opinion, the strategy for Afghanistan and South Asia, announced by US President D. Trump in August 2017, did not offer anything fundamentally new for resolving the conflict. Washington recognized the impossibility of achieving a military victory. It was possible to resolve the conflict only at the negotiating table.

However, the Taliban were willing to negotiate only on the condition that foreign forces withdraw. In order to "convince" the Taliban to sit down at the negotiating table, D. Trump proposed to increase military pressure so that the

Taliban "realized" the impossibility of achieving military success and were forced to agree to start a peace process. However, as subsequent developments showed, the build-up of air strikes in Afghanistan and the increase in the military contingent of the United States and its allies by several thousand people were not able to change the situation.

It should be noted that D. Trump's strategy was subjected to harsh criticism even in the United States. In particular, the opinion was expressed that instead of placing a diplomatic emphasis on ending the conflict, the Trump administration cut off all lines of communication with the leadership of the Taliban movement and tried to use military power to force the Taliban to leave their country, in while they "dedicated their lives" to this opposition.

The logic of the strategy, which stated the intention to force the Taliban into negotiations by increasing the use of air power and the number of US military instructors, is not clear. "More pressure" on Pakistan, with a simultaneous greater involvement of India, ensured that Pakistan would look to build up its opposition to US efforts.

The White House should not have accepted as a fact that the intractable political problems in Afghanistan could not be solved by military power directed from Washington, and that doubling down on efforts and commitments would simply increase the cost to American soldiers and taxpayers.

Finally, in July 2018, the Trump administration entered into direct negotiations with the Taliban without the participation of representatives of the Afghan government, which fundamentally changed the long-standing position of the United States. The appointment of Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, a former Afghan-born US Ambassador to Afghanistan, as the Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation has given a positive impetus. For more than a year, the Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation met almost continuously with Taliban officials in Doha and held consultations with the governments of Afghanistan, Pakistan and other countries.

Following a week-long decline in violence, Special Representative Khalilzad signed a formal agreement in Doha with Taliban Deputy Political Leader Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar on February 29, 2020, in the presence of a number of international observers, including Secretary of State Michael Pompeo. On the same day in Kabul, US Secretary of Defense Mark Esper met with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and they issued a joint US-Afghan

statement reaffirming US support and reiterating the Afghan government's longstanding willingness to negotiate with the Taliban without preconditions.

As part of the agreement between the US and the Taliban, the United States agreed to reduce its forces from 13,000 to 8,600 troops within 135 days (with a proportionate reduction in NATO allied troop levels) and to withdraw all of its forces within 14 months (April 2021). Also included were other U.S. commitments: facilitating work to facilitate the exchange of prisoners between the Taliban and the Afghan government, and lifting U.S. sanctions on Taliban leaders.

In return, the Taliban pledged to prevent members of al-Qaeda or other groups, including the local branch of the Islamic State, from using Afghan territory to threaten the US or its allies, including by preventing recruitment, training, and fundraising.

US officials have stated that parts of this agreement will not be made public, but those parts do not contain any additional obligations on the part of the United States, describing the annexes as confidential implementation and verification procedures.

The agreement between the US and the Taliban has fundamentally changed the situation with the presence of NATO forces in Afghanistan. It called for an end to US military efforts in Afghanistan, but it did not represent a comprehensive peace agreement between the Afghans, which is only possible through negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan government.

Intra-Afghan negotiations aimed at reaching such a settlement began in September 2020, and their beginning seemed to be an important step towards resolving the conflict and ending NATO's mission. However, the two sides appeared to be far apart on such important issues as the future of governance and women's rights.

The February 2020 U.S.-Taliban agreement committed the Taliban to start negotiations with the Afghan government by March 10, 2020, but talks did not actually begin for several months amid complications, including a stalemate in Kabul over a disputed presidential election in September 2019, delays in the exchange of prisoners between the Taliban and the Afghan government and the ongoing conflict. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, Ghani's electoral opponent and former partner in the government of national unity, agreed in May 2020 to end the political deadlock, and Abdullah was

named chairman of the newly established High Council for National Reconciliation to oversee talks with the Taliban.

The parties to the conflict completed the prisoner exchange in early September 2020, removing a major obstacle to intra-Afghan negotiations that began in Doha on September 12, 2020. The Afghan government's 21-member negotiating team, led by Ghani ally Mohammad Masum Stanekzai, included four women and represented Afghanistan's major ethnic groups.

Abdullah initially rejected Ghani's August 2020 appointment of some members of the High Council. These difficulties were symbolized by the disputes between the Afghan political elites, which are still divided into ethnic groups.

The Taliban negotiating team also included 21 members (all men). On September 5, the Taliban announced as chief negotiator Hakim Haqqani, a hardliner who served as the head of the Taliban judiciary and is reportedly close to Taliban leader Haibatullah Akhundzadeh. The move may have represented an attempt by the top Taliban leadership to gain more control over the negotiations.

US Special Representative Khalilzad stated on September 11, 2020 that the United States will not be a direct participant in the negotiations and the role is limited to assisting in the negotiations if requested. Since then, Khalilzad has made several visits to Doha, where he has met separately with members of each negotiating team.

The agreement between the US and the Taliban committed the Taliban to refrain from attacks on the US and other countries. However, this did not include Taliban operations against Afghan government forces, which continued and intensified in 2020 in some areas.

The Afghan Ministry of Defense reported Taliban attacks in 18 out of 34 provinces on September 12, 2020, when Doha talks began, and the violence has continued ever since. In October 2020, the United States called the ongoing Taliban offensive against the provincial capital of Helmand "inconsistent" with the US-Taliban agreement and launched airstrikes in support of Afghan government forces.

The United Nations reported that while the number of civilian casualties in the first nine months of 2020 was the lowest since 2012, the damage to the civilian population remains "excessive and shocking" with about 6,000 Afghans killed or wounded in combat in 2020.

The Taliban, whose main priority was the withdrawal of foreign troops, did not describe their specific proposals for a possible compromise. In his opening speech at the talks, Mullah Baradar spoke about the desire for an Afghanistan to be independent, sovereign, united, developed and free, an Afghanistan with an Islamic system in which all people of all nations can participate without discrimination.

The IRA government dismissed speculation of a possible power-sharing, and speaking at the opening of the talks, Secretary Pompeo urged Afghans to preserve their democratic gains while stressing the limits of US influence, saying that the choice of political system must be Afghan.

Meanwhile, as of July 2020, ANDSF had a total strength of around 289,000. Other metrics related to ANDSF strength and performance, including casualties and attrition, have been classified by the US military in Afghanistan since SIGAR's October 2017 quarterly report, citing a request from the Afghan government, although SIGAR has previously published these metrics in its quarterly reports. US air operations have stepped up significantly under the Trump administration. In the first months of 2020 alone, US forces carried out 1,010 strikes in 27 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces.

ATSIGAR's January 30, 2019 report states that Kabul's control or influence has fallen to 53.8% as of October 2018. This is the lowest figure recorded by SIGAR since tracking began in November 2015; 12% of the districts were under militant control or influence, and the remaining 34% were contested. The dynamics of the conflict over the past two years do not appear to have shifted in favor of the Afghan government.

Operations have been significantly reduced since the US-Taliban agreement, although the US has stressed that it periodically strikes the Taliban, which the United States characterizes as violating the agreement. It was noted that among the political and military elite of the United States there is no unity regarding the immediate actions due to the complexity of the Afghan conflict and the lack of progress.

In general, significant changes have taken place in the NATO mission in Afghanistan during the period of US President D. Trump. At the first stage, until mid-2018, there was a certain intensification of military efforts, and then a period of peace negotiations began, which ended with the signing of an agreement between the US government and the Taliban on February 29, 2020, which includes US commitments to withdraw troops, including NATO, and the Taliban's

commitment to start a peace process. However, there have been no significant changes throughout 2020, and NATO's prospects remain directly dependent on US decisions and the peace process in Afghanistan.

Conclusion.

The period of 2014-2020 was in many ways decisive for the end of the military conflict and the current situation in Afghanistan. It can be noted that the conflict in Afghanistan had long and deep roots, and, regardless of direct external intervention, had a complex and multi-level character.

NATO's Resolute Support mission aimed to assist the Afghan security forces in their training and infrastructure development, thereby preparing the conditions for the end of the foreign force presence. Despite some successes, mainly in maintaining the Afghan National Army and preventing large-scale Taliban gains, the NATO mission failed to address a number of fundamental problems, including improving the combat capability of the Afghan security forces and combating corruption, ethnic problems and the remaining split within the Afghan government.

The 2020 peace agreement and its implementation were hampered by the low level of trust and complete dependence of the IRA government on external funding, as well as the unwillingness of the Taliban to become part of the government, which they called puppet.

Thus, the uncertainty of the situation, the lack of understanding of how to achieve progress and under what conditions a compromise was possible, prepared the basis for the subsequent transfer of all power to the Taliban in 2021 and the establishment of peace in the country.

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AFGHAN CONTEXT OF U.S. NATIONAL INTERESTS

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Abstract: *It is common knowledge that beginning of the 21st century did not bring the expected solutions to global and regional problems. Moreover, at the beginning of the XXI century the world shuddered from the terrible international terrorist attack (2001) in the United States, after which the Western world, led by the United States, with the support of the countries of Central Asia, launched the anti-terrorist operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. September 11 attacks were a turning point in the change U.S. regional foreign policy and have put Central Asia among the regions that have a tangible impact on security in the world. This article explores the spread of U.S. influence as a superpower in the Central Asian region through the war in Afghanistan. The research also analyzes the results of American involvement into the region and tendencies, as well as conceptual and theoretical foundations in the strategy and tactics of the U.S. foreign policy in Central Asia. In addition to the above mentioned, the article determines methods of stabilization within and around the region, consolidation of efforts to counter the security threat, as well as optimization of the foreign policy capabilities of the countries of the region and their main external partners in promoting integration processes in Central Asia. The United States is the leading world power, possessing significant resources, political, economic and military power and its involvement in the region should therefore, from the point of view of the countries of the region, primarily contribute to the solution of regional problems. Washington, however, has its own interests and aspirations in Central Asia, an objective vision and consideration of which will also facilitate the interaction of all interested parties.*

Keywords: Central Asia, United States (U.S.), Afghanistan, foreign policy, region.

INTRODUCTION

The theoretical framework in understanding American foreign policy in Central Asia in particular covers various theories of international relations. It is common knowledge that for more than 40 years basic views of international

relations had been bipolarity, and all events have been viewed through the prism of such bipolarity.

By the end of 20th century great geopolitical changes had taken place in the countries of Central Asia. The collapse of the USSR led to the emergence of 15 independent states. As a result, geopolitical and economic vacuum has appeared in the countries of Central Asia. Initially, U.S. foreign policy towards the region was unclear due to the sudden collapse of the USSR. It might explain why many American foreign policy analysts, accustomed to see the USSR as a single element, found difficult to accept the political and economic independence of the newly independent post-Soviet Central Asian states. At first, the U.S. State Department did not have a clear strategy for the Central Asian region.

In addition, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise of free markets around the world in the early 1990s, were seen as a new opportunity for the active pursuit of American foreign policy. Zbigniew Brzezinski, Polish-American political scientist in his work "Geostrategy for Eurasia" emphasizes the economic and political significance of Eurasia, especially when it comes to predicting its possible rivalry in hegemony with the United States, since Russia, China and the EU are located on this continent. Therefore, as Brzezinski suggests, the main goal of American foreign policy in this region should be the presence and maintenance of geopolitical pluralism [1].

After the end of Cold War many international relations theorists and foreign policy analysts could not immediately describe emerging world structure. Opinions of analysts divided on whether the world structure would be a unipolar, which led by the United States, or whether the world structure would have multipolar system. Foreign policy analysts explained their view with the emergence of the European Union and Japan as new economic giants. As Joseph Nye noted in 1994, "the structure of power is like a game of chess in three dimensions [2].

The first dimension, which was considered military power and ability to demonstrate its military strength was occupied by the U.S.. The second dimension was supposed to be economic and at that dimension U.S., the EU, Japan, and possibly China were at equal position. And at the bottom, "a variety of transnational relationships are built that are beyond the control of states, including financial flows, drug trafficking, terrorism and ozone depletion" [3]. The multitude of international players, including international and intergovernmental organizations, and the atmosphere after the end of the Cold War have led to the placement of some new accents in understanding and analyzing events taking

place in the field of international relations. It is believed that today the field of international relations and geopolitics is dominated by neorealism and neoliberalism, the theories that often used as tools for analyzing foreign policy.

It is common knowledge that foreign policy analysis in general is dominated by geopolitics. Geopolitics opens up opportunities for a much broader and more accurate analysis of U.S. foreign policy in Central Asia, together with the enlarged Central Asia partnership doctrine as the basis for such politicians. The Geopolitics often used foreign policy variables as U.S. national interest, priorities, incentives, world view, geopolitical and strategic importance. Nevertheless, the U.S. had 3 priorities in the region:

1. Securing the legacy of Soviet weapons of mass destruction;
2. Helping the Central Asian countries attain and defend their newly won sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity against a potential resurgence of Russian neo-imperialism;
3. Breaking up Russia's monopoly over pipelines and transit routes for Central Asian oil and gas as a means of ensuring the region's independence from Russia [4].

The first two stages of American foreign policy with the countries of Central Asia were determined by the functions of US policy, priorities and relations with the countries of the region. The third stage is more difficult, since the absence of US military forces in Afghanistan will require Washington to identify and prioritize U.S. interests and relations in the region.

THE INITIAL STAGES OF THE FORMATION OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY IN CENTRAL ASIA

The end of the Cold War had a considerable impact on foreign relations with the United States. Analysts of foreign policy were faced with a dilemma: how to use national resources and formulate a new foreign policy in the new conditions and realities of the post-war world structure. Accustomed to the three main paradigms of American Cold War foreign policy—namely, containing the territorial expansion of the USSR, limiting the spread of its ideology, and promoting the development of the U.S.-led world economy while advancing the principles of democracy and the free market, analysts were unable to quickly formulate new political objectives.

Before the events of 2001, Washington had the fact of increased competition in the Central Asia region in the form of a hidden confrontation with China and Russia. U.S. State Department did not have clear foreign strategy

towards Central Asia. Political initiatives of the early 1990s, reflected in the Silk Road Act I document was one of the first steps directed to this region. This document did not clarify the political aspects of the regional political culture, but only pointed to the hasty economic and political transformation of the post-Soviet states of Central Asia. As noted in the introduction of the document: "Eight years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Silk Road Strategy Act establishes a policy framework that elevates and differentiates Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan from the status of ``former Soviet republics" and ``newly independent states." The very use of these labels by U.S. policy makers has frustrated states in the South Caucasus and Central Asia that view themselves as permanently independent and sovereign countries... The countries in the South Caucasus and Central Asia have almost without exception shown a strong desire to work with the United States in pursuit of economic and democratic reforms. Clearly, enormous economic gains are possible in several countries in the region due to the presence of oil and gas reserves. The goal of the United States should be to promote economic and democratic reforms in the region while helping to develop oil and gas resources in a manner that is beneficial to all states in the region..." [5]

Another notable fact is that The United States also involved Central Asia in the Partnership for Peace program, created in 1994 at the initiative of NATO. In this way, it can be argued that early U.S. policy towards Central Asia was limited to providing small grants in various areas, some assistance in training customs and border patrol, and limited assistance in the implementation of economic and political reforms.

After the Cold War two White House administrations: the administrations of George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton using the tools of the "new world order" and "neo-dollar diplomacy" tried to cope with the realities of the new world structure. The sudden fall of a former rival power made it necessary to change course quickly. Nevertheless, there was some delay in the implementation of foreign policy actions in relation to the countries of Central Asia. This could be explained by the fact that **at the initial stage the United States did not see any national interests in this region** [6].

US FOREIGN POLICY IN CENTRAL ASIA AFTER 9/11 ATTACKS

Al-Qaeda operatives hijack four commercial airliners and crashed into the World Trade Center, which is located in New York, DC. More than 3,000 people

were killed in the attacks. Despite the fact that Afghanistan was a base for al-Qaeda base, none of the nineteen hijackers were an Afghan citizen. The group was led by the Egyptian Mohammed Atta, and fifteen terrorists were from Saudi Arabia. President George W. Bush vows to "win the war against terrorism" and will later focus on al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan [7].

President George W. Bush signed a joint resolution authorizing the use of force against those responsible for the attacking on the 9/11. This joint resolution would later be cited by the Bush judiciary as legal rationale for its decision to take measures to combat terrorism, from invading Afghanistan, to eavesdropping U.S. citizens without a court order, to standing up detention at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba [8].

The concept of Washington's policy in Central Asia has undergone some evolution, the main characteristic of which was the change in targets from a general global character to a specific pragmatic one. An indicator of this approach is the current US policy aimed at rationally using the advantages of relations with the states of the region in the context of solving specific problems, primarily due to the fight against global terrorism [9].

It should be pointed out that American foreign policy had been changed not only on a global scale but also in Central Asia, after the terrorist attacks 9/11. Central Asian region became geopolitical important for U.S. due to the proximity of Afghanistan. Two military bases have been established as war on terror has required closer strategic warfare points: at Manas Airport in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and at Karshi-Khanabad in Uzbekistan. However, it can be seen that the U.S. military presence in Central Asia was explained in two different dimensions. First, it was believed that U.S. had only short-term military interests in Central Asia. Second, it was said that U.S. actions were aimed at a revival of the Great Game of the nineteenth century, calling it a "New Great Game" in which America sought control over the region [10].

Initially, the invasion of Afghanistan was explained by the national interests of the United States, the most important of which was a national security. The purpose of the military operation that followed the September 11 attacks was the destruction of international terrorists at the Al-Qaeda bases in Afghanistan and the prevention of new terrorist attacks on the United States. U.S. did not have aim to build a democratic state in Afghanistan. This set of goals and objectives, which determined the U.S. strategy in Afghanistan in the early stages of the invasion (2001-2002), fully corresponded to the concept of protecting national interests, which is the core of the American school of political realism.

Due to realism and pragmatic nature of U.S. foreign policy, most of these goals were achieved by the end of 2002. With the US intervention in the conflict in Afghanistan, the Taliban attack against the Northern Alliance was stopped; the main Taliban military forces were partly dispersed, partly destroyed. By the end of 2002, any organized military resistance from the Taliban did not occur. Such a sharp transition from a victorious attack to a withdrawal from almost all occupied territories left the top leadership of the Taliban in a state of deep confusion, followed by a state of prostration. Consequentially, the new Afghan government in Kabul along with its allies celebrated the conquest.

At the same time, the military lull turned out to be temporary: contrary to popular belief, the Taliban did not suffer a military defeat in 2001-2002, but simply refused to fight on the Americans' terms, returning to guerrilla and sabotage warfare. Their leadership correctly assessed the operational situation and rebuilt the command-and-control system: for example, the Taliban refused to defend some provinces where they were doomed to defeat, such as Helmand province, and withdrew into hard-to-reach areas, making their support for their bases.

If we consider the theory of neoliberals, success in exporting democracy and spreading universal values directly depends on the presence of the U.S. military in Afghanistan. Ultimately, Afghanistan along with Central Asia according to the classic of American geopolitics Mackinder, located in the Heartland, "the heart of the earth", and as Mackinder said in his works, whoever owns the Heartland owns the world [11].

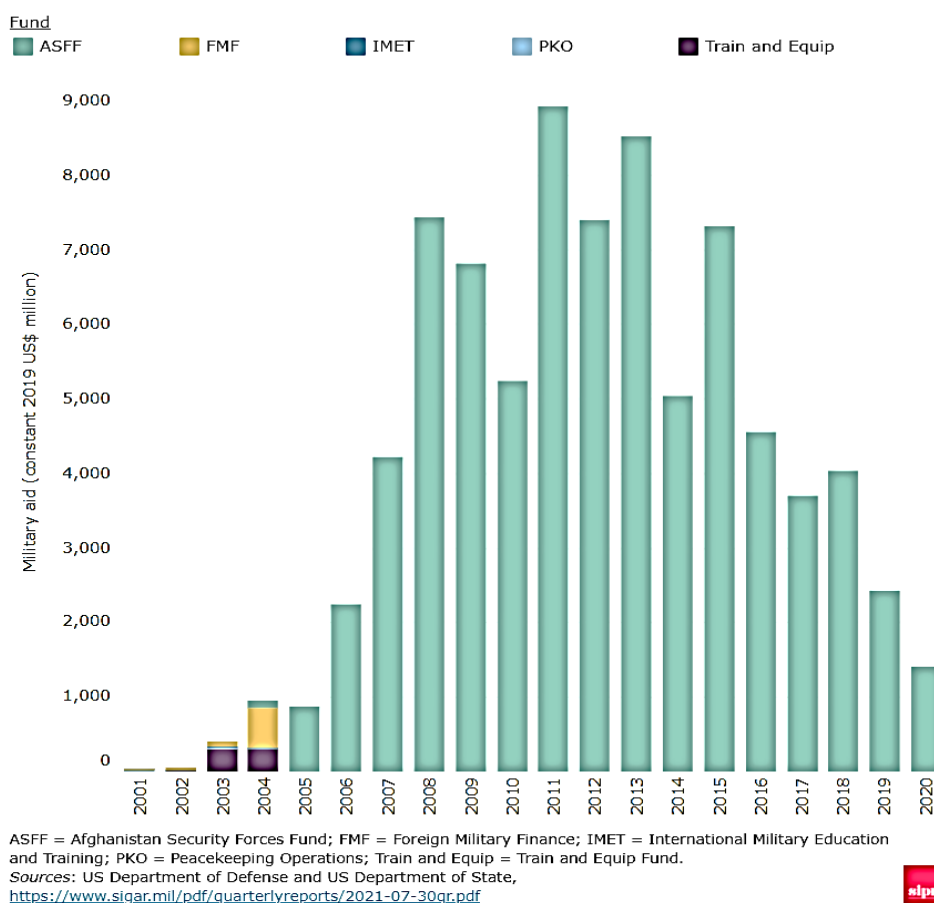
That is why the war in Afghanistan had a completely different meaning for liberals than for realists: for the latter, it is just a military operation, the purpose of which is to protect national interests by destroying al-Qaeda; for the liberals, the mastery of Afghanistan is a key element of their strategy to spread democratic values and form a new model of the world order. To leave Afghanistan for the realists is a natural and expected step related to the achievement of all the military goals set in this region. For liberals, this is the collapse of all their geopolitical concepts, the rejection of plans to build a monopoly world.

Regarding to the U.S. budget, after the final withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, President Biden suggested that the war in Afghanistan had most likely cost the USA more than US \$2 trillion.

Of all the reported US security-related reconstruction spending in Afghanistan, SIPRI considers five budget lines as military aid. These come from two sources: Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of State (DOS).

Between 2001 and 2020, disbursements to Afghanistan from these five funds totaled \$72.7 billion in current dollars (\$81.6 billion in constant 2019 dollars).

Figure 2. US military aid to Afghanistan, 2001–2020



Source: 20 years of US military aid to Afghanistan. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute [12].

The war in Afghanistan lasted for a decade and a half and remains the main security problem for Central Asian leaders. U.S. strategy provided for the concentration of forces primarily in the south of the country to fight the main strongholds of the Taliban, while the northern regions of Afghanistan remained without sufficient support.

However, instability in northern part of Afghanistan poses a dual threat to Central Asia. First, the conflict has spread to the very borders of the region, which could exacerbate problems with extremism in Central Asia [13]. Terrorist groups in Afghanistan that have formed from the in Central Asia and do not hide their intentions to return to their homeland. The leaders of the region consider the groups a direct threat to their security in their opinion, the international coalition

underestimated and ignored this threat for a long time, and now it is left to the states of Central Asia to deal with it on their own.

CONCLUSION

It can be assumed that the main root of the transition to a value orientation in US foreign policy in Afghanistan occurred due to connection with the rapid and impressive military successes (the defeat of the Taliban, which took only three months) and the destruction of Al-Qaeda's main strongholds in Afghanistan, Washington needed a new justification for its presence on the territory of a sovereign state. Former occasions were not enough convincing: the Taliban had been repulsed (many believed defeated), al-Qaeda had been dealt a serious blow from which it would be difficult to recover. There is no need for a foreign military presence in the country. However, the US decided to stay in Afghanistan. The reason for this was, of course, its important strategic position: due to military bases located in Afghanistan, **U.S. could control the Central Asian region, keep Russia from influencing on the region, threaten Iran and put pressure on China and India.** This, probably, turned out to be the main reason for the change in the US political rhetoric regarding Afghanistan: it was officially announced that the mission in Afghanistan would be completed only when a full-fledged democratic society was formed in the country, in which universal democratic values would win and strengthen.

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PART II

**TRANSFORMATION PROCESSES IN
CENTRAL ASIA**

KAZAKHSTAN AND SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract: The existing mechanisms of preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution have given serious failures; security threats are on the rise, including terrorism, the arms race, all sorts of hybrid wars, climate change; there is a clash in the field of geo-economics of two polar trends - globalism and nationalism. Under these conditions, the Head of Kazakhstan believes, it is necessary to find an effective solution to the most pressing issue: how to adapt the SCO to the difficult realities in the name of the deep interests of our citizens

Today, the SCO, - the Head of Kazakhstan believes, - is rightfully regarded as an effective tool for strengthening cooperation and trust in a space covering a quarter of the planet's territory, 40% of the world's population and a third of world GDP [1].

At the same time, K-Zh. Tokayev, the situation in the area of responsibility of the SCO, which has entered the process of deep transformation, is rather complicated. A severe test for the world community was the coronavirus pandemic, which clearly showed all the flaws in international cooperation, including the crisis of confidence between global powers. The existing mechanisms of preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution have given serious failures; security threats are on the rise, including terrorism, the arms race, all sorts of hybrid wars, climate change; there is a clash in the field of geo-economics of two polar trends - globalism and nationalism. Under these conditions, the Head of Kazakhstan believes, it is necessary to find an effective solution to the most pressing issue: how to adapt the SCO to the difficult realities in the name of the deep interests of our citizens? [2]

Chinese President Xi Jinping defines the approach to resolving this issue as follows: "Under the current conditions, the SCO should develop the "Shanghai Spirit", deepen cohesion and interaction, make a new contribution to ensuring

security and development in the countries of the region, and find a way to create a community of common destiny through practical steps. humanity" [3].

1. US President J. Biden on policy towards SCO locomotives - China and Russia

Today we are witnessing the aggravation of problems and imbalances in the world. February 4 p. US President John Biden delivered an address to the American nation at the State Department, in which he outlined the foreign policy strategy of the United States, the essence of which lies in his call "America is back. America can no longer afford to be absent from the world stage and is ready to take the lead again." J. Biden announced the main challenges for the United States in the present and future are two countries that, according to him, threaten the well-being, security and democratic values of America. This is, firstly, China with its "growing ambitions", seeking to "compete with the United States", and, secondly, Russia, which has a "firm intention to discredit and destroy American democracy", committed aggressive actions against the United States, in particular.

At the same time, J. Biden called China the most serious competitor for the United States. The American President said: "We will counter China's economic abuses; resist his aggressive, violent actions; to fend off China's attacks on human rights, intellectual property and global governance." At the same time, J. Biden cynically clarified that the United States is ready to cooperate with China if it is in America's interests [5].

However, J. Biden is forced to admit that the time of the sole and monopoly leadership of the United States has passed. Therefore, Washington plans to fight China and Russia, with global challenges together with key partners, alliances with which the US plans to restore in the near future. In this case, J. Biden believes, America will be able to "again stand shoulder to shoulder with allies and partners" against its opponents and competitors [6].

In our opinion, J. Biden does not understand the essence of the cardinal changes in the world that are taking place in the third decade of the 21st century. This, in particular, drew the attention of Russian President V. Putin, in whose opinion, the era associated with attempts to build a centralized, unipolar world order is over. Such a monopoly, simply by its very nature, contradicts the cultural, historical diversity of human civilization.

To date, various development centers have formed in the world with their own original models, political systems, and public institutions. Therefore, today, - V. Putin believes, - it is important to build such coordination mechanisms so that

diversity, natural competition of development poles does not turn into anarchy, protracted conflicts [7].

2. US strategy in Central Asia

In February 2020, the US strategy for Central Asia in 2019-2020 was presented. This document states that Central Asia is a geostrategic region important to US national security, regardless of the level of US activity in Afghanistan.

Of course, the countries of Central Asia and Kazakhstan are of no economic or political interest to Washington by themselves. Washington will increase its attention to Kazakhstan and Central Asia, because the main rivals and competitors of the United States now are Russia and China, neighboring countries in the region.

The United States, regardless of who is the president of the country (D. Trump or J. Biden), will strive to prevent the rapprochement between Beijing and Moscow, in particular, to disrupt the connection of the EAEU with the Belt and Road megaproject. An equally important task

for the United States is to undermine the authority and reduce the effectiveness of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the main locomotives of which are Russia and China.

It cannot be ruled out that in the hot heads of American politicians a plan has already matured to create a dividing barrier between Russia and China in Central Asia, by analogy with the created cordon between Russia and Europe, the “bricks” of which have already formed Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Ukraine, Georgia.

At the same time, the United States will try to convince the population of Kazakhstan and Central Asian countries of Russia's aggressiveness, on the one hand, and the threat of economic expansion from China, on the other. The West has reliable information that China is by no means the largest creditor of developing countries. Of the \$330 billion in foreign direct investment in the Kazakh economy, more than half comes from the EU. The share of China is only about \$20 billion (5%). For comparison, the share of the Netherlands is \$90.4 billion, the USA is \$48.4 billion, Switzerland is \$25.8 billion, etc.

Former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, during a spring tour of Central Asia in 2020, directly threatened that companies in the countries of the region cooperating with Chinese and Russian companies would fall under US sanctions.

And those firms that will be friends with American concerns, on the contrary, will receive the most favorable conditions and good prospects.

The entire history of human civilization shows that if a state wants to spoil relations with a neighbor for the sake of a third country, it always goes sideways. You don't have to look far for examples, just look at Ukraine or Georgia. Ukraine considered that it could be friends with the United States against Russia, and then it would be accepted into the European Union and NATO. As a result, Ukraine is now in a state of never-ending civil strife, and the population, split along ethnic and confessional lines, has decreased from 52 million people in 1991 to 33 million people in 2020.

Georgia tried to drag chestnuts out of the fire for the United States, following the example of Ukraine. As a result, this country is in a state of economic and political crisis and has lost Abkhazia and South Ossetia. And the population of Georgia, employed mainly in agriculture and tourism, decreased from 5.45 million people in 1991 to 3.72 million people. Of these, one third of the population of the republic lives in Tbilisi - 1.062 million people.

So any attempt from the outside to spoil the relations of Kazakhstan with its territorial neighbors, primarily with China and Russia, under any pretext, is contrary to national interests. Particular vigilance must be exercised, given the long experience of the United States in eliminating its competitors through "color revolutions".

3. The main priorities of Kazakhstan's participation in the SCO

It seems to us that for Kazakhstan at present the priority areas of participation in the SCO are the following: 1) Strengthening transport and logistics cooperation within the framework of the SCO. 2) The fight against the forces of the "three evils" (terrorism, religious extremism, separatism). 3) Fight against the coronavirus pandemic.

3.1. Strengthening transport and logistics cooperation as a link in trade between the SCO member countries.

For Kazakhstan, which does not have access to maritime trade routes, the integration project of the Eurasian Economic Union and the Belt and Road megaproject are of particular interest, since they open access to maritime transport and, accordingly, to the markets of Europe and Asia. As a result, favorable conditions for sustainable economic growth and social development will be created for Kazakhstan. Of no small importance will be the collection of customs duties for the transportation of goods through our territory.

Therefore, Kazakhstan is interested in the successful implementation of the Belt and Road megaproject and other infrastructure and logistics projects.

In turn, the Silk Road Economic Belt through Kazakhstan is a kind of "golden gate" for Beijing, since hypothetically, the United States can block sea routes to China's ports at any time, since they have military superiority in three oceans at once - the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific. And the route through Kazakhstan, not controlled by the US military, is absolutely safe for China.

Despite the coronavirus epidemic and its accompanying restrictions, from January to November 2020, more than 9,000 rail container trains traveled from China to Europe and back (up 30% compared to the same period in 2019), and the volume of rail freight traffic reached 18, 06 million tons, an increase of 27% [8].

In addition, if the transportation of goods from China to Germany by sea takes about 40 days, then by rail through Kazakhstan - 16-18 days.

The Chinese formula "Crises come and go, but roads remain" actually became a guide to action for the government of Kazakhstan, which managed to fulfill the task of transporting Europe and Asia, as a result of which 6 automobile, 9 railway and 4 air corridors pass through the territory of our country today international importance.

Now transport logistics forms 8.1% of Kazakhstan's GDP. Very promising in this regard is the participation of Kazakhstan in the construction of the international automobile corridor "Western Europe - Western China", with a length of 8445 kilometers, of which 2787 kilometers fall on our territory. Thanks to this project, the time of cargo transportation from the Chinese port of Lianyungang on the Pacific coast (via Khorgos, Almaty, Taraz, Shymkent, Kyzylorda, Aktobe, Orenburg, Kaza in., Moscow) to St. Petersburg will take only 10 days, which is 3, 5 times less than by sea. Due to this project, we reconstructed the roadbed from Khorgos to Aktobe through the southern regions of the country (Zhambyl, Turkestan, Kyzylorda). The only question is when Russia will complete its section of the road (2233 kilometers).

Kazakhstan supports China's initiatives on the earliest possible opening of transit transportation of goods along automobile routes between the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of the PRC, the East Kazakhstan region of Kazakhstan and the Omsk region of Russia.

Therefore, Kazakhstan stands for the early development and subsequent signing of the SCO Road Development Program.

3.2. The fight against the "forces of three evils"

World turbulence has led to the activation of the "forces of three evils" - separatism, terrorism and extremism. An adequate response of the SCO to the growing risks could be the active implementation of the Cooperation Program of the SCO member states to counter terrorism, separatism and extremism, including on the Internet.

3.2.1. Fight against terrorism

For the security of Kazakhstan and the countries of Central Asia, the penetration of Islamic State militants (ISIL-Daesh) into the provinces of northern Afghanistan continues to be a real threat. We believe that the external forces that finance ISIS will persistently push the militants to spread their activities on the territory of the countries of Central Asia - members of the SCO.

The next task of ISIS will be to further expand extremist activities outside Central Asia in two directions - to the northeast, to the regions of compact residence of the Muslim population in Russia and to the east - to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) of the PRC, where the Muslim population is densely populated. population.

It is no secret that immigrants from the countries of Central Asia and the SU AR of the PRC took part in the hostilities in Syria and Iraq.

According to US experts, Central Asia has been the third largest source of foreign fighters for the Islamic State, al-Nusra Front and other terrorist organizations in Iraq and Syria. According to them, more than 4,000 militants from Central Asia, including more than 1,000 citizens of Tajikistan, more than 500 citizens of Kyrgyzstan, about 500 citizens of Kazakhstan, and at least 300 Uyghur Muslims from the XUAR of China, took part in the conflict in Iraq and Syria.

Only from Kazakhstan, the entry of 546 mercenaries to Iraq and Syria was prevented (in 2013 - 168 people; in 2014 - 136; in 2015 - 151; in 2016 - 91). 79 Kazakh citizens were returned from the camps of international terrorist organizations, as well as from third countries.

It should be considered that 251,525 citizens of Uighur nationality live in the Almaty region bordering the PRC and in the city of Almaty. At present, none of the numerous Uyghur organizations registered in Kazakhstan openly declares the creation of a sovereign Uyghur state on the territory of the XUAR of the PRC and the border regions of the Almaty region. The scope of their activities is limited

to solving linguistic, cultural and humanitarian problems, lobbying for national business projects. But it must be borne in mind that under the influence of external influence, the situation in some Uyghur national cultural organizations on this issue may change.

We do not rule out that attempts to destabilize the situation in the countries of Central Asia using the technologies of political Islam (considering the proven technologies in Syria, Iraq and other countries of the Middle East) are possible. For example, in Tajikistan, according to the Tajik expert M.Olimov, the situation in Tajikistan can be destabilized from the outside due to the activation of terrorist groups in Afghanistan. Considering that 16% of young Tajik Muslims in some cases allow the use of religiously motivated violence and suicide tactics [9], destabilization of the situation in this country cannot be ruled out. If this happens, it could cause a "domino effect" in the region.

Daesh's financial resources make it an attractive sponsor for the so far scattered underground radical Islamist groups in Central Asia. Therefore, the SCO member countries need to take coordinated measures to cut off channels of external funding for such groups. The problem is that in addition to foreign sponsors, some businessmen in the region are beginning to support the idea of an Islamic caliphate: some pay the "jihad tax" voluntarily, others - as a result of intimidation and blackmail by Islamic radicals.

The return to their homeland of citizens of the countries of Central Asia and the XUAR of China, who have undergone military training and indoctrination in the ranks of Daesh, can lead to the activation and subsequent unification of the above-mentioned underground groups. We attribute the successful coup d'état in Bishkek to well-trained fighters from hidden IS cells stationed in the Kyrgyz part of the Ferghana Valley.

The persistence of the popularity of the ideas of radical Islam in Kazakhstan and in the Central Asian republics is alarming. The main reason is the deterioration of the socio-economic situation (poverty, unemployment, polarization of society), caused largely by corruption, nepotism, injustice, and the lack of "social lifts". Under these conditions, radical Islam appears to some of the disadvantaged people as the only hope for restoring social justice and improving their financial situation. As a result, despite the official ban, there are underground organizations in the countries of the region that promote the ideas of radical Islam, as well as lone radicals.

Thus, the first terrorist act in Kazakhstan took place in the summer of 2000 in Almaty, when migration police officers accidentally ran into armed militants of one of the Uighur separatist organizations from the XUAR of the PRC. Both criminals were killed after fierce resistance.

In 2011-2016, a number of terrorist acts took place on the territory of Kazakhstan. In the summer of 2011, an armed attack was made on two police officers in the Aktobe region.

On June 5, 2016, in Aktobe, 26 people, from among the so-called self-employed persons, carried out armed attacks on two weapons stores and a military unit of the National Guard (7 dead, 40 wounded, 18 criminals killed, 20 suspects detained).

A month later, on July 18, 2016, in Almaty, an unemployed lone criminal committed an armed attack on the building of the Almaty Department of Internal Affairs, and then opened fire in the city center (as a result, 8 law enforcement officers and 2 civilians were killed). The perpetrator was arrested and sentenced to death.

In all these cases, attention is drawn to the number of participants in the terrorist attacks, on the one hand, the high military and small arms training of the terrorists, on the other.

During the same period, the National Security Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan conducted four large-scale special operations in Atyrau, Aktobe and Almaty regions.

From 2014 to 2017, 30 terrorist acts were prevented on the territory of Kazakhstan. In April 2019, a man was detained in Almaty for preparing a terrorist attack in one of the shopping and entertainment centers. An arsenal of firearms and extremist literature was found in his apartment. The offender was sentenced to 10 years in a strict regime corrective labor colony [10].

In September 2019, 7 citizens of Tajikistan were detained in Kazakhstan, who were planning to organize a series of explosions in Almaty: in the Iversko-Serafimovsky Orthodox convent and in the building of the ATF Bank. The criminals were sentenced to 12-18 years in a strict regime corrective labor colony without the right to subsequently enter Kazakhstan.

In March 2020, a resident of Almaty, a supporter of the Daesh group banned in Kazakhstan, was detained. He intended to organize a series of terrorist acts in crowded places during the celebration of the spring holiday Nauryz. Two military

grenades were seized from the detainee. The investigation into his case is ongoing [11].

According to the data of the National Security Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as of June 2019, 662 citizens of Kazakhstan were convicted and are serving sentences in correctional labor institutions for crimes related to terrorism and religious extremism.

It is the representatives of the socially disadvantaged segments of the population in Central Asia that serve as the main base for recruiting militants committed to jihadism. And we need to understand a simple truth: if the socio-economic protest takes on a religious form, this can destabilize the situation in Central Asia.

3.2.2. The growth of religiosity of the population of the region

The pseudo-idea of an Islamic state, based on Sharia, on the principles of supposedly social justice, as well as opposition to the anti-Islamic policy of the West, is gaining more and more popularity not only in the global Muslim Ummah, but also among part of the Muslims of Central Asia.

In Kazakhstan, during the first six months of 2015, experts recommended closing about 400 Internet resources due to the fact that they contained information calling for religious extremism, showed mass executions of people, and posted propaganda materials of non-traditional religious organizations.

Unfortunately, the official clergy, the authorities of the countries of the region have so far been ineffective in counteracting the propaganda of Daesh.

Although political Islam in Kazakhstan and in the republics of Central Asia is currently in its infancy, nevertheless, it expands the resource base and prepares the social ground for positioning as an alternative to the secular vector of development. This is evidenced by the detention in the West Kazakhstan and Aktobe regions in August 2016 of 21 citizens who were members of three radical groups. In addition, in December 2016, in Aktobe, Atyrau and Almaty regions, 16 members of the religious extremist organization At-Takfir wal-Hijra were neutralized, accused of inciting religious hatred, of promoting the principle of takfir, the so-called accusation of unbelief, on which the ideology is built. Daesh and Al-Qaeda.

Particular attention should be paid to the problem of radicalization of youth and women. For example, in Aktobe in December 2016, seven young residents of the Aktobe region were arrested and convicted, including several minors, who

planned to commit terrorist acts in nightclubs and shopping centers in the neighboring Russian Federation.

In Almaty, in 2020, employees of the Center for Rehabilitation Activities carried out preventive and explanatory work with 884 citizens, as a result of which 52 people were rehabilitated and converted to traditional Islam, and another 135 people were adapted to the values of Kazakhstani society.

Currently, 13 women and 33 children are living in Almaty, returned by law enforcement agencies from the countries of the Near and Middle East as part of the Zhusan operations. As a result of the preventive work carried out, two women were rehabilitated after exposure to radical ideology, and eight women were adapted to the values of Kazakhstani society. Five women are employed, and 10 school-age children are provided with all school supplies [12].

3.2.3. The need for collective action to neutralize terrorism and extremism

Currently, work to counter terrorism and extremism is carried out not only at the national level, but also within the framework of the relevant structures of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, and the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS). As a result, the activity of foreign extremist and terrorist organizations on the territory of the Central Asian states has significantly decreased.

Nevertheless, in our opinion, the cooperation of law enforcement organizations in the region in the fight against terrorism and extremism is not effective enough. The special services of the SCO member states lack regional cooperation in neutralizing international terrorism, religious extremism, as well as the international criminal syndicates that feed them, specializing in illegal migration, arms smuggling, drug and precursor trafficking. The main reason for this is that the activities of the special services, for example, the countries of Central Asia, are primarily focused on neutralizing threats and challenges against the ruling regimes in the region. Therefore, access of specialists and experts from neighboring countries to information about the internal situation of the countries of the region is difficult.

As a result, cooperation between the special services of the SCO member states often comes down to holding demonstration exercises, scientific conferences, and other similar events. There is a need to work out joint actions against not fictitious, but real threats and challenges coming from outside.

Currently, in the context of the fight against coronavirus, we are witnessing the transfer of many areas of social and economic life to the online space. In this

regard, the importance of combating terrorism and religious extremism in cyberspace is growing sharply. Therefore, Kazakhstan proposes to create an Information Security Center on the basis of the SCO RATS.

In connection with the foregoing, we would consider it appropriate to draw attention to the following:

1. In Kazakhstan, unlike the countries of Central Asia, the process of the revival of Islam is not so noticeable, and is generally characterized by a spontaneous form of development. At the same time, there is a noticeable influence from outside, primarily from the monarchies of the Persian Gulf.

2. Secular governments in Kazakhstan and in the countries of Central Asia are trying to manage the processes in the religious sphere, mainly by administrative and bureaucratic means and measures. For example, in Kazakhstan, a ministry for religious affairs and civil society was created.

3. It is necessary to implement the following preventive measures in order to form immunity to radical religious ideology:

a) constant monitoring of Internet resources to identify propaganda materials of a radical nature;

б) strengthening border and migration control in order to prevent the penetration of terrorists and extremists from outside, especially from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkey;

в) preventing the penetration of extremist and terrorist ideology into law enforcement agencies, as well as among the military personnel of the Armed Forces;

г) prevention of merging of criminal elements with extremists and terrorists, including in the conditions of corrective labor institutions.

4. Religious radicalization of the population is facilitated primarily by the deterioration of the socio-economic situation of a significant part of the population, as well as the low level of religious literacy of citizens.

5. For the SCO member countries, the issue of the reconstruction of Afghanistan is topical. Kazakhstan is ready to continue cooperation within the framework of the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group with an emphasis on the socio-economic rehabilitation of this country, since the development of the political and socio-economic situation in Central Asia largely depends on the stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan.

3.3. The fight against the coronavirus pandemic

We share the point of view of Russian President V. Putin that the coronavirus pandemic, which has become a serious challenge to all mankind, has only spurred and accelerated structural changes, the prerequisites for which were already sufficiently formed, exacerbating the problems and imbalances that had previously accumulated in the world. In this regard, it is difficult to disagree with V. Putin's opinion that there are no borders for infections and pandemics. Therefore, it is necessary to unite and coordinate the efforts of the whole world in the fight against the spread of the disease, to increase the availability of vaccines against coronavirus, to take measures aimed at improving the efficiency of the monitoring system for the emergence of such diseases in the world [13].

In the difficult situation of the coronavirus, the SCO was at its best in terms of coordinating efforts to overcome the negative consequences of the pandemic. The well-known proverb "a friend in need is a friend" was confirmed, which showed in practice the readiness of the SCO member states for mutual assistance and joint actions to combat the pandemic. Mutual humanitarian assistance and the dispatch of epidemiologists from China and Russia to Kazakhstan and the countries of Central Asia helped to stabilize the situation in the region.

So, at the very beginning of the pandemic, March 20. In a telephone conversation, Presidents K-Zh. Tokayev and V. Putin discussed the need to coordinate practical actions to prevent the spread of coronavirus in the two neighboring states. Earlier, Russia provided Kazakhstan with 40,000 sets of test systems. Later, another 60,000 test systems were handed over to the Kazakh side. Last summer, several groups of Russian doctors were sent to Kazakhstan to work in the infectious diseases departments of hospitals.

During the February 20 d. telephone conversation between the leaders of Kazakhstan and Russia, President K-Zh. Tokayev expressed satisfaction with the Kazakh-Russian cooperation in countering the coronavirus pandemic. In particular, the production of the Russian vaccine Sputnik V was launched in the Kazakh city of Karaganda, and agreements were reached between governments on the supply of the Russian vaccine to Kazakhstan [14].

On March 24, 2020, Chinese President Xi Jinping told President K-Zh by phone. Tokayev about China's readiness to provide humanitarian aid to Kazakhstan with medical devices. Already on April 2, a plane from Beijing delivered the first batch of humanitarian aid to Almaty airport. It included thermal imagers, a set of tests, medical shoe covers, gloves, goggles. Then, hundreds of

tons of medicines and medical supplies continued to arrive in Kazakhstan on a regular basis and in fairly substantial volumes. Moreover, such assistance was provided not only at the state level - it also came from private Chinese companies. And this is many times more than we received from other countries. 15 Chinese infectious disease doctors arrived in Nur-Sultan, Almaty, and other Kazakhstani cities at the most critical time, in April last year, for three weeks to provide practical medical care.

At the same time, it is clear that there will be a long struggle against the pandemic and its impact both on the health of our citizens and on the economies of the SCO member states. Therefore, in Kazakhstan, the initiative to create under the auspices of WHO a Network of Regional Centers for Epidemiological Disease Control and Biosafety is considered relevant. Of particular concern are the risks associated with the threat of biological terrorism. Therefore, it is no coincidence that the President of Kazakhstan, K-Zh. Tokayev, at the 75th session of the UN General Assembly, proposed the establishment of an International Biosafety Agency.

Thus, the citizens of the member countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization have high hopes for the activities of the SCO, since successful and effective cooperation of the SCO member countries on the basis of equality, consideration of mutual interests will allow the peoples of our countries to successfully fend off emerging threats and challenges and, therefore, ensure security and the well-being of our people.

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THE ROLE OF ETHNOCULTURAL TRADITIONS IN THE NEW CENTRAL ASIAN POLITICS

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ABSTRACT: *The fall of the Soviet Union led to the clearest expression of the ethnocultural peculiarities of the territories it controlled or depended on it, and this also applies to those of Central Asia. Although there were particular cultural preservation policies applied already in the Eastern Bloc, the ethno-cultural factor seems to become of vital importance in this historical period for this geographical-political context. This paper wants to trace a limited perspective of how important this aspect is in this portion of the globe, and how it can influence the future of the politics of the actors that determine its existence.*

KEYWORDS: *Central Asia; Ethno-cultural traditions; Politics; Nations; Eurasia*

In the Soviet Union and in the so-called Eastern Bloc there was a paradox, which was that of the development of nationalities and territorial cultures. On the one hand, the Soviet Union promoted cultural difference and the preservation of national peculiarities, on the other hand it implemented a process of homogenization typical of modern forms of statehood. Obviously, this type of contradiction must be conceptualized in its dialecticity, and must be compared with the historical context and the political-strategic options that the decision-makers had to take. In line with the Machiavellian distinction between means and ends²⁰ which has always undergone political mechanics, the relationship between real socialism and the national question has been multifaceted. In very general terms, we can say that the preservation of cultural differences could have been the aim of the politics of the USSR, where the power of the Soviet state and the communist geopolitical sphere which tended to standardize cultures were the means. Even more, this paradox can also be found within the communist doctrine, where (for Lenin and Stalin) the battle for national independence seems to be defined sometimes only as a means for the defeat of bourgeois imperialism. At other times, however, it seems clear that the people, in their Marxian meaning, are such only according to their ethno-cultural characteristics. Thus, as always

²⁰ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, in *Opere*, Biblioteca Treccani, Rome 2006, p. 58.

in the field of politics, this type of stratification of means and ends, and this continuous reversal between one and the other, produce a difficult understanding of historical events and the nature of political phenomena. Paradoxically, Marx himself, with his distinction between the structural and superstructural element of socio-economic-political formations, attempted to extricate himself from this type of hermeneutic tangle²¹. This complexity, however, cannot be reduced solely to the production of superstructural justifications of structural productive organizations, as also claimed by Engels²²: everything is much more complex, especially when one confronts the question of nationality.

On the one hand, the national question was a fundamental starting point for the Marxian discourse, as well as an element of great importance in the subsequent development of this school of thought. Roman Szporluk was able to describe communism as the continuation of the nationalistic ideology of the nineteenth century by other means, a continuation that paradoxically eventually consolidated itself to Soviet nationalism²³, the phenomenon that Mikhail Agursky will call “national-Bolshevism”²⁴. In short, at the time of Marx it was neither possible nor conceivable to operate a division between people and nation, even if the anti-capitalist vulgate often suggests that these two subjects are opposed since the nation is necessarily a transversal corporate and interclass concept. In reality, the “classic” Marxist option was to exclude the bourgeoisie from national membership, since its interests were inherently transnational and anti-popular.

Leninism, by relating Marxian communist theories with the ethno-cultural mosaic of the Russian Empire, had to take the national question seriously, elaborating for it an even more complex vision than that developed in Central Europe by Marx and Engels, given that that the social reality of the Russian imperial space was very composite and largely untouched by modernization and therefore by those political structures and institutions that instead existed in the West. Lenin took very seriously the question of the nationalities that made up the Soviet Union, going so far as to ask Stalin to continue this work through a

21 Karl Marx, *Per la critica dell'economia politica*, Editori Riuniti, Rome 1979.

22 Friedrich Engels, *Engels to J. Bloch in Königsberg*, in Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Vladimir I. Lenin, *On Historical Materialism*, Progress, Moscow 1972, pp. 294-296.

23 Roman Szporluk, *Communism and Nationalism: Karl Marx versus Friedrich List*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1993.

24 Mikhail Agursky, *The Third Rome: National Bolshevism in the USSR*, Westview, Boulder 1987.

systematic theoretical elaboration²⁵. The Soviet dissident of Georgian origin Michel Mouskhély wrote in this regard:

««Russia, wrote Lenin, is the prison of the peoples. » The October Revolution gave the signal for an uprising: one after another the alien peoples broke away from the dying empire to form independent communities. It was the case of Ukraine, the Baltic countries, the nations of the Caucasus, Belarus... Engaged in the civil war, the Bolsheviks ran the risk of having other parts of their national territory torn apart. To face all these dangers, to unite the dispersed peoples, to decide to regroup them again, there was only one way: to make the revolution the instrument of liberation of the enslaved peoples. One of the first acts of the leaders was the «declaration of the rights of the peoples of Russia» (November 15, 1917). The declaration set the following four principles:

- 1) Equality and sovereignty of all peoples of Russia;
- 2) Right of the peoples of Russia to dispose of themselves until separation and the establishment of an independent state;
- 3) Abolition of all privileges and restrictions of a national or national-religious nature;
- 4) Free development of national minorities and ethnic groups established on the territory of Russia. »²⁶

Stalin, disputing the ideas in the socialist world that believed that the role of communism was to amalgamate the nations, wrote thus, in response to a letter he received:

«The Russian Marxists have long had their theory of nations. According to this theory, a nation is a historically evolved, stable community of people, based upon the common possession of four principal attributes, namely: a common language, a common territory, a common economic life, and a common psychological make-up manifesting itself in common specific features of national culture. This theory, as we know, has received general recognition in our Party.

[It is] a grave error in putting an equal sign between the period of the victory of socialism in one country and the period of the victory of socialism on a world scale, in asserting that the disappearance of national differences and national

²⁵ Cf. Joseph Stalin, *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, Foreign Press, Paris 2021.

²⁶ Michel Mouskhély, *Il paradosso della Federazione Sovietica*, in *Il Federalista – Rivista di politica*, i. 5 y. 2, 1960: <https://www.thefederalist.eu/site/index.php/it/saggi/1355-il-paradosso-della-federazione-sovietica> [translated from Italian].

languages, the amalgamation of nations, and the formation of one common language are possible and necessary not only with the victory of socialism on a world scale, but also with the victory of socialism in one country. And you furthermore confuse entirely different things in "abolition of national oppression" with "elimination of national differences," "abolition of national state partitions" with "dying away of nations," with "amalgamation of nations." It must be observed that for Marxists to confuse these diverse concepts is absolutely impermissible. National oppression in our country was abolished long ago, but in no wise does it follow from this that national differences have disappeared and that nations in our country have been eliminated. National state partitions, together with frontier guards and customs barriers, were abolished in our country long ago, but in no wise does it follow from this that the nations have already amalgamated and that the national languages have disappeared, that these languages have been supplanted by some one language common to all our nations».27

This type of concept was, whatever may be said, closely related to the ideas of Lenin28. Nonetheless, the paradox we spoke of at the beginning, according to Mouskhély, is to be considered produced by a certain Leninist pragmatism:

«Even in matters of nationality, Lenin adopts and follows the ideas, moreover schematic, of his illustrious predecessors. Should national aspirations be encouraged or stifled? Marx and Engels could perhaps have overlooked this question, but Lenin, a contemporary of the era of nationalities, could not avoid it if he did not want to compromise the success of the revolution he was preparing. And it is precisely in function of the revolution that he fixes his positions as a man of action and not as a theorist. He cares very little about the question of the nation itself and of national values themselves. What interests him in the first place is the use of national dynamism in the service of the struggle against capitalism.»29

This type of predisposition to the primacy of administrative and government techniques would have led, in the long run, to a loss of sight of the

27 Joseph Stalin, *The National Question and Leninism*, International Publisher, New York 1929, pp. 1-10.

28 Joseph Stalin, *The National Question: April & May 1924*, in *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, Foreign Press, Paris 2021, pp. 183-184.

29 Michel Mouskhély, *Il paradosso della Federazione Sovietica*, in *Il Federalista – Rivista di politica*, i. 5 y. 2, 1960: <https://www.thefederalist.eu/site/index.php/it/saggi/1355-il-paradosso-della-federazione-sovietica> [translated from Italian].

protection of national identities, according to Mouskhély, who, in a particularly harsh way, thus condemned these outcomes:

«Philosophers elaborate a communist morality made up of absolute loyalty to the Soviet homeland and to its leader, the Communist Party. Writers create a communist literature, a synthesis of all national literatures, but under the predominant influence of Russian literature. The works of art are dedicated to the glorification of «socialist realism», far from any «petty-bourgeois idealism» or the decadent forms of Western art. Sociologists boast the new socialist traditions, such as «socialist emulation», «socialist cooperation», socialist festivals and folklore, etc. The architects build modern-style homes that progressively replace the previous national-type homes. Even in furniture and clothing, a common style gradually replaces the diversity of indigenous styles.

Thus, thanks to a common effort, a new culture is created and spread, the «communist culture», with an identical background of values, ideas and traditions that Soviet men share, whatever nationality they belong to. What then remains of the national form? «Language as a way of expression and development of the communist culture of peoples»».30

This type of criticism, of course, suffers from a certain political enmity between the Author and the Soviet state, and these tendencies, even real, did not replace the fact that many of the national and popular traditions were preserved, east of the Curtain of Iron. In reality, in our opinion, the Soviet state was prey to those mechanics of cultural uniformity that were put in place for administrative and bureaucratic needs in the construction of modern states³¹. It is therefore interesting to note how, paradoxically, in the doctrine of its builders the Soviet Union should have avoided, as far as possible, the dissolution of national differences.

Given that politics constitutes the field of the heterogenesis of ends, it is interesting to note how Lenin himself had theorized the very important role of nationalities in the multiform chessboard of Central Asia. Mouskhély himself also noted:

«Finally, it was necessary to deal with the latent nationalism of the peoples of Asia. Lenin turned out to be a seer here. In his «Imperialism the highest stage of capitalism» he foresaw the defeat of colonialism and the sudden uprising of the liberated masses. What a boon for the communist revolution this immense miserable and ignorant «proletariat». But to take him on its side, shouldn't it

30 *Ibidem.*

31 Cf. Zygmunt Bauman, *Intervista sull'identità*, Laterza, Bari 2003, pp. 15-16.

begin by respecting the national sentiment that animates him and which is all the more hostile the younger he is?»³²

Obviously Mouskhély's tones are vehemently anti-communist, and his analysis is affected by his political positions. In reality, Lenin had not “prophesied” a phenomenon by mistake, but on the one hand he grasped the discrepancies of power between the world of advanced capitalism and the economically backward one, on the other – also through national liberation struggles – he was the first to theorize an uprising of the economically exploited peoples against the capitalist powers. Be that as it may, the link between Asian nationalism and twentieth-century historical communism is, as we have said, dialectical. The identity of the peoples of Central Asia obviously existed before communism, but communism has helped these nations to modernize, so that this process has produced modern nationalistic forms³³. With the fall of the Soviet Union, however, these national and ethnic identities saw a new period of flowering. We reiterate once again that we must keep in mind this type of dialectic between Soviet heritage and the overcoming of culturally centralistic elements in order to fully understand the nature of the post-communist transition in these countries.

Bernard Chavance, in his text with an economic-institutionalist approach on the reforms that took place in the Soviet Union and in the Eastern Bloc, highlighted how the process of autonomization (in economic and political terms) can be described as a process of de-Stalinization³⁴. This process took place (especially in countries such as Poland or Hungary) with the questioning of the models of economic interpretation generally spread from universities. For the countries of Central Asia the cultural element was perhaps more important than the economic one, considering how they simply sought to deepen and further distinguish the elements that made up their specific identity.

32 Michel Mouskhély, *Il paradosso della Federazione Sovietica*, in *Il Federalista – Rivista di politica*, i. 5 y. 2, 1960: <https://www.thefederalist.eu/site/index.php/it/saggi/1355-il-paradosso-della-federazione-sovietica> [translated from Italian].

33 The case of Tajikistan is emblematic: «At the beginning of the 20th century, it had been Russian scholars who took up the cause of the Tajik nation. When in 1924, the Soviet government decided on the “National Territorial Delimitation”, it was exclusively Russian “orientalists” who contributed to the exhaustive study of the Tajik nation that was to promote the realisation of the Tajik “ethnie”.»

Paul Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan: National Identity and the Origins of the Republic*, I. B. Tauris, London / New York 2007, p. 127.

34 Bernard Chavance, *The Transformation of Communist Systems: Economic Reform Since the 1950*, Routledge, Abingdon / New York 2020.

Writing for the peculiar case of Kazakhstan, Ayşegül Aydıngün notes how the reconstruction of national identity started from an objective fact, which was the feeling of generalized anomie that constituted the dominant atmosphere of the end of the Soviet Union:

«A situation of anomie became visible in Kazakhstan beginning in the Gorbachev period and increasingly after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which necessitated a search for a new social order. [...] It is within this atmosphere of anomie that the cultural revival project has been launched. » 35

The same factor can be considered – where more and where less – as influential in the processes of ideological reorganization of the other Central Asian states, which tried to become autonomous since the times of Glasnost and Perestroika 36.

According to the author herself, a prominent role was exercised by Islamic religious identity in the case of Kazakhstan:

«The revival of Islam is expected to play a significant role in this project and Islam is being used as one of the basic elements of culture that will contribute to the integration of the new Kazak national identity. Islam, in this context, is also used as a tool in the struggle against the Russian and Soviet heritage and is expected to play an integrative role. This integrative function is perceived as necessary for the construction of Kazak national identity.» 37

If on the one hand the sponsorship of Islam has served the new Kazakhstan to distinguish itself from Russian culture (predominantly Christian) on the one hand, and from Soviet history on the other, the dialectic we spoke of earlier comes into play where the religious and national elements assume a role of ethical structuring of social relations in a condition of absence of an order of this type due to the collapse of the USSR:

«The new Kazak political power attempted to fill the vacuum left by the Soviet ideology at the beginning of the period of Perestroika through promoting ethical values within an atmosphere of insecurity. In other words, the careful

35 Ayşegül Aydıngün, *Islam as a symbolic element of national identity used by the nationalist ideology in the nation and state building process in post-soviet Kazakhstan*, in *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 6 i. 17 y. 2007, p. 69.

36 Payam Foroughi, *Tajikistan: Nationalism, Ethnicity, Conflict, and Socio-economic Disparities – Sources and Solutions*, in *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, i. 2 vol. 22 y. 2002, p. 39.

37 Ayşegül Aydıngün, *Islam as a symbolic element of national identity used by the nationalist ideology in the nation and state building process in post-soviet Kazakhstan*, in *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 6 i. 17 y. 2007, p. 69.

promotion of religion that is under strict control of the government plays two significant roles: firstly, it fills the ideological and moral vacuum as a result of the disappearance of the Soviet system causing an important environment of insecurity, and secondly, it offered people an alternative to political parties that based their activities and projects on political Islam being in complete harmony with the position of the government.» 38

As has been noted, there is an attempt on the part of the Kazakh political hierarchy to fill the organizational and planning void left by the Soviet Union, and also in this sense the projects and development plans of the country should be read³⁹. Secondly, it must be remembered that the President of Kazakhstan until 2019, Nursultan Nazarbayev, came from the ranks of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and from those of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan.

«From a humble village background, Nazarbayev trained as a steel worker before climbing through the ranks of the Communist Party. He obtained the position of General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan in 1989 just prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Elected president in 1990, he emerged as the central figure responsible for guiding Kazakhstan through its incipient years of independence.» 40

The political-economic proximity of Kazakhstan to the Russian Federation, as well as participation in the Eurasian Economic Union project (the only Central Asian country together with Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan), do not separate the Central Asian country from Soviet history. Simply this, as we have already seen, is subject to revision, in a similar way to what happened in the Russian Federation itself. This type of rethinking of the historical past, the distancing from excesses, the revision of some elements are at the basis of the neo- and post-communist tradition in the post-Soviet space – especially as regards the question of religious identity⁴¹.

In this sense, Kazakhstan, under the leadership of Nazarbayev, has fully embraced its Eurasian dimension. This is not only for geo-economic reasons, as

38 Ivi, p. 81.

39 Diana T. Kudaibergenova, *The ideology of development and legitimation: beyond 'Kazakhstan 2030'*, in *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 34 i. 4 y. 2015, pp. 440-455.

40 Rico Isaacs, 'Papa'– Nursultan Nazarbayev and the Discourse of Charismatic Leadership and Nation-Building in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan, in *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, vol. 10 i. 3 December 2010: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1754-9469.2011.01089.x>

41 Gennadij Zjuganov, *Stato e potenza*, Edizioni all'Insegna del Veltro, Parma 1999.

has also been pointed out⁴²: its membership of EurAsEc (Eurasian Economic Union) and its political proximity to Russia in the shared regional space. Although there are those who support a new purely techno-economic dimension of Eurasianism, in its post-Soviet revival⁴³, we can say that this is not the case in Kazakhstan. In fact, Nazarbayev has made explicit his belief in the Eurasian theses of Lev Gumilëv⁴⁴, but not only: he has repeatedly reiterated how the Kazakh identity is determined by the encounter of the various religious cultures that characterize it⁴⁵. Not only the pre-eminent role of Islam which provides the guarantee of the maintenance of a public ethics, but also other traditions and cultures in a harmonious coexistence.

«The challenge was to promote Kazakh identity, thus strengthening the ethnic integrity of the nation, while ensuring other ethnic groups, especially the Russians, were not marginalised. [...] This commitment to a multi-ethnic and multi-faith Kazakhstan has been the cornerstone of Nazarbayev's nation-building policy.»⁴⁶

42 Maria Lagutina, *A concept of Eurasia: From classical Eurasianism to pragmatic Eurasianism*, in AA.VV., *Regional Integration and Future Cooperation Initiatives in the Eurasian Economic Union*, IGI Global, Hershey 2020, pp. 1-15.

43 «Post-Soviet Eurasian integration should focus on the economy. The collaboration between the Customs Union (a common customs space) and the Common Economic Space (dozens of agreements to establish uniform rules in the economy; in effect, it is a Eurasian common market) establishes a solid groundwork for integration. This focus will help strengthen the technocratic element and dedicate integration instruments to resolving the main task – economic modernization and increased global competitiveness.» Yevgeny Vinokurov, *Pragmatic Eurasianism: Prospect of Eurasian integration*, in *Russia in Global Affairs*, vol. II i. 2 April-June 2013, p. 93.

44 «Beyond academic circles, the acknowledgment of Gumilev's theories extends to the political authorities. Thus the new Kazakh State University founded in 1996 was named after him, and the Kazakh president Nursultan Nazarbaev is proud to display his familiarity with Gumilev's works.»

Marlene Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An ideology of empire*, Woodrow Wilson Press / Johns Hopkins University Press, Washington D.C. 2008, p. 10.

45 Yerzhan Saltybayev and Lidiya Parkhomchik, *The Eurasian idea of Nursultan Nazarbayev*, in AA.VV., *Regional Integration and Future Cooperation Initiatives in the Eurasian Economic Union*, IGI Global, Hershey 2020, pp. 193-208.

46 Rico Isaacs, 'Papa' – Nursultan Nazarbayev and the Discourse of Charismatic Leadership and Nation-Building in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan, in *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, vol. 10 i. 3 December 2010: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1754-9469.2011.01089.x>

Kyrgyzstan, instead, if it shares with Kazakhstan the membership of the Eurasian Economic Union⁴⁷, it also shares its common nomadic identity⁴⁸ so dear to Eurasianism (which openly refers, already with the thought of Leont'ev, to the conjunction between the Slavic sedentary heritage and nomadic identity of the Tatar invasions⁴⁹) and its re-propositions in a contemporary key. This conception, in open contrast to the previous Soviet ambiguous vision on nomadism⁵⁰, takes on a religious and political dimension in the space of Kyrgyzstan in the phenomenon of “tengrism”⁵¹, which recovers the proto-Turkish identity of the inhabitants of the nation⁵².

«Among the newer tendencies in Tatar society connected with Turkism, the form of neo-paganism known as Tenrgism stands out (Tengre was the pre-Islamic sky god of the Turkish peoples and in old Tatar simply means 'God'). Tengrism became widespread in the second half of the 1990s [...]. Tengrists see the meaning of life as living in harmony with the surrounding natural world. They regard tengrism not as the religious doctrine of Turkic nations but as a central element of the Turko-Mongol historical way of life and worldview now essential for the contemporary consolidation of the Turkic nations.» [53]

The Tajiki, for their part, claim their ancestral Persian origins, having clashed with the lack of recognition of their particularity for decades. Specifically, Tajikistan and its political authorities struggle to assert their difference from the generically Turkish roots of most of the rest of Central Asia⁵⁴. The panturk discourse was so strong, especially in Soviet times, that even some hierarchies of the local Communist Party allowed themselves to be

47 Membership that increased the country's import and export levels: Kubanychbek Sagaliev, *Kyrgyz Republic: Effects of joining the EAEU*, from *Center for International Private Enterprise*: <https://www.cipe.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/04-Kyrgyzstan-EAEU-report-ENGLISH.pdf>

48 Cf. Rico Isaacs and Erica Masat, *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Central Asia*, Routledge, Abingdon / New York 2022.

49 Konstantin Leont'ev, *Bizantinismo e mondo slavo*, Edizioni all'Insegna del Veltro, Parma 1987.

50 Ayşegül Aydıngün, *Islam as a symbolic element of national identity used by the nationalist ideology in the nation and state building process in post-soviet Kazakhstan*, in *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 6 i. 17 y. 2007, pp. 69-83.

51 Harun Güngör, *Tengrism as a religious and political phenomenon in Turkish world: Tengriyanstvo*, in *Karadeniz Uluslararası Bilimsel Dergi*, i. 19 y. 2013, pp. 189-195.

52 Cf. Rico Isaacs and Erica Masat, *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Central Asia*, Routledge, Abingdon / New York 2022.

53 Roland Dannreuther and Luke March (edited by), *Russia and Islam: State, society and radicalism*, Routledge, Abingdon / New York 2011, p. 106.

54 Paul Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan: National Identity and the Origins of the Republic*, I. B. Tauris, London / New York 2007, p. 15.

influenced by this narrative⁵⁵. In any case, it is precisely because of the revitalized Persian identity that relations between this Central Asian country and Iran are very close, even when particularly lively. In fact, Tajikistan and Iran have gone through a phase of fairly important diplomatic disputes in the last period, despite the fact that Iran itself was the first country to open an embassy in Dushanbe. To date, relations between the two countries are optimal and are substantiated in exchanges and large commercial agreements⁵⁶.

The case of Turkmenistan, on the other hand, is slightly different: as in Kazakhstan, in Turkmenistan the Soviet political legacy is very strong. The country's first president (deceased in 2006) Saparmyrat Nyýazow was also from the ranks of communism as First Secretary of the Communist Party of Turkmenistan. When Turkmenistan acquired effective independence, he endowed it with a strong nationalistic political import, of a more secular character than the ethno-primordialist or religious forms that have taken hold in the other countries of the region. However, this constituted the fundamental imprint of Turkmen politics in the new phase of global politics inaugurated with the end of the Cold War. In fact he said:

«Our ancestors formulated the principles which allowed the Turkmens to not merely preserve, for many centuries, their traditional features, but also face the challenges of time with dignity. The Turkmen people are a direct heir to the ancient world civilizations. Throughout the centuries of their history brimming with dramas, triumphs, and tragedies, the Turkmens have accumulated a powerful spiritual potential and preserved their national identity.»[57]

Nyýazow explained the statist nature of the Turkmen national identity thus: «Unlike for people in the West, the state is not a 'night-watchman' for Turkmens. They see it as a paternalistic organ, which displays father-like care for them, transforms the population into a single nation. It also takes care of its unity, ensures its security, makes them happy, and provides them with a free life. This is the reason why the Turkmen people adore with devotion the state and its President, believe in it, support it, and are willing to die for it.»⁵⁸

55 Ivi, pp. 18-19.

56 Francisco Olmos, *Busy times in Iran-Central Asia relations*, on *The Diplomat*: <https://thediplomat.com/2022/06/busy-times-in-iran-central-asia-relations/>

57 Quoted in Maxim Kirchanov, *Turkmen nationalism today: Political and intellectual mythologemes*, in *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, i. 11 vol. 1 y. 2010.

58 Quoted in Т. Халлыев, *Концепция Сапармурата Туркменбаши об обществе переходного периода. Демократия и право*, in *Журнал Туркменского национального института демократии и прав человека при Президенте Туркменистана*, i. 25 vol. 3 y. 2000.

Finally, Uzbekistan represents with its recent history the exemplary case with respect to the mechanics of distancing and proximity that have reconstituted the cultural map of Central Asia. On the one hand, it has freed itself from Soviet identity by claiming its national roots⁵⁹, on the other it is part of a shared regionality with Russia which sees it as a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization⁶⁰. Uzbekistan has recently entered the EurAsEc, and the economic-political results seem to be very good for the country⁶¹, nevertheless it will be necessary to see how much this turning point will affect the ethnocultural narrative, compared to the common Eurasian roots with Russia. Certainly, however, the influence of Turkism in Central Asia has been strongly guided, in recent history, by Uzbekistan itself⁶². We must also remember the case of a particular independentist type of nationalism that has awakened in the Uzbek state, and that is that of the Karakalpak, an ethnic group that would like to affirm its identity even with the secession from Uzbekistan (despite the requests for now are predominantly those of greater autonomy)⁶³.

To summarize this brief and certainly not exhaustive discussion, it is necessary to reiterate how the role of ethnocultural traditions and their rediscovery or reinterpretation within the Central Asian scenario from the period from the end of the Soviet Union to today is of no small importance. This type of role is not only self-representative, for a context where a unity of general sense was missing. Rather, there are major political derivations from this type of phenomenon. Sometimes, in reality, it is difficult to distinguish between the socio-political element and the identity element, since policies of this nature are often justified in this way. It is evident how the counterweight of the rediscovery of national traditions can favor autonomist policies, just as embracing the Eurasian theses can favor collaboration with Russia or at least with neighboring countries. However, this does not affect either the originality or the bona fide

59 James Critchlow, *Nationalism in Uzbekistan: A Soviet Republic's Road to Sovereignty*, Routledge, Abingdon / New York 1991.

60 Cf. Embassy of Uzbekistan in Tokyo, *Uzbekistan's SCO leadership: Effective partnership, tasks, prospects*, on *The Japan Times*: <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/2022/06/23/special-supplements/uzbekistans-sco-leadership-effective-partnership-tasks-prospects/>

61 Pierre-Emmanuel Thomann, *Uzbekistan's role in Eurasian economic Union is gaining momentum*, on *Eurocontinent*: <https://www.eurocontinent.eu/uzbekistan-s-role-in-eurasian-economic-union-is-gaining-momentum/>

62 Paul Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan: National Identity and the Origins of the Republic*, I. B. Tauris, London / New York 2007, pp. 15-19.

63 Reuel R. Hanks, *A separate space?: Karakalpak nationalism and devolution in post-Soviet Uzbekistan*, in *Europe-Asia Studies*, i. 5 vol. 52 y. 2000, pp. 939-953.

with which these cultural elements have been brought to light or revived. Rather, in our opinion, this represents a trend of no small importance in contemporary international politics, which is starting to take into account the multiplicity of territorial and cultural identities below, above and within the historically determined structure of the national state.

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GLOBALIZATION VS REGIONALIZATION: CENTRAL ASIAN APPROACH

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Abstract: *The Central Asian countries tried to integrate into the world system not as a single region, but each on its own. At the same time, individual states aimed at different niches in the world system. Turkmenistan placed its bets on the energy sector both strategically and tactically. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan initially focused on raw materials, hoping then to move into the industrial sphere. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan strategically relied on the water and energy sector, but in the short and medium term they tried to make money on transit and transport projects. It is important that in the selected niches, all the Central Asian countries wanted to be important players not on a regional, but on a global scale.*

Keywords: Central Asia, globalization, regionalization, regional cooperation.

To the outside world, the Central Asian region has always looked like a cultural-historical, partly political and economic entity. However, in the region itself, two trends coexisted – on the one hand, rapprochement and cooperation, and on the other, rivalry between the countries of the region.

Within the Soviet Union, the interdependencies between the republics arose both naturally due to the development of the economy and social ties, and were imposed on the republics artificially for ideological or political reasons, sometimes out of ignorance. At the end of the Soviet Union, many dependencies seemed unfair and the desire to eliminate them was becoming part of the strengthening national consciousness. This formed the conditions of super-actions in a modality that can be called "regional egoism". It was manifested in the desire to either get rid of regional interdependencies or transform them in their favor, that is, to make neighbors dependent on themselves in order to get unilateral benefits. The Central Asian countries got involved in the game of "bypassing the neighbor" which meant sections of roads and railways, pipelines

and power lines were built bypassing parts of the neighbor's territory (sometimes even at the expense of increasing the length and cost of transportation). In many cases, this was not possible and then the use of common infrastructure gave rise to many disputes and mutual claims which led to the deterioration of political relations [1].

This regional egoism was also fueled by the desire to connect as quickly as possible to the trend of globalization that was gaining strength by the end of the 20th century. The remaining scientific and technical base of the Soviet Union, the skilled labor force and the natural resources located in the region-all this gave hope for a decent life. At the same time, it seemed possible for them to realize their potential through cooperation primarily with advanced and rich countries of the world. However, the impediment to integration into the world system was the location of the region in the depths of the Eurasian continent and the infrastructure connection almost exclusively with Russia, which was in deep economic crisis. This created in all the countries of Central Asia a strong desire to diversify transport infrastructure in all geographical directions and this desire became part of the strategic culture almost part of what is sometimes called the "foreign policy DNA" of the elites of the Central Asian states.

At the same time as this desire to reach out to the outside world, there were also talks about closer regional cooperation, both in the format of only the Central Asian states, and in broader formats. The corresponding regional associations were created. However, for a long time, the direction of regional cooperation was more declarative, and in practical terms, regional selfishness and the desire to expand ties with the outside world prevailed, if not to the detriment and at the expense of cooperation with neighbors, then at least in a more priority order.

The Central Asian countries tried to integrate into the world system not as a single region, but each on its own. At the same time, individual states aimed at different niches in the world system. Turkmenistan placed its bets on the energy sector both strategically and tactically. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan initially focused on raw materials, hoping then to move into the industrial sphere. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan strategically relied on the water and energy sector, but in the short and medium term they tried to make money on transit and transport projects. It is important that in the selected niches, all the Central Asian countries wanted to be important players not on a regional, but on a global scale.

However, in practice, the Central Asian states found themselves on the world stage in about the same position as many other developing states, they had

to compete with many dozens of developing countries for the attention, interest and favor of both the governments of world leaders and multinational companies. Ultimately, this meant having to play by someone else's rules, even if there was little opportunity to influence.

Gradually, it was realized that regional selfishness and the degradation of regional cooperation did not facilitate, but made it more difficult to connect with the outside world, join globalization and participate effectively in it. In addition, in the context of the global financial and economic crisis of 2008-2009, globalization had seriously stumbled. For the first time in a long time, the world's leading economic leaders have become a source of serious problems rather than a source of growth and development, and they have taken protectionist and restrictive measures. The slowdown in the global economy forced developing countries to pay more attention to regional cooperation mechanisms. In the post-Soviet space, the idea that if the world economy ceases to be a source of growth, at least on the desired scale, then regional cooperation and regional economic integration can become such a source of growth. Indeed, back in the early 2000s, something paradoxical happened from the point of view of the dominant views at that time. At the beginning of economic growth in Russia and Kazakhstan in 1999 (with the beginning of a cycle of high energy prices), their trade began to grow faster not with the outside world, but with post-Soviet countries-primarily Ukraine and Belarus. This was primarily business to business trade. As soon as the funds appeared, they began to spread through the previous chains of economic ties. There were ideas that such trade and cooperation can be not only a consequence of growth tied to external factors, but also support such growth and increase its volumes. This means that it is necessary to seriously, and not declaratively, create a Customs Union and even a Single Economic Space, that is, to develop economic cooperation in an integration manner. Against the background of the financial and economic crisis of 2008-2009, there were reasons to believe that regional integration can not only strengthen local growth based on external factors, but even become the main source of growth against the background of a slowing global economy. Hence the idea was that the modality of globalization was changing. Previously, it was seen as a direct, as if horizontal, interaction of different actors, the ideal of which would be a “flat world” as described by the well-known liberal author Thomas Friedman [2]. But there were ideas that the new modality of globalization was that its main participants would be large regional integration associations, and many dozens of states would connect to globalization through them. It was on the basis of

these ideas and with direct references to them that Vladimir Putin and N. Nazarbayev presented the idea of the Eurasian Economic Union ten years ago. Understanding the genesis of these ideas should leave no doubt that the Eurasian Economic Union was not conceived either as an isolationist bloc, or, to paraphrase a well-known expression, as a “new geopolitical prison”, that is, as a cover for some political and geopolitical projects.

In Central Asia, there is an interest in both regional and global vision of their region. The Central Asian states are not interested in being trapped in the depths of Eurasia, far from the main trade routes. But they don't need complete openness either. In absolute numbers, the entire region is exceptionally small in the scale of the global economic system. With the complete removal of barriers, states risk losing their economic sovereignty, becoming a space exclusively for land transit and some major infrastructure and energy projects that will create rents, primarily at the disposal of the elites.

To maintain long-term social stability, the region needs broad economic development with reindustrialization to create jobs. Objectively, both globalization and regionalization can contribute to this. The main thing is to determine a safe balance.

In practice, this means finding a balance between Russian, Chinese and American initiatives for Central Asia.

Representatives of different schools call the changes taking place in the world in the information and scientific-technological sphere in different ways: the third industrial revolution (Jeremy Rifkin), the new technological way of life (Sergey Glazyev), or simply the “new reality”. But everyone means the same thing. Breakthrough technologies are replacing traditional production methods. Extrapolation of the processes is already underway into the future leads scientists and entrepreneurs to believe that many sectors of the economy will be seriously transformed in the near future; the methods and geography of production, the distribution of added value among the participants of production processes will change. As a result, the balance between developed and developing countries will change significantly.

Production is expected to become: less energy-intensive – less oil and gas will be needed, less material-intensive-the demand for industrial metals will fall, less labor-intensive-the use of cheap labor will decrease. Altogether, this can seriously move forward the trend, which is already partly observed now – the return of production from developing countries to developed ones. The role of

those who are in industrial and raw material niches will decrease, and those who occupy a scientific and technical niche will increase.

The question of how exactly new technologies will change international politics and the world order remains open. The model of the world economy in recent decades has been based on global value chains (GCVS), where parts of the production of final products were distributed around the world, and developing countries attracted them to their territories, which stimulated economic globalization. In the “new reality”, at least in the early stages, globalization is not so necessary. Production is concentrated in those countries and regions where there are highly qualified personnel, and they are systematically reproduced in developed countries (education, applied and theoretical scientific schools, the manufacturing sector). “Evolutionary spirals” will form, where progress or demand in one segment spurs efforts and development in another. Only a few states have such a system of “evolutionary spiral, and only they are able to claim the creation of new technological zones, which, especially at first, have a regional scale [3].

Regionalization in the "new reality" will also be promoted by the purchasing power and capacity of sales markets. Since only developed countries can create and maintain the technological and educational base for the “new reality”, they will also provide markets, since their residents have an appropriate level of purchasing power. As Boston Consulting Group points out, “one of the consequences of these processes will be that global production will increasingly become regional. Since low-cost manufacturing centers exist in all regions of the world, more goods consumed in Asia, Europe, and the Americas will be made near home.” The process of returning previously exported industries and technologies to developed countries has already begun.

Meanwhile, in the developed high-tech centers in the process of regionalization, the concentration of primarily high-tech and expensive production can be observed. However, experts point out that as technologies become cheaper, the production of cheap consumer products will also be concentrated in these centers, given to robotic lines which will lead to a reduction in the cost of final products. If both segments- expensive high-tech and mass-produced cheap goods are produced in developed technology centers, developing countries will experience a crushing blow.

In this regard, a rather bleak prospect looms before the states that are late to distribute the dividends from globalization. They will gradually be cut off from intellectual resources, investments, capital and technologies. This, in turn,

will reduce their chances of creating their own technological zones, increase the threat of internal instability and outflow of personnel due to the lack of the necessary number of jobs.

In such circumstances, finding a balance between globalization and regionalization in Central Asia will not be easy, on the one hand, but on the other, it is absolutely necessary: without regional sources of growth, developing economies will not be able to maintain the growth rates they need.

In this case, there will be many theoretical and practical difficulties. For example, in the context of the trend of globalization, being at the junction of regions looked like an advantage. Everyone dreamed of becoming "bridges" between North and South, East and West. In the process of regionalization, the "border state" proved to be a serious challenge. The Ukrainian crisis of 2013, when the local elite split over the choice of the direction of in-depth cooperation – with Russia or the EU – is a frightening illustration. There are other examples of unsuccessful attempts to get involved in big geopolitical games in the post-Soviet space as with Saakashvili in Georgia and K. Bakiyev in Kyrgyzstan. For Central Asia, the question of how much to involve Afghanistan in regional cooperation remains open, and its practical resolution will largely depend on the stability of this country [4].

The responsible elites of the Central Asian countries have yet to find optimal strategic solutions, taking into account the conflict between global and regional trends that have emerged in the past decade. The experience of 2020, the challenges of the pandemic, once again showed how complex the theoretical and practical challenges of our time are.

There are certainly global, and in this sense, common, challenges in the world. But there are no universal answers. We are entering a new historical state – a world that is materially connected, and in this sense global, but ideologically different, non-universal [5]. Global structures are not effective enough, but national governments, especially small and medium-sized states, cannot do everything by themselves. This only increases the interest in regional cooperation.

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"SOFT POWER" AS A POLITICAL INSTRUMENT: IMAGE DISCOURSE (UZBEKISTAN's CASE)

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Abstract: *In modern times, the “soft power” of the state plays an increasingly important role in international relations. As is known, for many years, power has traditionally been identified as coercive power, which for many prominent political researchers has been and remains the main indicator of a state's prestige in the international arena. However, since the mid-1980s in the theory of international relations the traditional (coercive) understanding of power is being replaced by its new (non-coercive) rethinking.*

Under the conditions of rapidly developing globalization, more and more attention is being paid to the position of the state in the international space. Competition is waged by both economic and political means. In this struggle, it is countries with stable positions on the world stage who are more likely to win. This is why such a concept as “Charts Power” is becoming increasingly important in scientific circles. In turn, an important tool for creating a stable position is the image of the country.

The study of the use of mechanisms for the formation of a positive image is especially important for the Central Asian countries, since it determines the ability to defend its own interests and potential.

Keywords: «Soft Power», Joseph Nye, foreign policy, country image, «Charts Power»/«Index Power», Central Asia, Uzbekistan, multilateral diplomacy, international ratings and indices, humanitarian assistance, tourism, city branding, higher education.

THE IMAGE OF THE COUNTRY AS A FACTOR OF "SOFT POWER"

IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The phenomenon of “soft power” was first introduced into scientific circulation by American researcher, political scientist at Harvard University Joseph Samuel Nye in his work “Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power”, published in 1990. Since then, the political scientist has

consistently developed the concept of "soft power" in his works. In his opinion, the strength of the state lies in the ability to achieve the desired results from others [1].

Attraction and persuasion are the essence of soft power. In the works of J. Nye, several different formulations of "soft power" are distinguished:

- the ability to obtain the desired results in relations with other states due to the attractiveness of one's own culture, values and foreign policy, and not coercion or financial resources, which are assumed by "hard power" [2];

- the ability to influence other states in order to achieve their own goals through cooperation in certain areas, aimed at persuading and forming a positive perception [3].

According to the author himself, the most complete definition of "soft power" is given in the work "The Future of Power" published in 2011, where this term is understood as the ability to influence others with the help of cooptive (i.e., involving) means of forming the agenda (i.e., a list of priority issues in the field of international relations that require attention and resolution), persuading and providing a positive attractive impact to achieve the desired results [4].

As it is known, changes in the second half of the XX - early XXI century in the world community caused "blurring" of state borders, increased competition between countries, information and communication actions and interests from the part of all states. Under these conditions, the phenomenon of the image of the state acquires a new meaning and becomes a strategic resource. The purposeful policy of forming an attractive image of the state contributes to the protection of its national interests, the achievement of foreign policy goals and the creation of an atmosphere of support by the world community for its steps in the international arena.

It should be noted that the final result of the research of scientists who analyzed the role of the image in politics was its definition, set out in the social science dictionary, in which the concept of "image" is interpreted as follows: 1) the external image (of a person, small and large social groups) created by them in order to cause a certain impression, opinion, attitude in other people; 2) a set of properties attributed to the subject by propaganda, advertising, prejudices, traditions, etc., in order to cause a certain attitude towards him" [5]. Consequently, the political image of the state is an opinion about it based on the image that has developed in the representation, purposefully formed through professional efforts

from the internal (population of the country) or external (social groups of other countries) audience.

Thus, the foregoing indicates that increasing the attractiveness of the state in the face of the country's image is a special resource, defined by J. Nye as "soft power".

"CHARTS POWER / INDEX POWER" IN THE STRUCTURE OF SOFT POWER FACTORS

In the context of globalization and increasing competition in the information field, the process of establishing a new potential form of "soft power", which is called «charts power» («index power»), is gaining more and more interest. States seek to find unique instruments of foreign policy influence in order to realize national interests, and therefore, on the basis of an assessment of the internal (quality of life, safety, etc.) and external (investment attractiveness, position in the international arena, etc.) resource potential, various kinds of global ratings of countries are indicated.

Despite the fact that at present there is a huge research work on the most diverse aspects of "soft power", the issue of index power is poorly studied in political science field. It should be noted that Western countries are the main initiators of the importance of "charts power", since historically they were the sources of popularization and transformation into a real form of power of a number of cross-country indices that evaluate and compare different countries according to various criteria: the quality of public administration, the development of democracy, freedom of speech, attractiveness of national cultures, academic rankings and many others. Nevertheless, in the study of this problem, the concept of "monitoring power" in international relations, which was proposed by American scientists J. Kelly and B. Simmons, is of particular interest [6].

The authors argue that "social pressure" is one of the main tools in modern international relations, along with military and economic means of pressure. A relatively new form of social pressure, which is becoming increasingly global in nature, is "performance indicators", i.e. indicators calculated for countries by rating organizations [7]. Recognized ratings can contribute to the formation of attractive or, on the contrary, repulsive foreign policy images of different countries.

As an argument for the above idea, one can cite academic rankings (primarily university ones), which testify to the specific superiority of the American and British education systems in the world. For example, according to the results of

the global index "The Soft Power 30" [8], in which the assessment of "soft power" is carried out on the basis of 65 indicators distributed in six categories (government, culture, education, degree of involvement in solving global problems, business climate and digitalization), according to the Education sub-index, which focuses primarily on higher education, measuring the quality of a country's universities, their ability to attract international students and their contribution to the publication of scientific research, the United States and Great Britain continue to dominate in this direction. In addition, according to THE World University Rankings [9], calculated according to the methodology of the British edition Times Higher Education (THE), as well as QS World University Rankings [10], calculated according to the methodology of the British consulting company Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), for many years Universities in the US and UK consistently occupy leading positions.

Thus, the aforementioned ratings, along with a huge number of other indices in various areas are used to assess the overall situation in the field of forming a foreign policy image and represent a unified system for assessing the stability/vulnerability of a country, the economy as a whole or its individual aspects of life. The main feature of the ratings is that, through the method of comparison, they directly or indirectly reflect both positive and negative changes in a particular state.

MAIN STEPS TOWARD THE FORMATION OF INTERNATIONAL IMAGE IN UZBEKISTAN

Being relatively young states, the countries of Central Asia have not yet formed a coherent brand in the international arena, despite positive steps in economic liberalization, the policy of openness and other positive changes. Today, the attention of world expert circles, politicians, diplomats and international businessmen is really focused on the Central Asian countries, especially in relation to such independent states as Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, however, the recognition of countries among ordinary people abroad, unfortunately, is still not so high.

The image of Uzbekistan in the international arena has been strengthened in many ways over the past 5 years. One of the key areas of the "Action Strategy for the Five Priority Areas of Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017-2021" approved in 2017 [11] is the provision of security, interethnic harmony and religious tolerance, the implementation of a balanced, mutually beneficial and constructive foreign policy. It is envisaged to implement measures to strengthen

the independence and sovereignty of the state, to create a belt of security, stability and good neighborliness around Uzbekistan. In this regard, special attention is paid to the growth of the country's international image, bringing to the world community objective information about the reforms being carried out in the country. It should be noted that after the acquisition of independence by the Republic of Uzbekistan, such a task was first set at such a strategic level. In the “Strategy for the Development of New Uzbekistan for 2022-2026” adopted in 2022 [12], within the framework of the VII direction, which involves strengthening the security and defense potential of the country, maintaining an open, pragmatic and active foreign policy, the 98th goal is also set to increase the effectiveness of bringing information aimed at improving the image of Uzbekistan to the audience of the world community.

An analysis of the chronology of actions in the foreign policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in this direction shows that in the country, under the coordination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2019, a draft “Concept for strengthening the positive image of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the international arena” [13] was developed, which is aimed at defining goals, objectives, priority areas and mechanisms for promoting a positive image of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the international arena. On June 2, 2020, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On improving the position of the Republic of Uzbekistan in international ratings and indices, as well as introducing a new mechanism for systematic work with them in state bodies and organizations" [14] was adopted, as a result of which a special Republican Council was created for work with international ratings and indices.

It should be noted that the Decree lists about 20 socio-economic and political-legal international ratings and indices of the highest priority for the Republic of Uzbekistan, among which you can see the Global Competitiveness Index, Human Development Index, E-government Development Index, Doing Business Index, Worldwide Governance Indicators, Press Freedom Index, Rule of Law Index, Corruption Perception Index, Democracy Index, etc. As it is known, on December 23, 2021, a meeting of the Republican Council for Work with International Ratings and Indices was held under the chairmanship of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan, during which it was noted that in 2021 Uzbekistan improved its position in a number of international rankings, such as the Statistical Capacity Index, the World Democracy Index, the Rule of Law Index, the Competitive Industrial Performance Index, the Global Innovation Index, Worldwide Governance Indicators, etc. [15]. For example, it

was noted that in the Rule of Law Index, published in the 2021 edition by the World Justice Project, Uzbekistan rose by 14 positions compared to the previous year [16]. In the Global Innovation Index in 2021, Uzbekistan rose by 7 positions, took 86th place among 132 countries, thanks to which it entered the top 10 countries that showed the best result [17].

In strengthening the authority of the state in the world community as a whole, as noted by Abdulaziz Kamilov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, in his article "The image of Uzbekistan is radically changing" [18], the key role was played by the political will and determination of the leadership of the republic, which set as its goal to conduct deep systemic reforms, including ensuring freedom of speech and the media, religion and belief, gender equality and interethnic harmony. As A.Kamilov notes, in recent years, the multilateral diplomacy of Uzbekistan has significantly intensified, which also influenced the strengthening of the positive image of the state. The constructive activity of Uzbekistan is expanding within the framework of international structures, primarily the United Nations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. A multifaceted dialogue and cooperation with the European Union are actively developing.

Among the most important events in the life of the country, it is necessary to single out the entry of Uzbekistan into the members of the Turkic Council, the promotion of negotiations on accession to the World Trade Organization, and obtaining the status of an observer state in the Eurasian Economic Union. Along with this, Uzbekistan has successfully completed the negotiation process on the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the EU and received the status of a beneficiary country in the GSP + system [19], which allows exporting more than 6,000 types of goods to the EU duty-free.

To improve the image of Uzbekistan, which largely determines the degree of effectiveness of the use of "soft power" and the attractiveness of the country for foreign investors, such a new component of foreign policy as the expansion of dialogue with international human rights organizations is aimed. The elections to the UN Human Rights Council for the period 2021-2023, which were held as part of the 75th session of the UN General Assembly on October 13, 2020 [20], were a great success for Uzbek diplomacy. Uzbekistan became the first Central Asian republic to be elected a member of this multilateral body, which includes 47 states.

Uzbek "soft power" shows its effectiveness especially in relations between the countries of Central and South Asia. At the initiative of Shavkat Mirziyoyev,

on November 29, 2019, a Consultative Meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia was held in Tashkent, following which it was decided to establish regular consultative meetings of leaders “as a regional dialogue platform for a constructive and open discussion of topical issues of cooperation in the region and solving common problems” [21]. Recall that on March 26-27, 2018, the Tashkent High-Level International Conference on Afghanistan "Peace process, security cooperation and regional interaction" [22] was held, which became a logical continuation of the efforts undertaken by the international community to ensure peace and stability in Afghanistan. On July 15-16, 2021, Tashkent hosted the High-Level International Conference “Central and South Asia: Regional Connectivity. Challenges and Opportunities” [23], the purpose of which was to discuss the model of a mutually beneficial strategic link “Central Asia – South Asia” in the transport and logistics, energy, trade, manufacturing, investment, technological, cultural and humanitarian spheres. The steps taken by the government of Uzbekistan under the leadership of Sh.Mirziyoyev to provide a platform for organizing international conferences and forums, indicates that Uzbekistan places a special emphasis on resolving regional and global problems.

In constructing the political image of Uzbekistan, the provision of humanitarian assistance to other countries is also a positive link. Such measures are especially relevant during the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. On behalf of President Sh.Mirziyoyev, in the midst of the pandemic, humanitarian assistance was provided to neighboring countries such as Kyrgyzstan [24], Afghanistan [25] and Tajikistan [26], which is a clear illustration of this trend. Strengthening humanitarian cooperation makes it possible to significantly increase the overall level of mutual trust both at the official level and at the level of citizens' contacts.

“Soft power” is, first of all, culture, spirituality, history, values. Tourism, being one of the most important components of the formation of a positive image of the state, is one of the fastest growing industries in Uzbekistan. A wide network of direct flights between Uzbekistan and the outside world, high-speed trains running between the historical cities of the republic, the introduction of a visa-free regime with a number of countries, the revival of handicraft traditions, as well as a high level of hotel service, have significantly increased the influx of foreign guests. Moreover, a 30-day visa-free regime has been introduced for citizens of more than 80 countries. It is not for nothing that, at the end of 2020, the World Tourism Organization at the UN (UNWTO) included Uzbekistan in the top 20 countries with the fastest growing tourism industry, the Republic took fourth place in the ranking [27].

Touching upon the topic of tourism, it should be noted the importance of branding individual cities. According to Alisher Fayzullaev, a diplomat with the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Uzbekistan: “City branding is one of the most dynamic branches of new brand technologies. City branding is based on the idea of its exclusivity. In this regard, there is significant competition between the cities of the world” [28]. The cities of Uzbekistan have a high potential to become brands. As is known, in 2020, the International Organization of Turkic Culture declared the city of Khiva the cultural capital of the Turkic world, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation declared Bukhara the cultural capital of the Islamic world [29]. So, in total, there are 8138 objects of material and non-material culture on the territory of the country, of which 4732 are architectural monuments, 682 objects of monumental art, 580 places of pilgrimage and others [30]. There are five names of objects on the UNESCO World Heritage List in Uzbekistan. Four are included in the list according to cultural criteria - the historical centers of Khiva, Bukhara, Samarkand and Shakhrisabz, one according to natural criteria - the Western Tien Shan (Chatkal Reserve).

In his writings, J. Nye mentions education several times as an important source of "soft power". For the system of higher education in Uzbekistan, 2017–2020 became a period of transformations and the adoption of important decisions to improve the quality of higher education. In 2019, President Sh. Mirziyoyev signed “On Approval of the Concept for the Development of the Higher Education System of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030” [31], which sets goals for reforming and developing higher education based on national and world standards. One of the goals of this concept is that at least 10 higher education institutions in the country take the first 1000 places in the ranking of internationally recognized organizations (Quacquarelli Symonds World University Rankings, Times Higher Education or Academic Ranking of World Universities), and the National University of Uzbekistan and Samarkand State University entered the top 500 higher educational institutions of the world.

Thus, from the foregoing, we can conclude that today the leadership of Uzbekistan gives priority to the active promotion of a positive external image of the country. Uzbekistan is implementing an active, offensive foreign policy, adhering to pragmatic, constructive and flexible approaches.

CONCLUSION

The process of globalization has led to a change in the patterns of international competition. In the new era, the key means of influencing another state, other than the possession of nuclear weapons and military power, are the tools of "soft power", to a greater extent it is the political image of the state, its attractiveness and persuasiveness.

A positive image of the state is the benchmark that the countries of the Central Asian region should strive for in order to remain as an economically strong independent state with a peaceful foreign policy, rich cultural heritage, etc. Today, the Central Asian states have the necessary unique potential to create an attractive political image, which, in turn, can become a lever for shaping the perception of their national identity among the foreign audience, thereby making them attractive for both investment and tourism, and for cultural exchanges.

It is necessary to strengthen strategic steps to form the political image of countries so that a favorable image will be more recognizable at the global level, which, in turn, will serve as an advantageous condition for attracting foreign investment and advanced technologies, financial and technical assistance, promoting domestic exports to world markets, expanding tourist flow, etc.

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GREEN TRANSFORMATION IN CENTRAL ASIAN PRIORITIES

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Abstract: *Central Asia possesses extremely fragile ecosystem and because of unsustainability over the years and current changes in climate have brought about many issues in this area that requires urgent shift towards greenness and sustainability. In Central Asian countries green activities have started already and even they become priority on the agenda in many sectors.*

In this article, scale of these green activities will be learned thoroughly through related scientific research materials, official reports of governmental, non-governmental and international organizations. And, some questions such as: “what kind of actual green issues do exist in Central Asia?”, “how well are the green issues been emphasized on the agenda of governments?” or “what international and non-governmental programs are there to deal with green transformation and how well they have been collaborating with the public and government there?” will be replied and a brief summary on the topic will be provided alongside some recommendations.

Keywords: *climate change, green economy, fragile eco-system, water shortage, energy sector, sustainable development, green movements.*

INTRODUCTION

In 2021, global temperatures were 0.85 degrees Celsius (1.5 degrees Fahrenheit) above the average for NASA’s baseline period, according to the information from NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS). Acceleration of the climate crisis and environmental issues at an unprecedented level all over the world has been emerging requirements for the quick green shift in every sector of the society. As a reply to those requirements, green transformation, which was established as an issue on the global agenda by Paris agreement has appeared and become a hot topic in every corner of the world, including Central Asia. Green transformation democratically and purposely aims to shift society towards sustainability [1].

GREEN ISSUES IN CENTRAL ASIA

Population of Central Asian region is 76,196,248 as of Tuesday, March 1, 2022, based on the latest United Nations estimates and it is estimated that this population is equivalent to 0.95% of the total world population [2]. There are five developing countries in this subregion: Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. While enormous quantities of water are stored in the mountain glaciers of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan have huge and mostly unexplored oil and gas deposits. However, the region suffers from various environmental issues such as the degradation of the Aral and Caspian Sea, desertification, and there is the climate change that bring about other challenges.

“The Aral Sea disaster has been recognized by the worldwide community as the greatest natural disaster of the 20th century that causes a devastating impact to more than 50 million people of the region [3]. This disaster is a result of over usage of water for agricultural purposes in the 80s of last century. At the same time, mass extraction of the energy resources of the Caspian Sea together with the major anthropogenic changes in the coastal zones have resulted in increased pollution and environmental degradation of the Caspian Sea, which is the largest landlocked body of water on the planet [4]. Both of the Aral and Caspian seas degraded as the result of unwise usage of these natural recourses by humankind which have been notorious samples of unsustainability all over the globe.

Because of the military polygons, namely nuclear test polygon in Semipalatinsk and the Cosmo-drome in Baikonur, much part of the area (about 60%) suffers from desertification. Moreover, Climate change has been affecting the territory significantly, despite the countries of Central Asia are among the states that are contributing the least to global climate change. The combined percentage of Tajikistan's, Uzbekistan's, and Kyrgyzstan's emissions accounts for only 0.55 percent of the total global level [5]. Vulnerability of the area to climate change can be seen in the sample of more severe droughts, which is affecting agriculture, melting the glaciers and fragile ecosystems. These all challenges worsen water shortage, already the worst issue of the region. Thus, Central Asia is more in need of sustainability to balance its development compared to any other regions and ultimately, water scarcity that is not only environmental problem but already political issue in the region has made green transformation priority for the states in this territory. Recognizing the need, the states in the territory have been shifting themselves towards greening.

It is not easy to shift the society democratically towards sustainability, it requires long term commitment and involve everyone and everything. There is no one-size approach to green transformation so it requires various approaches such as technological, market-led, governmental, and citizen-led methods [6].

RATIFICATION OF THE PARIS CLIMATE AGREEMENT IN CENTRAL ASIA

In 2015, during the 21st session of the UN Climate Change Conference, all countries adopted the Paris Agreement [7] which is the first legal global treaty that has united the countries to fight and adapt to climate change. The priority of this treaty is to decrease greenhouse gas emissions and limit global temperature rise to 2°C during this century, and Central Asian countries have taken their first steps towards green transformation by signing the Agreement. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan were the first of the five countries to ratify the Agreement in 2016. Tajikistan ratified it in 2017, Uzbekistan – in 2018, and Kyrgyzstan – in 2019 [8].

The total greenhouse gas emissions of all five Central Asian countries are 470.47 million tons of CO₂ equivalent, which is approximately 1% of the global emissions [9]. This amount may not seem as significant as the deal of emissions in developed countries such as China or the UK, yet it is already massive impact on the fragile ecosystem of Central Asia. So, following the fight against climate change, implementation of the aspects of Paris agreement has already started in each of the five countries in the area and plans to fight and adapt the climate change has been set by the states. The plans can be seen in the below given table.

Considerable progress has been made by the countries in integrating climate issues and clean energy transition into their sectoral planning up until now. However, significant efforts and investments need to be made to reach the Paris Agreement goals, due to the severe environmental risks in Central Asia.

According to the data given by UNESCAP, to meet the emission reduction targets set out, Central Asia countries need to improve energy efficiency and integrate green economy strategies, especially in agriculture and industrial processes [11]. For now, the largest greenhouse gases emitter in the subregion is believed to be the energy sector.

Climate mitigation and adaptation policies

	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan
Mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Enhance renewable energy sources. ✓ Develop clean energy technologies. ✓ Restore, conserve & enhance carbon sinks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Glacier monitoring. ✓ Hydro power rehabilitation projects. ✓ Emergency disaster risk management. ✓ Modernize hydro power plants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Build institutional & professional capacity and awareness. ✓ Monitor hydrometeorological survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increase the efficiency of fuel utilization. ✓ Mitigate Aral Sea crisis. ✓ Increase the share of natural gas in energy mix. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Decrease loss of natural gas in extraction, processing & transportation. ✓ Development of financial schemes. ✓ Subsidy support to energy saving measures.
Adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Modernize housing and communal services. ✓ Develop sustainable transport. ✓ Conserve ecosystems. Improve waste management. ✓ Enhance forest cover. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Microloans for climate adaptation & energy efficiency. ✓ Consider climate impacts in water & energy, land use & mining. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Use greenhouses to grow a variety of crops. ✓ Plant drought-resistant varieties of fruit trees. ✓ Provide shelter for livestock to lessen the risk of heat stress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Improve early warnings & weather forecasts. ✓ Adapt water & agriculture reforms. ✓ Conserve water. ✓ Enhance climate resilience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Diversify food crops. ✓ Enhance pasture productivity. ✓ Improve irrigated lands affected by desertification.
Policy Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy. ✓ Green Economy Concept for the Republic of Kazakhstan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ National Sustainable Development Strategy of Kyrgyzstan for 2013-2017. ✓ National Development Strategy of the Kyrgyzstan for 2018-2040. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the period up to 2030. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ National Climate Change Strategy 2012. ✓ National Strategy for socio-economic development up to 2030. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Program of Actions for Environmental Protection of Uzbekistan for 2013-2017. ✓ Government Decree No.841 on Measures to Implement National Goals & Targets in the Field of Sustainable Development up to 2030.

This table is taken from the official website of UNESCAP [10].

COOPERATION IN CENTRAL ASIA TOWARDS GREEN TRANSFORMATION

Each Central Asian country contributes differently to Climate change as well as they differentiate in their opportunities and natural resources. For instance, while Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are the biggest water reserves in the region because of the glaciers located in them, Uzbekistan is the biggest natural gas supplier or Kazakhstan can provide the major economic opportunities. Vladislav Bizek, a key WECOOP expert on EU Acquis and Environment Enforcement, claims some of specific features of each state in the region:

- Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have high potential to reduce CO₂ emissions;
- Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have energy efficiency potential;
- All countries have renewable energy potential, except hydropower;
- Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan have the potential to shift from coal to other energy sources;
- Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have industrial potential, especially in the implementation of the best available technologies;
- Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have potential in agriculture [12].

By cooperating they can mitigate the impact of climate change on the region and sustainable management of natural resources among them can bring about prosperity for all the Central Asian countries. In this regard, the states cooperate with each other in many sectors. One of the major cooperation has been conducted in water system. As water interconnects all Central Asian countries, recently it is declared a commitment to the strategic water planning using integrated water resources management (IWRM) principles in the region [13]. These principles are based on integrating the interests of various sectors within hydrographic boundaries and involving the public and stakeholders in the planning, development, funding, and decision-making process [14]. This is to ensure this natural, invaluable resource meets the needs of society and the environment in a sustainable manner. Furthermore, Central Asian countries are developing countries which cannot finance transformation independently, they need global investment, due to this reason they collaborate with international organizations.

One of the well-known regional institutions engaging in transboundary environmental issues is Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia

(CAREC) which was established in 2001 with financial support of European Commission and Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan. This organization is an independent, non-political, and non-for-profit international organization with regional mandate to assist the Central Asian governments, regional and international stakeholders in addressing environmental and sustainability challenges across Central Asian region and Afghanistan [15]. CAREC is a joint program of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, European Union, and UNDP. CAREC has declared some strategies namely, "CAREC DIGITAL STRATEGY 2030", or "CAREC Energy Strategy 2030" to transform the territory towards greening.

Another significant cooperation towards green transformation in Central Asia is the organization of Aarhus Convention Regional Workshop for Central Asia in the territory. This workshop on the Aarhus Convention was organized for the Central Asian region as a joint project of UNECE, UNEP and OSCE with financial assistance from the governments of Austria, Denmark (DEPA-DANCEE) and Norway [16]. The main idea of the workshop is described in the official website of the workshop as to assist countries of Central Asia in implementing the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (the Aarhus Convention) by raising awareness about the Convention and building capacity in applying it. Since access to information and access to Justice in environmental issues play pivotal role in providing green transformation, it can be told that transformation is on the agenda of the authorities in the subregion.

TECHNOCENTRIC TRANSFORMATION IN CENTRAL ASIA

Major challenge of Technocentric transformation is finding proper combination of technologies to meet rising demands in greener ways. The aim of this transformation is to reduce ecological footprints through technological innovation without altering systems fundamentally [17].

The Central Asian Republics have plethora of water relative to their populations but have an incredibly low economic return on water compared with other parts of the world. For instance, Turkmenistan uses almost three times more water than India to produce one dollar of GDP (gross domestic product) [18]. As well as on average, about 18% of the total irrigated areas are watered by a pump-lifted system covering about 1.84 million ha in the region [19]. In agricultural system also, there are many problems such as high spillage and wastage all along the food production and consumption chain which need usage of innovation technologies. As in Central Asia, over 20% of production is lost or wasted in

harvest, storage, transport, processing, and distribution of food [20], agriculture system should be transformed technologically.

With this purpose, in Central Asian countries it has been created various digitalization strategies such as opening green centers. The International Center for Green Technology and Investment which was established in Kazakhstan in 2021 or the International Green Technologies and Investment Projects Centre (IGTIC) are the establishments which are dialing with technological aspects of green growth in the area. IGTIC is an associated joint-stock company for “sustainable urban development, green business development, transfer and adaptation of green technologies and best practices, development of green funding, development of renewable energy sources, and capacity-building for green growth” [21].

GREEN TRANSFORMATION IN CENTRAL ASIAN ECONOMY

Green economy is accepted a way of achieving sustainable development which means “An economy that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities” [22].

Central Asia’s economies depend on carbon-based energy sources and the region is home to some of the world’s most carbon-intensive economies. For example, Bishkek, the capital of the Kyrgyz Republic was acknowledged as the most polluted city in the world based on international air quality ratings for several days in December 2020 [23]. However, republics in this region working along with the World Bank and the UN on turning the so-called carbon-intensive economies into net-zero economies or green economy. World Bank, for instance, is prioritizing investments that will facilitate a green, climate-smart economic transition; strengthen, preserve, and leverage agriculture and natural capital for climate resilience; accelerate sustainable, integrated spatial development aligned to a green economy; and address fragility and exclusion so that the transition works for everyone in Central Asia [24].

Overall, countries in this area have obtained some success in transforming the conventional economy and market system into sustainable and green economy. For example, Kazakhstan with the help of World Bank is producing its export-oriented beef production in environmentally sustainable version and it is also working on mitigating the industry’s climate impacts. Kyrgyzstan has been emphasizing on shifting its agriculture towards sustainability so thousands of families are improving their nutrition and seeing higher incomes from agricultural

activities. Tajikistan in the partnership with World Bank is restoring the outdated Nurek Hydropower Plant, which will lead to a reduction in CO₂ emissions by 68 million tons – equivalent to powering 12 million homes with electricity for an entire year. In Uzbekistan, together with World Bank, it has already launched the construction of the country's first large-scale, privately developed and operated solar power plant, which will produce 270 GWh of electricity per year – enough to power more than 31,000 households and prevent the release of 156,000 tons of CO₂ emissions annually.

CITIZEN-LED APPROACH TO GREEN TRANSFORMATION IN CENTRAL ASIA

As citizens are the biggest power, they always have been driving force of any kind of transformation in the society. With their connected social movements related to green consumers, green living, or transition of towns; food, water, energy sovereignty movements, citizens can influence economy, government, and digital system also.

Compared to the citizens of western countries, citizens of the subregion are lagging far behind in awareness of green issues and green transformation. However, the authorities alongside non-governmental and international organizations have created various projects on educating the public how to change society to greenness and sustainability. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is the biggest project related to teaching the public about green transformation and sustainability. Since partnership is the key to the success of the ESD Program, it cooperates with the ministries of Education, Environmental Protection, the academic and pedagogical community (schools, colleges, universities), young leaders, NGOs, scientific organizations, and the business communities of the area. These partners are the UN institutions, the World Bank, the Government of Norway, the German Ministry of the Environment (BMU), the Goethe Almaty Institute, GIZ (German Society for International Cooperation), USAID, REC, Samsung Electronics Central Eurasia LLP, Coca-Cola, Chevron, BG-Group and AGIP [25]. All of these educational programs' priority is increasing literacy of the community of Central Asia about sustainability and to accelerate citizen-led transformation in the area.

There are various green issues in Central Asia's many sectors ranging from water system to agriculture, to energy sector, to climate. Although carbon footprint of this area is not as high as in other developed countries, ecosystem in Central Asia is so fragile and vulnerable to even dearth of climate change. Most part of the glaciers in this area has already melted down because of climate change

which made the water scarcity issue more serious and there are also other problems like deforestation and land degradation which forced the Central Asian Republics to initiate green transformation in the subregion. Such as cooperating with each other and international organizations on tackling the green issues in the area and accelerating green transformation there. In spite of making the transformation priority in many sectors there are still challenges in economy system, public system and in energy and water system which demand more initiatives and effort. Changing behavior and outlook of people in the area towards sustainability and establishing green parties in the government system would be helpful in obtaining more effective results in transforming the territory towards sustainability.

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RENEWABLE ENERGY AND ITS EFFECT (REGIONAL CASE)

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Abstract: *The strategy of innovative idea and development of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2019-2021 envisages increasing the share of electricity generation using renewable and alternative energy sources more than 20% by 2025. Regarding country's energy system is changing gradually, and rapid development of renewable energy sources. The country attracts investment to implement of renewable energy. Among the Central Asia countries renewable energy almost is not realized except Kazakhstan that began to promote through investment incentives and take the lead Central Asia countries. In this paper reveals the main causes and problems of the transition to renewable energy and potential available of each Central Asia countries. There is analysis about policy of energy and renewable energy with concentrated on local energy electricity and grid. The results show that implementation of renewable energy in Uzbekistan more difficulty because of climate, in Kazakhstan has problems decentralized consumption, the rest of Central Asia countries absence of any decree or adjustments refer to implement of renewable energy. There for, Uzbekistan approved several decrees considering to improve green economy, wind-, solar- and hydro-renewable energy to improve the quality of living standard, social life, energy available to urban and rural population. This type of economic sector directed to decrease the cost of energy and involve the growth and sustainability development of the nation. According to this benefit, there are some difficulties to develop of transition renewable energy management in Central Asia. Moreover, implementation of renewable energy is complicated for the rest CA. According of the study, the renewable energy directed the growth of living standard and increase the income of nation Central Asia. In addition, renewable energy improves and give the solutions to the problems of climate change situation in Central Asia that causes by using fuel energy.*

Keywords: Central Asia, renewable energy, renewable energy sources, energy policy.

The main goals of developing renewable energy in Central Asia are to transform the energy sector, providing access to more diverse recourses, ensure the economic growth and leaves a minimal carbon dioxide (CO₂) to change the

climate situation in the region. In addition, renewable energy can also be impactful by providing energy to those who are live in rural areas, disconnected from central power grids or facing recurrent and extended outages regularly. Therefore, the countries which located in the region of Central Asia have to identify and establish priority actions that will encourage renewable energy development. Central Asia has all the potential to create a sustainable energy industry: 5.5% of the world's cost-effective hydropower potential, mainly in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan; the presence of an average of 3000-3600 hours of solar radiation per year on the territory of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan; and the wind potential at the Jungar gates alone in eastern Kazakhstan is 1.3 trillion. kWh per year. Renewable energy is alternative energy that substitute fossil fuel energy and gives the opportunities to achieve sustainable development, energy access, energy security and low-carbon economic growth and prosperity and will allow Central Asian states to the following priorities:

- meet the rapidly growing energy needs that population growth causes;
- reduce the environmental impact of fossil fuels;
- resolve matters of energy security, particularly in those areas with limited connections or no connection to central power supply networks.

But among the Central Asia countries renewable energy almost is not realized except Kazakhstan that began to promote through investment incentives and take the lead Central Asia countries. It depends on how the countries adopt and implant the decrees after ratified the Paris agreement as well.

Uzbekistan. In 2018, Uzbekistan ratified the Paris Agreement and adopted a national commitment to reduce GHG emissions per unit of GDP by 10% of the 2010 level by 2030. According to the Strategy on the Transition of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the “Green” Economy for the Period 2019-2030, Uzbekistan aims to increase the share of RESs in total electricity generation to more than 25% by 2030. It also plans to double its energy efficiency indicator, reduce the carbon intensity of GDP, and provide the entire population and all economic sectors with access to modern, inexpensive and reliable energy. Uzbekistan’s considerable RES potential could spur significant development of a green, environmentally friendly economy. The country’s total RES potential is 117 984 Mtoe, while its technical potential is 179.3 Mtoe. The Ministry of Energy is entrusted with implementing a unified state RES policy. In May 2019, the Law on the Use of Renewable Energy Sources and the Law on Public-Private Partnerships were adopted, creating a regulatory framework to accelerate the implementation of

renewable energy projects. The Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 610 of 22 July 2019 approved the Regulation for Connecting Businesses that Produce Electricity, Including from Renewable Energy Sources, to the Unified Electric Power System [1]. The regulation defines the main technical aspects of integrating renewable energy facilities into Uzbekistan's single electricity system. Presidential Decree No. PP-3981 of 23 October 2018 on Measures to Accelerate Development and Ensure the Financial Stability of the Electric Power Industry provides for the attraction of private direct investments in enterprises producing electricity, including through PPPs [2]. In addition, Presidential Decree No. PP-4422 of 22 August 2019 on Accelerated Measures to Improve the Energy Efficiency of Economic and Social Sectors, Implement Energy Saving Technologies and Develop Renewable Energy Sources calls for electricity produced from RESs, including hydropower, to expand to at least 25% of total electricity generation by 2030 [3].

The Uzbek government plans to invest 314.1 billion som (81 million USD) from its own funds to develop hydropower, solar, and wind energy, with plans to attract an additional 20.5 trillion som (5.3 billion USD) from foreign sources by 2025 [5].

Kazakhstan. Renewable energy such as hydropower currently makes up a small share of the overall energy mix, but solar and wind power plants are mushrooming across the country thanks to legislation, clean energy targets and the investment climate. Kazakhstan is unique in the region for having adopted a long-term strategy – the "Kazakhstan-2050" plan – that prioritizes diversification in total energy consumption. The administration intends to increase the share of renewable energy sources to 50% by 2050, with solar and wind energy comprising 39%, nuclear and hydropower 14%, gas 16%, and coal-burning thermal plants constituting 31% [6]. Kazakhstan pledged to reduce its CO₂ emissions by 25% when it signed the Paris accord, agreeing to achieve this reduction by 2030. The country's Green Economy initiative is even more ambitious, with targets to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 40% by 2050 [7].

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are heavily reliant on hydropower and coal for electricity generation. Its oil products and gas are almost entirely imported, with marginal domestic production and refinement within the country. Coal is mainly used for domestic heating and energy and heat generation in the capital city of Bishkek, and coal use may grow in the coming years due to plans for the expansion of coal thermal plants.

Except for Turkmenistan, all the countries in the region have precise targets for renewable energy capacity expansion. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have introduced feed-in tariffs, while Kazakhstan and Tajikistan have tradable renewable electricity certificates. Turkmenistan has so far not established a renewable energy support policy [8].

Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have introduced feed-in tariffs, while Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are trading renewable energy certificates. Turkmenistan has the fourth largest natural gas reserves in the world with the capacity of 17.5 trillion cubic meters. The country prioritizes the gas sector in its development agenda, which is more environmentally friendly in comparison to oil and coal, though it still negatively impacts the environment. Its only renewable energy facility is the 1.2 MW Gindikush hydroelectric power station, which celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2013 [9]. Therefore, Turkmenistan has not outlined a renewable energy development policy of any kind. It is important for Turkmen authorities to officially recognize the potential contribution of renewable energy in improving the living standards of the population, especially in those regions that are off-grid. Including renewable energy in the government's agenda would drive development of a sustainable energy strategy to ensure clean and abundant electricity.

According to the World Bank, Uzbekistan's economy is one of the most energy-intensive in the world. For example, the energy intensity of the country's GDP is 35% higher than in neighboring Kazakhstan and three times that of Germany. The share of renewable energy at present is negligible despite the significant technical potential of renewable sources (biomass 800 MW; solar 593,000 MW; wind 1600 MW; small hydropower 1800 MW), with the sole exception of hydropower [10]. The industry sector, which often uses outdated technologies in its production processes, accounts for 40% of all energy consumed in the country. To sum up analysis across Central Asian states, exported surplus electricity in the summer months, downstream countries would be able to diversify their energy mix, enabling them to utilize fossil fuels more efficiently and to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and pollutions. Restoring intraregional trade should be central to any sustainable development initiative in the region. Central Asian countries should revitalize intra-regional energy trades while also cultivating renewable energy sources. Each of these countries is at a different point in the transition to sustainable energy.

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PART III

MULTILATERAL COOPERATION IN

CENTRAL ASIA

MODERN SPECIFICS OF CENTRAL ASIAN ECONOMIC COOPERATION (CAREC)

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Abstract: *The five Central Asian countries vary considerably from each other in their financial capability to invest in transport sector hence most of the developmental projects of infrastructure are rather started or financed by donors and/or international organizations interested in the development of that region. Similarly, the rail transport is also gaining its importance, especially for the freight transportation and supplies to Afghanistan.*

Background

For the five countries of Central Asia i.e. Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan roads are the chief source of transportation and connection. Expansion of roads is the focal strategy for the development of transport sector in all five countries of Central Asia. Therefore, the quality of road is also a huge challenge, especially in hilly terrain where road structure requires not only substantial primary investments, but also the funds for their continuous maintenance and rebuilding. The five Central Asian countries vary considerably from each other in their financial capability to invest in transport sector hence most of the developmental projects of infrastructure are rather started or financed by donors and/or international organizations interested in the development of that region. Similarly, the rail transport is also gaining its importance, especially for the freight transportation and supplies to Afghanistan. For Example Uzbekistan has well-developed railway system and like wise Turkmenistan is also investing in its railway connections to the north and south

directions of the country. In so far, transporting people or goods between Central Asian countries is somehow complicated due to the limited number of direct flights amongst the main cities, inapt rail connections and time-consuming procedures visa or border.

CAREC The Origin

The organizational body named Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) is a practical platform which has project-based progression. This cooperation has grown from the 6 projects worth \$247 million in 2001, to 166 projects worth \$27.7 billion in 2015. All of these projects are being executed with the help of six different multilateral institutions.

CAREC Programme: An Introduction

CAREC is mainly spotlighting on the access strip development among the members states as a comprehensive programme chalked out through strategic framework of 2010. It covers the strategic framework 2010, economic corridor development strategy, governing structure, the CAREC institute, developmental results, evaluation programme and a media centre to publish its events as well as news. The CAREC programme works as the dedicated partnership between the 11 member countries which is further reinforced by 6 multidimensional institutions operationally integrated to promote development in the region of Central Asia through the regional cooperation. Moreover motto adopted by the CAREC organization is, “Good Neighbours, Good Partners, Good Prospects”.

Strategic Frame Work: CAREC 2020

The Strategic Framework for CAREC program summarizes the key features of its Comprehensive Action Plan (CAP). This includes the four proposed pillars of activities implemented as medium- term procedures for the Program. Moreover, it also contains the two-tier system for the expansion and deepening of the Program with the measures for ensuring strategic direction and management. CAREC strategic framework 2010 is a regional cooperation programme from 2011-2020. CAREC 2020 is aimed to expand trade to improve the affordability of goods in the region through the objective, action-oriented, and results- driven platform of regional projects and initiatives in the fields of transportation, trade facilitation, energy, trade policy, and the overall economic corridor development.

Moving Forward to 2020

The CAREC Program has made a good progress in short span of time moving toward its goal that is the development by establishing cooperation

between member countries over its first 10 years. Despite facing various challenges, CAREC has made the image of itself as a pioneer regional cooperation program in the Central Asian region with a clear cut vision oriented on mutual partnership with a Comprehensive Action Plan [1] [2], which defined shared priorities for cooperation. According to Comprehensive Action Plan of 2015, 166 projects related with CAREC were worth around \$27.7 billion and have been implemented in the four main areas of regional cooperation i.e. transport, trade facilitation, trade policy, and energy sectors. The prospective benefits of these projects should be assumed as the better connectivity in the form of allowing the movement of people and their businesses with greater ease and costing less money inside and outside their countries integrated by the “CAREC”. This is increasing economic activities in the region and improving the overall quality of life. Moreover, by the projects we can see the progress toward energy efficiency, security, and trade at the regional level contributing to productive capacity and social development.

During the progress of “CAREC” there were various lessons learned in the form of different experiments to regional and global setting from which several new ideas emerged. For example, some factors of strategic changes and operational modifications in the region, as CAREC moves into its second decade of cooperation, can be observed. In the “Ninth Ministerial Conference” of CAREC an evidence based study was prepared that has addressed these issues and identified the lessons and strategic imperatives going forward in the next 10 years of regional cooperation.

Guiding Principles of CAREC

The motivations for the CAREC Program are reflected in the operations performed till now, particularly the stress on rationality and outcomes. However, some other principles of the CAREC Program including ownership by the CAREC countries and corporation with the business community of regional organizations (such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Eurasian Economic Community) have also seen to be reinforcing’. CAREC is a rational, results-based program designed to facilitate trade and business development with the vision of country ownership, consensus- based and mutually-beneficial cooperation. Another principle of CAREC is Two Plus Principle (regional projects entail two or more countries) to complete the connectivity programme to enhance the cooperation. CAREC also develops the partnership with the business sector and regional organizations.

Four Action Pillars of CAREC

CAREC has adopted a strategy for expansion in the form of cooperation founded on the four “action” pillars as the visualization established in 5th ministerial conference in 2006. The first pillar from these four is “The knowledge or capacity building[3] [4]” which works with the combination of research and analysis. Acting upon the enhancement strategy the six multilateral institutions (Mis) significantly increasing their capability for the planning and implementing commonly beneficial initiatives in the region. Underneath the first pillar an inclusive training is initiated for middle and senior level officials. This training is to form a team of officials capable of conducting the modalities during the process of regional cooperation.

This pillar also proposes how to outreach the activities on business forums by broadening the inclusiveness of the CAREC Program. To organize these research, training and negotiation activities a leading step has been taken towards the establishment of a self- governing CAREC Institute. This institute has the supervision of the group of eminent persons within and outside the region. Moreover, one of the major assignments of pillar 1 is to increase research frameworks combining skills in the region within the six multilateral institutions (Mis) by taking initiatives toward making the CAREC Institute as principal body for regional dialogue, outreach activities, and in-country workshops, policy research briefs. CAREC institute (CI) has its personal news letter, website and has attained the level to encourage the business development forums and new business ideas (like global value chains) in order to promote capability enhancement, advisory positions, training, and “best practices” workshops, third- party, honest broker role of multilateral institution’s (Mis) eminent persons.

Second action pillar of the CAREC is “the regional infrastructure networks”. This pillar tends to provide the conventional thought that serves the supportive purpose for all CAREC countries and multilateral institutions (Mis) for transport corridors, energy markets, and trade-oriented infrastructure projects integrating the region. Connectivity is a unifying theme of the CAREC, reflecting the need to strengthen the region’s strategic location as a ground connection for Eurasia and the rest part of world. Similarly, another focus of second pillar is to transform the “regional-based programming with the public private partnerships made up for country based programming [5]”. The regional infrastructure network pillar includes the activities like; logistics systems building on transport, trade and

energy networks, developing the transport sector strategy, designing of multi-model east-west and north-south corridors and harmonizing transport regulations/cross-border transport agreement. Under this strategy trade infrastructure gets the priority in trade sector strategy, border crossing infrastructure facilities, infrastructure in support of border area free trade zones. In energy networks programme, it developed an energy sector strategy, energy generation infrastructure, energy transmission/distribution infrastructure and energy efficiency measures including policy, regulatory bodies and institutional development.

The third policy pillar of CAREC is “the trade, investment and business development [6]” which provides a comprehensive and integrated framework for improving the investment climate in Central Asia, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Mongolia. The aim of this pillar is to provide access to the business enterprises to the markets of CAREC region. Under this strategy the needs of the business community are clearly defined, including logistical requirements so as to enable participation in global value chains and other trade opportunities. Trade investment and business development strategy includes the tasks and assignment to develop a trade, investment and business development strategy and trade facilitation. For customs modernization / harmonization / streamlining CAREC has developed information platform and knowledge forums. For trade policy CAREC is developing transit and border trade measures, uniform trade tax system, WTO accession by all CAREC members. For investment and business development CAREC is developing its regional investment forums, business logistics services, global value chains and economic corridors.

Finally, the fourth policy pillar of CAREC is “the regional public goods pillar [7] [8]” which targets the expansion of the CAREC Program on project-specific basis to understand the issues beyond the boundaries of member countries, such as protection of the environment and management of natural resources. Policy pillar four includes the activities like; special projects to address priority regional public goods (environmental information systems, measures against desertification) and special projects to address priority regional public “bad” the avian flu threat, disaster management, corruption.

CAREC 2020: Focus, Action & Expectations

A wide-ranging futuristic strategy was developed in 2011 titled CAREC 2020 which was duly acknowledged by all associates. This focus was termed as a strategic framework of regional economic cooperation for Central Asia for the

decade of 2011 to 2020. The strategy aims at promoting the objectives of visionary partnership and neighborhood up to its maximum level by 2020. The important features of comprehensive strategy of CAREC 2020 are, trade expansion, economic improvement through cooperation, infrastructure development including roads and rail, energy and transport expansion plans. The CAREC strategy 2020 has a specific focus also on restructuring the organizational features by harnessing an institute for broadening the base of technical awareness. CAREC institute has proved its validity by incorporating the agriculture and health sectors into the ambit of programmed. The major priority areas of CAREC 2020 are to identify short term precedence projects and feasible bonding investments among the members. Most of identified short- and medium-term scheme have also been incorporated as part of national development plans of CAREC members. The sixty-eight projects only initiated in transport sector spending about \$ 23 billion is the highest priority area. The second priority area is to promote the institutionalized possession for all initiated plans and their regularization as national policy for growth of member states. Under this policy directive CAREC has planned to strengthen the existing partnerships in order to meet the resource requirements for CAREC 2020 [9]. CAREC has also broadened the enterprise by inviting private entrepreneur and donors. During the conference in 2011 the decision to incorporate the partners as forum is expected to be fruitful decision in next ten years. No programmed can be successful till the time its performance is not measured. The fool proof system has been developed to scrutinize the ongoing projects by senior management level of the organization. The comprehensively developed system of gauging the progress is being upgraded and surly be an asset for the further improvement. To further streamline the execution plan Wuhan Action Plan has been approved during eleven minister's conference. The action plan has emphasized three priority sectors of operational priorities; institute's five years work plan and action plan for transport facilitation.

Development of Economic Corridors

Corridors development strategy is being funded to develop connectivity infrastructure among member countries for more than a decade. The development of economy and connections will definitely promote cooperation among people to share ideas and link markets. The regional economic integration is the long-term agenda of the initiative which is being followed through ECD thus covering broad based multipurpose economic programmers. The long-term plan to develop the corridors is enhancing jobs market, smooth economic augmentation,

development of communications lines and technological advancements. ECD aims connecting large urban industrial centers to accelerate the industrial growth and bridge the gap between remote areas and urban clusters. CAREC has mobilized about \$27.7 billion since its inception for targeted areas of development [10].

All stakeholders have willingly adopted the strategic functionality as stressed by ECD.

Governing Structure

CAREC's overall institutional framework guides and strengthens the partnership in planning, prioritizing, and implementation of all aspects of the Program. CAREC has a commitment for broad-based dialogue and consensus building, which leads to cultivate confidence and conviction among stakeholders and CAREC countries. CAREC also prioritize and identify regional cooperation initiatives, and assistance to prepare and implement these initiatives. For achieving accelerated development CAREC has a mechanism to mobilize the technical and financial resources.

The Institute (CI)

In order to harmonize the integration efforts a need was felt since the beginning of the initiative to have a platform which can help members to augment regional integration programmed. During the tenth ministerial conference institute was evolved for initially promoting regional integration knowledge through the strategic framework 2010 [11]. Without calibration of transportation systems, trade facilitation systems and customs regulation, a way forward is not possible for a regional integration forum where all members have different geo-political and socio-cultural backgrounds and have political desire to integrate but simultaneously facing diverse challenges. These aims can only be achieved through well connected programmers, joint training sessions and information sharing.

What CARIC Institute (CI) Does?

In order to implement long term regional cooperation CAREC Institute (CI) has assumed five year direct supporting comprehensive package to function as a central place for all members of CAREC initiative. To achieve these objectives CI has shaped a strategic partnership with institutions and individuals in order to achieve the objectives of generating knowledge, developing research opportunities in the field of regional cooperation, regional political economy,

efficient transport modeling. There is also, requirement to develop CAREC institute as a role model body to develop a strategy for promoting a common business language for the region, to boost the regional integration for long term economic prosperity and finally a common security option for the region. Although CAREC Institute has taken the responsibility to provide its services in the field of knowledge through organizing seminars, workshops, however there is a room available for the improvement. Although the planes of CAREC like e-commerce, internet based platforms, data banks relevant to the regional cooperation does play an important role however if the CAREC model is compared with the EU than it can be noted that CI has challenging tasks to accomplish in future which can only be achieved through further pushing the boundaries of regional cooperation.

CAREC Institute (CI) Activities

The important tasks and activities CI have to perform as per its charter are analytical, training based, coordination, health activities, disaster management. It plans all these activates keeping in view the funds available. Institute is fully involved in forging new enterprise through intellectual base development at regional level. However, CI activities fully remain in the ambit of international law following the global requirements.

CAREC Institute - Advance Phase

Deliberate decision to appreciate a concrete structural pedestal for the region during conference in 2012 will lead the organization into advance stage. In order to administer the progress of all the projects from a central location, physical infrastructure has been developed at CAREC institute headquarters. The institute has been awarded three key assignments, generating knowledge, providing services to promote knowledge and managing all relevant understanding. The physical base of the CI has been successfully launched in December 2014 at a central area of the region of China. In March 2015, the Inaugural Knowledge-Sharing Workshop of the CAREC Institute was held in conjunction with the formal announcement of the opening of the CI's physical base. Jointly organized by CI and the ADB Institute, the workshop focused on how CAREC countries can develop effective policies and programs to develop and benefit economically through extending corridors and plugging in to in regional markets.

Partnership of Networks

CAREC is busy in developing a close network of cooperation among the

members along with its own structure. The canvas of networks is within and beyond the CAREC regions. Partnership and sharing is harnessing all intellectual and material resources. Primary data within CAREC includes all institutions and bodies including 92 CI are being integrated with institution outside the CAREC which constitutes all the institutions directly or indirectly supporting integration programs of all the member countries. It has been assessed that collaboration of these both tiers of networks can generate a better management model for CAREC region. Flexibility in the plan of partnership networks can yield better results of the CAREC region.

There are two important indicative areas of cooperation the institute is committed to deliberate upon. The first is the opening out of trade within CAREC region by speedy completing transport and trade-oriented projects. The second indicative area is deliberation upon the corridors completion in order to achieve fair and transparent viability in the region.

Trade Expansion

Trade expansion in CAREC region is multifaceted development which has been taken as challenge by the CAREC institute. Primarily this seemingly is a single project confronting various obstacles. A state level coordination emphasizing CAREC's goals is required to be implemented in phases. The CAREC institute has worked out a plan as "second tier areas [12]" for meeting the challenges. CAREC institutes' efforts to work out plan in steps; from organizational level to policy and finally across international borders level is being gauged for yielding the desirable results.

All members need to contribute their carefully planned participation in line with the CI objectives. CI has developed network, partnerships and outreach centers in order to promote the superior regional economic cooperation. CI provides opportunities to scholars of CAREC region for applied research, good practices, innovations, databases, publications and also encourages establishing knowledge centers and Eplatforms in CAREC region.

Role of ADB in CAREC

ADB has played a key role for regional integration programmes in Asia particularly in CAREC programme. ADB is also playing a vital role to develop CAREC Institute as a virtual reality since its inception. Fully functioning CI will have positive pros and cons in regional economic integration between Pakistan and Central Asia. Strategic awareness skeleton was the scheme of Asian

Development Bank, where the primary thoughtfulness is to develop CI into a permanent physical structure to make it a best leading institution facilitating for regional economic cooperation in the region. ADB plays leading role in organizing institutional level events to mega organizational schemes along with the financial assistance for execution of mega projects. In a decade ADB credited \$5.1 billion in the form of lending and endowments for trade, transport and energy sectors.

CAREC Institute (CI) Governance

At present the responsibility of governance is shared by a dedicated ADB team who is committed to execute the knowledge framework of CAREC. ADB also provides the consultative services which are playing key role in accomplishing the affirmed objectives of CI. Some of the declared goals are resource generation, evaluation, setting timetable and issue of SOM guidance. For achieving this objective CI has set interim objective plan 2014-17 within the framework of Strategic Framework 2010.

CAREC Partners

CAREC has earned the confidence of 11 members and world's top ranking financial institutions who are supporting and financing more than \$ US 38 billion projects in this initiative of regional cooperation and integration[13].

CAREC Countries

The CAREC members are ten countries who joined this initiative at different times. The last members are Pakistan and Turkmenistan who joined CAREC in 2010. Initial members were China and Central Asian Republics along with Mongolia who have been pursuing their goal of regional integration through the motto of good neighbors since 2001.

Multilateral Institution Partners

There are six multi lateral financial institutions supporting the CAREC projects in all the defined fields. These multilateral institutions; WB, ADB, European Bank for reconstruction and Development, IMF, IDB and UNDP are funding CAREC projects. Other than these institutions there are about 36 financial institutions, organizations and governments who are guaranteeing the success of CAREC initiative. CAREC initiated 156 projects in the field of transport, trade, trade facilitation and energy transmission sectors. A brief detail of these projects is given in the figure 7.

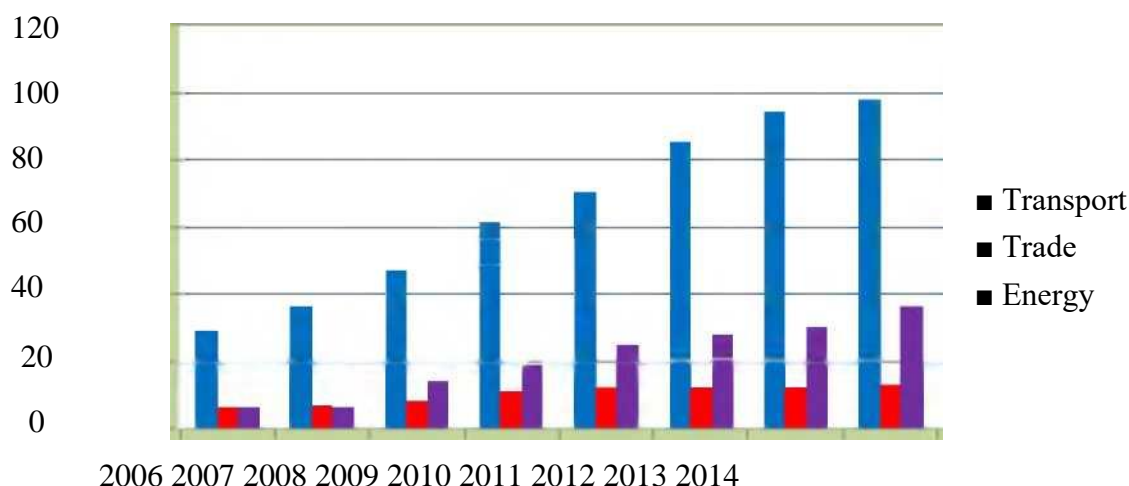


Figure 3. CAREC projects- 2006-2014 in transport, trade facilitation and energy sectors

Sectors of CAREC

Over all sectors of CAREC are controlled by two main bodies of the programme, at top level is the Ministerial Conference which formulates policies and execution modalities. The supervision role at top level is afforded by the conference to infuse regional cooperation across the region. New enterprise is also invented by the conference to be executed among the members. Discussion is generated by the conference to guide the progressing assignments to satisfy the funding institutions. The conference is attended by economic ministers and relevant officials on regular basis from all the members. The partner multilateral institutions are bound to take part in all meetings. Sometimes observers are also invited to some specific meetings provided that members agree. The second tier of CAREC is Execution of projects committee comprising senior officials meeting - SOM. The SOM is an execution body functioning at operational stage. The major role of SOM is to review and articulate the upcoming problems at execution level. SOM can also recommend appropriate judgments to resolve the issues at higher level of conference. It is also responsible for arrangements of meetings at all the levels along with the preparation of proposals for new initiatives. [14]

Transport Sector

Transport sector of CAREC is administered by a Transport Sector Coordination Committee (TSCC). Primary task of TSCC is to make plans for all transport related investments, and coordination with other sectors for activities like capacity building activities, identification of transport related pilot projects

and their implementation. TSCC also works for transport working groups. TSCC initiates its recommendations on regular basis to CAREC senior official's meeting (SOM) and finally the reports are presented at CAREC ministerial conference level. As for as the representation is concerned all senior officials of related fields from the member states constitute the TSCC. This body organizes its meeting on annual basis however for emergent projects it can organize immediate meetings as well. The host country chairs the meeting. So for in transport sector CAREC divided the entire region into six corridors, where every corridor comprises multi projects including railway, roads, trade facilitation, logistic centres and border crossing points aiming to connect major industrial hubs of the region and connecting landlocked Central Asia to global markets through East-West corridors and North-South corridors.

CAREC aims to complete all these corridors by 2020. The level of improvement in trade among CAREC countries is left on the future researchers to measure after 2020, once the ongoing CAREC projects are fully developed and activated along with other institutionalized developments. The socio economic indicators, business development, creation of new jobs and improvement in quality of life are quite visible in CAREC countries. CAREC has emphasized next phase priorities through its strategic framework 2020 in transport sector for developing infrastructure. CAREC assessment reports reveal enhancement of investments in its projects in coming decades which will further convert the transport corridors of CAREC region into economic corridors of regional integration.

CAREC selected five primary factors; which are traffic volume, possibilities of growth, capacity to connect economic and population magnets [15], capability to resolve obstacles and financial sustainability to assess corridor development plan for transport. Each corridor enables the accessibility of CAREC countries to world largest Eurasian markets and warm water ports of Pakistan especially Gwadar, will change the entire canvas of the region. These corridors are means to the final end product which is regional economic integration not the product itself. The entire project aims to ensure minimum time border crossing with optimum cost and flawless transshipment operations, which will only be possible once trade procedures of CAREC countries are fully harmonized which is the aim of CAREC transport strategy.

CAREC Corridors

All the six corridors of CAREC comprise thousands of kilometers roads, railway tracks, logistic centers and trade facilitation centers.

Corridor 1: Linking Europe with Asia

This will be most trafficked corridor of the initiative. Its alignment is east to west connecting China with EU region. The corridor is estimated about 13,600 kilometers roads and 12,000 kilometers railways track including three international level airports and a logistics center.

Corridor 2. Linking East Asia & the Mediterranean Europe

Mediterranean region will be connected to Caucasus through corridor two. The corridor passes through Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and the China. 9,900 kilometers of roads and 9,700 kilometers of railways development is part of this corridor.

Corridor 3. Linking South Asia, Russia & Middle East

Northern parts of Russia are connected to Middle East and South Asia through this corridor. It comprises 6,900 kilometers roads and 4,800 kilometers railways, running mostly East-West and North-South. Corridor 3 has the potential to generate tremendous freight business for Pakistan.

Corridor 4. Linking East Asia & Russia

Russian Federation will be connected with China and Mongolia through this corridor. Its route comprises 2,400 kilometers roads and 1,100 kilometers railways. Primarily corridor 4 is a bridge between other already completed projects and has completed the juxtaposition of connectivity in the CAREC region. Corridor 4 connects isolated Mongolia with Eurasian and Middle East markets through Pakistan.

Corridor 5. Connecting South Asia, East Asia & Middle East

Corridor 5 of CAREC will link East Asia to the Arabian Sea through Central Asia. The route passes through China, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan. It comprises 3,700 kilometers roads and 2,000 kilometers railway tracks. Corridor 5 also passes through Pakistan and under corridor 5 various projects are being completed in Pakistan.

Corridor 6. Connecting Europe - Middle East & South Asia

The corridor 6 of CAREC will have three routes linking Europe and the Russian Federation to the Arabian Sea port of Karachi and Gwadar port in Arabian Sea. The route will have 10,600 kilometers of roads and 7,200 kilometers of railways.

Progress on Corridors

For effective execution of transport programmes CAREC has completed research studies, including CAREC development effectiveness review 2014 which analyzed the completed projects and setting new priorities beyond 2015. Another study was completed in September 2015 named “From Landlocked to Link: The Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation Programme. In this study not only all existing projects have been evaluated rather investors from all over the world have been invited to invest on the basis of profitability of all projects. The study also focuses on how to explore untapped resources of the region. In September 2015 another research study was completed by CAREC namely “Improving Energy Efficiency and Reducing Emissions through Intelligent Railway Buildings”, the report suggested PRC and other CAREC members to reduce the carbon emission. Another study titled “ADB Outlook Update: Enabling Women, Energizing Asia” was completed in September 2015. In August 2015 “Reforming the Financing System for the Road Sector in PRC” was also completed. The important transport related events also took place at CAREC forum to promote transport sector among CAREC members. These events were, first meeting of the CAREC railway working group on 24-26 November 2015. The 14th CAREC ministerial conference also took place on 25 September 2015 followed by SOM.

Another milestone development event was technical consultation on quadrilateral traffic in transit agreement on 7-9 September 2015. A workshop was organized on road asset management on 30 April 2015, including 14th CAREC transport coordination committee meeting in April 2015. The other events organized were a workshop on cross border transport facilitation and the joint working group’s first meeting on Bishkek Almaty Corridor Initiative has been organized in 2015. Reports and working papers of all these projects are available on CAREC’s official website. CAREC members have endorsed their commitment on road safety during 14th ministerial conference in Mongolia. All CAREC member countries agreed to adopt a unified road safety system by combining the vehicular and road designing and modeling. Right now traffic fatality rate in CAREC countries is higher than the high income countries of the world. One aim of CAREC road safety is to minimize the fatality level while upgrading the road safety standards.

Trade Facilitation

Trade facilitation regime is also a major driver of regional economic integration. The areas which require to be integrated for trade facilitation are the

custom operation regime. For better custom cooperation to further moving towards custom union CAREC has evolved a Custom Operation Committee. The Custom Cooperation Committee, which is simply called CCC, has multi tasking assignments. CCC is a body which takes the strategic decisions for guiding and planning all trade facilitation assignments. Custom Cooperation Committee is responsible to monitor all CAREC regional based investments and to solve all customs related issues. The assigned tasks of CCC are to organize capacity building events and opportunities. Another important assignment of CCC is work out implications for planned pilot projects which are marked for the trade facilitation sector. CCC also works closely with the transport working group for better coordination and logistics. This CCC is answerable to Senior Official Meeting (SOM) to further report to the ministerial conference. The structure of CCC comprises senior government officials belonging to all CAREC members who all work in close association of CAREC secretariat. Every year CCC organizes its annual meetings where the meeting is chaired by the host country's officials. CAREC trade facilitation department supervises regularly different new research studies along with the ongoing projects. CAREC is paying full attention on the aspects of trade where it has launched 19 projects, and 5 research studies are under way to initiate new projects in future. The detailed data base and technical details of all projects are given in the repository data base of CAREC. There are dozens of trade facilitation activities and events organized by CAREC in the field of trade. These events include trade facilitation workshops, ministerial conferences, SOM meetings, customs cooperation committee's meetings, CFCFA annual meetings. Workshops on risk management, state's custom management, economic cooperation programme and Kyoto programme.

Energy

Energy is another important sector of focus by the CAREC. Energy includes exploitation of energy potential, transmission lines development program across the international borders of CAREC countries. CAREC has a mechanism to promote energy sector through energy sector coordination committee. Why energy is an important focus area, because CAREC region has tremendous natural resources which are required to be exploited through appropriate infrastructure development program. This regional energy cooperation through CAREC will integrate CAREC countries to collectively generate and distribute energy resources. Energy cooperation among CAREC countries is planned to introduce optimization regime to develop long lasting solutions to energy deficiency problems of South Asia, Western China and will enable Central Asia to export trans-border all the surplus planned energy

resources. Energy resources also include transportation of oil, natural gas and LNG via pipelines from Russia, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan which will be a new vista opening mega development in the region through CAREC. The main aim of energy cooperation by the CAREC is to promote the energy security in CAREC region and balanced economic growth through energy trade. CAREC has allocated substantial budget for energy projects comprising 35 energy projects. CAREC has planned various activities and events during 2015 for the promotion of trade like trade policy coordination committee meeting and international trade and investment conference to promote investment and trade. CAREC also organized various workshops on promotion of trade and cooperation.

Trade Policy

Trade policy plays a vital role to promote the regional integration and regional trade. Trade policy is the foundation stone for the intra regional trade of CAREC region. This initiative is managed by the trade policy coordination committee. Trade policy is a lacking area of cooperation among the CAREC members. The sustainable growth is only possible for the landlocked Central Asia if it strive to connect with the global markets. CAREC has developed an institutional framework namely Trade Policy Strategic Action Plan (TPSAP) to achieve the trade cooperation objectives through this mechanism. The primary objectives of TPSAP are to increase trade volume, and to promote intra regional trade. CAREC also seems committed to promote acceptance among the members for WTO membership, so that they can have access to the world markets on competitive basis. The CAREC programme is also involved in promoting the trade capacity through trade policy. CAREC aims to promote investment climate across the region by introducing liberalized regime within minimum possible time. CAREC has planned to introduce a uniform taxation system, reduction of tariffs and bringing the exports and imports restrictions at zero level.

CAREC has assigned the task to TPSA Pto develop a strategic plan to expand the regional trade among the member countries up to the latest global level and new heights. TPSAP is exerting to expand services required for trade, trying to reduce the non tariff measures. CAREC countries have shown will to harmonize the trade taxes, to remove the trade restrictions and to promote the cross border regional economic cooperation. Border crossing points BCP's are being surveyed in all CAREC members. ADB with the collaboration of World Bank have started trade liberalization training sessions with the consent of members for government officials, businessmen community and international investors since 2012. Although it is a new journey in CAREC countries however,

the way it has progressed will bring the region into a new phase of regional integration. So far CAREC has initiated 5 projects for the trade policy. In 2015 various events were organized to promote intra-regional trade like conferences and meetings. CAREC's trade policy coordination committee meetings are the regular features in this regard. So far 22nd times this meeting has been organized.

CAREC Results Framework

The CAREC has developed its own mechanism of results framework to monitor its performance for primarily tracking the advancement made by CAREC initiated projects and activities for the previous years. From 2000 to 2012 CAREC was monitoring its progress by the Development Effectiveness Review (DEfR). The DEfR was monitoring the progress while categorizing it in to three levels, where level one monitored for “development outcomes” level two was for “sector outputs” and level three was monitoring the “operational and organizational effectiveness”. However, this mechanism had certain shortcomings like unable for differentiate various levels like outcomes and outputs. Finally, CAREC adopted a new five level model for monitoring the progress which was approved by SOM in 2013. The new model for monitoring includes contributions and interferences, productivity, and impact shows the levels of institutions and bodies of CAREC. It is an adopted standardization for the results of trade facilitation, transport, energy and trade policy sectors by applying an integrated structure. The new model structure is capable to present an outline of the total program in one single place, where it shows that who is implicated, what is being executed, what is being yielded in terms of road infrastructure, how the beneficiaries are being satisfied through using the new infrastructure and what is the regional impact which is being contributed by the CAREC to the regional members.

The structure of new results framework is explained in five levels as categorically that how all the levels of this operating structure are functioning. The level one of the diagrams represents the CAREC institutions and different bodies which are active in different sectors. The actual theory of change in the region begins at level one. Level one plays a vital role of structure development architect which gets the support and assistance of subsequent levels for implementation.

CAREC's level one of its bodies has chalked out second phase plan in the form of CAREC 2020 the strategic framework since 2013 which is being followed. The second level of this structural diagram is the CAREC interventions. The second level is designed to incarcerate the assumed interventions to implement the framework. This level of involvement allows developing research

studies, grand strategic plans analytical assignments, monitoring of changes in policies, management of projects and changes in any one of the institutions. CAREC result framework maintains a list of all interventions which are more common in nature; not a meticulous list of all interventions which are planned but more of an articulation of the intended foci of any number of interventions. Level two of CAREC result framework, does require a precise flagship of projects or interventions which may be listed at appropriate place. In this regard CAREC portfolio measurement needs a mechanism of indicators. Coming over the level three which deals the changes in sectors output. This is the third level of result framework detains the changes at the sector level in terms of the systems and infrastructure that will be enhanced, extended and improved. It is the CAREC interventions which successfully brought changes in systems and infrastructure.

These changes are being incorporated successfully in different sectors by all CAREC member countries. There are various examples on ground completed like rail road infrastructure, rail road systems and harmonizing the border crossing points. The major task at this level is to measure the total amount of infrastructure, to assess and measure the level of rail road systems and overall length of roads which are going to connect the CAREC countries. Level four of result frame work is an important mechanism which deals to the changes in sector outcomes. This level helps CAREC to develop a coherent plan to bring the desired changes in outcome sectors. There is an agreed definition of sector outcome that it is the use of sector outputs by the CAREC members or user organizations, or may by the end user like businessmen community of CAREC region. Just to add an example that the use of road or use of rail infrastructure to transport goods and people across the international borders of CAREC members. The prominent indicator of measurement at this level would be the measurement of freight in might be in tonnage, or may be calculated in the form of containers. This level of result framework measurement does require another research project as a chronological survey from 2016 and beyond. The last and fifth level of result frame work is to assess the regional impacts.

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KAZAKHSTAN AND PROSPECTS FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION IN CENTRAL ASIA

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Abstract: The dramatic events currently unfolding in Afghanistan in connection with the withdrawal of US troops from this long-suffering country, and in this regard, the possible negative consequences for Central Asia, attract special attention to this region. Moreover, Tajikistan and other states of the region bordering Afghanistan were unable to ensure their security in the event of a possible invasion of Central Asia by the Taliban, which controlled more than half of the Afghan territory in early July of this year.

The time to “puff out cheeks” for the leaders of the Central Asian countries has passed, and they clearly face questions that they have not been able to solve for 30 years of independence: how to avoid the chaos that is coming from Afghanistan, from where, under the onslaught of the Taliban, they retreated to Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Iran thousands of demoralized soldiers and officers of the Afghan army; what is the combat readiness and moral and political state of the armed forces of the states of the region; on whose side the sympathy of the population, to whom it sympathizes more - national governments or Islamists; who will provide practical assistance and support to the states of the region in the event of a military conflict with the Taliban.

If the situation with Dushanbe is relatively clear, since Tajikistan, which is a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, can count on the real support of allies in the organization, then the situation on the borders of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan with Afghanistan in the event of an aggravation of the situation raises many questions.

1. Internal political situation in the countries of Central Asia
- 1.1. Lack of trust and cooperation among the states of the region

Central Asia is a vast region that includes countries with similar, but not common, economic, geographical, historical, religious, and cultural characteristics. Until recently, their joint projects have stalled, despite mutual

assurances from the leaders of the region's states. As a result, none of the acute regional problems (territorial-border, water-energy, environmental, transport and communication, agrofood) for 30 years of independent development of the countries of Central Asia has not been resolved.

After the change of top leadership in Uzbekistan, there was hope that the leaders of the states of the region would be able to agree on joint actions within the framework of informal consultative meetings at the highest level. In 2017, at the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly, President of Uzbekistan Sh. Mirziyoyev proposed to hold such meetings. But here, too, the process stalled as soon as it began - only two meetings took place. The first was held in March 2018 in the capital of Kazakhstan, the second - in November 2019 in Tashkent, where the regulations for their holding were adopted - once a year.

The third meeting was planned to be held in Bishkek in the fall of 2020, but the summit did not take place due to another coup in Kyrgyzstan. True, it was officially announced that the third consultative meeting of the presidents of the Central Asian republics in Bishkek was not held due to the coronavirus pandemic. Nevertheless, the third consultative meeting of the heads of states of Central Asia took place on August 6 this year. in the city of Turkmenbashi. At this summit, the leaders of the countries of the region, in particular, confirmed the relevance and necessity of "comprehensive development of multilateral cooperation" through bilateral and multilateral events, mutual visits.

The fourth consultative meeting of the heads of state of Central Asia will most likely take place in 2022 in Bishkek, unless, of course, another coup d'etat takes place there.

1.2. Three models of political development and transit of power in the region

There are three models of political development and power transition in Central Asia:

- a) radical-ochlocratic variant in Kyrgyzstan;
- б) reformation course in Kazakhstan (K.-Zh. Tokaev) and in Uzbekistan (Sh. Mirziyoev);
- в) conservative hereditary variant

(“freezing” the existing situation and the desire to keep the post of head of state in the hands of the ruling family) in Tajikistan (E. Rahmon) and Turkmenistan (G. Berdimuhamedov).

To date, four states of the region have changed leaders - in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (moreover, in Kyrgyzstan - more than once). In two countries, the change of presidents occurred as a result of the death of previous leaders: in Turkmenistan - S. Niyazov ("Turkmen-bashi" - "Leader of the Turkmens"), who died in 2006, who was replaced as president by G. Berdimuhamedov ("Arkadag "), and in Uzbekistan - I. Karimov, who died in 2016, who was replaced by Sh. Mirziyoyev.

Otherwise, there was a change of power in Kazakhstan, where on March 19, 2019, the 79-year-old head of state (“Elbasy is the leader of the nation”) voluntarily transferred power to the Chairman of the Senate of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan K.-Zh. Tokaev.

So far, only the president of Tajikistan, 69-year-old E. Rahmon (“Founder of Peace and National Unity - Leader of the Nation”), who has held this post since 1992, remains in power in the states of Central Asia, the longest of all post-Soviet leaders.

Some optimism is caused by the outlined political and economic reforms, which were started by Sh. Mirziyoyev in Uzbekistan and K.-Zh. Tokayev in Kazakhstan.

An exception to the typical Central Asian scenario of political development and power transition is Kyrgyzstan, where coups d'état regularly take place. As a result, only R. Otunbayeva, who was the country's president in 2010-2011, now has the status of ex-president of Kyrgyzstan. The fifth president, S. Jeenbekov, who resigned on October 5, 2020 under pressure from protesters, lost this status.

Such a development of events in Kyrgyzstan does not add optimism to the countries of the region. In our opinion, the weakening of the power structure of the central bodies of Kyrgyzstan is used by organized criminal groups interested in rocking the situation in the country, popularizing the ideas of radical Islam among the population, under the cover of which their criminal activities (drug trafficking, smuggling, illegal migration, etc.) are carried out.

Under these conditions, the most important socio-political events took place in the Central Asian republics, the results of which turned out to be quite predictable. On October 11, 2020, Emomali Rahmon won the presidential election

in Tajikistan, although until the last moment it was unclear whether he would give his seat to his son or keep this post for himself. On December 20, 2020, repeated parliamentary elections were held in Kyrgyzstan, after the previous elections on October 4 were declared illegal. S. Zhaparov, previously released from prison, won the early presidential elections.

On January 10, 2021, elections to the Mazhilis of the Parliament of Kazakhstan were held, which predictably won the party of the ex-president "Nur-Otan". True, the population of the country had many questions about the nomination of well-known nationalists Aydos Sarym and Berik Abdygali as deputies on the list of this party.

1.3. Foreign policy priorities of Central Asian countries

A feature of the countries of Central Asia is the difference in their foreign policy priorities. Of the states in the region, only Kazakhstan borders on two powers - Russia and China, and the land border of Kazakhstan with the Russian Federation is the longest land border in the world. Therefore, it is not surprising that for Kazakhstan the leading foreign policy priorities were, are and will be Russia and China. It is no coincidence that the President of Kazakhstan K.-J. Tokayev went to Russia, and the ex-president went to China, to the Second Beijing Belt and Road Forum.

For Uzbekistan, which does not border either Russia or China, an acute problem is the neighborhood with Afghanistan. At the same time, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan A. Kamilov refers to President Sh. Mirziyoyev, who believes that Afghanistan is part of the Central Asian region, since "for thousands of years, the peoples of Uzbekistan and Afghanistan have developed in the same cultural and civilizational space." Therefore, Uzbekistan will develop close political, trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian relations with Afghanistan. "We," emphasizes Sh. Mirziyoyev, "perceive the security of Afghanistan as the security of our country, a guarantee of stability and prosperity for the entire vast region" [1].

In connection with the dramatic development of the situation in Afghanistan, it is with Tashkent that Washington will primarily negotiate on the two most acute problems - on the deployment of an American military base withdrawn from Afghanistan; about the evacuation of several thousand Afghan citizens who collaborated with the American administration, and their families.

Kyrgyzstan, which borders on China, is oriented towards Russia in the military and political terms, and China in the financial and economic terms. At the same time, Bishkek, due to the difficult socio-economic situation and political instability in the country, is open for cooperation with states that are ready to provide sponsorship.

Tajikistan, due to geographical, ethnic and linguistic factors, is interested in deepening cooperation with Iran and Afghanistan. At the same time, Dushanbe maintains military-strategic cooperation with the Russian Federation, as well as financial, trade and economic relations with China.

Turkmenistan stands apart, which, due to its commitment to a policy of neutrality, continues to remain in a state of isolation.

The rivalry between the three leading powers in Central Asia was reflected in the topics of the meetings of the heads of the foreign affairs departments of the United States, China, and Russia with the foreign ministers of the Central Asian states in the 1+5 format. At the meeting of US Secretary of State A.Blinken with the heads of foreign affairs agencies of the countries of the region in an online format on April 23 this year, special attention was paid to the following issues:

- "to jointly solve common problems on the way to a prosperous and secure Central Asia, free to pursue its interests with various partners, including the United States."

- further "development of security cooperation between the United States and the countries of Central Asia as a means of promoting stability and regional security and countering cross-border threats emanating from Afghanistan."

- facilitating "regional connectivity and transit trade by expanding transport networks connecting Central Asia with South Asia via Afghanistan".

- "continuation of regional energy infrastructure and connectivity projects as a means of strengthening electrical connectivity and energy integration, promoting regional cooperation and providing transit revenues and reliable energy for Afghanistan and the countries of Central Asia" [2].

Another range of issues was considered at the Second Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the People's Republic of China and the countries of Central Asia, held on May 12 this year. in full-time format in the Chinese city of Xi'an. The ministers adopted the following statements: "On the development of interregional

cooperation"; "About Afghanistan"; "On cooperation in the fight against COVID-19". At the same time, the task of jointly drawing up a Plan for Future Cooperation and efforts to create a Community of Common Destiny for China and Central Asia was put at the forefront. The meeting documents emphasized that China and the countries of Central Asia are actively involved in the joint construction of the Belt and Road, which gives special vitality to the ancient Silk Road [3].

At the third online meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Russia and Central Asian countries, held on October 16, 2020, attention was drawn to the further development of multifaceted interaction between the Russian Federation and the Central Asian states. In particular, the ministerial statement "On Strategic Directions for Cooperation" said that it is in the common "national interest to further actively develop interstate ties in order to strengthen security and stability in Central Asia, turn it into a zone of peace, prosperity, interethnic and interfaith harmony, long-term and prospective cooperation, energy and transport-transit interaction of continental importance" [4].

Held on July 16-17 with. Conference in Tashkent "Central and South Asia: Regional Interconnection. Challenges and Opportunities", initiated by the President of Uzbekistan Sh. Mirziyoyev with the active support of the United States, demonstrated the fundamental differences in the approaches to the "interconnection" of Central and South Asia by the main non-regional actors, on the one hand, and the states of Central Asia, on the other. If the United States once again declared the need for a comprehensive development of relations between Central and South Asia, not only in all key areas, including trade and economic, transport and logistics, energy, security, but also in the field of cultural and humanitarian relations, then other participants of the Tashkent forum actually ignored such a position of Washington,

Thus, in the C5+1 joint statement adopted on 16 July this year. The heads of the foreign affairs agencies of the United States and the countries of the region within the framework of the Tashkent Conference pointed out the need to look for opportunities to strengthen ties between the regions of Central and South Asia through trade, transport and energy ties, including through Afghanistan, and to establish closer ties between the economies of Central and South Asia, and to promote cross-border business and people-to-people exchanges. Particular attention in this document was paid to strengthening the historical, cultural, civilizational and spiritual identity of the peoples of South and Central Asia and the restoration of cultural and humanitarian ties between these regions [5].

Beijing, focused on the implementation of its Belt and Road project, strongly opposed the "geopolitical games" around Central and South Asia. It is no coincidence that Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, speaking at the Tashkent conference, instead of the name of the forum "Central and South Asia: Regional Connectivity" used another term "connectivity in Central and South Asia." Based on this, Wang Yi focused on the need to develop openness, inclusiveness, partnership, adherence to the principles of mutual benefit, win-win, cooperation, and common security. And only then Wang Yi announced that China, supporting the construction of a transport corridor connecting Central and South Asia, proposes to jointly create large transport corridors connecting Europe with Asia, as well as the North with the South [6].

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation S. Lavrov proposed his interpretation of the agenda of the Tashkent Forum, declaring "the interconnectedness between Central and South Asia." In this regard, S. Lavrov, emphasizing the rapid degradation of the situation in Afghanistan, drew the attention of the initiators of the creation of transport, logistics and energy projects linking Central and South Asia to the need to consider the security situation in Afghanistan, as well as the threat of a "flow of instability" into neighboring states [7].

In our opinion, among the states of Central Asia, only Uzbekistan supports Washington's position on the comprehensive development of relations between Central and South Asia. Speaking with a welcoming speech at the opening of the Tashkent Forum, the President of Uzbekistan Sh. Mirziyoyev once again emphasized the historical closeness of Central and South Asia. According to Sh. Mirziyoyev, the historical, cultural and civilizational community of Central and South Asia, the coinciding interests of the countries of the two regions and peoples create a solid foundation on which a common prosperous future can be built. In this regard, the President of Uzbekistan said, the time has come, based on the huge historical, scientific, spiritual and cultural heritage of the peoples of the two regions, the complementarity of the economies, the availability of intellectual potential, to consolidate joint efforts, to turn Central and South Asia into a stable, economically developed and prosperous space. The head of Uzbekistan expressed confidence that only together it is possible to more effectively counter terrorism, extremism, transnational crime, including in cyberspace. Earlier, Sh. Mirziyoyev already proposed to the countries of Central and South Asia to approve a joint plan to combat terrorism and drug trafficking [8].

But Tashkent does not calculate all the risks associated with the integration of Central and South Asia. Take only the demographic factor. South Asia is home to 40% of the Asian population and 22% of the world's population. In Uzbekistan, 35 million people live, in Kazakhstan even less - 19 million. Therefore, an attempt to unite Central and South Asia is similar to an attempt to unite a fresh lake with an ocean. In this case, according to the law of communicating vessels, equilibrium will be established in both water spaces and, consequently, fresh water in the lake will be displaced by sea water.

In addition, Tashkent ignores such a complex factor as the confrontation between Pakistan and India, which take opposite positions on the Afghan problem. It's no secret that the Taliban enjoys the support of the Pakistani intelligence services, behind which, in turn, are the US and British intelligence services, whose activities are currently "sharpened" against China and Russia.

In this regard, it is impossible not to note two dangerous trends that are actively imposed on the countries of Central Asia from the outside: Russophobia and Sinophobia, on the one hand, the idea of uniting the Turkic-speaking states of the post-Soviet space under the auspices of Ankara on the basis of linguistic and cultural-civilizational identity, on the other.

2. Interest of Kazakhstan in cooperation with the states of Central Asia

The leadership of Kazakhstan pays great attention to the development of regional cooperation in Central Asia. Speaking at the General Debate of the 74th session of the UN General Assembly (September 25, 2019), President of Kazakhstan K.-Zh. Tokayev noted that for decades the states of the region had weak economic ties, which hindered their sustainable growth. Now, based on common interests and challenges, the region has entered a new stage of development. In this regard, - said the head of Kazakhstan, - a close and constructive political dialogue between all five states of the region will contribute to trade, economic, investment and human interaction.

Based on this, K.-J. Tokayev expressed confidence that Central Asia is becoming a "global shareholder." In his opinion, the peoples of the region are bound by strong ties of common historical and cultural heritage, as well as a common future. Therefore, Kazakhstan, as the largest economy in Central Asia, is vitally interested in further strengthening mutually beneficial interaction between all states [9].

His position on the need to establish intra-regional cooperation President K.-J. Tokayev developed it while speaking at the general political debates of the next, 75th session of the UN General Assembly (September 23, 2020). Noting that Kazakhstan's focus is always on intra-regional cooperation, Tokayev stressed that at the moment Central Asia is undergoing a rapid transformation due to a significant expansion of interaction between the states of the region in various fields.

In this regard, the Head of Kazakhstan expressed confidence that a prosperous, strong and united Central Asia meets the interests of both local and global stakeholders. According to Tokayev, rational use of transboundary water resources plays an important role in the context of regional stability. Therefore, he proposed the creation of a Regional Water and Energy Consortium. And in order to coordinate the development agenda in Central Asia, the Head of Kazakhstan proposed to institutionalize the UN Regional Center for Sustainable Development Goals in Almaty [10].

2.1. Transport and logistics cooperation and infrastructure competition in Central Asia

Kazakhstan continues to advocate mutually beneficial transport and logistics cooperation between the countries of Central Asia. In his message to the people of Kazakhstan (09/01/2020), President K.-J. Tokayev emphasized that a new infrastructural frame of the transport system has been formed in the republic, the country's integration into global transport corridors has been ensured, and the historical status of Kazakhstan as a link between Asia and Europe has been restored. At the same time, the head of state draws attention to the need for pragmatic approaches in cooperation in the infrastructure sector due to the presence of high competition in the region.

According to Tokayev, alternative projects have appeared in the Central Asian region that can reduce the transit potential of Kazakhstan. In this regard, it is necessary to consolidate the leading role of the transport and transit sector of Kazakhstan not only in Central Asia, but also in the Eurasian space. To ensure the country's competitiveness in this sector, Tokayev believes, it is necessary through breakthrough infrastructure projects, attracting new states and companies, increasing the level of service and the speed of transit routes [11].

2.2. Kazakhstan's support to the countries of the region in the fight against the coronavirus epidemic

The coronavirus pandemic has had an extremely negative impact on the republics of Central Asia. Quarantine restrictions in foreign countries, primarily in Russia, have led to the fact that about 40% of labor migrants who previously worked in the Russian Federation have lost their jobs. Many migrants returned to their homeland to wait out the crisis at home. This dealt a serious blow to the economies of the Central Asian states. In particular, economic growth rates have slowed down, production volumes have decreased, unemployment has increased, trade and industrial regional ties have weakened, there are interruptions in the supply of food and consumer goods, domestic demand has decreased, inflation has increased, and the devaluation of national currencies has continued [12].

The deterioration of the socio-economic situation could not but be reflected in the growth of protest moods. If earlier dissatisfied and socially active citizens could go to work in Russia and other foreign countries, then for the second year they have been deprived of such an opportunity. In this situation, President K.-J. Tokayev, based on humanitarian considerations, decided to provide assistance to the population of the Central Asian countries. Already in March 2020, 5 thousand tons of flour were sent to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan as humanitarian aid. In accordance with the request made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan R. Kazakbaev during his visit to Kazakhstan on October 28, 2020, the Government of Kazakhstan provided Bishkek with medicines and personal protective equipment free of charge, as well as financial and technical assistance [13].

2.3. Kazakhstan and the reconstruction of Afghanistan The effectiveness of cooperation between the countries of Central Asia largely depends on the internal political situation in Afghanistan.

For a long time now, the possibility of destabilization of the situation there after the withdrawal of American troops has been worrying in Kazakhstan, as a result of which flows of Afghan refugees may pour into the countries of Central Asia. Given that the armed forces of Tajikistan, numbering about 9,000 servicemen, will not be able to effectively cover the Tajik-Afghan border with a length of 1,430 km, one should expect a breakthrough of militant gangs across the border. This may cause a flow of refugees already from Tajikistan. Since the socio-economic situation in Central Asia is not the best at the moment, the influx of refugees may further aggravate the situation in the region.

Proceeding from this, Kazakhstan stands for the involvement of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. In

particular, speaking at the SCO summit on November 10, 2020, K.-J. Tokayev noted that Kazakhstan is ready to continue cooperation within the framework of the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group with an emphasis on the socio-economic rehabilitation of this country [14].

2.4. Kazakhstan and labor migration in the region

The coronavirus pandemic in Russia and its consequences (high airfare, expensive labor patents, manifestations of xenophobia, etc.) have forced many labor migrants from Central Asia to look for work in Kazakhstan. According to official statistics, the number of Uzbek labor migrants in this republic has increased by about 10 times over the past 5 years. Despite the closure of borders due to the pandemic, in January 2021, according to official data from the Ministry of Economy, there were more than 200,000 Uzbek citizens in Kazakhstan. The second largest group are migrants from Kyrgyzstan.

In January of this year, according to the State Migration Service of Kyrgyzstan, about 35,000 Kyrgyzstanis worked in Kazakhstan. According to the official statistics of Tajikistan, about 14,000 citizens of this country worked in Kazakhstan before the pandemic. There are no data on the number of citizens of Turkmenistan working in Kazakhstan [15].

3. Kazakhstan and the prospects for Turkic-speaking integration

A lot of comments and rumors, especially in the media, were caused by an informal meeting of the heads of the Cooperation Council of seven Turkic-speaking states, which took place online on March 31, 2021. This summit demonstrated the desire of states that consider themselves to be part of the Turkic world to adapt to the conditions of the transition stage from unipolar to multipolar world order.

At the forum, a number of original proposals were made by the Honorary Chairman of the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States, the ex-president of Kazakhstan. In particular, he proposed to revive the Great Silk Road through the Caspian Sea under the name "Trans-Caspian International Transport Corridor" (or "Turan Corridor"), which can become the safest and shortest trade route between Europe and Asia, will effectively use the benefits of the Chinese initiative "One belt is one way.

In our opinion, this project does not consider a number of factors: a) the availability of ferries for the transport of goods across the Caspian Sea; b) availability of berths; c) the time spent on loading and unloading cargo on the

eastern and western shores of the Caspian Sea; d) the cost of transshipment of goods; e) possible risks when transporting goods through the Caspian Sea, etc. [16].

More realistic and pragmatic is the speech at the summit of the President of Kazakhstan K.-Zh. Tokayev, who urged to jointly look for new opportunities to strengthen cooperation between the Turkic-speaking countries. Since the pandemic caused an unprecedented economic crisis, which led to a reduction in the volume of trade between Kazakhstan and the member countries of the Turkic Council by 11.2%, the head of Kazakhstan proposed to create a “Special H.oitoMii'ici zone” in the Turkestan region of Kazakhstan, uniting Turkish countries. This is w> June but, according to Tokaev, use nnpss l ation and trade and economic opportunities of the city I urksstap, located at the crossroads of trade routes and has the necessary resource base, human capital and tourism potential.

Tokayev called the effective and fair use of transboundary water resources, which are the key to stability and prosperity of the countries of the region, an important task to strengthen Turkic cooperation. He announced the readiness of Kazakhstan for the joint implementation of projects for the construction of hydraulic structures.

The next task, according to the Kazakh President, is the implementation of joint projects in such areas as artificial intelligence, digitalization, analysis of large amounts of data, and online commerce. Tokayev called for speeding up work on the creation of the Turkic Investment Integration Fund, the first joint financial institution, by offering to place its headquarters in the Astana International Financial Center.

Further, the Kazakh president proposed to form a common cultural and educational space. The first step in this direction could be cooperation in the field of education. For these purposes, according to Tokayev, the Great Turks educational fund should be created to coordinate interaction between universities on academic mobility, internships, and advanced training.

Kazakhstan is ready to allocate 50 grants (Yassawi scholarship) to train young people from fraternal countries under the undergraduate program at the International Kazakh-Turkish University named after Khoja Ahmed Yassawi in Turkestan. And, finally, in order to improve the status and strengthen the institutional structure of the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking Countries,

the head of Kazakhstan proposed to transform it into a full-fledged organization [17].

For the national-populist-minded part of Kazakhstani society, oriented towards Turkey, which claims to be the leader of the Turkic world, this path is one of the desired vectors of Kazakhstani foreign policy. Moreover, the Turkic integration is seen by national populists as an alternative to Kazakhstan's rapprochement with China and Russia. Thus, A. Sarym, a deputy of the Mazhilis of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan from the ruling Nur Otan party, a member of the National Council of Public Trust under the President of the Republic, called on Kazakhstan and Turkic-speaking countries to move away from cooperation with China and Russia.

The world is in a state of sanctions wars, confrontation between the West and China and Russia, Sarym said. In this situation, Kazakhstan should not take sides in conflicts, but resolutely defend itself against any attempts to be drawn into, in his words, other people's showdowns. At the same time, Sarym argues, it is necessary to fully support the desire of Azerbaijan, Turkey, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to develop cooperation with the countries of South Asia - India, Pakistan, Afghanistan [18].

In other words, A. Sarym and his supporters actually support the American plan of Greater Central Asia, the purpose of which is the unification of Central and South Asia, the refusal of the Central Asian states from mutually beneficial cooperation with Russia and China within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union, Belt and Road.

This position of the Kazakh national populists is not shared by all Kazakh society. The well-known publicist D. Ashimbaev believes that the idea of unification with Turkey arose at the dawn of independence, when Turkey was a democratic secular state. Now, with this country, which is steadily becoming Islamized and using increasingly aggressive rhetoric, no one in the post-Soviet space, with the exception of Azerbaijan, shows much desire to integrate. It became clear to everyone, - Ashimbaev emphasizes, - that Erdogan is not acting in the interests of the Turkic world [18].

In our opinion, in the 21st century, compared to the 90s of the last century, when the United States acted in the countries of Central Asia, using Turkey as a kind of battering ram, the situation has changed. However, now Erdogan has quarreled with Washington, as a result of which he has lost financial support and has ceased to act as a percussion instrument of the collective West in the region.

Accordingly, Turkey has lost a significant part of its attractiveness in the eyes of the Kazakh society.

Thus, rumors and assumptions about the growth of Turkey's influence in Kazakhstan after Azerbaijan's victory in Nagorno-Karabakh, achieved with the direct military support of Turkey, a NATO member, have no basis. Moreover, the assumptions that Kazakhstan is allegedly considering the inclusion of its Armed Forces in a defensive union within the framework of the "Turkic Council" created by Turkey are groundless.

Of course, Turkey does not leave hopes for the creation of a "Turkic world" and the establishment of its dominance not only in the Transcaucasus, but also in Central Asia. However, without purposeful support from the United States and the collective West, this is impossible. Moreover, such plans of the unpredictable Erdogan do not correspond to the geopolitical interests of Beijing and Moscow.

4. Reformatting the International Order and Perspectives for Central Asia

There are currently many opinions about the impact the pandemic will have on world politics and the global economy. Unfortunately, the 46th President of the United States, John Biden, concluded that, according to him, it is possible to overcome new global challenges - from the pandemic to the climate crisis and the proliferation of nuclear weapons - only by "countering the growing ambitions of China, which seeks to compete with the United States ", and "Russia's firm intention to discredit and destroy the American economy" [19]. As the US has lost its monopoly leadership in the world, Biden is making strenuous efforts to create alliances - in Asia it is the "quartet" (USA, Australia, South Korea, Japan) against China and Russia, in Europe - an anti-Russian and anti-Chinese alliance based on NATO and the EU.

In the growing confrontation between the collective West and Russia, a special place is given to Kazakhstan. The White House will seek to disrupt the connection of the Eurasian Economic Union with the Silk Road Economic Belt, a significant part of which passes through the territory of Kazakhstan. At the same time, the US is still interested in integrating the countries of Central and South Asia within the framework of the New Silk Road project. It cannot be ruled out that a plan may arise in the White House to create a dividing barrier in Central Asia between Russia and China, by analogy with the emerging cordon between Russia and Europe, where Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia have already formed "bricks" into the wall separating them. Ukraine and Georgia.

At the same time, Washington will try to convince the population of Central Asia of the aggressiveness of Russia, on the one hand, and of the economic expansion of China, on the other, although the history of the past two decades convincingly shows that it is the United States, contrary to international law, that poses a threat to the security and territorial integrity of many countries. Suffice it to recall the NATO military action led by the United States against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in March 1999.

The results of the "Arab spring", inspired by the US and Western countries, did not justify their hopes. According to Western experts, chaos reigns in Libya and Yemen, the war continues in Syria and Iraq, and a military dictatorship reigns in Egypt. The current US Secretary of State A.Blinken had to admit the perniciousness of the former power politics, saying: "We will not promote democracy through costly military interventions or attempts to violently overthrow regimes. We have tried this tactic in the past. I JMIMII as well-intentioned as they were, they didn't work. They have given democracy a bad name and they have lost the confidence of the American people." "We," the Secretary of State concluded, "will do things differently" [20].

At the same time, it should be considered that Russia is in a tough confrontation with the United States. This confrontation will continue in the medium and most likely in the long term. Accordingly, Russia's relations with the European Union will worsen, in which anti-Russian sentiments will be fueled by the efforts of Poland and the Baltic States.

In the event of further aggravation of relations between the United States and the collective West, on the one hand, Russia and China, on the other, Kazakhstan, as a member of the SCO, must remain a strong link between Russia and China, provide a reliable rear for Moscow and Beijing, contribute to the integration of the EAEU and Economic Belt of the Silk Road. In the event of open military aggression against the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan will have to fulfill its obligations arising from Article 4 of the CSTO Treaty, which provides, in particular, for providing the victim of aggression with the necessary assistance, including military assistance, in the exercise of the right to collective defense in accordance with Article 51 UN Charter.

It cannot be ruled out that the countries of Central Asia may be chosen to carry out "color revolutions". For these purposes, foreign "producers" will be able to take advantage of the difficult socio-economic and socio-political situation in the states of the region. It is also possible that Islamist radicals and militants from

the so-called “sleepers cells” of ISIS, primarily in the Fergana Valley, as well as organized criminal groups behind the drug mafia and interested in destabilizing the situation in the region, will be connected to the “color revolutions”.

5. Lack of prospects for regional cooperation in Central Asia

The author of the article, who has long been a supporter of the integration of the countries of Central Asia, came to the conclusion that today there can be no question of Central Asian integration. It will be a great success if we manage to agree on regional trade and economic cooperation.

There are enough reasons for such a conclusion, but the greatest pessimism is caused by the unresolved territorial and border problems in Central Asia. The main border conflicts in the region exist in the Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan-Tajikistan triangle, between which the Fergana region was divided in Soviet times. The complex terrain, ethnic stripes, and the absence of clear state borders, which were purely administrative in the Soviet period, led to the fact that territorial border problems turned out to be extremely confusing. The situation is aggravated by the rapid growth of the local population. In conditions of limited natural and climatic resources, this has led to increased competition for land and water.

Only 75% of the state border with a length of 1378 km is delimited between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. 324 km of the border is disputable (58 disputed sections). The length of the state border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan is 978 km, but only 530 km has been delimited. The remaining 448 km remain disputed (71 disputed sections). Between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, out of 1332 km of the state border, 105 km remain disputed.

The situation is aggravated by the problem of enclaves. Most of them are located in Kyrgyzstan (4 Uzbek, 2 Tajik). The Uzbek enclaves in Kyrgyzstan are Shakhimardan, Sokh, Chonkara and Dzhangail. Moreover, Sokh is one of the largest enclaves (the area is 352 sq. km, 19 settlements, the population is more than 60 thousand people). The Tajik enclaves in Kyrgyzstan are Vorukh and Kairagach. The Kyrgyz enclave of Barak is located in Uzbekistan (area -4 sq. km).

In this conflict triangle, clashes constantly occur between residents of border villages. Here are the most recent examples. April 29-30 p. d. the conflict on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border in the area of the water intake “Golovnoy” escalated into a clash with the participation of the military. As a result, 36 people died from the Kyrgyz side, 200 were injured. From the Tajik side, 19 dead, 87 wounded. On

July 8, another incident with the use of firearms took place on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border, during which one Kyrgyz border guard was killed and another wounded.

Thus, there is no light at the end of the tunnel of border conflicts in Central Asia. Moreover, it cannot be ruled out that the ruling elites may direct the dissatisfaction of the population with the difficult socio-economic situation in their countries into the channel of interethnic and interstate conflicts. Consequently, there can be no talk of any regional cooperation.

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INTERNATIONAL MULTIPARTY MEDIATION (TAJIK PEACE PROCESS CASE)

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Abstract: *In the article the author addresses the phenomenon of multiparty mediation in the international affairs. Multiparty mediation is one of the methods of a third-party conflict management and conflict resolution, which is applied when the conflicting sides have no will or chances to negotiate bilaterally. The effectiveness of multiparty mediation is analyzed through the Tajik peace process (1992-1997), where among other factors, close cooperation and coordination among the mediators themselves were the reasons behind its success. The article then focuses on the leading role of the UN as a coordinator during the Tajik peacemaking process.*

Keywords: conflict, civil war, negotiations, multiparty mediation, mediator, cooperation, coordination, complementarity, conflict resolution, the Tajik peace process, the United Nations Organization (UN), the United Tajik Opposition (UTO).

INTRODUCTION

The practice of mediation dates back to ancient times and traditional academic literature on international mediation retrieved most of its concepts from labor-management disputes. Today mediation has been advocated as one of the most effective third-party conflict management tactics in international relations. It is applicable when interstate or intrastate conflicts occur in the international arena and conflicting parties are not able to resolve the conflict by themselves. Mediator is a third-party who does not have a stake in the conflict and enters the negotiation process with the agreement of belligerents in order to help them to find commonly accepted solution to a problem. In this case, the role of a mediator can be performed by a state, an international or regional organization, representatives of non-governmental organizations and even individuals, who have gained international reputation in managing international conflicts. However, we should differentiate the cases when the mediation is conducted by a single third party or several mediators, as there have been situations in international experience where mediation was conducted by a group of actors – states, regional or international organizations. And, it should be noted that nowadays majority of international mediation cases have been multiparty in its

nature. The effectiveness of multiparty mediation depends on difference and similarity of mediators' interests, priorities and policy goals as well as their will to cooperate and coordinate among themselves. In this sense, the international mediation of the Tajikistan conflict in the 1990s, one of the post-Soviet intrastate conflicts, deserves special attention. The focus of this article is to delve into the essence of multiparty mediation and research it through the Tajik civil war.

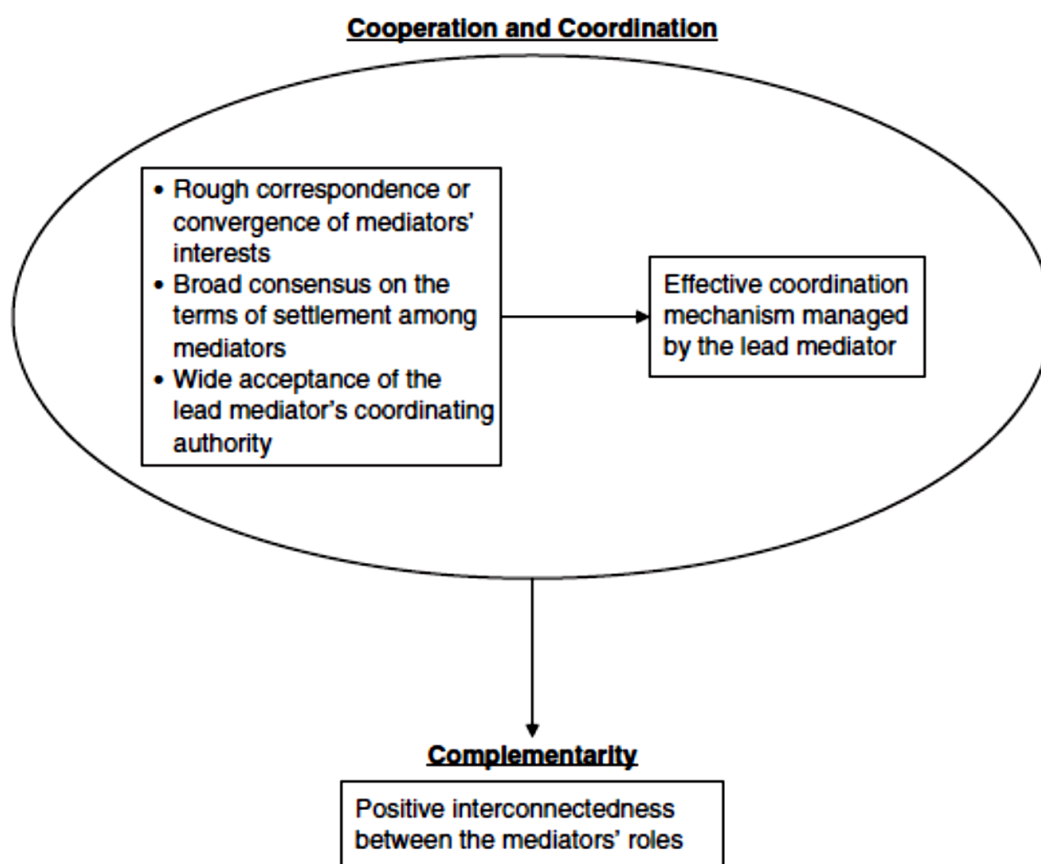
THE ESSENCE OF MULTIPARTY MEDIATION

In the late 1990s, the academic circles began to direct their focus of research on multiparty mediation. The prime goal of any mediation, according to Fisher and Ury and other Harvard scholars, "speak of joint problem solving to reach a win-win settlement or integrative solution" [2]. Nonetheless, when there are several mediators in the conflict management process, it is more difficult to handle a conflict or resolve it than when there is a single mediator. It is obvious that more than one intervener in a conflict might bring a chaos and that without *cooperation* among the mediators, *coordination* of their efforts and *complementarity*, it is not possible to get intended results (*see Figure 1 [2]*). Many scholars accentuate their attention to those determinants of successful multiparty mediation, for example, William Zartman states that "...conflict resolution is best carried out in concert. If a number of conciliators are available to the parties themselves and if a number of friends of the conflicting parties can coordinate their good offices and pressure, the chances of success are improved" [3]. Another researcher of international political mediation Chester Crocker compares a multiparty mediation to the task of herding cats: "Management in these circumstances [in multiparty mediation] is not a matter of establishing a line of command and responsibility. Organizing the diverse third-party peacemaking entities is a lot like organizing cats. As anyone who has lived with them can tell you, cats cannot be organized. Independent beings, they will do what they choose to do, gazing at your efforts to organize them with mild curiosity, or simply ignoring you. Gaining a cat's cooperation is a complicated matter of setting a course the cat might find reasonable and employing incentives (food often works) that persuade it at least to give your idea some thought" [4].

Cooperation is a situation where the mediators agree to work together to solve the conflict. It is evident that each mediator enters a conflict with its own interests and goals, nevertheless, they have to cooperate amongst themselves rather than compete to find a mutually acceptable solution, which is not possible if they consider acting unilaterally during the mediation process. Moreover, mediators can bring the belligerents to the table of negotiations using their

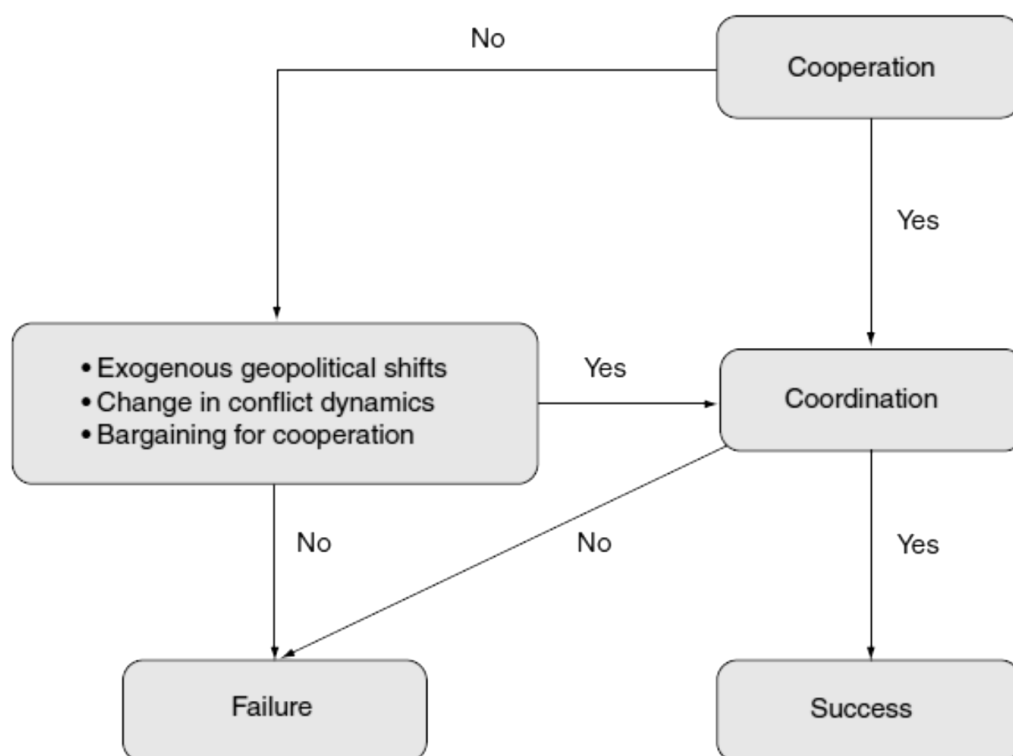
leverage and good relations, when one of them is in a good relationship with the one disputant, others have close relations with the other disputant. As Sinisa Vukovic puts it, cooperation and coordination among mediators in multiparty mediation are the core issues upon which depends success or failure of mediation (*see Figure 2 [5]*). It cannot be denied that there are various cases of unsuccessful mediation in history, where lack of cooperation and coordination among mediators had detrimental effects on the course of peacemaking efforts.

Figure 1



Coordination in multiparty mediation evolves when cooperation among the mediators is reached. Coordination means a method of synchronized usage of resources and leverage mediators have, as well as synchronized employment of various mediation strategies. In order to solve the conflict in short terms, mediators coordinate their actions by sharing information and resources; analyzing the current circumstances of the dispute. It is vital to send the same signals to the disputing parties while talking to them, since it creates the common ground for cooperation between the belligerents. In other words, cooperation and coordination among the mediators are of utmost importance in laying the foundation for the conflicting parties to cooperate and reach an agreement.

Figure 2



Involvement of states, regional and international organizations, non-governmental structures; division of labour and cooperation among them and successful employment of both *Track I* and *Track II* diplomacy are the factors which contribute to *complementarity* in multiparty mediation.

Considerable degree of cooperation and coordination, different yet complementary roles of mediators served as key determinants of successful multiparty mediation during the Tajik peace process.

BACKGROUND OF THE CONFLICT

Soon after gaining independence from the former Soviet Union in 1991, a civil war began in Tajikistan. Different explanations can be found in academic literature as causes of this war. Some scholars note that the concept of territoriality (*regionalism*) was deeply rooted among Tajik citizens; each region was trying to seize power and establish control over national resources. Many researchers claim that this was due to the facts that in Soviet times some regions had more economic and political privileges than others; political system in the country was not stable enough, and sense of national identity was not formed among population [6]. The

civil war in Tajikistan is considered to be one of the largest conflicts in the post-Soviet space.

In Soviet times, political power was concentrated in Leninabad region, northern part of Tajikistan. Representatives of the entire political elite were appointed from the Leninabadis. The main opposition was concentrated in the southern regions of the country, representing Garm, Kurgan-Tube and Gorno-Badakhshan. After some disagreements between them, in November 1992, Imomali Rakhmonov from Kulyab region came into power. The government comprised of the representatives of Kulyab and Leninabad regions, supported by Russia. Opposition forces protested against the new government and the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) was formed under the leadership of Said Abdullo Nuri. Thus, a bloody civil war began in Tajikistan, which lasted until June 1997.

MULTIPARTY MEDIATION IN PROCESS

A number of states, regional and international organizations participated as mediators in the peacemaking process to end the war in Tajikistan. Russia, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, the United Nations Organization (UN), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) acted as mediators at various stages of conflict resolution. Almost all of them hosted negotiations between the conflicting sides at different times. The lead mediators were Russia and Iran, while the UN took the role of a leading mediator among mediators. In June 1997, a peace agreement was signed between the government of Tajikistan and the United Tajik Opposition.

Mediation played an important role in this process. Undoubtedly, there were both internal and external factors which contributed to ending the war. Though “..... the peace process in Tajikistan represents a case of multiparty mediation in which eventual success was directly dependent upon the interests of the powerful neighboring states, regional geopolitical conditions, and international organization`s legitimate power to coordinate the activities of multiple third parties” [7]. Mainly, the effectiveness of multilateral mediation was due to the cooperation and coordination among the states involved; between the states and the UN; between the UN and other organizations; between formal and informal mediators [8].

Each mediator involved in resolving the conflict in Tajikistan was interested in ending the war and made it the primary goal. It was the most important factor in the success of the multiparty mediation. Lead mediators in this

process were Russia and Iran, as both countries established good relations with the warring parties. While Russia supported the government forces financially and militarily, Iran had strong cultural and linguistic ties with the opposition forces. Both states had the capability, strength and resources to exert sufficient pressure on the parties. In 1993-1994, after realizing that the conflict could not be resolved by military means, Russia began to try to find a political solution to the issue by approving the involvement of the UN more widely. Although by that time Russia had not yet decided which solution was going to meet its interests, the Russian government wanted Imomali Rakhmonov to stay in power. On the other hand, Russia wanted to resolve the conflict on its own, since Russian policymakers considered Central Asian region still to be under the influence of Russia and did not want other external actors to interfere with the affairs of this region. Yet Russia did not have enough power and influence to end the conflict unilaterally.

Although Iran was on the side of the opposition forces, it later realized that the UTO was not capable of taking control over the whole country because the population of Tajikistan did not have enough knowledge about Islam and was not ready to establish an Islamic state like in Iran. Besides, all citizens of Tajikistan were Sunnis, except for the Ismailis. Iranian government also realized that the Tajik civil war was not an ideological fight but a territorial confrontation. Keeping this in mind, Iran was very careful not to side too much with the Islamic opposition in order to maintain its good relations with Russia. Contributing to peace in Central Asia was a good opportunity for Iran to enhance its image and influence in international relations.

“The rapid rise of the radical Islamicist and ethnic Pushtun-based Taliban movement in Afghanistan in 1995-1996 dramatically changed the regional geopolitical context. Fears that the Taliban might threaten Tajikistan encouraged foreign governments to pressure their Tajik allies to negotiate a settlement to the war” [9]. Both Russia and Iran acted in their own interests to speed up the negotiation process between the parties and end the conflict. First of all, they agreed to cooperate with each other. They also came to an agreement to include representatives of the UTO in the government (30%), the main contingent of which would include the representatives of Kulyab region. They also acknowledged that both sides had interests in the Central Asian region, and agreed to cooperate bilaterally. Both Russia and Iran did not want other countries, such as the United States, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, to join the conflict resolution process in Tajikistan. So they began to use their resources and leverage by employing a manipulative strategy to end the conflict and to establish peace in the region.

As for other mediators, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan also saw the Taliban's rise to power in Afghanistan as a serious threat to their security, therefore, they wanted to end the Tajik war as soon as possible, too. Before the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan, President Burhanuddin Rabbani and his ally Ahmad Shah Masud supported the UTO, but after September 1996 they called on the UTO to negotiate with the government forces, stressing that the parties should reach a consensus.

Pakistan's involvement in the Tajik civil war and its mediation process was substantial, mainly because of its limited influence on the Tajik opposition. Pakistan provided the UTO with military aid through both governmental and non-governmental channels [10]. But then Pakistan turned into a passive participant of the process. This was due to the differences between the Tajik opposition and the Pakistani government over the Afghan issue, the former supporting ethnic Tajiks led by Burhanuddin Rabbani and the latter siding with the Taliban, ethnic Pushtuns.

The UN played the role of the “*mediator among mediators*” in the Tajik civil war. The key task of the UN was to ensure that there was mutual agreement among mediators with different interests. Since mediators had good relations with one or another party of the conflict, the interests of each mediator were to be considered in finding a solution to the dispute. Cooperation with Russia was particularly difficult for the United Nations, as Russia still considered the Central Asian region to be within its sphere of influence and, therefore, it did not want to reckon with anyone on the Tajik issue. Russia initially viewed UN mediation as a threat from the United States and the West, but later acknowledged that the UN had international prestige and could be a neutral party and a leading mediator. Other mediating states recognized the United Nations as the entity that would consider not only Russia's interests in the resolution of the war, but also their own.

The “division of labor” among all organizations involved in the mediation: the OSCE, the CIS and the UN contributed to the effectiveness of multiparty mediation. The OSCE and the UN had drawn appropriate lessons from the previous multiparty mediation experiences when they were both involved but failed to establish cooperation, which then led to unsuccessful outcome. In the case of Tajikistan, the OSCE as well as all other states and organizations admitted the leading role of the UN and supported it. The CIS Collective Peacekeeping Forces assisted in monitoring the ceasefire between the opposing Tajik forces.

CONCLUSION

It should be emphasized that it is essential to resolve political disputes and conflicts in international relations, both intrastate and interstate, by peaceful means. Sometimes the disputing parties refuse to come to the table of negotiations bilaterally for several reasons, and, in these cases, a help of a third-party might make the situation move further to manage or resolve the conflict. To the present day, mediation is considered to be the most effective way of a third-party participation in conflict management and conflict resolution. However, multiparty political mediation does not always end successfully, since the conflict is difficult to handle when there are several mediators. Mutual cooperation and coordination among mediators play a significant role in the effectiveness of the mediation process. The Tajikistan case is a perfect example in which the mediators were able to cooperate with each other and coordinate their efforts in order to end the civil war.

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CENTRAL ASIAN CONTEXT IN THE EAEU POLICY: PROSPECTS AND PROBLEMS

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Abstract: *The article explores the problems and prospects of integration on the example of countries joining the Eurasian Union. Geopolitical grounds for joining the EAEU have been put forward. Scenarios for the development of events around the Eurasian Union are analyzed. In conclusion, the author concludes that the accession of Central Asia to the EAEU format is a mutually beneficial geopolitical step that promotes the integration of the countries of Central Asia and members of the EAEU.*

Keywords: integration, EAEU, Central Asia, post-Soviet integration, regional policy, energy security.

The Eurasian Economic Union is not a frozen structure, but a constantly evolving organism that not only grows with new member states of the Union, but also expands external relations both at the level of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and through integration mechanisms implemented in interstate cooperation carried out states that are members of the EAEU. Moreover, interstate integration is very dynamic, it is carried out in changing realities, and it is necessary to constantly monitor integration processes in order to accurately analyze the state and development prospects of the EAEU itself. In this context, the experience of integration in the European Union is important. However, it should be recognized that the adaptation of the principles of the formation of the Common Market in Europe in the Republics of Central Asia occurs mainly through new ways of integration.

In the modern era of globalization, the degree of interconnectedness of states in all spheres of life is increasing. In the context of the world's transition to multipolarity, regional unions play an increasingly important role to a certain extent. Integration is becoming a form of interstate interaction, and tendencies towards regionalization are characteristic of the entire globalizing world. As A. Voskresensky rightly notes: knowledge concerning regional processes is becoming the most relevant in political sciences [1].

As for the multi-vector integration processes in the post-Soviet space, the key event for these processes was the creation of the Eurasian Union. As is known,

Russia is the core of the Eurasian Union and integration processes in the post-Soviet space. In turn, Eurasian integration is a geopolitical project, a response to the expansion of the EU zone. The initiative of the Eurasian Union was initially ambitious: it aimed to create a supranational entity similar to the EU [2].

The EAEU was created for the purpose of comprehensive modernization, cooperation and increasing the competitiveness of national economies and creating conditions for stable development in the interests of raising the living standards of the population of the member states.

As for the history of the very idea of creating such a union, during the first official visit to Russia, President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Abishevich Nazarbayev, March 29, 1994, at the Moscow State University. M.V. Lomonosov was the first to come up with the idea of forming the Eurasian Union on the basis of a single economic space and a common defense policy [3].

Over time, there is a need to move to a qualitatively new level of relations between countries on the basis of a new interstate association formed on the principles of voluntariness and equality. The Eurasian Union could become such an association. It should be based on principles other than the CIS, since the basis of the new association should be supranational bodies designed to solve two key tasks: the formation of a common economic space and the provision of a common defense policy. This question remained open and unresolved. But after the agreements on the establishment of the Customs Union within the EurAsEC came into force in July 2010, in December 2010, at the EurAsEC summit, an agreement was reached on the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union on the basis of the Common Economic Space of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia.

On November 18 of the same year in Moscow, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko and Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed documents for the next stage of integration:

- Declaration on Eurasian Economic Integration;
- Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Commission;
- Regulations for the work of the Eurasian Economic Commission.

Recently, there has been an intensification of discussions around the formation of the Eurasian Union and the accession of all Central Asian countries to this format of political and economic integration.

In 2011, on October 19, the heads of the countries of the Eurasian Economic Community decided to join Kyrgyzstan to the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan.

The three states are still in the process of considering a proposal to join the Union, but each of them does not exclude the possibility of mutual benefit in the event of accession.

Due to the geopolitical aspects and the requirements of the EAEU for goods and services, Uzbekistan, until recently, was at the stage of discussions. Sputnik Uzbekistan notes that after the approval of the Senate in May, the state proposed its candidacy as an observer country in the Union. Turkmenistan is not going to join the EAEU in connection with the desire to maintain neutrality. According to an article by Sputnik Tajikistan, Tajikistan is not yet joining the EAEU due to the circumstances of the domestic economy and the requirements of the Union to abandon the policy of protectionism.

The creation of the Eurasian Union has become a cornerstone in the history of integration processes in the post-Soviet space.

Initially defining the free exchange of goods, services, labor and capital as the subject of integration, the EAEU significantly inspired the community of integrating independent states. The model of "all-inclusive economic integration", used initially, made it possible to reorient the economic systems of the EAEU member states to the global direction of development of the world economy - integration. Producers and consumers of the EAEU countries have become much better and more efficient (despite the political and economic turbulence of the post-Soviet space) to navigate their preferences and economic interests. This has become an incentive to increase national and regional competitiveness and a big positive result of the EAEU. However, subsequently, for almost the entire duration of 2016, the model of "all-inclusive economic integration" began to falter.

In 2016, cooperation between the development institutions of the EAEU member countries was suspended. The member countries of the EAEU have not yet been able to implement integration as a modernization project, and the union as a whole turned out to be a technologically backward political project in comparison with developed integration associations. The fourth industrial revolution did not affect the economies of the EAEU member states and, therefore, did not affect the development of mutual ties and relations. And since Russia, as the dominant member of the EAEU, is under economic sanctions, the

EU, for example, does not see an opportunity to resume its strategy of exchanging technology for raw materials.

Due to the fall in the level of mutual trade, the curtailment of cooperation in high-tech areas and scientific and technological developments, the prospects for the development of interstate economic and political relations within the EAEU have noticeably deteriorated. They continue to be supported only by the personal relations of the presidents of the EAEU member states. President of Kazakhstan N.A. Nazarbayev, given the problems hanging over the EAEU, nevertheless, is optimistic about the future of the EAEU, since the political relations between Russia and Kazakhstan are in the nature of a strategic partnership and alliance, and thereby strengthen the union. "We," as V. Putin said at a meeting with N. Nazarbayev in Astana on October 4, 2016, "we interact in almost all areas" [4].

In general, political leaders will continue to cooperate in the EAEU to maintain the current level of economic interaction that avoids political conflicts. However, each country will still covertly pursue its interests.

Since the imbalances in mutual trade between the EAEU members that arose on the basis of differences in financial, monetary and economic systems as a whole have led to some chaos in the integration process, a discrepancy in trade and economic trends, today there is an urgent need to move to the next stage of harmonizing the economic policies of the EAEU member states. Now it is necessary to use the full potential of the difference in trade and economic relations and commodity nomenclature, it is necessary to reconsider all positions of integration and cut off, take out of the field of integration those that do not find their adequate political and state significance and place in the general direction of Eurasian economic integration. Therefore, it is necessary to move from the model of "comprehensive economic integration" to the model of its restructuring - the model of the "optimal structure of economic integration".

Today, the states have begun to implement a protectionist policy, and in each of the member states of the EAEU, national priorities for their development have been identified. Therefore, now it is necessary to divide the spheres of the integration process into competitive and contractual - non-competitive (which form the basis of national economies and the actual subject of integration).

For the EAEU states, oil and gas were most likely to become such a specific subject, the basis of integration, most likely. However, now, after some

weakening of the geopolitical status of hydrocarbons, it is necessary to redefine a more specific subject of integration, clearing it of certain elements.

In competitive areas, you can plan much less or not plan at all. Since market competition plays a major role in these areas, planning from above may not bring the desired result. With state intervention in such areas, it is easy to cross the line. In the contractual spheres, it is possible and necessary to plan and combine the interests of the EAEU member states in more detail and specifically, which in fact will constitute the contractual subject of the “optimal structure of economic integration”.

The task of integration in the post-Soviet space is relevant today more than ever. The processes of deglobalization are clearly outlined in the modern world. As A. Gromyko notes, the processes of regional integration are not in line with globalization, but as competing projects, i.e. as opposed to globalization [5].

However, modern realities are developing in such a way that the future of the union is not clear. First, Russia is under Western sanctions, and it is not yet clear what these sanctions will lead to and what consequences are expected for the Eurasian Union. On the one hand, the EAEU was hit by Western sanctions, on the other hand, the same sanctions against Russia became an impetus for uniting the potentials of the member countries of the union.

In response to Western sanctions, Russia has restricted the import of goods from countries that have imposed sanctions against it, thereby opening up new opportunities for the EAEU member countries to increase exports to Russia. For Russia, the EAEU members are becoming an insurance zone under sanctions.

The process of integration of the Central Asian countries to the union did not leave indifferent many analysts and politicians. To determine the prospects for Armenia in the Eurasian Economic Union, one should first analyze the main advantages and opportunities of the Central Asian states within the EAEU, identify the weaknesses of the country's accession to the EAEU, as well as possible threats both for the country and for the union itself.

The main problem of the Central Asian countries is access to international markets and the most important international transport corridors. But the countries themselves are of considerable importance in geopolitical and geostrategic terms.

The advantages of the countries of Central Asia in joining the EAEU lie in a number of points:

Firstly, the countries of Central Asia will be able to get out of the transport impasse, which in turn hinders the development of countries that have the human, resource, economic and social potential for such development to the greatest extent. This will lead to an increase in the GDP of countries.

Secondly, the country will be able to solve strategic tasks in the energy sector. It is no secret that energy security is directly related to the national security of the country, and almost all events in modern international relations are the result of the struggle of countries to ensure their energy security. The energy security strategy occupies the most important place among foreign policy priorities.

Thirdly, by joining the EAEU, the CA countries will discover a new influx of investments, by joining the EAEU, CA solves the most important problem of energy security of the countries

Thus, the Central Asian countries guarantee their own security and increase their economic potential. In a word, integration into the EAEU proceeds from the national interests of the country.

Recently, the opinion has often been heard that, by joining the EAEU, for example, Uzbekistan is losing its sovereignty. It is well known that in the era of globalization, becoming a member of an international organization, countries transfer part of their sovereign rights to this international organization. The continuous progress of multinational integration is changing the concept of the nation-state, along with the concept of sovereignty, since many policies that were previously determined and applied in complete dependence on the national context, now depend on a common decision and are implemented after passing through multilateral control. We also consider it appropriate to cite the example of the EU, where the principle of supranationality prevails: the EU member states voluntarily transferred parts of their sovereign powers to an international organization.

It is undeniable that in the globalizing world, international organizations, as participants in international relations, have fairly broad powers. It is only worth noting that the decisions taken by international organizations are placed above the constitutions of nation-states. The foregoing does not mean at all that the states are completely deprived of their sovereignty, nevertheless, this issue continues to worry the leaders of nation states, and not only.

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Economic and political cooperation within the framework of one structure (organization), the exchange of resources, the creation of a common market, of course, create all the conditions for resolving conflicts. After all, an important condition for resolving conflicts is the existence of common interests. It is fair to say that the EU has also developed mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of conflicts. However, the optimal mechanism used in the post-Soviet space has not yet been developed.

In the face of the EAEU, a new union of countries has emerged, linked to each other by agreements on politics, economics, and security, backed up by a common historical heritage and shared political views. Thus, there is a move towards multipolarity, which means a decrease in the share of the West (mainly the United States) in the world economy and world politics, the gradual dissolution of the unipolar world in a different structure of international relations.

Obviously, there is a move from a unipolar system to a multipolar one. The world is no longer fully unipolar. The US is gradually losing its hegemonic position. However, the weakening of America as a world hegemon does not mean that another superpower is rising on the historical stage today, capable of taking their place [6].

In the context of the transition from a unipolar world, the creation of such a union as the EAEU speaks of the strengthening of regional integration processes. Not surprisingly, the United States was the first to speak out against the creation of the Eurasian Union. Former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton described the still-planned Eurasian Union as "a step towards the re-Sovietization of the region." She also added that the United States is trying to develop effective measures to slow down and prevent the creation of the Eurasian Union [7].

The Ukrainian crisis has shown that the West is not ready or does not intend to take real measures to resolve the crisis. What is happening in Ukraine can be described as an example of the application of the "strategy of controlled chaos" of the United States.

The ongoing chaos of Ukraine's political space allows the United States to increase tension between Ukraine and Russia, to discredit the Russian Federation before the international community by waging an information war. The ongoing

accusations against Russia, as well as the subsequent numerous sanctions of Western countries against Russia, are a part of this strategy of the West. The weakening of Russia's economic and political positions can thereby become an obstacle to the development of a new union.

Obviously, Ukraine could play an important role in the Eurasian Union, being the territorially largest country in Europe. Ukraine's participation in the Eurasian Union would allow the union to become the main counterbalance to the European Union, which already faces serious problems, both economic and political.

If such a scenario were implemented, the Eurasian Union would be able to secure a strong position in Europe. As noted by R.S. Grinberg, with the failure of the prospects for Ukraine's participation in the EAEU, this association will be inferior [8]. For a long time, Ukraine pursued a two-vector policy, receiving support from both Russia and the West. Today it has abandoned the policy of balancing and has come to a hopeless crisis.

Despite the turbulence in world politics, the members of the Eurasian Economic Union do not plan to isolate themselves from the world, they continue to actively develop cooperation with different countries, expanding the boundaries of cooperation. Moreover, more than 40 countries are already interested in cooperation with the EAEU, including China and India. The signing of an agreement on the creation of a free trade zone with Vietnam is expected. With a favorable implementation of the data, the EAEU scenario will rather strengthen its position as a strong player in international relations.

The Eurasian Economic Union claims an ambitious role in the integration processes in the post-Soviet space, on the one hand, and the role of a new strong player in international relations, on the other. For the modern world, the unipolar system has already turned into a generator of hotbeds of tension and new conflicts, leading to ever greater human tragedies. In such circumstances, the creation of a new union of states gives hope for the restoration of the balance of power in the world.

CONCLUSION

Summarizing the put forward possible scenarios for the development of post-Soviet integration processes with the participation of the countries of Central Asia, we note that the latter occupies a key place in these processes. Despite all the real and possible threats, the countries of Central Asia and the EAEU are

taking firm steps towards deepening relations and full integration. This is evidenced by the active interaction of Central Asia within the framework of such formats of post-Soviet integration as the CIS and the CSTO. Hence the conclusion that there are no insurmountable obstacles when there is a real desire and will to achieve joint goals.

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SPECIFICS OF RUSSIA - CENTRAL ASIA POLITICAL RELATIONS

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Abstract: *This paper is aimed to analyze contemporary relations between Russia and Central Asian countries and the factor of globalization that influences to dynamics of multilateral relations. Moreover, cooperation of Russia and Central Asian countries during the pandemic Covid-19 and further strategy of development will also be covered.*

Keywords: *Russia, Central Asia, globalization, Covid-19 pandemic, Taliban, vaccination policy, information war.*

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia's foreign policy has changed from its intention to join the West to its support of its role as one of the centers of a multipolar world. This process was reflected in the formation of priorities in the concepts of foreign policy and national security of the Russian Federation. The priority development of Russia's relations with the post-Soviet space remained an unchanging end in all documents. At the same time, the Central Asian republics play an important role as a zone of special interests for Russia.

The security problem in the Central Asian region today has a complex geopolitical, economic and social character, as it did in the post-Soviet period. Its complexity lies in the fact that the security situation in the region depends on the influence of internal and external factors. Issues such as international terrorism, religious extremism, drug trafficking, and arms smuggling threats continue to dominate the Central Asian region, making Central Asia an integral part of the Russian Federation's foreign policy.

Interestingly, Central Asia is the only point that uniquely connects the world's four nuclear powers - Russia, China, India and Pakistan. The Central Asian region has a market potential of more than 60 million consumers.

The relevance of the topic depends on the importance of multilateral relations today. This is because the Central Asian region is becoming more and more important every year. The interest of the world's major nuclear and economic powers and international non-governmental organizations in the region is growing. Given the region's historical formation, multi-ethnicity, and mentality, external actors are trying to strengthen their positions and interests with more "soft power" than "hard power."

It is no secret that the main goal of such policies is not to extend a helping hand to Central Asian states. On the contrary, they are trying to eliminate the integration processes in the region and to create color revolutions through various political games within the states.

At the same time, the influence of public opinion through various IT and social networks is growing. Especially in today's era of globalization, efforts are being made to downplay the values of nations and incorporate them into their political ideology. This, in turn, threatens not only Central Asia's own identity, but also its national security. In such cases, all five republics will have to focus on resolving regional issues more quickly through bilateral diplomacy, accelerating the process of regional integration, and safeguarding national security while maintaining their identity and values.

At present, Russia's influence in the Central Asian region remains significant and will only increase.

Russia's foreign policy in Central Asia has three main goals. The first is to promote security and military-technical cooperation (from the modernization of the armed forces of the region to the construction of military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan). The second is to support energy projects in the oil and gas and hydropower sectors. Third, strengthen the integration institutions of the Eurasian Economic Union, of which Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are full members and Tajikistan is a promising member [1].

In addition, the importance of the Central Asian region for Russia is determined by a number of factors. Some elements, such as the instability of borders (often arbitrarily established between republics during the Soviet era), territorial disputes that have accumulated over the centuries, and inter-ethnic (or clan) relations between and within newly independent states) conflicts. Chronically unstable neighboring Afghanistan is threatening to destabilize the situation in the region. The emergence of a “gap of influence” and porosity of borders could lead to the strengthening of criminal and fundamentalist structures that threaten Russia’s own security.

Opportunities come with risk. Russia can develop and promote joint economic projects with Central Asian states, lobby for the interests of Russian private capital in order to establish contacts with the national business elite and gain certain economic benefits.

According to Russian analysts, the main reason for Russia's growing role in Central Asia is the significant weakening of the positions of its main regional rivals. When the United States decided to leave Afghanistan in 2011-2014,

Washington began to pay less and less attention to Central Asia. The previous US administration's Central Asia project, the C5 + 1 format, was seen as a less successful attempt to regain lost ground in the region. But with a very small budget of \$ 15 million, this American project could not claim itself as a full-fledged negotiation platform [2]. After the election of Donald Trump, a sharp domestic political crisis began in the United States (strong disagreements between him, part of the Democratic Party and the Republican Party, which now controls the House of Representatives), so the Central Asian foreign policy direction is practically demanding for an unknown future turned out not to have been done.

Most recently, in July 2019, the European Union adopted a new strategy for Central Asia. This indicates the EU's desire to renew its cooperation base and restore relations with the region. Even the EU understands that it will not be able to significantly expand its presence in the region due to the domination of Russia and China, but wants to remain an active participant there.

Since 2016, foreign policy concepts have also changed in Central Asian countries as a result of parliamentary elections. Over the past five years, Central Asia has undergone major reforms in terms of investment and economic development. In addition, at the beginning of his presidency, Shavkat Mirziyoyev carried out a number of measures to pursue an open policy on resolving border issues and to create conditions for free entry and exit of citizens at the borders. As a result, conditions have been created for the free movement of people on the borders with Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

Various disputes in the cross-border enclave have also been resolved through negotiations. Persistent clashes and disputes on the Uzbek-Kyrgyz border have been resolved peacefully through the prudent policies of the two presidents.

Uzbekistan's Action Strategy for 2017-2021 also outlines a number of plans to develop bilateral and multilateral relations in foreign policy.

Even at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, when the economic performance of the countries fell, the peoples of Central Asia and Russia proved that they were united and would help each other even in difficult times.

In recent years, the region and Russia have focused on the changes taking place in Afghanistan. The coming to power of the Taliban is worrying the whole world. Major powers fear of the risk of spreading more terrorism and drug trafficking around the world by talibs.

At the initiative of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, in order to alleviate the situation in Afghanistan, humanitarian aid was provided to the Afghan people during the pandemic and various medicines and foodstuffs were

delivered [3]. Negotiations are also underway with the Taliban government. All this is aimed at ensuring security in the region and strengthening the solidarity of the peoples of Central Asia.

GLOBALIZATION IN CA-RUSSIAN RELATIONS, SECURITY OF THE REGION

All the processes taking place in the world today are characterized by elements of the impact of globalization currents. The impact of globalization is reflected in the existence of humanity. Central Asian countries are fully aware of all the innovations that come with this global process.

The ideologues of globalization today claim that globalization is an objective conditional process of world development, the highest stage of the existence of human civilization. As a result of technological progress, especially in the field of information technology and communications, this has essentially allowed the elimination of state borders and provided endless opportunities, primarily for the economic and financial processes of global development. However, as expected, the processes of globalization very quickly showed their complex features, embracing politics, culture and other spheres of human life, uniting the social system and softening the national characteristics of countries and peoples.

The main negative factor of globalization is the widening gap between rich and poor countries. This difference is important in shaping the problem in Central Asian countries. It is an attractive region for regional and global powers, and countries in the region are experiencing a differential approach to geostrategic impacts. It should be noted that globalization allows Central Asian countries to influence without resorting to powerful methods. The main actors are transnational corporations, whose activities are mainly based on energy sources, information, communications, as well as the military-industrial complex.

As Nabi Ziyadullaev, Doctor of Economics, noted in his book "Central Asian States in the Context of Globalization," it is important to emphasize the strategic importance of the new sovereign states of Central Asia in the early XX-XXI centuries [4]. These republics are striving to become independent of Russia, to develop political and economic relations with other countries. In a short time, they have established diplomatic relations with most countries of the world. They have become members of the UN and other international organizations. signed treaties and agreements. They have established very complex trade and economic relations with more than 150 countries around the world.

However, throughout the period of independence, the relations between the republics of the region have remained very complex and have been developing and merging with the simultaneous functioning of two opposing trends: integration and fragmentation. At one time, inter-regional and inter-sectoral conflicts of a single national economic complex, once compensated by the union budget, were automatically transformed into interstate conflicts. Today, border conflicts and disputes have occurred on the Uzbek-Kyrgyz, Uzbek-Tajik, Uzbek-Kazakh, Kyrgyz-Tajik borders, which are not demarcated and do not have an internationally recognized character. Ultimately, the closest neighbors were separated by different types of economic and political reform models, competition for foreign investment and leadership in the region, incompatible regional and international ambitions of their leaders, and sometimes different positions towards the CIS and Russia. These contradictions arise with the geopolitical features of Central Asia. Thus, its rich natural resources have limited access to world markets.

As expert Sofiya Kalimova puts it, "In today's globalized world, civilizations face the challenge of preserving their national, cultural identity. It is important to keep in mind that a different strategy of global civilization change is possible and necessary in the current context. It is through the relations of several cultures that universal development and its intended results can be achieved. However, this process does not suppress traditional man-made culture. Modern communication processes reflect the optimal form of relations between cultures, peoples, states. dialogue is becoming an important international tool for resolving political, economic and diplomatic conflicts. "

"Kyrgyzstan is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country, one of the most ancient centers of Central Asian culture, and today it is at the crossroads of several civilizations and cultures. According to the first national census of the Kyrgyz Republic, there are more than 90 nationalities in the country, 12 of which have a population of more than 20,000," Kalimova said.

It should be borne in mind that cultural enlightenment has always played one of the most important roles not only in social life but also politically, taking into account national and traditional characteristics. Intercultural communication is a means of studying cultural traditions and cultural heritage in general, exchanging cultural values, and collaborating between ethnic groups.

The importance of studying intercultural communication is important. But a study of cultural dialogue in Central Asia shows that in the new millennium, there has been another decline in these issues. The Assembly of Cultures of the peoples of Central Asia has almost ceased to exist. Of course, among a number of

reasons, there are economic difficulties that have been observed in most countries in the region and have a negative impact on cooperation in this area.

These economic difficulties and border disputes are having a negative impact on integration processes in the region. The growing interest of major powers in the region could lead to a resurgence of The Great Game. In this context, strong competition is developing between Russia, China and the United States. Russia is "losing opportunities" to China in foreign trade. With that in mind, the Russian government intends to delve deeper into the region's politics and economy. In the context of the pandemic, it is precisely this competition that has intensified. Russia and China have been embroiled in a bitter rivalry over vaccination against Covid-19. Both sides have promised to deliver their vaccine doses to countries in the region. At the height of the information war, various rumors about Russian vaccines, such as Sputnik-V and Novichok, have been circulating on social media in an attempt to discredit them. A similar phenomenon applies to joint Uzbek-Chinese vaccines. Today, the Uzbek population is more skeptical of Chinese vaccines. Many want to get Russian vaccines. It is obvious that the Russian side has a strong psychological influence in defending its position and goods.

In this context, Central Asian states need to be careful in their relations with Russia and China. Their competition threatens to destabilize the region.

Various security structures have been established within the SCO. As part of security cooperation, since 2002, the SCO member states have been conducting regular anti-terrorism exercises (on a bilateral and multilateral basis). The largest of these is the Peace Mission exercise, which has been held since 2003.

In the 21st century, the issue of information security, which includes various concepts, was also on the agenda. For example, at the 2006 summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the leaders of the member states signed the Declaration on International Information Security. In 2009, participants in the SCO summit in Yekaterinburg, Russia, adopted the Yekaterinburg Declaration, which stressed the need for an urgent response to cyber threats.

The SCO, which serves as a leading multilateral structure in the fight against terrorism, religious extremism and drug trafficking, has used the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (MATT), which was created specifically to combat these "three forces of evil". Military exercises are being held within the SCO unit, and information about terrorist groups entering the region has been exchanged. The extradition of criminals suspected of committing terrorist acts is also envisaged. In addition to the fight against terrorism, the SCO RATS deals with

non-traditional security threats - human and drug trafficking, cyber threats and others.

In 2019-2020, MATT has played a coordinating role in organizing a number of specific measures to ensure regional security. The ongoing Peace Mission focuses on counter-terrorism command and staff exercises and a special border operation in solidarity in 2019-2021. In June 2019, representatives of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan were involved in the anti-terrorist exercise "Sari-Arka Antiterror-2019" at the Spassk test site in Karaganda region [5].

There is reason to hope that the coronavirus pandemic that has affected SCO countries, which has tasked its members with adapting to new realities, will force them to more actively develop a collective response to biosecurity challenges. One such response option could be a combination within the framework of a new international center corresponding to the SCO MATT level, with Russia's experience in managing effective work against COVID-19, India's pharmaceutical achievements and China's epidemiological findings.

In conclusion, there is no doubt that much needs to be done to combat terrorism, strengthen economic cooperation and stability in the region, to ensure border security not only for the development of the energy sector between the countries in Central Asia, but also in the Greater Eurasian format. It is also worth noting the peace-loving nature of the organization, which seeks to provide the security regime with non-military means through diplomatic negotiations and is making some progress.

In addition, at the next online summit initiated by the Russian side on November 10, 2020, President Mirziyoyev thanked Putin for the initiative, first of all, his speech on regional security and They offered to establish peace in Karabakh and jointly assist in the crisis in Afghanistan. In his speech, the President recalled that one of the requirements of the time is to expand cooperation in the field of IT and Hi-Tech against cyber-attacks in security. In addition, the need for the creation of techno-parks and economic zones in economic development was stressed. Under the One Belt One Road project, China and Russia agreed to strengthen cooperation in the field of high technology in Central and South Asia [6].

Security threats to Central Asian countries stem from international terrorist organizations and the crisis in neighboring Afghanistan. The drug problem is inextricably linked to the terrorist threat. The guarantee of security in the region is Russia's military bases in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Anti-terrorism and anti-drug cooperation in the CSTO, CIS and SCO remain uncompetitive. The government of the Russian Federation has decided to allocate more than \$ 3.5

million to Tajikistan to combat the drug threat in 2019-2021 [7]. Russia and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) are working together to train "anti-drug" personnel for Central Asian countries, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In the current complex political situation in the world, Central Asian states must assume a new role worthy of participating in the regional and global agenda. Therefore, in the near future, close interaction and cooperation with the Russian Federation will remain radically important and vital for them.

Despite all the difficulties, contradictions and failures of the early stages of the existence of the entire post-Soviet space, in contrast to the long-lasting collapse of the former unitary system, ways were found to preserve and further develop close forms. interaction. Such research has been marked mainly by the understanding that in the most difficult and uncertain conditions of globalization, as well as in conflicts of interest of leading external players, institutional mechanisms of regional cooperation are an important component of stability and security.

CA-RUSSIAN COOPERATION DURING THE PANDEMIC

In recent years, due to the closure of borders due to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, the next meeting of the CIS Prime Ministers was held in the form of an online video conference. Welcoming the summit, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan A. Aripov said that in the current pandemic, the economic potential of the countries has decreased, economic cooperation has fallen to almost 17%. During his speech, the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation M. Mishustin expressed Russia's readiness to provide practical assistance to the Commonwealth countries in the fight against the virus, as well as initiatives in the supply of vaccines against Covid-19, such as Sputnik-V and Novichok [8]. To date, large quantities of these vaccines have been delivered to Central Asia and mass vaccinations are being carried out. Despite the pandemic, borders have been opened this year, with a number of benefits in the areas of tourism and education. In particular, Uzbekistan, in cooperation with the Russian Federation, is reaching agreements on the opening of several branches of Russian universities. This was announced in March 2021 by Russian Foreign Minister Dmitry Lavrov and Uzbek Foreign Minister A.H. Kamilov was also mentioned at the briefing.

In addition, cooperation with Central Asia and Russia will be of great benefit in the exchange of practical and technological knowledge and experience in the formation of the "New Uzbekistan" projects initiated by President Sh. Mirziyoyev and the formation of the Third Renaissance.

The pandemic of a new coronavirus infection of COVID-19 did not interfere with the planned work of the Union authorities. In order to stabilize the sanitary-epidemiological situation in spite of emergencies, to ensure the vital needs of the population, to ensure the free movement of goods and mutual trade, to create conditions for further economic growth and recovery of passenger flow prompt action was taken.

No customs duties or economic restrictions shall apply to mutual trade within the customs territory of the Union. Four freedoms are exercised - the movement of goods, capital, services, and labor. The activities of the OSCE provide for the coordination of the economic sectors of the member states in the key sectors - the financial sector, transport and energy, industry and agro-industrial complex, and trade.

The legal framework of the Union is expanding. During the development of the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union, a number of agreements were signed in various areas of economic activity (transport, industry, agriculture, subsidies, competition, energy, digitalization, product labeling, etc.). Programs for the formation of a common electricity market have also been approved and are being implemented (a protocol "On Amendments to the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union" was signed on May 29, 2019 in terms of shaping the electricity market).

In 2020, against the background of a new coronavirus infection pandemic, the mobile application "Travel without COVID-19" was developed.

One of the new and promising areas of activity of the Eurasian Economic Union is the work on the introduction of product labels with identification devices aimed at combating "gray" imports and protecting the rights of consumers.

The Agreement on the Exchange of Information on Vehicles and Vehicles of the International Economic Forum, signed in St. Petersburg on 21 November 2020 and 6 June 2019 in the International Economic Forum, entered into force. It is designed to speed up the procedure of customs clearance of goods imported into the customs territories of the Union and China, as well as to increase the transit attractiveness of the countries participating in the agreement.

The activity of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the Eurasian Economic Union is currently observed. The question of our country's membership in this organization or in the World Trade Organization remains open. In this regard, the Deputy Chairman of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan S. Safoev studied the membership of the two organizations in Uzbekistan, the

extent to which their activities affect our sovereignty, achievements and shortcomings. emphasizes that without a decision [9].

In conclusion, the analysis shows that one of the main challenges facing the newly formed states in Central Asia after the collapse of the former Soviet Union is to "stand on their own two feet" economically and ensure security in the region. became in resolving these issues, the five countries had to turn to their historical partner and ally, the Russian Federation. Because Russia, as the successor to the USSR, had good financial and military potential. Russia has begun to provide conditional loans and assistance to countries in the region. For a while, the relationship improved. However, border issues in Central Asia, as well as opposition forces in Russia and the liberation movement in the South Caucasus, have weakened cooperation.

After the establishment of the CIS, a new page was opened in multilateral relations. Russia and Central Asia have now begun to cooperate in an expanded format. The various pieces of legislation that have been passed have allowed the world economy to make a gradual transition, not through "shock therapy."

A number of agreements have been reached on energy, resources and industrial production. Hundreds of state-owned joint ventures have been set up. The exchange of modern technologies as macro and microeconomic drivers has been established.

In terms of regional security, the countries of the region have managed to conclude agreements with the Russian Federation on the supply of military weapons and the repair of military equipment. Russian military bases have been established in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. They are aimed at ensuring the security of both the country and its borders.

Within the CIS, the Collective Security Treaty Organization was established. In addition to Central Asia, other CIS countries have joined it. Given that according to the foreign policy concept of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Uzbekistan is not a member of any military organizations, our country has now suspended its activities in the CSTO and gained only observer status.

In addition to border issues, conferences have been held on ending the war in Afghanistan, which is part of the MO, and ensuring peace there. On March 27, 2018, at the international conference on Afghanistan in Tashkent, President Sh. Mirziyoyev stressed the need to resolve the Afghan issue peacefully through negotiations with the Afghan people, to improve the living conditions of the Afghan people, to alleviate the situation by providing the necessary resources. called on states and international organizations to cooperate in this.

In order to achieve economic stability, the Eurasian Economic Council and later the Eurasian Economic Union were formed. Its main goal is to increase the economic potential of member states, provide technological assistance and, in a sense, compete with the WTO. In order to develop the domestic market in the OSCE member states, preferences have been created in the field of customs duties and rates. In addition, the patent system required to work on labor migration has been abolished. Many migrant workers from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are currently working without a license in various Russian cities. Migrants also account for 10% of Russia's GDP [10]. In addition, remittances are helping the two economies. Uzbekistan is currently an observer in the union. His accession to the OSCE or the WTO is being debated.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization has further expanded economic and security cooperation. The beginning of cooperation with the People's Republic of China and other major economic magnates is leading to great positive changes. However, we must not forget that Russia and China are competing to maintain their interests in Central Asia. China has turned Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan into financially "dependent" countries by providing large amounts of mortgage loans. China also lags behind Russia in foreign trade. Of course, the Russian government is worried about this. Therefore, members of the government led by Vladimir Putin are trying to keep the countries of the region away from them.

The SCO has developed a roadmap until 2021 to combat religious extremism, terrorism and drugs. Given today's realities, much has been achieved in this area. The infiltration of extremist ideas into the region has significantly decreased. The legal and religious consciousness of the population is growing. Drug trafficking is also banned. The volume of incoming drugs is also declining. This shows that year after year, reforms in the region are bearing fruit.

When it comes to modern globalization, it is important to note the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on multilateral relations today. During the pandemic, the economic performance of many countries fell sharply. Tourism and other sectors have also been severely affected. Nevertheless, the states intended to further increase and expand cooperation in various fields. Russia has developed vaccines such as Sputnik-V, Novichok, and Sputnik-Light to supply Central Asian countries with large doses in order to strengthen its position in Central Asia and resist the rise of other "powers" in the region. This will further enhance mutual trust between the two countries.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research topic and analysis, we would like to make a few suggestions on bilateral and multilateral relations. First of all, it is necessary to strengthen the joint efforts of Central Asian states with Russia. But in turn, it is necessary to keep a "distance" in cooperation with him. Taking it too close could do more harm than good to countries in the region. The reason is that this proximity distances the countries of the region from the rest of the major developed countries and leads to the deterioration of relations with them. The Great Game phenomenon could escalate again. Keeping all major states together at a distance is the best option.

Second, in order to avoid a power vacuum between the major powers, both the Central Asian states must develop economically and technologically, and strive to become one of the most developed countries in the world.

Third, it is necessary to strengthen cooperation with China on IT and Hi-Tech in the creation of new trade and technology zones, effectively using the "One Belt One Road" project. The increase in technology parks and the full liberalization of the economy will lead to the emergence of new products, increase production and increase export potential.

Fourth, to develop alternatives to natural resources in order to alleviate the Afghan problem and provide the Afghan people with energy resources. Improving the living conditions of Afghans will help end the war.

Fifth, in order to ensure information security, it is necessary to learn from the experience of Russia and China, as well as to radically update the technology and security systems. There is a need to address the shortage of staff in this area and pay more attention to improving the skills of existing staff.

Sixth, in order not to be deceived by various foreign ideas and propaganda, and to fight religious extremism and terrorism, it is necessary to increase the political consciousness and culture, legal awareness and religious knowledge of the population. At the same time, there is a growing need for the government to assist religious institutions in the region in carrying out the necessary work.

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CHINA'S THINK TANKS IN SHAPING FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS CENTRAL ASIA

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ABSTRACT: *The article analyzes the characteristics of think tanks in the People's Republic of China and their important role in shaping state policy, enhancing influence in global politics, including in Central Asia. The author tries to identify important prerequisites and reasons for the formation of think tanks focused on the Central Asian region; reveals the features of the development of cooperation between the think tanks of China and Central Asian countries, and also considers the process of institutionalization of forms of cooperation between their analytical bodies.*

KEY WORDS: *China, Central Asia, Think tanks, analytic centers, international relations.*

INTRODUCTION

In a rapidly changing world, the role of analytical institutions or the so-called “think tanks” (TTs) in making scientifically based decisions in the domestic and foreign policy of the state, including to handle various scenarios for the development of international processes. Today, for each state participating in international relations, the need for expert knowledge is growing, primarily due to the complication of tasks of public administration, their high dynamism, and the presence of intersecting threats of a different nature, emanating simultaneously from various sources.

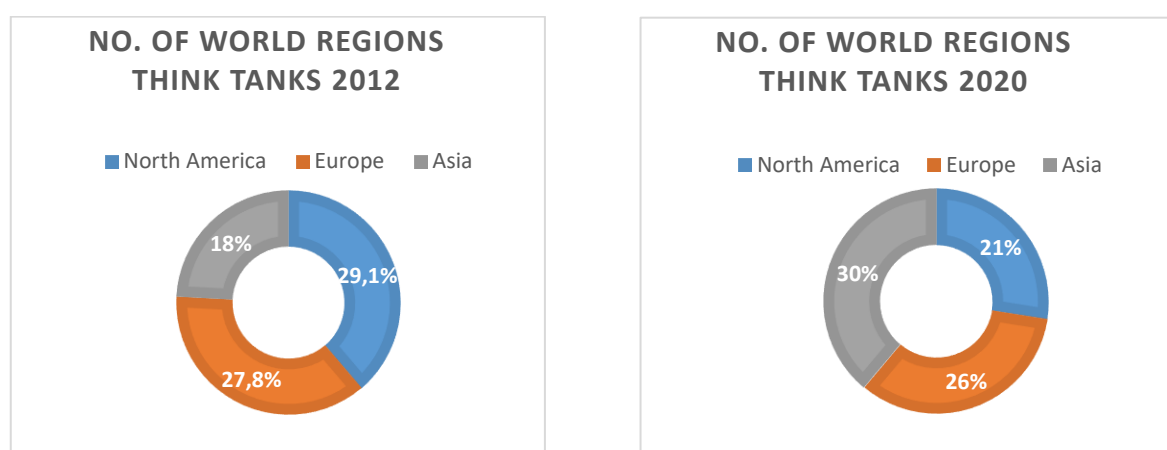
Under these conditions, those states that are able to instantly respond to ongoing changes, quickly adapt to new challenges, master constantly emerging new “rules of the game”, commensurate goals and resources, using their economic, political, informational and intellectual capabilities, have an advantage. In this regard, decisions developed ahead of time and based on objective and comprehensively thought-out considerations are not only effective, but can have long-term positive consequences in ensuring the national

interests of the country. From this point of view, the role of analytical centers for the state is invaluable and undeniable.

The first think tanks appeared in the United States in the 1920s (Brookings Institution, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, etc.). Dixon established their birth in the 1930s, when the US Treasury Secretary initiated the practice of state orders to scientific institutions [1]. Since then, think tanks have become an integral part of political systems in the Anglo-Saxon world. They are most developed in the USA, where today 2203 TTs (20% of global think tanks) are active [2].

Meanwhile, Asian Think tanks have begun to play an increasingly important role in enhancing the international scientific and expert dialogue in recent years. According to the “Global Go To Think Tank Index Report” for 2020, Asia (3389) for the first time surpassed Europe (2932) and North America (2397) in terms of the number of think tanks (Fig.1). Furthermore, the Japan Institute of International Affairs was recognized as the best TT in the world in 2020 and the total list of 174 best TTs in the world, 36 are Asian. These statistics indicate a significant global growth in the importance of Asian TTs, in which special importance is given to think tanks in the People’s Republic of China (PRC).

Figure 1



Comparison table compiled by the author based on data from the Global Go To Think Tank Index Reports for 2012 and 2020.

Literature review

The phenomenon of think tanks in political science became relevant after the World War II. However, specific studies began to be carried out in the late 70s and 80s. The prerequisites for the emergence and development trends of TT, their role in the foreign policy of the PRC were studied by such scientists such as D.Shambaugh [3], M.Ahmad [4], K.Dumbaugh [5], T.Eder [6], S.Menegazzi [7] and S.Tiezzi [8]. Among the Russian experts, one should highlight the studies by E.Kuklina [9] and I.Komissina [10]. Of particular interest are the articles by A.Maslov [11], E.Zhurbey [12], A.Gabuev [13], Kazakh expert R.Izimov [14], who studied in detail the evolution, role and characteristics of the TT in shaping China's foreign policy, including in the direction of Central Asia.

In Uzbek political science, China's experience in the formation and development of Think tanks and the use of this phenomenon as "soft power" has not been sufficiently studied. To date, the only scientist in Uzbekistan who has analyzed think tanks in the PRC, focused on Central Asia, is the well-known Uzbek sinologist A.Xodjaev [15]. The relevance of this article is determined by an attempt to fill this gap by studying the evolutionary progress in the systemic development of China's TT as an important tool for the formation and implementation of foreign policy activities.

In addition, today the study of the role of think tanks in making government decisions by such a major world power as China is of key importance for all partners, especially neighboring countries, including Uzbekistan. Every decision Beijing makes today has global implications. In this regard, identification, formulation and evaluation of new trends that reveal the role of the TT in China and their consequences are an important element in the study of the overall foreign policy of the PRC and its interests in Central Asian region as a whole.

Methods

In order to conduct an in-depth study, the article uses methods of expert evaluation, analysis of a statistic data and case studies that clearly reflect the manifestations of the use of "soft power" and its results. Particular attention is paid to successful cases of activation of China's think tanks for the study of Central Asia, its consequences in the implementation of China's soft power policy in the Central Asian region. In addition, a comparative analyze method was used, in which Chinese TTs are considered as models for think tanks in the countries of the region.

Stages of TT development and their features

The increased number of TTs in the PRC, the dynamics of their gradual development is directly proportional to growing interest of the Celestial Empire in countries and regions that it considers as full-fledged or potential partners in the implementation of its foreign policy strategy.

One of the first TTs in the PRC is the Chinese People's Institute of International Affairs (CPIFA), established in 1949 and considered to be a branch of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the China. The key periods in the evolution of China's think tanks are as follows:

The first stage is associated with the end of the “Cultural Revolution” (1966-1976) and the coming to power of a new generation of politicians led by Deng Xiaoping, as well as the promotion of the “policy of reform and opening up”, which marked the establishment of a new wave of think tanks in China. Since that period, the PRC authorities, gradually abandoning the previous methods of decision-making by a narrow circle of party and state officials, began to involve scientists in the development of the conceptual foundations of foreign policy [16].

The second stage was marked by the coming to power of Chinese Presidents Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao. China's TTs during these periods received new incentives for development. For the first time, Chinese leaders began to turn to the expert opinion of the MC more often. Thus, Jiang Zemin often used the advice of experts from Fudan University, the Shanghai Academy of International Studies and the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences.

The third stage started at the beginning of Xi Jinping's reign. From this period, Chinese think tanks entered their heyday. Its peculiarity lies in the fact that the issue of developing a system of think tanks was raised to the level of state strategy [7]. For the first time in 2015, the document “Opinions on Strengthening the Creation of New Type Think Tanks with Chinese Characteristics” was adopted. The strategy determined the creation by 2020 of up to 100 leading think tanks [17].

New trends under Xi Jinping

The rule of Xi Jinping is characterized by the fact that the government began to closely cooperate with think tanks, seeing them as a reliable source of new solutions and practical recommendations, especially in actively promoting

of new global ideas and initiatives in the PRC. The Chinese leader indicated to consider the activities of the TT as an important part of the “soft power” of the state, and research structures should become not only a source of analytical materials for the authorities, but also an instrument of influence on public opinion outside of China [10].

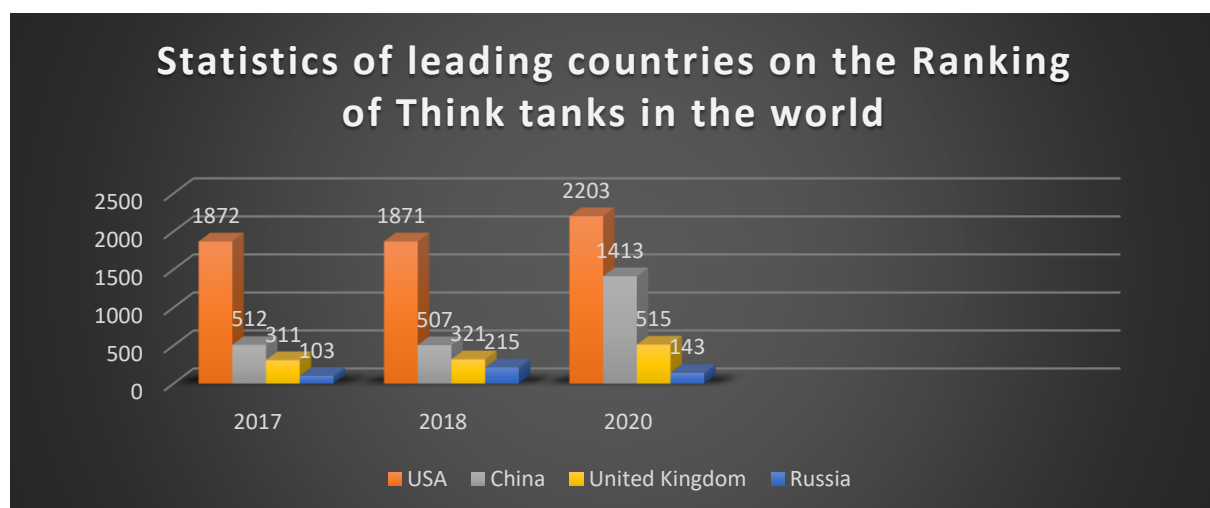
The leadership allowed to build up the “soft power” of Chinese TTs by involving foreign specialists and expanding international cooperation, including the creation of branches of Chinese institutions abroad. In a number of developed countries – China’s leading trade, economic and strategic partners - Chinese research institutes (China-CEE Institute in Budapest, Institute for China-America Studies) have begun to register. Also, some leading US Think tanks have opened branches in China (Brookings Institution, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace).

Thus, Beijing hoped that the established institutions would support bilateral trade and economic cooperation beneficial to China, bring to the attention of the local academic and wider audience China’s official positions on topical issues in international relations, exert influence on public opinion in partner countries, with the aim of becoming an important conduit for the spread of “soft power” abroad.

In particular, experts noted that the China-CEE Institute in Budapest was to become the so-called China’s “outpost” on European territory, which will regularly inform the “center” about ongoing changes in Europe and the “perceptions” of its politicians, including with regard to China [18].

As a result, there was a noticeable breakthrough in the creation and development of world-class state think tanks: over five years (2015-2020), more than 100 think tanks have been created, which in a short period have achieved worldwide fame. This, in turn, had a tangible impact on the improvement of the positions of Chinese analytical structures in The Global Go To Think Tank Index: CICIR in eight years (2012-2020) rose from 48th to 18th place in the world ranking, and the Center for China and Globalization, only included in the world ranking in 2015, in 2021 moved to the TOP-60 [2]. In general, if until 2015 only five leading think tanks of China were included in TOP-100, in the last world rating of 2021 their number increased to nine.

Figure 2



Source: Global Go To Think Tank Index Reports, The Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP), University of Pennsylvania.

Table 1

**Places of the main Chinese Think tanks in 2012-2020
in the TOP-100 Think tanks of the world**

Centers/years	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations	48	44	40	39	33	30	30	18	18
Chinese Academy of Social Sciences	17	20	27	31	38	39	39	38	38
China Institute of International Studies	38	36	36	35	40	50	51	50	58
Development Research Center of the State Council (DRC)	100	99	48	50	52	58	60	56	56
Institute of International and Strategic Studies, Peking University	63	61	61	64	80	79	81	81	81

Shanghai Institutes for International Studies	73	71	71	72	74	94	96	96	96
Center for China and Globalization	-	-	-	110	111	92	94	76	64

Source: Global Go To Think Tank Index Reports, The Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP), University of Pennsylvania.

Following the strengthening of the international rating of Chinese think tanks, the world renown of Chinese analysts increased: leading experts from Peking University, Wang Jisi and Tsinghua University, Yan Xuetong were included in the TOP 100 Global Thinkers, compiled by the American Foreign Policy magazine.

Central Asia in China's system of research priorities

Relations between China and the countries of Central Asia have a long history commencing with the establishment of the ancient Silk Road. China has always been interested in exploring territories in its West. For this purpose, more than 2100 years ago (130 B.C.), an envoy of the Han Dynasty named Zhang Qian traveled to Central Asia twice on a mission to study the lands to the west and their peoples. It was these trips that laid the foundation for close contacts between China and Central Asia and opened the Silk Road from Asia to Europe [19].

Moreover, in the Middle Ages, a large empire headed by A. Temur arose in the territory of Central Asia, which had enormous economic and military power, causing fears in the Chinese Empire. Hence, the Ming dynasty, sent its trade representatives with goods and gifts to state of A. Temur [16], to gather information about the potential of Temur's Empire. From many other historical facts, it is also known that in all periods of interaction between the parties, the Central Asian region, being the closest neighbor, has always attracted special attention of China. The study of the countries of the region has been one of the priorities of the Chinese government at various historical stages.

The first research bodies for the study of Central Asian countries began to be created in the late 1980s, when China, sensing the weakening of the Soviet Union and the possible end of the bipolar world, began to closely study the region. By the time of the collapse of the USSR in China, there were only 2 research centers in northwestern China (XUAR) - the Center for Central Asia (1980) and the Center for Cultures of Central Asia (1985) [20].

After gaining independence, Central Asia acquired a special significance in Chinese foreign policy. The beginning of the 1990s was a period of changes in China's foreign policy. As a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, China managed to increase its presence and occupy the vacated niche. If in the 1990s Beijing preferred to take a more observant policy, gradually expanding its participation in the energy and economic spheres of the countries of the region, over the past 10 years we have seen an increased activity of the PRC, which is aimed at expanding Beijing's influence in almost all areas of cooperation.

The collapse of the Soviet Union produced a shock therapy effect on the Chinese authorities. Strongly disturbed by past events, China realized emerging new opportunities for the implementation of a purposeful foreign policy in Central Asia. In order to obtain scientifically based policies, the Chinese government has mobilized a large group of scientists by setting up research centers at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, and at the country's leading universities. Thus, in China's leading analytical centers (Development Research Center of the State Council, CICIR, CIIS, IEERCAS, SIIS, as well as in the Institutes of Xinjiang, Xi'an, Lanzhou), departments were formed for the study of Central Asia.

A.Xodzhaev notes that the creation of these scientific centers, the mobilization of a large number of scientists to study the history and modernity of Central Asian states, and active publication of materials on the region show the increased interest of the PRC in its western neighbors.

Moreover, China is well aware of the complexity of the geopolitical situation in Central Asia and the acuteness of competition with the United States and Russia. The rapidly changing situation requires Beijing to have a clear understanding of the internal political processes in the countries of the region and the long-term aspirations of its opponents. Therefore, today we are witnessing a significant increase in the attention of the Chinese leadership towards the Central Asian republics. Beijing is changing not only its Central Asian policy, but also approaches to its implementation, relying on professional expert support for its regional strategy [21].

It is noteworthy that if in the 1990s and early 2000s the scientific validity of Chinese policy was based on bilateral contacts between scientists and political experts or on an individual study of specialists in the region, then already in the second half of the 2000s, Beijing expressed its intention to strengthen its position in the region. At the same time, Chinese authorities are aware that without high-quality intellectual resources capable of providing an assessment of risks and

opportunities, the competition with other global powers can result in losses for the Chinese side. Moreover, there was an increase in attention to Central Asia from the leading research structures of the West. This required China to quickly create its own institutions, as well as to continue high-quality research within existing think tanks in order to obtain practical feedback for further strategic decision-making.

According to Xiao Bin, a leading expert of the IEERCAS CASS, between 1992 and 2018 a total of 10,022 articles were published on CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure, 中国知网) and 1,035 doctoral and master's theses were written on the topic "Central Asia". The largest number of journal articles on Central Asian topics was in 2015, with a total of 930 articles, and the most unproductive year in this regard was 1993 - only 94 articles, with an average annual rate of 371 articles per year. From 2013 to 2017, there was a significant increase in research, which is associated with the launch of the "Belt and Road" initiative. Since 1999, an average of 51 doctoral and master's theses have been written per year [22].

However, while acknowledging the outstanding academic contribution of China's research on Central Asia, experts note the most noticeable structural problems, which are that the emphasis is on political orientation, and not on basic research. Over the past nearly 10 years (2010-2018), with the retirement of the older generation of researchers and the promotion or career change of some researchers, only 35% (191 researchers) are currently engaged in long-term (or relatively active) research in Central Asia. This indicates a decrease in the number of young scientists, who are mainly distributed in Beijing, Shanghai, Lanzhou, Xi'an and Urumqi [22].

The observed decrease in recent years in the number of systematic and large-scale academic studies on Central Asia is not due to the loss or decrease in the interest of Chinese experts and scientists in Central Asia as a whole, but, most likely, to weak funding due to various economic reasons, internal contradictions in the government in connection with the strengthening of the role of the party, the possible predominance of "secret researches", etc., a more detailed study of which the author plans in future works.

Institutionalization of the scientific approach to the interaction of the PRC with Central Asia

Over the past 20 years, China, together with the countries of the region, has launched several formats of cooperation at the expert level. By the beginning of

the 2000s in China, the “new turn” to Central Asia has become an obvious phenomenon. In 2001, the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was announced in Shanghai. Over the past years, the SCO, as the main body promoting Chinese interests in Central Asia, has become an important tool for increasing trade and political stability, as well as strengthening its “soft power” in the region.

Moreover, experts from Central Asia consider the SCO as the most successful organization in Central Asia [23]. At the same time, in the course of activities of the Organization, many issues arose that required scientifically sound solutions. Due to this need, in 2006 a consultative and expert mechanism, the SCO Forum, was established, which unites the scientific research and political science circles of the SCO member states.

The formation of expert advisory Forum was an important step for the further development of the SCO and scientific support for the activities of the Organization, and joint research on topical issues. In this context, one noteworthy fact should be emphasized: the idea of establishing such an expert-consultative meeting was put forward in 2005 on the personal initiative of Secretary General of the SCO Zhang Deguang. That is, China was primarily interested in creating such a format, a permanently functioning expert and analytical mechanism aimed at obtaining reliable information about the countries’ positions on various issues of interaction both within the SCO and within the framework of bilateral cooperation.

In a rapidly changing world, deep scientific understanding, analysis of ongoing processes, search for optimal ways to achieve the main goals of the Organization require the mobilization of intellectual resources from all SCO countries. Organising the SCO Forum on an annual basis makes it possible to quickly respond to any events both a global or regional stage. In this regard, the experts consider the SCO Forum as the mechanism of the “track two diplomacy” [24]. Moreover, the Forum has turned into a convenient platform on which Beijing tests its initiatives before putting them forward within the framework of the SCO or, conversely, strengthening advanced initiatives through the expert community, thereby creating the ground for making decisions that meet the interests of the PRC.

The growing importance of the Central Asian direction is also evidenced by the fact that in early 2014, the newly established National Security Council announced the creation of a new Center for Central Asian Studies. It is important to note that this is the first time since the launch of the SCO that the region has

garnered so much attention from China at such a high level. It should be emphasized that the creation of the National Security Council was initiated personally by Xi Jinping. The main objective of this new Center for Central Asia Studies is to gather information and prepare high quality analyses on the political situation in Central Asian countries for the Chinese government's senior management [25].

Creation of research centers on the BRI. The Chinese authorities needed analytical support during the development of Xi Jinping's new policies and the creation of a new political narrative. As early as 2013, Xi announced the long-term goal of “telling the world about China, projecting China's voice outward, and strengthening discursive power” (Chinese: huayu quan 话语权). Almost all major political initiatives of Chinese government required an explanation for the “outside world” [26].

An important factor in the positive engine of relations was the recognition by the states of the region of China's position through the adoption of most of Beijing's foreign policy initiatives. Since the fall of 2013, there has been a sharp increase in interest from Chinese analytical institutions in the region, which is associated with the promotion of a new foreign policy initiative by China, the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB). This ambitious project was the new foreign policy strategy of Chinese President Xi Jinping. Naturally, the development of new projects and programs within the framework of the SREB has actualized the need for analytical expertise and strategic calculations of Think tanks of the PRC.

In promoting this initiative in the global arena, think tanks played the role of a so-called “Track Two diplomacy”, i.e. became diplomats of goodwill. At the initial stage, Chinese think tanks organized numerous international events at their level, including expert visits to BRI countries to clarify the essence of the project, alleviate partner countries' suspicions of Chinese expansion and convince them of the benefits of participating in a strategically important initiative for the Chinese leader. Expert insights and significant achievements in working with project partners further became the basis for the dissemination of the “Belt and Road” initiative (BRI) on a global scale.

Since China launched the BRI, Central Asia has become one of the key regions for the success of the project. In this regard, in the period 2013-2015 nine think tanks were created, purposefully studying Central Asian countries. Prior to the announcement of the BRI, only in the territory of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) seven full-fledged research institutes

were engaged in the study of the republics of the region. In particular, after 2013 five new analytical centers were created in the XUAR, and in February 2014, three institutes for Central Asia were established in the Shanxi province. By that time, more than 20 research institutes, centers and departments were operating in China, specializing only for Central Asia studies [21].

In addition, in 2015, the Chinese authorities decided to create 100 best think tanks, which should become the main mouthpieces of the party's policy. At the same time, according to Kazakh expert A. Amrebaev, there are almost 200 think tanks in China, whose name includes "BRI" [27]. According to experts, most of the think tanks have revised the direction of research and retrained to study the BRI, and new centers have been created to study the Chinese initiative. The activities of these research centers were aimed at directly assisting the practical implementation of the strategic project BRI by providing China's governing bodies with analytical products on the domestic political and socio-economic development of all partners, including countries of Central Asia, as well as on the main directions and actions of states in foreign policy. A close study of the political processes in Central Asia shows that in the future China does not exclude the possibility of taking a more active part in domestic political affairs and taking decisive measures in the event of problems with China's fundamental interests in the region.

Think Tank Forum of "China+Central Asia". The complication of international relations, the need to strengthen the Chinese presence in the region and actively promote their initiatives (BRI, AIIB and others) pushed the PRC authorities to make decisions on creating their own formats of cooperation with leading Think tanks in Central Asia in order to "keep abreast". Relevant factors for creation of the China + CA Forum at the expert level were also the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, the growing threat to the security of Central Asia associated with it, and its possible spread to China. Under these unpredictable conditions, exchanges at the expert level and assessment of events both in Central Asia and in Afghanistan are pivotal for China's foreign policy. The new PRC+CA Forum is designed to regularly coordinate the efforts of the leading analytical structures of the parties.

Taking into account the above factors, a new expert and analytical dialogue platform was being formed between China and Central Asia. On November 19, 2021, the First Think Tank Forum of "China+Central Asia" (C+C5) was held in Beijing. Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng noted at the first meeting that all parties will work together to expand the influence of the forum, make it more institutionalized and create a new platform for exchanges of views and

cooperation between the countries of the region [28]. Thus, in addition to the current analytical structures, the PRC has formed a new format of expert cooperation, which involves the leading Think tanks of the countries of Central Asia. This platform, according to Beijing's plan, should even more tightly connect the expert-analytical ties between China and Central Asia.

The Chinese government, creating such a platform, will have the opportunity to regularly communicate its position, at the same time, with the help of think tanks in the region, it will become aware of the positions of countries on international politics and of changes in the direction of their foreign policy strategy. Taking into account the fact that from Central Asia leading government-affiliated analytical centers are involved in this format, the Chinese approach is justified, since on the Chinese side this format is represented by the Institute of Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia under the CASS, which is one of the leading Think tanks in China to ensure the Chinese government with the necessary information on the region. The institutionalization of mutual cooperation in the format of the TTs will give China ample opportunities to interact on a systematic basis and exert the necessary influence on the political course of Central Asian countries. This also contributes to the firm consolidation of the Chinese role in the region. Moreover, the "Chinese" format will also make it possible to comprehensively and directly discuss the most painful problems of the region, such as territorial, financial and credit, etc.

In addition to these institutional expert formats, the leading countries of the region - Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan - also have bilateral expert and analytical platforms with China's leading think tanks, which regularly hold bilateral events. Kazakh expert T. Kaukenova notes that such a format is certainly useful for deepening knowledge about the official agenda, trends in the conceptual design of bilateral cooperation, and positions on fundamental issues.

However, there are also certain problems in the sphere of interactions between analytical structures. Thus, scientific interaction in the field of political science and international relations is concentrated in the format of conferences, seminars, and expert meetings. It can be quite difficult to get a clear assessment in this perspective. Cooperation within the framework of the sciences of humanitarian cycle takes place on the basis of interuniversity contacts and personal exchanges. Despite the establishment of the Union of Scientific Organizations in the framework of BRI, there are practically no multilateral projects [29].

Another stumbling block for China–Central Asia relations is that both sides have limited knowledge of each other. This relates both to professional ties and people-to-people relations, the latter being one of the main objectives of BRI. There are only a few think tank and research centers in Central Asia that specialize in China studies [30]. In particular, Uzbek society has a vague understanding of China and its economic projects. Also due to the isolationist policy of Islam Karimov’s government. Local Uzbekistanis’ perception of China varies depending on the issue. Respondents seem to have some impression of China’s increasing cultural, economic and political influences. However, they do not necessarily know details of projects, such as the BRI. There is a lack of think tanks and research centres that specialize in Chinese issues and systematically inform the public about the country [30].

Most Western experts believe that China remains a challenge for Central Asia, including on those issues that are presently regarded as having been resolved. In think tanks and academic circles, the experts’ understandings of the situation are, in general, far more critical than those of their political leaders. Almost all experts express concern about the silence cultivated by the authorities in relation to the partnership with Beijing. They worry that the extent of China’s grip over the region has been concealed. They vigorously decry the authorities’ incapacity to make decisions for the future of the nation and are concerned about the atmosphere of suspicion – generated precisely through the dearth of information – that surrounds the topic of China in public opinion. According to the American analyst S.Peyrouse, in the long-term outlook, Central Asian experts hold views of China that are very largely infused with pessimism [31].

Meanwhile, Beijing is well aware that think tanks are a kind of barometer of the mood of local authorities. By strengthening close ties between expert and analytical circles, China intends to change the attitude of governments towards their country and prevent a negative attitude, at least at the expert level.

CONCLUSIONS

The readiness of Chinese politicians and party functionaries to turn to analysts and researchers for advice leads to the conclusion that these structures are beginning to have a stronger influence on the formation of public policy than they did two or three decades ago. Today, being the most important element of the country's political system, China’s modern “think tanks” are a kind of socio-political phenomenon that is distinguished by: 1) internal ideological consistency; 2) the ability to present real alternatives to the state and society in

developing an adequate strategy in response to emerging challenges and problems; 3) a special role in the implementation of major initiatives and strategies of the state, including “soft power”.

Recognizing that think tanks are an important tool of soft power and a channel for increasing China’s global influence, Beijing encourages think tanks to expand global engagement by inviting foreign experts to join Chinese research institutions, as well as expanding international cooperation with other think tanks.

The expansion of “spheres of influence” is one of the strategies of the great powers, traditionally used to improve their international position. China is also using the rise of think tanks in Central Asia as a tool to expand its all-round influence in the region. Based on this, there is an urgent need to pay more serious attention to the study of our eastern neighbor, if necessary, borrowing its rich experience in using intellectual power and resources as an essential element in the formation and implementation of domestic political activity and as an actor in foreign policy, taking into account their national interests and strategic directions of development.

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NATIONAL CYBERSECURITY IN PRISM OF "DIGITAL UZBEKISTAN-2030" STRATEGY

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Abstract. *This article presents the recent development of information technologies worldwide and achievements of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Information-communication sphere in particular. As it is written, thanks to introduction of information technologies in all sectors of the life, spheres such as public administration, education, healthcare and agriculture developing positively. Economic, social and political reforms that being taken in the country by the Head of state help set many democratic values as never before. With the help of modern information technologies, the country's economy liberalized visibly, the public officials became more responsible and accountable in front of citizens. The article also provides a brief information about the strategy "Digital Uzbekistan-2030" that was adopted in 2020 and its implementation by the Ministry in charge. As well as in this work the author tries to develop some recommendations to ensure the cyber security of the Republic of Uzbekistan.*

Key words: *Information technologies, cybersecurity of Uzbekistan, the strategy "Digital Uzbekistan-2030", ensuring cybersecurity, the law on "cybersecurity" of the Republic of Uzbekistan.*

Introduction

The new industrial revolution, taking place in the world, is based on revolutionary transformations in the field of information technology. Informatization of all spheres of human activity provides enormous opportunities for the development of economics, finance, social security, education, medicine, fundamental and applied scientific research in all directions. But, any information revolution, in addition to global positive changes, entails global threats. The most dangerous of these threats are cybercrime and cyberterrorism. In fact, none of the major terrorist acts is complete without the use of modern information technology (V.S.Ovchinskiy, 2017).

Due to this, all countries and international organizations over the globe are now developing different algorithms to counter these issues, analyzing new types, forms and way of cybersecurity and cyberterrorism.

For the Republic of Uzbekistan, as a developing country as well as a regional leader in the near perspective, the issue of ensuring cybersecurity is also vital.

From the time Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the incumbent President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, started to serve his presidency period in 2016, he has been carrying out positive economic, social and political reforms in the country. He set democratic values as never before, with the help of modern information technologies the country's economy liberalized visibly, the public officials became more responsible and accountable in front of citizens. Even the Oliy Majlis, the Parliament of the Republic of Uzbekistan, started to conduct plenary sessions live (Sh.Mirziyoyev, 2021). Moreover, to further implement comprehensive measures for the active development of the digital economy, as well as the widespread introduction of modern information and communication technologies in all sectors and spheres, primarily in public administration, education, healthcare and agriculture the President Sh. Mirziyoyev signed a decree "On the approval of the strategy "Digital Uzbekistan-2030" and measures for its effective implementation" in 2020.

In this article I would like to examine the issue of ensuring the cybersecurity of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the process of implementing the strategy "Digital Uzbekistan-2030" as well as try to develop some recommendations to consolidate both legal and technical basics of the ensuring the cybersecurity of the Republic of Uzbekistan in this highlighted period.

The strategy "Digital Uzbekistan-2030" and its implementation during the past few years

On the 5th October, 2020, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan approved the Strategy "Digital Uzbekistan — 2030", developed by the Ministry for the Development of Information Technologies and Communications with the participation of interested ministries and departments, representatives of the business community and academia, as well as foreign experts (Zamanov, 2020).

The main objectives of the Strategy is to develop the digital industry in the country, increase the competitiveness of the national economy by digitally transforming primarily economic sectors and regions.

In frame of the Strategy "Digital Uzbekistan — 2030" a range of ambitious plans were made. According to the Presidential Decree "On the approval of the strategy "Digital Uzbekistan-2030" during the years 2020–2022, it is expected to carry out following goals:

- to increase the level of connection of settlements to the Internet from 78% to 95%, as well as by increasing up to 2.5 million broadband access ports, laying 20 thousand kilometers of fiber-optic communication lines and the development of mobile communication networks;
- to implement over 400 information systems, electronic services and other software products in various areas of socio-economic development of the regions;
- to organize the training of 587 thousand people in the basics of computer programming, including by attracting 500 thousand young people within the framework of the "One Million Programmers" project;
- to implement over 280 information systems and software products for automation of management, production and logistics processes at enterprises of the real sector of the economy;
- to secure relevant higher educational institutions in the regions to improve the digital literacy and skills of khokims, employees of state bodies and organizations, training them in information technology and information security, as well as training 12 thousand of their employees in information technology.

Besides, the document also states that by the end of 2020, the digitalization of pre-school education, healthcare and general education schools would be completed. They would be provided with the necessary IT infrastructure, computer equipment. To implement information systems, employees will be sent for training in 13 model districts;

From the November 1st, 2020, it was expected that at least 5% of the total amount of funds from investment projects, as well as international financial institutions, foreign government financial organizations and donor countries would be directed to "digital" components.

A "Road map" for 2020–2022 which was also approved in the frame of the strategy, implies the development of four key areas, namely the development of e-government, digital industry, digital education and digital infrastructure and etc. (Sh.Mirziyoyev, 2020).

With the Presidential Decree, the Ministry for development of information technologies and communications of the Republic of Uzbekistan was appointed as the responsible body in the implementation of the strategy.

The implementation of the Strategy

For the past almost two years The Ministry for development of information technologies and communications of the Republic of Uzbekistan has been carrying out a range of activities to fulfil legal acts on time.

As it is highlighted above, the main objective of the strategy is to develop the digital industry in the country, increase the competitiveness of the national economy by digitally transforming. To complete this task, it is highly important to create appropriate infrastructure.

In January, 2022, The Ministry for development of information technologies and communications of the Republic of Uzbekistan held a briefing on “The results of the Ministry's activities for 2021”.

As it is stated, in order to develop telecommunication networks in Uzbekistan, an additional 50,000 kilometers of fiber-optic lines were laid, and as a result their total length was brought to 118 thousand kilometers, about 67 percent of settlements received access to high-speed communications. In the following years, activities will continue to expand fiber-optic communication lines. **For notes:** The figure was 22.2 thousand km in 2016.

Currently, the total bandwidth of international communication channels is 1,800 Gbit/s, and according to the results of the projects planned for implementation by the end of 2022, this figure is expected to be brought to 3,200 Gbit/s.

In order to develop mobile communications, the speed of mobile Internet was increased 1.5 times, and in 2021, 14,150 stations were installed. Thus, their total number has been brought to 45,890 units.

Currently, the number of Internet users has exceeded 27.2 million people. Including 25.3 million people use the mobile Internet.

Moreover, people through a my.gov.uz portal can use about 300 types of public services in electronic format. It is noteworthy that 185 of them are provided free of charge, and 181 services do not require an electronic digital signature and etc. (Sh.Axmatov, 2022).

Apart from this, O. Pecos, the incumbent first deputy minister of the Ministry for development of information technologies and communications of the Republic of Uzbekistan, in his article published in the magazine “O‘zbekiston iqtisodiy axborotnomasi – Economic Bulletin of Uzbekistan”, also provides some statistics in the field.

As he states, within the framework of the digital development of the republic, special emphasis is placed on providing social facilities with high-speed

Internet connection. Currently, 97% of secondary schools, 82% of mahalla (local) gatherings of citizens, 56% of police stations, as well as 100 percent of preschool educational and medical institutions are connected to a high-speed Internet network. The task has been set to fully provide all social facilities with high-speed Internet connection by the end of this year.

Mobile communications are also developing at an accelerated pace by increasing and modernizing base stations. So, if in 2016 the total number of base stations was 17.2 thousand units, then by 2020 this figure has grown to 31.7 thousand. This year, it is planned to install another 2 thousand base stations.

It should be noted that if earlier the expansion of mobile networks was carried out on the basis of 2G technologies, today projects based on 3G/4G technologies are being implemented. So, last year 3.6 thousand base stations were upgraded on the basis of 3G/4G technologies.

There are a range of activities that are underway to develop 5G technology. So, since April of this year in the business quarter of Tashkent – Tashkent City, Ucell (mobile telecommunication operator) has launched a fifth-generation network. In the future, it is also planned to deploy a 5G network in regional centers.

The subscriber base of mobile operators is consistently growing. Within five years, the number of mobile users has grown from 21.2 million in 2016 to 27 million people in the first half of 2021. 23.1 million people use the mobile Internet today.

There have been also carried out some actions to digitalize the government services.

The development of the e-government system in Uzbekistan is considered as one of the priority areas of digital reforms, which will allow to qualitatively reform the activities of public authorities and management. Large-scale e-reforms in the public sector cover all spheres of activity without exception with the broad involvement of ministries and departments (O.Pecos, 2021).

When it comes to digitalization the economy of the country, it can be noted that in 2021 the share of the digital economy in Uzbekistan's GDP was 2.2 percent. The share of the digital economy in Uzbekistan's GDP is planned to increase by 2 times by 2023, and the share of electronic public services is planned to increase to 60% in 2022. Currently, more than 260 projects are being implemented in the republic aimed at the consistent introduction of elements of the digital economy and "electronic government", as well as the digitalization of the banking sector.

The system of instant payments for business entities and entrepreneurs has been launched 24/7.

During 2020-2022, it is planned to attract investments in the field of information technology and communications in the amount of 498.1 million dollars. It is planned to implement 1,627 projects for the digital transformation of regions and industries (Abaturov, 2021) and etc.

The issue of ensuring the cybersecurity of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Such a rapid development of the digital economy and other spheres implies a multiple increase in information security risks also. Critical infrastructures are constantly targeted by cyber-adversaries, and we have seen security incidents exert both cascading and crippling effects regionally, nationally, and even internationally, due to the high degree of interconnectedness and interdependency that our global society now involves (Ho, 2014).

According to the experts in the area, Cybersecurity Ventures expects global cybercrime costs to grow by 15 percent per year over the next five years, reaching \$10.5 trillion USD annually by 2025, up from \$3 trillion USD in 2015. This represents the greatest transfer of economic wealth in history, risks the incentives for innovation and investment, is exponentially larger than the damage inflicted from natural disasters in a year, and will be more profitable than the global trade of all major illegal drugs combined (Morgan, 2020).

Today no nation, and no country is off such attacks. Uzbekistan may also be in the top list that hackers aim to inflict high losses on the country. Recently, by the company “Comparitech”, a pro-consumer website providing information, tools, reviews and comparisons to help the readers in the US, UK and the rest of the world improve their cyber security and privacy online (Comparitech, 2015), there has been carried out a research on the levels of cybersecurity of the countries around the globe. Within the research, experts analyzed 75 countries, judging each of them with an extended list of 15 criteria. This means countries are ranked from one to 75 with one being the least cyber-secure country and 75 being the most cyber-secure country. In the list, Uzbekistan is found among those countries that were the least cyber-secure country in the world (BISCHOFF, 2021).

In 2020 only, more than 27 million events of malicious and suspicious network activity originating from the address space of the national segment of the Internet, which in turn posed a threat to the safe and stable functioning of information systems and resources of government agencies and other organizations, were revealed in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

According to the data provided by the State Unitary Enterprise “Cybersecurity center”, by the end of 2020, out of 86,679 registered domains, about 30,000 domains were active. Of these, more than 12,500 domains have an SSL security certificate and about 300 domains have expired certificates.

As part of the safe operation of information systems and websites, 680 security events were detected in 2020, including technical problems, which is about 1,000,000 minutes of unavailability of websites. In addition, in the same year, 9,955,152 security events were recorded, of which 94,147 events could lead to unauthorized access and leakage of confidential information and etc..

According to the monitoring carried out by the State Unitary Enterprise “Cybersecurity center”, it is said that as part of the identification of malicious content and the analysis of its involvement in offenses in the information space, investigations of cybersecurity incidents were conducted, during which the causes and methods of their implementation were established.

The main reasons and methods for the successful implementation of hacker attacks are followings:

Brute force account passwords, outdated or vulnerable version of the content management system (CMS), SQL injections, outdated plugins.

In particular, according to the results of investigations, more than 2,690 malicious files were identified, as well as sources (countries) from which unauthorized destructive actions were carried out: Romania, Germany, the Republic of Slovakia, the USA, Indonesia, China, the Russian Federation, Great Britain, France, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Ukraine, the Netherlands, South Korea, Canada, Turkey, Poland, Vietnam and India.

Compared to the same period in 2019, there is a dynamics of an increase in the number of incidents committed against the websites of state and economic bodies by 144% (centre", 2021).

According to the latest research by reputable international companies in the field of geopolitical risks, in recent years there will be a dynamic growth of crimes in the world using information and communication technologies.

According to the latest research of reputable international companies in the field of geopolitical risks, in recent years there will be a dynamic growth of crimes in the world, using information and communication technologies in connection with:

- the transition to remote work of employees of companies (organizations);
- online education;

- making safe purchases in online stores;
- widespread use of Internet of Things devices (cameras, devices, sensors, etc.);
- the spread of ransomware viruses (cryptographers). It is necessary to take into account the rapid growth in the number of new end devices added to the Internet, as the coverage of 4G and 5G networks expands and sensors, cameras and other Internet of Things devices spread.

In addition, the increased demand for shopping in online stores and online trading platforms will create an additional "springboard" for fraudsters on the Internet, as a result of which the theft of funds from citizens' bank cards will increase. Another big threat that public and private companies may have to face will be the so-called ransomware viruses (cryptographers), the distribution of which will mainly be carried out by sending phishing emails or exploiting vulnerabilities in systems. Taking into account the above, such risks as: Internet of Things devices vulnerable to cyber attacks, unauthorized access for destructive purposes to information systems of organizations and the education system, and fraud on the Internet are the main challenges that are likely to be faced in the country.

All mentioned above positive developments in digitalization of economy and social sphere of the Republic of Uzbekistan as well as the cybersecurity incidents happened in recent years strongly recommends to think one more time to find the ways to ensure cybersecurity of the country in the long run.

Today, The Republic of Uzbekistan is taking some steps to ensure cybersecurity in the country of at the levels of legislation, institutionalism and international.

Legislation.

For the past years there have been no exact laws to control thenrelations in the country's cybersecurity. The sphere was partially controlled with the laws such as "On personal data", The Criminality and Code on administrative responsibility and etc.. What's more, recently The Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted the bill "On cybersecurity" (Majlis, 2022), where I personally participated in the preparation of this legal act. The need to develop this bill, as already mentioned above, is associated with increased challenges and risks in cyberspace, a sharp increase in cybercrime, an increase in online attacks, and the unpredictable dynamics of cyberspace development in the world.

According to the developers of the bill, currently, the Republic of Uzbekistan is actively developing and implementing digital technologies in both the public and private sectors. In addition to the advantages and new opportunities for all spheres of human activity, there are a number of potential risks to the sustainable functioning of information systems and resources of the public sector, the rights and freedoms of citizens, which may pose a real threat to public interests, health and well-being of society and citizens.

In addition, legal norms on information security issues are only partially implemented in the legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan. To date, this area is controlled by separate decrees and resolutions of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which do not fully cover it, and also meet global trends in the field of information and cybersecurity.

There is no system of interaction between government agencies and telecom operators that allows tracking cyber attacks, preventing their consequences and taking adequate preventive measures.

As before, the objects of the state information and communication infrastructure remain unidentified and unclassified, which can lead to negative and even catastrophic consequences for the economic and social situation of the Republic of Uzbekistan. There are no methods and techniques for assessing the security systems of information systems and resources at critical information infrastructure facilities.

Given the rapid development and variability of cyberspace, the bill should provide an opportunity

to respond more quickly to challenges in an ever-changing environment.

In order to minimize administrative procedures and time costs in the event of new fundamental threats in the digital environment, the bill proposes to clearly define the following issues:

basic principles of cybersecurity;

powers, rights and obligations of the authorized state body in the field of cybersecurity;

requirements for ensuring cybersecurity of information systems and resources of state bodies and organizations;

responding to cybersecurity incidents;

formation of the regulatory framework on the level of importance of critical information infrastructures;

creating favorable conditions and stimulating national projects and personnel in the field of cybersecurity.

The main objectives of the adoption of the bill:

1. Regulation of relations in the field of cybersecurity in cyberspace of the Republic of Uzbekistan.
2. Introduction of terms and definitions used in the field of cybersecurity.
3. Establishment of the powers, rights and obligations of the Authorized state body in the field of cybersecurity.
4. Establishment of requirements for ensuring cybersecurity of information systems and resources of state bodies and organizations.
5. Responding to computer incidents (threat detection, detection and prevention of attacks and their consequences), ensuring the effective operation of CERT (Computer Incident Response Centers).
6. Formation of the regulatory framework according to the level of importance of critical information infrastructure objects.
7. Implementation of requirements to ensure cybersecurity of objects and subjects of critical information infrastructure.
8. Establishing the rights and obligations of subjects of critical information infrastructure.
9. Creation of an effective legal framework for the promotion and further development of the domestic cybersecurity industry: adoption of state support measures, training of cybersecurity specialists, creation of a national operating system and software.

Institution.

In accordance with the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan PD-4024 dated November 21, 2018 "On measures to improve the system of control over the introduction of information technologies and communications, the organization of their protection" were created: "State Inspectorate for Control in the field of Informatization and Telecommunications" of the Republic of Uzbekistan and "Technical Assistance Centre" in the form of a state unitary enterprise.

The tasks of the Centre include:

- collection, analysis and accumulation of data on modern threats to information security, development of recommendations and proposals for the prompt adoption of effective organizational and software and technical solutions to prevent acts of illegal penetration into

information systems, resources and databases of government agencies and organizations;

- interaction with operators and providers of telecommunications networks, law enforcement agencies in the framework of analysis, identification of violators, methods and means used in the implementation of unauthorized or destructive actions in the information space;

- certification, examination and certification of hardware and software products, information and communication technologies, telecommunication equipment and other technical means at informatization facilities (with the exception of state secrets);

- assistance in the development and implementation of information security policy of information systems and resources of state bodies and organizations;

- development of proposals to improve the regulatory framework in the field of information security of state information systems and resources, as well as the national segment of the Internet;

- timely notification of national Internet users about emerging threats to information security in the national segment of the Internet, as well as the provision of consulting services for information protection (source, 2022).

International cooperation.

Currently The Republic of Uzbekistan has been carrying out a close relationship with the CIS on issues of information security. On June 29, 2021, an international expert Forum on information Security issues was held in Tashkent city, organized by the Institute for Strategic and Interregional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan jointly with the Ministry for the Development of Information Technologies and Communications of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the implementation of the Information Security Strategy of the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

The main objectives of the Forum were formulated in accordance with the key directions of the updated Concept for the further development of the CIS and assumed:

- substantive discussion of topical issues of international information security and ways to solve them in the context of the dynamic development of the digital agenda in the CIS;

- exchange of experience in strengthening cooperation in the main areas of digital economy development, building an integrated digital infrastructure and ensuring the security of common digital processes;

- development of expert recommendations on joint counteraction to security challenges and threats in the information space, including for the development of an Action Plan for the phased implementation of the Information Security Strategy of the Commonwealth.

As a result of the discussion, a final document was adopted containing practical proposals for the governments of the Commonwealth countries on the effective implementation of innovative development strategies, including issues of information security, legal and organizational and technical support for the development of the digital economy, as well as the training of specialized specialists in this area (Committee, 2021).

Some Recommendations

To to ensure cybersecurity of The Republic of Uzbekistan, it is recommended to The Republic of Uzbekistan to carry out the following tasks:

- to establish and ensure the continuous work of institutions in the field of cybersecurity;
- to ensure the stability and security of the functioning of information systems and technologies;
- to create solid legal bases of ensuring the protection of the rights and legitimate interests of business in the digital economy;
- to create of technical tools that ensure safe information interaction of citizens in the digital economy;
- to ensure the manageability and reliability of the functioning of the Russian segment of the Internet;
- to ensure organizational and legal protection of state interests in the digital economy;
- to ensure the stability and safety of the functioning of the unified telecommunication network of Uzbekistan;
- to ensure the technological independence and security of the functioning of hardware and infrastructure;
- to ensure the legal regime of machine-to-machine interaction for cyber-physical systems (Y. Konoplevo, 2019);
- to establish international cooperation in the field of cybersecurity.

CONCLUSION

By the way of conclusion, I can say that, the Republic of Uzbekistan as a full-right member of the process of globalization has entered to the new era, the era of “Information technologies”. The current changes in the world shows that if a state want to develop both economically and socially, has first of all to develop its information infrastructure, digitalize all the spheres of the country. Digitalization help states to carry out a transparent policy. It makes public officials to be more accountable in front of the nation, mitigates the level of corruption and finally endeavours democracy. But on the other hand, there is a flip side of the informatization. As it was many times noted above, recent times the level of crimes related to cyberspace increasing dramatically. The cross-border nature of cybercrimes and spreading fake news, to misconduct peoples mind, are gaining a lot of power due to the Internet. In this condition the republic of Uzbekistan should follow the golden rules of ensuring information security and develop its own and new strategies to combat crimes related to information and information technologies.

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MODERN
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REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY &
CAPACITY BUILDING
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