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- The Organization for Democracy and Economic Development—
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**GEOGRAPHY, GEOPOLITICS,
AND THE RELATED TERMS****CENTRAL EURASIA:
ITS GEOPOLITICAL FUNCTION
IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

Eldar M. ISMAILOV

*Director,
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In Lieu of an Introduction:
**Transformation of
the Eurasian Geopolitical Expanse**

Today, when we are concentrating on the problems of regional studies and regional cooperation, it has become especially important to look at the processes going on within what was once a single military-political and socio-economic expanse (the Council for Mutual Economic Cooperation—COMECON and the Warsaw Treaty Organization—WTO) formed by the Soviet Union and which fell apart late in the 20th century into:

The post-COMECON regions:**(1) Central (Eastern) Europe:**

- *post-COMECON countries*: Poland, Czechoslovakia,¹ Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania, the GDR,²

¹ In 1993, the country divided into the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

² In 1990, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) became part of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG).

and the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia³;

- *post-Soviet countries*: Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia;

(2) **Central Caucasus (Trans-Caucasus):**

- *post-Soviet countries*: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia;

(3) **Central Asian Region (known as *Sredniaia Azia* [Middle Asia] in Soviet times):**

- *post-COMECON countries*: Afghanistan, Mongolia;

- *post-Soviet countries*: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan.

The U.S.S.R./COMECON Initiating Core:

East European-North Asian Region:

- *post-Soviet country*: Russia.⁴

Evidently the interest in the three post-COMECON regions that detached themselves from the initiating core (Russia) can be explained by the special place they retained in the world political expanse. This becomes especially obvious when viewed as a single, independent, and isolated geopolitical object of the globalizing world.

The geopolitical conceptual apparatus typical of the bipolar world lost its relevance when the Cold War ended; the world was no longer divided into socialist and capitalist camps, therefore these conceptions and related terms, such as “the non-capitalist way of development,” the non-alignment movement, etc. were gradually replaced with more adequate categories. Despite the changes that have taken place in the last few decades, academic publications and educational and reference literature persist in discrepancies when it

³ Early in the 1990s, the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) fell apart into Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Montenegro.

⁴ Cuba and Vietnam were two other COMECON members; Afghanistan, Angola, Ethiopia, Laos, Mozambique, and the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen were observers.

comes to relating the post-COMECON countries to various regions of the *Eurasian continent* and their names.

Today, the academic and political communities are using old (czarist or Soviet, European and Asian), along with new, not totally accepted, definitions.⁵ The post-Soviet republics on the *Baltic coast* (the Russian term is “Pribaltiiskie”) are called the Baltic republics and are related to either Northern or Northeastern Europe; the republics that were called “*Sredneaziatskie*” in Soviet times are now known as the Central Asian (“Tsentral’noaziatskie”) republics,⁶ the *Trans-Caucasian* republics are now known as the South Caucasian or Central Caucasian republics⁷ and are seen as part of Eastern or Southeastern Europe, Central or Northwestern Asia.⁸

States were related to regions depending on geopolitical contexts: the changed balance among the main geopolitical actors in Eurasia was behind the shift in countries from one sphere of influence to another, which, in turn, drew new dividing lines between the regions.⁹ These

⁵ See, for example: V. Papava, “Tsentral’naia Kavkazia: osnovy geopoliticheskoy ekonomii,” *Analiticheskie zapiski Gruzinskogo fonda strategicheskikh i mezhdunarodnykh issledovaniy*, No. 1, 2007, p. 8, available at [http://www.gfsis.org/publications/VPapava_Ru_1.pdf].

⁶ N.N. Alekseeva, I.S. Ivanova, “Sredniaia ili Tsentral’naia Azia?,” available at [<http://geo.1september.ru/articlef.php?ID=200302804>].

⁷ See: E. Ismailov, Z. Kengerli, “O kategorii Kavkaz,” *Doklady Natsional’noy Akademii Nauk Azerbaidzhana*, Vol. LVIII, No. 5, 2002, pp. 290-295; E. Ismailov, V. Papava, *Tsentral’ny Kavkaz: istoria, politika, ekonomika*, Mysl Publishers, Moscow, 2007, 208 pp.

⁸ For more detail about the Northwestern Asia conception see: A. Ramezanzadeh, “Iran’s Role as Mediator in the Nagorno-Karabakh Crisis,” in: *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, ed. by B. Coppieters, VUB Press, Brussels, 1996, available at [<http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/ContBorders/eng/ch0701.htm>].

⁹ The way the borders of the Caucasian region were changing, depending on the dynamics of Russia’s penetration, is highly illustrative. The Caucasus ended where the sphere of Russia’s influence ended. Hence the 19th-century term Trans-Caucasus related to the areas beyond Russia’s reach. In fact, geographically these areas belonged to the Caucasian region. This trend survived: in the latter half of the 19th century, the Caucasus was extended to the southwest to include Kars, Ardahan, and Artvin, parts of the Ottoman Empire captured by Russia. After World War I, Turkey restored its possessions, which led to a narrowing down of the region; the regional borders were thus registered as commonly accepted definitions.

changes took place in the European and Asian parts of Eurasia. The conventional nature of the regions' new spatial descriptions, assumed to correspond to the geopolitical situation, allows us to identify new trends of development in intra- and extra-regional contacts and relations on the Eurasian continent.

Today, the geopolitical transformations of the 1990s have called for fresh approaches to the regional division of the political expanse of Europe and Asia that would reflect as fully as possible the continent's internal political, socio-economic, and cultural relations in keeping with the current geopolitical situation.

Today, Europe's political expanse should be regarded as the sum total of its main regions:

- Western Europe—EU and NATO members (Belgium, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, France, U.K., Denmark, Ireland, Greece, Portugal, Spain, Austria, Finland, Sweden, Iceland, Norway, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Bulgaria, and Rumania) and candidate countries (Croatia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, and still neutral Switzerland).
- Central Europe—Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova.
- Eastern Europe—the European part of the Russian Federation.

Some might object to counting post-COMECON and post-Soviet (Baltic) states as part of Western Europe for socioeconomic and cultural reasons: their fairly long existence within the socialist system (COMECON/U.S.S.R.) affected their development level and is responsible for their current specifics. It should be said that the level of their socioeconomic development was much lower than that of the old members (even though they joined the EU in 2004). In other words, in view of the greater socioeconomic compatibility of the "new EU members" with, say, Ukraine rather than France or the Netherlands, they could all be included in *Greater Central Europe* (Hunga-

ry, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Bulgaria, Rumania, Croatia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova).

It is much more complicated to restructure the political expanse of Eurasia's other part (Asia): its vast spatial-political scale and the current political and economic relations among the states with very different axiological systems, political regimes, geopolitical orientations, and development levels do not permit the countries to be grouped into strictly delineated regional segments. As distinct from Europe, the region's political borders in Asia are much more conventional. The current geopolitical situation suggests five regional parts:

- Western Asia—Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the other states of the Arabian Peninsular, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, and Iran;
- Eastern Asia—China, North Korea, South Korea, Japan, Mongolia, and the states of Indochina and the Malay Archipelago;
- Northern Asia—the Asian part of the Russian Federation;
- Southern Asia—India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives;
- Central Asia—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

Just as in Europe, the central part of Asia can also be described as Greater Central Asia,¹⁰ which would include Mongolia of Eastern Asia and Afghanistan of Southern Asia.

¹⁰ The Greater Central Asia conception has been formulated. According Frederick Starr, it consists of five newly independent states of Central Asia and Afghanistan (see: S.F. Starr, "A 'Greater Central Asia Partnership' for Afghanistan and Its Neighbors," *Silk Road Paper*, March 2005, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, Washington, D.C., 2005. p. 16, available at [<http://www.silkroadstudies.org/CACI/Strategy.pdf>]; idem, "A Partnership for Central Asia," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 4, 2005. Some authors also count Mongolia as part of the Greater Central Asia).

The Central Caucasian countries can be included both in the Asian (for geographical reasons) and in the European continent (because of their political and institutional involvement in European affairs). This region is a geopolitical “special zone” of Eurasia, an area where the continents meet.

The conception of the post-COMECON expanse has become completely outdated; its key segments—the European, Caucasian, and Asian—are now described as “central,” which means that any discussion of them as a totality should be based on Central Eurasia as an integral conception.

In any case, it is impossible to revive the Russian (either czarist or Soviet), European, or Asian (of the Cold War period) terms: the world

has changed, therefore the conceptual approaches and the categorial-conceptual apparatus have changed accordingly.

It is necessary, therefore, to clarify the definitions relating to this expanse: profound understanding of the objective development regularities of the Eurasian continent and, in the final analysis, its effective integration call for clearly systematized geopolitical conceptions.

This means that we should concentrate on identifying the spatial-functional parameters of Central Eurasia as the post-COMECON area. Should we study the region as a single whole? To what extent does this approach correspond to the historical and geopolitical development specifics of the Eurasian continent?

1. The Planet’s Pivot as Discussed by Halford Mackinder

The geopolitical situation of the early 21st century gave a new boost to the studies of the principles of regional structuralization of the geopolitical and geo-economic expanse of the entire Eurasian continent.¹¹ This revives the conceptions formulated by Halford Mackinder in the early 20th century and, somewhat later, by N. Spykman, his opponent. They offered very original approaches to the regional geopolitical structuralization of the Eurasian continent and to identifying the functional value of its spatial segments.

Mackinder, who interpreted the world historical processes on the basis of the idea of the world’s primordial division into isolated areas each of which had a special function to perform, asserted that European civilization was the product of outside pressure. He proceeded from the same idea when he looked at Europe and European history as the result of many centuries of struggle against invasions from Asia.¹² He believed that Europe’s advance and expansion was stimulated by the need to respond

¹¹ See: P. Darabadi, “Central Eurasia: Globalization and Geopolitical Evolution,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 3 (39), 2006; Ch. Klover, “Mechty o evraziiskom Heartland. Vozrozhdenie geopolitiki,” *Zavtra*, 7 April, 1999; A.G. Dugin, *Osnovy geopolitiki. Geopoliticheskoe budushchee Rossii. Myslit prostranstvom*, Arktogeia-tsentr, Moscow, 2000; idem, “Preodolenie Zapada (esse o N.S. Trubetskom),” in: N.S. Trubetskoy, *Nasledie Chingizhana*, Agraf, Moscow, 2000; idem, *Kontinent Rossia*, Znanie, Moscow, 1990; E. Ismailov, M. Esenov, “Central Eurasia in the New Geopolitical and Geo-Economic Dimensions,” *Central Eurasia 2005. Analytical Annual*, CA&CC® Press, Sweden, 2006; A. Zinoviev, *Novy etap globalizatsii. Voyna za gospodstvo v mire pereshla v stadiu goriachey, Doklad na Mezhdunarodnoy konferentsii po global’nym problemam vsemirnoy istorii (26-27 January 2002)*, available at [<http://www.pravda.ru/politics/2002/01/31/36396.html>]; S.G. Kara-Murza, “Evraziiskaia tsivilizatsia—ili etnicheskiy tigel?,” available at [<http://www.tuad.nsk.ru/~history/index.html>]; M. Laruelle, “Pereosmyslenie imperii v postsovetskom prostranstve: novaia evraziiskaia ideologia,” *Vestnik Evrazii*, No. 1, 2000; V.I. Maksimenko, “Bitva protiv Evrazii: sto let amerikanskoy geostrategii v Starom Svete,” available at [<http://www.kisi.kz/Parts/Monitoring/04-11-01mon3.html>]; A.A. Panarin, “Evraziiskiy proekt v mirosistemnom kontekste,” *Vostok*, No. 2, 1995; S.E. Cornell, “Geopolitics and Strategic Alignments in the Caucasus and Central Asia Perceptions,” *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. IV, No. 2, June-August 1999; A.P. Tsygankov, *Pathways after Empire: National Identity and Foreign Economic Policy in the Post-Soviet World*, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, New York, 2001; Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Basic Books, New York, 1997.

¹² See: H. Mackinder, “The Geographical Pivot of History,” *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. XXIII, No. 4, April 1904.

to the pressure coming from the center of Asia. According to Halford Mackinder, it was the Heartland (where the continental masses of Eurasia were concentrated) that served as the pivot of all the geopolitical transformations of the historical dimensions within the World Island.

He pointed out that the Heartland was in the most advantageous geopolitical location. Aware of the relative nature of the conception "central location," Mackinder pointed out that in the context of the global geopolitical processes, the Eurasian continent is found in the world's center, with the Heartland occupying the center of the Eurasian continent. This doctrine suggests that the geopolitical subject (actor) that dominated the Heartland would possess the necessary geopolitical and economic potential to ultimately control the World Island and the planet.

According to Mackinder, a retrospective analysis of military-political and socioeconomic processes in the Heartland reveals its obvious objective geopolitical and geo-economic unity.¹³ He pointed to the pivotal nature of the vast Eurasian region inaccessible for sea-going vessels, but in antiquity an easy target for the nomads. Mackinder was convinced that Eurasia possessed sustainable conditions for the development of military and industrial powers.

When structuring the geopolitical expanse in the form of a system of concentric circles, Halford Mackinder conventionally placed the Pivot in the planet's center, which included river basins of the Volga, Yenisey, Amu Darya, and Syr Darya and two seas (the Caspian and the Aral).¹⁴ "This Pivot was thus all but impregnable to attacks by sea powers, yet was able to sustain large populations itself. The nations that arose from within it depended on horse and camel to negotiate its vast expanses, which gave them the mobility to mount raids on Europe, which could not emulate in return."¹⁵

For historical and geopolitical reasons, the Pivot became the natural center of force. Halford Mackinder identified the "inner crescent," which coincided with the Eurasian coastal areas. He described it as the area of the most intensive civilizational development which included Europe, Southern, Southwestern, and Eastern Asia. There was also the "outer crescent" which included Britain, South and North America, Southern Africa, Australasia and Japan, zones geographically and culturally alien to inner Eurasia. He believed that the historical processes were concentrated on the Heartland, the homeland of all the nomadic empires of the past,¹⁶ territory populated by Turkic tribes whose inroads forced Europe to unite.

Proceeding from the above, Mackinder insisted on preventive measures to remain in control of the situation in the Pivot by various means, including control of the "inner crescent." He put in a nutshell his idea of Eastern Europe as the key to the Heartland by saying: "Whoever rules East Europe commands the Heartland; Whoever rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; Whoever rules the World-Island commands the World."¹⁷

The history of the Pivot, the conception of which will be assessed below, suggests the conclusion that its spatial-functional parameters were in constant change. Even though the process that took place within the area confirms what Mackinder said about the functional unity of Eastern Europe and the Heartland, the real meaning of the latter does not stem from the imperative nature of Eastern Europe when it comes to control over the Heartland, but from their structural unity. In other words, at all stages (especially today) of the Heartland's development, Eastern Europe remains a spatial element of its structure, the geopolitical unity of which is the sine qua non of the Pivot's functional validity on a Eurasian scale.

¹³ See: H.J. Mackinder, "The Round World and the Winning of the Peace," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 21, No. 4, 1943.

¹⁴ See: H. Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History."

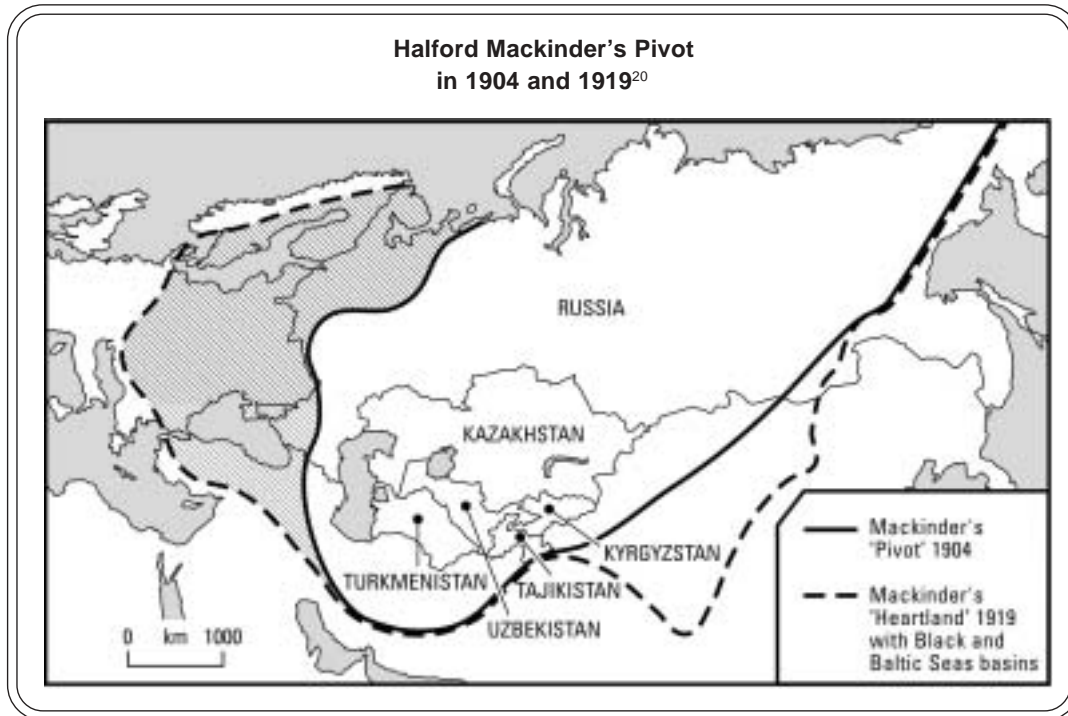
¹⁵ N. Megoran, S. Sharapova, "Mackinder's 'Heartland': A Help Or Hindrance in Understanding Central Asia's International Relations?" *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 4 (34), 2005, p. 12.

¹⁶ See: S.A. Pletneva, *Kochevniki srednevekov'ia: Poiski istoricheskikh zakonomernostey*, Moscow, 1982.

¹⁷ H.J. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality. A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction*, New York, 1944, p. 113.

Mackinder's later works support the thesis of Eastern Europe as part of the Heartland.¹⁸ Within a very short period of time he revised his theory twice in an effort to adapt it to the changing geopolitical realities. He readjusted the Pivot (see Fig. 1) in particular and included the Black and Baltic Seas basins (Eastern Europe) in the Heartland.¹⁹ This means that his famous formula should be rephrased as: Whoever rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; Whoever rules the World-Island commands the World.

Figure 1



This was confirmed in the mid-20th century when, after World War II, the Soviet Union expanded its domination zone westwards; COMECON/WTO, the expansion fruits, meant that the classical Heartland merged with Eastern Europe. They disintegrated along with the Soviet Union at the turn of the 1990s giving rise to new geopolitical and geo-economic conditions in the World-Island. This did not, however, set Eastern Europe apart from the Heartland. The geopolitical transformations of the late 20th century isolated Russia as a Eurasian geopolitical subject in the northeastern part of the continent and narrowed down the Pivot in its central part, that is, in three relatively independent regional segments of the latter—Central (Eastern according to Mackinder) Europe, the Central Caucasus, and Central Asia. To be more precise, the main relatively altered functions of the Heartland were

¹⁸ See: H.J. Mackinder, "The Round World and the Winning of the Peace"; idem, *Democratic Ideals and Reality. A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction*.

¹⁹ He included in Eastern Europe some of the East European states that formed part of the Ottoman Empire (the south-eastern European states—the Kingdom of Bulgaria, the Hungarian Kingdom, the Rumanian Principdom, the Principdom of Montenegro, the Kingdom of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia) and of the Russian Empire (the Kingdom of Poland, the Grand Principdom of Finland, the Central (Ukrainian) Rada, the Byelorussian Rada and the governorships of Bessarabia, Lifland, Kourland, and Estland.)

²⁰ The map is borrowed from N. Megoran, S. Sharapova, op. cit., p. 9.

concentrated in the newly emergent spaces of its system-forming segments. This launched another cycle of their integration and revival as a whole entity.²¹

Early in the 20th century (during World War I) and in the latter half of the same century (during the Cold War), the geopolitical logic created by the domination first of the Ottoman and Russian empires and later by Soviet domination in Eastern Europe (COMECON) suggested division into Western Europe (the countries outside the Ottoman and Russian/Soviet domination zones) and Eastern Europe (the countries completely dominated by the Ottoman and Russian/Soviet empires). The geopolitical logic created by the disintegration of the empires and Russia's isolation in the northeastern part of Eurasia excluded the former COMECON countries and post-Soviet republics from the East European expanse (with the exception of Russia's European part). The isolation of the last Eurasian geopolitical subject and its domination sphere in the northeast of the European continent, first, shifted the Pivot from the continent's north to the center; and second, called for conceptual changes. Indeed, that part of Europe's political expanse controlled by the last empire (the Soviet Union) should be identified as Central Europe and then included in the contemporary Pivot (Central Eurasia), while Russia, as part of the World-Island that occupies Eastern Europe and Northern Asia, should be described as a Northern Eurasian Power. In this context, Turkey becomes the Southern Eurasian Power.

N. Spykman also paid much attention to the role of the Pivot of the Eurasian continent in world history.²² He relied on what Mackinder wrote before him to produce his own version of the basic geopolitical model which differed greatly from that of his predecessor. He was convinced that Halford Mackinder had overestimated the geopolitical significance of the Heartland: the dynamics of the geopolitical history of the "inner crescent"—the Rimland—the coastal zones, he argued, was the product of its inner development impetus rather than emerging under pressure of the "nomads of the Land," as Mackinder asserted. Spykman was convinced that the Heartland was nothing more than a geographic expanse open to cultural and civilizational impulses coming from the Rimland. Mackinder's Pivot had no independent historical role to play, said he, the Rimland was the key to world domination, hence his formula: whoever rules the Rimland commands Eurasia; whoever rules Eurasia commands the world.

In both geopolitical conceptions, the world's spatial-functional structure includes three main levels—the *Heartland-Eurasia-the Planet* (Mackinder) and the *Rimland-Eurasia-the Planet* (Spykman)—the former insisted on the primordial and decisive role of the Heartland in the geopolitical expanse of the World-Island, while the latter said the same about the Rimland.

At different times, the state structures of both the Heartland and Rimland were either objects or subjects of the geopolitical relations in Eurasia. Their functional value in the global geopolitical processes changed accordingly. It is very hard, therefore, and hardly correct in the present context, to describe either the Heartland or the Rimland as primordial and all important. Both theories have one, and a serious, shortcoming: they were not intended to explain objective global geopolitical processes. They were formulated to serve the strategic interests of two Western powers (the U.K. and the U.S.). This accounts for the inevitable one-sidedness of their approaches to the question discussed above: what is primordial/more important—the Heartland or the Rimland? Their arguments confirm their obvious biases, therefore I will not merely reproduce Mackinder's and Spykman's theories about the place and role of the Heartland/Rimland on the Eurasian continent and worldwide. I will use their approaches to offer my own geopolitical idea about the Pivot of the 21st century and possible scenarios of the future.

²¹ The discussion about the Heartland's new expanses is still underway; there is the opinion that it has shrunk to cover the territory of Central Asia: E. Ahrari, "The Strategic Future of Central Asia: A View from Washington," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 56, No. 2, 2003; G. Sloan, "Sir Halford J. Mackinder: The Heart-land Theory Then and Now," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 2/3, 1999.

²² See: N.J. Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics*, Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1942; idem, *The Geography of the Peace*, Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1944.

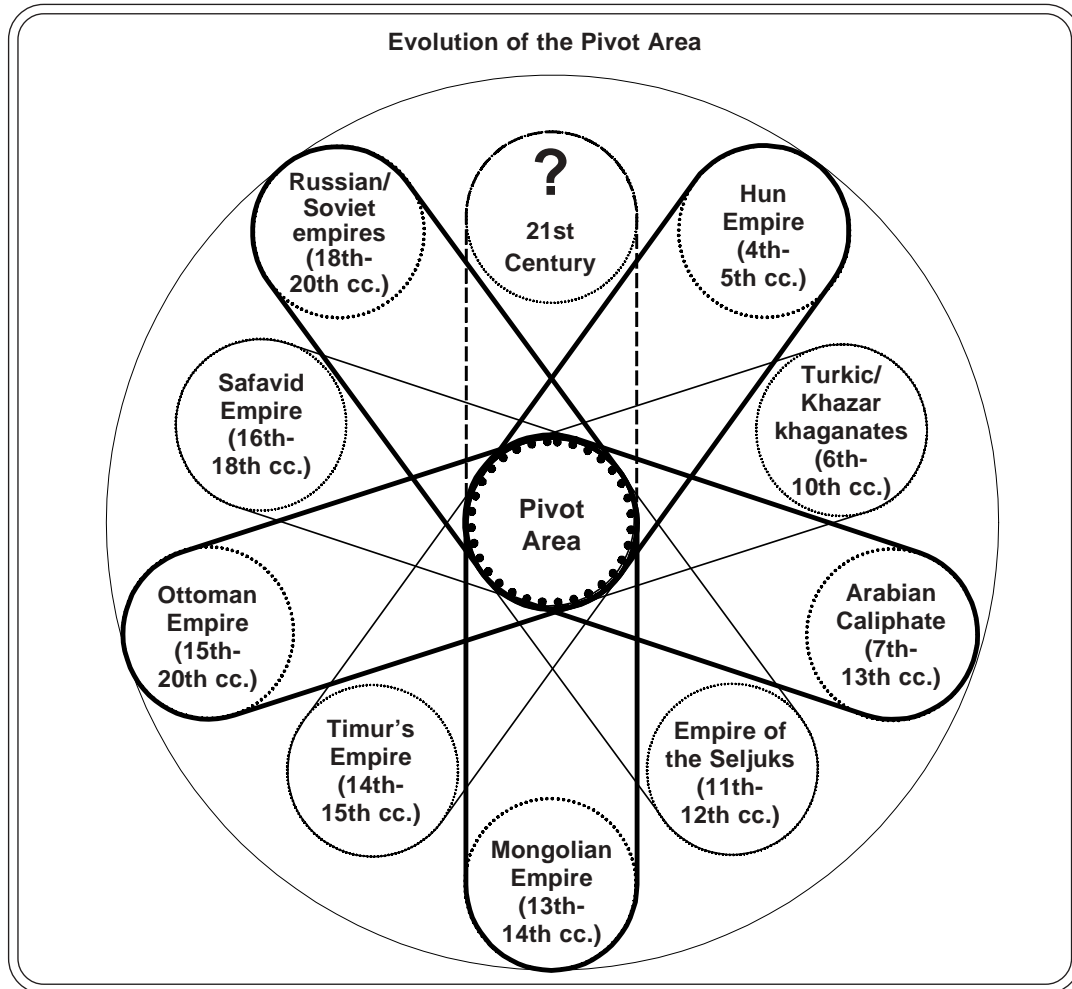
To achieve a much more profound idea about what is going on in the Pivot area, we should revise our old ideas to supply them with new scientifically substantiated content. We should:

- First, analyze the historic evolution of the Pivot expande, that is, the regularities and stages of the development of its geopolitical structure;
- Second, identify the main features, functions, and principles of its emergence and functioning, as well as its parameters and structure under present-day conditions.

2. Evolution of the Pivot Area— Central Eurasia

The history of the Heartland as a single and integral region began with the Hun Empire and unfolded through the consecutive changes of geopolitical actors: the Turkic and Khazar khaganates,

Figure 2



the Arabic Caliphate, the empires of the Seljuks and Mongols, Timur's Empire, the Ottoman and Safavid empires, and the Russian and Soviet empires (see Fig. 2).

At different times, the Pivot expanded or contracted within the empires which for several centuries replaced each other in its expanses. As a rule, each of them left behind stable administrative-territorial units within which the historical evolution of the Pivot area unfolded (see Table 1).

1. *The Hun Empire* (4th-5th cc.)²³—stretched from the Caucasus to the Rhine and from the right bank of the Danube to the Danish Islands. In the latter half of the 5th century, it fell apart into:

segments of the Heartland:

- Central European (latter half of the 5th-early 6th cc.)—possessions of the Balkan dynasts and of the dynasts of the Northern Black Sea coast;
- North Caucasian (latter half of the 5th-early 6th cc.)—possessions of the local dynasts.

2. *The Turkic Khaganate* (6th-8th cc.)²⁴—occupied the central strip stretching from Manchuria to the Black Sea steppes and the Crimea. In the latter half of the 6th century, it fell apart into:

segments of the Heartland:

- Central European (latter half of the 6th-first half of the 8th cc.)—possessions of the dynasts of the Northern Black Sea coast;
- North Caucasian (latter half of the 6th-first half of the 8th cc.)—possessions of the local dynasts;
- Central Asian (latter half of the 6th-8th cc.):
 - The Eastern Turkic Khaganate (609), which occupied the territory to the east of the Syr Darya and stretched to Manchuria. When it fell apart in 745, the Uighur Khaganate appeared on its territory (the Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region of contemporary China);
 - The Western Turkic Khaganate (603), which occupied the territory to the west of Syr Darya (stretching to the Caspian Sea) and the steppes of the Northern Black Sea coast and the Northern Caspian steppes. When it fell apart in 659, the Khazar Khaganate appeared on its territory.

3. *The Khazar Khaganate* (mid-7th-mid-10th cc.)²⁵—owned the Northern Caucasus, the Azov area, the steppes and forest steppes of Eastern Europe up to the Dnieper, as well as a large part of the Crimea it had wrenched away from Byzantium. Between the latter half of the 8th and 10th centuries, it fell apart into:

segments of the Heartland:

- Central European (latter half of the 8th-late 9th cc.)—possessions of the dynasts of the Northern Black Sea coast;
- North Caucasian (latter half of the 8th-late 9th cc.)—possessions of the local dynasts.

The Turkic tribal unions that appeared in Central Asia created, over the span of four centuries, three powerful states (the Hun Empire and the Turkic and Khazar khaganates) which laid the foundation of the Pivot Area for the first time and strove to extend it.²⁶ They never achieved this, however, and the empires fell apart. At the same time, none of the titular ethnoses managed to strike root in any of the segments and set up states of their own. As a result history “dissolved” them.

²³ See: A.N. Bernstam, *Ocherk istorii gunnov*, Leningrad, 1951; L.N. Gumilev, *Hunnu. Sredimaia Azia v dr. vremena*, Moscow, 1960.

²⁴ See: L.N. Gumilev, *Drevnie Tiurki*, Moscow, 1967.

²⁵ See: M.I. Artamonov, *Istoria Khazar*, Leningrad, 1962.

²⁶ The Huns and the Khazars dominated the European and Caucasian segments, while the Turkic khagans ruled mainly in the Asian, Caucasian, and partly European segments.

Table 1

Heartland Territory
within Different Empires

| Segments of Empires Empires/ Contemporary States | Periods Centuries | Total Area Thous sq km %% | | Including Post-Imperial Sizes of Segments | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----|---|----|--------------------------------|-----|-------------------------------------|----|------------------------------------|----|--------------------------------|----|-------|----|---|--|
| | | | | Size of the State formed by the Titular Ethnos—subject Thous sq km %% | | Size of the Heartland—object | | | | | | | | | | Size of the Rimland—object Thous sq km %% | |
| | | | | | | Total Thous sq km %% | | Including Segments of the Heartland | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | European Thous sq km %% | | Caucasian Thous sq km %% | | Asian Thous sq km %% | | | | | |
| Hun Empire | 4th-5th | 3,237 | 100 | — | — | 3,237 | 100 | 2,882 | 89 | 355 | 11 | — | — | — | — | | |
| Turkic Khaganate | 6th-8th | 5,701 | 100 | — | — | 5,701 | 100 | 550 | 10 | 355 | 6 | 4,796 | 84 | — | — | | |
| Khazar Khaganate | 7th-10th | 791 | 100 | — | — | 791 | 100 | 436 | 55 | 355 | 45 | — | — | — | — | | |
| Arabian Caliphate | 7th-13th | 13,848 | 100 | 2,606 | 19 | 1,917 | 14 | — | — | 187 | 1 | 1,730 | 13 | 9,325 | 67 | | |
| Saudi Arabia | 21st | — | — | 2,150 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | | |
| Empire of the Seljuks | 11th-12th | 3,801 | 100 | 200 | 5 | 2,171 | 57 | — | — | 993 | 26 | 1,178 | 31 | 1,430 | 38 | | |
| Turkmenistan | 21st | — | — | 488 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | | |
| Mongolian Empire | 13th-14th | 22,484 | 100 | 1,565 | 7 | 14,144 | 63 | 2,145 | 10 | 653 | 3 | 11,346 | 50 | 6,775 | 30 | | |
| Mongolia | 21st | — | — | 1,565 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | | |
| Timur's Empire | 14th-15th | 5,929 | 100 | 244 | 4 | 4,248 | 72 | — | — | 298 | 5 | 3,950 | 67 | 1,437 | 24 | | |

Table 1 (continued)

| Segments of Empires Empires/ Contemporary States | Periods Centuries | Total Area Thous sq km %% | | Including Post-Imperial Sizes of Segments | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----|---|----|--------------------------------|-----|-------------------------------------|----|------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|----|-------|----|---|--|
| | | | | Size of the State formed by the Titular Ethnos—subject Thous sq km %% | | Size of the Heartland—object | | | | | | | | | | Size of the Rimland—object Thous sq km %% | |
| | | | | | | Total Thous sq km %% | | Including Segments of the Heartland | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | European Thous sq km %% | | Caucasian Thous sq km %% | | Asian Thous sq km %% | | | | | |
| Uzbekistan | 21st | — | — | 447 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | | |
| Ottoman Empire | 15th-20th | 8,182 | 100 | 779 | 9 | 1,114 | 14 | 1,079 | 13 | 35 | 1 | — | — | 6,289 | 77 | | |
| Turkey | 21st | — | — | 779 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | | |
| Safavid Empire | 16th-18th | 2,000 | 100 | 228 | 11 | 335 | 17 | — | — | 35 | 2 | 300 | 15 | 1,437 | 72 | | |
| Azerbaijan | 21st | — | — | 87 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | | |
| Russian Empire | 18th-20th | 22,430 | 100 | — | 73 | 6,073 | 27 | 1,480 | 6 | 599 | 3 | 3,994 | 18 | — | — | | |
| R.S.F.S.R. | 20th | — | — | 16,357 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | | |
| U.S.S.R. | 20th | 22,402 | 100 | — | 77 | 5,202 | 23 | 1,021 | 4 | 187 | 1 | 3,994 | 18 | — | — | | |
| RF | 21st | — | — | 17,200 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | | |
| COMECON | 20th | 26,334 | 100 | 17,200 | 65 | 8,693 | 33 | 2,295 | 9 | 187 | 1 | 6,211 | 23 | 441 | 2 | | |
| RF | 20th | — | — | 17,200 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | | |
| Central Eurasia | 21st | — | — | — | — | 8,585 | 100 | 2,187 | 26 | 187 | 2 | 6,211 | 72 | — | — | | |

4. *The Arabian Caliphate* (first half of the 7th-mid-13th cc.)²⁷—occupied the territory between the Atlantic and Indian oceans and between the Caucasus and Central Asia to North Africa. Between the mid-8th and the mid-13th century, it fell apart into:

segments of the Heartland:

- Central Caucasian (mid-10th-mid-12th cc.)—the Kakheti (late 8th c.), Ereti (late 8th c.), Tao-Klarjet princedoms (early 9th c.), the Abkhazian Kingdom (early 9th c.), the Tiflis Emirate (the Jafarid dynasty—early 9th c.)—contemporary Georgia; the Ganja Emirate (the Shaddadid dynasty—971) and the Shirvan State (861)—contemporary Azerbaijan;
- North Caucasian (mid-10th c.)—the Derbent Emirate (the Khashimid dynasty—mid-10th c.)—the southern part of contemporary Russia;
- Southeastern Caucasus (latter half of the 9th-10th cc.)—the states of the Sajids (879), Sallarids (941), Rawadids (979)—the northwestern part of contemporary Iran;
- Central Asian (latter half of the 9th c.)—the state of the Samanids (875)—contemporary Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Afghanistan;

segments of the Rimland:

- West European (mid-8th-first half of the 10th cc.)—the Córdoba Emirate (756) and the Córdoba Caliphate (929)—contemporary Spain and Portugal;
- Western Asian (first half of the 9th-first half of the 10th cc.)—the states of the Taharids (821), Safavids (861), Alids (864), Buids (935)—contemporary Iran;
- North African (latter half of the 8th-10th cc.)—the Fatimid Caliphate (909) which included the state of the Rutamids (776), Idrisids (788), Aghlabids (800), Tulunids (868), Ihshidids (935)—contemporary Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt;

a geopolitical subject

that detached itself from the Rimland:

- West Asian (mid-10th c.)—the Baghdad Caliphate (945-1258) with *the Arabs as the titular ethnos*. Over the span of eight centuries, it gradually developed into contemporary Saudi Arabia.
5. *The Empire of the Seljuks* (first half of the 11th-first half of the 12th cc.)²⁸—stretched from Central Asia to Asia Minor and from the Caucasus to the Persian Gulf. Between the mid-11th and first half of the 12th centuries, it fell apart into:

segments of the Heartland:

- Central Caucasian (12th c.)—the Azerbaijanian Ildenizid atabeg sultanate²⁹ (1136)—parts of contemporary Azerbaijan, Iraq and Iran; the Shirvan State—contemporary Azerbaijan and the Georgian Kingdom—contemporary Georgia;

²⁷ See: E.A. Beliaev, *Araby, islam i arabskiy khalifat v rannee srednevekov'e*, Moscow, 1966. In the first half of the 10th century the Arabian Caliphate fell apart into the Córdoba Caliphate of the Umayyads (929-1031), the Fatimid Caliphate (909-1171), and the Caliphate of the Abbasids (750-945). When the latter fell apart, the Baghdad Caliphate appeared in turn, the rulers of which wielded merely religious power. When the Mongols under Hulagu Khan captured Baghdad in 1258, the caliphate disappeared.

²⁸ See: V.A. Gorlevskiy, *Gosudarstvo Seldzhukidov Maloi Azii. Izbrannye sochinenia*, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1960; T. Rice, *The Seljuks in Asia Minor*, London, 1961; S.G. Agadzhanov, *Gosudarstvo Sel'dzhukidov i Sredniata Azia v XI-XII vv.*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1991. 303 pp.

²⁹ In 1136, the Iraqi Sultanate was transformed into the Azerbaijanian Ildenizid atabeg sultanate (see: Z.M. Buniitov, *Gosudarstvo Atabekov Azerbaidzhana 1136-1225*, Vol. 2, Baku, 1999).

- Central Asian (late 10th-first half of the 12th cc.)—the state of the Khwarezmshahs (1127)—contemporary Uzbekistan;

segments of the Rimland:

- Western Asian (11th c.)—the Sultanate of Kerman (1041), the state of the Ismailites (1090)—contemporary Iran; the Iraqi Sultanate (1118)—contemporary Iraq;
- Asia Minor (latter half of the 11th c.)—the Emirate of the Danishmendids (1071), the Konya Sultanate (1077)—Central and Eastern parts of contemporary Turkey;

a geopolitical subject

that detached itself from the Heartland:

- Central Asian (12th c.)—the Sultanate of the Seljuks (1118-1157) in Horosan—the hereditary possession of the Great Seljuk Sultans where *the Turkmen settled as the titular ethnos*, but failed to unite and create a geopolitical subject. During the following eight centuries, it developed into contemporary Turkmenistan.

6. *The Mongolian Empire* (13th-14th cc.)³⁰—stretched from China to Asia Minor and from the steppes of the Northern Black Sea and Caspian coasts to the Persian Gulf. In the first half of the 13th century, Genghis Khan divided his empire into 4 uluses (1224) headed by his sons Jochi, Chagatai, Ögedei, and Tolui. In 1256, Genghis Khan's grandson Hulagu conquered Iran and Iraq and set up the fifth ulus.³¹ During the 14th-15th centuries the uluses fell apart into:

segments of the Heartland:

- East European (15th c.)—the Great Principdom of Muscovy—Western part of the Golden Horde (Ulus Jochi)—the European part of contemporary Russia;
- North Caucasian (13th-14th cc.)—the possessions of the Avar Nutsal (late 13th c.), the Derbent possessions (mid-14th c.), the Nogai Horde (late 14th c.)—the southern part of the Golden Horde (Ulus Jochi)—the southern part of contemporary Russia;
- Central Caucasian (first half of the 14th c.)—the Georgian Kingdom, the Shirvan State—the northwestern part of Ulus Hulagu—contemporary Georgia and Azerbaijan;
- Central Asian (14th c.):
 - the White Horde (14th c.)—the eastern part of the Golden Horde (Ulus Jochi)—contemporary Kazakhstan;
 - the Mogolistan Khanate (1347)—Ulus Chagatai—contemporary Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan;

segments of the Rimland:

- Western Asian (first half of the 14th c.)—the states of Jalairids (1336), Sarbadars (1337), Mozafferids (1340), Saids (1350)—the southwestern part of Ulus Hulagu—contemporary Iran;
- East Asian (latter half of the 14th c.)—the Ming dynasty (1368)—the southeastern part of Ulus Tolui—contemporary China;

³⁰ See: E.D. Phillips, *The Mongols*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1969.

³¹ See: A.A. Ali-zade, *Sotsialno-ekonomicheskaja i politicheskaja istoria Azerbaidzhana XIII-XIV vv.*, Baku, 1956; N.V. Pigulevskaia, A.Iu. Iakubovskaia, *et al.*, *Istoria Irana s drevneyshikh vremen to kontsa XVIII v.*, Leningrad, 1958.

*a geopolitical subject**that detached itself from the Heartland:*

- Central Asian (early 15th c.)—the Khanate of Oyrat (1418-1455)—the northern part of Ulus Tolui—the possession of the Great Kaans, where *the Mongols settled as the titular ethnos*; they failed to unite and create a geopolitical subject. Over the span of six centuries, it developed into contemporary Mongolia.

7. Timur's Empire (latter half of the 14th-first half of the 15th cc.)³²—included the territory that stretched from Central Asia to Asia Minor and from the Caucasus to the Persian Gulf: Transoxiana (Ma Wara'un-Nahr), Khorezm, Horasan, the Central Caucasus, Iran, Punjab. Early in the 15th century it disintegrated into:

segments of the Heartland:

- Central Caucasian (early 15th c.)—the Shirvan State—contemporary Azerbaijan and the Georgian Kingdom—contemporary Georgia;

segments of the Rimland:

- West Asian (early 15th c.) (the state of Kara Koyunlu (1410)—contemporary Iran.

*a geopolitical subject**that detached itself from the Heartland:*

- Central Asian (early 15th c.)—Herat (1409-1447) and Samarkand (1409-1449)—the emirates where *the Uzbeks settled as the titular ethnos*, but failed to unite and create a geopolitical subject. Over the span of five centuries, it developed into contemporary Uzbekistan.

8. *The Ottoman Empire* (mid-15th-early 20th cc.)³³—covered the territory from the Caucasus to the Balkans and from the Northern Black Sea coast to North Africa.³⁴ Between the late 17th and the early 20th centuries, it fell apart into:

segments of the Heartland:

- Central European (late 17th-early 20th cc.)—the Albanian Princedom, the Bulgarian Princedom, Hungarian Kingdom, Greek Kingdom, Rumanian Princedom, the Princedom of Montenegro, the Serbian Kingdom, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia—contemporary Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Greece, Rumania, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Southern Ukraine;
- Central Caucasian (first half of the 19th c.)—the Imeretian Kingdom (1804); Megrelian (1803), Abkhazian (1810), Gurian (1811), Svanetian (1833) princedoms—contemporary Georgia;

segments of the Rimland:

- North African (early 18th-latter half of the 19th cc.)—Algerian (1711), Libyan (1711), Egyptian (1805), Tunisia (1881) pashalyks—contemporary Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Tunisia;
- Western Asian (19th-early 20th cc.)—Iraq (1918), Syria (1918), Lebanon (1918), Palestine (1832), Hijaz (1916)—contemporary Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Saudi Arabia;

³² See: J.-P. Roux, *Tamerlan*, Fayard Publishers, 1991. 380 pp; I.M. Muminov, *Rol i mesto Amira Timura v istorii Sredney Azii*, Tashkent, 1968.

³³ See: *Istoria Osmanskogo gosudarstva, obshchestva i tsivilizatsii*, in 2 vols. Vol. 1, *Istoria Osmanskogo gosudarstva i obshchestva*, Transl. from the Turkish, Moscow, 2006.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23 (map.)

*a geopolitical subject
that detached itself from the Rimland:*

- Asia Minor (1923)—the Turkish Republic (1923—to the present day), where *the Turks settled as the titular ethnoses*.
9. *The Safavid Empire* (early 16th-first half of the 18th cc.)³⁵—covered the territory from the North-eastern Caucasus to the Persian Gulf and from Central Asia to Asia Minor. In the first half of the 18th century, the Safavid Empire fell apart into:

segments of the Heartland:

- North Caucasian (first half of the 18th c.)—Derbent Khanate (1747)—the southern part of contemporary Russia;
- Central Caucasian (first half of the 18th c.)—the kingdoms of Kakheti (1747) and Kartli (1747)—eastern part of contemporary Georgia; Kuba (1726), Sheka (1743), Ganja (1747), Talysh (1747), Nakhchivan (1747), Erivan (1747), Baku (1747), Javad (1747), Karabakh (1748), and Shirvan (1748) khanates where *the Azeri settled as the titular ethnoses*—contemporary Azerbaijan;
- Southeastern Caucasus (first half of the 18th c.)—Tabriz (1745), Maragi (1747), Khoi (1747), Maki (1747), Sarab (1747), Urmia (1747), Ardabil (1747), Gilyan (1747), and Garadag (1748) khanates where *the Azeris settled as the titular ethnoses*—the northwestern part of contemporary Iran;

segments of the Rimland:

- West Asian (latter half of the 18th c.)—the Zend State (1760)—contemporary Iran³⁶;

*a geopolitical subject
that detached itself from the Heartland:*

- Central Caucasian (first half of the 18th c.)—twenty Azeri khanates with *an Azeri population as the titular ethnoses* which failed to unite and create a geopolitical subject. Over the span of two centuries, the Azeri khanates of the Central Caucasus developed into contemporary Azerbaijan.
10. *The Russian Empire* (1721-1917)³⁷—covered the territory between the Far East and Central Europe and from the Arctic Ocean to the Caucasus and Central Asia. In 1917, it fell apart into:

segments of the Heartland:

- Central European (first half of the 20th c.)—the Polish Kingdom, the Grand Duchy of Finland, Central (Ukrainian) Rada, Byelorussian Rada, and governorships: Bessarabia, Lifland, Kurland, and Estland—contemporary Poland, Finland, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia;

³⁵ See: O. Efendiev, *Obrazovanie azerbaidzhanskogo gosudarstva Sefevidov v nachale XVI v.*, Baku, 1961; L. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, Transl. from the English, Baku, 2004; A.A. Rakhmani, *Azerbaidzhan v kontse XVI i v XVII veke*, Elm Publishers, Baku, 1991, 238 pp.

³⁶ See: M.S. Ivanov, *Ocherki istorii Irana*, Moscow, 1952.

³⁷ See: H. Carrere d'Encausse, *Nezavershennaia Rossia*, Transl. from the French, Rosspen Publishers, Moscow, 2005, 192 pp.; Iu.N. Gladkiy, *Rossia v labirintakh geograficheskoy sud'by*, Iuridicheskiy tsentr Press Publishers, St. Petersburg, 2006, 846 pp.; A.B. Shirokorad, *Uteriannye zemli Rossii. Otkolovshiesia respubliki*, Veche Publishers, Moscow, 2007, 497 pp.

- North Caucasian (first half of the 20th c.)—the Republic of Daghestan, the Mountain Republic, the Kuban Rada—the southern part of contemporary Russia;
- Central Caucasian (1918)—the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan, the Ararat Republic, the Democratic Republic of Georgia—contemporary Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia.
- Southwestern Caucasus (1918)—the Araz-Turkic Republic and the Southwestern Caucasian (Kars) Democratic Republic—contemporary northeastern iles of Turkey;
- Central Asian (first half of the 20th c.)—the “government” of Alash Ordy, “Kokand Autonomy,” Bukhara and Khiva khanates³⁸—contemporary Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan;

a geopolitical subject

that detached itself from the Heartland:

East European-North Asian (1917)—the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (1917-1991) where *the Russians settled as the titular ethnos*.

11. *The U.S.S.R. (1922-1991)*³⁹—existed on the territory inherited from the Russian Empire. In 1949, the Soviet Union set up COMECON which included the Soviet Union and also other parts of Central Europe and Central Asia, as well as certain states in other parts of the globe. In 1991, the U.S.S.R./COMECON fell apart into:

segments of the Heartland:

- Central European (1991)—Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania, the GDR, Yugoslavia; Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia;
- Central Caucasian (1991)—Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia;
- Central Asian (1991)—Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, and Afghanistan;

a geopolitical subject

that detached itself from the Heartland:

- East European-North Asian (1991)—the Russian Federation (1991 until the present) where *the Russians form the titular ethnos*.

A concise overview of the Pivot’s evolution reveals that the Huns, squeezed out by the Chinese Empire (a geopolitical subject of the Rimland’s eastern part) from the Central Asian segment of the Heartland in the 4th century, first began shaping the European and Caucasian segments of the Pivot Area into a functionally united geopolitical and economic expanse. Bugged down by their struggle for domination in Europe with the Roman (and Byzantine) empire, which controlled mainly the Western part of the Rimland, they failed to stabilize and develop the emerging integration trends among the still developing Heartland segments. The Huns shattered the empire with devastating blows, however, were defeated themselves in 451 in the battle of nations at Chalons in France. This ended the period of their passionarity⁴⁰ and buried the Empire of the Huns as well. For many centuries after that, neither the Heartland nor the Rimland could completely revive to perform their geopolitical and geo-economic functions in Eurasia.

³⁸ The Turkestanian A.S.S.R. with its capital in Tashkent was set up in Central Asia as part of the R.S.F.S.R.

³⁹ See: N. Werth, *Histoire de l’Union Soviétique. De l’Empire russe à la CEI, 1900-1991*, PUF, Paris, nouvelle édition refondue et complétée, 2001; *SSSR posle raspada*, ed. by O. Margania, Ekonomicheskaja shkola Publishers, St. Petersburg, 2007; *Istoria SSSR. S drevneyshikh vremen do nashikh dney*, in 12 volumes, Moscow, 1966-1968.

⁴⁰ On the passionarity theory, see: L. Gumilev, *Etmozhen i biosfera zemli*, Rolf Publishers, Moscow, 2001.

One hundred years later, the second cycle of shaping the Pivot Area began. A new state, the Turkic Khaganate, sprang into existence in the Huns' original homeland; having established its domination over Central Asia, it spread eastward (Manchuria, Xinjiang, Altai, and Mongolia) and westward where it reached the Northern Caucasus and the Northern Black Sea coast (Bosporus/Kerch), which belonged to the Byzantine Empire. In this way, the Turkic khagans gained control over the main routes of the Great Silk Road—the most important segments of the Pivot Area, which allowed them to perform a geopolitical and geo-economic function on the Eurasian continent. They failed, however, to tighten their grip on the Pivot: in 588 the Turkic state fell apart into the Eastern and Western khaganates.

A century later (in the 7th c.), the Khazar Khaganate came into being on the basis of the Western Turkic Khaganate, which covered the North Caucasian and Northern Black Sea coast areas. Like the Empire of the Huns before it, this state also tended to spread to the Caucasian and the European segments of the Pivot. The Asian segment of the Heartland was dominated by the Eastern Turkic Khaganate, the rulers of which were involved in protracted wars with China, a geopolitical actor in the Eastern part of the Rimland, which destroyed their state.

At the same time, in the 7th century, a new geopolitical subject, the Arabian Caliphate, emerged on the Arabian Peninsula. Having conquered the vast territories between the Atlantic and the Indian oceans (the Western stretch of the coastal area of the World-Island) from the very beginning, the Arabs established their domination over individual segments of the Pivot Area. Throughout the 8th century, the Caliphate was engaged in wars against the Khazar Khaganate in the Caucasian segment of the Heartland; while in Central Asia, it was fighting the Eastern Turkic Khaganate (712-713).

The resumed clashes between the new key actors operating in the Rimland (the Arabian Caliphate and the Chinese Empire) and the Heartland (the Khazar Khaganate and Eastern Turkic Khaganate) pushed the latter off the geopolitical scene.

In this way, the Arabian Caliphate established its domination over two segments of the Pivot Area (Central Asia and the Central Caucasus) and cut short the emerging integration trends in the Pivot Area. Its domination in the key segments of both the Rimland and the Heartland (nearly the entire World-Island) lasted for nearly two centuries.

In the first quarter of the 9th century, the Caliphate started crumbling: it lost some of the Rimland segments (Southwestern Europe, North Africa, Western Asia, and part of Asia Minor) and its Heartland segments (Central Asia and the Central Caucasus).

In the 11th century, another Eurasian power, the Empire of the Seljuks, appeared in the Central Asian segment of the Pivot Area, thus bringing in a new phase of the revival of the Heartland. Having conquered Central Asia, the Seljuks captured the Central Caucasus, the second segment of the Pivot Area, as well as individual segments of the Rimland (Western Asia and part of Asia Minor, and the Arabian (Baghdad) Caliphate proper). The decline of the Arabian Rimland revived the Seljuk Heartland which, in the guise of other geopolitical actors of the Pivot Area, dominated the World-Island throughout the 20th century.

In the 13th century, the Seljuks were replaced with the Mongols, who retained their domination not only in all segments of the Heartland (Central Europe, the Central Caucasus, and Central Asia), but also across the Eurasian continent.

In the 15th century, the Mongols were replaced with the Ottoman Turks who, having moved to Asia Minor from Central Asia mainly in the 12th and 13th centuries, set up their own state in 1299—the Ottoman Beylik. After defeating the Byzantine Empire in 1453 and capturing its territory, the Ottoman Empire, beginning in the 16th century, gradually moved into the Central European and Central Caucasian segments of the Heartland and the North African segments of the Rimland.

In the 16th century, the Safavid Empire, which was pressing forward in Central Asia and the Central Caucasus (segments of the Pivot Area), clashed with the Ottoman Empire. The many centu-

ries of their confrontation ultimately destroyed the Safavid state. As a result, the ethnopolitical and state units of the Central Caucasian (its eastern part) and Central Asian segments restored their independence. This also relieved the impact of the Ottoman Empire on the Central European and Central Caucasian (its western part) segments.

In the mid-18th century, the Russian Empire began moving into all segments of the Pivot Area; by the 19th century it had conquered the entire Central Caucasian region and began looking westward at Central Europe and eastward at Central Asia.

This means that the period of the Turkic empires' uninterrupted domination (the Hun Empire, the Turkic and Khazar khaganates, the empires of the Seljuks and Mongols, Timur's Empire, the Ottoman and Safavid empires) in the Heartland came to an end in the 19th century; Slavs (represented by the Russian Empire) moved in.

The Russian ethnos lived mainly in the East European segment of the Heartland; in the 19th century, in the form of the Russian Empire, it gained domination over all the key segments of the Pivot Area (Central European, Central Caucasian, and Central Asian) and conquered the strategically important littoral strips in the west (the Baltic states, Finland), in the east (Kamchatka, Sakhalin, the Maritime Area, and Alaska), and in the north (the littoral part of the Arctic Ocean). The Russians thus gained access to three oceans and became a land-and-sea power able to function as a geopolitical actor in the Heartland and Rimland simultaneously.

Early in the 20th century, the Russian Empire was transformed into the Soviet Union, which inherited its territory and geopolitical potential. In 1949, it set up COMECON and expanded the Pivot Area by including the Central European countries of the socialist camp (Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania, the GDR, and Yugoslavia) as well as Mongolia and Afghanistan in Central Asia in the new structure. This means that it was only during the Soviet Empire's lifetime that the Pivot Area acquired its most complete territory and functioned accordingly.

An analysis of the concluding stage of the last evolution cycle of the Pivot, disintegration of the Soviet Union, the last Eurasian power, and the beginning of the first stage of the new cycle of the revival of the Heartland clearly reveals that, very much as before, *Central European*, *Central Caucasian*, and *Central Asian* segments appeared, as well as the area of the dominant nation that detached itself from the Pivot and became an independent subject of geopolitics, the Russian Federation.

It should be noted that each of the Eurasian powers that emerged in the Pivot Area as a rule developed into an independent geopolitical subject that dominated the Heartland, its "mother lode." In other words, this part of the entity as a system-forming element of the Heartland gradually develops into an entity that is functionally different from the other elements of the same entity, the Pivot Area. This means that the new geopolitical subject leaves the place of its birth, that is, the mother lode, the Heartland, which shrinks as much as the titular nation expands its area.

The Pivot Area and its segments can be likened to the pupil of the eye that dilates, contracts, and even shifts, in short, it is never the same. This is one of the reasons why the territory of the contemporary states and segments of Central Eurasia does not coincide with their original historical frontiers.

The principles according to which the Heartland and Rimland were formed were mainly ethnic (the Hun Empire, the Turkic and Khazar khaganates, the empires of the Seljuks and Mongols, Timur's Empire, the Ottoman and Safavid empires where the Turkic ethnos was titular, in Russia this role belonged to the Russians), religious (the Arabian Caliphate—Muslims), and political-ideological (the U.S.S.R.—the Soviet people). Its evolution proceeded according to the same algorithm:

- *Emergence—detachment* of the titular nation which strikes root in its Pivot expanse;
- *Flourishing—total control* over the main Pivot segments and the desire to conquer the entire world;

- *Disintegration—emergence* of new frontiers of the Pivot segments and detachment of the titular nation.

The above suggests that at the stage when the Heartland was taking shape as an integral object/subject of world politics, one of the numerous ethnoses moved apart as the passionarity ethnos that came to dominate the other ethnoses of the Eurasian continent. This ushered in the second stage, flourishing. During that period, the area of the passionarity ethnos as the most stable geopolitical unit of the Pivot Area transformed from the object of geopolitics into its subject (in the form of an empire) resolved to dominate over the adjacent territories of the Pivot and then the entire world. However, when domination was established over the Heartland and part of the Rimland, the Eurasian imperial system (and the single expanse of the Heartland) began to fall apart into separate, relatively isolated elements, one of which became the territory of the state of the titular ethnoses. This pattern repeated itself at every stage of the evolution of the Heartland.

3. Essence, Functions, and Principles of Forming the Pivot Area in the 21st Century

***The Essence of the Pivot Area.** The Heartland is the central part of the planet's largest World-Island with no access to the strategically important littoral strips, but full of inner ethno-demographic and sociopolitical potential (passionarity). The systemic nature, dynamism, and sustainability of the Eurasian continent depend on the degree to which the Heartland is orderly and manageable.*

***The Function of the Pivot Area.** The main function of the Heartland—Central Eurasia—can be described as ensuring sustainable land contacts along the parallels (West-East) and meridians (North-South). In other words, Central Eurasia should contribute to consistent geopolitical and economic integration of large and relatively isolated areas of the Eurasian continent.*

***The Principles of Forming the Pivot Area.** Today, to achieve balanced development of mankind on a global scale, it is necessary to predominantly use the principles of *social-economic expediency (compatibility and mutual complementarity) and self-organization*. Its functioning calls for the principles of *self-regulation and self-administration*. The centuries-long history of Central Eurasia has demonstrated that during the times when the Heartland was forming predominantly according to the ethno-confessional or political-ideological principle and, correspondingly, functioned according to the principle of domination of the titular nation over the conquered area, the Eurasian empires ultimately fell apart. The same can be said about the Heartland as a united and integral geopolitical expanse that disintegrated into segments. In this way, the objective ties between the main regions of the Eurasian continent were disrupted.*

4. New Geopolitical Structure for Central Eurasia

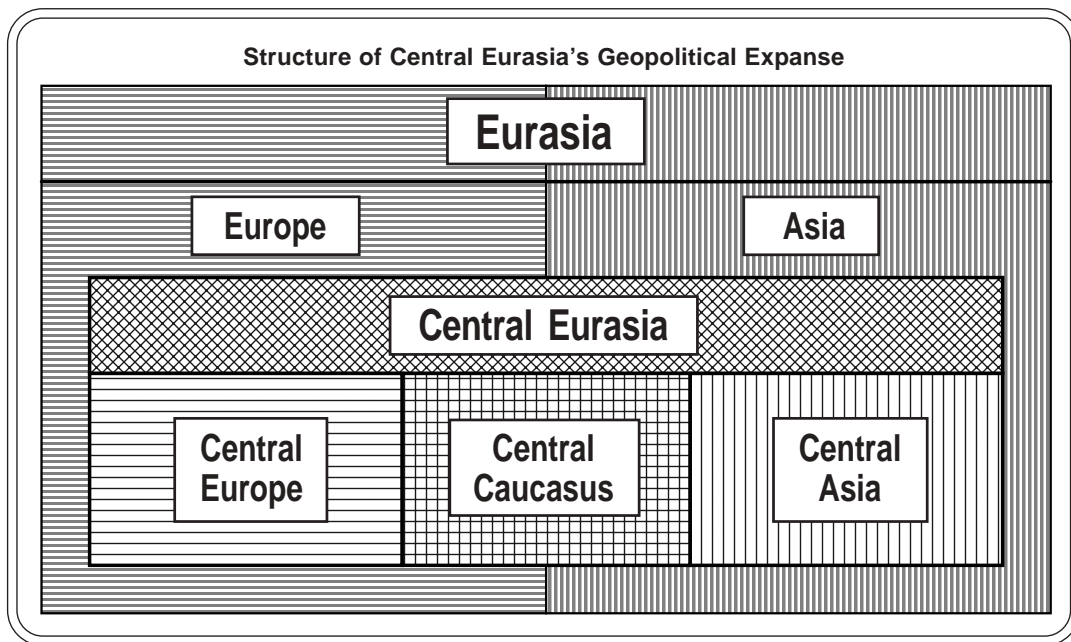
The evolution of the Pivot Area, the main stages of which have been discussed above, confirms the permanent functional mobility of its system-forming segments. This offers a clearer idea about how Central Eurasia is structured today. I have written above that from the spatial-functional point of

view Central Eurasia is much more than the *Central Caucasus* and *Central Asia*.⁴¹ The spatial point of view also offers the same conclusion. Indeed, since Europe and Asia are two organic parts of the Eurasian continent, its central part should inevitably include the central segments of both (territories of the Central European and Central Asian countries), as well as a “special zone” where the both segments meet—the territories of the Central Caucasian states. This has been confirmed by the Pivot’s centuries-long socioeconomic history.

At the same time, the structuralization of Eurasia’s geopolitical expanse cannot rest on physical-geographical features (spatial-geographic parameters) alone.⁴² It seems that regional structuralization of the geopolitical expanse should take into account not so much the criterion of physical geography, but also rely on the principle of the functional unity of the given expanse, compatibility and mutual complementarity of the independent neighboring states, and their social-cultural affinity rooted in their common past, as well as their joint functional importance for world politics and economics.

The above suggests that any discussion of the contemporary geopolitical structure of Central Eurasia should proceed from the fact that it consists of three segments—Central Europe, the Central Caucasus, and Central Asia (see Fig. 3).

Figure 3



⁴¹ In the post-Soviet period, Central Eurasia included mainly two segments of the Pivot Area (see, for example: Ch. Fairbanks, C.R. Nelson, S.F. Starr, K. Weisbrode, *Strategic Assessment of Central Eurasia*, The Atlantic Council of the United States, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Johns Hopkins University, Washington, D.C., 2001, p. vii; E. Ismailov, M. Esenov, op. cit.; M.P. Amineh, H. Houweling, “Introduction: The Crisis in IR-Theory: Towards a Critical Geopolitics Approach,” in: *Central Eurasia in Global Politics: Conflict, Security and Development*, ed. by M.P. Amineh, H. Houweling, Brill, Leiden, 2005, pp. 2-3).

⁴² On many occasions because of this approach, territories of sovereign states and parts of the neighboring states are included in individual regions. For example, the geopolitical concept of Central Asia is regarded as belonging to physical geography because part of Chinese territory (the Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region) is also included in it together with the post-Soviet states.

I am convinced that this approach to the place and role of Central Eurasia allows us to complete the Pivot with its “missing element”—Central Europe.

As distinct from the currently accepted conceptions that embrace only two segments (Central Asia and the Central Caucasus) and presuppose that they are formed and function according to the principle of the “domination of the titular nation,” my approach to the parameters, structure, and principles of the formation and functioning of Central Eurasia as the Pivot Area presupposes:

- first, that the third segment (the territories of the Central European states) should be included in the Pivot together with Central Asia and the Central Caucasus;
- second, the Heartland should be built and function according to the principles of socio-economic expediency, self-organization, self-administration, and self-development.

History and the present geopolitical realities have demonstrated that precisely these principles ensure long-term and uninterrupted horizontal (West-East) and vertical North-South land contacts, that is, consistent socioeconomic integration of Western Europe-East Asia, Russia-South Asia.

It should be said that in the last decades, which are marked by accelerated globalization, geopolitical literature (works on regional and country studies) has exhibited a bias toward macro-categories. The term “Greater” has become more frequently used than before: Greater Europe,⁴³ the Greater Middle East,⁴⁴ Greater Central Asia,⁴⁵ Greater China,⁴⁶ etc. This approach is obviously rational and not so much because the positions and interests of the actors involved in the rivalry on the European geopolitical stage should be conceptualized. This approach is connected with the objective regularities of the regional political systems’ development and interaction in Eurasia in the globalization context.

The interests of dynamic and sustainable political, economic, and sociocultural development of the states that are parts of the regional subsystems cannot be realized without the necessary degree of functional openness and mutual involvement in the process underway in the area. The stake on autarchic development belongs to the times of classical geopolitics. Today, under the conditions of globalization, none of the states can achieve self-sufficiency, at least from the point of view of economic expediency. This is reflected in the processes underway in each of the segments of the Eurasian continent and among them.

The “narrow” definition of the Eurasian regions we inherited from the Cold War cannot fully reveal the new realities created by the widening and deepening ties and relations among the regions. This means that to achieve a full understanding of them we should exercise a wide, macro-regional approach to the structuralization of the Eurasian expanse. This means that the definition “Greater” should be applied to Central Eurasia and its components.

We should bear in mind that academic writings widely use the definition in the case of Central Asia (Greater Central Asia). Two other segments—Central Europe and the Central Caucasus⁴⁷—have

⁴³ See: I. Maksimychev, “Os mira kak nachalo Bol’shoy Evropy,” available at [http://www.ng.ru/world/2003-02-28//6_europe.html]; A. Arbatov, “Tsvetnye revoliutsii i Bol’shaia Evropa,” available at [<http://www.rian.ru/analytics/20050530/40439533.html>]; “Bol’shaia Evropa protiv Bol’shoy Rossii,” available at [<http://www.zavtra.ru/cgi/veil/data/zavtra/05/609/41.html>]; “Razval Bol’shoy Evropy. Novy shans dlia SNG?” available at [<http://www.wciom.ru/arkhiv/tematicheskii-arkhiv/item/single/1417.html>].

⁴⁴ See: A. Krylov, “Neft i novye igry na globuse,” available at [<http://www.fondsk.ru/article.php?id=269>]; “Bol’shoy Blizhniy Vostok,” available at [<http://www.charter97.org/rus/news/2004/06/29/vostok>]; “NATO i Bol’shoy Blizhniy Vostok,” available at [<http://www.svoboda.org/programs/ep/2003/ep.102903.asp>]; R.T. Erdoğan, “A Broad View of the ‘Broader Middle East’,” *Russia in Global Affairs*, No. 4, 2004, available at [<http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/numbers/8/587.html>].

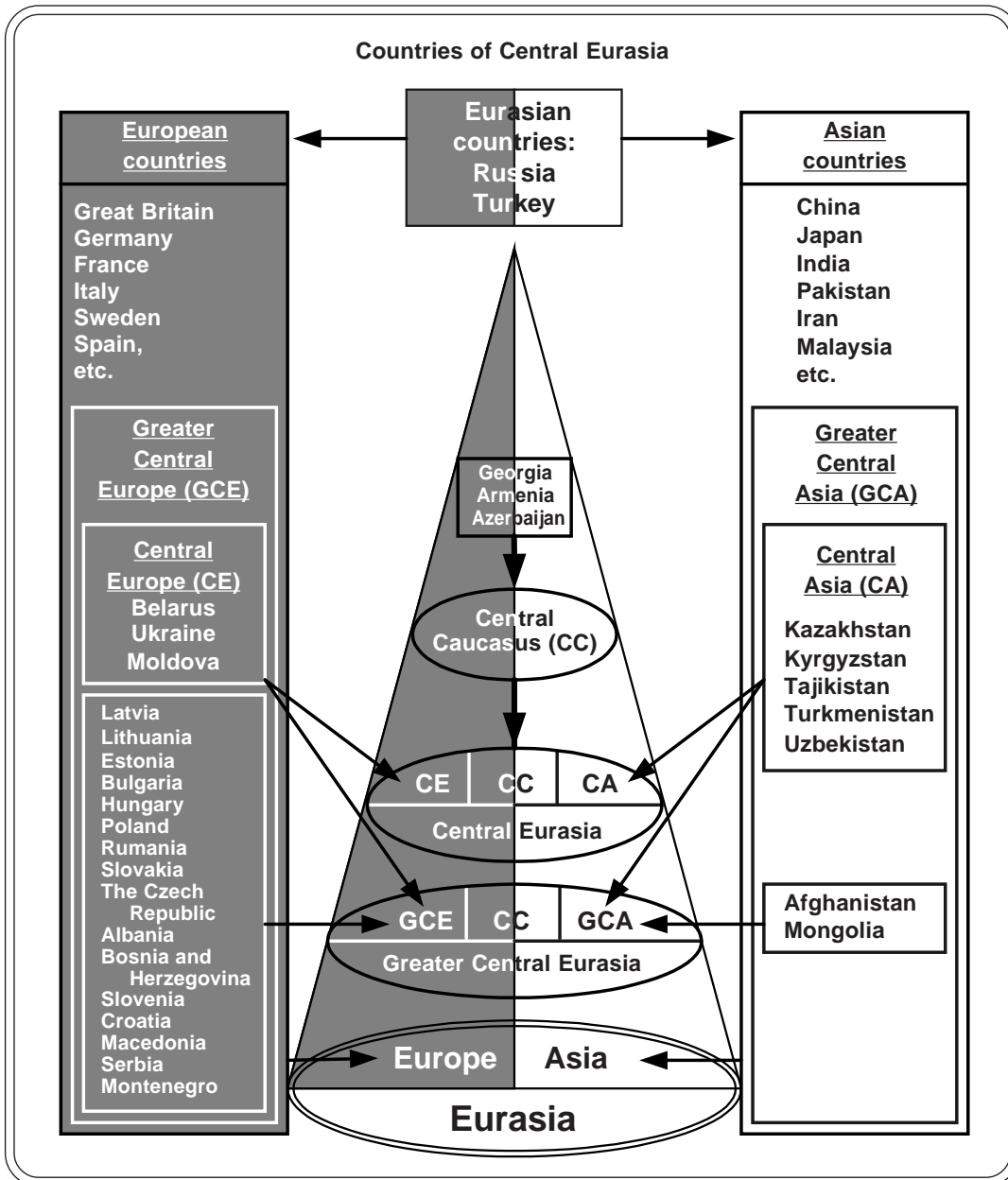
⁴⁵ See: M. Laumulin, “Bol’shaia Tsentral’naia Azia (BTsA)—novy mega-proekt SShA?” available at [<http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php4?st=1132564860>]; “Bol’shaia Tsentral’naia Azia: ob’ediniay i vlastvuy,” available at [http://www.dumaem.ru/indexkz.php?iq=st_show&st_kztm_id=8&st_id=814].

⁴⁶ See: K. Syroezhkin, “Byt li Bol’shomu Kitaiu?” available at [<http://continent.kz/2000/01/17.html>].

⁴⁷ This definition cannot be applied to the Central Caucasus because of its natural spatial limits.

not yet acquired this definition. The logic of the extended interpretation of the regions suggests that Greater Central Europe should be described, as I have pointed out above, as a geographic expanse filled by three post-Soviet republics (Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova) and also by three Baltic republics (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia) and post-COMECON states (Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, Macedonia, Poland, Rumania, Serbia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, and Montenegro) (see Fig. 4).

Figure 4



We can argue that the countries included in Central Eurasia have no common past, ideologies, ethnic affiliation, or axiological systems, which means that they would not be able to organize and administer themselves, or move toward the common development trends of the Eurasian continent and the entire planet. In fact, a certain amount of integration potential of the Pivot Area is rooted in the common historical past of the peoples of Central Eurasia (many of them lived side by side in nearly all the Eurasian empires, which inevitably caused ethnic mixing and cultural, linguistic, economic, and technological affinity). So far, however, the sociopolitical and historical writings have failed to provide objective descriptions of these historical periods and events which, in turn, greatly interfere with the speedy integration of the Pivot Area and the Eurasian continent as a whole.

Despite these and other complexities, it would be expedient to consistently promote integration of Central Eurasia simultaneously in several directions and in all segments. I am convinced that, taking into account the objective regularities of the joint development of the Central Eurasian states found in all segments, it is highly important to identify the contradictions among the states within one segment and among the segments themselves and find the shortest road to settlement.

It should be said here that in certain cases the volume and level of cooperation among the states in different segments of Central Eurasia is higher than among the states of one and the same segment. To illustrate: the level of cooperation between Central Asian Kazakhstan and Central Caucasian Azerbaijan is much higher than the level of its cooperation with Turkmenistan, its Central Asian neighbor, whereas Azerbaijan is engaged in strategic partnership with Central European Ukraine while being at war with Armenia, another Central Caucasian country.

I think that to realize the integration processes in Central Eurasia it is necessary to add activity to the “initiating core” in each of the segments, that is, a group of the most economically and politically developed countries which could serve as the cornerstone of integration within the segment with due account of the general integration trends in the Central Eurasian region. The following countries claim the role of the initiating core in Central Eurasia: Ukraine in the Central European segment; Azerbaijan and Georgia in the Central Caucasian segment; and Kazakhstan in the Central Asian segment. These countries have pushed aside inner- and inter-regional contradictions to look for the most effective ways of socioeconomic cooperation in the entire Central Eurasian region. Central Eurasia can create its own integrated and smoothly functioning economy no matter what the skeptics say.

This will probably not happen in the near future, yet integration in the region and the greater role of the “initiating cores” of the three segments testify that Heartland’s economic and political might is reviving.

In Lieu of a Conclusion

I believe that one of the key tasks the world community will have to address in the first quarter of the 21st century is that of establishing systemic ties between the segments of Central Eurasia, or to be more exact, between the countries of Central Europe, the Central Caucasus, and Central Asia along the principles of socioeconomic expediency, self-organization, and self-administration. This will allow Central Eurasia to ensure long-term, sustainable, and effective fulfillment of its planetary (geopolitical and geo-economic) function of integration of the relatively isolated large areas of the Eurasian continent.

“CENTRAL CAUCASASIA” INSTEAD OF “CENTRAL EURASIA”

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The Soviet Union's disintegration not only gave rise to new independent states, a process of historic importance, it also began their integration into new geopolitical areas. Their geographic outlines visible under Soviet power were confirmed by the Soviet Union's economic structure. Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia together were called "Pribaltika;" Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia were known as the Trans-Caucasus while Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan together formed "Sredniaia Azia" (Middle Asia). There were also corresponding economic regions of the U.S.S.R. In some cases, Kazakhstan was viewed as part of "Sredniaia Azia," but it was normal practice to discuss the Kazakh economic region separately because of its relatively large size.

It comes as no surprise that the independence and sovereignty of these states raised the question of finding new names for these geopolitical areas to emphasize their newly acquired independence from Moscow. In fact, certain publications (mainly by Russian authors) are still using the names inherited from imperial times.¹

¹ The best example of this is the Russian translation of Z. Brzezinski's *The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Basic Books, New York, 1997 in which the term "Central Asia" (pp. 46-47, 93, 95, 113, 121, 129-130, 131, 145, 150) is nearly everywhere translated into Russian not as "Tsentral'naia Azia" (as it should be) but as "Sredniaia Azia" (Middle Asia)

Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia have deemed it necessary to drop the term "Pribaltika" as a "Soviet holdover" in favor of the current "Baltic countries." Today, the terms "Southern Caucasus" and "Central Asia" (which includes Kazakhstan) have essentially ousted the old terms "Trans-Caucasus" and "Sredniaia Azia" (Middle Asia).

Recently the relatively new geopolitical term "Central Eurasia" had been gaining currency. It is normally applied to Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, which are treated as a single geopolitical area. I am convinced that this is not completely correct from the geopolitical viewpoint since it still reflects the Russian idea of this geopolitical expanse.

Here I have posed myself the task of revising some of the issues related to the region's geopolitical content from the position of a descriptive approach, that is, irrespective of the aims the world or regional powers are pursuing there.

(Z. Brzezinski, *Velikaia shakhmatnaia doska. Gospodstvo Ameriki i ego strategicheskie imperativy*, Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia Publishers, Moscow, 2005, pp. 61-62, 116-117, 137, 146, 155-158, 175, 180); in the same vein "the three Caucasian countries" and "the three states of the Caucasus" (Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*, pp. 122, 125) are translated, correspondingly, as "tri zakavkazskie (trans-Caucasian) strany" and "tri zakavkazskikh gosudarstva" (Z. Brzezinski, *Velikaia shakhmatnaia doska*, pp. 148, 152).

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Eurasia and Central Eurasia: Geographic and Geopolitical Approaches

The Eurasian continent consists of two parts of the world—Europe and Asia; for obvious reasons its geographic dimension can be used (and is used) in geopolitical contexts as well. The books by prominent American political scholar Zbigniew Brzezinski are the best example of this.²

There is another, no less popular, geopolitical idea about Eurasia created by the fact that in the post-Soviet period Russia has been looking for its national and territorial identity. Indeed, for the first time in the last 200 years, Russia has found itself on a much smaller territory. This prompted the search for a conception that would justify its special role at least across the post-Soviet expanse.³ No wonder the questions—what is Russia? and where is Russia?—remain topical.⁴ It should be said that the so-called myths⁵ and narratives⁶ about the homeland were largely encouraged by the talks about revising the RF state borders, which are much more popular in the intellectual and political communities of Russia and among the Russian public than is believed in Western academic writings.⁷ According to the latest public opinion polls, an ever growing number of people in the Russian Federation favor the idea of a restored Soviet Union.⁸

In their search for a solution to the problem outlined above, the RF political leaders can rely on the ideas of Eurasianism that acquired their second wind in the post-Soviet period.⁹ Based mainly on geography,¹⁰ they still presuppose a geopolitical revision of the Eurasian continent as a geographical unit.¹¹

In fact, late in the 19th century Russian Professor V. Pomanskiy suggested that there were three, rather than two, continents within the Old World.¹² Later, prominent Russian geopolitician Petr Savitskiy called it Eurasia (the limits of which essentially coincided with Russia or, rather, the Russian Empire).¹³ He argued that this Eurasia was different from the geographic description of Eurasia of-

² See, for example: Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*; Z. Brzezinski, *The Choice: Global Domination or Global Leadership*, Basic Books, New York, 2004.

³ See: J. O'Loughlin, P.F. Talbot, "Where in the World is Russia: Geopolitical Perceptions and Preferences of Ordinary Russians," *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, Vol. 46, No. 1, 2005, available at [http://www.colorado.edu/IBS/PEC/johno/pub/Wheres-Russia.pdf].

⁴ See, for example: Z. Brzezinski, *The Geostategic Triad: Living with China, Europe, and Russia*, The CSIS Press, Washington, 2007, pp. 56, 64.

⁵ See: V. Tolz, "Conflicting 'Homeland Myths' and Nation-State Building in Postcommunist Russia," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 57, No. 2, 1998.

⁶ See: Ş. Aktürk, "Reflections on Central Eurasian Model: A Foundation Reply to Barfield on the Historiography of Ethno-Nationalisms," *Central Eurasian Studies Review*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2006, p. 23.

⁷ See: V. Tolz, op. cit., p. 294.

⁸ See: V. Petukhov, "Vneshnepoliticheskie prioritety rossian: 'novy izoliatsionizm' ili pragmatizatsia soznania," in: *Integratsia v Evrazii. Narod i elity stran EEP*, ed. by I. Zadorin, Evropa, Moscow, 2006, p. 107.

⁹ See: L. Tchantouridze, "After Marxism-Leninism: Eurasianism and Geopolitics in Russia," in: *Geopolitics: Global Problems and Regional Concerns*, ed. by L. Tchantouridze, Winnipeg, Centre for Defense and Security Studies, University of Manitoba, 2004.

¹⁰ See: M. Bassin, "Russia between Europe and Asia: The Ideological Construction of Geopolitical Space," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 50, No. 1, 1991, p. 14.

¹¹ See, for example: M.W. Lewis, K.E. Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1997, p. 222.

¹² See: N.A. Nartov, V.N. Nartov, *Geopolitika*, UNITI-DANA, Moscow, 2007, p. 129.

¹³ See: P.N. Savitskiy, *Kontinent Evrazia*, Agraf Publishers, Moscow, 1997. As Savitskiy put it "Russia-Eurasia is the center of the Old World" (P.N. Savitskiy, "Geograficheskie i geopoliticheskie osnovy Evraziystva," in: *Osnovy Evraziystva*, Arktogeia-Tsentr, Moscow, 2002, p. 298).

ferred by Alexander von Humboldt.¹⁴ This gave rise to *Eurasianism*, one of the strongest trends of the Russian geopolitical school that asserted Russia's special historical and cultural role in geographic Eurasia.¹⁵

Lev Gumilev, a prominent Russian historian, ethnographer, and geographer, who studied the geographic limits of the geopolitical continent of Eurasia, concluded that it consisted of three regions: High Asia (Mongolia, Djungaria, Tuva, and the trans-Baikal area), the Southern region (Central Asia), and the Western region (Eastern Europe).¹⁶

We all know that geographically the Old World consists of several parts of the world—Europe, Asia (the so-called Eurasian continent) and Africa—while the term “Eurasia” as applied by the Russian geopolitical school narrows down the territorial limits of Eurasia as a geographical continent.

Those academics who embrace the entire geographical continent in their geopolitical studies fell into the trap, mostly inadvertently, of the Russian geopolitical school. In *The Grand Chessboard*, the author calls the region made up of Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the adjacent areas “the Eurasian Balkans” because of its conflict-prone nature.¹⁷ There is an obvious contradiction: if “Eurasian” is applied to the geographical Eurasian continent (as suggested by the book's content), then the author has wrongly placed the Balkans outside this continent: the “Eurasian Balkans” is nothing other than the Balkans. This contradiction can be removed if we specify that the term “Eurasian” in this context is related to Eurasia as seen by the corresponding Russian geopolitical school. In other words, Zbigniew Brzezinski was “taken captive” by this school unawares.

According to the Eurasists,¹⁸ Russia is a special continent.¹⁹ To resolve the terminological conflict between the geographic and geopolitical interpretations of Eurasia, the geopolitical context uses the terms “Eurasia-Russia,”²⁰ “Russia-Eurasia,”²¹ or “Eurasian Rus.”²² The problem became topical again in the post-Soviet period: before that geographers used the term “Eurasia” in its geographical meaning.²³ Here it should be said that the discussion of a possible compromise between the correct geographical term for Eurasia and the territory of Russia's domination is still going on.²⁴

Since the Russian geopolitical school relies on its own interpretation of Eurasia to justify Russia's imperial ambitions, the term “Central Eurasia” needs specification: to what extent do its geographic and geopolitical interpretations coincide and what problems do they entail?

¹⁴ See: P.N. Savitskiy, “Geograficheskie i geopoliticheskie osnovy Evraziystva,” p. 300. According to other authors, it was the Viennese geologist Eduard Suess who coined the term Eurasia in the late 20th century to apply it to Europe and Asia (see: M. Bassin, op. cit., p. 10).

¹⁵ Russia's claims on the Eurasian continent are so strong that even where there is no need to mention Eurasia authors of certain fundamental publications prove unable to leave the cliché alone. For example, when discussing economic reforms within the CIS and addressing the Eurasian problems neither in a geographic nor in a geopolitical context, the book by E. Stroev, L. Bliakhman and M. Krotov used the term indiscriminately (see: E.S. Stroev, L.S. Bliakhman, M.I. Krotov, *Russia and Eurasia at the Crossroads. Experience and Problems of Economic Reforms in the Commonwealth of Independent States*, Springer, Berlin-Heidelberg, 1999). The same can be said about some non-Russian academics from the FSU republics.

¹⁶ See: L.N. Gumilev, *Ritmy Evrazii*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1993.

¹⁷ See: Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*, p. 123.

¹⁸ It should be said that the proponents of Eurasianism call themselves Eurasians, which is not totally correct: Eurasians are people living in Eurasia, while those who preach Eurasianism should be called Eurasists. This term is used here precisely in this context.

¹⁹ See, for example: A. Dugin, “Evraziiskiy triumph,” in: *Osnovy Evraziystva*, Arktogeia-Tsentr, Moscow, 2000 (see also [<http://www.evrazia.org/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=102>]).

²⁰ See, for example: N.A. Nartov, V.N. Nartov, op. cit., pp. 133-135, 137.

²¹ See: A. Dugin, *Osnovy geopolitiki. Geopoliticheskoe budushchee Rossii*, Arktogeia-Tsentr, Moscow, 1997, pp. 83-84.

²² See: I. Panarin, *Informatsionnaia voyna i geopolitika*, Pokolenie Publishers, Moscow, 2006, pp. 312-364, 539-543.

²³ See: M.L. Hauner, “The Disintegration of the Soviet Eurasian Empire: An Ongoing Debate,” in: *Central Asia and the Caucasus after the Soviet Union*, ed. by M. Mesbahi, University Press of Florida, Gainesville, 1994, p. 222.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 221.

Traditionally, Central Eurasia as a geographic concept is related to the territory between the Bosphorus in the west and the Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region in the east and from the Kazakh steppes in the north to the Indian Ocean in the south.²⁵ This means that geographic Central Eurasia almost completely covers geographic Central Asia, but not Central Europe because Asia is much larger than Europe. For this reason Central Europe is left outside the conventional center (Central Eurasia) of the single continent called Eurasia. If, however, the physical dimensions of the continent's parts are put aside, logic suggests that *geographic Eurasia as a continent consists of two parts of the world (Europe and Asia)*. This means that *geographically Central Eurasia should consist of both Central Europe and Central Asia and the Southeast Europe and the Caucasian region as two links that connect them*.²⁶ It seems that the geographic interpretation of the Central Eurasian concept is still dominated by its geopolitical interpretation, which equates Russia and Eurasia even in the post-Soviet era.²⁷

Those who limit Central Eurasia to Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan are still under the spell of Soviet approaches²⁸ which leave vast territories, in particular Afghanistan, Northern Iran, the Northern Caucasus, Northwestern China, Cashmere, and the Tibetan Plateau, which share historical, ethnic, and cultural roots with the above countries beyond the region.²⁹

While the Russian Eurasian school narrows down the scale of Eurasia as a geographic continent, the differences are less important in the case of Central Eurasia since the Russian geopolitical school is in control of geography: look at the way the contemporary Russian geographers describe Northern and Central Eurasia as the territory that covers the former Soviet Union, western part of European Arctic region, and some regions of Central Asia.³⁰

Central Asia and Greater Central Asia

Alexander von Humboldt identified Central Asia as a geographic region in the mid-19th century. According to UNESCO, it comprises five former Soviet republics (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan,

²⁵ See, for example: K. Weisbrode, *Central Eurasia: Prize or Quicksand? Contenting Views of Instability in Karabakh, Ferghana and Afghanistan*, The International Institute for Strategic Studies, Adelphi Paper 338, Oxford University Press, New York, 2001, p. 11.

²⁶ V. Papava, "Tsentral'naia Kavkazia: osnovy geopoliticheskoy ekonomii," *Analiticheskie zapiski Gruzinskogo fonda strategicheskikh i mezhdunarodnykh issledovaniy*, No. 1, 2007, p. 8, available at [http://www.gfsis.org/publications/VPapava_Ru_1.pdf]. Eldar Islamilov in his article "O kategorii Tsentral'naia Evrazia," in: *Doklady Natsional'noy akademii nauk Azerbaidzhana*, Vol. LXIII, No. 1, 2007, approached the problem from the geopolitical positions and arrived at a similar conclusion.

²⁷ See: M.L. Hauner, op. cit., p. 217. Those of the authors who favor cleared definitions Russia is described as a northern part of Eurasia (see, for example: N.N. Moiseev, "Geopoliticheskoe polozhenie Rossii: perspektivy razvitiya," *Evolutsia teorii i factor ATP. Diskussionny Klub. Krugly stol No. 3*, available at [http://www.amani.ru/moiseev/geopolit.htm]).

²⁸ Today this idea of Central Eurasia has gained wide currency (see, for example: M.P. Amineh, H. Houweling, "Introduction: The Crisis in IR-Theory: Towards a Critical Geopolitics Approach," in: *Central Eurasia in Global Politics: Conflict, Security and Development*, ed. by M.P. Amineh, H. Houweling, Brill, Leiden, 2005, pp. 2-3; Ch. Fairbanks, C.R. Nelson, S.F. Starr, K. Weisbrode, *Strategic Assessment of Central Eurasia*, The Atlantic Council of the United States, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Johns Hopkins University, Washington, D.C., 2001, p. vii; K. Meyer, *The Dust of Empire: The Race for Supremacy in the Asian Heartland*, Abacus, London, 2004, p. 206.

²⁹ See: K. Weisbrode, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

³⁰ See: *Oledenie Severnoy i Tsentral'noy Evrazii v sovremennuiu epokhu*, ed. by V.M. Kotliakov, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 2006, p. 13.

Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan), Mongolia, Afghanistan, Western China, and several parts of India, Pakistan and Iran.³¹

Geopolitical studies of Central Asia became particularly topical in the post-Soviet period when the region acquired five new independent states (previously parts of the Soviet Union).³² Despite their more than 15-year-long history, the related system of knowledge—Centralasianism—still demands not only a vaster body of knowledge but also, to a certain extent, renovation.³³

Some geopolitical studies are still following the Soviet tradition and interpret Central Asia as limited to five former Soviet republics: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.³⁴ This is not quite correct geographically (and not only geographically) because it leaves out Afghanistan, Mongolia, and the adjacent areas of the countries enumerated above.³⁵

Some authors include Azerbaijan in Central Asia,³⁶ which can be hardly accepted because it is obviously part of another region, the Caucasus.

In October 2004, Russia joined the Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO)³⁷ set up by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan in 2002. Its CACO membership does not make it part of Central Asia; by the same logic, Turkmenistan should be excluded from the Central Asian countries because it does not belong to CACO. In other words, membership in any regional organization cannot be used as the only criterion of regional affiliation.

I have written above that in Soviet times the region was called Sredniaia Azia (Middle Asia); it included Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan and left out Kazakhstan.³⁸ Western economists mostly use the term “Central Asia,” while some Russian authors have not yet dropped the old term “Middle Asia,”³⁹ which as distinct from the past also includes Kazakhstan. It seems that the latter prefers to get rid of the alien term “Central Asia” because of the threats from the south—it obviously prefers the Soviet formula “Sredniaia Azia and Kazakhstan.”⁴⁰ This is all very sad indeed.

Another term, Greater Central Asia, is of a more or less recent coinage: in the early 1990s, it described Central and Southwestern Asia and South Asia⁴¹; later the term was given a more exact geopolitical specification and applied to the five former Soviet republics and Afghanistan.⁴²

³¹ See: “Description of the Project,” in: *UNESCO History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, available at [http://www.unesco.org/culture/asia/html_eng/projet.htm].

³² See, for example: G.E. Fuller, “The Emergence of Central Asia,” *Foreign Policy*, No. 78, Spring 1990; *Central Asia and the Caucasus after the Soviet Union; The New Geopolitics of Central Asia and Its Borderlands*, ed. by A. Banuazizi, M. Weiner, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1994; *The New States of Central Asia and Their Neighbours*, ed. by P. Ferdinand, Council of Foreign Relations Press, New York, 1994.

³³ See: F. Tolipov, “Central Asia as a Space, Polity, Peoples, and Fate,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2 (32), 2005, p. 112.

³⁴ See, for example: R. Menon, “Introduction: Central Asia in the Twenty-First Century,” in: E. Rumer, D. Trenin, Zhao Huasheng, *Central Asia: Views from Washington, Moscow, and Beijing*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, 2007, p. 3.

³⁵ See, for example: E. Naby, “The Emerging Central Asia: Ethnic and Religious Factions,” in: *Central Asia and the Caucasus after the Soviet Union*, pp. 35-36.

³⁶ See: M. Dowling, G. Wignaraja, “Central Asia’s Economy: Mapping Future Prospects to 2015,” *Silk Road Paper*, July 2006, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, Washington, D.C., 2006, p. 10, available at [<http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/Silkroadpapers/0607Wignaraja.pdf>]

³⁷ See: F. Tolipov, “Russia in Central Asia: Retreat, Retention, Or Return?” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 5 (47), 2007, p. 19.

³⁸ For example: M.W. Lewis, K.E. Wigen, op. cit., p. 179.

³⁹ See: A. Dugin, *Osnovy geopolitiki. Geopoliticheskoe budushchee Rossii*, pp. 353-359.

⁴⁰ S. Akimbekov, “Tupik liberalizma. Kakuiu strategiiu izbrat Kazakhstanu?” *TsentrAzia*, 4 November, 2005, available at [<http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php4?st=1131088440>]

⁴¹ See: R.L. Canfield, “Restructuring in Greater Central Asia,” *Asian Survey*, Vol. 32, No. 10, 1992, p. 874.

⁴² S.F. Starr, “A ‘Greater Central Asia Partnership’ for Afghanistan and Its Neighbors,” *Silk Road Paper*, March 2005, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, Washington, D.C., 2005, p. 16, available at [<http://www.silkroadstudies.org/CACI/Strategy.pdf>]; idem, “A Partnership for Central Asia,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 4, 2005.

The above (sometimes contradictory) interpretations of the term “Central Asia” demonstrate that there is no agreement on this issue.⁴³

The Kazakh Eurasists match their Russian colleagues: they insist that Kazakhstan is a Eurasian state which has nothing to do with Central Asia except for bordering on it.⁴⁴ It should be said in all justice that a small part of Kazakhstan (Western Kazakhstan) geographically belongs to Eastern Europe⁴⁵; however, Kazakhstan’s historical roots are intertwined with the roots of its Central Asian neighbors.⁴⁶ Its regime, which is based on the incumbent president remaining in office as long as possible, does not differ much from the regimes of the other Central Asian republics.⁴⁷ This means that Kazakhstan belongs to Central Asia. If detached from Central Asia as a Eurasian state, Kazakhstan will lose its independence and will be swallowed by Russia.⁴⁸

I am convinced that so far not all the Central Asian countries (at least most of them) have grasped the meaning of their independence and have pondered on their future. These are problems that have not yet been resolved.

The Central Caucasus

The region is found between the Black, Caspian, and Azov seas, that is, on the border between Europe and Asia. It is also believed that the territory is wedged between Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Russian sphere.⁴⁹

The contemporary geopolitical interpretation of the term “the Caucasus” appeared when Russia conquered the region.⁵⁰ Its presence coined the terms “the Trans-Caucasus”⁵¹ (part of the region found beyond the Main Caucasian Range if viewed from Russia) and “the Northern Caucasus” (the territory to the north of the Trans-Caucasus and the mountain range). Despite the obvious geographical fact that when viewed from Tehran, the Trans-Caucasus is located not beyond, but rather in front of the mountain range, it is still called *maveran-e kafkas* in Persian.⁵² At the same time, it should be said that Russian tradition dominated over the international practice of identifying the region.

The entire territory of the Northern Caucasus (which consists of the piedmont and mountain areas) comprises part of the Russian Federation. The piedmont area comprises the following RF subjects: the Krasnodar and Stavropol territories, the Astrakhan and Rostov regions, and the Republic of Kalmykia. The mountain area is made up of the republics of Adigey, Daghestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachaevo-Cherkessia, North Ossetia-Alania, and Chechnia.

⁴³ See: M.W. Lewis, K.E. Wigen, op. cit.

⁴⁴ See: D. Nazarbaeva, “Spetsifika i perspektivy politicheskogo razvitiya Kazakhstana,” *Mezhdunarodny institut sovremennoy politiki*, 3 December, 2003, available at [<http://www.iimp.kz/Lists/articles/DispForm.aspx?ID=766>].

⁴⁵ See: R.N. Zhanguzhin, *Novye nezavisimye gosudarstva Tsentral'noy Azii v sisteme mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniy*, Institut mirovoy ekonomiki i mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniy NAN Ukrainy, Kiev, 2005, p. 18; G. Khachiev, “Central Asia: Portrait against the Background of the World Economy,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2 (38), 2006, p. 117.

⁴⁶ See: F. Tolipov, “Central Asia is a Region of Five *Stans*. Dispute with Kazakh Eurasianists,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2 (38), 2006, p. 22.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 23.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 18.

⁴⁹ See: M.W. Lewis, K.E. Wigen, op. cit., p. 203.

⁵⁰ See: N.S. Breyfogle, *Heretics and Colonizers: Forging Russia's Empire in the South Caucasus*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2005.

⁵¹ See: T.V. Gamkrelidze, “‘TransCaucasia’ or ‘South Caucasus’? Towards a More Exact Geopolitical Nomenclature,” *Marco Polo Magazine*, No. 4/5, 1999, available at [<http://www.traceca-org.org/rep/marco/mp40.pdf>].

⁵² See: R. Gachechiladze, *The Middle East: Space, People and Politics*, Diogene, Tbilisi, 2003, p. 17 (in Georgian).

The southern limits of the Caucasus were always identified by the Russian Empire's southern state border in the Caucasus.⁵³ The border change was amply illustrated by the case of Kars of the late 19th century: when the Russian Empire detached it by force from the Ottoman Empire it came to be known as part of the Caucasus. Later, when Russia lost Kars, Ardahan, and Bayazet, the Russian political and historical documents stopped referring to them as parts of the Caucasus. At the same time, when in November 1918 these regions proclaimed their independence and formed the Southwestern Caucasian (Kars) Democratic Republic,⁵⁴ the name clearly indicated its Caucasian affiliation.

This tradition of identifying the southern borders of the Caucasus survived in Soviet times when three Union republics (Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia) were described as Trans-Caucasian.

Early in the 1990s, when the Soviet Union disappeared and the three republics regained their independence, the term "Trans-Caucasus" was replaced by the more correct term "the Southern Caucasus." Russia alone continued using the old term.⁵⁵

Significantly, few academics stop to ponder on the fact that the term "the Southern Caucasus" (as well as "the Trans-Caucasus") reflects the purely Russian geopolitical approach to the region.⁵⁶ The terms "the Northern Caucasus" and "the Southern Caucasus" perpetuate the new and old Russian borders in the region.

According to Dr. Ismailov,⁵⁷ the Caucasus consists not only of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, and the RF entities enumerated above. It also covers the northeastern Turkish areas (the iles of Agri, Ardahan, Artvin, Van, Igdyr, and Kars) and the northwestern parts of Iran (the ostanha of eastern Azerbaijan—Ardabil, Gilyan, Zanjan, Qazvin, Hamadan, and Western Azerbaijan). This division is based on the fact that the Turkish and Iranian regions have been populated by Caucasian peoples from time immemorial; for many centuries prior to the Russian conquests they belonged, together with the other Caucasian peoples, to the same ethnocultural and socioeconomic area. This means that these areas can be described as Caucasian on the same grounds as the Northern Caucasus of Russia.

Geographically, the above regions of Turkey and Iran (as well as Armenia, which is described as a Caucasian state) are found at the same distance from the Greater Caucasus and partly fill the space of the Smaller Caucasus.

The above suggests that the Caucasian region consists not of two (the Northern and Southern Caucasus) parts, as the international academic community that relies on Russian geopolitical thought commonly believes, but of three parts: the Central Caucasus (made up of three independent states—Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia); the Northern Caucasus (made up of the RF autonomous units bordering on the Caucasus), and the Southern Caucasus, which covers the iles of Turkey bordering on

⁵³ See: E. Ismailov, V. Papava, *The Central Caucasus: Essays on Geopolitical Economy*, CA&CC Press®, Stockholm, 2006, p. 10; idem, *Tsentrāl'ny Kavkaz: istoria, politika, ekonomika*, Mysl Publishers, Moscow, 2007, pp. 17-18.

⁵⁴ See: A. Gajiev, *Iz istorii obrazovaniia i padeniia Iugo-Zapadnoi Kavkazskoy (Karskoy) demokraticeskoy respubliki*, Elm Publishers, Baku, 1992; idem, *Demokraticheskie respubliki Iugo-Zapadnogo Kavkaza (Karskaia i Araz-Tiurkskaia respubliki)*, Nurlan Publishers, Baku, 2004; Sh. Tagieva, *Demokraticheskie respubliki Iugo-Vostochnogo Kavkaza (Azadistan i Gilianskaia Sovetskaia Respublika)*, Kavkaz Publishers, Baku, 2005.

⁵⁵ See, for example: K.S. Gajiev, *Geopolitika Kavkaza*, Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia Publishers, Moscow, 2003; *Geopolitika*, ed. by V.A. Mikhailov, RAGS Press, Moscow, 2007, pp. 205-213; *Regional'naia bezopasnost*, ed. by A.V. Vozzhenikov, RAGS Press, Moscow, 2006, pp. 158-160.

⁵⁶ See: E. Ismailov, V. Papava, *The Central Caucasus: Essays on Geopolitical Economy*, p. 11; idem, *Tsentrāl'ny Kavkaz: istoria, politika, ekonomika*, p. 19.

⁵⁷ E. Ismailov, "O geopoliticheskikh predposylkakh ekonomicheskoy integratsii Tsentrāl'nogo Kavkaza," *Izvestia AN Gruzii—seria ekonomicheskaiia*, Vol. 10, No. 3-4, 2002; E. Ismailov, Z. Kengerli, "Integratsia Kavkaza i sovremennye geoeconomicheskie protsessy," *Izvestia Natsional'noy Akademii Nauk Azerbaidzhana*, Seria gumanitarnykh i obschestvennykh nauk (ekonomika), No. 1, 2002; E. Ismailov, Z. Kengerli, "The Caucasus in the Globalizing World: A New Integration Model," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2 (20), 2003; E. Ismailov, V. Papava, *The Central Caucasus: Essays on Geopolitical Economy*, pp. 5-19; idem, *Tsentrāl'ny Kavkaz: istoria, politika, ekonomika*, pp. 11-28.

Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia (the Southwestern Caucasus), and northwestern ostanha of Iran (the Southeastern Caucasus).

If we proceed from the specific features of the region's history, Ismailov's conception fully reflects the Caucasian current geopolitical realities.

The region has developed into a meeting place for all sorts of geopolitical and economic interests,⁵⁸ while the Central Caucasus accumulates the entire range of regional problems.⁵⁹

On the "Central Caucasia" Concept: Moving Away from Eurasianism

Today academic circles (and not only them) are showing a great interest in studying the problems of the three Central Caucasian countries (Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia) and the five Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) within the same context.⁶⁰ The vast region represented by these eight states is now called Central Eurasia.⁶¹ The same term is also applied to the same eight countries and Afghanistan.⁶² I have already written above that, together with the five Central Asian states, it belongs to Greater Central Asia.

There is an even wider interpretation of Central Eurasia, which also includes the Black Sea, Caucasian, Caspian, and Central Asian regions.⁶³ This means that this approach to the term "Central Eurasia" can hardly be described as constructive—not only because it is rather vague, but also because the regions mentioned above overlap.

The current use of the term "Central Eurasia" not merely fails to describe the region geographically—it is a vehicle of the Russian imperial tradition based on the idea that Russia is Eurasia. If we proceed from this interpretation, we should ask ourselves what geographic name should be given to the region that unites the eight states and what do they have in common? It seems that a geopolitical approach may answer these questions.

Today these eight states (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) are seen as parts of much wider regions that include other countries as well. These are the Eurasian Balkans⁶⁴ and the Greater Middle East.⁶⁵ The eight countries are CIS members, therefore they are discussed in the context of this organization which, according to

⁵⁸ See: K.S. Yalowitz, S. Cornell, "The Critical but Perilous Caucasus," *Orbis, A Journal of World Affairs*, Vol. 48, No. 1, 2004.

⁵⁹ See, for example, E. Nuriyev, *The South Caucasus at the Crossroads: Conflicts, Caspian Oil and Great Power Politics*, LIT, Berlin, 2007.

⁶⁰ See: *Crossroads and Conflict: Security and Foreign Policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia*, ed. by G.K. Bertsch, C. Craft, S.A. Jones, M. Beck, Routledge, New York, 2000; *Faultlines of Conflict in Central Asia and the South Caucasus: Implications for the U.S. Army*, ed. by O. Olikier, Th.S. Szayna, RAND, Santa Monica, 2003; *Russia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia: The 21st Century Security Environment*, ed. by R. Menon, Yu.E. Fedorov, Gh. Nodia, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, 1999; *The OSCE and the Multiple Challenges of Transition. The Caucasus and Central Asia*, ed. by F. Sabahi, D. Warner, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2004.

⁶¹ See: M.P. Amineh, H. Houweling, op. cit., pp. 2-3; Ch. Fairbanks, C.R. Nelson, S.F. Starr, K. Weisbrode, op. cit.; K. Meyer, op. cit., p. 206; Xuetao Guo, "The Energy Security in Central Eurasia: The Geopolitical Implications to China's Energy Strategy," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 2006, p. 117, available at [http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/CEF/Quarterly/November_2006/Guo.pdf]

⁶² See: E. Ismailov, M. Esenov, "Central Eurasia in the New Geopolitical and Geo-Economic Dimensions," *Central Eurasia 2005. Analytical Annual*, CA&CC Press®, Sweden, 2006.

⁶³ See: P. Darabadi, "Central Eurasia: Globalization and Geopolitical Evolution," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 3 (39), 2006, p. 9.

⁶⁴ See: Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*.

⁶⁵ See: G. Kemp, R.E. Harkavy, *Strategic Geography and the Changing Middle East*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, 1997.

many experts, is currently facing certain integration problems.⁶⁶ They are the result of the efforts to limit integration to the CIS framework similar to the closer industrial cooperation within the Soviet Union.⁶⁷

The academic community is freely using the term “the Caspian region,” by which different combinations of sub-regions are meant in different publications. This term can hardly be used to denote the region composed of the eight republics enumerated above. Logic suggests that the term should be applied to the five coastal states—Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Turkmenistan.⁶⁸ The interpretations of the term, however, are numerous. One of them, for example, implies the western part of Central Asia, southern Russia, the Northern and Central Caucasus, as well as Northern Iran.⁶⁹ Other authors apply the term to the five Caspian states and to Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and partly Afghanistan, Pakistan, and even the Middle East.⁷⁰ According to the previous interpretation, the region covers a small part of Central Asia and stretches beyond the territories of the eight republics. According to the latter interpretation, the region comprises the above eight states and also many other states, to say nothing of regions, which is not completely justified. The term “the Caspian region” can obviously not be used to describe the region comprising the eight states enumerated above, that is, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

The term “the Caucasian-Caspian Region” can likewise not be accepted as a definition of the eight republics; those who use it imply that it covers the entire Caucasus⁷¹ yet fail to specify the degree to which the Central Asian region is included in it. What is more, they tend to write the Caucasian-Caspian and Central Asian regions,⁷² which seems to emphasize that Central Asia is outside the Caucasian-Caspian region.

It seems that the term “the Caucasian-Central Asian geopolitical region”⁷³ is much more precise, even though it covers certain territories outside the eight countries, because as we all know the Caucasus is not limited to Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia.

If we proceed from the fact that the eight republics discussed here form two sub-regions—the Central Caucasus and Central Asia—the larger region, which includes both sub-regions, can be called the *Central Caucasia*⁷⁴: *this preserves the term “Central” as the key one for both regions, while the*

⁶⁶ See: R.S. Grinberg, L.Z. Zevin, et al., *10 let Sodruzhestva nezavisimyykh gosudarstv: illiuzii, razocharovaniya, nadezhdy*, IMEPI RAN, Moscow, 2001; L.P. Kozik, P.A. Kokhno, *SNG: Realii i perspektivy*, Iuridicheskiy mir VK Publishers, Moscow, 2001; V.A. Shul’ga (head of the group of authors), *Ekonomika SNG: 10 let reformirovaniya i integratsionno-go razvitiya*, Finstatinform, Moscow, 2001; N.N. Shumskiy, *Sotrudnichestvo nezavisimyykh gosudarstv: problemy i perspektivy razvitiya*, Tekhnoprint, Minsk, 2001; idem, “Ekonomicheskaya integratsiya gosudarstv Sodruzhestva: vozmozhnosti i perspektivy,” *Voprosy ekonomiki*, No. 6, 2003; idem, “Obshchee ekonomicheskoe prostranstvo gosudarstv Sodruzhestva: optimal’ny format,” *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya*, No. 2, 2004.

⁶⁷ See, for example: B. Coppieters, “The Failure of Regionalism in Eurasia and the Western Ascendancy over Russia’s Near Abroad,” in: *Commonwealth and Independence in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, ed. by B. Coppieters, A. Zverev, D. Trenin, FRANK CASS PUBLISHERS, London, 1998, pp. 194-197; M.B. Olcott, A. Åslund, Sh.W. Garnett, *Getting it Wrong: Regional Cooperation and the Commonwealth of Independent States*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, 1999.

⁶⁸ See, for example: V.I. Salygin, A.V. Safarian, *Sovremennyye mezhdunarodnye ekonomicheskie otnosheniya v Kaspiyskom regione*, MGIMO-Universitet Press, Moscow, 2005.

⁶⁹ See: P. Darabadi, *Geoistoriya Kaspiiskogo regiona i geopolitika sovremennosti*, Elm Publishers, Baku, 2002, p. 6; idem, “The Caspian Region in Contemporary Geopolitics,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 3 (21), 2003, p. 66.

⁷⁰ See: B. Sasley, “The Intersection of Geography and Resources: Geopolitics in the Caspian Sea Basin,” in: *Geopolitics: Global Problems and Regional Concerns*, ed. by L. Tchamtouridze, Center for Defense and Security Studies, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 2004, p. 194.

⁷¹ See: I. Dobaev, A. Dugin, “Geopolitical Transformations in the Caucasian-Caspian Region,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 5 (35), 2005, p. 75.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 77.

⁷³ V. Maksimenko, “Central Asia and the Caucasus: Geopolitical Entity Explained,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 3, 2000, p. 56.

⁷⁴ See: V. Papava, *Tsentral’naia Kavkazia: osnovy geopoliticheskoy ekonomii*, p. 47.

new term "Caucasasia" is derived from two related terms "Caucasus" and "Asia." Formation of this word in English is rather problematic, since "Caucasia" is a synonym for the word "Caucasus." So we suggest using the term "Caucasasia" or "Caucaso-Asia" in English. The region can be either called *Central Caucasasia* or *Central Caucaso-Asia*. If the term is applied to nine countries (the original eight and Afghanistan), the region should be called *Greater Central Caucasasia* or *Greater Central Caucaso-Asia*.

We should not forget that Central Caucasasia as a single region is not integrated because it has no political or cultural homogeneity.⁷⁵ At the same time, its component parts have much in common, which makes it possible to regard them as a single region.⁷⁶

All the countries of Central Caucasasia began their post-Soviet lives under more or less identical conditions, without the very much needed institutions of statehood, with a fairly low level of political culture, and a command-(read: communist-)type economy. These three conditions were not merely interconnected: the future of the reforms in these countries depended on their interconnection. Indeed, the absence of statehood institutions, for example, made it hard to develop a political culture which, in turn, prevented democratization; on the other hand, the absence of statehood institutions made it much harder to transfer to a market economy,⁷⁷ which slowed down the advance toward democracy. Meanwhile, no market reforms are possible in the absence of democracy.⁷⁸ These problems were reflected, to different extents, in the political and economic transformations in the Central Caucasian countries. Significantly, all these countries, with the exception of Kazakhstan, demonstrated a reverse dependence between rich hydrocarbon reserves and the pace of market reforms: the reserves obviously failed to stimulate economic reform.⁷⁹

Central Caucasasia, to say nothing of Greater Central Caucasasia, has several conflict sub-regions on its territory,⁸⁰ something that interferes, to various degrees, with economic progress in some of the countries; it also prevents the local countries from using local resources to move together in the desired direction.

The region's rich hydrocarbon resources attract investments⁸¹ and tempt regional and world powers to politically dominate there. Today, when energy policy is blending with the foreign policy of these powers, this is not merely understandable, but also inevitable.⁸² At the same time, the Russian

⁷⁵ See: K. Weisbrode, op. cit., p. 13.

⁷⁶ See: E. Ismailov, M. Esenov, op. cit.

⁷⁷ See, for example: V.G. Papava, T.A. Beridze, *Ocherki politicheskoy ekonomii postkommunisticheskogo kapitalizma (opyt Gruzii)*, Delo i Service Publishers, Moscow, 2005, pp. 68-69; L. Balcerowicz, *Socialism, Capitalism, Transformation*, Central European University Press, Budapest, 1995, p. 146; V. Papava, "Georgian Economy: From 'Shock Therapy' to 'Social Promotion'," *Communist Economies & Economic Transformation*, Vol. 8, No. 8, 1996, p. 252; idem, "On the Theory of Post-Communist Economic Transition to Market International," *Journal of Social Economics*, Vol. 32, No. 1/2, 2005, p. 78; idem, *Necroeconomics: The Political Economy of Post-Communist Capitalism*, iUniverse, New York, 2005, p. 13.

⁷⁸ See, for example: A. Pshevorskiy, *Demokratia i rynek. Politicheskie i ekonomicheskie reformy v Vostochnoy Evrope i Latinskoy Amerike*, ROSSPEN, Moscow, 2000; B. Greskovits, *The Political Economy of Protest and Patience: East European and Latin American Transformations Compared*, Central European University Press, Budapest, 1998.

⁷⁹ See: A. Åslund, "Eventual Success of Market Reform," in: *Russian-Eurasian Renaissance? U.S. Trade and Investment in Russia and Eurasia*, ed. by J.H. Kalicki, E.K. Lawson, Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Washington, 2003.

⁸⁰ See, for example: S. Lounev, "Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus: Geopolitical Value for Russia," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 3 (39), 2006, pp. 14-15; K. Weisbrode, op. cit.

⁸¹ See: S.F. Starr, "The Investment Climate in Central Asia and the Caucasus," in: *Russian-Eurasian Renaissance? U.S. Trade and Investment in Russia and Eurasia*.

⁸² See, for example: *Energy and Security: Toward a New Foreign Policy Strategy*, ed. by J. Kalicki, D.L. Goldwyn, Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Washington, 2005; F. Hill, *Energy Empire: Oil, Gas and Russia's Revival*, The Foreign Policy Center, London, 2004, available at [<http://www.brookings.edu/views/articles/Fhill/20040930.pdf>]; E. Raket, "Paradigms of Iranian Policy in Central Eurasia and Beyond," in: *Central Eurasia in Global Politics: Conflict, Security and Development*; D. Sherman, "Caspian Oil and a New Energy Policy," *International Institute for Caspian Studies*, 25 May 2000, available at [<http://www.caspianstudies.com/article/daniel%20sherman.htm>].

factor⁸³ is still very strong in the Central Asian countries' energy policies: it seems that this part of the Soviet heritage cannot be eliminated soon.

The Central Caucasus and Central Asia are *mutually complimentary*, which means that they can use their resources together: the West is interested in Central Asian oil and gas, while the Central Caucasus not only wants to move its own oil and gas to the West, but also to use the energy (and not only) transportation corridor that connects the East and the West.⁸⁴ This means that the Central Caucasus can serve as a bridge between Central Asia, a geopolitically closed region, and the West.⁸⁵

It should be said in this context that, according to Zbigniew Brzezinski, Azerbaijan is the most important geopolitical pivot among all the others across the geographic continent of Eurasia.⁸⁶ The "geopolitical pivot" status⁸⁷ is determined by the country's geographic location and its potential vulnerability to what the active geostrategic players might undertake in relation to it.⁸⁸ By "active geostrategic players" I mean the states strong and determined enough to spread their domination beyond their limits.

By describing Azerbaijan as the "cork in the bottle" filled with the riches of the Caspian Sea and Central Asia, Mr. Brzezinski stresses: "The independence of the Central Asian states can be rendered nearly meaningless if Azerbaijan becomes fully subordinated to Moscow's control."⁸⁹ Kazakhstan is another of America's target countries in Central Caucasia, which is amply illustrated by the Americans' intention to maximize their investments there.⁹⁰

The idea of post-Soviet state independence and its strengthening as the linchpin of state interests of the Central Caucasian states rule out their acceptance of not only Eurasianism, but also of the Heartland theory. They both assert their subordination to the imperial schemes of Russia and the West.

The leaders of those Central Caucasian countries who are seeking a tighter grip on power rather than stronger and developed state sovereignty, to say nothing of democratization, human rights, and a market economy, are prepared to embrace any theory (or rather pseudo-theory) to camouflage their true intentions or justify them.

It would be naive to expect the world and regional powers to step aside and leave Central Caucasia alone. Reality is much more complicated: these countries should carefully match their national interests and their choice of regional and world powers as partners.

Eurasianism clearly preaches Russia's revival as an empire, but the even more moderate ideas now current in Russia do not exclude the "soft" alternative of imposing its interests on at least some

⁸³ See: I. Tomberg, "Energy Policy in the Countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 4 (22), 2003.

⁸⁴ See, for example: H. Chase, "Future Prospects of Caucasian Energy and Transportation Corridor. The Role of Caucasian Energy Corridor in European Energy Security," *Georgian Economic Trends*, No. 3, 2002; J.H. Kalicki, "Caspian Energy at the Crossroads," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 5, 2001; J.H. Kalicki, J. Elkind, "Eurasian Transportation Futures," in: *Energy and Security: Toward a New Foreign Policy Strategy*; R. Makhmudov, "The Problem of Exporting Energy Resources from Central Asia," in: *Central Asia and South Caucasus Affairs: 2002*, ed. by B. Rumer, L.S. Yee, Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Tokyo, 2002; F. Müller, "Energy Development and Transport Network Cooperation in Central Asia and the South Caucasus," in: *Building Security in the New States of Eurasia. Subregional Cooperation in the Former Soviet Space*, ed. by R. Dwan, O. Pavliuk, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, 2000; J. Roberts, "Energy Reserves, Pipeline Routs and the Legal Regime in the Caspian Sea," in: *The Security of the Caspian Sea Region*, ed. by G. Chufrin, Oxford University Press, New York, 2001; S.F. Starr, S.E. Cornell, *The Politics of Pipelines: Bringing Caspian Energy to Markets*, SAISPHERE, 2005.

⁸⁵ See: J. Eyvazov, *Bezopasnost Kavkaza i stabil'nost razvitiia Azerbaidzhanskoj Respubliki*, Nurlan Publishers, Baku, 2004, p. 132.

⁸⁶ See: Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*, p. 41.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47, 129.

⁹⁰ See: A.I. Utkin, *Amerikanskaia strategija dlia XXI veka*, Logos Publishers, Moscow, p. 105.

of the local states, irrespective of their national interests. Today only Georgia is described as being lost for Russia.⁹¹ The same author has said that “the economic importance of Armenia and Georgia for Russia is minimal,”⁹² even though “Armenia is Russia’s objective partner.”⁹³ In Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, Russia has economic interests in the production and transportation of hydrocarbons.⁹⁴ Stronger integration processes are contemplated in relation to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.⁹⁵ Regrettably, Russia’s political elite, carried away by the ideas of Eurasianism, does not welcome this approach.

America, on the other hand, is guided by objective considerations⁹⁶: far removed from the region, it cannot dominate over it and is strong enough not to become involved in unnecessary complications in this vast area.

From this it follows that America prefers a situation in which none of the countries dominates over Central Caucasasia to allow the world community free financial and economic access to the region.⁹⁷

9/11 taught the United States how to prevent the threat of new terrorist acts in Central Caucasasia and make victory in the war on terror possible.⁹⁸ American interests in the region are not limited to energy issues,⁹⁹ which means that it will help the former Soviet republics overcome what remained of the Soviet economic system and promote the market economy and private sector as a solid foundation for economic growth and the rule of law. This will also help them to cope with social and ecological problems and profit from their energy resources and ramified export mainlines.¹⁰⁰

Some Russian experts admit that Moscow is holding forth about its historical, psychological, and other ties with former Soviet republic, while the United States rejects in principle any theories along the lines of “soft” or “limited” sovereignty of these republics.¹⁰¹ The Americans are convinced that Russia would profit from richer and more stable neighbors.¹⁰²

Some Central Asian experts have offered interesting assessments, according to which “Moscow’s orientation toward ‘stagnation’ and the unlimited support of the people in power is depriving it, and has already deprived it, of promising and potential allies among those who tend toward modernization and change.” America’s policy in the region promotes democracy.¹⁰³

The above suggests that America is not seeking integration with any of the regional countries; its policy completely corresponds to the local countries’ national interests rooted in strengthening and developing state sovereignty, deepening democratization, and enhancing the market economy.

The newly coined term “Central Caucasasia” does not merely specify the region’s geographic identity: it is a conceptual idea of the interests of strengthening the local countries’ state sovereignty, which, in principle, contradicts the spirit and idea of Eurasianism. All the Eurasian deliberations about so-called “Caucasianism” as potentially a theoretical antipode of Eurasianism are absolutely wrong. This is explained by the political heterogeneity of Central Caucasasia, not all the members of which

⁹¹ See: S. Lounev, op. cit., p. 24.

⁹² Ibidem.

⁹³ Ibidem.

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 23-24.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 23.

⁹⁶ See: Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*, pp. 148-149.

⁹⁷ Ibidem.

⁹⁸ See, for example: T.T. Gati, T.L. Christiansen, “The Political Dynamic,” in: *Russian-Eurasian Renaissance? U.S. Trade and Investment in Russia and Eurasia*.

⁹⁹ See, for example: A. Jaffe, “US Policy Towards the Caspian Region: Can the Wish-List be Realized?” in: *The Security of the Caspian Sea Region*.

¹⁰⁰ S.R. Mann, “Caspian Futures,” in: *Russian-Eurasian Renaissance? U.S. Trade and Investment in Russia and Eurasia*.

¹⁰¹ See, for example: A.I. Utkin, op. cit., p. 108.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 105.

¹⁰³ F. Tolipov, “Russia in Central Asia: Retreat, Retention, Or Return?” p. 24.

have similar thoughts about state sovereignty and the road toward it. At the same time, developing and strengthening state sovereignty, deepening democratization, and confirming the principles of a market economy are not prerogatives of the Central Caucasian countries alone.

Even though it is accepted that the Central Asian countries' "key strategic interests can be described as independence, democracy, and integration,"¹⁰⁴ they do not exclude possible reintegration into Eurasia (to which Central Asia belonged as part of the Soviet Union) after it realizes its geopolitical self-identity.¹⁰⁵ If we take into account that, as the Eurasists say, Moscow claims domination over this Eurasia, the above arguments do not exclude (even in the relatively distant future, after "completed geopolitical self-identification") the possibility that the Central Asian countries will join Eurasia-Russia. It is equally interesting that some experts from Central Asian states are not alien to nostalgic reminiscences about the Soviet Union; they openly regret its disintegration.¹⁰⁶

Meanwhile, the pro-Western vector is much better suited to the interests of stronger sovereignty, deeper democratization, and promotion of the principles of a market economy, since they are commonly recognized Western principles.

¹⁰⁴ F. Tolipov, "Russia in Central Asia: Retreat, Retention, Or Return?" p. 31.

¹⁰⁵ See, for example: F. Tolipov, "Central Asia is a Region of Five *Stans*. Dispute with Kazakh Eurasianists," p. 18.

¹⁰⁶ See, for example: A. Niiazi, "The South of the CIS: Fundamental problems of Development," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 6 (24), 2003, p. 150; F. Tolipov, "Russia in Central Asia: Retreat, Retention, Or Return?" pp. 19-20.

REGIONAL SECURITY

CENTRAL ASIA
IN SEARCH OF STABILITY

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The tension in the Central Asian Region, particularly in its southern part, which includes Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran, largely affects the rest of this vast area and forces the United States and its allies to seek prompt settlement of the crisis they have on their hands. The situation in occupied Iraq is tense; the Turkish invasion into Iraqi Kurdistan in search of terrorists of the Kurdistan Workers' Party did nothing to relieve the tension; the conflict area spread even further. Two other events (the state of emergency President of Pakistan Musharraf introduced on 3 November, 2007, allegedly as an antiterrorist and anti-extremist measure, and the death of Benazir Bhutto at the hands of terrorists) brought the tension to boiling point.

About twelve months ago, two fairly prominent people—James Jones, NATO commander in 2003-2007, and Mansour Ijaz, who in 2000 initiated a ceasefire between the mujaheddin and the Indian troops in Kashmir—offered their opinions on the continued conflict and possible solutions in *The Financial Times*. “Pakistan and Afghanistan stand at a dangerous crossroads in their complex and troubled relationship. Both strong allies of the U.S. in its war to eradicate terrorism, Afghanistan is laboring to find stability under NATO mandate while Pakistan is struggling to find a balance between national interest and regional responsibilities to fight extremists on its own soil. Sadly, Afghanistan is losing its struggle for stability and security in part because Pakistan cannot decide whether it wants to fight terrorism or encourage it as state policy.”¹

¹ J. Jones, M. Ijaz, “Pakistan Holds the Key to South Asia’s Security,” *The Financial Times*, 21 February, 2007.

This suggests that Pakistan is held responsible for the dangerous situation in Afghanistan. Its leaders tend to encourage and/or ignore the Taliban's armed inroads from Pakistan's border areas into Afghanistan. This has already caused numerous complaints from the United States, NATO, and the Afghan government.

What is behind Pakistan's puzzling behavior? It looks very strange in light of the incessant references to the "fraternal peoples" of both countries and their "centuries-long friendship" that are invariably made at all the multilateral and bilateral meetings involving the two states, both of which are officially described as Islamic. The answer should be sought in the past: practically all of Pakistan's military regimes were tuned to permanent confrontation with India and therefore looked at Afghanistan as its strategic depth, i.e. territory the Pakistani armed forces could have used as a rear base in the event of a war with India.

After 9/11, when the armed units of the Taliban, which had been in power for some time in Afghanistan, were pushed to the Northwestern Frontier Province of Pakistan, the situation in the region changed radically.² In fact, the Pakistani military, which is at all times closely following India's maneuvers, should have been assured by America's and NATO's presence in Afghanistan, where they were fighting terror. The Kashmir issue is another persisting "headache." Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) uses it to keep the Indian troops stationed in the province on tenterhooks. Its agents controlled and supported terrorist groups in the region, paid them in petrodollars coming from the Gulf, and drew "live force" into their operations from among the idling fighters from the Arab countries and the mojaheddin of the "Afghan wars." "For its part, the Pakistani government, at the highest levels, denies any official sanctions for these activities, suggesting that, at most, these reports reflect the activity of former members of its intelligence service acting independently and against government policy."³

The heads of Pakistan's ISI maintained close ties with the Islamist organizations engaged in brainwashing the newly conscripted terrorists through numerous religious schools (madrasahs) supported through the same ISI. Jones and Ijaz wrote in their article: "Pakistan's army and intelligence apparatus have benefited immensely, meanwhile, from the big business of war."⁴

Earlier information about foreign fighters being trained in Taliban camps in the Northwestern Frontier Province was confirmed. The local administration insists that it is for the central government to address the problem of mercenaries: the fighters who rent their dwellings pay in advance. To evict them, the owner has to return money he no longer has. The fighters, in turn, threaten to kill anyone bold enough to turn them out. The Pakistani government, for example, paid four warlords in South Waziristan (the city of Wana) \$530 thousand it received from al-Qa'eda when the agreement of March 2004 was signed. The foreign fighters refused to leave; in the last two years more than 150 local people lost their lives and hundreds had to flee for their lives to North Waziristan.⁵

According to information supplied by the counterterrorist coalition command, a "younger, more aggressive generation of Taliban senior leadership" is pushing Mullah Omar and his circle aside. Siraj Haggani stands apart from the "younger, more aggressive generation" due to his methods of warfare: "Kidnapping, assassinations, beheading women, indiscriminate killings, and suicide bombers—Siraj is the one dictating the new parameters of brutality associated with Taliban senior leadership."⁶

² It should be said here that (1) the Pashtoons live both on the territory of Afghanistan (there are about 9 million of them) and in the north of Pakistan (16 million); (2) the Afghan side refuses to recognize the Durand Line the British colonialists demarcated and made the state border. For this reason, the Pashtoon tribes can easily cross the conventional state border.

³ J. Dobbins, "Ending Afghanistan's Civil War," *Testimony Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate*, 8 March, 2007, p. 5.

⁴ J. Jones, M. Ijaz, op. cit.

⁵ See: M.I. Khan, "Fractious Militants United by One Thing," *BBC News*, North Waziristan, 7 March, 2007.

⁶ "New Generation Taliban Rivaling Chief: US-led Coalition," *Yahoo!News*, 19 October, 2007.

He is extending his operation range using the money he gets from the Middle East; he is also supervising conscriptions of volunteers in Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Chechnia, and Turkey.

This is amply illustrated by mounting armed confrontation caused by the swelling of the jihad-ists' ranks with a considerable number of foreigners. This is reported by the Canadian contingent, which is part of the coalition forces: "The toughest fighters confronting Canada's Van Doos in Afghanistan are not Afghans but guerrillas from the volatile Russian republic of Chechnia. ... The Chechens are hard core. They are the best we face."⁷

It looks as if the fighters gradually driven away from the mountain areas of Chechnia, Dagh-estan, and Ingushetia are finding their way to other hot spots where they can use their fighting experience.

Western experts point out that new types of mercenaries have appeared among the Islamists operating in the Northwestern Frontier Province and the adjacent areas of southern Afghanistan: Europeans who embraced Islam and people from the Arab states, Northern Africa, and Turkey. Those interrogated on suspicion of being involved in terrorist activities in Germany turned out to be graduates of Islamic educational establishments in Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia. They were dispatched to Pakistan via Iran to be trained for terrorist activities. One such group, for example, acted in London: in June 2005 on an assignment from al-Qa'eda they organized blasts in the Tube that killed 52.⁸

Prof. Barnet Rubin of the United States has also detected the changes in the nature of the activities and psychology of some of the political-ideological and military Taliban leaders: "These new fighters belong to neither Afghanistan nor Pakistan: they are products of refugee camps and militarized madrasas in the tribal areas of Pakistan. They have never experienced benefits of citizenship in any country, and they have never participated in any 'traditional' society based on agricultural production, pastoralism, kinship relations, and state patronage. The longer the war goes on, the more the transnational milieu that creates this group becomes deeply rooted in the region."⁹

This is a very exact observation of the changed social and political status of the new generation of Afghans who have grown up and matured in the refugee camps of the Northwestern Frontier Province. Indeed, they lived amid permanent jihad, they had to wander in search of earnings before they ended up in madrasahs where they were educated in the jihad spirit on "charity money" that arrived from the oil-rich Arab states. This was how the "new Taliban" (and the children that grew up in the Palestinian camps) were raised to become merciless and indifferent to the suffering and convictions of not only non-Muslims, but also of their coreligionists who profess classical Islam. The longer the war, the more "irreconcilable" fighters of the new type will emerge in the world.

The Pakistani government is very concerned with the foreign mercenaries that enjoy the support of the Taliban and al-Qa'eda; this makes the task of President Musharraf to fight terror even harder.

Jones and Ijaz wrote in their joint article: "Pakistan's policies regarding Afghanistan are crucial to the future stability of the entire region." They are convinced that President Musharraf would have been moving in the right direction had he invited Hamid Karzai to a regional summit also attended by Prime Minister of India Manmohan Singh and the sides' key figures in the army and intelligence. In fact, this might lead to a Triple Council to promote mutual understanding on several issues. India's presence would have "dispelled the myth" about Delhi's investments in the Afghan economy used to move closer to the borders of Pakistan. The meeting would have given the sides' special services the chance to agree on the range of potential cooperation to avoid another spell of suspicion and mistrust.

⁷ *National Post* (Canada), 24 September, 2007.

⁸ See: "Terrorists in Training Head to Pakistan," *latimes.com.*, 14 October, 2007.

⁹ B. Rubin, "Afghanistan: Negotiations with Taliban?" *Informed Comment: Global Affairs*, 16 October, 2007.

In his annual report published on 11 January, 2007, Director of U.S. National Intelligence John Negroponte pointed out: "Pakistan is a frontline partner in the war on terror. Nevertheless, it remains a major source of Islamic extremism and the home for some top terrorist leaders."¹⁰ "The prospect of renewed tension with nuclear-armed India still lingers despite improved relations, and Pakistan had been a major source of nuclear proliferation until the disruption of the A.Q. Khan's network."¹¹ At the Congress hearings on foreign policy, the senators who are convinced that the "seat of the war" their country is waging is found not in Iraq or Afghanistan, but in Pakistan, where al-Qa'eda has its headquarters, deemed it necessary to stress that it was Pakistan that helped North Korea and Iran start their nuclear programs.¹²

Jones and Ijaz believe that "NATO could play a key role in the early stages of such a joint intelligence-sharing venture [the Triple Council] to depoliticize the use of intelligence in border patrolling, narcotics control and arms trafficking."¹³ In an article that recently appeared in Kabul, the Afghan side suggested not limiting cooperation to the Triple Council, which is concerned with purely military matters, but to ask the foreign ministries of Afghanistan and Pakistan to join the process together with U.N., NATO and U.S. observers.¹⁴ The regime in Kabul was advised to take the necessary measures to check the country's gradual degradation into a narco-state and a banker of all sorts of terrorists, while Islamabad should restore its leading role in the global struggle against extremism.

We all know that the longer the conflict, the more countries it draws into its sphere of influence and the wider the range of debatable issues. After a while the war on "global terrorism" inspired the actors to formulate narrow nationalistic, separatist, and religious slogans and territorial claims. This is what is going on in Central Asia, to which the United States has shifted its "point of pressure." By doing this America not only drew its NATO allies into the whirlpool of war, but also some of the East European countries waiting in line for NATO membership.

Six years of war produced nothing but justifiable skepticism both among outside observers and the local population. The Taliban's obvious moral superiority over the enemy is the main reason why a victory over terror represented by the Taliban and al-Qa'eda cannot be expected soon. President Karzai's efforts first to draw the "moderate" wing of the Taliban, and later Taliban leader Mullah Omar, into talks and his promises of high posts in his Cabinet for the movement's members were ignored. The Taliban, sure of itself and aware of the weakness of America's position, openly states that talks will be possible when the counterterrorist coalition pulls out of the country.

This is testified by the Open Letter of the Governing Council of the Islamic Emirate to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization of 16 August, 2007 and even by the very fact that the letter appeared at all. There is another important point: The Taliban acts in the name of the leaders of the Islamic Emirate and has taken the trouble of distancing itself from the Karzai Cabinet. The document that appeared in *Al-Emirate* consists of three points. It insists that the SCO should adopt measures "to stop those people, who by economic, cultural and political influences want to preclude development from infiltration into the regional countries." The letter goes on to say that the SCO members should know that Afghanistan is "in agony" and that it needs radical changes that will shake the world similar to the developments in the Soviet Union. The Taliban warns the SCO members: "You shouldn't look at the Islamic Emirate's members from the attitude of the U.S.A. But you should realize the reality on your own. We are neither terrorists, nor strange interferers from beyond Afghanistan. However, we are defenders of our national interest." The Governing Council is convinced that the country was occu-

¹⁰ J.D. Negroponte, *Annual Threat Assessment of the Director of National Intelligence*, 11 January, 2007, p. 11.

¹¹ The reference is to the network of traders in nuclear technologies headed by Abdul Qadir Khan, the father of the Pakistani nuclear bomb (see, for example: *The Christian Science Monitor*, 27 October, 2004).

¹² See: J. Dobbins, op. cit., p. 6.

¹³ J. Jones, M. Ijaz, op. cit.

¹⁴ See: *Afghanistan Times*, 4 March, 2007.

pied, which means that the jihad should be regarded as a just and absolutely legitimate war of independence. The letter stresses its authors' continued adherence to the principle of mutual respect among the region's countries, their desire to establish "fraternal relations" with them and the hope that the SCO will help to promote positive regional developments.

The document's content and tone can be interpreted as the promise of a loyal attitude to the SCO if the latter puts pressure on the United States and NATO and squeezes them out of the country.

It was his American allies who pushed Hamid Karzai to the talks with the Taliban; the Americans themselves, who having weighed up the "pros" and "cons," were engaged in secret talks with the Islamic opposition for a long time. At the current stage of the negotiations, there are attempts to establish contacts not only with the "moderate" Islamic opposition. President Karzai openly addressed the leaders of the Islamic Emirate. Academician Primakov has written that the president of Afghanistan took the trouble of pointing out that he did not invite groups closely connected with al-Qa'eda to the negotiation table.¹⁵ This is hardly important: first, the Taliban served the foundation on which al-Qa'eda unfolded its activities in the country; second, the Taliban did not deliver bin Laden to the Americans. They could not do that for the simple reason that he was more than a guest and an ideological ally—he was a "breadwinner."

The Taliban's pressure, which put a large chunk of the country's south under their control, dampened the morale of the Afghan National Army (ANA) being set up and of the civilians. This should not be taken to mean that most of the local people would hail return of the Taliban. In this context, the term "population of Afghanistan" defies unambiguous interpretation; it rather draws attention to the perpetual ethnic tension that is mounting as the hostilities continue. There are latent and even obvious signs that the relations between the Pashtoon South and the North populated mainly by ethnic minorities are strained and are worsening. The Pashtoons insist on their titular nation status while the "Northerners," who want a federative state, remind everyone that they helped to bring down the Taliban in the fall of 2001. On 22 September, 2007, the National Congress of Afghanistan (NCA),¹⁶ a leftist structure that speaks for the national minorities, put on their site a call to stop the war and discontinue the secret talks with the Taliban. The document pointed out that the choice was between allowing the Taliban to return or war. The former meant that the country should recognize the Taliban's power, a catastrophe that would trigger armed resistance. For this reason it was suggested that the Pashtoon members of the Taliban be accepted as the dominant force in the Pashtoon provinces (in the South) to let the people in the rest of the country pursue their own development aims. This called for a federative system. The document suggested that the Durand Line should be accepted as the state border with Pakistan and that all armed groups should be completely disarmed; the country also needed a mixed economy, illiteracy should be eradicated, etc.

A federal system would have suited the country perfectly, but it is too early to talk about it (let alone set about realizing it). The Pashtoons will interpret any step in this direction as an attempt to undermine the unity of the Afghan nation.

On 26 December, 2007, President Karzai visited Pakistan, where the two presidents discussed the far from simple situation in the border regions teeming with Taliban units and jihad fighters. The presidents agreed that to step up the struggle against extremism and terrorism in the region, the special services of both countries should cooperate on a wide range of issues.¹⁷ The president of Afghanistan came for a two-day visit, which was probably cut short: on 27 December, 2007, terrorists mortally wounded potential prime minister candidate Benazir Bhutto who died in hospital.

¹⁵ See: E. Primakov, "Novaia taktika SShA v Afghanistane?" available at [<http://www.mn.ru/issue/2007-39-4>].

¹⁶ The structure was set up in 2001 and officially registered; its leader, author Latif Pedram, took part in the presidential election and came in fifth. According to its leaders, it has branches in all 34 provinces of the IRA and abroad.

¹⁷ [<http://www.novopol.ru/article33337.html>], 27 December, 2007.

Media all over the world cannot agree on who is to blame: either al-Qa'eda or ISI agents connected with Islamic extremists. Once more Pakistan was plunged into the heat of a battle between the radical Islamists and those who favored a civil society based on democratic principles. The central issue is: Who will control the country's nuclear weapons?

There has been no shortage of ill omens.

On 19 October, 2007, the day Benazir Bhutto arrived in Karachi, a blast killed 150 and wounded over 500. The Islamic circles formulated seemingly democratic demands and insisted on a civilian administration. The Islamists, however, were not satisfied with President Musharraf's promise to retire from the army if he won the presidential election and to share power with the opposition Pakistan People's Party headed by Benazir Bhutto. It looked as if the Islamists would accept nothing but the rigid power of the extreme right wing of the Islamic radicals. In this case, the term democracy, with which they operated, should be interpreted as "Islamist dictatorship."

In America, President George W. Bush's Administration felt itself threatened when the Democrats gained the majority in the U.S. Congress and loudly voiced their dissatisfaction with America's Central Asian policies. As a result, late in February 2007, President Bush sent a letter to President Musharraf in which he warned his Pakistani colleague in harsh terms that America might cut back its aid to Pakistan if he failed to take decisive measures against al-Qa'eda still headed by the elusive Osama bin Laden. The Democrats demanded that America increase its pressure on Islamabad. They relied on the opinion of the American commanders in Afghanistan about the mounting Islamist opposition encouraged by the Pakistani side's passivity and its failure to live up to its promises in the antiterrorist struggle. What is more, the White House started planning unilateral strikes on the terrorists' training camps in North Waziristan sighted by U.S. satellite intelligence.¹⁸

On 1 March, 2007, it became known that in Quetta the Pakistani security services helped by U.S. CIA investigators arrested Mullah Akhund, former defense minister in the Taliban Cabinet (1996-2001); previously the CIA had been prepared to buy information about him for \$1 million. He was taken to Islamabad, where the officers of the special services of both countries interrogated him in the hope of gleaning details about the Islamists' military potential, who had announced a "spring offensive" against the U.S. and NATO units and the National Army of Afghanistan.

On the eve of the arrest, U.S. Vice-President Dick Cheney suddenly arrived in Islamabad. According to press information, he brought video evidence about the camps of the Taliban and al-Qa'eda fighters on the territory of Pakistan. The president of Pakistan, who had denied the existence of such camps on his territory, was thus shown that not merely the House Democratic majority, but also the U.S. senators were concerned about the problem: How could they explain to the American taxpayers why the antiterrorist struggle was producing no results and why the "strategic partner" failed to live up to its obligations?¹⁹

Pakistani journalist Ahmed Rashid has written in his book *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* that Pakistan failed to learn the lessons of history and continued living in the recent past when the money pouring in from Saudi Arabia and the CIA allowed Pakistan to lead the jihad.²⁰

It looked as if Islamabad was resolved to change its course: after all it abandoned Mullah Akhund to his fate; earlier Pakistan had counted on him and his supporters to influence the situation in Afghanistan and preserve tension in Kashmir. The price was too high: it was not only and not so much the money, but rather political and economic stability very much needed in Central Asia. It looks, however, as if President Musharraf cannot follow Washington's logic.

¹⁸ See: D.E. Sanger, M. Mazzetti, "Bush to Warn Pakistan to Act on Terror," *The New York Times*, 26 February, 2007.

¹⁹ See: T. Fatemi, "No Let-up in US Pressure," *Dawn* (Pakistan), 10 March, 2007.

²⁰ See: A. Rashid, *Taliban. Islam, neft i novaia bol'shaia igra v Tsentral'noy Azii*, Moscow, 2003, p. 257.

Experts in security issues in Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Middle East have pointed to the discrepancies in the American political documents related to Central Asia. On the one hand, in the next fiscal year the volumes of American aid to Afghanistan and Pakistan will increase. In 2008, Afghanistan will receive \$1.07 billion compared with \$968 million in 2007; while Pakistan will receive \$785 million (\$499 million in 2007). Out of the total amount of aid to Afghanistan, 18 percent are allocated to fighting illegal drug trafficking; about \$700 million are intended for the country's restoration. In the case of Pakistan, \$300 million should go to the military program.²¹

It turned out that Afghanistan received less than the other recipients of American aid: according to U.S. Senator James Dobbins, during the first post-Taliban year the United States allotted \$500 million to restoration, while Iraq, a much wealthier country but about the same size as Afghanistan, received \$18 billion in 2003. Further comparison produces the following figures: during the two post-Taliban years, the average Afghan received \$50 a year in foreign aid, while every Kosovo resident received 10-fold more during two years; and the average Bosnian enjoyed 12-fold more money in foreign aid.²²

The five Central Asian states could expect a slash of 24 percent in financial aid compared with 2006. Uzbekistan was punished for its human rights record, which was repeatedly criticized by the United States, and for its rejection of Western-recommended reforms. According to those in the U.S. Department of State who authored the comments on the new budget, Kazakhstan, as an oil-rich country, could go ahead without Washington's money. In this context Kyrgyzstan came forward as the main recipient of American money even if it will receive \$5 million less than two years ago; Tajikistan will receive \$3.4 million more, while American aid to Turkmenistan and its amount will depend on the new leaders' behavior. On the whole, the money will go "where there are opportunities to consolidate stability and promote democratization."²³

"The rhetoric and the numbers are at odds with one another," said Martha Brill Olcott, senior associate with the Russian & Eurasian Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "We're sending really tiny sums there [to Central Asia]," Olcott added. «The United States has had declining influence in the area and this isn't going to stop it [the decline]."²⁴ At the same time, Ms. Olcott believed "the U.S. strategy for assuring stability in Central Asia appeared to overly concentrate aid efforts on Afghanistan." Senator Dobbins, in turn, proceeds from the 2005 figures supplied by the RAND Corporation to say that out of the countries the United States has been patronizing for the last 60 years Afghanistan received the smallest sums for its "national construction" programs.²⁵

The above can be explained by the foreign policy blunders of President George W. Bush's Administration which is no longer able to respond pragmatically to the changes in the world and in Central Asia in particular. It overestimated the impact produced by the disintegration of its perpetual antagonist, the Soviet Union, and expected too much of it. American political strategists imagined that their country's military-political domination would come all by itself. Life has shown that America's closest allies hastened to exploit the changed balance of forces in Central Asia in their interests. This is particularly true of Pakistan. Its newly acquired nuclear potential (referred to with a great deal of pride as the "Islamic nuclear bomb") inspired the radical Islamists of President Musharraf's closest circle to insist on the country's greater involvement in the Great Game.

There are apprehensions that at some point Washington might run up against Pervez Musharraf's resistance; under pressure from the Islamists, the Pakistani president might even cautiously drift

²¹ See: J. Kucera, "U.S. Aid to Central Asia: 'The Rhetoric and the Numbers are at Odds with One Another,'" *Eurasia Insight*, 2 June, 2007 [<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav020607.shtml>].

²² See: J. Dobbins, op. cit., p. 3.

²³ J. Kucera, op. cit.

²⁴ Quoted from: J. Kucera, op. cit.

²⁵ J. Dobbins, op. cit.

away from his too obvious (according to his opponents) subservience to Washington. So far he is biding his time, while following the complicated developments in the United States where the Democrats won the majority in Congress. Tension in Central Asia is mounting: Benazir Bhutto's murder obviously upset the applecart.

The current developments suggest that the American-Pakistani relations are not only (and not so much) the key issue. The U.S. Administration is deliberately maintaining "controlled instability" in some of the countries (especially those in which the leaders are resolved to pursue independent policies). In the past, this allowed Washington to put pressure on the "recalcitrant" regimes, to remove them, and to provoke the use of force. Today, it has become clear to everyone that the myth about the Iraqi WMD and the contacts between Hussein and al-Qa'eda was put into circulation because America had its eye on the country's oil reserves. To gain control over Iran's gas and oil fields and the Strait of Hormuz, a strategically important stretch of the fuel transportation routes, the United States is working hard to knock together an anti-Iranian coalition; it needs international support to be able to use force to deal with the Iranian nuclear file. It would have been wiser to act within international law and to rely on the IAEA experts to avoid tension.

The "democratization" measures the United States has implemented or is implementing in the Middle East, Central Asia, and the APR are allowing Washington to widen its military presence there; it is consistently moving into Eastern Europe too.

The American Administration behaves inflexibly even in its relations with the regions and countries hypocritically described as partners. This has alienated the "empire" from the rest of the world. Prominent American political scientist Steven Cohen admitted that he got rid of the diplomatic husk early in 2003.²⁶ He believes that it was not because of the Balkan war or the counterterrorist operation against the Taliban in Afghanistan and not even because of America's war on Iraq that Russian-American relations went sour. Gorbachev and Reagan were the first to start talking about "partnership relations" between the two countries; George Bush Sr. continued in the same vein. For eight years, presidents Yeltsin and Clinton spared no effort to assure one another of "American-Russian friendship and partnership." Steven Cohen, however, pointed out that his country was guided by a very simple principle: Moscow should obey Washington's command. The American political analyst went on to say that as a result the United States got almost everything it needed from Russia. Russia, in turn, got practically nothing. Russia helped the United States liquidate the terrorist threat in Afghanistan. Today, however, everyone knows that the Taliban was "temporarily cornered," that NATO (headed by the United States) assumed responsibility for "bringing law and order to the country," while American military bases, which look like a permanent rather than temporary feature, appeared in Central Asia and the Caucasus. It is a strange partnership indeed, concludes Steven Cohen, when one of the partners was busy encircling the other with military bases. There was no partnership, says the American analyst. It was nothing but a myth.

Other American partners have their doubts about the strategies. To dissipate them, the leaders of the largest European states visited Afghanistan one after another: late in 2007 Kabul received German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, Prime Minister of Italy Romano Prodi, and his Australian colleague Kevin Rudd, to say nothing of the top NATO officials who frequented the country.

Daniele Ganser of France is convinced that "from the American point of view this boils down to a struggle to gain control over the energy resources of the Eurasian bloc found in the 'strategic ellipse' stretching from Azerbaijan across Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan to Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, and the Persian Gulf." It is in this region, says the French analyst, which is extremely rich in oil and gas

²⁶ See: interview with S. Cohen: "Partnerstvo? Eto fiktsia," *Tribuna (Delovoy vtornik)*, 2 April, 2003.

and which is the scene of the so-called war on terror that another round of the “geostrategic game” is going on, which “the European Union is sure to lose.” As soon as the United States establishes its control over the local energy resources and the energy crisis becomes even more obvious, America will confront the EU with certain conditions. “The United States will never give its gas and oil free to the European countries. Few are aware of the fact that the North Sea has reached the peak oil and that Norway and Great Britain have already passed the maximum figures and that oil production is steadily decreasing.”²⁷

Prof. Ganser hopes that sooner or later people will realize that the “antiterrorist wars” are nothing but manipulations, while the accusations hurled at the Muslims are (at least partly) propaganda. Europe should wake up to the truth about the “destabilization strategy,” it should learn to say “No” to the United States, where there are many people who do not want continued militarization of international relations.

Other states can do a lot to bring down Central Asian tension. Witness the statement made by a spokesman of the Foreign Ministry of Russia on 27 December, 2007. The document said: “Being aware of the main task of regional security and the need to resolve the Afghan problem in particular, the SCO can take specific measures designed to improve the situation. To make its efforts even more effective it should invite the observer states—Iran and Pakistan in particular—to join the process.”²⁸

The tragic events in Pakistan have confirmed that all the Central Asian states should pool their efforts to achieve mutual understanding when working on decisions that will add stability to the region. Some of the American political analysts agree with this and suggest that the SCO should be included in the process.

In his lecture of 16 January, 2008,²⁹ Assistant Professor of Political Science at Barnard College Alexander Cooley refuted the opinion of those who regard the SCO as a military bloc set up to balance off NATO, on the one hand, and as a “talking shop” unable to take practical measures, on the other, as completely wrong.

“I do not think that the SCO is a ‘talking shop’,” said he. “It is neither a trade nor a military organization. Despite this, it is growing fast and stands firmly on its own. It offers numerous boons to its members and is an attractive alternative to other international organizations.” “The weaker SCO members can influence its stronger partners: both Russia and China listen to their opinion,” said Alexander Cooley.

He said that the U.S. and the West as a whole fear Iran’s potential SCO membership but, he pointed out, “the Central Asian countries have the right to set up their own alliances.” The European Union and the United States have their own interests in Central Asia, pointed out Cooley and added: “They should talk to the SCO and learn to cooperate with it—many of the Western politicians share this opinion.” This is the right road: The SCO has already established close ties with the U.N. and is developing contacts with other international organizations, the OSCE in particular.

Stability in tumultuous Central Asia depends on the goodwill of all regional states resolved to realize principles of democracy, mutual understanding, and international security.

²⁷ Interview with Daniele Ganser in Silvia Cattori, “Il terrorismo non rivendicato della NATO. La strategia della tensione,” *Voltaire* (France), 11 January, 2007.

²⁸ [www.regnum.ru/news/938379.html], 27 December, 2007.

²⁹ Quoted from: [www.regnum.ru/news/943740.html], 17 January, 2008.

END OF RUSSIAN MILITARY BASES IN GEORGIA: SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF WITHDRAWAL

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I n t r o d u c t i o n

The breakup of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War considerably changed the geopolitical situation in Eurasia and started a completely new process of a fundamental transformation of the world political system. The collapse of the Soviet order has created a unique opportunity for the countries of the Southern Caucasus to play a new and significant role as independent forces between the dominant Eurasian power in the north, Russia, and the rival powers in the south, Turkey and Iran. Nevertheless the Caucasus is still an area of conflict despite numerous peacekeeping activities in the region. The continuing competition between the West and Russia over mediation of the conflict creates new geopolitical obstacles for long-term stability and development of the region.

Russian military presence in the Caucasus continues to remain a significant challenge for the newly independent states. Its policy toward the Southern Caucasus has undergone significant changes and hardly be characterized as consistent. Military, political and economic presence has allowed Moscow to exert influence in the regions internal development, especially the course of the conflicts, cease-fires and negotiations. The triad by means of which Russia was safeguarding the interest of its security in the region—military bases, defense of the CIS external borders, peacekeeping—had by the end of decade started to

crack. While the concentration of the Russian forces in the Southern Caucasus was cut down, as of today Russia still remains the sole external state with the power readily to shape developments in the region.

During the Soviet period the Southern Caucasus as part of Soviet Union was fully integrated into its security system, with its share of army, navy and air force bases, border guard contingents and early warning systems. The Soviet Union had maintained a substantial military presence in Georgia as its geopolitical position always made Georgia strategically important and warranting the locating of numerous Soviet military bases within its territory. Since the republic bordered Turkey, a NATO member, the Transcaucasus Military District, which had coordinated Soviet military forces in the three republics of the Transcaucasus, was headquartered in Tbilisi. In mid-1993 an estimated 15,000 Russian troops and border guards remained on Georgian territory. Russia as successor state of Soviet Union inherited geopolitical interest in the Southern Caucasus and particularly in Georgia.

Georgia is important for Russia because of several reasons:

- a) it borders the unstable North Caucasus region of Russia (including the troublesome Republic of Chechnia), which

generates grave internal threats to Russia's security;

- b) Georgia plays an important role in the development of the mineral resources of the Caspian Basin (Georgian territory contains vital Black Sea ports and potential routes of Russia-controlled oil and gas pipelines).¹

Additionally communications and pipelines linking Russia and pro-Russian Armenia run exclusively through Georgia.

After the collapse of Soviet Union at the beginning Georgia did not press the Russian troop withdrawal as vigorously as did other former republics of the Soviet Union because it did not have enough personnel to protect its entire border. However after the defeat in civil war with Abkhaz separatists (allegedly backed by Russian military circles) most Georgians saw Russia as an aggressor country that threatened Georgia's vital interests and territorial integrity. Sadly, this image of Russia still prevails in Georgian public opinion.

At present the Russian-Georgian relationship remains tense. Over the past five years, these relations have been characterized by tension, threats, recriminations, and mutual suspicion. President Saakashvili's unequivocally pro-Western orientation, in particular, Georgia's ambition to join NATO, and the recent promise that he will integrate Abkhazia and South Ossetia into Georgia by the end of his presidency cause outrage in Moscow. Russia for its part has been making life hard for Georgia and still continues its strategy of dragging out and stalling negotiations with Georgia. During a bout of extremely cold winter weather in 2006, Russian gas supplies to Georgia were cut off for prolonged repairs on a pipeline. A few months later, Russia banned the import of wine and mineral water from Georgia. Then, in September, Georgia arrested four Russian officers on charges of spying. This prompted Russia to suspend all direct transport and postal links, as well as to deport hundreds of

Georgian immigrants from Russia and threatened to freeze banking transactions with Georgia. Russia has also given political and economic backing to the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and, seeking to limit the presence of the OSCE and U.N., monitors the borders of the separated regions, condoning the local separatist militia and maintaining its "peacekeeping" forces.

Recently, Tbilisi has accused Russia of being behind an alleged 6 August air attack on Georgian territory near the South Ossetian conflict zone. Two separate groups of 13 technical experts from seven countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States) backed Tbilisi's version of events at the OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC) saying that at least one aircraft had intruded into Georgian airspace from Russia and dropped a guided anti-radar missile deep into Georgian territory.²

Though Russia has categorically denied any involvement in the incident, Georgian public opinion has presented the attack as a sequel to a controversial March 2007 missile strike on the Upper Kodori Gorge, in breakaway Abkhazia which houses the pro-Georgian Abkhaz government-in-exile. Georgia's media claimed Russia was seeking to warn the West that it maintained dominance over its neighbor and the particular target was not significant. Meanwhile, Senior Russian officials and diplomats, as well as Russia's Foreign Ministry, indicated several times this year that Moscow wanted to see Georgia as "a sovereign, neutral and friendly country." Russia's calls for Georgian neutrality collide with Tbilisi's NATO ambitions. The Georgian authorities have repeatedly said that the country's Euro-Atlantic aspiration is the top foreign policy priority and it cannot be traded off.

In the context of Georgian-Russian relations perhaps most sensitive of all is the question of Russian bases in Georgia. The presence of Russian troops has become one of the major hang-ups in the countries' bilateral relations, since Russia

¹ See: V.V. Naumkin, "Russian Policy in the South Caucasus," *The Quarterly Journal*, No. 3, 2002.

² See: "Missile Incident Discussed at OSCE," *Civil Ge*, 17 October, 2007.

agreed to the pullout of its bases under the provisions set forth in the 1999 OSCE Istanbul summit treaty.

Russian military presence in conflict zones is still a major challenge in the country, since

Russia retains a far more powerful presence in Georgia than any other foreign state, none of which, aware of the limitations of their own ability to project power, have sought to challenge its position.

The Vaziani and Gudauta Military Bases

The withdrawal of the military bases of the Russian Federation from the territory of Georgia represented a firm determination of the citizens of Georgia and Georgian authorities.³ On the basis of the joint statement made at the OSCE Istanbul Summit on 17 November, 1999, which is a part of the adapted CFE Treaty, the Georgian authorities have been holding negotiations with the Russian Federation on withdrawal of Russian military bases from the territory of Georgia. In accordance with the Istanbul joint statement, the Russian Federation committed itself to liquidate the Vaziani and Gudauta military bases. However, only on 6 October, 2006 the Russian Duma ratified agreements on the transit of Russian military cargo and personnel through Georgia, which included the terms, order of operation and withdrawal of Russian military bases from Georgia. The agreements were ratified in line with documents signed by Russia and Georgia in March 2006 in Sochi.

The term of the agreement is five years, but it may be extended if there are no objections from either side. Under the agreement, Russia must withdraw from the southern city of Akhalkalaki by October 1, 2007, but the deadline can be extended until December in the event of complications. The withdrawal from Batumi in the west of Georgia must be completed by late 2008. At the same time, the ratified agreement states that bases in Batumi and the southern city of Akhalkalaki will remain operational during the gradual process of removing troops and hardware. According to an agreement, the Russian military transit through Georgia may be conducted by road, air or rail transport. Russia cannot deliver through Georgian territory, including its air space, nuclear, chemical or biological weapons, as well as other weapons of mass destruction, including its components. Russia pledges not to deploy any further equipment or ammunition to the two bases.

The agreement defines transit procedures through Georgian territory of military cargo and personnel in support of the 102nd Russian military base in Armenia. The 102nd Russian military base in Gumri, about 120 kilometers from the Armenian capital Erevan, is part of a joint air defense system of the Commonwealth of Independent States, which was deployed in Armenia in 1995. The base operates under the authority of the Russian group of forces in the Southern Caucasus, and is equipped with S-300 (SA-10 Grumble) air defense systems, MiG-29 Fulcrum fighters and 5,000 personnel.⁴

An agreement also includes setting in motion preparations for a formal inspection by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and Germany of the Gudauta military base that Russia claims to have vacated in July 2001. Also agreed to seek additional sources of funding to cover the expenses of transporting equipment from the two Georgian bases. With regard to the liquidation of the Gudauta and Vaziani military bases, Russia has fulfilled the international commitment taken with-

³ See: *Resolution of the Parliament of Georgia on the Military Bases of the Russian Federation Located on the Territory of Georgia*, 10 March, 2005, available at [<http://www.georgiaemb.org/DisplayMedia.asp?id=379>].

⁴ See: "Duma Ratifies Agreements on Russian Military Presence in Georgia," *RIA Novosti*, 6 October, 2006.

in the Istanbul joint statement only partially. Namely, the Vaziani military base has been liquidated, however, only weaponry and military machinery restricted by the CFE Treaty have been removed from the Gudauta base, which the Georgian side is contesting.

Akhalkalaki Military Base

Akhalkalaki's position on the Turkish border, and on a natural route from Turkey into the Southern Caucasus, has long made the area a strategic prize. In Soviet times, the base in Akhalkalaki was the headquarters of a powerful group of forces which confronted those of NATO's Turkey a few miles away across the border. Russian military representation in Samtskhe-Javakheti originates since 1828 when the Russian Empire conquered Samtskhe-Javakheti by military force and annexed it to the Tbilisi province.⁵ Since that time till present the bases have had the most important influence on the political and economic situation in the region. It also called forth the formation of the present face of the region.

Both for the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union the existence of the base was of a great importance resulting from the military-strategic functions of the region. In the 19th century Samtskhe-Javakheti was an outpost of the Russian Empire in its fight against the Ottoman Empire, while after World War II it turned into a border region between two participants of the cold war—the Soviet Union and NATO. This accounts for the special militarization of the region. The Russian army and special services were concentrated here, while the majority of the region's population was connected in one or another way to the military institutions. The entire region presented a border zone and entrance was allowed only with special passes. This was also another factor for the isolation of the region's population from the rest of Georgia.

After the breakdown of the Soviet Union, the issue of the withdrawal of the Russian military bases, including the Akhalkalaki base, became a matter of principle for the Georgian government and it presented the main issue of the Russian-Georgian relations. For the government of Georgia and the majority of population the presence of the military base is a remnant of the Russian rule and one of the linchpins of the unwanted Russian influence over Georgia. The key date for the base withdrawal became the OSCE Istanbul summit of 1999 when the Georgian and Russian sides came to the agreement, according to which a concrete date of army withdrawal should have been defined by 2000. However, a real step toward the solving of this issue was taken only in May 2005, when the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Russia and Georgia, Mr. Sergey Lavrov and Ms. Salome Zurabishvili adopted a joint declaration where the year 2008 was defined as the date for the base withdrawal. This declaration was supported by the agreement between the Ministries of Defense of Georgia and Russia signed on 31 March, 2006.

According to the above-mentioned agreement, the Russian troops shall leave Batumi and Tbilisi central base by 2008, while they should leave Akhalkalaki not later than 31 December, 2007. However, first military columns have already left their place of dislocation in Akhalkalaki in late 2004 on an ad-hoc basis and continued from mid-2006 onward in accordance with an agreed timetable. As a result on 27 June, 2007 Russia formally handed over its military base in Akhalkalaki to Tbilisi. It should be noted that the last 150 Russian troops left on the eve of the official handover. Thus Russians have completed withdrawal three months ahead of the December 2007 deadline. Fixed assets handed over

⁵ After annexation of different Georgian kingdoms and provinces Georgia was divided into two big provinces (gubernias)—Tbilisi Province in the East and Kutaisi Province in the West attached to the Russian Empire.

to the Georgians include 196 buildings on an area of 128 hectares as well as a nearby combat training range.⁶

The withdrawal of the Akhalkalaki base was perceived very painfully by the local Armenian population of Javakheti, which has two reasons to it—an economic and a political. Besides the pure military function, the base also had a social role, being the largest economic entity in Akhalkalaki. According to different sources 1,000-1,500 local residents were employed there and were relatively well paid. Moreover, Russian servicemen spent part of their income locally and the base was involved in different economic transactions. The base also ensured that the region stayed economically tied to Russia by paying local servicemen at the base in Russian rubles. As a result the main currency circulated in the region was ruble. Also, as a result of the 1998 Russian requirement that all servicemen at its bases hold Russian citizenship, the local Armenian population has acquired Russian citizenship in addition to their Georgian citizenship. The Russian military base was used for transporting unregistered goods in and out of the region, which increased the economic importance of the base not only for the local clans,⁷ who were closely connected with the base authority, but for the local population as well.

The political motive is no less important. Fear of the neighboring Turkey is still very strong in the local Armenian population, as the conflicts that took place in the early 20th century are still vivid in their memory. The Armenian community in Javakheti strongly believes that only Russia can protect them from the imagined Turkish aggression. They argue that once Russian border guards left the Georgian-Turkish border the quality of frontier security sharply declined. The belief is widespread that if the Russian military base is withdrawn it will be replaced by NATO troops or the military forces of Georgia which is not trusted by the population either.

Today the Georgian government conducts programs for the integration of the Armenian-speaking population of Javakheti into the Georgian state. The withdrawal of the Russian bases from the region will not only strengthen the national sovereignty for the Georgian government, but also precondition the economic integration of the Javakheti population. To replace the bases, the government presents to the population various programs which will provide the unemployed population after the withdrawal of the bases with alternative jobs. One of such incentives was presented by the Ministry of Defense of Georgia according to which the mentioned body will permanently buy different agricultural products, basically potatoes, from the population for the military. Besides, there are special plans according to which centers of food production will be opened in Akhalkalaki providing new working places.

However, notwithstanding these promises the attitude of the population is still skeptic and acts of protest are conducted in the region. This proves that the process of the Russian military base withdrawal will not be painless and the Georgian government will face serious problems of social integration of unemployed workers.

Batumi Military Base

From 1991 through 2005, Russia stonewalled the negotiations on troop withdrawal, attempting to prolong its presence at Akhalkalaki and Batumi indefinitely. Even after the signing of the 1999

⁶ See: V. Soccor, "Georgian Flag Raised over Akhalkalaki," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 2 July, 2007.

⁷ Weakness of the civil sector in the region contributed to the emergence of local clan networks, who obtained control over existing resources and started to perform informal political, social and economic functions.

Istanbul agreements on troop withdrawal, Russia wanted at least another decade to close these two bases and demanded hundreds of millions of dollars as compensation for relocating the troops and materiel in Russia. However, the 2003 regime change in Georgia and the reestablishment of effective Georgian sovereignty in Ajaria changed the negotiations fundamentally. Moscow understood that the location of Batumi, deep inside Georgian territory, meant that the bases could be isolated and even blockaded if Russia refused to honor its obligation to close them down. This realization, as well as the loss of real military value of these bases, led Moscow to agree to evacuate them.

Instead, Russia hoped to retain the Batumi base by re-labeling it “anti-terrorist center.” The Georgian government originally came up with this idea in 2004 in order to re-start the Russian-blocked negotiations and to provide Moscow with a face-saving way to withdraw the troops. Tbilisi had envisaged the formation of one joint Georgian-Russian analytical anti-terrorist center, under Georgian sovereign control and not located at any existing military base, to be created in the wake of the garrisons’ departure, and to include several scores of Russian officers, without troops or armaments. The accord also contained vague language concerning the creation of such a center to be “formalized by a separate document,” as well as a bilateral commitment to conclude a pact regulating joint border issues “as soon as possible.”

The Russian leaders who seemed to be laying the groundwork for public acceptance of a withdrawal accord downplayed the strategic significance of the bases. “They are not bases, but just places where Soviet soldiers were always located. These bases are not of interest for us in terms of Russia’s security issues—this is the opinion of the Russian General Staff,” Russian President Vladimir Putin, stated in a meeting with the editorial staff of the *Komsomolskaia pravda* newspaper on 23 May, 2006.⁸

At the same time some observers and politicians in Georgia worried that the accord contained loopholes potentially enabling Russia to maintain a military presence in Georgia and thus public opinion felt uneasy about the project. Given the strained relations between the two countries, it seemed that neither Georgia nor Russia even theoretically considered the establishment of such a center in Batumi or elsewhere. However, in a statement issued on 21 November, 2007 Russia said that Georgia was failing to honor a commitment to start talks on the establishment of a joint anti-terrorist center to be based in the former Russian military base in Batumi. The Russian Foreign Ministry said that while Moscow had fulfilled its commitments under the agreement, Georgia was maintaining a non-cooperative stance.⁹

As to the 12th base most disturbing fact during the past years was that, despite the repeated ban imposed by the Georgian side, military exercises were carried out on the military polygons that were temporarily at the disposal of Russia. Moreover, the military units, stationed at the Batumi base, carried out military drills, using heavy weaponry and machinery on the Gonio military polygon and therefore, taking into account the fact that this region represented zone of tourist industry, inflicted particularly huge damage to Georgia’s ecosystem and economy. In addition, the Group of Russian Troops in the Transcaucasus (GRVZ) fully ignored the Georgian legislation and failed to adequately respond to the good will demonstrated by the Georgian side; sadly, the Russian leadership opted for an unconstructive position on this issue over the past years.

Recently on 13 November, the evacuation process from the 12th Russian military base in Batumi has ended and as a result it was officially handed over to Georgia ahead of planned schedule. A document on handing over of the base was signed by Batu Kutelia, the first deputy defense minister of Georgia and commander of the Group of Russian Forces in the Transcaucasus Andrei Popov. “All those facilities, which were occupied by the Russian military units, were transferred to the Georgian

⁸ See: *Komsomolskaia pravda*, 23 May, 2006.

⁹ See: “Moscow Tells Tbilisi to Keep Pledge on Anti-Terrorist Center,” *Civil Ge*, 21 November, 2007.

armed forces, while their remaining equipment, servicemen and staff are in the process of departure and the process will end in next several days,” Batu Kutelia told the Georgian Public Broadcaster. Confirming this fact Russian news agency RIA Novosti stated that “Russia has completed a pullout of military personnel and equipment from a Soviet-era base in Batumi, the Batumi base commander, the commander of Russia’s contingent in the Southern Caucasus, as well as 150 servicemen and their families are on the train, which is also carrying some 200 metric tons of equipment.”¹⁰ It should be noted that originally the process was planned to be completed in a course of 2008, according to the agreement reached between Georgia and Russia in 2005.

The Batumi pullout means that no Russian troops remain in Georgia except for peacekeepers in the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The Georgian government gave a positive assessment of completion of withdrawal of the Russian 12th military base in Batumi and expressed hope that soon no Russian troops will be left in the conflict zones in the country’s territory. “This is a great victory of our country, our diplomacy, joint effort of all our institutions. I hope that, with the same pace, we shall manage to withdraw all the rest Russian troops from the country’s territory, including Abkhazia, that still cause major problems in the country. I hope that soon Russian troops will leave the whole Georgian territory,” Givi Targamadze, Chairman of the Georgian Parliamentary Committee for Defense and Security, said.¹¹

The Georgian government officials recognize that Russia’s withdrawal will have a broad economic impact on the region and subsequently new roads, social welfare support and military food procurement contracts for local inhabitants have been promised. However, unanswered questions surrounded the work prospects for Georgians employed as military personnel at the Batumi base. The Georgian government announced that Georgian citizens employed as military personnel at the Russian bases would be eligible to transfer into the Georgian armed services. Officials hope a strategy to develop tourism in Ajaria could alleviate the economic damage done by the Russian troops’ departure. They think that main economic direction is privatization and concentration on tourism. However, some base workers are skeptical that tourism will enable them to make up for lost revenue following the withdrawal.

CIS PKF and Gudauta base

Along with the Batumi and Akhalkalaki bases, the issue of the Russian military base in Gudauta, which is located in Georgia’s breakaway region of Abkhazia, also stirs debate. The base has always been a significant factor in the Abkhaz conflict. The Georgian side and many Western independent observers claim the Gudauta base provided principal military support to Abkhaz rebels during the war in 1992-1993. At a summit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, in Istanbul in 1999, Russia agreed to shut down its base at Gudauta and to withdraw troops and equipment. Russia pledges that pursuant to the provisions of the OSCE Istanbul treaty, military equipment has been completely removed from the base and now the facility is used by the Russian peacekeepers, deployed in the Abkhaz conflict zone under the auspices of the Commonwealth of Independent States. However, the Georgian authorities doubt this statement and urge for international monitoring of the military base, with participation of Georgian experts.

¹⁰ “Midnight Train from Georgia Sees Russia Complete Military Pullout,” *RIA Novosti*, 15 November, 2007.

¹¹ See: “Georgian MP Hopes that Russian Troops will Leave the Whole Georgian Territory Soon,” available at [<http://www.regnum.ru/english/914125.html>], 29 February, 2008.

Despite the fact that the Russian side declares the Gudauta military base closed, Apsnypress quoted Maj.-Gen. Sergey Chaban, commander of the Russian peacekeeping forces deployed in the Abkhaz conflict zone, that currently only 4 helicopters and 130 Russian military servicemen still remain there.¹² This means that the base is not closed and that position had been maintained repeatedly by the Georgian side at the Joint Consultation Group (JCG) meeting in Vienna and shared by the majority of OSCE member states. Russia retains the Gudauta base and is blocking OSCE inspections there, although such inspections are mandatory under the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. Russia argues that the Georgian side must ensure safety of the international monitoring mission. The both sides know that Tbilisi cannot undertake such responsibility on the territory, which is not under its control, thus officials in Tbilisi believe that Russia uses this circumstance to delay the process as long as possible.

Meanwhile, Tbilisi seeks to end Russian Peacekeepers mandate in Abkhazia. Georgia says it will move to formally ask Russian peacekeepers to leave the breakaway region of Abkhazia following reports that they seized and beat five Georgian police officers. Government officials maintain that the 30 October, 2007 clash, in which several Georgian policemen were allegedly beaten and detained by Russian peacekeepers, has made imperative the demand for a new peacekeeping format. In a 31 October statement, the Georgian Foreign Ministry alleges that Russian peacekeepers with armored vehicles besieged a youth camp in Gannukhuri, a village in the Georgian region of Samegrelo, and physically abused and detained Georgian officers who were guarding the camp. The Georgian Interior Ministry special unit officers stopped the Russian peacekeepers, the Foreign Ministry claims, alleging that the confrontation ended only when Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili arrived on the scene. Commenting on Georgia's demand to dismiss the current peacekeeping forces commander, Sergey Chaban, from his post, A. Burutin said his powers were established by the Council of CIS Heads of State. Such issues should be decided by the CIS councils of defense and foreign ministers, he said.

At the same time, Georgian politicians have warned Russia against formally recognizing the independence of the Abkhazia, after Tbilisi issued claims that Moscow has stepped up its military presence in the conflict zone. Georgian State Minister for Conflict Resolution, Davit Bakradze, declared on 12 November that Russia has deployed five tanks, five rocket launchers, five military vehicles and seven howitzers, along with at least 200 additional troops, in the conflict zone. Moreover, President Saakashvili said on 14 November that the Georgian side had "documented evidence" proving of presence of additional Russian armament and troops in Ochamchira, breakaway Abkhazia.¹³ The recognition of Abkhazia by Russia would amount to declaration of war against Georgia and "we will accept this challenge," an influential lawmaker Givi Targamadze, who chairs the Georgian parliament's defense and security committee, said on 13 November. Commenting on this, Matthew Bryza, the U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, said that his government had already raised these reports with the Russian authorities. "That is something that would sharply contradict to Russia's status as facilitator," he added. He also condemned some statements "issued from other countries"—obviously referring to Russian officials (Yuri Luzhkov, the mayor of Moscow, has recently called for recognition of Abkhazia's independence)—calling for recognition of Abkhazia as "reckless, dangerous and unnecessary."

In response, the Russian Foreign Ministry in statement issued on 21 November, 2007 pointed out that although Russian troops have withdrawn from bases in Georgia, Russian servicemen remained as peacekeepers in the Abkhaz and South Ossetian conflict zones. According to the Russian Foreign Ministry, Russian peacekeepers represented "a major obstacle for those, who, under cover of peaceful

¹² See: "Abkhaz Reports: NATO Parliamentarians to Visit Abkhazia," *Civil Ge*, 20 April, 2006.

¹³ Georgian Public Broadcaster, 14 November, 2007.

rhetoric, continue preparing for military adventure in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.”¹⁴ The Russian MoF also criticized what it said was official Tbilisi’s habit of raising spurious complaints against Russia. It said such a stance was designed to cover up Tbilisi’s unconstructive stance in the Russian-Georgian relations. At the same time, the Russian authorities dismissed earlier Georgian allegations that it was building a military base in Abkhazia.

C o n c l u s i o n

The new Georgian state and its leaders have faced a number of objective obstacles, which suggests that the pullout of Russian troops from Georgia is inherently difficult, especially from conflict regions like Abkhazia and South Ossetia. These two unresolved territorial conflicts are small and frozen and are legacies of the demise of the Soviet Union and are considered as the most serious challenges facing Georgia today. It is clear that Georgia wants to solve the disputes in a democratic and European manner by ensuring political rights for both regions, individual rights, and the integrity of the Georgian state. Thus Georgia’s highest priority is to settle these conflicts peacefully and restore Georgia’s constitutional rule within its borders, using direct dialog with local populations, *de facto* leaders, and impartial mediation by the international community.

Though the Georgian government has pledged to establish “very good” relations with Russia, despite the fact that some political and military forces of Russia believe that the Georgian state-building project opposes Russia’s national interests, Russia is trying to restore its hegemony, and is actively, yet subtly, competing for influence over the region. Russia’s objectives toward Georgia focus on retaining influence as Russia has concerns about security on her southern border and the potential alliance of Turkey and the South Caucasian states. Accordingly, Russia feels threatened by the sudden move of NATO and other Western military structures into an area, which was very much part of its own backyard. In addition, Russia is not playing a helpful role and derails every attempt to find solutions for conflict settlement in Georgia. (Russia has illegally issued passports in the breakaway regions, while high-level Russian officials are serving in the *de facto* government of Abkhazia. The *de facto* leader of Abkhazia was also recently invited to a conference of Russian governors.) In this context, Russia’s geopolitical behavior in the region in the past several years has caused serious doubts that conflict resolution is a priority in Kremlin’s policy toward Georgia.

Generally, the situation with the Russian military bases in Georgia is now optimistically changing. Russia had almost fulfilled its 1999 OSCE Istanbul commitments to pull out military bases from Georgia, except for the need for Russia to reach agreement with Georgia on the status or withdrawal of the Russian presence at the Gudauta base. However, Russia’s decision to withdraw from a major treaty limiting military forces in Europe might affect the near-completed process of withdrawal of Russian bases from Georgia and especially from the Gudauta base. Russian officials stated that the suspension of its participation in the treaty meant Moscow would also stop providing information on and stop allowing inspections of its heavy weapons. It also said that Moscow would decide unilaterally on how many tanks or aircraft to deploy. Russia’s decision has raised much international concern.

Meanwhile, Tbilisi is unilaterally ending the mandate of Russian peacekeepers in Georgia. Although a specific date of removing Russian peacekeepers was not announced, the representatives of the State Chancellery stated that the date will be clear very soon. It seems that the Georgian government has finally decided to evict the Russian peacekeepers. Back in the Shevardnadze years, the par-

¹⁴ “Russia Dismisses Allegations It Is Building a Military Base in Abkhazia,” *RIA Novosti*, 11 June, 2007.

liament already stopped the mandate of Russian peacekeepers once, only to have Shevardnadze veto the measure. Many things changed after that and in 2006 the Georgian parliament returned to the issue of Russian peacekeepers, although still leaving the question of withdrawal date opened. However, this time the government decision looks like a final one and is not exposed to re-consideration.

At the same time, the Georgian parliament discusses the issue of who will replace Russian peacekeepers in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict zone. Most likely, these would be international peacekeeping forces, however, which countries will take part is not specified yet. How straightforward will the Georgian government be in this case depends on how events develop in Georgia and how Moscow will react. If Moscow does not stop aggravating the confrontation, then it is quite realistic to assume that the process of withdrawing Russian peacekeepers will take an unequivocal turn.

All of these developments demonstrate the seriousness of the situation in the Caucasus and create new challenges and options in the region. In many ways, Georgia's difficulties stem from Russia's confusion as to what its own priorities should be in the post-Soviet expanse. While Russian troop withdrawal clearly meets Georgia's interests, the procedures associated with the planned antiterrorist agreement and its legal implications pose some risks. The Georgian side would never agree to create such center, even under Georgian sovereignty. Georgia's desire for NATO membership is another factor influencing Tbilisi's withdrawal position. Some Georgian experts believe that Georgia's membership in NATO will not be seriously contemplated in Brussels until Russian troops leave the country.¹⁵

Notwithstanding all above-mentioned, Georgia needs to pursue a coherent approach to solve the current problems and advance democratic changes. In order to assist Georgia international community should be focused on several points:

- Georgia has managed to transform dramatically toward strengthening democracy in a very short period of time. Despite existing problems, country's course toward strengthening democracy and integration into NATO is very evident. Russia needs to recognize that a Western integrated Georgia would pose it no threat. To the contrary, a Western integrated Georgia would be a source of regional security and stability.
- Bringing Georgia into NATO would not be dangerous vis-à-vis Russia, rather, it would stabilize the relationship between Russia and Georgia, much as it did with the Baltic-Russian relationship. Moreover, it is necessary to convince Russia that Georgian progress and rapprochement with the West is irreversible.
- Moscow could do much more to normalize relations. Russia maintains the economic and transportation sanctions it imposed against Georgia. Likewise, it continues to take actions that call into question its professed support for Georgia's territorial integrity by supporting separatist regimes in Georgia's South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions. Russia should play a more constructive role and use its influence with the separatists to advance a peaceful resolution of each conflict in Georgia.
- Joint peacekeeping forces are operating under terms laid out in the Sochi Agreement but this framework may not be sufficient to build a lasting peace. Without substantial changes to the current peacekeeping framework, it is hard to imagine how the parties will arrive at a comprehensive solution. Many believe that the process now needs to be broadened.
- Due to the unconstructive stance of the Russian side, up to now it has been impossible to carry out inspection of the Gudauta base, which would verify its closure. At the same time, one-off

¹⁵ See: P. Ralchev, "Georgia's Russian Hurdles. Negotiating Russian Troops Withdrawal from Georgia," Institute for Regional and International Studies, 2005, available at [<http://www.iris-bg.org/f/plamen.pdf>].

inspection is not good enough to prove closure of the military base; it is essential to take specific measures aimed at guarantying permanent transparency in terms of further usage of certain facilities of the base.

- Although it remains to be seen whether Georgia will be able to bargain the best deal for itself, one thing is certain—Georgia's place in the region, and its relations with both Russia and the West, are entering a crucial new phase. Simply put, it's make it or break it time for Georgia.

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF NATO'S CENTRAL ASIAN STRATEGY: THE ROLE OF KAZAKHSTAN

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Since the 1990s, Central Asia has been steadily moving into the limelight of world geopolitics because of its geostrategic and geo-economic potential. Political influence, economic interests, access to its considerable resource potential, promotion of religious and national ideas, as well as all aspects of regional security can be described as priorities. The region's geographic location is certainly advantageous: it is found, first, between two influential geopolitical forces and, second, between powerful industrial centers and large consumer markets of Europe and Asia. This means that the region's security and sustainable development are an indispensable condition for realizing all sorts of interests. It goes without saying that it is not easy, for several (including objective) reasons, to set up a system of regional security in Central Asia.

Today the regional security system has several levels; however, it lacks a more or less clear structure, while relative stability is maintained by

bilateral military-political agreements between the Central Asian states and foreign power centers by the efforts of several international organizations. At the same time, the more active involvement of transnational security structures with different ideological platforms is introducing latent geopolitical tension and heating up rivalry among the large geopolitical players. The CSTO, SCO and NATO, all of them dynamically developing military-political alliances, are used as regional rivalry tools.

It should be said that the former two are present in the region for historical and geographic reasons, while the latter has come to stay. In the long-term perspective, therefore, its impact on the regional processes will become inevitable, while the efficiency of regional collective security efforts will largely depend on the format of relations between the Central Asian states and NATO, as well as on cooperation between NATO and Russia, China, the CSTO, and the SCO.

NATO's Contemporary Development Trends

Dynamic developments in the international security sphere have posed the question of the effectiveness of the transnational structures responsible for maintaining security throughout the world by collective efforts. For this reason, for the last fifteen years, NATO has been engaged in systemic re-adjustment of its mechanisms and tools responsible for the security in the Euro-Atlantic zone. For many years now, the Alliance has been identifying and substantiating those missions that go beyond the limits of its functions in strategic documents. It is concentrating on dealing with the new tasks: the antiterrorist struggle; prevention of WMD proliferation; crisis settlement, peacekeeping efforts, and wider dialogs with the countries outside the organization, which envisages readjusting their combat-readiness and maintaining a high level of the armed forces' efficiency. Taken together, this is transforming NATO into a tool that promotes globalization by force; it can also be described as the force-based skeleton of the new world order.¹

NATO is not merely actively involved in the conceptual readjustment of its collective security system and expanding its membership. It is widely using the new strategic ideas in practice. Today NATO is claiming a key role in the international security architecture. To be able to assume this role, however, it must change itself and its strategy. It is gradually enlarging by drawing in new members from Eastern and Central Europe and the Baltic area, which means that it is growing globally. Political science uses the term "NATO's eastward enlargement" to describe the process. The globalization process has taken NATO beyond its traditional responsibility zone, which, on the whole, can be explained by the upsurge of transnational security threats: international terrorism, the failed states, and proliferation of WMD. This explains why traditional "Euro-centrism" is no longer topical.

According to American experts: "With little fanfare—and even less notice—the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has gone global."² It should be said in all justice that the so-called globalization of NATO went through a long evolution process caused by a chain of internal crises and contradictions among the members, as well as several armed conflicts in which the Alliance took part (Yugoslavia in 1999, Afghanistan in 2001, and Iraq in 2003). This experience created the worldwide precedent of peace enforcement operations and humanitarian interventions outside the U.N. and endowed NATO with the ability to "project" military force beyond the traditional responsibility zone.

The same authors justify the expansion of NATO's involvement by the post-Cold War political situation: "Today, terrorists born in Riyadh and trained in Kandahar hatch deadly plots in Hamburg to fly airplanes into buildings in New York. Such interconnection means that developments in one place affect the security, prosperity, and well-being of citizens everywhere. NATO has recognized that the best (and at times the only) defense against such remote dangers is to tackle them at their source."³ Russian experts, in turn, have pointed out that the "idea of going beyond the traditional responsibility zone is nothing but a pretext for taking into account the 'global context' when ensuring the members' security."⁴

Today NATO is working on strategic plans aimed at drawing as many countries as possible into Western geopolitics. For this reason, the tactical or even strategic disagreements among the

¹ See: V. Shtol, *Evolutsia NATO v realiakh globalizatsii*, Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Moscow, 2004.

² I. Daalder, J. Goldgeier, "Global NATO," *Foreign Affairs*, No. 5, September/October 2006.

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ A.P. Alekseev, "NATO na putiakh transformatsii," *Evropeyskaia bezopasnost: sobytia, otsenki, prognozy*, Issue 9, 2003, p. 2.

Alliance's leaders notwithstanding, NATO is building up its geopolitical presence in many corners of the world.⁵

At the 2006 Riga summit, the NATO countries agreed to intensify their cooperation with partners outside the Alliance (Australia, New Zealand, India, Brazil, and Japan), as well as with the Middle Eastern and Gulf countries. It is "planned to become more deeply involved in cooperation with other international players, such as the U.N., EU, G-8, and the World Bank, as well as NGOs,"⁶ for the sake of a comprehensive approach to the security issues.

The Mediterranean and the Middle East are two of NATO's priorities where it operates on the basis of Istanbul Cooperation Initiative adopted at the 2004 NATO summit in Istanbul. The document allows the interested states of the Greater Middle East to cooperate with the Alliance on the bilateral basis, starting with the individual members of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

In recent years, NATO set up institutional mechanisms of partnership with the Caucasian states that are functioning today. The Alliance is working with the states on an individual and parallel basis. The task is not an easy one: it has to establish cooperation within its programs between Armenia and Azerbaijan and Armenia and Turkey. So far, according to NATO sources, Georgia is the only local state that is actively and consistently moving toward the Alliance. Armenia and Azerbaijan have not yet raised the question of their NATO membership. The Alliance describes its policy in the Southern Caucasus as "spreading stability." Today NATO is just getting used to its role of the region's stabilizing force and is keeping away from the zones of conflict.⁷

In view of Central Asia's special strategic importance for NATO, Brussels is keeping its contacts with the local countries at the highest level; it is prepared to consistently strengthen its presence in the region.⁸ America and the EU are very active in Central Asia: they are busy fortifying the West's military presence there through numerous bilateral and multilateral programs and agreements designed to tie the local states to NATO's policies. Cooperation among the Central Asian states and the North Atlantic Alliance has a fairly long history, but the stronger position of Russia and China achieved through the SCO, as well as forced evacuation of the American forces from Uzbekistan and the recurring contradictions between the United States and Kyrgyzstan, affect the military-political configuration in Central Asia.

NATO's Central Asian Diplomacy

The dynamically globalizing Alliance is obviously seeking tighter control over the region through its integration into NATO's collective security system. It is pursuing several strategic tasks in line with the interests of the West and the United States as its part.

- *First*, the Alliance wants to fortify its position directly in the region to acquire access to its energy resources and gain control over the transportation routes. It also wants to keep Russia and China "irritated" by remaining directly on their borders and in the zone of their natural

⁵ See: M. Laumulin, *Tsentral'naia Azia v mirovoy politologii i mirovoy geopolitike*, Vol. II. *Vneshniaia politika i strategiya SShA na sovremennom etape i Tsentral'naia Azia*, KISI, Almaty, 2006, p. 147.

⁶ Rad van den Akker, M. Rühle, "Putting NATO's Riga Summit into Context," *Russia in Global Politics*, No. 2, April-June 2007.

⁷ See: A. Nursha, "Strategia NATO na Kavkaze i v Afghanistane: sostoianie i perspektivy," 10 July, 2007 [www.kisi.kz].

⁸ See: M. Laumulin, "NATO v Tsentral'noy Azii," *Kontinent*, No. 18 (105), 24 September-7 October, 2003.

interests. This will allow it, at least, to help the West implement its economic projects, while the attention of two large rivals will remain detracted from what NATO is doing globally. It will also retain a certain amount of control in the security sphere; it will oppose transnational threats to the Euro-Atlantic region born in Central Asia and Afghanistan and control the local states' policies. On top of this, Afghanistan plays an important role in the Alliance's military-political strategy as its first military operation under the cooperative conception of security "projection" to the source of threat outside the Euro-Atlantic zone. It was also the first test and the first taste of practical experience in a peacekeeping and anti-crisis operation carried out when the Alliance completed its systemic transformations. Finally, Afghanistan and the situation around it justified NATO's continued presence in Central Asia and its emergence outside the European zone.

- *Second*, the NATO troops in Central Asia serve as a basis for the Alliance's continued control over the neighboring countries that threaten, to a certain extent, the West and its interests. The Alliance is consistently carrying out America's long-term project of geopolitical encirclement of Iran: military strikes on the country have been discussed for several years now. The fact that NATO and the United States managed to move their armed forces to the post-Soviet territory and Afghanistan created a very unfavorable geostrategic configuration around Iran. Indeed, the NATO Central Asian bases and the Caucasian partner-states (Georgia and Azerbaijan) have closed the circle around Iran: in the north there are bases in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan; in the northwest there are two pro-NATO states (Georgia and Azerbaijan); in the west, there are pro-American Israel and Saudi Arabia, Turkey (which is a NATO member), and American contingents in occupied Iraq; in the east, there are bases in Afghanistan and pro-Western Pakistan; and in the south pro-Western Kuwait, UAE, and Oman complete the circle. It looks as if America has carved out the foothold it needs to launch an attack on Iran (with possible NATO involvement). We can even say that Washington, which has been carefully weaving an anti-Iranian geopolitical plot for the last six years (since the counterterrorist operation of 2001), finally gained this foothold.⁹

The Alliance plays a much more important role in Western projects than meets the eye: it is helping to keep Russia, China, and Iran in check in the region, on the one hand, and is exerting ideological pressure on the Western regional partners, on the other. NATO is consistently carrying out very ambitious plans to become the key geopolitical and military operator in Central Asia. It has already laid several cornerstones:

- *first*, it relies on the smoothly functioning mechanisms of the Partnership for Peace and North Atlantic Partnership Council;
- *second*, its relations with the Central Asian countries rest on a legal and normative base;
- *third*, military-political cooperation and military training exercises are a regular feature in the region;
- *fourth*, NATO has its bases in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan (the scene of the NATO-led counterterrorist operation).

NATO is pursuing its regional strategy through distancing and fragmentation, which allows the Alliance to rely on bilateral relations: there is no need to contact the rivaling regional security structures, such as the CSTO and SCO, which limits Russia's and China's range of control over NATO-Central Asia relations.

⁹ See: G. Djemal, "Dvoynoy okhvat," *Profil*, No. 35, 24 September, 2007, pp. 24-25.

At the same time, the bilateral format helps NATO to fragment the region by identifying and supporting the leader with a pro-NATO and pro-Western orientation; in this way, the country is opposed to countries with a pro-Russian foreign policy bias.¹⁰ Bilateral relations simplify the task of putting political and ideological pressure on any of the regional partners.

The Alliance's rapidly progressing politicization inevitably affected its relations with the Central Asian countries. In 2004, NATO set up the post of NATO Secretary-General's Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia; Robert Simmons, the current representative, is a frequent visitor who is always ready for talks and consultations to keep his regular contacts at a government level.

NATO uses bilateral diplomacy to apply the "divide and rule" principle to the best possible effect by exploiting the obvious contradictions and latent rivalry among the local states (Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and partly Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan are such rivals, etc.).

All sorts of investment and economic programs carried out by international financial structures in the region make NATO even more attractive to the countries coping with financial and economic problems. This is true of nearly all the Central Asian countries and is especially true of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Financial aid to Uzbekistan was discontinued as soon as the U.S. and NATO pulled out of its territory. Kazakhstan moved away from the programs because of its dynamic economic growth. The Alliance, in turn, supports the Western businesses operating in Central Asia.

NATO is not only pursuing military-strategic interests in the oil- and gas-rich region: it is indirectly promoting the realization of Western energy-related interests. This was recently confirmed by an invitation to set up an "energy Alliance" by endowing NATO with the function of ensuring uninterrupted supply of energy resources to its member states. So far, the project's practical side remains vague.

NATO strategists hope that a system of bilateral relations rooted in all sorts of normative-legal acts that will take care of preferences and obligations will make it possible for the Alliance to narrow down the local countries' foreign policy leeway. There is any number of cooperation programs pushing the Central Asian countries toward greater dependence on NATO (Partnership for Peace, individual partnership plans, the Virtual Silk Road, etc.).¹¹

It stands to reason that the Alliance's military presence and active political involvement have somewhat improved the regional security architecture: on the one hand, it added a certain amount of stability and strengthened the defense capability of some of the local states; on the other, however, it promotes rivalry among the key power centers, thus upsetting the balance and disintegrating the regional security system, the outlines of which have hardly begun to take shape.

NATO's continued presence may split the region into pro- and anti-NATO groups of countries with great powers behind them. This is what is going on today in a format neither America, nor Russia, nor China expected to see: the situation has become vague. This can probably be explained by the fact that none of the states (Uzbekistan being the only exception) has openly joined one of the two military-political camps. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan are demonstrating their friendliness toward Russia, China, the CSTO, and SCO, as well as toward the United States, Western Europe, and NATO.

This policy has its specifics: Kazakhstan has officially registered its dual military-political course of cooperation with Russia and NATO; Kyrgyzstan is renting out part of its military infrastructure, while demonstratively moving closer to the CSTO and SCO; and Tajikistan, which remains in Russia's orbit, is moving toward NATO mostly in counterbalance to Uzbekistan, its regional opponent.

¹⁰ See: A. Ustimenko, "Tsentral'naia Azia i NATO: strategicheskie tendentsii razvitiia otnosheniy," *Analytic*, No. 5, 2004, p. 24.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

Turkmenistan is continuing with its policy of equal distancing from all the power centers by switching cooperation to the economic sphere.

It seems that this tactic does not allow the two geopolitical groups to use the mechanisms at their disposal to influence the objects of their strategies. The Central Asian countries, in turn, are acquiring maneuverability by playing on the rivaling interests of the centers of power. It should be said that not all the local states have mastered this skill.

The regional geopolitical structure, which is changing in favor of Russia and China, is forcing NATO either to seek new regional allies or increase its cooperation with old partners. The situation in the region, however, is narrowing down its field of large-scale political moves and is not conducive to any important breakthroughs that might have strengthened its regional position.

It looks as if the bilateral format of relations with the local countries is an important *factor that limits* NATO's opportunity to increase its influence in the region. NATO prefers to stay away from the SCO and CSTO, which means that it cannot control them or influence, even to the slightest degree, the processes underway in these organizations. While the Russian Federation and NATO are cooperating in information exchange, albeit on a minimal scale, consultations, etc., the Alliance has no contacts at all with China, another influential SCO member seeking a stronger position in the region. By entering into cooperation with the CSTO and SCO, NATO would have been able to increase its role in Central Asian geopolitics and find the tools with which to influence the rivals in the future.

The distancing policy undermines the region's stability level and may even create so-called gray zones of instability in the security sectors more or less outside the influence of these organizations. The lower stability level will primarily damage the Alliance's image, which claims to be the guarantor of regional security. The level of confidence in NATO is dropping against the background of the ISAF's barely efficient military operation of the counterterrorist coalition in Afghanistan, the worsening domestic situation under the pressure of extremist forces, and the obvious increase in drug trafficking in the region.

The mounting dissatisfaction with NATO's presence in Central Asia is allowing Russia and China to increase pressure on the West in an effort to drive their geopolitical rival out of the region. Even if NATO preserves its military presence in Afghanistan, it will find it difficult, if not impossible, to carry on with the counterterrorist operation without the Central Asian infrastructure.

To sum up: after more than six years of its military presence in Central Asia, the North Atlantic Alliance failed to tap into the favorable geopolitical situation: it even lost some of its previous ground. Today, NATO has to follow the logic imposed on it by Russia and China, two countries actively (and fairly successfully) building up bilateral and multilateral relations with the Central Asian countries. The latter aware of their potential and interests are fortifying their position: they no longer want to remain targets of the diplomatic efforts of outside forces.

The region has acquired a hierarchy of local countries as far as their economic potential and foreign policy involvement are concerned. For objective reasons, Kazakhstan is at the very top of the pyramid, *first*, because it is the most developed country in the region with a fairly ramified foreign policy; *second*, Russia and China, as well as the United States and the European Union, want closer cooperation with Kazakhstan for different reasons; *third*, because Kazakhstan, an CSTO and SCO member, is developing its Partnership for Peace program with NATO and is an active member of all the regional integration initiatives. It has no conflicts either with its immediate neighbors or with distant countries; its authority and regional leadership are gaining momentum. Kazakhstan extends economic support to its Central Asian neighbors, which makes it a pillar of regional stability. Today we can safely say that continued military-political cooperation in Central Asia largely depends on the position and policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, a fact that Russia, China, and the West should take into account.

Kazakhstan and NATO: Cooperation Dynamics

To fortify their position in the region, Western strategists are seeking deeper and wider cooperation between NATO and Kazakhstan. The latter, in turn, needs closer cooperation with the Alliance to upgrade its defense capability and acquire more levers in the joint struggle against today's threats and challenges. This means that cooperation with NATO gives Kazakhstan the opportunity to become involved in ensuring international security in the first place.

Relations between Kazakhstan and NATO passed through several stages during their onward and logical development. *The first stage began when the Soviet Union ceased to exist and ended in 1994.* The sides identified their priorities, interests, and possible cooperation spheres. It should be said that independence created a vast number of problems in the security sphere that called for an immediate solution. The newly independent state had no army, while its national security services and internal affairs agencies needed urgent reforming.¹² From the very first days of independence, President Nazarbaev was aware that his country's national security largely depended on the level of its interaction with international structures. He knew that the West had launched an active process aimed at building up new systems of international security which relied, in many respects, on NATO's resources and structures. This meant that Kazakhstan should establish constructive relations with this influential structure.

Their first contacts date to the very first days of independence. In December 1991, NATO set up the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) to develop contacts with former WTO members. On 10 March, 1992, Kazakhstan joined the NACC; since that time cooperation has been successfully unfolding within the Statement on Dialog, Partnership, and Cooperation which envisages meetings, seminars, and symposia on economic, defense, ecological, scientific, and many other issues.¹³

We all know that in the early 1990s Kazakhstan attracted the attention of NATO and the West as a whole as a country with the largest nuclear potential. From the very beginning, however, the country's leaders remained firm and absolutely clear: nuclear weapons are a destructive political factor unable to protect those who own them. They add to instability and interfere with good-neighborly relations with nearby states. Thanks to efficient diplomatic action, the country chose the right tone in its relations with NATO. Its well-balanced diplomatic practice allowed the republic not only to acquire security guarantees from the nuclear powers; by abandoning its nuclear arsenal the republic boosted its international prestige. The regular and productive meetings between President Nazarbaev and NATO leaders made it possible to raise the format of bilateral relations to a new, more confidential level.

The second cooperation stage began in 1994 and ended in September 2001. This was a period of the sides' practical cooperation, which extended not only to the military-political sphere, but also to democracy and human rights, civil defense, liquidation of the effects of natural disasters, science and high technology.

In 1994, the Partnership for Peace Program appeared; in May of the same year, Kazakhstan signed its Framework Document to become its 19th participant. It drew up its Presentation Document, which outlined the cooperation priorities: planning and funding national defense; democratic control over the armed forces and training the military. The document was handed to the NATO

¹² See: *Natsional'naya bezopasnost: itogi desiatiletia*, ed. by M. Ashimbaev *et al.*, Elorda Publishers, Astana, 2001, p. 15.

¹³ See: K.K. Tokaev, *Pod stiygom nezavisimosti*, Bilim Publishers, Almaty, 1997.

Secretary-General at the regular meeting of the NACC foreign ministers that took place in December 1994.¹⁴

Kazakh experts are convinced that the Partnership for Peace Program offered Kazakhstan the most rational cooperation format.¹⁵ NATO looks at the Program as a key factor promoting the relations between the Alliance and the Program members and adding vigor to their political and military cooperation. The Program is aimed at planning national defense; establishing democratic control over the armed forces, and training the army for peacekeeping operations. Effective cooperation within the Program considerably widened the field of practical cooperation, which in turn made it possible to launch several important initiatives, including Science for Peace and the Virtual Silk Road.

On 14 June, 2000, the president of Kazakhstan issued a decree that created the Kazakhstani Peacekeeping Battalion (Kazbat) to improve interoperability between the republic's army and NATO. This meant that Kazakhstan joined the ranks of the states that use their contingents for peacekeeping activities under the U.N. or NATO aegis, which naturally required new approaches to many important aspects. It was not enough for the Kazbat to master military skills; it needed good command of other things, including the English language, communication means, command and control systems, and decision-making procedures, as well as an understanding of how knowledge and experience are shared among contemporary armed forces. This means that thanks to cooperation with NATO, the republic's army upgraded its military potential and became involved in international peacekeeping operations.

It should be said that at all times Kazakhstan has been closely following the processes inside NATO and around it. The republic retained its constructive attitude toward NATO's eastward enlargement, mainly because the process could not be reversed. In fact, the process did not threaten Kazakhstan, although it was convinced that the "eastward enlargement" should not upset European stability and should take into account Russia's interests.

The 9/11 events changed forever the nature of international relations, particularly the format of international cooperation in the security sphere. *This ushered in the third stage of NATO-Kazakhstan cooperation, which lasted until early 2006 and was marked by much stronger partner relations.*

In October 2001, the United States and its NATO allies launched a military operation against Afghanistan as the first stage of the global counterterrorist campaign. The terrorist acts in the United States altered North-Atlantic strategic thinking: from that time on the Alliance needed much closer cooperation with its partner states. Kazakhstan offered considerable support to the coalition forces by letting them use its air space and allowing their aircraft to make emergency landings on its airfields. This naturally added a new quality to NATO-Kazakhstan relations. In 2002, Kazakhstan became the first Central Asian state to join NATO's Planning and Review Process. To improve their interoperability and defense activities (two cornerstones of the antiterrorist struggle on the republic's territory), NATO and Kazakhstan conducted military training exercises.¹⁶

The 2002 Prague summit adopted the project of a new NATO very different from the Cold War instrument, as far as its tasks, composition, and potential were concerned. The leaders of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPS) officially confirmed these obligations and agreed on the Partnership Action Plan against Terrorism. By signing the document, the EASP leaders recognized that all the states faced the same security challenges and that they should pool forces to confront them.

¹⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁵ See: E. Kononovich, "Kazakhstan i NATO: dialog partnerov," *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 29 June, 2004.

¹⁶ Based on the materials of the Khabar information agency, available at [www.khabar.kz].

As for Kazakhstan as a NATO ally, the document extends its possibilities and serves as a mechanism for its involvement in the Alliance's counterterrorist struggle. Its contribution to the process will correspond to its international obligations in this sphere with due account of the republic's policy in the security and defense spheres. In July 2003, Kazakhstan and NATO signed an agreement with NATO's Maintenance and Supply Organization (NAMSO).

In 2003, systemic military cooperation between Kazakhstan and NATO began; the Steppe Eagle (tactical antiterrorist military exercises) that involved aeromobile troops of the U.K. and U.S. International exercises on the republic's territory allow the Kazakhstani army to improve its fighting skills by acting side by side with the military from other countries. From that time on, Steppe Eagle became an annual event. In February 2004, the republic joined NATO's Operational Capabilities Concept, the information and documentary center of which was opened in Astana. In the same year, Kazakhstan acquired observer status in NATO's Parliamentary Assembly.¹⁷

Brussels has obviously come to stay in Central Asia. I have already written that in 2004 it created the post of NATO Secretary-General's Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia and appointed Robert Simmons to it. He is keeping the contacts with the top regional leaders alive and is doing his best to promote NATO's interests.¹⁸ He frequently visits Kazakhstan (as well as other Central Asian countries); his personal meetings with President Nazarbaev and the president's telephone talks with NATO leaders add vigor to the sides' cooperation for the sake of regional and international security.

The highly dynamic interaction between Kazakhstan and NATO pushed their cooperation to a higher, fourth, level. The new stage which began in 2006 is still going on: strategic cooperation became much closer. In January 2006, a meeting of the NATO- Kazakhstan Military-Political Committee held at NATO Headquarters discussed and prepared for final endorsement the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) that harmonized all aspects of practical cooperation and dialog between Kazakhstan and NATO. The Plan is designed to expand cooperation and create its new parameters in the NATO + 1 format: cooperation in the military sphere, in many sciences, the environment, and the system for preventing emergencies and liquidating their effects.¹⁹

The Plan enacted on 31 January, 2006 made Kazakhstan the first NATO Central Asian partner armed with new cooperation tools. This was a logical step for a country that had already joined NACC and Partnership for Peace Program, which fully corresponds to the ideology and aims of the political, economic, and democratic reforms underway in the country.

On the whole, Kazakhstan regards integration into global and regional security systems as a key element of its national security; this makes close and mutually advantageous partnership with the Alliance one of its foreign policy priorities. The republic is striving for mutually advantageous and equal cooperation in defense; reform and modernization of its armed forces; combating terrorism and drug trafficking; security on the borders; science; and the environment. We can safely say today that Kazakhstan's diplomacy is moving forward toward these aims.

Its interaction with NATO is of a multilevel nature and is being carried out in various formats, as well as within the framework of all sorts of military and non-military programs. The very fact that the NATO leaders describe Kazakhstan as the Alliance's key strategic Central Asian partner shows that cooperation has proven fairly effective. It is impossible to overestimate the republic's role in the Alliance's Central Asian strategy—today it is NATO's only pillar in the region. The Kazakh leaders take into account the republic's national interests in modernizing its military complex, as well as the

¹⁷ Based on the materials of the Khabar information agency, available at [www.khabar.kz].

¹⁸ See: G. Aybet, "Towards a New Transatlantic Consensus," *NATO Review*, Autumn 2004, available at [www.nato.int].

¹⁹ Based on the materials of the Khabar information agency, available at [www.khabar.kz].

fact that their balanced policy of drawing closer to NATO provides the latter with a relatively stable regional, albeit limited, position.

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Diplomatic rivalry between the West, on the one hand, and Russia and China, on the other, over special relations with Kazakhstan is going on unabated, with each of the sides trying to outdo the other in order to draw the republic into the CSTO, SCO, and NATO. Positive official rhetoric and all sorts of diplomatic maneuvers designed to flatter Kazakhstan, however, failed to successfully address the region's central issue—building an effective and balanced regional security system.

President Nazarbaev points out time and again that stronger and broader international cooperation in the struggle against security threats and challenges presupposes an integral approach. The country is working and will continue to work toward closer regional cooperation in order to meet today's challenges by taking part in joint military exercises within the CSTO and SCO and in NATO's counterterrorist initiatives and operations.²⁰

It seems that Kazakhstan's active involvement in the CSTO and in the Alliance's programs has made it possible for the republic to set up an absolutely indispensable system of checks and balances in regional geopolitics. This largely meets the interests of all the Central Asian countries. On the other hand, the SCO's active policy (its Chinese element in particular) allows the region to avoid a CSTO-NATO confrontation and forces all those involved to seek constructive solutions to the region's central cooperation problems.

Balanced cooperation between the Central Asian republics and the CSTO and SCO, on the one hand, and between the Central Asian republics and NATO, on the other, presents a strategically consistent and rational course toward stability at the national and regional levels. An upsurge of rivalry between the two sides might negatively affect the local countries: control will be lost; challenges and threats will become even more prominent, together with geopolitical disbalances; regional contradictions will become exacerbated; the rates of economic development will slow down, making the countries much less attractive to potential investors; and the local countries might even lose their foreign policy aims.

This means that it is highly important for Kazakhstan and the other Central Asian states in need of stability to build their cooperation with the above-mentioned structures on the basis of clear logic and strategy of action, as well as minimize the possibility of stiff rivalry among them. Kazakhstan, as a country devoted to balanced international military partnership, is in a position to start building a platform for constructive dialog, consultations, and interaction among the CSTO, SCO, and NATO to prevent a regional crisis. In the future, everything will be done to find a balance between the Central Asian states' integration into the international and regional security structures and their independence in decision-making on all international issues that affect their national interests.

From the point of view of the local countries' interests, NATO is doing a lot to ensure regional security and help some of the local countries develop, modernize their armed forces, master the latest military technology, etc. Today's threats are equally dangerous for all sides, which means that it is the duty of all the key geopolitical players to maintain the balance; they should cooperate—otherwise

²⁰ See: *Poslanie Prezidenta Respubliki Kazakhstan N. Nazarbaeva narodu Kazakhstana. Kazakhstan na poroge novoy ryvka vpered v svoem razviti*, 1 March, 2006, available at [www.akorda.kz].

regional tension will persist. NATO should revise its Central Asian policy to meet the changed geopolitical and strategic situation. The old tactics of distancing and fragmentation will merely allow the Alliance's rivals to squeeze its armed forces out of Central Asia.

RUSSIAN-IRANIAN NUCLEAR COOPERATION: 1992-2006

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Origins

Following the disintegration of the U.S.S.R., the Russian Federation, as a successor State, continued cooperation with Iran. From the start, it focused on the nuclear (including military) sphere. Thus, on 17 August, 1992, a bilateral agreement was signed on the peaceful use of nuclear energy, making provisions for the delivery to the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) of two VVER 440 reactors. On 8 January, 1995, Viktor Mikhailov, the Russian atomic energy minister at the time; and Reza Amrollahi, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran and the country's vice president, signed a \$800 million contract, in accordance with which the Russian Federation was to complete the construction of the first 1,000 MW light water reactor at the Bushehr nuclear power plant (NPP) in four and a half years.¹

As for the contract's legitimacy and its compliance with the norms of international law, according to Russian experts Vladimir Orlov and Alexander Vinnikov, it was flawless and complied with the nonproliferation requirements of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), as was repeatedly stated by V. Mikhailov.² In addition to that, the sides signed a secret protocol to the contract, on further negotiations between Tehran and Moscow about wide ranging cooperation in the nuclear sphere. In accordance with one of its provisions, Russia agreed to train Iranian specialists at its nuclear research centers, provide assistance to Tehran in mining uranium ore, and supply it with gas centrifuges for uranium enrichment. Several hundred Iranian nuclear scientists were trained at higher educational establishments in Russia, including at the

¹ See: *The Washington Post*, 9 January, 1995.

² See: V. Orlov, A. Vinnikov, "The Great Guessing Game: Russia and the Iranian Nuclear Issue," *The Washington Quarterly*, Spring 2005, p. 51.

Novovoronezh NPP training center, to operate the future NPP. In January 1995, V. Mikhailov and the IRI signed a protocol of intent emphasizing Russia's readiness to conduct negotiations on the contract on construction of the centrifuge plant for uranium enrichment. As it turned out later, Mikhailov had signed the protocol without the knowledge of the Russian government.³ Nevertheless, the stage was set for full-scale nuclear cooperation, including in such a sensitive sphere as uranium enrichment, enabling Iran to weaponize its nuclear program.

The two parties also reached agreement on Russian nuclear fuel deliveries to Iran. In August 1995, a 10-year contract was signed on delivery of nuclear fuel, produced at the Novosibirsk chemical concentrates plant, to the Bushehr NPP. However, the contract made no provisions for the spent nuclear fuel, since Russian laws prohibited its return to the country's territory.⁴

The U.S.-Russian 1995 Pact, or Aide Memoire on the Termination of Russian-Iranian Military-Technical Cooperation

In 1992, the United States passed a law directed against countries selling arms to the Near East, primarily Iran and Iraq. In particular, it provided for the introduction of sanctions against such countries.⁵ The White House administration at the time was increasingly concerned by Russian arms exports to Iran. Given that with a complete decentralization of power in the Russian Federation, when some of its military-industrial enterprises, including in the nuclear sector, were establishing direct contacts with Iran, often bypassing state export controls, the U.S.'s concerns were not entirely groundless. After the RF and the IRI signed a contract to build a NPP in Bushehr, the Americans came to the conclusion that it was necessary to look for ways of limiting cooperation between Moscow and Tehran in the military and nuclear realm.

It should be noted that starting from 1993, the U.S. repeatedly took up the issue of Russian missile and nuclear technology "leaks" to Iran. In April of the same year, on the initiative of the U.S. and Russian presidents, Bill Clinton and Boris Yeltsin, the Russian-American Joint Commission on Economic and Technological Cooperation (Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission) was created. It also covered the energy sector and conversion of defense industry enterprises.⁶ At the U.S. urging, in September 1994, B. Yeltsin assured B. Clinton that Moscow would stop selling arms to Iran.⁷ However, several months later, as mentioned previously, a contract for construction of the Bushehr NPP was signed. According to copies of Russian-Iranian agreements obtained by U.S. intelligence services, the contract also had a military section, an issue that was raised at a meeting of the U.S. and Russian presidents in May 1995. At the time, Washington pressed Moscow to exclude that part from the contract. That United States was concerned about the transparency of Russian-Iranian relations. It urged the RF to abandon cooperation with the IRI.

³ See: *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁴ See: *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

⁵ See: J. Broder, "Despite Secret '95 Pact by Gore, Russian Arms Sales to Iran Go On," *The New York Times*, 13 October, 2000.

⁶ See: *95/06/20 Fact Sheet: Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission*, Bureau of Public Affairs, U.S. Department of State, (Internet online).

⁷ See: W. Boese, "Congress Levies Accusations on Gore-Chernomyrdin Deal," *Arms Control Today*, November 2000 (Internet online).

In April 1995, at the fifth session of the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission, a secret deal (aide memoir) was reached that required Russia not to sign any new contracts to sell arms to Iran after 1995.⁸ However, the document made no provisions for halting arms supplies to Iran under earlier contracts. Russia pledged to complete all contracts on arms supplies to the IRI by 31 December, 1999. The disclosure of the content of the agreement stirred up criticism in the U.S. Congress, which saw it as a violation of the 1992 act. According to *The Washington Times*, Congressmen were angered by the fact that in late 1995, Gore promised Chernomyrdin to keep secret from Congress details of Russia's nuclear cooperation with Iran. In a classified letter, Mr. Chernomyrdin told Mr. Gore about Moscow's confidential nuclear deal with Iran—which in his words, was reduced to personnel training and nuclear fuel supplies to the Bushehr reactor—and stated that it was “not to be conveyed to third parties, including the U.S. Congress.”⁹

Construction of the Bushehr NPP

As the subsequent course of events showed, Russia did not scrap the nuclear contract. True, under U.S. pressure, it still promised the United States to limit its cooperation with Iran to the construction of the Bushehr NPP and the training of NPP personnel.

Moscow started the Bushehr NPP project in January 1996. Meanwhile, Russia and Iran signed an agreement to build another two power units at Bushehr, which, however, was never put into practice. Despite Russia's promise to limit its assistance to building the Bushehr NPP,¹⁰ the U.S. insisted that construction be terminated completely or at least slowed down.

Iranian President Mohammad Khatami's visit to Russia (12-15 March, 2001) and the signing of a treaty on general principles of relations and cooperation (alongside other documents) were of crucial importance for further development of bilateral ties. The negotiations addressed, among other topics, completion of the Bushehr NPP, as well as a plan to build a new NPP and heat and electric power stations in Iran.

The Americans continued to express their concern over Iran's nuclear program and the expansion of Russian-Iranian cooperation. The U.S.'s principal argument against the construction of the Bushehr NPP was as follows: Although the NPP was not a military facility, its benefits for Iran's nuclear-weapons program were likely to be “largely indirect” by contributing to its nuclear infrastructure and expertise.¹¹

The danger of Tehran's pursuing a nuclear military program forced U.S. President George Bush, during his meeting with RF President Vladimir Putin in late May 2002, to demand that Russia's Atomic Energy Ministry end cooperation with Iran's Atomic Energy Organization. At the time, the Bushehr project became a subject of heated discussion. Despite V. Putin's effective refusal to end such cooperation, under U.S. pressure, he persuaded Iran to recognize the IAEA as a watchdog for

⁸ See: W. Boese, op. cit.

⁹ B. Gertz, “The Letter Shows Gore Made Deal,” *The Washington Times*, 17 October, 2000 (Internet online).

¹⁰ In April 1998, the Russian Atomic Energy Ministry said it was interested to sell to Iran a research reactor that could enrich uranium to 20 percent of U-235. However, at the time, the United States blocked the delivery of the reactor and related laser equipment (see: V. Orlov, R. Timerbaev, A. Khlopkov, *Nuclear Nonproliferation in U.S.-Russian Relations: Challenges and Opportunities*, PIR-Center, Moscow, 2002, p. 18).

¹¹ See: G. Bahgat, “Nuclear Proliferation: The Islamic Republic of Iran,” *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 3, September 2006, p. 310.

the Russian-Iranian nuclear project to guarantee its transparency. On 27 May, President George Bush said that V. Putin did not object to the IAEA's supervision of the Bushehr nuclear complex. At the same time, it was established that Iranian nuclear facilities would be inspected four to six times a year, each inspection lasting two weeks.¹²

In spite of U.S. pressure, the Russian government approved, in July 2002, a plan of signing a new trade, economic, industrial, and scientific and technical cooperation agreement with Iran; in particular, provisions were made for the RF's possible participation in building another two 1,000 MW reactors in Ahvaz.¹³

International experts believed that Russian-Iranian nuclear cooperation came to a head in July 2002.¹⁴ At that time, U.S. officials said that Washington would not publicly object to the construction of the reactor if Moscow demanded that Tehran return spent nuclear fuel. In their opinion, that could ensure compliance with the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.¹⁵ Meanwhile, in the second half of 2002, the IAEA started inspections of Iran's nuclear facilities.

Intensive research in the nuclear sphere led Gholam Reza Aghazadeh, then vice president and head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, to say that "the success, achieved in the mining, processing and conversion of uranium ore would let the IRI push toward a full-scale fuel cycle without foreign assistance in the future." At the same time, Tehran's reluctance to permit surprise inspections of its nuclear installations by the IAEA increased the U.S.'s concerns about the possibility of Russia exercising full control over Iran's nuclear program, as well as over the consumption of nuclear fuel.¹⁶ In the meantime, Iran started developing a parallel program that relied on its own sources of fuel.¹⁷

In mid-August 2002, the Mujahedin-e Khalq organization reported that Iran was building a centrifuge plant in the town of Natanz.¹⁸ It became clear to all that Iran was trying to achieve the uranium enrichment goal without foreign assistance.¹⁹ It should be stressed that Iran's clandestine efforts to build a uranium enrichment facility in Natanz further heightened international concerns about its nuclear program.

Russian Nuclear Fuel Supplies

Nuclear fuel became a central issue not only in Iran's nuclear program, but also in Russian-Iranian nuclear cooperation. Exposed to U.S. pressure, Russia was forced to tighten its conditions on nuclear fuel deliveries to Iran. In mid-August 2003, ahead of U.S. Undersecretary of State John Bolton's visit to Moscow, then Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov approved the text of an additional provision to the Russian-Iranian agreement on the Bushehr NPP, in accordance with which the parties were to sign a protocol on the return of spent nuclear fuel to Russia. The protocol was expected to be signed after an IAEA meeting (in September). Thus Russia was forced to make a move to demon-

¹² See: *Gulf States Newsletter*, Vol. 26, No. 688, 12 June, 2002, p. 4.

¹³ See: *Gulf States Newsletter*, Vol. 26, No. 692, 7 August, 2002, p. 3.

¹⁴ See: *Gulf States Newsletter*, Vol. 27, No. 721, 31 October, 2003, p. 7.

¹⁵ See: P. Kerr, "Iran, Russia Reach Nuclear Agreement," *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 35, No. 3, April 2005, p. 36.

¹⁶ See: *Gulf States Newsletter*, Vol. 27, No. 705, 7 March, 2003, p. 6.

¹⁷ See: *Gulf States Newsletter*, Vol. 27, No. 708, 18 April, 2003, p. 8.

¹⁸ See: V. Orlov, A. Vinnikov, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

¹⁹ See: *Gulf States Newsletter*, Vol. 27, No. 708, 18 April, 2003, pp. 7-8.

strate the transparency of the Bushehr NPP project. The RF Atomic Energy Ministry believed at the time that there were no more impediments to nuclear fuel shipments. Although it should be recalled that in accordance with the original schedule, nuclear fuel was to have been delivered in March 2002.²⁰ As for the NPP, under the contract, it was to be put into operation in late 2003-early 2004,²¹ but Russia failed to meet the deadline.

Meanwhile, the RF's commitment to transfer nuclear fuel to Iran aroused serious concern in the United States. However, according to *Gulf States Newsletter*, in late May 2003, Moscow informed Tehran that it would not deliver fuel to Iran unless it agreed to full scale inspection of its nuclear facilities by the IAEA. At the time, the journal came to the conclusion that strong diplomatic pressure on Iran was only possible via pressure on Moscow.²² Russian experts Vladimir Orlov and Alexander Vinnikov suggest that Iran's admission that it had been conducting clandestine nuclear research activities for 18 years brought about a change in the Russian position on Iran's nuclear program. An internal decision seems to have been made, they write, at some point between 2002 and 2003, not to speed up the full completion of the Bushehr nuclear power plant project, invoking technical reasons.²³

The EU and the Tehran Agreement (21 October, 2003)

Throughout the preceding period of U.S.-Iranian confrontation on the nuclear issue, Europe stayed on the sidelines. Furthermore, in 2002, the EU started negotiations with Iran on a new trade agreement, which was of great importance to Tehran. The EU was the IRI's largest trading partner, accounting for nearly 30 percent of Iran's foreign trade. Total trade between Iran and the European Union exceeded 13 billion euros annually.²⁴

The restoration of diplomatic relations with leading European countries during Mohammad Khatami's presidency, as well as their significant share in Iran's foreign trade—i.e., its considerable dependence on Europe—enabled the European troika (the EU-3: the UK, France and Germany), acting on behalf of the European Union, to deal with Iran's nuclear program. However, that only happened when Europe saw that Iran had some undeclared nuclear facilities. Following the publication of an IAEA report (6 June, 2003), the European Union issued a statement to the effect that its trade relations with Iran would be made contingent upon Iran's accession to the Additional Protocol.²⁵ In a 20 June, 2003 document on European foreign and security policy, the European Council defined the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) as "the single most important threat to peace and security among nations."²⁶

²⁰ See: A. Dubnov, "Posledniaia ustupka Vashingtonu. Moskva ne otkazhetsia ot sotrudnichestva s Tegeranoo," *Vremia novostei*, No. 158, 27 August, 2003 (Internet online).

²¹ See: *Gulf States Newsletter*, Vol. 25, No. 657, 19 March, 2001, p. 3.

²² See: *Gulf States Newsletter*, Vol. 27, No. 711, 30 May, 2003, p. 9.

²³ See: V. Orlov, A. Vinnikov, op. cit., p. 55.

²⁴ See: S. Smeland, "Countering Iranian Nukes: A European Strategy," *The Nonproliferation Review*, Vol. 11, No. 1, Spring 2004, p. 50.

²⁵ See: *Ibidem*.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

It should be noted that intensification of international pressure started to bring results. Thus, on 21 October, 2003, an agreement was signed in Tehran between the EU-3 and Iran on the IRI nuclear program's compliance with the IAEA demands. The *Middle East Report* journal described the signing of the Tehran Agreement as a major victory of European diplomacy.²⁷ According to that document, all matters related to Iran's nuclear activity were to be decided solely by the IAEA. Two months later, on 18 December, at the IAEA headquarters in Vienna, Iran signed the Additional Protocol to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, opening the way to surprise inspections of its nuclear installations.²⁸ It should be recalled that the Protocol gives the IAEA additional powers to identify secret nuclear programs that were not previously declared to the Agency.

However, from the Western perspective, even that agreement was not enough to halt Iran's nuclear program.²⁹ At the same time, the numerous instances of Tehran's withholding information about its nuclear facilities increased distrust with regard to it.³⁰ According to some experts, the said document enabled Iran to pursue other parts of its nuclear program without addressing such matters as the closure of the nuclear facility at Natanz or the destruction of uranium enrichment centrifuges. Nevertheless, the uranium enrichment process was frozen, if only temporarily. Russia decided not to deliver nuclear fuel to Iran until the situation was cleared up on the diplomatic level.³¹

Reform of Russia's Atomic Energy Ministry

In the meantime, a significant political development occurred in Russia: In March 2004, V. Putin was re-elected as the country's president, which, among other things, had a significant impact on the activity of the Atomic Energy Ministry, which oversaw Russian-Iranian nuclear cooperation. V. Putin, who set out to reform government structures, downsized the number of ministries, from 30 to 17, which affected the once powerful Atomic Energy Ministry. Taking into account its excessive autonomy and "freewheeling", the president downgraded its status and placed it under the Industry and Energy Ministry, renaming it the Federal Atomic Energy Agency. As for military-nuclear activity, it was transferred to the Defense Ministry's purview.³²

On the other hand, Iran's nuclear program was coming under mounting pressure from the West. In a bid to break the impasse and regain international trust, in May 2004, Iran proposed to the EU-3 a plan in accordance with which Europe could become involved in the uranium enrichment process (by creating an Iranian-Russian-European consortium).³³

At negotiations in Moscow (in the second half of May) between A. Rumiantsev, the head of the Federal Atomic Energy Agency, and representative of the Atomexport company, on the one hand; and Saburi, the head of the Iranian delegation and deputy chief of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, the parties took note of the need to complete the first power unit and sign a contract for nuclear fuel deliveries to Iran (alongside the issue of returning spent nuclear fuel to Russia).³⁴

²⁷ See: "Dealing with Iran's Nuclear Program," *Middle East Report*, 18, 27 October, 2003 (Internet online).

²⁸ See: G. Esfandiari, "Iran. Tehran Signs Protocol to Non-Proliferation Treaty," *Radio Free Europe*, 18 December, 2003.

²⁹ See: S. Smeland, op. cit., p. 52.

³⁰ See: "Dealing with Iran's Nuclear Program."

³¹ Ibid., p. 7.

³² See: G. Kohlmeier, "Putin Downsizes Russian Nuclear Agency," *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 34, No. 3, April 2004, p. 32.

³³ See: *Kayhan*, 12 May, 2004 (in Persian).

³⁴ See: *Kayhan*, 13 May, 2004.

According to an IRI news agency source, the U.S. Congress at the time demanded that the Russian Federation halt nuclear cooperation with Iran and scrap the plan to deliver nuclear fuel to the country.³⁵ Against that backdrop, in a bid to clarify the situation around its nuclear program, the Iranian foreign minister flew to Moscow on 16 May.

There were numerous meetings between the two countries' officials. At the same time, according to the *Kayhan* newspaper, some unrealistic forecasts about the completion of the Bushehr NPP project appeared in the RF. Thus, in the course of his visit to Tehran (early July 2004), RF Security Council Secretary Igor Ivanov said that NPP construction would be completed by late 2005 and that it would be put into operation in 2006.³⁶ Nevertheless, a statement by IRI Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi (after his meeting with Sergey Lavrov in mid-October 2004) lacked such certainty. "I cannot specify the exact date when the Bushehr NPP will be put into operation," he said, "but it is evident that Russia should already have transferred it to Iran." Kharrazi indicated that putting the NPP into operation was a purely technical matter. Speaking at a news conference after the talks, Sergey Lavrov repeated Igor Ivanov's statement with regard to the completion of the Bushehr NPP. At the same time, he diplomatically denied that the United States had exerted any pressure on Russia, despite reports in the Iranian media that the United States was the main factor in delaying the launch of the Bushehr NPP. S. Lavrov attributed the delay of nuclear fuel deliveries to the need to sign the said agreement.³⁷

The delay in completing the Bushehr NPP project started to arouse irritation in the IRI's official media. For example, citing a Russian source, *Kayhan* said that although the NPP project was completed, the Russians were dragging their feet on transferring nuclear fuel.³⁸ Incidentally, the delay over nuclear fuel shipments to the Bushehr NPP, as well as Russia's failure to meet the construction deadline, pointed to the possibility of a Russian-U.S. tacit agreement about delaying the launch of the nuclear facility. Especially considering that some U.S. experts repeatedly suggested that certain measures be taken to hold back the development of Iran's nuclear program. In particular, Sean Smeland wrote: "Any measures that slow down the Iranian program could prove helpful by yielding more time for interested parties to gather intelligence and pursue their various policy options."³⁹

The Paris Agreement and Iran's Uranium Enrichment Moratorium

Under international pressure, Iran had to declare (on 4 November, 2004) a six-month uranium enrichment moratorium—at its negotiations with France, Germany, and the U.K.⁴⁰ In accordance with the moratorium, Iran was to halt all nuclear activities related to the production and import of gas centrifuges, spare parts, assembly and testing of those centrifuges⁴¹—that is to say, all activities related to plutonium separation, as well as uranium production and conversion.⁴²

³⁵ See: *Kayhan*, 15 May, 2004.

³⁶ See: *Kayhan*, 6 July, 2004.

³⁷ See: *Kayhan*, 11 October, 2004.

³⁸ See: *Kayhan*, 16 October, 2004.

³⁹ S. Smeland, op. cit., p. 52.

⁴⁰ See: *Kayhan*, 4 November, 2004.

⁴¹ See: P. Kerr, "IAEA Reports Iran to UN Security Council," *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 36, No. 2, March 2006, p. 28.

⁴² See: *Kayhan*, 16 November, 2004.

During the negotiations with the EU-3 in Paris, on 15 November, an agreement was reached in accordance with which Iran was to halt its nuclear activities, while the EU-3 was to confirm the peaceful nature of the IRI's nuclear program. The parties reaffirmed their commitment to the Non-proliferation Treaty. Furthermore, Iran reiterated that it did not seek to acquire nuclear weapons, but stressed that the moratorium would be in effect for the duration of the negotiations. The parties reached agreement to suspend uranium enrichment ahead of an IAEA Board meeting, also noting that the goal of the negotiations was to work out a mutually acceptable long-term agreement.⁴³ It should contain separate agreements concerning nuclear materials, technology, economic cooperation and security, providing general safeguards for the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program.⁴⁴ That move was taken to prevent the EU-3 from referring Iran's "case" to the U.N. Security Council the day before the EU-3 met in Paris. However, at the time some experts, taking into account the experience in uranium enrichment, as well as Iran's unstoppable aspiration to pursue its nuclear program, suggested that the halt would only be temporary and that Iran would eventually resume its nuclear activities.⁴⁵

Russia's Position on Iran's Nuclear Program

According to Russian experts, based on the success of the November 2004 EU-3 agreement with Tehran, Moscow firmly supported the internationalization of the Iranian nuclear issue.⁴⁶ The change in the RF's position on the issue was noted, in particular, by Brenda Shaffer, an Israeli journalist, who wrote: "In the past year and a half (2003-2004.— *N. Ter-Oganov*) Moscow's actions on the Iranian nuclear program have been responsible and constructive."⁴⁷

In this context, it should be noted that in 2004, at the urging of the United States, the delivery of Russian nuclear fuel, ready to be shipped to Iran, was once again delayed.⁴⁸ That effectively blocked the possibility not only of uranium processing and enrichment, but also of nuclear fuel deliveries from Russia. There is no reason to doubt that Iran's goal in pushing toward a full-scale production cycle is to lessen its dependence on Russian fuel and ultimately achieve the IRI's complete independence in the energy sphere.

By December 2004, the parties drafted an agreement on a new time frame for completing or modernizing the Bushehr NPP, in accordance with which the project was to be completed in 2006.⁴⁹

Continuous schedule slippage forced the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran to announce (in late December 2004) that to ensure the completion of the NPP project, the Organization would sign a protocol to a treaty on the return of spent nuclear fuel in January 2005. In 2005, the term of the 1995 contract on nuclear fuel deliveries to Iran expired. At the same time, according to A. Rumiantsev, the head of the RF Federal Atomic Energy Agency, the Russian company TVEL

⁴³ See: "Agreement (Paris—15th November 2004)," *Information Circular/637*, 26 November, 2004, p. 3.

⁴⁴ See: E. Kam, "Curbing the Iranian Nuclear Threat: The Military Option," *Strategic Assessment*, Vol. 7, No. 3, December 2004, pp. 1, 3.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴⁶ See: V. Orlov, A. Vinnikov, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

⁴⁷ B. Shaffer, "Will Iran Dupe the World Again?" *The Jerusalem Post*, 22 November, 2004.

⁴⁸ See: P. Kerr, "Iran, Russia Reach Nuclear Agreement," p. 35.

⁴⁹ See: *Kayhan*, 12 December, 2004, pp. 1-2.

reached agreement with the IRI on nuclear fuel deliveries to the Bushehr NPP and the return of spent nuclear fuel to Russia. That agreement, A. Rumiantsev said, was due to be signed in January 2005.⁵⁰ According to the *Kayhan* newspaper, the signing of the agreement was put off several times under U.S. pressure. It suggested that A. Rumiantsev's visit to Iran, scheduled for December to sign the agreement, also did not take place due to U.S. pressure. According to the newspaper, Russia often used delaying tactics due to the U.S.'s pressure and the desire to find out the results of the IAEA sitings.⁵¹ Nevertheless, on 27 February, according to A. Rumiantsev, Tehran and Moscow signed a contract on nuclear fuel deliveries for the Bushehr NPP (for a term of 10 years). It should be noted that despite U.S. objections to the project, that time the White House administration did not criticize the contract. The decision was made to deliver the first fuel shipment six months before the Bushehr NPP's official launch (in late 2006).⁵²

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad Comes to Power

The election of ultra-conservative Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as Iran's president (in late July 2005) did not alter the RF's position on the IRI's nuclear program, even despite Tehran's declared intention to resume uranium enrichment in early 2006. The principal consideration in favor of Russia's support for the IRI's nuclear program, as before, was the fact that Iran was a signatory to the Non-proliferation Treaty. Throughout Iran's nuclear crisis, Moscow was opposed to "Iran's case" being referred to the U.N. Security Council, arguing that supervision over nuclear programs should be exercised by the IAEA. From the RF's perspective, the problem was the establishment of technical oversight, and since supervision of a nuclear program is a technical matter, it should be dealt with by that organization. Therefore, referring Iran's nuclear case to the Security Council would not be a constructive but purely political decision. Moscow and Tehran's views on the issue completely coincided,⁵³ as a result of which the Ahmadinejad government took a tough position at negotiations with the West.

In August 2005, despite the EU's promised incentives, including economic incentives, in exchange for Iran's halting its uranium enrichment program, the IRI resumed the program.⁵⁴ On rather, on 8 August, the Isfahan uranium conversion plant, one of the key elements in uranium enrichment, resumed its operation. At the time, experts believed that Iran, which had no industrial capability to enrich uranium, had no pressing need for its conversion product—sulfur hexafluoride gas. Therefore, by resuming the operation of its conversion facility, Tehran in effect violated the Paris Agreement that it had signed in 2004. That was followed by an IAEA Board negative reaction. The Board deplored the fact that "Iran has ... failed to heed the call by the Board in its resolution of 11 August, 2005 to re-establish full suspension of all enrichment related activities including the production of feed material, including through tests or production at the Uranium Conversion Facility."⁵⁵ However, seeing that Iran did not intend to scale down its nuclear activity, the IAEA Board adopted another

⁵⁰ *Kayhan*, 26 December, 2004, p. 3.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

⁵² See: P. Kerr, "Iran, Russia Reach Nuclear Agreement," p. 35.

⁵³ See: *Kayhan*, 16 October, 2005.

⁵⁴ See: D.G. Kimball, "Solving the Iranian Nuclear Puzzle," *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 36, No. 2, March 2006, p. 3.

⁵⁵ See: S.C. Welsh, "IAEA on Iran: Recent and Pending Action and Legal Parameters," Center for Defense Information, 2 February, 2006, p. 4 (Internet online).

resolution (25 September, 2005) that laid the groundwork for referring a report on Iran's noncompliance in the context of Article XII.C of the Agency's Statute. In accordance with that article, in the event of a breach of the NPT, a relevant report was to be referred to the U.N. Security Council and the U.N. General Assembly for further consideration. Despite its importance, the resolution left open the question of when the report would be referred to the Security Council.⁵⁶

So as not to expose itself to international criticism, Russia was constantly urging Iran to cooperate with the IAEA. According to the IRNA news agency, in a phone conversation between M. Ahmadinejad and V. Putin, which took place in late October 2005, the RF president drew his interlocutor's attention to the need to expand cooperation with the IAEA.⁵⁷ The heads of the two countries' Security Councils, who supervised Russian-Iranian (Iranian-Russian) relations, frequently exchanged visits. In particular, on 11 November, RF Security Council Secretary Igor Ivanov arrived in Tehran on a three day official visit, in a bid to promote constructive negotiations between Iran and the EU. It should be noted that Russia once again cited outstanding technical issues as a reason for delays in completing the NPP project.⁵⁸

In early December 2005, Iran declared its readiness to resume negotiations with the EU on its nuclear program, which the IRI had halted in August of the same year. At the same time, Russia committed itself to establishing contacts between Iran and the EU. As a result of its efforts, the issue of Iran's nuclear program remained within the framework of the IAEA.

Later in the year, there was intensive discussion of the possibility of uranium enrichment on Russian territory, which, according to Iranian media, was initiated by the U.S. and the EU. It was suggested that if Iran rejected the proposal before a meeting of the IAEA Board (24 November of the same year), the U.S. and the EU would raise the issue of economic sanctions against the IRI at the U.N. Security Council.⁵⁹ In late December, Russia made an official offer with regard to uranium enrichment on its soil.⁶⁰

Russia's Uranium Enrichment Proposal

Tehran's refusal to halt uranium enrichment brought its negotiations with the West to a deadlock. In a bid to break it, Russia put forward a proposal on creating a joint (Russian-Iranian) uranium enrichment venture on its soil, which was categorically rejected by Tehran.⁶¹ On 10 January, 2006, Iran unsealed conversion facilities at the Natanz uranium enrichment center.

Not surprisingly, Russian-Iranian uranium enrichment negotiations, which took place in Tehran literally several days later, failed to bring the desired result.⁶² It is noteworthy that two weeks later, a spokesman for Iran's Supreme National Security Council said: "Tehran is not against the Russian plan, but it will not halt uranium enrichment."

Meanwhile, IRI officials warned the world community that if the "Iranian dossier" was referred to the U.N. Security Council, Tehran would resume uranium enrichment. At the same time,

⁵⁶ See: *Ibid.*, pp. 1-3.

⁵⁷ See: *Ettelaat*, 27 October, 2005 (in Persian).

⁵⁸ See: *Ettelaat*, 13 November, 2005.

⁵⁹ See: *Ibidem*.

⁶⁰ See: *Ettelaat*, 25 December, 2005.

⁶¹ See: *Ettelaat*, 4 January, 2006.

⁶² See: *Ettelaat*, 10 January, 2006, p. 16.

commenting on the Russian proposal, Iran said that it needed “reviewing and clarification” — i.e., on the one hand, Tehran did not reject the Russian plan, but on the other, tried to delay a solution.

On 23 January, 2006, RF Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov met with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Mehdi Safari, presumably to discuss the Russian proposal.⁶³ The following day, after negotiations in Moscow with the participation of Russian and Iranian national security council chiefs Igor Ivanov and Ali Larijani, the parties came to the conclusion that a political and diplomatic solution to Iran’s nuclear program could be found within the framework of the IAEA. They decided to continue the exchange of opinions.⁶⁴

On 4 February, the IAEA Board adopted yet another resolution on Iran’s nuclear program, demanding complete termination of uranium enrichment and conversion activity, including research and infrastructure development, halting the construction of a heavy water reactor, early ratification and compliance with the Additional Protocol, etc.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, in late February, Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said in Brussels that his country would continue nuclear research activity. He suggested that Tehran would like to preserve two major components of its nuclear program—nuclear research and uranium enrichment. Therefore, even though Iran signed the Additional Protocol, in February 2006 it effectively breached it, limiting the Agency’s access to its nuclear facilities.

In the course of Russian-Iranian negotiations on 20-21 February, the parties agreed to continue consultations on the Russian proposal. After the negotiations (they were held in the Kremlin behind closed doors), Igor Ivanov’s office said that the decision had been made to continue the talks.⁶⁶ However, according to a well informed source, Iran had no intention to resume an enrichment moratorium.⁶⁷

As previously planned, on 24 February, Sergey Kirienko, the head of Russia’s state nuclear corporation Rosatom, arrived in Tehran to discuss economic aspects of bilateral nuclear cooperation and the completion of the Bushehr NPP. According to the Interfax news agency citing a Russian source, during the negotiations the parties did not even touch on the Russian uranium enrichment proposal. The source also said that Russian nuclear fuel deliveries were to be discussed during Kirienko’s visit to Bushehr.

According to Ali Larijani, the main question at those negotiations was the status of the Bushehr NPP project. On 26 February, following the end of the negotiations, Iran announced that talks on the Russian proposals would be resumed in Moscow several days later. Aghazadeh told a news conference in Bushehr that the parties were pleased with the results of the negotiations and that they had discussed the Russian plan⁶⁸ while Sergey Kirienko added that there were no organizational, technical or financial problems with the joint venture.⁶⁹ A nuclear fuel delivery agreement was reached. In a bid to address Western concerns aroused by Iran’s intention to enrich uranium on its territory, and also to find a way out of the difficult situation, Russia intended to transfer into Iran’s private ownership a gas centrifuge plant where uranium hexafluoride could be enriched.⁷⁰

Following the publication of a report by IAEA Director General ElBaradei on Iran’s nuclear program, which did not confirm the peaceful nature of Iran’s nuclear program, V. Putin said that Russia

⁶³ See: *Ettelaat*, 25 January, 2006.

⁶⁴ See: *Ettellat*, 24 January, 2006.

⁶⁵ See: E. Asculai, “After the IAEA Resolution: Iran’s Road to Nuclear Weapons Remains Open,” *Tel-Aviv Notes*, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, No. 160, 8 February, 2006, p. 1.

⁶⁶ See: *Ettelaat*, 22 February, 2006.

⁶⁷ See: *Ibidem*.

⁶⁸ See: *Ibidem*.

⁶⁹ See: P. Kerr, “IAEA Reports Iran to UN Security Council,” pp. 26-27.

⁷⁰ See: *Ibid.*, p. 27.

was expecting Iran to respond to its uranium enrichment proposal. According to the president, that step could alleviate concerns about the possibility of Iran's using nuclear fuel for its military program.⁷¹ Nevertheless, on 1 March, Hossein Entezami, a spokesman for the Supreme National Security Council of Iran, acknowledged the Russian plan as constructive on the condition that the IRI retained the right to pursue nuclear research.⁷²

Ali Larijani's subsequent negotiations with Igor Ivanov, which took place on 1-2 March in Moscow, also failed to bring the desired results. Although A. Larijani described their outcome as positive, in an interview with the IRNA news agency he indicated that the IRI had not accepted the Russian uranium enrichment plan.⁷³ Meanwhile, Moscow invited Tehran to become co-owner of a Russia-based plant to enrich uranium that was processed and converted in Iran.⁷⁴ Therefore, Russia was not against uranium conversion in Iran, which (alongside the recognition of its right to limited nuclear research) could impede a unified position by the world community on Iran's nuclear program.

According to Iranian media, the U.S. backed the Russian plan. However, Ambassador Ali Asghar Soltanieh, Iran's permanent representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency, said that the plan would only be acceptable if it ensured the IRI's independence in nuclear production and the use of nuclear technology.⁷⁵ It should be noted that from the very start, Iran had pushed for the recognition of its right to uranium conversion and enrichment. In that context, the West expressed concern about the possibility of Russia's involvement in the uranium conversion and enrichment process.⁷⁶

As for Moscow's proposal, according to Konstantin Kosachyov, the head of the International Affairs Committee at the RF State Duma, Tehran disliked it from the start and used it as delaying tactics.⁷⁷

On 9 March, the IAEA informed the U.N. Security Council that it was not convinced about the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program.

In mid-April, negotiations took place in Moscow with the participation of an IRI deputy foreign minister and a deputy secretary of the Supreme National Security Council of Iran, on the one side, and deputy foreign ministers of five U.N. Security member countries plus Germany, on the other. They discussed in detail Iran's nuclear program. The six nations expressed their dissatisfaction with Iran's refusal (contrary to the demand of the IAEA Board and the U.N. Security Council resolution) to halt uranium enrichment.⁷⁸

At the time, the U.S. once again urged Russia to end nuclear cooperation with Iran. In response, on 21 April, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mikhail Kamynin said that a boycott of Iran would only be possible if it pursued a military nuclear program. Nevertheless, taking into account the IAEA's demand, in an effort to create an environment of trust, he urged Tehran to suspend uranium enrichment activity.⁷⁹ Addressing an international conference in Moscow on 21 April, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Kisliak suggested that should Iran continue the moratorium, it, like any NPT member country, would be able to pursue legitimate nuclear research for technological development purposes. In his opinion, the Iranian issue could be conclusively resolved at a G-8 meeting in St. Petersburg. A

⁷¹ See: *Ettelaat*, 1 March, 2006.

⁷² *Ibidem*.

⁷³ See: *Ettelaat*, 2 March, 2006.

⁷⁴ See: P. Kerr, "IAEA Reports Iran to UN Security Council," p. 27.

⁷⁵ See: *Ettelaat*, 2 March, 2006.

⁷⁶ See: D.G. Kimball, "Solving the Iranian Nuclear Puzzle," p. 3.

⁷⁷ See: *Ettelaat*, 10 March, 2006.

⁷⁸ See: *Ettelaat*, 20 April, 2006, p. 16.

⁷⁹ See: *Ettelaat*, 22 April, 2006, p. 1.

day prior to that, Sergey Kirienko said that the Bushehr NPP did not in any way jeopardize the NPT, and rejected the U.S. demand that the Bushehr project be scrapped.⁸⁰

It should be noted that throughout the period under review Russia constantly objected to the imposition of international sanctions on Iran and continued nuclear cooperation and arms sales.⁸¹

According to some foreign experts, Iran will need between five and 10 years to start indigenous production of even a small amount of nuclear fuel for its nuclear power plant in Bushehr. At the same time, according to U.S. officials, Iran will need about as long to start nuclear weapons production. It should be recalled that at that stage Iran was on the verge on putting into operation a centrifuge facility, which could have enabled it to produce enriched uranium both for civilian and military needs. Furthermore, Tehran's failure to respond to the latest demands not only of the world public but also of the IAEA aroused special concern, taking into account the fact that in January 2006, Iran removed 52 IAEA seals installed at its uranium enrichment facility, whose operation was suspended in October 2003. In August 2005, the Isfahan uranium conversion facility also resumed operations. By May 2006, Iran had produced 110 metric tons of sulfur hexafluoride, a gas essential for nuclear fuel production.⁸²

Under pressure from the world community, the Iranian authorities suggested that they could temporarily halt uranium enrichment activity in exchange for the recognition of the IRI's rights to such activity, with some provisos, and subject to tighter supervision.⁸³ At the same time, Iran's tough position forced the U.S., which had halted all contacts with the country, to make, on 6 June, 2006, a proposal, jointly with the EU, on providing Iran assistance in developing a non-military nuclear program.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, as the subsequent course of events showed, Tehran had no intention to stop halfway. Then, on 31 July, the U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 1696, ordering Iran to suspend its entire nuclear activity, including nuclear research and development. In addition to that, the resolution urged Iran to permit the IAEA to conduct inspection of its nuclear facilities. The Security Council made the resumption of negotiations contingent on the requirements being met. However, the IRI's categorical refusal to halt uranium enrichment, which it announced on 22 August, brought the Security Council to an impasse. On 31 August, the ultimatum expired, but the Iranian leaders reiterated their intention to continue uranium enrichment. Unlike the U.S. and the EU (the EU-3), Russia adopted the most lenient position with regard to Iran's nuclear program. True, just as China, it strongly objected to the introduction of tough measures, including economic sanctions, against Iran.⁸⁵ Such an approach obviously weakened the EU's position, giving Iran room to maneuver.

⁸⁰ See: *Ettelaat*, 22 April, 2006, p. 1.

⁸¹ See: D. Trenin, "Russia Leaves the West," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85, No. 4, July-August 2006, p. 92.

⁸² See: D. Albright, "When Could Iran Get the Bomb?" *Security, Science & Survival Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, July/August 2006, pp. 28-29.

⁸³ See: *Iran. Country Report*, August 2006, p. 19.

⁸⁴ See: "USA Edges Towards a More Pragmatic Iran Policy," *Gulf States Newsletter*, Vol. 30, Issue 790, 29 September, 2006, p. 4.

⁸⁵ According to A.V. Khlopkov, a Russian PIR Center expert, sanctions mechanisms cannot resolve the ongoing crisis around Iran's nuclear program; disagreements over a possible list of sanctions between the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council are too large for a viable resolution to be worked out, while the sanctions mechanism is not effective enough with regard to energy giants (see: *Russia Today*, 5 September, 2006 [Internet online]).

NATION-BUILDING

**EVOLUTION OF
PARLIAMENTARISM
IN THE REPUBLIC OF
TAJIKISTAN**

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The parliamentary system of government as a special political institution with all its principles and values did not become part of the theory and practice of nation-building in the post-Soviet countries, including Tajikistan, until the 1990s. This institution was totally alien to the Soviet state power system, which declared many of its features bourgeois and reactionary. After all, the Soviet system believed the bourgeois state machinery and the whole of pre-socialist statehood to be exploitative and in opposition to the interests of the working people. This was why the U.S.S.R. did not accept anything created in the theory and practice of the parliamentary system before the October Revolution.

In this respect, Soviet power was built on ideas and principles that were contradictory to the bourgeois organization of power. This in turn led to recognizing everything good and bad accumulated over the centuries as being alien to the interests of the proletariat.

The Soviets of People's Deputies elected by the people were considered a manifestation of their sovereignty, bodies authorized to decide the most important issues of state-, economy-, and social culture-building.¹

¹ See, for example: V. Shevtsov, *Obshchestvenno-politicheskoe ustroistvo SSSR*, Moscow, 1978, pp. 56-68.

The higher state power body of the Republic of Tajikistan (as in other Soviet republics) was the Supreme Soviet authorized to decide all the issues within the republic's jurisdiction.² These powers included supervising all issues relating to state-, economy-, and social culture-building, as well as forming executive, administrative, and control bodies subordinate to it.³ At the same time, sovereignty of the people and their representative bodies was formal, unrealistic, and confined to paper. In actual fact, the C.P.S.U. and its structures in the regions supervised all spheres of public and state life.

The democratic processes and changes that occurred at the end of Soviet society's existence brought these defects to the surface, and attempts were made to correct the situation. For example, the resolution of the C.P.S.U. Central Committee of 25 July, 1986 On Further Improvement of Party Leadership in the Soviets of People's Deputies, as well as the joint resolution of the C.P.S.U. Central Committee, U.S.S.R. Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, and U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers On Measures to Further Raise the Role and Increase the Responsibility of the Soviets of People's Deputies for Accelerating Socioeconomic Development in the Light of the Decisions of the 27th C.P.S.U. Congress, noted the need in particular to eliminate meticulous surveillance, duplication, and replacement of Soviets with party bodies, and talked about expanding the powers of the Soviets and raising their responsibility for all spheres of life in their territory.⁴ But experience showed that these attempts and cosmetic measures were clearly insufficient, the entire system required an overhaul.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, independent Tajikistan took consistent steps to build a contemporary parliamentary system, strengthen its foundation, and create other prerequisites for establishing this institution. The following features are characteristic of today's parliamentary system: its organization and functioning on the basis of the principles of the separation of powers and supremacy of law; a permanent parliament with the powers necessary to ensure its efficient functioning; specific working forms and methods and special relations between the parliamentary deputies and their voters. The parliamentary system in Tajikistan was created in keeping with the country's specific characteristics and conditions.

The Declaration on the Sovereignty of the Tajik S.S.R., adopted on 24 August, 1990, holds an important place in the evolution of the parliamentary system, as well as in the emergence of concepts and ideas about it and the legislative power.⁵ By declaring state sovereignty, the Declaration recognized and formalized generally accepted principles and regulations for the organization and functioning of state power, including those relating to the parliament and parliamentary system. For example, Item 3 of this document set forth that "state power in the Tajik S.S.R. is executed according to the principle of its separation into legislative, executive, and judicial."⁶ Here a vitally important principle of the parliamentary system is recognized for the first time, that is, the principle of separation of powers and recognition of parliament (in addition to the executive and judicial branches of power) as an independent branch of state power. The Declaration also added to the content of the principle of power belonging to the people.

The Soviet Constitutions only vaguely specified the content of this principle. For example, Art 2 of the Constitution of the Tajik S.S.R. of 1978 set forth that "all the power in the Tajik S.S.R. belongs to the people. The people execute state power through Soviets of People's Deputies that comprise the political foundation of the Tajik S.S.R."⁷ This main principle of people's power was fully

² See: *Constitution of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic*, Dushanbe, 1978, Art 56.

³ See: *Ibid.*, Art 99.

⁴ See: *KPSS o perestroike*, Collected Documents, Moscow, 1988, pp. 145-147.

⁵ See: *Ibid.*, pp. 234-250.

⁶ *Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Soveta Tadzhikskoi SSR*, No. 16, 1990, Art 236.

⁷ *Constitution of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic*, Dushanbe, 1978.

recognized in the Declaration. For example, the second item said that “the people are the bearer of sovereignty and the only source of state power. The people execute state power both directly and through representative bodies.”⁸ Here, as we see, it is important that the people are also recognized as the bearer of sovereignty and the only source of state power. Moreover, it was stated that the people could also directly execute the power that belonged to them.

By fixing these principles, the Declaration laid the foundation for establishing a parliamentary system, since it, as was stressed, became the basis on which the country’s new Constitution was drafted.⁹

The next important step in the evolution of the parliamentary system was the adoption of a new Constitution for sovereign Tajikistan (1994). It enforced the principles of a democratic and law-based state, which formed a strong foundation for the parliamentary system and created a legislative power branch in the country. The constitution set forth such principles as declaring the republic a democratic, law-based, and secular state; recognizing man, his rights, and his freedoms as the highest value in society; recognizing the people as the bearer of sovereignty and the only source of state power; enforcing political and ideological pluralism; separating powers into legislative, executive, and judicial; recognizing the supremacy of the Constitution and the laws; recognizing international legal acts as a component of the country’s legal system and their supremacy over laws; ensuring lawfulness; ensuring that laws go into effect only after their official publication; ensuring that citizens participate in administering the state through their representatives; recognizing the parliament as the state’s highest representative and only legislative body; ensuring free mandate and free expression of deputy will; guaranteeing inviolability of the deputy mandate, and so on.

Some of these principles could not be fully observed immediately after they were constitutionally enforced since society and the state were transiting from a Soviet totalitarian system to a democratic society. The old ways of thinking and methods of working, as well as the traditions and psychology of the Soviet period were still very strong. It would take time to overcome them and gradually replace them with new ones.

Moreover, when the state gained its independence (1991), public opposition began in the country, and then a civil war broke out, which prevented the establishment of a parliamentary system and the formation of a new state. Only after peace and national accord were reached (1997) was the opportunity presented for creating this institution.

The civil war in the country ended after talks were held and a Peace and National Accord Treaty signed on 27 June, 1997.¹⁰ The Treaty, in addition to other issues, also fixed the aspects important for the establishment of a parliamentary system.

For example, the third block of items on the agenda of the inter-Tajik talks was called “Fundamental Questions of the Constitutional System and Consolidation of Statehood in the Republic of Tajikistan,” in which the following proposals were made:

- 1) on drafting a new Constitution and drawing all strata of Tajik society into the constitutional process;
- 2) on drafting a new election law and drawing all strata of the republic’s population, political parties, movements, and public associations into the law-making process; and
- 3) on organizing and holding free and democratic elections in Tajikistan, to name a few.¹¹

⁸ *Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Soveta Tadjikskoi SSR*, No. 16, 1990, Art 236.

⁹ See: *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ See: I. Usmon, *Kniga o mire*, Collected Documents, Dushanbe, 2001, pp. 396-398.

¹¹ See: *Ibid.*, pp. 38-41.

This block also included issues relating to drawing up, discussing, and adopting the republic's new Constitution and new laws on elections to the parliament and local representative power bodies, as well as to holding democratic and free elections. During the inter-Tajik talks, these issues were clarified and specified in a Protocol on the Main Functions and Powers of the National Reconciliation Commission¹² and in the statute of this Commission.¹³

One of the most important issues relating to the establishment of a parliamentary system and its further development is the creation of a professional and permanent parliament. Its professional nature makes it possible for the representative power branch to perform the functions entrusted to it.

This was a topic of discussion even before the civil war. For example, at the extensive meetings held in Dushanbe at the end of 1991 and during the first half of 1992, the opposition demanded the early disbandment of the Supreme Soviet and the election of a new professional parliament. A decree issued by the republic's president, R. Nabiev, of 12 May, 1992 On the Formation of a National Assembly (Majlis) stated: "During the transition period, before a new parliament is elected on a multi-party basis, a National Assembly (Majlis) shall be formed from among the people's deputies and representatives of political parties and movements on an equal basis, which shall be a body for approving draft laws submitted by committees of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Tajikistan."¹⁴ The adopting of the Constitution, introducing amendments and addenda into it, and approving the state budget were not passed on to the National Assembly, but left for the Supreme Soviet to decide before a new parliament was elected.¹⁵

Admittedly, the decree did not directly talk about the professional nature of the future parliament. However, based on the content of this document and taking into account the situation at that time, it can be concluded that the creation of a permanent parliament was implied. In addition, professional parliaments had already been created at that time in some of the republics of the former Soviet Union, which also had a certain amount of influence on those in favor of creating this kind of parliament.

The draft of the new Constitution of Tajikistan directly mentioned a professional parliament, which was drawn up by a presidential working group and published in the mass media.¹⁶ Art 7 of the draft noted that "the Majlisi milli is professional and permanent, is elected to a four-year term, and consists of 63 people's deputies."¹⁷ An alternative draft presented by R. Zoyir, a professor at the law department of the National University, also insisted on the professional nature of the parliament. It stated that "the Majlisi milli is a permanent professional body that is elected to a four-year term and consists of 100 people's deputies."¹⁸

The draft prepared by the communists and the draft published in the *Farkhangi Badakhshon* newspaper pointed out that only some deputies should work in the parliament on a permanent basis. For example, the latter draft emphasized that "a deputy of the Majlisi Oli who works permanently in it may not occupy another post or engage in business activity at the same time."¹⁹ Whereas the communist draft noted that "a deputy who works permanently in the Supreme Soviet may not occupy another post or engage in business activity, apart from scientific and creative activity."²⁰

These provisions of the said drafts subsequently influenced the text of the Constitution of 1994. For example, it kept quiet about the professionalism and the permanent nature of the parliament.

¹² See: I. Usmon, op. cit., pp. 335-337.

¹³ See: Ibid., pp. 353-357.

¹⁴ See: *Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Soveta Tadjikskoi SSR*, No. 11, 1992, Art 189.

¹⁵ See: Ibidem.

¹⁶ See: *Vecherniy Dushanbe*, 1 June, 1992.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ *Narodnaia gazeta*, 15 July, 1992.

¹⁹ *Farkhangi Badakhshon*, No. 5, 1994.

²⁰ *Zov trudiashchikhsia*, 1-7 July, 1994 (in Tajik).

Art 49 said that “the Majlisi Oli is the highest representative and legislative body of the Republic of Tajikistan. The procedure for forming and supervising the activity of the Majlisi Oli is determined by law.”²¹ In this way, the Constitution, by keeping quiet about the professional nature of the parliament, seemed to refer to the law determining the procedure for its formation and activity. This law was adopted on 3 November, 1995, but it did not mention anything about the professional nature of the parliament.²²

So the Constitution of 1994 did not legalize the professional, permanent nature of the parliament of Tajikistan, which was sort of a step back compared to the draft published in 1992. But there were reasons for this “retreat” related to the ongoing civil war, disrupted economy, and hundreds of thousands of refugees who fled the republic. Of course, such conditions were not conducive to creating a professional and permanent parliament in the country.

This question was raised during the inter-Tajik talks and was one of the issues on which the opposition wanted to introduce corresponding amendments into the country’s Fundamental Law. This issue also related to the fact that, first, during adoption of the 1994 Constitution, most of the opposition and its supporters were living outside the country and did not participate in the voting to adopt the Constitution. So it was agreed that amendments would be introduced into the Constitution. Second, the proposal to create a permanent, professional parliament, as already mentioned, was made as early as the beginning of the 1990s, when the opposition had only just declared its existence. By making this demand, it wanted to hold early parliamentary elections, occupy a certain number of seats in the parliament, and use it as a political tribune for advancing its political claims. This idea did not come to fruition at that time, since the political struggle escalated into a civil war. But when the talks began between the government and opposition, this question was raised again and discussed for a long time both during the negotiations and in the National Reconciliation Commission.

As we already emphasized, this was one of the issues included in the third block of items on the agenda of the inter-Tajik talks,²³ and then fixed in the Protocol on the Main Functions and Powers of the National Reconciliation Commission and in the Statute of the National Reconciliation Commission.²⁴ These documents, along with questions related to making amendments and addenda to the Constitution, also included questions of drafting a new law on elections to the parliament and local representative bodies and submitting it to the parliament for approval, as well as for a general referendum if needed. It also contained proposals for the date on which elections to the new professional parliament should be held under the control of the U.N. and OSCE with the participation of observer countries at the inter-Tajik talks to be reviewed by the representative power branch.²⁵

Then this question was discussed for a long time in the National Reconciliation Commission, which included representatives of the government and opposition for implementing the agreements reached during the inter-Tajik talks.

The creation of a permanent, professional parliament was a central issue in the amendments introduced into the country’s Constitution, since these amendments largely affected the representative branch of power.

In order to draw up a draft of these amendments, the National Reconciliation Commission drafted a conception of proposals on amendments to the Constitution.²⁶ The conception was approved by the Commission after a lengthy discussion between the representatives of the government and opposition. It set forth the following ideas:

²¹ *Constitution of the Republic of Tajikistan*, Dushanbe, 1994.

²² See: *Akhbori Majlisi Oli Respubliki Tajikistan*, No. 21, 1995, Art 221.

²³ See: I. Usmon, op. cit., pp. 38-41.

²⁴ See: *Ibid.*, pp. 335-337, 353-357.

²⁵ See: *Ibidem*.

²⁶ See: A. Dostiev, *Konstitutsiia Respubliki Tajikistan: Istoria razrabotki, printatiia, vnesenie izmeneniy i osnovnyye poniatii*, Dushanbe, 2001, pp. 180-182.

- 1) a unicameral professional parliament should be created in the country;
- 2) the number of parliamentary deputies should be no less than 71 and no more than 80;
- 3) there should be no quotas for the regions;
- 4) the procedure for electing parliamentary deputies should be set forth in the Constitution itself;
- 5) elections of deputies should be held on the basis of the principle of the absolute majority of electorate votes;
- 6) bearing in mind that a permanent parliament is being created in the country, the parliamentary presidium and other superfluous bodies should be eliminated;
- 7) the heads of the country's diplomatic missions in foreign countries and international organizations should be appointed by the president with the parliament's consent.²⁷

The conception was sent to the president for approval. After acquainting himself with the document, he said he did not agree with several points. For example, his letter of 3 April, 1999, said that the creation of a permanent two-house parliament was a demand of the times and that it was suitable for the country,²⁸ and it also noted that it would be impossible to completely fund the functioning of a permanent parliament.²⁹

Taking into account the president's objections, the conception was discussed for a second time in the National Reconciliation Commission, where, after lengthy debates, it was adopted on 21 June, 1999. The Commission's resolution stated that a two-house parliament was to be created in the country, the lower house of which would be permanent and professional, and the upper would be convocational. It was set forth that the deputies of the lower house would be elected, and the members of the upper house would be elected or appointed. In other words, a mixed system of elections would be used, whereby some of the lower house deputies would be elected in single-member constituencies, and some on the basis of lists of candidates nominated by political parties according to the system of proportional representation.³⁰

On the basis of this approved conception, a draft of amendments to the country's Constitution was drawn up. Taking into account that most of its regulations applying to the organization and activity of the parliament would change, a new version of the corresponding chapter of the Fundamental Law was drafted.³¹

The following regulations and principles of the parliamentary government system formed the basis of this chapter. The Parliament—Majlisi Oli (Supreme Assembly) consists of two houses—Majlisi namoiandagon (Assembly of Representatives) and Majlisi milli (National Assembly). The lower house—Majlisi namoiandagon—functions on a permanent basis, and the upper house—Majlisi milli—is convocational. The deputies of the lower house are elected directly by the country's citizens according to single-member and multi-member constituencies; some deputies of the upper house are elected indirectly by local representative bodies, while others (8 people) are appointed by the country's president. The ex-president has the right to remain a life member of the upper house, if he does not waive this right.

A few other generally accepted regulations of parliamentary activity were also adopted. In particular, the president convenes the first session of the new convocation of both houses, regular ses-

²⁷ See: A. Dostiev, *op. cit.*, pp. 177-182.

²⁸ See: *Ibid.*, p. 184.

²⁹ See: *Ibid.*, pp. 177-182.

³⁰ See: *Ibid.*, p. 184.

³¹ See: *Ibid.*, pp. 198-209.

sions of the lower house as the permanent house are convened once a year, whereby they remain in session from the first work day of October until the last work day of June; parliamentary holidays, time for work with voters, and so on are also envisaged.

Each house has its own powers, and the houses also have joint powers which they execute at joint sessions. Powers are distributed between the houses in view of their specific features. Legislative activity belonged to both houses and other subjects of law enjoying legislative initiative. The lower house is considered legislative, all draft laws are sent to it and only it has the right to adopt them. Then the laws are sent to the upper house for approval. Laws on the budget and amnesty are an exception; they are sent to the president to be signed and promulgated.

Thus the generally recognized regulations and principles of parliamentarism, which are extremely important for establishing this political institution, were adopted in the republic for the first time. This ushered in a full-fledged parliamentary system in Tajikistan as an independent institution with all the characteristics, principles, and regulations inherent in it.

The further development of the principles and regulations of the parliamentary system was also fixed in the amendments to the Constitution introduced by the 2003 referendum.³² In most cases, these amendments were editorial and clarifying in nature. For example, it was envisaged that the deputies of the lower house and members of the upper house should have a higher education.³³ Along with these amendments, several other changes were also made to the section on the parliament. For example, the Constitutional, Supreme, and Higher Economic Courts have the exclusive right of legislative initiative, and the Law on Amnesty was transferred to the competence of the lower house along with the Law on the State Budget, which is also under its exclusive jurisdiction.³⁴ These and other changes, in turn, made it possible to improve the constitutional principles for the organization and functioning of the parliament and opened up broad possibilities for the further development of this institution of democracy in Tajikistan.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the parliamentary system and legislative power in the Republic of Tajikistan did not appear overnight, since it takes time:

- a) to gradually do away with the old way of thinking and improve the forms and methods of parliamentary work;
- b) to gradually comprehend the principles and regulations of the parliamentary system and put them into practice;
- c) to ensure that the parliament's activity, particularly that of the permanent house, gives the finishing touches to the principles and regulations of the parliamentary system keeping in mind the reality, special features, and characteristics of the Republic of Tajikistan;
- d) to gradually strengthen and improve the parliament's regulatory-legal framework (taking into account the above-mentioned factors) and elaborate efficient ways for it to interact with the other branches of state power.

³² See: *Akhbori Majlisi Oli Respubliki Tajikistan*, No. 3, 2003, Art 97.

³³ See: *Ibidem*.

³⁴ See: *Ibidem*.

GEORGIA: DEVALUED PUBLIC CAPITAL AND THE THIRD SECTOR AT THE CROSSROADS

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In the last ten years, civil society institutions in Georgia have been gradually gathering momentum even though the process has been somewhat lopsided. The very idea of civil society was misinterpreted from the very beginning along with the natural and traditional institutions of civil society, such as the media, the Church, trade unions, and higher educational and academic institutions. In recent years, the term has been appropriated by a narrow circle of the Georgian political community, which did not add popularity either to the term itself or to the phenomenon. It should be said, however, that the impact of civil society institutions' on all aspects of the country's public life and the political processes in particular is still felt.

The term "civil society" can hardly be described as popular with the Georgians mainly because of the politically engaged NGOs that have remained on the scene long enough to become associated with certain political forces. This gave Georgia its Third Sector, which can only be described as an imitation of the true thing: everything that was done, and is being done, in the country in its name (in the name of NGOs) merely imitates civil society. This radical assessment has become even more applicable after the Rose Revolution, which revealed all the institutional shortcomings and even digressions from democratic values of those local NGOs that posed as the vanguard of the democratic developments in the republic.

Civil Society Institutions: Typology

Civil society institutions were set up under Eduard Shevardnadze; the process accelerated in 1995 after the civil war ended and all the paramilitary structures operating outside the legal field were disbanded and the country acquired its first post-Soviet constitution. This was when the edifice of non-state institutions (in the form of nongovernmental organizations) was built along with the state institutions and structures. From the very beginning, NGOs formed the core of civil society not because they expressed its real interests, but because the smartest of them captured the money sources.

Those NGOs that sided either with the government or with the opposition and claimed political changes and democratization as their aims were also funded by their partners.

Typology will supply the reader with a clearer picture of Georgia's Third Sector.

So far we have no reliable official figures about the total number of NGOs operating in the republic, but we do know that after the Rose Revolution, the Third Sector neither widened considerably nor upgraded its performance. We can guess, however, how many of the old NGOs are still in oper-

ation: according to certain sources, in 2003 (the year of the velvet revolution and the peak year of NGO activity) there were over five thousand registered NGOs in Georgia.¹

Practically all of them were (and remain) small groups; some of them consist of one person only; most of them exist only on paper, the reason for which can only be found in why they were set up in the first place. It is no secret that most of them were set up for material/financial reasons and never pursued public interests: in Georgia, as across the whole of the post-Soviet expanse for that matter, international funds pay NGOs for all sorts of projects. This suggests typology based on the NGOs' relations with international funds. There are two groups of them: privileged and non-privileged, while their specialization divides them into the following categories:

1. Human rights organizations that claim to promote the rights of national minorities, gender issues, freedom of speech, etc.;
2. Associations of creative workers;
3. Student and youth NGOs;
4. NGOs engaged in scientific or similar activities;
5. NGOs operating in the media sphere;
6. Ecological and other NGOs.

They differ not only in their spheres of activity and amount of outside funding, they also have different "historical roots," no matter how strange this sounds. There are NGOs that are commonly considered to be vestiges of the Soviet past, such as the Union of Writers and the unions of other creative workers. They are no different from other NGOs, but because they served the communist regime and kept the creative intelligentsia under control, they were pushed to the back burner once the Soviet Union fell apart. Under Shevardnadze, however, before the Rose Revolution, they enjoyed state funding and continued operating by the force of inertia.²

The Rose Revolution put an end to their cushy existence; their property was expropriated (in the summer of 2007, the Ministry of Economics confiscated the sumptuous office of the Writers' Union in the center of the Georgian capital).

The United Trade Unions, another chunk of Soviet heritage, stand apart from all the other structures that outlived the Soviet Union. In the West, trade unions are the main component of the "third sector" and the force behind the public movement. The Soviet stereotype is still alive in Georgia, therefore the public refuses to treat trade unions as a civil society institution. Indeed, trade unions have remained bureaucratic structures; before the Rose Revolution the chairman of the United Trade Unions of Georgia regularly attended Cabinet sittings, very much like one of the bureaucrats. The trade unions changed hands after the revolution and became, at least formally, NGOs. So far, however, their presence in the country's civil movement is hardly felt. According to certain sources, the United Trade Unions is the largest public organization in Georgia. The teachers' trade union, which claims a membership of 141,000, is the largest in the country³; according to the latest sociological polls, its members earned it a place among the top five NGOs the public trusted. According to other sources, trade unions are only visible on 1 May, International Workers' Day, when several scores of activists go out into the streets in front of their offices to draw attention to themselves.

¹ See: O. Melkadze, *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo: problemy formirovaniya*, Political and Legal Literature Series, Book XIX, Tbilisi, 2004, p. 50.

² Imedi TV, Re-action Talk-show, 20 April, 2007.

³ See: *Stroitel'stvo demokratii v Gruzii. Diskussionnye materialy Kavkazskogo instituta mira, demokratii i razvitiya*, Series No. 1, 2003, p. 71.

The NGOs born in the last 10 to 15 years look very different from the “relicts of the Soviet past,” the most active of them being the Institute of Freedom, the Association of Young Lawyers, and Fair Elections.

Their activity is well paid; money comes from all sides: in the last 10 to 12 years, all sorts of civil initiatives and projects with money to spend, as well as branches of such international funds as the Open Society—Georgia (the Georgian branch of the Soros Foundation), USAID, Eurasia, the U.N. Development Program, etc., came to the republic to stay. Their money is spent on selected structures and carefully avoids most of the local NGOs.

The well-paid NGOs positioned themselves as fighters for democracy and for political rights and freedoms; they were entitled to speak in the name of civil society. This is especially true of the Institute of Freedom, which headed the crusade against the Shevardnadze regime; it gave rise to the Kmara youth movement, which played an important role in the Rose Revolution. It was the revolution that revealed the fact that the country had acquired quasi-political structures in the previous 10 to 12 years instead of genuine NGOs, the vanguard and striking force of the local political groups. The Institute of Freedom, for example, was closely connected with the Group of Young Reformers set up inside the power structures. It was headed by Zurab Zhvania (speaker of the parliament before the revolution and prime minister after the revolution) and Mikhail Saakashvili, the current president of the country.

There is another tell-tale point: when President Shevardnadze and the young reformers parted ways, the Ministry of Security suggested that a law (presented as a counterterrorist measure) on monitoring monetary flows from the international structures should be adopted. In fact, this was an attempt to control the NGOs that were growing rich on foreign grants (they were known as “grant-eaters”).⁴ President Shevardnadze, however, was removed from office before he could limit the money flows.

The Third Sector: Personnel and Value Crisis

The Rose Revolution sent the Third Sector into a crisis: before the velvet revolution its most active part had been pursuing political aims. In 2003, they were achieved in the form of the regime change; for some time the Third Sector sort of disappeared from the scene⁵: its activists moved up to the top. The Institute of Freedom delegated its members to the highest posts in the country: Giga Bokeria is a deputy and the de facto parliamentary majority leader; Givi Targamadze heads the parliamentary Committee for Defense and Security; Gigi Ugulava is the mayor of Tbilisi; Ivan Merabishvili is minister of the interior, Sozar Subari is ombudsman, Tamara Kintsurashvili is general director of public TV and radio; Alexander Lomaia, former director of the Soros Foundation-Georgia branch, fills the post of secretary of Georgia’s Security Council; and Levan Tarkhnishvili chairs the Central Election Commission.

They left many gaps behind, not only because there were no people to fill the vacancies, but also because none of Georgia’s NGOs were truly civil organizations. In fact, there was no clear line between nongovernmental and political organizations.⁶ The new NGOs borrowed the old pattern and mode of action to fight the official powers and side with the opposition. What is more, the Association of Young Lawyers, which opposes government on all issues, is closely connected with the opposition

⁴ See: *Stroitel'stvo demokratii v Gruzii. Diskussionnye materialy Kavkazskogo instituta mira, demokratii i razvitiia*, Series No. 1, 2003, p. 60.

⁵ See: “The Nongovernmental Sector is Waiting for New Heroes,” *Mtavari gazetii*, 12 June, 2004 (in Georgian).

⁶ See: “The Vast Crisis of Civil Society,” *Mtavari gazetii*, 12 June, 2004.

Republican Party. The Association is known in governing circles as the Republican Party's branch. This structure initiated by people inside the government and prominent opposition members had an important role to play in setting up a new, post-Soviet legal school in Georgia. Today it is engaged in the Georgian Government in the Scorching Sun project to reveal what they see as illegal acts of the Cabinet of Ministers and misappropriation of budget funds and the president's personal fund.

The Institute of Equality, a fairly young NGO, is opposed to the post-revolutionary government; it has already stirred up trouble, for which its activists had to pay with 30 days in prison. It applies the methods the NGO Institute of Freedom used against the Shevardnadze regime. The Institute of Equality is using similar methods against the Saakashvili regime by acting hand in glove with the regime's opponents.

Former minister for conflict settlement Georgy Khaindrava (evicted from the Cabinet two years earlier because of disagreements with Mikhail Saakashvili's team) joined the Institute of Equality. His brother is one of the leaders of the opposition Republican Party.

As for the Institute of Freedom, it is absolutely loyal to the regime. The NGO has even developed into the government's "brain trust;" today it is administered by former Kmara members. The NGO has the informal right, better described as a privilege, to offer legal political initiatives which the people at the top invariably take into account. It was the Institute of Freedom (which in the past actively supported freedom of the press) that drafted the law on ethics for TV and radio companies, which can be best described as an infringement on the freedom of speech.

This is more proof that civil society and the Third Sector have been developing in the wrong direction: indeed, instead of NGOs, the country acquired well-paid politically biased structures.⁷

After the Rose Revolution, the civil sector as a whole (with the exception of the structures mentioned above and some other NGOs) did not gain political weight for several reasons. Foreign funding, the bulk of which was controlled by the state, was one of the reasons. Mr. Soros, the founder of the fund that bears his name, announced after the Rose Revolution that the pre-revolutionary forms of the country's advance toward democracy and support of the civil sector had exhausted themselves. It was more important, he stated, to support the Georgian government; for some time the ministers received their wages from the fund.

The 2003-2006 Soros Foundation spent the following sums:

2003 (the year of the Rose Revolution)

■ **Total budget—\$2,800,733.**

The money was spent mainly on three priorities:

- programs in the legal sphere—\$587,012;
- election programs—\$332,179;
- economic development programs—\$324,000.

2004

■ **Total budget—\$2,138,939.**

Three priority programs:

- economic development—\$412,193;
- public health—\$300,000;
- regional information infrastructure—\$289,643.

⁷ See: *Ibidem*.

2005

■ **Total budget—\$2,723,277.**

Three priorities:

public administration and local self-government—\$546,590;

public health—\$513,828;

the legal sphere—\$350,757.

2006

■ **Total budget—\$2,499,700.**

Three priorities:

the rule of law and public administration—\$884,567;

integration and civil education—\$560,149;

support of civil society and the mass media—\$365,431.⁸

Today the money goes to NGOs engaged in research; very much like before, however, grants are limited to the chosen few that claim to be engaged in “expert activities” and refer to themselves as “reformers,” “pro-Western” structures, etc.

Nearly all of them are closely associated with the government, which entrusted them with the task of brainwashing the public through the media. This part of the civil sector has developed into a caste of experts that monopolized the TV and newspapers, on the one hand, and a very limited group that monopolized the grants coming to the republic, on the other. Here is what they say about this in their research papers: “Foreign grants stir up social protest or envy: the incomes and living conditions of NGO members are much better than those of most of the nation.”⁹ Strange as it may seem, NGO members admit that foreign funding closes the doors of their structures to new recruits.¹⁰

Recruiting new people into already functioning NGOs is a very painful process, while most new nongovernmental structures will be left without foreign financial support, which dooms them to inaction. The lucky ones spend the money on issues of little importance for Georgian society; more often than not their projects are token (conferences, symposia, and presentations) and ignore the most urgent issues—they are busy spending the donor money on banquets rather than projects. The NGOs engaged in research activities demonstrate no mean enthusiasm when it comes to publishing works of their own members, many of which are not up to par.

Significantly, after the Rose Revolution, the donors re-channeled their money away from political toward scientific-research projects because some of the previously privileged NGOs (which positioned themselves as fighters for democracy and pro-Western structures) had moved toward academic institutions where they usurped power.

Corruption among the officials of the foreign funds is one of the worst headaches of civil society in Georgia. It is a well-known fact that the grants are limited to the NGOs represented in the donors’ boards of directors. This creates a vicious circle with no light at the end of the tunnel.

⁸ See: [www.osgf.ge].

⁹ *Stroitel'stvo demokratii v Gruzii*, p. 59.

¹⁰ See: G. Tevzadze, *Georgia: “Power has Returned”*, Tbilisi, 2003, p. 77 (in Georgian).

The Opinion Leaders or Quasi-Experts: How the Mass Media Falsify Public Opinion

Civil society in Georgia has names of its own: these are the names of those who the media popularize and whose political commentaries are actively promoted. This is especially true of television, which skillfully ignores the prominent cultural figures the nation respects and whose opinions are cherished to fill its time with the same faces making the same statements.

The media explain their obsession by claiming that the people they present as opinion leaders, who express the will of civil society, enjoy authority and popularity among the public.

The Georgian electronic media divide this selected group of opinion leaders, or defenders of the interests of civil society, into several categories: experts (political scientists and economists); a narrow circle of journalist colleagues; cultural figures (writers, film directors, artists, etc.); sportsmen; and showmen.

They form the very narrow circle the electronic media describe as popular and, on the strength of this, allow them to address the TV audience in the name of the civil sector. This practice alienates civil society from the media, since the latter are creating a “micro-civil society” of their own, a sort of a virtual world in which they rule and refuse to look for new faces in civil society.

In some cases, members of civil society pose as Third Sector activists, in others they present themselves as academics or journalists (or both together). Members of the same NGO, for example, control numerous funds, universities, and even public television. In the past, it was television that moved these NGOs to the forefront and called them the “civil sector.”

Later, the same NGOs and the so-called experts that belonged to them monopolized the public sector. On the one hand, cooperation between the media and the NGOs—together they form the core of the Third Sector—can be described as natural. In Georgia, however, the politicized media are exploiting politicized NGOs in pursuit of political aims, or vice versa, the NGOs are exploiting the media to simulate a reality in which the public has no say. In this way, the wrong people are speaking in the name of civil society, while the right people with the will to promote public interests have no money to work for the good of society. They are left out in the cold, behind the closed doors of such civil institutions as the media.

For example, public TV runs a daily Commentary of the Day program that uses the same “experts” to inform the nation about the country’s political life. Sometimes this ends in absurdities: as soon as one program ends on one channel, the host and guest change places to start another analytical program in the same studio. Such “experts” know everything, ranging from Georgia’s integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures to global warming and the decline of the reproductive function in Georgian women. Recently the founder of one of the “expert” NGOs analyzed the economic situation in the country on the radio. When asked by one of the listeners about some details of the subject under discussion, the expert explained: “I know next to nothing about finances—I am an expert in economic issues.” The larger part of the “expert” NGOs consist of this type of character who wants nothing but money or, at the very least, contacts with the media. In this way, experts with neither professional knowledge nor adequate experience become the “faces” of civil society.

The Georgian media have a weakness for NGOs with names that include important-sounding words such as “international:” in fact, they mesmerize many (at least that part of society with fairly limited ideas about the world). The press multiplies such opinions with great enthusiasm. They all follow the rule: the opinions NGO members offer the media should fit the interests of the media which,

in turn, obey the instructions of their owners. This explains why in this country the NGOs and the media do not defend public interests and cannot be described as *vox populi*. They have a different role to play—that of political supporters of the groups engaged in political struggle.

This was amply confirmed by the pre-term presidential election held on 5 January, 2008 and the personnel shifts at the very top the elections entailed. Obviously, the country's political elite has strong doubts about those NGO members who, abetted by the media, assumed the role of experts or even of national "spiritual leaders." Not long ago, the most active "experts" spoke in the name of professional (the political scientists' community among others) and public circles. The opposition used the recent presidential election to accuse them of complotting with the government, even to tag them as "satellites of power." The fact that, together with foreign observers, the members of 44 Georgian NGOs also monitored the presidential election merely added fuel to the fire.¹¹ The most active of them were the NGOs that indirectly sided with the government. The nation was infuriated by the fact that the exit polls (ordered by three Georgian TV channels) were conducted by the NGO headed by the wife of Levan Tarkhishvili, Chairman of the Central Election Commission. The nation was offered one more surprise: two political experts who demonstrated no mean activity in the exit polls as representatives of the public were appointed ministers. These exit polls' results essentially coincided with the official figures which supplied the government with an additional argument for denying the accusations of election result falsifications.¹² The appointments revived the talks about the crisis in the Third Sector.

C o n c l u s i o n

Today the government and the opposition have monopolized the playing fields of Georgian politics and public life. The institutions of the political system, which should be independent of the two players and pursue democratic values, lost their positions.

In recent years, some of the institutions of civil society have acquired additional influence, but this did nothing to stir up the public movement, which should in principle remain independent of the government sector and other political entities (political parties, elites, etc.). At the same time, the country has a vast (still undeveloped) resource in the form of so-called public capital, which will sooner or later become strong enough to replace the surrogate Third Sector.

¹¹ See: *Speech of President of Georgia Mikhail Saakashvili to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*, 24 January, 2008.

¹² Rustavi-2 TV Channel, Prime-Time program, 28 January, 2008.

RELIGION IN SOCIETY

SECULARISM AND THE INTER-CONFESSIONAL RIFT (*Central Asia's experience*)

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Ideas about civil society, democratic principles, the constitutional system, and the separation between the state and religion are the product of secular, primarily European, cultural values which have been adopted to one extent or another as reference points in most post-Soviet states. However, the revival of religion and religious values is adding a special flavor to this situation. And to be more precise, this revival is giving rise to certain problems, in particular, open and latent conflicts between religious fundamentalists and the supporters of secular development who represent the political establishment of the Central Asian countries, as well as the often veiled appeal of politicians to Islamic values.

To a certain extent, mini conflicts of this kind are inevitable and arise from the differences in liberalism and religious culture. One of these

differences is the spiritual sphere, to which theologians are claiming a monopoly. And here they are at an advantage, since religion is the bearer of sacral precepts. In this sense, the revival of Islamic values and their use as a tribute to the religious situation in the region, so to speak, is also giving rise to several unsolvable contradictions. For example, propaganda by states of religious spiritual values and their perception in the Muslim sphere are turning religion into an ideology which, in turn, is influencing the formation of vital reference points, including the political preferences of a significant number of citizens. This is where the latent conflict between values and reference points begins. And any state that chooses the path of secular development, given the large number of believers in the country, always finds itself balanced on this barely perceptible edge.

These problems are also pertinent for the Central Asian countries, and the designated contradictions are currently a reality for all of the region's states. These conflicts can be settled by turning to our national experience and to the traditions and customs of the local Muslim community, which has learned over time to live in a polyconfessional environment. However, this is also leading to conflicts among theologians, since they have different ideas about the permissible degree of rapprochement with the representatives of other confessions and have different views about their own colonial past, the national features, customs, and rituals of the local people, and the ways to combine customs with the precepts of the Shari'a.

Nevertheless, one of the main problems in this sphere is *inter-confessional tolerance*. The theologians of different confessions often declare that they are ready to hold dialogs and that tolerance is the heart of their religion. But in my view this often nothing but ritual rhetoric and declarations and is not becoming a real norm of religious, particularly public, life. What is the reason for this? I would like to offer my own vision of the problem of inter-confessional tolerance or, vice versa, of the sources of inter-religious intolerance in the Central Asian republics.

So we are talking about one of the main reference points in the system of secular values—the call for tolerance, particularly with respect to the members of other confessions and ethnic groups who uphold different cultural values. Here I feel a special feature of our situation is related to our recent past. I am referring to repression and the Soviet policy of atheism which formed a cautious attitude, to say the least, among religious intellectuals to secular (or liberal) values and public and political institutions. This also applies to the degree of tolerance among some theologians. To illustrate this, it is enough to take a look at the Muslim religious literature published in the region. Running a little ahead, I will note that there is a big difference between the declarations of many religious leaders (which are more political in nature) and those ideas that become apparent when reading the Muslim literature legally and

illegally published these days by contemporary Muslim theologians in the region. An objective study of this literature compels us to make serious adjustments to our understanding of the real, but subconscious, aspects of religious consciousness and religious life of the local community, at least of most of the theologians who are publishing various works. I can say that after undertaking such a study, I became rather skeptical about the declared inter-confessional tolerance in the region.

I will only present a few examples here, or, to be more precise, two fragments from commentaries of the Qu'ran (*tafsir*) by famous theologians of the region. I think they precisely illustrate my earlier and later theses. I especially chose the commentaries of the 120th ayat of the Sura *Al-Baqarah*, where, I will remind you, the matter concerns the attitude of Muslims toward the infidels. In the officially published commentary of the Qu'ran (*tafsir*) by our most famous theologian, sheikh Muhammad-Sadik Muhammad-Yusuf, we read:

“From this and the previous ayats, as well as from contemporary experience, it is clear that the infidels will not leave us alone. They will carry out all kinds of hostile acts against Muslims in every sphere. ...But it is not worth hoping that they will be satisfied, for they will be satisfied only when we follow their religion. There is no other way they will take a liking to us. Jews and Christians have been hostile toward each other both in the past and nowadays. But they will immediately unite into a single bloc against the Muslims. They are trying to expel Muslims from their religion. But Muslims are entering into all kinds of talks and dialogs to somehow reach some understanding with them. Oh, if only this could be of benefit! For the main goal of the Jews and Christians is not mutual understanding. ...However ... Allah's path is the only true path. There is no need to think of anything else. There is no other way! There should be no turning from the true path! And so there is no need for mutual understanding with them (the infidels). For it is well known that the search for mutual understanding and attempts to cater to each others' needs will lead (us) to disaster. And there is no greater disaster (for

us) than the search for compromise with the infidels...".¹

About 15 years ago, another theologian of the region, Abduwali-kori Mirzaev, commented on this same ayat:

*"Islamic precepts are true, even if not everyone likes them! All other rules established in the public system are not worth twopence!... If anyone borrows even the smallest thing from the infidels, his path is an untrue path! Let such Muslims remember that they can either be Muslims or infidels! There is no other way! Do not follow them and do not deny your own religion! ...If you deny your own way, you deny Allah! ...But Islam's greatest foes are those Muslims who befriend Jews and Christians and borrow their rules, customs, and political systems. ... They think that if they reach an understanding with the Jews and Christians, they are not betraying their own religion... No! They are betraying it. Understanding cannot be reached with the infidels!!... Imitating the infidels and borrowing something from their "culture" is the same thing as following them and their faith... Today, Jews and Christians are hatching their selfish plans under the guise of various "cultural exchanges," "dialogs," "political and cultural unions"... But they are doing all of this against Islam, remember that! ...In actual fact, the confrontation between Jews and Christians, on the one hand, and Muslims, on the other, is not racial or geographic confrontation, it is confrontation between religions. And remember this well! However, at different times this struggle was given different names, but its essence has always been the same..."*²

Further in the same commentary, we read harsher, even aggressive, calls to distance ourselves from the infidels in every way. For example, let's take a look at the Sura *Al-Baqarah* (No. 2), ayats 11 and 12. The commentary is directed simultaneously against the "modernists" (=Islohatchilar, that is against reformers in the broad sense of this word),

¹ Sheikh Muhammad-Sadik Muhammad-Yusuf, *Tafsiri Hilol*, Mavorounnahr, Tashkent, 2005 (Baqarah, 120th ayat).

² 'Abduwali-kori (Mirzaev), *Tafsiri Furkon*, Madinai Munawwara, 2005 (published by 'Abd al-Kuddus, 'Abduwali-kori's son).

against secular governments, and against religious officials who are loyal to the secular forms of rule. Or in the commentary to ayats 26 and 27 of the same Sura, the author claims that the way to resolve ethnic conflicts should be based only on the laws of Islam: "*Islam knows no racism or nationalism. Islam knows only two nations—the Islamic nation and the nation of infidels.*"³ No matter what nation accepts Islam, we recognize it as an Islamic nation..."

From the commentary to ayat 107 (the same Sura No. 2):

"...In this world, there are many who call themselves 'Muslims' but befriend the enemies of Islam and Muslims. To acquire financial and other assistance from infidels, they refuse to perform the laws of Islam. But Muslims should be well aware that infidels never were and never can be the friends of Islam. ...Muslims should remember that only executing Allah's laws will stop the enemies of Islam and Muslims. We should not expect help from the enemies of Islam!"

From the commentary to ayat 108 (the same Sura):

"Those who say that instead of the Great Qu'ran and Shari'a they have chosen different 'imported' ways and (political) systems and say that 'we are going the path of secular development,' are those that believe in oppressors and trouble-makers instead of one Allah..."

From the commentary to ayat 109 (the same Sura):

"Hey, Muslims, the infidels have long wanted to turn you from the path and from the precepts of true faith. ...The infidels understand that if you follow Allah's behests, they will have no way to subordinate you. This will give them no peace!... Turn away from the infidels! Do not put yourselves on the same level as them!... Allah is capable of destroying them all in one fell swoop. Be with Allah, but not with them! ... do not believe that it is possible to have mutual understanding with them and in so doing preserve your interests. This is not true!"

The author of the commentary goes on to condemn Islamic states that support cultural and

³ Underlined in the original text.

political relations with “infidel countries.” He believes that these relations should be limited to economic and goods and resource exchanges only on “mutually advantageous Muslim conditions.” He also condemns Muslim states that borrow political and public institutions and structures created by the infidels.

The same severe attacks on infidels are also found in some other publications, for example, in the Uzbek translation of Muhammad Zahid ibn Ibrahim al-Bursawi, a Salaphite theologian well known in Arab countries.⁴ And the list continues with similar publications of religious Muslim literature in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, or Tajikistan.⁵

It goes without saying that these types of quotes are far removed from the quietism publicly proclaimed by some Muslim leaders and which it would be nice to see in Islam. Moreover, it is particularly difficult to combine this position with the actual idea of tolerance, the Islamic understanding of which naturally does not coincide with secular values. We can even say that such mutual attacks in religious literature are an inborn feature of all the mono religions on the whole, if we recall, for example, the Pope’s statements about the Prophet Muhammad, or the old and already traditional mutual attacks of Jewish and Muslim theologians. These viewpoints of old mutual non-acceptance can be regarded as historical birthmarks.

But the fragments presented were written by the most prestigious theologians in the region, for whom dogma and their own understanding of the holy texts are still the main reference points. And most important, this kind of interpretation (in printed and electronic form) is becoming the motivation and justification for the extremely intolerant position of many young Muslims, particularly in the southern regions of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, as well as in Uzbekistan. I see this almost every day.

⁴ See: Muhammad Zohid ibn Ibrahim al-Bursawi, *Mu’minning sifatlari*, Mavorounnahr, Tashkent, 2005, pp. 8, 19, 34 ff.

⁵ The present author is preparing an extensive study of officially and unofficially published religious literature in the Central Asian region.

Whatever the case, it is obvious that the attitude toward this dogma among the region’s contemporary Muslim authors appeared under the influence of theologians of the past, mainly of radical reformers of the western parts of the Islamic world, whose viewpoints, in turn, were formed under the influence of the anti-colonial and anti-Western movements of the beginning of the 20th century. It stands to reason that there is no place in these ideas for tolerance, which should also be perceived as a kind of endogenous (congenital) birthmark left in the aftermath of those challenges the Islamic world faced and is facing during colonization and neo-colonization.

There are other problems in the use and interpretation of the above and similar sources relating to re-Islamization in the Central Asian republics. I am talking about the *serious difference* between public declaration and the appeals to their own audiences (in the form of legal and illegal publications). The thing is that today’s theologians in the region have learned how to use contemporary means of information communication in their own interests. To some extent, this is the natural result of the politicization of some of the Central Asian Islamic leaders, or a reaction to the superfluous, at times inappropriate, extent to which some politicians in the region’s countries become carried away with Islamic rhetoric.

As for religious figures, I think it necessary to distinguish among their wide variety of different viewpoints espoused in publications, particularly on the Internet, which are more likely designed to arouse political intrigue. Sometimes the impression is created that the religious figures themselves do not always realize that they are being used in an information war and as a tool in the interests of the largest nations in one way or another opposed to each other. And sometimes it even seems that theologians are deliberately participating in the Great Game. This can also be said of the rhetorical statements of several religious leaders aimed at the broad public and the international mass media, or made at international symposia and conferences. It goes without saying that many religious leaders are trying

to demonstrate their own tolerance, willingness to hold a dialog, and political loyalty in this way, while only making a token attempt to uphold their own isolated Islamic identity. It is understandable that, in this case, the religious leaders drawn into regional or international policy are looking to international organizations, particularly those involved in human rights, for protection from their regimes. Moreover, they already feel at home in the political atmosphere of the Great Game and have learned to use its information features in their favor. This process can be seen as an entirely natural consequence of the politicization of Islam throughout the world. And the attempt to draw it into a dialog is a very positive thing.

But I think we are dealing with a very different problem. As I mentioned above, many of these religious leaders are espousing opposing ideas and making appeals in their publications or hutbas to their own audiences based more on an almost *total rift* with the non-Muslims. There is no need to prove that a rift always provides favorable ground for conflicts, religious extremism, and radicalism. As we noted above, some theologians (whereby the most prestigious) are openly calling for not entering into dialogs with the non-Muslims, thus latently fomenting inter-confessional confrontation. But according to my observations, this rift is at times escalating into hidden or open aggression in the inexperienced reader, particularly if he is young.

This is why a differentiated, as the specialists say, approach is needed to the sources, that is, broad public (information) rhetoric should be separated from appeals to their own audience. This approach will help to evaluate more correctly *where the political game of one religious leader ends and his ideology begins*. And it is not worth limiting such evaluations to the ordinary religious hypocrisy characteristic of the representatives of many confessions. It is utterly obvious that every researcher should be able to evaluate such ambiguous views of the religious leaders (as a result of their politicization) himself. I am talking only about the method of evaluation and interpretation of not only declared information sources, but also those aimed, so to speak, at "their own audience."

But under Central Asian conditions, the mentioned confessional rift has its own historical roots, which should also be kept in mind. Yes, our traditions and customs and our natural openness have been defined (including by geographic specifics). We have always been and are still, as is often declared today, at the junction between civilizations, cultures, and religions. Although relations between local Muslims and the representatives of other confessions and ethnic groups have not always been peaceful. But in the past 150 years, we have had to defend our own cultural and political independence and uniqueness, including our religious identity. And more often than not, our own culture (particularly religion) was preserved in the form of adaptation that always risked growing into assimilation. Moreover, it should be kept in mind that due to Bolshevization in the region, local Islam did not undergo any natural evolution or adaptation to the present-day conditions (due to the atheist policy in the past), and the reform movement (primarily the *jadids*) was also suppressed. The tradition of intellectual creativity was also violated. Throughout the entire Soviet period, not one significant or original theological work was written.

Nevertheless, in the Soviet period, it was cultural traditions and customs (including religious) that once again showed their tenacity and could oppose the total communist ideology. Re-Islamization began in the region and in other republics of the former Soviet Union during the years of Gorbachev's reform and after the collapse of the U.S.S.R. But religion was revived (and is being revived) in extremely conservative forms with the constant expectation (like *poor historical memory*) of unfriendly action by infidels, apostates, etc. And most important, according to the results of my extensive studies, I can confidently say that all of these ideas are interpolated into the perception of secular liberal values, or to be more precise, their non-acceptance (most often latent). I repeat that I am judging this first hand, including on the basis of the results of my study of the religious literature published in the region.

On the whole, it is not by chance that I am reminding you of this colonization period, par-

ticularly Bolshevization of the region. It is clear that the conditions created at that time cannot be referred to as positive with respect to maintaining historical tolerance. On the other hand, when Soviet policy was liberalized and the Soviet Union collapsed, we, in fact, entered a period of re-Islamization. In so doing, it happened at a much faster rate than the restoration and development of religious teaching. But returning to Islam in no way meant *understanding it as a complex system of dogmas and precepts*, particularly since the historical experience of peaceful relations with the members of other confessions was substantially discredited, particularly in Soviet times.

On the other hand, the new generation of theologians proved entirely unprepared for such rates of religious revival, there were no generators of new ideas, and new/old religious ideas and paradigms began to be imported from other regions of the Islamic world, mostly in very radical and extremist forms. To be more precise, these were paradigms formed among fundamentalists and extremists, whose ideology was born on the wave of religious, ideological, political, and military confrontation. This ideology, which was artificially interpolated into the Central Asian or Caucasian countries, gives rise to a mass of problems, conflicts, and clashes which are primarily detrimental to the Muslims themselves.

The Political Aspect

First let us take a look at the domestic political aspect. When the region's republics declared their independence, Islam was faced with the problem of retrieving its historical role of *social regulator*. But the Islamic leaders of the Central Asian countries have had no real opportunity so far to play this role. The social status once removed from religion is unlikely to regain its previous form in the new conditions. Some religious leaders are carrying out their activity very legitimately and are striving to preserve non-conflict relations with their governments in exchange for political loyalty and political estrangement. An exception is Tajikistan where the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) has been legitimized. Although it is obvious that the official authorities, which are trying to take the initiative from the politicized Muslim leaders by attempting to create their own "Tajik Islam," will also gradually oust it from the legitimate political field.

The other Islamic leaders of the region are carrying out their activity illegitimately, or, to all outward appearances, latently. They are openly or surreptitiously raising the question of the political status of Islam as the only necessary condition for preserving the Islamic identity and protecting it from infringements, as they believe, by the Christian world and the representatives of other confessions. At one time (at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s), almost all the Islamists of the region (with complete religious freedom) went on to exert significant efforts to create (or, according to their ideas, recreate) an Islamic state based exclusively on the laws of the Shari'a and, in so doing, maintaining extreme intolerance toward the infidels.

Some Western analysts suggest involving the Islamic parties in the legitimate struggle for power. Let us recall, for example, Charles William Maynes (the chairman of the Eurasia Foundation), who in one of his articles (in addition to everything else) put forward several approaches to Islam in the Central Asian republics. In particular, he wrote that the U.S. and other Western countries should use every available diplomatic and political means to insist on all the parties "striving for peaceful transformations," particularly Islamic political parties, to be incorporated into the official political system.⁶

⁶ See: Ch.W. Maynes, "America Discovers Central Asia," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 2, 2003, p. 132.

Other authors (A.K. Zaifert and I.D. Zviagelskaia), while agreeing with this posing of the question, nevertheless justifiably note that there is still the real possibility that the Islamists who become part of the power system in this way will resort to orchestrating a radical change in the existing constitutional norms. And, consequently, the attitude of the European states to this power system is still open.⁷

In my opinion, there is still the danger in most Central Asian countries that if Islamic parties participate in the political struggle, they will most likely follow the religious radicals, thus shattering all hopes of preserving the secular institutions. In my opinion, this scenario is more likely in Central Asia today, keeping in mind the extremely intolerant and conservative mentality of most of the local Islamists. This viewpoint can be substantiated by at least referring to the quotes presented above from the works of the region's famous theologians.

It should also be noted that contemporary political Islam in the Central Asian states is a primarily imported phenomenon. And when we talk about the earlier political strivings of the same Sayyid Abdullo Nuri (the first leader of the IRPT, died in August 2007), or his Uzbek associates (Rahmatulla alloma, Abduwali-kori, and others), we should not forget that their political breakthrough (as a reaction to the atheist policy) began to form as early as Soviet times, but under the influence of the works of such pillars of the ideology of political Islam as Abu-l-'Ala' al-Maududi (1903-1979), Muhammad 'Abduh' Abdo (died in 1906), and Sayyid Qutb (sentenced to death in 1966), whose works were analyzed in their illegal study groups (*hujra*) primarily in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Such reference points and clichés borrowed from militant political Islam played a significant role in forming the views of the local Islamists, defining their intolerance and radicalism.

Moreover, many followers and heirs of the ideas of political Islam, in Egypt for example, are already critically reconsidering their militant past and officially rejecting violence, thus expressing their willingness to adapt to the new conditions.⁸ While most of their like-minded followers in the Central Asian countries, particularly the radical wing,⁹ were extremely far from this.

It goes without saying that the Islamic religious party will sooner or later look for ways to justify its goals, ideas, and postulates in its own dogma, if only out of fear of losing its rating among its own electorate. And it is still not clear what direction this search will go in. At least for the moment, the views of the Central Asian Islamists striving to legitimize their own status boil down to an inflexible political ideology (to be more precise, phraseology) based on ayats selected with partiality from the Qu'ran, examples from the Sunnah, or based on a sacral idea of the history of Islam.¹⁰ And judging from the results of our polls and the content of a large amount of literature they illegally published, most Islamists of the region regard democracy as grounds for destroying Islam, and secularism as a "regime of apostates."¹¹ Moreover, the question of religious (Islamic) legitimacy of the concepts of democracy in general, modernism, or, let's say, the constitutional system has still not been resolved ultimately and positively among most of the local Islamists.

In addition, it should be kept in mind that most of the political elite in most of the Central Asian countries, which, according to Soviet tradition, are called "secular," regard themselves as Muslims

⁷ See: A.K. Zaifert, I. Zviagelskaia, "Primirenie Evropy i islama v Evrazii," *Vostok (Oriens)*, No. 5, 2004, p. 81.

⁸ See: G. Kraemer, "Introductory Presentation," in: *State and Religion in Countries with a Muslim Population*, ed. by Z. Munavvarov, R. Krumm, Tashkent, 2004, p. 158.

⁹ According to the information of current chairman of the IRPT M. Kabiri, in 1996, the party leaders agreed to begin talks. In response to this, head of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan T. Yoldosh repeatedly stated that the IRPT had "betrayed the interests of Islam" and that jihad had to be waged until a single Islamic state was formed in all the Muslim countries of the region.

¹⁰ The most characteristic example is the intolerant position of the Hizb ut-Tahrir party, which incidentally is also one of the "exported" organizations.

¹¹ Compare this with the position of the Turkish Islamists.

(recognizing Islam as a historical-cultural, ritualistic, and spiritual tradition). Moreover, in the current situation, the secular states of the region are manifesting significant liberalism toward religion, freedom of confession, and so on (political Islam is the exception, toward which there is also an ambiguous attitude, ranging from liberal-speculative, as in Tajikistan, to downright non-acceptance, as in other countries). Religion is also recognized as a spiritual and cultural value, its symbols, provisions, and figures (Islamic authorities of the past) are used as a component of the official ideology in essentially all the countries of the region. Although problems also arise here, which we will look at below.

On the whole, we will remind you again that local Islam is still extremely conservative. At present, the question of reform is particularly urgent, especially in the context of the global changes. The political circles of the Central Asian countries are offering different types of reform: in the form of “secular religion,” “enlightened Islam,” and so on. Some theologians see reform in a more conservative framework, by means of fresh approaches to interpreting legal questions and other problems that contemporary Muslims (*ijtihad*) face, using an already time-tested tool—development of the foundation of fiqh and making decisions (*fatwa/fatwolar*) in the spirit of the times.¹² But we are sure that in the current situation any attempt to carry out regional reform of Islam in one form or another will definitely result in the politicization of this process. And this, in turn, will give rise to a mass of problems in the local societies and governments. Great care should be taken when raising the question of drawing Islamists into the political process (or of their “political legitimization”) in such conditions; all the possible consequences of this step should be analyzed in advance.

For example, if we presume that Islamists come to power peacefully (as the above-mentioned authors presume) in one of these countries, in addition to the above-mentioned consequences, the first result will be that large numbers of secular residents of this country will leave it (which happened at one time in Iran). The representatives of other confessions will also most likely leave such a country (and we are talking about millions of people). This situation will realistically lead to the appearance of a mono religion and open the way to actual “Talibanization” of Central Asia. Under local conditions (where the timid steps of religious reform are far from complete and where the local Muslims hold a wide variety of different views), we can definitely expect a struggle for power within such an Islamic regime, as a result of which power will most likely be seized by radical forces. On the other hand, erosion (emigration or Islamic adaptation) of the secular strata of the population will mean that there is simply no physical foundation on which the secular part of the state’s political elite or even its “constitutional orientation” can rest (which some experts are writing about as the main prerequisite for allowing the Islamists to take power). While under the conditions of, say, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, this situation could lead to a standoff between the more secular northern regions and the Islamic south of these republics. Of course, I have no wish to paint such a gloomy picture, but most of those who are studying the problems of political Islam in the Central Asian countries do not have any serious objections to this development of events (if the Islamists become legalized).

Perhaps these circumstances also define the fact that there are no equal alliances between official politicians and religious figures. And in this case, a strange, although entirely legitimate, picture is revealed. Almost all the leading political figures of the region are beginning to play a role that is entirely uncharacteristic and uncustomary for them in trying to seize control over the so-called “Islamic factor.” But this is still manifested only in the officials’ rhetoric and in their patronage of various religious-political undertakings (although Islamization of official rhetoric at times becomes absurd and makes us doubt the secular nature of some of the Central Asian states).

¹² See: Sheikh Muhammad-Sadyk Muhammad-Yusuf, *Ihtiloflar haqida*, Mavorounnahr, Tashkent, 2003, pp. 72-78.

For example, let us recall the recent resolutions or official speeches of Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon, who quoted the Qu'ran and hadith to substantiate them.¹³ This may have been interesting had Mr. Rakhmon's utter religious illiteracy not been so apparent. He, whether he wanted to or not, was playing into the fundamentalists' hands, at least with respect to the ways he resorted to when presenting his arguments, both in his speeches and in the decrees he initiated on the fight against "religious vestiges."

In any case, the attempts of the region's political figures to use the Islamic factor as part of the political game and to raise their own ratings are officially encouraging Islamization (or encouraging radical Islamism) rather than promoting a spiritual or cultural revival. Nation-building in the Central Asian countries is still at the early stage of development when national and religious identity cannot always be fully separated from each other.¹⁴

Of course, the transformations in various spheres of public, economic, and political life began not that long ago and will not be easy, creating, as already mentioned, much room for social tension. In so doing, the radical Islamist will exploit the dissatisfaction among those strata of the population deprived to one extent or another of the public benefits in their attempts to replace secular states with Islamic. What is more, the countries of the region are not coordinating their religious policy, although many of their problems and challenges are identical. As I see it, the former Soviet nationalism/region-alism is preventing this, which has acquired all the features of a regional standoff, either in the form of a struggle for "regional leadership," or in territorial claims, or in mutual claims regarding water and hydrocarbon resource distribution, and so on. In so doing, the once common history of the region is becoming a hostage in this standoff. The new "national interpretation" and "rehashing" of history can be likened to the distortions and interpretations in official Soviet history. Ordinary Muslims cannot help but see these problems, who, according to my observations, have two outwardly opposing reactions to them:

- 1) serious nostalgia for the Soviet period (mainly among the older generation) and
- 2) greater sympathy for the idea of a "regional Islamic state," a version of the caliphate (primarily among theologians and the youth).

These and similar circumstances, in my opinion, will still long define the "face of Islam" in the region's states, particularly as far as mutual confessional tolerance is concerned. It is very obvious that this requires long *transformation and evolution of the believers themselves*, particularly of the authors of large and small theological works. For the time being, however, many of them regard secular liberal and democratic principles as alien, or, at best, simply tolerate them. Politicians should also change their way of thinking.

Moreover, the ideas of inter-confessional tolerance in the Muslim world are also being subjected to another kind of test, if we keep in mind the *external irritants* prompting a constant revival of radical ideas among some Muslims and searches for their substantiation in the Qu'ran and Sunnah. The matter concerns military conflicts in the Muslim countries. And while they exist, these irritants will also remain a serious factor directly encouraging inter-religious intolerance.

I believe that even these facts *in no way mean* that Islam is intolerant, dangerous, and permanently aggressive. It, as other religions, is diverse, and the discourse with religious radicals is in no way hopeless. Particularly since the local governments are searching for and independently choosing their own path and methods for opposing the ideas of confessional intolerance, radicalism, and terror-

¹³ From the video cassettes of President Emomali Rakhmon's speeches (these are election campaign speeches, as well as that presented at the ceremonial gathering devoted to the 16th anniversary of independence, and others).

¹⁴ See: A.K. Zaifert, I.D. Zviagelskaia, op. cit., p. 77.

ism (alas, not always successfully). But I think that it is more reasonable in this policy to support and encourage local customs and rituals that can create natural and time-tested ground for maintaining confessional tolerance. After all, it is no accident that those who uphold an aggressive ideology are severely criticizing those who uphold local religious traditions for their religious and political conformism.

**CONFLICTS BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND
NON-TRADITIONAL ISLAMIC TRENDS:
REASONS, DYNAMICS,
AND WAYS
TO OVERCOME THEM**
(based on North Caucasian documents)

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I n t r o d u c t i o n

The religious situation in the Northern Caucasus, a conflict-prone territory of the Russian Federation, is becoming noticeably politicized due to the overall difficult, often contradictory, socioeconomic and political-cultural transformations in the country. This situation can be called the rebirth of Islam, or revivalism, to use Western terminology.

Islamic revivalism in the Northern Caucasus is a specific phenomenon whereby regional traditional Islam receives a revivalist boost in the form of its free development. During the years when the Soviet ideological system prevailed, this gave rise to certain problems. However, Islamic revivalism also has another special feature relat-

ed to the penetration of radical and extremist trends that are not traditional for this region. These include the Salaf'ite trends, among which an important place is occupied by so-called Wahhabism.

The main purpose of this article is to look at how relations between traditional Islam in the Northern Caucasus and the non-traditional Islamic religious trends are developing. In order to do this, we need to look at the special features of local traditional Islam, the reasons for the appearance and spread of Wahhabism, the contradictions and conflicts between them, the interrelations between Chechen teyps and wirts, and the ways to overcome religious extremism.

1. The Special Features of Traditional Islam

The Muslims of the Northern Caucasus are mainly Sunnis who follow the Shafi'i and Hanafi schools of thought. There are more Sunnis than Shi'ites in the region. However, researchers often incorrectly cite the number of Sunnis and Shi'ites. For example, a study translated from English to Russian notes that: "the Sunnis comprise the minority of Muslims in Tatarstan, Daghestan, Chechnia, Ingushetia, and Kalmykia, which belong to the Russian Federation."¹ In actual fact, however, Sunnis, on the contrary, comprise the majority of the Muslims in these Russian constituents. There are approximately eight million of them, that is, their numbers are much higher than the number of Shi'ites living in Azerbaijan itself.

Back in Soviet times, when trying to define the specifics of Islam in Russia's Northern Caucasus, some researchers described it as parallel (extra-mosque) popular Islam. In Daghestan, Chechnia, and Ingushetia, which belong to the Northeast Caucasus, Islam existed (and exists) in the form of *Sufism*, while in the Northwest Caucasus (Ossetia, Kabarda, Karachai, and Adigey), it closely interacts with elements of the national culture, including paganism, which were sacralized and became objects of worship. On the whole, we should realize that Islam in the Northern Caucasus is a syncretic phenomenon that includes both religious and folk components.

Sufi Islam in the Northeast Caucasus functions through the *Naqshbandiya*, *Qadiriya*, and *Shazaliya* Tariqahs, which have their own distinguishing ideological foundations and ritualistic features. All of these three *Tariqahs* are widespread in the Republic of Daghestan, while in the Chechen Republic and the Republic of Ingushetia only the *Naqshbandiya* and *Qadiriya* trends are known and function. They, in turn, are broken down into smaller religious fraternities—*wirds*, the total number of which reaches three dozen.

Wird fraternities named after the following sheikhs belong to the *wirds* of the *Naqshbandiya* Tariqah in Daghestan, Chechnia, and Ingushetia: Tashu-Haji, Ahmatuk-Haji, Elah-Mulla, Abdul Vahlab, Abdulaziz Shaptukaev, Deni Arsanov, Iusup-Haji of Koshkeldy, Bagautdin Arsanov, Umalat-Haji, Sugaip-Mulla, Uzun-Haji, Solsa-Haji, Suleiman-Haji, Albast-Haji, Magomed-Amin, Iangulba-Haji, Kana-Haji, Ibragim-Haji, Kosum-Haji, Shamsuddin-Haji. The following main *wird* fraternities of sheikhs Kunta-Haji, Bamatgirei-Haji, Batal-Haji, Chimmirza, Ali Mitaev, Iusup-Haji of Makhkety, Mani-Sheikh, and Vis-Haji belong to the *Qadiriya* Tariqah. All of these *wird* fraternities evolved in the 19th-20th centuries, their founders comprised a pantheon of saints, the worship of which was the most important part of the religious rituals not only of the Chechens and Ingushes, but also of some Daghestanis. Almost all of them have their own ritualistic features, in which their followers or the researchers of the traditional institution of *wird* fraternities in the Northeast Caucasus are well versed. In Chechnia and Ingushetia, almost every founder of a *wird* has his own *ziarat*-mausoleum built by his followers and considered a site of systematic pilgrimage.

The religious situation in Chechnia and Ingushetia is largely defined by the relations that developed among the *wird* fraternities. As they become drawn into the political processes, they are often in conflict with each other. Moreover, this situation also depends on the relations between the traditional and non-traditional Islamic trends in the Northern Caucasus.

The Tariqah of *Shazaliya* functions successfully in Daghestan thanks to the activity of Sufi sheikh Said Afandi of Chirkey, who is still living and has an immense influence on the official clergy. In

¹ C. Horrie, P. Chippendale, *Chto takoe islam: Istoria i deistvitel'nost'*, Amfora. TID Amfora, St. Petersburg, 2008, p. 384.

Chechnia and Ingushetia, the Qadiriya wurd of sheikh Kunta-Haji Kishiev is the most authoritative, to which President of the Chechen Republic Ramzan Kadyrov, the mufti, and most of the Chechen clergy belong. The Naqshbandiya wurd of sheikh Deni Arsanov, which has complicated relations with the kunta-hajis, has less influence.

The followers of Sufism in Daghestan, Chechnia, and Ingushetia are Muslim Sunnis who rely on the basic provisions of Islam and adhere to Sufi traditions: worshiping their teachers—*ustazes* and the *sheikhs and avliya* they know. Pilgrimages to sites where the saints are buried, performing religious rituals—*zikrs*, and building *ziarat*-mausoleums over the graves of deceased Sufi teachers are important elements in the religious activity of the traditionalists.

Due to its long centuries of adaptation to the specific local ethnocultural features and national culture, Islam in the Northern Caucasus, including in Chechnia, acquired its own elements which are distinguished by liberalness and tolerance toward other confessions. What is more, since the end of the 1980s, the religious-political situation in this region has become complicated and tense due to the penetration of a religious-political teaching which the representatives of the regional Muslim clergy call “Wahhabism.” The followers of this teaching regard themselves as the bearers of pure Islam, the followers of the *tauhid*, and believe they are called upon to revive Islam of the times of the Prophet Muhammad and the four righteous caliphs by purifying traditional Islam of delusions and Sufi innovations and organizing Shari‘a-ization of the entire sociocultural reality of the North Caucasian Muslims. Some researchers call them *Salafis*, that is, the supporters of the traditions of the first Muslims, others, *neo-Wahhabis*, thus trying to show that they are distinct from the supporters of Wahhabism—the official ideology of the Muslim state of Saudi Arabia. Pursuing the same goal, we called this teaching “North Caucasian Wahhabism.”

2. Regional Wahhabism and the Reasons for its Appearance

During Gorbachev’s perestroika and glasnost, re-Islamization was observed in the Northern Caucasus: religious learning institutions and centers cropped up everywhere, the clergy became more involved in religious-political activity, and previously unknown and inaccessible religious literature appeared. Speeches were given at meetings of Muslims in Makhachkala, Grozny, and Karachaevska criticizing secularized society for moving away from God’s commandments and claiming that Muslim society should live in compliance with the Qu’ran, which Muslims regard as their “Constitution.” At the same time, religious parties and movements appeared that aroused the interest and support of some of the Muslims in the region. Branches of the Islamic Revival Party formed in 1990 in Astrakhan were created in Daghestan, Chechnia, and other regions of the country. Members of the traditional clergy called the members of this party Wahhabis, since it acted against traditional Islam with its cult of saints. Moreover, this party was the only Islamic organization in the country that aimed to assess the situation and develop Muslimism in the U.S.S.R.

As a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, an ideological vacuum arose which was filled, among other things, by various Islamic trends, right down to radical ones. According to Daghestani researcher K. Khanbabaev: “At the end of the 1980s, illegal formations of a religious-political fundamentalist Islamic trend appeared in several towns and regions of Daghestan and Chechnia, which was

later called Wahhabism.”² A split occurred in the Muslim community of the Northern Caucasus as a result of this activity and struggle for power among the clergy, and the single Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the region created in 1944 (with its center in Makhachkala) broke down into a number of independent administrations: the Dagestani, Checheno-Ingushetian, North Ossetian, Kabardino-Balkarian, and Karachaevo-Cherkessian. The Dagestani Spiritual Administration of Muslims in turn broke down into a few smaller national associations.³ The Wahhabi who criticized the official clergy for cooperating with the communist regime and corruption took active part in these processes.

After the state coup in the Checheno-Ingushetian A.S.S.R. in 1991, representatives of separatism wheedled their way further into the power bodies, who gradually fell under the influence of political and religious radicalism and extremism, neo-Wahhabis being the bearers of them. Since 1992, their activity in the Chechen Republic has been acquiring an active ideological and then political nature. They initially introduced the idea of monotheism, rejected the cult of saints, and stated that there should be no intermediaries, to which they related the saints worshiped in Sufism, between the Almighty and the believers. In this way, Wahhabism became a controversial alternative to traditional Islam.

After the end of the First Chechen War, acting president of Ichkeria Z. Yandarbiev closed the secular courts in October 1996, not without help from the Wahhabis, and formed the Supreme Shari‘a Court of Ichkeria with its regional structures which investigated many criminal and civil cases for several years. During the period under review, the social and cultural life of the people became Islamized. Secular society was not ready for this turn in events; the activity of the Shari‘a courts and methods of “complete Islamization” and “Shari‘a-ization” did not become popular among the Chechens. All of this intensified the conflict between their traditional culture and Wahhabi Shari‘a-ization.

Another aspect of the conflict was that the representatives of traditional Islam were pushed to the periphery of social life. The Ichkerian authorities tried to form a clergy from representatives of the religious radicals with a clear anti-Russian orientation.

3. Traditional Islam and Wahhabism: Conflict Interrelations

In the post-Soviet period in Chechnia, the ideology and practice of the representatives of so-called North Caucasian Wahhabism were entirely directed against the wurd fraternities, which gave rise to inter-religious conflicts.

Some of today’s descendants of the Chechen saints have influence on the believers, which is manifested in their peacekeeping activity, in settling conflicts among the believers, and in reconciling those embroiled in blood feuds. Often the power structures turn to them in search of support of a particular political official.

² K. Khanbabaev, “Etapy rasprostraneniia vakhkhabizma v Dagestane,” in: *Alimy i uchenye protiv vakhkhabizma*, Makhachkala, 2001, p. 105.

³ See: R. Gajiev, “Vakhkhabizm: problemy religioznogo ekstremizma v Respublike Dagestan,” in: *Religiozniy faktor v zhizni sovremennoogo dagestanskogo obshchestva: Materialy Respublikanskoj nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii (27 October, 2000)*, Noviy den Publishers, Makhachkala, 2002, p. 196.

Some fraternities directly participated in the political events of the 1990s, supporting the head of the separatists Jokhar Dudaev. But there were also those who were in direct opposition, for which they were persecuted by the regime. The followers of the wurd of Deni Arsanov, who had significant influence among the believers of the republic's Nadterechny Region, as well as among the Ingushes, were on the side of the opposition. The traditional Chechen clergy, which mainly consisted of Naqsh-bandiya followers, did not recognize the Dudaev-Alsabekov gazawat declared in the fall of 1994 against the Russian troops.

The wurd fraternities could not avoid a confrontation with the Wahhabis, and some of them, for example, the fraternity of Tashu-Haji and Kunta-Haji, clashed with them on 14 June, 1998 in Gudermes in an armed skirmish, during which the Wahhabis, who suffered defeat, moved to Urus-Martan, where they established Shari'a order until August 1999, much to the discontent of the population.

E. Kisriev writes that "Daghestani Wahhabism should be related to the reformist modernist trend in Islam, while the Daghestani Tariqah followers and representatives of the traditional Orthodox priesthood currently opposed to the reforms of the Wahhabis, that is, the professional ministers of the Islam cult—the mullah and imams of the mosques—are for all intents and purposes fundamentalist in nature."⁴ This viewpoint gives rise to arguments, since it is difficult to agree with the claim that representatives of the Tariqahs and traditional clergy are fundamentalists. The term "fundamentalism" does not fit here; if it is used at all, it can only be applied to the North Caucasian Wahhabis, but not to the Daghestani Tariqah followers, who are among the followers of traditional Islam in the Northern Caucasus.

4. Interaction between the Chechen Wirds and Teyps

The problem of interaction between wurd and teyp in Chechnia was being analyzed more intensively in connection with the attempts of certain researchers in Rostov-on-Don, Moscow, and St. Petersburg to understand the social structure and religious situation in Chechen society. In this respect, insufficiently professional arguments are often presented. As for today's social structure in Chechnia, researchers reduce it to kindred, teyp relations, ignoring the fact that the Chechens, as many other nations of the former U.S.S.R., went through different stages of Soviet modernization, and elements of democratic and civil origin are traditionally strongly developed in their society. In the past, they resolved their national problems by means of the Mekhkan Kkhiel, which translates from the Chechen as the Country Council (national parliament).

Despite the fragmentation among wurd, Islam in Chechnia is nevertheless united, and the republic's Muslims are Sunnis, who adhere to the Shafi'ite madhab (theological-legal school founded by Muhammad ash-Shafi'i). Due to its simplicity, this madhab is widespread in many Muslim countries and penetrated into Daghestan, Chechnia, and Ingushetia. This makes it possible to explain the non-acceptance of Wahhabism, which rejects the Sufi traditions recognized by most of Chechnia's Muslims.

For many Chechens, adherence to the wurd fraternities is historical tradition, the sacral side of their spiritual life. The spiritual-cultural traditions of the Chechens remain primarily homogeneous,

⁴ E. Kisriev, *Islam i vlast' v Dagestane*, OGI, Moscow, 2004, p. 109.

although the diversity of the teyps and wirds often gives rise to contradictory situations in which inter-religious unity is violated. The existence of archaic social and religious institutions shows the sociocultural diversity and amorphousness of Chechen society, but it only seems this way. Chechen society has always mobilized and rallied together whenever some outside influence posed a threat to or derogated the religious interests of the ethnoses.

Some research studies mention the direct link between the teyps and wirds, which in the strict scientific sense cannot be recognized as authentic. For example, A. Iarlykapov claims that "in Chechnia and Ingushetia, wirds and teyps intermingled."⁵ From my viewpoint, the situation is slightly different. Being directly involved in studying the ties between Chechen teyps and wirds myself, I cannot in any way vouch for this "intermingling." For there have been no studies so far that make it possible to define the special features of the interaction between teyps and wirds. Without such studies, it is impossible to obtain a clear picture of their interrelations and any statement about this will only be a presumption.

The principle of religious-political organization of the wird fraternities is not based on affiliation with only one teyp. The representatives of different teyps usually belong to a wird fraternity. During the years of Soviet power, A. Salamov, S. Umarov, and V. Gadaev⁶ identified the total number of wird fraternities (or murid communities), revealed the forms of their activity, described the holy places (*ziarats*) in Checheno-Ingushetia, and showed their political and spiritual role in the life of believers. Despite their ideological bias, these studies contained valuable information and still retain their empirical significance today.

If we make a quantitative comparison of the Chechen wirds and teyps, the former are far fewer than the latter. According to M. Mamakaev, Chechen society comprises 135 teyps,⁷ and the number of wirds amounts to 30. According to some expert evaluations, wirds encompass approximately 80% of the believers, 60% of which belong to the Qadiriya wirds, among which followers of Kunta-Haji's wird are the most numerous, and 20% are followers of the wirds of Naqshbandiya. However, 15% of all believers do not belong to wird fraternities, and 5% are indifferent in the religious respect.

The procedure for establishing interaction between the teyps and wirds, particularly recognizing their coincidence, is in our view a largely artificial and incorrectly treated problem. Most people think that the Chechen kin and teyp are identical concepts, but we cannot agree with this, since from our viewpoint, the Arabic term "tayfa" means an aggregate of people living in a particular territory, but they do not have to be related by blood-kinship ties. Tayfa cannot be identical to "kin" based precisely on blood-kinship ties.⁸ L. Iliasov correctly claims that "many Russian researchers identify teyp with kin, family, thus concluding that Chechen society has a kin-tribe structure."⁹ As social structures, kin and teyp have very different foundations. Clarifying our position, we will note that teyp is not a kinship and not a tribal structure, it is a union consisting of different families living on the same territory and entering into certain sociocultural relations.

⁵ A. Iarlykapov, "Musulmane Severnogo Kavkaza mezhdru "traditsionalizmom" i "arabizatsiei," in: *Rosiia i islam: mezhtsivilizatsionnyy dialog*, Moscow, Ufa, 2006, p. 150.

⁶ See: A. Salamov, "Pravda o 'sviatykh mestakh' v Checheno-Ingushetii," in: *Trudy Checheno-Ingushskogo NIIYAL* (Works of the Checheno-Ingush Scientific Research Institute of Language and Literature), Vol. 9, Grozny, 1964; S. Umarov, "Izmenchivye sud'by sviatykh," *Nauka i religia*, No. 7, 1976; idem, *Sotsial'naiia sushchnost' kul'ta "sviatykh" mest*, Grozny, 1983; idem, *Evoliutsia osnovnykh techeniy islama v Checheno-Ingushetii*, Grozny, 1985; V. Gadaev, "Miu-ridskie obshchiny na territorii Checheno-Ingushetii," in: *Metodicheskie rekomendatsii. Checheno-Ingush State Pedagogical Institute*, Grozny, 1987.

⁷ See: M. Mamakaev, *Chechenskiy teyp v period ero razlozhenia*, Grozny, 1973, p. 18.

⁸ We wrote about this in more detail in: "Chechenskoe obshchestvo v poiskakh geopoliticheskoi i sotsiokul'turnoi identichnosti," in: *Sovremennye problemy geopolitiki Kavkaza. South Caucasian Review*, Iss. 5, ed. by V. Chernous, North Caucasian Scientific Center of Higher School Publishers, Rostov-on-Don, 2001, p. 126.

⁹ L. Iliasov, "Chechenskiy teyp: mify i real'nost'," *Chechenskoe obshchestvo segodnia*, No. 1 (9), 2007.

Wirds play a very perceptible role in the social and political mobilization of the Chechens. As we noted above, certain political figures during political campaigns, including elections at different levels, were at times compelled to turn to authoritative wird leaders in search of support, who often mobilized their flock to achieve these goals. In addition, wird authorities play a key role in reconciling hostile sides, particularly those involved in blood feuds. The descendants of the sheikhs or wird authorities often wield greater weight in Chechen society than teyp authorities.

Sociocultural traditions imbibe valuable universal features, but neither are they deprived of conservative aspects. Religious traditions have played a significant role in contemporary Chechen society, which was accompanied by opposition to extremist manifestations.

In national Islam, the ethnic component has become more firmly embedded than the religious. The believer often faces an identity dilemma: is he a Muslim or a representative of the ethnos? This problem was raised in particular during the confrontation between the supporters of neo-Wahhabism and the representatives of traditional Islam. The former believed that religious affiliation, particularly to Jamaat groups with their sights set on creating a caliphate, was higher than kinship and ethnic relations. While the latter preferred the ethnic component, seeing a threat to spiritual and cultural traditions in the ideology and practice of the radicals. Opposing the ideology and practice of Wahhabism that is non-traditional for Chechnia, A. Kadyrov, as mufti and then president of the Chechen Republic, clearly defined his position on this issue. "We (that is, the Chechens.—V.A.) are first Chechens, and then Muslims," he said.

Ethnicity predominates in the Chechen self-consciousness, which is also characteristic of many other peoples of the Northern Caucasus. But this was not taken into account by the forces which imposed religious-ideological values formed beyond the civilizational-cultural space of the Caucasus on Chechen society.

Some ethnographers believe that the problem of Islamic conventionality in the Northern Caucasus "inevitably leads to another problem—confrontation between the Islamic youth and representatives of the older generation who position themselves as the bearers of so-called traditional Islam."¹⁰ The author goes on to write that "in response young people have thought up some rather scathing names for their opponents, the most inoffensive of which is "ethnic" Muslims, that is, Muslims by birth (?), but not in reality. The most humiliating characteristic of "ethnic" Islam heard is "funereal Islam."¹¹

The present author, who has worked for many years with the Chechen youth, never had occasion to hear such "humiliating characteristics" of traditional Islam. Nevertheless, it should be noted that young people criticize some provisions of Sufi Islam, believing that it departs from the ideology of Salafism (Islam of the times of the righteous caliphs). They also say that the religion of the fathers must be purified of innovations and delusions. This shows the influence of the representatives of the non-traditional trends that have penetrated the Northern Caucasus.

5. Ways to Overcome Religious Extremism

Many terrorist acts in the Northern Caucasus are justifiably related to the radicalism and extremism of the neo-Wahhabi trend in Islam, which is non-traditional for the region. In this respect, the need has

¹⁰ See: A. Iarlykapov, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

¹¹ *Ibidem.*

arisen to limit and, in general, intercept the ideological and practical activity of the neo-Wahhabis. For this purpose, the power bodies, with the support of the official clergy represented by the spiritual administrations of Muslims of the region, carried out several legislative and ideological-propagandistic measures. For example, legislative acts were adopted in Daghestan, Chechnia, Ingushetia, and Karachaevo-Cherkessia that prohibit the extremist activity of the Wahhabis. Special subdivisions have been created in the power-related structures that are called upon to fight the spread in Wahhabi influence and oppose their extremist (including terrorist) acts.

The activity of religious extremists and terrorists is currently being intercepted in Chechnia. Traditional Islam is undergoing a tempestuous revival in the republic, which is manifested not only in the building of mosques and religious learning institutions, but also in the spiritual enlightenment of young people. In their daily sermons, the traditionalists are calling on the Muslims to unite and pursue spiritual growth, while condemning drug abuse and other sinful acts.

With the support of the republic's president, Ramzan Kadyrov, the Muftiat (Islamic High Council) of the Chechen Republic organized an International Peacekeeping Forum in Gudermes in 2007 called "Islam is the Religion of Peace and Creation," which had great spiritual-cultural and political significance not only for the Muslims and non-Muslims of the republic, but also of the Northern Caucasus and the Russian Federation as a whole. The reports and speeches of the forum participants noted the humanistic, peacekeeping, and creational role of Islam, condemned radical and extremist manifestations under the guise of religious slogans, and confirmed the need for an inter-confessional dialog among the believers. The forum ended in the adoption of corresponding documents which called on the heads of state, believers, and the peoples to join together in combating violence, poverty and impoverishment, disease, and illiteracy, and in maintaining peace on the planet.

The Muslims of Chechnia, the official clergy in the form of the Islamic High Council headed by Sultan Mirzaev, approve of and support the republic's president, Ramzan Kadyrov, who has restored the economy and social sphere and revived the spiritual foundations of the ethnos.

At a meeting between Ramzan Kadyrov and the king of Saudi Arabia held in Mecca at the end of October 2007, the latter approved of Kadyrov's activity against the religious radicals and emphasized that he, as president, must carry out tough measures to oppose religious extremists and terrorists and in so doing establish order in the Chechen Republic. In this way, Ramzan Kadyrov, as a follower of traditional Islam, received the blessing of a religious-political figure who is prestigious in the Muslim world, which will help to strengthen his position in Russia and in the Muslim world as a whole.

C o n c l u s i o n s

The appearance of Islamic radicalism and extremism, which we believe is related to the increased political activity of Wahhabism, has undoubtedly been generated by the transition from one socio-political system to another, the collapse of the U.S.S.R., de-ideologization, the active democratic changes, and the weakness of the state power being established in Russia.

Traditional Islam in the Northern Caucasus, including in the Chechen Republic, is a symbiotic system that relies on two traditions: ethnic and Islamic. This general description of Islam correlates to the local specifics which are linked with the national culture, including Sufi, and with the functioning of the institution of wurd fraternities and national beliefs which comprise the foundation of the spiritual culture of each ethnos and determine the religious-political situation in society.

During the period of political instability in the Northern Caucasus, when the Wahhabis undermined the situation, were involved in terrorist acts in the region, and took specific steps to create a caliphate, the representatives of traditional Islam acted as supporters of the integrity of the Russian

state and took measures to prevent the threats the Wahhabis posed to society and the state. A graphic example of this is the religious and political activity of A. Kadyrov, the mufti and then president of the Chechen Republic. Evaluating Wahhabi activity in Chechnia during the regime of Aslan Maskhadov, he stated that under the banner of the madrasah, training camps were being created in different parts of Chechnia where not so much Chechens as people from CIS countries, neighboring North Caucasian republics, Middle Eastern states, and even the U.S. and Great Britain were undergoing military training. In his opinion, Chechnia was turning into a center of international terrorism, and the heads of the Chechen Wahhabis were establishing close contact with Osama bin Laden, who was generously financing all the projects in order to transform the republic into a spearhead aimed at Russia's heart.

Ramzan Kadyrov, who is continuing his father's cause, is opposing the extremist and terrorist activity still going on in the Northern Caucasus in every possible way. With the support of the Russian leadership, he is implementing a program of revival of the spiritual-cultural traditions of the Chechen people aimed at achieving peace and stability in the Chechen Republic. Within the framework of this program, abandoned cemeteries and holy places are being restored, the roads leading to them repaired, old mosques reconstructed and new ones built, and madrasahs opened where Muslim clergy are being trained using a curriculum that takes the special features of traditional Islam into account.

This attention to the nation's uniqueness and cultural-religious traditions is promoting a perceptible increase in the prestige of the republican and federal authorities. The Muslims of Chechnia support the policy of the republic's peaceful reforms. This is all helping to block the negative manifestations of radicalism and deal a strong rebuff to religious and political extremism.

TAJIKISTAN: SPECIAL FEATURES OF COOPERATION WITH LEADING INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC ORGANIZATIONS

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There are currently several dozen legal and illegal international Islamic organizations in the world which differ in structure, goals, level of representation, and spheres and forms of activity. Tajikistan is a member of more than 20 international organizations, including regional,

and closely cooperates with such prestigious legal Islamic structures as:

- The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC);
- The Islamic Development Bank (IDB);
- The Islamic Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO);
- The Imamate of Ismailites—the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN);
- The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).
- Moreover, an illegal international Islamic organization Hizb ut-Tahrir-al-Islami—the Party of Islamic Liberation (HTI)—operates in Tajikistan.

It should be noted that scientists and analysts have still not clarified the relations between international Islamic organizations and Tajikistan, the role of these organizations in settling conflicts and ensuring security, or in creating a destabilized situation, as well as in the country's socioeconomic development. Nor have studies dealt with the question of the political activity of these organizations.

The goals of the Organization of the Islamic Conference reflect the new reality that has emerged in the Islamic world and international community as a whole since the day this organization was created. These goals include multifaceted cooperation among Muslim states based on religious solidarity aimed at resolving the most important problems, including ensuring the national security of these countries. The creation of the OIC is more a story of establishing mechanisms to prevent religious extremism, fundamentalism, and radicalism, rather than promoting solidarity. One of the main reasons its founding states created the OIC was to express their rejection of the ideas and practice of religious extremism, fundamentalism, and radicalism. For example, Saudi Arabia believes these manifestations to be destructive and, as one of the main founders of this organization, is exerting efforts to make it a lever for preventing religious extremism, fundamentalism, and radicalism.

Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Hamid Algabid said the following about the organization's positive role in strengthening stability and security in the Muslim countries in his introductory speech at the 23rd Conference of Foreign Ministers of the OIC States in Karachi in 1993: "We should appreciate those efforts that are being exerted in this direction; efforts being exerted to overcome the difficulties and resolve the problems that systematically arise in a particular member state of our organization. These efforts are aimed at the peaceful settlement of military conflicts which are having a destructive influence on the region of our ummah. In this respect, we are pleased to report that the relations among our member states are gradually normalizing."¹

On the other hand, as noted above, one of the areas of the OIC's activity is ensuring development and stability in the Muslim countries and expanding economic, scientific, and cultural cooperation. It is no accident that two specialized institutions have been created for expanding economic and scientific-cultural cooperation within the OIC: the Islamic Development Bank and the Islamic Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO).

The OIC, which is mainly based on secular principles, as already noted, deals with problems that do not go beyond the framework of the national interests of its member countries. In other words, national states are its main actors, and the activity of this essentially secular organization is aimed at resolving the aforementioned problems of the Islamic world. The Islamic factor in this organization, on the other hand, serves only to unite the Muslim countries in solving strictly secular tasks.

An analysis of the Tajikistan's activity in the OIC shows that all the projects being carried out in cooperation with this organization meet the republic's national and state interests and play a perceptible role in strengthening the country's economic stability and scientific-cultural development. From the first days of its membership in

¹ *Kayhoni hawoi* (Tehran), No. 963, 1992.

this organization, the republic has been offering projects aimed at developing various branches of the national economy, and the country's cooperation dynamics with one of the specialized OIC institutions, the Islamic Development Bank, is a vibrant example of this.

Between 30 June and 3 July, 1997, Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon made an official visit to Saudi Arabia. This visit resulted, among other things, in the Islamic Development Bank granting Tajikistan an interest-free loan of 16.7 million dollars for developing public health and education in the country.²

The republic's cooperation with the OIC, including with its specialized institutions, is not limited to receiving loans. For example, on 12 June, 2000, Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon welcomed representatives of the Coordination Group of the IDB Arab Funds, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, the Saudi Development Foundation, and the OPEC Fund, who arrived in Tajikistan to participate in an international round table. It was organized under the auspices of the IDB, National Bank of Tajikistan (NBT), regional representative office of the IDB in Central Asia and Europe, and the above-mentioned Arab funds. At a meeting with the round table participants, Emomali Rakhmon noted that at the new stage—the stage of post-conflict socio-economic restoration and poverty-level reduction, the republic's government is placing great emphasis on developing foreign economic relations and attracting foreign investments, including from the Arab countries. What is more, the republic's president expressed the hope that the work of the round table would be productive and make it possible to lay a foundation for holding a conference of businessmen of the Islamic Development Bank member states in Tajikistan, about which a corresponding agreement was reached with head of the IDB Doctor Ahmed Muhammad Ali during his visit to Tajikistan. The creation of an Islamic corporation for developing the private sector, an agreement on the founding of which the

republic signed on 26 April, 2000, will help to encourage foreign direct investments into the Tajik economy.³

One of the special features of the republic's cooperation with the IDB is that all the agreements signed by the sides are being put into practice. For example, as noted above, on the initiative of Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon and IDB President Muhammad Ali, the idea was put forward of convening an international round table with the participation of the Arab funds. During this undertaking, Tajikistan offered 70 important projects in power engineering, transportation, finances, agriculture, public health, education, telecommunications, and so on. According to the Hovar National Information Agency of Tajikistan (NIAT), the IDB approved 17 of these projects, in correspondence with which the republic is being rendered assistance in building the Kulob–Kalai-Khumb highway (9.5 million dollars) and an international passenger terminal in Dushanbe (270,000 dollars).⁴

It should be noted that during the years of cooperation with the OIC, the republic has been making efficient use of this organization's potential. A special resolution on Tajikistan (No.10/27), which was adopted by the member states at the Organization's 10th session on the initiative of President Emomali Rakhmon, shows that this structure is playing a particular role in Tajikistan's system of international relations and will be able to help resolve the country's socio-economic problems to a certain extent. "It appeals to all the member states and financial institutions of the OIC region to take active and cooperative part in the efforts being exerted by the Tajikistan government to overcome the economic difficulties and advance the economic reforms. The document addresses the Islamic Development Bank with a request to significantly increase its financial and technical assistance to Tajikistan. Secretary General of OIC Abdelouahed Belkeziz was personally entrusted with monitoring the execution of this resolution and

² See: Z. Saidov, *Vneshniaia politika Tadjhikistana v usloviiakh globalizatsii*, Avasto, Dushanbe, 2004, p. 569.

³ See: *Ibid.*, p. 173.

⁴ See: *Narodnaia gazeta*, No. 25, 22 June, 2002.

presenting a report on its accomplishments to the 11th session of the OIC.”⁵

In this way, cooperation between Tajikistan and the OIC is growing with each passing day and encompassing other structures of this organization. At a session of the Interparliamentary Union (IPU) of its member states held on 16 February, 2007 in Kuala Lumpur, Tajikistan’s membership in this Union was approved.

Along with this, it should be noted that Tajikistan only cooperates with the OIC at the intergovernmental level, although under the conditions of the market economy, other public structures, particularly the private sector, play an important role in expanding the relations among the countries. The proposal of Tajikistan’s president to create an Islamic corporation for developing the private sector with the participation of Arab funds could significantly promote this undertaking.

Another prestigious Islamic structure, of which Tajikistan has been a member since 1992, is the Economic Cooperation Organization (on 21 May, 1998, the republic’s Majlisi Oli approved the new Izmir Pact and ratified Tajikistan’s membership in the ECO).

Tajikistan’s cooperation with the ECO is particularly noticeable in trade. The signing and approval of the Trade Agreement (ECOTA) as a fundamental element of regional cooperation within the framework of this organization will serve as an example for expanding cooperation in other spheres. For example, in 1999 alone, the volume of Tajikistan’s foreign trade with ECO countries amounted to 600 million dollars, that is, 40% of the country’s foreign trade turnover.

Tajikistan is interested in developing broad regional cooperation and regional integration, and the ECO could play an important role in achieving this goal. The purpose and tasks of this organization (the Izmir Treaty, the Almaty Program for Development of the Transport Sector, the Ashgabad communiqué of the meeting of states and member countries of the ECO for de-

veloping the transport and communication infrastructure, as well as the Strategy of Economic Cooperation in the ECO region) envisage the development of market economic relations of the member states and their rapid integration into the world economy.

But along with the achievements in ECO activity, there are also several unresolved problems that are creating obstacles to expanding cooperation among the member states. In his speech at a meeting of leaders of the ECO states on 14 October, 2002, Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon said: “Despite the obvious achievements in this area, there are still serious obstacles hindering further development of multifaceted economic trade cooperation in the ECO region. For example, the high railroad transit fees, the lag in providing banking services among the member states, the lack of standardization of the regulatory legal base and harmonization of fees and payments, and the introduction by several member states of strict visa conditions are having a very negative effect on interregional trade.”⁶

It should be noted that the border disagreements between some of the member states and unstable political situation are one of the reasons ECO regional cooperation is not developing as well as it should. “Although the leaders of the ECO member states at the Tehran summit in January 1992 called peace and security the main prerequisites for expanding economic cooperation among these countries, the instability in Afghanistan, disagreements between Pakistan and India over Jammu and Kashmir, the unsettled conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, and the problem of the Turkic-speaking communities of Cyprus, among other things, have turned this organization into a tool for settling political problems.”⁷ From this viewpoint, Tajikistan’s membership in the ECO

⁶ Z. Saidov, op. cit., p. 294.

⁷ F. Umarov, “Naqshi Sozmoni khamkorii iktisod (ECO) dar ravavndi Hamgaroii mintaqavi: mushkilot va dumamoi” (The Role of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in Regional Integration: Problems and Prospects), in: *Materialy mezhdunarodnoi konferentsii “Regionalnaia integratsiia Tsentralnoi Azii: problemy, prerspektivy,”* Irfon, Dushanbe, 2006.

⁵ Z. Saidov, op. cit., p. 489.

and problem-resolving in its format do not go beyond the framework of national and state interests. And the functioning of the United Nations International Drug Control Program (UNDCP) within the ECO is one of the important mechanisms for strengthening security in the region, particularly in Tajikistan.

In addition to these organizations, non-governmental Islamic structures also function in the republic, in particular the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN)—the Aga Khan Fund, which has made a worthy contribution to achieving peace in Tajikistan and to post-conflict restoration of the country's economy. Taking into ac-

count the great prestige and influence of the founder of this Fund, Shah Karīm al-Hussainī Aga Khan IV, special U.N. envoy Ramire Piris Ballon and special U.N. representative Gerdt Dietrich Merrem discussed the peaceful settlement of the conflict in the republic with him in 1995. Aga Khan's working visits to Tajikistan and his unofficial efforts as mediator played a great role in achieving peace among the Tajiks and in ensuring the country's security.

At present, the Aga Khan Fund is functioning in all the regions of Tajikistan, in its capital, and in the regions subordinate to the republican government.

1. Cooperation in the Economy

In 1999, the ESF Program and the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development (AKFED) offered loans totaling 530,000 dollars to 700 enterprises. This money was allotted to develop agriculture, the cotton industry, and tourism. The average amount of each loan was 1,000 dollars, with a one-month payback term, which helped to create 15,000 new jobs and, according to preliminary estimates, should have brought in revenue totaling 4.6 million Tajik rubles. Since the ESF began its activity in 1996, aid has been allotted to 1,630 enterprises, 4,200 jobs have been created, and revenue of 12.3 million Tajik rubles has been generated in the Karategin Region in 1997 alone. The total amount of loans for implementing the ESF Program amounted to 1.2 million dollars.

2. Cooperation in Education

The general vector of the AKFED education programs is cooperation with the government in support of educational reforms—from primary schools to higher educational institutions. In accordance with these programs, targeted professional development schools have been created in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAR), which will later become teacher training institutes. What is more, the Aga Khan Development Program in Human Science for Central Asia has drawn up a training program in cooperation with the Education Ministry, teachers, and intelligentsia of the region. It is based on ethics, traditions, and values, in which the region is extremely rich. This program is currently taught in five of the country's universities. Moreover, 500 students of the Aga Khan lyceum in the city of Khorog are learning English, information technology, and the fundamentals of the market economy. This undertaking in education by the Aga Khan Fund under Tajikistan's current economic conditions, when many teachers have turned to the market as a source of income due to the low salaries they are paid, is of immense significance in ensuring the country's cultural security.

3. Cooperation in Agriculture

The Aga Khan Development Program has drawn up a special Agricultural Reform Program, which encompasses seven regions of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (Vanch, Darvaz, Rushan, Roshtkala, Shugnan, Ishkashim, and Murgab) and seven territories subordinate to the republican government (Jirgatal, Tavildara, Tajikabad, Garm, Rasht, Faizabad, and Rogun). The 22,000 farmers participating in this program have been able to raise the yield of their crop harvests by 1.5%. As a result of transferring collective farm land to the farmers and developing new land, 27,500 tons of flour was produced in the GBAR in 1999, which met 92% of the region's needs, and four-fold more potatoes and wheat were grown in the Karategin Region than in 1998. For this purpose, the Aga Khan Fund allotted 1.3 billion Tajik rubles, which made it possible for 760 entrepreneurs to engage in business in the agricultural industry. Moreover, between 1996 and 2000, the Program rendered assistance to 2,400 small businesses, which produced goods totaling 18 trillion Tajik rubles.

The Aga Khan Fund has allotted more than 150 million dollars to implementing its programs in Tajikistan. These funds were spent during the difficult years of the civil war and after it ended, when the situation in the country was still unstable. Thanks to the Fund's prestige and influence in many countries, it has been able to attract investments into Tajikistan. For example, in 1999, the United States allotted "700,000 dollars via the Aga Khan IV Fund to develop the agrarian sector in the Garm group of regions. Moreover, a decision is already being drafted in the U.S. government to allot Tajikistan a grant of 700,000 dollars for developing rural areas and helping the rural population of the Kulob zone of the Khatlon Region to find jobs."⁸

This decision was made at a time when not one country had yet allotted funds to restore Tajikistan's national economy. This organization will be able to make a worthy contribution to the country's food, cultural, social, and economic security.

During the post-war period, two other Islamic structures, the Saudi Development Fund and the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, with which the republic began cooperating in 1997, made a valuable contribution to Tajikistan's socioeconomic development. Until 2000, they mainly allotted financial aid and carried out small projects. After the situation in the country was normalized and a relatively favorable investment climate emerged, communications increased and large projects were implemented. For example, in 2000 the Saudi Development Fund participated in rebuilding a maternity and pediatric hospital and building an infectious disease hospital and secondary schools in Tajikistan. The same year, this Fund approved a loan of 6 million dollars for joint (along with the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development and the OPEC Fund) investment in a project for building the Zigar-Kosta-Shkeve highway.

In 2002, a ceremony was held to sign loan agreements between Tajikistan and the Saudi Development Fund for building three secondary schools and purchasing equipment for them in three regions of the republic, as well as for rebuilding a maternity and pediatric hospital in Dushanbe and furnishing it with equipment totaling 3 million dollars.

During the time Tajikistan has been cooperating with the Saudi Development Fund, a loan agreement for a total of 35.2 million dollars was signed for building (in cooperation with the country's government) the Shogun-Zigar section of the Kulob-Kalai-Khumb highway⁹; a maternity hospital has been rebuilt, several general education secondary schools completed, the water supply system in

⁸ Z. Saidov, *Respublika Tadjikistan na sovremennom etape*, Avasto, Dushanbe, 2006, p. 78.

⁹ See: *Azia-Plus*, 23 August, 2002.

Dushanbe modernized, and a terminal in the capital's airport put into operation, to name a few achievements.¹⁰

As noted above, the Kuwait Development Fund also cooperates with Tajikistan. This Fund, which was created on 31 December, 1961 as a financial structure, is an autonomous state structure with an independent legal status. The Fund allots money to 86 countries, 16 of them are Arab, 35 African, 22 European and Asian, etc.

Kuwait is the first Arab state to which the Tajik president paid a visit. On 10 January, 2001, after the loan agreement was signed between Tajikistan and the Kuwait Development Fund for 5 million Kuwaiti dinars (16.5 million dollars) to build the Zigar-Shkev highway, the Fund's Deputy General Director Hisham I. Al-Waqayan noted: "This loan agreement is the result of terms reached during Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon's official visit to Kuwait in 1995."¹¹

From the example presented above, it can be concluded that Tajikistan's cooperation with this organization began primarily thanks to the Tajik leader's long-sighted policy and is growing with each passing day. Nevertheless, this historical fact shows that the Fund's activity as a prestigious financial institution is more pragmatic in nature and it executes the contracts it enters within the set deadlines.

It is precisely this aspect of the organization's activity, on the one hand, and the pragmatism of Tajikistan's foreign policy under the direction of its president, Emomali Rakhmon, on the other, that are the main factors playing a primary role in expanding cooperation between the sides.

Since bilateral relations began between the Islamic organizations and funds and Tajikistan, these structures have participated (and are participating) in the implementation of projects totaling 180 million dollars, 76 million dollars of which have already been used.¹²

4. Tajikistan and Illegal International Islamic Organizations

As we have already noted, along with the legal Islamic organizations, illegal ones also operate in the republic, including the religious-political Hizb ut-Tahrir-al-Islami party. According to different sources, its headquarters (emirate) are either in Western Europe, or in Palestine, and it has branches in Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Turkey, and some Central Asian countries.

The activity of HTI has long been recognized by most Muslim countries as unconstitutional, since the party's political doctrine is based on the idea of the caliphate.

Since the 1950s, movements and organizations have been emerging in the Muslim states, the activity of which later became Islamist in nature. They formed on the basis of local, regional, and international factors. We will single out the following among them:

- the crisis experienced by the Western and Soviet development models, toward which the elites of many Muslim countries oriented themselves;
- the constant defeat of the Arab states in the struggle to liberate their land seized by Israel, which lowered the prestige of the national-secular ideas among the broad masses of Muslim countries, particularly Arab, as a result of which they turned to Islam to resolve their problems and look for answers to important present-day problems;

¹⁰ See: Z. Saidov, *Vneshniaia politika Tadzhikistana v usloviakh globalizatsii*, pp. 113-115.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 304.

¹² See: *Azia-Plus*, 17 May, 2006.

- the failure of the unification projects in the Arab world on a national basis (for example, Arab unity) compared with the unification processes in Europe;
- the financial power and political influence wielded by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and other oil-exporting countries in the Islamic world.

As for the HTI, an important role in its emergence (in 1952) was played by the Palestinians' struggle to liberate their land, although other factors also had a certain amount of influence. And it was created on the basis of the party's Palestinian branch, al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin. Its founder was Takiyeddin al-Nabahani al-Falastini.

At the first stage, the party declared its purpose to be liberating Palestinian land from Israeli occupation. Later, the absence of support from Muslim countries, particularly Arab, as well as the U.N.'s inefficiency in regulating this crisis prompted the HTI to put forward its idea of creating a caliphate to resolve the problems. After the new international system (the Yalta-Potsdam system in 1945-1990) formed in the Islamic world and the number of nation-states rose, they declared the HTI unlawful in order to preserve their own political regimes and protect their national interests, which was why this party began carrying out its activity illegally. In other words, the governments of the Muslim countries regarded the idea of a caliphate as a serious threat to their national-state interests.

After the Central Asian republics acquired their independence and taking advantage of the ideological vacuum left during the post-Soviet period, the HTI was able to create its underground structures in some cities and regions of Tajikistan. According to Russian scientist Alexei Malashenko, "HTI cells exist in the northern regions of Tajikistan. Here their members supposedly reach 5,000."¹³

In our opinion, the reason for this party's great influence in the north of the country lies in the following:

- geographically the northern part of Tajikistan belongs to the Ferghana Valley, an economically and socially backward part of Central Asia, where this party initially arose;
- the weak influence of the legal Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan in this region since most of its leaders come from the southern regions of the country;
- most of the residents of the eastern part of Tajikistan follow the Islamist trend of Islam.

Along with this, it should be noted that there is the likelihood of several countries using this party as a tool for realizing their geopolitical interests.

This party, being extremist, directly threatens the country's state security, which could be expressed in the following ways.

1. A change in lifestyle and way of thinking of each Muslim. From the viewpoint of the ideologists of this party, in order to establish a caliphate at the present stage the Muslims' lifestyle and way of thinking must change to correspond to "true Islam."

In our view, if such ideas are disseminated, they could lead to destabilization within traditional Islam itself in Tajikistan and thus to a religious conflict. The thing is that Hizb ut-Tahrir's leaflets set forth its attitude toward the ritualistic-dogmatic provisions upheld by most Muslims of Tajikistan. They condemn the striving of the followers of traditional Islam to adhere to the traditional precepts of this religion, as well as their loyal attitude toward the authorities.

2. The idea of creating a caliphate.

"The main (and already realizable) task of HTI is to penetrate the state machinery, including the security service."¹⁴

¹³ A. Malashenko, "Islamism v Tsentral'noi Azii: segodnia i zavtra. Tsentral'naia Azia 2007. Klyuchevye faktory bezopasnosti," in: *Materialy mezhdunarodnoi konferentsii*, Almaty, 2007, p. 17.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

The HTI's program states that if the opportunity arises to overthrow the ruler, Muslims are obligated to use arms to achieve this goal, if such an opportunity does not arise, force must be mobilized and help sought among the strong. As we see, using force to achieve one's goals is not an exception in the strategy of this party, penetrating the power-related structures and recruiting their representatives are some of the main tasks in the party's program. From this viewpoint, the party's activity in Tajikistan also threatens state security. Members of HTI are promulgating (along with anathematizing the existing political regimes and leaders of the Muslim countries) the idea of a Golden Age and the rule of the righteous caliphs, which at times of economic difficulties and ideological crises can have a negative effect on stability in society and cause a large part of the country's population to fall under its influence.

3. The use of this party by some countries to achieve their geopolitical goals.

HTI's residences (emirates), as we have already noted, are located in different countries. Therefore it is possible that foreign forces will try to use this party to realize their geopolitical interests. In other words, it will be able to replace the terrorist organization al-Qa'eda, which (like Hizb ut-Tahrir) arose on the basis of the Muslim Brothers movement; and it is possible that there is some connection between them.

4. Since, according to some data, most members of this party in Tajikistan are Turkic-speaking, imposing their ideas on the local Muslims could cause an ethnic conflict and have a negative effect on Tajikistan's relations with its neighboring Turkic-speaking states.

C o n c l u s i o n s

So after the republic acquired its independence, international organizations, particularly Islamic, began occupying a special place in its system of international relations. A model of relations with international organizations, especially Islamic, began forming in Tajikistan's foreign policy and, as we can see, cooperation with them largely corresponds to the republic's national-state interests.

Although today certain states are the main actors in international relations, their opportunities for resolving regional and international problems are limited. So an increase in cooperation between Tajikistan and regional and international organizations could help to resolve global and regional problems. On the other hand, Tajikistan's membership in these organizations proves that multilateral diplomacy is also beginning to play a greater role in the country's international relations system. Whereas its bilateral diplomacy is largely promoting the resolution of intergovernmental bilateral problems, multilateral diplomacy is aimed at resolving regional and global problems, so Tajikistan can safely become involved in regional and globalization processes.

In our opinion, the importance of expanding the republic's cooperation with international Islamic organizations is defined by the following factors.

1. Intensifying cooperation with the above-mentioned organizations could reduce the influence of extremist and fundamental structures operating in the name of Islam on Tajikistan's political and social life. This is contributing to the country's domestic stability.
2. Taking into account the national interests of the member states, the above-mentioned organizations, especially the OIC, will be able to help to eliminate conflicts arising among the member states.

3. Tajikistan's membership in these organizations is raising its authority on the international arena, particularly in the countries of the Islamic world.
4. These organizations are capable of making a worthy contribution to the republic's social, economic, scientific, and cultural development and in this way can help to implement the National Development Strategy to a certain extent.

As for the illegal Islamic organizations, their aim is to advance the Islamist project designed to disrupt law and order and stability, remove certain areas of the country from current state jurisdiction, create parallel structures to rule the country, and organize armed seizure of power.

REGIONAL POLITICS

**COOPERATION BETWEEN IRAN AND
THE CENTRAL ASIAN STATES:
PAST, PRESENT,
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The collapse of the Soviet Union resulted, among other things, in the emergence of a new political and economic situation in the Central Asian republics, whereby new dominating factors are taking precedence and influencing its development. There has been a change in the line-up of political players interested in the region's evolutionary process, as well as in the balance of global and national forces in Central Asia. New actors, including Iran, have become actively involved in the game for the region's future.

Tehran's policy toward Central Asia has not always been consistent and well-balanced. But the overall modification of its foreign policy in the 1990s greatly affected Iran's strategic course toward the Central Asian states as well.

During his visit to the Central Asian countries in 1993, Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani emphasized that the main purpose of his trip was to establish business contacts. But prior to this, the country's foreign minister Ali Akbar Velayati said that Iran was not looking at its relations with these republics from the commercial standpoint.¹ This clearly showed Tehran's pragmatism, after all, this

¹ See: D. Menashri, "Iran and Central Asia," in: *Central Asia Meets the Middle East*, London, 1998, p. 90.

statement was probably made keeping in mind that the Central Asian countries repeatedly demonstrated their desire to develop primarily economic relations with Iran, without political undertones. For example, a representative of the Turkmenistan Foreign Ministry said that Turkmenistan needed Iran to gain an outlet to the sea for its commodities, but in so doing Turkmenistan has no intentions of becoming an Iranian-style Islamic state. The former head of the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Central Asia mufti Muhammad-Sadik Muhammad-Yusuf also spoke in the same vein when he noted that the Turkish path of development was more acceptable to Uzbekistan.²

The pragmatic wing of the Islamic Republic of Iran understood that the cultural dominant could become a more reliable springboard for launching Iran's intensive penetration into the region and spreading its influence there. Therefore, Tehran quickly reoriented itself toward reviving cultural communality, in particular, especially in the 1990s, by actively promulgating the common cultural heritage of the region. In so doing, attention was focused on the need for a cultural revival to achieve true independence and restore the splendor of the past, and it was emphasized that Iran was willing to render significant assistance in this.

This new vector in the country's foreign policy course coincided with the fact that since the end of the 1980s, a traditional, purely Iranian element has become more noticeable in Iran (along with a slackening off in the strictly Islamized ideological course in the country's political and cultural life).³ The country is declaring adherence to classical tradition in cultural policy and showing a desire to unite the academics of Asia and the whole world around the values of Persian classical poetry and the heritage of Ferdowsi. A special accent is placed on the importance of Ferdowsi's epic for the national cultures of the peoples of Central Asia and the Caucasus. These are the priorities in paving the way to integration into the region on the basis of common cultural and economic prerequisites.⁴ Iran's cultural-political doctrine in the region departs from the strictly Islamic postulates and is oriented toward the spread and promulgation of the monuments of Iranian cultural tradition: promulgating the Persian language and poetry and the Qu'ran in Farsi, rebuilding historical traditional relations, and spreading common ethnic pre-Islamic and Islamic principles. In so doing, the Muslim heritage features in the doctrine only in the form of a general background.⁵

Tehran says that during the formation of a purely economic organization, such as the ECO, the role of Iran's cultural heritage will make it possible to consolidate the economic union of countries and create a sustainable image for it in the Islamic world. The Iranians believe that precisely the specific nature of their ancient culture, its deep roots in history, and the consciousness of the South Asian peoples will help today's states to more efficiently integrate into the region and promote its development and creation in the light of the cultural-political and economic communality of neighboring countries.⁶

In 1995, Iranian Foreign Minister A. Velayati proclaimed the efficiency of the principle "return to oneself" (*bazgesht be hod*) set forth by Islamic ideologist Ali Shariati, which, in his opinion, is still viable and is manifested in cultural, political, and economic life in the region. He talks about the regional ties between Iran and Central Asia, the success and reality of which "guarantee a common cultural heritage for these countries."⁷ This statement, if it is viewed in the context of Iran's regional policy in Central Asia in the 1990s, shows how Iran is using the ideas of common culture

² See: Ibidem.

³ See: V. KliashTORINA, "Evolutsiia roli kultury v protsesse modernizatsii Irana i stran regiona," *Osobennosti modernizatsii na musul'manskom Vostoke*, Moscow, 1997, p. 158.

⁴ See: Ibid., p. 161.

⁵ See: Ibid., p. 164.

⁶ See: V. KliashTORINA, "Kulturno-politicheskaia doktrina IRI v regione," in: *IRI v 90-e gody*, Moscow, 1998, p. 123.

⁷ Ibid., p. 127.

to develop ties and strengthen its influence and position in the Central Asian countries. In so doing, it is emphasized that the Iranian culture is not something imported from the outside, but is part of their own cultural past. It is not propaganda of Iran's own culture, but a call to return to its historical-cultural sources, to its glorious past, a reverent attitude to which is a traditional part of the culture of the Eastern peoples as a single historical-cultural discourse, and not only of the Central Asian peoples.

As Tehran claims, their common cultural-historical past, common borders, economic foundations, and long-standing trade relations are conducive to the development of cooperation between the region's countries and Iran. The common culture, history, art, literature, and religion of the Iranian people and the Central Asian people form a reliable foundation and solid basis for developing their relations.

So an analysis of the cultural past has become of particular importance in the relations between the region's republics and Iran. In this respect, the viewpoint of Mehdi Sanai, an Iranian researcher specializing in the study of Iran's relations with the Central Asian countries and who published a book in 1997 called *Vzaimootmosheniia Irana i stran Tsentral'noi Azii* (Interrelations between Iran and the Central Asian Countries), is of particular interest. He presents several arguments to substantiate the common historical and cultural features between Iran and the current republics of the region.⁸ I would like to take a closer look at some of them.

1. Iran's relations with Central Asia began developing before the appearance of Islam, even before the appearance of Christianity, when most of the territory of present-day Central Asia was part of Iran. Thanks to the educational system borrowed from the ancient Iranians, the schools of Central Asia enjoyed enhanced development and became centers for producing great scientists. Thanks to this system, Islamic culture, science, technology, education, philosophy, art, and literature successfully developed in the region. Even when they were under the authority of the Turkic rulers who had close ties with the Abbasid caliphate, hindered the spread of Shi'ism, and prevented Iranians from taking power, the Iranians still had great influence in political and cultural life.

Based on these precepts, after the appearance of Islam in the region, Iran is given direct credit for the culture and civilization that exist in Central Asia.⁹ There are a great many Persian words in the languages of the peoples of Central Asia. The local population uses Persian sayings and poems in conversational speech. The Tajik language belongs to the Iranian linguistic family. In Uzbekistan, the people perform most Islamic rituals in Persian. Thanks to the influence of the Iranian education system, in many chronicles of the 15th-17th centuries, the history of the peoples of Central Asia was written in Persian. Well-known academics who were born in Central Asia are recognized as natives of the Iranian-Islamic culture. For example, such academics as Rūdakī, Ulugbek, Buhari, ibn Sina, Balami, Biruni, and Naser Hosrov are well known as Iranian figures at the global level. The peoples of Iran and Central Asia have many common traditions, for example, the celebration of Navruz. Many traditions and customs were formed under the influence of Islam, which has a strong impact on the mentality and everyday life of the peoples of the Central Asian region. One of the reasons for the close ties between Iran and Central Asia is that national minorities live on both sides of a common border. This reciprocal settlement underwent particularly intensive development during the time of the Great Silk Road.

⁸ See: M. Sanai, *Vzaimootmosheniia Irana i stran Tsentral'noi Azii*, Almaty, 1997, Chapter 1.

⁹ See: *Ibid.*, p. 15.

2. In the 18th-19th centuries, a large part of Central Asia became part of the Russian Empire, and, in the 20th century, of the Soviet Union, whereby the cultural relations between Iran and Central Asia underwent a period of relative stagnation. But, according to M. Sanai, the presence of Iranian culture and traditions in Central Asia was so great that it hindered the spread of the Russian culture in the 19th-20th centuries. Sovietization and collectivization caused the Turks of Central Asia to leave the region en masse, and Iran was one of the countries to which they emigrated. A large community of ethnic Turkmen live today in the province of Mazandaran on the border with Turkmenistan, in the town of Gorgan, while a large number of Kazakhs live in the north of Iran.
3. Only after they acquired their independence did the Central Asian republics turn their attention to self-determination and reviving their national self-identification, the purpose of which was to establish a certain distance from Russia and the Russian culture.

In this way, we see that a convincing ideological base was created for Iran's penetration into the region, which was immediately put into action. In 1992, Iran opened its embassies in nearly all of the Central Asian republics, each of which had special employees engaged in cultural, educational, and scientific affairs. Moreover, at that time, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Orientation opened its special representative office in Almaty, which performs the role of an Iranian cultural center in the region. Then Iranian cultural representative offices appeared in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. These structures promoted the dynamic development of Iran's cultural, educational, and scientific ties with the region's countries.¹⁰ In May 1992, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan participated in an international book fair in Tehran. While it was in progress, several bilateral documents on cooperation in the cultural sphere were signed, including in library science and the printing trade, which also dealt with replenishing the national libraries of the corresponding countries with books. In those years, a series of textbooks, dictionaries, and magazines for the Central Asian republics were published in Iran.

I would like to draw attention to several extremely vulnerable spots in the propaganda of Iranian culture in the region's countries. For example, despite the loud statements about the common cultural heritage, there are quite a number of differences between the Iranian and Central Asian cultures, and it is hardly correct to say that they are culturally identical. In the 16th century, Iran became a Shi'ite country, which naturally separated it from its neighboring Sunni countries. There are not any large Shi'ite minorities in the Central Asian republics with which Iran could establish strong ties. After independence was gained, the youth representatives of the Central Asian republics began to travel abroad to the theological centers of Turkey, Pakistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Morocco to study, but not to Iran. Moreover, these countries began widespread religious activity in the Central Asian republics as missionaries rushed in to spread and promulgate Islam. When the wave of the Islamic movement rose and the Islamic Revival Party was created back in Soviet times, the ideologists of this movement mainly turned to the works of Sunni and not Iranian thinkers.¹¹

As far as culture and linguistics are concerned, four out of the five Central Asian countries are part of the Turkic-speaking world, and Farsi only predominates in Tajikistan. The region has always been under the influence of the civilizations around it, at the crossroads of such philosophical systems as Confucianism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity. The Great Silk Road passed through it, which served not only as a means for exchanging goods, but also ideas among China, India, Iran, as well as

¹⁰ See: A. Atakhanov, "Razvitie kul'turnykh svyazei gosudarstv Tsentral'noi Azii s IRI v postsovet'skiy period," *Islamskaia revoliutsia: proshloe, nastoiashchee i budushchee*, Speech Theses, Moscow, 1999, p. 7.

¹¹ See: O. Roy, *Iran's Foreign Policy towards Central Asia*, New York, 1999, p. 9.

the Southern and Central European states. As New York University Professor Robert D. McChesney notes, the countries of Central Asia borrowed key elements from the three main components of the Islamic world—religion from the Arabs, the administrative-bureaucratic system from the Persians, and the military from the Turks, thus acquiring a unique advantage from the combination of Iranian and Turkish origins in their own culture.¹²

In addition, Iran often emphasized its superiority over the Central Asian republics and tried to pose itself as an “older brother” competent to teach them lessons in Islam, culture, and even language (in the case of Tajikistan), which aroused irritation in these states. So Iran’s justification for its presence in the region is far from ideal, although the ideas of cultural-historical commonality will most likely be developed and used further, since they meet Iran’s interests most of all.

As for possible Islamization of the Central Asian countries, the threat does not come from Iran. Iranian Shi‘ite Islam is unlikely to become widely accepted in the Central Asian countries, the population of which mainly consists of Hanafi Sunnis. The groups of Shi‘ites in the region are small and mainly consist of native Azerbaijanis and Iranians who live in compact groups in some of the Central Asian countries.

The main threat of expansion of radical Islam comes from the Sunni radical movements based in Pakistan and Afghanistan.¹³ The experience of several Muslim countries shows that the Islamic fundamentalists are rapidly gaining momentum and beginning to make claims on power in those states where modernization (in combination with the demographic explosion) is leading to rapid impoverishment of a large part of the population. The same situation could develop in the Central Asian countries. The Islamic fundamentalists are strong in preaching social justice, confessional democracy, and internationalism, which could be an ideological-political alternative to nationalism and ethnocracy.

As already mentioned, Iran is not interested in destabilization of the situation in the region, what is more, it is afraid that the nationalistic moods being manifested in the Central Asian countries might spread to the Iranian population (a large part of which comprises national minorities, particularly immigrants from Central Asia), which will pose a threat to Iran’s territorial integrity. Indeed, people with the same religion, traditions, and language live on both sides of Iran’s borders with the Central Asian countries, which is of great significance to Tehran. National minorities of Central Asian peoples also live in other countries of the Middle East. For example, there are Turkmen national minorities not only in Iran, but also in Iraq, Syria, and Saudi Arabia.¹⁴

Iran’s relations with the Central Asia states are developing at the multilateral and bilateral level, as well as between regions and provinces. Iran was one of the first countries to recognize the independence of the Central Asian states in all the regional and international organizations and forums.¹⁵

It meant a lot to Iran that these republics joined the Organization of the Islamic Conference, thus not only raising the prestige of the OIC in the world, but also augmenting the role of the non-Arab states in the OIC, which is strengthening Iran’s position in this organization.

Iran is also in favor of the Central Asian countries joining OPEC and is trying to draw up a joint policy with them for exporting oil and gas through its territory, which could also strengthen Tehran’s position in OPEC.

In 1992, on Iran’s initiative, the Central Asian countries were accepted into the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) recreated in 1985 on the basis of the Regional Cooperation for Develop-

¹² See: R.D. McChesney, “Central Asia’s Place in the Middle East,” in: *Central Asia Meets the Middle East*, p. 31.

¹³ See: M.A. Khrustalev, *Tsentral’naia Azia vo vneshnei politike Rossii*, Moscow, 1994, p. 19.

¹⁴ See: B. Shaffer, “Epilogue,” in: *Central Asia Meets the Middle East*, p. 230.

¹⁵ See: “Prakticheskie shagi, napravlennye na ukreplenie regionalnykh i mezhdunarodnykh otnoshenii,” *Tretiy vzgliad* (Moscow), No. 71, 2000, p. 36.

ment Organization, which turned it into the second largest regional organization in the world in terms of territory and population.

The founders of the ECO regarded these republics as a new market, sources of natural resources, and transit routes for their goods to Europe, the Far East, Siberia, Southeast Asia, and other markets of the world. Iran put forward the idea of creating a Common Islamic Market. It goes without saying that cooperation in the ECO also provides Iran with the opportunity to penetrate the Central Asian countries and come out of its isolation. For example, the main attention in the ECO projects (Iran plays the leading role in this structure) is paid to creating transportation and other communication routes, in which Iran holds the key place, thanks to which the latter will establish close ties with the countries of the region. There are attempts to coordinate banking activity for providing financial support of the projects being developed by the ECO countries. In 1993, a decision was approved to create a Joint ECO Bank, and the organization's insurance company was formed. Within the framework of the ECO, a Scientific Fund and Cultural Organization for the Development of Cooperation in Culture and Exchange of Scientific Achievements were formed.¹⁶ But trade remains a priority area of cooperation in the region, although bilateral relations prevail here, the development of which is complicated by the monotony of the export-import products of the ECO countries, a problem that traditionally complicates regional integration.

An important area in cooperation among the ECO countries is implementing joint projects in the oil and gas sphere and power engineering, but cooperation is mainly being carried out on a bilateral basis.

The idea has been revived of creating a trans-Asian railroad called the Great Silk Road, which would link the countries of the Middle East with Europe, the Far East, India, and the Southeast Asian countries, and in which, according to A. Hashemi Rafsanjani, Iran would become the main pillar.¹⁷ Within the framework of this project, Iran put a 700-kilometer section of the Bafq-Bandar Abbas railroad into operation in 1995, and in 1996, construction of the Mashhad-Serakhs-Tejen route was completed, which joined the railroad networks of Iran and the Central Asian countries. Putting these routes into operation is ensuring the fastest transit for shipments from Central Asia to the Persian Gulf ports.¹⁸ Since 1996, the international NOSTRAK consortium and Russian Transcontinental Lines Company have been drawing up a project for building an international North-South transportation corridor, within the framework of which there are plans to organize rail communication along the eastern coast of the Caspian Sea (with the construction of a connecting branch between the railroads of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan with subsequent access to Iran's railroad network). There are also plans to implement a variety of other projects. The Mashhad-Bafq and Kerman-Zahedan railroads are also under construction. Great importance is attached to the plans to create sea ferries that will operate from the port of Anzali to the ports of Turkmenbashi and Olia, as well as along the Makhachkala-Baku-Noshahr route. This also applies to the preparations for building the railroad ferry Lagan (Kalmykia)-Noshahr route which will provide access to the UAE.¹⁹

A decision has been made to join the energy systems of the region's countries in order to deliver electric power to territories which are in short supply. For example, Iran's electric power network has already been joined up to the electric power networks of Turkey and Azerbaijan, and work is underway to connect the electric power networks of Iran and Turkmenistan. Attempts are being made to create an integrated communication system. Iran is justifiably taking active part in preparing and

¹⁶ See: E. Dunaeva, "Iran i strany OES," in: *IRI v 90-e gody*, p. 89.

¹⁷ See: D. Menashri, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

¹⁸ See: *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ See: E. Dunaeva, "Kaspiyskiy region i IRI," in: *Islamskaia revoliutsia v Irane*, Moscow, 1999, pp. 135-136.

advancing projects for transportation of energy resources through its territory from the Central Asian republics.

Pipelines are not only of economic, but also of strategic significance to Iran. Any country through which the Caspian's energy resources are transported has every chance of becoming a real regional power and, of course, gaining economic dividends. And as we have already noted, it would be very advantageous for Iran to receive Caspian oil for consumption in its northern regions. Some American researchers also admit that the Iranian transportation route for Caspian oil is more convenient (at least for Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan), since it is cheaper, and Iran is the most stable country in the region and a reliable business partner.²⁰ But the sanctions imposed by the United States pose a major obstacle. The Central Asian countries face the problem of choosing between an energy transportation route they need, which promises great dividends, and relations with the U.S., which is at the top of the foreign policy priorities of the region's republics. In addition, these republics cannot always resolve the questions related to the transportation of their energy resources themselves. For example, Kazakhstan's oil industry depends heavily on foreign oil companies, among which American and European partners prevail (they provide about 50% of the investments in the industry).²¹ It should be noted that many projects for laying pipelines are not implemented due to the lack of funding. And international financial organizations refuse to allot funds to these projects, since Iran is to become the key country on the gas and oil pipeline routes. For this reason, U.S. and other Western companies refuse to participate in these projects. So it is extremely important that Tehran achieve the removal, or at least the alleviation, of Washington's sanctions.

Here is worth emphasizing that the problem of transportation routes is not only a question of choice of direction for transporting the Central Asian countries' export and import commodities, it is more a problem of access to the region, which is no longer economic, but geopolitical in significance. For Iran it is also a question of coming out of its isolation and removing the sanctions. The implementation of Iranian projects will mean ending all boycotts and embargos, and the interests of Western companies, whose oil will pass through the pipelines, will become the best guarantee of Iran's foreign policy prestige and also raise its influence in the region.

So Iran needs to conduct an active foreign policy toward Central Asia in order to maintain its current position and possibly in the future return what it has lost. Keeping in mind the situation that has currently developed around Iran and the rapidly changing political climate in the Central Asian countries (active expansion by Western companies of economically advantageous vectors of cooperation, enlargement of NATO, and so on), they could greatly undermine Iran's possibility of having an influence on the region's countries. The latter circumstance will have a negative effect on Iran's domestic economic and political situation, will lead to new problems, and will create an additional threat to its security. Such problems can be resolved not only by means of large financial and economic projects, but also on the basis of a more active cultural policy aimed at re-enacting the centuries-long involvement of the region's nations in the area where Islamic historical-cultural values are widespread.

²⁰ See: O. Roy, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

²¹ See: I. Azovskiy, *Tsentrāl'noaziatiskie respubliky v poiskakh reshenia transportnoi problemy*, Moscow, 1999, p. 89.

THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN AND THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN: COOPERATION ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROSPECTS

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The Tajik and Iranian Geopolitical Factor in the Region

Diplomacy in independent Tajikistan seeks to develop relations with all the members of the world community. Moreover, the multi-vector nature of its foreign policy is also conducive to establishing priority cooperation with those countries with which stronger ties are mutually beneficial.

Recently, many states have acquired the label of “regional power.” This term applies to those countries whose influence is not limited to only one theater of political, economic, and humanitarian activity. Whereby in a particular region, such states may have enough potential to directly affect the current political processes. Although this term is not new (it has been in circulation for more than fifty years), it has become increasingly popular over the last 10-15 years as those states that fit this category have become more active.

Today, one such state in the region is Iran. The influence of this country on current regional processes has perceptibly grown recently, which makes it possible to regard Iran as one of the sustainably developing regional powers.

After the formation of the U.S.S.R., Iran’s political, economic, and cultural influence in Central Asia dwindled to nothing, but it always tried to retain its niche in the region even in Soviet times. Official Tehran’s initiative to move its consulate from Leningrad (St. Petersburg) to Dushanbe in 1980

did not escape public attention. However, the Soviet authorities did not support the Iranian leadership's proposal at that time.

Iran is one of the four countries bordering on Central Asia, along with the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China, and the Islamic State of Afghanistan. The appearance of five newly independent states attracted increased attention from the Iranian political establishment, which was manifested over time in specific projects that allowed Tehran to perceptibly reinforce its position in Central Asia.

Thanks to its rich natural resources, convenient geographic location, high export potential, and sufficiently large domestic market, Iran is capable of engaging in mutually advantageous trade and economic cooperation with many countries, including the Central Asian states.¹

For example, if Iran's interest in Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan is primarily prompted by their common land and sea supply routes, its interest in Tajikistan, which is geographically distant, is explained by the fact that they belong to the same language and racial group, as well as by their cultural and political communality in the past.

When it first began establishing relations with the Central Asian states, Iran drew up a strategy that initially focused on the cultural-historical communality among the nations, which Tajikistan best fit. Keeping in mind the common religious ties between Iran and the Central Asian countries, Tehran was nevertheless unable to make use of the Islamic factor due to the variety of different trends this religion professed, as well as to the political state of the country's foreign policy, which encouraged the drawing up and implementation of a new pragmatic policy aimed at carrying out economic measures and applying levers to strengthen its position in the region. Iran developed cooperation in mutually advantageous economic spheres of the Central Asian republics, including energy, transport, banking, and trade.

Tajikistan's declaration of its state independence was marred by the civil war in the country that lasted for five years and had tragic consequences for the republic. Iran's active, constructive, and diplomatic policy made a significant contribution to the peaceful settlement of the inter-Tajik conflict.

On 27 June, 1997, a General Agreement on Peace and National Consent in Tajikistan was signed in Moscow between the Tajik government and the United Tajik Opposition, the guarantors of which were Moscow and Tehran. Iran's contribution in this process helped to build trust among the region's states toward Iran.

2006 was declared the Year of the Aryan Civilization in Tajikistan. Various events that shed light on the contribution of the Aryan civilization to world culture were organized in the country during this undertaking. Present-day Iran and Tajikistan are the direct descendents of a once single Aryan civilization.

This undertaking also had some political elements—in July 2006, a meeting of the leaders of the three successor states of the Aryan civilization was held in Dushanbe. At present, this trend is more geopolitical than historical in nature. On the whole, the undertaking can be described as an attempt by the leaders of the two states, Iran and Tajikistan, to create an alternative idea to pan-Turkism, which does not meet the national interests of Tehran and Dushanbe.

Tajikistan was to become the geopolitical fulcrum of the entire Central Asian geopolitical telurocratic strategy. The republic is acting as the main base in this process, whereby its territory is becoming a geopolitical laboratory in which two competing impulses are coming together—the Islamic impulse of the Indo-European Eurasian South and the Russian geopolitical impulse coming from

¹ See: G. Khajieva, *Tsentrāl'naiā Azia i Iran: potentsial ekonomicheskogo partnerstva*, Documents of the International Conference on the Historical-Cultural Interaction between Iran and Dasht-i Kipchak, Dayk-Press, Almaty, 2007, p. 217.

the Heartland, from the North. In this way, it is logical to designate one more arc, Moscow-Dushanbe-Kabul-Tehran, along which an unprecedented geopolitical reality should develop.²

At present, active political cooperation is seen among the countries of this four-cornered structure, which is determined primarily by the actual diplomacy of these states in this region, with the exception of Afghanistan, which is dealing with its own domestic crisis.

Iran's foreign policy is generating tempestuous discussions on the international arena. Many of the opinions heard in the world reflect a lack of understanding of the essence of the Islamic state and the motives that Tehran is guided by when it makes a particular decision. When studying the present-day state of Iranian society, three factors must be taken into account equally—Iranian traditions, culture, and Islam.³

Iran's foreign policy on its northern borders is defined by four components:

- 1) Russian-Iranian relations;
- 2) the Islamic factor;
- 3) the global factor (the U.S.'s role in forming regional policy); and
- 4) Iran's idea about its key role in the development of Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus.⁴

Iran's return to the region's political, economic, and cultural life is defined by the republic's national interests. Close and stable relations with the Central Asian countries will lead both to the development of the border states and to progress in Iran's northern provinces.

Bilateral Economic Cooperation

Iran was the first country to open its diplomatic representative office in the Tajik capital. This happened after the Republic of Tajikistan declared its state independence. The Tajik embassy began functioning in Tehran in July 1995. And its opening was scheduled to coincide with the first official visit by the Tajik president to the Islamic Republic of Iran. At the initial stage in Tajik-Iranian relations, humanitarian cooperation prevailed. Specific economic projects could not be carried out due to the difficult political situation in Tajikistan, which kept them at the discussion stage.

Iranian president Khatami's visit to Tajikistan in 2002 and Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon's return visit in 2003 helped to get Tajik-Iranian relations off the ground. For example, the sides coordinated their positions on one of the largest investment projects in Tajikistan—the Sangtuda-2 Hydropower Plant.

This hydropower plant was to be built by means of joint efforts on the Vakhsh River (in the south of Tajikistan). The cost of the facility amounted to 220 million dollars, 180 million of which was invested by Iran and the other 40 million by Tajikistan. Construction officially began on 20 February, 2006. Sangtuda-2 is to go into operation in three-and-a-half years. The Iranians will receive all the profit for twelve-and-a-half years, and then the facility will pass completely over to Tajikistan.⁵ The

² See: A. Dugin, *Osnovy geopolitiki. Geopoliticheskoe budushchee Rossii*, Arktogeia Publishers, Moscow, 1997, pp. 354-357.

³ See: M. Sanai, "Vneshniaia politika Irana: mezhdru istoriei i religiei," *Rossia i musul'manskiy mir*, No. 8 (170), 2006, p. 157.

⁴ See: *Tsentral'naia Azia v sovremennom mire: Vneshnepoliticheskie i geoekonomicheskie aspekty razvitiia*, Collection of papers, RAS IRISS, Center of Scientific-Information Research of Globalization and Regional Affairs, Department of Asia and Africa, Moscow, 2007, p. 89.

⁵ See: I. Kurbanov, Z. Abdullaev, "Iran prosit garantii i Tadjikistan gotov ikh dat," *Fakty & Kommentarii*, No. 11, 6 July, 2006.

launching into operation of the powerful hydropower plant will significantly raise Tajikistan's energy security and make it possible for the country to export its surplus electric power abroad.

Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon's official visit to Iran in January 2006 was constructive. It resulted in the signing of an entire set of documents which raised economic cooperation to a qualitatively higher level:

- an Agreement on Simplifying Bank Loans;
- a Memorandum of Mutual Understanding in Standards, Transport, Cargo Shipments, Energy, and Foreign Policy;
- an Agreement on Implementing a Project to Build the Sangtuda-2 Hydropower Plant;
- an Additional Protocol to the Memorandum on Mutual Understanding and Cooperation in Implementing this Project;
- a Joint Declaration on Developing Interrelations and Cooperation between Iran and Tajikistan.

The economic component dominated at the talks, in particular, questions of partnership were reviewed in the economy, the hydropower industry, and transport, to which a new sphere of bilateral cooperation was added—the development of information-communication technology. A decision was made to create a joint technical committee on information-communication technology founded by the Dadeh Pardazi IRAN Co. and the Tajik Ministry of Communications, the initial tasks of which were to hold advanced training courses for the employees of the Tajik Ministry of Communications, as well as introduce new technology into the republic's communication infrastructure.

At the end of July 2006, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad paid a return visit to Tajikistan.

The high-level talks ended in the signing of six socioeconomic bilateral documents: a Joint Statement on the Development of Bilateral Cooperation; Memorandums on Cooperation in Justice, on Labor and Social Security of the Population, and on Free Trade; a Program of Cooperation in Tourism for 2006, and an Agreement on Privileged Trade.

The Iranian leader noted that over the span of 15 years, the two countries had signed more than 150 agreements, and their number was growing. He suggested carrying out several bilateral and trilateral projects, in particular, opening a joint university and new television station that would broadcast in Persian in Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Iran in order to promulgate the culture of the Persian-speaking states. Moreover, the Iranian side confirmed its willingness to offer quotas to 100 Tajik students to take specialized oil and gas engineering courses at Iranian universities.⁶

Important regional projects were discussed during another official visit by the Tajik leader to Iran in May 2007. During the visit, several documents of mutual interest designed to intensify and expand economic cooperation were signed. In particular, the following can be mentioned:

- a Memorandum of Mutual Understanding on Cooperation between the Television and Radio Broadcasting Committee under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Radio and Television Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran;
- a Memorandum of Mutual Understanding on Bilateral Cooperation between the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Mines of the Islamic Republic of Iran;
- an agreement between the Somon Air Company of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Mahan Air Company of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the creation of a joint air company aimed at raising the quality of air services in the country;

⁶ See: "Sammit trekh prezidentov," *Fakty & Kommentarii*, No. 15, 3 August, 2006.

—an agreement between the Talko Tajik Aluminum Company State Unitary Enterprise and the Al-Mahdi Iranian Aluminum Company, in compliance with which Talko would be able to receive alum shale and coke, as well as supply Iran's Iralko Aluminum Company and Dubal Company of the United Arab Emirates with anode blocks.

It should be noted that today Talko is better supplied with equipment and technology than Al-Mahdi or Iralko and produces more aluminum than both of these companies. At present, Talko is ready to take part in investment and construction of new coke production in Iran and in equipping the Bandar Abbas port to enable it to transport its aluminum production. If this partnership is established, Talko will be able to provide itself with an alternative route for the transit of its cargo and commodities.⁷

The Tajik president proposed a project to build Rumi-Kumsangir (Tajikistan)–Kunduz–Mazar-i-Sharif–Herat (Afghanistan)–Mashhad (Iran) rail and road routes.

The development of transport infrastructure is one of the priority tasks of the national economy in Tajikistan today. Tajikistan is also carrying out similar projects with other neighboring states—China and Kyrgyzstan. For example, within the SCO, the Chinese side allotted large funds to reconstruction of the strategically important Dushanbe–Ayni–Istaravshan–Khujand–Buston–Chanak (the border with Uzbekistan) highway. Its total length reaches 410 km. The high-altitude Dushanbe–Kulob–Karakorum–Kulma highway linking Tajikistan and the PRC also went into seasonal operation relatively recently. This road offers Tajikistan the shortest route to the largest Indian Ocean ports and will also automatically promote an increase in goods turnover between the two neighboring countries.

In addition to this route, work has also been revived in the direction of Osh on the Dushanbe–Vakhdat–Nurabad–Tajikabad highway to the border of Kyrgyzstan. The total cost of the project amounted to 23.6 million dollars. The Asian Development Bank, which allotted 15 million dollars, and the OPEC Foundation, which granted 6 million dollars, were the main creditors; the Tajik government's share amounted to 2.6 million dollars.

In the near future, there are plans to build an Isfara–Osh highway that will bypass the Uzbek enclave of Sokh. Successful implementation of this project will alleviate many difficulties for the residents of the border areas of both countries, primarily by reducing to a minimum the number of conflicts on the border with Uzbekistan.⁸

Bridges linking Tajikistan with Afghanistan are also being built, since the latter occupies a strategic geographic position by providing access to other states (including India, Pakistan, and Iran), as well as in the opposite direction, from these countries to Tajikistan.

Operation of the Tajik–Iranian route linking the south of Tajikistan and the north of Iran will help to expand bilateral economic cooperation.

Building roads along the perimeter of the Tajik border is a demand of the times and will make it possible for Tajikistan to strengthen cooperation with other states of the vast Asian continent. Moreover, this will free the country from Uzbekistan's transport monopoly and deprive Tashkent of an important lever of pressure. At present, 80% of all the country's land routes pass through this country.

Tajikistan and Iran currently have a list of commodities that are of mutual interest. The list of goods exported by Iran to Tajikistan consists of coffee, tea, sugar, chocolate, paint, varnish, oil and petroleum products, carpets, rugs, ceramics, machinery, electrical equipment, clothing, furniture, as well as resin, rubber, and their derivatives. Aluminum and aluminum products, cotton, ferrous metals and metal production, glass, and glass products are delivered from Tajikistan to Iran.⁹

⁷ [http://www.prezident.tj/rus/novostee_Iran.htm].

⁸ See: V. Nijatbekov, Kh. Dodikhudoev, "The Republic of Tajikistan in the Regional Dimension," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 3 (39), 2006, p. 80.

⁹ See: Kh. Abbasian, *Iran i Tadzhikistan: piatnadsat let vzaimovygodnogo sotrudnichestva*, Irfon, Dushanbe, 2006, p. 103.

The trade turnover dynamics between Tajikistan and Iran, although on the rise, still do not meet the actual potential. The latest figures are as follows: 1999—23.9 million dollars, 2000—20.1 million dollars, 2001—39.9 million dollars, 2002—44 million dollars, 2003—75.1 million dollars, 2004—55.9 million dollars,¹⁰ while by 2007, trade turnover was higher than 100 million dollars.

The Iranian government has encouraged its investors to invest money in the Tajik economy from the very beginning, and Iranian companies have been showing enviable activity. They are currently investing in almost all the branches of Tajikistan's national economy.

The Anzob tunnel, Istiklol, is another major Iranian project, which is located in the north of Tajikistan and links the Sogd Region with the state's capital. Construction of this tunnel cost the Iranian side 31.2 million dollars, 10 million of which were a grant and 21.2 million a loan; the Tajik government's share amounts to 7.8 million dollars. The cost of construction was largely determined by the difficult geographical terrain in the area of the tunnel, which is located at an altitude of 2,650 meters above sea level and is five kilometers in length.

We must note the immense strategic importance of this tunnel, which is confirmed by the republic's president, Emomali Rakhmon: "This tunnel symbolizes Tajikistan's first step out of its transport impasse. The days of having to travel hundreds of kilometers through another state in order to get from one region of our country to another are over."

After the Anzob tunnel, the Iranian Sobir International Company will begin building another one, the Chormagzak tunnel, in the republic's east in the Dushanbe-Kulob highway area (not far from the Nurek Hydropower Plant). The cost of implementing the project amounts to 60 million dollars and the tunnel will be 4.2 kilometers in length.

A more interesting project is the TochIron Joint Venture for manufacturing tractors on the basis of the Dushanbe Khumo plant and the Tabriz tractor plant. According to the agreement, 51% of the shares will belong to the Iranian side, while Tajikistan's Khumo enterprise, which will provide the production capacities, as well as the energy and communication equipment, will own the other 49%. The Iranian partner will supply the technology, and Iranian investments will amount to 10 million dollars. Initially, there were plans to assemble 1,000 pieces of machinery a year with a subsequent increase in production. There are also plans to sell ready-made tractors both on the domestic Tajik market, which is experiencing a shortage of agricultural technology, as well as beyond the country.

Agriculture has become another sphere of cooperation. According to the agreements reached and enforced in a joint memorandum, the Iranian side intends to modernize the existing infrastructure, as well as take part in creating additional infrastructure in Tajikistan, in particular a slaughterhouse that meets the demands of today's market. In turn, Tajikistan will begin delivering mutton to Iran, and the latter will export its poultry products to Tajikistan.

Exhibitions of Iranian goods are regularly held in Tajikistan to strengthen economic relations by looking for new contacts. Dozens of enterprises of the textile and food industry traditionally display their products at these fairs, as well as factories and plants that manufacture office equipment and household appliances.

In 2006-2007, significant changes encompassing new spheres of cooperation occurred in Tajik-Iranian economic relations. Following the agreements signed at the highest level, contacts were also activated at the interdepartmental level. For example, questions pertaining to cooperation between the Iranian province of Khorasan Razavi and Tajikistan were discussed on 25 May, 2007 in Dushanbe. One of the paragraphs of the protocol of intent signed at this meeting registered the intention of the Iranian Iran-Khudru Company to manufacture Samand cars in Dushanbe.

The Iranian side was willing to invest 60 million dollars to set up a production line of passenger cars, while the Tajik side said it was willing to purchase two thousand Samand cars in Iran in the near

¹⁰ See: *Statisticheskii ezhegodnik Respubliki Tadjikistan*, 2005, p. 256.

future for city taxi services. Terms were also agreed upon whereby the Iranian company would sell Tajikistan cars at a 30% discount of their net cost. One car costs approximately 5,000-5,500 dollars.

The simultaneous building of large and small facilities requires a large amount of building material. With this in mind, Iranian partners would like to build a new cement factory in Tajikistan with a production capacity of 1 million tons a year. Businessmen from Iran will invest 140 million dollars in this project.

Iranian investments in Tajikistan occupy one of the leading places and feature in almost all the key branches of the republic's economy.

Humanitarian Sphere of Cooperation

The great political and economic trust between Tajikistan and Iran is largely due to the common multi-century culture of the two countries, which is manifested by the Rūdakī Mausoleum in Penjikent and the Hamadoni Mausoleum in Kulob. Iranian architects took part in restoration work on the Rūdakī Mausoleum—the founder of Tajik-Persian literature. 2008 was declared the Year of Rūdakī and the Tajik Language in Tajikistan. There can be no doubt that this will promote further progressive development of bilateral humanitarian contacts. Cultural ties are occupying an important place in the interrelations between the states. For example, agreements have been signed which provide Tajik students with the opportunity to study in Iranian universities.

The revival of cultural contacts essentially means the revival of the multi-century Tajik-Iranian dialog that was interrupted during the 1920s. It is also worth noting that one of the first foreign cultural centers opened in Tajikistan was Iranian.

Iran has great potential with respect to training scientific staff and qualified specialists for Tajikistan. This process is still unilateral, Iran is financing the training of Tajik students (70 people) in its civil higher education institutions and of Tajik students at the theological training center in the town of Qom (260 people).¹¹

Tajik-Iranian Cooperation in International Structures

The Republic of Tajikistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran highly value their interrelations, which are also supplemented by contacts within the framework of international organizations.

Close cooperation between the two states is also seen within the framework of regional structures, such as the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Economic Cooperation Organization, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, in which Iran has enjoyed the status of observer since 2005. The latter structure is of the greatest interest since countries with observer status—Iran, India, Pakistan, and Mongolia—have the possibility of swelling its ranks. Iran's potential entry into the SCO could have both positive and negative consequences. It could have a serious influence on the geopolitical and geo-economic processes in Asia.

¹¹ See: *Visit Prezidenta Rakhmonova v Iran mozhno nazvat' istoricheskim*, Rajab Safarov's interview on the results of the official visit by Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon to Iran in January 2006, available at [<http://www.analitika.org/article.php?story=20060212035915491&mode>], 12 February, 2006.

- First, Iran's vast hydrocarbon resources will not only noticeably strengthen energy projects in the SCO, but will also give a significant boost to their implementation. In the near future, this sector could become one of the key vectors in the organization's activity.
- Second, historically Iran's traditionally strong influence in Afghanistan will make it possible for the SCO to carry out more constructive work in the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group (founded in 2005 within the framework of the organization). At present, the extremely complicated military political situation in Afghanistan means that the SCO must pay increased attention to the events going on in this state.
- And finally, third, Iran's membership in the SCO is transforming the region from Central Asia into Greater Central Asia with all the ensuing positive and negative consequences.

Iran's interest in the SCO is generated by the current international situation around Tehran. The complicated relations with Washington and the EU countries are prompting it to look for new partners. In this respect, membership in the SCO will make it possible for Iran to become a member state in an integration formation with two countries that have the status of permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, which will ultimately lead to the prospect of forming a new strategic triangle in Central Asia—Moscow-Beijing-Tehran. But it cannot be said that this process will have a positive influence on the further practical and mutually advantageous participation of some states in the region. Consequently, Iran could use the SCO as a tribune for protecting its national interests by declaring its own political position in international politics. Taking into account some of the Iranian leader's ambitious statements, this could have an influence on the Central Asian countries' relations with the U.S. and the EU states.

Another regional integration formation is the ECO, which appeared on the political map in 1964 and is a common derivative of the diplomacy of Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey, brought to life for the purpose of strengthening economic cooperation among the three countries. It existed in this form until 1992. Since then the organization has become much larger after acquiring seven new members at the same time: Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

The founders of the ECO were interested in further enlargement of the regional structure by means of the Central Asian countries, as well as Azerbaijan and Afghanistan. New states not only mean new sales markets, but also the possibility of promoting new ideas in a vast geopolitical space.

Those branches that promote the strengthening of regional integration were defined as the main vectors of cooperation—transportation routes, trade, and energy. Iran is one of the leaders of this organization; it is interested in the successful implementation of projects within the ECO, which will ultimately lead to Tehran's interrelations with its partners reaching a new and higher level of trust, raise Iran's political prestige in the region, and remove the problem of the country's isolation.

Cooperation between the Republic of Tajikistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran in regional structures is unfolding during intensification of the globalization processes which are going on at the same time amid the ever-frequent outbursts of "clashes of civilizations." This means preserving their traditional Islamic humanistic identity, since many trends of other civilizations are having a certain negative influence. Within the framework of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Iran is carrying out a policy aimed at consolidating the fragmented Muslim world.

At present, the ICO is made up of 57 of the planet's states and is one of the largest and most efficient regional structures. The Islamic Development Bank, the financial input of which is quite important for Tajikistan's national economy, is the most influential and productive branch of the ICO; many projects are being carried out with Iran's complete political support. The main spheres of investment are transportation routes, agriculture, public health, education, and the banking system.

One of the promising Tajik-Iranian projects in hydropower engineering to be carried out with the direct support of the Islamic Development Bank is building eight small hydropower plants in Tajikistan. This plan will be implemented in March 2009. The general contractor of the construction project is the Tajik-Iranian Rokhi Korvon-Gukharrud Joint Venture.

The small hydropower plants, the projected capacity of each amounting to 8,000 kW, will be built in different regions of the county. According to the construction plan, these projects should be implemented within eighteen months. The total planned cost of the eight projects amounts to 10 million dollars.

Taking into account the current state of affairs on the international arena, Tajikistan's diplomacy in Western Asia has been defined by a whole series of factors. Dushanbe has recognized the whole of Iran's strategic significance in its foreign policy. The territorial influence of present-day Iran stretches from the Near and Middle East to Azerbaijan, including the Caspian, as well as Central Asia. In the policy of a state that is largely tellurocratic, the tallassocratic factor also plays an important role. The latter is expressed in Iran's access to sea routes and their proficient use.

C o n c l u s i o n

Iran will continue to hold an important place in the balance of regional power. This is due to the intensification of trade and economic contacts between the Central Asian countries and Iran. Tehran is actively building up its own economic potential and claiming regional leadership. Iran's economic possibilities relating to these political mechanisms are capable of making the republic a strong center of attraction for the Central Asian states, including Tajikistan. In our opinion, the practice of isolationism carried out by Washington will not be capable in the future, if a pragmatic approach prevails, of compensating for the potential dividends gleaned by the Central Asian countries from their cooperation with Iran, given Iran's real geo-economic and geopolitical clout in the regional balance.¹²

The existing level of Tajik-Iranian relations makes it possible to draw a conclusion about their further development. In the next 5-10 years, they will inevitably and significantly strengthen, for which there are several reasons.

- First, Tehran has recommended itself as Dushanbe's reliable and stable partner, becoming, along with Moscow, a guarantor of peaceful consent in Tajikistan.
- Second, Iran and Tajikistan have created a more than solid contractual-legal base for regulating all the aspects of public life, whereby many of them are oriented toward the distant future.
- Third, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan are two of the four border states with a large Tajik diaspora, linguistically they belong to the Turkic-speaking world, and Tajikistan itself is the only Persian-speaking country in the region. Their common language will become another strong basis for enhancing bilateral relations.
- Fourth, the positions of several states are becoming much stronger in independent Tajikistan: the traditional leader—Russia, and the most powerful Asian nation—China, with which Tajikistan has a rather long land border, as well as India, which is gaining momentum. Iran has established strong diplomatic relations with all the above-mentioned countries. Moscow, Beijing, and Delhi, despite all the contradictions between them, are extremely complaisant about the Tajik-Iranian tandem.

¹² See: S.K. Kushkumbaev, *Tsentrāl'naia Azia na putiakh integratsii: geopolitika, etnichnost, bezopasnost*, Kazakhstan Publishers, Almaty, 2002, p. 136.

On the whole, it can be claimed that there is a sufficiently high level of bilateral contacts in economic, political, and humanitarian cooperation. This is confirmed by the positive and progressive development dynamics in cooperation in various joint projects being carried out in Tajikistan. This fact characterizes Iran as a reliable and stable partner.

THE POLITICAL PROCESS IN UZBEKISTAN TODAY: TRENDS AND PROSPECTS

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The recent political and economic trends in the Republic of Uzbekistan reveal that the regime seems prepared to change (at the level of political statements), on the one hand, and outline the limits of possible transformations within the system, on the other.

The two-house parliament of the new convocation, the 2005 events in Andijan, the new oppositional coalition, and the presidential election of 2007, which postponed the transfer of power and any decision on the transfer mechanism, were the key factors that fully revealed the regime's nature.

In December 2004-January 2005, the country elected a two-house Oliy Majlis according to the new rules. On the eve of the general election, the country's medium business community set up the Liberal-Democratic Party with the stated aim of developing a civil society. There is every reason to believe that it was intended to replace the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan as the "leading" party to demonstrate that the country has acquired a new parliamentary majority. It formed the largest faction in the Legislative Chamber, the PDPU came second; and other seats went to several other parties likewise set up by the regime. Representatives of the district, city, and regional kengashes, together with 16 presidential appointees, formed the Senate (the parliament's upper house): the senators included prime minister deputies, chairman of the Supreme Court, state advisor to the president, foreign minister, and others,¹ which means that the Senate was a mixture of the legislative, executive, and judicial power branches.

The opposition parties were deprived of the opportunity to nominate candidates, while the lower house was placed under the control of the upper (which operated on a non-permanent basis and consisted of deputies of the local councils and members of the executive structures), thus preventing the newly elected parliament from assuming an independent political status.

¹ See: Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the Appointment of Members of the Senate of Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan of 24 January, 2005, press service of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, available at [<http://www.press-service.uz/ru/gsection.scm?groupId=4347&contentId=5607>], 15 November, 2006.

Probably starting in 2004, the ruling elite and President Karimov spared no efforts to demonstrate that they have cut back their claims to domination in the public sphere and moved over to a pluralist structure. In January 2005, the president offered the slogan "From a strong state to a strong civil society," which implied several reforms: a more important role and more influence for the legislature, real independence of judicial power, decentralization of power, support of NGOs, liberalized criminal legislation, abolition of the death penalty, and more democratic media.² The president's speech, in which he proclaimed the above, can be described as a manifesto of democratic changes, something that even the most radical of democrats would hail. It was caused by the obvious need to strengthen, through formal renovation of the country's political system, the regime's legitimacy and to rebuff those who accused power of "authoritarian stagnation" and absence of political initiatives.

Erk and Birlik, two opposition political structures, took the speech as a signal to launch the registration procedure and run for parliament. It turned out, however, that political practice and the democratic manifesto were worlds apart. The registration applications were declined,³ while the two parties enfeebled by internal squabbles in the absence of leaders remained illegal with no chance of influencing the political process.

In 2005, another opposition coalition called Sunny Uzbekistan appeared on the political scene. Described as open to all democratic forces and working "toward a constructive dialog with the government rather than a revolution,"⁴ it chose the strategy of supporting popular spontaneous actions and expressing the interests of those involved in public protests with the aim of leading such actions some time in the future. The regime refused to enter into a dialog with the new structure: in 2006, its leaders were detained and sentenced to conditional terms in prison (seven years with a probation period of three years).⁵

P. Akhunov, one of the Birlik leaders, called on all the supporters of the democratic forces to embrace new tactics: the opposition should bury its hopes to become legalized and weaken the authoritarian regime. The opposition instead, he argued, should abandon its idea of a power struggle for the sake of constructive criticism of the government and gradual legalization that would allow it to gradually develop a civil society and fight mass poverty in Uzbekistan.

As soon as the last election campaign began, a certain Extraordinary Committee announced that the opposition Erk Party had removed itself from the territory of Uzbekistan.

This means that the democratic opposition no longer loomed on the horizon as a threat to the ruling regime.

The events of May 2005 in Andijan revealed that the regime was not ready for a dialog. The riot was suppressed at the cost of 100 to 800 lives (the deaths mainly caused by the actions of the authorities). It is impossible to assess the rioters' aims: information was limited to what the president chose to say. He informed his own country and the world that it was a terrorist-instigated riot which was guided by Islamic slogans; he blamed a certain Aqromiyya Society associated with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.⁶ According to other sources, this was a rally of impoverished and desperate people wishing to attract the attention of the powers that be to their situation. Experts of the Memorial

² See: *Nasha glavnaia tsel—demokratizatsia i obnovlenie obshchestva, reformirovanie i modernizatsia strany*, Report of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov at the joint sitting of the Legislative Chamber and the Senate of Oliy Majlis, press service of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, available at [<http://www.press-service.uz/ru/gsection.scm?groupId=4392&contentId=5689>], 15 December, 2006.

³ See: *Sredniaia Azia: Andizhanskiy stseneriy?* Collection compiled by M.M. Meyer, Moscow, 2005, p. 185.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

⁵ See: *Ibid.*, pp. 112-114; 162-163; Information Agency Regnum, available at [<http://www.regnum.ru/news/645731.html>].

⁶ See: Briefing for foreign and Uzbek journalists and members of the diplomatic corps in connection with the events in the city of Andijan, press service of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, available at [<http://www.press-service.uz/ru/gsection.scm?groupId=4392&contentId=17282>].

Human Rights Center described “the grave economic situation and complete suppression of free thinking and civil freedoms that left the nation without legal forms of protest” as the main cause of the tragic events in Andijan.⁷

In any case, the event outlined the limits of the permissible and demonstrated the ruling elite’s determination to use force, despite what they call liberalization, and in total disregard for the world community’s harshly negative response. On the one hand, the absence of internal opposition and the president’s complete control of the power-related structures made these developments possible; on the other, during the conflict, Russia probably assured the Uzbek president that it would support him. The Andijan events cut short relations between Uzbekistan and the United States; the Americans withdrew their military base from the country, while Russia became Uzbekistan’s main strategic partner, offering no critical opinions about the ruling regime.

In 2006-2007, fresh signs of possible political shifts toward polycentrism reappeared, probably because the “successor” issue had moved to the fore, while the country’s international isolation slackened.

The Constitutional Law on the Greater Role of Political Parties in the Renovation and Further Democratization of State Administration and Modernization of the Country adopted in 2007 and enacted in 2008 allowed political parties to take part in forming the Cabinet. The Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis needed a majority (made up of one or several parties), all the other factions becoming the parliamentary opposition with the right of legislative initiative (under the new law they acquired the right to put forward an alternative version of the law timed to coincide with the report of the Chamber’s corresponding committee on the same issue); the right to include their special opinions on the issues under discussion in verbatim reports of the chamber’s plenary sitting; and the right to the guaranteed participation of their members in conciliatory commissions on any bill declined by the Senate.

Under the new law the president nominates the candidate for prime minister after consultations with all the factions formed by political parties in the Legislative Chamber and deputies nominated by citizen groups. If both houses decline the candidate three times running, the president appoints an acting prime minister and disbands the parliament or one of the houses. The factions of political parties have the right to initiate resignation of the prime minister; the prime minister may be removed from his post (in this case the government should resign) if the president initiates his removal and the initiative is supported by two-thirds of the total number of deputies of both chambers. The same applies to the regional khokims (heads) and the khokim of the capital: the president nominates candidates after preliminary consultations with each of the party groups represented in the local kengashes and disbands those kengashes which fail to approve the candidate after three attempts. The kengashes, on the other hand, have no right to remove the khokims—they can merely initiate their resignation by presenting well-argued requests to the president.⁸

When speaking at the ceremony dedicated to the 14th anniversary of the Constitution of Uzbekistan, the president pointed out: “Time has come to create basic legislation that will increase the parties’ efficiency and transform them into a decisive force behind the changes in our society.” The law, continued President Karimov, “has created new possibilities for the political parties to enjoy wider rights and have a stronger impact on the legislative and executive structures and the country’s domestic and foreign policies... This law has promoted the accountability of the central and local officials and, if need be, the power structures to the public.”⁹

⁷ See: *Zaiavlenie Pravoazashchitnogo tsentra Memorial o sobytiakh 12-14 maia v Andizhane*, Memorial: International Historical, Educational, Human Rights and Charity Society, available at [<http://www.memo.ru/daytoday/5andijan1.htm>].

⁸ See: [<http://www.press-service.uz/ru/gsection.scm?groupId=4392&contentId=25811>], 20 December, 2006.

⁹ [<http://www.press-service.uz/ru/gsection.scm?groupId=4392&contentId=25811>], 23 December, 2006.

This means that the law has widened the rights of the factions formed by political parties, on the one hand, and widened the president's powers, on the other: he acquired the right to disband not only the parliament, but also the local kengashes and preserved the right to appoint and remove the prime minister. This law pursued several other aims, besides those enumerated above: it was deemed necessary to create a formal opposition out of one or several parties. In the wake of the 2005 parliamentary elections won by the Liberal-Democratic Party, the local political landscape acquired strange forms: the People's Democratic Party, which won the previous election, moved over to the opposition, while insisting on its wholehearted support of the president and his course. The law turned the "opposition" into an official opposition to the government, the head of which is nominated and/or approved by the party/parties that won the election. The ruling elite is out to make the opposition it created itself a legal entity: the parties are divided into "ruling" and "opposition" parties, since it proved impossible to achieve such differentiation in any other way in a country where the five registered parties support the president and do not strive for power.

In December 2007, the country went to the polls to elect the president. Under the Constitution, President Karimov could not run for the post (he had exhausted his terms in power), however, he was nominated by the Liberal-Democratic Party, which holds the majority of seats in the Legislative Chamber, and registered with the Central Election Commission. Significantly, no official legal comments followed and no legal interpretations of the kind offered at previous elections and referendums on President Karimov's extended term in office were suggested. In private, members of the Liberal-Democratic Party explained that under the amended Constitution, which extended the term of presidency to seven years, the president was serving his first seven-year term and could run for a second term. This supplied the post-Soviet expanse with a precedence: before that none of the heads of state had violated the Constitution without any justification. They either let the Constitutional Court interpret the Fundamental Law (this happened in Kyrgyzstan and Belarus) or resorted to amendments that introduced life presidency (Turkmenistan) or officially permitted the first president to be reelected for an unlimited number of terms (Kazakhstan). In other words, Uzbekistan was trying out an absolutely new method; the president either deemed it unnecessary to amend the Constitution, or expected to carry out the "successor" alternative; when he abandoned it for whatever reason it was too late to change anything.

The December elections differed from the previous ones: first, more than two candidates ran for the highest office; second, three of the four registered candidates were nominated by political parties in line with what the president said about the greater role of parties in the political process. The People's Democratic Party nominated the leader of its faction in the Legislative Chamber, Asliddin Rustamov (not the party leader, Latif Guliamov); the Social-Democratic Adolat Party nominated its head, deputy speaker of the Legislative Chamber Ms. Dilrom Tashmukhamedova; Akmal Saidov, another deputy of the Legislative Chamber, head of the Committee for Democratic Institutions, NGOs and Self-Government Bodies, and director of the National Human Rights Center, was nominated by a citizen group. Several other non-party people also wanted to run for the highest post: economist D. Shosolimov, A. Tojiboy ugli, employed in food processing, A. Shaymardanov, an ecologist, V. Galkin, a specialist in electric power supply, A. Aliev, who works in the humanities field, and others. The specific features of the Uzbek election laws did not give seven independent candidates enough time to present their documents. To be registered, they had to collect about 800 thousand signatures (5 percent of the total number of voters), an impossibly large number. Only those supported by the state stood a chance of running for president—all the others were weeded out. The candidates of two registered parties (Milliy tiklanish and Fidokorlar) were also left out in the cold: they failed to gather the required number of signatures.

Those who ran for the presidency together with Karimov cannot be described as opposition candidates, since all the parties support the president. The fact that the Samarkand clan and the Tashkent

clan nominated two candidates each, Karimov and Rustamov from the former and Tashmukhamedova and Saidov from the latter, looks significant. The same can be said of the fact that the third key clan (Ferghana) preferred to stay away from the elections because its members probably mistrusted the president. This time the Liberal-Democratic Party, the country's youngest, moved ahead to replace the People's Democratic Party as the ruling party (by ruling we mean the party that won the parliamentary majority): entrusted with the task of nominating the incumbent as a presidential candidate, it became Uzbekistan's main political party. This time the list of candidates looked impressive enough: candidates from the large parties; a self-appointed candidate, a woman (for the first time in Uzbekistan), and an "official" human rights activist. The 2007 election was much more alternative and representative than the election in 2000.

The results were predictable. According to official figures supplied by the Central Election Commission,¹⁰ 14,765,444 (90.6 percent) out of a total of 16,297,400 registered voters came to the polls. Islam Karimov received 88.1 percent; A. Rustamov, 3.17 percent; D. Tashmukhamedova, 2.94 percent, and A. Saidov, 2.85 percent. President Karimov received nearly 4 percent less than at the previous election in 2000. The other candidates gained fewer votes than the number of signatures they collected. Formally, the election was more competitive than before, but the president's rivals proved too timid. Their campaigns were subdued, therefore most of the voters remained ignorant of their names, let alone their programs. The 90.6 percent turnout cannot but arouse doubts: even according to the official data, about 2 million citizens of Uzbekistan (12 percent of the voters) live and work abroad (the actual number is even higher).

The election assessments in Uzbekistan were also easily predictable: President Karimov pointed out: "The election of the president of Uzbekistan on a multi-party and alternative basis, in which a candidate nominated by a citizen group also ran shows that the country has become a democratic state ruled by law with an election system that completely corresponds to international regulations." The head of the Central Election Commission said: "The election was conducted according to national election legislation which corresponds to all the international regulations and standards." S. Lebedev, head of the CIS Executive Committee, declared: "The CIS observer mission describes the presidential election as free, open, and transparent." The OSCE observer mission stated: "The election was conducted in a highly controlled political situation and left no breathing space for true opposition."¹¹

Thus, President Karimov extended his term in office until 2014 in disregard of the Constitution, which did not remove the successor issue from the agenda—it merely postponed it. Transfer of power is the most painful issue for all authoritarian regimes: the leader cannot merely step aside, since his further security is not guaranteed. His position is especially precarious if power is mixed with property: those around him who control economic resources want to perpetrate their grip on power and wealth, while those who lost much under the present leader are burning for revenge. For obvious reasons, the ruling elite want to remain in power for an indefinitely long period. Before the presidential election in Uzbekistan, Central Asia knew of two versions of power change: either by force (Kyrgyzstan) or by death (Turkmenistan). It remains to be seen whether the Uzbek novelty becomes the third.

In the last three years Tashkent has obviously turned away from Washington to stay closer to Moscow: it left GUUAM (a political-economic organization of Georgia, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova), joined the EurAsEC, and restored its membership in the CSTO, in which Russia plays first fiddle. In the EurAsEC, Uzbekistan received 15 percent of votes (on a par with Kazakhstan and Belarus); Russia preserved its 40 percent, while Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan received 7.5 percent each.

¹⁰ [Uza.uz <http://uza.uz/ru/politics/1785/>], 30 December, 2007.

¹¹ *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 25 December, 2007.

By joining the EurAsEC, Uzbekistan gained access to the markets of the three leaders (Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan). The EurAsEC also means visa-free trips for the members' citizens, Uzbek diplomats accepted in all the EurAsEC countries, and coordinated contacts with the WTO, OSCE, and other international organizations. On the other hand, Uzbekistan's membership considerably widened the organization's position and the common market.

In March 2006, the parliament of Uzbekistan ratified the Treaty on Allied Relations between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Russian Federation, which marked another important step toward the country's foreign policy orientation toward Russia. The President of Uzbekistan described the treaty as unprecedented.¹² "The treaty is an important landmark on the road toward regional stability, security, and threat prevention," said he at a press conference. Art 3 of the Treaty says: "In the event of a situation that one of the sides regards as a threat to peace or infringement on its security interests, as well as a threat of aggression against one of the sides, they shall immediately enact a mechanism of consultations to coordinate their positions and practical measures designed to settle the situation." The Treaty is also related to closer cooperation on the international scene and contacts in the trade and economic, scientific-technical, social, cultural, and other spheres. The local newspapers paid particular attention to the fact that "an objective and impartial assessment of the terrorist acts carried out in Andijan last year shows that Russia has assumed a clear position and shares its political approaches with Uzbekistan."

The anti-terrorist military exercises of the Uzbek and Russian military, described as a purely anti-terrorist measure, were a great success. Sergey Ivanov, first deputy prime minister of Russia, declared that the heads of both countries demonstrated political will to develop military cooperation in the practical sphere. The country's strategic orientation toward Russia worsened Uzbekistan's relations with the United States still further. The American leaders stepped up their criticism of President Karimov's human rights record and the Andijan events and even recommended introducing sanctions against the republic. To restore its international image and acquire a reliable ally in its confrontation with the West and the domestic opposition, the ruling elite of Uzbekistan turned to those international organizations in which Russia played the leading role. This means that Uzbekistan's membership in the Russia-dominated economic and military alliances was due to political rather than other considerations, which made Russia (along with China) a foreign guarantor of the republic's regime headed by President Karimov.

The political situation in Uzbekistan may be regarded as stable. The following can be described as the most important political events: the recent presidential election that allowed the ruling elite and the president to remain in power, as well as demonstrate the regime's "liberalization" in the form of the laws on the greater role of political parties, abolition of the death penalty, and milder criminal legislation. These superficial measures did not, and could not, change the country's political system; this was impossible in the context of the unconstitutional extension of Islam Karimov's power. The division of the political parties (all of which were accountable to the political elite) into ruling and oppositional did nothing to create a competitive party system, even though the party system per se was a great step forward and away from the clan system; the latter, however, remains dominant.

So far the regime is not threatened either outside or inside the country; the opposition parties have finally recognized that victory is impossible; the leaders of the newly established Sunny Uzbekistan Party are in prison, some of the leaders of the Islamic opposition were exterminated, while the mass media (electronic media included) and NGOs are striving for survival under fierce pressure. Fully aware of the futility of the sanctions, the country's Western partners are prepared to lift them in exchange for certain superficial concessions. None of the Western leaders came forward

¹² In July 2006, the sides exchanged ratification instruments, which meant that the Treaty was enacted.

with an official statement about the illegitimate nature of President Karimov's new term in power. It seems that both inside and outside the country, he appears to be the only leader capable of preserving stability in the republic. Indeed, social discontent caused by climbing prices for all foodstuffs and food shortages can be described as the only threat to the country's stability either today or in the future. In 2007, public discontent developed into a series of rallies; it may remain limited to local actions similar to what took place in Andijan, especially if Russia, Uzbekistan's strategic partner, helps to defuse the crisis.

The transfer of power issue will loom high throughout Karimov's new presidential term. I have written above that Uzbekistan may come up with a new method of power transfer that its neighbors (with the exception of Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan) might be willing to borrow.

At the turn of the 2000s, the following were described as the economic priorities: the state's trimmed presence in the economy, stronger guarantees against illegal interference of the controlling structures in economic activities, liberalization of the currency market, and structural readjustment of the economic sphere based on private initiative and medium and small businesses.¹³ Land lease was moved to the fore in agriculture. Under President Karimov's decree, farmers could lease landed plots for a period of up to fifty years with the right to inherit them during the lease.¹⁴ Farmers retained the right they enjoyed under Soviet power to use the land as a lifelong possession that could be bequeathed. The state remained in the agrarian sector: those who rent land have to sign agreements with the organizations that buy their products, the prices for which are determined by the state, while the district and regional power structures interfere in the election and removal of the heads of cooperatives.¹⁵ The old practice of extensive agriculture is responsible for the continued growth of agricultural output, as well as for degradation of the land fund. The sector that produced a quarter of the republic's GDP has to survive on 5 percent of the investments,¹⁶ which speaks of obvious disproportions in the country's economic development.

In 2003, the government passed a decision on convertibility of the local currency (the sum), which in practice cut down the money supply and perpetrated unofficial limitations on currency operations. In a situation in which economic entities have no free access to the foreign currency market, the exchange rate, which is unrelated to supply and demand, widens the gap between the National Bank's and the black market's exchange rates. In 2002, the state tightened protectionist measures by raising import tariffs and excise duties, banning products imported by third persons, introducing certification, demanding that imported products have international certificates, and tightening up on product labeling.¹⁷ This sent the prices for imported products up and affected the exchange rate on the black market.

In recent years, the budget deficit dropped considerably together with the inflation rate, but the financial market remains undeveloped. The banking sector, together with the fairly stagnant financial and inter-bank markets, forms the core of the financial market in a country where the securities market is hardly developed, while agriculture is short of money.¹⁸

According to official sources the country's GDP grows by 3-4 percent every year, while the non-public sector is responsible for 73.3 percent of the GDP.

¹³ See: N. Sirajiddinov, "Ekonomicheskie reformy v Uzbekistane," in: *Tsentrāl'naia Azia: Sobstvenny vzgliag*, team of editors K. Safarova, K. Ridel, ed. by R. Krumm, Bishkek, 2006, p. 426.

¹⁴ See: Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the Main Trends of Deepening Economic Reforms in Agriculture of 6 May, 2003, available at [<http://2004.press-service.uz/rus/documents/uk05062003.htm>].

¹⁵ See: N.A. Dobronravin, "Uzbekistan: Tsentr Tsentrāl'noy Azii—vse pod kontrolem," in: *SSSR posle raspada*, ed. by O.L. Margania, St. Petersburg, 2007, p. 397.

¹⁶ See: L. Sultanova, A. Gaisina, "Republic of Uzbekistan: Economy," in: *Central Eurasia 2006. Analytical Annual*, CA&CC Press®, Sweden, 2007, p. 298.

¹⁷ See: N. Sirajiddinov, op. cit., p. 428.

¹⁸ See: Ibid., p. 429.

Poverty, a shortage of arable land, and unemployment are the worst economic plagues. A large share of the able-bodied population still has to work in Russia and other CIS countries to be able to support their families at the lowest of levels.

The previously united Central Asian economic expanse was disrupted when the Soviet Union fell apart; the tension on the border with Turkmenistan separated the Khorezm Region and Karakalpakstan from the rest of the country: the railway that connects them with the republic's main regions goes across Turkmenistan. In 2002, the railway between Navoi and Nukus (through Uchkuduk) and the Ghazli-Nukus gas pipeline were completed, thus ending the dependence of the Khorezm Region and Karakalpakstan on Turkmenistan.¹⁹

Russia has not only preserved, but has also increased its influence on the country's economy; Uzbekistan is actively developing its cooperation with Gazprom and the leading Russian operators of mobile communication networks, which have already captured almost the entire market. With 21.7 percent of the trade turnover, Russia is Uzbekistan's main trade partner. The national holding, Uzbekneftegaz, and LUKoil and Gazprom of Russia signed several documents in the fuel and energy complex that envisaged investments of \$2.5 billion into the republic's oil and gas sector.

Uzbekistan has not yet acquired a market economy—it remains devoted to the Soviet style of economic management, which means that local businesses have to settle their problems with state structures. The problems that interfere with the development of a market economy are still acutely felt: the taxes are almost as high as the taxes in the countries with developed market economies; business remains dependent on the state; in the absence of independent courts, it is next to impossible to defend property rights; the road to the market remains blocked by numerous administrative barriers in the form of licensing, certification, registration, etc.; the state has not loosened its grip on the economy, state structures still interfere in private economic entities; the state has the final say in price formation and distribution of resources, etc. Mass unemployment and poverty remain the two most outstanding issues; the situation is steadily worsening under the impact of the high natural population growth (from 17 to 25 million in the last ten years). These problems are, in turn, giving rise to ever-increasing drug trafficking, drug production and drug pushing, huge numbers of labor emigrants, and an upsurge in organized crime. The country's leaders seem to be convinced that the state should remain prominent not only in politics, but also in the economy, that it should be able to control all forms of economic activities and sanction the emergence and activities of other entities. Economic and political entities outside state control are seen as undesirable and even dangerous. It seems that these trends will continue to prevail in the near future.

The regime is unlikely to transform itself any time soon; the question is whether the regime will change under the successor? Today, there are no political actors capable of changing the regime and mobilizing the masses: even at the height of the opposition activities, the nation remained fairly passive. If the opposition leaders return to Uzbekistan and if their parties are legalized, they will need much time to build up resources and draw the masses to their side. This means that the secular opposition presents no real threat to the regime, while the anti-terrorist structures and the CSTO collective security forces (particularly Russian) will oppose the terrorist acts of the Islamic extremists. The same forces can be used to suppress spontaneous social riots (similar to those in Andijan) by presenting them as Islamist actions. The ruling regime is facing another potential danger: a power struggle among the clans that might flare up if the regime weakens should the president fall ill or die. It is for the head of state alone to protect the country by developing a mechanism of power transfer while he is still in power. It seems that the president and his closest circle are working on this.

The limited spheres that remain beyond the control of the dominating actor can be described as a source of internal and external danger. I have in mind illegal opposition structures that dissem-

¹⁹ See: N.A. Dobronravin, *op. cit.*, p. 401.

inate literature published abroad and several human rights organizations funded from abroad. More than that, the absence of the Iron Curtain means that scores of young Uzbeks travel abroad to Europe and America to study, and return home armed with different ideas; there is no longer total censorship of the media and the Internet in particular; and there is an intelligentsia that at the best of times remains opposition-minded (this was what started anti-Soviet actions in the past). The spheres that remain outside the government's control are very narrow, their social basis is limited, therefore they can do nothing drastic to weaken the regime. This means that we should expect no radical changes in the near future.

TURKMENISTAN: CURRENT POLITICS

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Late in December 2006, President Niyazov, who had been in power for over twenty years, suddenly died. This death defrosted the political process driven to a standstill by the advent of the Golden Age in Turkmenistan and kindled hopes of positive developments both inside and outside the country: indeed, death was the only thing that could end Turkmenbashi's unlimited rule. During his lifetime the expert and political communities agreed that under Niyazov the country was well protected against a Color Revolution (which cannot be said about its CIS neighbors). No Color Revolution shook the republic after his death either.

Today Turkmenistan is sending positive signals to the world: opera and circus have returned to the country of barchans and camels; the country's leaders restored the nation's favorite holidays, International Women's Day (8 March) and Victory Day (9 May), and annulled the former president's birthday (19 February) as a national holiday. These were the initiatives of the new president, Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov, who in February 2008 marked his first anniversary in power. This short period has brought numerous changes for the better: the local people agree that life has become easier, there are fewer limitations, and much more freedom. There is talk about a "thaw" after the long period of Niyazov's authoritarian and cruel rule. It is no surprise that the term and positive changes bring to mind the Soviet past associated with Nikita Khrushchev: the image of the late president was desacralized, people no longer pledge loyalty to the president every day (this ritual is reserved for official events), the nation is no longer obliged to study *Rukhnama*, the moral code of the Turkmens. Will the trend continue? Which direction will be chosen for the political process?

While the president was still alive, political scientists and the ordinary people asked themselves what would happen to the country after his death. Having become an authoritarian leader with no

contenders or opposition on the political field, he (very much like Stalin before him) gave little thought to a potential successor and to his country's life after his death. Despite the unending stream of wishes of "many happy returns of the day" and good health coupled with the lavishly paid services of the best Western cardiologists, his heart failed. This death put an end to a cruel and tragic period in the country's history, which the court historians chose to call the Golden Age of Turkmenbashi.

The sudden death of any autocratic head of state is fraught with serious political troubles and risks. This is especially true of the East. The outwardly closely knit Turkmenian society is torn apart by clan, regional, and tribal contradictions, however, by the time President Niyazov died the political scene had been purged to the extent that no more or less plausible candidate could be seen. The late leader refused to keep his own son by his side; he did not trust him and never thought of him as a potential successor. Some time will elapse before we know why Berdymukhammedov was selected as the future president, but his steps as acting and then elected president preserved stability and excluded excesses. In the very first days after President Niyazov's death, Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov, who headed the funeral commission, won the nation's sympathy by the way he conducted the burial rituals. The ceremony was attended by the heads of state of many countries. The successor's active stance and what he did to forestall unwelcome developments demonstrated that, like the late president, he was no mean tactician—a talent indispensable for any political leader. The country's political system, which had been tuned to meet the idiosyncrasies of the charismatic leader, abounded in traps, while further developments showed that the new president had skillfully avoided them all.

Art 61 of the country's Constitution proved to be the first barrier: "If the President, for some reason, is not capable of meeting his or her obligations ... his or her powers shall be transferred to the Chairman of the Parliament" and further: "A person meeting the obligations of the President may not be a candidate in the presidential election." Berdymukhammedov, who chose to ignore the "constitutional trifles," proved equal to his predecessor; he promptly adjusted, to the accompaniment of general approbation, the constitution to the circumstances. Criminal charges against the speaker of the Mejlis neutralized him and swept him off the stage; all of a sudden the Security Council became the country's main structure—this infringed on the powers of the People's Council (Khalk Maslakhaty) which the late president had designed as the executive, legislative, and consultative structure rolled into one and with the only function of adding legitimacy to his personal decisions. Berdymukhammedov avoided this trap by timing the election of the new chairman of the People's Council (one of the country's key posts) to coincide with its next convocation. He was obviously following in Turkmenbashi's footsteps by concentrating power in his hands and winning the election.

As distinct from the past, the nation was offered several candidates. Those who knew enough of the real situation were aware that there was no real choice, however, compared with the recent past, this was a step forward. Under Niyazov, the election campaign was limited to unanimous approbation of the only candidate, the president himself; during the first post-Niyazov campaign, people were given the opportunity to meet the candidates and read about them and their programs in the newspapers. This meant that the main candidate and his closest circle were absolutely sure of victory. The lightning campaign would have been impossible without the support (deliberate or otherwise) of the presidential security service headed by influential General Rejepov. As was expected, Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov declined the role of puppet of the omnipotent special services—he was moving ahead. On 30 March, 2007, he was elected Chairman of the Khalk Maslakhaty, which allowed him to confirm his position as the nation's leader. Had the post gone to a different person, especially one appointed by the paramilitary ministries, the situation might have been different. In this case, the elected chairman would have won the central position: much would have depended on his closeness to the president and on the administrative resource he could have gathered. In fact, the election became a watershed between the new president, who while pledging loyalty to the old regime hinted that he was prepared to slacken its grip on the country, and the conservative wing of the Niyazov guard. Later it

became obvious that he had negotiated this obstacle too. The 20th congress of Khalk Maslakhaty disappointed those who expected another 20th Congress of the C.P.S.U. and denunciation of the Niyazov personality cult. Two weeks later, however, the world learned that General Rejepov and his closest supporters had been arrested and sentenced to long terms in prison. This launched a wide-scale campaign that deprived many officials of the top posts they filled under Niyazov. On the other hand, General Rejepov was considered the main guarantor of the old regime; with him out of the way the new president could go on with his policies. He has obviously come to stay: the self-control and presence of mind of the former doctor are the best evidence of this.

To what extent is the new president prepared to rely on his predecessor's "rich" heritage? In the post-Soviet era, Saparmurad Niyazov, who blended the Soviet political school with the Oriental traditions of perfidy and authoritarianism, soon developed from an obedient and slavish Moscow puppet into a political monster. He mastered the rich arsenal of skirmishes behind the scene and even surpassed his Soviet teachers. Power was his only purpose in life. Many of his initiatives were absurd and looked hilarious to outside observers—inside the country few were bold enough to oppose the tyrant. The wisest of his retinue preferred to join in the chorus of bootlickers, nearly all of whom were doomed to disfavor. The very fact that Berdymukhammedov spent ten years at the top (in 1997 he was appointed health minister) and survived the periodical cruel purges shows that the president had a soft spot for him. President Niyazov probably looked at him as a reliable official and a person without power ambitions. He was suspicious and grew even more apprehensive toward the end of his life: there were too many highly placed officials who hated him enough to remove him. Thanks to his perspicacity as a doctor and his no mean political talents, Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov feigned absolute loyalty and obedience; this explains why the head of the special services, in turn, expected to acquire an obedient and tractable president.

As soon as he entrenches himself at the very top, Berdymukhammedov will have to chart his course and its ideological underpinnings with due account of the political legacy of the previous period. The personality cult has not yet been condemned—this is unlikely to happen at all. Khrushchev's "thaw" and Gorbachev's perestroika, which brought down the "idols of the epoch," ended in disasters for those who initiated them. Even though Berdymukhammedov has first-hand experience with the negative traits of the "father of all Turkmens," he is still keeping his image alive. Golden profiles of the late president no longer appear on TV screens, there are fewer portraits in the streets, his birthday is no longer a national holiday, and very soon his portraits will disappear from the banknotes, while the main attribute of the Niyazov era—*Rukhnama*, the nation's cultural and moral code—has already left the officials' desktops. This is a natural process; over time his image will develop into the image of a "kind grandfather" and will remain a historical and architectural landmark; the unlimited personality cult will develop into a barely discernible cult (akin to the cult of Ataturk in Turkey) to supply new leaders with the chance to refer to the great behests of the founder of the Turkmenian state.

There is a more disquieting trend: at the inauguration ceremony the new president responded to the speech of First Secretary of the Political Council of the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan Onjuk Musaev, who peppered it with "great president," with the comment that the epithet "great" was premature and that he would have to work hard to earn it. Several months later, however, his portraits appeared more frequently in the press, he is widely quoted on TV; new coins with his portrait were minted, while his books are recommended to the nation.

Having avoided the traps on the road to absolute power, he reached the most dangerous of them. By this I mean the system of economic management and the execution of all sorts of decisions. The first moves suggest that he is unlikely to abandon the old practices because, first, any transformation might destabilize the country's social and political situation; and second, is there any real need to invent a new system and share power? It is much easier to whitewash the façade and add "democratic hues"

to it. On the other hand, a system tailored to a charismatic leader can hardly function in the context of the systemic crisis of the economy, education, and social policy. Based on continuous rotation (achieved by the use of force) of the top and medium managers, it cannot function long.

The reforms that the new president has already announced are natural and predictable. Since the mid-1990s, Turkmenian society had been stagnating; by the turn of the 21st century its degradation had become obvious—this called for changes, if not radical, then superficial. It looks as if the new young and active president would like to get rid of the unattractive image of the country ruled by a petty tyrant. A U-turn, on the other hand, may cause havoc; even the best and most professional ministers might prove unequal to the task of extricating national industry, agriculture, education, health services, culture and science out of the quagmire. Professional managers are few and far between; corruption has spread everywhere, which means that the new leaders might find it hard to push through even the best of decisions.

Aware of the precipice, the new president launched reforms of the education system and health services, which had suffered a lot under Niyazov. In full accordance with his election promises, he restored ten-year school education; the time spent on *Rukhnama* was allocated to more important subjects: physics, mathematics, and foreign languages. Graduates will receive certificates accepted in Russia and the other CIS countries. He also restored five-year higher education and doubled the number of young men sent to study abroad on state grants. Some of the Russian higher educational institutions agreed to open their branches in Turkmenistan. In June 2007, President Berdymukhammedov restored the Academy of Sciences closed by his predecessor at the very beginning of his presidency. The consistent educational reforms show that the new president knows the future of the country depends on the ability of the younger generation to adapt to the contemporary world.

These are not systemic reforms—they look more like fire extinguishing. The old educational policy, degradation of the educational system and the social policy, its *Rukhnama-zation*, and isolation from the rest of the world and its cultural expanse are ruinous. If the process continues, the republic will lose not only managers, doctors, and teachers, but also skilled technology specialists.

Being a doctor, President Berdymukhammedov never hesitated: he annulled the “novelties” of his predecessor, who had closed hospitals and outpatient clinics in outlying districts and the countryside to force people to travel to the capital for medical assistance. After reopening them in the countryside, the authorities discovered that there were not enough medics to staff them. By another decree, President Berdymukhammedov restored pensions and social benefits. Under President Niyazov, 100 thousand to 300 thousand senior citizens had either been deprived of their pensions or had had their pensions cut. On 1 July, 2007, the Social Security Code initiated by the new president and adopted a month after his inauguration which ensured old-age pensions for all citizens came into force. The president preserved subsidized gas, water, and power supplies, as well as salt and flour; very soon all citizens will be entitled to a certain amount of free gasoline.

The new people in power should tread cautiously in order to overcome legal mayhem. The human rights issue might become another headache for the new president. In the past, human rights violations and political prisoners made the country a target of scathing criticism by all sorts of human rights organizations. On 24 September, 2007, speaking in front of students and lecturers of Columbia University in New York, he obviously preferred to leave this painful issue alone: “I am a young president and I am mainly concerned with my country’s economy.”

He used his newly acquired power as president to release from prison and return from exile some of the officials (repressed by President Niyazov for failures and shortcomings) with whom he used to work and whom he trusted. On the eve of the Night of Clemency, the new president released 10 thousand prisoners, most of whom were convicted as criminal offenders. Lauded as another bold step by the new president, this was nothing more than continuing Niyazov’s tradition of mass amnesties. President Berdymukhammedov, however, suggested that in future amnesty be practiced throughout the

entire year by the permanent State Commission. The decree said in part: "The Commission is set up to develop democratic foundations in the state and public life of Turkmenistan, to protect human rights and freedoms proclaimed by the Constitution of Turkmenistan, and to improve the way citizens' addresses related to the functioning of the law-enforcement structures are investigated."

This was said because first, the new government wanted to flaunt its democratic intentions; second, it acquired another instrument of control over the law-enforcement bodies; and third, this would allow the president to shift the blame for the past repressions onto former heads of the Ministry of the Interior and the National Security Council. By that time, the new president had pardoned only 14 people of those accused of the attempted assassination of President Niyazov in November 2002. All of them, including the country's former mufti Nasrullah ibn Ibadullah, were only indirectly related to the murder case. The regime, which was lauded for this important step toward greater democratization, still keeps hundreds of political prisoners behind bars; nothing is known about the fate of former foreign minister Boris Shikhmuradov. President Berdymukhammedov is obviously not ready to revise the system: indeed, when released from prison, these people might prove strong rivals of the new (and in many ways old) regime. The new government might decide to uphold its democratic image by exchanging the freedom of all political prisoners for their loyalty to the regime. Later political émigrés might receive a similar proposition. So far, the opposition leaders in exile have failed to consolidate and formulate a joint position. Many of them, including Boris Shikhmuradov, were top bureaucrats: fear for their lives, rather than strong ideological convictions, drove them out of the country. With the Niyazov regime off the scene, they might at least find a common language with the new rulers; the new rulers might offer them government posts to remedy the deficit of skilled managers and administrators.

The president's meeting with the local intelligentsia said a lot about the future of the country's democratization and the "thaw." The president spared no words to criticize the press, which, as he put it, "fails to adequately reflect the stability reigning in all spheres of the country's state and public life, including the performance of the bodies of state power and administration." Foreign information agencies reported that the president lashed at the journalist corps for its inadequate professional level: out of the vast "eighty-thousand-word vocabulary of the Turkmenian language," they use "the same 200 words." Under President Niyazov, Turkmenistan was a tightly controlled society in which official channels were limited to propaganda of Turkmenbashi and his genius; the local media concentrated on lauding the president's ruinously expensive projects, his regime, and himself. "Foreign" cultural influence in the form of literature, opera, and ballet brought in by the Soviet regime was wiped away. The void was filled with *Rukhnama*, a collection of Niyazov's philosophical deliberations. Translated into many foreign languages, it was the central part of the educational process in kindergartens, secondary schools, and higher educational establishments; every year state officials had to confirm their knowledge of the president's creation.

The local journalists have found it hard to change their ways—it is not easy to abandon the stereotypes created by many years of fear and pressure. The new president insists on fresh approaches, while journalists and editors remain under the spell of old habits, they are not yet ready to change their ways at their own risk. They have to look before they leap so as not to endanger their jobs or even freedom. Indeed, in a country where all the positive developments are ascribed to one person and where the nation's leader insists on his personal responsibility for everything in the country, even the most timid of criticisms can be interpreted as an encroachment on state order. As long as the government goes on with its deliberations about "caring for the people," rather than showing the practical side of its intentions, the Turkmenian media will remain devoted to their 200 words. So far the new government has only partly lifted the ban on freedom of movement inside the country, opened subscription to some foreign publications, and criticized the Turkmenian media. This can be taken as a resolution to improve the situation in this sphere, but nothing has been done so far to ease control over the media.

The new president continues to appoint the editors of all the newspapers; there are special government commissions for the protection of state secrets that censor all materials before publication.

At the same time, there is information that the president allocated considerable sums for modernizing the technical basis of radio and television, and a decision has been made to build a TV tower 211 meters high in the Kopet-dag foothills (in the outskirts of Ashghabad). It is much easier to allocate some of the gas money (there is more of it because of the higher export prices) than to make TV and radio programs more interesting; self-control and fear still prevail. Real changes in this sphere will come together with real liberalization (even if limited) of public life when the security services ease their control. Over time, liberalization might clash with the very foundations of the president's personal power; we can expect, on the other hand, that new government is prepared to offer journalists a "new reality."

The time has come for the new elite to choose the right road leading to a viable Turkmen state. When talking to the intelligentsia, President Berdymukhammedov revealed some of his ideas for the first time. He spoke about a secular state ruled by law and about a market economy. "I am convinced," said he, "that protecting human rights and freedoms, ensuring the equality of all citizens before the law and their absolute abidance by the law, and building a highly developed society are my main goals." He also spoke about a "strong democratic state that will serve the people." The new leader pushed aside the "immortal" behests of the old leader about the country's special road to replace it with a new ideology of "the state for the people" guided by human values. He said that the new ideology of Turkmen society was about spiritual renovation, new national awareness rooted in "the nation's creative upsurge," and a new generation with different and better ideals. He voiced his conviction that this doctrine would help create a secular state ruled by law and a market economy.

Most of the expert community interpreted this as a final divorce from the old eccentric ideology of *Rukhnama* and the personality cult. This is not completely correct: as a man of a somewhat different generation, the new president is fully aware of the absurdity of Niyazov's *Rukhnama* and the surrogate nature of its spirituality. Forced to maintain the illusion of continuity, Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov is looking for an ideological platform of his own. Over time, *Rukhnama* will be forgotten—he will not need the book written by his predecessor to develop his own ideology and, probably later, his own personality cult. It will be probably replaced with a different book written by the president or by one of his cronies. When talking to the intelligentsia, the president called on cultural figures to promote the new ideology. He has forgotten or probably merely ignored the fact that President Niyazov destroyed the Turkmen culture. The reopened circus and opera can do nothing: those who created culture and developed it either emigrated or moved to different spheres.

The media showed no mean enthusiasm when describing the "new ideological doctrine" as the Great Renaissance. Articles about Turkmenbashi's behests disappeared to give space to articles and reports about the new president's novelties. Any careful observer, however, will find nothing new, let alone novel, in the new doctrine. Politicians all over the world are fond of holding forth about democracy and human rights, a better life for the people, better education, culture and economy, as well as peace and friendship among nations. In this respect, President Niyazov differed little from his colleagues. What we see today is nothing more than change of political scenery. The fairy-tale of the Golden Age has been replaced with another fantasy called the Renaissance. Placed in the historical context, the new president's Renaissance boils down to the simple fact that he merely returned to the people what they had been robbed of during the Golden Age and led the country out of the world of absurdities back to where it started. Access to the Internet, which figured prominently during the election campaign, is still a luxury, while the very popular satellite dishes will fill the information vacuum and replace the state controlled systems of cable TV.

The human rights activists insist that the president's ideological novelties would look better if supported by practical steps toward democracy and freedom. The new ideology should rest on the firm

foundation of democratic institutions if the president is resolved to build “a state for the people.” He will hardly abandon the state’s total control over society—this would be too exotic for post-Soviet Central Asia; the same can be said about giving people, the media, and NGOs genuine freedom. It seems that we should expect another personality cult and another *Rukhnama*: the ideological doctrine lauds Berdymukhammedov and his time as “the Age of the Great Renaissance.”

In some fields, the new government is following the old course; the style of leadership remains the same: ministers are publicly humiliated and fired. It should be said that the country, which was completely isolated from the rest of the world under Turkmenbashi, has become more open. During his first year in power, the new president visited scores of countries and revived political contacts with Russia, China, the U.S., and Western Europe; he normalized relations with the closest neighbors, and resumed talks with Azerbaijan on the controversial Caspian gas fields. Many took this for democratization. It seems, however, that this is a fairly severe, but somewhat softened and modernized, authoritarian system which has dropped the aberrations of the past. There is no firm conviction that the political system based very much as before on the unlimited power of one man (who looks reasonable and intelligent) will not slide into tyranny. Is Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov wise, moderate, and intelligent enough not to become Turkmenbashi-2? If official Ashghabad refuses to carry out radical political and social reforms, it will channel its efforts toward building an imitation of the political process, while in the economy and social sphere it will limit itself to overripe and inevitable changes. The administration system, meanwhile, needs radical changes, the lower levels should become freer and more responsible, and power should no longer be concentrated in the hands of one man. The market economy cannot rest on slogans: the people at the top should be prepared to abandon the old style of state administration when the nation’s civil initiative, competition, private enterprise, and development of business activities demand this. Will reason triumph over the intoxicating taste of unlimited power?
