RUSSIA
AND
THE MOSLEM WORLD
2014 – 12 (270)

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MODERN CRISES AND CONFLICTS: CHARACTERISTICS, SCENARIOS OF DEVELOPMENT AND PREVENTION

Causes and characteristics of contemporary conflict and crisis situations

Emerging crises and conflicts are not amenable to early recognition and diagnosis, according to the experience of forecasting the geopolitical situation in recent years. Numerous "color revolutions" and the protest movements in the post-Soviet area and the Middle East serve as examples. Experts and political analysts have not been ready for them, despite repeated preconditions and scenarios of these "revolutions." The wave of "Arab revolutions" in North Africa and the protest movements in Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia and Moldova have led to the elimination of the ruling regimes there as a result of the application of technology to manipulate human consciousness. The two superpowers identified the main parameters of global development and the member-countries of the military-political alliances complied with bloc discipline and supported the policy of the United States or the Soviet Union in the international arena in the previous era of bipolarity. Political forecasting used the comparative approach with a linear

extrapolation of the situation at national and international levels. Nowadays the situation has changed radically. Socio-political processes develop nonlinearly with symptoms of turbulence due to the possible influence of members of social networks. Identification and diagnosis of incipient conflicts and crisis situations become more complex as a result. The triumph of social networks has brought fiasco to political prognostication.

In the 1990s there were 170 conflict zones in the world and 30 of them were in the active phase. However, their number began to decrease at the beginning of this century and now it has stabilized at around five to seven armed conflicts[1]. But the number of internal and external participants in these conflicts has increased.

The main feature of modern crises and conflicts is the involvement of external actors that provide military, financial or informational support in their own interests to one of the conflicting parties. Similar conflicts develop beyond the bounds of internal problems of the given country, when they are viewed from the international legal point of view, as the situation in Libya and Syria has already proven.

Another feature of the majority of modern conflicts is their value dimension, realized by the struggle of ethnic, cultural and religious identities. The value factor is often used as ideological substantiation and propaganda cover by the participants in the conflict. There are frequent situations when a conflict does not abate because of the irrational wish of the leaders of radical movements to fight to the end "for faith" or "in the name of true independence of the nation," when incompatibility of interests has already been overcome. The fact is that today the ideas of protecting national interests and dignity of the nation can be used as a mobilization reserve.

The third feature of modern conflicts is the involvement of common people of other countries into conflicts. The mass media and social networks, which form public opinion, also affect the heads of state and international organizations. Thus, a large number of internal and external participants in a conflict, its vaguely outlined state borders, the interdependence of social, economic, religious and humanitarian aspects – all this makes it difficult to forecast the development of the situation. These factors make analyses a complex task with many unknowns. The frequency of conflicts and crises is due to a high level of conflict potential, which is determined by the following factors:

Rivalry between the leading world and regional actors in world politics for spheres of military and political influence, sources of raw materials and markets in the post-Soviet area and the Middle East, with the use of indirect action strategy and soft power.

Increased activity of diplomatic, intelligence agencies and non-governmental organizations, promoting, organizing and financing the opposition forces in their fight against the current government. Organizers of protest movements involve third countries (as was the case of Libya or Syria) to participate in them, recruit and train mercenaries and finance their activities.

Scenarios of political upheavals have successfully been implemented to destabilize the social and political environment in the Ukraine, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and Moldova. Young people under 30 years are the driving force of these "revolutions" and their number is increasing. It is assumed that it will be 47 percent in Asia, 57 percent in the Middle East and North Africa, and 70 percent in sub-Saharan Africa by 2020[2]. At the same time, the necessary conditions for successful social integration of young people in social structures have not been envisaged in the near future that make them a source of socio-political instability and conflict.

Ethnic and confessional separatism creates a serious threat to the domestic and regional stability and international security. Numerous separatist organizations operate all over the world, using financial and ideological means of the Wahhabis of Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The Internet and global communication system ensure successful organization and coordination of the separatist and opposition movements. The leaders of these organizations are able to promote their ideas and requirements and carry on their activities through the various social networks and the Internet.

The appeal of extremist ideologies has increased against the background of people's awareness of their social and political inequality in the third world countries. Formerly, these people reconciled themselves to poverty and lawlessness, as they simply did not know about another way of life and the living standards in developed countries. The welfare of the inhabitants of the advanced countries, as shown by the international media, causes envy, indignation and hatred, fanned by radical political movements.

The creation of the global information space contributed to the increased politicization of the population. People realized that the rich countries existed against the background of most countries confronting unresolved economic and social problems. All this destabilizes the socio-political situation in the countries with undeveloped political systems and institutions.

Modern crises and conflicts have much in common, despite their variety.

1. Profound contradictions formed over the centuries and based on the confrontation of values and lifestyles of peoples belonging to different civilizations. It is not only territorial disagreements, but also a clash of cultural and religious systems that are the cause of the

conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

2. Support of the conflicting parties by external actors in international politics, belonging to different civilizational platforms. An example is provided by the conflict over the Falkland Islands in 1982, when the Latin American countries supported Argentina, and Western countries took the side of Britain. Also the people of Palestine feel a strong support of the Islamic world in its confrontation with Israel.

3. Situational changes of orientation of the conflict participants from the civilized basis onto factors of the current political situation in the course of the conflict. Participants in the Serbian-Croat-Muslim conflict in Yugoslavia changed their allies, depending on the political situation. The position of the West was determined by political expediency rather than closeness of civilizations.

4. Difficulties involved in a clear identification of the aggressor and the victim. The conflict in Yugoslavia has emerged between the three civilizations: Slavic-Orthodox, Catholic and Islamic, and each side saw the aggressor in its opponent.

It is noteworthy that most conflicts arise between subjects belonging to the same civilizational platform, despite their intercultural character. Among the examples of this is the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s, as well as the present civil war in Syria, which occurred as a result of rivalry between the Shi'ite and Sunni branches of Islam.

"Color revolutions" as a tool of reformatting geopolitical space

For the first time the phenomenon of "color revolutions" appeared in the late 1990's in Serbia. Then, similar events occurred in Ukraine, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, and in Ukraine again in 2013.

There have also been attempts to organize protest movements in Belarus, Uzbekistan and Russia, but they have failed due to the stability of state institutions and the lack of sufficient support from the population. Political regimes have undergone a transformation, mostly pro-Western and anti-Russian in the countries where "color revolutions" were a success. These phenomena are harmful to the national interests of Russia, and they are an effective tool to reformat the political space in the interests of external actors in international politics, holding anti-Russian positions.

An analysis of the preparation and carrying out of "color revolutions" shows that the organizers of such political actions follow certain principles during the preparatory and initial stages.

1. Reliance on non-violent forms and methods of achieving political objectives, with the use of information technologies and psychological impact on people's minds. A "legitimate" change of the regime will be implemented in the country, the cabinet of ministers will be changed, early elections will be held under the supervision of international observers as a result of the initiation of "peaceful" political actions.

2. The use of an opposition party or a social movement eager for a change, as well as elements of the lower sections of the population with unrealized ambitions as a driving force for the implementation of political transformations.

3. The use of social networks for organizing protest movements with the active involvement of the mass media to legitimize the goals and objectives that can be regarded as a special form of information warfare undertaken by external actors in international politics against the present government.

It's no secret that the main catalysts of "color revolutions" are foreign sponsors who finance youth organizations, as well as opposition

parties whose leaders support the Western model of democracy and liberal values. Activists of such "revolutions" receive financial support in the form of grants and scholarships from such organizations as the "Open Society" Institute, Harvard University, Albert Einstein Institute, International Republican Institute, National Democratic Institute (USA), International Institute on Non-Violent Conflicts, and the International Institute for Strategic studies in London[3]. According to MacIntyre, the growth of social tension and political upheavals should be expected if less than 20 percent[4].

The weakness of the central government and its inconsequence in solving social and economic problems also contribute to the success of "color revolutions". Two "color revolutions" in Ukraine have occurred during the last ten years (2004 and 2013–2014). International organizations and Western leaders have tried in every way possible to weaken their positive results and refrained from giving real economic assistance to the country. They have obstructed the Ukrainian leadership's efforts to prevent the destructive actions of the opposition, which undermined the foundations of the political system and its democratic institutions. It is not surprising that "color revolutions" occurred in the most advanced CIS countries in terms of adherence to democratic standards: in Ukraine and Georgia, and President Askar Akayev of Kyrgyzstan was considered one of the most democratic presidents in the post-Soviet area.

The liberal media create a favorable environment for "color revolutions" in the context of social and political instability in a state; politicians and public figures of pro-Western orientation play the role of "catalyst for change," influencing people's minds in order to create a favorable background for the upcoming move to "democracy," and a crowd in the streets gets the status of "the people demanding change."

An analysis of the preparation and carrying out of "color revolutions" shows that in most cases they have evolved according to one and the same scenario, described in the book by the American political scientist J. Sharpe "From Dictatorship to Democracy," published in 1993[5]. In his view, political struggle against the ruling regime under constitutional standards is doomed to failure. He advises to focus attention on non-violent methods of struggle against the regime through the organization of various forms of protest movements and disobedience to the authorities. "Color revolutions" represent the American technology for organization of coups d'état with the use of media and social networks, paid and controlled by international non-governmental organizations, which are the instruments of Western influence.

According to Sharpe' scenario, a "color revolution" begins with the opposition's initialization of the delegitimization process of power. The latter in the person of officials, leaders of different levels and politicians is accused of corruption, the absence of effective social policies, as well as of authoritarian ways, unfair elections, failure to comply with the rights and freedoms of citizens, reprisals, etc. Next, according to the scenario, the opposition needs the so-called victims of power, a mandatory component of any color revolution, as their persecution discredits and prevents the authorities' actions, urging people to join the protest movement.

The formation of three driving forces of revolution takes place at the next stage: radically-minded youth, combat troops arriving from provinces to the capital, and the "creative class", consisting of representatives of small and medium-sized businesses dissatisfied with the authorities and eager for change. Events in Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan serve as a vivid example. Squads, arriving from provinces to support the "revolution", as well as local nationalists, neo-fascists

and anti-Semites obeyed their "warlords," and the strength and energy of people from provinces are absorbed by the protest movement, because they do not have a shelter in the capital and could not return home.

Choosing a leader is another important factor in the organization of a "color revolution". A well-known and quite respected politician, recently departed from a high post and joined the opposition, surrounded by less-known figures, representatives of show business and sports, is the best option. Also, he should be a firm supporter of Western democratic values and freedoms, culture and lifestyle.

Scenarios of development of contemporary conflicts, crisis situations and possible ways of their settlement

The conflict potential of the modern world is one of the consequences of the Cold War and the end of confrontation between the two military-political blocs, on the one hand, and globalization of the world's information, cultural and religious areas, on the other. The principle of ethno-religious self-assertion became a significant conflict factor, more radical than self-assertion based on ideological principles in times of bipolarity.

Many states face problems of ethnic and confessional challenges over the past decade. Mass migration to Europe from developing countries, partially restrained by the policy of the European Union, poses a direct threat to identity, cultural integrity and national security of the European continent. If the cultural assimilation of migrants does not take place in a country, the potential threat of civil war arises, according to Samuel Huntington[6].

According to sociological studies, assimilation of migrants takes place in the second or third generation, and they "disappear" in the total

mass of the native population, if their number is a small fraction of this population. If the proportion of migrants is growing rapidly, assimilation does not occur. When their number is close to a "critical mass" (15 percent of the population), national enclaves are formed, and their members may begin struggle for recognition of their social and political interests. The emergence of ethnic enclaves in the major cities of Russia, ethnic conflicts and the construction of mosques in areas where Muslims live are among the specific features of this phenomenon.

The above factors point to the necessity of revealing prerequisites for conflicts at early stages, when they have not yet become irreversible and can be resolved. First of all, it is related to the immigration and religious policy of a state, as well as the adaptation of immigrants to the confessional, cultural and legal environment of the host country.

As for the scenarios of the crisis, the nucleation phase of a future conflict, and the formation of its conditions are in a latent form and appear harmless at first glance. The local authorities present them as domestic incidents without ethno-religious overtones; for example, the burning of several Orthodox churches in Tatarstan.

The second stage of the crisis is the expansion of its scope, affecting the overall situation in a country. The central power has to set up special departments to stabilize the situation and to combat extremists in order to prevent escalation of the crisis.

The third stage of the crisis is characterized by extreme aggravation of the situation when the warring parties begin an open armed struggle. Illegal armed groups are formed, and terrorist and subversive acts, as well as hostage-taking are committed.

The fourth stage of the crisis is characterized by involving human rights and humanitarian organizations, and bringing diplomatic,

information, propaganda and economic pressure to bear on the country's population and leadership.

If this pressure does not lead to the desired results, and the confrontation turns into a civil war, the question of military intervention and the overthrow of the "dictatorial" regime should be forwarded to the UN Security Council.

Such events may develop according to the following scenarios after the beginning of certain actions of the parties concerned and the aggravation of contradictions.

1. It is a relatively quick victory of one side in the conflict and the defeat of the other. The events in Tunisia and Egypt serve as an example. The defeated party may again create a crisis situation to take revenge by starting a new round of confrontation. This happened in Egypt, after the "Muslim Brotherhood" grouping has come to power, and in Iraq, where the Sunni grouping, with the support of Saudi Arabia, has been waging an armed struggle against the Shi'ites, trying to restore its position in the country.

2. There is a situation of relative equality of the parties, when the conflict develops into a long armed confrontation, as it was in Libya and is happening in Syria now. The expansion of the conflict can occur through the involvement of new participants, among which are those who are trying to benefit from it, playing the role of peacekeepers.

3. The conflict settlement process begins when there is stalemate and both sides come to a conclusion about the futility of continuing the struggle. It indicates the depletion of moral, human and material resources of the parties and their awareness of the risk of a complete loss. The peaceful solution of the Cuban missile crisis and the subsequent signing of the Helsinki Accords is an example.

A peaceful solution of a conflict can be facilitated by the presence of certain overlapping interests of the warring parties.

Secondary interests, not affected by the conflict, can play a significant role in the course of its settlement. Thomas Schelling, one of the founders of conflictology, claims that "pure" conflicts are rare, when one side gets everything, and another – nothing.[7] Most conflicts are different, and there is a prospect of finding a reasonable balance of interests. Realizing this fact, the warring sides can move from confrontation to a joint search for solutions.

Here are some of approaches to the conflict resolution. The principle of dilution of the parties is one of them. It has been applied in solving the conflict over the Sinai Peninsula occupied by Israel in the 1967 war.

But the principle of diluting the parties is not always effective. It often happens that the parties are interested in capturing or controlling the same objects: territories, sources of raw materials, transport, communications, access to the sea, etc. However, a solution of a conflict is possible in this case, too. The principle of mutual concessions can be implemented by appealing to independent experts for making appropriate proposals. Authoritative public figures, scientists, and international organizations can be involved as experts who would analyze the situation and offer variants of a decision allowing the parties concerned to resolve the conflict.

Contradictions between the participants in the conflict may be insurmountable at some stage. The impasse in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is an example, when a territorial claim threatens to escalate into greater conflict between the Islamic world and the West. The only way lies in mitigating the conflict through reaching agreements on minor issues which could positively affect security in the region.

Reduction of tension should precede a search of options to resolve the conflict. Steps are undertaken to de-escalate the confrontation and promote peace initiatives of one party in order to

induce the other party to follow suit. The main difficulty lies in the distrust of the participants in each other. Third-party guarantees are necessary in this case. The solution of the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 is an example of the principle of de-escalation of the conflict.

A solution of territorial claims is an important aspect of conflict resolution. The struggle of nations for self-determination and formation of independent states on the territories they occupy is not seen as a territorial dispute. The population of a territory can create a subject of international law through a referendum and subsequent elections of the supreme authority, following the principle of self-determination of nations. Palestine, Kosovo, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and South Sudan are among such examples.

Territorial disputes are considered to be the "zero-sum" conflicts in international practice, because one party loses its territory and the other one gains it as a result of solution to a conflict. This variant can be avoided if the disputed territory becomes shared by the parties through creating a common economic area, an enclave or a military base. Another variant to resolve territorial dispute could be through removing the subject of it, as was the case of Damansky Island, which became part of the PRC as a result of the demarcation of the border between Russia and China.

Different approaches to the conflict resolution are intended for creating favorable conditions to settle problems at the intergovernmental level. But such emotional aspects as the sentiments of the population and its attitude to the conflict, as well as the desired way to resolve it should also be considered.

Informal contacts between representatives of the warring parties are an important factor in resolving conflicts. They have a positive impact on both the population and the warring sides. They are called "people's diplomacy" in which there is an opportunity to hold

negotiations and conferences with the participation of representatives of the public.

The systematic application of this approach greatly facilitates the work of diplomats, as it reduces the level of tension and creates an atmosphere of trust, even if results do not appear immediately.

A significant role in reducing the level of the conflict potential can be played by peacekeepers, along with international observers to preclude the military phase of the conflict. Peacekeeping involves financial, medical, food, and training assistance, as well as holding referendums and elections to ensure compliance with the agreements reached.

"Peace enforcement" is applied when one party tries to resolve the conflict by military means, actively opposing the efforts to settle it politically. In this case, peacemaking takes the form of a military operation, as it was in the defense of South Ossetia from the Georgian aggression in August 2008. A military operation may be aimed at ending armed clashes between the parties and curbing the aggressor and establishing peace.

Conflict prevention and crisis management

Management of a modern state and international systems is anticrisis at all development stages a priori. Politicians at all levels require the ability to see the approach of a crisis in time, and take adequate management decisions. Among the most important elements of crisis management are diagnosis and preventive sanitation of crisis tendencies and phenomena. Diagnosis makes it possible to get reliable information about the real purpose and capabilities of the opposing sides. This will help form a reflective model of crisis management.

Crisis management is defined as a system of measures and methods for diagnosis, detection and neutralization of the causes of crisis in order to overcome its consequences.

The crisis management system should be flexible enough to respond quickly to emerging threats and challenges, adapt to changes in the socio-political environment, as well as to have the ability to effectively use the potential of geopolitical and informal methods of control at the disposal of a state.

The time factor should be taken into account because it is especially significant in the period of emergence and development of the crisis tendencies and phenomena.

These features of the mechanism of crisis management determine the solution of such problems as timely recognition of symptoms and causes of the approaching crisis, as well as the classification and elaboration of measures to overcome it.

The issue of conflict prevention and crisis management is relevant because to prevent these phenomena is much easier than to stop them. The purpose of preventive action is timely recognition of signs, the nature and causes of a conflict, as well as their initiators and driving forces. The socio-political development of public and international systems cannot be stopped, as well as crisis phenomena, inseparably associated with them, which take the form of conflict. But their destructive manifestations of violence, loss of life, and damage to property, public interests and values, should be prevented.

Efforts should be directed at the prevention of violence, its uncontrolled escalation and also at reorientation to a peaceful solution of the problem, depending on the nature of a conflict and its origin and development. There are two types of prevention: preventing a conflict at an early stage and preventing its uncontrolled development after its occurrence.

Prevention efforts to resolve conflict and crisis situations should be aimed at avoiding escalation of violence right up to the armed confrontation between the parties or mass protest demonstrations. It so often happens that one of the participants in the conflict does not attempt to normalize relations and does not wish to resolve it with the opposite side through negotiations.

Shuttle diplomacy, mediation efforts of public and religious figures, observer missions, peacekeeping forces, military exercises in regions bordering on conflict zones -- these are examples of actions to prevent conflicts and crisis situations. All these measures should be carried out before the turning of a conflict into an armed confrontation between the parties.

The strategy of early warning of crises should use a monitoring system for preventing potential conflicts, which will be able to predict and identify their development. The best period of monitoring a conflict is its latent phase, since there is every possibility to prevent its development by a catastrophic scenario.

Humanitarian organizations and international agencies can deliver the most accurate information on the issue, and arrange personal contacts and intermediary functions in conflict areas. This activity can be carried on in cooperation with the media and research organizations.[8]

Preventive measures may include a mission for identifying and investigating the factors of the impending conflict, its limits and the extent of contradictions. Obtained information shall be used by the expert community to organize negotiations between the participants in a potential conflict.[9]

The involvement of international organizations, providing financial and technical support to intermediaries and negotiators, as well as sending peacekeepers to areas of a potential conflict is feasible

at the next stages. All these measures give time to seek a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

A system analysis of the root causes of the situation based on the conflicting interests of the parties and the asymmetry of their relationship is made at the stage of preventing the uncontrolled development of the conflict.

Large-scale preventive measures include a study of the causes of the uneven development of regions and their ethno-religious communities, the characteristics of socio-political and cultural relations between them, taking into account the social inequality of the population of these regions and the activities of their authorities.[10]

The result of the preventive measures can be reflected in the economic development program of the conflict regions, the mechanisms of resolving conflicts, peacekeeping actions to establish intercultural contacts, and the creation of bodies to prevent and resolve conflicts. Among additional measures mention should be made of promotion of national and religious concord, and the creation of mechanisms for the peaceful and constructive division of political power in an entire state or in a specific region.

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**KHIZB UT-TAHRIR IN THE REPUBLIC
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A little over a year ago the residents of the Republic of Tatarstan entered into a new reality, that of mutual distrust and alienation, which began on August 19, 2012, after the attempt on the life of the Mufti of the republic Ildus Faizov and the assassination of his deputy Valiulla

Yakupov. In the view of many analysts, these events were connected with the interests of certain circles aimed at destabilization of the situation in the republic. Meanwhile, mass searches in the houses of many Muslims and arrests were interpreted as reprisals against believers, and the mass media and social networks harped on the themes of excessive powers of the special services and police, torture and threats. Official confirmation or denials have not been published. There was a noticeable growth of anti-Muslim rhetoric, and information about Tatarstan becoming a "Wahhabi enclave" began to be widely circulated. However, quite soon this hysteria has died down.

Nevertheless, there have been numerous reports about clashes between Muslims adhering to traditional hanafite madhhab and those supporting Wahhabi ideology and Khizb ut-Tahrir.[1] Many of the latter were arrested.

We have attempted to examine this problem. Along with available literature on this subject, we paid considerable attention to the mass media, the Internet resources, as well as numerous surveillance results. We have also interviewed members of the expert community, teachers at Muslim educational institutions, as well as representatives of the official clergy and a number of government bodies.

Most respondents, judging by their answers, have had no experience in dealing with representatives of Khizb ut-Tahrir. No wonder because by a decision of the Supreme Court of Tatarstan, this organization was recognized as a terrorist organization and its activity was banned.

However, most respondents noted that Khizb ut-Tahrir worked quite effectively, distributed a wealth of literature, and widely used various media resources. In the view of one of the respondents, the organization successfully uses the complex situation in the Islamic world. As to assessments of its activity as such, different characteristics

of it have been voiced. Some regard it as the "absolute evil," "dangerous," "sectarian," "pathological mentally." Others say that its activity is too exalted, aggressive, "too maximalist…"

Quite a few people call the organization terrorist, although by a decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation Khizb ut-Tahrir was included in a list of 15 terrorist organizations.

Some respondents maintain that its activity is a provocation aimed at discrediting Muslims and turn common people away from Islam. A view is widespread that Khizb ut-Tahrir is dangerous because it preaches fanaticism and ignorance.

However, most respondents believe that administrative and legislative bans and other such measures will not give positive results, because adherents and supporters of this organization go underground, and the movement becomes more radicalized. In other words, reprisals will only lead to its growing popularity.

Speaking of theological differences of dogmatic and ideological character, it should be noted that that most of those polled both rank-and-file Muslim believers and experts, consider that Khizb ut-Tahrir should be viewed not as a purely religious, but as a religious-political movement. Active members of this movement do not see the possibility to fulfill their religious premises in the conditions of modern society, outside a world Islamic state, that is, caliphate. "It is only there that it will be possible to implement the laws of Our Lord."

Their opponents note a wide gap between the active supporters of the movement and most Muslims. The former lose the sense of reality and base their activity on doctrines.

It is also noted that their priorities differ from general Muslim premises, they place caliphate at the head, but not the problems of faith, knowledge, worship, etc.

According to our surveillance, most adherents to the ideas of Khizb ut-Tahrir are young men, as a rule, without a higher education and permanent work, but with certain, rather high, ambitions. Most often, they are either people from other parts of Tatarstan, or from Central Asian republics. Members or supporters of this movement are distinguished by a well-pronounced social aspect of their activities or views, but lack of religious knowledge, and quite a few of them have connections with the criminal world or adhere to the extreme opposition.

As to the practical activity of Khizb ut-Tahrir, it is rather difficult today to draw a line between extremism, freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, and criticism of the secular authorities. Nevertheless, in our view, there are no grounds for including it in the list of terrorist organizations, because there are no direct facts confirming its terrorist activity. There is no banned extremist literature in the homes of its members, but it is quite logical that the fact of reading such literature does not turn its readers into supporters of or participants in such activity.

Naturally, the state should take preventive measures aimed at disrupting extremist activity and eliminating the causes and conditions allowing the manifestations of extremism. Apart from this, it should be remembered that in the conditions of a difficult socio-economic and political situation and along with the further growth of religious self-consciousness and still existing lack of religious knowledge among the population, the ideas of radical reorganization of society will always find supporters. And these ideas will not always have a religious tint. Nevertheless, as long as the socio-economic problems of society are not solved, the outside "political players" will continue to use religious sentiments of believers as a cover for their "struggle for oil and human resources."

Notes

1 Along with this, we tried to find out within the framework of our surveillance whether certain circles of Muslim community regard the threat of dissemination of the ideas of Khizb ut-Tahrir real, and also whether a dialogue or discussion is possible with the supporters of the views of this movement. Another task was to find out the reasons for the emergence of supporters of the ideas of such movements in our society. We have also been interested in the question as to how the people polled viewed a solution of the problem of dissemination of ideologies like the one of Khizb ut-Tahrir.

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CONNECTION BETWEEN ETHNOPOLITICS AND GEOPOLITICS IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS

One of the specific features of the North Caucasus as an internal border geopolitical region of the Russian Federation is the multinational, or poly-ethnic, composition of its population, which lays a considerable imprint on the most important spheres of its life. People of many nationalities live there, who belong to different ethnocultural and linguistic families, or groups, such as Caucasian-Iberian (Georgians, Circassian-Adyge, mountain peoples of Daghestan – Avars, Darghins, Lezghins, and others, Chechens and Ingushes, etc.), the Iranian branch of the Indo-European family (Ossetians, Greeks, Tats, Turks – Azeris, Kumyks, Karachai, Balkars, Nogais, and others). The biggest ethnic group in the North Caucasus is Russians, a considerable part of which is Cossaks. The borders of the North Caucasus stretch to the territory of the South Caucasus and further on to the Middle East. We mean the diasporas of North Caucasian peoples settled in the

second half of the 19th century in Turkey, Jordan, Syria, and other neighboring states.

This explains the fact that the ethno-national factor is of key importance from the point of view of ensuring national security and state unity of the Russian Federation along its southern borders, and the North Caucasus itself. Many other factors stem from it, or are closely connected with it. The most important spheres of life, including the political one, are intertwined with ethno-national, tribe, clan, and other aspects.

Political sympathies and antipathies of people are largely determined by their affiliation to a definite ethno-national group, the language, clan, or locality. There is no simple abstract, statistical electorate, but there are voters – Lezghins, voters – Avars, or voters – Kumyks, etc. Any problems of social, economic, educational, or any other character are connected, in one way or another, with the nationalities question. The main development vectors of the region depend on how this question is solved there.

In other words, the interconnection of geopolitics with ethnopolitics is revealed there as vividly as nowhere else in the Russian Federation. They are closely intertwined and strongly influence the vitality, sovereignty and unity of the state. Moreover, the combination of the geopolitical and ethnopolitical factors becomes especially important and timely in a situation when the ethno-national problem becomes a source of various contradictions and conflicts threatening state unity and socio-political stability in the country. This is why investigation of this problem in the context of national security of Russia is quite important not only for understanding and solving the country's domestic problems, but also for evolving a foreign-policy course in relations with many neighboring states.

Touching on the causes of conflicts in the North Caucasus, K. Gadjiyev wrote that they had emerged "within the framework of the implementation of the so-called Leninist foreign policy… Having proclaimed a policy of self-determination of peoples in theory, in real life the state-administrative units were not formed strictly by the national criterion… The very principle of territorial-administrative division on the basis of the nationality principle contradicted the realities of the Caucasus. The arbitrarily established borders between republics in the Soviet period have become a potential source of various conflicts in our time."[1]

As a result of numerous arbitrary administrative-territorial demarcations, disregarding the ethno-national factor, many ethnic groups have become split between two or even four republics. The pernicious character of such policy has become clear in the conditions of *perestroika* and the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. following it, when the latent contradictions in the sphere of interethnic relations have come to the fore.

Among the factors conducive to the growing striving for sovereignty all over the country, and in some cases the greater activity of radical groups demanding secession from Russia and formation of independent ethno-national units, the tendencies toward the politicization of ethno-national relations and the emergence of nationalistic ideologies based on the politicization of ethnic history have played a major role.

As a result, the notorious "show-of-sovereignties" had begun, which created a serious threat to the territorial integrity of Russia and multinational republics. In this context, the example of poly-ethnic Daghestan is of special interest. A number of national republics in the Russian Federation have adopted their own constitutions, which

proclaimed their sovereignty and in certain key articles of their constitutions contradicted the Constitution of the Russian Federation.

True, in the course of administrative reforms carried out during the past decade and aimed at restoring the vertical of power, many excesses in the normative-legal sphere of the North Caucasian republics have been overcome. As a result of amendments adopted in the late 1990s – 2000s these articles were either repealed or amended.

In the Soviet period relations between the titular and non-titular ethnic groups, just as their representation in bodies of state power, were regulated by the Communist party and government bodies. The so-called quota system of filling the vertical of power of national units was in action in accordance with the proportional number of each ethnos. As shown by experience of a number of North Caucasian republics, this system was not effective enough in Soviet time. Nevertheless, it has been adopted by the authorities of the Russian Federation, true with certain changes. However, in a number of republics this system with certain negative characteristic of the Soviet period has moved even farther from the principles, standards and rules of political democracy and a law-abiding state.

The interconnection of the ethno-national and power factors can especially clearly be seen in the multinational Republic of Daghestan, where the struggle for power and the alignment of forces have acquired a well-pronounced ethnic character. The republican population amounts to about three million, but it consists of more than one hundred nationalities, including more than thirty indigenous peoples speaking their own languages, and fourteen ethno-national groups are regarded titular. However, already in the Soviet period, from the late 1930s, the first roles in the higher echelons of power were played by representatives of two or three ethno-national groups, namely, the Avar, Darghin and Kumyk.

After the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. the ethnocratic tendencies have intensified, which resulted in the actual monopolization of state power in the hands of representatives of the above-mentioned three ethnic groups. They have occupied the three highest posts in the republic – President, Chairman of People's Assembly and Head of government of the Republic of Daghestan during the entire post-Soviet period. Lucrative places in the vertical of power were also distributed among representatives of these ethnic groups. Similar situation, though with slight nuances, is typical of other North Caucasian republics.

The clan-ethnic system of organization of business and power, in combination with criminal privatization, has led to growing inequality by the nationality principle. The number and titular status of some or other ethnos guarantees it a majority in political representation in legislative and executive bodies of power in the republic. The key positions have been occupied by the corrupt administrative, bank, commercial and other groups which are part of ethnic clans. They have actually monopolized the political and economic resources and established their own informal mechanisms of adopting key decisions.

Under such circumstances, contradictions and conflicts between clans look like interethnic ones in the eyes of common people. In this sense, groupings formed by ethnic and community principles pose a serious threat to economic security.[2] Ethnicization of the vertical of power is also expressed in that the ruling clans use law-enforcement agencies for the preservation of their positions.

As V. Tishkov has justly noted, "the reason for the failure of the division of power and ethnic rotation in ethnically complex parts of the country lies not so much in the very system of social democracy, as in the inadequate civil-legal consciousness of the population and the influence of the criminal and corrupt forces and ties, which use political mobilization by the ethnic and local principle."[3] Naturally, this is a

factor violating the principle of proportional representation of the basic ethno-national communities in all three branches of power at a republican and municipal levels. Such situation is a source of differences and conflicts which acquire an extremist character, so dangerous for society.

These realities explain why some or other decisions adopted by the authorities are regarded by part of the population as those infringing upon their interests. Thus, the idea about unification of divided peoples remains one of the incentives capable to violate social and political stability in individual republics from time to time.

Naturally, interethnic relations in such republics as Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachaeyvo-Circassia, as well as multinational Daghestan are distinguished by especially great tension. For example, in Kabardino-Balkaria, the main problems aggravating the social and political situation arise in relations between Kabardians and Balkars who rival for political leadership.

In this context mention should be made of several projects of changing the ethnopolitical map of the North Caucasus by uniting certain ethnic groups living in different national republics into unified autonomous units within the Russian Federation.

For instance, Kh. Tuguz put forward an idea to unite all Adyges in the Adyge Republic with autonomous districts: Kabardian, Adyge, and Circassian. Further on, in his view, such model could be used for uniting other ethnic groups living in the North Caucasus.

On June 5, 2010, about 700 representatives of the Circassian, Abazin, Russian and other ethnic groups of the Karachayevo-Circassian Republic held a congress which adopted a resolution demanding to divide the republic and restore Circassian autonomy within the Russian Federation, which had existed from the latter half of the 1920s up to 1957. This demand was backed by assertions that the Karachay

ethnocracy, which had formed and strengthened in the Karachayevo-Circassian Republic, concentrated state power in its hands.

Tension continues to persist in relations between the North Ossetian Republic and the Republic of Ingushetia on the territorial question, and interethnic tension is observed between Chechens, Ingushes, Kumyks, and Meskhetian Turks, on the one hand, and Russians and Ossetians, on the other.

The problem of certain peoples of the North Caucasus, for example, Ossetian, Lezghins, Avars, and others, who have become divided by state borders between the Russian Federation, Azerbaijan and Georgia after the disintegration of the U.S.S.R., remains unresolved from the point of view of regional and national security of the Russian Federation. As a result, any exacerbation of the situation in the South Caucasus is directly reflected in the state of affairs in Russia. Moreover, the latter is automatically involved in any conflicts, for instance, between Georgia and Abkhazia, or between South Ossetia and Georgia. The Georgian-South Ossetian conflict was the most tragic event, which led to the war in August 2008. Another example of the dangerous situation in this sphere was provided by a mass revolt on March 1, 2012, in Kuba (Northern Azerbaijan) inhabited by Lezghins, who were dissatisfied by the nationalities policy of the Azerbajani authorities.[4] Traditionally restless Daghestan is facing another problem, that of the Lezghin ethnos living in the south of the republic.

Notes

[1] K. Gadjiyev. *Geopolitika Kavkaza* [Geopolitics of the Caucasus]. – Moscow, 2003. – P. 77.
[2] A. Bakryashev. *Tenevaya ekonomika i ekonomicheskaya prestupnost* [Black-market Economy and Economic Crimes] // http://znanie.podelise.ru/docs/933/index-1380.html?page=13

3   V. Tishkov. *Konflikty i federalism. Federalizm i etnichesky faktopr na Severnom Kavkaze. Obshchaya otsenka situatsii i prirody konfliktov* [Conflicts and Federalism. Federalism and Ethnic Factor in the North Caucasus. General Assessment of the Situation and the Nature of Conflicts]. Kazansky federalist, 2002, No 2.

4   About this see: "*Turan*": *Prichina bunta v Kube – bednost i bezyskhodnost, tsaryashchiye v Azerbaijane* [The Cause of Revolt in Kuba – Poverty and Desperation Reigning Supreme in Azerbaijan] // http://panorama.am/ru/politics/2012/03/05/azerbaijan-guba-turan/

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**CENTRAL ASIA AND THE SOUTH CAUCASUS:
NEW MODEL OF THE U.S. PRESENCE
IN THE REGION**

On February 25, 2014, it was twenty-five years since the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan, after almost ten years of their stay there (from December 27, 1979) with the purpose of maintaining the relations "of brotherhood and revolutionary solidarity" with the People's democratic party of Afghanistan, which was then in power in that country. The Soviet government wanted to protect the southern borders of the U.S.S.R. from penetration of Islamic fundamentalism, which could take place as a result of the activity of the Afghan anti-government opposition coming out under traditionalist Islamic slogans. However, the U.S.S.R. did not achieve stabilization on Afghan soil, which was plunged into the permanent confrontation of the Kabul government and the Tajik-Uzbek Northern alliance with the Pashtun units of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.[1] The "Taliban" Islamist movement was fighting against all these groupings; the United States considered this movement as the terrorist threat No 1 in 2001, and its

activity was the cause of the invasion of Afghanistan by NATO and the International coalition of forces within the framework of the anti-terrorist operation "Indomitable Freedom."

As is known, by the end of 2014 the U.S. military contingent and troops of the American allies plan to leave Afghan territory on completing their peacekeeping mission in accordance with the UN Security Council resolution of December 20, 2001. To date there are several important questions which will determine the reconfiguration process of the U.S. military presence in the region:

In what way will the United States be able to ensure the further stay of the limited contingent of the NATO forces in Afghanistan necessary for maintaining minimal security and preventing the expansion of the instability zone to neighboring territories?

What are the prospects of the national development of the Afghan state in the conditions of deep antagonism between the secular authorities and the "Taliban" movement, which is strengthening its positions?

How will the weakening of the international peacekeeping forces be reflected on the macroregional situation in Central Asia and the South Caucasus?

How will the withdrawal of the NATO forces from Afghanistan proceed technologically, what infrastructural and technical procedures should be observed during the transportation of military and non-military cargoes from the place of their deployment?

What status will be given to the logistics junctions in the Central Asian and South Caucasian regions?

How will cooperation between NATO and other military-political structures proceed in the conditions of the changing character of international threats and declared transfer to a new stage of the North Atlantic security system without deep-going contradictions?

In order to understand and analyze future transformations of the U.S. presence in the given region it will be necessary to determine the real reasons for and strategic importance of the stay of the NATO military contingent in Afghanistan.

The pretext for the U.S. invasion of the territory of Afghanistan was the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon building on November 11, 2001, which was committed, according to the CIA, by the "Al Qaeda" terrorist organization headed by Osama bin Laden, leader of the World Islamic Union. After the war in the Persian Gulf area in 1990–1991, the Islamist movement has sharply stepped up its activity against the United States regarded as the main enemy of the Islamic values. The terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, was a manifestation of the new global tendency of transnational terrorism and the strengthening of civilizational confrontation between different cultural-historical types ready to use force and violence to protect and establish their values.

Having come across the qualitatively new essence of international relations and threats to stability of the world order, Washington has decided to carry out an anti-terrorist operation against the Talibs on Afghan territory. Having realized the changed character of international threats – mainly, the possibility of making sudden terrorist attacks, disrupting security systems, breaking communication networks, proliferating weapons of mass destruction, and stepping up the activity of transnational criminal elements, the United States has legitimized the right to a symmetrical answer and gained the opportunity to use preventive strikes with a view to protecting its national interests. Further on, such strategy will be implemented with the help of the proliferation of the anti-missile system defending the combat theater and reconfiguration of the NATO military presence near countries with unstable political regimes. At the time the struggle against terrorist

groupings deployed in Afghanistan was largely reactionary and time-serving and was viewed as retaliation for the damage done, as well as the desire of the Americans to have revenge and restore the reputation of a great power with global responsibility. Terrorist actions at the time were interpreted by the world community as encroachment on the U.S. sovereignty.

As a result, Article 5 of the NATO Charter came into force, which said that an armed attack against one or several NATO members in Europe or North America would be regarded as an attack on all members, and a joint action would be taken against the aggressor, including the use of the armed force, with a view to restoring and preserving security in the North Atlantic region. Other NATO members joined the United States in its actions. Besides, Russia also supported the actions of the United States in its operation against the Taliban movement by providing intelligence information and an air corridor for NATO aircraft. Apart from that, Moscow contributed to getting consent from certain republics in the post-Soviet area (Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan) to permit the deployment of U.S. military bases on their territory. This step has demonstrated shortcomings in the foreign-policy strategy of Russia in assessing terrorist threats to international security and possibility to use this circumstance by certain actors of world politics in their geopolitical interests, as well as concerning the character and consequences of the NATO presence in Central Asian and Trans-Caucasian republics, taking into consideration their geographical position and strategic importance in the structure of the energy and resource balance of the world system. In this context, the anti-terrorist operation initiated by the United States as an answer to the damage inflicted on it made it possible to shift strategic interests and attention of Americans to the geopolitically important region of the planet.

The thesis of the need to fight the radical Islamist groupings threatening international security has legitimized the U.S. right to the military-political presence of NATO in Central Asia and the South Caucasus. It also contributed to the formation of new prospects of the U.S. foreign-policy activity and the strengthening of its positions in the Caspian region. In May 2001, Thomas Graham, an employee of the Carnegie Foundation, wrote an article about his country's relations with Russia and interests in the region. He said that an access to the energy resources and prevention of the destabilization of the region bordering on four nuclear powers were matters of extreme importance. Many analysts pointed out that the main aim of the anti-terrorist operation of the United States was to establish control over the energy resources of the Caspian region. Scholars of the Caspian region, S. Zhiltsov and I. Zonn, wrote that "…whereas in the 1990s the United States created its basic positions in the Caspian region, the events of the late 2001 – beginning of 2002 laid the foundations of foreign-policy trends of the next decade…"[2]

For a long time the Caspian region had been in the periphery of world historical development, but in the early 1990s it turned into an arena of the struggle of global players. This region is of principal importance for potential supply of Europe with energy resources, has an advantageous geopolitical position, and forms a "strategic energy ellipse"[3], consolidating the existing hydrocarbon potential and the functioning transit routes from the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea. Oil and gas reserves concentrated in the region prompted the United States to recognize the Caspian region a "zone of its strategic interests." In the 1990s the then U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright declared that work on the formation of the future of the region would be one of the crucial tasks to be tackled at present. Oil and gas were considered the basis of national security of America, an important

component of national might, the main factor of the world economy, a reason for wars and conflicts, and the decisive force in international relations.[4]

The United States begins to establish constructive diplomatic relations with countries of Central Asia and the Trans-Caucasus, broaden the processes of democratization and liberalization of the ruling regimes of the post-Soviet republics and contribute to the building of infrastructures and the strengthening of technical possibilities for mining, prospecting for and transporting energy carriers, as well as increase the integration of security systems of newly-independent states in the Euro-Atlantic structure.

As noted by S. Zhiltsov and I. Zonn, "the United States believed that control over Afghanistan and the Islamic states of Central Asia gives them the keys to two big oil-producing regions, such as the Middle East and the Caspian basin, which will directly hamper the growing oil ambitions of China."[5] However, it was not only rising China that caused apprehension of the United States, it was more important to prevent the restoration of Russian influence in the post-Soviet area and the establishment of control over Caspian hydrocarbons. The anti-terrorist operation launched by the Unites States and NATO made it possible, though partly, to realize such intentions by creating a favorable background for the legitimate military presence of Americans on Central Asian and Trans-Caucasian territory.

However, the geopolitical victories of the United States were not accompanied by successes at another front, namely, in the fight of the NATO contingent against the "Taliban" and other Islamist terrorist groupings.

It should be remembered that one of the election promises of the U.S. President Barack Obama was the withdrawal of the American troops from Afghanistan, completion of the NATO international

mission, and help to the Afghan national army in terms of strengthening the country's security. From the beginning of the world financial crisis in 2008, contradictions began to crop up between the allies concerning the growing expenditures on the anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan. The International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS) has prepared a report on "Military Balance of 2012" in which it was noted that the countries which have paid large sums for military operations would be forced to redistribute the military budget for domestic needs.[6] The success of the western operation in Afghanistan was in peril, and therefore NATO should rely mainly on diplomacy and coordinated actions.

At the NATO summit in Lisbon in 2010 it was announced that its forces would be withdrawn from Afghanistan by the end of 2014. In December 2011 at a conference in Bonn the international community mapped out the framework of future help to Afghanistan and expressed readiness to take part in the "Decade of Transformations" on Afghan soil from 2015 to 2024. At its summit meeting in Chicago in 2012 the NATO member-states reaffirmed their Lisbon strategy and decided that the main NATO contribution to Afghanistan after 2014 would be training, consultations, and assistance to the Afghan national security forces. NATO has already evolved a plan of implementing these measures, which presupposes a change in the structure of the NATO presence in Afghanistan.

In our view, the main problem lies not so much in the need for the legal backing of this operation (signing of an agreement with the Afghan leadership on security, determining the character of its relations with the United States after the withdrawal of the forces of the international coalition in 2014), as in the future presence of the U.S. military bases on the territory of Afghanistan and the neighboring countries taking part in the system of the counter-terrorist anti-Taliban

operation. The special representative of the Russian Federation at the United Nations, Ambassador Vitali Churkin, has already voiced apprehensions on this score. "If the anti-terrorist mission is fulfilled, the military bases will be preserved in connection with some other task, which is not connected with Afghanistan. If the struggle against terrorism demands continuation, it will be necessary to obtain prolongation of the Security Council mandate. In any case, the remaining military presence should not be used against the interests of Afghanistan's neighbors and other countries of the region… It is important to have a clear-cut temporary and legal framework: attempts to make the presence of alien forces permanent give ground for serious doubts as to its real aims." Vitali Churkin also stated that the future NATO mission to Afghanistan could be organized only after receiving and studying a complete report of the international body on Afghanistan to the UN Security Council on the fulfillment of the current mandate.

The U.S. actions in the Central Asian and the South Caucasian regions in the context of the prospects connected with the withdrawal of the NATO forces from Afghanistan provoke serious questions and make it possible to state that the United States has embarked on the transformation of its model of presence in the region. This model is now based on the new Strategic concept announced at the NATO summit in Chicago in 2012. Among the major premises of this new concept were "clever defense" and "adjoined forces," which will help ensure maximal coordination of defense planning, developing and using the forces and means in accordance with economic effectiveness: the future framework of operations should be oriented to objectively limited financial and economic resources. The rapid reaction forces of NATO, partial change of military-political influence on the economic and political situation in the region, as well as renunciation of permanent military deployment in favor of the flexible and operational

use of military objects jointly with the allies are the embodiment of these standards. This strategy is confirmed by the actions of the United States and the European Union in the Caspian and Central Asian regions.

It is quite evident that the expected withdrawal of the NATO forces from Afghanistan will change the regional balance of forces. The rapid formation of national flotillas of the countries of the "Caspian Five," continued isolation of Iran, possible transit of military cargoes through the region, and the growing demand for ensuring security of the new transport (pipeline) infrastructure from Azerbaijan toward NATO – all this forms a set of tangible risks. Parallel with the growing tension in the security sphere in the Caspian region, the withdrawal of the NATO forces from Afghanistan will, evidently, contribute to the emergence of new transport routes and logistics junctions in the countries of Central Asia and the Caspian basin.

In this connection the session of the World Economic Forum for a strategic dialogue on the future of the South Caucasus and Central Asia held in Baku on April 7–8, 2013, was quite indicative. Actually, the main aim of the session was to create a new form of cooperation between the elites of the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia invited to it. Azerbaijan is to play a special role within its framework. The aim of the forum was to start long-term initiatives and offer definite scenarios for the regions of the South Caucasus and Central Asia. These processes will continue for the next 18 months. The main aim is to reach regional economic integration and examine the unique evolutionary potentials of the region and various alternative scenarios. It was indicative that among the participants in the forum were leading experts from the Johns Hopkins University (the United States) who had worked out the "New Silk Route" concept now used by the U.S. Department of State in implementing its strategy in Central

Asia and Afghanistan. Proceeding from this, one may conclude that despite a multitude of expert assessments showing the loss of interest of Washington in the region of the Caspian Sea and Central Asia, in reality there is going to be but a slight change in the balance of foreign-policy forces.

Thus, it can be assumed that the planned withdrawal of the NATO forces from Afghanistan means a change in the models of the U.S. presence in the region, but not a refusal from this presence. The model connected with the presence of a many-thousand military contingent in Afghanistan and considerable financial expenditures and human losses is going to be replaced by a model of indirect economic influence. The key elements of this model will be export-oriented pipelines (in western and south-eastern directions), on the one hand, and on the other, transport junctions in countries of Central Asia and the South Caucasus being created at present, which will be used for the withdrawal of the military forces from Afghanistan. The countries of the region which adhered to many-vector policy previously, but recently became "western-oriented" in their foreign policy will play considerable role within the framework of this model. The strengthening of the regional component in the new model of U.S. influence presupposes more dynamic reaction on the part of the key states of the Caspian region.

Azerbaijan. According to results of 2013, it can be stated that Azerbaijan has increased its pro-western orientation in foreign policy and its intention to broaden cooperation with NATO, including in the matters of ensuring security of the transport infrastructure, but without aggravating its relations with Russia. A visit to Baku by the senior adviser of the U.S. Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks in January 2013 demonstrated the growing mutual interest of the two countries in broader relations. The growing attention of the United States to the

South Caucasian route may be conditioned by the emergence of an additional opportunity for strengthening its military ties with Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. Evidently, Baku receives positively Washington's initiatives. After her visit to Azerbaijan it has become known that president Aliyev has endorsed an agreement on cooperation between the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan and the European command of the United States, according to which the two sides will hold bilateral military consultations at the level of leading experts on planning.

It is indicative that the strategic role of Azerbaijan in the region becomes one of the main subjects to be discussed at various international conferences and forums: there was one in Washington last spring sponsored by the Kennan Institute of the International Woodrow Wilson Scientific Center. Speaking at this conference Nargiz Gurbanova, high official of the Azerbaijan's Embassy in the United States, told the audience about the turning of her country into a regional transport network, and specially mentioned its growing role during the withdrawal of the NATO troops from Afghanistan. The permanent representative of Azerbaijan at NATO Khazar Ibrahim said that official experts from Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey presented to NATO technical and procedural details for the use of the railway line Baku – Tbilisi – Kars for the purpose. In turn, at the Azerbaijani-American Forum "Glance into the Future" held at the end of May 2013, President Ilkham Aliyev of Azerbaijan said that "cooperation in the sphere of security is also very important for the two countries, and I am glad that our cooperation is entering a new stage. We are working together on global security matters. Our soldiers shoulder to shoulder render help and support to Afghanistan. Azerbaijan provides almost 40 percent of transit to Afghanistan and the Northern distribution network is considered one of the most reliable and stable."[7]

Military security, that is, prevention of conflicts and military clashes, is replaced in public space by energy security, which, naturally, is quite important for any sovereign state, but not sufficient enough for the Caspian and Central Asian regions. As a result, international actors penetrate in the regions pursuing their own geopolitical interests under the guise of various forms of cooperation, be it public-diplomatic, lobbyist, financial, or military assistance. To date NATO de facto has been taking part in providing security for the Baku – Tbilisi – Ceyhan and Baku – Tbilisi – Erzurum pipelines. Suffice it to recall that in January 2014, the NATO General Secretary Anders Fogh Rasmussen and President of Azerbaijan Ilkham Aliyev stated that ensuring security for the gas pipeline between deposits in the Caspian basin and Europe would be one of the crucial directions of further cooperation between NATO and Azerbaijan. Besides, cooperation on Afghanistan calls for continued cooperation between NATO and Azerbaijan on a whole number of programs, for one, within the Program of individual partnership. The two sides will continue interaction in the sphere of reforming the armed forces of Azerbaijan and bringing them to the NATO standards.

Despite this, official persons of Azerbaijan state that their country is not going to allow the deployment of NATO bases on its territory and they understand the risks, which may follow from military-political intrusion of the third forces in the region. Azerbaijan considers it very important to maintain good relations with Russia, as before, and recognizes its leading role as a regional player.

Turkmenistan. That country could become an important link in the chain of transit and logistics junctions created by NATO for the withdrawal of its troops from Afghanistan. At the end of May 2013 the Ambassador of Afghanistan to NATO Humayun Tandar said that the route of the withdrawal of NATO troops and arms from Afghanistan via

Turkmenistan had been discussed. However, this is a long and difficult route, the Ambassador stated, and he added that he did not know whether Turkmenistan would agree with the transit of arms. The route starts in the north of Afghanistan and passes through Turkmenistan, the Caspian region and Azerbaijan.

To date the question of Turkmenistan's consent to transit of military cargoes still remains open. However, Turkmenistan has expressed its interest in joining the transport project "Baku – Tbilisi – Kars." It would like to take part in the "Central Corridor" which would connect Central Asia with Europe via the Caspian region with the help of the Baku – Tbilisi – Kars railway line.

Kazakhstan. That country could also be included in the process of the withdrawal of the NATO forces from Afghanistan. This is confirmed by statements of certain figures in the political establishment of Kazakhstan. The proposal to offer the Kazakh port Aktau on the Caspian Sea for transit of cargoes from Afghanistan shows that the country realized full well the forthcoming geopolitical transformations.

Moreover, speaking at the above-mentioned World Economic Forum, the first Deputy Premier Bakytjan Sagintayev touched on certain promising fields of cooperation with Central Asian and Caucasian countries. Among other things, he mentioned the transport-logistical potential of Kazakhstan as a region lying along the historical Great Silk Route from East to West. In essence, Sagintayev presented his country as a bridge between East and West. All the more so since Kazakhstan is now implementing transcontinental projects opening new opportunities for it and other states of Central Asia and the Caucasus, which have no access to the sea and are far removed from world markets.

As is known, the Aktau transit port has been functioning since 2009, and more than 15,000 containers have been handled by it,

according to official data, which is a considerable part of military cargoes taken along the Northern transit route. Representatives of Kazakhstan and the United States now discus the question of turning this port into the key transit hub in the structure of the Northern supply network. It will be achieved through expanding the port and increasing the capacity of the airport.

Today, Kazakhstan is trying to position itself as the biggest transport-logistical hub of Central Asia and with this aim in view it is stepping up the development of international routes (projects "Western Europe – Western China" and "Kazakhstan – New Silk Road"). Kazakhstan is situated between several major participants in trade markets – China, Russia, and countries of East and Western Europe. The sea port of Aktau is a component of international transport corridors TRACECA (Transport corridor Europe – Caucasus – Asia) and North – South, which ensure access to ports of the Caspian, Black Sea – Mediterranean and Baltic basins, countries of the Persian Gulf and Southeast Asia. Evidently, the port of Aktau is of geostrategic importance for the entire region, and this is why the presence of outside players in it can have a negative effect on the macroregional situation.

All this goes to show the readiness of the countries of the Caspian – Central Asian region to grant NATO and the International security forces the already functioning and newly-created transport and logistical junctions as routes for the withdrawal of military and non-military cargoes from Afghanistan. This will contribute to the implementation of the NATO Strategic concept announced at the NATO summit in Chicago in 2012, which presupposes the change of the model of influence in the region of Central Asia and the South Caucasus.

Evidently, Moscow cannot ignore the change of the geopolitical reality on neighboring territories, which, historically, are part of the zone of exclusive influence of the Russian state. If Russia remains

indifferent to these changes, the already existing formats of Eurasian security (Collective Security Treaty Organization) and the planned Eurasian Economic Union may become endangered in the foreseeable future.

Russia is advocating the intensification of a dialogue between Caspian states – members of the CSTO on broader cooperation in ensuring security and stability in the Central Asian and Trans-Caucasian regions. Moscow is ready to contribute to the process of logistic and technical backing of the withdrawal of the NATO military contingent from Afghanistan, but is categorically objects the possible preservation of the NATO bases on these territories. Russia has already been taking necessary measures for protecting the Tajik-Afghan border within the framework of a specially evolved program by the CSTO and participates in creating an infrastructure directly on the territory of Afghanistan. The CSTO military command does not examine a possibility of cooperation with NATO.

Meanwhile, the change in the configuration of the Trans-Atlantic military presence abroad demands that Russia and its allies should be ready for agreed actions and evolve a strategy of reaction to the geopolitical transformations of the world system. Cooperation between CSTO and NATO in mutually acceptable spheres seems quite constructive. This includes exchange of information, opposition to drug trafficking and cyber-threats, counter-terrorist operations, as well as post-conflict world order and long-term interaction in setting up stable government institutions. Such strategy can be applied to working out a joint plan of action in the withdrawal of the NATO forces from Afghanistan and the post-crisis solution of the situation.

At the present moment the situation remains unpredictable and contradictory. It can be said that after the withdrawal of the NATO troops from Afghanistan the neighboring territories may face

deep-going changes and great threats to security. There can be a civil war in Afghanistan, greater criminal activity of narcobarons, and growing drug trafficking along the route Afghanistan – Central Asia – Russia. Besides, NATO may consolidate its military presence on the territory of Central Asia and the South Caucasus while transporting military cargoes from Afghanistan.

Notes

[1]   Gulbuddin Khekmatyar, leader of the Islamic party of Afghanistan, former prime minister of Afghanistan (1993–1994, 1996).

[2]   S. Zhiltsov, I. Zonn. *SShA v pogone za Kaspiyem* [The U.S.A. in Pursuit of the Caspian Region]. – Moscow, 2009. – P. 34–38.

[3]   G. Kemp. Superblow. Strategy, Politics and the Persian Gulf and Caspian Basin. – Washington, 1997/ – P. 97.

[4]   D. Ergin. *Dobycha: Vsemirnaya istoriya borby za neft, dengi i vlast* [Booty: World History of the Struggle for Oil, Money and Power]. – Moscow, 1999.

[5]   S. Zhiltsov, I. Zonn. Op. cit. – P. 52.

[6]   The Military Balance 2012 // The International Institute for Strategic Studies. URL.: http://www.iiss.org/en/publications/militarybalance/issues/the-military-balance-2012-77da

[7]   Azerbaijan and the U.S.A. determine the prospects of strategic partnership //*Vesti Kavkaza*, 2013, May 29. URL: http://vestikavkaza.ru/new/Azerbaijan-i-SSHHA-opredelyayut-perspeltivy-strategicheskogo-partnerstva.html

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"SYRIAN SYNDROME" AMONG AZERBAIJANI YOUNG PEOPLE: FORTUITY OR TREND?

The mass media in Azerbaijan regularly published in 2013, and in the first months of 2014, information about young men who happened to be in Syria, take part in the armed struggle going on there,

and fall in the "sacred jihad battle" against the "hateful regime" of Bashar Asad. Such information is also widespread in the Internet. Sad statistics reports hundreds of young men who have fallen in the battle "for pure faith," which fact cannot but cause justified alarm. All the more so since this happens to the citizens of a country, one-fifth of whose territory is under occupation, more than one million people are refugees and displaced residents in their own country, and where a ceasefire agreement is daily violated by the militant fighters of the so-called Nagorno-Karabakh army.

The Azerbajanis fighting in Syria are mainly representatives of the radical religious Salaphite and Wahhabi groups.

During the past few years the Wahhabi-Salaphite movement has found a favorable ground in certain Muslim republics of the CIS and Russia. Fundamentalist sentiments became widespread, predominating in various religious groups. As a result, citizens of one and the same state found themselves on opposite sides of the barricades. In the view of Arif Yunus, an Azerbaijani political analyst, the war against the political regime in Syria, which began in 2011, has gradually turned into a war between the Sunnis and Shi'ites, with Azerbaijani volunteers fighting on the side of the latter. Emissaries from Arab countries attract young men under the pretext of serving the holy Koran. Although they call their struggle "war against the infidels," in actual fact Muslims on both sides are being killed. Religious fanatics use the fact that in the past decades the educational level of all people in the countries of the former U.S.S.R. has drastically deteriorated, the video material in the Azerbaijani and Russian languages in the Internet is unbelievably primitive, yet it has an effect on poorly educated young men.

The State Committee on religious organizations of the Azerbaijani Republic has carried out monitoring of the mass media publications and notes in the social networks, in which representatives

of the Salaphite religious groups accuse one another of religious distortions and misdeeds. It should be admitted that these accusations contradict the atmosphere of tolerance which has existed in our country for a very long time, violate human rights, and create misunderstanding on religious grounds in society. Besides, these religious groups are trying to usurp the right to publish fatwas on the Sharia problems. Taking into account the serious character of these mutual accusations and the need to give a legal assessment of the conflicts on the basis of the results of the monitoring carried out with a view to determining the presence in these materials of the ground for spreading religious hatred and enmity and forming religious intolerance and calls for drawing Azerbaijani citizens to participation in armed conflicts abroad, and also in accordance with the results of religious expert evaluation, the State Committee will adopt all necessary measures to stabilize the situation, including measures of a legal character.

The State Committee for work with religious organizations, whose activity is aimed at ensuring mutual understanding and tolerant relations between representatives of various religions living in Azerbaijan, is observing the situation and taking necessary measures for maintaining the atmosphere of tolerance in the religious sphere. If religious expert evaluation shows that the material in question is fanning religious intolerance and discrimination, the persons distributing this material can be brought to criminal responsibility by law-enforcement agencies.

Participation of representatives of Salaphites, who are citizens of Azerbaijan, in military activities in other countries is not sanctioned by the state, and by their action they place themselves outside the law. Consequently, the question arises concerning their status after their return home, if they do not become Shaheeds.

It would be naïve to regard this problem as one of Azerbaijani young people only. The low educational level of young people has created broad vistas for all and sundry propaganda of destructive fundamentalist ideas in all republics of the former Soviet Union. It is only the well-thought-out educational policy in all independent states of the CIS that will be able to oppose effectively the unwelcome challenges of the early third millennium.

"Lomonosovskiye chteniya. Vostokovedeniye,"
Moscow, 2014, pp. 233–236.

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POLITICAL ELITE OF TURKMENISTAN: TRADITIONS AND PROSPECTS

Turkmenistan is one of the closest and controversial countries, and at the same time commanding attention as an authoritarian state with well-pronounced features of totalitarianism in the post-Soviet area. In the view of OSCE observers, there are no elementary features of democracy and pluralism in Turkmenistan: no election of officials, no freedom of speech, freedom of creating public organizations, no freedom of conscience, no clear-cut division of powers, although all these rights are guaranteed by the present-day Constitution of the country. The atmosphere of persecution and strict control over the activity of each citizen reigns supreme.

At the same time certain international and public organizations speak of Turkmenistan as a state making a successful transition from totalitarianism to democracy. In September 1999 the former president S. Niyazov was awarded the highest prize of the World Academy of

Medicine named after Albert Schweitzer (Poland) for "outstanding contribution to the development of humanistic principles in international relations and activity in the name of the common benefit of the Turkmen people." Speaking at the award ceremony the President of the Academy Kazimierz Imelinski noted that "an atmosphere of creative labor has been created in the country, and its stability and democracy could serve as an example to other countries."

It is difficult not to notice the diametrically opposing character of assessments of Turkmenistan's political system. On the one hand, we face a typical authoritarian state with a one-party system and dominant mono-ideology relying on the forcible apparatus for ruling the country. On the other hand, it is a state which has chosen a model of social development based on the national traditions of its people.

Such controversial picture does not allow us to assess in a simple manner the political system of Turkmenistan. It is necessary to apply an all-round and unbiased analysis of the socio-political situation in the country and its acting political forces in order to find out adequacy of various assessments.

From the very beginning of the independent development of the country its political leadership placed stake on the creation of a certain sacrosanct authority, as well as the evolvement of national idea. According to the idea and plans of the leadership of Turkmenistan, its population should orient itself to the authoritative leader and national idea, and the Turkmen elite should rally around them.

There have been definite reasons which induced the political leadership of Turkmenistan to choose precisely this development vector. From the point of view of contemporary political science, it is not every national or ethnic unit with uniform territory, borders with other countries, and uniform administrative power that can be regarded a state. A state should pass a number of development stages. It should

evolve effective forms of the functioning of administrative bodies and the bureaucratic apparatus, create a uniform socio-cultural area, achieve general civic self-identification, and foster uniform political and legal consciousness among its population. The Turkmen people have never in history had an experience of nationhood, consequently, there have been major problems at the development stage of an independent state with a number of state-formation features.

In a situation when patriarchal social organization, division of socio-cultural area by clans and community, and absence of general civic self-identification and uniform legal consciousness are typical features of society, the decision on the evolvement of a definite national idea, or the creation of the sacrosanct authority capable to rally and orient the people is potentially correct.

Under Saparmurat Niyazov (Turkmenbashi) (in 1985–1991 he was First Secretary of the CC of the Communist Party of Turkmenistan, from 1990 to 2006 – President of Turkmenistan) the image of the "ideal leader" of the country began to be formed, which resulted in the emergence of the "personality cult," irremovability of the leader, and ousting of all democratic procedures, such as electivity, control over the activity of the head of state, and the system of checks and balances. In 1994 a referendum prolonged the powers of the president to 2002, and on December 28, 1999, the country's parliament abolished presidential elections altogether and announced S. Niyazov "eternal President of Turkmenistan." Parallel with this, official ideology was evolved named "ideology of Turkmenbashi." Its main premises were of a purely grotesque character: "divine origin of the President, his irreplaceability and eternal stay in power." They were aimed at the total suppression of all initiatives of citizens (especially, political), pluralism of opinions, isolation of the country's population from the surrounding

world (reliance on domestic resources and refusal from experience of developed countries).

At the same time, Turkmenistan, just as all former republics of the U.S.S.R. became an arena of acute struggle for power between various elite groupings based on the tribal principle. The modern Turkmen elite is a symbiosis of individual sections, whose formation is determined by the development of the concrete historical situation. These sections are largely congeneric. From the beginning of their formation the Turkmen elite clans changed in the following order: traditional nomadic (tribal), colonial, Soviet *nomenklatura*, modern elite. Similar situation has been observed in other states of Central Asia. There has been no revolutionary and radical change of elites. The elements of the various types of elites have jointly existed, having been fancifully intertwined to this day.

Several clans have been singled out in Turkmenistan, which contributed (and contribute now) to the formation of the domestic situation and the foreign policy of Turkmenistan at the initial stage of its independence: 1. Kizil-Arvat clan; 2. Mary clan; 3. Balkan clan; 4. Chardzhou clan; 5. Tashauz clan; 6. Akhal clan. Each of these clans was differently represented in the higher echelons of power and was fighting for influence on the supreme leader of the country.

The Kizil-Arvat clan was named by its geographic origin. It was represented by the former head of the cabinet of ministers Khan Ahmedov, minister of consumer goods industry Ashir Atayev, Chair person of the Supreme Soviet of Turkmenistan Rosa Bazarova, as well as many former ministers, and people of science and culture. This clan was the indisputable leader in interclan rivalry for taking important government posts and pursuing its policy within the framework of the state under Turkmenbashi.

The Kizil-Arvat clan has taken the leading positions in the political life of the country for a long time, which was due to its cohesion and influence on other, weaker clans, as well as its consort relations.

The Mary clan (from Mary region) was well represented in the government apparatus, the Academy of Sciences, health protection institutions, and culture.

The Balkan clan took the third position; it was headed by the former member of the Presidential council, deputy premier and minister of oil and gas industry Nazar Soyunov.

The fourth place was taken by the Chardzhou clan. It advanced to the political arena of Turkmenistan as an independent force in the years of the rule of Muhammednazar Gapurov, whose sons Bakhtiyar and Serdar owned large financial means. This clan was also headed by one of the vice premiers of Turkmenistan Jorakuli Babakuliyev, who was in charge of agriculture up to 1994. The clan included numerous representatives of intellectuals and government officials of middle rank.

The Tashauz clan was represented by Rejep Saparov (deputy head of the cabinet of ministers), Hudaiberdy Orazov (President of the Central bank), Sapargeldy Totayev (former governor of Tashauz region), and Yazgeldy Gundogdiyev (governor of Tashauz region). Today this clan is not a real political force capable to consolidate numerous supporters from among the intellectual and leading officials of the country. At the same time, its members hold negotiations with representatives of other clans on the possible consolidation of forces in the future political struggle.

The influence of the Akhal clan was quite great in the government under S. Niyazov. Its representatives controlled most ministries, the attorney general's office, and courts. Such situation could be explained by the fact that S. Niyazov was from the Akhal-

Tekin clan himself, and therefore he gave leading posts at ministries and departments to his fellow-tribesmen. Affiliation to the Akhal-Tekin clan was the reason for getting not only an important post, but also a good salary. However, the former President of Turkmenistan did not allow men from various clans to hold key posts for a long time. Such rotation of personnel created a certain chaos in the echelon of state power, but removed a threat of the emergence of a group of fellow-thinkers capable to oppose the president.

The new President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov (b. 1957 in Akhal region) belongs to the Teke tribe. Under him practically three-quarters of all government officials and nine-tenths of people in the special services are members of this tribe. In modern Turkmenistan affiliation to the Akhaltekin tribe is almost always the reason for receiving an important government post.

After the death of Turkmenbashi, experts have put forward three main scenarios of the development of the situation in the country.

1. Complete break-up with the epoch of Niyazov. This scenario was largely catastrophic. It presupposed popular unrest and even a civil war on the pattern of "color revolutions." However, this scenario was supported by a small number of experts.

2. A "second edition" of Turkmenbashi, accompanied with the repetition of odious characteristics of the regime of unrestricted personal power. This scenario was also supported by few experts.

3. A slow and cautious evolution toward liberalization, similar to that in the U.S.S.R. after Stalin's death, and in China after Mao Zedong. This scenario is the most widespread among experts. They evolved forecasts that the regime would be more oligarchic and more oriented to intra-elite negotiations, where the president would not be a sacral ruler, but would be the first among equals. The regime would evolve into

institutionalized authoritarianism, although the rates of this evolution would be slow enough.

Recent years have shown the tentative nature of such forecasts. The Czech analyst Slavomir Gorak has thoroughly described the evolution in the corridors of powers in Turkmenistan. He noted that its ruling elite, which had taken shape by the time of Niyazov's death, began to change immediately after the elections of the new president. Berdimuhamedov's strong position began to be seen and felt quite soon. Despite the seeming reduction of the powers of the president, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov behaved quite confidently during the first days of office, and let people know that he was not going to depend on his patrons. One of the well-known experts on Central Asia, Alexander Sobyanin, holds the view that "Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov holds the reigns of power quite strongly; influential political rivals have either been expelled from the country or imprisoned, and strong and influential government officials have either promised to serve him or have been dismissed."

Having become President and Turkmenistan's first person, Berdimuhamedov was going to consolidate the regime of personal power rather than to turn to the oligarchic or "tandem" (with Rejepov) rule. In a situation when there are many elite groupings of a similar level without a leader in the political medium of Turkmenistan, conditions could emerge for an unpredicted conflict between elite groupings claiming power. Berdmuhamedov seemed to have understood this. During the formation of a new government he showed that he was well aware of the situation and knew how to choose and appoint the necessary personnel in the Turkmen conditions. The new President surrounds himself with people whom he knows well enough and those who fell in disfavor in Turkmenbashi's time (for example, Jemal Geoklenova and Khadyr Saparliyev, who were the minister of

textile industry, and rector of the Polytechnical institute and later the minister of education). Experts also note that Berdimuhamedov minimized the possibilities of transfer of power to another force. For one thing, by the Constitutional Law the procedure of transfer of power in an event of the death of the president has been changed. Presidential powers go over not to the speaker of parliament, as it was the case, but to the first deputy premier. In other words, the vice premier can be fired at any moment, whereas the speaker, which is formally elected by parliament, can become an independent figure.

Apart from that, expert on Central Asia Vitali Khlyupin also points to the fact that advisers from the entourage of Turkmenistan's President play an important role in the country's domestic and foreign policy. Each authoritarian ruler of the Asian-African type has groups of assistants from other tribes who fulfill important functions. The first concerns his image (communication with the outer world); the second – so-called literary…, to write ideological dummies; the third – to tackle the boss's business dealings in Europe or elsewhere and hide his assets. Because these people are not members of local clans and are outside the local system, they can be trusted, and they will reliably guard the "holy of holies," namely, the purse of the boss, and take care of the most "delicate" business. This is a quite normal practice. Moreover, our leaders often take outlanders as personal bodyguards: they are more loyal.

Experts note a great importance of the clan factor in adopting decisions, especially on internal matters. The backbone of the political and economic elites of Turkmenistan is formed by representatives of Berdimuhamedov's clan – the Akhal-Tekin. They hold up to three quarters of the key posts, including the government and regions, which fact breeds clan and ethnic discontent in the country. Experts also note that inhabitants of various regions and districts and representatives of

different tribes practically do not mix with one another. This aggravates still more interclan contradictions. On the whole, in the view of regional observers, in his policy Berdimuhamedov follows the former president of Kyrgyzstan Kurmanbek Bakiyev, which leads to his greater involvement in clan matters and can contribute to the development of the domestic political situation according to Kyrgyz scenario.

The wide distribution of clan and family relations and the domination of paternalist traditions in relations between few public organizations and the state narrow down democratic foundations and the weak social basis of the political system and regime of Turkmenistan, posing s threat to its future in the conditions of the growing risks of the proliferation of "color revolutions" in the world.

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CERTAIN SPECIFIC FEATURES OF THE PARTY-POLITICAL SYSTEM OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

Just as other Soviet republics, Uzbekistan has taken the road of economic reforms after the disintegration of the U.S.S.R., and begun political transformation of the country.

It should be remembered that in Soviet times political processes in the Soviet republics were largely determined by the Center, however, it was precisely this period that was characterized by the intensive development of clans in Uzbekistan.

Interaction between the Center and the political elite in Uzbekistan in the person of political clans was built on the basis of mutual exchanges of resources and loyalty on the part of the Uzbek population, which contributed to the preservation of stability in the region, and quite satisfied the Center. Experts note that the peak of the hey-day of the clans of the Uzbek Republic was during the "stagnation"

period. During that period there were no strong nationalistic sentiments in Uzbekistan. Separatist and anti-Russian sentiments and manifestations were effectively suppressed by the special services of the republic, because the leadership of Uzbekistan was greatly interested in maintaining the balance of forces, which served as a guarantee of the preservation of their own power.

The development model of industrialization and "non-shock therapy" chosen by Uzbekistan has allowed it to reach the GDP level of 1991 already by 2000.

The political system of the republic has been transformed from the communist into authoritarian one, in which all power was concentrated in the hands of the President and political clans.

The modern political system of Uzbekistan is in many respects a continuation of the Soviet system. Under the Constitution of 1992, Uzbekistan is a presidential republic. All power and political and legislative initiatives are concentrated in the hands of the President. He is personally immune from any legal prosecution. Not a single government body is capable to lift this immunity. After the expiry of presidential powers, the head of state receives the status of lifelong member of the second chamber of parliament – the senate.

The President appoints and recalls the heads (khakims) of twelve regions of the republic. The lower level of political power is represented by rais – chairman of the makhalla committee, which usually consists of five to six elders.

A characteristic feature of the modern political system of Uzbekistan is the presence of special groups of loyalties in the country's political system, which includes individual families, makhallas, and neighboring communities. It should be noted that clans have taken the most active part in the political transformation of the country, which resulted in the establishment of an authoritarian regime.

Today, the political system of Uzbekistan answers to all characteristics of the authoritarian regime (with a definite degree of accountability of its institutions). Despite the fact that many institutions and practices have been borrowed from the former Soviet Union, one of the main features of Uzbekistan is the preservation of the so-called informal sector. It is necessary to notice certain specific features of this process, namely, the formation of state institutions answering the interests of clans and the person of the President, concentration of economic resources, control over the special services, the greater role of the head of state, and certain independence of clan and inter-clan relations.

Thus, President Islam Karimov, from the very beginning of his rule, has been placed under certain dependence on clans. An important condition of his staying in power is the preservation of a balance between regional clans, without letting one of them gain dominant position and broader access to the country's resources. Islam Karimov has brought to power representatives of clan elites. At the time of Karimov coming to power, the most influential clans whose interests he had to take into account were the Ferghana, Dzhizak, Samarkand, Kashkadarya and Khorezm clans. The President had to give government and other important posts to people originating from these clans. Rivalry of regional factions plays a crucial role in the formation and structure of the state and government apparatus, which thereby gain access to the main resources of society. It is quite important to note that despite the fact that Karimov himself belonged to the Samarkand clan, he restricted power of representatives of this clan, and restored the rights of the Ferghana and Khorezm clans. Muhamad Salikh (Saloi Madaminov) , the head of the opposition party "Erk" ("Freedom"), was an influential member of the Khorezm clan (He was forced to leave Uzbekistan because he was an implacable opponent of the incumbent president).

At present the President's entourage includes mainly representatives of the Tashkent elite.

Thus, it can be stated that the clan factor has been playing an important role in the modern political processes of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Today, the President of Uzbekistan comes out as the guarantor of balanced relations between political clans, groups and individual leaders. However, if he leaves the political scene, struggle for power may become unpredictable in the future. Thus, potential political instability in Uzbekistan can lead to the growing activity of radical extremists, which in turn will create instability and a certain danger for the entire Central Asian region, as well as for Russia.

The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan (articles VII–X) guarantees its citizens democratic rights and freedoms: of speech, assembly, religious views, property ownership, ethnic and gender equality. The Constitution also guarantees all citizens the equal right to vote, freedom of political movements and associations on condition that their activity does not encroach upon the state system of the republic, does not fan national, religious and other discord, and is not directed to destabilization of law and order in the country. Any changes in the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan can be made in due order according to the Law adopted by voting results and endorsed by two-thirds of all deputies to the lower and upper chambers of the country's parliament.

The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Political Parties" adopted in 1996, and the Law of 2004 "On Financing Political Parties" legitimate the creation and functioning of voluntary associations of the country; they also aim at improving and raising the role of political parties in society's life. The latter law determined the sources and basic principles, accessibility of information about financing and the use of

financial and other means of these political parties and organizations, as well as the activity of the factions in parliament, etc.

Party	Number seats	Representation
Liberal-democratic party	41	34,2
People's democratic party	28	23,3
National-democratic party "Fidokorlar"	18	15
National-democratic party "Milliy Tiklanish"	11	9,2
Social-democratic party "Adolat"	10	8,3
Candidates put forward by citizens' initiative groups	12	10

At present there are five officially registered political parties in the Republic of Uzbekistan: the People's democratic party, Social-democratic party "Adolat," National-democratic party "Milliy Tiklanish," National-democratic party "Fidokorlar," Movement of entrepreneurs and businessmen – Liberal-democratic party of Uzbekistan. The political parties function in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Law "On Political Parties," and other legislative acts.

Representation of political parties in the Legislative Chamber of parliament by the election results in December 2004 and January 2005 was as follows:

The leading party of Uzbekistan (ruling party) is the National-democratic party of Uzbekistan (Halq Demokratik Partiyasi), which was officially registered in November 1991, and which was transformed from the Communist party of the republic. This party proclaims adherence to the market economy and multiparty system and fully supports the political course of President Islam Karimov. Having preserved in the main the personnel and organizational structure of the

former Communist party, it is a mass party (its membership is about 600,000). President Karimov quit the party in June 1996 and left the post of its chairman. However, this tactical step did not mean the loss of his control over it, all the more so since the deputies elected from this party have taken more than half of all posts in government ministries. The successor of the head of state on the post of the party chairman A. Dzhalolov took part in the presidential elections of 1999–2000 as Karimov's rival, and was supported by only 4,2 percent of the voters. Almost all members of the People's democratic party voted for Islam Karimov, which confirms this party's position as the presidential party.

The National-democratic party "Fidokorlar" has existed since 1998; it was formed in compliance with I. Karimov's proposal to set up a new party "free from corruption," a party of "younger leaders of the future." As a result, this party received 34 seats in the lower chamber of the country's parliament in the election held in December 1999. The "Fidokorlar" played the decisive role in the presidential elections in January 2000. In April 2000 this party and the moderate conservative party "Progress of the Motherland ("Vatan Tarraqiyoti") founded in 1992 officially announced their merger, thus creating "Fidokorlar." In July 2000 the first congress of the new united party was held, its membership was more than 45,000 in 2004. Most of its members are entrepreneurs, intellectuals, and young people.

The Social-democratic party "Adolat" ("Justice") was formed in 1990. In February 1995 it proclaimed its support of the President's course and denounced Islamic intellectuals who advocated radical ideas. This party had about 60,000 members in 2006.

Another popular party among the Uzbek intellectual circles supporting President Karimov's course is the Democratic party "National Revival" ("Milliy Tiklanish Partiyasi") created in 1995. Among its aims was political work in the interests of "national progress

and national consciousness" on the basis of liberal principles with due account of Uzbek specific features. The party scored certain success in the 1999 elections, having won ten seats in the lower chamber of parliament. However, it was unable to score tangible results in the elections of 2004.

In 2003 the Liberal-democratic party (UzLiDeP) was set up on the initiative of the country's authorities, which is regarded as a movement of entrepreneurs and businessmen. It has shown itself as a party protecting the interests of owners, industrialists and private capital. The party became widely known in 2006 when it stood at the head of the Democratic bloc consisting of "Fidokorlar" and "Adolat" in the lower chamber of parliament.

Examining the party-political system of Uzbekistan, mention should be made of the role of the opposition. However, the present legislation considerably narrows down the sphere of its activity.

There are unregistered or banned opposition parties and socio-political movements. In the experts' view, the opposition to the President and government can conditionally be divided into three groups: 1. national-democratic opposition which comes out for the creation of a democratic civil society; 2. clan opposition based on interclan contradictions; 3. Islamic opposition, which advocates the creation of an Islamic state. It should be mentioned that the opposition always demands to take into account national specificity.

Analyzing the reality of Uzbekistan, one feature of the Uzbek model draws the attention of experts, namely, that the state plays the decisive role in all economic and political reforms in modern Uzbek society.

Uzbekistan is one of the most totalitarian states of the region with a harsh autocratic regime. However, it should be examined in a historical context: we cannot deny that the existing ruling system after

the country has gained independence succeeded to implement modernization processes in Uzbekistan. Time will show whether the authoritarian regime has become obsolete, and whether the present stage of the country's development will allow it to make transfer to another, more democratic development road. However, it seems that the further, more "highly technological" development of society is unfeasible in the conditions of authoritarianism.

The development process of the newly-independent states of the Central Asian region has shown that democracy is not a universal form of society's organization, and it cannot be brought from the outside.

It is evident that after the proclamation of a democratic course and even after the introduction of the institutional foundations of democracy, its structural elements do not emerge all by themselves. The process of democratization is always prolonged, taking the character of political modernization in the conditions of traditional society. Sharing the view that democracy "cannot be imported" and is always a product of the original culture of a people and their historical and spiritual development, and, as it was justly noted by Uzbekistan's President I. Karimov," democracy cannot be introduced by force, it is fostered, sometimes for a long time. Genuine democracy is not decreed and forced by the authorities; people create it themselves, by their culture and realization of their social needs."

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РОССИЯ
И
МУСУЛЬМАНСКИЙ МИР
2014 – 12 (270)

Научно-информационный бюллетень

Содержит материалы по текущим политическим,
социальным и религиозным вопросам

Компьютерная верстка Е.Е. Мамаева