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WHAT WE DO NOT KNOW

I is not only the world economy, but also the entire mankind that are now in a deep crisis and transition to some qualitatively new state. One would like to believe that it will be relatively stable, but the experience of the past quarter of a century makes us suspect that a radical change of the very concept of “stability” in actual fact means permanence of various changes. The most evident factor transforming our life is the change of the technological basis, transfer from industrial, technologies to post-industrial ones (at first information and then, possibly, biological). As a result, even the parameters of society and individuals, which have been considered objectively constant, change dramatically.

Despite the high degree of ambiguity, many parameters of our future seem understandable and deserve to be united in a uniform system. This is a great task facing social sciences. In order to tackle it we have to define the most important, “nodal” zones of ambiguity and formulate the questions answers to which will be of the greatest theoretical and practical importance.

These questions become a plan of the most promising research in the sphere of social sciences, at least at the first stage.

Disintegration of the World: What Will It Look Like?

There is consensus at the present time on the subject of the cause for the world economic crisis. It is the decay of global monopolies, which is manifested in the debt crisis, infantile (sometimes, even idiotic) state and official corporative management, and inflation of various financial and business bubbles.

Analysts agree that the decay of global monopolies, which have made demand the main value, will lead to the further growth of protectionism (which started at the end of 2008), right up to the division of the world into macroregions, that is, currency and customs zones, which will enter into bitter and chaotic competition with one another.

What is the most probable scenario of the falling down of mankind into depression and disintegration of the uniform global markets into macroregions? It is supposed that the slowing down of China's progress (and possibly its partial de-industrialization) will give it a fillip.

There is no clear idea about the scope and depth of the disintegration of global markets. Naturally, the markets of mobile communication and the Internet-services will remain global, just as criminal markets, including the markets of illegal financial services, which will cater for the needs of the global managerial class.

The problem of the geographical distribution and localization of the global losses from depression seem also very important.

Theoretically, the population of the advanced countries should suffer most: the greater comfort, the more painful transfer to poor living conditions.

It is quite possible that in the conditions of global depression the well-developed societies will again be able to transfer a considerable part of their losses on to the rest of the world, as has been the case of

the past crises. This will be accompanied with growing poverty and the destruction of a considerable part of underdeveloped economies, and their chaotization and dehumanization.

Technological Shock

The most important paradox of information technologies is the fact that the world is becoming less and less cognizable.

This decrease of cognizability of the world is the key expression of the archaism of mankind, a sign of the end of the linear section of the spiral of social progress: technological progress still continues, but it leads to regress, not progress, in the social sphere – with the corresponding destruction of the entire system of world view.

There is a real threat of technological degradation and great catastrophes capable (in the event of the loss of part of life-supporting technologies) to lead to a considerable reduction of the numerical strength of humanity.

A more real threat of manmade disasters is created by the inevitable division of the global market into macroregions. Most probable, many key markets will narrow down to a size, which will not allow us to maintain quite a few technologies we are used to, including life-supporting technologies.

One of them, forming a “risk zone” is food production. Part of it is concentrated already now on the output of genetically modified organisms (which do not give progeny). It is also essential that “ordinary” seeds degenerate and demand constant cross-breeding with their wild predecessors, whose collections of seeds are limited.

The reduction of markets in size combined with the destruction activity of global monopolies aimed at the ostentatious elimination of “defiant” consumers creates colossal technological risks.

It is quite possible that part of macroregions will be destroyed due to the collapse of life-support technologies; on the other hand, part of global monopolies will retain control over several macroregions. At the same time, it will be possible that cheap, simple and generally available technologies, which have for a long time been blocked by global business and state bureaucracies, will rapidly develop. The use of these superproductive technologies will lead to closure of the colossal number of jobs at traditional enterprises and to collapse of monopolies, including global ones.

It should be borne in mind that different global markets will disintegrate differently, and some formally existing states with their different markets of products and technologies may become part of different macroregions.

Dialectic of Technologies

One of the most interesting problems of today is the future prospects of technological development. In the 1960s–1970s mankind shifted the center of gravity of its intellectual efforts and financial investments to science from the technology of changes of the surrounding world to the technology of management. This was manifested by the elaboration of computer technologies and the technologies of control over behavior (through management of work and entertainment, as well as marketing).

The spreading of democracy is of no less importance: people are bent to refuse from the indefinite, little known and doubtful “bright future” in favor of current consumption. Influencing the adoption of decisions, they are against financing investigations with indefinite results.

Lastly, global monopolies realize that technological progress is a direct threat to their power and welfare, and they retard it with the

help of the institution of the rights of intellectual property. As a result, technological progress becomes definitely slower and can be replaced by technological degradation.

However, this apocalyptic conclusion is not confirmed by the fact of spreading a considerable number of new technologies transforming the world. And they have spread far beyond the boundaries of the computer and information spheres. First of all, we see the integration of computer technologies with industrial ones, which considerably raise the effectiveness of the latter. One of the first results of this process was the emergence of mobile communication, and the extraction of gas and oil from shale, which transforms both geo-economics and geopolitics.

Genetic modification of plants enabling us to grow new types with predetermined properties, transfer from mechanical processing of materials to the use of electromagnetic fields in order to change its properties, the introduction of industrial robots, etc. will eventually change the entire sphere of production, our everyday life, and, what is very important, the international division of labor. This may cause partial deindustrialization of China and become one of the factors which will push the world to global depression.

A feeling emerges that we witness the qualitative weakening of global monopoly as a motive of behavior of global monopolies themselves, and the possible disintegration of the global market into macroregions.

At the same time, we also witness a striking combination of the rapid improvement of technologies and their threatening degradation. This dialectic cannot be perceived so far within the framework of a uniform theory.

Downfall of Social Value of Knowledge: Where Is the Limit?

The very nature of human thinking is changing rapidly enough under the impact of tumultuously developing technologies.

First of all, computers, having made formal logic equally accessible to all, are pushing mankind into the void of non-logical (creative and mystical) thinking. And this may lead to the full disorganization of the current activity of mankind. Ability to create becomes the main condition of competitiveness of an individual and a team. As a result, interpersonal competition will become more “biologized,” more connected with the inborn qualities of a person and less social than at present; different cultures dominating in different macroregions will give different answers to this challenge and determine their destiny differently.

Naturally, the more democratic one or another culture, the more accessible “social lifts” in it, the more competitive it will be in a new situation.

The sharp growth of the volume of information has greatly exceeded the processing and analytical possibilities of people and the devices they have evolved for the purpose.

As a result of systematic interaction with the computer a change of human personality seems quite dramatic. It has been noticed time and time again that the psychology of professional computer operators – systemic managers, programmers, etc. – differs from the psychology of ordinary people to such an extent that it is difficult to keep in touch with them even when it is absolutely necessary for both sides at work.

This gives an impression of a new development stage of man connected with the clear-cut degradation of an individual.

Spiritual infantilism and simplification of personality which have long been noticed and described, for example, in the United States, have transformed it into a “partial member of society” with limited possibilities of individual perception.

The World without Middle Class: Under the “Iron Heel”?

Against the backdrop of these fundamental and frightening problems the question about the fate of the middle class may seem egoistically trifling.

Indeed, the productivity of new, primarily information technologies, sharply reduces the number of people necessary for the production of material and cultural benefits consumed by mankind.

While the state has been the main subject of politics, it has restricted, in one way or another, technological progress for the sake of the preservation of the social structure convenient for it. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the beginning of globalization global business has become the main subject of world politics (in the West its triumph began with the resignation of President Nixon), and the logic of a firm, in contrast to the logic of society, requires the optimization of expenses. In this case, the main bearer of expenses is the middle class which is distinguished with the maximal gap between the directly produced and directly consumed benefits. (It is important that its elements may be necessary, but indirect, conditions for the production of modern benefits, for example, technologies, which may lead to the loss of these benefits after the social reduction of the middle class; but a firm, be it a global firm, needs profit “here and now.”)

This is why the middle class is destroyed by global business within the framework of its struggle against extravagance, and this process has already reached the advanced countries.

Meanwhile, the middle class presents a critically important part of the demand of the modern world; reduction of this demand means collapse of the market economy and global depression. What will the modern economy be like without the demand of the middle class? This question remains open.

Perhaps, the market as a means of organization of society has exhausted itself and the modern global crisis is also a crisis of market relations as such.

It is indicative that private ownership has been preserved only at the level of small, medium-sized and partly big national business; as to global business, even major shareholders are unable or unwilling to implement their rights of owners, which means the actual abrogation of private ownership – the foundation of market relations.

Finally, a major change showing the exhaustion of market relations is the lowering significance of money and the growing significance of technologies, which become, in certain cases, principally inalienable from their designers and developers (it is not technology that is sold, but the right to use it).

The transformation of democracy seems quite substantial, too. Its present crisis is nothing as compared with what awaits it in the event of the disappearance of the middle class, its source and foundation.

Perhaps, it will be replaced with harsh information dictatorship capable to tear people off reality and largely control the structure of their requirements (as to their social requirements, this control will be complete).

A certain harbinger of such information dictatorship (by its effectiveness and totality) we can now observe in Ukraine, which is now plunging into real madness.

As to the situation of the elite, by virtue of its inevitable selfish narrowness and inability to support and maintain the necessary level of knowledge and technology, it will be extremely unstable and vague.

Naturally, the list of the numerous problems which have, evidently, no solution and which are facing humanity at the time of its qualitative change and transfer to a new state, is much longer and broader: a journal article has objective limitations. Nevertheless, a thorough apprehension and conceptualization of a range of the problems raised will contribute, as it seems, to a better management of our societies. And social sciences are a means of searching for the truth and ensuring mankind's progress.

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“ISLAMIC STATE”: ANOTHER VERSION

In his lectures on the history of philosophy Hegel wrote: “Islam has long left the world historical arena and returned to Oriental calm and quiet.” One hundred years later, at the beginning of the 20th century his words were echoed by the leader of the Algerian Sheikhs-ul-Islam Abd al-Hamid Ben Badis: “The dreams about the revival of the caliphate will never come true, and the Muslims will ultimately understand it.” Evidently, for one hundred years which divided these two thinkers such words were quite justified. However, today, against the background of the developments in the Middle East one is hardly able to talk of Islamic religion in terms of “calmness” and “quietness.” Doubtless, the situation in the region in 2014–2015 is really unprecedented: the terrorist Islamic grouping has not only succeeded

to set up its own state with all necessary attributes, but also to broaden its boundaries all the time. Paradoxically, this has taken place at the time when the failure of political reforms inspired by Islamism has clearly been revealed in a number of Arab countries, above all, in Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, Yemen, and earlier in Sudan. It is important to pay attention to the structure named “Islamic State.” At its sources stood the former regional organization “al Qaeda” – “al Qaeda in Mesopotamia,” which was replaced first by “al Qaeda in Iraq,” and then “Islamic State in Iraq and Levant” (ISIL). In the summer of 2014 the grouping again renamed itself “Islamic State”, thus having renounced any geographical affiliation. Its basic principles are not new; they are based mainly on pan-Islamism of the mid-20th century. In 1980, the journal of the Egyptian “Muslim Brothers” entitled “Ad-Dawaa” propagated the idea about the need “to turn the 20th century into the century of ‘the triumph of Islam’ and unification of all Muslim peoples in a ‘single nation’ within the bounds of one state.” Although the outlines of the suggested state have never been quite clear, the pan-Islamists have always opposed “regional narrowness” of nationalist concepts and put forward universalism and internationalism of Muslim brotherhood. In practice, this has always concealed the “hegemonic aspirations” of the ruling circles of certain countries. This was true of Ottoman Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (at the dawn of its foundation). The “Islamic State” was no exception. Despite a great volume of everything written and spoken about it, the reasons for its emergence on Iraqi territory have not been disclosed well enough. The present tragic state of Iraq is directly connected with the reasons put forward by the United States to justify its military interference in that country. It should be borne in mind that the Ba’athist regime and “al Qaeda” had for a long time been at loggerheads, and Saddam Hussein and his associates rejected Islamism as such, be it Shi’ite or

Sunni. In 2003, prior to the occupation of Iraq, there were no “al Qeada” units in the country, but after American troops landed there they emerged and became active, operating against the Ba’athists, the coalition forces, and the Iraqi army.

The real reasons for the American invasion of Iraq lay not in the U.S. striving to seize Iraqi oil or reshape and democratize the Middle East, but in the promise given by President George Bush Jr. to the American people after the tragic events of September 11, 2001, that the United States would fight “al Qaeda” not on their country’s territory, but very far from its borders. The official substantiation of the coalition forces’ invasion of Iraq contained not only the assertion that the Ba’athist regime possessed chemical weapon, but also the statement of the contacts between Saddam Hussein’s regime and “al Qaeda.” A joint resolution of the two chambers of the U.S. Congress directly said that Iraq presented a real threat to the United States and the Persian Gulf countries because it had chemical and biological weapon and because it supported and hid terrorist organizations on its territory. The resolution entrusted the U.S. administration with taking measures “against international terrorists and terrorist organizations, or persons who planned the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, or helped perpetrate them...” In compliance with his promise the troops of the coalition headed by the United States entered Afghanistan at the end of 2001 and in January 2002 the Taliban regime connected with “al Qaeda” was wiped out. However, the Talibis who have fled from Kabul and the strike forces headed by Osama bin Laden continued a successful guerilla war, having based themselves in the hardly accessible districts of Waziristan and Baluchistan, from where the coalition forces were unable to squeeze them out. The entire course of the American invasion of Iraq makes it possible to conclude that the United States has deliberately destroyed the Iraqi regime in order to

turn that country into a springboard for the fight against “al Qaeda.” Thus, the United States seemed to “kill two birds with one stone.” It destroyed the dictatorship in Iraq, which was unacceptable for many countries of the region and for many Iraqis themselves, and at the same time provoked “al Qaeda” to operate on the territory where it would have to fight in disadvantageous conditions. Indeed, in contrast to Afghanistan, where “al Qaeda” operated in mountain districts in habitual conditions and with support of local residents, the situation in Iraq was completely new for its fighters.

In other words, by its invasion of Iraq the U.S. army has destroyed quite a few structures of Islamic radicals in a number of Arab countries and thus dealt a serious blow at “al Qaeda.” However, turning Iraq into an arena of battles between foreign forces and the Ba’athist structures and the main Islamic grouping entailed numerous losses among the peaceful population and growing discontent with foreign occupation. In addition, the contradictions inherent in the overthrown regime, which were cruelly suppressed, came to the fore as soon as Saddam Hussein went off the scene.

Ethnic and confessional struggle in Iraq which divided the Kurds, Shi’ites and Sunnites at the time of Saddam Hussein but were harshly suppressed by the authorities came to the fore after 2003. A specific feature of the exacerbated conflict was the fact that it was not the Kurds or Shi’ites that had been a weaker side in it, as it was the case earlier, but the Iraqi Sunni Arabs who had always been more educated and secularized section of the population in the country. The weakening of the positions of Sunni Arabs in Iraq can largely explain the rapid successes of the “Islamic State” in the North-western part of Iraq inhabited mainly by the Sunni population who received the extremists as liberators from the Shi’ite regime. As a result, in the course of several months the fighters of the “Islamic State” were able to take the

territory of the “Sunni triangle” in Iraq under their control, as well as three provinces in Syria. The total number of the population there amounted to about 10 million. For the sake of justice it should be noted that the present exacerbation of the ethno-confessional contradictions in Iraq is not a result of the collapse of the Ba’athist regime alone and the following foreign occupation; it has deeper historical reasons underlying the present-day Iraqi statehood. Iraq in its present boundaries was created in 1920 by uniting three former provinces of the Ottoman Empire: Baghdad, Basra and Mosul, with the population of Baghdad and Basra mostly Arab and poly-confessional with a slight predominance of Sunnites. On the contrary, Mosul was dominated by Shi’ites and its northern part was mostly inhabited by Kurds. The Hashemite Kingdom of Iraq set up under the British mandate where the brother of the King of Jordan took the throne could be considered an “artificial formation,” just as some Arab historians regard the Kingdom of Jordan. Popular uprisings which shook the kingdom in the period between the two world wars had, as a rule, not only a class, but also confessional nature, inasmuch as their main participants were the Shi’ite popular masses. The Kurd national movement was also developing during that period: the first major uprising of the Kurds took place in 1931–1932 and was headed by Mustafa Barzani. The second such event was in 1943. The Kurds continued to rebel after the overthrow of the royal regime in 1959. In other words, ethnic and confessional contradictions were the permanent factors determining the domestic political situation in Iraq throughout its entire history as an independent state. Despite numerous attempts to resolve these conflicts they were never completely eliminated. For one, Saddam Hussein, who never hesitated in the methods “to pacify his subjects,” was only able to turn the conflict between Iraqi confessions and ethnic groups to a smouldering state, but he could not eliminate it completely. After the

overthrow of the Ba'athist regime the conflict flared up again, but this time there was no strongman in Iraq, who would have been able to suppress the threat to the very existence of the state.

The policy pursued by the provisional coalition government and after that by the Shi'ite government of Iraq has only aggravated the complex situation. In May 2003 the provisional government adopted two laws which laid the foundation of the country's reconstruction: on elimination of the Ba'athist rule and order from Iraqi society and on liquidation of government and state structures. The first of them actually sanctioned purges of the political and civil elites, and the other one served as the basis for the liquidation of the special services, as well as political and military structures of Iraq. In August of that year the High national commission on "de-Ba'athization" began to work, which became especially active during the stay in power of Ibrahim al-Jafari's cabinet. At that time the candidates of Sunna political parties were not allowed to take part in the election campaign. A new Constitution of Iraq was adopted in 2005, which banned the Ba'ath party and removed from all government posts people who had been Ba'ath party members for the past ten years. The policy of the then prime minister of the country Nuri al-Maliki was aimed, among other things, at harassment of the Sunni minority and prevention for its members to increase their representation in government bodies. His policy has largely contributed to the Sunna inhabitants of Iraq preferring the "Islamic State" to their "democratic" country.

The struggle of the Iraqi leadership against the defeated Ba'ath party was associated with the struggle against Sunnites. It is indicative that the backbone of the "Islamic State" army is Sunnites who have fled from persecution of the new authorities of Iraq because of their alleged connections with the Ba'athist regime. The two key figures among the top leaders of the "Islamic State" – Abu Ali al-Anbari in Syria and Abu

Muslim at-Turkmani in Iraq are representatives of high-ranking officer corps of Saddam Hussein's army.

In the mid-20th century the Egyptian public and political figure and one of the ideologists of the “Muslim Brothers” Sayid Qutb in his book “Islam: The Misunderstood religion” paid attention to the possibility of playing on contradictions as a serious weapon in the Muslims' hands. He wrote, among other things, that the advantageous geographical position of Muslim countries – between the old world and the new world – would enable them to manage the balance of forces. Then they will be able to support one or the other side guided by their own collective interests, but not the desire to serve eastern or western imperialism. Conformably to the present time, despite the presence of highly qualified officers it is hardly possible to overestimate the might and potential of the “Islamic State”: its army numbers about 10,000 men and is far from being a serious military force, especially taking into account the absence of heavy weapons. The secret of its present successes should be sought not in their strength, but rather in the weakness of their enemies conditioned by the deep crisis of international relations in the Middle East after the “Arab spring” developments.

The “Arab spring” which has touched all countries of the region has definitely become the turning point not only in the socio-political development of certain Arab countries, but also in the functioning of the entire system of interstate relations. The year 2010 preceding the “Arab spring” was the highest peak in regional cooperation. Despite all and sundry claims presented by regional actors to one another, they interacted quite effectively, ensuring collective security in the Middle East. In this connection mention should be made of the idea to create an “Arab zone of good-neighbornliness” voiced by the then General Secretary of the Arab League Amr Mussah in March 2010. In his view,

such structure could simplify the principles of interaction of the Arab world and the states surrounding it. The then Premier of Turkey T.R. Erdogan supported the idea. At the time the question of including Iran in the “Arab zone of good-neighborliness” was also discussed actively, which could be regarded a great step along the road of Iranian “integration” in the Arab world.

However, the practical realization of this idea is obviously a thing of the future. The Arab governments have plunged into the domestic problems of their countries, and diplomatic relations in the region have rapidly changed beyond recognition. In this context, the position of Turkey is indicative enough. Its political system was considered almost ideal, especially in Egypt after the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak during the “revolution of January 25.” Premier Erdogan’s visit to Egypt in the summer of 2011 evoked a great social upsurge among the Cairo young people. However, after the next “revolution of June 30” during which the military ousted the Islamists from power, the Turkish achievements began to be devaluated in Egypt, and the culmination of the reappraisal was the official expulsion of Turkey’s Ambassador from Egypt at the end of 2013 because of his alleged interference in the internal affairs of the country.

During the past four years two events dealt a heavy blow at the system of inter-Arab relations. The first was the conflict in Syria and the other was the collective filibuster of the countries of the Persian Gulf with regard to Qatar. The Syrian turmoil has not only divided the states of the region into supporters and opponents of President Bashar al-Asad, but in actual fact, it excluded the very possibility of a dialogue with the existing Syrian regime on the subject of evolving joint methods of opposing the “Islamic State.” Now it is simply impossible to imagine a situation in which Syria could sit at a negotiation table with such key actors responsible for security in the region as Turkey or

Saudi Arabia. It is clearly seen that the exclusion of Syria, one-third of whose territory is controlled by the “Islamic State,” from the international coalition, shoots down the idea of a positive outcome of the operation against the Islamists. The problem is aggravated by the fact that Iranian “integration” in the Arab world is still in a deadlock, and relations between the Shi’ite government of Nuri al-Maliki in Iraq and the Persian Gulf countries have remained strained right up to the resignation of the Iraqi leader in the summer of 2014. To boot, Tehran’s influence on the political processes in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon remains quite strong. Finally, the conflict within the “Arab six,” which previously seemed unshakeable, has added fuel to the fire, having made the regional situation still more complex. Of course, Saudi Arabia could restrict Qatar’s ambitions, if it so wished. However, Qatar’s financing the Muslim Brothers in the entire Arab world, from Morocco to Iraq, bears fruit. In the Maghrib countries and in Yemen the project of political reforms on the basis of Islamism has reached a stalemate, whereas in Iraq and Syria it is on the upgrade. A no small role in it has been played by assistance coming from the Persian Gulf countries to the local insurgent groupings during the past four years.

A combination of all factors have formed a favorable foundation for the emergence and spreading of the “Islamic state” on the territory of Iraq and Syria. The opponents of the Islamists often act without proper coordination, and are quite often at loggerheads with one another. The most vivid confirmation of their disunity has been the fact that not a single country of the coalition wishes to begin a land operation against the “Islamic state,” preferring to shift responsibility for this step on its neighbors. As to the West, it continues, just as its allies, to render financial and military assistance to the forces fighting Bashar al-Asad, ignoring the fact that a greater part of this assistance falls into the hands of al-Bagdadi and his followers.

In the latter half of the 20th century a view was widespread according to which religious concepts had already fulfilled their function, having “awakened politically” the Muslim peoples and rallied them together in the fight against “foreign oppression.” Preponderance of Islam in the public and political life of the Arab countries was regarded as a means for “diversion of the attention of the popular masses from solution of the vitally important political tasks.” It was supposed that this phenomenon would be short-lived, inasmuch as “socio-economic and cultural progress inevitably causes the growth of secularist tendencies.” However, real life has shown that the potential of revival tendencies in the Muslim world has not been exhausted in our time. The rapid growth and major successes of the “Islamic state” are a vivid confirmation of this. It would be wrong to regard the “Islamic state” as an uncivilized gang of brigands and murderers who publicly torture and kill citizens of western countries. To date this organization has become a strong state structure which was able to create a full-fledged state with borders, an army, a system of political power, its budget, and, what is more important, the population supporting it. The “Islamic state” is not like the half-mythical “al Qaeda” hiding in inaccessible mountains and making sporadic attacks on various continents. This is a quite objective political reality of the 21st century which has entrenched itself in the Middle East with its “land of Islam” and has been waging a war against the “infidels.” This state formation has become an attractive alternative for thousands of Muslims the world over dreaming of Islamic revival. The phenomenon of the “Islamic state” has once more reminded us that it is too early to delete Islam from the pages of universal history; the ideas of restoration of Islamic caliphate proved to be viable and tenacious. The well-known Indian political figure and one of the chairmen of the Indian National Congress Maulana Abul Kalam Azad justly noted

that religion was like a powerful steam engine requiring highly-skilled operators. In the hands of unworthy people it can cause a terrible disaster. To our great misfortune, today religion has fallen into the hands of fasiqs, who have turned it into its opposite. And now it is not clear where we are going to.

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EXTREMIST POTENTIALITIES

OF RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM:

FROM ITS SOURCES TO OUR DAYS

Fundamentalism as an ideological current has spread in the modern world practically in all religions and also in the spheres of

public life, which are directly connected with religion. Religious fundamentalism has the most extremist potentialities which are often realized in politics and accompanied with destructive processes in society. What then is fundamentalism and how is it connected with fanaticism (the latter is frequently identified with the former)?

Islamic fundamentalism is the most widespread type of religious fanaticism by the number of adherents and its influence on domestic-policy and foreign-policy processes in many countries of the world. However, fundamentalist tendencies are observed not only in Judaism, Islam and Protestantism (where the history of fundamentalism begins); representatives of other religions have been unable to avoid them. All fundamentalist currents are subdivided into two types: the first is based on Abrahamic religions, the second is nationalistic variants of Hinduism and Buddhism.

Despite this variety and difference in doctrines there is much in common between them. Fundamentalism is defined as a movement for returning to the foundations, it has a “reactive” nature, being a reaction to processes taking place in any sphere of society. A broad interpretation of fundamentalism is based on two premises: the presence of undisputed postulates and aggressive opposition to innovations under the pretext of the protection of traditions from innovations. It is connected with conservatism insisting on gradualism of changes taking place in society, with due account of the existing values and traditions and traditionalism representing the direction of public consciousness to the past, and opposing it to the present.

The Russian philosopher Sergei Averintsev calls fundamentalism “false traditionalism” which has modernistic features, inasmuch as it is closely connected with modern tendencies, including secularist ones. In the consciousness of rank-and-file people fundamentalism is closely connected with religion, primarily, Islam and terrorism.

Fundamentalism is frequently identified with fanaticism. The causes of the emergence and spreading of fundamentalism in the world are not only in the sphere of religion. They can be divided into three big groups.

1. Changes within religion: the action of two tendencies – modernistic (reformist) and fundamentalist (conservative).

2. Group of reasons connected with cultural processes caused by the development of society itself (as “opposition to the growing difficulties of life and its renovation” and universal action of secularist tendencies).

3. Group of reasons connected with the emergence and spreading of globalization in the modern world and actions of the so-called globalization pressure and antiglobalist (protective) reaction.

Some experts maintain that the roots of fundamentalism should be sought in culture, which, just like society creating it, has gone through definite changes.

Inasmuch as culture has turned into the “central category of the vital world,” people observe rites and rituals out of respect for society and its traditions. Thus, faith represents only a tribute to tradition, part of culture, and this definition of faith and culture becomes all-embracing. If faith is only a tribute to tradition and culture, this evokes hidden apprehensions among some believers. These feelings may later be embodied in fundamentalism, which does not wish to be part of culture, as it happened with faith, but wants to be both in order to replace everything necessary for man.

Islamic fundamentalists are fanatics who are intolerant toward any non-Muslim. Fundamentalism is a product of the modern epoch, a new form of faith. It is sometimes called a “modernist experiment.”

The reasons for the emerging fundamentalist reactions and the creation of such religious organizations were not only internal religious

processes, but also numerous socio-economic and political upheavals which called for adequate reaction on the part of the government and society in building a new world.

The instinctive reaction of the fundamentalists to the claims of modern society demanding separation of the state from religion, proclamation of freedom of conscience, tolerance, etc., was often an attempt to create an enclave of “pure faith” and form a culture capable to oppose the modern spirit.

Fundamentalism emerged for the first time in Protestantism in the United States at the beginning of the 20th century. Its founders demanded that the content of the Holy Writ be taken as the foundation of faith, and there should be no attempts to interpret it in any form. In 1910–1912 anonymous pamphlets began to be distributed free of charge in the country under the title “The Fundamentals: A testimony of the truth.” It was a reflection of the spiritual crisis of the beginning of the 20th century. Fundamentalism with its striving to return to the foundations was a specific reaction to this crisis.

Among the extreme manifestations of fundamentalism is a totalitarian sect (spiritual leader is most often a charismatic person who produces or uses ideological postulates, for instance, about spiritual true calling, chosenness, etc.).

At the end of the 20th century and the beginning of this century the logic of development of social, economic and political relations expressed, among other things, in superproduction and superconsumption brought forth a deadlock situation which was not provided for by the possibilities of humankind. Man is forced to adapt himself to the realities of post industrialism, and fundamentalists came to the fore as a result.

The trends of fundamentalism are distinguished by radical, sometimes extremist, views and active social realization. The

fundamentalists are extremely intolerant toward representatives of other faiths. Organizationally, they resemble sects with their claim to the one and only truth.

Fundamentalism appeals to tradition and at the same time offers a new social and religious ideal. It gives new orientation points to society and therefore is realized as ideology, it has a social base, puts forward principles – dogmas, and proposes steps for achieving the ideal. This ideal is return to the “golden age,” to the time when people felt calm and confident, to the initial truth, etc. This connects fundamentalism with a myth and mythological consciousness.

The social activity of radical fundamentalists, which is based on violence, gives their opponents and critics grounds to accuse them of fanaticism. If fundamentalism is ideology, then fanaticism is its socio-psychological basis, the “subjective foundation of fundamentalism.”

Among the reasons for the emergence and development of modern fanatical fundamentalism are:

1. Socio-economic gap between the poorest and the richest, which is widening all the time; the existence of sharp social contrasts leads the population of certain countries to hatred and aggression; for example, two-thirds of Palestinians live beyond the poverty line, and Afghanistan (a center of fundamentalists) is one of the poorest countries of the world.

2. Unresolved problems: religious trends of fundamentalism originate from the national-liberation movement, to be more exact, in the attempts to overcome the consequences of colonial policy (backwardness of colonies and superiority of metropolitan countries).

3. Political problems as the causes of latent and real conflicts, many of which began in the distant past (for example, conflicts in Rwanda, Palestine, and elsewhere).

4. Institutionalization of religion, its “mixing” with the state (formation of theocratic states), non-separation of the church from the state, which is a breeding ground for fundamentalism.

5. Emotional causes (first and foremost, loneliness), which narrow down the emotional sphere and evoke polarization of views and the feeling of hatred toward the enemy.

6. Globalization, the development of technologies and the domination of market relations, sometimes in personal relations, too.

7. Education (there is a direct connection between the low level of society’s education and the presence of radical fundamentalism in it; for instance, in Afghanistan about 70 percent of the population are illiterate).

8. Reaction of the country’s population to the possible loss of cultural heritage and social injustice.

9. Adherence to tradition in contrast to scientific progress.

10. Return to the traditional values of the Holy Writ.

11. Multitude of psychological problems which force people to look for protection.

12. Problems connected with media-politics, the role of the mass media, turning to primitive requirements and emotions of people, which make it possible for religions to call on people to pay more attention to eternal spiritual values and make them more attractive.

Fundamentalism reveals itself in the sphere of politics, too. One of the tendencies of the modern world is the politicization of religion. Religion is included in political life, and political conflicts become sacral.

When religious fundamentalism becomes the ideology of political extremism and terrorism, one can talk of political fundamentalism. This concerns, primarily, Islamic fundamentalism, which became the ideological basis of terrorism.

One of the main reasons for the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism is an anti-globalist reaction. Many leaders of fundamentalists position themselves as fighters for true faith, in contrast to the western (primarily, American) godless and immoral world.

The growing globalized pressure of the western world, its economic and technological preponderance (which the BRICS countries are trying to overcome), the striving of the United States and the leading European countries (Germany, France and Britain) to force their values and democratic ideas and practices, the use of military force in this process, etc. evoke rejection reaction not only among many states of the world, but also among the Islamic fundamentalist organizations which have proclaimed “jihad” against the West. For many Islamic states the struggle against the West has become a diversion allowing their authorities to turn people’s attention from economic problems to the outside enemy. With this aim in view the image of the West is all the more demonized.

A great role in the formation of fundamentalism in Islam has been played by the concept of pan-Islamism (prior to it there was pan-Turkism and pan-Arabism), that is the ideology of non-national and non-class unity of all Muslims, which became the ideological foundation of the movement of Islamic solidarity in the epoch of the collapse of the colonial system and the attainment of national independence by the Middle East countries. It is based not only on the uniform religious foundation, but also on demographic changes connected with the demographic strategy of Islam which encourages childbirth considering it the will of Allah, which results in the growth of the population in all Muslim countries and, consequently, to the spreading of Islam all over the world (in 2013 one-quarter of the globe’s population believed in Islam, Muslims form a majority

in 39 countries. The “demographic” revolution is regarded one of the causes of the “Arab spring.”

Islamic young people have become an active force and their rapidly growing number is a powerful political factor in the Arab world. Radicalization of Islamic fundamentalism is connected with the release of enormous socio-psychological energy. Pan-Islamism has become a slogan of certain radical fundamentalists (for example the “Muslim Brothers” organization which has been banned). Thus, the formation of radical fundamentalism in Islam is connected with the existence of many reasons (historical, socio-economic, political and religious).

The ideological foundations of Islamic fundamentalism are postulates evolved by Islamic leaders Ibn Abd al-Wahhab in Arabia, Mohammed ibn Ali as-Senusi in the eastern part of Sahara, and Mohammed Ahmed ibn Abdallah (Mahdi) in Sudan in the 18th century. They called on all Muslims to return to true Islam as religion of one God and, consequently, to cleanse it from heathen customs and foreign innovations, as well as “survivals” of the past, especially the cult of the saints, magic rites, and alliances with the infidels.

Islamic fundamentalism is not homogeneous. There are several trends in it:

Theoretical trend which deals with humanitarian questions of searching for truth.

Fundamentalism of Salaphites (Sunna trend of Islam) which calls for return to the faith of the “righteous ancestors” (as-salaf as-salihun). They appeal to the social order, but not to the foundation, are regarded radical and their active struggle in Europe for purity of faith gives ground for the law-enforcement agencies to accuse them of religious extremism. In France there is the “Alliance of Muslim organizations of France” which criticizes the country’s policy toward Muslims and demands special rights which would single out the Salaphite

community and submit it to an autonomous law (amalwi) whose members are radically-minded and supported by Muslim suburbs of big cities.

Fundamentalism of Sunni terrorist groups whose aim is to create an Islamic world with the help of violence (for example, the terrorist Sunni group “Islamic state” in Iraq (in the summer of 2014) murdered all non-Muslims if they do not adopt Islam; their typical representatives are the Wahhabi Muslims (Wahhabism is official ideology of Saudi Arabia).

Shia fundamentalism (a vivid page of its history was the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 and the coming to power of Ayatollah Khomeini); the great role in it is played by theological scholars – spiritual leaders; the suicide-bombers who commit terrorist acts in Palestine, Lebanon and other countries come from their midst.

The “Taliban” organization in Afghanistan and Pakistan is an ultraconservative Islamic movement formed in 1994 of madrasah graduates. It has been financed by Pakistan, the United States and Saudi Arabia. Its aim is the creation of a truly Islamic state, its leader is mullah Mohammad Omar. The Talibis have formed the Islamic Emirate on the greater part of Afghanistan where they have introduced the Sharia laws in their extreme interpretation and pursued a policy of destroying everything “non-Islamic.” Although the Taliban government is no more, the activity of the “Taliban” movement continues.

Back in 2006 M. Khabash, the head of the Center of Islamic Studies in Damascus (Syria) published figures, according to which 80 percent of the Islamic population were conservatively-minded, 20 percent considered themselves “reformists on the basic problems,” and only one percent were radicals. This figure correlates with figures of investigations in other countries where the share of radically-minded extremists and terrorists amounts to three – five per cent of the

population. The main danger lies in the fact that these people are the most active part of the population prone to violence and aggression; after acquainting himself with extremist ideology and with able manipulation a radically-minded person become fanatic-extremist. This is especially true of socially-troubled regions where there are reasons (religious, political and economic) for conflicts. Another factor contributing to the development of Islamic jihad was lavish financing (the very emergence of Islamic groupings in the Middle East has been connected with the bipolar system of the world and the financing of religious extremists by the leading world powers). For example, in Afghanistan the United States financed the Islamists who were fighting the Soviet troops deployed there. To date in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Libya, and other countries there are many camps for training terrorists who carry out their operations in different countries of the world. One of the present-day trends is participation of European and American jihadists in terrorist acts and military conflicts in the Middle East (in Syria and Iraq, according to the data of August 2014, about 500 British subjects, 700 French citizens and 500 Belgians took part in military operations).

A great role in jihadism is played by training suicide bombers regarded as the most rational and effective system of measures of struggle against the better armed enemy. (The term “suicidal terrorism” has now become widely used.)

The aim of Muslim fundamentalists is the construction of a pan-Islamic world, seizure of power in the major Muslim states – Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Pakistan and Jordan (the latter is very important because it borders on Palestine, the arena of struggle for the destruction of Israel), and the establishment of control over the nucleus of the Islamic world, which will save the world from pernicious penetration of western civilization, in their view.

Thus, Islamic fundamentalism contains several characteristics potentially contributing to the formation of extremism and fanaticism: jihad against the infidels, unswerving following the Koran, opposition to the infidels, attitude to western values and those of moderate Islam as threats to pure faith, exploitation of radical ideology by extremist groups prone to violence, preparation of fanatics who become suicide-bombers, drive to establish authoritarian ideology and form authoritarian thinking.

Fundamentalism, which is an ideological trend striving for return to the foundations, is an objective reaction to the innovations of the modern epoch. The reasons for turning to fundamentalism are not only internal attempts to cleanse religious truths from subsequent buildups, but also objective cultural changes (rationalization of thinking, scientific discoveries, secularization). To boot, there are factors connected with globalization.

Religious fundamentalism is also subject to evolution as a reaction to a new search for spiritual truths, the emergence and active use of the mass media and the Internet.

Fundamentalists carry on active missionary work, which can sometimes take a violent form, thus becoming the ideological foundation of terrorism and extremism.

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**AZERBAIJAN AND THE EUROPEAN UNION:
ZIGZAG IN RELATIONS**

The development of relations between Azerbaijan and the European Union (EU) is of rather ambiguous character. These relations are based on the partnership agreement concluded in 1996 in Luxembourg and entered into force in 1999. In 2009, Azerbaijan was also included in the EU program “Eastern Partnership”, the purpose of which was rapprochement with Ukraine, Armenia, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Belarus without adopting them into the EU.

However, at the Vilnius summit in 2013, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev refused to sign the association agreement with the European Union and expressed his country’s readiness to cooperate with the EU in the implementation of projects under the Eastern Partnership program. He said that the level of relations between Azerbaijan and the European Union requires a higher form of cooperation than the association. The term “association” is not entirely appropriate, since Azerbaijan is a self-sufficient country both politically and economically. Any integration process involves obtaining

additional preferences which are not visible within the framework of the association¹.

Despite the fact that Azerbaijan and the EU constantly confirm their partnership, tension and mutual claims express their dissatisfaction with each other, and this has taken place throughout the history of their relations. Currently, there is a cooling period.

One of the top figures of the EU's neighborhood policy said that cooperation between Azerbaijan and the European Union was moving backwards rather than forwards. He expressed the hope that "we shall be able to identify several areas where it is possible to work together, and move forward together," but noted that the EU was concerned about the situation prevailing today².

What has caused mutual dislike in the statements of Azerbaijani and European politicians lately? It was hardly the economic component of relations. The trade turnover of Azerbaijan with the EU amounts to more than six billion euros, and exports of the republic to the European Union reached five billion euros in 2014, or about 45 percent of the total export of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan is an important, though not the largest, supplier of energy to Europe. Oil is the basis of energy export, and it reached 24.9 million tons in 2013, and 69 percent of it goes to EU countries. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline has been built to transport oil to Europe bypassing Russia³.

The export volume of gas does not exceed five billion cubic meters, but there are plans to increase the supply of gas up to 10 billion cubic meters by 2019 from the "Shah Deniz 2" deposit. Azerbaijan is an important component of the project of Trans-Adriatic gas transportation route (TAP), bypassing Russia, and also of the "Nabucco" project. The European Union is aware of the strategic importance of Azerbaijan and

considers it as a serious and reliable partner, because Europe is interested in developing energy cooperation with it.

Azerbaijan considers that the dialogue between Baku and Brussels should be built on the basis of strategic partnership, which includes not only energy, but also other spheres. An agreement on simplification of the visa regime between Azerbaijan and the EU came into force in the autumn of 2014.

Azerbaijan aspires to the role of an independent and respectable state recognized both in the West and in the East. The European Union accepts Azerbaijan as a modern economic leader in the region and, potentially, the guarantor of stability in the South Caucasus. What is the cause of irritation in relations between Baku and Brussels?

Mutual discontent implies a whole range of reasons. Azerbaijan is dissatisfied with the vague position of the EU on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, considering that the EU demonstrates insufficient support for the territorial integrity of the republic.

As is well-known, the conflict arose in 1988 due to Armenian territorial claims against Azerbaijan. As a result, the Nagorno-Karabakh region and seven surrounding districts (about 20 percent of Azerbaijani territory) were occupied by the Armenian armed forces. In May 1994, the parties agreed to respect the ceasefire. Since then unsuccessful peaceful negotiations have been conducted with the support of the OSCE Minsk Group chaired by Russia, France and the United States.

Azerbaijan accuses the EU of the absence of a clear position on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue (that is, meeting the interests of Azerbaijan), and of its support of Armenia. Baku maintains that Europe is showing too much attention to the political situation in the country, imposing values which are alien to the mentality of the Azerbaijani people (for example, recognition of same-sex marriages), as well as accusing the authorities of violations of human rights and suppression of all dissent.

Suggesting the initiative of “European Neighborhood Policy” ten years ago, the European Union expected that the participating countries, including Azerbaijan, would gradually introduce the European standards, especially regarding the human rights. However, soon it became clear that the parties would disagree on the interpretation of serious problems. Azerbaijan believed that if a country was an important energy supplier and partner in the sphere of security, it could afford selective cooperation in certain economic and political issues, in accordance with its historical and socio-cultural features in the interpretation of the principles of democracy and respect of human rights. In this regard, Azerbaijan's state-run mass media constantly criticize the countries, which are the major “exporters” of Western values, namely, the United States and Germany.

Lately, there have emerged new grounds for mutual disagreement in the assessment of contemporary political processes. Baku fears the emergence of its own Maidan, so any independent activity in the political sphere is regarded as a threat to Azerbaijan's national security. According to European experts, Azerbaijan may enter into history as a country which “chaired the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and at the same time carried on an unprecedented campaign of reprisals against human rights defenders at home.”⁴

Several months ago, the European Union adopted a resolution condemning political reprisals in Azerbaijan and called for the immediate release of political prisoners. This document was received in Baku nervously. Of course, any discussion of these issues is not included in the plans of President Aliyev during his visits to Europe. The Azerbaijani leadership denies the existence of political prisoners in the country, and the foreign-affairs adviser to President Aliyev has made a personal attack against the President of the European Parliament recommending the latter “to mind his own business.”⁵

The EU understands that there is no effective way to influence Azerbaijan due to its cautious attitude to “Eastern Partnership” and the absence of ambitions in relation to European integration, on the one hand, and the EU interest in the energy resources of this Trans-Caucasian republic, on the other. For a time, Europe had to pretend not to notice the processes going on in that country. However, the EU runs out of patience with the accumulation of sharp criticism from human rights activists, who constantly accuse the EU institutions of a liberal attitude to the arbitrariness of the Azerbaijani authorities in exchange for Azerbaijani oil and other energy resources. Perhaps, a drop in energy prices and increasing political vulnerability of exporters of hydrocarbons will influence the tone of statements of European politicians.

Past experience suggests that the dynamics of interaction between the two parties within the framework of the existing format of relations between Azerbaijan and the EU, first, will be limited, and secondly, it will continue to be of an unstable character. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that political preconditions for greater mutual trust in resolving current regional and international issues, as well as creating new institutions for development, have not yet come into being, yet they could give additional impetus to the expansion of economic and trade exchanges.

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**GEOPOLITICAL PROCESSES
IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS
AND THEIR INFLUENCE
ON GEOPOLITICAL SITUATION
IN KARACHAYEVO-CIRCASSIAN REPUBLIC**

Geopolitics, as defined by K. Gajiyev, is “a concept characterizing the theory and practice of international relations based on considering and connecting geographic, geostrategic, socio-cultural, socio-political, ethnological, demographic, economic, and other factors. In this connection the Caucasus is a region which, having been part of the Russian Empire, then the Soviet Union, and now being part of the Russian Federation, has always been a zone of junction of geopolitical interests of various countries. The North Caucasus is a geostrategic region, which has been a kind of a corridor between Europe and Asia. In this context it was a crossroads of trade routes, and the Great Silk Road passed through it.

It is not possible to separate the national interests of the Russian Federation in the North Caucasus from the historical development and geopolitical characteristic of the region. The geopolitical significance of the North Caucasus is a major factor in the development of the peoples and states of this region and Russia as a whole, as well as a whole number of countries whose historical destiny is connected with the North Caucasian political and cultural area. Being a region of junction of the two worlds – Christian and Muslims – the North Caucasus, by its role in the world, is comparable with the Balkan region in Europe. All these factors have predetermined the fact that the North Caucasus has

always been a region of geopolitical interests of different countries of Europe and Asia.

In the 1970s the geopolitical situation in the world, and also in the Caucasus, exacerbated noticeably. The United States and its allies with the help of old and new means and methods (war and humanitarian aid, bribes and corruption, etc.) contributed a great deal to the fanning of hatred between peoples. Hence, the wars in the Balkans, in the Middle East, and in the post-Soviet area, which were accompanied by the emergence of new sovereign states in this region (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia). This has been regarded by certain countries of the West, Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia as a historical chance for spreading their influence on the region.

The geopolitical significance of the North Caucasus is determined by its geographical position bordering on the zones adjacent to the Caspian and Black seas.

In the conditions of the present world order, the geopolitical importance of the North Caucasian region has greatly increased.

Turkey, Pakistan, and in certain cases Saudi Arabia are the conductors of the U.S. policy toward the Muslim regions of Russia. Turkey is a NATO member and greatly depends on the United States in the military-political sphere.

Zbigniew Brzezinski has called the North Caucasus the “Eurasian Balkans” due to its conflict character, presupposing a possibility of interreligious and interethnic conflicts and the historical precedent with Yugoslavia.

The geopolitical characteristics of the North Caucasus contain definite conflictogenic factors of interethnic actions in the ethnopolitical process in the republics of the North Caucasian region. There have been contradictions concerning the rule in their republics between Kabardians and Circassians, and between Balkars and

Karachays. The latter have come out for the creation of independent Balkarian and Karachay republics. For instance, a congress of representatives of the Karachay people held in 1990 proclaimed the creation of the Karachay autonomous region. Despite this, at a referendum in 1992 a majority of the republican population voiced their desire to preserve unity of the Karachayev-Circassia.

In the 1990s the power-thirsty Islamic extremist groupings stepped up their attempts to establish the political and socio-cultural domination of the titular nations, fanned separatist sentiments, and put forward special territorial claims. More and more facts of discrimination based on the national-confessional characteristic were registered. The constant growth of the number of such manifestations and the level of their tension is fraught with paralysis of political and public life not only in the North Caucasus, but also far beyond its boundaries.

Even where the conflict has been regarded until now as national or religious, its true nature is revealed clearly enough. For example, in certain villages of Karachayev-Circassia confrontation between the Russian and Karachay population acquires a violent character and can be regarded as an ethnic conflict or a confrontation between Orthodox Christianity and Islam. The significance of the Circassian diaspora is expressed in the words “There are few of us here, but behind us there is a great diaspora.”

At the same time, the Islamic factor is very strong among the Karachays, which is more balanced among the Circassians due to their religious history.

Parallel with the flare-up of the Karachay national movement, Islam has actively been developed in the Karachay medium. However, during the conflict of the late-1990s there were hardly any radical

currents, all the more terrorist groups in that movement. They emerged in the republic some time later.

The organization “Imamat Karachaya” set up by nationalists in the republic was not the main driving force in the struggle of the Karachays for autonomy. This function was taken by the secular public movement “Jamag’at.” And conflicts around “Imamat Karachaya” and its leaders had no interethnic character.

The emergence of the Circassian movement in Karachayev-Circassia was closely connected with the creation of the International Circassian Association in May 1991 at an inaugural congress in Nalchik. Its main aim was the consolidation of Circassian organizations in Russia and beyond its borders and the interaction of Circassians living in Russia with the world Circassian diaspora.

The global geopolitical conflict has greatly exacerbated during the 1990s after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the formation of the CIS in the post-Soviet area.

The declaration of the Caucasian region a zone of its strategic interests by the United States and the return of Turkey and Iran to the Caucasian political field has evoked a growing interest of western powers in the great oil riches of the Caspian basin. According to N.J. Spykman, the Eurasian rimland stretches from the western fringe of the Eurasian continent to its eastern fringe. Thus, he divided the world into two parts – heartland and rimland. In contrast to Mackinder and other well-known geopolitical figures, he rejected the idea of the preponderance of the continental powers of the heartland and put forward his own formula: “He who controls the rimland controls Eurasia; and he who controls Eurasia controls the destiny of the world.”

Within the framework of the “new world order” the world is regarded unipolar, with the United States as the only superpower. The

Pentagon has published a strategic review. Paul Wolfowitz, former Pentagon chief, has stated that the main aim of the United States is to prevent the emergence of a new American rival in the post-Soviet area, and also in any other place on the globe, which will be a threat to the United States similar to that presented by the U.S.S.R. This premise should be the main one in the new defense strategy. “We should try to prevent the emergence of hostile regional powers which could gain global control over international relations with the help of their resources,” he declared.

Paul Wolfowitz also agrees with the heartland doctrine, asserting that Russia will remain a strong military power in Eurasia and the only force in the world capable to destroy the United States.

Zbigniew Brzezinsky, national security adviser to President Carter in 1977–1981, is one of the most ardent supporters of the imperial geopolitics of the United States. In his words, America is now the only superpower and Eurasia is the central arena of the world. Geopolitics has now acquired global dimension on the territory of the Eurasian continent.

The geopolitical consequences of the disintegration of the Soviet Union continue to exert a negative influence on the modern interethnic relations in Russia.

More than eighty international extremist organizations of the Wahhabi trend are carrying on their illegal activity on Russian territory. The five countries of the Persian Gulf (Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain) are the most active sponsors of the Islamists. Many pro-Islamist public non-commercial organizations rendering voluntary financial assistance to “insurgents” have been registered in the United States.

The “United Caucasus” conference took place in Istanbul in 2012, which was organized by the civil society “Imkander.” Its results

showed that this society, which is under the strong influence of the Caucasian diaspora and radical Islamic groupings, as well as the foreign policy of Turkey as one of the NATO members, has been playing a no small role in the North Caucasus. The geostrategic importance of the North Caucasus has become much greater due to the changes of the world political balance in the conditions of the “new world order.”

A multipolar geopolitical structure is emerging on the borders of the post-Soviet area, which has a major impact on the ethnopolitical processes going on in some countries of the former U.S.S.R. Thus the geopolitical importance of the North Caucasus contributes to the emergence and development of ethnopolitical conflict in the republics of the region, including the Karachayev-Circassian Republic. In the early 1990s a conflict flared up there, which resulted in disturbances close to its disintegration and formation of several national units on its territory. The numerous public meetings calling for the division of the republic and violations of the electoral law of the Russian Federation and the republic in the mid-1990s caused destabilization of the socio-political situation in the Karachayev-Circassian Republic. The Federal Center took the necessary measures only in 2000 for regulating the conflict in the republic.

In our view, the lack of proper understanding of the consequences of confrontation with the authorities among political figures and representatives of the different sections of society is fraught with serious political risks.

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