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- Central Eurasia: Politics Today
- Central Eurasia: Religion in the Sociopolitical Context
- Central Eurasia: Integration Processes

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- articles should be no less than 3,000 and no more than 6,000 words, including footnotes;
- footnotes should be placed at the bottom of each page; if there are references to Internet resources, please give the author’s name, the name of the document, the website address, and the date it was made available, for example, available 2007-04-19;
- quotations, names of authors and other information from English-language sources should be duplicated in brackets in the original language, that is, in English;
- the article should be divided into sections, including an introduction and conclusion;
- the author should include the following personal information: first name, last name, academic degree, place of work, position, city, country.

All articles accepted are published in Russian and English, in the Russian-language and English-language versions of the journal, respectively. The editorial board takes responsibility for translation of the articles.
THE EURASIAN ECONOMIC UNION: DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

The integration unions that have emerged in the post-Soviet region can guarantee its states preservation of their sovereignty, as well as the opportunity to oppose various internal and external threats, challenges, and risks. Kazakhstan and Russia have become the driving forces behind the integration processes in post-Soviet Eurasia, and these two countries bear the responsibility for maintaining stability in the region.

The Customs Union and Common Economic Space formed a platform for launching post-Soviet Eurasia to a higher level of integration—the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), which has been functioning since 1 January, 2015 as “an international organization of regional economic integration with international legal standing.” The EEU is intended for transforming the post-Soviet region into a new, more influential target of geopolitics in the future, a union that is qualitatively different to the CIS.

The very fact that the EEU exists is undoubtedly an important achievement in integration development in the post-Soviet region. Functioning of the union should lead to an increase in goods turnover, a rise in domestic and foreign investments, and significant economic growth. Experts also see certain prospects for reorienting the economy of the regional states from a primarily raw material model to high-tech sectors. In addition, certain countries should receive benefits.

The EEU is faced with the difficult task of competing with alternative projects unfolding in the post-Soviet region: America’s New Silk Road program, which places China and Russia outside regional economy and policy; America’s Trans-Pacific Partnership project,
which, according to the intentions of its creators, should become an alternative to Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), where China holds a relatively strong position; the Turkic project advanced by Turkey and Kazakhstan; and, finally, the Great Silk Road Economic Belt regional trade and transport project launched by the PRC in 2013. Keeping in mind that the participating states and goals of this project partially coincide with the EEU’s precepts, they could reciprocate each other and render mutual assistance, drawing up for Russia, the Central Asian and Caucasian states a strategy for responding to internal and external challenges and risks. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) continues to be an important lever of influence in the APR and Central Asia, giving Russia a unique opportunity to discuss with China many pressing international problems.

Creation of the CU and EEU is, in itself, not enough for full-fledged Eurasian integration. So it is important to encourage such measures as forming a common market in Eurasia and expanding opportunities for mutually advantageous business relations both with individual states beyond the post-Soviet region and on a multilateral basis with other integration unions and organizations. In the new geopolitical conditions, it is important to establish pragmatic relations in Eurasia on an equal basis. This will guarantee stability for the participants in the integration processes.

**KEYWORDS:** integration, CIS, post-Soviet Eurasia, Customs Union, Eurasian Economic Union, Russia, Kazakhstan, Silk Road Economic Belt, China, Turkey

**Introduction**

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the CIS countries encountered a systemic crisis in their economies, and life itself pushed the former Soviet republics toward integration for the following objective reasons:

— crisis of the national economies as a result of the breakdown in reciprocal economic ties during sovereignization of the post-Soviet states;

— collapse of the most advanced, science-intensive branches of national production as a result of the elimination of scientific-technical associations uniting various subdivisions into a single technological chain in the former Soviet republics;

— real threat of the post-Soviet countries, including Russia, turning into the periphery of the world economy and becoming manufacturers of raw materials and semi-finished products.

To this can be added the widespread disappointment in the CIS countries in the role of foreign capital, which, in spite of the artificially high expectations placed on it, did not assist the development of the real sectors of the economy, high technology, and so on, but reduced its activity primarily to the export of energy resources and other types of mineral and biological raw material.¹

It comes as no surprise that the post-Soviet countries found themselves in a strategic impasse. Collective efforts were the most rational way to withdraw from it, both by restoring and activating mutual economic relations, and by creating new relations between public and private companies and enterprises of the post-Soviet countries.

¹ For more details, see: G.I. Chufrin, Ocherki evraziiskoi integratsii, Ves mir, Moscow, 2013.
The experience of relatively successful examples of integration in the world—the European Union (EU), the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)—speaks in favor of closer interaction among the post-Soviet republics. The intensified economic trade contacts achieved by these integration unions have had a positive influence on the entire international political situation in certain regions and continents, have led to an expansion in stability zones, and have promoted a manifold decrease in the risk of internal conflicts. Moreover, in comparison with several other integration groups (the European Union and ASEAN), the post-Soviet republics possess advantageous starting opportunities—they were long part of a single state and, even after acquiring their independence, represent a closely interrelated geographic, economic, and sociocultural region. It is another matter that they have not been able to take full advantage of this.

The integration processes in the CIS have been hindered by the so-called civilized divorce ideology that initially laid the foundation of this interstate union. The Russian Federation’s course toward primary development of relations with the West, which has essentially been going on uninterrupted since the beginning of the 1990s, has also objectively hindered integration. Integration failures were also caused by the fact that the national elites in the newly independent former Soviet republics placed the emphasis on strengthening their acquired sovereignty, while the symbiosis that emerged in the overwhelming majority of the CIS republics in the form of power-accreted capital was not conducive to the integration processes. So, although they supported the unifying ideas in word, in practice the post-Soviet leaders saw a threat to their own interests, both economic and political, in the integration initiatives, particularly if they came from stronger Russia.

However, since the beginning of the 2000s, the need to knit together the scattered economic spaces in post-Soviet Eurasia through intensified integration has been dictated by objective international reality:

— the global financial and economic crisis at the end of 2008, the waves of which continue to shake the world system;

— the growing chaos in international affairs, which was largely related to the crisis in international multilateral institutions with gradual deformation of the postwar world order;

— the erosion of the very phenomenon of state sovereignty under the impact of political globalization;

— the frequently occurring precedents in world policy of a change in regime through interference from the outside (humanitarian intervention, color revolutions, and so on).

The fact that the different vectors and models of integration already functioning or only beginning to form in the post-Soviet region—economic, political, cultural, and military—could guarantee the states of the region the opportunity to preserve their sovereignty and oppose the various internal and external threats, challenges, and risks became the imperative in these conditions. The leaders of Kazakhstan and Russia have been placing special emphasis on this. They have become the driving forces behind the integration processes in post-Soviet Eurasia, and these two countries bear the main responsibility for maintaining stability in the region.

**On the Way to a Eurasian Economic Union**

President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbaev voiced the idea of forming a Eurasian Union of States when he spoke on 29 March, 1994 at Moscow State University during his first state visit to the
Russian Federation. According to the Kazakhstan President’s idea, the Eurasian Union was to pool its potential and revive transport communication among the Eurasian countries, which would make it possible for them to function as a transit corridor between the East and the West, as well as act as a mediator between the two continents in their trade and economic interactions. It was presumed that the project would be based on the concept of varied-speed integration, in which the forms and rates of cooperation would depend on the interest and willingness of the participating countries.2

In July 1994, the integration project proposed by Nursultan Nazarbaev was sent to the heads of the CIS states, and the media began calling this project the Eurasian Union.

The Union was to form a unified approach to market reforms, guarantee the participating countries national security, and promote their incorporation into the global economy by creating a unified political, economic, humanitarian, and customs space controlled by supranational institutions. In so doing, there were plans to engage in cooperation not only in the economy, but also in politics, security, and defense.3

On 29 March, 1996, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia signed an agreement on intensifying integration and founded a new regional organization (the Customs Union), which was to ensure the gradual intensification of economic and social integration with respect for sovereignty, equality, border inviolability, and non-interference. But the union never got underway: customs regulation was not coordinated, the free trade regime remained incomplete, and the states introduced various restrictions for protecting their own markets. In 1998, the gradual course of economic integration was interrupted by the financial-economic and currency crises, as well as the default on government short-term bonds in Russia. The participants in the CU felt the negative consequences of this crisis and began taking serious measures to protect their manufacturers, national financial and currency systems, and commodity markets.

The functioning of the CU and further intensification of integration were also hindered by Kyrgyzstan’s accession to the WTO in 1998; the republic’s leadership agreed to significant concessions to the international organization in an attempt to complete the accession process as quickly as possible. For example, Kyrgyzstan pledged to carry out several demands that did not have legal status and were not formally enforced, which prevented the CU from unifying customs duties. In so doing, the CU participating countries were supposed to coordinate WTO accession efforts and exchange information on negotiating strategy, which also did not happen.

At the same time, at the turn of the new millennium, in order to prevent further erosion of economic trade ties, a regional structure that could realistically function in the post-Soviet region had to be created that would ensure greater effectiveness of mutual cooperation among the countries and establish contact with other similar associations. And this was the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) founded on 10 October, 2000. Its full members included Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, while Moldova, Ukraine (since May 2002), and Armenia (since January 2003) became its observers. The International Aviation Committee (IAC) and Eurasian Development Bank (EDB) also received status of observer in the EurAsEC. After becoming an economic integration organization that presumed the gradual creation of an economic union, the EurAsEC was able to determine many long-term integration vectors of multilateral cooperation among the post-Soviet states.

On 19 September, 2003, the presidents of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine signed an Agreement on the Formation of a Common Economic Space (CES) in Yalta. It was presumed that it

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would unite the customs territories of the participating states and ensure the freedom of movement of goods, services, capital, and labor, as well as a unified foreign trade and coordinated tax, monetary, and fiscal policy. The establishment of the CES as an integration regional organization was based on the principle of varied-level and varied-speed integration enforced in the basic agreement.

However, Ukraine began to hamper the integration process, striving to achieve unilateral political and economic advantages. When Viktor Yushchenko became president of Ukraine in 2005, the republic’s leadership placed top priority on Euro-integration (Ukraine’s accession to the European Union and NATO). Due to Ukraine’s particular position, implementation of the CES project in the form it had been conceived was essentially halted. Based on this situation, the heads of the EurAsEC member states made a decision on 16 August, 2006 to transfer work on forming the CU to this organization. Here an important stage on the way to building the CES was to be implemented by means of three states—Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia.

On 19 December, 2009, an action plan to form a CES of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia was approved by a decision made at a summit meeting of the EurAsEC Interstate Council. However, unification of economic policy in certain branches of their economies, which should have been accompanied by a gradual cancellation of tariff and non-tariff restrictions, went relatively slowly. In order to overcome this situation, a decision was made at a summit meeting of the EurAsEC Interstate Council on 5 July, 2010 in Astana to accelerate this process, and on 8-19 November, 2010 the following agreements were signed at heads of government meetings of the EurAsEC Interstate Council in St. Petersburg: on unified principles and rules of technical regulation in the three participating republics of the EurAsEC; on cooperation to combat illegal labor migration from third states; on the legal status of work migrants and the members of their families; and on ensuring access to the services of natural monopolies in power engineering, including the foundations of price formation and tariff policy. On 9 December, 2010, at summit meetings of the EurAsEC Interstate Council—Supreme Body of the Customs Union (SBCU), all the remaining international agreements included in the CES contractual-legal framework were signed.

On 1 January, 2010, the Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia began functioning and launched full-scale work on 1 July, 2011 in compliance with international standards. The EurAsEC continued, nevertheless, to engage in the regulation of labor migration, social-humanitarian problems, and coordination of the efforts of national structures in the main international issues.

Thus, the formation of the CES’s contractual-legal framework was essentially complete. The presidents of Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan adopted the Declaration on the Formation of a Common Economic Space, in which they expressed their certainty that integration in the Eurasian region would continue to develop effectively. And on 18 November, 2011, the heads of Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan signed the Declaration on Eurasian Economic Integration, in which the sides announced the transfer to the next stage in integration-building—the CES. The basic documents on establishment of the CES came into force on 1 January, 2012.

The CU and CES became the platform for launching the region to a higher level of integration—the EEU. This project received a boost after publication on 3 October, 2011 in Izvestia of an article by the then Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin called “New Integration Project for Eurasia—The Future of Which Is Being Born Today.” In turn, Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbaev proposed that this union be initially created as a competitive global economic association that would head toward accelerated industrial and innovative development. According to the idea of the Kazakhstan president, the new union was to become a bridge between the Euro-Atlantic and Asian arenas of economic development.

On 29 May, 2014, in Astana, at a meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council, the presidents of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia signed an Agreement on the Establishment of the EEU, which was ratified by the end of 2014 by all three participants. The Agreement came into force
on 1 January, 2015, after which the EEU began officially functioning as “an international organization of regional economic integration with international legal standing.” Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan applied to join the organization. But the Agreement on Accession to the EEU was only signed by the Republic of Armenia (Minsk, 10 October, 2014) and with the Kyrgyz Republic (23 December, 2014), whereby on 2 January, 2015, Armenia acquired the status of full-fledged member of the EEU. Tajikistan, which also submitted an integration application to join the EEU, is still waiting for it to be examined.

The EEU is intended for transforming the post-Soviet region into a new, more influential target of geopolitics in the future, a union that is qualitatively different to the CIS. Nor is it any secret that security considerations became key aspects in the formation of the EEU. What is more, its non-Russian participants are placing the emphasis at present on the economic, and not on the political-ideological or supranational (for which some Russian politicians called) component of the EEU. It is worth noting in this respect the viewpoint expressed by Director of the Institute of International and Regional Cooperation at the Kazakhstan-German University Bulat Sultanov: “The Europeans have been creating a common market for more than 30 years, and all this time they have managed without any ideology. And only then did they decide to create the European Union, because they felt that they could compete with the U.S. and could create a new currency. So we do not need to pose ideological tasks now or talk about any projects. We are creating a common market.”

It is obvious that the creation of supranational structures (a Eurasian Parliament based on the example of the European Parliament, as was proposed at one time by certain Russian politicians) is not on the EEU agenda today, since this could discredit the very idea of integration. An emphasis on its political dimension could add fuel to the flames in the domestic political situation of the countries participating in the integration processes and play into the hands of ultranationalist and chauvinist forces that see the integration economic undertakings being carried out as something akin to an attack on the national sovereignty of their countries and accuse Russia of great power strivings.

So the primary goal of the EEU is the reciprocal opening of markets. Signing by the CIS countries (apart from Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan) of an Agreement on a Free Trade Area (FTA) on 18 October, 2011 in St. Petersburg became a perceptible step toward implementing this project. It will allow the CIS countries to accelerate the process of mutual adaptation and unification of their national economies, possibly according to the same model of “varied-speed integration” that economically unified the EU. Attention is also drawn by the fact that very different countries are beginning to show an interest in the FTA—beginning with Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, which traditionally avoid participating in any kind of international associations, either economic or political, and ending with Turkey, Vietnam, Mongolia, and several others.

The very fact that the EEU exists is of course a major achievement in the development of integration in the post-Soviet region. The functioning of the union should lead to an increase in goods turnover, a rise in domestic and foreign investments, and significant economic growth. Experts also see certain prospects for reorienting the economies of the states with a primarily raw material model to high-tech sectors. Moreover, certain countries should also receive benefits.

**Eurasian Integration: For and Against**

Russia largely views the integration unions in Eurasia as a tool for protecting its national interests in talks with the West, on the one hand, and from China, on the other, since Kazakhstan’s pro-

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spective accession to the WTO will open up the Russian market primarily for Chinese commodities. What is more, by establishing the CU/EEU, Russia is eliminating several problems existing in its relations with some of the CIS member states, the leaders of which are accusing Russia of deliberately freezing the integration processes in the post-Soviet region.

Russia is not interested in launching integration with all the EurAsEC countries at once, since they differ too much in terms of economic development level, and there are also too many contradictions and mutual claims among them. This is why Russia first asked Belarus and Kazakhstan to integrate with it—states that, in its opinion, had matured enough for this process and would not be able to reject it. This is particularly true since the creation of such a large regional union as the EEU promises the countries belonging to it and potential participants future strategic value.

Russia is essentially creating a zone, along with Kazakhstan and Belarus, for developing its own business. It is impossible for Russia to create this kind of zone with the European Union in the foreseeable future, and it is afraid of doing this with China. In this respect, the value of the CU/EEU as an important step toward comprehensive integration in post-Soviet Eurasia is growing, and the results of this interaction, which is limited for the time being at the initial stage to the economy and trade, are important for Russia’s development not only in the long term, but also in the short term.

Based on the fact that there are plans to create a single currency for all the member states in the EEU, as well as a unified emission center, Russian President Vladimir Putin came forward with a proposal at a recent meeting of the leaders of the EEU countries in Astana to transfer to a single currency. To this end, he assigned the Central Bank and government the task of determining the economic expediency of this reform before 1 September, 2015. Nevertheless, a currency union is the deepest form of integration interaction, in contrast to the FTA and CU. However, a perceptibly higher level of coordination of macroeconomic policy is needed to introduce a single currency than what we are seeing in the EEU today. In order to introduce a common currency, a perceptibly larger volume of trade among the union members is desirable. According to the results of last year, however, the goods turnover volume among the CU countries decreased by 11% and amounted to $57.4 billion. The indices for mutual investments are also low.¹

**Kazakhstan,** like Russia, occupies a special position in the implementation of Eurasian integration projects due to its significant economic and resource potential. These projects attract Kazakhstan for several reasons.

- First, it is concerned about China and regards Russia as a good counterbalance to China’s economic expansion.
- Second, President Nursultan Nazarbaev is a long-term and consistent supporter of the idea of Eurasian integration.
- Third, the republic is positioning itself as a bridge between Europe and China, for which a green corridor through Russian territory is vitally important.

One of the main arguments in favor of creating the CU and EEU for Kazakhstan is the possibility of expanding the sales market for local commodity manufacturers. After all, Kazakhstan, with its limited domestic market formed by a population of 16.6 million people, has gained access to the Russian and Belarusian markets.

By showing an interest in creating the CU as a kind of defense system, Kazakhstan is trying to build it keeping in mind its own interests, which do not always and not in every way coincide with those of its CU/EEU partners.

For Armenia, the pluses of integration are related to the legalization of work migrants, as well as to the fact that this country, which is in transport isolation, hopes that within the framework of the CU/EEU, some commodities will become cheaper for the population. According to Head of the Integration and Development NGO Aram Safarian, the almost 225,000 citizens of Armenia who depart every year for Russia and other EEU countries send remittances of between $1.5 and 1.8 billion home every year. And since Armenia has, according to the businessman, the most liberal economic system in the EEU, this makes it possible for many companies to open new businesses here, which is much cheaper than in Russia. Armenia’s position is weakened by the fact that it does not have common borders either with Russia, or with the other participants in the Eurasian integration project, which could complicate the republic’s cooperation with other members of the union in the future.

For Kyrgyzstan, which acceded to the EEU in May 2015, this is also a chance to improve the economic situation in the republic. It is no accident that President Almazbek Atambaev called 2015 a year for strengthening the national economy.

The situation with Tajikistan looks more complicated, the authorities of which, although they welcome the EEU, for which they are striving, experience certain doubts about the possibility of resolving their problems within the framework of this union, particularly in migration policy. The situation itself in the republic remains vague due to its geographic distance from Russia and from Kazakhstan, and most important, due to the economic and political crisis that has hit Tajikistan. This is aggravated by its proximity to Afghanistan, where events might begin to develop in accordance with an even more negative and unpredictable scenario.

The disputes around the EEU are not abating in the other countries participating in this integration union either. Here the representatives of business circles are worried that they will not be able to fully protect their national interests, keeping in mind Russia’s absolute economic domination. They also see the risk of having to compromise not only their economic, but also political interests. The situation is further complicated by the fact that the natural resources, capital, and so on of the Central Asian and South Caucasian regions are only partially sovereign, and there are still many unresolved contradictions (due to disputed territory, water resources, deposits, routes of energy and transport lines, etc.) between some of their states—current and potential participants in the integration process in post-Soviet Eurasia.

In addition to these and other fears and phobias, in 2014-2015, a situation has been created, in which the entire integration process faces serious challenges. The matter concerns the unfavorable geopolitical background that has emerged with respect to the Ukrainian crisis, the sanction activity of the U.S. and European Union, and the economic difficulties Russia is experiencing because of this. This has resulted in a certain decrease in the EEU’s appeal for Russia’s partners.

- First, due to the decline in the ruble, commodities from Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Armenia have become too expensive compared with Russian goods, which has had an impact on reciprocal trade volumes.
- Second, the drop in oil prices has devalued another vitally important plus of integration—preferential prices for Russian energy carriers.6

In so doing, attention is drawn by the fact that the information wave coming from the West has been taking advantage of the emergent difficulties, playing on fears—not so much real as perceived—about Russia’s striving to take revenge in the wake of Crimea in other directions, revive the so-called

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imperial policy of the Soviet Union, and oust the local business and political elite from its advantageous position.

When analyzing this whole situation, Russian scientist Nabi Ziyadullaev notes: “The caution and mistrust of several CIS countries toward closer integration with Russia comes from the long years of imperial and Soviet history. Nevertheless, in the contemporary world, deep economic integration is imperative, and if Russia is indeed bent on long-term cooperation with the former republics, it must prove that the EEU project is an entirely new type of relations among the post-Soviet states based on the inviolability of political sovereignty, territorial integrity, and equality of partners that excludes the domination of Moscow.”

In this respect, Russia faces the difficult task of ensuring that the EEU can compete with the alternative projects unfolding in the post-Soviet region: America’s New Silk Road program, which places China and Russia outside regional economy and policy; America’s Trans-Pacific Partnership project, which, according to the intentions of its creators, should become an alternative to Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), where China holds a relatively strong position; the Turkic project advanced by Turkey and Kazakhstan; and, finally, the Great Silk Road Economic Belt regional trade and transport project launched by the PRC in 2013.

It is worth noting that the U.S. intends to put up active opposition to the CU and EEU projects. It is enough to remember how severely Hillary Clinton, contender in the 2016 presidential U.S. election, reacted to the first signs of the appearance of the EEU as early as 2012 as Secretary of State in the Barack Obama administration, saying that Russia was aiming to Sovietize the post-Soviet region: This process “is going to be called a customs union, it will be called Eurasian Union and all of that… But let’s make no mistake about it. We know what the goal is and we are trying to figure out effective ways to slow down or prevent it.”

As for China’s Silk Road, keeping in mind that the participating states and goals of this project partially coincide with the EEU’s precepts, they could reciprocate each other and render mutual assistance, drawing up for Russia, the Central Asian and Caucasian states a strategy for responding to internal and external challenges and risks. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization continues to be an important lever of influence in the APR and Central Asia, giving Russia a unique opportunity to discuss with China many pressing international problems.

**Conclusion**

Creation of the CU and EEU is, in itself, not enough for full-fledged Eurasian integration. So it is important to encourage such measures as forming a common market in Eurasia and expanding opportunities for mutually advantageous business relations both with individual states beyond the post-Soviet region and on a multilateral basis with other integration unions and organizations. In the new geopolitical conditions, it is important to establish pragmatic relations in Eurasia on an equal basis. This will guarantee stability for the participants in the integration processes.

There are also prerequisites for the EEU’s rapprochement with China’s Silk Road Economic Belt project, but only if the regulations for this interaction are drawn up. Otherwise, one project might be mutually absorbed by another.

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DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS FOR THE INTEGRATION PROCESSES WITHIN THE EURASIAN ECONOMIC UNION: A TAJIKISTAN CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the Republic of Tajikistan’s participation in regional integration among the Eurasian states. It analyzes the integration experience accumulated during the activity of the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) and the main obstacles hindering the integration within the framework of the EurAsEC. It focuses on the trends, problems, and prospects for Tajikistan’s possible accession to the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).

Russia will continue to be the main driving force behind integration in the post-Soviet expanse, preferring selective cooperation with those post-Soviet states that, like Kazakhstan and Belarus, show their willingness to engage in intensified interaction. In so doing, due to its significant economic and resource potential, Kazakhstan, like Russia, will occupy a special position in implementing the Eurasian integration project.

For the post-Soviet republics, which, on the whole, still represent a closely interrelated geographical, economic, and sociocultural expanse, intensification of economic trade contacts is a positive factor, since this promotes an expansion of stability zones and a manifold decrease in the risk of internal conflicts.

The EEU is a promising and competent tool of regional integration, being an important geopolitical achievement promising specific benefits for the states that belong to this kind of union. In the event the EEU is successfully implemented, it could turn the participants of economic cooperation into full-fledged partners in institutional political and military unions. In this context, this integration union can be seen as a decisive strategic breakthrough in the former Soviet expanse.
**Introduction**

The EEU, which originally united Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus, was founded on 29 May, 2014 in Astana; this integration project is one of the most ambitious, advanced, and rapidly developing among the post-Soviet states. On 2 January, 2015, Armenia acceded to the EEU, and on 29 May, 2015, Kyrgyzstan joined it.

Subregional integration within the EEU was the result of searches for an optimal form of cooperation and the creation of a common economic space; at one time, the CIS and EurAsEC made a futile attempt to reach this goal.

Today there is a need to comprehend the experience of the integration formations mentioned and compare them with the EEU. This is extremely important, not only from the scientific, but also from the practical viewpoint, since it alleviates the choice of those countries looking at the possibility of acceding to the EEU. This applies in particular to Tajikistan.

There can be no doubt that the formation of the Customs Union (CU) on 20 January, 1995, which joined Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, was the first step on the way to integrating the Eurasian countries. In March 1996, Kyrgyzstan joined this union, followed by Tajikistan in 1998.

However, the goals set within the EurAsEC were not reached. This failure was instigated by Kyrgyzstan joining the WTO (World Trade Organization) without coordinating its accession conditions with the other EurAsEC partners, which was one of the reasons for the CU being transformed into the EurAsEC (the agreement on founding of the Eurasian Economic Community was signed in 2000 and came into force on 30 May, 2001).

In recent years, the EurAsEC countries have mainly advanced in reciprocal trade liberalization (that is, in ensuring a free trade regime within the Community).

Despite the adoption of a whole series of documents relating to the formation of the CU, the Community members were unable to achieve the designated results, which was largely due to the differences in their approaches to setting custom duty rates. For example, in 2006, import customs duties among Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan were only coordinated by 62%. As for the customs tariffs of Tajikistan and particularly of Kyrgyzstan, they were not very well coordinated with the basic index of the common customs tariff of the community’s countries.

Other unrealized tasks include, for example, establishing a common market of transportation services and an energy market, as well as coordinating and unifying economic and foreign economic policy measures necessary for achieving integration goals.

The main reasons for inefficient integration were the absence of a supranational structure and the fact the EurAsEC structures were not endowed with real powers. What is more, the decisions made were not mandatory, which waived all responsibility for their non-implementation.

**Tajikistan and the EurAsEC**

The low effectiveness of Tajikistan’s interaction with the EurAsEC countries was primarily manifested in its dependence on import deliveries from the Far Abroad. In other words, the market of the EurAsEC countries was unable to give Tajikistan’s export opportunities the necessary boost.
Tajikistan’s foreign trade relations development shows that between 2000 and 2013, the share of the EurAsEC countries in its total export volume decreased from 34% to 18.6%, while in imports it increased from 29% to 42.3%. The share of the EurAsEC countries in the total volume of Tajikistan’s trade turnover increased slightly from 32% in 2000 to 37.1% in 2013.\(^1\)

The dynamics of the absolute volumes of the country’s foreign trade turnover show that during the indicated period, Tajikistan’s export to the EurAsEC countries decreased 1.22-fold, while imports, on the contrary, increased 8.66-fold.\(^2\) On the whole, in 2013, compared with 2000, Tajikistan’s export indices with respect to the EurAsEC countries amounted to 82%, while import indices reached 86.5%.

The republic’s untapped economic potential also prevented an increase in its foreign trade efficiency; we believe this was one of the main factors of Tajikistan’s failure to become properly engaged in the integration processes within the framework of the EurAsEC, since participation in them presumes a certain level of maturity.

The following indices show the level of Tajikistan’s economic development in the period under examination:

— per capita GDP in Tajikistan with respect to the average index of the EurAsEC countries amounted to 8%, while foreign trade turnover was 15%\(^3\);
— Tajikistan’s share in the total volume of industrial production was equal to 0.2%, and in agriculture to 2%\(^4\);
— Tajikistan’s share in the total import volume of the EurAsEC countries decreased from 0.6% in 2000 to 0.34% in 2013, while in export, its share increased from 0.6% to 2.4%\(^5\);
— in 2013, trade turnover with the community’s countries amounted to $1,972.8 million, or 37.1% of the country’s total foreign trade volume. In so doing, export to the EurAsEC countries amounted to $216.6 million, and import from the EurAsEC countries to $1,756.2 million.\(^6\)

Tajikistan’s trade with the EurAsEC countries was characterized by its imbalance. In 2013, the negative balance of the country’s foreign trade with the community’s countries amounted to $1,539.6 million.

Tajikistan’s main trade partner in the EurAsEC was Russia. Its share in Tajikistan’s export amounted to 10.3% of its total export volume with respect to the EurAsEC countries, while it enjoyed a 52% share in import.\(^7\)

What Prevented Integration within the EurAsEC?

We know that integration leads to the emergence of two types of economic effect—static and dynamic. However, neither the one nor the other are observed in the economy of the community’s

\(^1\) Calculated according to: Commonwealth of Independent States, 2013 (statistics yearbook), CIS Interstate Statistics Board, Moscow, 2014, 614 pp.
\(^2\) Calculated according to: Eurasian Economic Community, 2000-2012 (brief statistics collection), CIS Interstate Statistics Board, Moscow, 2013, p. 102.
\(^3\) Calculated according to: Eurasian Economic Community, 2012 (statistics yearbook), CIS Interstate Statistics Board, Moscow, 2013, p. 17.
\(^4\) Ibidem.
\(^5\) Calculated according to: Commonwealth of Independent States, 2013 (statistics yearbook).
\(^6\) Calculated according to: Foreign Economic Activity of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2014 (statistics yearbook), Statistics Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, Dushanbe, 2014, 551 pp.
\(^7\) Ibidem.
countries, since there is essentially no real effect from foreign trade within the EurAsEC, a qualitative index of which is primarily export.

An analysis of the data of reciprocal trade turnover\(^8\) shows that the foreign economic strategies of the group’s countries have different vectors. This led to fragmentation of a once unified political and economic area within the framework of the EurAsEC and CIS.

According to the data of the CIS Statistics Board, between 2000 and 2013, the share of the EurAsEC countries’ reciprocal trade in the total volume of their foreign trade turnover amounted to 13-17%, whereby showing a downward trend.

It should be noted that subjective factors, in addition to objective, also promoted the low level of integration efficiency within the community (as in the Commonwealth as a whole). These subjective factors included low performance discipline and the absence of political will.

The disintegration processes were caused both by global competition and the absence of coordinated approaches to the accession of the group’s countries to the WTO.

The wide gap in the levels of economic potential of the community’s countries also prevented the development of efficient integration within the EurAsEC: Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan significantly lagged behind Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus.

Russia’s share in the total GDP volume of the EurAsEC countries amounted to 87.6%, Kazakhstan’s to 8.7%, Belarus’ to 3.2%, Tajikistan’s to 0.3%, and Kyrgyzstan’s to 0.2%.

The share distribution of the foreign trade turnover for the indicated countries also looked approximately the same. For example, Russia provided 79.8% of the total trade turnover volume of the community’s countries, Kazakhstan 11.4%, Belarus 7.7%, and Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan 0.5% and 0.6%, respectively.\(^9\)

Meanwhile, the theory and practice of regional integration indicate that it is more efficient between countries with comparable levels of economic development. However, some experience has been garnered recently of countries with different levels of economic development achieving successful integration. It should be said, however, that different levels of economic development lead to a varying degree of interest of partners in economic interaction and integration.

The economic structures of the EurAsEC participating states also noticeably differs: Russia and Belarus were the most developed in the industrial respect; in Kazakhstan, the production and agricultural branches prevailed; while in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, there was a decrease in industrial production and an increase in the share of the agrarian sector. All of this was seriously complicated the development of reciprocal exchange among the organization’s participating states.

**Searches for Integration**

Against the background of the low efficiency of integration within the EurAsEC, Russia initiated a new project called the Common Economic Space (CES). In addition to Russia itself, it was also to include Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. But this project was never implemented, primarily because of Ukraine’s lack of desire to advance integration cooperation.

In 2005, there was a meeting of the heads of state of the CES, at which it was announced that Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus would jointly move toward creating a full-fledged customs union, as well as a common market of goods, services, capital, and labor.

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\(^8\) Calculated according to: Eurasian Economic Community, 2012 (statistics yearbook) and Commonwealth of Independent States, 2013 (statistics yearbook).

\(^9\) Calculated according to: Eurasian Economic Community, 2012 (statistics yearbook).
Further, the CU, with the participation of Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus, became one of the most important mechanisms for strengthening integration cooperation among the Eurasian states; the agreement on its establishment was reached during an informal summit of the leaders of the EurAsEC countries in August 2006.

The heads of Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus designated a plan for establishing a Customs Union consisting of three states, with the prospect of the other members of the community joining it as they were ready.

In October 2007, the Agreement on Establishment of the Customs Union was signed; it began functioning on 1 January, 2010. On that day, customs-tariff and non-tariff trade regulation measures with third countries, unified for all three CU states, were introduced.

In July 2010, the CU Common Customs Code came into effect, which provided an organizational and legal framework for the common customs territory. On 1 July, 2011, customs control was fully transferred to the external borders of the CU countries, which meant formation of the common customs territory was complete.

In the Declaration on Eurasian Economic Integration adopted on 18 November, 2011, the sides stated their intention to complete codification of the international agreements composing the legal framework of the CU-CES by 2014 and form the EEU on its basis.

On 1 January, 2012, the agreements on formation of the CES came into force, but at first it functioned on a perfunctory basis.

According to the basic agreement on the formation of the CES, by the end of the current decade, the free movement of goods, services, capital, and labor was to be fully ensured, as well as harmonization and unification of national legislation, formation of common branch markets, and real coordination of economic and foreign economic policy with the prospect of establishing a currency union.

The Problems and Prospects of Integrating Tajikistan into the EEU

The EEU was established on the basis of the EurAsEC Customs Union (on 10 October, 2014, a treaty to enlarge the EEU to Armenia was signed followed by Kyrgyzstan on 23 December, 2014). The Agreement on the EEU came into force on 1 January, 2015; since that day, the EurAsEC ceased its existence. Since the EEU was created on the basis of the EurAsEC CU, the main candidate for accession to the new integration group is Tajikistan.

As mentioned above, Kyrgyzstan acceded to this organization on 23 December, 2014. However, it does not plan on becoming a full-fledged member of the Union until the end of May 2015.

There are extremely significant obstacles hindering the accession of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to the EEU and CU. The main problem for Tajikistan is the absence of customs borders between it and the CU member states.

Tajikistan’s accession to the CU will only be possible after Kyrgyzstan joins it. However, judging from everything, Kyrgyzstan’s accession to the CU will be a long and difficult process; moreover, several questions must be resolved relating, among other things, to this republic’s membership in the WTO.

Tajikistan will also encounter similar difficulties in accessing the CU.
Art 24 of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade sets forth the principles that should guide countries establishing customs unions and free trade areas. In this context, the following example is indicative: according to the WTO Charter, a member of this organization does not have the right to join unions like the CU that do not include WTO members without reexamination of its membership provisions.

Tajikistan’s, as Kyrgyzstan’s, customs duty rates are lower than those of the CU countries, and it cannot join the EEU without coordinating this with other WTO members.

There are different approaches to assessing the prospects for Tajikistan’s accession to this organization. As Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Tajikistan Agybai Smagulov notes, establishment of the EEU fully corresponds to the principles of the WTO, the main one being a gradual decrease in tariffs and removal of the barriers hindering trade flows.

Russia, which has joined the WTO, must lower its rates. Kazakhstan plans to complete the negotiation process this year and pledges to lower import duty rates with respect to third countries (with transition periods for the most vulnerable goods of course). Bishkek believes that Kazakhstan’s and Tajikistan’s rates will be lowered and come close to each other (keeping in mind the transition periods of the latter).

At present, the simple mean arithmetical of the ad valorem parts of the import duty rates of Tajikistan’s tariff schedule is equal to 8.71% and 9.45%, which is not much lower than the corresponding index of the CU. According to the calculations on the obligations assumed to the WTO, by the end of 2020, these indices will be even closer and amount to 7.73% and 7.90%.

There are also plans to draw up proposals that the import customs duty rates that differ from the unified customs tariff of the EEU should be used temporarily with respect to certain goods.

Since Russia and Tajikistan have also joined the WTO, we think the most realistic way to resolve this problem is for Belarus and Kazakhstan to accede to this organization on generally coordinated conditions. In this event, the accession of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to the CU will be entirely realistic and lead to conditions being created for implementing one of the prospective ideas of integration cooperation among the Eurasian states.

Keeping in mind contemporary geopolitical reality, it is very logical to presume that when coordinating their obligations within the WTO, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan might encounter certain difficulties.

Nevertheless, despite everything else, the possibility of creating deep and strong economic cooperation within the EEU is very realistic. This new union is based on integration cooperation among the Eurasian states, where a great deal of aggregate economic potential is concentrated.

It stands to reason that strengthening cooperation within the EEU meets the long-term interests of the member states and corresponds to the trends seen in the world economy. However, further prospects for its development primarily depend on the successful resolution of economic tasks that are equally important for all the participating states and the achievement of real improvement in the life of the population in the Eurasian states. Further, the viability of Eurasian integration will be determined both by the internal need for rapprochement and by the political will and desire of the elites of the participating states to intensify cooperation.

It should be noted that implementing the Eurasian integration model will not be easy at first. The thing is that within the EEU (as within the CIS in general), we are not seeing the mutual striving of the countries toward each other that could ensure the emergence of genuine integration. It is logical to presume that without an increase in economic potential and competitiveness, it will simply be impossible for each of the countries to achieve success.

The trend toward closer and more systemic cooperation could be reinforced by activating the subjective factor; it implies the foreign economic policy of the countries, which should be efficient and pro-integration. Without this, it will be extremely difficult to ensure the interests of the EEU countries, particularly keeping in mind the impact of globalization.

If we are objective, the goods turnover structure of the countries and the level of their socioeconomic development are not promoting stronger integration potential so far. One of the ways to strengthen integration interaction is to activate different forms of economic cooperation. The matter primarily concerns production-technological cooperation and investment activity. In so doing, branches of the Russian economy that possess the greatest export potential and financial opportunities could perform a structure-forming function. They have the realistic possibility of being the main element in building vertically integrated structures within the EEU.

What is more, the Collective Security Treaty Organization should play a certain role in intensifying production ties.

In conclusion, we tried to evaluate the state and prospects of Tajikistan’s cooperation with the EEU members. To do this, we examined Tajikistan’s reciprocal goods turnover with the Community’s countries and presented the results of a SWOT analysis of its accession to the EEU.

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The table was compiled according to the data of the statistics collection *Tajikistan’s Foreign Economic Activity*, Statistics Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, for the corresponding years.

The system index of Tajikistan’s trade with the EEU countries on a bilateral basis is calculated according to the following formula:

$$ I_{ij} = \frac{X_{ij}}{X_i} \cdot \frac{M_j}{(M_w - M_j)} = \frac{X_{ij} \times (M_w - M_j)}{X_j \times X_j}, $$

where $I_{ij}$ — the system index of bilateral goods flows of country $i$ to country $j$; $X_i$ — total export volume of country $i$; $X_{ij}$ — export of country $i$ to country $j$; $M_j$ — total import volume of country $j$; $M_i$ — total import volume of country $i$ and $M_w$ — total volume of world import.

The calculations we carried out show (see Table 1) that Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan hold the leading places in Tajikistan’s goods turnover with the Central Asian countries.
The level of mutual significance between Armenia and Tajikistan remains low, which is caused by the low level of development and weakness of the foreign trade (primarily export) potential of both countries, as well as their distance from each other. Evidently, this state of affairs will continue in the future.

In all likelihood, after a common customs border is created within the EEU, the dynamics of Tajikistan’s trade intensity with Kyrgyzstan will drop. This prognosis is explained by the fact that Tajikistan’s import from Kyrgyzstan largely consists of the re-export of Chinese goods.

The situation in Russia, which is deteriorating due to the West’s sanctions and the crisis, is leading to a decrease in the purchasing power of the Russian population and demand for Tajik goods and services. What is more, employers are hiring fewer foreigners, which is leading to a mass exodus of Tajik guest workers from Russia.

It stands to reason that this situation could lead to a drop in purchasing power in Tajikistan and a decrease in import volumes from Russia.

One way to overcome the above-mentioned negative phenomena could be to carry out a coordinated policy in the real production sphere (for example, by creating contemporary import-substitution production units).

The restoration of cooperation ties on an essentially new basis among the EEU countries in all spheres of the real sector will raise the level of integration maturity of small economies (including Tajikistan’s) planning to join the union, as well as become a driving force behind its economic development.

Coordination of a structured policy presumes drawing up and implementing efficient division of labor in the EEU, whereby specialization of the Union’s countries should be based on the principle of relative advantages.

### Table 2

**SWOT Analysis: Assessment of Tajikistan’s Accession to the EEU**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Factors</th>
<th>Negative Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal origin</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—sufficient (wealthy) raw resources, surplus workforce and relatively high productive force potential;</td>
<td>—deterioration in the national production structure;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—branches with a high level of competitiveness in the world markets;</td>
<td>—low competitiveness of the national economy, goods, and services;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—high level of integration cooperation with individual EEU countries established within the EurAsEC;</td>
<td>—de-industrialization of the economy;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—unified legislation within the EurAsEC;</td>
<td>—inefficient foreign economic policy;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—high demand for Tajik goods and services by Tajikistan’s main potential EEU partners;</td>
<td>—inability of national enterprises to compete with import goods;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—relatively high economic and foreign economic potential (untapped);</td>
<td>—high degree of openness, to a certain extent limiting the implementation of an efficient industrial policy;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—opportunities for diversification of Tajikistan’s foreign economic specialization within the EEU and system of international labor division in general;</td>
<td>—critical dependence on the external labor market;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>—country’s distance from Russia and Belarus;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>—transport restrictions by Uzbekistan that create certain difficulties both for the country’s efficient development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Conclusion

As the SWOT analysis shows, the main problems facing Tajikistan regarding its possible accession to the EEU and efficient integration cooperation within this union are caused by the low efficiency of the country’s national economy and foreign economic complex. Ensuring Tajikistan’s national interests, aggravated by the globalization processes, the high dependence on foreign markets (goods, services, labor, and capital), and tough competitive struggle for resources, as well as retaining...
its political independence depend on the implementation of an efficient integration policy. In addition to integration within the CIS, accession to the EEU is an important strategic vector of Tajikistan’s foreign and foreign economic policy.

At the same time, all the potential negative consequences of Tajikistan’s accession to the CU and EEU must be seriously studied. These consequences might be caused by a drop in revenue from foreign economic activity, for example. However, it seems that there is very justified hope that they will be covered by the synergetic effect from Tajikistan’s accession to the EEU in the form of market expansion, increase in the volume of national production, increase in export scope, optimization (cheapening) of import, increase in employment, and so on.

In this context, it is worth remembering that the establishment of the CU presumes the formation of a common basket of customs duty receipts and each country receiving its share of its distribution.

From the viewpoint of protecting national economic interests and achieving an optimal balance of pluses and minuses during Tajikistan’s accession to the EEU, it should be kept in mind that there will likely be disbursements relating to the country’s contribution to this basket and it should try to increase its share in it.

In my opinion, in the near future, the EEU will become the main model of integration cooperation in the CIS. However, we must also recognize the exclusively important role of Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus as the founding countries of the CU and, later, the EEU.

It should be noted that the development prospects for the EEU in general and its efficiency for Tajikistan in particular primarily depend on the ability of crisis-stricken Russia to fully realize the organization’s integration potential. This is largely prevented by the deterioration in the world geopolitical situation and the EU sanctions instigated against it.

On the other hand, the situation developing within Russia and around it could serve as a catalyst for intensifying interaction within the EEU and promote a transfer from declarations (as was the case in the CIS) to the creation of a real integration union among the Eurasian states.
The United States is kept busy by the events unfolding worldwide and on the Eurasian continent (the Ukrainian crisis, Afghanistan, the anti-Russian sanctions, oil and gas prices, the Muhammad cartoons crisis, the Lausanne talks on the Iranian nuclear file, etc.). Under the pressure of these and many other factors, Washington is actively readjusting its Central Asian policy, as well as its conceptual approaches to the regional policies of other players and to the changing specifics of each of the Central Asian countries.

Its claims to regional leadership are challenged by the Color Revolutions and its ambiguous involvement in the Middle East. Hence the tectonic shifts in the minds of the Central Asian elites, the dampened pro-Western enthusiasm, and the noticeable changes in public opinion in the Central Asian republics.

The author has discussed America’s foreign policy and its implementation in the region based on the values the United States declares to be fundamental, the specifics of the “progress of democracy,” and
the new real and potential regional security risks. Possible steps by other players involved in the region—China, Russia, Turkey, and Iran—and America’s possible response to potential developments are also discussed.

The author looks at the relations between the U.S. and each of the Central Asian republics. When analyzing the relationship between Washington and Astana, Tashkent, Ashgabat, Dushanbe, and Bishkek, he concentrates on synergetic methods, which presuppose the quest for and use of active constructive impacts on unstable situations.

**KEYWORDS:** The U.S., Central Asia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Russia, Iran, Afghanistan, foreign policy, international relations, synergy.

**Introduction**

America’s readjusted approaches to Central Asia are shown by the completion of Operation Enduring Freedom and the new National Security Strategy discussed and adopted by U.S. Congress. The American administration has revised some of the fundamental values of its foreign policy course. This has been amply confirmed by the way the White House responds to the presence of other players in Central Asia (Russia, China, EU members, Turkey, Iran, India, Pakistan, Middle Eastern countries, and others), as well as Washington’s statements relating to the political developments in the countries of Central Asia and Afghanistan.

U.S. regional policies follow the changing interests of the American companies, American military-industrial complex, and transnational giants, the primary concern being economic growth, which creates demand for American exports.

Washington is following the changing situation and the political and economic processes unfolding in the Central Asian countries.

In any case, the American administration proceeds from the uncontested principles that travel from one official document to another: Central Asia is a link of the interconnected world in which the United States has national interests; the U.S. should become and remain the strongest leader in this part of the world to preserve regional order. This means that Washington should promote and impose its interests and values on the region’s states, up to and including the use of force.

The following organizations can be described as tools or subjective factors of the efforts described above: the U.S. Department of State; the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs; Congress; the National Security Council; the Department of Defense; and other levers of pressure, as well

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as the media and officials of the U.S. administration, diplomats (Anthony Blinken, Nisha Biswal, and Richard Hoagland), and the special envoys for Iran and the Middle East, etc.

The academic and expert communities, as well as analysts from universities and other structures are actively contributing to the elaboration of new strategic and tactical trends. They are Frederic Starr, Paul Wolfowitz, and Martha Olcott, to name but a few.

The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace headed by notorious William Burns with offices in Beijing and Moscow, the Council on Foreign Relations, which publishes the *Foreign Affairs* journal, the Brookings Institution headed by Strobe Talbott, and the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) at the Johns Hopkins University can be described as instrumental subjective factors.

In the mid-term perspective, the United States wanted to remain in the region to supervise the presidential elections in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, the parliamentary elections in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, the constitutional reforms (in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan) to ensure they are carried out in line with international standards, and the policy of the new leader of Afghanistan.

### How the Declared Values are Realized

Since 1991, the United States has been presenting itself in the region as “the greatest force of peace, progress, and human dignity the world has ever known,” while American leadership was offered as the “global force for good.” The White House officials frequently quote the Holy Koran: “Whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see its results.”

When talking about Washington’s priorities in Central Asia, the leading American experts in the region invariably turn to how Strobe Talbott described Central Asia in July 1997 in the SAIS where he spoke as Deputy Secretary of State: “free societies at peace with themselves and with each other.”

This is the foundation of American Central Asian policy put in a nutshell.

At one time, Talbott warned that the region might become an arena of never-ending rivalry of the Great Powers, a breeding ground of terror, and a seat of religious and political extremism. An experienced politician, he was moderately tolerant of Turkey’s regional initiatives and very concerned about the possible Iranian impacts.

He believed that “our presence and influence in the region can itself be a force for the right kind of integration.” Among other things, “the efforts of non-governmental organizations and businesses” would be important for the overall success of American policy in the region.

Many of his forecasts were realized, yet he was not quite right about Turkey’s influence in the region and the prospects for social partnership of the unfolding “second” and “third” sectors in Central Asia.

Today, on the eve of the final withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan, the United States is interested in the enormous potential of a “region that could act as an economic bridge from Istanbul to Shanghai and provide opportunities for our own businesses, technologies, and innovations to take

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root; a region that could offer goods and energy to the booming economies of South and East Asia; and a region that could serve as a stabilizing force for Afghanistan’s transition and an indispensable partner in the fight against narco-trafficking, terrorism, and extremism. The United States wants to broaden and deepen our bilateral relationships with each of the states in Central Asia. At the same time, we do not see these relationships in the region as exclusive, or zero-sum, in any way."

The United States has admitted that “progress of democracy has been halting” and, at the same time, deemed it necessary to declare: “We are present” and we are “engaged with the governments of the countries and their civil societies.”

Washington obviously has no intention of abandoning its rhetoric about human rights, the stronger presence of civil society institutions, and wider religious freedoms. From time to time, the U.S. administration voices its concerns about the infringements on human rights across the vast territory stretching from the Caspian to the Chinese borders.

Americans are constantly concerned about the spread of terrorism, as well as the poor state of prisons and the penitentiary system as a whole. Recently, in light of the terrorist acts in Europe and the wars in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, the United States has developed new concerns about the radicalization and reproduction of crime in Central Asian prisons accompanied by related problems—the quality of the judicial system, reforms of the judicial and legal systems, improvement of the mechanisms of amnesty, rehabilitation and re-socialization of convicts, ensuring employment, etc.

Very much as before, Washington intends to build a more open society because “the more people can’t find outlets for their frustrations and their fears that are productive outlets, you can almost guarantee that they’ll find negative outlets for that.” The United States, however, will have to revise its attitude to convicts as potential members of illegal armed units.

**Attitude to Other Players**

The most powerful of the geopolitical players, the United States, however, cannot remain indifferent to what other players are doing in the region. In view of the organizational and geopolitical isolation of South and Central Asia, the players can be divided into external (China, Russia, Turkey, Iran, etc.) and internal (India and Pakistan).

During the anti-Taliban operation in Afghanistan, the region became even more dependent on big Chinese investments. It should be said that China has outstripped Russia in terms of trade volume with the five Central Asian republics, even though Russia has stepped up its efforts. According to the media, Washington has mixed feelings about this and has been paying much more attention to China’s investment principles and economic and legal statements, which differ from the Western ones, attitude to the local (non-Chinese) workforce, the quality of projects, etc.

The SCO headed by China is still a very loose structure with a low level of cohesion and efficiency.

Washington is no less concerned about the decision to set up the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and over a dozen less influential financial structures. While talking about the investments of the key countries, China in particular, as being very important for the region and its

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countries, the United States does not conceal its concerns about internal rules, decision-making, the role of the Board of Directors, standards in human rights, environmental protection, intellectual property, etc. Washington relies on its vast experience of creating and supporting the standards observed by dozens of the largest international financial institutions.

Beijing is invariably cautious when it comes to propaganda, which means that the United States will hardly develop “permanent concerns” associated with the AIIB.

According to another scenario, the United States might accumulate resources and liberalize the principles by which pro-Western financial institutions are guided and allow them to cooperate with the AIIB (up to and including direct involvement of the U.S.’s key allies in it). In addition, new Asian bank “clones,” interaction among the creditors, etc. are possible.

One tends to agree with the author, who writes that “these (Central Asian.—Ed.) states … distrust China’s reliability on border security and view their economic relationships with China as unequal. Many of their intellectuals think that China is mishandling the Uighur problem and that instability in China could spill over and affect their countries.”

The Central Asian neighbors of China are involved in a bitter rivalry for partnership relations with China and control over Chinese trade and transit routes.

In view of the keenly felt vulnerability of the western borders, which are too long and poorly fortified, China, which knows that other powers are unpredictable, while the loyalty of the local Muslim population does not stretch too far, is placing its stakes on maintaining stability outside its borders.

This means that it needs peaceful and predictable secular regimes along its borders; today, the ruling circles of the People’s Republic of China look at Central Asian countries as a breeding ground of Islamic radicals. Beijing can hardly welcome Central Asian states’ sympathy toward the separatist forces operating in Xinjiang; there is a firm conviction that its Central Asian neighbors are open to manipulation of the other great powers.

According to the logic of the most conservative part of the Washington establishment, preserving the U.S. primacy in the region under review and realizing its national interests requires “bestowing on the United States asymmetric economic advantages over others; creating new preferential trading arrangements that consciously exclude China; recreating a technology-control regime involving U.S. allies that prevents China from acquiring military and strategic capabilities;concertedly building up the power-political capacities of U.S. friends and allies on China’s periphery; and improving the capability of U.S. military forces” in Central Asia,” etc.

According to prominent analysts, China’s presence in Central Asia does not threaten America’s interests, however further expansion of its interests in Central and South Asia is potentially fraught with serious consequences because “Washington confronts a wide range of daunting security challenges abroad and tight fiscal constraints on defense spending at home.”

The United States is especially worried by China’s jealous suspicions of all sorts of strategic cooperation along the Washington-Delhi line.

The new National Security Strategy of the United States speaks about “a strategic convergence with India’s Act East policy and our continued implementation of the rebalance to Asia and the Pacific” and says that the United States should “continue to work with both India and Pakistan to

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9 A. Scobell, F. Ratner, M. Beckley, China’s Strategy Toward South and Central Asia. An Empty Fortress, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, Calif, 2014, p. 79.
promote strategic stability, combat terrorism, and advance regional economic integration in South and Central Asia.” This speaks of America’s relative tolerance of what India is doing in the region.

The Washington administration considers the recent events on Russia’s western borders to be a threat to the fundamental principles of inviolability of borders and territorial integrity, as well as the inalienable right of people to decide their own future. One of the American top officials said in this connection that “countries should be able to decide for themselves with whom they want to associate and what the basic decisions are about their future.”

There is also an opinion in Washington that “Russia, which of course has deep historical and economic ties to Central Asia … will continue to be a major economic force in the region. At the same time, Central Asia states need the space to make their own decisions on how to further their economic development, preserve their political autonomy, and deepen their integration with global markets.”

The U.S. relies on all sorts of official and semi-official media to describe the EurAsEC as excessively politicized and, at the same time, tries to arrange Central Asian support of the Minsk Agreements and other political processes.

Turkey’s chances of spreading its influence in Central Asia are limited by the riots in the Turkish capital and elsewhere to the support of the pro-Turkish lobby, as well as the involvement of citizens of Central Asian countries in the pan-Turkic structures. It should be said that American experts remind us from time to time that Prime Minister of Turkey Özal talked about a Turkic dream (a United Turkish Republic) while watching the Soviet Union fall apart.

So far, the Central Asian capitals respond to the progress of the Lausanne talks on the Iranian nuclear file with a declarative and cautious approval of “complete liquidation of weapons of mass destruction,” “comprehensive non-proliferation regime,” etc. This can be interpreted as a manifestation of the traditional mistrust of the policies pursued by official Tehran and their active determination to oppose the threat of armed confrontation on their borders, the effects of which might be too catastrophic. This explains their de-facto support of the efforts of the Six, the United States in particular.

It should be said that the hopes kindled in the newly independent Central Asian republics and supported by the United States that Iran might become the gates to sea routes in Europe and Asia did not come true: Iran was ostracized, demonized, and marginalized.

Today, their positions are not uniform (even if we push aside the intermediate results of the Lausanne process); they are inscribed into a triangle of sorts, the sides of which are formed by Iran, which does not want the stronger position of the United States, the countries that would prefer to lift economic sanctions (with the exception of the Caspian states), and the United States. The local leaders expect it to actively oppose the gradually spreading religious extremism of ISIS.

The United States still considers Iran to be a sluice for Europe, as well as a gateway to India within the context of the events it initiated earlier.

Taking Local Specifics into Account

When talking about international relations in Central Asia, top American officials refer to Byzantium: “Why is this important? The European heritage with its government structures and social

contracts flows from the Western Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment; whereas the Russo-Soviet heritage flows in nearly a direct line from the Byzantine Empire.\textsuperscript{13}

America regards Central Asia as one of the least economically integrated regions and as an entity of states with conflicting national interests and differentiated development models that, on the whole, shows no enthusiasm over American values. This and the fact that much, including the implementation of generally accepted international standards, depends on the political will of leaders does not prevent the U.S. from pursuing its strategic interests through cooperation with all the countries in the region.

Today, the collapsed oil prices, devalued national currency, negative ratings supplied by Western rating agencies, etc. might make Kazakhstan, which totally depends on oil, more responsive to China’s greater influence in the region. On the other hand, these negative factors might whip up diversification efforts, widen foreign policy choices, and finally end Kazakhstan’s dependence on its neighbors.

The White House invariably refers to the Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the United States of America, signed on 20 February, 2015 in Washington, as an illustration of the nature of bilateral relations. It is the first document of this sort signed by the United States with a Central Asian country.

The sides treat the document as a tool for strengthening their ability to fight drug trafficking, slave trade, terrorism, religious extremism, and money laundering.\textsuperscript{14}

The signing of the treaty was intended to demonstrate to the other Central Asian countries that closer cooperation with the United States in this sphere was possible, and even necessary. Washington is obviously interested in continued cooperation with Astana in the wide-scale state English language programs and cooperation between the state structures of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the universities of Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, Duke University, the Federal Executive Institute (FEI) in Charlottesville, etc. This is done with the expectation that American university graduates will find it easier to coopt into the Kazakhstan elite and widen the cooperation between the Civil Service Agency of Kazakhstan and the U.S. Office of Personnel Management.

Washington is talking about educating young people from Afghanistan at Kazakhstan’s higher educational establishments to plant in their minds the values of the new elite. There is every reason to believe that in the near future Afghanistan, into which billions of Western aid have been poured and which is faithfully following the lead of the United States, will become a “shop-window of consistent progress” in the sub-region of South and Central Asia.

The United States will help Kazakhstan join the WTO (this event is scheduled for 2015) and promote its cooperation with Kyrgyzstan in this respect.

At the same time, Astana’s sporadic claims of regional leadership tacitly supported by Washington, which feigns tolerance for Kazakhstan’s integration initiatives, were pushed to the background by President Putin’s statement about the absence of statehood among the Kazakhs in the past, probably grossly misinterpreted by the media.

The geopolitical balance of power in the region is somehow readjusted by Washington’s sporadic attempts to draw Astana into the developments in the east of Ukraine to help deescalate the situation.

\textsuperscript{13} See: “Central Asia: What’s Next?” Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Richard E. Hoagland, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs; Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., 30 March, 2015, U.S. Department of State, available at [www.state.gov].

When talking about Tajikistan, American experts point to corruption in the corridors of power, security structures, etc. as the main threats.\(^\text{15}\)

Corruption is especially obvious in the production and export of raw materials; it is gradually undermining the ruling regime, while the resultant instability is leading to the emergence of Islamic extremism.

The problem of drug trafficking cannot but cause concern among the republic’s neighbors, together with the fact that Dushanbe prefers to deal with it singlehandedly without involving its neighbors. The Western media point out that, not infrequently, Tajikistan relies on international anti-narcotic structures. This limits the circle of drug trafficking groups and concentrates the profits produced inside it.

American experts warn that the country’s stability might be undermined by the huge number of labor migrants returning from Russia and doing nothing for the country’s GDP and per capita income (which will inevitably affect the religious situation). The situation is negatively affected by the growing demonization of Tajikistan as a failed state and unreliable partner.\(^\text{16}\)

There is a threat of Dushanbe’s unpredictable behavior in relation to Afghanistan and the “new” Iran; suffice it to say that the country supported Ahmad Shah Massoud.

Tashkent’s fairly ambiguous position on Dushanbe’s continued augmentation of its military potential makes the regional context even more complicated.\(^\text{17}\)

For Washington, Kyrgyzstan has been and remains the regional beacon of parliamentary democracy, which makes relations with it one of its priorities in the region.

It is the place where America is implementing, with fairly dubious results, its numerous projects designed to develop efficient regional institutions capable of planting “common international rules” in local soil.

According to Washington, Bishkek and Astana, but not Tashkent, Dushanbe, or Ashghabad, are doing a lot to put an end to violent extremism and to contribute to the American initiatives to stem financial flows and discontinue conscription into the ISIS. The two countries’ success is explained by their relatively milder religiosity, which makes them less responsive to the ideas of religious extremists.

The United States is convinced that it should continue its close cooperation with Kyrgyzstan “to combat narcotics trafficking … cooperate in fighting corruption … investigate financial crimes … and implement the law enforcement reform.” An important role in their cooperation belongs to the Kyrgyz USAID offices and the Peace Corps.\(^\text{18}\)

Some American experts think that Russia, which intends to build new hydropower stations in Kyrgyzstan, is driven by its own interests and the desire to keep the region disunited.

On the other hand, the countries situated in the basins of local rivers have learned to meander between Moscow and Washington; they believe that CASA-1000 alternatives will allow Afghan farmers to switch from opium poppy to other crops.

The United States is of the following opinion about the widening Eurasian Union and Kyrgyzstan’s membership in it: “The expansion of the Eurasian Economic Union, for example, should not come at the expense of countries fulfilling their existing international commitments, including commitments to the World Trade Organization, nor restrict their ability to enter into other bilateral or multilateral trade relationships.”\(^\text{19}\)


\(^{19}\) “The New Silk Road Post-2014…”
When talking about Uzbekistan, the top officials say that there is “the right balance of pressure, partnership, and a certain amount of strategic patience in how change can take place.”

The United States is convinced that Uzbekistan has adequate intellectual potential to promote business activities, innovational economic growth, etc. On the whole, its positive attitude to the results of the parliamentary (2014) and the presidential (2015) elections in Uzbekistan means that Washington approved the country’s rejection of “the false choices imposed by anyone else” and its desire to continue its multivectoral foreign and economic policy. It seems that the U.S. will encourage Uzbekistan’s involvement in the Northern Distribution Network.

The image of Turkmenistan as Russia’s unreliable partner makes the country a welcome partner of the West. The United States still backs the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline; it wants, among other things, to diversify the flows of Turkmen natural gas to new South Asian markets.

There are other factors which contribute to stability in the relationship between Turkmenistan and the United States.

**Conclusion**

The sociopolitical and socioeconomic processes in the Central Asian republics and Afghanistan, the confrontation between Russia and the West, the new Chinese initiatives backed by considerable funding, the Lausanne process, the very specific nature of democratization in Turkey, the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, etc. call for reinterpretation of America’s presence in the region.

It seems that in the last few years, the Obama Administration has finally arrived at the conclusion that the Anglo-Saxon model of power is not enough to plant democracy in any country. It should primarily be supported by economic infrastructures, an indispensable political context, judicial reform, etc., which takes time and requires consistent efforts. Washington remains as contradictory and inconsistent as ever; not infrequently, its well-balanced approaches and rational decisions are devalued by ideologically biased statements.

It has to take into account the fact that the Muslim world suspects that the present U.S. Administration cannot resolve the Israeli-Palestinian problem. We should also bear in mind the still loud echo of the recent events in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Yemen, and other Arab countries, that is, along the “arc of instability” stretching from North Africa to Afghanistan, which has caused, to a certain extent, domestic political conflicts in the Central Asian countries.

The United States should take into account that, in light of what is going on in Syria and Iraq, the attitude to America as the main superpower that proved unable to pursue its strategy in the Muslim world is gradually changing from positive to negative among the people living in Central Asia.

All the Central Asian republics, on the whole, pursue a well-balanced foreign policy in their relations with Russia, the United States, and other power centers. The Central Asian capitals proceed from Moscow’s and Washington’s continuing common determination to put an end to radical extremism and uproot drug production. They still demonstrate common approaches to the way many topical problems of international security should be resolved or, to use the latest term, the “so-called principle of ‘compartmentalization’ which allows countries to confront each other on some issues and to cooperate productively on others.” It seems that, in the future, this will help consolidate the regional security system with due account of the national interests of all the Central Asian states.

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Much more attention should be paid to the so-called “medium-sized” states (Iran and Turkey), which are part of the regional agenda. The fact that the armed opposition has found a safe haven in Pakistan and there is a need to preserve regional security demands that the U.S. administration should clearly trace the routes of official relations with Islamabad. Drawing even closer to the Central Asian countries, the closest neighbors of Afghanistan, might help the United States to realize its plans.

On the whole, however, Central Asia is not one of the foreign policy priorities, although the United States’ interest in the region might, in the mid term, come to the fore to acquire just as much urgency as the need to preserve global security.

These interests should be constantly readjusted because the region is attracting numerous global threats and challenges (territorial, ethnonational, religious, ecological, etc.).

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MICRO-GEOPOLITICAL SEMIOTICS OF CENTRAL ASIA: “CROSSROADS” AND “BRIDGES”

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ABSTRACT

The author analyzes a highly specific geopolitical phenomenon—geopolitical self-identification of the Central Asian countries with the help of geographic images, symbols, and signs used to prove their importance on the international arena and at the regional level in particular. In his analysis the author uses a constructivist approach to the efforts to fit several geographic descriptions into a geopolitical context combined, to a certain extent, with a realistic approach expressed by the term “geopolitical semiotics.”

KEYWORDS: micro-geopolitics, semiotics, transportization, Central Asia.

Introduction

In the years of independence the Central Asian republics have enriched their political vocabulary with quite a few new terms, expressions, and figures of speech.

Since 1991, that is, for practically quarter of a century of renewed independence, the Central Asian region has been coping with real and virtual geopolitical challenges.
Many experts in Central Asian developments have acquired the habit of talking about the regional context in geopolitical terms better suited to the Great Powers’ rivalry in this part of the world. Suffice it to mention the famous “Balkanization of Central Asia” offered by former U.S. national security advisor and prominent American political scientist Zbigniew Brzezinski.

The modality of the region’s geopolitical transformation created a relative novelty: micro-geopolitics of each of the Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan).

Micro-geopolitics is a product of sorts of Great Power geopolitics (macro-geopolitics), none of which has so far outweighed the others in the region as a whole, or in individual countries in particular. Their rivalry, however, has created side-effects, one of them being the perceptual and real geopolitics of the smaller Central Asian states.

**Exercises in Semiotics**

Today, we have arrived at a constructivist approach that describes geopolitics as “a discursive practice by which intellectuals of statecraft ‘spatialize’ international politics in such a way as to represent it as a ‘world’ characterized by particular types of places, peoples and dramas.”

“To designate a place is not simply to define a location or setting. It is to open up a field of possible taxonomies and trigger a series of narratives, subjects and appropriate foreign policy responses.”

In other words, any political discourse of a space and its “material content” should concentrate on what is important (meaningful) or unimportant (meaningless). At the top political level, this “construction of meanings” looks like an effort to create and promote a system of ideas and worldviews.

The spatial-territorial semiotics of the official and expert geopolitical discourse is one of the outcrops of the phenomenon described above; it is an earlier unknown communicative system that uses relatively new politicized signs, words, images, and symbols as tools.

Dmitry Zamyatin from Russia has studied the specific features of geographical spaces and their cognitive reflections in geographic and geopolitical images: “Construction of geographic images is connected with the process of formalization and, at the same time, compression and concentration of certain geographical ideas. A geographical image is the sum-total of bright and concentrated signs, symbols, and key ideas about real spaces (territories, locations, regions, countries, landscapes, etc.). These geographical images may assume different forms depending on the aims, tasks, and conditions of their creation. In most cases, they are the results of two main processes: purposeful construction and purposeful reconstruction, exposure and identification. The correlation between them depends on the position of the creator of geographic images.”

After arming themselves with the expression “New Silk Road,” the five Central Asian newly independent states returned to the political parlance, a move better described as a semiotic exercise. Indeed, they wanted to stress their significance as countries with important or even special places on the New Silk Road. It should be said here that the reference to the New Silk Road used to confirm their newly found geopolitical status has pretty much become part and parcel of their national ideologies, a phenomenon clearly seen in Uzbekistan in the heart of the region.

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The magic of this combination of words has spread far and wide at the international level—the great powers have learned to look at Central Asia through the prism of the Great Silk Road. The United States, the EU, Japan, China, and India have gone even further: they have elaborated the so-called Doctrines of the Great Silk Road at the national level.

The idea has become the region’s business card of sorts; today, the new concepts have been adjusted to contemporary reality: the Great Silk Road of highways and railways; the optical-fiber Great Silk Road, gas- and oil-pipeline Great Silk Road, etc.

Great Silk Road semiotics have spread across the region in the form of the geopolitically justified “bridge,” “road,” “corridor,” and “crossroads” rhetoric. It seems that the revived memories of the Silk Road have inspired self-positioning of the Central Asian countries as a bridge between geographically important areas, a crossroads of important international communication lines.

Here is a typical case of self-perception: “Uzbekistan’s geographic location in the center of a huge region where important international East-West and North-South transport arteries meet means that, albeit a landlocked country, it stands a good chance of becoming an indispensable part of the international transportation network. These advantages were well known and well used in the distant past: our ancestors knew nothing about logistics, yet they built caravanserais at the crossroads of the Great Silk Road. Travelers could rest there, leave their cargos for safekeeping, or arrange their delivery to places far removed from the major caravan routes.”

The virtual status of the crossroads of which the Central Asian countries boast (sometimes without adequate reasons) is not an idle invention. In the past, Central Asia was considered a geopolitical bridge that connected the Russian Empire and, later, the Soviet Union with Afghanistan. The British Empire, in turn, expected to reach the Heartland via Central Asia. In 1992, Milam Hauner published a book about the geopolitical rivalry, otherwise known as the Great Game, between Britain and Russia to answer the main question: What is Asia to us? India is seen as “the main factor in the Central Asian question: ‘the drive for warm waters’ and the ‘so-called railway imperialism’.”

“The southern tier assumed a dual function at the beginning of the twentieth century. The first function was a convenient platform … from which diversionary operations could be launched to threaten British India. The second function was to back up the vulnerable lifeline connecting the two extremities of the Empire.”

Some experts think that Central Asia’s contemporary transit function became part of its modus operandi. Ross H. Munro, among others, has pointed to the following: “A New Silk Road of modern railroads and highways that would effectively give China a land route far to the West, ultimately to Europe and to an Iranian opening on the Persian Gulf, would have enormous strategic consequences, possibly comparable to the impact that the advent of the Suez and Panama Canals once had.”

On the whole, seen in the macro-geopolitical context, Central Asia invariably looked like a target of geopolitics that served, so to speak, the interests of the Great Powers locked in rivalry. It seems that today, when the Central Asian countries have acquired international subjectivity, this approach can no longer be accepted.

Strange as it may seem, these countries have developed a taste for geopolitical games—sometimes it is hard to say whether the region serves as a bridge or a crossroads for extra-regional countries or for the Central Asian states. It should be said that the regional states are building their “crossroads-

bridge” identity not only in the context of interregional communications, but also in the intraregional context.

It seems that the special attention being given to this identity is suggested, among other things, by the region’s geographic uniqueness, a favorite subject with practically all the Central Asian countries.

- First, all five Central Asian states are landlocked (on top of this all of Uzbekistan’s neighbors are also landlocked).
- Second, the region borders on three powers: Russia to the north, China to the east, and India to the south, while the Caucasus, to the west, is just a stone’s throw away from Europe.

This means that Central Asia is a crossroads that has been serving as a transportation hub of the North-South and East-West routes since time immemorial, and still does so today.

## Assets and Liabilities

Can this affect the course of the political processes in Central Asia? Will the region’s countries manage to capitalize on their geopolitical “bridge” and “crossroad” assets?

Let’s answer the first question. “Central Asia and the Caucasus,” a semiotic formula coined in the 1990s, can serve as an illustration of the region’s existential geopolitical transformation. This was when a scholarly journal of the same name was launched in Sweden and largely stimulated studies of the processes unfolding in the vast zone bordering on Russia.

This formula means, on the one hand, that Central Asia and the Caucasus have acquired political significance, in particular, as a bridge between Europe and Asia, leaving Russia in the cold (this has been noticed by many authors). On the other, it is evidence of the growing subjectivity of the five Central Asian and three South Caucasian states (Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia) on the international arena.

The GUUAM alliance (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Moldova) was formed because the Central Asian countries treated it and the Caucasus as a “window on Europe.” Europe, in turn, looked at Central Asia and the Caucasus as a “window on Asia,” an exercise in semiotics of sorts.

The TRACECA project in 1998 and the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline in 2005 added weight to the “crossroad-bridge” definition of Central Asia and the Caucasus.

TRACECA, initiated by the European Union as a Europe-Asia transportation corridor, consisted of the Black Sea ports (Poti and Batumi), the railways of Georgia and Azerbaijan, the ferry between Baku and Turkmenbashi across the Caspian, the railways of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and China, and the Chinese Pacific ports. It was expected to widen the markets of Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus and connect them with the EU.

There was a political dimension as well: transportation between Central Asia and Europe should be diversified to leave Russia outside the new corridor.

The project includes 6,900 km of newly built railways—the transportation corridor across Russia is 10,800 km, making TRACECA’s appeal obvious.7

The project of a railway between Andijan (Uzbekistan), Osh (Kyrgyzstan), and Erkeshtam (China) designed in 1997 is an example of transportation functionalism: it essentially creates a straight

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line between China and Amsterdam that is 8,000 km shorter than the route across the Suez Canal and 15,000 km shorter than the one around the Cape of Good Hope.

Some experts think that the new railway will be beneficial to no less than 30 states, although Kazakhstan, the transit territory between the CIS and China, will not be among the lucky ones. This explains its insistence on upgrading the borderline railway station Druzhba-Alashankou and building a new railway between Yining (Gulja) in China and Almaty.\(^8\)

Today, the Central Asian hub is fairly busy: merchants, carriers, and travelers rub shoulders with NATO, American, German, and Russian military, trans-border drug dealers, etc. The region has become an important stretch of the so-called Northern Distribution Network (NDN) used to move ISAF troops and military equipment from Afghanistan. This has added weight to the region’s strategic importance and made it a bridge that connects the largest and so far “incompatible” parts of the vast continent.

This suggests a question: Will the Central Asian states remain important for NATO after 2014? Much will depend on whether they find a new mode of operation between the Euro-Asia and Euro-Atlantic zones.

The region’s transit function has created a problem that demands a vitally important choice between the Euro-Asian and Euro-Atlantic actors and trends; so far the region is living amid strategic indefiniteness.\(^9\) In the context of macro-geopolitics (a new name for the old Great Game), these trends strongly affect the “pendulous” foreign policies of the local states and, first and foremost, regional stability.

This adds new significance to the second of the questions formulated above: Will the region’s countries manage to capitalize on their geopolitical “bridge” and “crossroad” assets? At first, Central Asia looked like a region without dividing lines and a major transit, trade, and civilizational crossing on the Asian continent. Today, it has found itself in the new and possibly too demanding role of a geopolitical bridge between two mega-zones: Euro-Atlantic and Euro-Asia. Imposed on the specific national-state identities of the Central Asian countries and their different interests, this role is reflected in geopolitical semiotics.

Each state has its assets and liabilities, as well as the related rhetoric and regional policies of extraregional and intraregional dimensions.

The extra-regional vectors include, in particular, the Tejen-Serakhs-Mashhad railway added in May 1996 to the railway web covering the vast space between Turkey, Iran, and Central Asia. Today, the Iranian stretch is 170 km long, while the Turkmen route is 130 km. The Seraks stretch completed the trans-Asian main railway and shortened the time needed to reach the Persian Gulf from Shanghai. This might cut down the time and cost of freight transportation from China or Japan to Iran and further on to Europe by 25-30%.\(^10\)

The Turkmen-Kazakh stretch of the railway between Kazakhstan and Iran via Turkmenistan was commissioned on 11 May, 2013. As part of the international North-South transport corridor, it will offer better and cheaper deliveries from Europe to Central and Southern Asia and the Middle East. Connected with the East-West transportation network (the transcontinental route China-Central Asia-the Caucasus-Europe across the Caspian), the North-South corridor will acquire even more significance.\(^11\)

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An agreement on a new international transit corridor between Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Oman, and Qatar was signed in April 2011 to connect the Central Asian states with the Middle East.

The multimodal transport-and-logistics Navoi hub deserves special mention as one of the dimensions of the extra-regional vector. The project, which is being implemented jointly with the Korean Air Cargo Company, serves as the air, automobile and railway terminal for export, import, and transit of cargos and passengers.

Today, Korean Air Cargo performs 12 flights per week by Boeing-747 aircraft along the Incheon (Korea)-Navoi (Uzbekistan)-Milan (Italy), Incheon-Navoi-Brussels and Shanghai-Navoi-Milan routes. The Uzbekistan Airways Company, which uses A300 aircraft, performs 11 flights a week along the Navoi-Delhi, Navoi-Mumbai, Navoi-Bangkok and Navoi-Frankfurt routes, as well as chartered flights Navoi-Dakka and Navoi-Frankfurt. There are plans to open flights to Istanbul, Almaty, Dubai, Moscow, and Tel Aviv. The freight terminal can process up to 300 tons a day.

The transnational Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan-China gas pipeline, which will diversify gas export geography, is being successfully implemented.

In 2013, President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov announced that the third branch of the Uzbekistan-China pipeline will be built. This makes Uzbekistan, a country in the heart of Central Asia with the most diversified transport and service infrastructures, the best candidate for the title of interregional and continental crossroads.

The crossroads and bridges rhetoric and politics have a geopolitically charged intraregional dimension. The region’s important transit function and its significance, as seen by the great powers, have created a feeling of self-importance in each of the region’s countries and made them very confident about their geopolitical potential.

Certain countries have been marginally successful in tapping their “unique” bridge/crossroads opportunities; this has fanned tension in intraregional relations and threatens the region’s further fragmentation. Tajikistan, for example, despite its far from advantageous geographic location high up in the mountains, is actively involved in international transportation corridors going to China, Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan. In this way, Uzbekistan (which from time to time imposes transport blockades on Tajikistan) is being pushed aside.

China is one of the most active participants in all the transportation projects being implemented in Tajikistan, which, very much like its Central Asian neighbors, accompanies its efforts with semiotic novelties. For example, there is a project called Shokhrokhi Abreshim-Shokhrokhi Vakhdat expected to connect all the mountain regions among themselves and around the capital with an outlet in the Kulma Pass to the Karakorum highway on the Chinese border. President of Tajikistan Emomali Rakhmon described Gorny Badakhshan as “the Golden Gates of Tajikistan,” which intensifies the bridge/crossroads rhetoric. The Qulma-Khorog-Qulob-Dushanbe-Khujand-Chanok highway, raised to the rank of “grand strategy,” is designed to help Tajikistan “get out of the present transport-communicational deadlock” (!).

Today, Uzbekistan is the only and, therefore, most important and real bridge connecting Tajikistan with the outside world. This has given Tashkent strategic advantages and supplied it with tools for putting pressure on Dushanbe, which is doing nothing for the relations between the two countries.

According to the official statement coming from both countries, regular flights between their capitals (cut short in the 1990s by the rapidly worsening bilateral relations) were to be resumed on 29 March, 2015. This has not happened yet.

12 [www.mfa.uz].
The road and transit problems, contemplated within the framework of purely national interests, have created a complicated or even tense micro-political situation. Suffice it to say that even the Andijan-Osh-Erkeshtam railway, no matter how attractive and profitable, has raised questions and criticism.

Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are restoring the old “bridges”: the Shymkent-Tashkent highway, 99 km in length, is being actively reconstructed into a trunk highway with dual carriageways; an interchange (road junction) with five flyovers is being contemplated.

The Shymkent-Tashkent highway is part of the international Western Europe-Western China transit corridor; 8,445 km of it will cross China, Kazakhstan, and Russia. The total length of the Kazakhstan stretch is 2,787 km (2,452 of which must be reconstructed): 215 km were commissioned in 2011; 700 km were added in 2012. The reconstruction of these highways is expected to be continued, in which both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are interested. The Kazakhstan stretch will be commissioned in 2015.

The above reveals the interconnection between the micro-geopolitical images and symbols of the “bridge” and “crossroads” types and the efforts of the Central Asian countries to consolidate their regional and international positions in full conformity with the policy of prestige and protection of national interests. This policy, however, should take into account regional interests as well.

The above clarifies the main point: the claims of the smaller Central Asian countries to the role of bridges and crossroads connecting the East and the West, China and Russia, and China and Europe are obviously exaggerated. We should never forget that they must first become bridges for each other and only then assume a continental, interregional connecting (or probably disuniting) mission.

The local countries have already recognized the importance of intraregional consortiums in the hydropower, food, transport, and communication spheres; despite their urgency, corresponding activity is at the lowest point. It seems that the Central Asian neighbors, who have been living together for many centuries, have indefinitely postponed drawing closer to each other.

In Lieu of a Conclusion

There are no traffic lights or road signs at the Central Asian geopolitical crossroads. Traffic regulations are determined by the micro-geopolitical situation and the fact that the Central Asian countries are aware of their place in the world and the region, the nature of their political systems and regimes and, naturally, their historical legacy.

On the other hand, to become instrumental and acquire substantiality the images of bridges and crossroads should correspond to the geo-historical (in retrospect) processes and geo-strategic (in prospect) plans (constructions).

Throughout its history, the region has traveled through the crucible of three epochs of transportation: the Great Silk Road epoch; the colonization and Soviet power epoch; and the current epoch of globalization.

The first epoch left nothing behind but romantic images, while the second and the third have directly affected the geopolitical image of the region and its role in the global system of international relations, conditioned by political and economic diversification and their security status. The second epoch of transportation was mainly longitudinal (this was a Soviet project), while the third acquired a new latitudinal nature.

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From the constructivist point of view, an analysis of these problems has added weight to the sphere of ideas, identities, and axiological choices that have cropped up in the course of discussions. While analyzing the reasons and motives that prompted the Central Asian countries to turn to micro-geopolitical semiotics, we discovered that they have constructed their own identity and the world around them; on the other hand, they use the term Realpolitik when building their regional and international strategies.

This has created an interesting methodological situation, in which constructivism and realism are brought together in the above descriptions of the political processes.

The geopolitical semiotics of the crossroads and bridges in Central Asia is a very complicated and specifically interpreted reflection of reality (roads, transportation hubs, territorial scopes, natural resources, etc.) in new (deliberately constructed) geopolitical images and symbols that should not only promote diversification of international communications, but also help to solve the tasks of national-state self-assertion. Not infrequently, these divisions are accompanied by the highly contradictory nature of the states’ political and strategic interests.

It seems that given the apparent relevance and strategic logic of the policy of longitudinal and latitudinal expansion of the ways and means of communications stretching from and across the landlocked crossroads of Central Asia, we should accept the fact that the real and virtual bridges between the five countries need to be restored.

After regional integration was described as the highest goal in 1991, the process began and unfolded dynamically until 2005-2006, when it was deliberately cut short.

This and the results of nearly 25 years of post-Soviet development of Central Asia suggest that until the intraregional bridges and small crossroads are restored and become usable, the large communication routes between Europe and Asia are unlikely to be sustainable.

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STRUCTURE OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND TERROR IN THE NORTHERN CAUCASUS IN THE 1990S-2000S

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ABSTRACT

The author relies on the structural violence concept to analyze political violence and terror in the Northern Caucasus throughout the 1990s-2000s, which brought him to the conclusion that direct armed violence, or even terror, are less...
dangerous than structural violence. The dynamics of their manifestations, however, is interconnected. Applied to the armed conflict in the Northern Caucasus, his tridimensional model reveals the inner logic of the conflict’s development and its cyclical nature. Indeed, outbursts of clandestine activities and terror alternate with relative lulls, while the conflict’s intensity gradually subsides. Each stage corresponds to an institutional structure of violence, which outcrops in the form of armed confrontation (either a classical frontal war or network terror) and its ideological frills (ranging from secular nationalism to radical international Islamism).

**KEYWORDS:** the Northern Caucasus, Chechnia, structural violence, terror and political violence, the Caucasus Emirate.

**Introduction**

Forty-five years ago, Johan Galtung put the structural violence concept into academic circulation.¹ Two years later, he and Tord Høivik showed how structural violence could be measured with the help of potential life expectancy statistics.² In 1976, Gernot Köhler and Norman Alcock offered a basic model for measuring the “magnitude of structural violence” accompanied by a basic definition of the concept: “Whenever persons are harmed, maimed, or killed by poverty and unjust social, political, and economic institutions, systems, or structures, we speak of structural violence.”³

Their model is fully applicable to the hypothetical state of affairs in a society that knows no structural violence. This suggests a question: How many deaths could have been avoided if all countries could offer life conditions similar to those of Sweden (the Swedish model), or if at any observable period of time the level of wellbeing was evenly spread across the world (the egalitarian model)?

The answer can be found in the formula the authors applied to the Swedish model:

\[ V1 = \frac{Pn}{En} - \frac{Pn}{Es} \]  \hspace{1cm} (1)

where

- \(Pn\) — population strength of the country \(N\);
- \(En\) — life expectancy in the country \(N\);
- \(Es\) — potential life expectancy in Sweden.

In 1976, Sweden could boast of the longest life expectancy, which means that the formula is applied to any country with the longest life expectancy at the time of study.

To calculate the level of structural violence in any country against the world’s average, the authors somewhat changed equation (1):

\[ V1 = \frac{Pn}{En} - \frac{Pn}{Em} \]  \hspace{1cm} (2)

where

- \(Pn\) — population strength of the country \(N\);
- \(En\) — life expectancy in the country \(N\);
- \(Em\) — world’s average life expectancy.

The figures obtained from both equations show to what extent the level of structural violence would have been reduced in county $N$ if its wellbeing was the highest at the moment of calculation.\footnote{See: G. Köhler, N. Alcock, op. cit., p. 345.}

### Structural and Direct Armed Violence in Russia Today

I will use this methodology and official life expectancy statistics for Russia\footnote{Here and elsewhere the figures of the potential life expectancy in Russia have been borrowed from the site of the Russian Committee for Statistics (see: [http://www.gks.ru]), 21 January, 2014.} to calculate the share of structural violence in Russia, Daghestan and Ingushetia being the two model regions.

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Russian Federation</th>
<th>Republic of Daghestan</th>
<th>Republic of Ingushetia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1990</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>73.1</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>68.9</td>
<td>72.6</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>70.5</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>70.5</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>64.5</td>
<td>70.4</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>70.3</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>70.5</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
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<td>1999</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>65.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
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<td>2003</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>65.3</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>74.1</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Between 1990 and 1999, the Republic of Daghestan demonstrated the longest potential life expectancy and the Republic of Ingushetia from 2000 to the present. The slight deviation of 0.2 year from this trend in 2005 (when Ingushetia came second after Daghestan) can be explained by a statistical error, since throughout the first decade of the 21st century Ingushetia consistently outstripped Daghestan by about a year. The figures of potential life expectancy in the Russian Federation and in Ingushetia and Daghestan can be found in Table 1.

The losses caused by structural violence can be calculated by putting the figures of Table 1 in equation (2) and correlating the results with the population strength in any given territory for any given year. In the last two decades, the magnitude of structural violence increased nearly three-fold (see Table 2); after dropping to a minimum in 1991, it reached its maximum in 2004.

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Available statistical data point to certain regularities. First, outbursts of terrorist activity in Russia (illustrated by the number of victims) are negatively correlated with structural violence. Diagram 1 shows that the smallest share of victims of structural violence as related to the total population strength of the Russian Federation (per 1 thousand) occurred in the mid-1990s and early 2000s, that is, during the first and second military campaigns in Chechnia.

Diagram 1

Correlation of the Total Population Strength of the RF and Losses due to Structural Violence, 1990-2012

In the mid-1990s and the first half of the 2000s, the correlation between the losses caused by structural violence and the total population strength of the Russian Federation (per 1,000) was much lower than 1. In the periods of relative “lull” (in the early 1990s, late 1990s after the peace of Khasavyurt and in the late 2000s after the official completion of the counterterrorist operation in Chechnia), there were three peaks of structural violence with the rates rising to 1.2, 1.4, and 1.0, respectively.

The number of losses caused by structural violence, direct armed violence (including in the course of hostilities), and terrorist violence indicates that structural violence is the main threat and, at the same time, the main cause of “stable instability” in the Northern Caucasus.7

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Specifics of Structural Violence in the Northern Caucasus

According to American expert Gordon M. Hahn, between 2008 and 2012 the number of terrorist attacks in Russia vacillated between 383 and 583, the ups and downs showed no clear trends. At the same time, the number of victims of political terror remained more or less the same (about several hundred).² According to Russia’s official figures, the peak of terrorist activities occurred in 2005 (203 attacks); the number gradually decreased during the latter half of the 2000s to drop to 25-30 cases a year.³ This means that the correlation between the losses caused by structural, armed, and terrorist violence is about 100:10:1.

It should be said that Norwegian academics postulated, albeit indirectly, a correlation between the high living standards and the high potential life expectancy (and consequently a low share of structural violence). In some of his works,⁴ Tord Hoivik demonstrated that the Gini coefficient, social status, and distribution of national wealth are critically important for the index of structural violence. This does not fully apply to Russia.

There is no direct correlation in Russia. The North Caucasian subjects of the Russian Federation are very close to the other regions in terms of level of unemployment, monetary incomes, nominal wages, the number of pensioners (which directly affects the region’s life expectancy level), and the subsistence level (the lower the level, the shorter the potential life expectancy).⁵

A comparison between Ingushetia and Tyva gives food for thought. According to Hoivik, the regions with opposite indices of structural violence should be very different socially and economically. According to official statistics, there are practically no differences (with the exception of unemployment figures). For example, Khakassia, Tyva, and the Sakhalin Region do not differ in terms of magnitude of structural violence: about 100-150 victims every year (or about 12%), while their economic indices differ two- or three-fold.

There is a second and very important regularity: there is a leveling factor in the Northern Caucasus that determines the potential of structural violence through a set of additional conditions, probably specific social institutions. I will limit myself to pointing out that in Russia the crime level is higher than in the developed countries and has come close to the indices of the far from successful countries of the South.

In recent years, the number of deaths caused by criminal offences (that is, murders, as well as robberies, rapes, terrorist acts, etc.) was about 34 per 100,000 of the country’s population and on the decline.⁶ This can be explained by the somewhat improved criminal situation (and the end of hostilities in the Northern Caucasus) and the changed rules for registering crimes. To obtain a correct picture we should rely on the average of the last couple of years: 25 violent deaths per 100,000 a year. In the developed countries, the figure is 10 to 12 deaths.

Today Russia is close to the figures of the mid-1990s in terms of the total number of crimes: in 2010, the total number of registered crimes was 1,839 per 100,000; in 1995 this figure was 1,857 (in some of the federal districts this index is close to the late 1990s). Judging by the level of crime, the

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2000s were the most dangerous period. The maximum crimes per 100,000 were registered in 2005-2007 (about 2,600). The Northern Caucasus stands apart in this respect: the number of crimes committed in the mid-2000s is higher than in the early and the late 2000s, but lower than the figures of the early and mid-1990s.

In 2010, there were 872 murders and attempted murders in the North Caucasian Federal District (in the Moscow Region and the Far Eastern Federal District with very close population sizes, the figures were 746 and 1,117, respectively). The average for Russia was 15.5 thousand per 142.9 million people or 10.8 per 100,000. The corresponding figures for the Northern Caucasus are 872 per 9.4 million people, or 9.3 per 100,000; in Dagestan, 296 murders and attempted murders per 2,914 million of the republic’s population, or 10.2 per 100,000. These figures are lower than Russia’s average, even though the region is rightly regarded as a source of social instability.

The slack armed conflict and the presence of an active terrorist underground lower the level of crime in these republics. They figure prominently in media reports about terrorist acts and are found at the end of the list of regions where the number of crimes per 100,000 is concerned: Karachaevo-Cherkessia, Ingushetia, Dagestan, and Chechnia come 80th to 83rd, respectively.

This is natural and unavoidable: warlords, who rule in the Northern Caucasus, use physical violence to institutionalize their power. To de-criminalize society and improve the law enforcement situation in the country, the state should minimize the effects of structural violence caused by different development levels of social institutions across the country and to close the gap between the administrative and legal statuses of citizens in different regions.

The year 2014 will go down in history as the year of the Sochi Olympics and the year of the depressing jubilee of the beginning of the first armed campaign in Chechnia. In the twenty years that separate us from that day, the causes, course, and content of the conflict in the territory of the former Chechen-Ingush A.S.S.R. (and the Northern Caucasus as a whole) have changed to a great extent. The old leaders have left the stage; the conflict has gradually transformed from an open confrontation into a terrorist guerilla, it has spilt over the initial limits; the aims and tasks of the sides involved, as well as their strategy and tactics have changed considerably. In the last twenty years, the state took certain measures that brought no desired results, while the main aim—final victory over (international) terror and extremism—has remained unattained.

The Armed Conflict in the Northern Caucasus: Sources, Dynamics, Repercussions

In view of the above, I intend to analyze the counterterrorist struggle in the Northern Caucasus and partly in some other regions of the Russian Federation with the help of a tridimensional model that measures the conflict’s duration, structure, and dynamics. They are interconnected and, therefore, should be discussed as an entity, each of the components being formally identified.

The long duration of the North Caucasian conflict and the fact that throughout its duration it fanned terrorist activities of all sorts of groups of influence point to the special importance of the time factor. The entire stretch of the conflict can be conventionally divided into four stages, the boundaries of which being conventional and, therefore, vague.

The first period began in 1992-1995 when the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (CRI) was declared and ended in 1998-1999 when the active armed struggle for leadership between Basaev and

14 See: Ibid., p. 331.
Maskhadov and preparations for an invasion of Daghestan began. This means that the first period lasted for about six years and coincided with the period of Chechen statehood known as Project Ichkeria. The next stage began in 1999-2005, that is, between the invasion of Daghestan and the Nalchik Riot, the third lasted from 2005 to 2012, and the fourth, which began in 2012, has not yet ended.

The chronological limits of the conflict and its division into periods are necessarily conventional, while each of the four periods is identified by a special type of terrorist activity (TTA): special methods; targets; organizational structure; the infrastructure used; and the frequency. The periods are separated from one another by events or chains of events, after which a new type of terrorist activity came to the fore. This happened not because someone wanted this, the transfer to the next period was caused by a certain vague continuum.

The first period began with a fairly meaningful chain of terrorist acts in Nevinnomysk, Budennovsk, Buynaksk, and other cities. They took place in 1995 when the hostilities in Chechnia were going on, were aimed at civilians and civilian targets (women and children, hospitals, maternity hospitals, etc.), were carried out beyond the territories of the conflict, and were invariably sanctioned openly (or not) by one of the sides in the conflict. This raised its status and increased external (that is, outside) legitimation. The terrorist act in Budennovsk and the famous telephone talk between Shamil Basaev, the Vice Premier of CRI, and Victor Chernomyrdin, the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, was a typical example of the general mood of this period.

During the first period, those who carried out the terrorist acts, those who supervised them, and those who extended political patronage can be defined as the leaders of one of the conflicting sides. The CRI leaders and Grozny claimed sovereignty and the status of an independent state, which allows us to formally define the type of terrorist activities from the mid-1990s onwards as (quasi)state terrorism. The illegal armed forces (the armed forces of the separatists) were, in fact, the organizational structure responsible for the terrorist acts.

This means that at the first stage there was no structure or institution responsible for this type of violence, which explains the uniform or even amateurish nature of the terrorist acts, in which the personal factor figured prominently (all the terrorist acts of the first period were organized by Basaev, Baraev, and other leaders of illegal armed units) and which were tinged with a “romanticism” or “nobleness” of sorts: if their demands were accepted, the terrorists set their hostages free; sometimes they set some of the hostages free even before their demands had been fulfilled to show that they trusted the federal government to a certain extent. This was the staple food of the media.

The discourse on terrorism and its legitimacy in the eyes of Chechen society and the leaders of the illegal armed units were purely nationalist. Jokhar Dudayev and Aslan Maskhadov, who came after him, repeatedly declared that they were building an independent democratic (at least at the early period duly impressed by the Vaynakh Democratic Party) Chechen Republic. This was ethnic symbolism pure and simple: the flag and state symbol bore the wolf, the totem of the Chechens; they planned to acquire their own currency (unofficially known as “dudariks”), teaching in schools remained secular and, from that time on, in the Chechen language, etc.

At this stage, the TTA was fairly efficient, since the terrorist attacks in regions bordering on Chechnia, the negative media coverage, and the efforts of human rights organizations, such as the Moscow Helsinki Group, the Memorial Foundation and the Soldiers’ Mothers’ Committee, convinced the Russian public that the war should be stopped. In view of the coming presidential election, Russia’s President Boris Yeltsin had to discontinue what was called “restoring constitutional law and order” and postponed the final decision about the CRI status until 2000. It was planned to carry out a referendum to decide whether the republic would remain part of the Russian Federation or become an independent state. The Peace of Khasavyurt was the highest point of the terrorists’ external legitimacy. From that time on, it was on the gradual decline: representatives of Dudaev and Maskhadov
were no longer greeted at international forums and Western embassies (they had been welcomed there, which irritated the Kremlin).

The latter half of the 1990s saw infiltration of radical Islam and its odious preachers (such as Bagautdin Kebedov) into Chechnia. Later, “among the critics of Wahhabism in the republics of the North Caucasus, a special word arose—‘Wahhabist’—which rhymes with ‘terrorist’.” Religious discourse gradually replaced national discourse. In 1998-1999, political terrorism in contemporary Russia passed its first turning point. This was when the top crust of the CRI split and the first attempt was made to build an Islamic state. The republic acquired infrastructure, which made it possible to move terror, at the second stage, beyond the republic’s borders. Let’s take a closer look at these factors.

The Chechen leaders spilt into “nationalists” headed by President Maskhadov and “internationalists” headed by Basaev (both terms are conventional). The former believed that the republic should pour its forces into building a national Chechen state, while the latter were inclined toward the idea of what was described as liberation of the Northern Caucasus, Daghestan, as the closest neighbor, being the first aim. Shamil Basaev, who lost the presidential election, never abandoned his efforts to snatch leadership among the separatists from Maskhadov. He was convinced that a successful invasion of Daghestan would be supported by the people, attract armed recruits, and, in general, give him wider resources to continue his struggle for power. It should be said that some of the warlords (the Yamadaev brothers) and other leaders (Akhmad Kadyrov and Bislan Gantemirov) remained neutral; later, in the course of the counterterrorist operation, they sided with Russia.

The invasion of Daghestan and the most active stage of the counterterrorist operation (1999-2002) showed that the separatist project within the CRI and in other North Caucasian republics was not even marginally popular in the region. Even in fairly Islamized Daghestan, the local people were not overjoyed at being “liberated”; after realizing the true intentions of the “liberators,” they took up arms and moved against them. Their external legitimacy (especially in the West) declined because of Russia’s support of the international coalition in Iraq and Afghanistan and adequate and skillful media coverage of the counterterrorist operation.

Terrorism, which at the first stage had been directed outwards, became concentrated within Daghestan, Ingushetia, and Chechnia, with a few exceptions, viz. the terrorist acts in Moscow and Volgodonsk (1999), Makhachkala (2002), and Vladikavkaz (2003). They were indeed exceptions to the rule, despite the scope and the largest (by that time) number of victims. The methods also changed:

- first, the local terrorists borrowed the tactics of suicide bombers with the help of so-called shahid belts widely used in Palestine, Afghanistan, and Iraq;
- second, the terrorist acts became much more frequent. In the past, terrorist acts had been few and far between, while, at the second stage, their frequency rose to once every two weeks (including failed attempts);
- Third, the terrorist structures, being less dependent on the center, made the “deterrence policy” much more flexible.

On the whole, this period demonstrated what was later called Chechenization: on the one hand, real power and the responsibility for the counterterrorist struggle were transferred to the authorities
of the Chechen Republic, while on the other, Maskhadov’s former supporters were lured to the side of the Chechen Republic and set against their former comrades-in-arms. The conflict was reduced to a purely Chechen conflict without additional ethnic hues. State power in Chechnia became ethnic, which led to an ethnocratic regime as a side product of the process described above.

The separatist project failed; by 2004 Maskhadov had lost the greater part of his supporters, either dead or turncoats. The new balance of power survived the assassination of Akhmad Kadyrov, of which Maskhadov was accused; the active terrorist underground moved to Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Dagestan.

Collapse of Ichkeria and the Caucasus Emirate: From Secular Separatism to Islamic Extremism

In his well-known *The Question of Nationalities* or “*Autonomization*”, Lenin criticized Stalin’s project of unification of the Soviet republics within the R.S.F.S.R. as autonomies. He wrote about “a voluntary union of equal independent republics” and prevailed.

Analyses with the Bolsheviks are not limited to this: the RCP (Bolsheviks) regarded the revolution in Russia as the first step on the road toward a world revolution under the red banner of communism. In the same way, the so-called liberation of the Muslim territories of Russia from the power of the kafirs is but the first step on the road toward a world Caliphate under the black banner of jihad. It can be said that a century later (by 2017), Russia will again be confronted with a generation of active revolutionaries.

An outburst of Islamism happened in the mid-2000s, although the process that can be described as an “Islamic revival” is rooted in the late 1980s-early 1990s. The gradual radicalization of Islamic theologians was caused by the absence in Russia of world-level theologians and the mutual mistrust of old and young preachers.

Ethnic affiliation plays a secondary role in the Islamic discourse: group identification is based on strict observance of the basics of Islam, as interpreted by the Salafis. Said Buryatsky was fond of saying that “a kafir Chechen is our enemy, while a Muslim Russian is our ally and brother.” Internal legitimacy based on extra-ethnic solidarity buried Project Ichkeria and limited the terrorists’ social basis. From that time on, their agents could be found in the fairly narrow circle of the radically-minded Muslims. This meant that it must be constantly replenished, hence the gradual radicalization of political protests involving slowly growing numbers of North Caucasian Muslims.

This happened because the target of terror had changed: since the mid-2000s, so-called law enforcers predominated among the victims of the terrorist attacks in the Northern Caucasus. Attacks on infrastructural facilities of the federal forces (the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Federal Security Service) became a fact of life. The turn occurred in the summer and fall of 2004, when one

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terrorist act followed another in quick succession: on 9 May, Akhmad Kadyrov was assassinated in Grozny; on 22 June, Nazran was attacked; on 1-3 September, hostages were taken in a school in Beslan; a year later, the so-called Nalchik Riot took place, the last in a series of large-scale terrorist acts in the Northern Caucasus and in the country as a whole.

Later, the terrorists mastered the tactics of surprise attacks and fast retreats. The number of victims per strike was much lower, while the increased number of attacks produced many more victims than before. Since the early 2010s, every year the number of deaths in the Northern Caucasus has remained at around 700, while the number of terrorist acts and armed attacks has topped 200. Civilians and civilian targets were rarely attacked in and outside the Northern Caucasus, but all the victims were judges, officials, politicians at the republican and federal level and their relatives.

The terrorist infrastructure changed when the Caucasus Emirate was proclaimed:

- First, terror was shifted to big cities, mainly the capitals of the North Caucasian republics.
- Second, the illegal armed units lost their function of the main fighting tools, which went to the jamaats (autonomous fighting units).
- Third, the rank-and-file fighters and their leaders became considerably younger: in Ichkeria the fighters were 30 to 40-year old; in the Emirate they are 20 to 25 on average.

The nature of violence, mobilization, and interaction with the world has changed accordingly. The so-called Russian Wahhabis who have emerged into the limelight can be described as the most important feature of the current stage of the development of terrorism in Russia (comparative descriptions of all stages are shown in Table 3). There is nothing new in this: the phenomenon is rooted in the early 2000s; it came into the focus of the media’s attention after the first of a series of three terrorist acts in Volgograd late in 2013; assessments ranged from negative to very negative.\(^{18}\)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Table 3</th>
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<td><strong>Comparative Characteristics of the Four Stages of the Development of Terrorism in Contemporary Russia</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Number of the Period</strong></td>
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So far, the phenomenon remains outside academic studies and has not yet been discussed in detail in academic publications. Everything said so far has been fairly superficial, although the emergence and spread of Russian Wahhabism is the gravest (at present) threat to Russia’s national security.

The fourth stage began in 2012 with the attempted assassination of the mufti of Tatarstan. Judging by the previous periods, it will last for 5 to 6 years and reach its peak in the latter half of the stage. This means that the Russian leaders have several years to devise countermeasures.

**Conclusion**

So far, the current fourth stage has not acquired clear boundaries of the “zone of struggle”; there is no generally accepted ideology (that is, there is no strategy of propaganda or “external” ideology); there is no external legitimacy (according to indirect information, Saudi Arabia has abandoned the North Caucasian Salafis). On the other hand, potential Russian and other neophytes (from the Volga area in particular) will complicate the activities of the special services.

A counterterrorist struggle presupposes that the enemy is well-known, or can be easily identified by the way he is dressed, his dialect, and his external appearance. People from the Caucasus are easily recognized, while it is practically impossible to identify people coming from the Ryazan or Irkutsk regions. This requires a wide network of agents and much higher efficiency than that demonstrated by the special services today.

A potential terrorist is, as a rule, a migrant, but in the case of Daghestan, Ingushetia, and Chechnia their number is small: 95% of Ingush, Chechens and Daghestanis live in their titular regions; this does not apply to other peoples (Tatars or Ukrainians, for example) scattered across the Russian Federation. This means that the emergence of Russian Wahhabis has significantly increased the number of potential terrorists, or to be more precise, the potential number of targets the special services must keep their eye on. The terrorist threat in the country as a whole is much more real (while it has somewhat decreased in the Northern Caucasus), and the number of potential terrorist acts and their potential victims is much higher. The Center (Moscow, the Moscow Region, and St. Petersburg) are in danger; the same applies to other regions with high migration activity of the autochthonous population in particular.

On the other hand, the experience of other countries has shown that terrorism is efficient as a tool of national-liberation (anti-colonial) war or separatism. This means that in Russia the limit of terrorist efficiency was reached at the first stage. Today, the Salafis are fighting to restructure the Russian Federation on the basis of political Islam. The fact that they still rely on terror as the method of struggle means that they have suffered a strategic defeat. It remains to be seen whether the Russian Federation, that is, the present form of the Russian statehood, will outlive Salafism.

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THE KERCH TRAFFIC INTERCHANGE: A GEOPOLITICAL DIMENSION

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ABSTRACT

After unifying with Crimea in 2014, Russia became determined to build a traffic interchange across the Kerch Strait. A bridge across the strait has appeared and disappeared from the agenda several times. Today Moscow means business: the peninsula needs foodstuffs, energy, and water.

Before the war between Russia and Ukraine, this large-scale project with its huge integration potential could have claimed a geopolitical status. Today, when international isolation has transformed it into a transportation dead end, the bridge has lost much of its geopolitical potential. Today, it is a local project designed to resolve the urgent, but local problems of a small patch of land.

Before unification with Russia, the peninsula was completely integrated with Ukraine, which covered its needs for foodstuffs, supplied it with 100% of coal and sugar, and 90% of fuel and 55% of oil products. The peninsula’s dependence on the Kerch ferry, the low capacity of which drops even further in bad weather, has become a focal point because of the limited supplies from Ukraine. Discontent among the Crimean people, or even social outbursts, cannot be excluded. The economic and financial blockade of Russia caused by the war with Ukraine has made the Kerch traffic interchange a challenge of huge dimensions. Russia has no choice: the problem must be solved either with the use of arms (occupation of the Ukrainian stretch of the Azov coast from Mariupol to Crimea), or by building a bridge across the Kerch Strait. If the first alternative fails, Russia will have to realize the latter in haste. It remains to be seen whether the game is worth the candle.


KEYWORDS: Crimea, Russia, Ukraine, the Kerch traffic interchange, Tuzla Island.

Introduction

For a long time, a bridge across the Kerch Strait has been part of a large-scale geopolitical project of a Eurasian traffic interchange expected to consolidate integration and promote trade be-
tween the two continents, the importance of the idea being best confirmed by the list of states that started talking about it at different times. In the nineteenth century, the British government laid a telegraph line, a stretch of the famous Indo-European Telegraph that connected London and India; the British toyed with the idea of a transcontinental railway with two continental traffic interchanges (across the English Channel and the Kerch Strait) as the shortest and reliable trade route between the U.K. and India, “the jewel in the Crown.” Nicholas II, the last emperor of Russia, also contemplated a Eurasian traffic interchange, which could not be realized in the early twentieth century for technical reasons. Aware of the strategic potential of a bridge across the Kerch Strait as a link in the trans-Eurasian route to India giving access to Persia via the Caucasus, the leaders of the Third Reich ordered Albert Speer, Adolf Hitler’s personal architect, to design a permanent flyover.

Closer economic ties further intensified by globalization created a need for ambitious integration projects. Before the war between Russia and Ukraine, a Kerch traffic interchange could have claimed this status as a link of the new Great Silk Road. It could have offered Russia, Ukraine, and Georgia new opportunities, and could have opened up new vistas for big EU trade partners.

Today, in Ukraine the strategic route West Europe-Middle East partially coincides with International Transport Corridor No. 3, the transit capacity of which remains underloaded. A Eurasian corridor Berlin-Lvov via Zhmerinka, Crimea, and the Caucasus to Tehran would have successfully addressed several tasks; it would have connected the EU with Iran, one of the world’s largest energy powers, and would have created the shortest land route from the Southern Caucasus to Western Europe. To a certain extent, it would have helped resolve some of the problems of the unrecognized republic of Abkhazia.

Unification with Russia tipped the geopolitical balance of power and reduced the Euroatlantic traffic interchange to a local project. Crimea’s international isolation has already transformed it into a traffic dead end. The anti-Russian and anti-Crimean sanctions excluded (for a long time to come) this logistic solution from the sphere of interests of big international players and killed its investment attractions.

Russia is doing its best to re-brand the project and justify its prompt implementation, the following arguments being the main ones:

1. Delivery of foodstuffs and fuel to Crimea, which remains the acutest economic problem. Despite the frantic efforts to detach the peninsula from the continental part of Ukraine, Crimea still depends on it for resources because of the logistic problems of the Kerch ferry, which became obvious in the summer of 2014 and the winter of 2014/2015.

2. Invigorating economic growth in Crimea in order to transform it from a recipient into a donor region. According to RBC, unification cost the Russian market $179 billion: capital outflow ($33.5 billion); lower capitalization of Russian companies in Russia ($82.7 billion) and in London ($62.8 billion). There is a lot of talk of new jobs created by the project and the revived economy of Crimea and the Krasnodar Territory. It is the centerpiece of the five-year federal program Social-Economic Development of Crimea and Sevastopol until 2020, which will cost 700 billion rubles; in this context the project is all-important.

3. Setting up infrastructure conducive to Crimea’s continued militarization. Today, Crimea is rapidly developing into Russia’s powerful military base and a foothold for an offensive against Ukraine (if this decision is taken at the very top). Over 40 thou-

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sand military, 43 warships, and scores of missile launchers and aircraft stationed in Crimea threaten the European continent.3

(4) Supporting Putin’s image.

Image is very important for the people in power in Russia. After declaring himself the liberator of the Russian-speakers of Crimea from the “fascist junta” and “reuniting” them with their “brothers” in Russia, Putin shouldered moral obligations that must be fulfilled at all costs so as to preserve his authority on the peninsula intact.

This means that Russia is aware of the strategic importance of the traffic project and has accumulated weighty arguments in favor of the Kerch traffic interchange. We should bear in mind, however, that between the end of World War II and our days, the Soviet Union and then Russia tried several times, and failed, to implement this project of obvious military-political importance for Russia.

The Kerch Bridge Project in War and Peace

So far, Stalin’s was the only more or less successful attempt to build the Kerch Bridge: the traffic interchange of over 4 kilometers in length was built in 1944 to the north of Kerch. It had over 100 spans of either 13.6 or 27.3 m long and four horizontal-swing spans in the main shipping channel.2 The whole structure was not strong enough to survive the unusually powerful ice-drifting of 1945, which crushed half of the piers. The very idea of a bridge across the Kerch Strait remained buried for a long time by the postwar economic problems of the Soviet Union and severe winters.5 Early in the 1950s, it was decided that a cheaper alternative—a ferry—would be enough. It is still functioning.

In the mid-1970s, there was another attempt to build a bridge; it was suggested by the ecological and economic problems of the Sea of Azov. On the eve of World War II, it produced 30% of the valuable fish and caviar for overall Soviet production. After the war, when the Volga-Don Canal and the Kuban Water Reservoir had cut down the inflow of fresh water from the Don and Kuban rivers by 40%, fishing in the Sea of Azov began to decline: local fish could not adjust to the much saltier seawater. It was decided to tie together the problem of fishing and the future of the Sea of Azov by devising a Kerch hydro scheme to limit the inflow of salty Black Sea water into the Sea of Azov. Entrusted with the project, the S. Zhuk Gidroproekt Institute produced an excellent and technically substantiated project accepted at all stages and pushed aside. Its rival, the Leningrad dam, designed to protect the city from floods (their costs were practically equal—480 million rubles or $400 million in contemporary prices), won at a sitting of the Politburo of the C.C. C.P.S.U.6 This was the end of the peaceful stage in the history of the Kerch traffic interchange.


4 See: M. Ryzhveksiy, “Kerchenskiy tunnel: zalog bezopasnosti Kryma,” Podzemnye gorizonty, No. 1, April 2014, available at [http://www.google.com.ua/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CCEQFjAB&url=http%3A %2F%2Fsfpb-projects.ru%2Fforum%2Fdownload.php%3Ffid%3D334879&ei=ivVJr1J83Vqf8grAD&usg=AFQjCNsS7TAZ DCtCAoImUNWg2UQXQtQe0A&sigs=2%3ExJ60_XNK-VyM0a33Y-Jg&bvm=87611401,d.d2s].


Its new history began in the 1990s, when the disintegration of the Soviet Union created a new geopolitical reality, in particular, the certain vagueness of the borders between the newly independent states. The question of control over the Kerch Strait and the Sea of Azov developed into the first disagreement between Russia and Ukraine over Tuzla Island.

Until 1922, the Tuzla sand bar was part of the Kuban region. In 1941, it was transferred to the Crimean A.S.S.R. (which was part of the R.S.F.S.R.); in 1954 it, together with the peninsula, was transferred to Ukraine. Its geographic location gave Ukraine an advantage. As the only owner of the Kerch Strait (between the peninsula and the sand bar), it charged all, including Russian, ships for passage across the strait and earned about $15 million every year.7

The Russian part of the channel (between the Tuzla sand bar and the Taman Peninsula) was made shallow to suit the needs of fishing vessels. Its deepening for the needs of navigation was fraught with unwelcome ecological and, most important, economic problems: the spawning places of valuable fishes would be destroyed together with Ukrainian fishery since the larger part of the fish-processing plants were situated on the western coast of the Kerch Strait.

Moscow began realizing its geopolitical ambitions on a grand scale; it started building a dam between Tuzla and the Taman Peninsula, a confrontational decision which would have made the island part of the continent and would have allowed Moscow to establish its control over the Kerch Strait. Construction was halted 102 m away from the Ukrainian border; in December 2003, the sides signed an Agreement on Cooperation in the Use of the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait. The border issue and regime of the sea remained pending.

James Sherr, Fellow, Conflict Studies Research Center, Defense Academy of the United Kingdom, assessed Russia’s efforts to organize a Eurasian corridor as follows: “Firstly, Russia is trying to establish whether Ukraine has enough will power and spirit to offer resistance and defend itself. Secondly, to find out whether the West has lost interest in Ukraine or whether it will support Ukraine.”8 This was confirmed in 2014 by the unification of Crimea.

Satisfied with the results of “fighting reconnaissance,” Russia resumed its peaceful attempts to realize its ideas: in 2007, after winning the right to hold the 2014 Winter Olympics, Moscow came up with a new argument in favor of the Kerch traffic interchange, viz. a shorter route from Europe to the Caucasus to simplify access to the Olympics. The absurdity is obvious: it is much easier to reach the Caucasus (Sochi) by air from Moscow than from Russia (Ukraine) via Crimea (Kerch). The billions poured into the traffic interchange would never have been paid off by the tiny groups of tourists willing to use this roundabout route. In 2010, in Kharkov, the then President of Ukraine Victor Yanukovich signed an agreement with President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev on feasibility studies and the construction of the Kerch-Kuban bridge; the agreement was never realized.

Ambitious Project-2014

In 2014 when Crimea was unified with Russia, the new Silk Road issue was raised to a qualitatively different and higher level. The stage of political slogans and half-hearted attempts to address the economic ills of Crimea and the Krasnodar Territory was left behind: a new empire was looming on the horizon. A heap of alternatives offered by the common land space between Azov and Kharkov was replaced with two clear-cut alternatives: either further escalation of the armed conflict with

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8 [http://www.artukraine.com/old/events/tuzla4.htm].
Ukraine to acquire a very much needed land corridor to Crimea along the Azov coast, or a bridge across the Kerch Strait. Today, the bridge itself is seen as a symbol that has accumulated the rhetorical questions of its financial and geostrategic expediency and its impact on world order. The price is high: this refers not only to the hardly measurable changes in the worldwide balance of power, but also to the project’s cost in measurable financial terms and Russia’s ability to accumulate the required sum within a very short period of time.

It is much harder to find the correct technical design and to realize it in the conditions of economic blockade in which Russia has found itself. Indeed, this is a challenging task: the ground is loose, while the region’s seismicity is high (seismic intensity in the main shipping channel can reach 9 points with 1% possible intensification). There is a fracture of the earth’s mantle under the strait, the bottom of which is formed by mud volcanos, the mud layer being over 50 meters thick. It shifts, leaving behind islands or deep gullies; this means that the bridge piles must be sunk to a depth of no less than 200 meters.

The weather is another destabilizing factor: between November and April storms are frequent. On 11 October, 2007, several ships were sunk by a storm that contaminated the coastal waters with oil and sulphur. In cold winters, the ice sheet can be up to 30 cm deep, which results in damaging ice drifts (in 1945, one such ice drift destroyed the bridge).

This means that to build the bridge Russia needs unique technologies, access to which is blocked by its conflict with Ukraine. With no access to high technologies, experts from more experienced countries, and money from richer countries, Russia’s ability to cope with the challenging task looks doubtful. Indeed, few companies, if any, will be adventurous enough to be involved in an ambiguous project. This means that everything we are hearing from Moscow about the willingness of China, Turkey, or South Korea should be taken with a grain of salt.

The traffic interchange project will include the bridge and envisage modernization of the traffic infrastructure on the Taman and Kerch coasts: the Krym, Kavkaz, and Ayvazovskaya stations should be modernized together with the access routes, railway lines, and highways in Crimea and Kuban. The project will require more passenger stations, loading facilities, reloading mechanisms, and corresponding services; the Feodosiya oil terminal must be expanded. Taken together, these absolutely necessary adjustments and modernization will bring the cost of construction up to over $4 billion, according to preliminary assessments.

It remains to be seen whether the assessed cost of the project will attract investors, or to be more exact, whether the traffic interchange will become an important economic link between Europe and the Caucasus, and whether Crimea will become a tourist Mecca (Russia plans to open a free gambling zone on the peninsula).

It should be said that so far the considerable and negative environmental effects are being pushed aside. The water surface of the Kerch Strait is the spawning place of valuable fishes, while the coast is the favorite nesting place of several types of birds. This is especially true of the Chushka sand bar and the reed beds in the Kuban. New roads and the bridge will damage them.

It seems that it is much wiser to contemplate the security of a bridge built too close to the Caucasus and the explosive situation there: terrorist threats call for exclusive safety measures.

The Project’s Technical Side

On the whole, several acceptable alternatives of the traffic interchange have been discussed:

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9 See: M. Ryzhevskiy, op. cit.
(1) The northern alternative, on Fonar Cape, where the strait enters the Sea of Azov.

(2) Zhukovsky, at the site of the functioning ferry.

(3) Enikale, to the south of the functioning ferry, between Eni-kale Cape and the southern end of the Chushka sand bar.

(4) Tuzla, at the old fortress, to the south of Cape Ak-Burun Bely on the Tuzla sand bar.10

According to information on the site supplied by the State Avtodor Company, which was entrusted early in 2014 with creating a daughter company for engineering and feasibility studies, it has arrived at the two most acceptable alternatives—Zhukovsky and Tuzla.11

An analysis of the environment and the navigation conditions points to the Tuzla alternative as preferable. The bridge will span the narrowest part of the strait, where navigation is limited by the high coast, on the Crimean side, and shallow waters and the Tuzla island-sand bar, on the Caucasian side.

Today, the project is being actively discussed by Russian experts and politicians, many of them being very doubtful about its prospects. In December 2014, the Stroitransgaz Company left the project, its head, Gennadi Timchenko, one of Vladimir Putin’s personal friends, explained this in an interview to ITAR-TASS: “This is a very hard project for us. I am not sure that we can cope with it. I do not want to run reputational risks. It is unclear what the cost will be because there is no ready project. No one understands the geological features there. And neither do we. So it is a very risky deal. I am afraid of undertaking it and failing.”12

The Council of Ministers of Crimea, represented by Head of the Republic Sergey Aksenov, pointed out that “a tunnel is a more effective and cheaper construction than a bridge.” Oleg Saveliev, RF Minister for Crimea, and Georgy Muradov, Deputy Prime Minister of Crimea and representative of the republic to the president of Russia, consider the bridge too expensive and dangerous. The latter has calculated the approximate cost of the tunnel at 60-80 billion rubles.

Early in 2015, over 40 prominent experts concluded during the final discussion of all the possible alternatives of traffic interchange that a bridge was the only one that met all the necessary conditions.13 On 19 February, 2015, Stroigazmontazh was appointed as general contractor and signed a contract with the Taman Department of Federal Highways of the Federal Highway Agency.14 Two hundred and twenty-eight billion rubles were allocated from the federal budget to the Kerch Bridge; the infrastructure on both sides will swallow even more money. The road-rail bridge is scheduled to be opened by December 2018 for testing, and will later be fully operational in June 2019; the total length of the traffic interchange will be 19 km.15

A political decision, however, is not enough: Russia is not ready to shoulder this ambitious project money-wise. The international blockade, economic slump, and the war with Ukraine make the accumulation of the needed sums a challenge despite Russia’s certain financial safety margin.

Another project of the century will become a heavy burden for Russia’s citizens. One cannot but wonder whether people are ready to shoulder it.

Propaganda is in full swing: in February 2015, veterans of the Russian Black Sea Navy in Sevastopol called on the people of Crimea to gather money for a “national project.” Vice Admiral Alexander Frolov, who initiated the campaign, referred to similar actions during World War II when people donated money to the Magnitogorsk Iron and Steel Works; collective farmer Golovatov donated two aircraft to the Stalingrad Front; and the people of Tambov collected enough money to build a tank column.\(^\text{16}\)

Can Ukraine Halt the Project?

Late in December 2014, Head of Crimea Sergey Aksenov made an astonishing, yet absolutely justified statement to the effect that “international legal norms, which make the Sea of Azov a common area of navigation of Russia and Ukraine, stipulate that building the bridge requires the approval of the Ukrainian government, which will be impossible to receive due to the current relations between the two countries.” Indeed, in 2003, Russia and Ukraine signed an agreement on the Azov-Kerch that defined the Sea of Azov and the strait of Kerch as the historically internal waters of the Russian Federation and Ukraine and envisaged that all related issues must be regulated by an agreement between the two countries. In 2012, they signed an agreement on delimitation of the sea; no borders were drawn, which means that use of the sea is still regulated by the 2003 agreement and the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties. This means that Russia cannot violate the agreement, although it can suspend it according to Art 62 “Fundamental Change of Circumstances” of the Convention, by which the changed status of Crimea is meant. Most states have refused to recognize the act of unification of Crimea and Russia, which means that Ukraine has a good chance of contesting this “fundamental change” in the International Court of Justice or in a conciliation commission of the United Nations. The traffic interchange will block Ukraine in the Sea of Azov, but Russia’s aggressive foreign policy in the region suggests that it will ignore any decisions made by any international departments. This means that Aksenov’s arguments will be pushed aside.

This may mean, however, that the statement was a trial run of the Crimean leaders amid the water and energy hunger. It can be interpreted as part of a wider project of exchanging Crimea for Donbass, since Russia is very open about its desire to return the Donetsk and Lugansk People’s Republics to Ukraine in exchange of Ukraine’s democratization.

Conclusion

We are watching one of the rounds of Russia’s “great geopolitical game” called the Kerch Traffic Interchange. In view of the above, it is being used as a pressure lever applied to Ukraine and the world community and as justification of Russia’s efforts to organize a corridor along the Azov coast of Ukraine.

The use of force looks cheaper and faster; if it fails Russia will be left with building a bridge as the only option. Its construction will increase regional tension and decrease security in this part of the Sea of Azov.

THE MACROECONOMIC EFFECTS OF BUDGET SPENDING IN AZERBAIJAN’S ECONOMY

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the changes in the amount and structure of budget spending in Azerbaijan’s economy in 2000-2013. It assesses the impact of budget spending on the dynamics of the economy’s non-oil sector, personal income, employment, poverty, inflation, import, and human development indicators. On the basis of the calculations carried out, it establishes that even if the multiplier of hypothetic spending in the country’s economy is equal to 2.6, the multiplication effect of budget spending amounts to 1.4 in the non-oil sector and 1.8 in personal income, respectively. In addition, a 1% increase in budget spending in real terms leads to a real increase of 0.47% in the non-oil sector and of 0.56% in personal income. Every billion manats of budget spending creates 28,000 new jobs and releases approximately 190-200,000 people from the grips of poverty. At the same time, an abrupt increase in budget spending will stoke inflation and cause an increase in import: a rise in budget spending by 10% increases inflation by 2.1% and import volume by 6.1%.

KEYWORDS: budget spending, non-oil sector, inflation, employment, Azerbaijan.
**Introduction**

In the current debates relating to fiscal policy for developing countries, experts think that a tight fiscal policy is required. According to the prevailing opinion, a budget deficit should be avoided because it "crowds out" private investments and is inflationary. On the other hand, it is an effective tool for stimulating an economy facing an economic slowdown when the standard Keynesian models of economic and fiscal policy are at hand.¹

Of course, the economic role of fiscal policy, particularly of one of its most important elements—budget spending, is not limited to this. State budget spending could play an important role in ensuring the production of social benefits,² protecting economic stability,³ fighting the crisis,⁴ and maintaining economic growth.⁵

Under the impact of the oil boom that began in 2005, an unusual fiscal dominance has been forming in Azerbaijan’s economy, and this process is continuing today. The state budget, with its abrupt increase in spending, which has essentially become the main channel of money injections into the economy, is also the key element of non-oil aggregate demand. It goes without saying that these changes have been accompanied by a whole series of macroeconomic effects in the non-oil sector, personal income, employment, inflation, poverty, and so on. The purpose of this article is to assess the impact of these macroeconomic effects, as well as analyze how they emerged. The article consists of three sections: the first analyzes the main trends and dynamics of budget spending in Azerbaijan’s economy; the second assesses the impact of budget spending on economic growth, employment, poverty, inflation, import, and the human development indices in the country; and the third sums up the results obtained during the study.

1. Analysis of the Main Trends and Dynamics of Budget Spending

Since 2005, against the background of the accelerated growth of the production industry as a result of the oil boom, budget revenue has been on the constant rise. This has been the consequence of economic growth and a corresponding increase in tax revenue, on the one hand, and the abrupt increase, beginning in 2006, of transfers to the budget from the State Oil Fund, on the other.

The state’s rapidly increasing fiscal opportunities and the growing challenges that accompany this today have prompted the state to assume even greater economic and social responsibility, which has been expressed in an increase in budget spending (see Fig.1).

In 2013, state budget spending amounted to more than 19.1 billion manats, which is 12.7 times higher than in 2004, directly before the oil boom, and 25 times higher than in 2000. Of course, this is

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growth in nominal terms, and its large share is explained by the permanent depreciation of money. Nevertheless, real growth (that is, inflation-free) is also rather high: in real terms, budget spending in 2013 was 6.4 times higher than in 2004, and 11 times higher compared to 2000.

The rapid increase in budget spending, which is much higher than the growth rates in the non-oil sector, led to a sharp rise in the budget share in the economy and indirectly increased the budget’s impact on the economy. In 2000-2013, the ratio of budget spending to GDP increased by 17% and reached 33.2%. In the non-oil sector, this correlation already amounts to 63.8%, which is 38.8% higher than in 2000. But this is not the highest level of budget spending ratio to GDP in the non-oil sector. The peak was recorded in 2008 at 70.9%. As a result of the abrupt drop in oil prices under the impact of the global financial crisis, there was a relative decline in budget oil revenue and a corresponding decrease in spending (2.5%). Maintaining dynamic growth in the non-oil sector led to a drop in 2009 of the ratio of budget spending to GDP in the non-oil sector of 8.1%; in subsequent years, it has remained more or less the same.

An analysis of the data for 2001-2013 shows that during this period the budget spending growth rates were very high and just as volatile. During the indicated period, the mean value of this index amounted to 30.5%. During the oil boom and subsequent period (2005-2013), the growth rates different significantly from the previous period (2001-2004). Whereas before the oil boom, the average budget spending growth rates amounted to 18.8%, during the oil boom and in subsequent years, they reached an average of 35.6%.
In so doing, the budget spending growth rates have demonstrated a high volatility: the difference between the highest growth indicator (77.1% in 2006) and the lowest (–2.5% in 2009) is equal to 79.6 percentage points. Another indicator of volatility is variability (standard deviation) of total budget spending, amounting to 26.6 percentage points, which is a rather high indicator (see Table 1).

Among the budget spending vectors, investments in the economy are growing the fastest (the main part of this spending, around 98.5% in recent years, constituted investments in basic capital). The average growth rates during this period amounted to 49% in this vector, while in total between 2000 and 2013, spending in this vector has increased 91.8-fold. It appears that this is why the highest volatility of growth rates is observed in this vector. For example, at an average level of volatility of 53.3 percentage points, the corridor (the difference between the maximum and minimum values of growth rates) for spending on economic needs amounted to 192.2.

The “other spending” section ranks second, both in terms of growth rates and volatility. During the period under analysis, the average growth rates for this spending amounted to 34.2%, the corridor...
of growth rates to 122.4, and the variability to 35.4 percentage points, while this kind of spending increased on the whole 31.2-fold.

The average spending growth rates, as well as their volatility in other areas of budget spending—sociocultural undertakings, science, and maintenance of state structures—proved close: in the range of 19.6-23.3% and 14-16.2%, respectively.

The higher growth rates for “spending on the economy” and “other spending” over the growth rates in other spending areas is the reason for the significant changes in the budget spending structure (see Fig. 2).

The shares of “spending on the economy” and “other spending” in the budget have grown by 31.2 and 5.5 percentage points, respectively, while the shares of all the other budget spending items have significantly decreased.

The share of spending on sociocultural undertakings has decreased the most—28.8 percentage points. In this vector, the share of spending on education and social protection and social security underwent the greatest drop—by 16.3 and 9.1 percentage points, respectively. The share of spending on health care decreased by only 2.1 percentage points.

In a separate analysis of the changes in vectors of budget spending (in the budget) during three periods (2000-2005, 2005-2010, and 2012-2013), it can be seen that the main changes occurred in

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Figure 2

Change in the Share of Budget Spending in the Main Vectors (2000-2013)

Source: Compiled on the basis of data from the Azerbaijan Republic State Statistics Committee.

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6 This section includes spending on education, health care, social protection and social security, culture, art, physical culture, and other similar spending.
2005-2010. Due to an overall drop in budget spending growth rates, during the third period (2010-2013), the shares of the separate spending areas changed the least (see Fig. 3).

**Figure 3**

**Shares of Budget Spending in the Main Vectors:**
Results of the Changes
(Comparisons for 2000 and 2013)

**Source:** Compiled on the basis of data from the Azerbaijan Republic State Statistics Committee.
Whereas in 2000, exactly half of the budget was spent on sociocultural undertakings, in 2013, this spending amounted to a little more than 1/5 of the budget (21.3%). Spending on the economy, which amounted to approximately 1/9 of the budget in 2000, currently forms up to 43% of budget spending.

Since 2006, the largest part of budget spending has gone to the economy. That year, the country’s budget became investment-oriented, and the large-scale construction work financed by the state that continues to this day began.

As we have already noted, the share of the “other spending” item has also increased. It was relatively high as early as 2000 (22.4%), while during the period under review it increased to 27.9%. There are several possible reasons for this increase. The first hypothesis is that the diverse nature of the economic and social problems in the modernization phase and the state’s leading role in their resolution are making it necessary to engage in more vigorous spending of budget funds in very different areas. The second hypothesis lies in the fact that this change in the spending structure is the result of efficient redistribution. However, it is rather difficult to theoretically justify and assess the efficient distribution of spending. Another hypothesis might be related to the increase in corruption, although in light of the fight against corruption going on in the country, this hypothesis does not seem very realistic.

The share of spending on science, which has always been the most modest (1.2% in 2000), decreased even more and, in 2013, amounted to 0.6% of the total sum of budget spending. An analysis of the dynamics of change in the budget spending structure makes it possible to draw two important intermediate conclusions.

- First, the rapid growth in budget spending, particularly in expenditures on the economy, is generated by the imperative need for economic modernization, and the state has assumed the main responsibility for solving this task. Since 2005, the accelerated growth in the corresponding items of budget spending has significantly raised the budget’s role in Azerbaijan’s economic development, particularly of the non-oil sector.

- Second, the high volatility of budget spending growth rates and particularly the 2.5% cutback in total volume of budget spending during the crisis, which was even higher, around 12%, in terms of the areas that accounted for the largest share of spending (“on the economy” and “other spending”), gives reason to claim that the country’s budget is of a pro-cyclical, and not counter-cyclical nature. This is an extremely important point that must be kept in mind with respect to raising the stability of both the budget and the economy as a whole during possible crises.

Nevertheless, although Azerbaijan’s economy managed to emerge from the recent world financial crisis essentially unscathed, the “lost economic opportunities” in 2008-2009, according to some estimates, took a toll of 83 billion manats, of which the non-oil sector accounted for 2.5 billion manats. The non-oil sector demonstrated real “losses” only in 2009, and it stands to reason that the cutback in total budget spending for that year of 270.4 million manats, as well as in spending on the economy of 585 million manats, had a significant impact on this.

We will try to examine the impact this spending has on the economy.

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2. Assessment of Macroeconomic Effects of Budget Spending

2.1. Impact of Budget Spending on Economic Growth

Azerbaijan’s state budget is mainly formed by means of the oil sector (for example, in 2013, 72.3% of the budget revenue was formed by means of transfers of the Oil Fund and tax revenue from the oil industry), while it redirects revenue to the non-oil sector. So we will analyze the impact of budget spending on the non-oil sector and the formation of personal income.

In Azerbaijan’s economy, budget spending performs the function of aggregate demand in the non-oil sector. According to the data of 2013, the ratio of total budget spending to GDP produced in the non-oil economy amounts to 63.8%, which means that the state manages approximately two thirds of the financial flows in this sector of the economy. What is more, the share of state investments in the non-oil sector is quite high (63.3%).

In turn, personal income mainly consists of the profit formed in the non-oil sector (equivalent of non-oil GDP), oil-sector revenue siphoned by means of budget spending into the non-oil economy (transfer through budget revenue from the oil sector to the non-oil sector), and income of the population employed in the oil sector. They, particularly the first two, are directly or indirectly formed by budget spending.

Figure 4

Real Growth Rates of Budget Spending, Non-Oil GDP, and Personal Income (2001-2013)

Source: Compiled on the basis of data from the Azerbaijan Republic State Statistics Committee.
For these reasons, there is a close tie among budget spending, non-oil GDP, and personal income both in nominal and real terms. For example, coefficients of correlation between the pairs “budget spending-non-oil GDP” and “budget spending-personal income” in nominal terms will be 0.997 and 0.998, respectively. The coefficients of correlation between these pairs in real terms is also very high: 0.987 and 0.995 (between 2000 and 2013), respectively. It stands to reason that in this case, there should also be some similarity between the dynamics of the growth rates of the mentioned indices (see Fig. 4).

As Fig. 4 shows, in 2001-2013, there was a noticeable similarity among the growth rates of budget spending, non-oil GDP, and personal income.

For example, the increase in budget spending growth rates since 2005 also led to an increase in personal income the same year, and in non-oil GDP growth rates the following year. Each of these three indices continued to grow at the same rate right up until 2009, after which they decreased slightly under the impact of the global financial crisis, but recovered as early as 2010. The similar dynamics of budget spending, non-oil sector GDP, and personal income is related not only to the fact that budget spending constitutes the main part of financial receipts into the non-oil economy, but also to the multiplier effect created by this spending. For example, depending on the level of marginal propensity to consume (in other words, the extent to which an increase in personal income by one unit leads to an increase in spending on consumption), budget spending is causing an increase greater than its own amount both in the non-oil economy and in personal income.

According to the calculations done for Azerbaijan’s economy, the coefficient of the marginal propensity of the country’s population to consume is equal to 0.62. This means that every 100 manats of income growth may cause an increase in consumption spending of 62 manats.

The latter means that every manat spent from the budget (not counting transfers) has the potential to create 2.6 manats of income in the economy. That is, the coefficient of the hypothetical multiplier of budget spending is equal to 2.6; at the same time, the coefficient amounts to 1.6 (see Table 2) for spending on budget transfers.

### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Indicator</th>
<th>Calculated Coefficient</th>
<th>Calculation Order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coefficient of the marginal propensity to consume*</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spacing multiplier</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>(1/(1-c))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax multiplier</td>
<td>-1.6</td>
<td>(-c/(1-c))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer multiplier</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>(c/(1-c))</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Coefficient of the marginal propensity to consume is calculated on the basis of the equality of regressions. Here \(C_t\) — spending on end consumption, \(Y_t\) — personal income, \(a_0\) — autonomous consumption (part of consumption that does not depend on changes in income), \(c\) — coefficient of the marginal propensity to consume, \(u_t\) — model remnants. The model calculated on the basis of the 2005-2013 statistics can be presented as follows: \(C = 602.5 + 0.616*Y, R^2 = 0.997\) (effective at a level of significance equal to 0.01); \(DW = 2.06\); effective when the coefficient of the marginal propensity to consume is at a level of significance equal to 0.01, while the fixed model threshold (autonomous consumption) is 0.1.

**Source:** Compiled on the basis of the author’s calculations.

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In reality, the multiplier coefficient is lower than the hypothetical level (taxes, import, and other similar reasons). The coefficients of the real multiplier calculated for Azerbaijan’s economy are presented in Tables 3 and 4, in which the impact of a change of one unit of budget spending on income in the non-oil sector and personal income is expressed. Moreover, these tables present the calculations of coefficients of elasticity of the non-oil sector and personal income in relation to budget spending.

According to the assessments (see Table 3), a nominal increase in budget spending of 1 manat leads to an increase in GDP in the non-oil sector of an average of 1.4 manats (all other things being equal). In other words, the multiplier effect created by budget spending in the non-oil economy is equal to 1.4. In real terms (keeping in mind inflation), an increase in budget spending of 1 manat leads to an increase in GDP growth in the non-oil sector of 0.94 manats.

As for the coefficient of elasticity of the non-oil economy with respect to budget spending, the calculations show that a 1% increase in budget spending in nominal terms leads to a 0.68% increase in non-oil GDP. In real terms, the coefficient of elasticity of the non-oil economy with respect to budget spending is equal to 0.47, that is, an increase in budget spending for each percent in real terms causes economic growth in the non-oil sector of 0.47%. The latter expresses the significant dependence of non-oil economic growth on a real increase in budget spending.

This also means that to maintain a minimum average annual economic growth in the non-oil sector of 7%, set forth as the goal in the Development Concept “Azerbaijan 2020: A Look into the Future,” in current conditions, budget spending should be increased by approximately 15% in real terms.

According to the results of similar calculations for personal income (see Table 4), every additional manat of budget spending in nominal terms raises personal income by 1.82 manats (that is, according to the hypothetical multiplier, less than 0.78 manats).

Moreover, every additional manat of budget spending in real terms raises personal income by 1.52 manats in real terms. At the same time, in compliance with the results of the measurements of elasticity, in nominal terms personal income, with respect to budget spending, is identical to the indices of elasticity in the

| Table 3 |

Results of a Regression Analysis of the Effect of Budget Spending on the Non-Oil Economy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Budget Spending</th>
<th>Constants</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$DW$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-oil GDP</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>2,445.8</td>
<td>0.997</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ln (Non-oil GDP)</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>3.5295</td>
<td>0.997</td>
<td>2.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real non-oil GDP</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>3,455.4</td>
<td>0.986</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ln (Real non-oil GDP)</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>5.0478</td>
<td>0.993</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Every line in the table expresses the regression equation: in the first column— dependent-variable, in the first lines—free variable budget spending and its stable threshold. $R^2$ and $DW$ express the coefficient of determination of the models and Durbin-Watson statistics, respectively. Here $Ln$ expresses the logarithmic level indicator (natural logarithm) included in the calculations. At the same time, since the logarithmic level and real value (at the level of 2000 prices) were used in the equations with the dependent variable, the logarithmic level and the real value of the budget spending were included in its calculations, respectively.

Source: Compiled on the basis of the author’s calculations.
non-oil sector (0.68). In other words, every 1% increase in budget spending raises personal income by 0.68%. In real terms, elasticity of the personal income-to-budget spending ratio is much higher than in the non-oil sector—a real 1% increase in budget spending leads to an increase in personal income of 0.56%. This means that in order to maintain the average annual growth rates (9%) of personal income in the post-crisis period (since 2009), real budget spending growth rates must be at a level of 16%.

2.2. Impact of Budget Spending on Employment

Budget spending directly (through government investments and purchases) and indirectly stimulate aggregate demand in the economy and, in so doing, play an important role in fighting unemployment. These opportunities of budget spending are being actively used in Azerbaijan’s economy, particularly since 2005.

Moreover, an Employment Strategy\(^9\) for 2006-2015 has been drawn up in the country that was implemented at the first stage by the State Program\(^10\) for 2007-2010, while at present, the second stage is being implemented by the State Program for 2011-2015.\(^11\) According to the results of the first stage, with an increase in the size of the economically active population of 185,400 people, the number of jobs rose by 218,300. This led to a decrease in the number of unemployed of 32,900. The level of unemployment amounted to 5.6%, dropping by one percentage point (see Table 5).

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Change in the Size of the Economically Active Population, thou. people</th>
<th>Change in the Size of the Employed Population, thou. people</th>
<th>Change in the Size of the Unemployed Population, thou. people</th>
<th>Unemployment Level, %</th>
<th>Domestic Investments in Non-oil Sector, million manats</th>
<th>Investments by Means of Budget Funds, million manats</th>
<th>Share of Budget Investments in Domestic Investments in the Non-oil Sector, %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>-10.1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>3,665.4</td>
<td>1,852.4</td>
<td>50.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>-18.9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>6,670.5</td>
<td>3,859.9</td>
<td>57.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5,227.3</td>
<td>2,705.9</td>
<td>51.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td>-1.9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>6,082.6</td>
<td>3,255.3</td>
<td>53.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2007-2010   185.4                        218.3                        -32.9

Drop of 1 percentage point 21,645.8                      11,673.6                     53.9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Change in the Size of the Economically Active Population, thou. people</th>
<th>Change in the Size of the Employed Population, thou. people</th>
<th>Change in the Size of the Unemployed Population, thou. people</th>
<th>Unemployment Level, %</th>
<th>Domestic Investments in Non-oil Sector, million manats</th>
<th>Investments by Means of Budget Funds, million manats</th>
<th>Share of Budget Investments in Domestic Investments in the Non-oil Sector, %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>-7.4</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>8,779.3</td>
<td>5,466.5</td>
<td>62.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>62.3</td>
<td>70.1</td>
<td>-7.8</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>10,618.0</td>
<td>6,849.0</td>
<td>64.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>75.9</td>
<td>-6.5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>11,736.5</td>
<td>8,080.4</td>
<td>68.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2011-2013   170.4                        192.1                        -21.7

Drop of 0.6 percentage points 31,133.8                      20,395.9                     65.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Change in the Size of the Economically Active Population, thou. people</th>
<th>Change in the Size of the Employed Population, thou. people</th>
<th>Change in the Size of the Unemployed Population, thou. people</th>
<th>Unemployment Level, %</th>
<th>Domestic Investments in Non-oil Sector, million manats</th>
<th>Investments by Means of Budget Funds, million manats</th>
<th>Share of Budget Investments in Domestic Investments in the Non-oil Sector, %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>355.8</td>
<td>410.4</td>
<td>-54.6</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>52,779.6</td>
<td>32,069.5</td>
<td>60.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2007-2013   355.8                        410.4                        -54.6

Drop of 1.6 percentage points 52,779.6                      32,069.5                     60.8

Source: Compiled on the basis of data from the Azerbaijan Republic State Statistics Committee.
According to the results of the second stage of the “Employment Strategy” for the first three years (2011-2013), implementation of the “State Program” (2011-2015) has led to an increase of 192,100 people in the number of employed with an increase in the size of the economically active population of 170,400 people, as a result of which the number of unemployed decreased by 21,700 people. The level of unemployment dropped by 0.6 percentage points and amounted to 5%. All in all, in seven years (2007-2013), with an increase in the size of the economically active population of 355,800 people, there was an increase in the size of the employed population of 410,400 people, as a result of which the number of unemployed decreased by 54,600 people and amount to 236,600 people (5% of the size of the economically active population).

During implementation of the “Employment Strategy,” the state, as well as dealing with organizational issues, assumed an additional financial burden and mobilized funds from the budget to guarantee investment activity in the country.

At the first stage of the “Employment Strategy” (2007-2010), 11.7 billion manats (53.9%) of the 21.6 billion manats of domestic investments in the non-oil sector were realized by means of the budget, while during the first three years (2011-2013) of the second stage, 20.4 billion manats of 31.1 billion manats (65.5%) were realized.

According to the estimates (based on data that cover 2000-2013), for each billion manats of budget spending, the size of the employed population increases by 28,000 people. According to the results of the measurements of elasticity between these two indicators, a 10% increase in budget spending leads to an increase in the number of employed of 0.43% (see Table 6).

An increase in the employment level, in turn, means the participation of a large part of the population in the economic processes and the opportunity for an increasingly larger number of people to take advantage of the fruits of these processes, while the latter has an impact on the drop in the poverty level in the country.

### 2.3. Impact of Budget Spending on Income Distribution (Poverty)

One of the main functions of the budget is to redistribute the income created in the economy and, in so doing, provide social security for the impoverished strata of the population. In this respect,
budget spending is one of the main tools for implementing this function. Since 2005, the abrupt increase in budget spending has been playing an important role in reducing poverty in the country.

Implementation of the “State Program to Reduce Poverty and Promote Economic Development (2003-2005)” in the country led to significant achievements in lowering the poverty level. At present, these processes are continuing by means of the “State Program to Reduce Poverty and Promote Sustainable Development in the Azerbaijan Republic in 2008-2015” approved in 2008.

Implementation of the first “State Program” led to a drop in the country’s poverty level from 47% in 2002 to 29%, and approximately 1.4 million people were released from the grips of poverty. The second “State Program,” beginning from the time it was created in 2008 right up until the end of 2013, lowered the poverty level by 11 percentage points, reducing it to 5%. This led to the number of people who have an income higher than the poverty level increasing by 885,000. Stepping up the poverty-combating measures carried out as a whole since 2000 and particularly beginning in 2003 led to a decrease in the poverty level in the country of 46 percentage points (3.6 million people). It stands to reason that these achievements are the fruit of budget spending. For this reason, a direct link is seen among the mentioned indicators.

As can be seen from Fig. 5, which shows the ties among budget spending, personal income, and poverty level, there is a strict linear tie between budget spending and personal income (we examined the quantitative parameters of this tie earlier), while at the same time, there is a close dependence between budget spending and the poverty level at the logarithmic level.

Table 7 below shows the results of an econometric analysis of the impact of budget spending on poverty.

![Depiction of the Ties among Budget Spending, Personal Income, and the Poverty Level](image)

Source: Compiled on the basis of data from the Azerbaijan Republic State Statistics Committee.
Both a direct (by means of regression equality expressing the ties between these two indicators) and an indirect (in the form of coefficients expressing the ties between budget spending and personal income and between personal income and the number of impoverished people) measurement of the impact of the changes in budget spending on the size of the population living below the poverty line gave close results.

According to the estimates, an increase in budget spending of 1 billion manats leads to a drop in poverty of the population by 200,000 people. At the same time, an increase in personal income of 1 billion manats causes a decrease in the number of poor people of 105,000. As for the elasticity indices, the estimates show that every 1% increase in budget spending leads to a decrease in the impoverished population of 0.65%, and a 1% increase in personal income leads to a decrease in the impoverished population of 0.94%. According to the indirect measurements, an increase in budget spending of 1 billion manats reduces the number of poor people by 190,000 people, while a 1% increase leads to a decrease of 0.64%.

Table 7
Results of an Econometric Analysis of the Ties among Budget Spending, Personal Income, and Poverty (2000-2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget Spending, million manats</th>
<th>Personal Income, million manats</th>
<th>Ln (Budget Spending)</th>
<th>Ln (Personal Income)</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>DW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Size of the impoverished population, thou. people</td>
<td>−0.200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.956</td>
<td>1.920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of the impoverished population, thou. people</td>
<td></td>
<td>−0.105</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.974</td>
<td>1.842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ln (Size of the impoverished population)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>−0.645</td>
<td>0.983</td>
<td>1.683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ln (Size of the impoverished population)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>−0.943</td>
<td>0.995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal income, million manats</td>
<td>1.820</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.996</td>
<td>2.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ln (Personal income)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.675</td>
<td>0.998</td>
<td>2.234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of the impoverished population (indirect*)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>−0.190</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ln (Size of the impoverished population) (indirect*)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>−0.637</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Indirect coefficients for measuring the impact of budget spending on poverty and personal income, as well as the impact of personal income on the number of poor people.

Note: Every line in the table expresses the regression equation: in the first column—dependent-variable, in the first lines—free variable budget spending and its stable threshold. R² and DW express the coefficient of determination of the models and Durbin-Watson statistics, respectively.

Source: Compiled on the basis of the author’s calculations.
2.4. The Impact of Budget Spending on Inflation

In Azerbaijan’s economy, budget spending acts as the main channel for siphoning money into the economy. At the same time, budget spending also plays a decisive role in forming personal income (as can be seen from the estimates presented earlier). For this reason, there is a close linear dependence between the growth rates of budget spending and inflation. This can be seen from Fig. 6, which shows the general movement of these indicators for 2001-2013.

As Fig. 6 shows, since 2005, budget spending growth rates have been increasing the volume of the money supply and been accompanied by an increase in inflation.

The peak of budget spending and consumer price growth came in 2008, following which, under the impact of the world financial crisis of 2009, both indices demonstrated an abrupt drop. Since 2010, parallel to the restoration in budget spending growth rates, money supply growth rates have also been undergoing restoration, which also caused a slight increase in inflation.

According to the results of an econometric analysis of the impact of the growth rates of budget spending, personal income, and the money supply (separately) on inflation in Azerbaijan’s economy,
A 10% increase in growth rates of budget spending could lead to an additional 2.1% of inflation. At the same time, a 7.8% increase in nominal personal income creates 10% of inflation. In turn, a 10% increase in the growth rates of the money supply according to M0, M1 and M2 increases inflation by 1.2%, 0.9%, and 0.8%, respectively. As we see, inflation in Azerbaijan reacts more to changes in budget spending growth rates than to money supply growth rates (see Table 8).

### 2.5. The Impact of Budget Spending on Import

Budget spending not only has an impact on personal income, but also stimulates domestic demand, which leads to an increase in demand for imported production. An analysis of the ties among budget spending, personal income, and import for 2000-2013 shows a close tie between “budget spending-import” and “personal income-import” (see Fig. 7).

According to the estimates, each additional manat of budget spending leads to an increase in import of $0.52. An increase in personal income of 1 manat leads to an increase in import of $0.28. If we measure the dependence of import on budget spending indirectly, the result will be almost the same. As we already know from previous calculations, an increase in budget spending of 1 manat leads to an increase in personal income of 1.82 manats. At the same time, a similar change in personal income leads to an increase in import of $0.51 (see Table 9).

As for the elasticity of import with respect to budget spending and personal income (separately), according to the measurement results, a 1% increase in budget spending leads to an increase in import of 0.61%.
Table 9

Results of an Econometric Analysis of Ties among Budget Spending, Personal Income, and Import (2000-2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Budget Spending, million manats</th>
<th>Personal Income, million manats</th>
<th>Ln (Budget Spending)</th>
<th>Ln (Personal Income)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Import, $m</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ln (Import)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ln (Import)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal income</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ln (Personal income)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Import (indirectly*)</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ln (Import) (indirectly*)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Indirect coefficients for measuring the impact of budget spending on import and personal income, as well as the impact of personal income on import.

**Note:** Every line in the table expresses the regression equation: in the first column—dependent-variable, in the first lines—free variable budget spending and its stable threshold. $R^2$ and $DW$ express the coefficient of determination of the models and Durbin-Watson statistics, respectively.

**Source:** Compiled on the basis of the author’s calculations.
In so doing, the elasticity of import with respect to personal income is higher (this can be clearly seen in Fig. 7)—a 1% increase in personal income leads to an increase in import of 0.94%.

The results of indirect measurement of the elasticity of import with respect to budget spending are close to the results of direct measurements: as we know from the previous calculations, a 1% increase in budget spending causes an increase in personal income of 0.68%, while a similar increase in personal income is accompanied by an increase in import of 0.64%.

### 2.6. The Impact of Budget Spending on Human Development

On the one hand, budget spending is used to increase income, as well as to provide the population with social benefits that are very important for strengthening the material basis of human development. On the other hand, direct budget spending on health care maintains an even more important human life condition—health.

For this reason there is a close dependence between human development and budget spending. In particular, keeping in mind the size of the country’s economy and budget, Azerbaijan’s rather high budget spending on education and health care is having a direct positive impact on human development.

As can be seen from Fig. 8, there is a tie between budget spending and the human development index offered by UNDP and one of its sub-components—life expectancy at birth; an increase in budget spending is accompanied by an increase in both indices, but over time they will react weakly to a budget spending increase. In other words, stronger index inertia is occurring.

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**Figure 8**

**Depiction of Ties among Budget Spending, the Human Development Index, and Life Expectancy at Birth (2000-2013)**

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**Source:** Compiled on the basis of data from the Azerbaijan Republic State Statistics Committee and the United Nations Development Program (Human Development Report 2014).
Against the background of the abrupt increase in budget spending in Azerbaijan in 2000-2013 (from 764 million manats to 19.1 billion manats), significant success was achieved in human development, as a result of which the country’s human development index rose by 0.108 points (from 0.639 to 0.747). At the same time, such an abrupt increase in budget spending along with an improvement in the standard of living, as well as rise in quality of medical services provided by the state, created conditions for increasing life expectancy at birth by 2.4 years (from 71.8 years to 74.2 years).

According to the calculations done on the basis of the data for 2000-2013 (see Table 10), an increase in budget spending of 1 billion manats leads to an increase in the Human Development Index of 0.006 points (at present, in accordance with the U.N. Human Development Report 2014, Azerbaijan ranks 76th among 187 countries with an index of 0.747).

| Table 10 |

**Results of a Regressive Analysis of the Impact of Budget Spending on Human Development (2000-2013)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Budget Spending, billion manats</th>
<th>$\ln$ (Budget Spending)</th>
<th>Budget Spending in Health Care</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>DW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human Development Index</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.965</td>
<td>2.437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\ln$ (Human Development Index)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.046</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.984</td>
<td>1.168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy at birth</td>
<td>0.116</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.969</td>
<td>1.840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy at birth</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.958</td>
<td>1.153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Every line in the table expresses the regression equation: in the first column—dependent-variable, in the first lines—free variable budget spending and its stable threshold. $R^2$ and DW express the coefficient of determination of the models and Durbin-Watson statistics, respectively.

Source: Compiled on the basis of the author’s calculations.

At the same time, each additional billion manats of budget spending increases life expectancy at birth by 0.12 years. An increase in budget spending of 1 billion in the “Health Care” item raises life expectancy at birth by an average of 4 years. As we can see from the indices, budget spending in Azerbaijan plays an important role in the country’s human development potential.

**Conclusion**

Budget spending in Azerbaijan’s economy plays an exclusively important role in modernizing the country’s economic and social infrastructure, ensuring employment, and implementing large-scale programs aimed at reducing poverty and promoting regional development. What is more, budget spending is the largest component of non-oil aggregate demand and, consequently, has a rather high impact on the macroeconomic processes in the country.

According to the results obtained during an assessment of the macroeconomic consequences of budget spending, it can be said that almost all the changes (99%) both in GDP, produced in the non-oil sector, and in personal income are explained by changes in budget spending. At the same time, 98% of the changes in employment, 96% of the changes in the size of the poor groups of the population, 82% of the changes in inflation, and 98% of the changes in import can be explained by changes in budget spending.

Moreover, the calculations determined that if the multiplier of hypothetical spending in the country’s economy is equal to 2.6, budget spending will create a multiplier effect in the non-oil sector of
THE CHINESE PRESENCE IN KAZAKHSTAN’S OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

China’s presence in Kazakhstan’s oil and gas industry shows that it is primarily interested in developing this country’s hydrocarbon fields. Raising the production volumes of Kazakhstan’s hydrocarbons will make it possible for China to meet its own energy needs. Chinese companies presently control approximately one quarter of the oil produced in Kazakhstan and one fifth of its petroleum product market. They also occupy a relatively strong niche in such an important segment of Kazakhstan’s oil and gas industry as the construction and exploitation of oil and gas pipelines. In the short
Introduction

On 3 January, 1992, diplomatic relations were established between the Republic of Kazakhstan (RK) and the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Since then, China has regarded Kazakhstan as the main target of its economic and, primarily, energy interests in Central Asia (CA).

An analysis of the Kazakh vector of the PRC’s foreign strategy in the post-Soviet period makes it possible to indentify three main stages of its implementation.

- **The first stage** occurred at the beginning and middle of the 1990s. At that time, China assessed the essentially new situation that had developed in the post-Soviet states and determined its energy and other interests in CA related, in particular, to penetration into Kazakhstan’s oil and gas industry.

- **The second stage** covered the second half of the 1990s, when the PRC began gaining direct access to Kazakhstan’s oil and gas industry, which occurred in the context of stronger trade ties between the two countries. Its project-investment activity in the republic’s oil and gas industry was largely generated by the increase in the PRC’s energy needs. In 1997, the leading Chinese state energy corporations began to acquire assets in Kazakhstan’s oil and gas industry and participate in developing its hydrocarbon fields.

- **The third stage** coincided with the beginning of the 21st century; it was precisely after 2000 that the scope and depth of China’s penetration into Kazakhstan began to significantly increase. China engaged in mass purchase of assets in Kazakhstan’s oil and gas and energy industries (primarily in the nuclear industry). In so doing, the PRC began pursuing a more active credit policy, financing on privileged terms those projects in which most of the loans were being developed by the Chinese companies themselves.

All of this led to an increase in the Chinese presence in the Kazakh market. Between 2001 and 2008, deliveries of goods from the PRC to the RK increased 11.3-fold—from $0.74 to approximately $8.4 billion, while the total goods turnover grew from $1.25 to around $16 billion. In 2009, under the influence of the global financial economic crisis, the volumes of Chinese-Kazakh trade decreased by 15.5% and amounted to $13.5 billion. In subsequent years, the goods turnover of the two countries began to climb again, and in 2011-2012 it stabilized at a level of around $20 billion. Between 2013 and 2014, a new trend toward an increase in goods turnover was designated, which grew by approximately 35%—from $20 to 27 billion (see Table 1).

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Goods Turnover, $m</th>
<th>Deliveries from China to Kazakhstan, $m</th>
<th>Deliveries from Kazakhstan to China, $m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Goods Turnover, $m</th>
<th>Deliveries from China to Kazakhstan, $m</th>
<th>Deliveries from Kazakhstan to China, $m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>489</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>825</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1,253</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2,478</td>
<td>1,493</td>
<td>985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2,856 (3,330)</td>
<td>1,546</td>
<td>1,310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>3,694 (4,498)</td>
<td>2,060</td>
<td>1,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>6,762 (7,243)</td>
<td>2,980</td>
<td>2,266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>8,784 (10,800)</td>
<td>5,130</td>
<td>3,654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>12,385 (15,226)</td>
<td>7,005</td>
<td>5,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>15,964 (18,500)</td>
<td>8,362</td>
<td>7,602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>9,458 (12,287)</td>
<td>3,569</td>
<td>5,889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>14,084 (17,615)</td>
<td>3,962</td>
<td>1,0122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>21,313 (24,913)</td>
<td>5,021</td>
<td>16,292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>20,568 (23,611)</td>
<td>7,445</td>
<td>13,123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>22,365 (24,000)</td>
<td>8,240</td>
<td>14,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>26,767 (28,250)</td>
<td>9,256</td>
<td>17,111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The dynamics of Chinese-Kazakh trade in the post-Soviet period can be traced more graphically in Diagram 1.

At the same time as the increase in the PRC’s trade presence in Kazakhstan’s consumer market, its credit policy and project-investment activity also intensified, whereby the main target of China’s interest continued to be the country’s oil and gas industry. Purchasing foreign (mainly Western) assets is, as before, the characteristic feature of the penetration of Chinese companies into this industry.

As of the beginning of 2015, the total volume of financial resources used by China to strengthen its position in Kazakhstan’s oil and gas industry is assessed at between $43.5 to $45.7 billion, including around $22.2-24.4 billion in investments, around $16.3 billion in acquired assets, and $5 billion in loans.
Assets

Since the end of the 1990s, China has been insistently and consistently pursuing an essentially expansionist policy in Kazakhstan’s oil and gas industry by engaging in fairly large-scale purchase of foreign and partly Kazakh assets. It continues to place the main emphasis on purchasing as many shares as possible in production projects on the mainland.

As for Kazakhstan, it is pursuing an ambiguous policy. On the one hand, Astana encourages China’s penetration into its oil and gas industry and is trying to direct it toward purchasing assets in offshore projects, while, on the other, in order not to entirely lose control over the backbone branch of its national economy, it is forced to restrain China’s activity to a certain extent.

First, between 1997 and 2014, Chinese companies acquired assets totaling $16 billion. These were mainly shares in operating companies engaged in the development of oil and gas fields on the mainland: 94.47% of the assets of the Kazakh State OAO Aktobemunaygas Company (including 94.47% of the shares of the Zhanazhol gas refineries), 100% of the assets of America’s First International Oil Company (FIOC), 48% of the shares in Central Asia Petroleum Ltd., formally an Indonesian offshore company, 11% of the shares in the KazMunayGas Exploration Production (AO) Company, 100% of the shares in the Russian-Indian Caspian Investments Resources Ltd. Company, 50.12% of the private Kazakh OAO Karazhanbasmunay Company, 67% of Canada’s PetroKazakhstan Inc. Company (including 50% of the assets of the Shymkent Oil Refinery), and 8.4% of the share in the North Caspian project. In addition, Chinese companies have bought 100% of the shares of small fields located in the southern and central parts of Kazakhstan from KazMunayGas.

Chinese companies are not participating in the large production projects to develop the Tengiz and Karachaganak fields, at which around 55% of Kazakh oil and up to 90% of its gas are produced. At the same time, China already has shares in essentially all other similar projects, controlling a total of around 24% of the oil produced in Kazakhstan.
However, China has almost no assets in the offshore projects that produce “big oil” and “big gas.” At the moment, China’s Sinopec Petrochemical Corporation is a formal participant in the Zhambay Iuzhny and Iuzhnoe Zaburunie geological exploration project, in which it owns 50% of the shares.

The assets of Chinese companies in other segments of Kazakhstan’s oil and gas industry are relatively small and limited to the following projects:

— reconstruction and modernization of the Shymkent Oil Refinery, in which the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) owns 50% of the assets (the other 50% belong to KazMunayGas. This same corporation owns 94.47% of the assets of three Zhanazhol gas refineries; the rest belong to KazMunayGas);
— the Sinooil Company, which controls from 15% to 20% of the Kazakh petroleum product market.

Second, China’s asset acquisition policy is influenced by contradictory and, often, mutually exclusive factors.

On the one hand, Beijing’s striving to buy up as many assets as possible is clearly supported by Astana. What is more, Kazakhstan is essentially lobbying the PRC’s purchase of assets being sold by foreign companies. We will note that according to the law, KazMunayGas has priority right to the purchase of the oil and gas assets of foreign companies, which means they cannot be transferred to China without Kazakhstan’s participation. This shows that the RK and the PRC are closely coordinating their steps.

On the other hand, there are reasons to presume that Kazakhstan is still trying to restrain China’s activity to some extent. In most cases, it is either buying back some of the assets from the Chinese companies, or bargaining for them in exchange for certain preferences. What is more, Kazakhstan is striving to keep hold of the controlling set of shares in its strategic production companies, KazMunayGas Exploration Production (AO) and OAO MangistauMunayGas; China has only been conceded an 11% share in the first and 48% in the second. Whereby such facilities as the Pavlodar Petrochemical Plant and chain of Helios gas-filling stations have not even been partially transferred to Chinese control (although the PRC, it seems, wanted to and could have bought up all of the above-mentioned assets).

Third, most likely, in the short term (up to three years) and medium term (up to ten years), China will continue to increase its efforts to acquire assets in Kazakhstan. The main targets of Chinese interests will primarily be the assets of foreign companies in production projects on the mainland, including the development of such large fields as Tengiz and Karachaganak. At the same time, relying on Kazakhstan’s support, China will continue its attempts to purchase assets on the shelf of the Caspian Sea.

We should not write off China’s interest in the refining segment of Kazakhstan’s oil and gas industry (particularly in gas refinery).

It should be noted that the increase in China’s presence in any segment of Kazakhstan’s oil and gas industry will inevitably entail its purchase of new assets in production projects.

However, there is no guarantee that the PRC will achieve all the goals it has set, particularly since they are extremely ambitious and essentially related to gaining control over the largest or, at least, a significant part of the strategic assets of Kazakhstan’s oil and gas industry. As time goes on, it will become increasingly difficult for China to acquire assets in production projects on the mainland (apart from the North Caspian project).

It should be presumed that if China follows its principled interest in penetrating Kazakhstan’s oil and gas industry, it will achieve a certain amount success, but only in acquiring the assets of small production projects on the mainland (which, of course, will not lead to any significant increase in China’s control over this industry).
Moreover, it is highly improbable that the PRC will gain access to strategically important assets in projects to develop the Tengiz and Karachaganak oil and gas fields in the short and medium term, since Western companies are unlikely to sell them to it.

Theoretically, in time, Beijing will be able to turn a large part of the export flows of Tengiz and Karachaganak oil from Europe to China. This is giving rise to the problem of filling the Tengiz-Novorossiisk oil pipeline (which is not at all in the interests of Kazakhstan and Russia), while deliveries of Kazakh oil to Europe will be dramatically reduced.

Keeping in mind the above, it can be presumed that in the short and medium term, Western companies might consent to sell Chinese companies assets in the Tengiz and Karachaganak projects, but only in extreme cases, such as a deep financial economic crisis in the EU or a dramatic drop in Europe’s need for oil. All the same, in the long term (up to twenty years), when the Tengiz and Karachaganak fields will most likely have reached the stage of diminishing production, foreign companies may concede the assets in these projects to China.

This will inevitably awaken China’s oil and gas appetite for offshore projects (keeping in mind the PRC’s limited opportunities in terms of further purchase of assets in production projects on the mainland). Its interests will primarily be aimed at increasing its share in the North Caspian project, in the refining segment of the Kazakh oil and gas industry and, correspondingly, in purchasing retail facilities trading in petroleum products.

Most likely, Chinese companies will try to acquire a share in the assets of Kazakhstan’s large oil refining plants. We are talking about the Atyrau Oil Refinery (which refines around 4.7 million tons of oil a year) and the Pavlodar Petrochemical Plant (which refines around 5.2 million tons of oil a year). We will remind you that the CNPC already has a 50% share in the Shymkent refinery.

In terms of its presence in the Kazakh petroleum product market, Chinese efforts will be aimed at taking control of as large a segment as possible and at purchasing infrastructure facilities: gas-filling stations, storehouses, depositories, and so on.

**Oil and Gas Production**

The main vector of China’s policy in developing Kazakhstan’s hydrocarbon potential continues to be aimed at comprehensive augmentation of oil production volumes (with the goal of exporting them to the PRC). Against this background, the industry’s gas segment, despite some positive dynamics in increasing blue fuel production volumes by Chinese companies, is still of secondary importance. This is explained by the fact that Beijing is more interested in Kazakh gas transit from Turkmenistan.

Nevertheless, the PRC must undertake a cardinal reexamination of its entire former strategy aimed at penetrating the Kazakhstan oil and gas industry, which was based on widespread purchase of assets in mainland production projects from foreign and Kazakh companies. On the one hand, the oil and gas fields under Chinese control (they are all on the mainland) have already reached the stage of diminishing oil production, in other words they have already reached their peak. On the other hand, the prospects for the possible participation of Chinese companies in other production projects (both on the mainland, and on the Caspian shelf) are still very nebulous.

- **First**, since it began its project-investment activity in Kazakhstan’s oil and gas industry, China has been consistently increasing the production of hydrocarbons, mainly oil, at the same time as buying up assets. Whereas in 1997, the CNPC owned only 1.6 million tons of the oil produced in Kazakhstan (or around 6% of the total volume of Kazakh oil production), in 2007, it owned around 10.65 million tons (or 16.8%); while at year-end 2014, this figure amounted to almost 20 million tons (or around 25%).
In turn, Chinese companies (mainly OAO CNPC-Aktobemunaygas) have not begun industrial gas production, or to be more precise, its recovery and utilization (Kazakh gas is mainly casing-head gas extracted during oil production) until 2004; their share in Kazakhstan’s gas production remains insignificant.

The dynamics of gas production volume increase are also insignificant. For example, in 2004, the CNPC owned 1.6 bcm of the gas produced in Kazakhstan (around 8% of the total volume of gas production), while by 2014, this amount had increased to only 4 bcm (or a little less than 10%). Such a slow rise in gas production was largely related to technical difficulties during its transportation from fields widely scattered across Kazakhstan’s huge territory.

Second, China’s policy to augment the volume of Kazakh hydrocarbon production is hindered by a whole series of unfavorable factors, a key one being the extremely limited opportunity to purchase new assets in production projects in Kazakhstan. Despite the PRC’s high interest in Kazakh oil, the opportunities of Chinese companies to increase oil production volumes by further exploitation of the fields it has already acquired within the framework of the existing projects have essentially been exhausted. As for new large production projects, the possibility of Chinese companies gaining access to them remains dubious. Despite the available opportunities for raising gas production, Chinese companies are showing a greater interest in Kazakh oil. They are not particularly striving for an extensive increase in gas production volumes, since this is economically unprofitable. They are engaged in the recovery/utilization of gas only due to technological necessity, as well as to political and environmental demands.

Third, in the short term (up to three years) and medium term (up to 10 years), China will certainly try to increase the production volumes of Kazakh hydrocarbons. Moreover, the PRC will most likely manifest a growing interest in gas production. When striving to increase oil and gas production volumes, Chinese companies will inevitably encounter the objective need to purchase new assets in large projects, both on the mainland, and on the Caspian shelf. They will have this opportunity if they join the projects to develop the Tengiz and Karachaganak fields (where around 55% of Kazakh oil and up to 90% of gas is produced) and/or if the North Caspian project is a success (within the framework of which “big oil” and “big gas” production is expected).

However, in the short and medium term, the PRC will unlikely be able to join the development of the Tengiz and Karachaganak fields or begin extensive hydrocarbon production within the North Caspian project. The main reasons are that Western companies (just like Kazakhstan itself) will not want to permit China to participate in developing the Tengiz and Karachaganak fields, which are relatively important from the commercial and strategic viewpoint.

Nor is it likely that China can participate in hydrocarbon production within the North Caspian project, which it has already joined, due to technological obstacles that are unlikely to be overcome (otherwise, Conoco Phillips would not have sold its assets in the project). In addition, the sharp drop in world oil prices during 2014 has made oil and gas production in this project unprofitable (due to the technological difficulties and financial expenditures), which is dramatically lowering its investment appeal. In this respect, it is unlikely that Chinese companies can expect a significant increase in oil production volumes in the short or medium term.

However, it is highly likely that they will be able to increase the volumes of Kazakh gas production (utilization) slightly. Nevertheless, it is very doubtful that the produced gas will be exported to China, it will be used by the production companies themselves, as well as sold to several Kazakh population settlements located close to the hydrocarbon production sites.
In the long term (up to 20 years), the volumes of oil and gas produced by the PRC in Kazakhstan will directly depend on the participation/non-participation of Chinese companies in developing the Tengiz and Karachaganak fields, on the one hand (although by this time they will most likely have reached the stage of diminishing production), and on the success/non-success of the North Caspian project, as well as on the development of the Darkhan field, which China is probably saving for the future, on the other.

It appears that, whatever the case, we can expect an increase in the volumes of blue fuel production; Chinese companies will be forced to step up their activity (for example, under Kazakhstan’s influence or based on technological need) in the recovery and utilization of casing-head gas extracted during oil production. However, a large part of the produced gas, as before, will most likely be sold in the Kazakh market, since collecting it from the numerous fields scattered all over Kazakhstan’s vast territory and exporting it to China is highly inexpedient.

Oil and Gas Refinery

The project-investment activity of Chinese companies in hydrocarbon refinery in Kazakhstan is quite noticeable, particularly against the background of the non-participation of other foreign states in this kind of project. On the whole, the scope of Chinese activity in the refining segment of the Kazakh oil and gas industry is still small. While not showing due interest in introducing new oil-refining capacities in Kazakhstan, Chinese companies are paying increasing attention to raising the gas-refining volumes. This is primarily related to the objective need for the utilization of gas extracted during oil production, as well as long-term plans for its export.

First, since 1997, when China began penetrating into Kazakhstan’s oil and gas industry, the scope of the PRC’s project-investment activity in hydrocarbon refinery was slightly higher than in production.

At present, the PRC is actively implementing three relatively large hydrocarbon refining projects; its participation in them can be broken down into the following stages:

— in 1997-2003, the CNPC modernized the first (built in Soviet times) and constructed the second and first string of the third Zhanazhol Gas Refinery, which resulted in an increase in gas-refining capacities from 0.8 to 4.5 bcm a year. At present, the construction of the second refinery is almost complete and preparations are being made to build the third string; this could lead to an increase in the total capacity of the three gas refineries to 8 bcm of gas a year;

— since 2006, the CNPC has been participating in oil refining (4.5 million tons every year) at the Shymkent Oil Refinery; it owns 50% of the assets of this enterprise;

— in May 2013, Sinopec began building an aromatic hydrocarbon complex at the Atyrau Oil Refinery; it is to be put into operation at the end of 2015. It is presumed that this complex will produce 133,000 tons of benzene every year and 496,000 tons of paraxylene.

Nevertheless, China’s financing in the above-mentioned enterprises is still small (against the background of investments in production projects) and amounts to approximately $2.4 billion, including $1.4 billion in loans for building the aromatic hydrocarbon complex at the Atyrau Oil Refinery and around $1 billion in investments to modernize/build the Zhanazhol Gas Refinery ($895 million) and modernize the Shymkent Oil Refinery (from $20 to 25 million).

At present, China holds a relatively flimsy place in the refining segment of the Kazakh oil and gas industry. The Chinese share in the total volume of Kazakh oil refining is a little
more than 14%, while its share in gas refining is a little less than 10%. The rest of the share in Kazakh hydrocarbon refining belongs to KazMunayGas. What is more, approximately 1/5 of the annual blue fuel production in Kazakhstan is refined by Russia’s Orenburg Gas Refinery.

- Second, China is, in general, not pursuing an active policy in the refining segment of the Kazakh oil and gas industry. Chinese companies are still not inclined to build new large refining facilities, and Kazakhstan itself is not showing any particular interest in this. For example, it seems that implementation of the construction project for the same Zhanazhol Gas Refinery was most likely dictated by the technological need to utilize the vast amount of gaseous products extracted during oil production and the tough environmental demands rather than by commercial considerations.

There are no other Chinese projects of this scope in Kazakhstan. As for the plans announced back in 2008-2009 to build an oil refinery on the border between Kazakhstan and the PRC, they have not yet been implemented.

- Third, in the short (up to three years) and medium (up to ten years) term, the oil production scope (and, correspondingly, its refinery) by Chinese companies in Kazakhstan is unlikely to significantly increase. Moreover, after the decision made in 2012 by the Kazakhstan Ministry of Oil and Gas about the extensive refining of Kazakh oil (around 1.5 million tons annually) at plants located in the XUAR in accordance with the toll scheme, it appears very unlikely that Chinese companies will build new oil-refining facilities in Kazakhstan.

At the same time, Chinese companies will increase gas-refining volumes in the short term. After the second and third strings of the third Zhanazhol Gas Refinery go into operation, the total capacity of these three plants will increase from the current 4.5 to 8 bcm a year. The resource base for the Zhanazhol Gas Refinery will be additional volumes of gas from the gas caps of the Zhanazhol field.

However, at least in the short term, the gas produced by Chinese companies will be sold in the Kazakh market (as is currently the case). In the medium term, small amounts of gas may theoretically be delivered to the PRC (approximately 4 to 5 bcm a year) via the Beineu-Bozoi-Akbulak-Shymkent gas pipeline, which is to go into operation in 2015. There is also the possibility of it joining up with the Turkmenistan-China gas pipeline.

It is also possible that China is hatching plans to take control of all the refining facilities in Kazakhstan: the Atyrau Oil Refinery and Pavlodar Petrochemical Plant (not counting the Shymkent Oil Refinery it already controls). This is probably the reason that China began building the aromatic hydrocarbon complex at the Atyrau Oil Refinery. The thing is that aromatic hydrocarbons can be used to raise the quality of petroleum products to high European standards (in Kazakhstan they are not used for other purposes). In so doing, Chinese companies will have a good opportunity to carve out a stronger niche for themselves in the refining segments of the Kazakh oil and gas industry.

In the long term (up to 20 years), the increase in the scope of China’s participation in refining Kazakhstan’s oil and gas will depend directly on two factors.

- The first is the participation/non-participation of Chinese companies in projects to develop the Tengiz and Karachaganak fields (although by this time they will most likely have reached the stage of diminishing production).

- The second consists of the success/non-success of the offshore projects Chinese companies will participate in (primarily the North Caspian project), as well as in the project to develop the Darkhan field, which China is probably saving for the future.

Implementation of the above projects will make it possible for Chinese companies to significantly increase oil and gas production volumes. In this case, we are likely to see common Chinese-
Kazakh interests in building new gas recovery and refining facilities in Kazakhstan. It can also be predicted (although not very confidently) that China will prefer to refine oil mainly in its own territory.

Pipeline Projects

The main goal of China’s policy in the Kazakh oil and gas industry is to increase hydrocarbon production volumes and export them to the PRC. This determines one of Beijing’s key and permanent priorities—building a pipeline system from Kazakhstan to China.

However, at present, Chinese companies are encountering the problem of filling the present and future oil and gas pipeline system. Despite this, China intends to increase its throughput capacity (at least in the short term), counting primarily on additional transit of Russian oil through Kazakhstan, as well as an increase in deliveries of Turkmen gas to the PRC via the Turkmenistan-China gas pipeline.

First, since 2005, the PRC has been very active in building a pipeline system from Kazakhstan and through Kazakhstan to China. This fully corresponds to China’s efforts to purchase assets in Kazakhstan’s oil and gas industry and increase hydrocarbon production volumes in Kazakhstan. Between 2005 and 2009, two main oil pipelines were built using Chinese investments: the Kenkiyak-Kumkol and the Atasu-Alashankou, which make it possible to export up to 14 million tons of oil a year to China from the western and central regions of Kazakhstan.

In addition, between 2008 and 2011, the PRC financed and built two branches of the Turkmenistan-China main gas pipeline, which makes it possible to transit up to 40 bcm of gas every year. In 2015, the third branch with a throughput capacity of 25 bcm a year is to go into operation. What is more, a local gas pipeline, Zhanazhol-KS-13, was built for supplying gas to the enterprises of OAO CNPC-Aktobemunaygas, as well as to the population settlements and economic facilities of the Aktobe Region.

At present, China continues to finance the development of separate elements of Kazakhstan’s gas pipeline system in order to create conditions for increasing deliveries of Turkmen and, in the future, Kazakh gas to the PRC.

For example, China has financed the construction of the third branch of the main Turkmenistan-China gas pipeline with a throughput capacity of up to 25 bcm a year. The PRC is also financing the construction of another main gas pipeline, Beineu-Bozoi-Akbulak-Shymkent, with a throughput capacity of up to 10 bcm a year; it can be used to deliver gas from the western and southwestern regions of Kazakhstan to the southern, then (by means of the existing gas pipelines) to the country’s eastern regions and on (theoretically) to China. In the future, there are plans to increase the throughput capacities of this gas pipeline to 15 bcm a year.

At the same time, the main pipelines via which oil and gas are transported to the PRC have still not reach their throughput capacity limit. For example, the main Atasu-Alashankou oil pipeline is functioning at 65% of its throughput capacity, falling approximately 8 million tons of oil short. In turn, the main Turkmenistan-China gas pipeline uses up to 75% of its throughput capacity, falling approximately 10 bcm of gas short (in the near future there are plans to fill it to 100%, bringing the total volume of transportable gas up to 40 bcm by means of additional deliveries from Turkmenistan).

Second, China’s plans to build pipelines in Kazakhstan and through its territory are calculated for the long term. Despite the existing problems, they are still aimed at increasing the throughput capacity of the main oil and gas pipelines going to China.
The Chinese companies producing around 19 million tons of oil annually in Kazakhstan could theoretically fill the Atasu-Alashankou oil pipeline (designed to pump up to 14 million tons of oil a year). But for several reasons (the geographic location of the oil and gas fields and the existing oil transportation routes among them), China can only send oil from southwest Kazakhstan (from the Kumkol field) via the Atasu-Alashankou pipeline, as well as from the Zhanazhol, Kenkiyak-post-salt, Kenkiyak-pre-salt, and North Truva fields being developed by OAO CNPC-Aktobemunaygas. The total production volume at all the above-mentioned fields amounts to around 12 million tons a year; some of the oil (between 3 and 4 million tons) is sent to the Shymkent Oil Refinery.

There is also a lack of clarity in questions relating to the presumed deliveries of Kazakh gas to the PRC. For example, the projected capacity of the Beineu-Bozoi-Akbulak-Shymkent gas pipeline being built (which could technically join up with the Turkmenistan-China gas pipeline) amounts to 10 bcm a year. This volume (approximately 10-11 bcm of gas) could theoretically be supplied by the oil and gas fields of the Mangistau, Atyrau, and Kyzylorda provinces close to its route. But in practice it will be much lower due to the inevitable technological losses (no less than 30% in Kazakhstan’s conditions) during extraction, recovery, and transportation of the gaseous product. What is more, some of the produced gas (at least 2-3 bcm) is essentially intended for the southern regions of Kazakhstan, which are presently buying it from Uzbekistan. Consequently, the theoretically potential export opportunities for transporting Kazakh gas to China presently amount to approximately 4-5 bcm a year.

It seems that it is precisely the lack of clarity about gas deliveries that largely explains why, if the Beineu-Bozoi-Akbulak-Shymkent gas pipeline is built, China will not be investing financial resources (as in the case of the Atasu-Alashankou oil pipeline and the Turkmenistan-China gas pipeline), but will provide Kazakhstan with them in the form of loans. Nevertheless, despite the problems relating to filling the pipelines, their throughput capacity is systematically increasing in the Chinese direction. In addition, more oil-pumping stations are being built on the Atasu-Alashankou route, and a third branch of the Turkmenistan-China gas pipeline is under construction.

China is also placing the stakes on increasing deliveries of Russian oil via the Omsk-Pavlodar-Shymkent oil pipeline (which joins up with the Atasu-Alashankou oil pipeline at the Atasu station). There are also plans to promote a slight increase in oil deliveries from the Kumkol fields (by means of the same Atasu-Alashankou oil pipeline), which partially belong to Kazakhstan’s KazMunayGas Exploration Production (AO) Company. They will most likely be carried out within the framework of Chinese-Kazakh toll operations regarding oil refinery at oil refineries in the PRC.

While striving to provide itself with additional volumes of gas, China is so far showing a priority interest in increasing Turkmen export.

- Third, in the short term (up to three years), China will no doubt raise the throughput capacity of the main Atasu-Alashankou oil pipeline from the current 14 to 20 million tons of oil a year, as well as of the Turkmenistan-China gas pipeline from 40 to 65 bcm.

In the medium term (up to 10 years), a further increase in the throughput capacity of the above-mentioned pipelines and the construction of new ones will only be possible if China joins some of the large production projects on the mainland (such as Tengiz and Karachaganak) and/or on the Caspian shelf. We must understand that for China much will depend on the success/non-success of the North Caspian project, the implementation of which depends on overcoming the numerous technological difficulties hindering development of the Kashagan field (not to mention development of several satellite fields that are also part of this project).
In the long term (up to 20 years), expansion of the pipeline system to China will continue to depend directly on the participation/non-participation of PRC companies in projects to develop the mainland fields Tengiz and Karachaganak (although by that time they will most likely have reached the diminishing production stage), on the one hand, and on the success/non-success of offshore projects in which they will be participating/want to participate (primarily, the North Caspian, as well as the project to develop the Darkhan field), on the other.

If Chinese companies succeed in significantly increasing the volumes of hydrocarbon production in any of the large projects, it stands to reason that more extensive (than during the last decade) work will be carried out to increase the throughput capacities of the existing and build new oil and gas pipelines going to the PRC.

### The Sale of Petroleum Products

Since the middle of the first decade of this century, Chinese manufacturers of petroleum products have begun making increasingly active probes into the Kazakh market and successfully competing with Russian and even Kazakh companies. For example, the Sinooil Company began operating in 2005, delivering petroleum products and selling them in the Kazakh market. The PRC is essentially carrying out economic trade expansion, which will only increase in the future.

- **First**, although the Chinese presence in the Kazakh petroleum product market emerged relatively recently, its share, nevertheless, amounts to between 15% and 20%, according to different estimates.
- **Second**, in all likelihood, China does not want to rest on its laurels and intends to strengthen its position even more. It appears that one of the ways it hopes to reach this goal is by organizing the production of aromatic hydrocarbons at the Atyrau Oil Refinery and raising the quality of petroleum products to European standards. By possessing a monopoly on the production of aromatics, Chinese companies will have a unique opportunity to take control over a large part of high-quality Kazakh petroleum products (and then strengthen control over the petroleum product market).
- **Third**, in the short, medium, and long term, the penetration of Chinese trade companies into the Kazakh market will undoubtedly only increase. This is favored by the fact that Kazakhstan prefers to import petroleum products from China to building new oil refineries. What is more, Chinese companies will most likely increase production and sales volumes of liquefied natural gas (LNG) in the Kazakh market.

### Conclusion

The format of the PRC’s presence in Kazakhstan’s oil and gas industry is objectively promoting Kazakhstan’s energy/resource exhaustion and enforcing its raw appendage status rather than developing comprehensive and full-fledged (primarily industrial-innovation) cooperation between the two countries.

In the short and medium term, the nature and scope of China’s presence in Kazakhstan’s oil and gas industry is unlikely to significantly change. In the long term, much will depend on whether Chinese companies gain access to “big oil” and “big gas” from the offshore fields, primarily within the framework of the North Caspian project. If “big oil/big gas” is manifested and China is able to take active part in the offshore projects, the scope of its presence in Kazakhstan’s oil and gas industry and in all of its segments will increase. In turn, Kazakhstan’s energy and strategic significance for the PRC will rise.
However, even in this case, the current format of China’s presence in Kazakhstan’s oil and gas industry is unlikely to significantly change; the PRC’s efforts will continue to be aimed primarily at exporting raw hydrocarbons from Kazakhstan. At the same time, the refining of Kazakh hydrocarbons is unlikely to become one of the main activities of Chinese companies.

The Chinese will undoubtedly build additional facilities for purifying natural gas and its liquefaction. Nevertheless, it is very unlikely that the export-raw material orientation of the Kazakh oil and gas industry will drastically change. This is explained by the fact that there are no plans to engage in the deep refining of hydrocarbons entailing the manufacture of petrochemical and gas chemistry products with a high added value under these projects.

It appears that if the PRC’s attempts to participate in “big oil/big gas” are unsuccessful, Kazakhstan’s importance will significantly diminish in its eyes. In turn, Kazakhstan’s share (2-3%), which is miserly anyway in meeting China’s oil demands, will decrease even more.

However, whatever happens, China will continue to have an interest in Kazakhstan’s oil and gas industry. Even if it does not gain access to “big oil/big gas,” the PRC will continue its presence in Kazakhstan, but it will no longer be dictated so much by oil and gas, as by other considerations, including geostrategic.
CONTEXTUALIZING CIVIL SOCIETY: A KYRGYZSTAN CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The idea of “civil society” has achieved prominence in political and developmental discourse over the past two decades, particularly in connection with the successive waves of democratization, beginning in Latin America and Eastern Europe and spreading across the developing world. Civil society is an arena where, through free and civilized interaction and communication, individuals obtain and exercise their freedom, as well as pursue their interests. It is a space where people are given an opportunity to enter into social relations free from state interference. The fall of the U.S.S.R. has fundamentally altered the conditions for the emergence of civil society on a global level. The changed political map of Central Asia in general and Kyrgyzstan in particular has made it possible to carry out democratic reforms and, within this political context, various autonomous social organizations have emerged and begun creating their space in the political system. During the past two decades, open political regimes have been providing a more appropriate context within which civil societies are able to thrive. Such systems have provided a legal and regulatory framework guaranteeing the rights of social groups; they permit the existence of lively media, enabling social organizations to communicate their values and programs; and their political elites are acting in ways that reinforce the acceptance of social diversity and political differences. In this context, the present article is an attempt to shed some light on the different models of civil society emerging in the context of Kyrgyzstan.
**Introduction**

In the past decade, the concept of civil society has gained considerable attention. The revival of civil society is related to the struggle of the democratic oppositions in Eastern Europe against authoritarian socialist party-states. There are too many reasons to present, however: the disintegration of the U.S.S.R., the good governance initiative of the World Bank under a structural adjustment program, and the triumph of the market economy are the immediate causes that make it a subject of interest. Since the late 1980s, the concept has been used by multilateral developmental agencies, international financial institutions, nongovernmental organizations, environmentalists, and feminists.

From a historical perspective, its origin can be traced back to the *societas civilis* in Aristotelian tradition. The first version of civil society appeared in Aristotle’s work *Politics* as *politike koinonia*, or political society/political community. Later on, many Latin translations rendered the Greek *politike koinonia* as *societas civilis*, based on an ethical-political community of free and equal citizens under a legally defined system of law. However, the Aristotelian tradition did not allow for any distinction between the state and society. For a quite long period of time, it remained one of the central themes in European political thought. For centuries, the concept of civil society has experienced a remarkable career in several languages. Having a long tradition of many centuries, it disappeared during most of the twentieth century before being rediscovered and reinforced in the 1970s and 1980s when the concept became attractive again in the fight against dictatorship, particularly against communist rule in Eastern and Central Europe.

During the 1980s, the term civil society reappeared in the writings of Central and Eastern European dissidents as they tried to come to an understanding of the social process that could stand in opposition to the state. During this period, many civil social movements, networks, and NGOs emerged and extended their influence beyond national borders. These included the international labor
movement, campaigns against prostitution and alcoholism, and then—continuing today—the struggle for disarmament and peace. In particular, most recently there have been waves of trans-nationalization and global social movements to transnational advocacy networks. Civil society has now crossed national borders with unprecedented vehemence and in new political spheres—just think of all the environmental, human rights, and anti-globalization movements. New decentralized forms and new means of communication are available to this end, thus making this possible. A new world view, radically different from any other that has existed before, has been born and is currently enjoying a growth spurt—it is called global civil society.

The collapse of the U.S.S.R. fundamentally, nevertheless, altered the conditions for the development of civil society in Central Asia, as the new conditions emerged with promising prospects for the development of civil society. At that time, civil society’s emergence was linked to the empowerment of dissident opposition movements that launched liberal political projects to terminate their region’s socialist/communist experiment. The end of the Cold War is often termed in the way John Keane suggested, i.e. as the spread of a global civil society that has broken the territorial boundaries of nation-states.

Throughout Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the creation of new political structures and adoption of new legal frameworks, combined with international assistance to help introduce democratic principles in these new independent states, has offered new opportunities and challenges to the emerging civil society community. However, the Central Asian republics lagged behind the rest of the Soviet Union during perestroika in terms of developing civil society. According to Freedom House (2006), Kazakhstan is doing much better than Uzbekistan or Turkmenistan, but worse than Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The World Values Survey does not include Kazakhstan in any of the four waves of surveys, but the post-communist Muslim countries that have been surveyed (Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan) score high on secular-rational values (but are more traditional than non-Muslim post-communist countries) and low on self-expression (while scoring high on survival values). The people in these societies may have rather progressive political attitudes, but very few are active members of voluntary organizations.

The fall of the U.S.S.R. has mirrored the aspirations of ordinary men and women to carve out for themselves an autonomous space for collective action and act as a counter to state power. Over the past two decades, their role in sociopolitical areas has expanded to a larger extent. However, at times, the role of NGOs is being exaggerated to hide authoritarian rule and, at times, being pushed to the background of the law and order problem. This article analyzes the civil society models that have developed over the past two decades in post-independent Kyrgyzstan. The present author argues that both liberal and communal forms, with roots in antiquity but relegated to the background during communist rule, have emerged in post-independent Kyrgyzstan. In the latter case, I give an account of how civil society has developed in the non-Western context and what the efforts of donors to civil society promotion have yielded.

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10 See: M. Kaldor, op. cit., p. 2.
11 For example, in 1999, Kyrgyzstan adopted a new Law on Non-Commercial Organizations, which was expected to alter the regulation of NGOs. It replaced a previous law that regulated the registration and on-going activities of NGOs (see: [http://www.osce.org/publications/odihr/2000/10/12360_141_en.pdf]), p. 8.
Liberal Perspectives

The term civil society, société civile, Zivilgesellschaft, or Bürgergesellschaft assumed its modern form in the 17th and 18th centuries, largely through the writers of the Enlightenment. During this stage, various contributions were made by John Locke, Adam Ferguson, Montesquieu and other Encyclopedists, a term used to describe the group of French philosophers who collaborated in the 18th century to produce the Encyclopedia, Immanuel Kant, and many others. “Civil society” had a positive connotation during the Enlightenment process. It was largely defined in contrast to the absolutist state. In other words, civil society was by nature something opposite to an absolutist state based on hierarchical feudal order. The Enlightenment also represented profound changes in human consciousness that produced the American Revolution (1776) and the French Revolution (1789). Absolutism was replaced by republicanism and democracy. The free market and free exchange were the cornerstones of the time. The public sphere also emerged in the form of civil society, and the term was usually understood as anything beyond the domination of the state apparatus. In the 18th century, it emerged in the form of merchants associations, skilled craftsmen, and property owners. Immense efforts were made to protect these associations from intrusions by the state. An intellectual debate revolved around the problem of self-interest in commercial society and the resultant social disintegration, but also focused on the argument that capitalist development could foster a new ethical order concerned with the common good. The modern idea of democracy begins with the fusion of civil society and political society by John Locke. Locke referred to it as an association based on the rule of law and formed by men in a state of nature to protect their property, which he saw as consisting of life and liberty as well as “estates.” It is a force that stands in opposition to state power. In the post-Enlightenment age, the likes of Adam Smith, John Locke, Adam Ferguson, and eventually Hegel cast their economic, political and spiritual aspirations in terms of institutional solidarities and liberties. The Scottish Enlightenment reveals it as commercial society (Smith), while Kant identifies it with the properties of public reason. A generation later, Hegel modernized the theory of civil society by bringing it into line with the realities of industrial society separating civil society from the state and family. Civil society is usually taken to mean a realm or space in which there exists a set of organizational actors who are not part of the household, the state, or the market. These organizations form wide-ranging groups, including associations, people, movements, citizen groups, consumer associations, women’s organizations, and groups called NGOs. Tocqueville revealed the democratic habits formed in local associations. He talked about the richness of associational life in the United States and saw this activity as a source of democratic strength and economic power. The different liberal definitions of civil society reflect a debt to classical liberal philosophers and the democratization of civil society in Eastern and Central Europe, and Latin America and, most recently, in the quest for democracy in sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, Alfred Stepan defines civil society as an “arena where manifold social movements … and civic organizations from all classes … attempt to constitute themselves in an ensemble of arrangements so that they can express themselves and advance their interests.”

18 A. Stepan, Rethinking Military Politics, Prinston University Press, 1988, p. 3.
Michael Walzer, on the other hand, defines civil society as “the space of uncoerced human associations and also the set of relational networks—formed for the sake of family, faith, interest and ideology—that fill this space.” John Keane defines civil society as an aggregate of institutions whose members are engaged primarily in a complex of non-state activities—economic and cultural production, voluntary associations, and household life, and who in this way preserve and transform their identity by exercising all sorts of pressures or controls upon the state institutions. In all the above definitions, civil society is separate from the household, the market, and the state. The significance of this midway location is that civil society enjoys autonomy from state control and that membership is voluntary depending on the acceptance or recognition of the interests, wishes, values, ideology, and identity that define a particular group. The motifs of independence from state control and voluntary action are vital to the function of civil society as an agent of social change. As an agent of social change, civil society limits state power and upholds pluralism. The idea of social capital has become influential in relation to development and democracy, which can reduce the destabilizing effect of single-interest religious or ethnic groups within a culturally diverse context. NGOs are organizations that can contribute to its creation and maintenance. Robert Putnam argues that social capital represents the relationship of trust and civic responsibility that are built among the members of a community over a longer period of time. Social capital can therefore be seen in terms of the connections between people that help to facilitate participation in civil society, either through direct or indirect action focused on political change.

Jürgen Habermas has used it in a different context and sought to emancipate it from the instrumental rational of the state and market.

Civil Society from a Non-Liberal Perspective

The contemporary discourse on civil society draws upon its various heretical traditions and is not limited to one strand. So, when speaking of civil society, most of the literature makes as much reference to De Tocqueville and Adam Smith as to Hegel and Gramsci, thus making civil society a subject matter of both liberal, as well as leftist political theory. Despite the differences between Hegel, Marx and Gramsci, all three have created a tradition of civil society that was an alternative to the liberal concept of civil society. They rejected the liberal view of civil society as an area of rights and freedoms and believed it to be an artificial and superficial analysis of concept. Marxists, both orthodox and dissidents, used it negatively. They identify it with bourgeoisie society, a realm of contradictions and mystifications sustained by the relation of power. Here, civil society is considered to be a bourgeoisie society based on productive capitalism. Marx stressed the negative role of civil society, its atomistic and dehumanizing features, but in so doing, he managed to deepen the analysis of the economic dimensions of the system of needs and went much further than Hegel in

analyzing the social consequences of capitalist development. Marx later impoverished the concept by reducing it to a sphere of bourgeois privacy. However, members of the Frankfurt School influenced by Lukács’s interpretation of Hegel saw the concept of civil society as a prism through which the contradictions and conflicts of capitalism were refracted. Equally, the rediscovery of Antonio Gramsci’s work was a vital spur, while the modification of the arrangements of Marx’s schema of base and superstructure gave the concept of civil society, applied to Western Europe, a wholly novel centrality. For Hegel, civil society stands for an intermediate realm situated between the state and the household, populated by organized groups or associations that are separate from the state, enjoy some autonomy in their relations with the state, and are formed voluntarily by members of society to protect or extend their interests, values, and identity.

The change occurred under the influence of capitalism, which was gaining ground, and of early industrialism, the definition of which underwent tremendous changes in the first half of the 19th century in the writings of Hegel, Marx, and others. “Civil society” became even more clearly distinguished from the state than it had been and was understood as a system of needs and work, of the market and particular interests, more in the sense of a “middle-class society” of the bourgeoisie than a “civil society” made up of citizens.

Both the liberal and radical conception of civil society provides different perspectives on the role of NGOs in political processes. The liberal view shows the ways in which NGOs have moved into territories previously occupied by the state apparatus and which found it difficult to adapt to the changing realities of human rights, environment, and gender interests. In the radical or Gramscian perspective, it is also possible to use the society theory to understand how NGOs have ultimately institutionalized contested political interests. As far as the state is concerned, the norms of civil society—freedom, publicity, accessibility, and the rule of law, however formal they prove in practice, perform two valuable functions.

- First, these norms give vent to the expression of popular opinion through institutionalization of the right to freedom.
- Second, state power acquires legitimacy through these means.

On the other hand, by contrast, some scholars have taken a more critical view of INGOs and their relations with national states, international capital, and local NGOs. The argument suggests that some INGOs impede local institutional development, exacerbate information dependency, and further remove the locus of decision-making from the stakeholders in development. These scholars claim that INGOs, along with the United Nations, the World Bank, and multinational corporations, form a global “development industry” more interested in advancing the interests of international capital than in facilitating balanced development.

There have been two main types of donor approaches to working with civil society (NGOs); the first is reforming the system through working on creating an enabling environment by improving the

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27 See: Civil Society: History and Possibilities, p. 16.
rules of the game under which civil society operates. The second is through support of agendas by working within the existing civil society environment and supporting specific organizations directly. USAID has tended to go the second route as the Cold War strategies and U.S. geopolitical considerations made such agendas typical in the 1980s, when the U.S. often supported military regimes and the apolitical model of development based on technology transfer was prevalent. But more recently, donors have begun focusing on the enabling environment, as well as sectoral agendas.

Finally, there is another emerging discourse in relation to NGOs and civil society—that of the growth of global civil society. Until recently, civil society had been discussed only in relation to the nation-state. However, it is now common to hear it argued that the nation-state is in decline and that global civil society is increasingly representing itself across nation-states through the formation of global institutions, such as formal links between parties, churches, unions, and informal networks among women’s movements, peace movements, and global organizations, such as Amnesty International and Green Peace. It indicates the link among international NGOs, national NGOs, and popular organizations. Transformationalists believe that the process of globalization has intensified in modern times, become multi-faceted, and is changing global governance, with non-state actors becoming increasingly important.

The idea of “civil society” has achieved prominence in political and developmental discourse over the past two decades, particularly in connection with the successive waves of democratization, beginning in Latin America and Eastern Europe, and spreading across the developing world. In normative terms, civil society has been widely seen as an increasingly crucial agent for limiting authoritarian government, strengthening popular empowerment, reducing the socially atomizing and unsettling effects of market forces, enforcing political accountability, and improving the quality and inclusiveness of governance.

Contextualizing the Models of Civil Society in Kyrgyzstan

Given the different strands of thought related to civil society presented above, the author argues that civil society is an arena where, through free and civilized interaction and communication, individuals obtain and exercise their freedoms, as well as pursue their interests. It is a space where people have the opportunity to enter into social relations free from state interference. Conceptualizing civil society from this perspective, the Central Asian countries have not been able to develop a public sphere owing to the nature of the historical clan-based society. Second, authoritarian rule during the Soviet era dominated both private and public sphere.

It is becoming obvious that it is precisely the clan structure of society that is hindering the development of civil society in Central Asia. This is because Kymlicka believes that civil society is the “site of progressive politics through which a culture of inequality can be dismantled.” In many standard definitions, “civil society” is described as existing between or beyond the state, market, and family. The author argues that those who rely entirely on the Western definition of civil society tend to believe that civil society in Central Asia will have to be created from scratch, either because there is nothing of value today upon which to build (the entire Soviet legacy being cast as negative), or because there is no such thing as a traditional society in Central Asia owing to the onslaught of the Soviet system on the previous social structures.

34 See: J. Giffen, L. Earle with Ch. Buxton, op. cit., p. 11.
The liberal perspective has put forth some arguments based on the experiences of both the pre-Soviet and the Soviet period. They reason the absence of any sphere that was beyond the control of the Communist party of the time. Authoritarian regimes controlled both the private and the public sphere of individual life. This can also be substantiated by the arguments put forward by different experts from time to time. Authoritarianism dominated all spheres of citizen lives and activities, preventing the emergence of a vibrant civil society in the region. The Jadidists, a group of intellectuals, spoke in favor of political, social, and especially religious reform in the Muslim regions. Although they represented a very small group of people, it is important to mention them, particularly in the context of civil society formation in Kyrgyzstan.

One more important factor is the retraditionalization of Central Asian’s political and social life based on intra-familial ties and patron-client relations. The institutional legacies of the Soviet and pre-Soviet periods were characterized by the absence of both a civil society and democratic government. The traditional societies can be explained in part by the entrenched system of patron-client relations that kept most of the population in submission and dependent on patron domination. This not only perpetuates kin/local/regional segmentation of society, but also prevents the “creation of clearly delineated criteria of citizenship and legally protected rights.” Traditionalism, and retraditionalism, has affected the development of civil society in a number of ways.

- First, there is general apathy vis-à-vis civic engagement. An overwhelming majority of people shun the idea of working unpaid in NGOs.
- Second, in such situations, civil society activists often fall short of their professed goals, being plagued by the same ills of traditional society they ostensibly seek to overcome. It has often been seen that their activist groups are torn between loyalty to the project and loyalty to a kin/clan network.

Frederic Starr believes that the Central Asian states are not fertile ground for the growth of civil society, and he gives the following reasons for this.

1. The traditional hierarchical nature of their cultures, wherein power flows from the top rather than upward from the citizenry.
2. The clan-based society, which discourages the establishment of voluntary associations among people that form the core of civil society.
3. The Soviet system, which turned the people into subjects rather than free citizens.
4. Post-Soviet practices, which have strengthened the hierarchical principle. Voluntary initiatives at the local level are now subject to control by the mahalla, as well as to direct regulation by the state.
5. The inefficiency of the courts, which do not protect the laws of civil society that exist from violation.

However, these arguments have not precluded the development of civil society in Central Asia any more than feudalism half millennium ago precluded the eventual emergence of civil societies.

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36 See: Ibid., p. 294.
38 Ibid., p. 86.
39 See: Ibid., p. 91.
In the late 1980s and early 1990s, donors became extremely enthusiastic about using civil society in their activities to tackle social, political, and economic problems in the developing countries. Kyrgyzstan received particular support from international organizations. For instance, IMF helped the Kyrgyz state to carry out its economic policies based on shock therapy. Independence made a considerable amount of nonpolitical associational activity possible in the country, while the United States, members of the European Union, and private international donors seek to strengthen the institutions of fragile civil society through programs aimed at training, equipping, and directly financing selected nongovernmental organizations in the region. The emphasis on programs to strengthen civil society has seemed to be a propitious focus of U.S. policy toward Central Asia at this particular time. Leaders of USAID and other governmental funding bodies concluded that the noblest mission their agencies could pursue in the newly independent states is to foster the development of “civil society.” Meanwhile, large donors, such USAID, DFID, the World Bank, and the United Nations (U.N.) agencies, had programs focusing on promotion of liberal civil society in the early 1990s. A multitude of international organizations, foreign foundations, and NGOs mushroomed in the country to supplement the transformation process Kyrgyzstan is going through.

Civil society has thus become a slogan for foreign actors wishing to export a political model in order to transform these societies. During our 1996 conference, NGOs, Civil Society and the State: Building Democracies in Transitional Societies, some participants argued against the whole concept of civil society as yet another neo-colonial imposition from the major northern development agencies. However, civil society does not lend itself to “external manufacturing.” The Civil Code and the Law on Noncommercial Organizations (NCO Law) establish the primary NCO legal framework. As of 22 November, 2011, a total of 16,262 NCOs have been registered, including 4,623 public associations, 3,199 foundations, 5,659 institutions, 690 associations of legal entities, and 2,091 other types.

Democracy promotion and restraining the authoritarian tendencies of the state have been an ultimate goal of the NGOs. The donor community assumes that civil society is the key factor for promoting both the market economy and liberal democracy.

In this way, we are witnessing the emergence of a liberal model of civil society in the said region. Therefore, the two main approaches for analyzing civil society in Central Asia that have been found to be most relevant in the region can be termed mainstream, or neo-liberal and alternative, and communal, or traditional. Contemporary theoretical literature on civil society also tends to divide civil society groups into “ideal types” to help the observer understand their empirical manifestations in various contexts, and to appreciate the different roles they can play in effecting the change. These “ideal types” suggest ways that civil society has developed as a system of values, political projects, and organizational forms. Many of the contributions herewith have sought to engage with the unfolding debate about the possibility of categorizing models of civil society by testing their applicability in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus (CASC). The whole concept of liberal civil society is

41 See: Civil Society in Central Asia, p. 5.
45 By 1998, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan laid claim to over 7,000 registered nongovernmental organizations, of which 4,500 were in Kazakhstan, 1,500 in Kyrgyzstan, 800 in Turkmenistan, and 270 in Uzbekistan. However, only 514 NGOs are active at present. This is 6% of the total number of NGOs registered in Central Asia at that time as public associations, public foundations, and associations of legal entities.
based on Robert Putnam’s contribution of social capital, which refers to the network of NGOs, associations, clubs, social movements, and so on. These associations generate trust among individuals and contribute to the well-being of society.

Actually the mainstream approach has dominated donor thinking in terms of revealing the goals of the World Bank, such good governance and the market economy, in these newly independent states. The model stands for the notion of networks of free citizens based on professional associations, unions, political parties, and interest groups. This is often taken as a prerequisite for building democracy and the rule of law. The liberal conception of civil society is also associated with humanitarian aid and the INGOs present in Kyrgyzstan with international funding to spread the message of human rights, democratic values, and the free media. For this purpose, NGOs have spread and reached the peripheral segments of population. Their aim is to promote local volunteering and capacity-building, moving through organizational development to support newly established NGOs.

These types of NGOs with liberal orientation have made their appearance in the country with the dawn of independence. Counterpart International with financial aid from USAID has created country-level networks of civil society support centers with hub centers managing network activities and providing organizational development services to each of the 34 local CSSCs. All 39 offices are providing regular services, such as training, grant management, and community mobilization, to nearly 1,600 NGO clients—twice the level anticipated under this program. Another NGO active in Kyrgyzstan since 1994, founded by Asiya Sasykbaeva, has built up its organizational capacity with resource centers in Bishkek and Osh, monitoring elections, defending individual rights, etc. Within the liberal notion of civil society, a prominent place goes to human rights, the rule of law, fair elections etc., with a laissez-fair type of state. After 1991, the primacy of the market was trumpeted; it was also clear to the advocates of liberal economies that the market would not function properly in societies where corruption was rife and the rule of law not properly enforced. The donor community assumed that civil society is the key factor for promoting both the market economy and liberal democracy. The absence of institutional infrastructure, such as social arrangements, aims, and aspirations of the part of individuals, is in fact one of the greatest tragedies of and challenges for the new Central Asian states. Whatever evolution occurred during the glasnost period, groups seen as the beginning of civil society were unfortunately written off before they had developed much beyond the earliest stages. During the early period of independence, the emergence of civil society was linked to the empowerment of dissident opposition movements that launched a liberal political movement to terminate their regions’ socialist and communist experiment.

The new NGO law made it possible to significantly reduce the cost of establishing, registering and regulating all NGOs (both locally and regionally within Kyrgyzstan). In this respect, this new law potentially strengthens the status of all non-commercial organizations and establishes their clear distinction from commercial organizations. The new NGO law also clearly defines the organization-al-legal forms of NGOs (including associations, foundations, and institutions). The effectiveness of the new law will largely depend on its implementation, yet the document itself is one of the most progressive of its kind in the FSU. Of the five republics, only Kyrgyzstan has seen an improvement

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48 See: Civil Society in the Muslim World Contemporary Perspectives, p. 123.
52 See: Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia, p. 292.
in its overall sustainability score.\textsuperscript{54} As an organizational form, neo-liberal civil society has most often been described as “the realm of autonomous voluntary organizations, acting in the public sphere as an intermediary between the state and private life.” It is best represented by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the voluntary sector made up of organizations that are private, non-profit distributing, self-governing, and voluntary.\textsuperscript{55}

As of 1989, large-scale Western-driven political projects began to support these groups, grounded in the belief that external funding and training could strengthen nascent neo-liberal civil society. They began to address a wide range of issues, extending from human rights promotion, women’s leadership, election monitoring, environmental protection, education, micro-credit, microeconomic development, and health to family planning. The role of Western funding donors came as a breath of fresh air for them. These organizations provided grants, training, and access to wider networks to support them. However, this has been severely criticized by many analysts as a neo-imperialist project to impose Western hegemony and prevent the recognition of more traditional and indigenous forms of civil society.

From the liberal viewpoint, the state has a limited role, which is reduced to administering justice in society. Meanwhile, civil society is an autonomous, self-regulating actor and acts as a balance to the state. Clearly, donors aimed to create an autonomous civil society, which would function on its own, self-serve itself by providing different services, counterbalance the state, and make it more democratic by representing the voices of different people. In Kyrgyzstan, the main criteria reflecting the presence of a liberal civil society are the number of NGOs active in the country, their legal framework, i.e. registration process, their role in politically sensitive areas, and autonomy from state administration.

\subsection*{Alternative Approach}

To claim that civil society is the invention of Western societies means ignoring its historical context. Second, to claim that civil society is “a Western dream” cannot amount to asserting that such a vision was immutably held at any particular historical moment.\textsuperscript{56} Orientalist readings of Muslim history have commonly posited the absence of civil society as a key issue in the failure to engender indigenous democratic institutions.\textsuperscript{57} The emergence of civil society (NGOs) in Central Asia in the 1990s owing to perestroika and glasnost did not happen in a vacuum. The Central Asian societies have long traditions, and the institutions in question took generations to evolve in other societies.\textsuperscript{58}

The second form of civil society, which has its roots in antiquity, reappeared with the breakdown of the Soviet Union. However, some observers argue that due to the dominance of the state, no form of civil society existed during Soviet times. In addition to politics and the economy, all aspects of life and society, including religion, education, social relations, art, culture, and history were subjugated to Soviet ideology to serve the purpose of central control. Despite such repression, the mahalla existed to serve local purposes, perform religious rites, etc.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{54} See: The 2005 NGO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, 11 November, 2012.
\textsuperscript{55} See: B. Babajanian, S. Freizer, D. Stevens, op. cit., p. 211.
\textsuperscript{56} See: Civil Society in the Muslim World Contemporary Perspectives, p. 14.
\textsuperscript{57} As Bryan Turner sums up, the argument is that “Islamic society lacked independent cities, an autonomous bourgeoisie, rational bureaucracy, legal reliability, personal property, and the cluster of rights that embody bourgeois culture” (Civil Society in the Muslim World Contemporary Perspectives, p. 14).
\textsuperscript{58} See: Civil Society in Central Asia, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{59} See: Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia, p. 298.
The argument can also be substantiated by a second wave of theorizing about civil society, which begins through the spread of the civil society debate to non-Western contexts in the mid-late 1990s.\(^6\) Scholars from the Islamic world were frequently at the forefront of this reconceptualization of civil society as a communal concept. Taking the Western conception of civil society into consideration based on free election, free media, and the market economy, civil society has to be created from scratch in Central Asia. This is simple to say, since Central Asian societies contain nothing of any value upon which to build a civil society. Whatever existed during pre-Soviet times has been crushed owing to the onslaught of the Soviet system.\(^6\) Yet a closer look at existing society shows that there is, in fact, immense social potential left over from the era. It is comprised of networks of people-based solidarity groups, extended families, avlad, clans, neighborhood clusters, and mahalla.\(^6\)

The leaders in power after independence played on traditional cultural values, equating tradition with national sentiments, and so on. In 1993, President Karimov issued a decree on mahallas, giving them some powers of social control, i.e. the authority to issue wedding certificates. In any case, traditional patterns of networking, solidarity and clientelism do provide a safety net amidst the growing pauperization of society and the failure of society to meet the people at both ends. The Islamist movements have striven to bypass traditional affiliations by appealing to the sense of communality belonging to Muslims, invoking the religious umma, or community that transcends social and ethnic lines. In 1992, in the town of Namangan in Central Asia’s Ferghana Valley, a local movement calling itself Adalat took control. And more mosques were built by self-taught mahallas to function as social centers and even NGOs. The effect remains very limited on account of state suppression. But they do contribute to challenging the authoritarian regimes of Kyrgyzstan, although they have failed to achieve any success in building a civil society.\(^6\)

Here civil society is not viewed as a neo-liberal construct, but as a communal one. Thus, communal civil society is less concerned about state-society relations and the ability of citizens to resist amoral and power-hungry political elites than about relations within society, community solidarity, self-help, and trust.\(^6\) The main aim of this civil society is to ensure that all members of the group have the necessary means for survival. Based on informal coping mechanisms—family ties, friendship, or good neighborliness—it offers services, community infrastructure, and other essentials. In this context civility signifies providing the basic material and economic conditions for people to ensure that they can function in the group. It is about inspiring “cohesion and trust in local communities.”\(^6\) Sabine Freizer compares two case studies of civil society organizations operating in two regions of Tajikistan, one “neo-liberal” and one “communal,” and questions whether the two are as different as the theoretical distinction implies. Drawing from a number of case studies in southern Kyrgyzstan, Lucy Earle suggests that an uncritical use of aksakals and the ashar tradition may be reinforcing rather than challenging exclusionary structures in local communities.\(^6\)

So communal civil society could be defined as a sphere of social interaction where people come together on a voluntary basis, along interest lines, to exchange information, deliberate about collective action, and define public opinion. It is a space made up of organizations, as well as highly informal modes of interaction. Communal civil society could be located in “families, com-

\(^{60}\) See: B. Babajanian, S. Freizer, D. Stevens, op. cit., p. 215.
\(^{62}\) See: Ibid., p. 130.
\(^{63}\) See: Ibid., pp. 133-34.
\(^{64}\) See: S. Freizer, D. Stevens, op. cit., p. 218.
\(^{65}\) M. Glasius, D. Lewis, H. Seckinelgen, op. cit., p. 120.
Various organizational representations of communal civil society have evolved in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus (CASC), often adopting new functions and forms of interaction with the state to change political environments. They include the Kyrgyz and Kazakh nomadic hordes (zhuz), which were based on extended clan networks through which economic, political and social issues were addressed. Amongst urbanized and sedentary populations—especially Tajiks and Uzbeks—kinship ties were strengthened by links based on proximity in mahallas. These were geographic neighborhoods, but also the site of intensive contacts, information exchange, opinion formation, and decision-making. In the post-Soviet period, as several of our authors describe, mahallas have survived in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, but often with new occupations and levels of accountability. Throughout Central Asia, traditional forms of community self-help termed hashar (in Uzbekistan/Tajikistan) and ashar (in Kyrgyzstan) still have empirical meaning today.

It might be possible to see traditional networks as a part of “civil society” in Kyrgyzstan insofar as they reinforce the ties of social solidarity that help people to survive a difficult transition and add to “local sentiments and personal sensitivities” something that the state cannot match. But, as has been suggested by Rachat Achylova, the logic of such ties tends to run counter to the notions of individual representation and participation generally thought to underlie the notion of a democratic civil society, at least in its Western version.

In newly independent Kyrgyzstan, that framework is spelt out in the constitution, civil code, and various laws applying to specific groups, implemented largely by the Ministry of Justice, and ostensibly given further backing through the courts. The civil code, adopted in two stages in 1996 and 1998, has been described as providing the basis for both a civil and market-oriented society. The reform process has prevented the development of civil society in so far as mass impoverishment has limited the opportunities for participation and generated increased reliance on clientele relations, which might not be overly civil.

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To conclude, civil society, which appeared in Kyrgyzstan in the late 1980s with the emergence of NGOs, needs a strong social base promoted by reinforcement of the already established social fabric rooted in antiquity. Civil society can be strengthened by encouraging the NGOs to play a greater role in providing training and skills.

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STATE-BUILDING IN AFGHANISTAN: DECENTRALIZATION VS. CENTRALIZATION

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ABSTRACT

It appears that the multinational and multiconfessional nature of Afghan society itself is the main reason prompting examination of the problem raised in this article. Recently, there has been increasingly lively discussion about whether Afghanistan will be able to choose a development model that could ensure long-term peace and stability in the “heart of Asia.”

KEYWORDS: Afghanistan, state-building, government decentralization and centralization, constitutionalism, separation of powers, ethnic balance in the state administration system, traditional mechanisms of social organization.

The question is not “Who should govern in Afghanistan?” but “How should Afghanistan govern itself?”

Nazif Shahrani

Introduction

The 9/11 events played a key role in shaping the global viewpoint that says weak and/or failed states are a national and an international issue of the first order\(^1\) and one of the main threats to universal peace and security.

The world community agrees that a centralized form of state governance would best suit Afghanistan; strong presidential power has always been associated with law and order and stability and considered to meet the country’s centuries-old traditions.

However, during the discussions going on in academic/analytical circles around the present-day reality of state-building in Afghanistan, this constitutional phenomenon has been severely criticized.

It should be noted that the formation and development of multinational statehood can be viewed as a struggle between decentralization and centralization.

From a Failed State to a Centralized One

The ongoing inter-Afghan conflict has primarily resulted in a dramatic change in Afghanistan’s geopolitical status with respect to its regional and international dimensions. By the beginning of the 21st century, the country had rid itself of the buffer-state condition it found itself in during the 19th-20th centuries.

However, strangely enough, it was precisely this buffer-state condition that served as one of the important factors of power consolidation and centralization based on the generous financial and economic subsidies from nations interested in turning Afghanistan into a beneficiary state.

The usual chain of events broke down after Soviet troops (1979) moved into Afghanistan, the culmination being Operation Enduring Freedom in 2001.

When one of the great powers disappeared from the world political scene and the participants in the New Great Game increased, the conflict in Afghanistan ultimately acquired a regional nature, which, in turn, strengthened its ethnic, religious, and ideological components (this was fully manifested during the opposition of the Taliban movement and the so-called Northern Alliance—a military-political union of Afghanistan’s ethnic and religious minorities).

This resulted in feudal fragmentation characterized by the parallel existence of different governments and quasi states. In this situation, the Kabul authorities manifested complete incompetence and did not take any steps to maintain law and order, social stability, or the population’s economic prosperity.

Given all the complexity of the inter-Afghan puzzle, it remains indisputable that Afghanistan’s transformation into a failed state is largely the direct result of both active (during the Great Game, Cold War, and after 9/11) and passive interference (in the post-bipolar period) of the world powers in this country’s internal affairs. What is more, regional states and non-state actors found themselves drawn into the conflict.

The Bonn Conference of 2001, devoted to political settlement of the Afghan conflict, provided a historical opportunity to make some adjustments to the state of affairs. A provisional administration was formed at this conference held under the aegis of the U.N., while ministerial portfolios were distributed among the four main Afghan groups permitted to participate in this process.²

The so-called victors won the main prize in the form of key posts in the provisional government; a member of the Pashtun majority, Hamid Karzai, became head of the administration.³ In so doing, one of the rules of the political game around Afghanistan was adhered to and the “right answer” was given to the traditional question: Who should govern in Afghanistan? It should be noted that absolutely all the world powers trying to establish their power and influence in Kabul adhered to this rule.

The Bonn Agreements, which set the tone for the further institutionalization of contemporary Afghanistan,⁴ essentially launched the formation (actual restoration) in the country of a centralized form of state governance.

The idea of strong presidential rule was supported by the international community, namely by the U.S. and its allies. At the same time, it also responded to the hopes of many Afghans living both

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² The following participants were involved in the formation of the provisional administration: members of the Northern Alliance; the Cyprus Group—representatives of Afghanistan’s Shi’ite communities; the Rome Group—supporters of restoring monarchial rule; and the Peshawar Group—members of the Afghan Pashtun tribes in Pakistan.
³ After the murder of his father, Abdul Akhad, in July 1999, Hamid Karzai became the head of the Popalzai tribe that was considered the progenitor of Afghan statehood. Ahmad shah Durrani, founder of the Afghan state, and Mohammed Zahir Shah, the last king of Afghanistan, come from this tribe.
⁴ The matter concerns the convocations of the Emergency Loya Jirga in 2002 (under the chairmanship of Zalmai Khalilzad, U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan), the Constitutional Loya Jirga in 2003-2004, as well as the organization and holding of the parliamentary and presidential elections in 2004 planned by the Bonn Agreements.
in the country itself, where an atmosphere of uncertainty, lawlessness, and anarchy reigned, and beyond it. In so doing, some were guided by the interests of a specific political or ethnic group and were in favor of restoring the monarchy and/or power of the Pashtun majority, while others believed that a strong government power was needed to resolve the existing problems.

Thus, the correlation of interests of the main actors on the political scene of post-Taliban Afghanistan and the aggregate of specific internal and external factors played in favor of constitutional incorporation of the idea of centralized power and retention of continuity in the state governance of this country.

Centralized Power and the Limits of Afghan Constitutionalism

On 4 January, 2004, the all-Afghan council of elders, i.e. the Loya Jirga (the Grand Assembly), convened to discuss and approve the draft of the country’s Constitution, completed its work. The three-week-long arduous process of coordinating the will of its participants resulted in the adoption of the sixth Constitution in Afghanistan’s history.

The Constitutional Loya Jirga turned into an arena of political struggle; while it was in session, numerous discussions were held, the liveliest of which developed around such issues as the role of Islam, the appointment and/or election of provincial governors, the proclamation of cultural/religious pluralism and, of course, the future form of state rule in Afghanistan.

The opposition bloc, consisting of representatives of national and religious minorities, was in favor of government decentralization, which to a certain extent showed the changes in the positions of the political forces belonging to it.

The thing was that in the 1990s, the political parties, which mainly defended the interests of the ethnic Uzbeks (the National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan) and the Hazara (Hezbi-Vakhdat), supported the federal form of rule.

In constitutional law, decentralization is traditionally understood as the transfer of certain powers by the center to the local election structures. From this it follows that questions of decentralization and centralization are examined with respect to the formation of regional and/or local structures. In so doing, it is very important to find answers to the following questions: “Who forms the local structures of state administration? What is the procedure for appointing officials, and where are they issued mandates—in the center or in the provinces?”

The sum answers to these questions make it possible to conclude that two different types of unitarian state exist: decentralized and centralized.

According to the current Constitution, Afghanistan is a unitary centralized state; this means that the administrative-territorial units do not possess autonomy and are directly engaged on executing the center’s decisions.

It stands to reason that the most important bones of contention between the supporters and opponents of government decentralization in Afghanistan relate to the delimitation of powers between the center and the periphery.

However, in the context of this country, this phenomenon is much broader and, what is more, has its own peculiarities. The main problem requiring immediate resolution concerns decentralization

5 Afghanistan’s first constitution was adopted by emir Amanullah Khan in 1923, the next by Nadir Shah in 1931, then by Zahir shah in 1964, by Mohammed Daoud in 1977, and by Najibullah in 1987 (in 1980, a temporary constitution was adopted).
of the central government itself. The matter concerns the dilemma facing Afghanistan’s top leadership, that is, the choice between a presidential and a parliamentary republic.

Initially, the Constitution draft envisaged the establishment of a semi-presidential system characterized by the separation of executive power into two components: the president (Pashtun) elected by the population at direct elections and the prime minister (non-Pashtun) appointed to the post by the Volesi Jirga—the lower house of the Afghan parliament. The logic of this “separation of powers” consisted of ensuring an ethnic balance in state governance as one of the indispensable conditions of retaining stability in the country’s political system.

However, this initiative was not supported by the Loya Jirga and, in the end, the idea of separation of powers based on the principle of checks and balances was unable to manifest itself in full (in particular due to the formal absence of the institution of prime minister).

Establishing peace, achieving ethnic consent, and adhering to the balance of interests of Afghanistan’s ethnic groups is also of regional significance. As Uzbek President Islam Karimov notes, “based on this country’s many-century history, no one should forget that the failure to observe the interests of all the strata of the population living in this land and belonging to different nationalities, peoples, and religions, was the reason for so much bloodshed and had negative consequences.”

In this context, we must mention legitimacy, which should primarily be understood as the positive attitude of the residents of a country distinguished by its ethnic, religious, tribal, and ethnolinguistic diversity to the existing power institutions and recognition of their legitimacy. The ruling regime is recognized as legitimate if it is founded on the values, norms, and interests, as well as the traditional institutions of the social organization existing in society.

The thing is that powers in Afghanistan are traditionally executed at the local level, and almost all of the country’s ethnic communities are familiar with how they are performed. Such institutions as the local councils and jirgas, as well as the Pashtunvali code of honor and Shari’a laws, have served for centuries as ways of ensuring the legitimacy of power in Afghanistan.

Arbabs and maliks acted as intermediaries between the government and the community. In the villages, nomad landings, and urban districts (mahallas and guzars), kinship ties have helped to preserve the strongest relations. Councils, jirgas, and informal institutions settled disputes between members of the communities, and, if absolutely necessary, provided protection for their members. It should be noted that the central government never made any attempts to oust or transform these deep-rooted forms of social organization.

Over the more than 30 years of the inter-Afghan conflict, the autonomy and sociopolitical significance of these institutions have strengthened and, at the current stage, they possess significant resources for creating a viable government.

The situation is paradoxical in that Afghanistan, being de facto one of the most decentralized states in the world, de jure has one of the most centralized constitutional systems.

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However, the principles of local self-government have not been enforced in the country’s constitution, which largely promoted the strengthening of centralized presidential power. One of the main reasons for this state of affairs is that one of the standards of statehood is based on the concept of the legitimacy of power.

The Constitution of Afghanistan says that “The government, in preserving the principles of centralism, shall transfer the necessary powers, in accordance with the law, to the local administrations in order to accelerate and improve economic, social, as well as cultural matters, and foster the peoples’ participation in developing national life” (Art 137). However, this constitutional provision has never been put into practice.

In keeping with the national legislation, the formation of local administration structures relates exclusively to the powers of the head of state; he is the one who appoints the provincial governors and district heads (uluses), judges, and prosecutors, as well as (along with the country’s minister of internal affairs) local administration officials. The representatives of ministries and departments in the provinces act on the direct instructions of the center and corresponding linear ministries and departments, and do not have to report to the heads of the local administration. So we can talk about the creation of a clear vertical of power, which is the most effective way to reinforce the jurisdiction of the center and retain accountability.

As for provincial, district, municipal (urban), and rural councils that do not have financial resources or real powers, they never became competent state institutions. What is more, elections to the district, municipal, and rural councils have still not been held. The proposal of the delegates of several ethnic groups at the Constitutional Loya Jirga about electing governors or appointing them from the list of candidates offered by the provincial councils could be a positive step toward forming a strong government in the provinces.\(^1\)

Today we are seeing a decline in the potential of the local state power and government structures. But this does not mean the central government has a stronger position.

The Afghan authorities have always been in favor of retaining the status quo. During the years of Hamid Karzai’s rule, the institution of presidency took hold as a central link in the state system. The head of state accumulated all the power in his hands, while the key political decisions were made by his administration. Central power became so concentrated that even decisions regarding the appointment of school directors and teachers in the provinces were made exclusively by Kabul.

The country’s authorities did not manifest political will in forming a party system. The activity of the political parties was extremely lax, and they did not compete with each other. Given the weakness of the political system, the parliament did not become an effective institution befitting a multinational society, rather it became the main victim of strong centralized presidential power.\(^2\)

Nevertheless, the compilers of the Constitution made several attempts to reach a consensus; there was a move away from the narrow understanding of the terms “Afghan” and “the nation of Afghanistan.” According to the current Constitution, the word “Afghan” applies to every citizen of Afghanistan, and “the nation of Afghanistan” is composed of all individuals who possess citizenship of the country (Art 4).\(^3\)

Moreover, the Constitution enforced a provision, according to which “in addition to Pashto and Dari, the Turkic (Uzbek and Turkmen), Baluchi, Pashaie, Nuristani, and Pamiri languages shall be the third official languages in those districts where they are used by most of the population” (Art 16).

\(^1\) See: B.R. Rubin, Crafting a Constitution for Afghanistan, pp. 159-160.
\(^3\) According to Art 4 of the Constitution, the nation of Afghanistan is comprised of Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Turkmen, Baluch, Pashaie, Nuristani, Aimaq, Arab, Qirghiz, Qizilbash, Gujur, Brahwui, and other tribes.
All of Afghanistan’s former constitutions (including the 1964 Constitution, on which the current one is based) proceeded from the dominating role of the Sunni religious-legal school of Hanafi.

In contrast to them, the current Constitution determines that “the sacred religion of Islam” is the religion of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (Art 2). The positive aspect of this provision is that it guaranteed the equality of both Sunnis (the religious majority) and Shi’ites (the religious minority) of Afghanistan at the legal level for the first time. In so doing, Shi’ites (mainly Hazara) acquired the same opportunities as Sunnis for holding their religious rituals and celebrations.

Of course, these improvements in the legal situation of Afghanistan’s ethnic and religious minorities confirm their increased participation in state administration and show the positive development of national legislation.

However, the above-mentioned changes did not lead to the desires results. During the formation of a government of national unity of Afghanistan, the representatives of the national minorities were against the country’s parliament rejecting their candidates for the new cabinet and in favor of observing “political justice.”

So we can conclude that solving the historical problems of the contemporary Afghan state will be no easy task.

Power Centralization: Historical Prerequisites and Current Dilemmas

“Every Afghan dreams of capturing Kabul one day. But as soon as he does, he will lose the rest of the country.”

Afghan saying

The struggle of opposites, that is, the striving of the political elite for government centralization and of the ethnocultural and ethnolinguistic groups and clans/districts/ for its decentralization, has deep roots in the history of Afghan state-building.

From the time the Afghan state was formed in 1747, all power in the country (military, economic, and ideological) has been concentrated in the hands of one person. The priority lies on family, clan, and/or tribal interests, while patronage, kinship, and nepotism have always been prevalent in organizing social and state life.

An interclan and dynastical power struggle has traditionally been the driving force behind centralization; in so doing, the main task has been to limit the influence of its armed bastion—the Durrani tribe. Later, the range of tasks widened and the center’s policy was aimed at weakening the influence and military might of the eastern Pashtuns, the rulers of Turkestan (Afghan), the rival cousins, and the non-Sunni ethnic groups (particularly Nuristans and Hazara), who were historically not under the power of the Afghan state.


15 Creation of armed units of representatives of the Gilzai tribes and other ethnic groups; resettlement of the leaders of the Mohammedzai clan in Kabul, separating them from the tribal base; transfer of the capital from Kandahar to Kabul (1776), and other steps were aimed at reaching this goal.

16 See: T. Barfield, op. cit., p. 147.
During the 19th century, “the practice of ethnic purges, discrimination, and military pressure on the ethnic minorities continued to be an important political tool the Kabul emirs used to preserve and strengthen their own power.”

By destroying the old state structure and might of the eastern Pashtuns (by means of resettlement, establishing direct taxes, physical destruction, recruitment into the army, etc.), the aggressive military campaigns of Abdur Rahman Khan described by L. Dupree as “internal imperialism” nevertheless ensured the Pashtuns a leading position in Afghanistan’s political life. A kind of hierarchy of ethnic groups was formed, where the leading place belonged to the Pashtun tribes. In so doing, Abdur Rahman Khan turned the Durrani nation (in the eyes of many Afghans) into a Pashtun state.

The efforts to modernize society and the state made in the 20th century did not affect the deep foundations of Afghan society; this made it possible to retain the supremacy of the centralization policy. Armed with the principle “divide and rule,” the center decided to weaken the influence and power of the regions and the strong natural spaces that served as a factor of stability and could be an example for modeling a contemporary Afghan state by consistently fragmenting the provinces and increasing their numbers.

By the beginning of the 20th century, the administrational-territorial division of Afghanistan largely coincided with the regional and corresponded to the actual resettlement of ethnic/ethnolinguistic groups. At present, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan consists of 34 administrational-territorial units (according to the Constitution of Amanullah Khan of 1923, the country was divided into 10 provinces, while according to the 1964 Constitution, there were 26).

At the same time, it should be noted that the appearance of new provinces is related to the changes in the traditional structure of Afghanistan’s ethnic hierarchy and fortification of the position of the nontitular peoples in it. This is shown in particular by the formation of the provinces of Nuristan (2001), Panjshir (2001), and Daikundi (2003), the overwhelming majority of the population of which consist of Hazara, Nuristani, and ethnic Tajiks, respectively.

The centralized model of state created with the help of a modern army and based on the Western conception of statehood could not destroy the traditional foundations of the social organization of Afghan society. In this respect, it is appropriate to present the statement of Thomas Barfield, who wrote in his fundamental book on the political and cultural history of Afghanistan that the efforts to create a centralized Afghan state destroyed the so-called climax state. He also noted that “the stable climax state in the ‘political ecology’ of Afghanistan was characterized by a center (wherever it was) dominating distinct regions, which had their own political elites.”

The above is confirmed by the fact that today we are seeing constructive separation of powers between formal (state) and informal (including illegal) formations across the board. The informal leaders (influential people, the leaders of tribes and ethnic groups, warlords, and so on), who possess political (ties with influential politicians, external donors, a high social status in certain social group) and material resources (smuggling, drug trade, foreign contracts, and so on), are essentially in charge of the situation in the regions and compete with the official authorities for influence at the local level.

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19 See: T. Barfield, op. cit.; M.N. Shahrani, op. cit.
20 The potential of the region was made active use of both by the Soviet Union and the U.S. These nations planned and organized their own military operations within the regional military districts. In 2003, in order to advance into an Afghan village, the American command in Afghanistan initiated the creation of a Joint Regional Team according to the zonal principle. The structure of the Taliban movement inside Afghanistan was also based on regional division.
21 See: T. Barfield, op. cit., p. 162.
22 Ibidem.
The contemporary Afghan state is based on old ideas and institutions. According to M. Nazif Shahrani, “the primary reason for the failure has been the unwillingness or inability of the leadership to shift from a tribal political culture anchored in person-centered politics to a broader, more inclusive, participatory national politics based on the development of modern national institutions and ideologies.”

I would also like to note that the opinion that the Pashtuns are the only ethnic group interested in government centralization is erroneous. The thing is that the desire of certain political elites (regardless of their ethnic affiliation) to monopolize the central government has become the norm of political life in Afghanistan.

The failure of the current system and monopolization of power by the center appeared during the last presidential election. In so doing, the uncompromising nature of the struggle among the contenders for president was based on the slogan “the winner takes all.” In light of this, the decision regarding future convocation of the Constitutional Loya Jirga looks like a compromise between the supporters and adversaries of government decentralization striving to preempt the current situation and afraid of provoking certain ethnic and religious forces to take more decisive steps capable of undermining the status quo.

**Conclusion**

The government is the central element of any political system, the stability of the architecture called “the state” essentially depends on it. It is considered extremely legitimate that its structure and content as a political institution functioning within the framework of the constitution should correspond to the fundamental principles of society and combine the values and traditions of the peoples coexisting in it. In so doing, it is extremely important that the mechanisms of local self-government be fully integrated into the state power system and that its local (provincial) structures be given real powers.

Ensuring an ethnic balance in the state power and government system is the cornerstone for achieving peace and stability in Afghanistan. Essentially all of Afghanistan’s neighbors are showing an objective interest in achieving this goal.

The international community has been unable to play an effective role in state-building in Afghanistan. The political elite of this country must make a choice—either a centralized government/strong Kabul, or a decentralized state/recognized Kabul with strong regional partners.

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Ethnicity and Ethnic Relations

Certain Aspects of Ethnicity of the Kazakhs of China

Botagoz Rakisheva
Ph.D. (Sociology), Director, Public Opinion Research Institute (Astana, Kazakhstan)

Abstract

There are about 5 million Kazakhs living all over the world outside the Republic of Kazakhstan, the largest part of them predictably found in the Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous Region of the PRC bordering on Kazakhstan.

There are two distinct groups of Chinese Kazakhs: the clans that migrated to China to avoid collectivization in the Soviet Union and the larger one of indigenous Kazakhs.

Today, the Kazakh diaspora, as all other diasporas for that matter, is facing the challenge of preserving its ethnic identity.

The author analyzes the main results of the sociological studies of the life of the Kazakhs she has been carrying out since 2010 by different means: polls, in-depth interviews, and observations and polls of experts.

The article contains certain results of sociological expeditions that studied four basic identities—linguistic, religious, zhuz-clan, and cultural.

This combination of different methods helps to analyze the social processes going on in the Kazakh diaspora, identify the impact of individual factors and the degree to which the ethnicity has been preserved, as well as the current state of ethnic identities, and forecast further development.

The article has been written within the project Contemporary Diaspora Studies and the Experience of Kazakhstan in Maintaining Agreement and Tolerance among Ethnicities financed by the project of funding scholarly studies of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2015-2017.
Introduction

The Kazakhstan-Chinese border is 1,533 km long. For different reasons, the XUAR is home to the largest (1,557,457, or 7% of the total population) ethnic group of Kazakhs (according to the latest population census of 2010) (see Table 1).\(^1\)

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Ethnicities</th>
<th>Number (thou.)</th>
<th>Share in the Total XUAR Population (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Uyghurs</td>
<td>10,528,646</td>
<td>47.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Han</td>
<td>8,472,911</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kazakhs</td>
<td>1,557,457</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dungans (Hui)</td>
<td>1,023,054</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kyrgyz</td>
<td>194,382</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mongols</td>
<td>180,822</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tajiks</td>
<td>48,569</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sibo</td>
<td>42,939</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Manchurians</td>
<td>26,648</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Uzbeks</td>
<td>17,656</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Russians</td>
<td>11,688</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Daurns</td>
<td>6,776</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Tatars</td>
<td>5,022</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>143,880</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>22,260,450</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows the numerical strength of the Kazakhs living in different types of settlements.\(^2\)

Information about the exact number of Kazakhs in China has always been fairly contradictory. The monograph Xinjiang, the Land of the Chinese: Past and Present cites the figure 1,245 thou.

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Kazakhs living in the XUAR, or 6.47% of the region’s total population.\(^3\) The Kazakhs assess their numerical strength in the XUAR as up to 2 million.\(^4\)

According to Konstantin Syroezhkin, a Sinologist from Kazakhstan, “even divided by the state border, the Kazakhs have remained a single ethnic community. However, despite their common ethnicity, the fact that they lived in another country and were involved in its social, economic, and political processes means the Kazakhs of the People’s Republic of China were guided by different development logic. Their social structure and national self-awareness developed differently.”\(^5\)

No diaspora can remain limited to its community; this is especially true of ethnic groups, the culture of which is rooted in nomadism. According to Prof. Anatoly Khazanov of the University of Wisconsin (U.S.), “the important phenomenon of nomadism (while it remains nomadism) really consists in its indissoluble and necessary connection with the outside world; that is to say, with societies which have different economic and social systems.”\(^6\)

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2 According to the author’s field studies of 2010-2014 in compact settlements of the Kazakhs in the XUAR.


Sociological Study Methodology

This article is based on the results of the author’s field studies of 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2014 carried out the settlements where Kazakhs live in compact groups in the XUAR of China.

The methods employed ranged from polls (450 people), in-depth interviews (90), and observations and experts interviews (20 interviews of government members, academics, journalists, and municipal officials).

The 2012 expedition was funded by the Committee for the Development of Languages at the Ministry of Culture and Information of the RK; its main results were published in a report about the linguistic situation among the ethnic Kazakhs of XUAR.7

This article looks at the main components of the diaspora: the ethnic-confessional, linguistic, zhuz-clan, and cultural identities.

Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity is a feature, or a marker of sorts, of individual ethnic affiliation with a group with common self-identity.

It becomes especially pronounced when an individual or a group finds himself/itself in a different ethnic milieu and serves as a sort of shield.

During the sociological poll, the polled Kazakhs were asked “To which nationality do you belong?” All respondents (a total of 450 people) answered that they were ethnic Kazakhs.

When asked “What determines the nationality of Kazakhs?” 89.5% answered that it was knowledge and good command of the native language; 83.8% said it was observance of customs and rites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good command of the language of one’s ethnicity</td>
<td>89.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customs, traditions and cultural values</td>
<td>83.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>77.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality of the father</td>
<td>67.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial type</td>
<td>29.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal choice</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality of the mother</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of birth</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The total is more than 100 percent because the respondents could choose several responses.

and the preservation of cultural values; for 77.5% religion was the main determinant; 67.9% spoke of the nationality of their fathers as the main factor; while 29.8% pointed to the racial type (see Table 3).

The question “To what extent is your nationality important for you?” invited 79.6% “very important” answers and 15.6% “important” (see Table 4).

To What Extent is Your Nationality Important for You?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>79.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Very Important</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unimportant</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The question “Do you attach importance to the nationality of other people?” was negatively answered by 52.4%, 23.6% pay attention to the nationality of people they do not like, while 18.3% of ethnic Kazakhs always pay attention to the nationality of people they deal with (see Table 5).

Do You Attach Importance to the Nationality of Other People?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normally not</td>
<td>52.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, when dealing with people I do not like</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, in all cases</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refused to answer</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the poll, nearly 90% of ethnic Kazakhs (89.9%) have no relatives among other nationalities, while 8.1% said that there are inter-ethnic marriages in their families (see Table 6).

Do You Have Close Relatives of Other Nationalities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>89.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The polled were asked to answer the question: “How would you feel if a close relative decided to marry a member of another nationality?” The responses revealed that 79.2% of the respondents were dead set against this and would try to prevent it; 10.5% were indifferent; 3.5% did not approve and believed that it would be better avoided if possible; and 6.8% had nothing against it if the future relatives were worthy people (see Table 7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Condemn and would interfere</td>
<td>79.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not approve and believe it should be avoided</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have nothing against it if future relatives are worthy people</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve and encourage because nationality is not the main thing</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Marriages inside the Kazakh ethnicity predominate (83.2% of the respondents), there are marriages with Uyghurs (7.3%), Chinese (3.8%), Tatars (2.9%), and Dungans (1.9) (see Table 8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Han Chinese</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uyghurs</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dungans</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tatars</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriages only with Kazakhs</td>
<td>83.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Zhuz-Clan Identity

The native language, religion, culture, history of origin, ideas about the native land, myths, national character, and national cuisine are the most important ethnic features of any diaspora.
The Kazakh diaspora is also dedicated to the principle of purity of blood down to the seventh generation (zheti ata), belonging to a definite ru (clan) that belongs to one of the three zhuzes (hundreds), and knowledge of clan history or the genealogical tree—shezhire (tree).

**Zheti ata**

The Zheti ata tradition, that is, knowledge of genealogy to the seventh generation is an important part of the spiritual culture of the Kazakhs. The question “Do you know your zheti ata?” invited the following answers: 73.0% know their ancestors to the seventh generation; 20.4% know only part; and 6.6% know nothing of their ancestors.

**Clans**

The biggest number of members of two large clans—the Naymans and Kerei—live in Xinjiang. All the respondents knew the names of the members of their clans by the paternal line, as well as the clans of their close relatives. The following clans were mentioned more frequently: Aday, Alim, Merkit, Mashan, Aksak, Karzhau, Otep, Taylak, Maylybay, Shuharaygyr, Amanbay, Sarybura, Baybura, Kozha, Shagay, Zholdy, Argyn, Teristanbaly, Zhadyk, Kyzay (Kuz Molkhy, Zhantekey, Sherushi), Tasbike, Uak, and Karakas.

**Zhuzes**

The origin of the zhuzes and their development are debatable questions. Sultan Akimbekov from Kazakhstan, for example, believes that “the division of the Kazakhs into three zhuzes should not be interpreted as disunity. More likely than not, it was a form of unification of kindred clans within a political compromise on the basis of the Kazakh Khanate, the strongest of them, in the context of a crisis of the Mongol tradition of governance.” This perfectly fits the diaspora mentality of the Kazakhs, who treat ru (clan) and zhuzes as factors of their ethnoterritorial unity.

In the Kazakh diaspora, the zhuz is a tool of ethnic survival through the very strict rule of not mixing with other ethnicities down to the seventh generation (zheti ata), which is especially important for an ethnicity that finds itself in an alien ethnic milieu.

This tradition is vitally important for the small Kazakh diasporas of Western Europe, hence the tradition of selecting a spouse in Kazakhstan, which has consolidated contacts with the historical homeland.

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8 Zeti ata—names of seven fathers and the knowledge of the family history down to the seventh generation.

9 Ru (clan)—a certain group originating from one ancestor in the seventh generation or earlier.

10 Zhuz—communities of the Kazakhs formed in the distant past based on division along the paternal line into clans (rus). There were three zhuzes—the Elder, Middle, and Younger zhuzes.

11 Shezhire—genealogy among the Kazakhs, a list of relatives along the paternal line.

12 Naymans and Kerei—two largest clans of the Middle Zhuz.


14 According to the author’s field studies of 2005-2014 in Western Europe (Germany, France, Great Britain, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Austria).
Inside the diaspora, control over marriages, that is, strict observance of the principle of marriages within the zhuz, is highly topical even if the narrow clan limits make inter-ethnic marriages inevitable.

The poll of 450 respondents who live in compact groups in the XUAR showed that 80.5% of them belong to the Middle Zhuz, 12.6%, to the Younger Zhuz, and 2.6% to the Elder Zhuz (see Table 9).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elder Zhuz</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Zhuz</td>
<td>80.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger Zhuz</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not belong to a zhuz—aksuyek (kozha, tulengit, etc.)</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of the responses to the questions about clan affiliation asked during in-depth interviews are reproduced below.

“I belong to Aydak, my granddad moved here during the jut; many Kazakh families fled the country to escape Soviet collectivization... Here Aydaks are few and far between, mainly the descendants of those who fled during the jut of the 1930s. We have many relatives in the Mangistau Region; our roots are there and my relatives go there fairly frequently... Next year I’ll go for a month to Kazakhstan, to the city of Aktau” (a woman of 22).

“I am a Kazakh from Merkit. You know, Shyngyskhan was married to a Merkit woman; I belong to her clan. There are many of us here and we mainly live in Urumqi” (a man of 49).

“There are mainly Naymans around; I am Nayman and my wife is also a Nayman from a different ru” (a man of 37).

Shezhire

The zhuz and clan affiliation is a feature of ethnic identity; each Kazakh is expected to know his/her shezhire (genealogical tree), which helps preserve historical memory and keeps the diaspora together. The tree, which consists of clans, is rooted in the distant past and has accumulated all sorts of legends and myths to become the oral history of the people. N. Alimbay has described shezhire as “a genealogically orientated ‘historical autobiography’ of a nomadic ethnicity or, wider still, ‘folklore historiography’.”

Aksakals, the older generation, strictly control the knowledge of shezhire. There are posters with shezhire in every Kazakh home, or at least written notes by family members. Similar posters are seen in every cultural center used for all sorts of public events.

Religious Identity

Religion is another important element of ethnic identity. The Kazakhs of China (they are mainly Sunni Muslims) are loyal followers of the traditional maddhab of Imam Abu Hanifah. The remnants of Tengrism are still alive among the Kazakhs in the form of ancestor worship (Aruakh).

There are mainly Uyghur mosques in the XUAR built on the money of local municipalities. There are Kazakh mosques here and there, mainly in the countryside.

The question “What is your attitude to religion?” was asked to identify the level of religiosity among the Chinese Kazakhs: 77.3% of the polled described themselves as faithful members of the community who regularly attend the mosque, observe all rites, enjoins, and promote the values of their religion; 21.7% spoke of themselves as faithful Muslims whose involvement in religious life was limited to holidays and vitally important rites, while 1.0% turned out to be non-believers, atheists, and opponents of religion convinced that people should stop believing in God (see Table 10).

All the respondents spoke of themselves as Muslims who did their best to follow all the postulates of their religion.

Here are bit and pieces from in-depth interviews:

“We are mostly Muslims and as such believe in Allah; we do everything in His name” (a man of 25).

“We read namaz, go to the mosque every Friday, fast, and celebrate kurban bayram” (a man of 38).

“As a faithful Muslim, I read namaz five times a day, observe fasts, perform the rite of sacrifice, celebrate all holidays, do my best to attend the mosque every day, and go to the mosque every Friday” (a man of 35).

“We raise our children as faithful and according to the tradition of veneration of elders and respect for the young” (a man of 42).

The question “How often do you attend the mosque?” produced the following answers: 13.0% do not go to the mosque and pray at home; 11.2%, attend the mosque once a month; 6.3%, do not go
to the mosque because there is no mosque in their settlement; 15.4%, attend services once in six months; and 44.4% attend zhuma namaz (Friday services) every week (see Table 11).

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am faithful, I belong to the community, attend mosque regularly, fulfill</td>
<td>77.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the rights and enjoinments, obey bans, and promote the values of my religion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am faithful, but my involvement in religious life is limited to holidays</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and certain vitally important rites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not faithful, but I follow the traditions of my people and take part</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in some rites and holidays, and defend our religion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not faithful and do not take part in religious life, but I respect</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the religious feelings of the faithful and do not oppose them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have my own faith in non-religious values (civil religion without a</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>traditional god)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not faithful, an atheist, and an opponent of religion and believe</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that people should abandon it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every day</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once in six months</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not go at all because I do not believe in God</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no mosque in our settlement</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not attend the mosque because I pray at home</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In his interview, the imam (a man of 66) of one of the Kazakh mosques said: “There is freedom of religion here; no one can limit it because it is proclaimed by the Constitution. Now we have 28 mosques; in some regions there are many of them; in others, there are fewer mosques. We plan to build a mosque in Urumqi, so far Uyghurs and Kazakhs attend the same mosque.”

Mosques serve as traditional meeting places for Muslims; normally they get together for Friday services (zhuma-namaz). In Urumqi, there are mostly Uyghur mosques, while the settlements with a predominantly Kazakh population have Kazakh mosques.
Linguistic Identity

Let us look at the use of different languages in the social-communicative milieu of the Kazakh diaspora. Today, the Kazakh language in China uses Arab script; there are no dialects, which makes it much easier to understand each other even if Kazakhs are separated by thousands of kilometers. The Kazakh language has accumulated a lot of foreign words, inevitable in a language developing far from its historical home.

I have divided the languages used by the Kazakh diasporas in Western Europe (Great Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark) as well as Turkey, China, Russia, Central Asia, Saudi Arabia, the U.S., Mongolia, and the CIS into the following:

1. Native Language
2. Migration Languages
3. Local Language
4. Education/Business Language

The Chinese Kazakhs use the Native Language (the Kazakh language); Local Language (Chinese, Uyghur, and Mongolian), and Education/Business Language (Turkic, Russian, etc.).

The native language is used in the territories with compact Kazakh populations. All the respondents describe Kazakh as their native language.

The local language of the country where Kazakhs live is used in all spheres of the social-communicative system; its use depends on the ethnic policies pursued by the local government. In China, for example, this group consists of three languages: Chinese, the state language; Uyghur, the language of the largest ethnic group in China; and Mongolian, the language of the border regions with a nearly 150 thousand-strong Kazakh diaspora.

Education/Business Language is acquired in the country of residence. The Kazakhs of China use Turkic, Russian, and other languages in this capacity.

There are migration languages in the communicative system of the languages of the Kazakh diaspora that moved away from the XUAR. The migration languages were expanded by Chinese, Uyghur, and Mongolian, as well as the languages and dialects of Nepal, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Tibet, India, and other countries in which Kazakhs live. These languages are used in everyday life and in all spheres of Kazakh businesses.

Here is an illustration of the above. One of the respondents of the poll carried out among the Kazakhs of Saudi Arabia was an ethnic Kazakh born in the XUAR. His family emigrated to Pakistan through Tibet and India and spent a lot of time in Afghanistan. He knew his native language, as well as 12 other languages, including English, Chinese, Uyghur, Urdu, Pashto, Dari, Turkish, Arabic, and dialects of the countries of exodus. His vocabulary was limited to his needs as a merchant.

The Kazakhs who migrate from China to other countries (mostly Turkey, the U.S. and Western Europe) use the Chinese and Uyghur languages as migration languages.

The question “What other languages do you know?” produced the following answers: Chinese (89.0% of ethnic Kazakhs); Uyghur (75.5%); Mongolian (45.6%); and Russian (4.5%). The respondents also knew, to a certain extent, Turkish, English, French, Uzbek, Tatar, Arabic, and German.

The Kazakhs of Xinjiang mainly use Chinese, Uyghur, Mongolian, and Russian.

- The Chinese language is the official language of the People’s Republic of China; members of the older generation living in remote villages know it much worse than other Chinese Kazakhs.

16 According to field studies carried out by the author in Saudi Arabia (Jidda, Mecca, and Medina) in 2008.
The **Uyghur language** is a common language used by Kazakhs who live among Uyghurs, the numerically largest ethnicity (10 million people).

The **Mongolian language** is used in the borderland area; it was developed at all times. There are about 100 thousand Kazakhs (mainly of two big clans—the Naymans and Kerei, who also live in the XUAR) living in the Bayan-Olgi Aymak of Mongolia.

The **Russian language** was inherited by the Kazakhs from the period of active relations between the Soviet Union and China in the twentieth century. It was taught in the schools and higher educational establishments of China; large groups of Chinese students studied in the Soviet Union. Today, it is widely used by businessmen in the territories bordering on the China-Kazakhstan, China-Kyrgyzstan, China-Tajikistan, and China-Russia corridors.

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, when Kazakhstan started developing close trade relations with its neighbors, many businessmen started learning Russian. It was and remains the language of trade contacts primarily in the border areas, of which the XUAR is one.

Bi-lingual Kazakhs (Kazakh and Russian) are more and more frequently invited to fashionable shops of the top price range frequented by Russian-speaking customers.¹⁷

Kazakhs are a usual sight at big markets geared toward foreign customers; they have a good command of their native and Chinese languages, which makes it easier to serve all customers, Kazakhs included.

The need for the Russian language is promoted by frontier migrations for all sorts of reasons: visits to relatives and friends, education, partnership relations, business trips, etc. Those who want to live in Kazakhstan and who are socially active study Russian while living in China.

In recent years, China and Turkey have been steadily developing their bilateral relations, which has made **Turkish** a highly popular language. Some of the respondents said that they knew and used it.

¹⁷ According to field studies carried out by the author in the XUAR in 2010-2014 in the places of compact Kazakh settlement.
Kazakh and Turkish belong to the same language groups, which helps Kazakh businessmen do business with their Turkish colleagues.

On the whole, the Chinese Kazakhs are bilingual, about which Prof. Gulnara Mendikulova, prominent student of the Kazakh diaspora, has written in her *Kazakhskaia diaspora: istoria i sovremennost* (The Kazakh Diaspora: Past and Present).

Any diaspora is inevitably confronted with the problem of preserving its language as the main vehicle of culture and an ethnic marker.

K. Esimova, who studies China, believes that the continued function of the Kazakh language presents a problem: “The huge amount of money poured into bilingual education, the advantages of bilingual education widely promoted through the media, and the encouragement of the best pupils and students at schools that cooperate with the richest regions have attracted 90% of the Kazakh
children to bilingual schools. This creates real possibilities and, at the same time, leads to the Sinification of the non-Han population.”  

R. Ayyp, Executive Director of the Zhebeu Public Organization, has described this as follows: “We cannot say that the social status of the Kazakhs in China is unfavorable, however their national situation cannot but cause concern. Their national future is dim. About ten years ago, 90% of Kazakhs could be educated in the Kazakh language. Today, 90% of Kazakhs are educated only in Chinese. Respected teachers have to leave schools because they do know Chinese; teachers with a perfect command of the language preserve their jobs; others are sent away to do manual work. The number of hours of the Kazakh language is shrinking, together with TV and radio broadcasts in Kazakh.”

It should be said that the policy of bilingualism introduced in national schools in the last four to five years will cut down the volume of the use of the Kazakh language; this policy (kos til) is being actively introduced from the very first year of study in Kazakh schools.

Sinification as a national program in China is a pragmatic project: the process of active modernization of the country’s western part will sooner or later affect the local Kazakhs: those with inadequate or no command of Chinese will be pushed out of active life. Today, knowledge of Chinese makes it easier for Kazakhs to find good jobs. To deal with this problem, the authorities must demonstrate flexibility, while the Kazakhs must be ready to adjust to inevitable modernization.

The answers to the question “Are you concerned about the present and future of your native language?” revealed that 61.5% of ethnic Kazakhs are concerned, 32.7% are mildly concerned, and only 5.8% remained unperturbed (see Table 12).

Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, very much concerned</td>
<td>61.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mildly concerned</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not concerned</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The question “What might interfere with the continued existence of the Kazakh language among the Chinese Kazakhs?” was asked during in-depth interviews to identify the degree to which the Kazakh language among the Chinese Kazakhs was threatened. The majority believed that preservation and continued development of the Kazakh language might be threatened if China changes its policy in relation to national minorities.

Judging by the following answers received during in-depth interviews, the majority was mainly concerned about the future of their native language.

“Our generation has no problem with knowledge of the Kazakh language: we know it and use it and know no other languages. The youth is in a much more difficult situation: globalization and opened borders make young people willing to be involved in the worldwide space, which requires the knowledge of other languages. There is nothing bad in this, but our young people should realize that knowledge of native language is also required” (a man of 78).


“It seems that many peoples fear they might lose their native language in a world where English and Chinese dominate” (a man of 35).

Both languages, Chinese, which belongs to the Sino-Tibetan language family, and Kazakh, which is a Turkic language, most frequently used by the Chinese Kazakhs are heterogeneous languages. At the same time, the homogeneity of the Kazakh and Uyghur languages means that the Turkic peoples of Xinjiang have no communication problems.

Cultural Identity

Traditions and rites constitute another important element of ethnic identity. The Kazakhs of the XUAR, which is a melee of ethnicities, religions, and culture, are determined to preserve the heritage of their ancestors, which is confirmed by the fact that 99.0% of those asked “Do you know the national Kazakh traditions and customs?” gave positive answers (see Table 13).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>92.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rather Yes than No</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rather No than Yes</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It turned out that 89.8% of the respondents try to strictly follow the customs and traditions, 7.3% observe some of them, while 2.9% turn to them in special cases (weddings, births, burials, etc.) (see Table 14).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I try to strictly follow all the traditions</td>
<td>89.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I observe some traditions</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I turn to the traditions on special occasions (marriages, births, burials, etc.)</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, I deliberately ignore the national traditions</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never thought about it</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The elders strictly control the ways the diaspora observes all the traditions that are handed down from generation to generation. The respondents had the following to say:

“In our milieu, we observe all the traditions and customs related to births, marriages, and burials” (a man of 49).

“At home, we do everything according to our ancient traditions: we respect our elders, cook Kazakh dishes, and sing Kazakh songs” (a woman of 34).

During the poll, the respondents were asked about traditions related to births, ceremonies (weddings), and burials, as well as name-giving ceremonies.

A large share of the questions dealt with everyday traditions and customs: cooking, home decoration, singing of traditional folk songs, etc.

The answers to these and other questions related to the Kazakhs’ cultural identity revealed that the Chinese Kazakhs were preserving their culture and its authenticity. This is related in particular to spiritual values, traditional social, family and clan relationships, rites and festival culture, etc.

Conclusion

The structure of identification of the contemporary Kazakh diaspora is classical and based on ethnic identity; religion (Islam and remnants of Tengrism) is another key identification parameter. Combined, they add sustainability to the entire structure of the identification system of the contemporary ethnic group of Chinese Kazakhs. It should be added that since they share the territory with Uyghurs, Dungans, Tatars, and other Muslim peoples, they also observe the main Islamic postulates.

Knowledge of the zhuz-clan routes (lineages) is one of the factors of ethnic identity that helps to avoid incest, an important circumstance in view of the diaspora’s fairly limited numerical strength. This knowledge helps the Kazakhs to find relatives; this is highly important for nomads, since a certain number of the Kazakhs of the XUAR are still nomads or semi-nomads.

Linguistic identity is strongly affected by the official Chinese policy relating to the national minorities. So far, it is pretty loyal: there are Kazakh media and cultural centers, even though bilingual schools have somewhat limited the use of the Kazakh language.

The Chinese Kazakhs are highly tolerant in their relations with their neighbors and yet they have preserved their authentic culture, customs, and traditions. At the same time, they are affected by other cultures; this is especially clear in what they eat every day: their menu includes several traditional Chinese dishes. They used certain Chinese words when speaking their native language.

A careful investigation of the main markers of ethnicity of the Chinese Kazakhs (language, religion, culture, and clan relations) suggests an important conclusion: they have preserved their ethnic identity and demonstrated considerable resistance to assimilation.

The fairly large numerical strength of the diaspora, its compact settlement, high internal solidarity, and the consistent nationalities policy pursued by the authorities of the People’s Republic of China have allowed the Kazakhs to preserve their structure, language, customs, and traditions. They use their native language, profess Islam, strictly follow zhuz-clan relations, and can freely follow the national traditions and religious rites. They have their cultural centers, which not only bring the Chinese Kazakhs closer, but also help to maintain ties with their historical homeland.

The policy Beijing is pursuing in relation to national minorities (Chinese Kazakhs being one of them) is one of the factors of their development. The Kazakh diaspora has cultural centers, the media (newspapers, journals, radio and TV channels, Internet portals, etc.) and also publishes books by Kazakh academics, etc.

The Kazakhs living on both sides of the common Chinese-Kazakh border maintain ties with their relatives.
Ethnicity is a far from simple phenomenon, which is never static. Its components and levels are strongly affected by external and internal factors; the rapid economic modernization of the western part of China populated by Kazakhs stands a good chance of becoming one such factor: it might change the region’s makeup and social institutions.

THE ADYGHE FACTOR
IN THE ETHNOPOLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF
THE NORTHERN CAUCASUS

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(Kiev, Ukraine)

ABSTRACT

The 150th anniversary of the end of the Caucasian War, which caused havoc in the lives of the Circassians, coincided with the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi organized on the land where Circassians (Adyghes) had long lived. These two events revived an interest in the Circassian question and showed that the lacunae in the history of the Adyghes, making an unbiased approach to the issue, impossible should be filled with facts. Repatriation of the Circassians to the Caucasus and a unified Adyghe republic are impossible in Russia’s political reality.

KEYWORDS: the Russo-Circassian War, the Winter Olympics, genocide, Adyghes, Adygeans, Shapsugs, Circassians, Kabardians, Adyghea, Karachaevochrome-Circassia, Kabardino-Balkaria, national republic, Adyghe Khase, repatriation.

Introduction

On the eve of the Winter Olympics-2014 in Sochi, the Russian media, as well as the media of other countries, carefully avoided certain historical facts that were vitally important for the Adyghes who live in the Krasnodar Territory and in the republics of Adyghea, Karachaevochrome-Circassia, and Kabardino-Balkaria.
The year 2014 marked the 150th anniversary of the end of the so-called Caucasian War, Sochi being one of the ports through which Circassians were deported to the Ottoman Empire. The media carefully ignored the fact that the Olympic Games were organized on land that had once been home to a large number of Adyghes (Circassians), while academic publications pointed out that Shapsugs, descendants of the local Adyghes, were still living around Sochi.1

The Sochi Olympics and the stormy events in Ukraine distracted the world’s attention from the Circassian Question, which forced Circassian activists, on 20 May, 2014, to ask Speaker of the Supreme Rada of Ukraine Alexander Turchinov (at that time acting President of Ukraine) to recognize the genocide of the Circassian people. The request authored by Editor of the Natpress Information-Analytical Agency Aslan Shazzo gathered, among others, the signatures of Circassian activists living in Adyghea I. Soobtsokov and E. Tashu, A. Khuade, who represents the Patriots of Circassia international organization in Adyghea, as well as several public figures from Kabardino-Balkaria, Azerbaijan, and the United States.2

The response from the Russian authorities was negative. Shazzo, Khuade, Tashu, and Soobtsokov, who lived in Adyghea, were invited to corresponding structures that wanted to hear their answers to the question, “Do you realize that this request may cripple Russia’s security?”

Ilyas Soobtsokov answered: “There are two requests from the parliaments of Adyghea and Kabardino-Balkaria to the State Duma of the Russian Federation to recognize the genocide of the Circassians. Circassian public organizations, likewise, repeatedly asked the Russian authorities about this.” He was convinced that these requests should be addressed not only to Ukraine, but also to all the member states of the U.N., and argued: “Russia recognized the Armenian genocide, despite its friendly relations with the Turkish authorities. Why not do this in relation to our people? I think that we, like the Armenians, should ask every country to do this.”3

It should be said that the initiative of the Circassian activists stirred no enthusiasm among the leaders of the Elders of Adyghea movement. One of them, the chairman of the movement’s Council Askarbiy Ajigiriev, went as far as expressing his dissatisfaction with the activities of the public organizations of Adyghea, Karachaevo-Circassia, and the Kuban, which had asked President Putin to recognize the genocide of the Adyghes, and said: “The Elders of Adyghea dismiss letters of this kind addressed to the authorities of Ukraine and Russia as provocative and marred the reputation of the Adyghe people.”4

One cannot but wonder: “What are the Russian authorities and the political movements in the Northern Caucasus dependent on them afraid of? Why are they reluctant to recognize the events of the so-called Caucasian War as genocide of the Circassian people?”

The answers to these questions should be sought in the past of the Circassian people, which, until recently, has been gravely distorted.

The Past of the Adyghes as Interpreted by Historians in the Twentieth Century

Soviet and émigré historians have been equally interested in the history of the Adyghes, also known as Circassians. Soviet historiography presented the relations between Russia and Circassians

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2 See: “Obrashchenie Adygov k ukrainskomu pravitelstvu,” available at [http://blog.i.ua/user/2805707/1425421/2015-02-04].
3 Ibidem.
as friendly, the fact of Russian expansion to the Northern Caucasus in the eighteenth-twentieth centuries being safely ignored.

In the 1940s-early 1950s, Soviet historians interpreted the events unfolding at that time in the Northern Caucasus as the Russian Empire’s aggressive policy. In the latter half of the 1950s-1980s, they started talking about the voluntary adherence of the North Caucasian peoples to the Russian state that took place in the sixteenth century.

The two-volume collection of mainly Russian documents *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia v XVI-XVIII vv.* (Kabardian-Russian Relations in the Sixteenth-Eighteenth Centuries) published in 1957 is especially interesting, if only because those who selected the documents stopped at the nineteenth century, a time of dramatic or even tragic upheavals.

There was an alternative trend represented mainly by the works of émigré Circassian historians, the most important of them being the monograph by Ramazan Trakho *Cherkesy* published in Munich in 1956 and re-issued in 1992 in Nalchik to familiarize the local public with it: under Soviet power there had been no access to it. Ramazan Trakho, who after World War II lived and worked in Munich, offered a history of his people in the mid-sixteenth century very different from what his Soviet colleagues had written.6

All researchers are unanimous in their opinion that until the Mongol invasion, the Circassians who lived mainly in the Northwestern Caucasus were known as “Meotes,” Zychi, Kasogs, and Cherkesy.7 According to archeologists and historians, in the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries, the valley part of Alania in the Terek basin was populated by Adyghe tribes who had come from the Kuban area. They settled on the left bank of the Terek to form Greater Kabarda. By the late fifteenth century, the ancestors of the Kabardians had settled on the right bank of the Terek, in what is known as Smaller Kabarda. At the same time, Kabardians moved into the steppe and piedmont of the Terek basin and went as far as its lower reaches.8

Georg Interiano from Genoa, who visited the south of Eastern Europe in the fifteenth century, “expressly says” that “the people called in the Italian, Greek and Latin languages Zychi, by the Tartars and Turks, Tscherkessians, and in their own tongue Adiga, inhabit the whole sea-coast above Lasia.”9

There is no agreement about the origin of the ethnonym “Kabardian” or of the geographic name Kabarda that appeared in fifteenth-century written sources: L. Lavrov, for example, believed that they were derived from the proper name Keberd.10

The Kabardians are still very proud of the fact that their princes acquired a lot of political weight in the piedmont valley stretching from the Azov to the Caspian seas, as well as in the piedmont where they controlled all the mountain passes as soon as the Golden Horde fell apart. Later, they established control over the Balkars and Ossets.

By the early sixteenth century, the Adyghes-Circassians were living in a vast territory stretching to the Black and Azov seas in the west and to the Terek basin in the east.11
The Soviet historians and their émigré colleagues made different assessments of what had happened in the 16th century.

The Soviet historians insisted on the “voluntary adherence” of Kabarda to the Russian State: In 1555, under Czar Ivan IV, Andrey Shelepoyev returned from the Northern Caucasus to Moscow accompanied by a large embassy of Kabardians and representatives of Western Adyghe tribes. He told the czar that the Adyghes had come to vow allegiance to the Russian czar. Ivan IV responded with “his great benevolence” and announced that they had been accepted as eternal subjects of Russia.

Two years later, in 1557, another Circassian embassy reached Moscow; as a result the Adyghes officially became subjects of the Russian czar. This was when Czar Ivan IV married daughter of Kabardian Prince Temryuk Idirov Kugeney, who was baptized as Tsarina Maria.

This was the official Soviet version devised to explain the celebration in 1957 of the 400th anniversary of the “voluntary adherence” of Kabarda to the Russian State.

While the preparations for the pompous celebrations were in full swing, Ramazan Trakho, who disagreed with the Soviet interpretation of history, wrote in Munich: “This is another attempt of Soviet historiography as a ‘general line of the Party’ to write a new history of the non-Russian peoples. I cannot go into the details of these absurdities lest to upturn my consistent exposition of historical facts, which convincingly say that there was no voluntary adherence of Kabarda to Russia.”

“In July 1557,” said Trakho, “a Kabardian embassy headed by prince Kanklich (Klich) Kanuko reached Moscow. This very limited connection led the Bolsheviks to stir up a lot of political noise 400 years later and insist that 400 years earlier Kabarda had joined Russia on its own free will.”

Soviet historians wrote that very soon Western Circassians became subjects of the Russian czars: in 1614-1615, Western Adyghes, who allegedly needed allies to stand opposed to the Crimean khans, vowed loyalty, together with other North Caucasian peoples, to Russian Czar Mikhail Fedorovich. It was argued that in the seventeenth century the titles of all the Russian czars included “czar of the land of Kabarda and of the Circassian and Mountain princes.”

Ramazan Trakho, in turn, said the following: “After the Time of Troubles, Moscow lost interest in the Caucasus. Until Peter the Great came to power, there were no political or otherwise important acts between the two countries. Circassia was absolutely calm safe clashes with Nogays, Crimeans, Kalmyks, and Cossacks.”

Not infrequently, Soviet historians offered contradictory descriptions of the historical events, fully illustrated by their so-called studies of the struggle between the Ottoman Empire and Russia for control in the Northern Caucasus that unfolded in the first half of the eighteenth century. According to the Soviet version, the Kabardians sided with Russia, while the Western Adyghes were fighting in the ranks of the army of the Crimean khan, a vassal of the Sublime Porte.

This raises the following question: If Kabarda and Western Circassia acceded to Russia earlier, how could the Circassians fight on two different warring sides? This could only have been possible if Circassia was a neutral territory in the early eighteenth century.

Soviet historians mentioned that in the latter half of the sixteenth and in the seventeenth century, the ethnopolitical situation around Kabarda changed because, on the one hand, Nogay Tatars and Kalmyks roamed into the steppes to the north of the Terek, which means that the Kabardians had to move out, at least temporarily. While on the other hand, they pointed out that by the second half of the sixteenth century the Terek and Grebenskie Cossacks had come to the right bank of the Terek, and by the eighteenth century...
century they had spread to the left bank. This means that even before the Caucasian War, the Kabardians
had been squeezed out of their previous territory. The mountain gorges to the south of Kabarda, on the
left and right banks of the Terek, were occupied by Balkars, Ossets, Ingush, and Chechens.18

Soviet historical science explained the Caucasian, or Russo-Circassian, War by the stiff rivalry
between Russia and Turkey in the Northern Caucasus in the latter half of the eighteenth century; this
shows why the Russian Empire started to pay greater attention to local religions. In the eighteenth
century the czarist government realized that Islam (which had been spreading in Kabarda since the
sixteenth century) made Kabardians allies of the Ottoman Empire and a threat to Russia’s position in
the Northern Caucasus, a plausible excuse of czarist policies in the Northern Caucasus for Soviet
historians.

Trakho, on the other hand, wrote that in 1736, during the Russo-Turkish War, the Kabardians
sided with the Porte, which promised to recognize their independence. Indeed, “Art 6 of the Belgrade
Peace Treaty [18 September, 1739] stated: About the two Kabardas, i. e. Greater and Lesser, and the
Kabardian people, both sides agree that they should be free and not under the influence of either the
one or the other Empire.”19

The czarist government was not ready to accept this; earlier the Russian Empire, after pulling
the Ossets, who had already been embracing Islam under the influence of the Kabardians,20 to its side,
responded by spreading Christianity among them, its proselytism facilitated by the fact that the larg-
er part of Ossetia had joined the Russian Empire in the latter half of the eighteenth century.21

This interest in the Ossets is explained by geography: the Daryal Gorge, which gave access from
Russia to Transcaucasia and Orthodox Georgia crossed the territory of the Ossets.22 Early in the eigh-
teenth century, the Russian authorities had been seeking ways to create a Christian corridor in the
Northern Caucasus across the domains of non-Christian peoples, the Kabardians being the most
prominent among them.

In 1745, Russia initiated an Ossetian Spiritual Commission, first in Kizliar, to restore Christian-
ity among the Ossets.23 In 1770, its residence was moved to the left bank of the Terek, to the Mozdok
Fortress founded seven years earlier. In 1792, the bishopric headed by Bishop of Mozdok and Majar
was set up in Mozdok; in 1816, the spiritual commission was moved from Mozdok to Tbilisi.24

The territory on which Mozdok was later built was captured for political considerations; earlier
it had been a settlement called Mozdok, which means “dark forest” in Kabardian.25

Since under the 1739 treaty between Russia and Turkey, Kabarda should have remained neutral,
Russian fortifications in its territory violated the treaty. In October 1761, however, the Senate submit-
ted a report to Catherine the Great on settling the Ossets and other mountain peoples in the Mozdok
environs and building a fortress there. The fortress was founded in 1763.26

The Russian authorities expected the fortress to help colonize the Central Caucasus; Ramazan
Trakho had the following to say on this score: “In view of these intentions, the town of Mozdok, built
by the Kabardians in 1759, acquired great importance; it was open to direct threats; four years later
Russia turned it into a fortress connected along the military line with Kizliar in 1763. This year can

19 A. Namitok, “The ‘Voluntary’ Adherence of Kabarda (Eastern Circassia) to Russia,” Caucasian Review, Munich
(CRM), No. 2, 1956, p. 17 ff.
24 See: Istoria Severo-Osetinskoy A.S.S.R., p. 156; B.A. Kaloev, op. cit., pp. 287-288; idem, Mozdokskie osetiny,
Moscow, 1995, pp. 8-11.
be regarded as the beginning of a one-hundred-year war between the Russians and Circassians, which ended in the spring of 1864.\textsuperscript{27}

It should be said that until recently we drew our knowledge about the Caucasian War from classical Russian literature, which never looked at its causes or its course. The truth about the war cannot be found in official Russian historiography either, which suppressed and still suppresses the truth. Soviet historians, on the other hand, never denied the fact that at the early stages of the war, Lesser Kabarda was situated to the south of Mozdok.\textsuperscript{28}

According to Kabardian historian V. Kudashev, the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca of 1774, under which Kabarda was expected to become part of Russia, added vehemence to the struggle between the Russians and Kabardians. In 1777, the Kabardians started rioting; the riots continued until the end of 1779. As the weaker side, the Kabardians were defeated: on 9 December, 1779, they vowed allegiance to Russia. Under the agreement, the River Malka formed the boundary of Greater Kabarda, while the River Terek was the boundary of Lesser Kabarda.\textsuperscript{29}

Kabarda continued its struggle against Russian expansion in the first half of the nineteenth century. According to historians, there were armed clashes in 1809-1810. This forced the czarist government to send a punitive expedition to Kabarda on 19 April, 1810 headed by General S. Bulgakov; 200 burned settlements came as an unpleasant surprise for War Minister of Russia Barclay de Tolly.

In 1816, the Russian troops stationed in the Caucasus were realigned into the Separate Caucasian Corps under General Alexey Yermolov, who dealt cruelly with those who opposed Russia. The mutinous Kabardian princes went high into the mountains from which they attacked the Russian troops and their allies. The Ossets and other North Caucasian peoples were obliged not to allow the Kabardians, who had fled to the Kuban area (where they were called “fugitive Kabardians”) in search of shelter, to cross their territories.\textsuperscript{30}

The riots of 1822-1825 in Kabarda, stirred up by the construction of the defense line across its territory and setting up an Interim Kabardian Court of Justice, were also suppressed.

In 1827, General Yermolov abandoned the Caucasus, leaving behind the general trend of its policy toward the Kabardians. The Russian authorities built fortresses on the land taken away from the local people, who moved (or were forced to move) to other places.\textsuperscript{31}

Under Soviet power, Ossetian historians did not conceal the fact that the czarist authorities had been consistently moving Ossets to the valley, that is, the territory of Kabarda, where the number of Ossets was steadily rising, while number of Kabardians was steadily decreasing. In the first half of the nineteenth century, under Caucasian Viceroy Alexey Yermolov, the process reached its peak.

In Soviet times, this was explained by the desire of Ossetian communities to acquire land in the piedmont valleys.\textsuperscript{32} The documents of the early nineteenth century published in the Soviet Union in the 1940s show that, from the very beginning, the Ossets did not move where they wanted to move, but to the places indicated by the Russian administration.\textsuperscript{33} This caused cruelly suppressed riots,\textsuperscript{34} while the Russian government started moving Cossacks to the best lands of Lesser Kabarda.\textsuperscript{35}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[34] See: Ibid., pp. 191-192.
\end{footnotes}
It was in 1830s-1850s, during the time of Shamil, that the czarist administration increased its repressions against the Kabardians and finally suppressed all mutineers. The dissatisfied preferred to leave their homeland; at first they went beyond the Kuban and built new auls there. When their new homeland was finally conquered by Russia, the migration flows moved in different directions.

According to Soviet historians, both the Russian and Ottoman empires profited from the resettlement of Muslims from the Caucasus, which spelled a tragedy for the Circassians. They think that the Turks planned to use the newly acquired population against Russia and the Balkan peoples. The czarist authorities were glad to get rid of at least some of its mutinous subjects.

The process began in 1859 and ended in 1865; many North Caucasian peoples, Kabardians and Ossets among them, were also removed from their lands, to which loyal people were moved.

It should be said in all justice that Soviet historians, despite the pressure from above, used statistics to illustrate the tragic consequences of the war for the Adyghes.

It has been established, for example, that by the end of the eighteenth century there were between 165,000 and 200,000 Kabardians; according to certain sources, by the 1830s-1840s, only 40,000 were left due to the Russo-Circassian War. According to Far from complete information gathered by Baron Pavel Vrevesky, in 1837 there were 10,243 men living in Greater Kabarda and 377 men in Lesser Kabarda. In the first half of the eighteenth century, there were 8,500 households in Greater Kabarda and two times fewer in Lesser Kabarda.

Resettlement to Turkey proved to be fateful for all Adyghes and Kabardians; according to Soviet historians, in 1860-1867 about 10,000 people were moved away from Kabarda (in 1865, 3,000 were deported). About 500,000 were moved away from the Kuban Region (where a great number of Kabardians lived) to Turkey; in 1867, only 44,000 Kabardians (7,384 households) were left in the Northern Caucasus.

The lot of Western Adyghes was no less tragic, yet Soviet historians left numerous lacunae in what they wrote about the Caucasian War; until recently it was absolutely impossible to find out who had lived on the northeastern part of the Black Sea coast until the mid-nineteenth century.

In the post-Soviet period, historical science in Russia demonstrated certain shifts.

According to N. Shakhnazarian, the 1829 Adrianople Peace Treaty, which ended the Russo-Turkish War of 1828-1829, transferred the eastern Black Sea coast from the mouth of Kuban to St. Nicholas Bay to Russia. The Adyghes refused to obey, which started hostilities. By 1861, Russia established its control over the larger part of the Northwestern Caucasus, while “the local population started moving to the Ottoman Empire; there was no place in the Caucasus for them.”

Today, Russian historians prefer to pass over in silence much of what should be said on the subject.

Ramazan Trakho wrote: “The first unofficial resettlement of Circassians began immediately after the Crimean War when active fighting in Circassia resumed. In 1859-1860, the larger part of the Abazins who lived between the Kuban and Urup were moved off their land. It was planned to move the Besleney and some other peoples in 1861. By late 1863, most of the Abkhazes had also become forced migrants.”

According to the documents of that time, over 1.5 million Circassians were resettled to Turkey; Trakho concluded that the lands along the Northeastern Black Sea coast had been vacated to be resettled with Cossacks. The Circassians who remained in the Caucasus were small and disunited groups of a formerly large people.
The same author wrote: “It was at this early stage that Russian imperialism revealed its true face as an exterminator of nations.”

In late Soviet times, there were positive trends in dealing with the Circassian issue.

The Adyghes in the Soviet Union

The events that followed the October coup and the Civil War affected the position of the Adyghes of the Northern Caucasus and awakened the local peoples to the struggle for national self-determination. In November 1920, the All-Peoples Congress of the Terek Region met in Vladikavkaz to declare its autonomy. In January 1921, the Presidium of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee of the R.S.F.S.R. (VTsIK) had to legitimize the Mountain and Daghestan A.S.S.R. The former included the Chechen, Ingush, Osset, Kabardian, Balkar, Karachay, and later Sunzha districts and the cities of Vladikavkaz and Grozny as separate districts. In 1921-1924, the Mountain Autonomous Republic was split into autonomous peoples’ units.

On 1 September, 1921, the VTsIK passed the decision to remove the Kabarda District from the Mountain Republic and form the Kabardinian Autonomous Region (KAR). In November 1921, the Constituent Congress of the Soviets of Workers’, Peasants’, and Red Army Men’s Deputies of Kabarda finally formed the KAO as part of the R.S.F.S.R. On 16 November, 1922, the VTsIK of the R.S.F.S.R. passed a decision, under which Balkaria was removed from the Mountain A.S.S.R. to become the Kabardino-Balkarian Autonomous Region.

According to official Soviet sources, Balkaria and Kabarda were detached from the Mountain Republic for geographical reasons. Kabarda occupied the valley part of the Nalchik District, while Balkaria was higher up in the mountains. The Soviet authorities argued that this made it harder for Balkaria to communicate with the Mountain A.S.S.R., while Kabarda became an independent autonomous region.

Kabarda and Balkaria were finally united in December 1922 at a regional congress of the Soviets, which formed the regional executive committee and other structures. At the time of the “triumphal march of the Constitution of victorious socialism” (1936-1937), the autonomous region was transformed into the Kabardino-Balkarian A.S.S.R.

In 1944, the Stalinist authorities exiled the Balkars to Central Asia, and the Kabardino-Balkarian A.S.S.R. lost the second part of its name to become the Kabardian A.S.S.R. On 28 April, 1956, under Khrushchev, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. passed the Decree on the Rehabilitation of the Peoples Repressed during the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945; the Balkars started coming back.

Significantly, the leaders of the Kabardian A.S.S.R. did not occupy the abandoned Balkar villages, which helped avoid ethnic clashes.

On 9 January, 1957, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. passed a Decree on Transforming the Kabardian A.S.S.R. into the Kabardino-Balkarian A.S.S.R. This meant that for many years, until the destruction of the Soviet Union, the Kabardians, who used one of the Adyghe dialects, and the Balkars, who spoke a Turkic dialect, lived in one republic. According to the official

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42 R. Trakho, op. cit., p. 29.
45 See: Ibid., pp. 137, 139, 142, 146.
The same can be said about the Circassians and the Karachays, who live to the west of Kabardino-Balkaria.

In 1922, the Karachaevo-Circassian Autonomous Region left the Mountain A.S.S.R. to become a new administrative unit. It brought together the Turkic-speaking Karachays, who lived in the mountains of the Central Caucasus, and the Adyghes, who lived in the left-bank valley of River Kuban. The local population, who spoke an Adygh dialect, was a blend of several groups of Adyghes, the core formed by Kabardians and closely related Besleney.

In this context, we should talk about the phenomenon of dual self-identity of the local Adyghes, who called themselves Adyghe, yet insisted on their kinship with the Kabardians and Besleney. This explains why the Soviet authorities did not think long before giving them the traditional name Circassians (even though the Adyghes had never used this term themselves); hence a new autonomous region with a new and unexpected name—Karachaev-Circassia.

In 1928, Karachaev-Circassia was divided into the Karachay Autonomous Region, the Cherkesk National District (later an autonomous region), and the Batalpashinsky District.

In 1944, the Karachay Autonomous Region was liquidated, and the Karachays were exiled to Central Asia and other eastern regions of the Soviet Union. Thanks to postwar rehabilitation of the rights of repressed peoples, the Karachays came back; in 1957, the Karachaev-Circassian Autonomous Region appeared, which survived until the Soviet Union’s disintegration.

According to official figures, late in the 1980s, there were 109,200 Karachays and 31,200 Circassians in the autonomous region (which was part of the Stavropol Territory of R.S.F.S.R.). The Turkic-speaking Karachays were in the majority.

According to statistical data, it took the Adyghes a long time to form a homogenous ethnic group: during the 1926 population census, some of them spoke of themselves as Kabardians, others as Besleney. Early in the 1930s, the ethnonym Circassian was rarely used by the Adygh intelligentia to define their ethnicity. Ten years later, according to the same official statistics, about 80% of the Adyghes who lived in the autonomous region called themselves Circassians.

In the 1970s, only 2% of the Adygh population called themselves Kabardians, the rest used the ethnonym Circassian. The Soviet authorities arrived at the following conclusion: “During the years of Soviet power diverse Adygh ethnic groups of the Karachay-Circassian Republic became a Circassian nationality.”

Speaking of the early 1970s, I. Kalmykov wrote: “Even though Kabardians constitute the core of the Adygh population of the region, the contemporary Adygh of the Karachaev-Circassian Republic no longer call themselves Kabardian. Moreover, many of the local people do not know to which Adygh ethnic group their ancestors belonged.”

The history of the Adygh Autonomous Region is very interesting. In 1920, a Kuban-Black Sea Region was formed in the Northwestern Caucasus as part of the R.S.F.S.R. In January 1921, the problem of an independent autonomy for the local Adyghes came to the fore, but the local Bolshevik leaders objected with the following arguments:

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49 See: Narody mira, pp. 203, 504.
50 I.Kh. Kalmykov, op. cit, p. 39.
51 Ibidem.
— The absence of an economic center and means of subsistence;
— The dearth of communist Circassians;
— The ethnic diversity.\textsuperscript{52}

The gap between the Adyghes and Bolsheviks became obvious at the Second Regional Congress of the Working Mountain Peoples of the Kuban and the Black Sea Region held on 2-8 March, 1921. The most radical of the Adyghes came forward with the idea of an “independent North Caucasian Mountain Republic in the area occupied by the mountain peoples until 1800 and return to the Caucasus of the Adyghes who had been resettled in Turkey.”\textsuperscript{53}

The Bolsheviks had to take into account the prevailing sentiments among the Western Adyghes: on 27 June, 1922, the Presidium of VTsIK R.S.F.S.R. set up a Circassian Autonomous Region that included three districts (Psekups, Fars, and Shirvan); they were formed from Adyghe territories that included settlements with mixed populations that used to belong to the Krasnodar and Maykop divisions of the Kuban-Black Sea Region. The executive committee, which should have been elected at the next congress of Soviets, acquired the powers of a gubernia executive committee.

The name of the newly established unit—the Adyghe Autonomous Republic—caused certain misunderstanding. In 1922, there were two autonomous regions with practically similar names—the Karachaevo-Circassian Autonomous Region on the upper reaches of the Kuban and the Circassian Autonomous Region on the lower reaches of the same river. On 22 August, 1922, the VTsIK R.S.F.S.R. changed the name of the latter to the Adyghe Autonomous Region “to avoid misunderstanding and confusion.”\textsuperscript{54} This means that the contemporary names of these republics were imposed on the people from above.

On 23 May, 1923, the borders of the Adyghe Autonomous Region were determined by a decision of the VTsIK R.S.F.S.R. to stretch in a narrow strip (10 to 30 km) along the left banks of the Kuban and Laba, its total territory being 2,660 sq km, with a population of 114,570.\textsuperscript{55}

Until the Soviet Union’s disintegration, neither the borders, nor size of the population of the Adyghe Autonomous Region of the Krasnodar Territory changed: in the late 1980s, there were 86,000 Adyghes living in the region, the numerical strength of those who called themselves Adyghes was 109,000.\textsuperscript{56}

In 1990, the Adyghe Autonomous Region detached itself from the Krasnodar Territory to become a national republic.

In 1924-1945, there was the Shapsug National District in the Krasnodar Territory stretching along the Black Sea coast to the south and the north of Tuapse; after 1945, the Shapsugs were not registered as such in population censuses—an eloquent fact.\textsuperscript{57} The national district comprised 14 villages, along with the Adyghe population who lived in the spa zone. In 2014, this was the territory of the Winter Sochi Olympics.

To sum up: during Soviet power, the Adyghes lived in four autonomous regions of the R.S.F.S.R. Soviet ethnographers supplied information about the Adyghes living in Turkey, Syria, Jordan, and other countries of Southwest Asia.

\textsuperscript{54} Ustanovlenie sovetskoy vlasti i natsionalno-gosudarstvennoe stroitelstvo v Adyghee (1917-1923gg.), Maikop, 1980, p. 236.
\textsuperscript{55} See: Adyghea, p. 118.
\textsuperscript{56} See: Narody mira, p. 41.
\textsuperscript{57} See: N. Shakhnazarian, op. cit., pp. 7, 21-22.
Kabardians lived in the North Ossetian A.S.S.R. and also in the Krasnodar and Stavropol territories.\(^{58}\)

The above suggests a question: Why did the Bolsheviks never set up an autonomous republic for all the Adyghes contrary to their own policy of the right of nations to self-determination? Rama-\(^{59}\)zan Trakho supplied an answer: “The Bolsheviks pursued the important aim of dividing the tribes, since the belligerent peoples of the Northern Caucasus might have caused a lot of trouble. This policy was applied to nations and individual tribes, the Circassians in particular.”

This is a bit too much. The same author had the following to say about the development of the national autonomies of the Adyghes under Soviet power, as well as the development of their culture, language, and education: “Czarist power did nothing in this respect, therefore what was done can be described as a huge achievement had these cultural institutions not been controlled by the Communist party and implemented its policies. This was not an achievement but a national misfortune, since despite the national façade, the Circassians were deprived of their own word, freedom, and independent thought.”\(^{60}\)

### The Adyghes in Post-Soviet Time

Contrary to the expectations, the Soviet Union’s disintegration did not restore a justice that would have permitted the Adyghes to return to their lands and unite into a single republic: the post-Soviet changes were superficial.

In 1992, the Adyghean and Karachaevo-Circassian A.S.S.R. and also Kabardino-Balkaria became republics of the Russian Federation. According to the population census of 2010, there were 124,835 Adygheans, 516,826 Kabardians, 73,184 Circassians, 3,882 Shapsugs. All in all 718,727 Adyghes.\(^{61}\)

Some of the problems, including linguistic, remain pending: it is commonly believed that the Kabardians and Circassians of Karachaevo-Circassia, as well as the Adygheans and Shapsugs speak kindred but different dialects of the Abkhazian-Adyghe branch of the Iberian Caucasian language family.\(^{62}\) Is this absolutely correct? Indeed, in Soviet times it was commonly believed that the Kabardians and Circassians used the same language.\(^{63}\) One cannot but wonder what criteria were applied and whether they are dialects of the same language.

Adygheans, Circassians, Kabardians, and Shapsugs are mainly Sunni Muslims; a much smaller number of them are Orthodox Christians. They share many features of their material and spiritual culture, and they all call themselves Adyghe.\(^{64}\)

In Soviet times, prominent Soviet ethnologists argued that ethnic self-awareness realized in a common self-identification was the main feature of an ethnos\(^{65}\); this is what the Adyghes think about

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\(^{58}\) See: Narody mira, pp. 41, 192, 504.

\(^{59}\) R. Trakho, op. cit., p. 34.

\(^{60}\) Ibid., p. 52.

\(^{61}\) [https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C0%E4%FB%E3%E82015-03-11].


\(^{64}\) See: Narody mira, pp. 41, 192, 504; N.G. Volkova, op. cit., p. 18.

themselves. Thus, it is surprising why in Russia the Adyghes, Shapsugs, Circassians, and Kabardians are treated as separate ethnicities.

Here is a pertinent example: until recently the Ossets were treated as one people despite the fact that there are several local groups among them who call themselves the Iron, Digor, and Tual. The Ossets, who have no common name, are aware of their common origins and use the name that other peoples apply to them.66 There is no logic in this.

It should be said that no matter where they lived, the Adyghes were aware of their common origins (irrespective of the names used by other peoples). In the 1990s, the Circassian migrants from Kosovo preferred Adygea to Karachaevo-Circassia. This means that the Adyghes are one people.

They have been fighting for their rights for the last 150 years because of their territorial disunity and insulting historical fate. These feelings became even stronger after the Soviet Union’s disintegration.

The Adyghes pinned their hopes on the leaders of new Russia; when it became obvious that these hopes were misplaced, public movements appeared, demanding fair treatment.

They demand that the Caucasian War, which led to the disappearance of the Circassians from the Northern Caucasus, should be recognized as a war of annexation; this has been and remains the most painful issue for the Adyghes. The Congress of Circassians set up in 2004 repeatedly asked the State Duma of Russia and European Parliament to recognize Circassian genocide. The very fact that the Congress was set up and is functioning means that the past is closely connected with the present.

The Congress was set up to preserve the language and the culture of the Adyghes and to consolidate them in their historical homeland; it is also concerned with collecting and systematizing documents relating to the Russo-Circassian War.

The request to recognize the genocide of the Adyghes was repeated at the scientific conference “Concealed Nations and Continued Crimes: Circassians and the Peoples of the Northern Caucasus between the Past and the Future” held in Tbilisi on 21-22 March, 2010.

Late in 2009, the announced intention to set up a Circassian Government in Exile brought the “Circassian Question” to a new level: “Circassia should be returned to its status of an independent state” and unite all the Adyghes. The future government is determined to rely on the Declaration of Independence of Circassia of the time of the Caucasian War (1835) and the Declaration of Independence of Circassia issued by the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) in 1996.67

There is an Adyghe Khase public movement in all the republics with a Circassian component; at first it represented the interests of the Black Sea Shapsugs. It was set up in the early 1990s to restore the liquidated Shapsug National District, among other tasks. Its members did a lot to develop the small autochthonous ethnic community of the Black Sea Shapsugs culturally, socially, and economically.68

The Adyghean republican organization Adyghe Khase is coping with several somewhat different tasks: it is opposing the thesis of “Adygea’s voluntary adherence to the Russian State.”69

In 2004, the Worldwide Circassian Brotherhood (WCB) appeared with a young (under 30) membership determined to preserve and increase the cultural and historical heritage of the Adyghes and establish contacts with compatriots in other countries. The leader, Zamir Shukhov, believes that it should move toward “unity of the Circassians in their historical homeland” but “as part of Russia.”70

Until recently, all the Adyghe/Circassian organizations shared the following aims:

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66 See: N.G. Volkova, op. cit., pp. 100-121.
69 T.P. Khlynina, op. cit., p. 310.
(1) Insist on recognition by the official powers of the Russian Federation of the genocide of the Circassian people during the Russo-Circassian War.

(2) Create conditions necessary to set up one republic for all the Adyghes;

(3) Promote repatriation of the descendants of Circassian émigrés.

All the Adyghe organizations were determined to boycott the Sochi Winter Olympics. So far, the ideologists of the Adyghe/Circassian national movements have not agreed whether the future Adygh republic should be independent or remain part of Russia.\textsuperscript{71}

It remains to be seen whether these demands correspond to the current times.

Will There be an Answer to the Adyghe Question?

The future of the Adyghes depends on the development trends of their ethnic self-consciousness; today, the kindred groups are ready to pool forces.

It seems that the present Russian leaders are not prepared to seek new approaches to the Adyghe question.

If Moscow recognizes the expansionist nature of the Caucasian War and genocide of the Circassians, its foreign and domestic policies will be doubted. So far the leaders of the Russian Federation have been following in the footsteps of czarist Russia: an aggressive and expansionist policy in relation to neighboring states and efforts to impose on them its own federalization model.

From this it follows that Moscow is quite satisfied with the country’s political and administrative-territorial organization and will not change anything in the Northern Caucasus.

If the political system of Russia changes, which will not happen any time soon, the problem of recognition of the genocide of the Circassians and unification of the Adyghes into one republic will most likely be resolved. On the other hand, the Northern Caucasus is a patchwork of ethnicities in which there is no compact Adyghe group. This means that an attempt to set up a single Adyghe republic might ignite ethnic conflicts.

The most radical of the Adyghe leaders are talking about bringing the descendants of the Circassians who were exiled to the Middle East to the Caucasus. This, too, is fraught with ethnic troubles.

To sum up, the Circassian problem has been and remains a delayed action fuse for Russia.

PRESS COVERAGE OF ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS IN KYRGYZSTAN AND THE ROLE OF ECO-NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This article explores obstacles and conditions that environmental nongovernmental organizations face in interacting with media outlets in Kyrgyzstan. It also examines the limited scope of environmental journalism and the resulting limited ability of news outlets and eco-NGOs to help set the public agenda for discussion of policy and issues in the country. Even if such public relations interaction occurs, it is rarely effective and rarely generates influential eco/environmental articles in the media. The study is based on a content analysis of the news agency 24.kg and the newspaper Vecherniy Bishkek. It includes results of a survey and interviews with eco-NGOs representatives.
Introduction

If we examine coverage of environmental issues in Kyrgyzstan’s news media, we find that it is minimal in relationship to the country’s serious environmental and ecological problems, including water quality, air pollution, habitat destruction, climate change and glacial melt, and deforestation. There are more than 350 registered local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) dealing with the environmental situation in the country. However, this study found that only six of those based in the capital city, Bishkek, were engaged in regular activities, had financial support, and were involved in projects during the study period. Even those eco-NGOs had not formed strong networks that could influence government, prompt citizen engagement in environmental problems, and serve as an effective lobbying force.

Many Western media organizations carry regular editorials, columns, and news coverage, as well as employ specialized journalists who report on the ecological situation in every, or in almost every, issue. Those articles do not necessarily carry a negative message or criticism. For example, they often report on “positive” developments such as the birth of an endangered species in a zoo. In contrast, no media outlets in Kyrgyzstan regularly provide columns, broadcast series, or radio programs dedicated to environmental issues. However, that shortcoming does not imply there are no environmental problems in the country. To the contrary, such problems range from pollution to climate disruption to industrial and mining waste to habitat destruction.

The media is indisputably a powerful entity that influences public perceptions. However, it seems from this study that eco-NGOs in Kyrgyzstan do not take this obvious fact into consideration when carrying out their activities. The resulting absence of coverage is crucial because if citizens lack information about environmental issues, they cannot take action to prevent or solve ecological problems.

Research Question

Why do media outlets rarely or never publish eco-related articles, especially on controversial environmental topics. Press releases seem to be one of the most popular ways that NGOs communicate, or can communicate, with editors and other journalists.

Thus, the research question: How do Bishkek-based eco-NGOs attempt to influence press coverage of environmental issues by Bishkek-based media organizations?

Based on agenda-setting theory under which eco-NGOs could shape press coverage that affects how citizens, policymakers, and other media outlets determine priorities on topics of public concern, this study considers communication between journalists and eco-NGOs as a potentially major agenda-builder.

Prior Research

The study is based on the agenda-setting theory of mass communication and how it is influenced in the public sphere by information subsidies such as press releases. This theory describes the power-
The influence that news media wield by telling the public what issues are important. As for the interaction between the theory and information subsidies from public relations activities, Kiousis et al. explained: “From an agenda-building perspective, the interplay of source, media, and public agendas is of paramount concern. The role of political public relations efforts has been deemed crucial to the process of agenda-building…” In addition, this theory underscores two basic assumptions about agenda-setting research:

1. The press and media do not reflect reality; they filter and shape it.

2. Media concentration on a few issues and subjects leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues.

At the same time, as Stone et al. observed, “the public agenda cannot be expected to exactly mirror the media agenda.”

Some scholars divide the relevant theory into two main steps: agenda-setting and agenda-building. According to Weaver and Elliott, “the focus is on how the press interacts with other institutions in society to create issues of public concern. This agenda-building approach is more concerned with how issues originate, or how subjects of news coverage become issues, than with the media audience relationship studied so often by agenda-setting researchers.”

Agenda-building is one of the main goals of public relations specialists, and every company or organization that wants to deal with the public needs a public relations specialist. Thus, in the book Managing for the Environment, the authors write: “A wealth of research has shown precisely how important the media can be in affecting public opinion. Consequently, only the most fool-hardy manager dealing with environmental management issues would think it is unimportant to understand how, why, and with what managerial consequences the print and electronic media help frame environmental issues today. Nor would she underestimate how important media coverage of the environment and her organization’s related activities can be to destroying, maintaining, or rebuilding the public’s trust in her organization.”

The theory has been studied only on a limited basis in international settings concerning the influence of public relations-related activities to coverage of environmental news. For example, Moon and Shim examined the role that press releases played as an agenda-builder in South Korea’s largest environmental conflict, the Saemangeum land reclamation project. Their study showed a relationship between media coverage and press releases in the context of agenda-building. Moreover, it found that the “mention of demonstrations in press releases had a significant influence on the favorability of news coverage, even in a conservative newspaper.”

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4 G. Stone et al., op. cit., p. 232.


7 See: S. J. Moon, J.C. Shim, op. cit.

8 Ibid., p. 74.
Another study, The Production and Consumption of Environmental Meanings in the Mass Media: A Research Agenda for the 1990s, made the case for an agenda of geographic research based on the mass media of communications. The author found that the media are an integral part of a complex cultural process through which environmental meanings are produced and consumed. The study showed how “environmental meanings are encoded in different forms of media texts and decoded by the different groups who comprise the audiences. It contended that physical and human geographers could usefully collaborate in research with both producers and consumers of media texts, so as to better understand contemporary discourses about human-environment relations.”

Bendix and Liebler examined geographic variations in newspaper coverage of a controversy about protecting northern spotted owls and old-growth forests in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. The study addressed: “the extent to which newspaper ‘framing’ of the conflict favored one side or the other; how coverage varied among newspapers published in different cities around the country; and the extent to which that variation was related to other characteristics of the newspapers’ locations.” Their findings showed that “understanding of media coverage has much to gain from a geographic perspective, because both the environment and attitudes have long history of study in geography, chosen to specifically address environmental news.”

Studies closely related to this article include ones focused on Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan. The most recent examined news coverage of transborder environmental issues in the Ferghana Valley and was based on in-depth interviews with journalists in two cities in Kyrgyzstan and two cities in Tajikistan based on in-depth interviews with representatives from eco-NGOs and news agencies. Interviewees identified major obstacles to coverage of such issues: avoidance of controversy; self-censorship; limited access to information; lack of collaboration; insufficient professional skills; and weak minority-language media.

For the 2011 study of Kyrgyzstan, the author interviewed respondents in Bishkek, Karakol, and Naryn to answer two research questions: How do domestic eco-NGOs seek to influence domestic press coverage? How do domestic environmental news outlets cover environmental issues and what major factors influence their coverage? The research examined cooperation among eco-NGOs, government, and press outlets, as well as the role and societal position of media, their dependence on government, pressures they face, and the small number of independent, private, or oppositional media outlets.

A study by Pugachev showed problems in collaboration between government and health NGOs in Kyrgyzstan. Although it did not directly address eco-NGOs, similar problems in collaboration between the two sectors were clear.

Methods

Eco-NGOs have the potential to disseminate important ecological-related messages to the public and, thus, help set and build the agenda for public, media, and governmental discussion. This study
uses three methods—content analysis, a survey, and interviews conducted by the lead author—to explore this potential.

**Content Analysis**

This study is based on a content analysis of articles from the online news outlet 24.kg and Vecherniy Bishkek newspaper for six months, from January through July 2010. 24.kg is one of the most popular online news agencies in Kyrgyzstan. According to statistics from the LiveInternet service, it averaged around 80,000 daily visitors during the study period. The agency has wide networks of correspondents throughout the country. Stories are quickly translated into English for the English-language version of the website, which allows foreigners to read news about current political, economic, social, and other issues. At the time of the study, Vecherniy Bishkek was published five days a week (Monday through Friday). It now appears three days a week.

It is disseminated in all regions of the country and had the biggest circulation among the country’s Russian-language newspapers during the study period.

**Survey Questionnaire and Interviews**

If eco-NGOs complain that media outlets ignore or are ignorant about their messaging, are eco-NGOs themselves responsible? Perhaps one reason lies in poorly written press releases that journalists cannot understand well.

Thus this study incorporates results from a questionnaire sent to representatives of Bishkek-based eco-NGOs about dissemination of information to the media and public about their activities and issues of concern. The purpose of the survey was to examine whether NGO leaders understand the importance of public relations and the agenda-building role of their organizations.

In addition, the study included face-to-face interviews by the lead author with representatives of Bishkek-based eco-NGOs to provide a better understanding of the situation. In-depth interviews are frequently part of qualitative research to produce descriptive and exploratory data for issue-focused research.\(^\text{14}\) In-depth interviews have been included in mass media research about environmental issues in Central Asia. For instance, Toralieva interviewed journalists and activists in researching her article about obstacles to environmental reporting in Kyrgyzstan.\(^\text{15}\)

**Findings**

Articles about ecological issues did not appear regularly in 24.kg and Vecherniy Bishkek. Moreover, any such articles related mainly to weather and to reports or warnings from the Ministry of Emergency Situations. Thus, during the monitoring it was decided to include only those articles that stated that humans caused certain ecological problems that affected people or could affect people in the future. During the content analysis, only a small number of articles included the perspectives of eco-NGOs.


Content Analysis of News Agency 24.kg

During the six-month study period, 24.kg published sixty-six articles on environmental topic; eco-NGOs initiated eight of the articles, as through a press release or information provided during a press tour organized by the eco-NGO. One article was published under the name of an international agency that monitored pollution of cities worldwide. Among the stories covered: the Kyrgyz capital ranked 16th on the world’s list of most polluted cities; a representative of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) CARNet Project, Jaras Abu Takenov, was interviewed about climate change; the head of the NGO Aleine spoke about agriculture and possible damage from chemicals. Other articles dealt with environmental protection, animals, and renewable energy sources. One article based on remarks by United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon discussed tailings in Kyrgyzstan.

In addition, there were six editorials by 24.kg journalists about animals, images of Bishkek, Lake Issyk Kul, floods, and timbering.

Moreover, forty-nine of the sixty-six news were written at the instigation of government agencies, such as the Ministry of Emergency Situations, regional governmental administrations, the National Agency on Environmental Protection, and parliamentary deputies in the Jogorku Kengesh.

Figure 1

Variety and Number of Topics Covered
Many sources appeared in environmental news stories, but the leading source was the Ministry of Emergency Situations. These issues were covered mainly by the same journalists who perhaps were assigned to follow a particular governmental body as their beat or as part of their beat. Thus, for example, it is obvious that Bolotbek Kolbaev was assigned to report on fire department news. Aizada Kutueva reported mainly on environmental issues such as special park zones and animals.
Content Analysis of Vecherniy Bishkek

Fifty-seven eco/environmental articles appeared during the study period. Six articles cited eco-NGOs as sources of information. Two stories, both about renewable energy sources, cited the eco-NGO Biom. Three articles referred to the UNDP CARNet project. Other articles talked about animals, energy efficiency, and waste. One article was written about Lake Issyk Kul, based on data and information from the Asian Development Bank. One article referred to members of the Youth of Naryn initiative group.

Twenty-seven editorials and columns were by the newspaper’s own journalists. Nine editorials focused on animals, insects, and birds. Three were about waste. Other environmental topics were covered no more than twice. Twenty-three articles were based on government data: Five were based on data from the National Academy of Science of the Kyrgyz Republic; the Ministry of Emergency Situations and Ministry of Agriculture provided information for two articles each.

The number of editorials and columns in Vecherniy Bishkek was higher than in 24.kg. The content analysis of Vecherniy Bishkek found twenty-seven editorials and columns. They were written by different journalists. It was clear that some are interested in the topic since they write eco/environmental articles.

### Figure 4: Variety and Number of Covered Topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>air pollution</td>
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<tr>
<td>mountain lakes</td>
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<tr>
<td>hydro-electric power stations</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>avalanche</td>
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<tr>
<td>natural resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>windspout</td>
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<tr>
<td>energy efficiency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lake Issyk Kul</td>
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<tr>
<td>public sanitation</td>
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<td>poaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>water supply</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>animals</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>World Environment Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>extraction of timber</td>
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<tr>
<td>bio laboratory</td>
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<tr>
<td>urban gardens</td>
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<tr>
<td>animal burial site</td>
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<td>hunting festival</td>
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<tr>
<td>earthquakes</td>
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<td>protected nature areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>tailings</td>
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<td>renewable energy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>wastes</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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mental articles on a regular basis. For example, Anastasiya Khodykina wrote seven articles on eco/environmental issues. However, they were not published regularly: three articles were published in February and four in June.
Survey Results

This section is based on a survey questionnaire completed by six Bishkek-based eco-NGOs: Ala-Too Camp; Aleine; Ekois; Unison; CARNet; and Biom. The survey consisted of twelve questions.

Figure 7
How Dangerous to Human Life is the Ecological Situation in Kyrgyzstan in Your Opinion?
(Respondents used a five-point scale: 1 = not dangerous; 2 = not very dangerous; 3 = neither; 4 = dangerous; and 5 = very dangerous)

Figure 8
What are the 3 or 4 Most Important Ecological Problems in the Country That Your Organization is Interested In?
related to their activities, their connections with the media, and an overall image of the ecological situation in the country.

Twenty-five percent of respondents called mine tailings the most dangerous ecological problem. Nineteen percent identified deforestation as one of the most crucial problems. Pasture degradation and preservation of biodiversity each received 13 percent of responses. Each of the remaining answers, totaling 6 percent, received only one vote each. This finding suggests that such ecological problems as persistent organic pollutants, climate change, greenhouse gases, energy sources, and defense of ecological rights do not occupy a central place in the issue agenda of most Bishkek-based eco-NGOs.

**Interviews**

The survey included interviews with the surveyed NGO representatives to allow them to expand on their responses.

Alma Karsymbek, the first interviewee, represented Ala-Too Camp. She coordinates communication projects and exchange programs for the Ala-Too Camp Public Foundation. In the interview, she reported communicating with journalists mostly when they ask her to arrange interviews; however, in the survey she responded that the organization is interested in communication with journalists and that it regularly sends press releases, conducts press conferences, and organizes other events such as media tours for journalists. According to Karsymbek, her NGO’s main problem in securing coverage is that many other issues, particularly political ones, seem more interesting to both journalists and the public. She also said only a few journalists are interested in environmental issues. In addition, she said the government does not want to pay attention to these issues because most environmental problems would have to be solved immediately, which would be expensive.

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16 A. Karsymbek, interview, 9 December, 2010, Bishkek.
She named tailings, pasture degradation, and deforestation as the most dangerous ecological problems. Notably, the content analysis of 24.kg and Vecherniy Bishkek found no articles on these issues.

The second interviewee was Professor Emil Shukurov, who chairs the Aleine ecological movement, established in 1994 as one of the first ecological organizations in Kyrgyzstan. According to Shukurov, the main problem of environmental journalism is that articles do not appear on a regular basis. Even when people read them, they are most likely to forget the information from the articles. The audience tends to think that lack of information about such issues indicates the absence of eco/environmental problems in the country, which is untrue. Shukurov said lack of and degradation of forests are the main ecological problems in Kyrgyzstan, and political problems have a crucial influence on the eco/environment. He was one of the first experts who helped develop the Ecological Code for the Constitution in 1993, and he was also invited to develop laws for the 2005 and 2010 constitutional reforms. However, he said corruption plays a huge role, even in eco/environmental legislation. For instance, a person who illegally kills a snow leopard would be fined only 6,000 soms (about $150).

Another interviewee was Indira Jakipova of Ekois. The NGO has a representative in Karakol, the capital of Issyk Kul region, and many independent journalists from all over the country work for this NGO. Journalists usually write for the organization’s website, updating regional eco-news. However, they are rarely paid for their work. Jakipova updates the website and disseminates an ecological digest on a regular basis. In addition, the organization has a bulletin, Areol, which provides recent updates about the ecological situation and the organization’ achievements. She said journalists mostly cover political problems, leaving eco/environmental issues in the background. Moreover, the unstable political situation has influenced the activities of Ekois, making it difficult to find donors for eco/environmental projects. Thus many eco-NGOs changed their goals to connect their activities with social and health care problems.

The next interview was with Darika Sulaimanova of Unison where she coordinates its Power Sector Management Program. The NGO was established in 2002 and has a representative office in the city of Naryn. According to Sulaimanova, the organization lacks regular connections with media. However, it has created Google groups dedicated to power sector management and climate change. Google groups give it an opportunity to send a biweekly digest to members and it provides a platform to discuss published articles. However, members of the Google groups are mainly people working in the eco/environmental sector, so the information does not necessarily reach ordinary citizens and rarely gets published in the mass media. Unison has broadcast video material on climate change on the Kyrgyz Public TV/Radio Corporation and organized trainings for journalists on environmental journalism.

Sulaimanova said it is necessary to raise people’s awareness of eco/environmental issues. Regular columns dedicated to ecology and environment could contribute toward development of better relations among journalists, experts, NGOs, and civil society groups. Moreover, Sulaimanova said ecological problems are not as popular for media coverage as political issues. Therefore, the country’s unstable political situation occupies a central place in the media and does not provide opportunities to raise public awareness of ecology. If any ecological topics are covered in the media now, they will lose their value in contrast to the most current issues such as politics and the economy.

In her interview, Irina Chistyakova of the UNDP project on Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development and an editor-analyst of the CARNet network, cited a number of problems with

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reporting of eco/environmental issues. According to her, civil society organizations in developing countries are uninterested in ecological problems because they have many other important concerns, such as rising food prices and political and economic instability. Moreover, ecological problems do not appear to have an immediate effect—most such problems in the country are currently not dangerous to human life although they will influence the lives of people decades later. For instance, Chistyakova spoke of radioactive tailings in Tuiuk Suu, which are threatened by landslides and where removal efforts would take at least two years.

According to Chistyakova, one of the crucial problems is the low status of the responsible governmental body, the State Agency for Environmental Protection in Kyrgyzstan. The agency does not have representatives in the parliament and, therefore, does not have influence on governmental decision-making processes. In light of rapid changes in governmental agencies, Chistyakova said the agency’s executive board does not focus on long-term plans.

Another problem cited is the absence of a permanent column in any of the news media. Vecherniy Bishkek used to have a regular feature called “Ekopolis” by journalist Svetlana Lapteva that was published once every month or two months but without a stable schedule. Chistyakova also noted that most eco-NGOs do not hire public relations specialists who could develop proper relations with media outlets. On the other hand, journalists cannot produce quality eco/environmental articles, due to their lack of skills and understanding of ecological problems, she said. “Journalists often confuse basic environmental terms. The lack of PR specialists also plays its role—sometimes eco-NGOs do not even prepare press releases for their press conferences.”

The projects coordinator of Biom, Anna Kirilenko, expressed a different opinion on eco/environmental journalism. She said ecological journalism is improving and the number of journalists reporting about and interested in this sphere is increasing. Moreover, Kirilenko said a number of journalists have become specialists on ecological issues. Kirilenko also noted the historical development of the ecological movement and ecological journalism in Kyrgyzstan. “After the collapse of the Soviet Union, any NGO was perceived as a money-washing machine. The attitude of people toward the activity of eco-NGOs was negative and biased,” she said. The ecological movement in Kyrgyzstan has gone through many stages and difficulties. As a consequence, the topics raised by eco-NGOs were perceived negatively. People tend to believe that eco-NGOs are just trying to scare people.

Kirilenko was the only interviewee who questioned the necessity of publishing regular articles in the media. She said Biom has been publishing regular materials in the Slovo Kyrgyzstana newspaper. From this experience, she said it is important not to scare the public or cause panic. As she noted, that is what journalistic talent is about—the ability to find balance—and that is something eco/environmental journalism in Kyrgyzstan lacks.

The content analysis found few articles published under the instigation or initiative of eco-NGOs. Only 26 percent of articles on the 24.kg website and 12 percent of articles in Vecherniy Bishkek were written under the initiative of independent, non-governmental entities or journalists themselves (editorials or columns). The most popular topics were the agricultural industry, poaching, mudflows, animals, Lake Issyk Kul, urban gardening, environmental protection, protected natural areas, renewable energy, water supply, and waste. The articles in Fig. 1 eco/environmental topics

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21 A. Kirilenko, interview, 4 May, 2011, Bishkek.
were mentioned more than three times with at least three articles on each topic published in both 24.kg and Vecherniy Bishkek during the study period.

In addition, it was noticed that the two media outlets had different agendas. There were a number of issues that were raised only by one of them. For instance, 24.kg never mentioned air pollution or natural resources during the study period, while Vecherniy Bishkek never reported on climate change, radioactive waste, or the agricultural industry that 24.kg had covered.

The data answered the Research Question: What are the 3 or 4 most important ecological problems in the country that your organization is interested in? NGO representatives listed deforestation, pasture degradation, tailings, persistent organic pollutants, climate change, greenhouse gases, energy resources, biodiversity, and defense of ecological rights. By comparison, the most popular published topics were the agriculture industry, poaching, mudflows, animals, Lake Issyk Kul, urban gardening, protected natural areas, renewable energy sources, water supply, and waste. Table 1 shows the difference.

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the 3 or 4 most important ecological problems in the country that your organization is interested in?</th>
<th>Topics most covered in both 24.kg and Vecherniy Bishkek</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>deforestation</td>
<td>agriculture industry</td>
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<tr>
<td>pasture degradation</td>
<td>poaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>tailings</td>
<td>mudflows</td>
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<tr>
<td>persistent organic pollutants</td>
<td>animals</td>
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<tr>
<td>climate change</td>
<td>Lake Issyk Kul</td>
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<tr>
<td>greenhouse gases</td>
<td>urban gardening</td>
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<tr>
<td>energy resources</td>
<td>protected natural areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>biodiversity</td>
<td>renewable energy sources</td>
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<tr>
<td>ecological rights</td>
<td>water supply</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>wastes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table shows the comparison of answers from eco-NGO representatives and data gathered through the content analysis. The list of most important ecological problems these organizations were interested in differs from the topics covered most often by both media outlets. As a result, we can see that eco-NGO leaders and journalists, and consequently, media-consuming readers, consider the environmental situation of the country differently. What seems most important or newsworthy to one group does not to the other. Therefore, citizens might not be aware of what eco-NGOs regard as the most important ecological problems because journalists do not report about them.

Shukurov, of Aleine, said in his interview that some journalists are not motivated or interested in reporting on certain topics unless they get paid for it. However, based on the data collected for the content analysis, it is clear that media outlets published environmental articles almost daily on average during the study period, as well as editorials and columns. Shukurov also said his organization communicates with journalists mainly via phone if they call for an expert opinion. However, that is insufficient to develop effective relations and connections with the media.

The representative of Ala-Too, Karsymbek, usually arranges meetings with journalists and experts. However, such meetings do not necessarily lead to coverage of her NGO’s activities because journalists could be interested in issues that the NGO is not interested in.
In comparison with those eco-NGOs, Ekois seemed more active in forming relationships with journalists. However, sending them digests and publishing bulletins does not always mean they will read the information. In addition, as Jakipova noted, its digest includes extensive articles about environmental issues elsewhere in Central Asian and other countries, which could be a reason why local journalists are not interested.

Unison’s Sulaimanova acknowledged that her eco-NGO has not established regular connections with media although journalists are interested in publishing its materials. This seems inconsistent because the organization has plenty of time to develop necessary links with journalists since its establishment in 2002. The organization has created two Google groups dedicated to Power Sector Management and climate change. However, the number of listed participants is relatively small—132 members in the first group and 113 in the second. Most of the listed participants represent other eco-NGOs and governmental agencies; only a few people from media and journalists are included in the lists. These Google groups do not disseminate the information among ordinary citizens.

As for the UNDP project interviewee, Chistyakova said CARNet’s main goal is to raise awareness about civil society related to development of ecological issues. The organization has functioned since 2004 and has representative offices in Central Asian countries as part of a Central Asian network. The network is well developed; however, its contribution in raising people’s awareness on the ecological issues is arguable. It is obvious that cooperation within the countries has developed and is seen in terms of the network’s activities. However, CARNet is not an information agency and, thus, is not popular among people and ordinary citizens who do not work in the sphere of ecology. Chistyakova said CARNet established relationships with a number of professional journalists and organized competitions and media tours for journalists from Bishkek and other regions of the country; journalists from the regions are more interested in its trainings and seminars than their colleagues from the capital.

Meanwhile, the content analysis found only one article about CARNet’s activities. The material was in the form of interview with NGO representative Jaras Abu Takenov and was published on 24.kg on 5 February, 2010.

Anna Kirilenko, the representative of Biom, said her NGO has developed close relations with journalists that report on the issues of ecology and environment. Kirilenko told that Biom is always trying to take the track of the journalist into consideration. She emphasized that they always provide journalists with special press-kits, even including certain video materials, when they organize special events for the press. During the content analysis, the study found two articles citing Biom, and both were written on the topic of renewable energy sources.

Kirilenko said that “most of the articles on eco/environmental spheres tend to cause the feelings of guilt and anxiety, and they usually lack the information or guidelines on how to deal with the problems or do not have any list of possible ways to overcome such difficulties. Thus, such articles cause the feeling of disgust.” According to her, eco-NGOs have to change people’s perception of the organizations and ecology itself. She also said journalists should focus more on positive reporting of environment and ecology to encourage the public people to be hopeful and ready to act without waiting for help from government or eco-NGOs. “It is really amazing that people in Kyrgyzstan were able to make two revolutions but cannot keep the streets clean and the residents of certain small regions are not able to fix their water pipes,” she said.

Areas for Future Research

Since environmental journalism is not well-developed in Kyrgyzstan, there is a wide range of questions for future research. They include: What kind of environmental articles are perceived best by the publics? This article examines only two parts of the three-step communication process. The
first is based on the interviews with eco-NGO representatives concerning their understanding of the need to raise public awareness in these issues, as well as the tools they use and measures they undertake toward development of environmental journalism. The second part, based on the content analysis, is examination of how eco-NGOs communicate with media and what environmental topics the media cover. However, this study does not incorporate public perception of environmental issues or of media coverage of those issues. For example, these questions could be researched: How interested are people in environmental issues? What is their perception of eco-NGOs? How do they react to different types of news coverage about environmental issues? How would they like press coverage to change? What would they advise to improve the reporting? In addition, researchers should expand such studies geographically and in terms of media type and language. This article limited its content analysis to two Russian-language news outlets—one online, one in print—based in Bishkek, with no regional media, no radio or television channels, and no media in Kyrgyz.

Conclusion

Among eco-NGOs in Kyrgyzstan, only six of those based in Bishkek were active during the study period; others changed their focus to social issues to qualify for grants. The active ones lacked public relations specialists who could help develop journalists’ interest in ecological issues. Despite the multiplicity of serious environmental issues and newsworthy topics for future articles, media coverage of those topics and of eco-NGOs remains small. As eco-NGO representatives emphasized in interviews, ecological issues are not popular topics on the media agenda, while coverage priority focuses on economics and politics. However, economic and ecological issues are interrelated. Karsymbek and Shukurov said media outlets should publish a regular column dedicated to eco/environmental issues, a proposal that suggests that enhancing coverage could make those issues more prominent for decision-makers in government and international organizations.

Even if traditional news media are not covering ecological issues in depth, some websites are dedicated to ecological and environmental problems of Central Asia, and Kyrgyzstan in particular, including [www.caresd.net] and [www.ekois.net]. Another, [www.carecnet.org], was established by the Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia founded by the region’s five countries, UNDP, and the European Commission. The news section of that website is updated daily, publishes interviews with experts, and provides information about upcoming trainings, grant opportunities, and workshops. Its major themes are: information and capacity building; climate change and sustainable energy; water initiatives; education for sustainable development; civil society initiatives, and environmental management and policy.

As this study shows, eco-NGOs have not developed effective, ongoing relationships with media outlets and individual journalists, contributing significantly to a lack of coverage. The need to establish a certain common set of ideas and understandings of environmental issues among eco-NGOs, media, is essential.

The study illuminates how eco-NGOs and media outlets have different understandings of the country’s most important environmental problems. This also is illustrated by the fact that the two media outlets in the study had different agendas. As noted earlier, “Media do not reflect reality, they filter and shape it, and a media concentration on a few issues and subjects leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues.”22 However, these six eco-NGOs did not contribute toward reflecting, filtering, and shaping media outlets’ environmental agenda. As a consequence, the public remains unaware of issues that are rarely raised in the press.

22 University of Twente, “Agenda-Setting Theory.”
It should be acknowledged that two-way communication between eco-NGOs and the media is not an easy process, and “this is especially true, when shared understandings about health, safety, or ecological risk do not exist.” Thus, eco-NGOs and media should develop some common understandings, principles, and issues for the media agenda.

However, these eco-NGOs are not ready to be agenda-builders. The environmental agenda of Vecherniy Bishkek and 24.kg during the study period consisted primarily of topics raised by governmental bodies, with only a small percentage prompted by eco-NGOs. To be more effective in this realm, cooperation among eco-NGOs is one necessary step toward establishing and publicizing their own agendas. They should unite to increase their mutual capacity to become a strong lobbying force that could influence governmental agencies and parliament.

Basing on the findings, we can conclude that eco-NGOs lack an understanding of how to effectively develop relations with media outlets and how to raise public awareness of environmental issues. The content analysis shows that eco-NGOs rarely cooperate with both 24.kg and Vecherniy Bishkek. Although some eco-NGOs conducted seminars for journalists, they acknowledge that many journalists are too busy to participate. Also, most eco-NGOs representatives interviewed acknowledged that their main communication with journalists is limited to press releases and email subscriptions on Google groups or with bulletins. Moreover, information from eco-NGO sources does not always satisfy journalists’ needs. These organizations are unable to demonstrate the newsworthiness of their materials and, as a consequence, most challenging and interesting topics do not reach the attention of media audiences.

\[\text{23 R. O'Leary, R. F. Durant, D. J. Fiorino, P. S. Weiland, op. cit.}\]