Central Asian Knot Of World Politics

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the problems associated with determining the location of post-Soviet states of Central Asia in the modern world politics. The following issues are of central attention: characteristics of the Central Asian Region (CAR), features of its political transformation, traditional and nontraditional security challenges, "multi-vector" foreign relations of the CAR, the European dimension (European Union and Russia) in their foreign policy cooperation with major regional states of Asia and the Middle East, the prospects of international relations of Central Asian states and its role in the world politics.

Keywords: Central Asia, European Union, NATO, OSCE.

1. Introduction

In the centre of the study, which covers mainly the 2000s, there are five Central Asian states (CAS) - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. They appeared on the world stage as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union and became due to move in recent years, many international processes from Europe to Asia, at the intersection of competing interests, both regional and global.

The world environment surrounding the Central Asian Region (CAR) is rapidly changing: it has the traditional international relations, where the mainly role is played by the state and the bilateral relationship, increasingly replaced by a new international interaction of new content whose participants are not only state and intergovernmental organizations, but also nongovernmental factors - non-governmental organizations, transnational corporations (TNCs), inside the state regions, etc. Of course such an interaction, by observation of the famous Russian orientalist Ya. Belokrenitsky, is "more and more close, interlinked and mutually binding" (Belokrenitsky 2009, p.16). Another Russian scientist, specialized in the study of international relations and world politics – V. Baranovsky, pays attention to a remarkable feature of the emerging international system: it "was and continues to be

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redistributed between the proportion of the various existing and emerging centres of influence, particularly in regard to their ability to influence other nations and the world as a whole. The main intrigue in the emerging international system is deployed on the line between developed and developing world... The world is not more divided into a relatively small part of the industrial and many underdeveloped countries. Now there is another formula: a group of traditionally highly developed countries and increasingly tending to them a group of countries with dynamic economies in transition "(Baranovsky, 2010 p.6). All these indicate that in the modern world the major and fundamental changes are undergoing. With regard to international problems, and they are now often considered "in conjunction with each other and in a single global context" (Lebedev, 2006, p.125).

Along with changing actual influences of the modern world, by the different balance of power in it, new components and factors of global security are formed. It is now threatened mainly by non-governmental factors - ethnic separatism, religious extremism and cover, as a rule, religious guise transnational terrorism. Global scale has achieved such a threat, as drug trafficking, as well as the uncontrolled distribution of weapons of mass destruction. A significant place is taken by threat of environmental degradation - including air pollution, global warming, reduction of forest areas, etc. Acquired great importance is given to the threat of wars over water. Many of these threats and challenges are highly relevant for Central Asia.

A significant influence on the development of world politics, in general, and its Central Asian segment, as a part, cause the globalization processes. Such external influence has ambiguous consequences for the CAS.

On one hand, it is able to transform the authoritarian societies of the region towards the perception of separate elements of the liberal market model; globalization also creates favourable conditions for cooperation with developed countries of the West Asian states in dire need of modern technology; it stimulates economic modernization, promotes greater involvement of some CAS into the world economic processes. But on the other hand, globalization, leaving slight opportunities for nation-states to maintain their economic, political and cultural sovereignty, increases the tendency to turn the CASs into a raw materials appendage of the developed world. This has already led a number of countries of the region to the one-sided development of the financial system and economy, made them dependent on the fluctuating world prices for energy, in some cases, initiated the development of the "Dutch disease".

In fairness, it should be noted that these negative trends are often not only because of globalization, but also selected by the CAS direction of development. Therefore the crises in many respects are also due to internal factors. Among them there are - the lack of sustained growth on a market basis, dis benefit in internal market with its ineffective non-raw material sectors, incomplete nation-building processes, the acuteness of the social, national and ethnic problems, corruption, clanliness, etc.

An increased international competition in the region is initiating instability. In a sense of undermining the sovereignty of Central Asian states, the globalization expands the opportunities of TNCs as well as international security structures controlled by the West - such as NATO and the OSCE - to influence, in a positive direction for the West, to the local and less structured political systems. All of these issues are anyway represented in numerous studies on Central Asia. There, however, insufficient attention is paid to identifying the place of CAS in modern world politics. This work is an attempt to fill in the space in our existing scientific literature. Post-Soviet Central Asian republics are considered by the authors as independent (regional) segment of the emerging polycentric world, and as part of the European Eurasia, and as a subsystem of developing Asia, and as a specific component of modern global processes, with their particular weight in Afghan international political component. This multilevel approach allows getting an idea of international relations in the CAR, and their prospects, as well as the role given to the CAR countries in the modern world politics. All combined issues give to the performed research a high relevance.

CENTRAL ASIA AS A SEGMENT OF MODERN WORLD-SYSTEM

An important place in Central Asia (CA) in a modern world-system is defined by very specific factors - the possession of the countries in the given region in fuel and energy resources, transit opportunities, opening (or closing) an access to the strategically important regions of South and East Asia, the Middle East. These factors, as
well as other specific features of the CA, can characterize it as a segment (region) of the modern polycentric world, as its particular emerging subsystem.

Characteristics of Central Asia as a region, and features in political transformation of its states
CAR occupies a large territory (about 4 million sq. km.), which has no outlet to the ocean. For the International economic and political activity of the CAS there are some distinct obstacles and other geographical barriers: mountainous landscape, impassable deserts and semi deserts, etc. This all leads the CAS at present to import and export their products, mainly, through the Russian Federation and Iran. The region's population, in total amounted, in July 2010, over 61 million people (15.460.484 in Kazakhstan, 5.508.526 in Kyrgyzstan, 7.487489 in Tajikistan, 4.940.916 in Turkmenistan, 27.856.738 in Uzbekistan) (http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/region/region_cas.html), is not so much by the world standards. But CAR is rich in raw materials (oil, gas, gold, copper, aluminium, uranium, etc.). According to the World Bank, oil and gas exports in different countries of the region is from 30 to 40% of the total volume, and the benefit from the sale of these hydrocarbons form a significant portion of budget income to provide basic resources for investment and development. The economics of Central Asian states as a whole is similar to each other, but the vectors of economic development are different.

Uzbekistan located in the "heart" of Central Asia occupies in the region a particular geostrategic and geopolitical position. Its' extending over 6221 km borders are in contact with all the Central Asian states and Afghanistan. There are many Uzbek Diasporas, who may wish to become an important lever for the influence of Uzbekistan. The state controls basically all economic activity, combined with elements of central planning and strategy based on import substitution, prevents economic liberalization and structural reforms that significantly limits the development of private enterprise.

Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, making integration into the global economy as a goal of their economic development, performed significant macroeconomic reforms, which enabled them to be recognize as the countries with market economies. Another thing is that the results of the reforms in both countries differ from each other.

Kazakhstan remains one of the leaders of economic growth not only in Central Asia, but also in the former Soviet Union and its economic system is considered the freest in comparison with the rest of the CAR. The most important factor in the rapid increase in GDP of Kazakhstan is the development of oil and gas industries, and which are the main recipients of foreign investment. The benefits from hydrocarbon exports have become a major resource for the modernization of the economy, although in this situation, there is another side - a strong economy's dependence on commodity export. GDP growth in Kazakhstan was 7% in 2000 - 2007, which has decreased in the global economic crisis to 3% in 2008 and up to 1% in 2009 (http://www.worldbank.org.kz/). In 2010, the GDP grew by 8% of GDP in 2011 by 8,3% of GDP and in 2012 by 8% (http://www.ca-news.org/news/442951).

But Kyrgyzstan, being the most consistently implementing the recommendations of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, but who has not reached the sustainable economic growth, falls into the state of deep economic and political crisis after the two "revolutions". Tajikistan, which was considered in the Soviet times, as the poorest republic of the Union, is still feeling the effects of the internal conflict of the 1990s and the country could not find the strength and resources to carry out radical reforms. However, Tajikistan together with Kyrgyzstan is playing an important geo-strategic role in the region, due to the fact that both republics control 90% of all water resources of CAR. Tajikistan, in addition, allows access to the restive Fergana Valley; the republic borders with Chinese Xinjiang, is an oasis between Iran and Persian culture, and the most remote military outpost of Russia – due to its military presence here - in the former Soviet Union. Turkmenistan, whose economy is based solely on benefits from gas exports (by its reserves, Turkmenistan is the fourth largest in the world), launched in 2007 to reform the individual sectors (petroleum, financial and industrial), but the overall state control of all basic sectors of the economy remains quite strong. According to the Internet portal of the NIS the GDP growth in 2011 in Turkmenistan was amounted almost 9%, and by a minor involvement into the global processes the republic's economy was insignificantly affected by the economic crisis. Based on its natural potential, favourable geo-strategic position in the Caspian and convinced about peculiarly understood policy of neutrality, Turkmenistan until the recent time has precluded its participation in regional integration processes.
The Central Asian states, in general, form similar to each other in respect of historical, cultural, religious and civilizational plans environment. During the Soviet time it was defined by the term "Central Asia and Kazakhstan", which was associated with the division of the USSR into the economic regions. In fact the Central Asian region included four Soviet Union republics, the Kyrgyz, Tajik, Turkmen and Uzbek, apart from the Central Asian region existed in Kazakhstan. In 1992, the President of Kazakhstan N. Nazarbayev, at the meeting of the heads of Central Asia, proposed to use the term "Central Asia" for all five independent states of the region, which, along with the old name - Central Asia, has taken a firm place in the political and scientific use.

There are other interpretations of Central Asia as a region. Iranian scientist M. Sanai, for example, names it a "territory", bordered on the North by the Kazakh steppes, on the South-North by Afghanistan and Iran in the West by the Caspian Sea, and from the East by Xinjiang (Sanai 2002, p.5). UNESCO extends the geographical scope of the actual CAR (composed of five former Soviet republics), including Mongolia in it, Western China, Northern Afghanistan, Northern India, Northern Pakistan, North-Eastern Iran and the Asian part of Russia to the South of the taiga zone. As the basis of another method in determining the borders of modern Central Asia the ethnic composition of the population is taken, according to which the CAR is considered as a region inhabited by Turkic folks of the former Soviet Central Asian republics (though, note the people of Tajikistan is mainly Persian speaking), Chinese Xinjiang, Northern Afghanistan, South Siberia, Mongolia and Tibet.

Central Asia is recognized as a part of the "Islamic world", this message, as suggested by some researchers (Naumkin 2005, pp. 122-123.), it is not quite true. During the years of Soviet Government the Islamic traditions of Central Asia were either disrupted, or they have undergone a major transformation, therefore one can’t say about Islam as factor of some supra-national identity.

In this paper, in relation to the five post-Soviet republics of the former Central Asia and Kazakhstan such known terms of political science as "Central Asia" and "Central Asian region" are used. Here the following circumstances are taken into account. First, the political, military-strategic and economic contours of the CARs do not always coincide with the existing models of the Asian world division into the conventional geographic regions. And, secondly, the Central Asian countries are just beginning to develop internal communications that didn’t have yet a stable character and didn’t develop a solid basis for such inner unity, which would implicitly assume CA has formed a region. However, the basis for such unity exists.

In the second half of the XIX century, this tradition by taking a privileged position in the spiritual and cultural spheres of Central Asian folks, to some extent, contributed to the perception of many elements of the modernization model. So that by the beginning of the 1990s the population of Central Asia advantageously differed by many different parameters (the standard of living, education, health, cultural and political development) from its Asian neighbours - in developing countries. Not accidentally, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has included into its membership the newly independent states of Central Asia, as if acknowledging their involvement, in advance, to European civilization, which was confirmed also in the decision to entrust the presidency of Kazakhstan in 2010 in the organization. 2010 was a year of Kazakhstan's chairmanship in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Kazakhstan became the first country in Central Asia and the first post-Soviet state that received the OSCE chairmanship.

Becoming from 21 December 1991 full members of the formed Independent States (CIS) from the dissolved USSR and being entered into the period of transformation, or "transition" the newly independent Central Asian countries have not focused their interests on the structure uniting the former Soviet republics. They began to search for other ways of cooperation, both at the sub-regional level, and through the creation of different kinds of groups, along with neighbouring Asian countries. The first half of the 1990s, the Central Asian republics applied a Turkish, Chinese, Korean and other models. Simultaneously, the regions gradually develop their own economic and political priorities, led the search for new partners and allies.

A hypothetical possibility of filling the ideological vacuum, created in post-Soviet CA republics, by religious ideology, was not excluded. There was debate about the possibility of association under the auspices of Turkey,
Turkic-speaking folks of the former Soviet Union; moreover this idea was often detected in the statements of the Turkish high-ranking politicians. But the idea of unity of the Muslim Turkic folks of Central Asian, having a certain access to the area of the local nationalistic oriented intellectuals, in the masses took root, and Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia and other Muslim states could not secure a footing in Central Asia. Islamic paradigm does not lay down here in the framework of political transformation, although Islam is seen, almost everywhere in Central Asia, as a major component of the cultural and civilizational traditions. Priority was also given to the development of relatively secular and modern culture. In general, the political systems of all Central Asian states with external institutions and procedures for maintaining a pluralistic society are drifting toward the formation of model-managing, or otherwise - a simulating, democracy (Malishev 2004). This form of government, from the standpoint of the ruling elite, best allows supporting the peace and social stability, to prevent the development of sectarian and ethnic conflicts. In addition, the real, rather than showcase of democratization of the political life of Central Asian countries are quite dangerous for the local ruling groups and it is bad predictable process. After all, it provides the possibility of defeat in the elections, the effects of which differ significantly from the European: the change of government in Asian countries usually entails the transmission into uncivilized opposition, and a large-scale redistribution of spheres of influence in the field of economics and politics.

Another problem is the nature of the opposition in the CAS. Democratic tradition initiated here since the early 1990s, as well as political pluralism, have a very weak base. There is no respectively accelerated political emigration among the population, whose representatives, in the case of their access to power could enlist the support of their followers. On-going fighting in the states of Central Asia between the government and the opposition is only the visible to public eye process. In fact, here, in contrast to the usual Western civilization of the party-political factors, there are much stronger influences on the policy by the regional, clan, compatriotic, ancestral associations that exist informally as opposed to party-political ones. In addition, the specific social, political culture, and history of the peoples in the region, pre-doom any "velvet" (i.e., non-violent) revolution in the transformation into a bloody feud that demonstrated two "revolutions" in Kyrgyzstan at the latest period. If we take the earlier history - the inter-Tajik conflict, then is has started with a relatively peaceful confrontation in Dushanbe in two areas where political rivals were gathered, eventually ended up in a lot of blood. Possibly, the memory of that tragedy encourage the Central Asian leaders to better diligence and caution, because any sudden movement can result in the destabilization of Central Asia, to irreparable consequences.

But due to the fact that the political "field" in some Central Asian states is cleared from any dominant secular opposition, its place is attempted to be taken by non-systemic religious and political organizations and movements. They become the main alternative power, and they, as has already happened in the Middle East, democratization and free elections in theory can open up opportunities not only to legalize but also for the coming to power. Therefore the political logic pushes the dominant ruling group pushes CAS to take a prescription, not much focused on democratization, but rather on the stability, on strong government to preserve the current regime, which is given carte blanche to confront the issue of opposition, especially if the latter resorted to armed methods of struggle. A democratic model aceleratory implemented without considering the local specifics is not able to cope with the real challenges of still semi-feudal social structure of the CAR, which is fraught with chaos and chronic instability.

Thus in some countries (especially in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan) Islamism has loudly announced itself as a political force, the fight with it will have a long-term prospects in the CAR, and the situation here is difficult in all respects. This does not preclude, meanwhile, widely used by the authorities of the Central Asian states the threat of religious extremism as a pretext to deal with the political opposition, and therefore one can assume that the real threat of terrorism in a religious guise in Central Asian countries are often highly exaggerated to justify attempts to restrict civil rights and freedoms, as well as receiving additional funds from Western donor countries.

The historian and social anthropologist, Professor Carleton College (USA) Adib Ghalib emphasizes in this regard: "Deliberately exaggerating the terrorist threat, the authorities use it to control the religious life of citizens. This is despite the fact that all modes name Islam a part of their cultural heritage. Since the repression affect the huge layer of politically inactive Muslims, the government runs the risk of alienation of a huge part of society which does not sympathize with Islamic militants and has nothing to do with them" (Khalid, 2006, p.66).
Modernization of the political systems in the selected countries of Central Asia with the possibility for admission of their members of the "moderate Islam", denying the violence is a difficult task because it requires political will, both in government and in religious opposition. So the Islamic factor in Central Asia will not disappear itself, that only increases the urgency of making arrangements for sanitation in mainstream of legal protests, painted into religious tones.

And still the way of "imitation democracy" is not an optimal way in CA to solve the toughest problems. Yes, the restriction of political rights and freedoms - in some countries is more (Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), in others is less (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan) - has no effect as if the whole on the internal political stability and authoritarian rule may, in some periods, serve justification for maintaining such stability at the proper level. After all, without the firm hand of the state in the CAR it is difficult to do in the fight against old challenges and threats posed by the region, as well as threats of transition, directed to Central Asia from the Border States.

Serious challenges to security in Central Asia are unresolved border disputes. They affect most of the republics of the region, but especially Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, where the ethnic overlapping and the lack of universally accepted boundaries is aggravated by lack of land and - which is even more important in the arid climate - water resources, which causes periodical conflicts of distinct socio-economic tinge. A problem of "population pressure" has increased in Central Asia (http://www.liter.kz/index2.php?option=com_content&task), leading to increased migration flows and makes the problem of food security in the CAR not be solved effectively. Kazakhstan, being in the group of countries with an average population growth and having a deficiency in the labour force may face in the future with uncontrollable migratory flows from neighbouring countries - Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, where the population density in certain regions (Fergana Valley) is very high. At the same time the main mass of the rural population is dealing with low-productivity work, and it constantly replenishes itself by the Army of poor folk, as a result of undeveloped national economies and the lack of a global initiative.

The on-going full speed "energy decentralization" in the CAR, caused by rivalry over water and energy resources, is fraught with conflict. Long time existed disputes over water in Central Asia, somewhat muffled in the Soviet Union time, have been extremely deteriorated in 2009-2010. In particular, the tensions created in connection with plans for the construction of the Rogun hydroelectric power station in Tajikistan and Kambarat hydroelectric power station in Kyrgyzstan on trans-boundary waterways of Amu Darya and Syr-Darya. The conflict has led to the fact that Uzbekistan at the end of 2009 has totally refused to participate in the United Energy System of Central Asia (UES CA), which, besides itself, consisted of Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. However, so far, none of the Central Asian republics can solve energy problems autonomously, without prejudice to the neighbours, and hence, without loss to themselves. Thus, there are differences between the Central Asian states, not only on the use of water resources, but also on the ways to achieve energy independence. Assessing the situation, the Kyrgyz analyst V. Bogatirev draws attention to a disturbing phenomenon in CAR policy, as forming "a kind of new informal unit of two countries (Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan), which, obviously, will start a quick rapprochement and engage in joint alignment policy on water resource management "(Bishkek Press news (Kyrgyzstan). URL: http://bpc.kg/news/5635-10-03-09).

For the safety of the Central Asian the Afghan vector objectively remains the key in the number of threats. The main danger to the Central Asian secular regimes of and especially to Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan - countries represented in the volatile Fergana Valley, which has traditionally found refuge for religious-political movements – they represent few, and not alien to extremists’ plans, opposition groups (the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan - IMU Akramiya, Hizb-ut-Tahrir and others), had taken refuge in Afghanistan. The influence of these groups in the states of Central Asia is primarily due to serious internal economic and social problems - widespread poverty, high unemployment, especially among the young, growing social inequalities and the widening gap in incomes of the population.

Beyond the threat of militants from Afghanistan, the real danger was the use of Afghan territory for drug production, which is a subject of the Central Asian countries and Russia.
Currently, there are parallel functioning military structures in the CAR, funded and organized by Russia, on one hand, and the United States and NATO, on the other hand. But soften the coming external challenges and threats in Central Asian trans-border crime, terrorism, religious extremism and drug trafficking. Even the problems of stability and security in Central Asia are interpreted differently than in the West. German expert on Central Asia Beate Eshment notes in this regard: "In Central Asia, stability is perceived as a lack of change and security - as the stability of nations, specifically modes. If the European Union, raising the topic of security, has in mind, including safety of individual, the Central Asian countries are considering at this issue very differently, and when the West starts a conversation about human rights (as part of the concept of security), the Europeans are immediately accused of meddling into internal affairs "(http://www.ferghana.ru/article.php?id = 6348). Another feature is that the CAS are weakly related to each other and focus more on other regional forces or non-regional powers, therefore the security threats and challenges are not the same for them, are not perceived by all five Central Asian states as a region-wide.

For example, the problem of drug trafficking, although the Central Asian countries officially recognize it as a threat, in practice in somewhat concerns the local government. According to V. Bogatyrev, CASs are basically only the transit for the transfer of drugs from Afghanistan, and they are not their main producers and consumers. And therefore such a transit "is really and unofficially admitted as one of the shadow branches of the economy. For this reason, "there are no serious anti-drug government agencies which are not held by the CAR" (http://www.ipp.kg/ru/analysis/774/). Or there is a problem of the Islamist threat. It is relevant to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, but quite different, more relaxed perceived in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Thus, the Central Asian countries show a clear unwillingness to consolidate their efforts to repel external challenges and threats. Despite the importance of this issue one cannot discount the risk of domestic political risks that CASs may face. In this regard, an undoubted attention should be given to the conclusion that makes the Russian specialist on Central Asia I. Zvyagelskaya from the analysis of the political situation in the region and the outcomes of the internal transformation of each CAS: "The lack of channels for political expression of grievances, unresolved succession issues can become more serious challenges for the regimes in the states of Central Asian, than external risks and threats "(Zvyagelskaya 2009, p.74).

"MULTI-VECTOR" INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS OF CA

In recent years the focus of international competition is increasingly shifting from areas of Europe to Central and East Asia. Here, there is the competition in economic, military and political interests of Russia, China, Iran, Turkey, India, Pakistan, the non-regional governments and structures (U.S., EU, NATO). At the same time CASs are involved together with Russia into the changes that occur in Central Asia due to the intensification of military operations in Afghanistan. The very process of identification of the foreign policy of Central Asian states differs by contradiction and inconsistency, which is exacerbated by internal political systems of these former Soviet republics, which are the easy subject to social, ethnic and religious upheavals. Once drawn into the complex process of geopolitical balancing, post-Soviet Central Asian states have tried to distance from the possibility of binding to a single global or regional centre, to maintain good relations with all parties of on-going competition in the region. Such type of foreign policy marked by Russian political scientist and internationalist A. Bogaturov as "pending neutrality" - when the Central Asian countries "do not seek to engage in military cooperation beyond the minimum required security" and dose at their own discretion the cooperation with regional and non-regional players (http://www.globalaffairs.ru/numbers/43/13575.html), possibly, and guarantees for a while a internal and international security of CAS. However, the same foreign policy manoeuvring, the avoiding of commitments, the desire to seek foreign loans and grants to the detriment of own sovereignty, and many other things that formed the basis of today's attention, taken by all, without exception of CAG for a "multi-vector strategy", does not contribute to their transformation into a real subject of world politics. Instead, it creates favourable conditions for the establishment of the CAR "external control" - either the West (more likely), or China. The "multi-vectoring" disrupts the establishment of much-needed intra-regional cooperation in the Central Asian countries on the range of key issues - from border protection and security to the trading and distribution of water resources.

Even being combined into a regional structure (CIS, Eurasian Economic Community, Custom Union, etc.), the Central Asian states solve their socio-economic and political problems, as a rule, outside the region.
They all adhere to "multi-vector", which has various modifications in the region. But this, in general, is not new political line in international relations, (think about so beloved by modern Central Asian politicians winged dictum of Lord G. Palmerston that the UK has no permanent allies or enemies, there are only permanent and enduring interests), in the reality the CAR gives rise to a peculiar phenomenon of diversification not of the goals, but political partners, the substitution of a simplified manoeuvring of foreign policy priorities, verified and aligned on the basis of long-term national interests. It is clear that such "promiscuity in relations" of CAS has been used successfully to a variety of international partners to advance their own and very specific geopolitical interests. And all together creates a favourable basis for the rapid conversion of most of the Central Asian countries form once modernized society, what they promised to be during their stay within the USSR, into the periphery of the developed world, into its retarded ("third world") raw materials appendage.

CENTRAL ASIA AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

Along with Russia, an important role in the international politics of Central Asia on the European continent plays the European Union (EU). For the first time a qualitatively new options in its work - namely, to conduct a more active regional policy outside Europe, including Central Asia, were fixed by the Maastricht Agreement in 1993. After 10 years - in 2003 the EU launched an initiative "Wider Europe - New Neighbourhood", which was intended to solve problems rose to the EU in the process of its enlargement and convergence with new countries in Eastern and Central Europe. This initiative also provided the conditions for free movement of goods, services, capital and people. The paper published in the May 2004 titled “The European Neighbourhood Policy” outlined the principles on which the EU set out to build a privileged relationship with the countries of North Africa and the Middle East, on the one hand, and Eastern and Central Europe - on the other hand. It dealt with the commitment to such values as democracy, human rights, and rule of law, market economy and sustainable development.

"The European Neighborhood Policy" was focused on Eastern and Central Europe, which in the long term, together with a number of CIS countries amounted to a massive of "Great Europe". On May 7, 2009 the EU launched the program "Eastern Partnership", which implied a closer cooperation with non-EU and NATO and former Soviet republics, now independent states - Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. European Commission that developed the "Eastern Partnership" emphasized that the program was not aimed at preparing countries for EU accession, but only was provided for the development of broad cooperation with them. Six post-Soviet states were proposed, in addition to "a significant increase in the level of political engagement" with the EU, the prospect of obtaining a number of preferences.

The EU Strategy for Central Asia, although it had some similarities with the "Eastern Partnership", was distinguished by certain characteristics. First, the EU has positioned itself in Central Asia as a single region, representing the interests of united Europe, and the post-Soviet Central Asia, was inclined to be regard primarily as a regional association. This policy of the EU fundamentally differed from the approaches of Russia, the United States and China, in compare with CAR, where the preference was favoured to bilateral cooperation.

Secondly, the EU acted in Central Asia on the basis of a carefully designed long-term strategy, while the initiatives of other regional and global states represented in the region, were often dictated by considerations of today’s’ interests.

Thirdly, the EU has set for itself clear terms of priorities (economic reform, rule of law, border issues, migration, education, environment), which was carried out on the basis of funding of the projects in the region.

In addition, the EU in Central Asia, made a bid for joint economic interests, focused on progress in the area of European technical regulations and quality standards. Thus, the EU tried to create a relatively solid foundation for further expansion of its influence.

From 1994 to 2006 the cooperation between the EU and a number of CIS, including Central Asian regions, was carried out under the TACIS program (Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent States), whose main task was to promote accelerated economic reforms in the CIS. From 1 January 2007 TACIS was replaced by a new EU project - "European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument" (ENPI), which is before the expiration of
its action - December 31, 2013, applies to a few geographical areas. Central Asia is one of them. Here, as in the CIS as a whole, two previously running EU programs continue to operate: TRACECA (Transport Corridor Europe Central Asia-TRACECA), aimed for developing economic relations, trade and communications between Europe, the Caucasus and Asia; and INOGATE (Interstate Oil and Gas Transportation to Europe - INOGATE), which deals with problems of energy supply in Europe by Caspian oil and gas resources. The EU is trying to attract to the practical implementation of its programs, the resources of international organizations - UN, OSCE, International Organization for Migration and International Monetary Fund, etc.

Since 2006 the European Union Special Representative for Central Asia is working in the region to resolve the crisis in the Caucasus. The EU support plans on participation of Central Asian states in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The programs on providing the assistance to Central Asia in the fight against drug trafficking and poverty, law enforcement training, construction of new roads, oil and gas pipelines, are developed. For this purpose, Brussels allocated to the Central Asian countries in 2013 about 750 million Euros (http://business.restate.ru/news/43496.html). In 2007, the Presidency of Germany in EU initiated the development of the new strategy for Central Asia, which was aimed to develop a qualitatively new partnership with all countries of the region. The main provisions of the strategy were outlined in the document entitled "European Union and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership, 2007" (www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/.../EU_CtrlAsia_EN-RU.pdf). By defining the essence of the strategy, its author, former German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Stein Meier, said that the EU policy towards the region should be determined by two factors: Central Asia is a huge market and, simultaneously, is a great source of energy for Europe (http://russian.eurasianet.org/node/30823).

Presentation of the strategy was held on 28-29 March 2007 in Astana, Kazakhstan in the format "Three countries of EU - Central Asia" on the fourth (from 2004) meeting of EU members with ministers of foreign affairs of Central Asian republics. Since then, the EU is working in Central Asia within the framework of this strategy. Its main feature is that it provides an individual approach to each of the five states in the region. This means that the EU declares the intention to establish equal relations not only with key Central Asian countries - Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, but also with less developed countries in the region.

By pointing to the strategic importance of a particular document, and stressing that "EU has a strong interest in a peaceful, democratic and economically prosperous Central Asia", the new partnership strategy outlines the following specific steps: the establishment of permanent regional political dialogue EU - Central Asia at the level of ministers for foreign affairs; the introduction of "European Education Initiative" and support in development of the project "e-Silk Road" in Central Asia; activate "Initiatives of the EU rule of law"; the establishment permanent dialogue with each state in Central Asia on human rights, aimed to achieving specific results; and performing on a regular basis a "energy dialogue" with the countries of Central Asia.

According to the report, the interest of EU in Central Asia is caused by several moments and first of all by the desire for involvement of not only the South Caucasus, but also Central Asia to the program on "European Neighbourhood and Partnership." Besides, there is a task of bringing the energy resources of Central Asia in order to ensure EU energy security and meet the needs of European countries in the oil and gas.

The document contains a list of existing regional organizations in Central Asia, with which "EU is ready to engage into an open and constructive dialogue", "establish regular ad certain contacts". This is the Eurasian Economic Community (EEC), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, the Organization of the Collective Security Agreement, the Central Asian Economic Cooperation Program and the Central Asian Regional Information Coordination Center.

The EU announced an "energy dialogue" with Central Asia as one of the key objectives of its foreign policy in the frame of the efforts to reduce Europe's dependence on Russian supplies. In 2006, Brussels, has signed a memorandum on energy with Kazakhstan, and in 2008 - with Turkmenistan. Similar agreements are prepared with other countries in Central Asia.

April 10, 2008 in Ashgabat a regular meeting of the "Three countries of EU" with representatives of the Central Asian countries at the level of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs was hosted. The emissaries of European to the
negotiations paid the main attention with President of Turkmenistan on the possibility of connecting his country (and Kazakhstan) to the main gas pipeline Nabucco, which is expected to lay to Europe bypassing Russian Federation. The president of Turkmenistan G. Berdimukhamedov who didn’t take the specific commitments, has just promised a reserve for the EU since 2009, amounted by 10 billion cubic meters of gas per year (According to the newspaper "Kommersant", 2008).

An important aspect of the practical activities of the EU in Central Asia has become the problems arrangement on boundaries. After gaining independence, the five former Soviet republics of Central Asia faced with the need to replace, existing during the Soviet era of new state administrative boundaries that must be protected. There was the problem of "external" borders - with China, Afghanistan and Iran. The states of Central Asia had to create and develop their capacity to deal with border problems.

The border problems are also related to various security challenges, which are faced by the countries of Central Asia. Among them are:

- Proximity to Afghanistan, which is the largest producer of opium and heroin;
- General political instability in Afghanistan and Pakistan;
- Difficulties caused by the decline from the Soviet concept on border control (military approach) to the border control and control of drug trafficking;
- Low level of cooperation within and between agencies responsible for border control in Central Asian states.

Taking this into account, the EU has stepped up its activities in the area of border management in Central Asia through programs on cross-border assistance. Initially, they were put in Fergana Valley, and then expanded to the scale of the whole region. In 2002 - 2004 several EU missions have worked in the Central Asian countries, thereafter the program on Border Management in Central Asia - BOMCA (Border Management Program in Central Asia) was initiated. In January 2001 the program on Drug Action in Central Asia - CADAP (Central Asia Drug Action Program) was launched. It was built by analogy with two other EU programs - BUMAD (Program on assistance for the prevention of drug abuse and drug trafficking in Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova) and SCAD (South Caucasus Action Drug Program). EU Coordinator follows the implementation of CADAP, which is now entered into the “fourth phase”, for Drug Control in Central Asia, specially crafted at EU delegation in Almaty.

All programs, which are funded by the European Union and implemented in Central Asia with support of UN Development Program (UNDP), are designed to "assist to the countries of the region to strengthen the security of their borders and at the same time to promote the legitimate movement of people and goods across borders". The program BOMCA, in particular, should help the Central Asian States to learn and implement so-called "Border Management Concept", adopted in European Union, which poses two problems: strengthening of border trade and facilitate a legitimate trade and transit. The total budget of the program BOMCA for 2003-2010 was amounted to 26.7 million Euros, and under the UNDP program for Central Asia, 2 million Euros were allocated (http://bomca.eu-bomca.kg/ru/about/123).

In the sphere of education, the European Commission could implement several programs in Central Asia. In particular, in the framework of Tempus and Rasmus programs the students from Central Asia had the opportunity to be educated in European universities. Through the Tempus program Brussels suggests reforming the system of higher education in Central Asia, linking it with the so-called Bologna process (under the name signed in 1999 in the Italian Bologna Declaration, which formulated the objectives and principles of convergence and harmonization of national higher education systems in European countries in order to create a single European Higher Education Area). In 2010, Kazakhstan was the first from Central Asian countries, which joined the Bologna process and received corresponding obligations. To the contemporary needs of Central Asia the EU education program "e-Silk Road" is adapted as well as distance learning program of students and teachers.

EU also paid considerable attention to the environmental problems in Central Asia, including an intricate and complex task of water resources management.

Cooperation with Central Asian states in this area has great importance for EU, particularly in respect of the need to run the program of the UN "Millennium Development Goals" up to 2015, regarding the clean drinking water and adequate sanitation facilities.
The EU is trying - as long as the truth, rather unsuccessfully - to mediate in disputes between the Central Asian states on the use of water resources. Thus, when in 2009 between Uzbekistan and its nearest neighbours, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan a conflict took place over the plans of Dushanbe and Bishkek, to build Rogun hydropower plant in Tajikistan and Kambarata in Kyrgyzstan with the assistance of Russian companies, the EU took the side of Uzbekistan. It recommended not building the large dams here and to get restricted by the construction of small hydropower plants, which contradicted expectation on the interests of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, experiencing an acute shortage of electricity. Dushanbe and Bishkek believed that the EU position was largely dictated by political considerations - the strong competition between the EU and Russia over control of water resources in Central Asia.

Entry of the Lisbon Agreement into force in December 1, 2009, the election of the President of the European Union and the head of the European Service for External Affairs can be viewed as an attempt to build a common EU foreign policy, including - with regard to the region of Central Asian countries, which plays the role of one of the major energy suppliers in Europe and Russia. Apart from Kazakhstan, a considerable interest of European countries dealing with searching of hydrocarbon alternatives of Russia, is given to Uzbekistan, which could become a gas supplier to the Trans-Caspian pipeline project lobbied by EU. In addition, the territory of Uzbekistan is considered by Europeans as an important transit base to support the Afghan campaign, where Germany, which is one of the leading forces of the EU, and a sole European country with which Uzbekistan maintained friendly relations after 2005 take the prominent place. Germany (in contrast to the U.S. in 2005 were forced to leave the Uzbek military base in Karshi-Khanabad) maintained its presence at the military base in Termex on the border with Afghanistan, through which the supply of German troops was passed in the Afghan province of Kunduz. Since 2009 the strategic importance of this base has increased after the Taliban attacked on soldiers of the Bundeswehr, and cut off an alternative route of their supply via Tajikistan. In regard to the events of April 2010 in Kyrgyzstan, an official Brussels took a cautious position that can be explained by the relatively small importance of this state, devoid of energy and located away from oil and gas routes. Another possible reason is lack of coordination approaches old and new foreign policy institutions of Brussels. However, the EU has considered it necessary to send to Kyrgyzstan on April 9, 2010, his special representative for Central Asia Pierre Morel. A senior representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, in her speech on April 20, 2010 in Strasbourg the European Parliament, expressed her concern about what is happening in Kyrgyzstan, and stated about the need for an early "ensure of stability and public order in this country." The EU also requested Astana and Tashkent to open borders "as soon as possible to ease the situation in Kyrgyzstan" (URL: http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction).

April 28, 2010 in Brussels a meeting with Ministers of Foreign Affairs “Three EU countries" with partners from five Central Asian states, took place. The EU representatives expressed their readiness to actively cooperate with the interim government of the republic in all on-going and planned reforms of the political system of the country, including the constitutional reform, referendum and parliamentary elections. In turn, the new Kyrgyz authorities have assured that "all previously ratified international agreements with the EU will be implemented in full extend" (http://www.vz.ru/news/2010/4/28/397217.html).

There are, however, in the relations between the EU and the Central Asian States the issues on which mutual understanding is reached with difficulty. This, first of all, is a human rights issue. Being the priority for the EU, the problem in Central Asia acquires specific refraction, because countries in the region - with their unsettled political systems, rooted in the life of local communities with traditions and strong influence of Islam - often have to choose between democracy and stability to prevent the recurrence of events similar to the ones in Kirghizistan. Under these circumstances, the Central Asian countries remain difficult partners for the EU.

In particular, when after the Council meeting in Brussels on cooperation "Uzbekistan - EU" on September 14, 2009, the European Union appealed to the leader of this country to adopt effective measures for protection of human rights and civil liberties, ensure compliance with international standards in the parliamentary elections on December 27, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan V. Norov in his response accused the West in "Islamophobia" and stressed that his country seeks to expand relations with Member States of European Union and insists that these relations were based "on the basis of equality and mutual respect".
EU is not ready to accept presidential and parliamentary elections held in CA as relevant to the democratic norms. Thus, in a statement about the carried out on the 28 February 2010 parliamentary elections in Tajikistan, the EU claimed that they "did not meet international standards" (http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/tajikistan/index_en.htm). But some work to advance the values of European democracy in the CA is held, and in Kazakhstan, for example, the "European initiative for the rule of law" proposed by France and Germany, was positively accepted. And still, the human rights and democracy promotion in the relations between EU and Central Asian states play a minor role. Moreover, in recent years, the European Union, intensified the search for suppliers of energy resources from Central Asia, pushed into the background the issue of human rights in the region, which is the most clearly evident in the relationships of such states, where their infringement, in terms of human rights defenders, is most notably in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

In general, at the political level, especially in the field of security, the importance of EU relations with Central Asian region is determined by the fact that all of its countries are members of the OSCE. According to the number of peer reviews, the further expansion of the EU's relations with Central Asia will be uniquely useful for the countries of the region from the perspective of their economic and political development, as well as maintaining this stability and the spread of democratic values.

CONCLUSION

The Central Asian countries will try, as in previous years, to take advantage of a variety of vectors of co-operation providing them a favourable geographical position. Before the states in the region, there will be a task of striking a balance between all international players at a time when relations between the U.S. and Russia, the EU and Russia are improving, while the Russian-Chinese rapprochement. By playing the different "maps" CASs try to capitalize on some of their own competition initiated by the geopolitical struggle. And still it is hard to disagree with Kyrgyz scientist Nur Omarov that in the "various projects of the future" the Central Asia, despite the interest in it today as a "world pantry", will remain "in the peripheral zone of Globalization" (Omarov 2008, p.200).

To make maximum use of its rich economic potential, the Central Asian countries need to develop cooperation at the regional level. The settlement of political differences - in particular water and energy sectors - will be a key to strengthening the regional cooperation. It can contribute to economic growth CASs, to the development of potential in intra-regional trade. In this regard, the signing in early 2010, the Customs Union between Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus, may contribute to the improvement of infrastructure of regional trade relations and the restoration of traditional trade routes, giving impetus to the growth in the entire Eurasian region.

Russia during the brief "respite", which coincides with the departure of multinational coalition forces from Afghanistan, would be ready for taking additional and largely complicated obligations to ensure the safety of the CAR. For this reason it requires, first, to secure its own development, because the dissociation from the Central Asian, even if Russia desires, will not succeed. Second, Russia needs that in order not to be forced out of the position in which it was able to establish itself in the period of tension lowering on US-Russian competition caused by the diversion of the United States to solve more important than the Central Asia problems. Taking this into account, it makes sense for Moscow to strengthen the "point" military-political and economic cooperation with countries in the region, to breathe new life into the organizations far from exhausting their potential - EurAsEC, CSTO, SCO, and to initiate cooperation with regional and international forces in order to reflect current and potential challenges and threats. America-NATO presence in CAR under the "umbrella" of anti-Taliban / anti-terrorist military operations in Afghanistan have created for Russia a risk of loss as a strategic advantage in Central Asia, squeezing this region, along with all its hydrocarbons from the sphere of Russia influence. Even more unfortunate situation in the CAR may arise for Russia (as well as for the ethnic Russians living in CAS) in the next few years - after the departure of the main forces of the international coalition from Afghanistan. For that Russia does not seem to be ready, because even a very worrying "bell", which became the Kyrgyz "revolution" of 2010, didn’t accelerate the development of an effective strategy by Russia, which would be adequate to the new challenges that would protect the rights of ethnic Russians, create a reliable barrier against drug expansion and religious-political extremism mixed with transnational terrorism. Without such a strategy, is difficult for Russia to rely on the fact that it can implement its own national interests in security in the CAR.
With regard to significant portion of risks and threats of Afghanistan, projecting to Central Asia, it will not be, according to the American project of "Great Central Asia", a locomotive of integration in Central and South Asia. The very presence of the US-NATO military was a powerful feeding for the deployment of a rebel movement, where the leading role belongs to the Taliban. In the light of all this, the prospects for recovery war-ravaged Afghanistan, turning it into a transport and energy corridor, establishing a lasting peace in the regions of Central and South Asia, are seen unclear.

Activation of the military factor in Afghanistan and Pakistan, ensuing displacement of militants who had taken refuge here from the ethnic Uzbeks and Tajiks, returning in mass extend to their homeland, poses a real threat to merger the local extremist movements in Central Asia with armed natives of Afghanistan. Separate fighting in Central Asia may acquire the character of guerrilla warfare, familiar from the experience of civil war in Tajikistan.

Russia's partners in NATO and the U.S. and the EU, despite all the talks about the "reset" will not be able to overcome the distrust to Russia. They do not dare to equitable and mutually beneficial cooperation neither with Russia nor the CSTO nor the SCO, even on such an important issue for the future of NATO as Afghanistan. This will be determined by ideological considerations, as well as the strategy by which they are not going to give up. It lies in the possible ousting of Russia from the key, in terms of Western interests, former Soviet republics, preventing their integration into the union, where Russia can play a significant role (whether there is the Customs Union, CSTO, SCO, etc.).

If competition for control over Central Asian energy resources will increase, then the independency in external policy will become a serious irritant for the West.

Russia in its desire to retain the influence in Central Asia, will, as now, face numerous obstacles to advance its interests on a collective basis within the framework of existing organizations in the CIS, as the region itself is not yet formed as a single political and integrative entity. Therefore the relations of Russian Federation with Central Asian countries will have, as usually, a bilateral character.

Smoldering sources of instability in the Afghanistan-Pakistan area of the managed conflict, in Xinjiang, Fergana Valley are the threats that loom largely over the Central Asian states, China and Russia. The probability of their ignition is very high, which makes practice to check the real combat effectiveness of existing security systems in the region (CSTO and SCO), and only just emerging (RRF). It is obvious that none of Russia's Central Asian partners on these structures will cope alone with the growing challenges and threats. The notorious "multi-vector", where some Central Asian countries are trying to balance between the CSTO and NATO, and others - to give preference to military cooperation with the U.S. / NATO, only blurs the regional interaction and weakens the joint efforts. In the activation of the leading world powers in Central Asian the countries of the region must make a serious choice - to whom, in what areas and under what conditions co-operate. On this depend not only the future of these countries themselves, but also the situation in the region, their relationship with each other and with Russia.

Summarizing, we can say that the people who inhabit Central Asia mostly rely on the fact that their region has become a platform for cooperation, and not for competition. Indeed, the very Central Asia is a space where independent self-developed countries seeking to become not an object, but a subject of international relations, and this fact should be understood by the various global and regional players operating in Central Asia.

Notes

1. A detailed view about Central Asia emerged due to many studies of Western, primarily French scientists - former Sovietologists (A. Bennigsen, E. Carrere d'Encausse, etc.).

2 In modern literature it is interpreted as a transition to a new qualitative state due to the radical reform of the economic sphere by the introduction of market-based rather than centralized management, as well as politics - in the direction of its democratization.
3. For example, in Egypt, where the "Muslim Brotherhood" legally belonged to the parliament, or in the Palestinian National Autonomy, where Hamas won parliamentary elections controls Gaza.

4. "Three EU countries" is usually represented by the country elected for a period of six months, which is taking a chair in the Council of the European Union, as well as its former and future Presidents.

5. (This fact is indicated, in particular, by a professor of Russian-Kyrgyz Slavic University Nur Omarov. Citation By: V. Panfilov Brussels against the huge dams. - Independent newspaper. Attachment NG -Diplomatic Courier. 20.04.2009.).

6. (Official name of the signed document at the EU summit on December 13, 2007 in Lisbon - "The Lisbon Agreement on amending the Agreement on European Union" and the "Agreement on establishing the European Community").

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