

branch. The most up-to-date medicines are created in Iran to combat cancer, diabetes and blood diseases.

The companies of the two countries are interested in joint work in the national free-trade zones, in setting up a special free trade zone between Russia and Iran, drawing closer together the legal basis of the use of foreign capital, expanding participation in foreign-trade exchange of small and medium-size business, and better using the possibilities of participation in regional organizations and regional projects, specially within the framework of SCO and EAEC. After the lifting of sanctions it can be predicted that economic cooperation between the two countries will greatly develop and may reach the figure up to \$10 billion. The Russian side has decided to open a credit line for cooperation with Iran of up to \$5 billion to step up Russian-Iranian economic relations. This shows our striving to create a solid economic basis for political cooperation between Russia and Iran.

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VALENTINA SCHENSNOVICH. AFGHAN CRISIS AND
THREATS TO SECURITY OF CENTRAL-ASIAN REGION //
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Introduction. The authors of articles examine the Afghan crisis conformably to the security of Central Asia and the threats, risks and challenges from Afghanistan with an emphasis on their religious component. Researchers pay attention to the problem of drug trafficking from Afghanistan all over the world. Their articles single out the role of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in maintaining security in Central Asia and analyze the basic measures aimed at

stabilizing the situation in the region. The authors also turn to the problem of Islamization of the Central Asian region.

1. *Dina Malysheva. Afghan Crisis and Post-Soviet Central Asia // World Economy and International Relations. Moscow, 2017, Vol. 61, № 8, P. 14–34.*

Keywords: Afghanistan, post-Soviet Central Asia, security, crisis, Islamist radicalism.

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The author analyzes the situation in Afghanistan in the context of the acute regional crisis developing there, which draws foreign forces to take part in it. The author examines the new approaches of Russia to the problem of Afghan settlement and assesses its initiatives in maintaining security in Afghanistan and Central Asia and lowering tension in the entire Asian region. An attempt is made to determine the conditions under which cooperation of the Russian Federation with China and Central Asian states – partners by the CSTO and SCO – may bring positive results.

While the American-NATO military presence in Afghanistan was being curtailed in recent years, and world leaders and the mass media concentrated their attention on other international developments, the countries of the post-Soviet Central Asia with their troublesome neighbor Afghanistan remained somewhere in the periphery of world interests. Meanwhile, as the author of this article notes, the intensity of the armed confrontation in Afghanistan has not diminished, and this international crisis, retaining its ever-explosive potential can create serious problems in the security sphere for the post-Soviet Central Asian states, which are of importance for Russia due to their mutual interest in

the development of economic, military, political, cultural, and other connections.

Afghanistan is still split ethnically and religiously. The vitality of the state is in great danger, its economy is ruined by the war and fully depends on foreign donations. The Kabul authorities are fully dependent on the United States patronizing them and can hardly cope with the most difficult problems in stabilizing the situation and ensuring peaceful construction; maintenance of public order in a country torn asunder by the struggle between various political forces is a task beyond the strength of the local police and army units. The Taliban grouping, who do not lose hope to score victory over the government forces, remain the leading opposition force, winning new areas. The number of victims of the conflict is growing all the time, which hampers the efforts undertaken by international sponsors to step up the process of the peaceful reconstruction of Afghanistan. The situation with drug production and drug trafficking remains alarming in Afghanistan. By the beginning of 2017 the country continued to be the world's leading supplier of heroin. According to the UN data, the area sown to poppy continues to grow. UN experts connect such situation with the growing territory under the Taliban control for which drug trafficking is one of the major sources of income.

The attempts to normalize the Afghan crisis by political means, with the participation of the United States, Pakistan and China, have not brought any tangible results.

There can be an increase of foreign military forces in Afghanistan due to more active operations of Islamist radical forces there, who use reprisals and terror for promoting their idea of a "new caliphate." So far the Islamists prefer to stay calm and quiet due to their negative image in Afghanistan and its neighboring countries in Central Asia. Besides, the Middle Eastern roots of the "al Qaeda" and the Islamic State are considered "alien" in Afghanistan.

Although the threat from the Islamic State is often exaggerated, there are grounds to believe, the researcher asserts,

that it has a prospect to gain success. Indeed, inasmuch as the Islamic State does not recognize either national or ethnic affiliation and state borders and proclaims itself transnational organization, its opportunities to draw representatives of various ethnic group are much broader than of the Taliban, which is mainly a monoethnic Pashtoon movement.

The author emphasizes that the emergence in Afghanistan of the bearers and propagandists of the idea of building a “new caliphate” connected with their Middle Eastern fellow-thinkers, transnational terrorism and drug dealers increases the potential of threats to Afghanistan itself, and also to the secular regimes of Central Asia. The unpredictability of developments in Afghanistan and a possibility of the resumption of a large-scale armed conflict there with drawing third parties in it is a constant cause of alarm for Central Asian countries. Their people connected with Afghanistan by many-century history, ethnic-religious traditions and culture are not indifferent to the situation in Afghanistan: whether it is peaceful, the position of the Taliban with regard to its southern neighbors, the possibility of the “al Qaeda” to broaden the sphere of its influence in Afghanistan, and explode the situation in Central Asia.

The researcher notes that the security system in Central Asia is distinguished by a complex, multi-level character. It is bolstered up by such organizations as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization. The elements of the global security level are also connected with the membership of states in the UN and OSCE, as well as interaction with NATO. For a short-time perspective the Central Asian states will not be of any direct interest for the Taliban or any other units of radical Islamism. However, in case of the broadening of the influence of these forces in districts bordering on Central Asian countries, tension may arise again. As a result, in the author’s view, there can be more risks for the post-Soviet Central Asian region:

First, a large-scale civil war may be resumed in Afghanistan and military actions may spread to the territory of neighboring

states in Central Asia. The main threat will emerge from foreigners, that is, ethnic Uzbeks Tajiks, Uighurs, Chechens, and others. They now live in Afghanistan, but they do not abandon the desire to go back to their native parts with a view to changing the secular rule to the Islamic one there with support of outside sponsors.

Secondly, the ousting of religious radicals and Talibs may cause additional risks in the zone of the Afghan-Pakistani crisis. This will make vulnerable the Tajik-Afghan and Turkmen-Afghan borders. In contrast to Turkmenistan with its officially recognized neutral status, excluding its entry in any military structures, and Uzbekistan, which stopped its membership in the CSTO in 2012, the three other Central Asian republics (Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan) may rely on military assistance from Russia as the CSTO members,

Thirdly, the possibilities to implement an Islamist project in Afghanistan may result in the radicalization of the Central Asian ummah and the strengthening of terrorist activity and drug trafficking there. To boot, the drug mafia feed religious extremism, and they both become a strong element destabilizing the situation in the Central Asian countries.

For Russia the Central Asian region will remain a strategic buffer against threats from the outside, and its role in maintaining security in Central Asia will be growing due to the need to oppose drug trafficking combined with opposition to growing Islamist radicalism. Central Asia represents for Russia a valuable communication hub and a precious fuel-and-energy center. Russia's relations with the countries of the region will also be influenced (although indirectly) by its interaction with China, as well as with the United States and its allies. Russian participation is also necessary in protecting the security of this region within the framework of the SCO and CSTO organizations. There are imperatives to raise the effectiveness of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) among whose members, along with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, are Armenia, Belarus and the Russian Federation. The

latter is trying to evolve a strategy aimed at regulating the Afghan crisis and establishing security in the entire Central Asian region. Conformably to Afghanistan, D. Malysheva emphasizes, Russia could have not so much military influence there, as diplomatic and political.

2. Anton Degtyarev. Growing “Afghan Threat” in Central Asia. New Challenge to CSTO // *Fundamental and applied research: Hypotheses, problems, results. Collection of materials of II International scientific conference, Novosibirsk, 2017, P. 29–35.*

Keywords: Central Asia (CA), Afghanistan. NATO, CSTO, collective security, fight against drug criminals.

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The author discusses the problem of growing “Afghan threat” which is manifested, among other things, in an increasing number of the supporters of the “Islamic state” on the territory of Afghanistan. The article also pays attention to the drug trafficking problem throughout the world. The role of the CSTO in ensuring security in Central Asia is dealt with, and measures to maintain stability in the region are examined.

The situation in Afghanistan causes serious concern in the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, because the number of Islamic state units is growing in Afghanistan. Certain units of the Taliban, both Afghan and Pakistani, have declared their support of the idea of building the Caliphate. Recruitment of fighters for the units is going on in the country. The CSTO is the guarantor of ensuring military-political stability and security on the territory of the post-Soviet area. For the purpose the CSTO has created the Collective forces of operative response. Their task is to rebuff armed attacks against the members of the Organization.

An analysis of the prospects of the evolution of the situation in Afghanistan and post-Soviet Central Asia gives grounds to suppose that the Islamic state can become the center of the unification of the enemies of the state regime, which is characterized by a certain dualism – a split in the Afghan government into supporters of President Gani, who is a Pashtoon, and supporters of the Premier Abdullah, a Tajik. It is indicative that the ranks of Islamists are often joined by non-Pashtoons, that is, the enemies of the Taliban. An intensification of the propaganda of extremist organizations in Central Asia is noted. Another problem is the turning of Afghanistan into a training base of militant fighters, whose aim is to destabilize the situation in the Russian Federation.

On November 2, 2016, a meeting of the Coordination Council of the heads of special bodies to combat drug trafficking took place in Astana (Kazakhstan). Representatives of the CSTO member-states singled out a serious problem – drug production and distribution organized, supervised and developed by Afghanistan. It was specially noted that the main part of growing production and distribution of synthetic and psychoactive preparations come from Southeast Asia. The participants in the meeting agreed to continue to organize international anti-drug operations.

From May 29 to June 2, 2017, the CSTO member-states carried out a joint operation aimed at blocking the channels for Afghan drug trafficking in the areas of the Baltic, Caspian and Black seas.

From 2107 Russia began to strengthen its military bases in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in order to prevent the transfer of terrorist activity from Afghanistan to Central Asia. In November 2017 in Tajikistan (near the border with Afghanistan) military exercises of the CSTO Joint forces were held with a view to training for joint actions to do away with illegal armed units in the mountains.

Thus, A. Degtyarev notes in conclusion, the Afghan problem can be regarded in two aspects. First, this is drug trafficking not only to the Russian Federation and the CSTO countries, but also to other places in the world. And we can already talk of certain positive shifts. Secondly, the numerical growth of militant fighters on Afghan territory worrying the entire world community is now openly recognized by the public and mass media. The Central Asian countries are under threat, but the 2017 exercises have demonstrated that the positive forces are always ready to counter aggression

3. *Shirin Amanbekova*. Influence of Afghan Crisis on Islamization Process of Central Asia // *Post-Soviet Research*, Moscow, 2018, Vol. 1, № 3, P. 318–320.

Keywords: Afghanistan, CIS, Central Asia, terrorism, Islamization, radicalism.

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The author notes that the Central Asian region is now one of the “most dangerously-explosive” places. Various organizations of the radical Islamic and pseudo-religious nature wish to strengthen and consolidate their positions there. One of the major sources of threats to security in the Central Asian region of the CIS is the unsettled Afghan problem. The restoration of peace and stability in Afghanistan is one of the most pressing international and regional problems. Primarily, for the Central Asian countries directly suffering from the negative consequences of the prolonged war in that country. The conflict in Afghanistan engendered threats and challenges to stability and security in the Central Asian countries, which are living through a difficult period of consolidating their statehood, complicated by religious extremism, ethnic intolerance, terrorism, drug trafficking, and arms smuggling. Apart from that,

the possibility of transferring the conflict situation from Afghanistan to CIS countries is not at all hypothetical. Because on both sides of the state borders live representatives of one and the same people, often connected with one another by family ties for centuries, to say nothing of historical and cultural affinity.

Among the threats the greatest one for the secular regime of Central Asian countries is religious extremism, the author emphasizes. Today, the problem of Islamization in Central Asia has assumed threatening proportions, which is largely connected with the situation in the Middle East. Islamization processes, due to objective historical and cultural reasons, as well as their own value and political preferences of the key regional actors, the most active Islamization processes develop in Central Asian countries.

After the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. in December 1991 certain radicalization of Islam began to take place in Central Asia. This was manifested, among other things, in the emergence of Islamist organizations and movements (often appearing and acting illegally). Radical Islam in Central Asia has long become no less tangible than that in the Middle East or Africa. Influence of radical Islam is felt in Central Asia especially acutely, if compared with other regions of the post-Soviet area, due to the border with Afghanistan, which makes a destabilizing influence on the situation practically in all five Central Asian republics – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. It should be borne in mind, the author notes, that the Islamic tradition and its opposition to secular manifestations have a rather long history there and proved quite strong.

For a long time Islam was dominant religion in Central Asia. Approximately three quarters of the 20th century Islam, and religion in general, were practically outlawed in Central Asia, because the region was part of the Soviet Union, where free confession was banned, and the general religiousness of the population was going down. In the 1980s, when the war was in progress in neighboring Afghanistan ideas of radical Islam began to get through. The disunited religious population of Central Asia

took up both nationalistic and religious extremist ideas. In the early 1990s, along with the downfall of the U.S.S.R., the role of radical Islam increased, just as the freedom of action of radicals. Radical Islam was manifested in different forms. The researcher mentions the most striking events:

1. Civil war in Tajikistan (1992–1997);
2. Batken developments in Kyrgyzstan (1999–2000);
3. Andizhan developments in Uzbekistan.

Prerequisites for the region becoming a major center in world Islamist strategy and creating favorable ground for major expansion have existed earlier. For example, this region has historically been a link between the centers of Islamic civilization of the Middle East and the Muslim population of Russia, Xinjiang, Uighur autonomous district of China, Uzbek cities of Samarkand, Bohara, big cities of the Ferghana Valley: Kokand, Namangan, Ferghana, Andizhan and Osh, as well as southern cities of Kazakhstan – Shimkent, Turkestan, Taraz, which were one time spiritual centers of Muslim culture in Central Asia. They were quite well-known as big theological centers independent from the official authorities. It is not for nothing that many radical forces set themselves the aim to create an Islamic state in the Ferghana Valley, which should become part of the so-called “World Islamic Caliphate.”

A sum total of definite historical, geopolitical, cultural and economic factors largely explain the vulnerability of Central Asian states before the threat of religious extremism. The threats to security of Central Asia from radical Islamism in Afghanistan and certain Middle Eastern countries become stronger due to a number of negative domestic challenges, in the author’s view, which are responsible for the necessity to include most countries of the region in the category of “fragile states.” Their “fragility” is due to the potential of collapse and formation of “frustrated states” unable to control their own territory. It is such states that are an ideal nutrient solution for breeding radical terrorist groupings of the Islamic state type. A major factor contributing to the growth of

radical Islamism is high corruption in the region. First, corruption is connected with organized crime, especially with drug trade, which finances terrorist groupings. Secondly, it greatly hampers the activity of government institutions, including in the struggle against radical Islam. Thirdly, high corruption and social inequality connected with it is one of the main propaganda arguments against existing secular regimes used by radical Islamists.

The influence of radical Islam is felt well enough in Central Asia as compared to other post-Soviet regions due to the closeness of the border with Afghanistan, which exerts a destabilizing impact on the situation in all Central Asian states: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Radical Islam is the strongest in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

The researcher emphasizes that religious extremism and terrorism is at present one of the major threats to stability in Central Asia. Its forms and methods are constantly improved, and it draws more and more people into its orbit, especially young people.

It is necessary to tackle economic, political, and social problems in the region more thoroughly. In the view of the author of the article, their solution is the most effective form of struggle against religious extremism and terrorism.

Conclusion

The conflict level in Afghanistan, researchers note, is high enough, and this causes great concern in all neighboring states. In the event of the exacerbation of a conflict the threat of destabilization begins to loom over not only post-Soviet Central Asian countries, but also China, India, and Iran. Russia, too, as a strategic partner of Central Asian countries, can be drawn in the destabilization process, which may end with a major explosion threatening Eurasian economic integration. In the conditions of the growing polycentric world order, Central Asian and South Asian

countries could use a chance to become a unifying center of Asia. In this context, in the view of these authors, it would be quite logical to set up with participation of the CSTO and SCO a cooperative security system which could allow Russia, China, Central Asian countries and their allies in Asia effectively to tackle the problems of Afghanistan and other security problems in Asia. It is also necessary to improve the measures, methods and forms of opposing religious Islamist currents of Central Asia, which are a grave threat to security.

2019.01.009. ALEXANDER ROGOZHIN. ARAB COUNTRIES OF PERSIAN GULF – COURSE TO ASIA // *“West – East – Russia 2014. Yearbook IMEMO RAS,” Moscow, 2014, P. 116–121.*

Keywords: Arab countries, Persian Gulf, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, OAE, Asia, PRC, India, negotiations, contracts, trade, investments, fast-developing countries, migrants, immigrants.

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The author examines the stepping up of diplomatic activity of Arab countries in Asia, primarily in their relations with China and India.

In September the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, Crown Prince Saud Al-Faisal held talks with his Chinese colleague Wang Yi, in which he promised to contribute to speeding up the creation of a free-trade zone of Cooperation Council of Persian Gulf Arab States – PRC and take part in the formation of the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank, a new financial, institution, in which China has shown a great interest. In November the Emir of