

became a part of broad initiatives of the Pentagon in the states of the former USSR and pursue quite bottom-line aims. First, the White House is keen to engage sponsored peacekeeping forces in foreign operations under the auspices of NATO. Secondly, peacemaking is used as covering action for distribution of military activity of the North Atlantic Alliance on the states of the CSTO. Thirdly, exchange of experience through special detachment allows obtaining information on defensive capability of allies of Russia and serves preparations of own special troops for actions abroad.

Thus, D. Popov concludes, the analysis of the American-Tajik relations shows that at the current stage the republic is not among the main foreign policy priorities of the U.S. in the post-Soviet space. However, it does not mean that Tajikistan is completely out of the Central Asian strategy of the U.S. Keeping it in the focus of attention of the American foreign policy will be the aspiration of Washington to maintain access to Afghanistan and to constrain development of geopolitical competitors such as Moscow and Beijing. It is not drawn a line in the question of possible membership of the RT in the Eurasian Economic Union.

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ELENA DMITRIEVA. POLITICAL ELITE OF TURKMENISTAN. POST-SOVIET PERIOD // *The review was written for the bulletin "Russia and the Moslem World."*

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Abstract: The review examines specific features of the formation of Turkmenistan's political elite in the post-Soviet

period, characteristic is given to the modern Turkmen political elite, factors are analyzed, which influence the adoption of outside and inside political decisions by the political elites in power, and the role of the clan system in the country's political system is described.

Introduction: Central Asia in the post-Soviet period is a zone of instability (high ethnic fragmentation, pendency of border problems and the use of water reserves, demographic problems, radicalization of Islam, etc.). The situation in the countries of the region remains tense, despite the authoritarian rule existing there. In this situation the emergence of a vacuum of power in one of the Central Asian countries may lead to catastrophic consequences.

Turkmenistan remains today one of the most closed states of Central Asia. Its geopolitical position and raw material resources (the country holds fourth place in the world in gas extraction) make it possible to regard Turkmenistan one of the key states of the region. The concentration of political power in the hands of the head of the state is greater than among other leaders of the Central Asian countries. Clan-tribal regulators exert tremendous influence on the formation of the country's political elite. Belonging to a definite clan in Turkmenistan plays an important role in appointing to a high post. The country's President relies on representatives of his own clan and forms political elites from among them. The most numerous in Turkmenistan are the Tekin tribes and the Yomud tribes (more than 50 percent of the population and more than 60 percent of territory). Apart from them there are many so-called regional "provincial:" family-tribal groups (Mary, Kizil-arvat, Chardzhou, Balkan, Tashauz).

The first head of sovereign Turkmenistan, Saparmurat Niyazov, came to power in Soviet time, when he was elected First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist party of Turkmenistan in 1985, and after the disintegration of the Soviet Union became President of Turkmenistan. Saparmurat Niyazov belonged to the Akhal-Tekin clan, which controls the capital and a

number of other regions of the country, and this is why its positions have strengthened still more in the period of Niyazov's rule. From the 1950s until the mid-1980s the leading posts in Turkmenistan were taken by people from regional clans, because the leadership of the Soviet Union constantly carried out the rotation of the personnel in the struggle against the clan character of state and republican power. It was precisely representatives of the Akhal-Tekin clan that comprised the bulk of Niyazov's administration, gradually ousting and replacing representatives of other groups on the leading posts. They managed to retain their positions in state power after Niyazov's death in 2006. The new President of Turkmenistan, G. Berdymuhamedov, is also a representative of that clan. Taking into account these tendencies, the expert community has begun to view the domestic political life of modern Turkmenistan as a struggle of the Akhal-Tekin clan against the regional groups of the elite during the last years of the existence of the U.S.S.R. and in the entire period of the existence of modern Turkmenistan.

Turkmen Elite and National Identity

Examining the problem of national identity of the Turkmen elite O. Vasileva, PhD(Politics)* notes such characteristic features of the ruling elite as traditionalism, closeness, and non-acceptance of democratic transformations. Tribalism is a phenomenon inherent in the domestic life of Turkmenistan. The author believes that Turkmenians up to the present are a community of tribes, but not a nationality in the traditional meaning of the term. Differences between tribes and the clans heading them are so essential that many researchers deem it possible to study them as independent small peoples. The years of Soviet power have not led them to erosion of inter tribal borders, and Turkmenistan has remained a full-fledged feudal society with a characteristic set of political institutions and traditions.

* O. Vasileva. "Political Elites of Turkmenistan and the Problems of National Identity"// *"Caspian Region: politics, economics, Culture," Astrakhan, 2018, No 18 (57), P. 200–206.*

According to ethnological data, there are thirty tribes, which historically formed in Turkmenistan uniting more than five thousand family groups. Each clan was represented in the high echelons of power, and exerted influence on the first persons differently. At present, the author notes, the family-tribe division of Turkmens remains a major condition of the existence of the modern political system of Turkmenistan. The problem facing the Turkmen people is the fact that they have not become a single and united nation. A search for identity of local political elites is, in essence, a search for support on clan and tribal traditions. As is known, nationalism is opposed to tribalism, inasmuch as it unites a nation, eliminating estate, clan and tribal differences. In Turkmenistan tribalism still scores victory in the struggle against nationalism.

A search for identity takes the leadership and elites of Turkmenistan into the thicket of traditionalism. Back in 2001, at a meeting with members of the Association of Turkmens of the world Saparmurad Niyazov noted that among the top priority tasks of domestic policy facing the people of Turkmenistan was that of eradicating tribalism among them, which was in the past the main reason for their inability to build a national state. But despite correct and well-meaning thinking, tribalism still scores victory and does not allow the political system to become modernized according to the laws of an open democratic society. Turkmenistan does not have foundations and opportunities so far to realize this project. The leadership of Turkmenistan, in its majority, remains patriarchal conservative. This conservatism is based precisely on clan traditions and prejudices.

Despite its proximity to Iran, Turkmenistan is not going to move along the road of Shia theocracy, because the Turkmens are not Persians, but Turks, and all the more so Sunnites. A monarchic

scenario is hardly probable, either, in the vein of Arab Middle Eastern regimes. Turkmenistan, just as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, slightly similar to it, is likely to go forward along the road of creating a secular authoritarian regime.

Finally, the author comes to a conclusion that tribalism has deep enough roots in Turkmenistan, and the Turkmens remain to this day a community of tribes whose development level of civic self-consciousness remains low enough. Along with this, in professional thinking of the political elites themselves tribalism occupies strong positions and is not regarded as a threat to national unity and security.

Influence of Political Elite on Foreign Policy of Turkmenistan

The Central Asian region attracts the attention of many regional and global participants in international relations. In this connection much attention is paid to the questions of the formation of the foreign-policy course of the Central Asian countries. Political analysts from the National Research Nizhni Novgorod State University D. Belashchenko, I. Ryzhov and I. Shodzhonov* have analyzed the influence of the factor of the elites on the adoption of foreign-policy decisions.

* D. Belashchenko, I. Ryzhov, I. Shodzhonov. "Forming of Political Elite of Turkmenistan and its Influence on the Process of Foreign Policy Decision-Making" // *"Herald of Belgorod State University."* Series: History, Political Science, 2018, Vol. 45, No 4, pp. 766–774.

The authors of the work characterize modern Turkmenistan as a state, which is the most closed from the information point of view. Many processes and tendencies taking place in the country remain either unknown, or emerge in the information field much later. The geographical situation of Turkmenistan, its economic and raw material potential attract an ever growing attention of the neighboring countries, and also influential world powers (Russia, China, Iran, and others). One of the major achievements of the country in the years of independence was the official recognition

of the neutral status of Turkmenistan, which does not actively participate in any integration projects.

With the coming of the new President of the country G. Berdymuhamedov to power in 2007, the political system began to be transformed toward certain liberalization. He pursues liberalization of the political life of the country, makes shifts in the ruling elitist circles (transformations in the special forces, changes in the ministerial groups created by S. Niyazov, setting up new government posts, a number of key posts were filled with relatives of the new president. Representatives of the Republican Foreign Ministry, except the Minister and certain big bosses, only guide the foreign-policy course of G. Berdymuhamedov and his close entourage/ The President has "shadow advisers", that is, a group of influential persons formed from people who are not representatives of the titular nation. They are people from the presidential administration of S. Niyazov. Their position has remained unchanged, as before. We now mean advisers and consultants of Russian origin - A. Zhadan and V. Umnov (economic questions), V. Khramov (main ideologist of the country), I. Maiman (construction and jewelry business). According to information, I. Maiman put forward the ideas of the Trans-Caspian pipeline, lobbied Turkmenistan's interests in the United States, Germany, France, Turkey, Israel, Azerbaijan and Turkey. Among other influential business companies mention should be made of construction firms from Turkey and France. After coming to power of Berdymuhamedov various changes in traditional society took place in Turkmenistan. The head of state surrounded himself with well-tested people on the basis of personal acquaintanceship. Processes of consolidating personal power were taking place, potential rivals were ousted, conflicts within elites were eliminated, and the institution of "shadow consultants" preserved and strengthened.

One of the factors influencing the process of adoption of foreign-policy decisions is clan-tribal connections. Prior to the establishment of Soviet power each Turkmen tribe had its own

area of living, and it could only be violated during raids. When Soviet power came to the country, geographical and other borders between tribes began to disappear, people began to travel quite freely, yet, the newly-acquired freedom was not broadly used by Turkmen people; they preferred to stick to traditions and conservative habits. After the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. the old socio-cultural mechanism was restarted in order to return to the traditional features of public life. An archaization of the main political institutions took place, which was typical of tribal-family bodies.

S. Niyazov's autocracy has led to the over centralization of power, and the concentration of functions of adopting decisions in the President's hands, which has largely simplified the formation of a foreign-policy course. President Berdymuhamedov now faced serious rivalry of clans in the struggle for political heritage of S. Niyazov, and was forced to correct the mechanism of their interaction.

As to the role of the tribal factor in Turkmenistan's foreign policy, the authors of the article single out three aspects of influence:

1. Affiliation of the President and his entourage to concrete tribal groups.

2. Territorial distribution of tribes inside Turkmenistan. A great role is played here by the tribes living in the border districts.

3. Contacts of Turkmen tribes with members of the diaspora (the biggest communities live in Iran, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Turkey, Pakistan and Russia).

Among the tribes influencing Turkmenistan's foreign policy are the Yomud tribe living in the western, Caspian regions and controlling transport routes, trade, and mineral extraction, and the Ersar tribe living in the eastern districts bordering on Uzbekistan. A definite role is played by the tribes bordering on Afghanistan.

In the 1990s - early 2000s Turkmenistan succeeded to establish and maintain maximally favorable relations with the

“Taliban” movement and the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan and participate in the attempts to accommodate the sides to the Afghan conflict.

Changes began to occur after Niyazov’s coming to power, who invited to leading posts in politics, business and other spheres his countrymen, who gradually formed a powerful Akhal-Tekin grouping and practically closed the road to power for other clans. The positions of the Akhal-Tekin clan have strengthened still more under President Berdymuhamedov who drew a still greater number of Akhal-Tekin men to state power. They actually control the ministries and departments responsible for security and defense. Thus, it is the regional-ethnic origin in modern Turkmenistan that exerts the decisive influence on official and public career.

Representatives of the Chardzhou clan have lost their influence as compared with the Soviet period, but preserved a number of posts among officials of the middle link. The Mary clan also has a certain influence; its representatives held posts in political affairs, culture, science and other spheres. The Tashauz clan has the least influence at present, its representatives have lost influential government posts under S. Niyazov. Nevertheless, the activity of other clans also exerts a certain influence on the domestic and foreign political course of Turkmenistan. Among other things, the territorial ties of clans should be taken into account, especially the positions of the clan elders should thoroughly be considered. Among them special mention should be made of the positions of the clan elders living in border districts. Clans also have ties with Turkmens living beyond the borders of their historical Motherland. Accordingly, this factor is also used in planning and implementing the country’s foreign policy. Apart from that, with account of the growing importance of energy resources and dependence of Turkmenistan’s economy on their procurement and export, the clan’s influence increases in the territories rich in natural gas.

In conclusion, the authors note that the adoption of foreign-policy decisions in Turkmenistan is not transparent, inasmuch as in this process the sides which are not interested in publicizing

their activity take part. Among the specific features of the process of adopting foreign-policy decisions in Turkmenistan is the presence of the “shadow elite” in the person of the President’s advisors and consultants of non-Turkmen origin who seriously influence the formation of foreign policy. The “shadow advisors” had a serious influence on S. Niyazov and were able to become part of a close circle of the current President G. Berdymuhamedov. Another group of influence is foreign companies having branches and affiliations, as well as serious business-interests in Turkmenistan. They are engaged mainly in the sphere of mineral extraction. Apart from that, the country’s foreign-policy course is influenced by tribes and clans living in border districts, which have stable connections with clan and tribal groups in neighboring countries, as well as clans having active contacts with Turkmen communities abroad. Influence on the President is also made through his close entourage, and also personal meetings with him.

Conclusion

The political elite in post-Soviet Turkmenistan is in the state of constant transformation. Two stages can be singled out in the formation process of the political elite of post-Soviet Turkmenistan: the period of the rule of S. Niyazov and the period of the rule of G. Berdymuhamedov. During the former the political elite was represented by people with working experience received in Soviet time on posts in the state and party apparatus of the U.S.S.R. The regional-ethnic principle of personnel alignment continued to play the key role. Turkmenistan has overcome comparatively easily the change of power and the struggle between the elites after the death of S. Niyazov. There were no clashes between various groups of the population, and the change of the rule was not reflected in the domestic life of the country. After G. Berdymuhamedov came to power the clan structure of the political elite and the whole Turkmen society and business was mainly preserved, however, new leaders came to life, who will be

able to join political rivalry in the future. With the outward external stability of the modern situation in Turkmenistan, the clan system is fraught with a constant danger of internal strife. In this case the previously reliable clan structure of power may give in, and power struggle in the upper echelon of power may cause destabilization of the situation in the country.

On the other hand, the Turkmen elite will not gain much due to changes in society; on the contrary, it may lose power and sources of personal wealth. It can be expected that clan relations taking shape on the regional-ethnic principle and on the basis of personal loyalty to one's patron will further dominate in the political life of the country.

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The author notes that 2017 has become one of the most dynamic stages in the history of independent Uzbekistan for all the years of post-Soviet development. Therefore, new trends in the relations of Uzbekistan with its closest neighbors deserve special attention. Uzbekistan is the only country in the region that has borders with all the republics of post-Soviet Central Asia.

Analyzing the relations of Uzbekistan with neighboring countries, the author notes a breakthrough in the Uzbek – Kyrgyz relations, which were previously characterized by tensions due to long-term border disputes.