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ABOUT SOME OBSTACLES TO THE INTEGRATION OF CENTRAL ASIAN STATES

Abstract. The paper discusses the major issues and factors that create certain obstacles to the integration processes in Central Asian region that eventually become a barrier for successful integration of countries of the region. The issues include political, economic, hydro and social problems and process affecting the integration among the Central Asian states (former Soviet republics). The authors of the article draw attention to the fact that Central Asian countries are lacking the common system of economic management of the region. The article explores about the complicated cases in resolving territorial disputes in the region. It also mentions the aggravated situation with the use of water resources between the states of Central Asia. The methodology implied in the research is mainly based on the use of comparative politics tools to discover the major differences between Kazakhstan Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to understand how it affects on entire integration processes between them.

Key word: integration, Central Asian region, territorial disputes, political situation, borderline, illegal trade, terrorism.

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Орталық Азия елдерінің бірігуіндегі кейбір кедергілер туралы

Аңдатпа. Мақалада Орталық Азия аймағындағы интеграциялық процестерге белгілі бір кедергілер тудыратын негізгі проблемалар мен факторлар, сайып келгенде, осы аймақтағы елдердің сәтті бірігуіне кедергі болатын факторлар қарастырылады. Бұл проблемаларға Орталық Азия мемлекеттері (бұрынғы кеңестік республикалар) арасындағы ықпалдастыққа әсер ететін саяси, экономикалық, су және әлеуметтік проблемалар мен процестер жатады. Мақала авторлары Орталық Азия елдерінде аймақтың экономикасын басқарудың бірыңғай жүйесі жоқ екендігіне назар аударады. Мақалада аймақтағы аумақтық дауларды шешудің күрделі жағдайлары қарастырылған. Бұл сонымен қатар Орталық Азия мемлекеттері арасындағы су ресурстарын пайдалану жағдайының шиеленісуіне де қатысты. Зерттеуде қолданылатын әдістеме негізінен Қазақстан, Өзбекстан, Түркіменстан және Қырғызстан арасындағы негізгі айырмашылықтарды анықтау үшін салыстырмалы саясат құралдарын қолдануға негізделген, бұл олардың арасындағы интеграциялық процестерге қалай әсер ететінін түсіну үшін.

Түйін сөздер: интеграция, Орталық Азия аймағы, аумақтық даулар, саяси жағдай, шекара сызығы, заңсыз сауда, терроризм.

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О некоторых препятствиях в интеграции стран Центральной Азии

Аннотация. В статье рассматриваются основные проблемы и факторы, создающие определенные препятствия для интеграционных процессов в регионе Центральной Азии, которые, в конечном итоге, становятся барьером для успешной интеграции стран данного

региона. Эти проблемы включают политические, экономические, водные и социальные проблемы и процессы, влияющие на интеграцию между государствами Центральной Азии (бывшие советские республики). Авторы статьи обращают внимание на то, что в странах Центральной Азии отсутствует единая система управления экономикой региона. В статье рассматриваются сложные случаи разрешения территориальных споров в регионе. В ней также упоминается обострение ситуации с использованием водных ресурсов между государствами Центральной Азии. Методология, используемая в исследовании, основана на применении инструментов сравнительной политики для выявления основных различий между Казахстаном, Узбекистаном, Туркменистаном и Кыргызстаном, в целях понимания того, как это влияет на интеграционные процессы между ними.

Ключевые слова: интеграция, центральноазиатский регион, территориальные споры, политическая ситуация, пограничная линия, нелегальная торговля, терроризм.

Introduction

The integration processes in the Central Asian region despite the considerable efforts undertaken by the Republic of Kazakhstan, are not developing actively enough, which is explained by the presence of a sufficiently large number of factors that not only impede, but sometimes even prevent positive changes.

Some of these factors are unresolved territorial disputes between Central Asian states.

This mainly refers to the relations between the Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Here, as analysts note, “ethnic streaks and the absence of universally recognized borders are exacerbated by a shortage of land and, more importantly, in an arid climate, water resources, giving periodically emerging conflicts a distinctly expressed socio-economic color” (Malysheva: 2010, 12).

It is known that at the beginning of 2017, about 75% of the state border was delimited between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The total length of this border is 1378 km. There were 58 disputed areas (Sultanov: 2016, 81).

According to some experts, a definite breakthrough has recently occurred in the Uzbek-Kyrgyz relations, previously noted by tension due to many years of border disputes. One of these unsettled disputed territories is in the Ungar-Too region. On September 5, 2017, during the state visit of the President of Uzbekistan to Kyrgyzstan, the parties managed to agree on 85% of the entire state border; coordination of 15% of the disputed territory is carried out by a joint government commission (Malysheva: 2018, 92).

A difficult situation was on the Uzbek-Tajik border as well. In November 2017, the commission on delimitation and demarcation of the border resumed its work that was interrupted in 2012. Until 2002, the parties decided on 84% of the border, and in October of the same year, the heads of states signed an

agreement on the Tajik-Uzbek state border. On the remaining 16% of the borderline, controversial issues remained unresolved. One of the main disputed sections of the border is the Farhad Dam, located in Tajikistan, built in the 1940s. After President Mirziyoyev came to power in Uzbekistan, the parties have repeatedly stated their readiness to restore negotiations (Malysheva: 2018, 93).

As for the border between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, only 55% is delimited here. The length of this border reaches 970 km. It is known that on 71 sites discrepancies in the position of the parties remain (Starr: 2013, 11).

Among the positives, it should be noted that on November 10, 2017, the foreign ministers of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan signed the Treaty on the area of the junction of the state borders of the three states.

The difficulty in resolving territorial disputes between the countries of Central Asia is to some extent explained by the fact that in many respects the existing borders were artificially determined during the national-territorial demarcation of the 1920-1930s.

Experts note that at that time, tribal and regional (among Kyrgyzes, Uzbeks, Tajiks) and tribal (“Sarts”, “Türks”, “Muslims”) definitions, the old political and administrative (Bukhara, Khiva and Kokand khanates) were ignored and linguistic (Tajik-speaking Uzbeks of Samarkand and Uzbek-speaking residents of Tajikistan) borders, as well as the natural borders of oases (Ferghana Valley, which was part of the Kokand Khanate, the valley of the lower Amu Darya, which was part of the Khiva Khanate) (Sultanov: 2016, 83).

The incompleteness of the work on demarcation of borders between the above mentioned states of Central Asia against the background of a difficult general socio-economic situation in some countries of the region contributes to the emergence of border conflicts.

The situation is aggravated by the fact that a number of states sometimes even mined some of its sections to prevent border crossings by “terrorist units”, which led to civilian casualties on both sides of the border.

The complex of these problems significantly affects relations between a number of Central Asian states, provoking them to tough “retaliatory” measures.

The complexity of solving problems associated with the internal borders of Central Asian countries is also exacerbated by “external factors,” one of which is Afghanistan today.

External factors

In 2015, the situation in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan aggravated the situation in the northern regions, which was caused by the appearance in this part of the country of armed detachments not controlled by Kabul, consisting of militants of the ISIS organization banned in the countries of the Central Asian region (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), which was banned in the Republic Kazakhstan and several countries of the world. And this, according to the Tajik expert community, posed a direct threat to the Central Asian states.

As for Kazakhstani specialists, in their opinion, Afghanistan should not be afraid of a direct strike and a breakthrough of the border with Central Asian countries. To a greater extent, the negative impact of radical ideology is causing concern (Sultanov, 2016:83).

In addition to the instability that emanates from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, which borders on some countries of the Central Asian region, as well as the danger of penetration into the territory of virtually all Central Asian states without exception, “various gangs and sabotage groups,” there is an additional problem.

As noted by Kazakh analyst Sultanov B., referring, in turn, to publications by European media, “the leading area of illegal trade in the region is the production, transportation and sale of drugs in Afghanistan, Central Asia, Russia and Europe, carried out by the international drug cartel.”

The most tensed situation, in his opinion, is taking shape in Kyrgyzstan. According to the report of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, of the 80 organized criminal groups involved in the illegal trafficking of drugs in the Central Asian region, 50 operate in Kyrgyzstan.

In the publications of the Central Asian analyst Bakytov R., it is noted that the main smug-

gling routes cross the border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in the Osh and Batken regions and go to the north of the Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, it is known that employees of law enforcement agencies of Kyrgyzstan are sometimes involved in drug transit, which even led to the emergence of such a term as “red heroin”. This term refers to drugs sold by law enforcement officials. All this began to lead to the fact that in some regions of Kyrgyzstan the drug business turned into the main source of income and employment.

Another, no less acute, issue is the use of trans-boundary water resources (Farah: 2015, p. 16). In general, the Central Asian region, as you know, inherited the existing water management system from the former USSR.

The mentioned system was designed to ensure the economic interests of all the republics of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, which constituted a single economic complex in the Soviet Union.

With this aim, the following so-called compensation mechanism was introduced:

- upstream countries (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) had major water supplies. They were supposed to provide water to the countries of the so-called lower reaches – Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan;
- the three indicated downstream countries provided planned energy supplies for the upstream countries (Rogozhina: 2014, 44).

It is known that, for example, on the territory of Kazakhstan, the flow of one of the rivers of Central Asia – the Syr Darya is formed by 6%, while the water intake from this river exceeds 38%.

A practically similar situation with the use of water resources is observed in the Republic of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

For a general understanding of the complexity of this problem, we can cite some data from a situational analysis prepared by the Institute for International Studies of the Moscow Institute of International Relations of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in May 2012 on the topic “Actual problems of energy policy in the Central Asian region and Russia’s interests”. The authors of the document draw attention to the fact that the unified energy system of Central Asia of the period of the Soviet Union ignored the logic of economic independence of the republics, since it was created within the framework of a single and centrally managed economic complex (Chow: 2010, p. 87). Sometimes this led to the formation of the following situation, which laid down intractable problems for the independent development of the states of the region:

- the southern parts of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were connected to their northern territories through the territory of Uzbekistan;

- the northern part of Kazakhstan practically belonged to another energy system, which was not connected with the energy system of Central Asia itself;

- Uzbekistan could not maintain the necessary frequency in its own networks without the capacities of the hydroelectric power stations of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan;

- Turkmenistan was also not self-sufficient, which depended on coal supplies for its heat and power plants from other republics.

The opinion of some German experts who note that the situation with the distribution of water resources in Central Asia was difficult at the end of the Soviet period is also interesting. After formation of the five union republics within clear borders that did not exist before and were not international but purely administrative in nature, many rivers and water reservoirs were divided between several union republics. The situation was even more complicated after the construction of hydraulic structures, which were created without considering these administrative borders. As a result of a one-sided orientation toward cotton production, the multidirectional interests of the new Central Asian union republics developed, which in the USSR tried to harmonize within the framework of the command system of water and energy distribution, as well as due to administrative pressure (Olcott: 1996, p. 16). Towards the end of the Soviet era, both the water quotas system and cotton-oriented production were in a political, economic and environmental crisis.

Ultimately, the aggravation of the conflict over the “water” problem during the period of independent development of the Central Asian states occurred after the Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan stepped up the implementation of projects planned back in the Soviet period. Both countries intended to build two hydroelectric power stations on the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers – Rogun and Kambarata.

Last but not least, the decision of Bishkek and Dushanbe was linked with an increase in energy prices that came from the so-called downstream countries.

Uzbekistan categorically opposed these plans. Tashkent emphasized that these projects should be agreed with the interested countries of the Central Asian region.

According to Uzbek experts, the implementation of such projects can disrupt the natural flow of

Transboundary Rivers in Central Asia. That is, it poses a threat to water, food and environmental security. Moreover, this can lead to increased tension and conflict potential in the Central Asian region (Sultanov: 2016, 83).

A number of analysts recall the rather harsh statements of the former President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov, who spoke about the possibility of “water wars” in the Central Asian region.

Admittedly, water issues are complicated by another factor. As the Russian researcher N. Rogozhina notes, a single international legal framework for managing transboundary water resources does not currently exist. International standards are generally advisory in nature. They are mainly about environmental issues. The issues of rivers’ resources management are not sufficiently spelled out.

Thus, there is virtually no mechanism for resolving international disputes; the legislative and regulatory frameworks are rather poorly developed as well.

It should be added that almost all states in the region (with the exception of Uzbekistan) are not parties to relevant international agreements. Moreover, different legal models of water resources regulation guide them.

Thus, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan support the decision of the Dublin (1992) international conference, where it was defined that “water has its economic value for all its competing uses and should be regarded as an economic commodity.”

Uzbekistan, in its turn, is a supporter of the so-called “basin” principle of water resources management (Rogozhina: 2014, 48).

A separate issue is water pollution. Therefore, often the water entering the territory of Kazakhstan is absolutely unsuitable “both for agricultural needs and for fisheries” (Sultangalieva: 2015, 14-16).

Periodically arising issues related to unauthorized electricity withdrawal by some transit countries (due to the lack of financial resources necessary to ensure the smooth functioning of their own energy systems) from the Central Asian Unified Energy System (UES) are also superimposed on the “water” issue. And this, in its turn, encourages states that are the ultimate consumers of electricity (Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan) to declare the possibility of exit from the mentioned energy system.

Due to its specificity, the problems connected with the use of water resources for the agricultural sector are closely linked to issues arising from the functioning of the energy system of some countries in the region.

As Kazakhstani researcher G. Rakhmatulina emphasizes, the states located in the lower reaches of the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan) are constantly experiencing water shortages. In its turn, the states of the upper reaches of these rivers (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) have, as previously mentioned, problems with providing fuel resources from neighboring countries for the operation of power plants in winter. Lacking these resources, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are forced to more actively use hydropower facilities. Moreover, it is known that working at full capacity of hydroelectric power plants in winter not only reduces the volume of reservoirs, but also leads to a massive discharge of large volumes of water into the border regions of neighboring states (Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan).

In this regard, the flooding of the southern regions of Kazakhstan is almost ongoing. At the end of February 2008, due to the overfilling of the Shardara reservoir and the precipitation of a large amount of rainfall, severe flooding occurred in the South Kazakhstan region.

A similar situation exists in the Amu Darya river basin. Flooding threatens the Khorezm region and Karakalpakstan, which are part of Uzbekistan.

Concluding this topic, we can give some estimates of specialists. Thus, Western analysts believe that a comprehensive regional solution can hardly be expected. First of all, because the water problem cannot be solved at the level of water policy. This is possible only on the basis of deep political, social and economic changes (Boyarkina: 2015, 22).

Other researchers come to several other conclusions. They believe that the legal regime for water management in the region does not cover all aspects of interstate water relations. The lack of universal international legal norms on the use of trans-water resources dictates the need for relevant developments in the field of international water law.

According to other researchers who consider the water problem as a whole, the influence of the fresh water shortage on international relations is structural, despite the presence or absence of international water use regimes or agreements regulating interstate interaction in stressed water basins (Likhacheva: 2015, 17).

Another problem complicating the integration processes in the Central Asian region, according to the common opinion of analysts, is the different level of socio-economic development.

Socio-economic development

So by 2002 (a period of active steps taken by the same Republic of Kazakhstan to build the main areas of interaction between all countries of the region), Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, as noted in the study by S. Zhukov, despite continued growth over the past few years, continued “staying ... in the developing world.” Kazakhstan continued to move toward the level of oil-exporting states in terms of per capita gross domestic product (GDP), and Turkmenistan was also approaching the level of Kazakhstan (Zhukov: 2005, 14).

Here I would like to cite data from the report “Kazakhstan and its neighbors: opportunities and limitations”, prepared by A. Sultangalieva from the Institute of World Economy and Politics under the Fund of the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. It clearly demonstrates the significant differences in indicators of economic development, including Kazakhstan and some of its neighbors in the region.

Thus, Kazakhstan’s GDP in April 2015 (195 billion US dollars) exceeded the combined indicator of three neighboring Central Asian countries – Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan – almost twice. A similar picture was observed when assessing per capita GDP for 2014. Ranking 79th in the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Index, Kazakhstan with a per capita GDP of \$ 11,028, more than doubled the total of the three countries mentioned (Mukhitdinova: 2015, pp. 365-367).

Analysts state that according to most basic characteristics, the countries of the Central Asian region belong to territories with difficult development conditions. Therefore, the bulk of the territory of the same Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are mountains. A significant part of the territories of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan is in the semi-desert or desert strip. And this, in its turn, significantly limits the amount of land suitable for agricultural activities.

It should be noted and low population density in most of the territory of Central Asian countries, as well as an insignificant concentration of production per unit of territory (Zhukov: 2005, 16).

It is also noteworthy that almost until the beginning of 2000 a number of states in the region (Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) tried to exclude their economies from the global scope. This was expressed in the closed balance of payments and introduction of restrictive measures for the circulation of convertible currency.

It should be recalled that, becoming a member of the World Trade Organization in December 1998, Kyrgyzstan joined to almost all sectoral initiatives and agreements of this organization. This step not only limited Kyrgyzstan's ability to protect its national market, but ultimately led the rest of the Central Asian countries to introduce the necessary customs restrictions to protect their own producers.

Differences in the level of economic development of states of the region were sharply marked after the global financial crisis of 2007-2008, as a result of which the countries of Central Asia were split into those that were severely affected by the crisis, and those that were less affected (Phillips and James: 2013, pp. 23–35).

In general, after the global financial crisis, as Kazakhstani analysts note, the Central Asian region sharply divided into donors and recipients of assistance. In the future, this led to the freezing of many regional projects that were in limbo (Nursha and Kapushenko: 2014).

Speaking about the difference in the economic development of Central Asian countries, Chinese analysts point out that the per capita income of more developed Kazakhstan is 10 times greater than of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, Kazakhstan strengthens the country's development and actively contributes to the transformation of the production structure and progress in science and technology, while Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan face the challenges of living (Shi Jie: 2013, 56).

A number of Russian experts note that almost all Central Asian states continue to focus on externally oriented development. However, most Central Asian countries do not notice the fact that the conditions of world economic development have fundamentally changed since mid-2014, when demand for raw materials slowed, which led to a drop in prices. Ultimately, this led to the completion of a favorable cycle for externally oriented raw material growth (Reznikova: 2016, 132).

Another factor hindering the development of integration processes in Central Asia is the presence of transport problems.

One of these problems is a state of roads and transportation infrastructure as a whole. Experts note the deterioration of road equipment among carriers, which leads to accidents and a shortage of vehicles. In addition, almost all countries of the Central Asian region are net importers of motor transport services, that is, their own capacities cannot satisfy the increasing demand for transport services. The low level of quality of the roadway and bridges also remains (Ordabayev: 2015, 10).

There are problems in the field of rail transportation, which have their own limitations.

These are multi-track roads that are used in the Central Asian region, on the one hand, and on the territory of their foreign policy partners in Asia and Europe, on the other. Lack of appropriate infrastructure (transshipment centers, etc.) remains.

Depreciation and shortage of wagon and locomotive parks, the high cost of renting wagons, and the mismatch of existing infrastructure and technologies with international standards are observed.

This is superimposed on the low speed of rolling stocks, insufficient development of capacities for the processing, shipment, loading and redistribution of goods, which causes a simple, and sometimes even leads to loss of goods.

Speaking about the transit and transport potential of the Central Asian region, Kazakhstani analysts note one interesting situation. On the one hand, without any doubt, the active participation of Central Asian states in the formation of international transport corridors strengthens their position in the system of world economic relations, and also provides them with important conditions for sustainable development. But on the other hand, the transit status of this region attracts the attention of so-called external players who are interested in implementing those transport projects that are more or less in line with their geopolitical interests (Okur: 2014, pp. 86–90). And this, in its turn, leads to increased competition between various projects, both in the direction of “North – South” and “East – West”.

Under the prevailing conditions, the countries of Central Asia have to consider all possible risk factors when implementing one or another transport corridor, take into account the interests of leading players in the context of their rivalry, and anticipate the possibility of “raising rates” in this struggle.

The opinion of other experts from the Eurasian space should also be cited, who believe that in the development of transport routes in Central Asia the interests of participants external to the region who solve their communication problems – China, the EU, Russia, Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey, the United States – are in contact. In addition, Central Asia is the scene of a clash of three large integration projects: Eurasian integration, the US New Silk Road and the Chinese One Road One Belt (Vakulchuk and Overland: 2019, pp. 115–133). As world experience shows, major international transport projects being implemented set the vector for regionalization.

With regard to the development of transport infrastructure in Central Asia (and the Eurasian space as a whole), there is a tendency to unite integration transport projects and initiatives:

- integration of the project “Western Europe – Western China” into the meridional “North-South” corridors of CAREC, TRACECA, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific – ESCAP and others;

- coincidence of projects for the development of communications within the SCO and CAREC;

- the international transport corridor through the CIS is a continuation of the pan-European corridors and the TRACECA project, and the EAEU road and rail routes coincide with the network of Asian and European highways, as well as with the routes of the Organization for Cooperation between Railways (Turayeva: 2014, 58).

Integration processes in the Central Asian region also complicate some political problems. In due time, they were formulated in sufficient detail in a study by S. Barov, excerpts from which can be cited almost completely.

Thus, the author notes that the development of these processes in this region is impossible without taking into account world experience in creating supranational management systems and using existing developments of integration associations. However, it is also necessary to consider local cultural, historical and political legal features. The mere borrowing of positive international experience of integration is not applicable in Central Asia; its use may even lead to the opposite results (Barov: 2013, 17).

Integration in the Central Asian region should also be considered in the context of common economic and political processes taking place in the region. In this case, we mean the intersection of the areas of responsibility of various international structures – the CIS, the SCO, the EurAsEC and the CSTO.

According to the Russian researcher, despite the fact that there are successes between the Central Asian countries in creating an atmosphere of friendship and good neighborliness in the region, there is still a lack of ideological and political foundations for cooperation. This is compounded by an insufficient level of cooperation in the social and humanitarian field.

Nationalist sentiments are preserved, which, coupled with ethnocratic tendencies, lead to a negative perception of the existing positive initiatives aimed at forming a single community in the Central

Asian region, which is united by common values, and also has common civic structures represented by relevant supranational public organizations.

A similar opinion is shared by Kazakhstani analyst B. Sultanov. In particular, he emphasizes that the problems associated with the incompleteness of the process of socio-political and socio-economic reform in the states of the region have a destabilizing effect on the situation in the Central Asian region.

He also notes that local political elites have so far no interest in the development of intra-regional integration processes. And as a result – after the devaluation of national currencies in the countries of Central Asia, especially in the second half of 2015, there was an increase in social polarization.

A decrease in the living standard of the population is also observed, as a result of which the mentioned increase in socio-political tension was noted (Sultanov: 2016, 73).

Many experts, including Russian ones, agree with this thesis. In particular, I. Zvyagelskaya emphasizes that there are huge income gaps in Central Asian countries. Moreover, a significant part of the region’s population is below the poverty line. If earlier, in her opinion, possible explosions of instability to a large extent had an interethnic basis, today, while maintaining this danger, their social and economic causes are of greatest concern.

Kazakh researcher B. Sultanov, in turn, notes the increase in religiosity of the population of the region. This happens, according to the analyst, in the conditions of both a weak activity in socio-political life, and an increase in poverty, unemployment, clannishness and corruption in Central Asia. Under the current conditions, the number of followers of various Islamic radical organizations is growing.

In addition, ambiguous ideas of the Islamic state, which allegedly advocate the principles of social justice and opposition to Western policy, are beginning to gain more and more popularity in the Muslim community (Sultanov: 2016, 79).

In this regard, a number of experts are beginning to be concerned about information published, including in the analytical materials of the previously mentioned MGIMO of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. So, in the corresponding analytical report, experts, referring, for their part, to the data of the International Center for Research on Problems of Radicalism and Political Violence (ICSR), state the participation of foreign citizens in conflicts in Syria and Iraq.

According to reports, at the end of 2014, 250 fighters left Kazakhstan, 100 from Kyrgyzstan, 190

from Tajikistan, 360 from Turkmenistan, 500 from Uzbekistan.

Analysts at the Moscow Institute of International Relations of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs also cite facts from a later (August 2015) report of the American Brookings Institution, which states that Uzbekistan (500 people) was named among the 20 states that served as the main “suppliers” of manpower for the Islamic state, Turkmenistan (360) and Kyrgyzstan (350) (Zinin: 2015, 135-144).

One of the realities of the relationship of a number of Central Asian countries is labor migration.

It is known that Kazakhstan is the only country in Central Asia that accepts the largest number of labor migrants from Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

As noted in the materials of Kazakhstan researcher A. Sultangalieva, who refers to the World Bank in 2014, about 12% of Uzbek citizens leaving the country in search of work are labor migrants in Kazakhstan (a significant part of them are employed for seasonal work) (Sultangalieva, 2015, 46).

Kazakhstan is the second country after Russia where citizens of Kyrgyzstan carry out guest work as well. The main areas of employment for Kyrgyz migrants are trade (40%) and agriculture (5%).

A number of Russian experts predict that by 2050 the number of able-bodied people in the countries of Central Asia (the main suppliers of labor migrants to Russia and Kazakhstan) will grow. It is expected that in Uzbekistan their number will increase by 6.4 million, in Tajikistan – by 2.8 million, in Turkmenistan – by 900 thousand, and Kyrgyzstan – by 600 thousand people (Ryazantsev, Pismennaya and Tkachenko: 2013, 46).

As for Kazakhstani specialists, they do not exclude that the recent reduction in labor migration from the same Kyrgyzstan or Uzbekistan (due to the well-known consequences of the economic crisis in Kazakhstan itself) may put negative pressure on the labor markets of the above-mentioned countries, thus exacerbating socio-economic situation on the ground.

Conclusion

Of course, the presence of this complex of problems, a number of which has become a reality of modern processes taking place both in the region and around Central Asia, significantly complicates the implementation of even the most acceptable integration processes in the Central Asian region under the current conditions.

According to some Russian researchers, the fragmentation of Central Asia in the medium term will not be overcome. The countries of the region have not yet aimed at economic unity. The uniformity of their economies and multi-vector foreign policy only strengthens this state of affairs. Both global and regional powers, having economic and political interests in the region, are also not tuned to the formation of regional unity.

States are aimed at maintaining their own national interests to a greater extent than at developing holistic relationships within the region. A specific situation is developing in the region: only three states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) out of five are interested in economic integration both within the region and in a wider format, for example, in the Customs Union or the Common Economic Space. At the same time, the economies of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, due to their objective economic positions, are actually not ready for integration. Uzbekistan prefers to develop relations with neighboring states on a bilateral basis. Turkmenistan, despite the reforms that have begun in domestic politics and foreign economic orientations, still does not focus on intra-regional projects (Dadabaeva and Kuzmina: 2014, 49-51).

Contrary to the mentioned factors hindering the objective development of integration processes in the Central Asian region, there is no alternative to the unification of the Central Asian states. Otherwise, the Central Asian countries can finally gain a foothold in the fourth group of states of the modern system of international relations, which has a four-stage configuration.

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