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KAZAKHSTAN IN THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL – INTERIM RESULTS

Meirat Omarov

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Abstract. The article analyzes the main aspects of Kazakhstan’s activity as a non-permanent member in the UN Security Council for eleven months of 2017. The author focuses the reader’s attention on the results achieved by Kazakhstan in terms of the foreign policy strategy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2014-2020 and on the basis of the four basic principles of Kazakhstan’s activities in the UN Security Council: food security; water security; energy security; and nuclear security.

Keywords: *the UN Security Council, foreign policy, security, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of WMD, peacekeeping.*

ҚАЗАҚСТАН БҰҰ ҚАУІПСІЗДІК КЕҢЕСІНДЕ – АРАЛЫҚ НӘТИЖЕЛЕР

Меират Омаров

Аңдатпа. Мақалада Қазақстанның БҰҰ-ның Қауіпсіздік Кеңесінің тұрақты мүшесі ретіндегі 2017 жылдың 11 айындағы қызметінің негізгі аспектілерін талданған. Автор 2014–2020 жылдарға арналған Қазақстан Республикасының сыртқы саясатының стратегиясы аясында және БҰҰ-ның Қауіпсіздік кеңесіндегі Қазақстанның қызметінің төрт негізгі принциптері негізінде: азық-түлік қауіпсіздігі, су қауіпсіздігі, энергетикалық қауіпсіздік және ядролық қауіпсіздік бойынша қол жеткізген нәтижелеріне оқырман назарын аударады.

Түйінді сөздер: *Біріккен Ұлттар Ұйымы Қауіпсіздік Кеңесінің, сыртқы саясат, қауіпсіздік, ядролық қарусыздану және жаппай қырып-жою қаруын таратпау, бітімгершілік.*

КАЗАХСТАН В СБ ООН – ПРОМЕЖУТОЧНЫЕ ИТОГИ

Меират Омаров

Аннотация. В статье анализируются основные аспекты деятельности Казахстана в качестве непостоянного члена в Совете Безопасности ООН за 11 месяцев 2017 года. Автор работы акцентирует внимание читателя на результатах, которые были достигнуты Казахстаном в рамках стратегии внешней политики Республики Казахстан на 2014–2020 годы и на основе четырех основных принципов деятельности Казахстана в СБ ООН: продовольственной безопасности, водной безопасности, энергетической безопасности и ядерной безопасности.

Ключевые слова: Совет Безопасности ООН, внешняя политика, безопасность, ядерное разоружение и нераспространение ОМУ, митотворчество.

The first year of activity of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the UN Security Council as a non-permanent member is coming to an end. Before the presidency of our country in this authoritative body during January 2018, a body which is responsible for the maintenance of peace and security on the planet, it makes sense to sum up some intermediate results.

It should be reminded that Kazakhstan set out on its path to the key decision-making body at global level, the UN Security Council, on March 2, 1992, when it became a member of this universal organization. Since that time, the country has had the opportunity at world level not only to declare itself but also to play an active part in solving mankind's problems.

Kazakhstan proclaimed its peaceful position through Nursultan Nazarbayev, who first spoke in 1992 at the UN General Assembly as the head of an independent state.

The world community for a quarter of a century observed not only the unprecedented voluntary rejection by the state of nuclear weapons, but its efforts, both in the sphere of nuclear non-proliferation, and in the settlement of conflict situations between countries at the regional and international levels. Since then, a peacekeeping mission has become the cornerstone of our country's foreign policy. 25 years of independence of the Republic was

also the 25th year of fruitful cooperation of Kazakhstan and the UN.

It should be noted that, thanks to the balanced foreign policy course of N. Nazarbayev, over the last quarter of a century the country has made the long journey from a debutant in international relations to an active and authoritative member of a unique global organization. This was confirmed at the beginning of 2017 by the participation of the state as a non-permanent member in the work of the Security Council.

During the first half of 2013, the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Kazakhstan conducted preparatory work for joining the specialized UN body. In September, Kazakhstan submitted its candidacy for a seat as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for the Asia-Pacific region for 2017/2018, creating competition for Thailand. On June 28, 2016, at a vote at UN headquarters in New York, Kazakhstan, having won 138 votes out of 193 UN member states, was elected for the first time as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for 2017–2018.

It should be noted that the program Kazakhstan put forward for its candidature of the UN Security Council proved to be quite convincing, as it gathered gaining a significant majority of votes. As a result, within two years Kazakhstan will be able to influence the

adoption of a number of important decisions and the preparation of documents of a geopolitical nature for UN resolutions, albeit without a veto.

Kazakhstan's membership of the UN Security Council, according to Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov, is not only the logical outcome of twenty-five years of implementation of foreign policy strategy but also naturally acts as a prologue to the qualitatively new status of Kazakhstan on the world stage in terms of the Third Modernization of Kazakhstan. In this context, the work of the ROK in the UN Security Council is seen as a nationwide project [1].

It is worth noting that Kazakhstan has joined the UN Security Council at a time when the global security system is undergoing a period of increasing instability. Today, the United Nations faces challenges that need to be responded to quickly and efficiently. The worsening of global problems is characterized by the intensification of international terrorism, the challenges to food and water security in Central Asia, conflicts in Africa and the Middle East, and the nuclear arms race. The Organization and, most importantly, the Security Council, have a substantial responsibility and, more, the need to prove their effectiveness.

At the same time, such key issues of the global discourse as sustainable development, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of WMD, economic integration, dialogue of civilizations, peacekeeping, human rights, combating transnational challenges and threats are the areas in which Kazakhstan has great experience and high authority.

As a regional leader, a global partner in security issues and a country that makes a significant contribution to international peacekeeping missions, the Republic of Kazakhstan wants to use its unique experience and expertise to address a number of pressing issues currently facing the UN Security Council.

In addition, our country pays special attention to the settlement of the situation in Afghanistan, since without achieving lasting peace and

stability in that country, it is impossible to ensure sustainable security in the Central Asian region. Kazakhstan promotes the international initiatives of the Head of State in the field of nuclear non-proliferation, combating terrorism and extremism, along with those set out in the Manifesto, "The World in the 21st century", which are an integral part of the agenda of Kazakhstan in the UN Security Council.

Today, work in the UN Security Council is well under way, and the Kazakh delegation is actively involved in the consideration of the entire agenda of the Security Council. And the Kazakh diplomats daily participate in discussions on the world's most important political platform, study and analyze huge amounts of information and participate in the development and adoption of truly important international decisions.

Along with that, it should be highlighted that Kazakhstan's major contribution to the work of the UN's main body for ensuring peace and security was the special political appeal of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev's speech entitled, "Kazakhstan's Vision for Strengthening Global Partnership for Building a Safe, Fair and Prosperous World", presented on January 10, 2017 at the open debate of the UN Security Council.

As a result, this appeal received the official status of a document of the General Assembly and the UN Security Council.

In the address of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, seven priorities for work in the UN Security Council were outlined:

1. Achieving a world free of nuclear weapons;
2. Preventing and completely eliminating the threat of a global war by reducing the degree of military confrontation at global and regional levels;
3. Making Central Asia the model of a region of peace, security, cooperation and development;
4. Fight against international terrorism and violent extremism;
5. Efforts for national reconciliation and the restoration of peace in the African continent;

6. The continuity of the connection between peace, security and development: joint measures to prevent wars and conflicts, protect human rights, realize the goals of sustainable development and combat climate change;

7. Adaptation of the Council and the entire UN system to threats and challenges to humanity in the 21st century[2].

It is important to note that in accordance with national interests within the framework of the given strategy, the main foreign policy efforts will be focused on achieving the following main goals:

1) ensuring in every way possible the national security, defense, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country;

2) strengthening peace, regional and global security;

3) ensuring sustainable positions and the formation of a positive image of the state in the world community;

4) establishing a just and democratic world order with the central and coordinating role of the United Nations (UN)[3];

In accordance with the given strategy, Kazakhstan during 2017-2018 used the opportunity to contribute to the work of the Council and promote national interests in terms of peace and security as well as the interests of the Central Asian countries. One of the country's main national interests is ensuring national security and preserving state sovereignty.

Thus, active work in the UN Security Council as a non-permanent member allows Kazakhstan to promote its international authority and strengthen national security. In addition, membership of the UN Security Council contributes to raising the status and subjectivity of a relatively young independent state in the world arena. At the same time, two visits by the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres - as well as a forthcoming third - to our country since his appointment testify that the authority of Kazakhstan is recognized in this global organization.

Kazakhstan sees its important mission to promote the interests of Central Asian states

on the UN SC site, which will be represented in this body for the first time in the history of the UN. Kazakhstan intends to raise important issues for the region, including regional security issues, and, in this regard, the political settlement and improvement of the social and economic situation in Afghanistan is a key factor for stability and security in Central Asia. In general, the task is to turn the region into a "zone of peace, cooperation and security"[4].

In this sense, non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council allows Kazakhstan not only to be considered as a key country in Central Asia, but also in practice to work to promote the interests of the region on the main international platform, putting forward as a priority of this work the intention to turn the region into a "zone of peace, cooperation and security". Moreover, it is now that there is an intensification of cooperation between the countries of the region, thanks to which the achievement of this goal is possible.

In recent years, Kazakhstan has been implementing practical efforts to solve the problems of Afghanistan. Now, Astana, the head of the Afghanistan / Taliban Committee, has an opportunity to participate actively in stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan on the UN platform, which is of great importance for achieving Kazakhstan's goals for Afghanistan. Moreover, Kazakhstan should use its position in the UN Security Council to resolve the Afghan issue.

At the same time, the resolution on Central Asia and Afghanistan which is planned to be adopted in January 2018 during Kazakhstan's presidency of the UN Security Council will help to actualize and resolve a number of security issues in the Central Asian region. Now it will be possible to propose a program of real participation of the Central Asian countries in resolving the crisis in Afghanistan.

Kazakhstan's activity in the UN Security Council is based on four basic principles: food security, water security, energy security and nuclear security.

The food crisis may turn out to be more urgent than the financial crisis, since it threatens the emergence of social unrest around the world. Given the great potential of Kazakhstan's agricultural sector, Kazakhstan can confidently ensure not only domestic food security but also contribute to global food security. It should be noted that Kazakhstan is one of the top ten largest grain exporters in the world and one of the top five in terms of exports of flour. Annually, up to 6 million tons of wheat is supplied to Asian countries and up to 2 million tons to European Union countries. In general, Kazakhstan exports to over 70 countries [5].

Despite huge reserves of hydrocarbon raw materials, coal and uranium, Kazakhstan intends to develop "green energy", realizing what harm to the environment these types of energy resources can do. Accordingly, energy security has become another important priority and this fits with the international exhibition Expo-2017, successfully held in Astana and dedicated to the development of green energy. In line with this policy, the International Exhibition Center for Green Technologies and Investment Projects "Energy of the Future" is planned to be created on the basis of the Exhibition infrastructure under the auspices of the United Nations. It is worth emphasizing that this initiative was supported by 86 countries and 15 international organizations [6].

In the field of water security, the Republic of Kazakhstan is pursuing a policy of uniting the efforts of all the states of Central Asia for the joint rational use of water and energy resources, including the revitalization of the Aral Sea. At the same time, the conflict potential around the use of water of transboundary rivers has been growing in the Central Asian region. Experts estimate that in the foreseeable future, water will become one of the main types of raw materials, after oil and gas. It seems that the conflict potential in Central Asia itself will tend to grow. Therefore, Kazakhstan as a representative of the region in the UN Security Council, directly interested in maintaining stability, uses a specific political leverage to prevent tensions

in the region. Kazakhstan will have to draw the attention of the United Nations to the threat of a conflict over water in the region.

An important area in which Kazakhstan makes its significant contribution is the resolution of major crises in the world. In particular, it would be worth noting the Astana negotiating platform and the role of the leader of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev in engaging the "irreconcilable" opponents involved in the Syrian conflict. It was the Astana platform that provided a constructive approach to agreeing on the provisions on a joint operational group for monitoring the cease fire regime in Syria, as well as the signing by the guarantor countries of a memorandum on the establishment of de-escalation zones in Syria. Moreover, this format allowed the representatives of the government of Syria and the opposition to gather at the same table of negotiations, and also managed to separate the moderate paramilitary opposition from such terrorist groups as ISIS and "Djebhatan-Nusra." In general, this platform acts as a supplement to the Geneva talks and it is obvious that without Astana it would be difficult to accomplish practical tasks.

Nuclear security is the main and traditional theme in Kazakhstan's foreign policy. Our country voluntarily renounced nuclear weapons, offered its mediation on the Iranian nuclear program, established a low-enriched uranium bank in Kazakhstan under the auspices of the IAEA, and joined the G-8 Global Partnership against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In 2006, Kazakhstan ratified the Central Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone - a legally binding commitment not to manufacture, acquire, test or possess nuclear weapons. Moreover, on December 7, 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted on the initiative of Kazakhstan the Universal Declaration on Building a World Free of Nuclear Weapons. And on March 31, 2016 the Head of State put forward the Manifesto "Peace. XXI century", calling for the world community to joint forces for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. As a result of these commitments, the country

has been held up as a model for international disarmament and atomic security.

The issues of ensuring energy, food and water security, which are of great importance for Central Asia, can also be attributed to the acquired valuable competence. In the region, the formation of an effective mechanism for solving such problems both within individual countries and within the framework of interstate interaction has long been one of the urgent tasks [7].

At the same time, Kazakhstan has the resources, experience, and political will to actively participate in solving the global security problems facing the UN Security Council.

It should be reminded that the agenda of the Security Council consists of 53 active and 15 “sleeping” country and regional issues, mainly on conflicts in Africa and the situation in the Middle East, as well as thematic issues of WMD non-proliferation, fighting terrorism, armed conflict, peacemaking and world stability. The UN Security Council has more than 30 subsidiary bodies, the management of which is distributed among the member countries.

Taking into account the authority of Kazakhstan and a solid track record, Kazakhstan was entrusted with chairing the Security Council Committees on Afghanistan / Taliban (Committee 1988), on IGIL / DAIS / Al Qaeda (Committee 1267/1989/2253) and Somalia / Eritrea (Committee 751 / 1907) [8].

The Afghanistan / Taliban Committee monitors the sanctions imposed by the UN against individuals or organizations supporting the Taliban movement. In addition to monitoring, this committee is also involved in the inclusion or exclusion of an appropriate sanction list. The monitoring and analytical work teams of the committee provide and review travel data and conduct research on incoming information. In addition, there is joint work with Interpol [9].

The Committee on ISIS / DAISH / Al-Qaeda became the next committee headed by Kazakhstan. The sanctions imposed on these organizations include asset freezing, arms embargoes and travel bans. In addition to monitoring the implementation of sanctions,

the units of the committee also provide and disseminate to Member States reports on the global threat from ISIS / DAISH and Al-Qaida and related individuals, groups, enterprises and organizations [10].

The Sanctions Committee for Somalia and Eritrea monitors compliance with sanctions imposed on the East African States of Somalia and Eritrea. The reasons for imposing sanctions were the activities of Islamist militants in Somalia, the criminal activity of the rebel groups, the facts of supporting these movements by Eritrea and the military conflict with the State of Djibouti [11].

Africa is one of the most unstable regions in the world, where for decades military conflicts have continued and new ones have been breaking out. As a result, almost 70% of the UN Security Council’s agenda falls precisely on Africa. This is part of the global responsibility of Kazakhstan and its perception as a significant international actor, ready to work in all directions, if it is necessary to ensure peace and security.

A significant result of Kazakhstan’s activity in the UN Security Council was the initiative put forward at the session of the General Assembly on the establishment of a regional center or a UN committee on preventive diplomacy in Central Asia, with the headquarters to be located in Kazakhstan.

As a result, by consolidating its initiative, Kazakhstan is working on the creation of the Regional Hub of the UN multilateral diplomacy in Almaty, which will pay special attention to the issues of sustainable development, humanitarian assistance, disaster reduction and stability in the region and beyond [12].

The bulk of the terrorist attacks that many member states of the Security Council have encountered are perpetrated by radical Islamists, most often members of the ISIS/ DAISH. At the same time, the leadership of this very committee dealing with the issues of combating terrorism and religious extremism, our country, has valuable experience in countering this threat and allows us to work out mechanisms for international cooperation in the fight against

such challenges. Thus, international terrorism can be defeated only within the framework of the coordinated struggle of the states of the world.

The President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, stated that international terrorism has already acquired a “catastrophic scale”. “Today, any point of the globe can be the object of destructive attacks. Since the beginning of the third millennium, the number of terrorist attacks, as well as the number of deaths, has increased ten-fold. In 2016, terrorist attacks occurred in 104 countries. That’s more than half of the world. That is, according to geography and scale, we are virtually in a third world war. In the war against terror”, he said [13].

In this sense, Kazakhstan’s decision to make a special contribution to the United Nations Trust Fund for Combating Terrorism amounting to 300,000 US dollars is an important contribution by Kazakhstan and a role model for other states. These funds will be used to implement the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, in particular, the third phase of the project “Supporting the implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia”. As a result, Kazakhstan became the first donor country of the program in the region, providing more than 10% of the total project financing.

It should be noted that Kazakhstan working in the Security Council acquires valuable experience and detailed information on the

forms and methods of resolving key security problems. In particular, it gains the practical knowledge on the comprehensive combat with terrorism, within the framework of the promotion of the entire anti-terrorist strategy.

Finally, Kazakhstan during the presidency of the UN Security Council in January 2018, as the main event, plans to convene an open debate on international peace and security issues with the participation of the Head of State, Nursultan Nazarbayev, which will form the basis for the work plan for the second year of Kazakhstan’s membership in the UN Security Council. In addition, it is planned to hold a ministerial-level debate on Central Asia and Afghanistan, as well as quarterly debates on the Middle East at the ambassadorial level.

Thus, summing up the work done for the year of its non-permanent membership, it can be stated that Kazakhstan has done a tremendous job, putting forward really relevant initiatives to resolve conflicts and preserve peace and security on the planet. Kazakhstan’s peacekeeping activities will have a positive cumulative effect and impact on international security now and in the future. Actively working and interacting with the world’s leading powers in the UN Security Council throughout the term of non-permanent membership, Kazakhstan can move towards realizing the goals of its Security Council agenda: complete nuclear disarmament and elimination of the threat of a global war.

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SYRIAN-LED NEGOTIATIONS OF THE ASTANA PROCESS AS A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE GENEVA PROCESS

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Abstract. This article observes staged attempts of the regional and international actors to affect a negotiation process in Syria.

The joint efforts have failed to provide a practical relevance despite the five years of negotiations. “Suggested formats” have not resulted in creating a mutually beneficial approach on Syria – to seek out a compromise.

However, an analysis of the Astana Talks Format results has demonstrated the feasibility of practical problems, managed not only to supplement the Geneva process, but also to open the way for negotiations on further transformations in Geneva.

Given that it was Astana platform allowed to create a security zones, which has significantly reduced the scope and level of violence in Syria, that speaks volumes. Stated differently the Astana Format objectively contributed to international detente, managed to engage the parties in constructive dialogue and to supplement the Geneva process.

Key words: *The Astana Process, the Geneva Process, negotiations, opposition, Syria, Turkey, Russia, Iran.*

СИРИЯРАЛЫҚ АСТАНА КЕЛІССӨЗДЕРІ: ЖЕНЕВА ҮРДІСІНЕ АЙТАРЛЫҚТАЙ ҮЛЕС ҚОСУ

Әділхан Ғәділшиев

Аңдатпа. Мақалада Сириялық келіссөздер үрдісіне аймақтық және сыртқы ойыншылардың ықпал етуге талпынысы қарастырылған.

Келіссөздер бойынша бес жылдық кезең өткеніне қарамастан, бірлескен күш-жігер нақты нәтижелерге қол жеткізе алмады. «Ұсынылған форматтар» Сирия үшін өзара тиімді тәсілді қалыптастыру – ымыраға келуге мүмкіндік бермеді.

Алайда, Астана келіссөздер форматында нәтижелерін талдау нақты міндеттердің орындалу мүмкіндігін көрсетті, бұл Женева үрдісін толықтырып қана қоймай, сонымен қатар Женевада одан әрі реформалау жөніндегі келіссөздер үшін жол ашты.

Сирия аумағында зорлық-зомбылық ауқымы және деңгейін едәуір қысқартатын қауіпсіздік аймақтарын құруға мүмкіндік берген Астана платформасы болғандығын ескеретін болсақ, оның мәні жоғары екендігін көреміз. Басқаша айтқанда, Астана форматы халықаралық шиеленісті бәсеңдетуге объективті үлес қосты, тараптарды маңызды келіссөздерге шақырып, Женева үрдісін толықтырды.

Түйінді сөздер: *Астана келіссөздері, Женева үдерісі, Сирия, келіссөздер, оппозиция және қақтығыстар.*

МЕЖСИРИЙСКИЕ АСТАНИНСКИЕ ПЕРЕГОВОРЫ: ЗНАЧИТЕЛЬНЫЙ ВКЛАД В ЖЕНЕВСКИЙ ПРОЦЕСС

Адилхан Гадельшиев

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматриваются различные инициативы, направленные на урегулирование ситуации в Сирии, и действия региональных и внешних игроков с целью оказать влияние на сирийский переговорный процесс. Несмотря на то, что переговоры происходят на протяжении пяти лет, практической результативности они не имели. «Предлагаемые форматы» так и не привели к выработке взаимовыгодного подхода по урегулированию кризиса в Сирии. При этом Астанинский формат переговоров показал свою эффективность, он не только дополнил Женевский процесс, но и открыл новые перспективы для дальнейших переговоров. Астанинская платформа позволила создать зоны безопасности, которые значительно сократили масштабы и уровень насилия на сирийской территории. Таким образом, Астанинский формат внес значимый вклад в международную разрядку напряженности, позволил организовать конструктивные переговоры и дополнить Женевский процесс.

Ключевые слова: *Астанинский процесс, Женевский процесс, переговоры, оппозиция, Сирия, Турция, Россия, Иран.*

Across the intersection of interests...

Currently the Middle East is one of the most unstable world regions. Regional confrontation is conducted at various levels: between small ethnic groups, terrorist groups, neighboring countries and major political leaders.

This region, which possesses a third of world's oil and natural gas reserves, has become a hotbed of social, political, religious and cultural tensions since the "Arab spring". It is a crossroads of major sea, air and land routes connecting Europe, Asia and Africa. The location makes the region certainly promising from the point of view of transit-capacity development and its impact on economic advancement.

However, the coexistence of Muslim and Christian civilizations, the juxtaposition of different cultures and ethnics represents in turn a huge potential for conflicts and creates additional difficulties for the solution of political problems.

Some Arab countries took individual elements of democratic systems, taking into account the democratization formation processes in the world, while maintaining the traditional way of social life. Others were involved in large-scale social conflicts, which are currently in different stages, rejecting the Western forms of democracy.

In this regard, the Syrian Arab Republic has become a country which broke one of the most acute and protracted conflicts. The question of how to resolve the entrenched conflict was key to reducing regional tension, something that could subsequently mean the creation of a favourable international situation. The Astana Talks in this context became the key to the settlement of the Syria conflict. It managed not only to increase the effectiveness of the Geneva negotiations, but to predetermine the agenda of the region's future.

"Untouch points" or how did it get started...

Before the beginning of the Astana Talks Format, various attempts had been made to achieve effectiveness in settling the Syria conflict. In some cases, the proposed platforms are not effective because of inconsistencies

of external parties; and in others, the problem was the search for agreements on cease fire and truce between official Damascus and the "moderate armed opposition". In this context, it is worthwhile paying attention to a particularly important negotiation process that took place from 2011 to 2016, which managed to gather at the negotiating table involved participants but which did not bring productive results in providing practical solutions.

The Arab League Plan, developed in January 2012, envisaged the handover of power from Syrian President B. al-Assad to ex-Vice-President Farouk al-sharaa. Moreover, it was suggested that, in two months, a government of national unity should be formed under the leadership of a figure acceptable to all sides; and within six months to organize a Presidential election in Syria with the participation of Arab and foreign observers. However, the Arab League suspended its activities in Syria after the armed attacks on members of the League [1].

The Kofi Annan peace plan for Syria or "six-point peace plan for Syria". A Plan for Syria developed in the spring of 2012 by Ko Annan, UN and the Arab League special envoy, in particular, called for the cessation of armed violence by all parties under effective control of the UN special arrangements. Moreover, it included the issue of ensuring humanitarian access to all parts of the country affected by armed clashes [2].

The important items in the Plan were compliance with a daily two-hour ceasefire, the right for peaceful demonstrations and freedom of movement throughout the country for journalists. However, the Plan did not include the question of the resignation of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, on which the West was so insistent.

This initiative was not successful. None of the items have been implemented; and reports about new armed incidents and victims regularly came from Syria [3].

Group "Friends of Syria". This format was initiated in February 2012 with the aim of regular discussions of the Syria situation outside the UN

Security Council. According to some estimates, there was a “new international diplomatic collective of countries” interested in shifting the current regime, intent on circumventing the veto of Russia and China on the Security Council resolution which condemned Syria.

In the framework of the conferences held from 2012 to 2014 the Group discussed the increase pressure on the Syrian government and support the moderate Syrian opposition, including armed groups, in the form of military stuff delivery and other assistance [4].

The Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) announced this “Alliance” by series of related circles of conspiracy against Syria. It should be noted that the format of the meetings did not provide meaningful process and failed to lead to finding a peaceful solution to the Syrian conflict [5].

In general, the practice of resolutions in respect of Syria was used to accelerate the solution of the Syrian issue. Resolutions proposed by the West and some Arab States have condemned the grave violations of human rights and arms supplies for the Syrian army. Russia and China, in turn, insisted on the principles of non-interference in the Syria’s internal affairs, demanded an immediate cessation of hostilities and a termination of the moderate opposition funding. Russia blocked West resolutions in the UN ten times over the entire period of the civil war, defending its position on Syria.

Thus, such initiatives have not ensured progress in developing a common approach on the Syrian issue because of vetoed resolutions of the UN Security Council.

Meanwhile, it is appropriate to mention the first attempts of the Geneva negotiations on Syria or Platform “Geneva-1”. On 30 June 2012 at the initial stage the parties held a first international conference under the UN auspices within the framework of the “Action Group on Syria”. The process involved the permanent members of the UN Security Council, representatives of the European Union and the Foreign Policies of Turkey, Iraq, Kuwait and Qatar. However, this format does not include Iran, Saudi Arabia, and

the immediate neighbors of Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, as well as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Lakhdar Brahimi, the new UN and the Arab League special envoy on Syria, has called the talks “insufficient” according to the results of all consultations, intending to involve the UN Security Council. Russia is expected to make a statement which would have established a deadline for cease-fire and start peace talks between the parties involved in the Syrian conflict.

Thus, there were six preparatory meetings in the format of Russia – US – UN from that period until January 2014. However, the parties were unable to reach peace, in particular due to a delay in the response of the Syrian opposition regarding its participation in upcoming negotiations. In May 2013, Sergei Lavrov, the Russian Foreign Minister, and John Kerry, the U.S. Secretary of State, made a proposal to hold a new conference on Syria, called “Geneva-2”. “Geneva-2”, which started on 22 January 2014, was a continuation of the “Geneva-1” negotiation process, previously proposed by Ko Annan, former UN and the Arab League Special Envoy on Syria.

In this context, it is worth saying that a new phase of negotiations to resolve the Syrian crisis has included both sides – a delegation of Syrian Government and the opposition fighting against the current regime.

If in the first round, held in January 2014, any results on the issue of providing humanitarian aid and prisoner exchange failed, in the second round of negotiations, held on 10-15 February, the parties were able to agree on the supply of humanitarian aid to Horn and civilian evacuation. Accordingly, this solution was the only result of “Geneva-2”.

As a result of the Second Geneva talks, it became clear that in the framework of “Geneva-2” the consultations have not brought significant progress for the Syrian people. As a rule, only a political settlement was the only way to end the conflict. In this case, the parties relied on the achievement of significant progress

in the implementation of the third international conference on Syria, otherwise “Geneva-3”. Simultaneous with the preparatory stage to the negotiations, “Geneva-3” was held as part of the Vienna peace talks on Syria, carrying out the role of a bridge between the processes of “Geneva-2 and Geneva-3”. It is worth noting that a fairly successful military operation of the Russian armed forces in Syria starting against the ISIL terrorists in September 2015 was an important reason for the initiation of the Vienna negotiation process started in November 2015. Initially, a new peace plan for Syria was worked out jointly in the framework of the Vienna talks, which included agreement on the commitment to a cease-fire between the warring parties and achieving national reconciliation. Moreover, its provision for the elimination of ISIL, “Al-Nusra Front” and other terrorist groups has become an important condition. However, the dispute between Russia and the United States failed to find a common denominator regarding the political future of Bashar al-Assad, the Syrian President.

The disputes between the various parties still exist within the Third Geneva Talks on Syria, held under the auspices of the United Nations from February to July 2016. Thus, Riyadh has opposed the participation of the Iranian side in the negotiations on Syria, amid worsening diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

The Munich Meetings were a long-term stage of the “Geneva-3” process in February 2016. Considering the results of the negotiations, it may be noted that their consultations were only given the prospects of establishing a cease-fire by the moderate armed opposition and does not spread to the main parts of the Syrian Islamic front, ISIS and “Jabhat al-Nusra”.

Still, a minor progress under the same process could ensure the Lausanne peace talks on Syria, as it was attended by the heads of Russia, USA, Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Iran Foreign Policies, as well as Staffan de Mistura, the UN special envoy on Syria. Thus, a wide range of participants in this process for

the first time included in the agenda the issue of withdrawal of support for extremists and the possibility of developing a “road map” for a political settlement.

Summarizing the above-mentioned negotiation processes, the parties have not come to a compromise solution which could ensure a cease-fire, a truce and, as a consequence, to consolidate efforts in the fight against the main terrorist organizations. The approach on dividing the “moderate armed opposition” from the armed “jihadists” have become consistent.

The search for the best site for negotiations

The talks site always had certain importance. In this context, the Astana site was chosen for a reason. The issue of balancing political and economic interests in relation to their partners has played a key role for Astana.

On the one hand, Astana Format was proposed, primarily due to Kazakhstan’s earned image. On the other hand, the constructive communication of Astana with Western partners would help promote a new format of negotiations for Russia and Iran to a certain extent.

In addition, close economic and trade relations and investment agreements of Kazakhstan with a number of Middle East countries in this case simplified the opportunity not only to involve the Arab countries in the process, but also to develop a “balanced approach”. Initially, the idea of such tactics was not to spoil the “Nazarbayev mediation style” and the image of Astana as a successful negotiation bridge.

Constructive negotiations on Syria are the result, primarily, of the “Astana” platform, not “Geneva”

Initially, a question of major importance, during the resolution of a long civil war, has always been connected with cease re and willingness to start negotiations. Only then the political aspect of the settlement was made in the drafting of a future government and the adoption of new Constitution, etc.

A similar scenario is in the Syrian case. It wasn’t impossible to debate on the Geneva

agenda, including development of the future state specifications, the adoption of a new Constitution for Syria and the holding of elections supervised by the United Nations, while practical questions of “Astana” would not be solved. To ensure the inclusive nature of the process was the main task: a consolidation of the entire spectrum of the opposition and the search for a constructive dialogue with the official Damascus government delegation.

A number of countries have made efforts in this direction. For example, Saudi Arabia has made great efforts to unite the opposition with which it cooperated. So the “Riyadh group” was created. On the Egyptian side the “Cairo group” opposition appeared, which was in close Alliance with the most combat worthy Kurdish people’s self-defence militias. On the Russian side – the “Moscow group” led by the Front for change and liberation of Syria.

Subsequently, Kazakhstan’s diplomacy has contributed to the development of these initiatives; and thus “Astana group” was formed. Leaders and representatives of various opposition forces in Syria, as well as representatives of civil society and independent opposition, who was ready to meet under the “Astana umbrella”, were included in it.

Focusing on the total productivity of “Astana and Geneva” processes, it should be noted that Astana is a new process, and the current Geneva inter-Syrian negotiations are a continuation of the previous inconclusive “Geneva-3” talks.

From the time of activation of the Kazakstany platform, two of the dialogue platforms, “Astana” and “Geneva”, complement each other. In this case the Geneva process is working on one agenda, and “Astana” on the other. It is worth to say that without the Astana process the representatives of the warring parties could not sit at the same negotiating table in Geneva, because the Geneva process prevented ultimatums from the representatives of the various oppositions and preconditions being imposed on the negotiations.

It is noteworthy that the obstacle to the political process in the framework of “Geneva”

has always been that the Syrian leadership has not provided any vision of the transition period. Thus, the Assad regime prevented the implementation of the Geneva process.

The first three rounds of talks held in January, February and March 2017, at once determined the fate of the Astana process. The integration of the armed opposition into Syrian negotiation process was effective.

“Astana” has created a more favorable atmosphere for further negotiations, prior to the Geneva peace talks. Moreover, the agreement between the guarantors of the truce – Russia, Iran and Turkey on the establishment of a tripartite mechanism to monitor the cease-fire in Syria, has become one of the main outcomes of these negotiations, what was not achieved early on the Geneva talks.

The list of significant achievements might also include the creation of a mechanism of prisoner exchange, as well as consistency in the dead-bodies exchange. So, the gradual promotion of the Astana process began. However, at later stages, certain difficulties arose. The boycott of the talks third round by the armed opposition’s delegation did not stop the discussion of the truce regime.

On 7 April 2017 a missile strike by US on Syria that negatively affected the political efforts of the guarantor-countries of the Astana negotiation process exacerbated the split lines of the different parties on the Syrian case. However, it did not disrupt further negotiations in May.

In subsequent rounds, significant success has been achieved in the creation of zones of de-escalation, which stopped the fighting in agreed areas and provide quick and safe access to humanitarian help. Accordingly, guarantor countries, which bear the obligation to monitor the settlement process, have appeared.

Another diplomatic achievement was the separation of “armed moderate opposition” from the terrorist groups ISIL, “Al-Nusra Front”, related to the al-Qaeda terrorist groups “Ahrar al-sham” and “Jaish al-Islam”, which constitute united Syrian Islamic.

The seventh round marked positive developments in the Syrian conflict: the process moved from a military solution to a political, so the Astana process has been successful in solving practical problems and intensifying efforts to promote the political process in Geneva.

Now the resolution of the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly can have a negative impact. Thus, according to the Russian party, a resolution adopted in November on human-rights violations in Syria undermines the international efforts that have been made in Astana. The Syrian side defines this “project” as a part of a campaign on behalf of Saudi Arabia and its allies aimed at destroying Syrian statehood. Objectively, this approach is characterized as counterproductive, since the “politicized” resolution adopted creates obstacles to this process.

In this context, a potential escalation of the conflict and the hardening of the positions of the parties can only threaten previous agreements. In other words, the practice of such “moves” will only postpone the prospect of reaching a comprehensive peace.

At this stage, unsatisfactory comments on the performance of the Astana format appear. For example, James Mattis, the Minister of Defence of the USA, characterizes the Astana inter-Syrian negotiations as unproductive, giving priority to the Geneva process [7].

There are some positive reviews among the official points of view. The Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has repeatedly noted the effectiveness of negotiations. The Russian President Vladimir Putin, has repeatedly stressed the proven effectiveness of the Astana format in his speeches [8].

“Astana” is a successful addition to “Geneva”

Currently, almost ninety-eight percent of the state’s territory is under the control of the Syrian army, including one of the main points - Deir-ez-Zor city. A phased systematic retreat of the armed gangs should be noted. Moreover, the

plans on joint demining efforts of world heritage sites in Syria can be perceived as approaching the end of the civil war.

Overall, the Astana process in seven rounds of negotiations have significantly reduced the scope and level of violence on Syrian territory. It has disproved the scepticism, demonstrated their productivity through the implementation of practical questions and given further impetus to the Geneva negotiations.

As a result, today steps for activation of inclusive inter-Syrian dialogue is undertaken on the basis of UN Security Council 2254 resolution. On new sites, it is possible to provide for the participation of representatives of wide segments of Syrian society, with gradual promotion. There are plans to gather delegates from various political parties, internal and external opposition and ethnically religious groups at the negotiating table. However, first of all, the main objective is to develop a national agenda for Syria, including the reconstruction of the infrastructure, the revival of industry, agriculture, trade and the opening of social sites.

Progress in resolving the crisis on the basis of the “Astana-Geneva” format opens a new stage in the Syrian conflict settlement. Their complementarity is actually reducing the risks of new conflicts.

Today, the parties, interested in a process of stabilization, agree to take the maximum steps to stimulate the engagement of other countries, including regional and international organizations. So, all the planned objectives in the long term, should really speed up the peace process and, as a consequence, to have a positive impact on the situation in the middle East.

Now the question is whether the agreements are crucial for Syria’s future? And what will be the future Syria’s policy? These questions remain in the Geneva agenda. Still, thanks to the Astana inter-Syrian process, the specific tasks stipulated in the document, are being carried out; and there are hopes for improvement of the situation in Syria.

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CENTRAL ASIA – 2025 FORECASTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION AND INDIVIDUAL STATES OF CENTRAL ASIA AND CHANGES IN THE INTERNATIONAL AND GEOPOLITICAL SITUATION BY 2025

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Abstract. Currently, sweeping changes in the balance of power are taking place at the heart of Eurasia. Central Asia is going through a fundamental geopolitical shift resulting in the new roles of China, Iran, Russia, South Africa and USA and new relationships with them. Collectively, these changes will lead to the geopolitical reorientation of the region from Eurasia and USA to Asia. By 2025 this trend will have proved out.

Central Asia is headed in the direction, which implies that the region is experiencing a massive geopolitical shift, resulting in weakening ties with Euro-Atlantic community and increasing influence and importance of China. In the foreseeable future, the key partners of Central Asia's countries will be China and Moscow in the fields of politics, economy and security: it's connected with the prevailing economic influence of China in the region and the Russia residual presence.

A number of experts reckon that the region has many problems that should be resolved exactly bilaterally, and not through the participation in the unions and alliances. On the other side – Central Asian elites have always known that in case of serious security threat to protect the region without the assistance of foreign partners is not simple.

In the short term (till 2025), CA States will try to preserve the current power balance. In turn, international and regional players which are interested in region, proceeding from their perspectives and opportunities, will provide security and stability of the regions to advance their own practical use. Meanwhile, in the medium turn (after 2025) Central Asian Republics will be faced with the global impact of the world political transitions.

Key words: *Central Asia, China, Russia, USA, EU, regional co-operation, geopolitics, foreign policy.*

ОРТАЛЫҚ АЗИЯ – 2025

ОА ӨҢІРІ МЕН ЖЕКЕ МЕМЛЕКЕТТЕРІНІҢ ДАМУЫ ЖӘНЕ 2025 ЖЫЛҒА ХАЛЫҚАРАЛЫҚ ЖӘНЕ ГЕОСАЯСИ ЖАҒДАЙДАҒЫ ӨЗГЕРІСТЕРДІҢ БОЛЖАМЫ

Мұрат Лаумулин

Андатпа. Қазіргі таңда Еуразия құрлығының ортасында күшті орналастыруға қатысты масштабтық өзгерістер орын алуда. Орталық Азия Қытайдың, Еуропаның, Иранның, Ресейдің, Оңтүстік Азияның және АҚШ-тың жаңа рөлдеріне және олармен жаңа қарым-қатынасқа әкеліп соқтыратын іргелі геосаяси ілгерілеуді бастан кешіруде. Нәтижесінде бұл өзгертулер өңірдің геосаяси тұрғыдан Еуропа мен АҚШ-тан Азияға қайта бұрылуына алып келеді. Ал 2025 жылға қарай бұл беталыс өзін толықтай көрсетеді.

Орталық Азия еуро-атлантикалық қоғамдастықпен байланыстың әлсіреуі және Қытайдың мәні мен әсерінің күшеюіне әкелетін, өңірде ірі геосаяси қозғалыс тудыратын өзгерістер орын алатын бағытта дамып келеді. Болашақта Орталық Азия мемлекеттерінің саясат, экономика және қауіпсіздік салаларында басты серіктестер Бейжің мен Мәскеу болады: бұл өңірдегі Қытайдың басым экономикалық ықпалымен және Ресейдің бұрыннан қалған байланыстарымен түсіндіріледі.

Бірқатар сарапшылар өңірдегі көптеген мәселелерді одаққа немесе альянсқа бірігу арқылы емес, керісінше, тек екі жақты форматта шешілуі тиіс деген пікір ұстанады. Ал басқа жағынан – орталық азиялық элита қауіпсіздікке нақты қауіп төнген жағдайда, өңірді сыртқы серіктестердің көмегінсіз қорғау оңай емес екенін әрдайым түсінеді.

Орталық Азия мемлекеттері қысқа мерзімдік келешекте (2025 жылға дейін) ағымдағы күштер теңгерімін сақтауға тырысады. Өз кезегінде, өңірде қызығушылығы бар халықаралық және өңірлік ойыншылар, өз мүдделері мен мүмкіндіктеріне сүйеніп, өздерінің нақты мүдделерін жылжыту үшін өңірдің қауіпсіздігі мен тұрақтылығын қамтамасыз етеді. Сонымен қатар, орташа мерзімдік келешекте (2025 жылдан кейін) ортаазиялық республикаларына әлемдік саяси трансформациялардың ғаламдық әсеріне қақтығысуға тура келеді.

Түйінді сөздер: *Орталық Азия, Қытай, Ресей, АҚШ, ЕО, өңірлік ынтымақтастық, геосаясат, сыртқы саясат.*

ЦЕНТРАЛЬНАЯ АЗИЯ – 2025 ПРОГНОЗЫ РАЗВИТИЯ РЕГИОНА И ОТДЕЛЬНЫХ ГОСУДАРСТВ ЦА И ИЗМЕНЕНИЙ В МЕЖДУНАРОДНОМ И ГЕОПОЛИТИЧЕСКОМ ПОЛОЖЕНИИ К 2025 ГОДУ

Мурат Лаумулин

Аннотация. В настоящее время в центре Евразии происходит масштабное изменение расстановки сил. Центральная Азия переживает фундаментальный геополитический сдвиг, результатом которого станут новые роли Китая, Европы, Ирана, России, Южной Азии и США и новые отношения с ними. В совокупности эти изменения приведут к геополитической переориентации региона с Европы и США на Азию. К 2025 году данная тенденция уже проявит себя в полный рост.

Центральная Азия движется в том направлении, которое подразумевает, что в регионе происходит крупный геополитический сдвиг, результатом которого станет ослабление связей с евро-атлантическим сообществом и усиление влияния и значения Китая. В обозримом будущем главными партнерами стран Центральной Азии в сферах политики, экономики и безопасности будут Пекин и Москва: это связано с преобладающим экономическим влиянием Китая в регионе и остаточным присутствием России.

Ряд экспертов полагает, что в регионе множество проблем, которые следует решать именно в двустороннем формате, а не через участие в союзах и альянсах. С другой — центральноазиатские элиты всегда понимали, что без помощи внешних партнеров защитить регион в случае серьезных угроз безопасности непросто.

В краткосрочной перспективе (до 2025 г.) государства ЦА будут стремиться сохранить существующий баланс сил. В свою очередь, заинтересованные в регионе международные и региональные игроки, исходя из своих интересов и возможностей, будут обеспечивать безопасность и стабильность региона ради продвижения своих практических интересов. В то же время, в среднесрочной перспективе (после 2025 г.) центральноазиатским республикам придется столкнуться с глобальным воздействием мировых политических трансформаций.

Ключевые слова: *Центральная Азия, Китай, Россия, США, ЕС, региональное сотрудничество, геополитика, внешняя политика.*

If in the 1990s 2025 was considered as a long-term perspective, in the mid-2000s this date is already short-term. However, the previous basic settings and framework conditions flowing from this fact vary little [1].

It should be noted that, currently, in the center of Eurasia, there is a large-scale change in the alignment of forces. Central Asia is undergoing a fundamental geopolitical shift, which will result in new roles for China, Europe, Iran, Russia, South Asia and the United States, and new relations with them. Together, these changes will lead to a geopolitical reorientation of the region from Europe and the United States

to Asia. By 2025, this trend will be showing itself in fully [2].

Central Asia is moving in a direction which implies that a major geopolitical shift is taking place in the region, and it will result in weakening ties with the Euro-Atlantic community and strengthening the influence and significance of China. In the near future, the main partners of the Central Asian countries in the spheres of politics, economy and security will be Beijing and Moscow: this is due to China's predominant economic influence in the region and the residual presence of Russia.

One of the existing problems in Central Asia,

which must be solved by 2025, is the long length of the unsettled Soviet-era borders. Hence, the main reason for the emergence of conflict situations in the unresolved border issues, while small skirmishes always retain the risk of developing into a large-scale confrontation. For this matter, experts recommend carrying out an audit of international treaties and find related to it resolved border issues.

Another long-term problem is the requirement to comply with international norms when constructing new hydropower stations on the transboundary rivers of the region. Until 2025 all CA countries should make the effort to participate in constructive dialogue in order to strengthen confidence, mutual consideration of interests, ensure effective energy and water conservation and search for common approaches aimed at improving the formats and mechanisms of interaction. The International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea may become the main platform for interaction between the countries of the region.

Specialists consider the multilateral format of the Rogun HPS project to be more realistic with the participation of external players, for example, Russia and China. This would reduce the tension in the water issue of the region and resolve the existing contradictions.

Further, one of the main problems of Central Asia is a poorly developed railway network, a solution for which should be worked at until 2025.

A number of experts believe that there are a lot of problems in the region that should be solved in a bilateral format, and not through participation in unions and alliances. The countries of Central Asia, realizing the danger of neighborhood with Afghanistan, are trying to create all necessary infrastructure to protect the common borders and invest the maximum amount of forces and resources in the development of their own armed forces.

However, the Afghan problem remains complex for the entire region. Tajikistan is a problematic territory for Uzbekistan, through which Afghan narcotraffic passes. Within the framework of regional and international

structures, it is necessary to develop mobile operational units, which are capable of detecting and neutralizing enemy forces in mountain gorges and valleys.

On the other hand, the Central Asian elites have always understood that without the help of external partners, it is not easy to protect the region in the event of serious security threats.

Uzbekistan – 2025

The main changes in the life of Uzbekistan after 2016 are connected with the completion of the “Karimov era” and the beginning of the formation of a new political course. The Governance of the country headed by S. Mirziyoyev proclaimed initiatives to liberalize domestic politics and economy, as well as to build more constructive relations with neighboring states.

As the observers note, in the next three years (i.e. around 2020), Uzbekistan expects profound changes. Now the formation of a new team in the government is being completed, in the following years the situation can radically change. At the same time, a rigid vertical power-structure is maintained, the course for strict secularization of public and political life and the prevention of the spread of ideas of radical Islam is continued [3].

The RU is the only state bordering all the Central Asian republics and Afghanistan, while geographically it occupies the central part of the region. There are Uzbek diasporas in all neighboring countries, moreover, and some are second in number, for example, in Kyrgyzstan. The Uzbek army is considered the largest and most powerful in Central Asia, in part because of a significant portion of the infrastructure and military equipment of the Soviet Turkestan Military District remained on the territory of the republic. Economically, Uzbekistan in the region is second after Kazakhstan. The republic managed to preserve the industrial potential existing at the time of the collapse of the USSR, create new industries, such as the automobile industry, and also to diversify agriculture and reduce dependence on the production of water-intensive cotton.

High birthrate, a fairly closed economy model for foreign investors, remoteness from the sales markets, poor development of the transport infrastructure, and a lack of resources prevented the creation of the required number of jobs. As a result, Uzbekistan is the main supplier of labor migrants to Kazakhstan and Russia.

Researchers associate the special place of Uzbekistan in the CA region, first of all, with a capacious internal market (more than 30 million people), its own resource base and political stability. It is also tied up with large-scale projects initiated by the new president S. Mirziyoyev on systemic reform of the republic's economy. Corruption and bureaucracy, social contradictions, low purchasing capability of the population and the non-liberalized currency market are among the negative factors.

In the strategies of Tashkent nothing has changed – equidistance from Moscow, Washington and Beijing remains an unshakable foundation of Uzbekistan's foreign policy. But for Tashkent it is also important to intensify the dialogue with its immediate neighbors.

In matters of national security, the country continues to focus mainly on its own forces, while not refusing to develop military ties with Russia, the United States, China, France, Germany. Uzbekistan is interested in ensuring that Russian bases in Central Asia protect the region from external threats, but do not interfere in its internal affairs. A similar situation will be arranged by Tashkent in 2025.

There are large Uzbek communities in all surrounding countries of Uzbekistan, and since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the main principle for Tashkent has been that they are the citizens of other countries and their problems are the problems of those countries, where they currently live. However, there are signs that this approach may change.

Thus, we can confidently predict that until 2025 the policy of non-alignment of the RU to military blocs will continue. Foreign military bases are also unlikely to appear in Uzbekistan, and the development of their own armed forces will remain for him the top priority. Uzbekistan will support Russia's actions in the field of

security policy towards Afghanistan. Moscow, in turn, is interested in strengthening the defense capability of Uzbekistan. Therefore, military-technical cooperation will be a priority for years. Under the treaty, the two countries will carry out mutual deliveries of military products up to 2025, which includes not only weapons and military equipment, but also works, services, intellectual property and information in the military-technical sphere.

Experts recommend in the coming years the introduction of electronic entry visas and a customs control-system “green corridor” in Uzbekistan for foreign tourists in the international airports of Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara and Urgench; as well as separate passage of passport control for residents and non-residents in airports and railway stations of the country.

Uzbekistan expects serious investments in the high-tech industries of the country. Many problems affect the investment climate, which is assessed as rather complex. These include issues of currency conversion, a double rate and the problem of exporting profits.

Uzbekistan continues to live according to the model whose author is the first president of the country, I.Karimov: in the regulation of the economy, the state has a leading role. The currency issue is the main brake on the entire economy. Bringing national legislation in line with market mechanisms will be a tremendous impetus, leading Uzbekistan to be the absolute leaders of the entire regional economy. This will become the central task of the new governance of the RU until 2025.

The new development strategy for 2017–2021, adopted in Uzbekistan in early 2017, suggests an increase in GDP by 2030 to more than 2 times. For this purpose, it is planned to implement 657 investment projects with a total cost of about \$ 40 billion, create new free economic zones, continue a large program of import substitution and develop large infrastructure projects.

At the same time, the list of reforms, presented by President S.Mirziyoyev, as a whole was fragmented and did not allow to

make conclusions about the real scale of the planned innovations.

The strategy of actions was approved by presidential decree in early February 2017. It includes five priority areas, each of which provides an approval of a separate annual state program on its implementation:

1. Enhancement of state and social construction.
2. Ensuring the rule of law and reforming the judicial and legal system.
3. Development and liberalization of the economy.
4. Development of the social sphere.
5. Ensuring security, interethnic harmony and religious tolerance, implementing a balanced, mutually beneficial and constructive foreign policy.

At the same time, the strategic project does not contain points affecting the place and role of security agencies in the system of state bodies. At the same time, the action plan provides for strengthening organizational and practical measures to combat religious extremism, terrorism and other forms of organized crime. This means that the influence of the security forces via the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the National Security Service on the socio-political life of Uzbekistan will remain in the medium term – i.e. until 2025.

As for the liberalization of the exchange rate, the Strategy gives preference to the phased introduction of market mechanisms, and as the main task of economic development, it is indicated to ensure the stability of the national currency and prices in the domestic market. Thus, the issue of lifting foreign exchange restrictions in the short term (until 2025) is removed from the agenda.

For Uzbekistan, the Caucasian transport corridor is of special interest, which will enable the Uzbek cargo to follow through the Black Sea ports of Georgia, the Mediterranean Turkish port Mersin and further to Europe. Uzbekistan considers any opportunities for its products to enter the European market, offering natural gas, cotton fiber, uranium, non-ferrous metals, cement, automobiles, fruits and vegetable products. The main issue that is being considered on the negotiations is the formation

and adaptation of the through tariff for the whole Caucasian route.

Herewith the Turkey-Georgia-Azerbaijan-Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan magistral is only a section of the road. The project will have its logical continuation when the construction of the transport corridor China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan is begun.

At the present stage, Uzbekistan has become one of the important objects to which the Turkish activity is directed. Today in Uzbekistan, there are total 500 Turkish firms and companies. The volume of Turkish investments attracted to the economy of Uzbekistan is more than 1 billion dollars. Turks are ready to invest in the construction of refineries, agriculture, textile, leather industry, etc. Turkish investors are ready to invest 3.5 billion dollars into the Uzbek economy.

According to analysts, it is necessary to search for new formats for cooperation, for example, the formation of a free trade zone (FTZ) within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEC) - Uzbekistan. At the same time, we are not talking about Uzbekistan's accession to the EAEC.

In the international arena for Uzbekistan, China is increasingly becoming the leading Asian partner, in relations with which interests are becoming more reciprocal. Tashkent develops bilateral cooperation with China and seeks to maximize the benefits from such cooperation for the development of not only the transport infrastructure, without which all programs within the framework of SREB will remain just good intentions. In Uzbekistan, they consider their unconditional support and participation in the implementation of the SREB concept as a broad opportunity for new projects for the development of the real sector of the national economy. Apparently, the existing approach will remain unchanged until 2025.

Uzbekistan intends to use not only China's own investment resources, but also investment tools in organizations where China plays a leading role. Among them are the Asian Bank for Infrastructure Investments and the Silk Road

Fund. Tashkent expects Chinese support to attract preferential investments and the opening of new credit lines to finance the development of the basic sectors of its economy, including the priority transport sphere. Tashkent and Beijing discuss the possibility to connect their railways through Kyrgyzstan. For this, logistics centers near two borders will be opened. First for automobile transport, in the future - for railway transport.

As regards the west, the European Union intends to implement a number of projects in Uzbekistan totalling 168 million euros. In Uzbekistan, there are three EU programs aimed at the development of the agricultural sector. One of them is aimed at helping to grow and certify fruit and vegetable products, which will be competitive not only in the region, but also among buyers in the EU. For this direction, 20 million euros are allocated for a period of two years. Two other programs support a staff training in agriculture – also about 20 million euros - and technical reform of the sphere.

According to experts, the Uzbek model of political and economic reforms is contrary to the concept of Washington. After 2008, when the whole world was embraced by the global financial and economic crisis, Uzbekistan not only stayed afloat, but also entered the top ten countries that show the highest rates of annual GDP growth. The reason for this was that Tashkent did not follow advisers from international organizations, and when implementing its model relied on a serious state presence in the economy. Now, international institutions are ready to do everything to introduce free conversion of the Uzbek currency with the help of an unreasonable comprehensive risk assessment.

A long time ago, Tashkent realized that in terms of economic cooperation and development in the modern world there are only two centers capable of such a strategically important scale: Moscow and Beijing. For political scientists it is clear that Western countries will never become serious global investors for Uzbekistan, they will not fundamentally contribute to the

development of the country. Moreover, the nature of the economy and the need for investing in Uzbekistan are such, which does not promise rapid profits. The practice of other countries shows that the Arab monarchical regimes (and a number of other financially secure centers - Japan, South Korea, etc.) are quite restrained in this regard.

In terms of long-term interests, it is important for Uzbekistan to develop cooperation with Moscow, because more than 2 million citizens of the republic work in Russia, it is also an important economic partner and the largest investor, primarily in the oil and gas sector. A certain movement towards the EAEC is not excluded, but not yet at the level of full membership. With Beijing, close cooperation will continue, as China is an important investor primarily in the transport sector, a major buyer of gas produced in the republic. But caution with regard to such a powerful regional player as China is likely to persist, so that probably the proposed by Beijing the free trade zone with Uzbekistan will remain as a project. With Western countries, the situation is somewhat different: there is no serious economic cooperation base.

That is, until 2025, Uzbekistan will constantly strive to diversify its foreign economic relations, but for large projects, “big” investors are also needed. There are only two such, and both Moscow and Beijing are simultaneously interested in the stability of Uzbekistan, proceeding from their own security reasons.

With Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Tashkent has rather tense relations. The main reasons for this state of affairs are the unresolved border issue, which is especially acute in the overpopulated Fergana Valley, as well as the extremely conflicting water and energy theme. These problems will not go away anywhere after 2025.

According to some international observers, Uzbekistan will become the fastest growing country in the next 10 years, both in Central Asia and in Eurasia, and will demonstrate the fastest GDP growth per capita.

Kyrgyzstan – 2025

Kyrgyzstan has certain advantages, which include relatively liberal legislation, cheap labor, favorable conditions for the development of agriculture, light industry and tourism and active participation in the work of the EAEC. At the same time, there is no continuity of the political course in the country, there are risks of political instability and the spread of Islamist ideology [4].

Moreover, the Kyrgyz economy stagnates, continuing, as before, to keep on grants and loans from abroad, migrants' transfers, services, the re-export of Chinese consumer goods, as well as gold mining.

In the long term, in five-six years, the gold reserves in the "Kumtor" deposit will be depleted and the receipt of money will cease. The same can happen with other external sources of replenishment of the Kyrgyz budget. If by that time the country cannot modernize the economy and solve at least part of the current problems, the republic will face a full-blown crisis, and this may happen before 2025.

Moscow remains the most important partner for Bishkek. The volume of Russia's total aid to Kyrgyzstan in the past five years exceeded 3.5 billion dollars - in the form of investments, direct budget financing and other types of support. Russia is ready, as necessary, to expand its military presence in Kyrgyzstan. Russia has traditionally adhered to the principle of supporting the current government, minimizing contacts with the opposition.

Moscow annually spends about \$30 million to support the state budget of Kyrgyzstan. Thus, starting from 2012, the total amount of such assistance reached \$255 million. In May 2017, an agreement was reached between the countries on the write-off of Kyrgyz debt to Russia in the amount of 240 million dollars. In general, over the past 11 years, Russia has written off over \$700 million of external debt of Kyrgyzstan.

According to official data, by 2017, 710 thousand Kyrgyz citizens left for work. Russia accounts for about 80%, or about 600 thousand

people. About 450 thousand compatriots received Russian citizenship. The total number of Kyrgyzstanis in Russia alone is more than 900,000 people, which is more than 60% of the country's able-bodied population. According to the National Bank of Kyrgyzstan, only for the first half of the year 2017 migrants transferred to their homeland 1.9 billion dollars.

On the other hand, China has long played a growing role in the country's economy. China is one of the main trading partners of Bishkek. According to official data, during 25 years of establishing diplomatic relations between the two countries, China's direct investment in Kyrgyzstan amounted to \$1.2 billion. Kyrgyzstan increasingly becomes dependent on Beijing. Half of Kyrgyzstan's external debt falls to China. This is about 2 billion dollars at 2% per annum. Chinese investments are present in the mining industry, in the supply of construction materials, in small and medium businesses.

Beijing helps the republic in the reconstruction of Bishkek-Torugart, Osh-Erkeshtam roads, in the construction of an alternative North-South road, the "Datka-Kemin" substation and the construction of small enterprises in the processing industry.

In recent years, Beijing and Bishkek have decided to accelerate the construction of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway. The big problem in Xinjiang is the lack of compliance with the infrastructure requirements of the initiative "One Belt - One Way". Two variants of laying a railway are considered in Bishkek. The first variant is Torugart-Dostuk-At-Bashi-Jalal-Abad with the length of 433 km, the second – Torugart-Arpa-Kara-Suu, 278 km. In Bishkek, they plan to build a road in such way that it covers as many settlements as possible. However, in Beijing, another point of view holds, considering that the transit road will be competitive with a short extension - about 100 km. It is assumed that these problems will require their solution long before 2025.

There is also no consensus on the issue of gauge. Beijing insisted that the road have a European gauge of 1435 mm, while the

Russian standard, common for all post-Soviet states, as well as for Slovakia, Finland, part of Afghanistan and Iran, is 1520 mm. Russia connects the situation with ensuring national security in Siberia, the Volga region and the Urals. If there is a Chinese track, then there will automatically appear Chinese security and the Chinese military. This is not a question of Kyrgyz-Russian relations, it is a question of the future of Russia itself. Kirghizia in this project is assigned the role of a transit country.

A major problem in domestic politics, which is unlikely to be resolved before 2025, remains the Islamic question. According to various estimates, there are about 3 thousand active mosques on the territory of the republic, not all of them have passed state registration. To this, we should add 102 acting madrassas, 7 Islamic institutes and 1 Islamic university. A number of experts believe that in recent years in Kyrgyzstan there is a religious psychosis. Religious traditions are propagated in the republic, replicas are being circulated about the possibility of creating an Islamic state in Kyrgyzstan.

According to specialists, until 2025 the role of Islam in Kyrgyzstan will only grow with time and this process is irreversible. Nevertheless, the creation of a political party on a religious basis in the coming years is not possible. Existing Muslim groups do not represent a single whole. These are disparate groups that are under different influence. The intellectual level of the Muslim community is not ripe for the creation of a political platform. At the same

time, experts are concerned about the growing number of extremists.

In early December 2017, a change of power is expected in the republic following the results of the presidential elections. The new president will have to solve a number of tasks that have long ripened and are overripe. The state share in the economy is 62%, the share of budget expenditures to GDP is one of the highest in the world. External debt – 40% to the level of GDP. In 2017, the peak of payments for external debt began, which is 4 billion 100.5 million dollars. From 2017 to 2023, the maintenance of external debt from the country's budget will go from 200 to 300 million dollars.

Keeping in mind the development of the country until 2025 and beyond, experts strongly advise it is necessary to start deregulating the economy, reduce business taxes, simplify registration for small businesses, stake on small businesses, declare a tax holiday for investors, release small businesses from payments for three years. Of course, without political reforms this can not be achieved. It will be necessary to develop state institutions, form independent courts, attract investment.

But in the coming years, observers do not see the prospects for a change in either the constitutional system of Kyrgyzstan, nor the policy aimed at cooperation with the Russian Federation, integration in the EAEC. Among recent trends, we should note a rapprochement with Tashkent. As it is supposed, in subsequent years Kyrgyzstan will be more reoriented to relations with Uzbekistan.

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MILITARY ASPECTS OF ANTITERRORISM PROTECTION

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Abstract. On the basis of an analysis of terrorist activity in different parts of the world, conclusions are drawn in the article concerning the transformation of terrorism to a military threat. The growth in different resources, available for use in states, including the military, has been required due to the intensive growth of terrorism and the different forms of violent acts carried out by terrorist organizations and groupings.

Taking international experience into account, the military aspects of antiterrorism protection are considered. This means the set of measures involving armed forces, other troops and the military forces of the RK involved in prevention of and response to current terrorist threats.

Recommendations are offered regarding improvements to the training of the Kazakhstani army in countermeasures against terrorist powers; and also coordination of activity with other states in this area during non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council.

Keywords: *terrorism and extremism, threats and challenges, terrorist activity, national security, Armed forces, other troops and military formations, Kazakhstani army, military and specific training, special-operations forces, special forces units.*

ТЕРРОРИЗММЕН КҮРЕСТІҢ ӘСКЕРИ АСПЕКТІЛЕРІ

Георгий Дубовцев

Аңдатпа. Мақалада әлемнің түрлі аймақтарындағы террористік әрекеттерді талдау негізінде терроризмнің әскери қауіпке айналғандығы туралы қорытынды жасалды. Терроризм ауқымын кеңейтуге, сондай-ақ террористік ұйымдар мен топтардың зорлық-зомбылық әрекеттерінің әртүрлі әдістерін қолдануына байланысты оған қарсы мемлекеттердің барлық мүмкіндіктерін, соның ішінде әскери ресурстарды да тартуды талап етті.

Халықаралық тәжірибені ескере отырып, терроризмге қарсы күрестің әскери аспектілері қарастырылады, олардың қатарына Қазақстан Республикасының Қарулы Күштерінің, басқа да әскерлер мен әскери құрылымдарының қатысуымен туындауы мүмкін лаңкестік қауіп-қатерлердің алдын-алу және жедел әрекет ету шаралары жатады.

БҰҰ Қауіпсіздік Кеңесіне тұрақты емес мүше болу кезеңінде террористік күштерге қарсы тұру үшін қазақстандық армияны оқытуды жетілдіруге, сондай-ақ осы саладағы басқа мемлекеттермен үйлестіруге ұсынымдар ұсынылады.

Түйінді сөздер: *терроризм мен экстремизм, қауіптер мен қауіптер, террорлық әрекеттер, ұлттық қауіпсіздік, Қарулы Күштер, басқа әскерлер мен әскери құралымдар, қазақ әскері, жауынгерлік және арнайы дайындық, арнайы операциялық күштер, арнайы мақсаттағы бөлімдер.*

ВОЕННЫЕ АСПЕКТЫ БОРЬБЫ С ТЕРРОРИЗМОМ

Георгий Дубовцев

Аннотация. В статье на основе анализа террористической деятельности в различных регионах мира делается вывод о превращении терроризма в военную угрозу. Из-за расширения масштабов терроризма, а также применения террористическими организациями и группировками разнообразных форм насильственных действий, для борьбы с ними потребовалось привлечение различных ресурсов, имеющихся в распоряжении государств, в том числе и военных.

С учетом международного опыта рассматриваются военные аспекты борьбы с терроризмом, под которыми понимается комплекс мер с участием Вооруженных сил, других войск и воинских формирований РК по предупреждению и оперативному силовому реагированию на возникающие террористические угрозы.

Предлагаются рекомендации по совершенствованию подготовки казахстанской армии к противодействию террористическим силам, а также координации деятельности с другими государствами в этой сфере в период непостоянного членства в Совете Безопасности ООН.

Ключевые слова: *терроризм и экстремизм, вызовы и угрозы, террористическая деятельность, национальная безопасность, Вооруженные силы, другие войска и воинские формирования, казахстанская армия, боевая и специальная подготовка, силы специальных операций, подразделения специального назначения.*

Introduction

When Kazakhstan was elected as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, it entered new level of interaction with other world states with the aim of finding a solution to global international problems. Our country does not ignore problems related to the fight against terrorism and extremism, as these threats become larger and relevant to many countries.

Escalation of terrorist activity happens in modern conditions all over the world. Terrorism in its different appearances endangers the security of citizens in many countries. The nature of terrorist activity is complicated; the sophistication and scale of terrorist acts are increasing rapidly. The military-like approach to violent action has been noted by experts to be a distinctive feature of modern terrorism. Threats on the

part of terrorist forces have become such that countermeasures are longer the monopoly of security services and law-enforcement bodies. A variety of approaches, including the military option, are required for an effective fight against them.

Events in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and some other countries have demonstrated that terrorism is a serious threat to national and international security. For this very reason, the globalization of terrorism and extremism and the extension of activities over an increasing area, leading to military threats against our country, is one of the principal factors behind the idea of a new military doctrine for the Republic of Kazakhstan [1].

Research methods

Different methods of research were applied during the research phase of the present topic: system analysis, logical methods (analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction, analogues, summary), and also methods of establishment of cause-and-effect relations of the processes being studied, formalization and idealization, and also a wide spectrum of the methods of modern military science, political science and other related sciences.

In addition, the special methods of military science – military prediction; the best practice of counter-terrorism operation in different world regions; and the analysis of the experience of antiterrorist studies – were used for to analyse the level of readiness displayed by the military authorities and forces for the fight against terrorists, the identification of reserves and opportunities for their improvement.

System analysis and a complex approach to the study of problems related to the fight against terrorism allowed a determination of the role and place of the armed forces in this fight, and also trends in reaction to their training for effective countermeasures against terrorist forces.

1. Terrorism as a threat to the military security of the state

Prior to the 21st century, terrorism was considered as a type of political violence,

applied in a limited way. It was an object of criminal investigation within the criminal-justice system. In the present context, it is considered to be a military threat and a specific form of violation, which can be performed almost without restriction.

A military-style approach; terrorist-style violent action; and a network-style method of organization, where it is impossible to isolate the organization's center, are distinctive features of modern terrorism. Such a center is available in the terrorist network, but, as a rule, only in terms of ideology, politics and sometimes finance. A vertical hierarchy is absent in such a network both operatively and organizationally. An absence of hierarchy subordination in some groupings provides additional flexibility and stability to the terrorist nexus.

In spite of the support given by many countries within the world community to countermeasures against international terrorism, expressions of support are at variance with the real actions, direct or indirect, undertaken by countries in pursuit of their geopolitical aspirations. Hence emissaries from the Arabian monarchies and Middle Eastern countries actively and purposefully organize the distribution of the ideas of Wahhabism in the countries of Central Asia, resulting in specific impact and adherents in the territory of Kazakhstan.

Terrorism is not so widespread in our country. But experts note the interest in our state on the part of foreign terrorist and extremist organizations; missionaries of radical religious sects; and different extreme sects, all of which are trying to organise within Kazakhstan.

Organising countermeasures against extremism therefore requires a reasonable combination of power-based methods with ideological, social and economic measures in order to avoid the excessive radicalization of a sector of society due to the application of the criminal law, often perceived as repressive ones.

Extremism grows out of an extreme perception of society, and terrorism is born from extremism at the far end of the spectrum. It is impossible to fight against extremists efficiently, not knowing their intentions, and not

controlling the processes inside organizations. Competent sources of information need to be used for this and special investigative measures require to be performed. It is also necessary to put together a package of measures around discrediting extremist ideology, the latter creating and justifying terrorism.

Events in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and other countries demonstrate that terrorism is becoming serious threat. This factor, as well as the increase in the activity of international terrorist and extremist organizations in the region and specifically the deployment of emissaries and indeed Kazakhstani citizens who are members of terrorist and extremist organizations bent on destabilising the Republic of Kazakhstan, helped to determine a new military policy which has had an impact on the military security of the Republic of Kazakhstan [2].

Aggravation of the situation in some northern regions of Afghanistan, related to a considerable increase in IS rebel groups' activities there and a series of defeats of this and other terrorist groupings in Iraq and Syria, has meant that many followers and adherents of Jehadi ideas can return to their countries, including Kazakhstan, where they can try to use their newly-acquired combat skills with the purpose of destabilization. There is a sufficiently high probability of growth in the terrorist threat due to the penetration of fighters from terrorist organizations into Kazakhstan from neighboring states. In this case, the activation of clandestine organizations, which are prohibited in extremist organizations, is possible, especially in the south and west regions of the country. It is necessary to prepare for this in advance.

2. Role and place of the Kazakhstani army in strong counter-terrorism

As far as military personnel performing military operations against terrorism in peace time are concerned, there is a need for clear legislation on the issue of the use of weapons and military equipment and the issue of social guarantees.

The Ministry of Defence of the RK has therefore addressed a number of matters in

connection with the fight against terrorism in Kazakhstan, as in some other states, in the law "On counter-terrorism" [3]. However the purpose of the deployment of the armed forces is not for them to substitute for national security bodies or internal affairs bodies but to supplement those forces with efficient usage of military forces and facilities within enforcement of the right of the state on self-defense and its obligations on security enforcement for individuals and society.

The military aspects of counter-terrorism stipulates a package of measures in connection with the participation of the armed forces, which include, *firstly*, measures aimed at prevention of threats on the part of extremist and terrorist forces; and, *secondly*, measures connected with an operational response to large terrorist threats which are in progress.

Preventive measures are provided by the creation of an efficient system of state military security and the demonstration of a commitment to the resolute deployment of force against terrorism.

Related to preventive measures is the provision of security for military personnel and military objects in order to exclude the possibility of the theft of armor, ammunition and explosive substances, as well as sabotage and terrorist acts against military objects.

It is necessary to study our citizens during military service in order to see not only how to use armor, military equipment and special facilities, but also how to use the acquired knowledge and skills for the benefit of our community. Good army training can be a peculiar barrier against Kazakhstani people's involvement in extremist, terrorist and criminal organizations. A well-organized system of military training and education allows the prevention of growth of a number of members of extremist and terrorist organizations due to current and former military personnel. This is one of the most important functions of the Kazakhstani army.

An operative power response to terrorist threats is impossible without management bodies and a fast-paced military contingent

continuously available, both of which have been prepared in advance to carry out joint actions with national security bodies and other law enforcement agencies and trained and equipped for the fight against irregular terrorist formations as part of the armed forces.

For the implementation of such tasks, the structure of forces and prompt-response facilities when faced with terrorist threats was put in place within the armed forces at the beginning of 2017; and they are permanently on alert. Aircraft have been allocated for their transportation. In addition, an action plan for these subdivisions was developed, and issues worked out regarding their cooperation with other national security, defence and law enforcement agencies [4].

The measures taken by the management of the Ministry of Defence of the RK are very important for the improvement of efficiency in the fight against terrorism. The armed forces continue their fight against it in a series of stages:

first, when terrorist threats are aimed against military objects or personnel of the armed forces;

second, when national security bodies and law enforcement agencies need assistance in solution of special tasks, which are within the exclusive competence of the armed forces;

third, when terrorist threats are so large that opportunities for the national security bodies and law enforcement agencies are not enough for countermeasures.

Measures of the armed forces in the fight against terrorism include prevention, or if it is impossible, liquidation of terrorist forces; and also the liquidation of the consequences of terrorist acts. Moreover, the armed forces can render assistance to law-enforcement bodies in the fight against terrorist organizations and criminal associations supporting terrorism.

The following are related to such measures:

first, the implementation of protective measures for the reduction of the vulnerability of the civil population, territory, infrastructure and systems for processing information and communication;

second, the implementation of measures for the detection, prevention, prediction and suppression of terrorist activity;

third, the implementation of measures on the mitigation of consequences of terrorist acts and stabilization, rendering assistance to civil authorities;

fourth, peace-building activity in conflict areas for the prevention of terrorist forces and their distribution;

fifth, the military blockade of terrorist forces, with territorial remoteness;

sixth, military support for other law-enforcement authorities in the case of interception of criminal offences, related to transit and drug, weapon trafficking, borders protection against penetration of illegal armed groups and terrorist groups to the country;

seventh, the protection and prevention of weapons, ammunition and other military facilities leakage from the armed forces, other troops and military formations;

eighth, staff training for the anti-terrorist and counter-terrorist fight.

3. How to improve efficiency of forceful counter-terrorism?

Constant attention should be paid to issues of anti-terrorism security of military units and institutions, and also the safe custody of armor, military and special equipment, ammunition and explosive substances during the everyday activity of the armed forces, other troops and military formations of the RK. Constant improvement of the package of measures on the physical protection of military objects and personnel is required, using modern technical facilities.

The improvement of algorithms on the training of the armed forces, other troops and military formations of the RK is required for effective countermeasures against terrorist forces.

First, the main efforts should be focused on joint and trans-species training, when management bodies and military formations of all security agencies, and also all kinds

and service arms sorts perform tasks under consolidated management. Therefore measures on operative training of law-enforcement agencies, where issues of counter-terrorism operation are worked out, must be cross sectoral.

Second, primary attention must be paid to the fight against diversionary-terrorist militia in mountain-desert areas and in urban conditions, based on the experience of such activity in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, during measures on military and special training of the armed forces, other troops and military formations in the RK.

Governing boards and troops must be taught to fight against the opposing side, applying diversionary-terrorist and partisan methods of struggle. The principal tactic level of such training should be at battalion level.

Third, highly mobile subdivisions should be trained to carry out autonomous work at great depth and over a prolonged period of time.

Fourth, the training of specialist snipers, not only in special, but in combined arms subdivisions, plays a special role in the effective fight against suicide bombers.

Fifth, suitable tactics for special-operations forces (SOF) and Special Forces units, possessing appropriate weapons, munitions and equipment, should be opposed to diversionary tactics of terrorist and illegal military formations.

Operational security and high mobility, with the ability to defeat the most important targets of the opposing side and the ability to escape return fire must be the basis of training of Special Forces units and SOF.

Sixth, the role of small subdivisions is increased during the performance of military tasks and special operations against terrorist formations. The responsibility of key personnel for their planning and implementation is therefore also increased, while the role of company officers and junior noncommissioned officers of all security agencies taking part in such operations is strengthened. There is therefore a requirement to adjust the training programme for the National Defense Cadet Corps of the MD RK, higher military-training

establishments and also the arrangement of measures and course training for commissioned and non-commissioned personnel of the armed forces and other troops and military formations of the RK.

Special attention should be paid to the improvement of the professional training of military officers and noncommissioned officers and improvement of their knowledge and skills regarding issues of anti-terrorist combat.

Seventh, The high mobility of subdivisions and units of the armed forces and the National Guard of the MIA RK should be provided in order to fight effectively against highly mobile terrorist formations with modern wheeled armoured vehicles.

The updating of the terrorist threat requires a search for new forms of activity and coordination with other states in the military field; the improvement of the common legal framework; and the creation of well-balanced multinational antiterrorism protection system. Joint actions of states in this area must be focused on prevention of terrorist acts and acts of sabotage. Regular joint anti-terrorist training exercises, war games and training with participation of the competent authorities' representatives is one of efficient preventive measures.

For example, anti-terrorist trainings of military formations of SCO member countries "Peace mission" have been performed regularly since 2003. Anti-terrorism issues are worked out during the annual joint exercises of the coalition forces of CSTO "South Shield of Commonwealth" and "Yug-Antiterror". Organizing of joint exercises on fight against terrorism by CIS member countries has been practice since 2001. Practical experience of cooperation of law-enforcement bodies, special services and armed forces is acquired during performance of similar measures and fight against terrorist formations, applying rebellious-partisan tactics.

Therefore it is necessary to activate interaction between neighboring countries on a bilateral basis, and also in the line of SCO, CIS and CSTO on issues of coordinated measures'

implementation for timely detection and deactivation of terror operatives. Development of algorithms of joint actions on prevention of terrorist activity, performance of joint special operations, and also advanced training of appropriate officials are among the most important issues of such cooperation.

Conclusions

Nowadays terrorism as extreme form of religious extremism has been included in the political reality of most countries and has become one of the most dangerous threats for most world countries. Modern terrorism has become a highly-profitable business of global scale with developed “labor market” and huge capital. Availability of financial assets allows terrorist groups to search their followers and attraction of citizens in different world regions, including in Central Asia and particularly in Kazakhstan, for terrorist acts and military actions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

Counter-terrorism is one of the most important tasks in the promotion of safety at the country level.

Research into the problem of the fight against terrorism and international experience on employment of military forces in this area allows some conclusions to be drawn.

The first conclusion lies in the fact that there is a sufficiently high probability of terrorist threat growth in case of penetration of terrorist organizations’ fighters to Kazakhstan across territory of the neighboring states. A certain number of Kazakhstani people were attracted as participants in combat operations on the side of ISIL and other terrorist groups in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. Having returned from these countries, former fighters can create an underground terrorist network, especially in the south and west regions of the country.

Therefore coordinated work of central and local executive bodies, security agencies, religious and public associations, mass media on countermeasures to extremism and terrorism with emphasis on their prevention and reasonable combination of ideological

and social and economic measures with power methods is required.

Second conclusion. Improvement of training methods not only of special and law-enforcement bodies, but the armed forces, other troops and military formations of the RK is required for effective countermeasures to terrorist forces.

The main efforts should be focused on joint and interspecific training, when governing bodies and military formations of all security agencies, and also of all kinds of service arms of our army perform tasks under consolidated guidance.

In this context measures of operational training of force authorities, during which issues on anti-terrorist operations are worked out, should be intergovernmental.

Third conclusion. The growth of threat on the part of terrorist forces extends the frame of the armed forces, other troops and military formations of Kazakhstan usage; and therefore primary attention should be paid to fight against diversionary-terrorist militia in mountainy desert area and in urban conditions, upon experience of such activity in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, during measures on military and special training of troops.

Governing boards and troops should be taught to fight against the opposing side, applying diversionary-terrorist and partisan methods of struggle. The principal tactic level of such training should be battalion. High-mobility subdivisions should be ready to carry out autonomous work in deep water and over a prolonged period of time. Training of sniper specialists, not only in special, but in combined arms subdivisions, plays a special role in effective fight against suicide bombers.

Fourth conclusion. Constant attention must be paid to anti-terrorism security of military units and institutions, security of military objects, and also to the safe custody of armament, military and special equipment, ammunition and explosive substances during the daily activity of the armed forces, other troops and military formations of the RK. Constant improvement of package of measures on physical security

of military objects and military personnel is required, using modern technical facilities.

Fifth conclusion. The growth of the international terrorism threat requires a search for new forms of activity coordination with other states in the military field, improvement of common legal framework and creation of well-balanced multinational antiterrorism protection system.

Therefore it is necessary to activate interaction between neighboring countries on a bilateral basis, and also in the line of SCO, CIS and CSTO on issues of coordinated measures' implementation for timely detection and deactivation of terror operatives, and also for countermeasures to ammunition and drugs traffic.

Joint actions of states in this area should be focused on prevention of terrorist acts and

acts of sabotage. Regular joint anti-terrorist training exercises, war games and training with participation of the competent authorities' representatives is one of efficient preventive measures.

Sixth conclusion. During the period of non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council, Kazakhstan should apply its forces for the promotion of the initiative of the President of our country, N.A. Nazarbayev, for the creation of an international anti-terrorist coalition under the auspices of the United Nations, on adoption of resolutions of the UN Security Council, which are legally binding for implementation of the UN Global counter-terrorism strategy, which was suggested during the Summit on countermeasures against violent extremism in September 2015 [5].

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AFGHANISTAN IMBROGLIO AND PROSPECTS OF CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE BY SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION

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Abstract. World renowned English geographer and strategic thinker Mackinder defined ‘Central Asia’ as the heartland. The geo-politics, rise and fall of empires, alignment and re-alignment of world powers in more than a century has not changed this constant of history. Yet again in the evolving international environment with rise of China, resurgent Russia and American efforts to influence this region through its permanent presence in Afghanistan has proved the pivotal geographic positioning of Central Asians Republics (CARs). Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is gradually emerging as a powerful bloc with numerous positive indicators having requisite potential to bring prosperity and strategic stability in the whole region. Post 9/11 US efforts to stabilize Afghanistan has so far failed and no prospects of sustainable peace in Afghanistan appears to be on the horizon. Can a regional approach under SCO contribute towards bringing peace in Afghanistan? This paper takes a deeper view of Afghanistan’s imbroglio and evaluates various dimensions of SCO, incorporating the geo-strategic construct of CARs and proposes certain options for resolving the Afghanistan conflict.

Key words: *Afghanistan, SCO, Central Asia, regional cooperation, regional security, foreign policy.*

АУҒАНСТАНДАҒЫ ШИЕЛЕНІСКЕН АХУАЛ ЖӘНЕ ШАНХАЙ ЫНТЫМАҚТАСТЫҚ ҰЙЫМЫНЫҢ СЫНДАРЛЫ РӨЛІНІҢ ПЕРСПЕКТИВАЛАРЫ

Захид Латиф Мирза

Аңдатпа. Әлемге әйгілі ағылшын географы және стратегі Маккиндер «Орталық азияға» хартленд (жер кіндігі) дегей сипаттама берді. Бір ғасырдан астам уақыт бойындағы империялардың өркендеуі мен құлдырауы, әлемдік державалар арасындағы күштің үйлестірімі мен қайта бөлінуі тарихтың осы тұрақты шамасын өзгерте алмады. Дамып келе жатқан халықаралық жағдайда Қытайдың өркендеуі, қайта күшейіп жатқан Ресей және Американың Ауғанстандағы өзінің тұрақты өкілдігі арқылы осы өңірге ықпал етуге күш салуы орта азиялық республикалардың (ОАР) географиялық орналасқан жерінің түбегейлі маңыздылығын кезекті рет дәлелдеп отыр. Шанхай ынтымақтастық ұйымы (ШЫҰ) бүкіл өңірдің гүлденуі мен стратегиялық тұрақтылығын қамтамасыз етуге қажетті әлеуеті бар көптеген оң көрсеткіштерге ие қуатты одаққа біртіндеп айналып келеді. 11 қыркүйектен кейінгі АҚШ-тың Ауғанстандағы ахуалды тұрақтыру шаралары осы күнге дейін ешбір нәтиже алып келмеді және жақын арада Ауғанстанда тұрақты бейбітшілік орнайтындай болып көрінбейді. ШЫҰ шеңберіндегі өңірлік тәсілдеме Ауғанстанда бейбітшілік орнатуға жағдай жасай ала ма? Осы мақалада Ауғанстандағы шиеленіскен ахуалға неғұрлым терең көзқарас келтіріледі, ОАР-ды қоса, ШЫҰ-ның әртүрлі аспектілеріне баға беріледі, сондай-ақ Ауғанстандағы қақтығысты реттеудің нақты нұсқалары ұсынылады.

Түйінді сөздер: *Ауғанстан, ШЫҰ, Орталық Азия, өңірлік ынтымақтастық, өңірлік қауіпсіздік, сыртқы саясат.*

СЛОЖНАЯ СИТУАЦИЯ ВОКРУГ АФГАНИСТАНА И ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ КОНСТРУКТИВНОЙ РОЛИ ШАНХАЙСКОЙ ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВА

Захид Латиф Мирза

Аннотация. Всемирно известный английский географ и стратег Маккиндер охарактеризовал «Центральную Азия» как хартленд (сердцевина). На протяжении более чем столетия геополитика, взлет и падение империй, расстановка и перестановка сил между мировыми державами не изменили данную константу истории. В развивающейся международной обстановке подъем Китая, возрождающаяся Россия и усилия Америки по оказанию влияния на этот регион посредством своего постоянного присутствия в Афганистане в очередной раз доказывают принципиально важное географическое положение центральноазиатских республик (ЦАР). Шанхайская организация сотрудничества (ШОС) постепенно превращается в мощный союз с многочисленными положительными показателями, обладающими необходимым потенциалом для обеспечения процветания и стратегической стабильности всего региона. Усилия США после теракта 11 сентября по стабилизации ситуации в Афганистане до сих пор не дают никаких результатов и, как представляется, никаких перспектив устойчивого мира в Афганистане в ближайшем будущем не предвидится. Может ли региональный подход в рамках ШОС способствовать установлению мира в Афганистане? В этой статье приводится более глубокий взгляд на

запутанную ситуацию вокруг Афганистана и оцениваются различные аспекты ШОС, включая геостратегическое устройство ЦАР, а также предлагаются определенные варианты урегулирования конфликта в Афганистане.

Ключевые слова: Афганистан, ШОС, Центральная Азия, региональное сотрудничество, региональная безопасность, внешняя политика.

Introduction

Methodology

The research is primarily based on qualitative method. The paper argues that Afghanistan's multi-dimensional challenges are ontologically real, having an impact on Central Asian Republics but there are varying degrees of epistemological interpretations. A realist ontology is therefore used to see, what actual capacity SCO has to shape the Afghanistan's environment towards positivity. Epistemologically, the research focuses on the validity of existing knowledge related to Afghanistan in the given context. An interpretivist approach is therefore used to evaluate the power potential of Central Asian Republics to jointly address Afghan challenge. Qualitative method being open ended and less structured facilitates in developing a broad understanding of this deep rooted issue and gradually narrowed to develop a coherent view. As done in this paper, the research at the end focuses on working out of options for SCO to address Afghanistan imbroglio.

Chinese Concept of Global Governance

Idea of 'responsibility of power' is deeply embedded in Chinese political thought and has roots in Chinese traditions of statecraft [1]. Chinese conception of maintaining a stable and secure international environment is considered vital for Chinese rise and peaceful development. Thus China's involvement in the management of global affairs is in Chinese interest and also for international community. Professor Zhang Haibin, School of International Studies, Peking University asserts that, "Chinese conceptions of responsibility need to 'know no limits and know no boundaries'[2]. In the prevailing global /

regional environment, the emerging challenges are transcending state borders. China has displayed its resolve as a responsible member of international community to make positive contributions to the peace and stability.

In the context of global governance, China has always believed in harmonious world. Zhao Tingyang of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences have coined the idea of 'Tianxia System'. [3] In the historical context, 'Tianxia' represents both the 'world' and 'the greatest and highest form of order'. Zhao envisages the (re) inauguration of the Tianxia system as having at its core an 'all-inclusive humanity'. By employing this concept in making sense of the world, Zhao concludes that 'we will be able to take responsibility of the world as our own responsibility' [4].

In encapsulated form in the context of global governance and responsibility, China believes in maintaining world order and stability through common development, prosperity and the creation of 'inclusive' pluralist system of governance.

SCO and Afghanistan

In 1996, Shanghai Five initiative was spearheaded by China with Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan as its founding members [5]. Inconsistent foreign policy alignments of Central Asian Republics, growing instability, terrorism and separatist tendencies coupled with ungovernable Afghanistan having geographical linkages with China especially Xinjiang and Russian security and other interests can be identified as main drivers for the birth of Shanghai Five. Subsequently Shanghai Five germinated/blossomed as Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in 2001 with

addition of Uzbekistan as its member [6]. The underlying reasons were festering instability thriving further on US presence in Afghanistan and hedging against growing US politico-military influence in the region [7].

Combatting three evils namely; separatism, extremism and terrorism was adopted as an official manifesto of SCO with inter alia and linked objectives such as narco smuggling, poverty alleviation through regional connectivity and economic integration, tapping of immense hydro-carbon and hydrological resources. Subsequently, Mongolia was granted observer status in 2004 followed by similar status to Pakistan, India and Iran [8] in 2005. During the recently concluded Astana Summit 2017, India and Pakistan have been granted full membership of SCO [9]. With the latest expansion, the full members of SCO has grown to eight whereas, Afghanistan, Iran, Belarus and Mongolia enjoy observer status. Five states including Turkey, Armenia, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Cambodia are dialogue partners of the organisation [10]. With inclusion of new members, SCO's aura, clout and capacity to grapple with regional and global complexities is expected to increase phenomenally being one of the most significant organisation on globe; representing more than Half of the global population, [11] 4 x nuclear powers (including 2 x perm members of UNSC) and covering entire Central Asia effectively transcending into Asia Pacific, South Asia, Europe and Middle East. Nevertheless, this expansion is accompanied with a set of challenges grounded in irreconcilable divergences and strategic distrust amongst some of its key players. Nonetheless, a fair degree of consensus exists in line with the 'Shanghai Spirit' [12] as the founding values of the SCO, featuring mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for cultural diversity and pursuit of common development.

The situation in Afghanistan has a varying degree of fallout invariably on all the SCO states. Hence SCO emerges as one of the principle stakeholder in peace, prosperity and stability of Afghanistan. During the SCO Summit of

2013 in Cholpon Ata, Kyrgyzstan, SCO leaders unanimously endorsed the inseparable linkage of peace and stability in Central Asia and South Asia with that of Afghanistan. Presence of multiple stakeholders, divergent interests of regional players and growing influence of Taliban and ISIS further complicates Afghan conundrum warranting a comprehensive and all-inclusive regional approach towards Afghan issue. SCO, due to its inherent organizational strength and regional approach, can play a meaningful role in facilitating a sustainable solution to Afghan Problem.

All the neighbours of Afghanistan, through SCO have a unique opportunity for deliberating the Afghan problem from a regional perspective. Alongside US unyielding efforts with dismal and uncertain geo-political outcomes; contributions of SCO towards peace and stability in Afghanistan too have not been appreciable so far. Afghanistan is yet far from being a politically or economically viable or a stable state. With eroding US / western commitment post drawdown and setting in of donor fatigue, the danger of ensuing chaos and return to anarchy looms large with wider ramifications for the entire region including SCO countries. Notwithstanding, its *raison d'être*, SCO faces multitudes of challenges in figuring out a unified approach and promising policy options for dealing with Afghan situation; primarily attributable to US intransigence in addressing legitimate concerns of key stakeholders and some divergence of interests amongst SCO members and observers.

Geo Strategic Significance of Central Asia

The location and close proximity to major oriental powers (Czarist Russia and Han / Qing's China) of the world presented Central Asia a unique and distinctive geo- strategic location throughout history. However, the geography of the region never supported the local population to make a dominant mark over the neighbourhood. Therefore, notwithstanding its mammoth size and resource riches, Central Asia rarely aspired for the seat of power or

becoming an empire by itself. Central Asian region as a whole mostly remained highly contested, serving as a battleground for outside powers than as a power in its own right.

Central Asia remained the focus of Mackinder's 'Geographical Pivot of History' theory, in which, he argued that the 'Heartland'

was the most advantageous geo-political location of the world. His doctrine suggested that the geopolitical actor that dominated the Heartland would possess the necessary geopolitical and economic potential to ultimately control the World [13].



Mackinder's Pivot [14].

Central Asia had both the advantage and disadvantage of a central location between four historical seats of power [15] (Russian Empire, Chinese Empire, South Asian Dynasties and Persian Empire). From its central location, it has access to trade routes to and from all the regional powers. On the other hand, it has been continuously vulnerable to attack from all sides throughout its history, resulting in political fragmentation or outright power vacuum, as it is successively dominated.

Central Asian States vis-à-vis Afghanistan – Geo Strategic Context

Historically, Afghanistan's borders with the Central Asian states did not exist in a modern sense; instead frontiers witnessed constant transition with the rise and fall of empires (northern Afghanistan and Central Asia both have also been part of a single state or empire at different times). However, in the beginning of 19th century, the 'Great Game' between the Russian and British empires phenomenally

redefined the geo-strategic significance and the political outlook of the entire region. Russia's imperial expansion into Central Asia coincided with the growth of the British control over India, and instead directly fighting each other for further expansion, both the expansionist / colonial empires finally settled for establishment of a buffer zone with defined frontiers in what is now Afghanistan [16].

The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 and subsequent disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991 as a strategic shock emerged altogether new geo-political realities giving birth to the Central Asian states of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Despite Soviet a-religious outlook and officially repressive policies, a sizable Central Asian populace was practicing Muslims and even Islamists, which explains how Islamism took root in the region shortly after the Soviet collapse. Meanwhile, Afghanistan descended into internal conflict in the aftermath of Soviet withdrawal and abandonment of US assistance for mujahideen. Forces of chaos eventually led

to the rise of extremism and Islamic militancy with expansionist character, strongly radiating threat of Islamic militancy in defiance of international system.

Embryonic Central Asian republics already grappling with the legacy of Soviet era and multitudes of political and economic issues post-independence also started experiencing serious security challenges from certain Islamic movements including Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Islamic movement of Central Asia. These groups had strong linkages with Taliban in Afghanistan, and later with Al-Qaeda, with objectives of creating a pan-Central Asian Islamist theocracy. Geographic and demographic linkages with Afghanistan made things simpler for the leaders of these movements to frequently exchange ideas and course of action with each other. A large number of youth have also been recruited from the region to fight for Islamic State (formally ISIS) in Afghanistan. Furthermore, IS with established footprint in Afghanistan is already trying to make an ingress in Central Asia for exploiting region's poor socio-economic indicators [17].

Relevance of Afghanistan for Central Asian Region and SCO

Peace, prosperity and economic prosperity of Central Asian States are directly linked with peace and stability in Afghanistan. Due to border contiguity, demographical, ethnic, cultural and tribal affinities, developments in Afghanistan have invariably affected Central Asian States. US inability to achieve desired peace and stability in Afghanistan and ensuing chaos post drawdown of US / NATO forces dramatically increase the vulnerability of Central Asian states. Rapidly eroding writ of Afghan government vis-à-vis increasing frequency of terrorist attacks in Afghanistan purported by IS elements or Taliban are indicative of a direct threat to Central Asian Republics in particular, and to the region in general. Two of the deadliest attacks in Istanbul (airport attack, June 16 and Rienna Night club attack, January 17) were carried out

by IS terrorists belonging from Central Asia [18]. Prevailing chaotic order in Afghanistan provide the much needed enabling environment wherein armed militias, radicalized movements and splinter groups / breakaway factions could thrive and unleash monstrous instability for the entire region.

Afghanistan is producing approximately 90 % of world opium supply [19]. 25 % of this quantity is smuggled to Russia, Europe and America through Central Asia (Northern route) [20]. The boom of opium production in Afghanistan radiates yet another unmistakable threat to socio-political fabric of the entire Central Asian region. The linkage between drug money, organised crimes, gang wars and terrorism needs no amplification.

Central Asia's landlocked status has constrained its socio-economic uplift by limiting its trade and energy flow through Russia (quite similar to Soviet era). In stable and insecure Afghanistan is thus acting as a strategic barrier for southwards trade and energy flow (through pipelines and denying shortest access to Indian Ocean) and profitable integration of Central Asia with South Asian and Middle Eastern economies. A stable Afghanistan could have yielded enormous geo-political and geo-economic dividends for Central Asia including becoming part of CPEC via shortest access for connectivity with China, Pakistan and India and beyond. Projects like TAPI gas pipeline are stalled and not likely to make some headway till a semblance of peace is not achieved in Afghanistan.

True socio-eco dev potential of landlocked Central Asia cannot be unlocked without peace and stability in Afghanistan. Russia and all the Central Asian members of SCO aptly recognize and ack the value of peace and stability in Afghanistan for their development. Going by irrefutable dictates of geography, Afghanistan, thus figure out to be a strong candidate for SCO's membership.

Almost all Shanghai members have a very clear set of issues, like drug trafficking, instability, poverty, separatism and terrorism;

which to a great extent has roots in an unstable and war-torn Afghanistan which shows that Afghanistan is admittedly very significant to SCO members and observers - Afghanistan's security and economic conditions directly and invariably affect national interests of each SCO member and observers [21].

SCO and Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)

In the backdrop of growing threats of militancy, extremist movements and separatism emerging from Afghan civil war of 90's, China initiated a process of creating a group of likeminded states called 'Shanghai Five'. Although resolution of the borders dispute was stated as one of the core strand of creation of SCO, yet a considerable majority of scholars believes that this organisation was primarily created as a counter weight to growing unipolarity increasing assertiveness of US in the region with anti-west and anti-US orientation. Another major factor was the Afghanistan's spill-over effects that had the potential to destabilize the entire region. Shanghai Five was officially transformed into SCO in 2001 with enhanced mandate.

Goals and Tasks of SCO

The Charter of SCO urges the member states to jointly contribute towards strengthening of peace, security and stability in the region. The main aim of the organization has been to tackle three evils, namely terrorism, separatism and religious extremism with its members signing the convention on combating these evils in June 2001 [22]. Certain relevant goals and tasks as enumerated in SCO Charter [23] are:

- To consolidate multidisciplinary cooperation in the maintenance and strengthening of peace, security and stability in the region and promotion of a new democratic, fair and rational political and economic international order.
- To jointly counteract terrorism, separatism and extremism in all their manifestations, to fight against illicit narcotics and arms trafficking and other types of criminal

activity of a transnational character, and also illegal migration.

- To cooperate in prevention of international conflicts and in their peaceful settlement.
- To jointly search for solutions to the problems that would arise in the 21st century.
- The primary task of the SCO is to jointly react effectively to global threats and challenges so as to ensure sustainable socio-economic development in the area of the SCO.

Evolution of Regional Security Apparatus of SCO

In October 2001, US launched its 'Global War on Terror' with physical invasion of Afghanistan. With US invasion, the regional security architecture in Central Asia underwent a major change. Though the SCO condemned the 9/11 attacks on US and extended support to its operations against terrorism in Afghanistan, however it could hardly render any practical help to US due to absence of any military capability under the auspices of SCO. However, certain member states participated in anti-terrorism operations with an individualist character as a national undertaking. Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan offered their airbases to support US operations in Afghanistan.[24] Tajikistan also provided its territory for conduct of US operations [25]. These countries in a way welcomed US presence as a security guarantee against possible spillover of Afghan instability towards their territories.

In order to counter US presence in the region, SCO established a Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in 2004 with its headquarters at Tashkent to coordinate the activities of the member states in dealing with the three evils. With setting of deadline for US to abandon its military bases from the region in SCO's Astana Summit Declaration 2005, the SCO, it became somewhat obvious that primarily China and Russia are driving SCO's forum for elimination of US presence from Central Asian Region; considering it be NATO's eastwards expansion in their backyard [26].

The Three Evils - Terrorism, Extremism and Separatism

The SCO security concept acknowledges that security can no longer be viewed strictly in terms of territorial divisions, and as a result collaborative approaches between nation-states are required [27]. Therefore, instead of concentrating on traditional inter-state military collaboration, the SCO has elected to focus on the harmonization of its member states' national approaches to these challenges. The central components of the SCO's Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism are the mutual exchange of information and intelligence between member states. The SCO security concept also extends to the development of complementary processes for identifying, addressing and punishing actors contravening convention throughout the SCO region and the joint development of methods to combat sub-state security threats [28]. It is interesting to note that the Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism was signed three months prior to 9/11 attacks, at the SCO Summit in Shanghai in 2001.

Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS)

The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), headquartered in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, is a permanent organ of the SCO which serves to promote cooperation of member states against the three evils of terrorism, separatism and extremism. The Head of RATS is elected for a three-year term. Each member state also sends a permanent representative to RATS. Its main objectives and functions are given below [29].

- Maintaining working contacts with main administrative body of SCO member-states and strengthening coordination with international organizations on matters of struggle against terrorism, separatism and extremism.

- Participation in preparing drafts of international legal documents on matters of struggle against terrorism, separatism and extremism.

- Taking measures to establish together with the UN Security Council and its anti-terrorist committee, international and regional organizations, the mechanism of effective regulation of global challenges and threats.

- Gathering and analysing information, provided by member-states, on matters of struggle against terrorism, separatism and extremism.

- Creating data bank of anti-terrorist structure, presenting considerations on building up cooperation by the Organization in struggle against "three evils".

- Preparing and holding scientific-research conferences, exchanging experience on matters of struggle against terrorism, separatism and extremism.

One of the major performance limitations of RATS is that it has no jurisdiction to enforce its policy recommendations. It is focused on non-state security and such policy actions fall within domestic legal parameters. So instead, the RATS has focused on establishing itself as a mechanism of communication between the SCO member states to facilitate greater coordination between each state's internal security organs [30].

SCO and Afghan Peace Prospects Afghanistan's Present Imbrolio

Current dispensation and US endeavours for peace and stability in Afghanistan can be termed as frustrating to say the least with likelihood of further destabilization looming overhead. The writ of central administration is dwindling in the face of growing violence and increasing clout of regional / factional leaders. Inter-ethnic, communal, lingual and sectarian cleavages are deepening. The Afghan government presently controls about 57 percent of the country's populated districts i.e about 15 percent fewer than it controlled in November 2015 [31]. **According to Robert Grenier**, who served as CIA's top counter-terrorism official, there are significant parts of the country, particularly in the south and the east, where it seems inevitable that the Taliban will further consolidate their control. Moreover, IS forces are active in Nangarhar and Kunar provinces [32].

The stability and security of Afghanistan with its geographic and demographic contiguity with Central and South Asia has inalienable linkages with nearly all the SCO member states. Flocking of IS in bordering region of Central Asian states and in Nangarhar opposite Pakistan is already ringing alarm bells. Chinese concerns of internal security and stability, particularly in Xinjiang region also emanate from Afghanistan [33]. The Central Asian region is the soft underbelly of Russia and any destabilization and radicalization of the region will increase security worries for Russia itself. Hence, stability in Afghanistan has serious security implications for almost all the SCO states (including members and observers alike).

Role of SCO in Afghanistan – Retrospect

Since 2013 Cholpon Ata summit, there is growing awareness amongst SCO for seeking resolution of the Afghan issue. Its seriousness at the leadership level is reflected through various commitments made by the head of SCO states and senior ministers with some glimpses as under:

- At Cholpan Ata, SCO leaders agreed that peace and stability in Central Asia depended on development of the situation in Afghanistan.
- During SCO summit at Tashkent in 2016, Chinese President Xi Jinping stated that SCO can play a constructive role to help Afghans in their quest to restore peace and stability in the country.
- Tajikistan's President Emomali Rahmonov, during Tashkent summit, laid strong emphasis on the establishment of longstanding peace and stability in Afghanistan and said that stability in Afghanistan was in the interest of the entire region and the world.

Presently, SCO's initiatives regarding Afghanistan are limited in scope and manifestation as the lead role of Afghan peace process is still with US / NATO forces operating inside Afghanistan. However, failure of US Afghan strategies in ensuring sustainable peace and the credibility of ANSFs to simultaneously deal / fight / defeat Taliban and brewing IS challenge becomes questionable. Therefore,

an increasingly supportive role of SCO in Afghanistan becomes a logical preposition. The situation offers challenges and opportunities for SCO in assuming a well-defined, measured and carefully calibrated role for resolving one of the most complex security cum geo-political challenges of modern times.

Chronology of SCO's Commitments towards Afghanistan

Keeping in view the importance for regional peace and stability of the region, Afghanistan has always been remained on agenda of SCO. Important landmarks are summarised below:-

- 2005 – Protocol on establishment of an SCO Afghanistan contact group was adopted by the SCO in Astana for increase in mutual cooperation between the SCO and Afghanistan. [34].
- 2007 – in SCO's Bishkek summit, former Afghan President Hamid Karzai urged the SCO states to focus on the fight against drugs and even come up with a regional plan to tackle this menace [35]. During the same summit, the Russian President called for creating a 'belt of counter narcotics security' around Afghanistan and hunting down the financial roots of drug trade in the region [36].
- 2009 – a special conference focusing on Afghanistan was held in Moscow under the aegis of the SCO in which a plan of action to combat terrorism, illicit drug trafficking and organised crime was signed by SCO and Afghanistan.[37]
- 2011 – at Astana summit of the SCO, the member states identified the unresolved situation in Afghanistan as a key threat to regional stability in Central Asia. They also agreed that it is impossible to solve the Afghan crisis by military means and efforts need to be directed towards solving the socio-economic problems in the country [38].
- 2012 – SCO's summit at Beijing supported Afghanistan's effort to build an independent, neutral, peaceful, prosperous country free of terrorism and drug related crimes. They also agreed that the national reconciliation process in Afghanistan should be Afghan led and Afghan owned [39].

- 2012 – Afghanistan accorded observer status in Beijing summit and the members states too agreed to help the Afghan people in their reconstruction efforts [40].

- 2013 & 14. Similar commitments regarding Afghanistan were reiterated by the SCO states.

- 2015 – Afghan authorities applied for its full membership in the Organization [41].

- 2016 – during Tashkent Summit, member countries deliberated security situation in Afghanistan as one of the most important agenda items. Members also expressed their pledges for supporting Afghanistan in its war against terrorism [42].

- 2017 – during Astana summit, Russian President Vladimir Putin said; “it was obvious that a military solution to the Afghan conflict was not feasible, and Russia and the other SCO members back a political solution based on agreements between the Afghan government and the Taliban insurgency” [43].

Peace Processes for Afghanistan involving SCO Members as Main Stakeholders

Presently, various global and regional platforms are being used in a bid to resolve Afghan issue. Post US drawdown environment in Afghanistan and chaotic projections have accentuated the need for early settlement of the issue. Although a number of initiatives have been propelled but none could be termed as a success story. Nevertheless, a regional perspective facilitates a greater degree of understanding by SCO members as compared to Western / US extra regional players. Details of some of the initiatives in search of sustainable peace and stability in Afghanistan involving SCO members with a varying degree of success are given below.

- **The Heart of Asia - Istanbul Process.** The Heart of Asia - Istanbul Process was established to provide a platform to discuss regional issues, particularly encouraging security, political, and economic cooperation among Afghanistan and its neighbours.[44] This region-led dialogue was launched in November

2011 to expand practical coordination between Afghanistan and its neighbours and regional partners. The US and over 20 other nations (including all SCO members less Uzbekistan[45]) and organizations serve as “supporting nations” to the process. Six ministerial level conferences have been held so far, however, the outcome remained elusive.

- **The Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG).** The Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) which consists of the US, Pakistan, Afghanistan and China, is a forum to discuss the Afghan-led peace and reconciliation efforts. First meeting of the group was held in Islamabad in January 2016, which highlighted “the need for immediate resumption of direct talks between the Afghan government and Taliban.”[46].

- **Doha Peace Process**

- Senior leaders of the Taliban are currently stationed in Doha, Qatar. The original purpose for the Taliban leaders’ presence in Qatar was to open an office that would facilitate reconciliation between members of the Taliban, Afghanistan, the US and other countries. However, shortly after the opening of the Taliban office in 2013, the office was closed by the Qatari government. While the Taliban leaders are still present in Doha, and continue to be provided for by the Qatari government, since that day, all peace negotiations have been suspended and the Taliban office remains closed.

- In January, 2016 the Taliban in Qatar participated in a Doha Dialogue titled “Peace and Security in Afghanistan”. While the conference was attended by key leaders from the Taliban offices in Qatar, the Afghanistan embassy and government boycotted the event.

- **Russia - China - Pakistan Initiative.** Russia’s growing interest in Afghan affairs is apparent from Moscow’s hosting of peace talks. The recent talks on ‘peace in Afghanistan’ were held in Moscow in the middle of April 2017. Representatives from Afghanistan, China, India, Iran, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan participated in the talks.

SCO's Peace Initiatives for Afghanistan— Strengths and Constraints

Regional Approach - SCO Strengths.

The SCO's charter defines the main purposes of the organisation as “strengthening mutual trust, good neighbourliness and friendship among member states; developing effective co-operation in political affairs, economy, trade, science and technology, culture, education, energy, transport and environmental protection; and working together to maintain regional peace, security and stability”[47]. Some of the unique strengths enjoyed by SCO as one of the biggest regional organizations are deliberated in ensuing paragraphs.

- The interventionist approach practiced by the US to tackle the issue of terrorism could not bring the desired dividends. Thus, SCO has a legitimate stance to prosecute the issue through regional institutionalisation of fight against terrorism as a collaborative and participative undertaking.

- Afghanistan has a number of peculiarities that deeply connect its fate to Central and Southern Asia, such as cultural and tribal affinities and irrefutable transitional connections to other groups around the region. In this sense, a regional approach to its internal problems seems to be most appropriate way to deal with them.

- The development of the SCO by and large is a result of growing confidence in its capability and potential to address security across the region, especially with regard to the ‘three evils’. However, this has only been possible because the institutional design of the SCO has proven itself durable and acceptable to the leaderships of the member states. Since the SCO model of cooperation is based on inter-governmental cooperation, it can function efficiently as a mechanism of coordination and communication. Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr Nawaz Sharif termed SCO as an anchor of regional stability at Astana Summit 2017 [48].

- The cooperative framework of SCO certainly provides a useful platform to involve regional powers of South Asia in permanent

consultation and cooperation, on the basis of shared principles. Its consensus approach to decision making barricades hegemonic or coerced cooperation, which is imperative to check the bigger members' interference in the smaller members' internal affairs as well as prevent the forum to be hijacked from the bilateral disputes of the belligerent neighbours.

- With inclusion of India and Pakistan as full members of SCO (currently playing at cross-purposes to each other at all regional and international fora including Afghanistan) on 9 June 2017 may further the progress towards resolution of Afghan issue.[49] “Cooperation under the auspices of SCO amongst these three major countries on Afghanistan's borders could expedite the process of an Afghan settlement as Afghanistan is surrounded by members of a powerful regional association with common values and approaches to resolving issues”[50].

- With China's benevolent and benign outlook, Afghanistan's mineral sector can be developed in consultation with other stakeholders as a prime source for long term economic sustainability. Afghanistan has plenty of mineral resources, such as iron, copper etc, with an estimated value of more than three trillion US dollars. Regional countries, particularly China (which has a greater acceptability in Afghan masses and is already involved in mining of Ainak Copper Mines) [51] may come forward with their technological knowhow and fiscal resources to help Afghanistan benefit from its natural resources. Such exploration of mineral riches of Afghanistan can greatly facilitate peaceful development of Afghanistan.

SCO's Constraints and Impediments in Afghanistan. This list of positive potential needs to be viewed from the perspective of some of SCO's limitations in relation to ground realities. As a relatively new institution, the organisation is still evolving and developing its own mechanisms battling a host of constraints and limitations.

- US / NATO consider rise of Chinese strategic initiative for advancing her agenda

of global dominance through benevolence and regional integration / connectivity. Therefore US / NATO seems apprehensive of growing clout and effectiveness of SCO as a regional politico-economic alliance. Surely US / NATO would not like to see SCO growing as an Eastern security alliance acting as a strategic counter weight to NATO.[52] Hence prima facie US / NATO would rather like to remain in a state of denial than awarding a meaningful role in Afghanistan. The foregoing can be validated from repeated disassociation of each other from peace and stability endeavours of the others.

- Similarly, SCO has concerns regarding the presence of extra-regional forces in the region in general and Afghanistan in particular. The US request for observer status was refused because of its being an extra-regional power [53]. Russia and US / NATO forces have divergent view points on Afghan situation. Though the US and NATO's role in Afghan affairs is crucial, they were not invited in either of the round of talks held in Moscow. According to US State Department spokesman Mark Toner, "It seemed to be a unilateral Russian attempt to assert influence in the region that we felt was not constructive at this time" [54].

- Regional stakeholders do not have common understanding on Afghan issue especially applicable for India and Pakistan. [55] The activities of different SCO members in Afghanistan at present do not reflect a coordinated or harmonized endeavour instead is marred by lack of mutual understanding regarding Afghanistan during its transition period after the US / NATO withdrawal.[56] Though the member countries are part of various initiatives and peace processes, SCO as a unified platform has not been able to meaningfully assert itself in Afghanistan.

- Some divergences and mistrust between two of its founding members (Russia and China) over dominance in region is yet another hurdle in the way of unified approach. Russia sees Afghanistan as part of its exclusive zone of influence (Near Abroad [57]). Sino-centric order in SCO is somewhat worrisome for

Russia as it is for the west and NATO. Russia realizes that Central Asia is more than willing to embrace Chinese investment ventures for their national interest.

- SCO lacks institutional mechanisms and financial capacity to increase its role in Afghanistan. Russian experts Dmitri Trenin and Alexei Malashenko have highlighted the financial handicap of the SCO as one of the main reasons that may not let this organisation play a big role in Afghanistan. Unlike US and ISAF and other donors, SCO countries are not willing to throw capital in a blind alley only to be eaten away by corrupt political mafias instead being helpful in poverty alleviation. According to them, "the SCO, whose budget is a mere US \$ 4 million, has no chance of playing a significant role within Afghanistan"[58]. Lack of political will and capacity also points towards a limited and less consequential role of SCO in Afghanistan at present.

- The SCO at present has no military command and structure as it has adopted a conscious approach to stay away from the military alliances or opting for a competition in the global strategic environment. Foregoing notwithstanding, alongside politico-economic support Afghanistan also desperately needs a ready and arrayed military support for serving the cause of peace.

- Role of SCO in Afghanistan is being downplayed by certain quarters highlighting that with limited financial capacity, without any military capability, unbridgeable divergences amongst members especially with respect to their support for different ethnicities and politico-religious factions; SCO is merely a channel of communication for Afghanistan (and nothing more than this) which will continue to depend upon US / NATO for all types of assistance [59].

- Afghanistan was granted the status of observer state of SCO in 2012. Although, Afghanistan applied for the full membership in 2015 [60] yet it hadn't taken any real steps toward complete accession with the membership status supposedly attributable to US / Western influence[61].

- Afghan imbroglio figures out to be the biggest impasse in actualizing the SCO's true potential by linking energy-surplus Central Asia with energy-deficient South Asia / East Asia.

Impressions about efficacy of SCO in handling the 'Three Evils' – Its Raison d'être

Shanghai convention to address and combat the "three evil forces" of terrorism, separatism, and extremism and ushering in a better security environment was signed in 2001. Since then, the SCO has adopted a series of mechanisms to curtail the penetration of the three evil forces into its member states. Certain highly consequential achievements of strategic dimensions for SCO in this regard include:-

- Effective containment of US influence in Central Asian republics directly linked to fomenting instability, regime change and separatist tendencies engineered through public uprising e.g colour revolutions.

- Increasingly effective border control between SCO members deemed pivotal for countering destabilizing forces and proprietors of three evils.

- General consensus on politico-military assistance and intelligence sharing amongst SCO members for countering three evils.

- Fair degree of success in containing Afghan unrest from spreading into Central Asia and China.

- Suppression / limiting of extremist tendencies, particularly in Xinjiang and Tibetan regions.

- Enhanced security cooperation (including joint military exercises, counterterrorism, counter narcotics, and cyber security cooperation) amongst member states.

However, despite significant progress in above mentioned domains (especially in developing intelligence sharing and trust between its members), the SCO is yet to prove that it is an effective tool for addressing the multitudes of non-traditional security threats (NTSTs) present in Central Asia, China and now in South Asia also (with India and Pakistan becoming its members).

SCO Policy Options for Peace Initiatives in Afghanistan

Option I – US / West and SCO's Partnership for Achievement of Sustainable Peace in Afghanistan

SCO with nearly all the regional players / key stakeholders fully onboard as its members is rightly in a position for bidding / seeking a major role in Afghan peace process partnering US led western alliance. SCO with its huge politico-economic potential and effective 'Soft Power' potential can significantly and positively contribute in resolving Afghan mess up - provided US / West is ready to accommodate it as a major partner or a key stakeholder in peace and stability of Afghanistan.

The likelihood of sustained peace and stability in Afghanistan largely depends on its capabilities to sustain economic growth and ensure good governance. The SCO can more effectively achieve its goals in Afghanistan through economic, educational and governance reforms. Following steps can yield desired dividends:-

- Focusing on developing Afghanistan's legal economy and improving its basic economic infrastructure.

- Financing joint projects in Afghanistan, eliminating SCO trade barriers and creating employment opportunities.

- Enhancing people-to-people contacts, and cooperation in fields such as youth and women empowerment, health care, sports and environmental protection.

- Assistance for fighting drug trafficking in Afghanistan, including creation of a potent control mechanisms along the country's borders.

- Educational reforms under a joint mechanism with Afghan government ensuring cultural sensitivities are not hurt.

- Implementation of Turkmenistan – Afghanistan – Pakistan – India (TAPI) pipeline project, Central Asia – South Asia power project (CASA-1000), revitalization of the ancient Silk Road and other similar projects.

- Lending SCO's support to all other bilateral and multilateral peace initiatives

involving any of the SCO members, especially those with active involvement of China, Russia and Pakistan. With inclusion of Pakistan and India as members of SCO, its capabilities to resolve the issue through dialogues will enhance significantly.

Option II - SCO Opting for a Lead Role in Resolving Afghan Conundrum

SCO may opt for taking the lead role in resolution of Afghan issue, provided US / NATO also willingly cede this role to SCO. Despite its regional clout, SCO by itself is currently not in a position to claim or assume this role vis-à-vis US hold over geo-politics backed up by an unparalleled military might.[62] Moreover, besides a political prong spear headed by SCO (endeavouring to address most of the concerns of all stakeholders) a meaningful military capability is a must for negotiating from a position of strength – this comprehensive military capability and desired architecture is at present is only available with US led Resolute Support Mission (RSM) and SCO at present is not configured to field any worthwhile military capability (would require considerable time and effort; should SCO embark on such an undertaking). Moreover, accepting a policy position subservient to SCO by US led RSM is an unlikely preposition in the given regional / global environment.

The growing clout of organisation with friendly and benign outlook towards Afghanistan vis-à-vis eroding US influence bearing a hegemonic character can be usefully channelized for achieving desired end state in Afghanistan. Although giving a lead role to SCO at policy tier (in finding a political solution spear heading the peace initiative) supported by US / RSM military machine for force oriented support unambiguously figures out to be the near ideal / best possible option (for restoring order in the shortest possible time); nevertheless, it is not fitting in prevailing geo-strategic construct. However, now Pakistan and India as members of SCO provide SCO an excellent forum for a regional solution.

Option III - SCO Taking a Backseat (bearing semblance to Status Quo)

In view of the intransigence and resistance from US / NATO countries to let SCO play a rightful role in resolving Afghan issue, SCO may adopt a policy of wait and see for the time being and keep building its capabilities in cognitive and non-cognitive domain simultaneously for handling Afghan issue in a befitting manner at a later / opportune time. Major strands of ‘Status Quo’ would include:-

- US / NATO forces to continue lead role in Afghanistan with substantial military presence in Afghanistan.[63]
- Peace initiatives through various fora like Istanbul Process, QCG, Doha process, and Russian initiative to continue at their own stream. SCO may continue to accelerate and facilitate these processes through active involvement of its member states where possible.
- An increased coordination and cooperation with US / NATO forces to find common grounds of interest in Afghanistan while reducing the irritants.
- Engagement with Afghan Government [64] and accelerating process of granting full membership to Afghanistan, followed by Iran, as major stakeholders of Afghan issue.

Afghan problem is far too complex to be dealt with by SCO alone by itself. Hence, under the given circumstances, Option-I with SCO seeking enhanced role as a major stakeholder in peace and stability logically figures out to be the best way forward. As neither SCO is fully configured at present for a lead role nor US / West would like it that way. Entirely taking a back seat akin to status quo too has its own shortfalls with serious implications for regional security.

SCO in the Context of China’s role in Global Governance

SCO has emerged as a very powerful and effective regional organisation with a strong global outlook. With three of the world’s rapidly emerging global powers (rising China, Russia and India becoming harbinger of multipolarity and power transition from west to east) as its members (with all the regional and

trans-regional countries as potential aspirants of SCO's membership), SCO has an immense potential to play a decisive role in world politics in coming days.

SCO with four nuclear powers (Russia, China, India and Pakistan) accounting for almost half of world's population and 1/3rd of total area including Afghanistan as observer can play a significant role in resolution of Afghan imbroglio in constructive engagement with all the stakeholders.

Serving the cause of peace, rise of SCO is a positive omen as it affirms that stability in the region can only be guaranteed when the regional strategic competitors are convinced that the use of military force to shift the prevailing balance of power or altering the status quo in one's advantage is not a prudent strategy; hence a consensus approach or a win-win for all is to be endeavoured for Afghanistan. SCO is a unique forum for regional dialogue to decrease regional tensions and lay down foundations for mutual understanding.

In this first part of the 21st century, many imminent and salient threats to international security are trans-national in nature, with regional or even global repercussions. Extremism, terrorism, and separatism are deadly menaces emanating from ungovernable Afghanistan as an epicentre; warranting a regional security apparatus for which SCO is the only viable forum.

With India and Pakistan successfully acquiring full membership status on 9 June 2017 at Astana Summit, [65] SCO's political and economic profiling as one of the most potent regional organisations gets significantly elevated. Nevertheless, more meaningful role by this organisation can only be played if endeavours of all its members are synergized for achievement of common good and none of its members works in isolation or at cross-purposes to each other (especially applicable to Indo-Pak legacy of arch rivalry). For effectively serving the cause of peace and stability in Afghanistan, Iran and Afghanistan also need to get integrated with full-fledged membership

status of SCO. Inclusion of Turkey with full membership [66] would further strengthen SCO once seen in the backdrop of Turkey's active role in Afghan peace initiatives (including Istanbul Process) and growing warmth of Russo-Turkish relations.[67]

Chinese soft power, socio-economic uplift and mining projects are already being well received by Afghans without any kind of prejudice. Pakistan too has been an inseparable player in Afghan equation with shared destiny as validated from baggage of centuries. Of late India and Iran, too have started wielding their influence by making considerable inroads into Afghan society through socio-economic uplift projects and playing favourites. Russia too is poised to provide all necessary assistance provided rightful place is conceded to SCO for playing its part in Afghanistan. SCO can yield enormous dividends for Afghanistan in terms of connectivity and regional integration as a major transit for trade, commerce and industry. Hence it can safely be concluded that instead pursuing politically motivated and exclusive peace processes for politico-economic gains (bearing semblance of new Great Game) an all-inclusive and participative peace process involving SCO as a key stakeholder promises enormous dividends.

Conclusion

- Presently, SCO faces numerous challenges and hurdles in effectively playing its positive role in regional politico-economic developments. Afghan issue by far poses one of the most complex politico-economic and security challenges to the Central and South Asian region with serious ramifications for global peace. Notwithstanding, US / Western intransigence, taking a back seat and being complacent with status quo is not an option for SCO. Instead, with enhanced membership base, SCO should assert itself through politico-economic ventures and softer prongs, creating a win-win for all stakeholders (without taking sides). Peace and stability in Afghanistan is already a strategic imperative for SCO as

continuously breeding insecurity, extremism and terrorism (challenging the foundational cardinals of SCO) are directly affecting almost all the SCO members.

- The internal mechanisms of SCO including expansion of organisation, shaping

of security mechanism, financial wherewithal, and coherence between interest of member states would also warrant due attention for effective transformation of SCO into a potent and dynamic organisation, fully empowered in aptly handling the regional issues.

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The Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies Under the President of Kazakhstan (KAZISS)

The Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of Kazakhstan (KAZISS) was established on June 16, 1993, by the Decree of the President of Kazakhstan. In April 2014, the President of Kazakhstan issued the Executive Order to relocate the KAZISS to Astana.

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The KAZISS employs a highly professional pool of experts; at present it includes two Corresponding Members of the National Academy of Science, one Corresponding Member of the Military Academy of Kazakhstan, nine Doctors of Science, five Candidates of Science, three Ph.D.s and twelve Masters who specialize in political science, sociology, public administration, history, and economics.

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