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KAZAKSTAN'S ROLE IN THE MAINTENANCE OF SECURITY IN CENTRAL ASIA

Abstract

The cooperation with the countries of Central Asia in the field of regional security has been one of the important foreign policy priorities of Kazakhstan. The threats to security in Central Asia remain to be the growing influence of Islamic radicalism, instability in Afghanistan, illicit drug trafficking, etc. This paper focuses on the role of Kazakhstan in maintaining security in the region of Central Asia. The authors examine a wide range of regional security issues and analyze the foreign policy initiatives of Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan's initiatives on strengthening the nuclear nonproliferation regime have been analyzed in the paper. The authors analyze the relationship between Kazakhstan and organizations as NATO, OSCE, CSTO and SCO.

Key words: Central Asia, regional security, foreign policy, Kazakhstan, diplomacy

Introduction

Since the declaration of its sovereignty, Kazakhstan has been demonstrating the peaceful character of its foreign policy. To date, Kazakhstan has developed clear vision for its foreign and security policy interests. It has been reflected in the Strategy-2050 [1] and Kazakhstan's foreign policy Concept for 2014-2020. [2]

Changes in security sphere have led to a significant change of emphasis in connection with its new dimensions.

Nowadays security is a stable economy, the uninterrupted supply of energy, low level of crime and healthy environment. And then we can consider security as the military category.

Global changes that have taken place in the world, carry some contradictory trends: on the one hand, the world community has taken concrete steps to increase cooperation and the peaceful solution of disputes, control arms race and proliferation of nuclear weapons, on the other hand - the new risks and threats to security were emerged.

The new geopolitical realities affecting on Kazakhstan's security show emerging the wide range of opportunities and challenges along Kazakhstan's borders. The geopolitical situation in the region has been characterized by social, economic and demographic tensions and the threat of destabilization has been increased. All of it requires the development and use of new approaches, both in terms of conceptual understanding of the issues of the global and regional security maintenance, as well as medium-term and long-term prognosis.

New theoretical approaches to security issues supposes an understanding of the complex nature of security, strengthening of civil and non-military aspects of security. The region of the Central Asia in this context plays an important role since the succession of events in the region to a certain extent reflects and will continue to reflect the development of the situation at the global level.

[In accordance with the foreign policy Concept, Kazakhstan, acknowledging its responsibility and the role in the region, will exert every effort to provide regional stability and security and take actions against new challenges and threats.](#)

Challenges, threats and risks to the security of the Central Asian countries can be divided into several groups:

- global risks;

-intra-regional challenges, risks, and possible tensions between the countries of Central Asia;

-challenges related to the policy of external actors;

- potential tensions between the major actors and regional players.

The issues of all these groups are inter-related.

It is important to focus on the following threats and challenges to security of Central Asia:

- uncertainty of the political development course of Central Asian countries in terms of succession question;

-the growing influence of Islamic radicalism and extremism in Central Asia; terrorism, drug trafficking, illegal migration, water and energy issues, transport and etc.

- factor of Afghanistan that includes a range of threats and risks for the countries of Central Asia. That is not a complete list of threats.

Issues of strengthening the Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime

The priority issues of Kazakhstan's foreign policy are the issues of the strengthening the nuclear nonproliferation regime and destruction of nuclear weapons.

The antinuclear policy of Kazakhstan has helped in the establishment of positive relations with the world community; it has received guarantees of security enabling it to pursue internal political reforms independently with the aim to strengthening of the statehood without outside intervention, in other words it took full advantage of the "confidence" it enjoys from the world powers.

The antinuclear policy of Kazakhstan has created the conditions to support regional and global security, facilitating Kazakhstan to involve in the decisive process of building up a system of international security and disarmament.

Kazakhstan has been consistently advocating for strengthening the global nuclear security. Kazakhstan is committed to the idea of comprehensive nuclear disarmament that is the only guarantee of nuclear security.

Being aware of the danger of WMD proliferation and its link to terrorism, Kazakhstan has been calling for increasing efforts to counter it under the central coordinating role of the UN and Security Council.

Our country has been one of the first participants of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. The setting up of the IAEA Low Enriched Uranium Bank in Kazakhstan will allow all members of the world community to develop peaceful nuclear technologies and improve the situation with the control of the existing material. In this way, it will promote to reduce significantly the risk of nuclear terrorism.

The signing of the Protocol to the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia by the United States, the United Kingdom, France, China, and Russia on 6 May, 2014, has been an important step towards the consolidation of the Zone. Thus, the major step in the legal process of the forming Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the region has been made. The Protocol commits the five nuclear-weapon States not to use nuclear weapons against the parties of the Treaty [3].

Kazakhstan's initiative on the establishment of International nuclear fuel Bank led to the signing of the relevant agreement with the IAEA in 2015 [4]. Thus, Kazakhstan acts as one of the guarantors of safe service of the atom for peaceful purposes as fuel for nuclear power plants.

Thus, by analyzing Kazakhstan's participation in the international security maintenance, it can be stated that Kazakhstan has been making a real and positive

contribution to strengthening global and regional security. Kazakhstan's contribution to global and regional security maintenance has been recognized by the UN and world community.

Threats of terrorism and religious extremism

The threats of terrorism and religious extremism play increasingly important role in Central Asia. The threats have had systemic character. This type of threats has received support from external sources and has gained a new dynamics in the internal political and social-economic process in Central Asian countries.

Today the Central Asian region represents a territory with high degree of terrorism. News about joining of Central Asian countries' citizens the terroristic organizations operating in the Middle East raises growing concerns in the region. It is reported that citizens of Central Asian countries are fighting along other foreign-backed militants in Iraq and Syria [5]. Kazakhstan's expert community considers it as not only the terrorism issue but also as the vulnerability of the information system [6].

There are internal and external factors for the potential existence of the terrorist and extremist groups.

The internal factors are – low standard of life of the population and generally unfavorable socio-economic situation in the Central Asian region, lack of proper social security leading to increasing threat on the part of radical elements.

External factors are – international terrorist organizations, powerful external financial support, military-political instability in the Middle East and negative impact of an adverse geopolitical situation and transit of drug trafficking.

The factors encouraging the growth of terrorism also include instability due to influence of growing criminality, increasing tendencies to solve the problems by force, poor performance of the state machinery and the law enforcement bodies etc.

Presently the fight against terrorism is basically directed to suppression of terrorist activities while the main focus of this activity should be on their prevention.

In the formulation of the policy to fight against terrorism the onus should be on the identification and elimination of the causes and the conditions leading to terrorist activities.

Consequently all the means of prevention should be set in motion: political, social, economic, legal, educational, informative, propagandist, etc.

Thus, it is necessary to create an interstate mechanism, capable of tracing and blocking the channels of financing of the international terrorism without which this phenomenon cannot show its destructive potentiality.

The important point in the fight against terrorism is adequate legislative measures at the state level. However, each country differently perceives the threat of terrorism, and terrorism itself has various, typical for the given country objects of infringement that excludes an opportunity of speedy unification of antiterrorist legislations and their merger into a uniform complex of legal norms for all the states.

The main causes of the threat of religious extremism are the outcomes of diverse factors of psychological, economic, political, religious, and social character.

The geopolitical location of Kazakhstan has been an important factor for the possible scenarios of religious extremism. The struggle against extremism in Kazakhstan has been an important and necessary issue since it has been identified as one of the risk factors for the nation's security. An analysis of religious extremism in Kazakhstan shows that religious extremism for our society is a phenomenon that came from "outside", through various missionaries and their attempts to destabilize the Kazakhstani

multinational society. The analysis of the phenomenon showed the need for religious education of the population.

In the last decade, increasing interactions of organized criminal groups with the Islamist radical organization in Central Asia poses the major threat to the regional security.

Threats of growth of drug trafficking in Central Asia

The problem of drug trafficking in Central Asia remains quite serious destabilizing factor. The situation in Central Asia has been mainly determined by the influence of Afghanistan, which has become the leading global producer of a certain group of drugs (cannabinoid: marijuana, hashish, hashish oil) in recent years [7].

The illegal distribution of drugs as one of the negative factors of modern development undermines the foundation of stability and safety of any state.

One of the three main routes of Afghan drug trafficking is the «northern route». Being a major transit corridor, Kazakhstan has become an important link in this chain. Today on the territory of Kazakhstan there are four main routes of drug trafficking.

In Kazakhstan, as well as in the others states of Central Asia, the situation of drug trade is quite complex. The number of drug addicts increased 4 times. In the overall structure of drug addiction heroin registered significant increase. 10 % of all crimes happen to be drug related.

In the words of an international expert, «significant growth of illegal transportations of drugs in the republics of the Central Asia threatens not only the health of the local population, but also exerts a negative impact on political, economic and social stability and also on the process of democratic reforms» [8].

Nevertheless, for the liquidation of the problem it is necessary to do much more including strengthening of borders and development of effective regional and international cooperation. It is necessary to design a common strategy for the fight against consumption of narcotics. Priorities in the fight against consumption of narcotics and drug trading should be:

- Appropriate legal provisions: perfection of judicial system, strengthening of criminal suits for the crimes related to illegal drug trade;
- Establishment of reliable police forces for the control and implementation of the laws forbidding drug trading;
- Effective measures that should be taken to restrict drug related problems include: customs control, strict regulation of illegal circulation of drugs and their eventual destruction, introduction of other special mechanisms;
- Provision for medical-rehabilitation;
- Warning - development of drug immunity, involvement of nongovernmental and public organizations, educative programs for teachers, creation of specialized information-analysis centers in the districts.

For an effective fight against drug trade, a clear understanding of its military, economic and political implications is important. The countries of the Central Asia should play a key role to fight against drug trading and insist on the international control over the modes of financing of drug trade and thereby curbing the income by drug trafficking.

After the events on September 11th, 2001 the fight against terrorism, extremism and drug trade became the main concern of internal and external policy of many countries. More often this began to be considered as a problem since drug trade remains the main support of terrorism and religious extremism.

Migration processes in the region contain a number of challenges and potential threats to security. In recent years, due to the positive tendency of stable economic growth, Kazakhstan has become a regional center that attracted many migrant workers.

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), the number of labor migrants in Kazakhstan fluctuates between 300,000 to 1,000,000 and more in a year [9]. According to other organizations' data, the total number of migrants in the region is estimated at 5,000,000, while 2,000,000 of them work in Kazakhstan [10].

The major trends in Central Asia are labor migration and the steady increase in illegal migration. The dynamics of migration processes in Central Asia for 20 years shows that mobility of the population in the medium and long terms will play a significant role in the context of the regional security and stability along the borders of Kazakhstan.

At the same time, migration processes in the region contain a fairly high potential for conflict that might undermine the already fragile architecture of security of Central Asian region

Afghanistan Post-2014

According to the Foreign Policy Concept Kazakhstan being conscious of its responsibility and role in the region intends to exert all-out efforts to ensure regional stability and security, to resist new challenges and threats, including those which come from neighboring territories.

The situation in Afghanistan created the whole range of threats. The armed stand-off in Afghanistan is a major obstacle to regional economic cooperation development, to the realization of Central Asian great transit potential. It became obvious that it is necessary to reform the international cooperation in Afghanistan and to ensure regional security.

The situation normalization in Afghanistan is of the interests of the Central Asian countries and due to which they can't stay on the sidelines. It can be assumed that the cooperation on the issue of Afghanistan could become the basis for a wider range of cooperation in the field of security between the states of Central Asia.

In Kazakhstan there is a clear understanding of the importance of Afghanistan to preserve regional security in Central Asia, and our country holds an active position on Afghanistan's stabilization. Kazakhstan supports all peace initiatives and processes of conflict settlement in Afghanistan and continually confirms obligations to support the global partnership for assistance to Afghanistan. Based on the above, the priority should be given to the search and implementation of optimal forms and methods of cooperation between the Central Asian countries, that will reconcile national interests of sovereign states with region-wide integrative needs.

The Istanbul process is one of the new forms of cooperation in Afghanistan direction, and Kazakhstan supports regional and international projects in the fields of energy and transport infrastructure development. It shows the absolute interest of Kazakhstan to stabilize Afghanistan by means of cooperation with regional partners and leading international organizations represented by the United Nations.

What are the solutions to these problems?

Kazakhstan believes, that concrete step in the solution of actual problems of the region could be the creation of the Regional Center in the republic, which would coordinate the activities related to border security of the region, including the fight against terrorism, drug trade and other illegal transaction [11].

Kazakhstan supports the initiative about prompt acceptance of the universal international Convention against international terrorism. It is necessary to build a system of counteraction to illegal transit of drugs with joint efforts.

In the field of combating international terrorism alongside with already known mechanism we have to pay attention to such aspects, as: intolerance to support or recognition of terrorist acts; the definition of terrorism - a criteria must be determined by the UN; the CICA initiatives against religious extremism also must foresee stricter drug trade and arms distribution control, cooperation between law-enforcement authorities; reinforcement of the policy of eliminating poverty.

For the efficient fight against drug business it is important to clearly understand its military, economic and political aspects. The countries of the region must consider the possibility of the signing a pact on joint law-enforcement operations directed against such social evils as drug trafficking and international criminality. In order to achieve this purpose it is necessary to arrange joint courses and training of police, as well as information exchange.

As to interstate relations, proceeding from the importance of regional and sub-regional order maintained through many-sided diplomacy, it is necessary to develop the concept of regionalism, in particular, refusal of discussing bilateral issues and cooperation in sphere common interests. Regionalism provides multiplicity of opinions, variety and tolerance. The CICA must be not only the forum for negotiations, but better a rule-making institution.

Another mechanism of the security system formation must be gradual development of the confidence-building measures. The confidence-building measures represent a pragmatic move towards the ideal purposes – this requires goodwill and serious attitude of participant, as well as the corresponding mechanisms. In general it is necessary to develop a catalogue of the confidence-building measures, which can be applied in the regional and sub-regional level.

It is necessary to further initiation of agreements on peaceful settlement of disputes on borders between the member states. At least once, there is a constructive example: the model of security, on base of which five countries - Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan - have duly settled their disputes on borders issues and reached mutual understanding in regard of the reduction of armed forces and their movement to the minimum level in the border regions.

The settlement of territorial conflicts and agreements on arms control represent conditions for successful fulfillment of confidence-building measures. So a layered mechanism can be created for the dialogue in the security sphere for the purpose of developing preventive diplomacy and reduction of regional vulnerability. And, finally, it is necessary to pay attention to the spheres of human rights and cultural cooperation. First of all, reinforcement of inter-civilization dialogue in Asia is necessary.

Thus, to solve the problem concerning fight against the emergence of international terrorism in Central Asia, religious extremism, drug trade, illegal circulation of arms, illegal migration, it is necessary to evolve a joint policy leading to the formation of regional and inter-regional systems of security on a bilateral basis.

Quite complicated situation in the region reveals that the formation of real and effective security system shall be the priority area of Central Asian states 'foreign-policy activities.

As far as the question of possibility to create a system of security in the Central Asia is concerned, it is necessary to take note of the weak functional relations of the states of the region among themselves. There is little to speak about the evolution of the system of security of post-soviet space and the Central Asian region, which in reality has not gained momentum.

Each of the countries of the region of the Central Asia independently defends its own interests on the issue of national security. This explains the intention of the big international players "dealing" with these countries separately not at the level of regional cooperation.

According to the Foreign Policy Concept Kazakhstan will strive to develop intra-regional integration in Central Asia to reduce the conflict potential, to solve social and economic problems and other challenges. The transformation of the region into common integrated subject of international politics and economy appears as the long-range goal [12].

In the era of globalization it is not enough to have new regional designs on the basis of interstate agreements and contracts. It is also necessary to talk about "the formation of the uniform economic law and order and acceptance of the Uniform code of regional and world security".

Kazakhstan prefers non-military security measures, which primarily include political, diplomatic, legal, economic, humanitarian, advocacy and other measures.

This defines the following tasks:

- Relations and integration processes enhancement on the basis of mutually beneficial cooperation, mutual understanding and confidence-building measures implementation as well as military transparency among friendly countries, among Central Asian countries in particular;
- Increase in activity to establish international mechanisms of armed conflicts and aggression prevention;
- Confidence-building measures, renunciation of military force to resolve interstate conflicts, peaceful settlement of international disputes;
- economic ties expansion and deepening of cooperation with the world democratic and industrialized nations;
- Global assistance in strengthening non-proliferation weapons of mass destruction regimes and arms control.
- and lastly, international community support of the state with the assistance and cooperation of international institutions and forums.

Kazakhstan and international organizations in the region: opportunities and risks.

Kazakhstan consistently supported implementation and improvement of principles of multilateral structures.

Proceeding from the current trends of the world development and personal vision of modern international security and disarmament problems Kazakhstan is purposefully and actively involved in all processes of security and disarmament regimes establishment at all levels of international and regional cooperation. This came through Kazakhstan's activities in the frameworks of the UN, CSTO, CICA, SCO, OSCE, NATO partnership.

Over the years of its independence Kazakhstan has proved itself to be an effective, consistent and reliable participant of the UN system. Special priority is given to strengthening cooperation with the Organization in the fields of: economy, environment, social development, international a progressive development, human rights observance, combating terrorism, organized crime and drug trafficking. The position of Kazakhstan to support the leading role of the UN in international relations appears to be reasonable.

Kazakhstan is actively engaged in work in the OSCE, considering it as the main instrument of preventive diplomacy, objective development of all its dimensions. The participation of Kazakhstan in the OSCE promotes maintenance of stability on the Eurasian space. In this sense the summit of the OSCE in Astana is a real step to implement the initiative of Kazakhstan to form the Euroatlantic and Eurasian community of common and indivisible safety. The presidency of the OSCE by the Republic of Kazakhstan is the result of attracting of attention to our region.

It is quite logical to set up an international structure to fight against such threats to security like illegal migration in Central Asia under the aegis of OSCE. OSCE can also play an important role in the security on the Caspian Sea. In this context Kazakhstan proposes to sign "A Pact on stability on the Caspian Sea" prohibiting the use of military force in Pre-Caspian region.

The Central Asian countries are member-states of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

At the present the role of the Collective Security Treaty Organization is of great importance because it is a regional organization established to ensure the stability and security of Kazakhstan and the Central Asian region.

The CSTO originally is political, open and is not aimed to create a military bloc. It became the basis for a qualitatively new level of maintenance of member-states security, mainly by political, peaceful means, joint efforts to build a new security system.

CSTO is one of the few still working the CIS structures. It has the article like the NATO treaty, according to it an attack on one of the participating countries in the Collective Security Treaty Organization is regarded as an attack on all member countries, which inevitably involve them in military action.

Yet the official position of Kazakhstan regarding the CSTO is that the system of collective security, despite all the problems and difficulties, is the real basis for the formation of a regional security system and it is necessary to take further steps to improve the effectiveness of the organization [13].

Kazakhstan supports the formation of additional guarantees of security, both in the territory of CIS as a whole, and in Central Asia, in particular. Not by coincidence, it is Kazakhstan that has taken the initiative to create a new structure of cooperation in Asia — by creating a Conference on interaction and confidence building measures in Asia (CICA), which occupies a special position in its system of the foreign policy priorities.

In terms of its objectives and functions CICA is often compared with the OSCE. It is a perspective the realization of strategic objectives to establish partnerships with many countries in Asia, for the prevention of crises and conflicts.

Kazakhstan defines the role of CICA as a forum for negotiations and consultations in the sphere of security and stability in Asia. The initiatives by Kazakhstan are directed towards the creation of a common area for security covered by CICA, which is «free from dividing lines where the states are partners of equal rights».

CICA also presumes «the refusal of the concepts of the spheres of influence», «the regional approach to solve the problems of security», «ensuring transparency in interstate

relations, keeping in mind, that the foreign policy of each participant state should be built on the principles of predictability and openness taking into consideration individual and collective needs in the sphere of security» [14].

In this context the CICA establishes an acceptable structure of peace and security building.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is becoming more popular in the region of Central Asia. This is proved not only by participation of Russia and China in the regional organization, but also by the interest of India, Pakistan, Iran.

All efforts of the SCO member-states are aimed solely at maintaining peace and stability in the region and expansion of the geographical areas of cooperation is discussed.

No doubt, the existence of external threats and challenges to the stability and security of the region, especially an escalation of terrorism and extremism, as well as economic problems in the world are crucial to the process of the SCO member-states cooperation.

Maintenance of the military security of the SCO member-states is an important function, but not the main task for the organization. The main task is to ensure confidence, friendship, good neighbourliness in the region, as well as to counter new threats. The main is the terrorist threat.

It should be noted that initially one of the main tasks of the SCO was fight against terrorism, separatism and extremism. The Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism was signed at the "inaugural" SCO summit (June 2001) [15]. Subsequently, SCO Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure - a permanent body to facilitate coordination and inter-activity of the corresponding authorities of the SCO countries was established.

The SCO is not a military alliance, not a political union of states. It is a regional security structure aimed at expanding the scope of cooperation. Now important tasks for the strengthening of comprehensive cooperation of SCO are not only military and political cooperation, but also economic.

The issue of participation in the SCO's activity is one of the key questions of Kazakhstan's multivector foreign policy as well as it is able to become the effective tool to achieve of a number of the geopolitical purposes.

First of all, this organization is the most acceptable tool for China to integrate into the system of regional security in some sense, which is very important for Kazakhstan.

The SCO member countries justifiably believe that Afghanistan determines the fate of all region. Ever though the SCO has never been involved in military operations directly, it provided valuable and sometimes irreplaceable transport logistic, military and technical support to ISAF in Afghanistan. The SCO member countries carry on a number of social and infrastructure and humanitarian projects that post-conflict restoration of long-suffering Afghanistan couldn't be impossible without.

The SCO is an organization, capable of providing security in the Central Asia. Now it is at the stage of self-development and possibly in the future will exert significant influence.

The administration of Kazakhstan considers reasonable to initiate a number of the measures directed to the SCO activity enhancement, its status and functional orientation change, a new content fill in, and, in the end of the day, turning the SCO into an important element of international and regional security system.

Kazakhstan's partnership with the NATO is reasonable to preserve political balance.

Cooperation of Kazakhstan with the NATO is a prominent aspect of strengthening of regional security of republic. It covers a wide spectrum of areas, such as reform of sector of defense and security, military operative compatibility of armed forces of NATO member-countries and Kazakhstan, civil emergency planning and scientific cooperation.

The basic direction of joint work with the Alliance is an interaction in the military sphere is carried out on the basis of the Individual Partnership Action Plans (IPAP), and also within the frameworks of Planning and Analysis Process programs (PAPP) and the Concept of operative potential (COP). Our country is one of the first Central Asian states which has joined the NATO program «Planning and review Process» (PARP).

On higher level of relations development of the parties which is left in January 2006 in the format of «NATO+Kazakhstan» having confirming Individual Partnership Action Plans "Partnership" (IPAP). The plan is directed on strengthening of regional and international security, deepening of process of transformation of Military Force of RK, increase of operative compatibility, cooperation in the field of fight against terrorism, civil emergency planning, science and ecology.

IPAP harmonizes and coordinates all aspects of existing interaction on Kazakhstan-NATO's line. It is necessary to mark that Kazakhstan is one of the first Central Asian countries went out on such level of cooperation with the NATO.

The basic priorities IPAP are:

- cooperation in regional and international security sphere ;
- defense and military questions, fight against international terrorism;
- strengthening of political dialog and consultations between NATO and Kazakhstan with the purpose of democratic reforms;
- cooperation of prevention of emergency situations and sciences [16].

Present and future dialogue between Kazakhstan and NATO takes place within analysis and counter existing threats and challenges, including terrorism, organized crime, uncontrolled migration, drug trafficking and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

NATO attaches great importance to its relations with our country because Kazakhstan and NATO have a common stand on and shared interests in combating terrorism, smuggling, drug trafficking, defense cooperation and on issues of civil emergency and disaster-management capabilities.

Kazakhstan proposes significant new principles of mutual understanding and peace, and above that here you can start negotiating security structures such as NATO and the CSTO, OSCE and the SCO.

It became obvious that it is necessary to reformat international cooperation for stabilizing Afghanistan and ensuring regional security . In this connection possibilities that allow to foster regional security in a changing U.S. and its allies policy in Afghanistan should be considered:

- credibility of finding a common stance of the SCO member states on stabilizing situation in Afghanistan and regional security;
- possibility of NATO-SCO cooperation.

One of the priority issues on the agenda of the dialogue between Central Asian states and NATO is the situation over Afghanistan, including possible joint activities.

On the other hand, all the SCO members are interested in a speedy resolving of the Afghan issue.

The dialogue between these organizations - NATO and the SCO - can be useful in many areas. There are several points of contact for cooperation between the SCO and NATO, including Afghan crisis.

Initially, the U.S. did not have any interest in cooperation of the SCO and Afghanistan. A little later, since 2007 the United States had began to impel the SCO to Afghan issue settlement actively and actually recognized it as a influential regional organization. As Barack Obama's comprehensive new doctrine for Afghanistan was announced, the United States, have shown growing interest in working with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on the Afghan problem.

In 2008, NATO demonstrated its interest in the region and the SCO, as a young organization of a new type, should relate to these realities objectively. These organizations need to establish mechanisms for cooperation and settlement of relationships to jointly ensure the stable development of Central Asia [17].

At the summit in January 2011 the SCO member countries expressed their willingness to cooperate with NATO on special projects related to border security with Afghanistan. This was a very encouraging signal to be picked up as a deep and structured cooperation between the Alliance and the SCO, it is needed even now [18].

There are different opinions concerning the prospects of cooperation between NATO and the Shanghai Cooperation in Afghanistan. According to Kazakhstani experts, such cooperation will be possible, if the U.S. is convinced of the necessity of the interaction between NATO and the SCO in Central Asian area. Kazakhstani initiatives in the field of Asian security (CICA and the SCO) can serve as a basis for this dialogue.

According to the National Coordinator of Tajikistan in SCO Akbarsho Iskandarov, NATO without assistance of our countries could not solve the problems in Afghanistan. Today or tomorrow, NATO will face the necessity for cooperation with the SCO [19].

Russian experts, in particular, Arkady Dubnov is skeptical about the prospects of cooperation between NATO and SCO in Afghanistan. The main reason for this skepticism is rooted in the lack of mutual trust between these structures. According to them, China and Russia, the two dominant powers of the SCO by Chinese terms. They fear of the deep rooting of American military presence in the heart of the Asian continent, in the region that SCO considers as the zone of its influence [20].

Establishment of the cooperation between SCO and Euro-Atlantic organizations (NATO and EU), in our view, is critical to stabilize situation in Afghanistan. If such cooperation does not arise, the SCO and the Euro-Atlantic structures will continue to spend resources in Central Asia to support the competing forms of interaction with the Central Asian states. Meanwhile, these resources are needed to deal with the real threats emanating from Afghanistan.

Since there is a contact group «SCO – Afghanistan», there is a natural question, why a joint working group of NATO and the SCO on the Afghan problem has not been established yet. Strengthening cooperation between interested international actors now looks logical and timely. It wouldn't lose its relevance after the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) from Afghanistan, since Afghanistan is bordered by a number of the SCO member countries and two observer countries of the SCO - Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

It is obvious that the Afghan problem is still far from being solved; respectively it is necessary to attract resources of NATO and the SCO, which could cooperate in the

context of a struggle against terrorism and energy policy and social adaptation of the Afghan population.

If the dialogue between NATO and the SCO is held, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization could give a new impetus to the efforts to ensure security in the region, including Afghanistan into the regional system of social, economic and energy component. It should be said that not only Russia and China, but all of the SCO countries are keenly interested in establishing stability in the region and Afghanistan [21].

According to experts, it will be rational, if the SCO solves the following practical goals for Afghan settlement in the short term:

1. Antidrug direction: phased developing an anti-drug trafficking belt around Afghanistan by opening SCO anti-drug center and establishment cooperation with relevant Afghanistan departments;

2. Anti-terrorist direction: establishment close contacts between the SCO's Anti-Terrorist Centre and appropriate Afghanistan services;

3. Border security issues: providing assistance and support to SCO member states which have a common border with Afghanistan to protect and improve boundaries and create specialized SCO institutions on border security;

4. Economic cooperation issues: to determine with Afghanistan an area of responsibility on economic cooperation of the SCO member states in Afghanistan to provide necessary economic assistance to Afghanistan to boost the creation of the SCO Development Fund [22].

It is obvious that military-political situation in Afghanistan is becoming as one of the main external factors for the SCO member states and it is required a timely and decisive response. Today, despite the absence of unanimity of views on the role and capabilities of the SCO on the Afghan problem, the necessity to strengthen joint action to combat threats emanating from Afghanistan is a core issue in the foreign policy in Central Asian states, Russia and China.

In order to be successful in Afghanistan, the SCO member countries should develop a common understanding and stance on the Afghan settlement or joint action in Afghanistan alongside the existing bilateral relations with this country.

It should also be noted that there are a lot of disagreements between Russia and the West on the Afghan-Central Asian agenda. Nevertheless, the objective situation in the region suggests the necessity of positive interaction.

Speaking about the role of the SCO in ensuring regional security, Russian expert K. Barsky notes that «special attention should be paid to joint analysis and forecasting of the situation in the region and developing options of response and prevention. Harmonization of stances and actions should replace simple exchange of point of views» [23].

Central Asian countries are highly interested to resolve situation in Afghanistan and therefore they can not remain as detached onlookers. It can be assumed that the cooperation on the Afghan issue could become the basis for a wider range of cooperation in the field of security between states of the region.

Such complicated situation in the region demonstrates that shaping an effective security system should be prior direction in the Central Asian states' foreign policy. Even so, the key point of this system should be international promotion for stabilization of the military-political situation in Afghanistan which has generated, in fact, a whole range of challenges and threats not only to Central Asia but the whole continent as well.

The analysis of Kazakhstan's participation in regional associations has allowed to reveal the trends testifying that the combination of bilateral cooperation within the

CSTO, development of cooperation on the SCO line, coordination of the work with the Eurasian structures, developing partnership with the western structures on a number of issues on bilateral (the RK - the USA, the RK - the EU countries) and multilateral (within certain programs of the EU, OSCE and NATO) basis has the greatest value for the Republic of Kazakhstan.

In this context further efforts to improve coordination of activities in the frameworks of bilateral and multilateral cooperation, counter –terrorism, -extremism, organized crime and drugs contractual legal base; implementation of joint preventive measures on strengthening the southern boundaries with involvement of multilateral security structures; information security in order to counter religious extremism are necessary.

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