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## ETHNO-TERRITORIAL PROBLEMS OF REGIONAL SECURITY IN CENTRAL ASIA

The article deals with the ethno-territorial contradictions that arose between the new independent States of Central Asia after the collapse of the USSR. The complexity of border problems is associated with a number of historical, ethnic and physical-geographical factors. The mountainous terrain, ethnic “cross-hair”, when a significant part of the “titular” population of one country lived in a neighboring state, and the lack of universally recognized borders between the republics made it difficult to demarcate them. Uncertainty of boundaries, which is exacerbated by an acute shortage of water and land resources, contributes to tension and inter-ethnic conflicts. Including one of the problems are socio-economic reasons. Ethnic groups vary greatly in language, religion and way of life, according to socio-political status, and the presence of forces external to the conflicting parties interested in continuing the conflict. The most intense section is the Fergana Valley, which includes several enclaves, respectively, the interests of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan collide here. The difficulty lies in the fact that these states, in addition to territorial claims to each other, have other problems in relations. Even in those areas where the borders were agreed, there were interethnic clashes, which caused even greater tension.

**Key words:** ethnicity, conflict, discrimination, interstate, intergovernmental, interdepartmental.

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### Орталық Азиядағы аймақтық қауіпсіздіктің этно-территориялық мәселелері

Берілген мақалада Орталық Азия мемлекеттерінің КСРО ыдырағаннан кейінгі алған тәуелсіздігінен кейінгі арада туындаған этно аймақтық қайшылықтар қарастырылған. Күрделі шекаралық мәселелер негізінен тарихи, этникалық, физико-жағрафиялық жағдайлармен байланысты болды. Таулы жер бедері, этникалық көпшықты, сонымен бірге халықтың көптеген бөлігі көрші аймақта тұрғандықтарынан, сонымен бірге республикалар арасында жалпы мойындалған шекаралардың болмауы түрлі қиындықтар туғызған болатын. Шекара белгісіздігі шикізат көздерінің және су тапшылығының салдарынан көптеген шиеленістер мен этносаралық қақтығыстардың болуына ықпалын тигізіп отырды. Ең басты мәселелердің бірі әлеуметтік-экономикалық себептер. Этникалық топтар, әсіресе тілдер жағынан, дін, өмір сүру салттары тұрғысынан, әлеуметтік-саяси мәртебелері бойынша өте қатты ерекшеленіп тұрады. Сондай-ақ жанжалды ары қарай жалғастыруға мүдделі үшінші тараптардың әсер етуі де тысқары қалмаған. Бірнеше анклавтарды біріктіріп отырған шиелініс ең қарқынды жүрген аймақтардың бірі Ферғана еді, сондықтан осы аймақтарда Өзбекстан, Қырғызстан және Тәжікстан тараптарының мүдделік негізінде туындаған қақтығыстар орын алып отыр. Бұл мемлекеттердегі қақтығыстар тек шекаралық мәселелерден басқа да қатынастық байланыстардан да туындап отыр. Кейбір шекаралық келісімдерін тапқан аймақтарда да этникаралық қақтығыстар одан аса шиеліністер тудырған болатын.

**Түйін сөздер:** этникалық, қақтығыс, дискриминация, мемлекетаралық, үкіметаралық, ведомствоаралық.

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### Этнотерриториальные проблемы региональной безопасности Центральной Азии

В статье рассматриваются этнотерриториальные противоречия, возникшие между новыми независимыми государствами Центральной Азии после распада СССР. Сложность пограничных проблем связана с целым рядом исторических, этнических и физико-географических факторов. Горный рельеф местности, этническая «чересполосица», когда значительная часть «титульного» населения одной страны проживала в соседнем государстве, и отсутствие общепризнанных границ между республиками затрудняли их демаркацию. Неопределенность границ, которая усиливается острым дефицитом водных и земельных ресурсов, способствует напряженности и межэтническим конфликтам. Также одной из проблем являются социально-экономические причины. Этнические группы сильно различаются по языку, религии и образу жизни, по социально-политическому статусу, наличие внешних по отношению к конфликтующим сторонам сил, заинтересованных в продолжение конфликта. Наиболее напряженным участком является Ферганская долина, включающая в себя несколько анклавов, соответственно именно здесь и сталкиваются интересы Узбекистана, Кыргызстана и Таджикистана. Сложность заключается и в том, что эти государства, помимо территориальных претензий друг другу, имеют и другие проблемы в отношениях. Даже на тех участках, где границы были согласованы, случались межэтнические стычки, чем вызывали еще большую напряженность.

**Ключевые слова:** этничность, конфликт, дискриминация, межгосударственный, межправительственный, межведомственный.

#### Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union was a turning point in the history of the world, the gaining of independence by the countries of Central Asia revealed many problems that required an immediate solution. The most urgent problem was ethno-territorial conflicts, which had deep roots in history.

Currently, the issue of borders and inter-ethnic relations is key in the region. A huge influence on the current situation in the region was the fact that the modern borders of the countries of Central Asia were defined during the Soviet Union. The central authorities of the former USSR did not take into account the historical, cultural and other features of the ethnic groups. As a result of the ill-conceived policy of the former Soviet Union, the borders of the Central Asian states largely do not coincide with the territories of the resettlement of ethnic groups in the region.

The problem of uncertainty of boundaries, which is exacerbated by an acute shortage of water and land resources, contributes to tensions and inter-ethnic conflicts (Solozobov YU., Shibusov M., 2016).

One of the main factors of interethnic and territorial problems are socio-economic reasons. The reasons that underlie such conflicts include:

– ethnic groups vary greatly in language, religion and lifestyle;

– ethnic groups differ significantly in socio-political status;

– on the territory of residence of one of the ethnic groups, the political and economic situation is changing in a short time;

– the presence of forces external to the conflicting parties interested in continuing the conflict;

– conflicting ethnic parties have formed persistent negative stereotypes in relation to each other (Obrazovatel'nyy portal, 2018).

#### Research methods

This scientific study was based on general logical methods such as: analysis, synthesis, synthesis and description.

#### Main part

When solving territorial problems, it is necessary to take into account the national interests of each state. Pursuing national interests, no state in the world wants to make territorial concessions. Negotiations that address this problem in the region were conducted from the very beginning of independence and had a lot of controversial points.

In our opinion, territorial disputes are the stumbling block for the normalization of inter-ethnic relations, security issues, and the effective integration of the countries of the region. It should also be noted that every state must understand that

such problems must be solved in accordance with the norms of international law.

The most intense section is the Fergana Valley, which includes several enclaves, respectively, the interests of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan collide here. The difficulty lies in the fact that these states, in addition to territorial claims to each other, have other problems in relations. Even in those areas where the borders were agreed, inter-ethnic clashes occurred, which caused even greater tension. The need to obtain visas in order to travel to a neighboring country, even more caused discontent among residents, as it was difficult and costly. Residents could not realize in the early stages of independence that they now live in different states, and not in one country, as was the case in the times of the Soviet Union. The thinking of people who once lived in neighboring villages was difficult to change, there are many examples where people are not authorized to run across borders that were mined at the time, and as a result we see a lot of casualties among ordinary people. The restriction of movement between countries was dictated by the national security issues of the countries of the region. In addition to the problems we have mentioned above, drug trafficking flows and growing terrorist groups have begun in the region. As a result, cross-border travel and trade were a big problem, often exacerbated by the behavior of customs and border guards. Border services often did not have sufficient qualifications to stop certain people from moving across borders.

If we consider the largest and in our opinion significant ethno-territorial conflicts, it would be appropriate to dwell on the problems that exist between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz.

Ethno-territorial conflicts between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz began in the period of the existence of the Soviet Union.

In 1924, the cities of Osh, Jalal-Abad and Uzgen, despite the fact that the majority of the population were Uzbeks, were included in Kyrgyzstan. The reason for this was that the Kyrgyz would not have their own industrial centers. The Uzbeks, who controlled the trade and services sector, lost their leadership positions, which went to the Kyrgyz, as well as language discrimination of the Uzbek language (Trofimov D.K., 2002).

The situation began to heat up when Kyrgyz youth appeared in Uzbek cities, demanding land for housing construction. However, USSR legislation prohibited the allocation of land for individual development in the capitals of the Union republics, and therefore discontent of the Kyrgyz youth living

in Frunze grew. Kyrgyz people from rural areas who did not have their own housing and registration did not abandon attempts to seize land.

However, the year of the rise of national self-consciousness not only Kyrgyz, but also Uzbeks was 1990, when the informal Uzbek association Adolat and the Kyrgyz Osh Aymagy, which were providing people with land for building houses, became active in Osh from early spring. In May 1990, in the city of Frunze and in the city of Osh, several youth associations were formed, which shared different goals. Some demanded a solution to the housing problem, others put forward political demands, and others worried about preserving Kyrgyz history, language and national identity. Representatives of the Uzbek population demanded the creation of the Uzbek autonomy, as well as the granting of independent status to the Osh region, the creation of the Uzbek cultural center, the opening of the Uzbek faculty at the Osh Pedagogical Institute.

Inter-ethnic tension arose in the cities of Jalal-Abad, Maili-Sae, Tash-Kumyr, Suzak and Bazar-Kurgan districts, on the border of Madaniyat Pakhta-Abad and Burgandy villages of Leninsky district.

The events in the Osh and Andijan regions showed a weak social policy, inability to resolve land use issues, which was the reason for the aggravation of interethnic relations. However, unfortunately, no concrete decision was made on this issue to prevent such clashes between different ethnic groups (Novosti Tsentral'naya Aziya, 2010).

The unresolved political, economic and social problems in Kyrgyzstan led to a new increase in tensions in the sphere of inter-ethnic relations, this was especially pronounced after the fall of the Bakiyev regime.

In the spring of 2010, the situation in Osh began to heat up. Uzbeks again began to report pressure from representatives of criminal groups that included Kyrgyz, as well as an increase in violent street incidents, of which ethnic Uzbeks became victims.

The inaction of law enforcement agencies in southern Kyrgyzstan, which were demoralized after the change of power in Bishkek, pushed the Uzbek population to take measures to ensure their security. The authorities were forced to authorize the formation of "people's guards", and representatives of the Uzbek diaspora developed a collision alert system, which allowed in a short time to collect dozens and hundreds of residents at the scene.

Issues of delimitation and demarcation of borders in Central Asia are still not fully resolved, in particular at the border of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

There are many controversial sites. Such as: Lyailyaksky district of Osh district, Batken district (Kyrgyz Republic) and Isfara district of Leninabad oblast and Jirgatal district (Tajik Republic).

In addition to the delimitation of borders, the issue of inter-ethnic clashes between Kyrgyz and Tajiks also remains very difficult, since the population in the border areas is not uniform. Kyrgyz live in Tajikistan densely, and the Tajik population, on the contrary, in Kyrgyzstan. The main cause of inter-ethnic clashes here is primarily the fact that some border areas are very densely populated. Population growth is carried out mainly due to internal, demographic processes. The Batkent region of Kyrgyzstan occupies the southern foothill part of the Fergana Valley with advanced chains, spurs and foothills of the Turkestan Range and the Alay Range, three quarters of its borders are international. The region borders on Tajikistan in the south, west and north-west, Uzbekistan in the north, and Osh region in the east. The Batkent region is characterized by a high birth rate, low mortality and a high natural increase. The main problems here include a noticeable water shortage, a shortage of arable land and mountainous terrain, which is one of the obstacles to the resettlement of the population; therefore, over the past few decades, some Kyrgyz began to pull closer to the city of Isfara, on lands traditionally settled by Tajiks. Here, settlements began to emerge with a predominance of the Kyrgyz ethnic group (Aksai, Samarkandek, Hovsuvar, Aktatyr, Kochoboy, Shakcha, etc.). The situation was aggravated by the fact that during the Soviet Union, when the borders were drawn, areas with a compact Kyrgyz population were included in Tajikistan, and vice versa.

The territorial issue between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan is also greatly complicated by the presence of enclaves. On the territory of Kyrgyzstan there is a relatively small plot of land (130 thousand sq. Km) belonging to the Isfara district of the Leninabad region of Tajikistan – the Vorukh enclave with a population, according to various estimates, from 23 to 31 thousand people, approximately 99% of which are Tajiks, 1% – Kyrgyz, respectively. And, for example, the population density of the Batken district surrounding it is much less. This circumstance was a factor of social tension between Kyrgyz and Tajiks. Ethno-territorial conflicts began in the days of the Soviet Union, in the early 80s of the XX century.

There are events in the villages of Vorukh – Tangi in 1982 and the Match (October) – Aktatyr in 1988. The most significant was the confrontation

between the Tajiks of the Isfara region of Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz of the Batken region of Kyrgyzstan in 1989.

Sadly, inter-ethnic conflicts also began to influence bilateral relations between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. So, during the Kyrgyz-Tajik clashes in n. 90s. found a significant discrepancy between the positions of the authorities of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The leaders of the two countries of the republics exchanged official accusations against each other with accusations of unwillingness to solve the problems that had arisen. Local conflicts escalated into interstate differences, with demands for a revision of inter-republican borders (Electronic resource //https://regnum.ru/news/accidents/1753343.html).

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Unfortunately, the frequency of border conflicts in recent years is a wake-up call to a possible destabilization of the situation in the Fergana Valley, and therefore in Central Asia, at any moment [Electronic resource].

In Central Asia, Uzbek-Tajik relations differ in complexity and intensity, despite the fact that Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are the closest republics of Central Asia in terms of culture and lifestyle. During the Soviet era, the closest economic ties of Tajikistan in the region were with Uzbekistan.

After independence, relations between the two countries developed relatively well. Diplomatic relations between the republics were established on October 22, 1992. Already in 1995, the Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan began to function in Tashkent. The legal base of bilateral Tajik-Uzbek relations, which has been formed to date, consists of 111 interstate, intergovernmental and interdepartmental agreements and treaties in the political, trade and economic spheres. Meetings of the two heads of state were regular (Rashid G.A., 2014).

However, the phenomenon of interethnic and as a result of interstate disagreements is clearly expressed here.

In Central Asia, the Uzbek-Tajik contradictions are the most protracted, because Half of Tajiks live in economically underdeveloped areas of Uzbekistan, such as Surkhadarya, Fergana, and Kashkadarya regions. The standard of living is much lower than the national average. There is a high unemployment rate among the population, with a high demographic growth.

The Tajik population of Uzbekistan does not seek to participate in the political life of the country. It is characterized by passivity and disbelief in its capabilities. In Tajikistan, there is a large Uzbek diaspora of more than 1 million people, which ranks second in the quantitative sense after the titular nation. Uzbeks make up about a quarter of the republic's population. Unlike the "Uzbek" Tajiks, they are characterized by a desire to participate in state-building, to actively participate in the political and economic life of Tajikistan, the Uzbeks intend to change the situation in accordance with their interests. This striving manifested itself most vividly during the civil war of the early 1990s, when ethnic Uzbeks, with the support of official Tashkent, had a significant influence on the course of events unfolding in the country.

The resettlement of ethnic groups of Tajiks and Uzbeks by almost 50% does not correspond to the borders and geographical position of the national states – the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Tajikistan, this is what creates the ground for numerous contradictions, in particular, inter-ethnic ones.

The Uzbek-Tajik relations are greatly influenced by complex interstate relations. In this case, we

can clearly observe the merging of interethnic and interstate contradictions. One of the factors complicating bilateral relations is the problem of border security. More than half of all ethnic Tajiks in Uzbekistan live in areas bordering Tajikistan and Afghanistan.

The independence of Tajikistan began with a split (February 1990), a political confrontation between various regional and political elites in the struggle for sovereignty in the republic. The standoff began around the 70s. last century, and in February 1990 it turned into an open political struggle for power, an attempt was made to oust the supreme power in the republic. Attempt to seize power failed. Having received support from the center, the former elite managed to hold their positions. But their power was no longer complete.

In the neighboring republics, the authorities were able to intercept the national-revival slogans from the opposition, won the sympathy of the population and become the fathers of the founders of the new independent states. In Tajikistan, the ruling elite could not adapt to the new conditions that led to the political crisis in the country.

In May 1992, the political confrontation escalated into a civil war. President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov sent a letter to the UN Security Council with a proposal to intervene in the situation in the interests of finding a way out of the difficult situation in which Tajikistan finds itself

At this time, a large flow of refugees from Tajikistan rushed into Uzbekistan, which created difficulties for the country. The continuation of the war was fraught with an even greater flow of refugees, and as a result of this, it was transformed by the spread of instability beyond Tajikistan, including to Uzbekistan, which at the time was also not calm and stable enough.

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The message of Islam Karimov served as the basis for discussing the situation in Tajikistan in the UN Security Council and the subsequent dispatch of a special fact-finding mission. A series of subsequent UN-decisions led to the deployment of the organization's peacekeeping mission in the republic.

From November 16 to December 2, 1992. in Arbob, the 16th session of the 12th Supreme Soviet of the Republic was held. In addition to deputies, field commanders of the opposing sides, representatives of opposition political parties and organizations that were not directly represented in parliament, held positions in the executive branch of that time, took part in the session. In the hall there were also political figures who were not part of any of the branches of power, but who played a prominent role in political processes. At the session, Emomali Rahmon was elected head of state. The war continued for another four and a half years, but the legitimacy of the decisions taken at Arbob was never questioned by the opposition. Uzbekistan contributed to the successful conclusion of the session and the beginning of the work of the newly elected government in Dushanbe.

It seemed that relations between the two neighboring republics would develop very well. However, unfortunately, after some time the relationship began to take shape differently. At first, they began to talk about friction between the leadership of the two countries, the reluctance of one side to see the other as an equal political partner. This state of affairs persisted until the end of 1995, when relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan began to enter into a zone of open mutual alienation. For countries, tensions clearly felt, especially in the energy sector, have become characteristic.

While the problems of political nature between the leaderships of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have not accumulated a certain critical level, the problems arising in the field of energy more or less quickly found their solution. However, in early January 1996, the supply of natural gas from Uzbekistan unexpectedly stopped. The consequence was the collapse of the entire heating system in the cities and towns of the republic. It was then, for the first time in the republic, that what later became commonplace in the winter time was the phenomenon of overloading of electrical networks and accidents on power lines.

Another painful point is transport and communication problems. When civil war broke out in Tajikistan, in Uzbekistan it was considered necessary to completely curtail the air traffic between the two countries in order to ensure their security. In Tajikistan and, no doubt, in Uzbekistan itself, this measure was considered as temporary. However, there are still no regular flights between the two countries. Tajikistan has only one rail exit to the outside world – through Uzbekistan.

Another problem was the difficulty of humanitarian contacts. For almost all the 90s. There were practically no problems in this matter. Citizens of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan quietly moved in both directions. Although from May 1992 to June 1997. there was a civil war in the country, any obstacles caused by security considerations were simply absent in the way of free visa-free visits to Uzbekistan by the citizens of Tajikistan. But already after the signing of the inter-Tajik peace agreements, the trip to Uzbekistan became accompanied by the increasingly complicated procedure of crossing the border checkpoints from the Uzbek side. The logical conclusion of the process of complicating bilateral relations in this direction was the introduction in the early 2000s. on the initiative of the Uzbek side of the visa regime between the two countries. In parallel with this process, the process of mining the border from the Uzbek side was unfolding. The objective reasons were taken in 1999-2001. IMU's armed

forces intervene in penetrating from their base in Afghanistan into the territory of Uzbekistan.

In Soviet times, Tajikistan had only one significant economic land exit to the outside world for it – by rail through the territory of Uzbekistan. Through Uzbekistan, the railway linking the central and southern regions of the republic with its industrially developed northern region was carried out. In winter, the automobile communication of the South and Center with the North of the Republic, as already noted, was also carried out through the territory of Uzbekistan. In turn, the railway and, to a rather large extent, automobile connection of the Uzbek part of the Fergana Valley with the rest of the territory of Uzbekistan was carried out through its Tajik part.

The transport and communication interdependence of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan that developed in Soviet times was not a problem until the collapse of the USSR. In the post-Soviet period, it became a problem for Tajikistan, which practically had no own possibilities for its solution. Uzbekistan, by now, has built an alternative railroad and highway, overcoming transport dependence on Tajikistan.

With the collapse of the USSR and the gaining of independence by Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the conflict-related preconditions, inherited from the Soviet era, quickly transformed into real problems that adversely affect bilateral relations. This happened, in many respects, due to quite objective factors.

The energy problem has become one of the pain points in the Tajik-Uzbek relations. Almost immediately after the collapse of the USSR and independence, Tajikistan began to experience a shortage of energy resources. It was aggravated by a shortage of financial resources and a shortage of opportunities for the purchase and sustainable delivery of the necessary energy resources to the republic from the outside. In the first half of the 2000s, the situation with the shortage of electricity in the country worsened so much that it had no choice but to seriously address the issue of creating opportunities for recycling its considerable hydropower resources.

Tajikistan has a real desire for a constructive dialogue with Uzbekistan on energy and transport and communication problems that are critically important for it, because the insecurity of these problems has had a negative impact on it. For a long time, the other side simply didn't have such a need for a constructive dialogue on these and various other problems for bilateral relations. Uzbekistan

had a whole range of advantages, which included the inclination of external forces that have their own interests in the region and are able to influence the countries that belong to it, to take into account its position and interests.

The prospects for a more rapid resolution of issues related to the delimitation and demarcation of the border between the two states and their subsequent legal consolidation look better. These issues were discussed on November 14 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan with the Tajik ambassador to this country, Sodik Imom. Already on November 16, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan Abdulazizi Kamilov received the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan, Makhmadsharif Hakdod, in Tashkent and discussed the same issues with him. The source of the Asia Plus news agency in the government of Tajikistan stressed that the Tajik and Uzbek sides are determined to put an end to the issue of delimitation and demarcation of the border between the two countries by the end of the year.

Summarizing everything, it can be noted that in bilateral Tajik-Uzbek relations there have been visible visible positive shifts. The intensified constructive dialogue gave the first fruits. I would like to hope that this trend will be sustainable and will bring relations between the two countries to a level that meets their fundamental national interests (Rashid G.A., 2014).

### Conclusion

Thus, inter-ethnic tensions persist in the border areas of the republics of Central Asia, which can at any time escalate into an interstate conflict. Unemployment, the low standard of living of the majority of the population, the acute shortage of arable land and water resources, the intensification of groups of armed extremists – all of these are factors that can aggravate inter-ethnic contradictions. After the collapse of the USSR and the independence of the former Soviet republics, the situation on the border worsened: the borders did not have a clear outline, there was not enough land and water. These factors have always been and are the causes of the frequent ethno-territorial conflicts between the two republics.

The Fergana Valley with its unresolved issues of controversial borders, lack of water resources, high corruption in border areas, threats of extremism and terrorism, ethnic conflicts and drug trafficking are the key to the security of the whole of Central Asia. No state in the region is able alone

to resist the drug clans and the smuggling industry. In our opinion, only integration, the search for consensus in solving ethno-territorial and inter-ethnic problems, the search for ways to establish close economic relations will help countries to achieve peace in the region.

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