

THE NATIONS OF AFGHANISTAN AND CENTRAL ASIA: COMMONWEALTH OF HISTORICAL DESTINY

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Abstract: This paper is devoted to the analysis of the main stages of the emergence and development of contacts, as well as of the active interaction of the nations of Afghanistan and Central Asia (CA), from antiquity to the present. Due to its geographical position, complicated internal political situation and ethno-confessional mosaic, Afghanistan and the Central Asian states for a long time have been in the area of close attention of both global and regional powers. The relevance of the selected topic is due to the call to strengthen the CIS southern borders and create a culture of mutual neighborly co-operation, which is one of the priority tasks not only of the states of Central Asia, but also of Russia and China. As the most important factor that can largely determine the future, the commonwealth of the historical destinies of Afghanistan and Central Asia is pointed out, with respect to the fact that representatives of ethnoses residing on both sides of the Panj and Amu Darya rivers has been interconnected for many centuries—and most of them are related. It is emphasized, that in the ancient period and the Middle Ages Afghanistan ties with Central Asia (including Kazakhstan and East Turkestan) had comprehensive and systematic character; thus, material culture, beliefs and customs—all formed, albeit peculiar, but in many respects similar or even identical complexes. A comparison of the archaeological, anthropological and historical-ethnographic materials of these regions suggests that already in the early antiquity they were pooled by the same model of the economy and general ethno-linguistic, cultural and historical traditions. Economic and cultural recovery, both of Afghanistan and Central Asia, from antiquity and the Middle Ages, until the XV century (the era of the Great Geographical Discoveries) were promoted by the routes of the Great Silk Road. It is concluded that through research and analysis of contacts and experience of interaction of various nations inhabiting the center of the Eurasian continent one can look at the deep roots of historical processes and find solutions to various contemporary problems taking into account the historical past. **Keywords:** Afghanistan, Central Asia, Turkestan, nations, Turks, Tajiks, identity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nations which, from the period of antiquity, and then through the Middle Ages, inhabited the territory of Central Asia [1] have centuries of cohabitation experience. Geographically, the two mountain systems of the Tian Shan and Pamirs connect the vast expanses of the Central Asian region. The Tian Shan Mountains stretch from west to east and pass through the territories of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and China (XUAR). The other mountain system of the Pamirs, crosses mainly the territory of Tajikistan (Badakhshan mountains); however, its eastern and southern parts are in China and *Afghanistan*. Central Asia also consist from desert-steppe landscapes, and the Karakum and Kyzylkum deserts, which are adjacent to fertile oases irrigated by the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers and their tributaries. In these diverse natural and climatic conditions characterized by significant contrasts of natural zones and temperatures, cultures of different appearance and ways of ménage and exploitation of resources have occurred—but at the same time they had a similar fundamental basis in many respects, originating from the moment when the peoples **Central Asia and Afghanistan together were part of many states** that have left their mark in the historical past. These are states such as Bactria, the Old Persian Achaemenid Empire, the

Empire of Alexander the Great, Greco-Bactrian kingdom, Kushan empire, Persian Sassanian Empire, Hephthalite Empire, The Turkic Khaganate, Arab Caliphate, the Samanid state, Karakhanid Khanate, Ghaznavids and Khwarazmian dynasties, the empires of Genghis Khan and Emir Timur, Chagatai Khanate, Moghulistan and Timurids.

At the present time, the nations inhabiting the Central Asia and Afghanistan are either related or identical. The population of Tajikistan at the end of 2017 was 8,965,827 people [2]. Afghanistan is a multinational country inhabited by over 20 nations who speak Iranian, Turkic, Indo-Aryan and Nuristani languages. And they are related not only in a wide ethnic sense, but also in simply human, as many southern Tajiks have their blood relatives in North Afghanistan. The same kinds of relative relationships in Afghanistan also occurred among the residents of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan (Pamir peoples): Rushans, Shugnans, Ishkashims and some others who lived long ago on the right and on the left banks of the Panj river. Moreover, the Turkic-speaking and other population of the south of Tajikistan and of the north of Afghanistan are closely related. Both sides are inhabited by Uzbeks, Turkmens, Arabs, etc. Besides, for example, on both banks of the Amu Darya river representatives of Uzbek tribes of Kattagans, Kungrads, Karluks, Keneges, and some others are residing. Up to 40% of the populations of modern Afghanistan are representatives of nations who are also indigenous, “state-forming” or “titular ethnos” of the Post-Soviet countries of Central Asia. Also 40% of the population of East Turkestan related to the Uzbeks by language and culture are Muslim Uyghurs, 7% - Kazakhs, 200 thousand Kyrgyz, 20 thousand Uzbeks and 10 thousand Tatars [3]. According to the Constitution of Afghanistan, there is a provision on the “Afghan nation”, under which all subjects of the Afghan state were comprehended, regardless of their race and nationality [4]. In addition, it should be noted that this is quite often nowadays when the significance of the region for international security is constructed on the basis of such spatial imagination and geographic considerations that position Central Asia “on the borders” of Afghanistan and even refer it to Afghanistan alone as a region [5].

The peoples of Afghanistan and Central Asia are united by a common religion—Islam, predominantly Sunni of the Haniphite Mashkhab, which they were converted to during certain historical epoch as a result of the Arab conquest of the VII-VIII centuries, although the Islamization of Afghanistan ended later than of Central Asia. However, there were also nations professing other confessions of the Muslim faith, for example, the peoples of the Pamirs, most of whom were Ismailis.

Methodology

With respect to the stated goals and objectives of the study, the methodological basis of this work was a combination of systemic and chronological approaches.

Studying the problem of cohabitation and interaction of the peoples of Central Asia and Afghanistan predetermined the need for an objective analysis based on the widest possible range of information and analytical materials. This required an appeal to both various groups of sources, and to the works of well-known Russian and foreign specialists in international affairs, political scientists, historians and sociologists.

The idea to show the dynamics of the changing situation in the region and the results of the impact of international organizations led to the application of the historical-problematic approach; for clarification of the specifics of the development of the general political situation in Central Asia and Afghanistan, a comparative method of research was utilized.

An analysis of all historical material leads to the conclusion that the ethno-cultural and **historical commonwealth of Afghanistan with the peoples of Central Asia was the dominant trend in the history of Afghanistan since ancient times.** The ancestors of the

modern nations of Afghanistan and Central Asia fought together with foreign invaders—the ancient Persian Achaemenides, the armies of Alexander the Great, Arabs, Mongols, Manchus and Chinese. *As a result of lingering cohabitation and a long-term joint struggle against foreign invaders, the formation of global spiritual, cultural and value orientations that compose the basis of the Central Asian community was represented by a complex dialectical process that was reflected in literature as a prism that refracts national ethno-social and ethno-cultural memory.*

Discussion

The Age of the Aryans and Zoroastrianism

The first page, shedding light on the **common history of the various ethnoses** of Afghanistan and Central Asia, begins approximately from II millennium BC; it is associated with the so-called Aryan and Indo-Aryan ancient Iranian tribes who belonged to the Indo-European linguistic and cultural community and became isolated at this time in the steppes of Central Asia, where they became known as representatives of the archaeological Andronovo culture. The era of the greatest expansion of these tribes occurred within the second quarter of the II millennium BC; their common self-name was the word “arya” – “noble”. Still, little is known about their history. Those who came to the lands of Iran and Afghanistan were called Arias or Iranians; those who migrated to India became known as Indo-Aryans—and the languages were called Iranian and Indo-Aryan, respectively. It is known that many Aryan and Indo-Aryan tribes left the north of Central Asia to the south and southeast, to Afghanistan, Northern India, Asia Minor, Iran and Mesopotamia, where on the cuneiform clay tablets of Hittite (in present-day it is the territory of Turkey) and Mitanni ancient kingdoms traces of the language of the Indo-Aryans were found. The consequences of the migration of the Aryans and Indo-Aryans was the “arianization” of Iran, Afghanistan and Northern India, which resulted in the spread of the ancient Iranian and Indo-Aryan languages and religious and ethical views. While in Iran and Afghanistan, the assimilation of the arias by the local population was relatively complete, the ancient Indian society with its highly developed civilization, after the arrival of the Aryans, turned into something similar to the Aryan, but not at all identical to it. Ancient Indian civilization of the Aryan conquest time is a symbiotic creation that is woven by the Aryan, Central Asian at its source by a thread, on a local Indian basis. And until now the nations of Northern India and Pakistan speak Indo-European languages, dating back to the language of the ancient Indo-Aryans.

Even in more ancient times, the ancestors of the Aryans and Indo-Aryans were same nation, which was called Proto-Indo-Iranians. They, a branch of the Indo-European family, lived by breeding livestock in the steppes of Central Asia and Eastern Europe. *From the steppe expanses of Central Asia, they migrated to the south and east—to the oases of the Syr Darya and Amu Darya interfluves, to Afghanistan and East Turkestan, and from the turn of the II-I millennium BC in Central Asia and Afghanistan, an array of related or identical nations was formed.* Their society was divided into two main groups: priests-clergymen and shepherds-warriors. The conditions of the steppe life contributed little to the change in their way of life. The division of the Proto-Indo-Iranians into two distinct peoples—the Aryans and Indo-Aryans occurred somewhere in the beginning of the third millennium BC. They remained nomads and, apparently, had contacts with sedentary populations of the Near East. They adopted or borrowed wooden carts From Mesopotamia; and then learned about the war chariots. In order to ride these chariots, they tamed the wild horses. Approximately at the same time, bronze came into use. The mountains bordering ancient Afghanistan and Central Asia had rich deposits of tin and copper, which made it

possible to produce weapons, and the inhabitants of the steppes became formidable soldiers [6].

The Aryans ended their existence under this name at the beginning of the first millennium BC. Not all of them left the steppes of Central Asia to Iran, Afghanistan and India. Those that remained were the ancestors of new nomadic peoples in the Great Steppe - Saks, Sarmatians, and Scythians. The Aryans made great efforts to study out the world that was endless and incomprehensible to the ancient man: they presented these forces in the guise of the gods, gave names to the gods, and determined the character of each of the deities, compiled texts of prayers and even incantations and invocations to the gods. This is how the most ancient religion of the world emerged, with faith in a single creator – the God, whose adherents continue to practice it in different countries and among different nations. This doctrine was called by the name of its prophet Zarathushtra or Zoroaster (as the ancient Greeks called it) – Zoroastrianism.

Based on the content and language of the anthems composed by Zarathushtra, it is assumed that he lived in the steppes of ancient Central Asia to the east of the Volga River. Yet there is an opinion that his homeland is the south of Central Asia with the adjacent areas of eastern Iran and northern Afghanistan. The significance of Zoroastrianism, whose origins in ancient Central Asia, and possibly in Afghanistan, goes beyond their history. Zoroastrianism is the oldest of the world religions of Revelation—that is, the religions received by the prophet from the Most High, the Almighty God—such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Zoroastrianism was the state religion of the Great Persian Empires of antiquity and the Middle Ages, from the Achaemenides to the Sassanides, from the VI century BC till the VII century AD, and prevailed in most of the Near and Middle East, also included in its composition and the lands of south-west of Central Asia and the west of Afghanistan. Some of its most important provisions were borrowed by Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam. Zoroastrianism, therefore, is the entity of one of the greatest civilizations of antiquity and the Middle Ages, and this circumstance allows a new look and appreciation of the world of ancient Afghanistan and Central Asia, where this faith was born [7]. After the Arabic conquest of Iran and Central Asia in the VII-VIII centuries AD, Zoroastrianism was almost universally superseded by Islam [8].

Yuezhi and Kushan Empire

In the 160 and 158 years BC the resettlement from East Turkestan of the Yuezhi, the people, supposedly the Saco-Scythian circle (i.e., ancient Iranian-speaking nomadic tribes), has begun. They moved to Semirechye (or Zhetysu – the modern southeast of Kazakhstan) and further to Central Asia and Afghanistan. Yuezhi took possession of the lands in the headwaters of the Amu-Darya and the middle reaches of the Syr Darya. They later became the creators of Kangju—the kingdom of Kang (Kangha), known since 150 BC, which was composed from 21 BC to 221 AD by the lands between the Aral and Caspian seas, and the Central Asian-Indian Kushan Empire—the world power of the I-IV century AD along with the Roman and Han empires. Hou Han Shu ancient Chinese dynasty history tells about the origins of the Kushan Empire: “When the Yuezhi's house was destroyed by the Huns, they moved (to Greco-Bactria, to the south of Central Asia and the north of Afghanistan), and divided into five princely houses... After a hundred years, the Guishuang (Kushan) prince Kyotsjuku (Kujula Kadphises) conquered the other four princes and declared himself sovereign; and his kingdom was called Guishuang (Kushan)...” [9].

In the meantime, there is no single idea in contemporary science of how the capture of Greco-Bactria by the Yuezhi took place. There is an opinion that as far back as 164 BC the

Great Yuezhi under the pressure of the Hsiung (Asian Huns) were forced to leave their lands in Eastern Turkestan. Going west through Fergana, they attacked Greco-Bactria and conquered this kingdom, having founded the capital on the north side of the Amu Darya. Simultaneously in the west, they defeated the Saka (Saca) who lived “behind the Yaksart” (i.e., east of the Syr Darya), a part of which was forced to migrate to the lands where Afghanistan is now located, i.e. Kapisa Province (the valley of Kabul), and the others settled on the land of ancient Drangiana (the basin of the Hilmend river), called Sakastan (Sistan). The exact date of the fall of the Greco-Bactrian kingdom is not established, there is an assumption that it happened in 140-138 BC.

According to another version, Bactria, once occupied by the ancient Greeks, was released not by outlanders from Eastern Turkestan who spoke Indo-European languages (presumably in ancient Iranian), but local, and ancient Iranian nomadic tribes that lived along the banks of Syr Darya and Amu Darya and were part of the union tribes, called the Great Yuezhi or Massagetae, who were the inhabitants of Khwarezm, and later constituted the main core of the state of Kangha. As a matter of fact, the structure of the Yuezhi state of Central Asia—the forerunner of the Kushan Empire, included the *regions of modern Uzbekistan and Tajikistan—the kingdom of Kang Han-na (Sughd Region, Chach, Khwarezm), Parkan (Fergana). There were also Yuezhi in the Semirechye, along with the Saka.* The main residence of Yuezhi in the period of I century BC—I AD became Tokharistan (“Tokharistan” is the name of the historical and cultural area on the territory of modern Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, the term appeared in the IV century and replaced the term “Bactria”). Initially, it happened before the resettlement of the Yuezhi under the onslaught of the Xiongnu, associated with East Turkestan, and by this time—with the territory of present-day southern Tajikistan and northern Afghanistan. This state had a sedentary life, built houses; its inhabitants in ethno-linguistic terms were comparable with the inhabitants of Fergana and were skilled at trade. The population of the country reached one million people; the main city had a “bazaar with various goods”. Such were the consequences of the victory of the Yuezhi migrations, *which radically changed the ethno-political map not only of Central Asia and the adjacent lands of Afghanistan, but also of India. But the main result of the Yuezhi arrival was the creation on the territory of modern Afghanistan, Central Asia and Northern India of the Kushan Empire,* which adopted Buddhism and reached flourishing economy, trade, culture in the first centuries AD. It is by this time that the construction of the world's two largest Buddha statues in Bamyán, Afghanistan; those statues were barbarously destroyed by the Taliban in 2001 [10].

Turkestan

The pre-revolutionary name of Central Asia—Turkestan included not only the territories of modern Central Asia from the Caspian Sea to the Gansu Province on the northwest of China—namely Central Asia, Kazakhstan and East Turkestan, but also the modern north-west of Afghanistan. The term of “Turkestan” first appears in the British scientific literature at the end of the XVIII century—by this time they have reached the approaches to Central Asia from the south, from British dominions in India. The British borrowed the term from the Iranian-speaking peoples—the overwhelming majority of the Afghan population, primarily its most numerous ethnic groups—Pashtuns (43% of the population of Afghanistan) and Tajiks (27%). The term Turkestan is a word from the New Persian language (Farsi); its Dari dialect is one of the official languages of Afghanistan and the main language of inter-ethnic communication in this country. The term’s meaning is “the country of the Turks”; it was used in the Middle Ages in reference to different regions, depending on the frequent migrations of Turkic peoples. The name “Turkestan” was adopted

in the XIX century over the vast expanses of Central Asia. Half a century later, this term appeared in the western scientific community, and then it was accepted by academic community in Russia. At different times there were different points of view on what lands were parts of Turkestan. For example, in the middle of the 19th century from the point of view of Russian politicians and scientists, Turkestan was comprehended to be part of Central Asia, where now Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and the south of Kazakhstan, and Kashgaria—the southwest of East Turkestan. By the end of this century, under Turkestan, they meant the territory from the Caspian Sea to China—the northwestern province of Gansu and the north-west of Afghanistan. In terms of geographical location, Turkestan was divided into Western and Eastern. The structure of West Turkestan included the lands of modern Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and in the East—the territory of the present Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China. Proceeding from the political and administrative division of these territories or the principle of their nationality, Turkestan was divided by the end of the XIX century in three parts: “Russian Turkestan”, i.e. western, “Chinese Turkestan”, i.e. eastern, and “Afghan Turkestan”, i.e. north-west of modern Afghanistan. It should be noted that the term “Afghan Turkestan”, being both political and scientific is used in both Western and Russian literature. Knowledge of the changes and evolution of the toponymy of this region, which was called Turkestan back in the first half of the XX century, and the part of which is a numerous lands of Afghanistan, helps to better understand the events of its history.

A factor that unites the peoples of Afghanistan and Central Asia can also be ethnic-linguistic kinship—for centuries dialects of the New Persian language – Farsi (which called Dari in Afghanistan, and Tajik in Central Asia) were the main cultural language in Afghanistan, and one of the main cultural languages in Central Asia. The birthplace of Farsi was East Iran—Khorasan and adjacent lands of Afghanistan and the south of Central Asia. The appearance of the Farsi language, presumably in the VIII-IX centuries, was the result of cultural processes taking place in Afghanistan, Central Asia and East Iran as a result of the Arab conquest and Islamization [11].

Economic and cultural recovery, both of Afghanistan and Central Asia in antiquity and the Middle Ages (until the XV century—the era of the Great Geographical Discoveries, when the world trade routes shifted from continental Eurasia to the seas and oceans), was contributed by several routes of the Great Silk Road from west to east—from Europe to India and China and from north to south—from Central Asia and China to India. Afghanistan and Central Asia, namely the oases of Central Asia, the south of Kazakhstan and Eastern Turkestan, served at that time as major international crossroads, where interaction and mixing of different cultures, languages, peoples, religions and even civilizations took place; also city planning and urban culture flourished. This proves that in ancient times and the Middle Ages, Afghanistan and Central Asia (its oases from Central Asia to East Turkestan) were in a common economic space that left a notable mark on the history of their mutual relations.

In the X century the Turkic tribes led by Sabuktigin, the son and heir of which was Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi, came to Afghanistan from Central Asia, from the shores of Issyk-Kul. Mahmud Ghaznavi created the Ghaznavid Empire in the XI century, this empire included Afghanistan, northeastern Iran, the south of Central Asia with Khwarezm and the northwest of India. The greatness of the power of the Ghaznavid sultans was reflected in the works of famous scientists and poets—Firdausi, Al-Biruni, Unsuri, who wrote in Farsi and Arabic, and their works are the common cultural heritage of nations of Central Asia and Afghanistan.

The next invaders to Afghanistan and the adjacent lands of Central Asia in the XIII century were the troops of the mongol conqueror Genghis Khan. They came from the east of

Central Asia, sowing death and destruction everywhere. At the same time, one of the consequences of the Mongol invasion was the formation in the XIV-XV centuries a new nationality in Afghanistan—the Hazaras (self-name – Hazar), now numbering up to 10% of the country's population; they speak Dari and profess Islam of Shiite direction⁷. The time of Mongol domination with all its horrors is characterized by the involvement of Tajiks from Central Asia and Afghanistan by Mongolian rulers to the affairs of governance and education in all parts of the vast Mongolian state from China to Russia and Asia Minor. Suffice it to say that the Muslims of the Tajiks, along with the medieval Uyghurs, who came from Eastern Turkestan (then Buddhists and Christians), were among the teachers and mentors of the Mongol princes from the ruling dynasty of Genghis Khan Descendants. And the language of the Tajiks—Farsi was one of the state languages in all the Mongol empires without exception, formed on the ruins of the disintegrated global Mongolian state. And that is also true for the Mongolian dominions in East Asia—the Yuan Empire, which included China, Mongolia, Korea, Tibet, East Turkestan, as well as the Golden Horde or Jochid Ulus on the lands of Eastern Europe, Khwarezm and the steppe part of Central Asia from Altai to Danube, not to mention the Mongolian states—Ilkhans or Hulaguid Mongols in Azerbaijan, Persia and the Middle East and The Chagatai Khanate in the oasis of Central Asia. The role of the Tajiks in the Islamization of East Turkestan and northwest China under Mongol rule is quite noticeable. The descendant of Genghis Khan Anand Nyamdavaa in the late XIII century converted to Islam under their influence, and turned all subjects in this region—Mongolians, Chinese, Tanguts (a people related to Tibetans) - into it, initiating the formation of a new ethno-religious community of Muslims known in China as the Hui, and in Central Asia—as the Dungan people, speaking now in the dialect of the Chinese language.

Afghanistan—the cultural center of Central Asia

One of the significant facts in the life of the nations of Central Asia and Afghanistan is that in the XV century on the territory of present-day Afghanistan located the capital and the center of culture throughout Central Asia. In this period the rulers of the Timurid Empire were the heirs of its founder Timur—Shah Rukh and Sultan Husayn Mirza Bayqara. They created a prosperous state on the lands of Afghanistan and Central Asia with the capital in Herat, which amazed contemporaries with the magnificence of architecture and the immortal creations of the **poet and statesman Alisher Navoiy**, who wrote in Farsi and Chagatai—the Turkic written language. This language was common to all Muslim Turkic peoples of Central Asia—Sufi Abdurrahman Jami, historians Mirhond and Khwandamir, the great master of miniatures Kamāl ud-Dīn Behzād—all these names belong to the cultural heritage of both the nations of Central Asia and of Afghanistan. During this period Herat became the largest center of crafts, trade, culture and art. In the XVI century Afghanistan obeyed the power of the Turkic newcomer from Central Asia, the former ruler of Fergana Zahīr ud-Dīn Babur, who later created the Mughal empire in India; he was also a famous scholar and poet performed on Chagatai and Farsi [12].

Through Afghanistan, specifically Badakhshan, from Central Asia was the road to the expulsion to India of a relative of Babur, the famous “historian on the throne” Mirza Muhammad Haidar Dughlat, a native of Tashkent from the ruling family of the Central Asian state of Moghul, which included Issyk-Kul region, Fergana valley and Kashgar – the west of East Turkestan. Muhammad Haidar Dughlat captured Kashmir in northern India, where he established his principality on the borders of Afghanistan. In Kashmir, he wrote (in Farsi) the famous work “Tarikh-i-Rashidi”, which first reported on the causes of the fall of the Uzbek ulus and the emergence of the Kazakh Khanate, and tells about the relationships of the Central Asian peoples of the second half of the XV century. Mirza Haidar's work contains a wealth of

facts and unique in nature material on the history of Tibetans, Kafiris and Kashmiris. Such, for example, is his description of the customs and traditions of the residents of Kafiristan (the historical name of the territory of the modern Afghan province of Nuristan and the surrounding territories) in Afghanistan and Lesser Tibet, as well as the story of the Kirghiz of the Tien Shan. Eight chapters are dedicated to Kashmir. Mirza Haidar was not a stranger to poetry either: he was equally fluent in Chagatai and Farsi. Already in our days in India a collection of his poems has been found written on Chagatai. In Kashmir Mirza Haidar completed his life's journey, having died off the hands of the conspirators; the tomb with his ashes is still located at this place.

Soon after the establishment of the Pashtun state of Durrani dynasty in Afghanistan in 1747 its connections with the peoples of Central Asia were further developed. In 1752, the Durrani forces marched northward beyond the Hindu Kush, where independent and semi-independent dominions were located, inhabited mostly by Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, and Pamir peoples—Shugnans, Vakhans (the latter were dependent on the Bukhara emirate until 1740). After the defeat of the Persian Empire by Shah of Nadir of the Bukhara emirate, new establishments such as Badakhshan, Kunduz, Mazar-i-Sharif, Balkh, Bamyan, Aqcha, Saripul, Andkhoy, Maymana and Sheberghan were formed on its former lands in the north of Afghanistan. ***Subsequently, in the XIX century, these territories became part of the Afghan state, won by “iron and blood” largely due to the policy of the Russian and British empires, thus delimiting their possessions in Central Asia and India, defining Afghanistan as a buffer state—including at the expense of lands inhabited by Tajiks and Pamir peoples.*** At the same time, the Afghans spoke in support of their Central Asian co-religionists when the Manchu-Chinese armies of the Qing Empire reached the borders of Central Asia and Kazakhstan after they crushed the Dzungar Khanate of the western Mongols—the Oirats and their dominions like Eastern Turkestan in 1759. It is known that the Kazakh Ablai Khan (whose Muslim name was Abilmansur) appealed to the Islamic world, intending to find their support in the confrontation with the Qings. Thus, in the years of 1763-1764, Ablai—then the ruler of most of the families of the Middle and part of the clan of the Senior Zhuz (ethno-territorial associations – the content of the Kazakh Khanate), supported the idea of the Afghan ruler Ahmad Shah (the founder of the Afghan state) to create ***an anti-Qing coalition based on the consolidation of the efforts of the Muslim countries of Central Asia and Afghanistan. Afghanistan became a refuge for Muslims who fled the Qing authorities after the Manchus and the Chinese conquered Eastern Turkestan,*** when Kashgar and Yarkand were taken by the Qing troops on August 6, 1759, and their theocratic Muslim rulers—Hajji Burhan al-Din and Khan-Khoja, fled Pamir to Badakhshan, to the territory of the Durrani state. After the conquest of Eastern Turkestan, the Qing emperor Qianlong ordered the capture of the Khoja and already in 1759 they both died in Badakhshan under very suspicious circumstances [13].

In turn, since ancient times some representatives of the Iranian-speaking peoples of Afghanistan were a permanent component of the population of East Turkestan; others (mostly merchants) lived here for more or less a long time, but in fact during the XVIII-XX centuries they were a constant and important layer of the urban population. In the cities of the southern outskirts of the region, trading colonies of Badakhshans, Shugnans, Pathans (Pashtuns) and other “Afghans” (East-Iranian languages speakers) were established. As for the indigenous Iranian-speaking peoples of East Turkestan, whose tribesmen are represented in Afghanistan and Central Asia, they can include more than 1 thousand Tajiks living in Sarikol—eastern Pamir (now part of China); and from 2 to 5 thousand Vakhans, residing at the border junction of China, Tajikistan and Afghanistan. The Vakhans adopted Ismā‘īlism; they were mountain cattle breeders (“sheep breeders”), but they also did farming.

According to the official data of the Chinese authorities, the collective name of the Iranian-speaking peoples in modern China is the **ethnonym of “Tajiks”**, although in fact the above-mentioned Iranian-speaking peoples, mostly Pamiris, are hiding under this name. The total number of these so-called “Tajiks” according to the 1990 census in China is more than 33,500 people. According to the latest information, their number is in the range of 85-90.000. Within the PRC, they are granted national autonomy of the county level—the Tashkurgan Tajik Autonomous County. Thus, since East Turkestan—Xinjiang is under the Chinese jurisdiction, Afghanistan and the countries of Central Asia are the nearest neighbors of the PRC with a common border—representatives of their peoples are citizens of modern China. According to J. Schoeberlein, “ethnic self-identification” in Central Asia is a very unstable and mobile social process [14].

Basmachi years

Basmach - from Turkic “basmak” - to make a raid, to attack, to run in - the military-political guerrilla movement of the local population of Central Asia in the first half of the 20th century, which arose after the 1917 revolution in the Russian Empire.

The Afghan state did not remain indifferent to the uprising of the Muslim peoples of East Turkestan-Xinjiang against Chinese rule. In the second half of the XIX century, Afghan advisers trained “Red Sarbabs” - the guards of Yaqub Beg, a native of Kokand of the Tajik descent, the ruler of the Jetti-Schahr (Semigradye) state with the center in Kashgar, who fell under the onslaught of the Qing Empire. During the uprising of Muslim peoples in Eastern Turkestan against the power of China in the 1930s, the authorities of Afghanistan did not prevent the departure of Central Asian emigrants (former Basmachi) living in Afghanistan since they were confessional and ethnically close to the Muslims of Xinjiang. Moreover, Afghan Prime Minister Mohammad Hashim Khan and personally the last King of Afghanistan Mohammed Zahir Shah hosted representatives of the rebels, who arrived in January 1934 from Kashgar, expecting to establish official relations with Afghanistan, and also to receive assistance with money and weapons. Although officially the Afghan side adhered to the policy of neutrality, its authorities and people “with great sympathy” related to the establishment of a Muslim state in Eastern Turkestan; the leader of the rebels Hoja-Niyaz enjoyed great authority in Afghanistan. The Afghan territory was used as a trans-shipment base for many volunteers who want to help the rebels. The Kashgarians acted immediately and in many ways—those who arrived in the capital of Afghanistan Kabul, met with German envoys. Others went to Peshawar, where they established contacts with the Union of the Rescue of Bukhara and Turkestan, which was supported by the British. Earlier, in the fall of 1933, the Turks Mustafa Ali (firmly entrenched in Afghanistan) was sent from Kabul to Kashgar; negotiations were held with his participation on purchases for the insurgent a large batch of small arms of 4.000 rifles. The involvement of Afghanistan in East Turkestan affairs was maintained even after the suppression of the uprising. So, in June 1935, the emissaries from Urumqi visited Kabul again with the goal of recruiting Central Asian emigrants to fight the Chinese authorities in Xinjiang. And these emissaries were admitted to the Foreign Ministry of Afghanistan. They also established contacts with the Japanese mission in Kabul. The result of this activity was the arrival in Central Asia of emigrants from Xinjiang led by Kurbashi(qurboshi) - the Basmachi leaders Fayzul Maksim and Kamiljan [15].

The Afghan state was in solidarity with the Basmachi movement in Russian Turkestan against Soviet power. In 1920 Afghan military units fought with the Red Army on the side of the troops of the Bukhara emirate, when the Red Army captured Bukhara and deposed the emir Mohammed Alim Khan, an ally of the Afghan king. In the fall of 1921, the former

military minister of the former Ottoman Empire and the head of the Young Turks ruling triumvirate Enver Pasha arrived in Bukhara. He was forced to leave his homeland after the defeat and disintegration of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War in November 1918. At first, Enver Pasha cooperated with the Soviet authorities, but then moved to the side of the Basmachi. Enver Pasha with the support of the Bukhara emir Mohammed Alim Khan and Afghanistan's military minister Muhammad Nadir Khan (the future king of Afghanistan in 1929-1933) claimed to be the military leader of the Basmachi movement, nurturing plans to turn Turkestan into a Muslim power under his leadership. Enver Pasha, whose detachments were Afghan soldiers and officers, captured Dushanbe, Qarshi and Shahrissabz; and besieged Bukhara in March 1922. But the last word was left for the Red Moscow. Two divisions and three brigades of the Red Army were sent to Turkestan, led by Commander-in-Chief of the Red Army S.S. Kamenev. Also, to Bukhara were transferred a prominent figure of the Soviet state—G.K. Ordzhonikidze and one of the leaders of Cheka (main Soviet special service) - Yakov Peters. The result of their actions was the defeat of Enver Pasha's forces and his further death in battle on August 4, 1922. However, despite the death of Enver Pasha, the intensity of the Basmachi movement did not subside. The main leader of the Basmachi becomes Ibrahim Bek, the son of the lieutenant-colonel of the army of the emir of Bukhara. Earlier he rose from the rank-and-file Jigit to the Bek of Hisor and Naib (the governor) of the Emir of Bukhara. From 1922 to 1926 Ibrahim Bek led a guerrilla war against the Soviet authorities in the south of Tajikistan and the southeast of Uzbekistan. It was in 1926 when the famous Red Army commander, Semyon Budyonny was sent to Turkestan to stir up the struggle against Basmachi. Having lost most of the fighters and weapons in battle with Budyonny's horsemen, Ibrahim Bek retreated to Afghanistan and, having become involved in the internal strife of this country, became the enemy of her new king Mohammed Nadir Shah. Then, under the pressure of the Afghan troops, he returned to his homeland, where a new wave of Basmachi movement was rising in the autumn of 1929 as a result of forced collectivization. More than 10,000 of Basmachi troops crossed the border from Afghanistan side, but on June 21, 1931, Ibrahim Bek was defeated, captured and shot later in 1932 [16].

Despite all the tensions that the Basmachi leaders sometimes faced with the Afghan government, in general the Central Asian Basmachi enjoyed the support of the Afghan authorities, which was also expressed in granting refuge to refugees from Soviet Central Asia. And there were many of them: after the suppression of the Basmachi movement, hundreds of thousands of people emigrated to Afghanistan, about 15-20% of the population of Russian Turkestan—Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmens, and Kyrgyz fled from the repressions of the Soviet authorities. Besides, Kyrgyz—several tens of thousands of people, led by their leader Rahmankul Khan, a participant of the Basmachi movement, amnestied by the Soviet government, and then repressed—fled first to East Turkestan. After the victory of the Communists in China in 1949, Kyrgyz of Rahmankul immigrated to Afghanistan, where they were settled by the Afghan authorities in Badakhshan and taken to serve the Afghan king to protect the state border. Refugees from Central Asia brought flocks of sheep, horses, camels, cattle with them. So, a large number of Karakul sheep arrived with the Turkmen refugees; that happened to serve as an impetus for a very lucrative article of Afghan exports to England and Germany. Emigration from Central Asia also contributed to the development of carpet weaving in Afghanistan [17].

Age of USSR

The Soviet Union was the logical successor of the Russian Empire. The imperial beginning in the USSR was strengthened as the era of revolutionary romanticism passed. At

first, it seemed that in Central Asia nothing had changed after the victory of the Soviet government. However, after the October Revolution of 1917, serious changes occurred in the region in comparison with the situation that existed in the Russian Empire. The main difference was that the Soviet leadership in Central Asia began to implement the social reorganization of the traditional system of Central Asian society's management. Unlike the Russian Empire, the USSR in Central Asia has abandoned the principles of extra-systemic control over the livelihoods of traditional societies of local peoples. Attempts to interfere and radically reorganize the principles of life in Soviet Central Asia began; and it caused fierce resistance from its peoples. The resistance of the traditional society of Soviet Central Asia (the Basmachi movement) to attempts to the Soviet model modernization by changing the nature of internal systemic ties continued until the early 1930s; and it required tremendous efforts to suppress it from the side of the Soviet state. One of the consequences of Soviet policy in Central Asia was the forced withdrawal of hundreds of thousands of ethnic Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Tajiks, Turkmen, Kyrgyz to Afghanistan, Iran, and Xinjiang.

The final strengthening of Soviet power in Central Asia within the former borders of the Russian Empire had other important consequences, both for Central Asia and Afghanistan. ***First of all, Moscow's efforts to change the nature of the systemic ties of the traditional societies of the Muslim peoples of Central Asia—which were subject to its will, required a tremendous effort to directly suppress the resistance of the local population.*** The ability of the USSR to control its state border in Central Asia has become an important condition for conducting social experiments on the reorganization of traditional communities within the Central Asian region – such as Russian Turkestan. Gradually, the state borders of the USSR in Central Asia became the factor that determined the belonging of Soviet Central Asia to the overall systemic unity of the entire Soviet Union. ***These borders have limited to a minimum the economic, social and cultural contacts of Central Asia not only with neighboring Muslim countries, including Afghanistan, but also with the entire Islamic world—allowing the Soviet government to radically transform Central Asian societies on a Marxist pattern—essentially a European model.*** The national-state delimitation was to some extent a concession of the Soviet state with regard to self-identification and the forms of self-determination of the peoples of Central Asia on the platform of belonging to the communist family of nations. As a result, the Soviet regime was able not only to preserve the integrity of the empire thanks to its national policy visibly manifested in Central Asia, but to retain it for almost 70 years. This, by the end of the Soviet era, predetermined the systemic differences of the Central Asian societies from the external traditionally Muslim world, of which Afghanistan was a vivid embodiment; although they exerted a strong influence from within on the policy of the Soviet state, which was partly expressed in the USSR's comprehensive support for national liberation and anti-colonial movements [18].

Afghanistan and Central Asia at the turn of the century

Events of the last decades of the XX century in Afghanistan, primarily related to the intervention of the USSR, had a huge impact on the nations of the former Soviet Central Asia. Particularly, the test fell on the Tajiks. So, deepened in its past, the ethnic consciousness of Soviet Tajiks was shocked by the scale of the actual losses, the crushing and degradation of their own culture, the growing Russification and “questioning” of their language. All of that coincided with the Soviet war in Afghanistan, where there were many Soviet Tajik interpreters and military personnel, a shock for which was the realization that Soviet troops were brutally opposed not to unknown foreigners, but to the same Tajiks. The events connected with the entry of Soviet troops into Afghanistan left a “deep scar” on the heart of the Tajiks. And the national hero of Afghanistan, the “Lion of Panjshir” Ahmad Shah

Massoud, probably one of the famous warriors in Tajik history (died on the eve of US intervention as a result of the terrorist attack) - became the object of admiration of the Tajiks of the entire Post-Soviet space. The ancestors of Ahmad Shah Massoud moved to Afghanistan from the territory of the former Soviet Central Asia from the Da'bet settlement in the Samarkand region of Uzbekistan and all Panjshir Tajiks consider Samarkand their homeland.

During this period, the existence of ethnic communities of the peoples of Central Asia on the territory of Afghanistan allowed them to exert influence on the internal situation. Dushanbe is already linked with the Afghan central and local governments, especially in Mazar-i-Sharif; Uzbekistan established special relations with the National Islamic Front (Jumbish-i-Milli Islami Afghanistan) of General Abdul Rashid Dostum; Ashgabat maintains contacts with Ismail Khan—the former warlord of the Mujahideen, who controls Herat.

The Afghan war was a powerful impetus to the revival of former half-forgotten values, when the Tajiks of Central Asia recognized in Afghanistan's Tajik culture the undistorted image of their “golden age”, the time of their cultural grandeur. Along with the interpreters, an active stream of books previously unavailable in the USSR—Iranian and Afghan editions of ancient and modern literature in Farsi (both secular and religious), the culturological journals and studies, audio cassettes with records of performers popular in the Iranian-speaking world flood back into a country. Works of poets-thinkers (among them were creations of Rumi, Attar of Nishapur, Sanai and many others), often forgotten and even forbidden in the Soviet era, began to be reintroduced to the culture during the Afghan war period.

Soviet Tajiks saw their image in the “Afghan mirror” and were horrified at the depth of the dehumanization of their own culture, which contributed to the immersion of Tajik society in the 80s. into negativistic self-reflection and denial of the painful present. The herald of this “self-exposure” was the prominent poet-settler Bozor Sobir, talking about modern Tajiks, whose history, marked by the famous symbols of the Tajik culture is currently presented to them as a chain of losses, as a waste of the spiritual riches of their gone “golden age” [19].

The disintegration of the USSR led to the restoration of ties between Post-Soviet Central Asia and the Islamic world—primarily with border countries, including Afghanistan. At the same time, it had negative consequences for the countries of Central Asia, since after the withdrawal of Soviet troops Afghanistan plunged into the abyss of civil war, which continues to this day. The established Taliban regime in Afghanistan in the 1990s. threatened destabilization of the Post-Soviet authorities of the countries of Central Asia. Civil war in Tajikistan, the invasion in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan of militants trained in Afghanistan, drug trafficking from Afghanistan to Central Asia and Russia—the annual turnover of Afghan drugs is estimated at \$ 30 billion a year. Up to 65% of drugs produced in Afghanistan go to Central Asia, Russia and European countries; about a third of them stays behind in the CARs [20].

In turn, the Post-Soviet states of Central Asia were involved in the civil war in Afghanistan, when their territory was used to transfer weapons and equipment to the opposing forces in that country; tens of thousands of refugees from the embattled civil war in Tajikistan (first half of the 1990s, the situation was also affected by the negative impact of the Afghan “chaos”), fleeing in northern Afghanistan. In addition, the government of Uzbekistan provided direct support (including military actions) to the Afghan field commander, an ethnic Uzbek—General Abdul Rashid Dostum, who controlled the north-west of Afghanistan for a number of years, including the city of Mazar-i-Sharif with the surrounding region, i.e. Afghan Turkestan.

At the very beginning of the XXI century, the US troops entered Afghanistan. The events in Afghanistan related to the US military intervention that overthrew the Taliban regime in 2001 removed the external military threat from for the regimes of Post-Soviet Central Asia [21]. Still, the situation in Afghanistan and Central Asia remains difficult. Tajik and Afghan special services exchanged information on Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) attacks in enclaves along the Panj River in 2010 and during clashes in Khorugh in July 2012.

Local regimes are afraid of losing the source of income that exists due to the western presence in Afghanistan [22]. Nowadays, three countries bordering on Afghanistan—Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan experiencing a great impact. This is caused, firstly, by the extent of the borders. Thus, the border of Afghanistan with Tajikistan stretches for 1309 km, with Uzbekistan -156 km, and the border with Turkmenistan is 854 km [23]. The longest one among them is the border with Tajikistan; therefore, Afghanistan is both a guarantee of stability, and a possible cause of the country's instability due to the close ties between the population of these two states [24].

Afghanistan also has a common border with East Turkestan, which is part of the PRC. The Chinese authorities have been fighting for a number of years to suppress the Uyghur underground armed movement for secession from the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) from the PRC and the creation of an independent state of “East Turkestan”. This movement has a certain national and social base in the XUAR among the most numerous indigenous population of this region—Muslim Uighurs. XUAR conducts guerrilla war in Chinese cities, which is expressed in mass riots on ethnic grounds, attacks on government officials and military, explosions in public places. In 2007, armed clashes were observed against Uyghur rebels with regular mountain rifle units of the People's Liberation Army of China (PLA) in the XUAR mountains—where bases of Uighur militants were found and clashes took place. Religious leaders prevailed in the Uighur anti-Chinese movement; they inclined to radical, extremist actions and received (prior to the well-known events in Afghanistan) support from the now overthrown Taliban regime. Those days Uighur militants were supplied with weapons and money by the Taliban; they also underwent military training in secret sabotage centers—a queue closely associated with Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda. Although the Afghan operation of American troops was beneficial to the Chinese authorities, as the main centers where military and subversive training was conducted by Uighur militants abroad were located in Afghanistan and were destroyed by the Americans. Graham E. Fuller emphasizes that the US is concerned about the possibility of turning the Central Asian region into a “hotbed of civil wars, the proliferation of nuclear weapons, radical Islamist movements, in the battlefield of Asian geopolitics, into the ecological wasteland, the economic cripple, into the object of the resurgent Russian imperial plans” [25]. Nevertheless, in the territory of Afghanistan controlled by the Taliban, Uyghur militants have not only restored their combat infrastructure to the present day, but have also strengthened by uniting with the Islamic movement of Uzbekistan into the single Islamic movement of Turkestan. However, for the sake of justice, it is worth remembering that in the 80's of the XX century, the Chinese, together with the United States and other countries, supplied weapons and military instructors to Afghan Mujahideen, who fought with Soviet troops and from which the Taliban came out. Therefore, the PRC has its share of responsibility for the tragic development of subsequent events in Afghanistan that went beyond its borders and touched directly China, and which eventually led to the US military invasion. It can be said that NATO's strategy in Afghanistan was based on hopes of progress on a number of issues, but these hopes have so far largely failed to materialize [26].

One has to agree with the opinion of the Indian scientist N. Shahrani, who notes: “Unfortunately, the leaders of Central Asia have come to realization of that for too long. These regions may have much more common interests with each other than with Russia or Western Europe. The relationship between Central Asia, South-West Asia and the Middle East has a very long history, going back centuries into 1300 years, since the time of appearance and even earlier—since ancient times” [27].

As it is known, as a result—the existing national borders of the region were determined not by the countries themselves, but were imposed externally—for example, by Russians in Central Asia, by France and Great Britain in southwest Asia and the Middle East; and that largely determined the region development in the XIX-XX centuries.

Conclusion

As it follows from the foregoing, even now the situation in Central Asia (including Chinese part), is influenced by the Afghan factor, which now seems to have faded into the background. “As it follows from the new US security strategy, Americans are mainly interested in expanding military cooperation with the countries of Central Asia. The socio-economic plot, in fact, “slides way”, with the possible exception of the matter of access to raw materials. It is highly unlikely that this approach is interesting to the, for instance, Kazakhstan, which has embarked on the path of modernization breakthrough. The same can be said about the other members of the American group of C5+1” — stated the director of the Third Department of the CIS of Foreign Ministry of Russia Sternik [28].

Nevertheless, the outcome of the military operations of the United States and its Western allies with the still undefeated Taliban in Afghanistan and the new force of radical Islam—the ISIS, whose detachments are numerous from the countries of Post-Soviet Central Asia and Eastern Turkestan, will determine the future of this region as a whole, and its Post-Soviet states and East Turkestan—Xinjiang, in particular. And it is not accidental that, according to the American experts, Central Asia is politically and culturally closer to Pakistan and Afghanistan than to Belarus or Georgia [29].

So, it should be noted that the prevailing in science opinion on the conventional nature of the division of Afghanistan and Central Asia into separate regions is fair and has a historical basis. From the modern political point of view, Central Asia comprehended as the former Asian Soviet republics listed above as part of the USSR. This comprehension of the term of “Central Asia” emerged from the Western scientists—Political scientists and Sovietologists, it was picked up by the leaders of the Post-Soviet countries of Central Asia, and now rooted in Russian political science—which can not be said about Russian academic oriental studies. Regarding the modern understanding of the term of “Central Asia”, at least since the last decade of the last century, two views—political science (cited above), and scientific and academic—should be distinguished. The scientific and academic point of view shared by UNESCO involves the integration of modern Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Xinjiang Uygur, Tibet and Inner Mongolia, autonomous regions of China, Mongolia, parts of Russian lands (Buryatia, Tuva, Altai Mountains, Baikal region), as well as Kashmir, Afghanistan and northeastern Iran—Khorasan province [30].

The nations of Central Asia and Afghanistan have deep common cultural and civilizational values, business and economic ties, the historical past, ethnic and linguistic kinship, as well as the common problem for all states related to security threats, which is especially relevant at the present time.

Thus, it can be stated that the destinies of the peoples of the region are closely intertwined to this day. In this regard, the experience of Afghanistan's historical development,

both positive and negative, is very important for the nations of Central Asia and Eastern Turkestan; such experience brings up an idea of avoiding a difficult fate and of not becoming an arena for military confrontation and clashes of external forces with all the consequences, when, for example, the history of Afghanistan has demonstrated how quickly the destruction of the foundations of the organization of the state and society can occur. The Afghan tragedy is a vivid sample for the nations of Central Asia – of where the split in society that led to the civil war and the intervention of external forces may lead.

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