

The U.S. and Western Europe role in resolving the religious conflicts in Central Asia

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Abstract—The modern world is experiencing fundamental and dynamic changes. The transformation of international relations; the end of confrontation and successive overcoming of the Cold War consequences have expanded possible international cooperation. The global nuclear conflict threat has been minimized, while a tendency to establish a unipolar world structure with the U.S. economic and power domination is growing. The current world system of international relations, apparently is secular. However, the religious beliefs of one or another nations play a certain (sometimes a key) role, both in the domestic affairs of the individual countries and in the development of bilateral ties. Political situation in Central Asia has been characterized by new factors such as international terrorism; religious extremism and radicalism; narcotrafficking and illicit arms trade of a global character immediately threaten to peace and political stability in Central Asia. The role and influence of Islamic fundamentalism is increasing; political ethnocentrism and the associated aggravation of inter-ethnic relations, the ambiguity of national interests and objectives of major geo-political groups in the Central Asian region regarding the division of the political influence, emerge. This article approaches the following issues: the role of Islam in Central Asia; destabilizing factors in Central Asia; Islamic movements in Central Asia, Western Europe and the United States; the United States, Western Europe and Central Asia: religion, politics, ideology, and the US-Central Asia anti-terrorism and religious extremism cooperation.

Key words—USA, Central Asia, religious conflict, terrorism, regional security.

I. INTRODUCTION

NUMEROUS facts evidence the increasing religiosity of the population and the intensification of religious movements in various countries in the last decade of the 20th century. The number of international religious institutions and foundations; religious movements; parties and sects operating worldwide is increasing as well. Some ethnic and inter-state conflicts are obviously of a religious origin. All of this make a number of analysts to conclude that the religious factor is becoming an important part of international life, including the formation and activities of terrorist organizations. Most of all is said and written about Islam, the second, after Christianity, world religions professed according to various estimates by 1.5 bln. individuals in 127 countries. In modern Central Asian states, the interest to Islam is due to many factors, both internal and external. Islam is the religion of substantial part of the Central Asia population and the dominant in several CIS countries such as Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan. The number of Islam votarists, especially in the titular nations of the Central Asian Region (CAR), has grown in recent years.

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For example, in Uzbekistan, which is according to its President Islam Karimov, is a secular state, over 80% of its population are Muslims. However, Islamic canons, traditions and norms do not dominate in this country. The state adheres the Constitution and the mentality of its nation in political, social and other areas. In the southern areas of this region has increased the number of observers of the religious domestic mass cultic ceremonies such as funerals, weddings, and etc., which account between 54.8% - 64% of respondents according to the certain scholars and local experts. There is a trend to perform the religious orders and in-depth study of the Quran by some of the local population. The next 3-4 years, according to these scholars and experts, the area of the Muslim religion influence will expand and would have the greatest impact on the upbringing and education of young people in particular and on society as a whole. The growth of religiosity in the Central Asian region has a number of reasons, and, above all, would be the unbar of the religious freedom. According to the scholars and experts, it accounts for 60%-70%. For historical reasons, the Muslim states normally referred to as the Member States of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, have not been involved in the development of the outlines of the current system of international relations established after the World War II. According to numerous scholars including the Western ones, the later purposeful actions of the colonial authorities, as well as the impact of Western political culture in the Muslim world, have been crucial displacing Islam from politics. As noted by P. J.Vatikiotis, one of the most authoritative scholars of Islam, "...over the last 150 years, Islam as religion and law, was ruthlessly and consistently expelled at a minimal role in state affairs, economics and international relations".[1] Although, between the World War I and the World War II, as well as in the postwar period there have been instances when the Muslim religion played a certain role in anti-colonial movements and regional conflicts, the Western science has considered Islam, until the late 70s, as a diminishing factor in the formulation and implementation of domestic and foreign policies of Muslim states.

For example, W. Montgomery Watt, the author of "Islamic Philosophy and Theology," published in 1962, UK, stated the diminishing role of Islam in Muslim community, and doubted Islam would have a person, "who has a magnetism, supported by masses and some local political elite to such an extent, to move forward the Islamic revival "[2.] Foreign analysts have underestimated the role of Islam in world affairs for a long period of time. Thus, at one of the conferences on Islam and International Relations (1963, UK), attended by the scholars from Muslim countries as

well, was said about the "very limited impact of Islam on the preferences and behavior of Muslim states in the international sphere." One of the speakers, the Palestinian Fouad al-Sayegh, concluded: "Islam does not have any noticeable impact on motivation, planning, decision making, as well as the language of politicians of both neutral and non-neutral Muslim states."

As time has shown, both the West and the East have underestimated the Islam influence on the masses in Muslim countries and the potential of this religion to mobilize and integrate. In the early 80-s the attitude of journalists, politicians and scholars to Islam has been changed drastically. It has become customary to say the Muslim religion is undergoing a rapid revival, it has evolved into an independent political force, in most of the Muslim countries and plays an increasingly prominent, and, mostly destructive role in the international arena. Strengthening the political role of Islam ("Islamic resurgence," as it is called in the Muslim world) in numerous Muslim countries, began in the mid 60s., due, as shown in many studies, including Soviet (and later Russian) researchers, a number of local, regional and global factors, particularly the following:

- i. obvious evidence of the crisis both the Western and Soviet models of development focused on the political elite in most Muslim countries. "This crisis manifested itself in the revolutionary events of the late 60s in Western Europe; "Prague Spring" in 1968 and the later deployment of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia; as well as the failure to accelerate modernization of the society according to the Western or Soviet models in most of the Muslim countries";
- ii. Arab defeat in the war with Israel in June 1967, which undermined the influence of nationalist (secular) ideologies, including Nasserism and Ba'athism, whereas some population of Muslim countries began to address Islam searching after answers to acute issues;
- iii. failure of the interstate unification projects launched by the Muslim world such as Arab unity; the integration of Maghreb; and etc. compared to the growing integration in the West;
- iv. significant financial power and certain political influence of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Libya and some other Muslim states which adhere to Islamic solidarity and actively assist Islamist movements in various countries.

It should be noted, the revolution victory under Islamic slogans in Iran and the establishment of a regime headed by the Muslim clergy; building of an Islamic state; the new Iranian's regime confrontation with the U.S. and the proclamation of the "Islamic world order" - all this enormously impressed the masses in other Muslim countries, reviving the interest to Islam, specifically among young people. The activities of "fundamentalists" or "integrist" movements sharply increased both in the Muslim world and even beyond. The most striking examples of such movements would be the organization of Hezbollah in Lebanon; the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria; Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya in Egypt; and others, commonly referred to as "political Islam", and their members often referred to as "Islamists."

II. DESTABILIZING FACTORS IN CENTRAL ASIA

Since the early 1990s, [political] struggle in

Afghanistan has been increasingly of a distinct ethnic form. Behind the confrontation of Persian Afghans, including Pashtuns and the Shia, stood the interests of Iran and Saudi Arabia [3]. The U.S. and Pakistan have already developed their own "solution" of the situation in Afghanistan. It would be the Peshawar-based alliance of Afghan Transitional Government, a tentative political alternative to Kabul. The Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) has immediately supervised all military actions and political operations. In February, the ISI has convened a *Shura* from meticulously selected delegates, dominated by representatives of the Peshawar Seven. In terms of ethnicity, they represented the Pashtun tribal group *Gilzay*. An attempt to introduce the Durrani's representatives close to the monarchy and Kabul regime, to the Transitional Government, has been prevented. Given the financial support of Saudi Arabia, the prime minister post was offered a representative of the small Wahhabi sect. However, the Transitional Government had no leverage over the warlords, and soon lost any credibility.

Reluctance and fear of the Mujahideen victory, uncontrolled by Islamabad, was a major political mistake of Pakistani strategists. Their military victory would immediately put on the agenda the establishment of a so-called "Pashtunistan." Under these circumstances, the ISI placed a stake on incitement of Gilzay Pushtun against Durrani; the Peshawar politicians against the Mujahideen; and the Hezb-e Islami party against all the others. This strategy was supported by Saudi Arabia and the Muslim Brotherhood, who considered the Hekmatyar as the barrier against Iranian influence in Afghanistan. Washington went on a leash of the Pakistani ISI, slashed any aid for the Mujahideen, and pressured the private institutions and the UN to ensure all the aid provided for Peshawar. The new forces threatening both the East and the West have grown during the long Afghan tragedy. Despite the ethnic and tribal differences, narcotic plants were cultivated in the area of Pashtun tribes residence, on both sides of the Durand Line. The so-called "tribal area" has developed into "an Islamic drug cartel." The drugs are grown and exported by the Columbian scheme: the network of peasant lots used as the manufacturing base; private traders managed marketing, collection and delivery; while revenue was shared with local and state authorities. The drug cartel consisted of the two groups including the Mujahideen and the private owners. The Mujahideen controlled the Eastern and Southern parts of this area.

Eventually, the private dealers clearly dominated in drug business and dictated their will both to Mujahideen and local authorities. By the early 1990s, the situation in the "Islamic drug area" has seriously affected not only Afghanistan and Pakistan, but Iran and the Soviet Union. The Afghan permanent war affected the situation in Central Asia which is recognized by all researchers in this region. Thus, A. Arnold acknowledges that the Afghan war has not only undermined the Soviet Union power and contributed to its collapse [4], but also immediately and dramatically affected the development of the post-Soviet states in Central Asia. The impact of the Afghan war was diverse including direct military threat; refugee issues; influence the events in Tajikistan; drugs and weapons trafficking; direct destabilization in the region; and general worsening of the geopolitical background for the Central Asian states.

Another scholar, M. Goodman, believes the Afghan war and related civil war in Tajikistan, have spurred Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and especially Turkmenistan into more close cooperation with Russia in the defense sector; Turkmenistan fully conveyed Moscow control over its border and armed forces to Moscow; only Uzbekistan has created the efficient army. [5]. V. Spalnikov used to be the most pessimistic about the impact of the Afghan conflict in the CAR countries [6]. He believes Afghan events, sooner or later, would destabilize the situation in Central Asia; the war may pass the former Soviet Union borders and move to the territory of the region. Islamic fundamentalism is not a myth, but a very real radicalization threat for the Central Asian community. All the CAR leaders divine this and toughen measures against Islamic radicals in their countries and support the Taliban opponents. The Tajik crisis developed into a bloody civil war and merged with the Afghan crisis, proved that fears of militant Islamic fundamentalism were not groundless. Since 1992, the politicians of Central Asia had to act with caution to the security threat from that region. According to R. Dannruether, who studied this issue more carefully than other scholars, the Afghan-Tajik crisis has identified the most interested party - Uzbekistan. Now it is perfectly clear the Karimov's regime has played a crucial role in the initiation and the suppression of the Islamic revolution in Tajikistan. In addition, he vigorously supported the pro-Uzbek forces in northern Afghanistan, led by the famous General Rashid Dostum. All this suggests that not only the Central Asian Republics, but also Russia, and possibly the West stood behind the Afghan-Tajik crisis.

R. Dannruether believes that if any "Great Game" is played somewhere, this is in Afghanistan only. In addition to these political players, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan could be added to this list. Their aspirations to support the Islamic movement experiences a new ideological factor such as independent Uzbekistan and its nationalism based on ethnic secularism [7]. Since the April revolution in 1978 and up until now, Afghanistan used to be a major source of instability on the Eurasian continent. Until the end of 2001, the situation in Afghanistan was characterized as a deadlock. Considering real possibilities of the opposing parties such the Taliban and Northern Alliance, as well as the forces behind them, neither party could breakthrough. Meanwhile, the consequences of the continuous political-military conflict in Afghanistan became more visible, both within the country and far beyond. Afghanistan has become one of the world's major producers and suppliers of drugs and a "launching pad" for the terrorism export, political and religious extremism. Instability in Afghanistan had a very destructive consequences, above all military, social and humanitarian, for the neighboring states including the Central Asian countries. Permanent war in Afghanistan affects the situation in Central Asia in different ways including export of radical ideology and terrorism and support to extremist organizations in a number of Central Asian countries; the refugee issue; the growth of inter-ethnic and inter-state tensions; drugs and weapons trafficking; the potential military threat; and etc.

The recent events in Southern Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, have once again proved real threats to the stability of the secular regimes in Central Asia would come from religious extremists. These factions reject the modernization results achieved by the Central Asia countries,

and are opposed to the existing principles of organization of the Central Asian states and societies, and, consequently, against the current political elite. [8] The Taliban movement became the most interested ally of the extremists-radical opposition in the CAR in the mid-90s. The Taliban advocated a return to the original Muslim values and, in fact, denied the right of the Central Asia traditional secular elites to the legitimacy of its governance, primarily in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

No less dangerous threat to keep in tension the leadership of the Central Asia countries, would be a possible uncontrolled refugee flow out of Afghanistan, provoked by the continued military actions, which could destabilize the whole region. A potential danger of a direct military threat from the Taliban should not be discounted as well. The Taliban, considering the forces of the allies, had a serious and experienced military force to handle necessary military actions.

Thus, with no stability in Afghanistan, it would be impossible in principle to effectively provide security in Central Asia. Obviously, all the Central Asia countries had profound interest to normalize the situation in Afghanistan and establish the sustainable peace, when Afghanistan would no longer be a source of drug trafficking, international terrorism and religious extremism.

III. ISLAMIST MOVEMENTS IN CENTRAL ASIA, WESTERN EUROPE AND THE U.S.

In the late 80s there were no longer Muslim countries where certain appearances of political radical Islam would not have been observed. There is a number of Islamist movements: from very moderate, although critical of state power, but ready to meet half-way with it, and parties to the government, to the extreme underground ones using the methods of terror. A number of Islamist organizations has a rather complicated organizational structure: the same organization may have units operating peacefully and legally, as well as conspiratorial terrorist structures. For example, the Egyptian radical terrorist groups such as Al-Gama'a al-Islamiya and Al-Gihad are the basic structural units of the primary organization of Islamic Egypt - the so-called Association of Muslim Brothers. Therefore, the Islamist movements can easily switch from legal to illegal, from peaceful to armed methods of struggle. The Islamic radicals are often in close contact with the local criminal groups, international criminal business such as illicit arms and drugs trafficking, illegal migration, and etc. With all the diversity of methods and programs used by the Islamist movements, political activity and strong organization would be their main distinctive feature. The Islamic concept of the world order is based on the divisibility of the world's population into two groups: the Muslim community - Umma and all the other people. *Dar al-Islam* (House of Islam) would be the countries governed by the Islam rule. Protection of the Islam world is the sacred duty of every Muslim. *Dar al-Harb* (House of War) would be the states declared war on Muslims, as well as states threatening the Islam world. *Dar al-Sulh* (House of Treaty) refer to the states where power is held by non-hostile, reconstructed rulers. Hereby Quran also recognizes the divisibility of the Muslim world. As a prerequisite of peaceful relations between the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds would

be the recognition of monotheism by the latter. In general, Islam obviously recognizes the existence of the international community. But the attitude of Islam to this community is active, since the planting of Islam is a religious duty and the responsibility of an Islamic state. Everyone in the Islam world including a Muslim or a state, should seek to extend this zone of influence. Armed violence went down in history of the Islam dissemination. Abul A'la Maududi, one of the ideologists of radical Islam, in his early works has argued that the goals of Islam and nationalism are diametrically opposed, since the ultimate goal of Islam would be the establishment of the world state with no distinction between races, nations and classes, and therefore Islam can not accept nationalism which seeks to establish a nation state. According to Maududi, the whole concept of nationalism is irrational since destroys the human beings relationship. Islam, by contrast, considers the entire planet as the seat of humanity, thus destroying all the artificial borders between people. For that reason, Maududi has called for the Muslims of India not to participate in the national liberation struggle waged by the Indian National Congress and Muslim nationalists against the Britain, since as a result, the Christian domination of the Indian Muslims would be replaced by the domination of Hindu majority. However, after the creation of Pakistan, Maududi and his party began a campaign to establish an Islamic state. In the 60s, Maududi has appealed for the establishment of the Muslim countries block. Recognizing the territorial integrity of every Muslim country, he advocated the spiritual unity of all Muslim countries to resolve common internal and external issues.

According to Shia Islamists, the West is "the world of unbelief". Currently, a number of countries traditionally considered as Islamic, including Russia, represent the "world of war" and governed by the infidels. Algeria and Egypt would be a classical case of the kind while Iran is the "world of Islam." Since the most radical Western circles have identified Islam as the main enemy, as a consequence, this would doom the Muslims to the civilizational, geopolitical and spiritual destruction, every Muslim must acknowledge himself as a politician anxious about the fate of his country. The current actual way for the Islamic political movement would be the opposition. The Islamic opposition should recall for the "third force" in the truest sense of its definition, as it was first announced by Imam Khomeini who has said after the Islamic Revolution in Iran: "We are neither East nor West." Thus, the Islamists, in contrast to the other faith, appear to be the political opposition to the regime of the most Muslim countries, as well as to "official Islam", which they consider as a weapon of the ruling elites. In other words, Islamism is more a political than a religious movement, since its representatives do not advocate the ideas of reforming the religion as a system of dogmas and rituals. They demanded to change the role and place of religion in a society, rejecting the dominant ideology and political practices of the regime, while the state structure is not complying to the Islam norms. These movements focused on major transformation of the entire socio-political and economic system in a society that is to change the social system, not just in a single Muslim state, but worldwide. Mustafa Mashhur, the leader of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood Organization, reportedly, is the head

of the World Organization of Muslim brothers, has said in one of his interviews that the purpose of the organization is "to establish the World Islamic state in the next thirty years" [9]. Islamists criticize the official Islam leaders including Mufti, Ulama, Sheikhs of various tarikats since they call for a submission to authority that is mired in corruption and ignorance of the people's interests. Not all of the anti-Western Islamist organizations maintain such an attitude, at least in practice. There is a number who have contacts with the Western intelligence agencies among them, while some of them even get assistance from the West. In fact, in 40-50s, the British and the Americans had contacts with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt; the Americans maintained relations with the Islamists including a very radical one such as the Algerian Islamic Salvation Front, which causes a resentment in France; and provided some assistance to the Taliban movement in Afghanistan, seeking to direct their destructive energy in the right direction. However, most of extremist Islamic organizations are characterized by negative attitude to the West and pro-Western regimes in Muslim countries. For example, the National Islamic Front of Sudan; the Hezbollah; the Warriors of Allah in Lebanon; the Egyptian Al-Gama'a al-Islamiya; and others declare the elimination of the pro-Western regimes in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries. They are convinced that only Islam would fill the post-collapse vacuum of the Arab nationalism inspired by the West and other ideologies introduced from outside. The Islamists are characterized by a negative attitude to the existing world order as discriminatory against the peoples and countries of the "third world", including the Muslim ones. The international origin of the Islamist movements is seen in unlimited activities in their home country. They also operate on the territory of neighboring countries, as well as create the branches in other countries including those outside the Muslim world such as the Western Europe, USA, Canada, and South Africa.

In general, they actively cooperate with the external Islamic groups. For example, the National Islamic Front of Sudan maintains relations with the Algerian Islamic Salvation Front and its military wing - the Islamic Salvation Army, the Egyptian Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya, and the Tunisian An-Nahda party. In return, the Algerian Islamic Salvation Front assists the Tunisian Islamists; and the American Islamists cooperate with the Islamists of the South African Republic. In general, Islamist movements and organizations receive the support from abroad, including that of the government agencies. Often, the very emergence of an Islamist movement was often inspired by a state concerned. For example, the Amal and Hamas organization in Lebanon has emerged and developed with the support of Syria and Iran, respectively. The National Islamic Front of Sudan and the Lebanese group Hezbollah have received assistance from Saudi Arabia in the early stages of development. The militants of various Islamist movements are trained in Sudan, Iran, Pakistan and some other countries. For example, reportedly, Sudan provides its territory for about 20 training camps for Islamic militants from Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Lebanon, the Israeli-occupied Arab territories, Algeria, Tunisia and Uganda. There are a lot of Iranians, as well as the Afghan Mujahideens, among the instructors at these camps. Libya does not deny its support to the Islamist movements in various countries. The problem is that an Islamist

organization created by, for example, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Libya, later tend to "go to the freewheeling" while the countries created them can not control their activities anymore. The Western countries, specifically the U.S., considered the Islam revival as a factor threatening political stability in the Middle East. The Islamic Revolution in Iran and its call for a global Islamic revolution; the Shia population unrest in the eastern province of Saudi Arabia, 1979; the seizure of the Great Mosque in Mecca by the militant Islamists; the burning of the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad; the attempts for take-overs, as well as attacks on foreign embassies in Bahrain and Kuwait in early 1980; the murder of Anwar Sadat, 1981; the increasing radicalization of Shiites; and bombings of the U.S. and French barracks in Lebanon, October, 1983 - all these activities raised the fear of a global Islamic revolution and further strengthening of Islamophobia that has deep historical roots in the West. Immediately after these events, such a term as "Islamic threat" has been widely broadcasted in the Western media. Appeared as a propaganda clichés, it has migrated on to the pages of scientific papers, which authors proposed various scenarios of possible development of major international events initiated by the Islamist movements, and even seriously discussed the upcoming clash between the Christian and Islamic civilizations. According to the Western, specifically American, interpretation, the radical Islamism (Islamic fundamentalism) is associated with the Islamic revolution in Iran and terrorism. On the plea of war on terror, the United States has intervened Libya in 1986 and, two years earlier, Beirut, Lebanon. The Americans consider the Islamic fundamentalism as the conflict between the East and West after 1945. They believe, the threat of Islamic fundamentalism serves the same role as the communist threat. The Western media instills the idea of "fundamentalism, conflicts and Islam come alone and produce discomfort for the international security forces." A number of Western European countries have expressed their concern about any possible transfer of Islamic fundamentalist activities on their territory. For example, Italy and France fear the massive migration from the North Africa, where population growth is much higher compared to Western Europe, and a large percentage of the unemployed, specifically under 25, would make them the centers of the Islamic fundamentalists' activities. According to some forecasts, in the late 90s about 25mln. of Muslims used to reside in the Western Europe as legal migrants performing the jobs the local population would not want to do. In a number of countries, the Muslims have taken the place of the Jews as the second largest religious community; and they outnumber the Protestants in France and Catholics in Berlin. However, all these fears of the North America and Western Europe are not groundless. It is evidenced by the bombings in Paris and New York; the terrorist attacks in Germany; and other activities of Islamist movements and organizations that can dramatically affect not only the political situation in their home country, but also destruct the situation in the neighboring countries, as well as in the entire region. The military successes of the Taliban in Afghanistan echoed in Tajikistan and other Central Asian states. The outcome of the protracted struggle between the government and the Islamists in Algeria may have an impact in Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, and can also affect gas and oil supply to Europe. The whole expensive and

balanced system of the U.S. Domination in the Middle East is under a question. The actions of the Islamist organizations in the Israeli-occupied Arab territories, as well as in Israel and in the South of Lebanon, have been used by certain forces in Israel to threat the entire Middle East peacemaking process.

IV. THE US, WESTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA: RELIGION, POLITICS, IDEOLOGY

The issue of the Muslim factor in the West is certainly important, since the very existence of the West is the unbearable factor for the Muslim fanatics who stand behind the Islam. The Western civilization is an alternative model, in many ways a world order alien to Islam. In Central Asian countries, Islam is the dominant and defining religion professed by the majority of the population. The Islamic factor, directly or indirectly, plays an important role in the politics of these countries. Therefore, it is impossible to ignore the religious factor in the Central Asian countries. When the anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan was launched, for obvious reasons, these countries had to rely on the U.S. administration's opinion and act with caution to Washington. At the same time, the illegal radical Islamist organizations, such as Hizbat-Tahrir al-Islami (Arabic - Islamic Liberation Party), very actively propagandize in the former Soviet republics, particularly in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. It may not safely be said whether such groups as Hizbat-Tahrir maintain direct contacts with the international terrorist organizations, such as Al-Qaeda. However, such possibility cannot be excluded, either. According to the analysts, such organizations are very attractive to those who have not been able to self-actualize in the difficult socio-economic conditions currently experienced by the Central Asia's countries. According to the political analyst Farid Asadullin, even the so-called *fatwas*, the orders of the higher Muslim spiritual leadership of the Central Asia Republics which prohibit the young people to contact the Hizbat-Tahrir' representative, are barely observed. In mid-summer 2002, Abdurashit Bakhromov, the Mufti of Uzbekistan has issued such an order. In fact, any such directive, even issued by a reputable clergyman, can be executed only if the young generation is able to self-actualize in some legitimate public processes. However, due to a massive unemployment, young people are easily recruited by radical Islamic or pseudo-Islamic organizations. It is arguable that the radicalization tendency will gradually increase, since there are no objective preconditions to improve the living standards in these countries in the near future. This is true for the countries bordering Afghanistan [10]. At the same time, the analyst points that difficult economic conditions make most of the population socially passive and indifferent to politics. Therefore, the transformation of Central Asia into the U.S. base to bomb Afghanistan has not seen any significant protest of the local population. In the Central Asian Republics, it is either human rights activists or radical Islamic youth organizations making attempts to oppose the local political elites. The latter consider America as a financial donor paying the political loyalty of the regional leaders [11]. According to F. Assadullin "...if the anti-terrorist operation will openly be an anti-Islamic in nature, then, combined with the dynamic deterioration of the economic situation, it can result in a powerful social explosion in Central Asia... The social explosion, that will inevitably have a religious overtone, is

possible in the immediate future." Further, F. Assadullin argues that the second stage of the anti-terrorist operation can serve as a catalyst for this process. It will definitely burst and cause an anti-American sentiment, and force even the loyal Islamic clergy to reorient since it would be difficult for the latter to explain the ordinary Muslims the killings of innocent people in Iraq. In his opinion, America must not forget that every fourth resident of the planet somehow belongs to the Islamic civilization. Due to an ill-considered aggressive U.S. policy, the radical Islamic organizations will get a lot of new members ready to fight against the U.S. hegemony in the region and far beyond. Washington should more closely monitor the political regimes are to establish closer relations with Central Asian states, it is primarily about the Muslim world, which certainly would try to increase its influence. Fuller specifically dwells on this issue, and given that the section "The struggle for the Muslim soul of the Central Asia," concludes his book, the topic of Islam in the future destiny of the region is becoming a dominant. The author believes the region was at the crossroads of various international geopolitical interests and ideological groups, in his opinion; it may be a number of combinations:

- i. Turkic group against Iran;
- ii. Turkic-Iranian group against the Arab states;
- iii. "Islamistan" consisting of Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia, detached from the Arab world and India;
- iv. More extensive grouping at the level of the entire Muslim world, which may be or may be not against the West or Israel;

J. Fuller believes the membership of the Central Asian states in the anti-Western blocs is very likely in case of dissatisfaction with their CIS membership and relationship with the West. For about 75 year, these Republics were a part of the state which ideology was a struggle against the West, which would facilitate such transformation. For the Central Asian states, there is a real issue of the militant Islam dissemination. The growth of radical Muslim organizations in these states would be the most real threat than any other external factor. For this reason, most of these countries unreservedly supported the U.S. efforts in combating international terrorism. The Central Asia political leaders were seeking to derive much benefit from the anti-terrorist operation conducted by the U.S. These benefits would be not only the U.S. military, economic and political resources and their usage, but also the elimination of the Muslim extremist organizations and the source of serious political instability on the border, particularly with Afghanistan. The IMU (Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan) was included in the list of prohibited terrorist organizations. In August 2000, the U.S. Department of State has added the IMU to the list of the most dangerous foreign terrorist organizations. Similar action has been made by the UN. In October 2002, the IMU was added by the Great Britain to the list of terrorist organizations. The IMU was made responsible for a series of explosions in Tashkent, in February, 1998 that killed 16 individuals; for attacks in Tashkent and Surkhandarya regions; as well as for the invasion on the territory of Kyrgyzstan and kidnap in the Batken region. The IMU's paramilitary units have fought alongside the Taliban

against the anti-terrorist coalition' forces in Afghanistan. The Kyrgyz government believes the extremist movements influence the socio-political situation in the country and the level of criminality. "The Islamic extremist movements seek to destabilize the situation and move the focus of religious confrontation in the territory of Kyrgyzstan. To prevent the conflict, the Kyrgyz Ministry of Interior has enhanced the activities of the Department responsible for the relations with civil society," - quoted Khabar [Kazakhstan's news agency] B. Subanbekov, Head, Ministry of Interior, Kyrgyzstan. According to Essen Topoev, Minister of Defense, Kyrgyzstan, the current situation is much different from what the Republic was experienced in 1999 - 2000, when Juma Namangani' troops have penetrated into the southern part of Kyrgyzstan. Currently, in addition to the army units of Kyrgyzstan, the anti-terrorist coalition' grouping is deployed at Gansi airbase. Kyrgyzstan is also supported by the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) member states and the Russian airbase at Kant. However, in spite of these measures, the MoD (Ministry of Defense) of Kyrgyzstan does not deny that the situation on the Republic's frontier lines remains difficult and the risk of destabilization in the region still remains. The situation on the Tajik-Afghan border is particularly challenging. Lately, the unprecedented activity of drug traffickers was recorded here, and experts incriminate a direct link between drug trafficking and activated militant activities, since drug trafficking provides the material basis for the armaments. The IMU' militants who have twice attacked the Southern region of Kyrgyzstan, once again gather in the frontier areas of Afghanistan. According to the Kyrgyz MoD, the Al-Qaeda' military groups have been forced out of the central regions of Afghanistan by the anti-terrorism coalition located on the CIS borders. Only in the Gorno-Badakhshan region more than twenty of such groups have already been recorded. And many of them have already silted into Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan [12]. The U.S. Department of State has warned of possible anti-American attacks in Uzbekistan. According to the U.S. DOS, extremist groups, including Al-Qaeda could choose hotels and other "vulnerable points" for these attacks [13]. The Turkmen authorities believe that there are no domestic Islamic fundamental groups [14]. The U.S. geo-strategic policy has its disadvantages such as the increasing anti-Americanism in particular, and the worldwide anti-Westernism as a whole. This is largely due to the aspiration of Americans to impose their own national stereotypes to the mankind at large. Besides, anti-Americanism is also observed in the EU's foreign policy. At the same time, Samuel P. Huntington notes "the sound cooperation with Europe is the best antidote to the feeling of a superpower, Americans have formed." One of the ultimate priority for the U.S. foreign policy would be establishment of equal relationship with key partners to mitigate and abolish the global anti-American sentiment. In addition to the Muslim factor influencing the U.S. foreign policy, the ideologues of the U.S. hegemony should consider this strategy and periodically update it taking into account the growth of anti-Americanism worldwide. Currently, there is a tendency of growth of such social and political phenomena as anti-Americanism. The anti-Americanism can be observed not only in the Muslim countries, but also in the EU. Before and after the U.S. military operations launched in Iraq, this tendency has intensified as never before. February 15-16, 2003, the world was swept by mass demonstrations and rallies against the United States, against the introduction of armed forces in Iraq and against the

U.S. policy decision to eliminate the "evil country" by means of war, that is, using violent methods. About 10mln. people participated in these anti-war demonstrations and peace rallies. They swept in 60 major cities around the world, which were attended by over 600 different mass organizations, both political and social. The largest mass participation of the demonstrators was in Rome, about 3mln. individuals; in London - over 2mln individuals, and in all major cities in Europe, USA and Asia. In New York alone over 100 thousand people participated in demonstrations opposing the U.S. plan to begin the war against Iraq [15]. In Arab countries demonstrations were not of such a mass character. This is explained by the U.S. presence of expeditionary military housing; military ships; aviation; and etc. in these countries, as well as by authoritarian and other regimes prevailing there.

V. THE U.S.-CENTRAL ASIA COOPERATION AGAINST TERRORISM AND RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM

The radical change in the geopolitical world balance in a very short time, was a consequence of the terrorist attacks September 11, 2001 in New York and Washington, DC and the subsequent operation of American and British troops in Afghanistan. Geographical neighborhood of the Central Asian states to Afghanistan determined their active engagement in the international anti-terrorist coalition. Uzbekistan was the first CAR state which demonstrated its willingness to cooperate and provided its territory for a number of foreign units lead by the USA. Uzbekistan was one of the key points for Pentagon operation. The availability of the former Soviet military bases and airfields used back in the 80s for the same purposes, sustained the implementation of U.S. plans. Generally, Uzbekistan continued its policy of strategic cooperation with the United States, build up earlier. During the visit of President Islam Karimov to Washington in mid-March 2002, the U.S. actually received confirmation of Tashkent's loyalty and continued support to anti-terrorist operation conducted by the US. Uzbekistan feared that in fact the Islamists military infrastructure was not destroyed, it may expect new extremists attacks, both in Afghanistan and against Uzbekistan. Despite doubts on the ability of the Western peace-keepers to control the situation in this country, Tashkent was much interested in a long-term military presence of the U.S. and its allies in Afghanistan. In addition, Uzbekistan has managed to represent its interests in the Afghan government. [Rashid Dostum], a representative of a large Uzbek Diaspora in Afghanistan was appointed as a Vice-President with the relevant authorities. R. Dostum, being a Tashkent-controlled player could significantly facilitate the solution of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) issue on the original territory. It should be noted that planned confederation in Afghanistan proposed by Rashid Dostum, was potentially beneficial for Uzbek leadership. In this case, the territory of Uzbekistan bordering with Afghanistan, the Uzbek government would control an Uzbek faction to ensure complete safety of the southern borders, and a powerful instrument to influence the geopolitical processes in this strategically important region.

Tajikistan has also agreed to provide territory for military under the anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan. The foreign policy of Tashkent and Dushanbe in many ways are exactly the opposite. Tajikistan is one of the closest allies of Russia,

dependent to a greater extent than any other Central Asian states. We can assume the Tajik leadership actions was a direct consequence of the Russian foreign policy changes. So it was rather a Moscow move than Dushanbe, or one of the Kremlin' concessions to Washington. Kyrgyzstan provided the country's main airport in Bishkek - Manas to accommodate the anti-terrorist coalition forces and to render humanitarian aid to the Afghan people. The reasons compelled the Kyrgyz authorities to take this step, coincide with the Uzbek, namely, assist to eliminate military threat from Afghanistan. Besides, Bishkek was seeking to use an external factor to resolve domestic political and economic issues. The Government of Turkmenistan declared its support to the initiative to establish an international anti-terrorist coalition against only, if it is coordinated by the UN. The point is that Ashgabat mean the information and humanitarian cooperation, but not the deployment of foreign armed groups. Turkmen Foreign Ministry denied reports the Republic would provide its territory and military facilities for military operations run by foreign states. So, Ashgabat, in this case clearly adhered to the principle of neutrality. Kazakhstan's geographical and geopolitical location has predetermined the Astana's support to the goals and objectives of the anti-terrorist operation conducted by the international community in Afghanistan. Kazakhstan's approach was based on the necessity to stop any external support to the warring parties and hold a UN Security Council' special session on Afghanistan. These initiatives were proposed at the UN Millennium Summit in September, 2000. Immediately after the events of September 11, the Chief of State made an official statement condemning the inhuman terrorists acts, and expresses the readiness of our Republic to render any assistance in their apprehension and punishment. According to the RoK President, Kazakhstanis believe the terrorists, as well as their patrons should be punished. Kazakhstan was originally prepared to support the U.S. anti-terrorist operation with all available means. Nursultan Nazarbayev, the RoK President at the meeting with the U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, stated: "We are aware the American leadership has addressed many states with such requests. If, such a request provided to the GOK, we address it positively," [16]. In addition, the report "Kazakhstan's position on resolving the situation in Afghanistan," released as an official document of the UN Security Council and General Assembly, highlighted the RoK position on the subject. In fact, Kazakhstan is extremely interested in establishing a normal peaceful life in Afghanistan and close political and economic relations. Considering the negative impact of political-military conflict in Afghanistan to Central Asia, it is impossible not to cover an issue of drug trafficking. According to the UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) in Central Asia about 65% of Afghan drugs are currently trafficking through Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to China and Russia, and then to Europe and the United States [17]. Thus, Afghanistan remains one of the most "lively" crossroads of the external players including the Islamic ones and their interests in Central Asia. The divergence of these interests makes this country a permanent hotbed of instability. The politicization of Islam does not occur simultaneously in different parts of the Muslim world, due to internal socio-economic and political issues in each country. Egypt, Syria and Iraq were the first countries going through this process since back to the 50th-60th they were facing deep social, economic

and political changes. Then in the 70s - 80s. - Pakistan, Iran, Morocco and other countries have joined the club.

VI. CONCLUSION

Thus, according to experts, the U.S. military presence in Central Asia is served to solve, except for the Afghan problem, other issues important to U.S. national security, namely:

- i. Have in the region, the rapid reaction force, demanded, in the case of political instability in Pakistan, and especially in case of next aggravation of India-Pakistan conflict;
- ii. Have the infrastructure in the region for an active policy towards Iran and its nuclear program;
- iii. Projecting American military presence in the Caspian energy resources;
- iv. Control the territory of China, especially the areas of deployment of missile systems, and to some extent, further growth of China.

In general, the U.S. current political activities in Central Asia as well as the expansion of this superpower presence in the region is characterized by ambiguity on the one hand, and clear strategic, national goals and objectives specified in the U.S. geopolitical strategy, on the the hand. It should be noted that the countries of Central Asia should consider the economic integration of Central Asian states to international organizations, both politically and economically as a real political counterweight to the U.S. political influence and pressure in the region. The views of Americans on the world order has undergone significant changes. During the Cold War, the international system was considered as a strictly bipolar: the international community was "divided" into two camps, and all foreign countries were assessed in accordance with their inclination to one of the geopolitical poles. Current world is a pyramid with the U.S. on top. The U.S. is building the inside world political system with a hierarchy based on a country's loyalty to the liberal democratic values and the market economy order. But in fact, as America considers itself a bulwark of world's democracy, a commitment of any state to above principles to be verified by the loyalty to Washington and its policy.

As a result, all countries are divided into three categories – the allies implicitly recognizing the hegemony and those who seek to join them; the states with negative attitude to the United States ("rogue"); undecided or inactive members of the world political processes. Russia and China clearly do not belong to any of these categories. According to numerous representatives of the American elite, the current period of political history of the world community provides a unique opportunity to combine the hegemony of one country with the assertion of democratic values. In theory, it is recognized that the geopolitical situation so much comfortable for the USA is not eternal, but all political leaders of this country would avoid any changes to a negative direction. The attractiveness of the ideas advocated by the United States and rather good political prospects of their distribution, inspire the American elite representatives that the first hegemony of the democratic state would only be strengthened in the future.

The controversy between the inevitable authoritarian style of such type of leadership and proclaimed democratic

principles, is not considered. The fact of a national idea, particularly of an American exceptionalism to be introduced the originally liberal ideology of the United States, is not considered as well.

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