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INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND CHALLENGES ALONG “ONE BELT, ONE ROAD” IN CENTRAL ASIA

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Abstract. The concept of international security has numerous dimensions and interpretations, because of a wide scope of threats and challenges, which have various roots and reasons and depend on the region of the development of a particular security issue. This accounts for the choice of the form: the best way to discuss international security is to use particular cases while conducting the research. This method allows us to perceive the issue as a complex notion in particular circumstances while avoiding unnecessary generalization of the researched object. Current research is devoted to the issue of security assets in Central Asian republics (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kirgizstan). Moreover, the research does not only take into consideration security threats purely as a notion but also brings in another variable to the discussion: a factor of the Chinese "One Belt, One Road" initiative. This fact allows the research to obtain geopolitical meaning and depth. For China realization of the OBOR initiative means far more than the creation of a mechanism of international logistics, investments, and cooperation. Using the OBOR China tries to promote a scale of values, which is different from the Western one. Moreover, building the OBOR grants China the role of an international superpower as well as a new pole of gravity in international relations. The research also addresses the question of the importance of Central Asia as a geopolitical bridge. The control over it has been a debatable issue among international players since the early 19th century, and it still has not lost its importance because the region has its borders close to the borders of the Russian Federation from the south and China from the west. Central Asia is also a region with numerous internal problems: on one hand, they are very similar for all the five republics of the region, but, on the other hand, they have their peculiarities differing from country to country. First of all, these concerns are related to the newly emerged unconventional security threat like religious radicalism and extremism: particular features of this phenomenon are different from country to country, and it does not have a unified solution. The last fact endangers not only national states of the region, but also countries of the neighboring region of Central Asia. In general, the research discusses the correlation of the OBOR as an international phenomenon with possible security risks for this project in the region of Central Asia.

Keywords: international security; China; Central Asia; One Belt One Road; extremism; radicalism; geopolitics.

1. INTRODUCTION

Central Asia occupies its particular place as a region of Eurasia which is located between Europe and Eastern Asia and plays an important role of a bridge that links these two very different parts of the Eurasian continent. After the Soviet Union collapse and disintegration, five Central Asian countries, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kirgizstan, became independent national states with their individual features of development.

The history and geographical location of Central Asia has always remained in the spotlight for key international actors. One of the main collisions between the Russian and Britain Empires over the maintenance of control over this geographical area was later called The Great Game. That accounted for one of the biggest diplomatic and military confrontations over current Central Asia. Even though the amount of the controlled territories was considered the main value for international actors of that time, the factors of accessibility and ability to project power on the controlled territories together with a possibility of further expansion were definitely important. Naturally, the role a land bridge from the Caspian Sea to Southern and Eastern Asia cannot be underestimated. The USSR's incorporation of Central Asia republics solved some problems temporary. However, after the Soviet Union collapse five Central Asia republics faced economic crises, a period of permanent political instability, diversity in national minority and religious groups and that accounted for numerous inner conflicts.

Circumstances like that created a rather particular and unpredictable internal political environment which worked in favor of a steady and sustainable development neither for the region in general nor for separate countries in particular. Unsettled territorial claims can be seen as an additional comprehensive factor, which has contributed to the creation of the general regional security atmosphere; it still influences political and security decisions of inner and outer regional actors, as well as their behavior and reactions within the region of Central Asia.

As a comprehensive notion, newly-emerged threats become a stumbling point for regional and non-regional actors alike. Unlike economic problems or territorial disputes, which have clear-cut solution mechanisms to a certain extent, issues like radicalism, extremism, terrorism come from a complicated social, political, religious and other backgrounds, and, therefore, these issues cannot be solved using one particular scheme or solution. Moreover, similar phenomena developing in important geopolitical regions can cause serious security concerns for all bordering countries, no matter what kind of countries that might be. Furthermore, this can not only endanger development of local already existing international initiatives but make impossible setting down of new ones.

One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative is the most prominent economic initiative of recent years. It was first proposed in 2013 by a Chinese chairman during his visit to Kazakhstan, and it brought significance to the whole region of Central Asia, and in particular to the place of official Astana in the process of development of OBOR. This event accentuated the role of Central Asia in the Chinese OBOR strategy and for China. Of course, OBOR has a great potential, and this research will discuss and bring up key points of this Chinese initiative, as it is compulsory for understanding this strategy, motivation of China as a key actor, its interest in a region of Central Asia and, most importantly, the challenges China might face developing its strategy in the region at the current stage. It should be noted that currently OBOR strategy has already passed its initial stages, however it might be still vulnerable for unpredictable security concerns in this region.

2. DISCUSSION

First of all, it is important to understand what OBOR is. The visits of Xi Jinping to Kazakhstan and Indonesia in 2013 as well as his speeches proved the political will of China to direct all their efforts at a new reality creation, mainly by building communication and transportation infrastructure between China and Europe, literary renewing the Silk Road, which came into existence around 2 century B.C., but its trade volume and development level matched the values and volumes of trade of the 21st century. The initiative was calling for creating sustainable environment for mutual economic

development of all participants of this initiative. Only primary objective included participation of 26 countries in this project of connecting China with Europe by land and sea corridors. And what is the most important, most of land corridors go through the Central Asia and that makes this region a key one in this strategy. [1]

The next step in the process was taken soon after the above-mentioned visits of chairman Xi to Kazakhstan and Indonesia. The Plenum of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party adopted and politically supported ideas of Chairman about further development of the already existing infrastructure facilities and creation of the new ones; moreover, the document supported ideas of openness for further reformation. [2]

The document itself didn't have any legislative power in particular; however, it clearly declared the direction of further orientation on economic processes facilitation in China, and that included both manufacturing and commercial spheres.

Another document issued in 2015 included recommendations and highlighted possible opinions contemplated by the Chinese State Council for facilitation, and its key points relied on both inner and outer Chinese directions. If the former documents promoted recruitment and attracting foreign technologies and investments into China, current recommendations gave an impetus for development to foreign markets and spaces, using openness as a tool for the development of the Chinese economy and reformation tendencies. [3] Its second aspect was prioritizing Western regions of China, as they are comparatively underdeveloped and need more attention to establish a balanced inner development and to shorten an economic gap between rich Eastern coastal regions and poor Western ones. [1] This aspect points to the fact, that Western China cross-border regions were planned to be a gateway for goods, which would move into western direction, not only European, but also African and Middle East ones.

The emergence of such a policy was predictable due to the growing and self-developing investment potential of the PRC. The period before 2010 can be called a period of capital accumulation in China; however, after 2010 the speed of Chinese economy development started slowing down. Chinese economy was slowly overheating because of the number of foreign investments involved before that period of time. Chinese inner market also was not able to consume that amount of goods produced by the manufacturing industry. The only possible way for saving their economic growth and healthy economy was redirecting the industrial sector to outer markets and creating an export-oriented economy. [4]

However, there are certain challenges in creation and maintenance of such an economic model. The most important factor of a successful development of an export-oriented economic model also has several conditions. The first and most important one is having a sustainable and steady market. As long as China can be considered a "factory of the world", its market can be the whole world as it is; however, it is the European Union which is the priority market for them as its consumption grows with each passing year. Consequently, the most important issue to handle is to create capabilities and resources for a fast, reliable and timely transportation, and the shortest routes and tracks from China to Europe go through Central Asia. In this case, Central Asia makes a key region of interest for China. Of course, the OBOR initiative also includes a maritime component. However, risks and expansions of maritime component are higher, and shipping time frame is longer than land transportation.

Moreover, Chinese expert community claims that building of OBOR is more than just creating economic relations between and across countries participating in this immense economic project. According to the claims of a Chinese political scientist one of the main ideas of the OBOR project is a creation of international community with a high level of common cultural values for common sustainable growth. [5] According to this opinion, the current economic and political model promoted by Western countries doesn't fit numerous developing countries, and the "liberal economic approach" does not work as it should be. One of the most prominent signs was the economic crisis of 2008, which showed that the world needed another strategy and approach for development as the current political order showed incapability to prevent economic disasters. Such incapability also leads to newly-emerging local conflicts and acts of violence all over the world. From this perspective, OBOR transforms from an economic to political and ideological project, aimed at revision of current

international relations, and such revision should be started from economic and finish at political aspect. Furthermore, Chinese adaptive economic and ideologically-based reforms showed its efficiency and potential for becoming a model for exporting it as a model for sustainable development, and OBOR is a tool for promotion this model. [5]

Chinese expert community also claims that emergence and promotion of a new political and economic paradigm, its active development and implementation put responsibility on China for the development of those developing countries that are ready to accept this Chinese strategy for themselves. Chinese readiness to accept such responsibility shows China joining to the elite group of top international actors and its transformation into one of the international poles of power, not only in an economic sphere, but also in a political one. This process also puts ties of moral duties on China as a promoter and main ideologist of a new international order, which is based on social stability as a key point of steady and healthy development. [6] In this case, creation and investment into different outer-China infatuation projects seems to be a priority. This comes from the idea that creation of a highly-efficient infrastructure will create a condition for the further development of countries and regions that are based on free and fast transportation of people and goods between countries and regions for facilitation of economic activities, as it earlier happened in China. For this reason, the role of Central Asian countries and creation of their stable background seems to be vitally important for the development of the Chinese OBOR strategy. Successful implementation and actions in this direction will definitely allow China to create a steady pillar for development of its strategy globally.

The creation of such a pillar is possible in the conditions of stability and harmony in the region; however, after the Soviet Union collapse, the region of Central Asia faced a systemic crisis because of a vacuum of power emerging on the territory of Central Asia. On one hand, five countries obtained independency and that allowed them to develop as national states, on the other hand, it brought a decade of political, social and economic instability. While the Russian Federation was going through a similar period and tried to gather post-Soviet republics into the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), a pretty weak organization with mostly declarative objectives and no ability to guarantee any practical approaches for solving current issues solutions, China was not able to secure the role of a guarantor of regional stability because of its focus on inner economical and developmental objectives. This happened despite the fact China had its own interests in the region in general, primarily because of the necessity to resolve border claims, which emerged after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and building up guarantees of saving peace on Western borders. In comparison, for Western countries, mainly the USA, for the most part the region was like unchartered waters, not that it was completely unknown, but it demanded time as well as right tools and means. The last one was not that easy to choose because of unstable and unpredictable political conditions and events happening within the region. Moreover, even being politically and economically weak, the Russian Federation used all possible means to slow down the American expansion in the region. And, one can say Russian efforts were rather effective.

China shared the same position. The Beijing White Book of Defense regularly points out at American attempts to expand its geopolitical influence and hegemony, it declares that an equal international setup has not been set yet, and hegemonic attempts like that shatter fair and equal development of key strategic geopolitical regions. There no direct mentions of the USA; however, the splendidly smart wording hints at this country. [6]

Chinese official and research papers have a term “渗透” (shèntòu), which can be translated into English as “penetration”. It is usually used for description of expansion tendencies of big countries in particular regions. The same term is also used to describe American attempts in Central Asia region. Moreover, from Chinese perspective, American activities are usually evaluated as harmful ones and, in same aspects, as potentially dangerous for Chinese and Russian national interests.

For the USA the last decade of 20th century could be defined as preparatory in terms of further development of attempts to expand influence in the region of Central Asia. Because of rapid and unpredictable changes in the political landscape of Central Asia, the US policy was slow and careful. Moreover, while the US was trying to create an atmosphere of mutual trust between countries of the

region, its policy can be described as very careful and slow. At the same time, in the period between 1991 and 2001, the United States worked out a particular geopolitical strategy towards the region, and it included several important points: to make Central Asia republics less dependent on the Russian Federation, to prevent the growth of the Chinese influence, to exclude Iran from interactions with the countries of the region, to protect American interests in the region from possible religion related extremist and unconventional warfare threats. [7]

It should be noted that in some cases American officials were overly cooperative with national governments: therefore, other American official representatives often criticized them for suppression of human rights in the respective countries. The main humanitarian tools of that time were based on educational and cultural institutions. Take an example of such programme as the creation of American University of Central Asia, its mission is: "[to] develop enlightened and impassioned leaders for the transformation of Central Asia." Another tool of influence is represented by the American funds like USAID and NED. Their role is to provide scholarships and financial aid to different opposition democratic institutions, mostly in the post-Soviet space. [7]

9/11 terrorist attacks changed the whole perception of security threats not only in the USA, but all around the globe. Simultaneously, they changed the status of Central Asia bringing it to the frontier of an anti-terrorist fight of the US in Afghanistan in 2001. This event also raised importance of Central Asia countries, first of all for the USA.

Central Asia became one of the most important dislocation areas for the USA that was using military bases and aerodromes in several countries, including "Hanabad" and "Termez" in Uzbekistan, "Manas" in Kyrgyzstan, "Kuljib" in Tajikistan and "Mary-2" in Turkmenistan. American military cooperation with Central Asia countries at the beginning of 21st century opened doors for the US, as they came to the region to guarantee peace as well as to develop American humanitarian and economical initiatives. Despite the terrorist threat on the part of al-Qaeda and Taliban, the danger of which was revealed after 9/11 terrorist attacks, and the necessity to fight with terrorism threats in Afghanistan, American military bases rapidly emerging in Central Asia caused ever more concerns with Russia and China, even the danger of nonconventional threats was reduced. [8]

Additionally, plenty of Chinese scientists viewed temporary American military campaigns in the region as the first step of possible advancement and active expansion in other spheres. First and foremost, it involved spreading democratic ideas and ideals in the regions which national perspectives and cultural mindsets were different from the American ones. Moreover, according to their statement, popularizing American "democratic model" and "surrounding Russia with democratic regimes" in the region of Central Asia will influence political regimes in both Russia and China. [9]

In 2003 the United States Department of State approved an address to the President concerning their foreign policy in Central Asia, it called to facilitate democratization in Central Asia and confirmed the financial back-up to develop this process. In 2005, during the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan, the resident American ambassador asked American government to rise American "aid for development of democracy" for opposition up to 30 million dollars. Together with American support of protesters, their severe criticism of government during confrontations in Andijon (Uzbekistan) in 2005 also influenced the American image in whole Central Asia. After the events, the Uzbekistan government terminated the agreement allowing US troops to use any military bases in that country. This situation was very exemplary as it prompted other countries to reevaluate the place of the USA in their foreign policies as well as reassess the USA general ambitions in the region. Moreover, that was a strong geopolitical push benefiting Chinese positions in the region, and they used it to implement their own international projects, including security coordination in Central Asia.

However, in 2011 the USA announced a program called "New Silk Road". The project was another attempt of the USA to return to the region. In fact, it was not successful for a number of reasons, including the suspicious attitude towards the USA, a lack of infrastructure, security concerns. The project had low competitive reserves and could not offer much for the target consumers, i.e. countries of Central Asia, because of the two already existing projects – the Russian EAEU (Eurasian Economic Union) and the Chinese OBOR; these two projects are to be seen as complementary rather than

antagonistic. In 2015, the USA initiated the project "C5+1", but Central China republics regarded it carefully and coolly. In May, 2014, NATO opened its agency in Uzbekistan with the main task of coordination of the NATO presence in Afghanistan, in particular between the USA and countries of the region. This agency lasted three years only and was shut down within less than six months after moving to Tashkent in 2017. This serves as a bright example of the lack of trust showed to the USA and its policy in the region, even when it comes to facing the whole scope of unconventional threats coming from the still unpredictable security situation in Afghanistan.

In December, 2017, the US published the new "National Security Strategy": it marked the start of the competing era among great powers, and, at the same time, the strategy declared the national will of the USA to further empowerment. The strategy also claimed that the Chinese international economic model, promoted in the Asian region, had changed the international order in Asia, and it resulted in the attempts to oust the United States from that region. It also emphasized the rise of Chinese influence in developing countries and its competition with the USA. While understanding, that the Chinese OBOR initiative would have a great influence in whole Asia, the USA was sensitive to its own role and position. [10] Since the early 2018 American position towards OBOR changed from neutral at the very least into almost hostile. Soon after the beginning of the trade war between the USA and China, OBOR initiative started suffering from pressure and aggressive claims on the part of the USA. An example of such claims can be seen in Testimony of Patrick M. Shanahan, in which Chinese foreign policy was claimed "predating and expansionist". [11] Having defined OBOR as a threat, the Ministry of Defense suggested expanding American presence in the Asia-Pacific region. Joseph Dunford, America's Joint Chief of Staff Chairman, openly claimed that "China will be the greatest threat for the USA future." [12]

One of the key problems of Central Asia countries is existence of multiple sources of unconventional security threats and challenges. These threats may differ depending on a country or a region, because of the specific features and various aspects of development of the territories and states that depends of particular historical, social, economic and political factors. However, it is common countries of one region to share relatively the same scope of concerns; and the five Central Asian countries mentioned in the research paper earlier can relate to that.

In terms of unconventional local threats in Central Asia it is religious extremism and terrorism that occupy leading positions. The key factors contributing to the development of this phenomenon are relatively the same for the five above-mentioned countries. These factors include poor economic conditions, the infiltration of ideas related to radical Islamic terrorism, economic inequality and different social groups haggling over political power. The combination of these factors creates a unique landscape for each of the five countries; the same applies to the severity of security concerns, as there are different situation and conditions in each of the five countries. [13]

The agreement between the USA and Taliban concerning the withdrawal of foreign military forces from Afghanistan provoked the rise of the unconventional threats level in the region. In its turn it caused activation of religious radical groups in the region of Central Asia. Such radical organizations like "Hizb ut-Tahrir", "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan" and "East Turkestan Islamic Movement" have partial support of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan citizens. What is interesting, the nomadic nations of Central Asia (Kirghiz, Kazakh, and Turkman nations) are less prone to fall victims of radical Islamic ideas, although, originally, Islam was more popular in the agrarian countries of the region (Uzbekistan and Tajikistan). Therefore, to reach the general aim of the research, it is important to compare all the five countries. [13]

Among all the countries of Central Asia region, Kazakhstan can be described as the most successful one. For the main part it is due to its most stable economic conditions, a high percentage of the Russian-speaking population, a comparatively high level of social modernization and a historical tradition of popularizing Islam among Kazakh population. Relations between state institutions and religion in Kazakhstan are directly interconnected because of certain events in its historical development. For example, one can trace back the tradition of peaceful coexistence of different beliefs among nomadic groups in the Kazakh steppes. The nomadic way of life weakened Islamic institutions; compared with neighboring countries they are powerless. In addition, during the Soviet period the role of religion itself

was degraded, and that all was accompanied by the social modernization and russification of the Kazakh society.

After Kazakhstan became an independent national state, there happened the religious renaissance in the country. In 2013 the number of religious institutions reached 4550; in comparison there were only 970 of them in 1990. This number included Catholic, Islamic, Orthodox Christian and other denominations. Recently the influence and prestige of Islamic organizations are growing continuously. In the course of this process, there also appeared a lot of small religious groups, close to illegal criminal groups. Since the gaining of independence the total amount of such groups reached over 500. One of the facts worth mentioning is that the majority of terrorists, who appeared in the country in between the 1990s and early 2000s, were originally from the North Caucasus nations, Uzbekistan or Chinese Uighurs. However, in between 2005 and 2011 the number of extremists and terrorists with the Kazakhstan citizenship became rapidly growing. [14]

In Kazakhstan, it is the Southern and Western regions of the country that are the main regions where radical religious extremist tendencies spread. Southern Kazakhstan belongs to the "settled" region of the country, and that means that a high level of development of religious institutions and religious renaissance led to the appearance of unconventional religious movements and schools, for example Salafism. The situation in Western Kazakhstan is more complicated. Fast development of the oil and gas industry in this region called for an appearance of the highly marginalized social groups, especially, those consisting of ethnic Kazakhs who returned to Kazakhstan from other countries. Such isolated environment is pretty comfortable for independent radical groups.

Another serious issue is Central Asian nations' representatives joining ISIL and their consecutive coming back to the countries of origin. Speaking about Kazakhstan in particular, it is important to emphasize that economic and social conditions of the country are the best ones compared to the rest four countries of the region, and that decreases the social-economic aspect of engagement of Kazakh people in ISIL. However, in 2015-2016 the oil and gas industry income decreased severely causing an economic crisis and protests. Another reason for protests was based on the attempts of the government and parliament to change the Land Code in favor of foreign investors. In this case protests had only social and economic grounds, speaking in more details they were Sino-phobic, but had no religious reasons in general. [15]

Taking into account its domestic security situation, Uzbekistan can be considered one of the most complicated countries. Despite the security and preventive measures taken by the Uzbekistan government, radical groups of the country seem to be the most powerful and influential in the whole region. It is also important to notice, that main problems of Islamic extremism come from complex political, economic, interreligious and social problems in this country. A lot of extremist groups grow their numbers by means of taking in citizens of other countries. [16] The issue of the increasing religious extremism is also connected with the clan social system of the country, specific to Uzbekistan. Political competitiveness among clans causes social tensions inside the country and justifies the privileged status of some clans over others. That results in escalations of social conflicts and other negative tendencies, including extremism.

The high unemployment rate, reaching up to 30% percent of all population of the country, contributed to the complexity of the situation. It also caused a high level of labor migration to the Russian Federation. Prior to economic crisis in Russia in 2014 labor migrants were transferring 10-12 billions of US dollars a year to Uzbekistan, and that was 12 percent of GDP of the republic. However, after the crisis, the income of Uzbekistan citizens working in Russia dropped severely, and as well as an amount of money transferred from Russia to Uzbekistan. Consequently, that increased the recruitment rate of young people becoming members of terrorist or extremist organizations. [17]

There were two main active periods of extremist activities in Uzbekistan. The first one happened at the end of 1990s. In 1999 terrorists of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan blew up five cars in the very center of Tashkent. Another terrorist attack happened in late 1999 and was called the Batken Conflict. In the course of the conflict, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan launched an attack on Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan from the territory of Afghanistan and Tajikistan. In order to protect themselves countries

were forced to use the Collective Security Treaty Organization mechanisms. The second period of terrorist activity was in 2004-2005. It included a series of explosions in Tashkent and neighboring regions, followed by three simultaneous explosions near the embassies of the USA, and Israel, and near the General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Uzbekistan. All explosions caused numerous casualties among civilians and Uzbek police. However, the most dangerous event happened in 2005 and was called the "2005 Andijan unrest". According to the official information, the Unrest was arranged by "Hizb ut-Tahrir" and it resulted in numerous casualties in the course of confrontations with police and regular military forces in Andijan after the protesters had attempted to release some members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, accused of terrorism. [17]

On the one hand, Uzbekistan is a country, featured as a recruitment base of different terrorist organizations; on the other hand, it is a comparatively safe country, viewed from the security perspective, as police and other security services of the state take continuous active measures to prevent acts of terrorism and extremism. However, among the members of ISIS and other radical Islamic organizations in Middle East the numbers of Uzbeks were the highest among all the terrorists from Central Asia, who took part in different conflicts. That brings us to the idea that their return to Uzbekistan can cause a rapid growth of potential risks and concerns of security policy, as well as a possibility of exporting extremist ideas to other countries inside and outside the region.

Kirgizstan is one the countries that includes the whole scope of regional security concerns in the region and has one of the most dramatic situations among the five Central Asia republics. There are the following reasons underlying this situation: the complicated social and economic situation, weakness of governmental security agencies after the revolutions in 2005 and 2010, contradictions between the Northern and Southern clan groups. The Northern groups are less influenced by the Islamic tradition because of their strong nomadic culture, Russification and modernization of society during the Soviet rule in the region. There is also an issue of a severe ethnic conflict between Kirgiz and Uzbek nations in the south of Kirgizstan, exacerbated by religious tensions, primarily by the stronger traditional religiousness of the Uzbek nation, as well as a high level of recruitment of Uzbeks to ISIL and other extremist organizations.

Another direction of extremism development is the religious based extremism. The collapse of the Soviet Union caused active growth and development of different religious groups and sects. As of 2015, Kirgizstan had 2362 mosques, 81 religious educational institutions and 68 Muslim funds sponsored from abroad, which were in charge of spiritual education and financial support of religious development. [18]

By virtue of the fact that Kirgizstan became the most democratic national state after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it was also the most open to an invasion of different trends of social and religious development, sometimes contradictory to one another. Therefore, Kirgizstan is a place, which attracts attention of not only Uighur, but also extremist groups from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Russian North Caucasus.

Tajikistan is one more ground for growth of radical Islamic extremism in the Central Asia. The Civil War of 1992-1997, its closeness to Afghanistan and a decrease of labor migration to Russia because of economic crisis, all contributed to the growth of internal social tensions and economic crisis in this country. The last aspect also influenced the exacerbation of economic crisis. The weakness of the government after the civil war and the inability to control religious groups in country create a vast space for work of extremist groups and fractions. The background for such freedom was set in 1974 with an early beginning of the "religious renaissance" in Tajikistan. The lack of stable and steady religious ideology has created another block of problems in stabilizing the internal political situation. Tajikistan has numerous connections with Qatar and Saudi Arabian religious funds; they are actively running in Tajikistan, promoting anti-Shia and anti-Iranian ideas, using religious institutions as a tool of propaganda.

In this context it is important to mention such organization as the "Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan", it had important role in the attempts of religious, cultural and political reunion of the country. Additionally, since its creation, the "Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan" was supported

by Turkey and Iran, both having their own interests in the region of Central Asia. While the "Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan" was one of the most influential opposition forces and had strong support in Tajikistan, it was also the real reason why this party was banned in Tajikistan in 2015. [19] However, even being banned, it preserved the support of approximately one third of overall population of Tajikistan. Another serious aspect of the "Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan" activity was restraining the spreading ideas of Wahhabism and Salafism in Tajikistan, them being the most radical branches of Islamism introduced into the political and ideological vacuum, created after the "Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan" left.

The situation in Tajikistan becomes more intense, mainly because of escalations on the border with Afghanistan and a permanent infiltration and flow of terrorist groups from that country, as this brings Tajikistan numerous security challenges. This phenomenon cannot be neither prevented, nor stopped by the Tajik military on their own; there is a need of foreign help and support and that demands for the permanent presence of Collective Security Treaty Organization military forces in the country to guarantee the state security or, at least, to prevent active invasion of terrorist forces from Afghanistan.

On one hand, Turkmenistan can be taken as a country with one of the lowest extremist rates in the region of Central Asia due to historical and cultural reasons. For one, Turkmenistan belongs to the same nomadic culture as Kazakhstan and Kirgizstan. This factor shows that religious belief of the Mohammedan faith in these countries is not that orthodox, and has a wide framework of freedom in following religious principles. On the other hand, a strict division of social and religious life makes an important factor, and there is the policy of religious non-intervention into the state ruling matters. Additionally, the information aspect allows to see Turkmenistan as one of the most closed countries of the region. Constant lack of information causes some doubts concerning the real situation in the country and interpretation of the current security situation. [20] Until recently, Turkmenistan was among the countries that did not feel the impact of radical ideas of Wahhabism, because of the governmental control and efficient work of security forces of the republic. That also can be explained by the cultural tradition of the majority of population to reject the notions of religious fundamentalism.

The potential dangers coming from extremists revolve around the main and most realistic one, which is the safety threat coming from Afghanistan and organizations like Taliban. Turkmenistan declares that they maintain absolute control over each and every possible security issue from that direction, including the threat of religious extremism; however, the lack of open sources information does not allow making a credible analysis; therefore, the statement is fact partially unreliable and there is a need for more information from independent sources.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The importance of Central Asia cannot be underestimated for key international actors. The geopolitical value of the region arises from it being the crossroads from the continental Europe to south-eastern Asia, and from Middle East to the Asian part of the Russian Federation. Being the international and geopolitical crossroads provides an unsurpassable opportunity for getting a huge advantage from all the international traffic passing its territory and the role of a logistic services supplier, handling multiple directions. On the other side, the region is doomed to handle permanent pressure, seeking its place and balance among bigger and stronger international actors, who might not stop trying to take advantage of the area and have it under their control.

In fact, the Chinese OBOR initiative promises bright perspectives for all Central China republics, as it is aimed at creation of not only transportation infrastructure, but also new cooperative links, which have been lost after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Such achievements will benefit the development of both China and the region in general. Of course, every international actor is chasing their interests; however, the Chinese approach looks like a fair deal, because it calls for mutual benefits and a win-win strategy. Moreover, China relies on economy first of all, and it actually makes up a key aspect of attractiveness of the Chinese project for developing countries. A lot of them are being criticized for not

following Western democratic standards, but seeking their economic benefits without political pressure.

On the other hand, Central Asia is a complicated puzzle with numerous security threats and concerns, starting from religion and culminating with the issue of Afghanistan, which has been in decay for almost 20 years. These concerns are hidden by a huge number of factors, like history, and traditions, beliefs, and demography, economy, and political tradition, and others. A lot of these challenges can be resolved only after resolutions of the others, but their combination and amalgamation at the same time in the same place can endanger even so ambitious projects like OBOR. Thus, it seems that to build OBOR through the Central Asia successfully China needs to find a creative approach to simultaneously solve all these issues, while promoting OBOR as a development strategy not only for China, but also for all participants of the project.

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Ідея міжнародної безпеки має багато вимірів та розумінь, через наявність широкого спектру загроз та викликів, які мають різноманітне походження і причини, які залежать від специфіки регіону, в якому вони мають місце. Тому найкращим способом дослідження під час обговорення міжнародної безпеки є розгляд конкретних виявів загроз. Такий метод дозволяє зрозуміти конкретне питання як комплексне поняття у специфічній ситуації, одночасно дозволяє запобігти непотрібному узагальненню під час розгляду об'єкту дослідження. У центрі розгляду знаходиться обговорення питань безпеки в центральноазійських республіках (Казахстані, Узбекистані, Туркменістані, Таджикистані та Киргизстані). Водночас обговорення дослідження торкається не лише питань безпеки як єдиного поняття, а й враховує як провідний чинник китайської ініціативи «Один пояс, Один шлях». Таким чином, дослідження отримує геополітичне значення та глибину. Для Китаю реалізація проекту «Один пояс, Один шлях» має значення створення не лише механізмів міжнародної логістики, інвестування та співпраці. Використовуючи «Один пояс, Один шлях» Китай визначає шкалу цінностей, яка є відмінною від Західної Європи. Будівництво «Одного поясу, Одного шляху» є процесом становлення Китаєм наддержави і новим полюсом тяжіння в міжнародних відносинах. Дослідження піднімає питання значущості Центральної Азії як геополітичного мосту, питання контролю піднімалось між ключовими міжнародними акторами, і яке не втратило актуальності і до тепер через наближеність до кордонів Росії з півдню і до Китаю з заходу. Центральна Азія є регіоном з великою кількістю проблем, які є схожими для всіх країн регіону, проте мають свої особливості в кожній з п'яти країн. В першу чергу, ці проблеми пов'язані з новими нетрадиційними загрозами, такими як релігійний екстремізм та радикалізм, які особливості в кожній з країн і не мають єдиного рішення. Це ставить під загрозу не лише країни регіону, а й сусідні країни до регіону Центральної Азії. В дослідженні обговорено і співвіднесено зв'язок між проектом «Один пояс, Один шлях» та безпекові загрози в регіоні Центральної Азії.

Ключові слова: міжнародна безпека; Китай; Центральна Азія; Один пояс, один шлях; екстремізм; радикалізм; геополітика.