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**FACTORS IMPEDING EFFECTIVENESS  
OF SECURITY COOPERATION BETWEEN THE EU  
AND CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES**

This article is devoted to the consideration of factors impeding effectiveness of security cooperation between the European Union and the countries of Central Asia. The author examines in detail the following aspects of the EU and Central Asian countries' interrelations: enhancing the international responsibility of the European Union on the world arena, the EU initiatives on the democratization of political processes in the countries of Central Asia, the spread of drug trafficking, the problems associated with terrorist activities in Central Asia, the investment climate of the Central Asian region, the perception of democracy by both the EU and the countries of Central Asia, the East-West confrontation and other. The authors reveal the current problems of cooperation, offering ways out of this situation, since the relationship between the EU and Central Asia, including the security sector, have the potential for further improvement. The brief characteristic of the EU's cooperation with each Central Asian country is summarized in the article; it identifies the advantages and disadvantages of the Central Asian countries on their way towards democracy. The political interests of each side are also analyzed in the article.

**Key words:** effectiveness, security, cooperation, European Union, Central Asia, geopolitics, democratization.

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**Еуропалық Одақ пен Орталық Азия елдері арасындағы  
халықаралық қауіпсіздік саласындағы әріптестіктің тиімділігіне  
кедергі келтіретін факторлар**

Мақалада Еуропалық Одақ пен Орталық Азия елдері арасындағы халықаралық қауіпсіздік саласындағы ынтымақтастықтың тиімділігіне кедергі келтіретін факторлар қарастырылады. Авторлар Орталық Азия елдері мен Еуропалық Одағының қарым-қатынасының келесі аспектілерін анықтап зерттеуде: Әлемдік сахнада Еуропалық Одақтың халықаралық жауапкершілігін арттыру, Орталық Азия елдеріндегі саяси үрдістерді демократияландыру бойынша Еуропалық Одақ бастамалары, есірткінің еркін айналымының таралуы, Орталық Азия территориясындағы террористік әрекеттерге байланысты мәселелер, Орталық Азия аймағының инвестициялық климаты, Еуропалық Одағының және Орталық Азия елдерінің демократияны қабылдауы, Шығыс-Батыс текетіресі және басқа да аспектілер. Авторлар әріптестіктің өзекті мәселелерін анықтап, қалыптасқан жағдайдан шығудың жолын ұсынуда. Өйткені Орталық Азия және Еу-

ропалық Одақ арасындағы қарым-қатынас, қауіпсіздік саласын қоса, алдағы уақытта одан әрі жақсарту әлеуетіне ие. Мақалада Еуропалық Одақтың Орталық Азияның әрбір елімен өзара қарым-қатынасына, артықшылықтары мен кемшіліктерін ескере отырып, қысқаша сипаттама берілген. Сонымен қатар, әр тараптың саяси мүдделеріне сараптама жасалған.

**Түйін сөздер:** тиімділігі, қауіпсіздік, ынтымақтастық, Еуропалық Одақ, Орталық Азия, геосаясат, демократияландыру.

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### **Факторы, препятствующие эффективности сотрудничества в сфере международной безопасности между Европейским Союзом и странами Центральной Азии**

В статье рассматриваются факторы, которые препятствуют эффективности сотрудничества в сфере международной безопасности между Европейским Союзом и странами Центральной Азии. Авторы прорабатывают следующие аспекты взаимоотношений Европейского Союза и стран Центральной Азии: повышение международной ответственности Европейского Союза на мировой арене, инициативы Европейского Союза по демократизации политических процессов в странах Центральной Азии, распространение незаконного оборота наркотиков, проблемы, связанные с террористической деятельностью на территории Центральной Азии, инвестиционный климат Центральноазиатского региона, восприятие демократии как Европейским Союзом, так и странами Центральной Азии, противостояние Восток – Запад и другие аспекты. Авторы выявляют актуальные проблемы сотрудничества, предлагая выходы из сложившейся ситуации, так как взаимоотношения между Европейским Союзом и Центральной Азией, включая сферу безопасности, имеют потенциал дальнейшего совершенствования. В статье приводится краткая характеристика сотрудничества Европейского Союза с каждой страной Центральной Азии по отдельности, выявляя положительные стороны и недостатки стран Центральной Азии на пути построения демократии, а также проведен анализ политических интересов каждой стороны.

**Ключевые слова:** эффективность, безопасность, сотрудничество, Европейский Союз, Центральная Азия, геополитика, демократизация.

## **Introduction**

The political interests of the EU in Central Asia are a phenomenon which is hardly tangible. It is the result of the fact that the EU still has not developed a unified mechanism for making foreign policy decisions. Several supranational bodies associated with the EU (European Council, European Commission and EU Council of Ministers), participate in decision-making. «To an outside observer, Europe acts as a bloc with all 27 member states discussing issues and unanimously making decisions on foreign policy. But behind the scenes lies a tacit agreement that the largest member states with the most resources take the lead» [1]. If there are different approaches to solving various problems of world politics (the problem in Iraq in 2003 revealed the differences in the approaches of a number of EU countries), then it is impossible to speak of an efficient foreign policy of the EU outside the Europe.

The main problem of the European policy is to achieve pseudo compromises, i.e. it means that the EU prefers not to solve problems but to reach a compromise by moving aside the problems in the future. A typical example is the decision to admit the 10 candidate countries, when the transition period has been drastically reduced, although the unavailability of most of these countries to join the European Union was evident.

The common European foreign and defense policy is actually a geopolitical project. Its essence is to transform the EU from an economic giant into a full-fledged geopolitical actor. As conceived by France and Germany, the EU will build up its armament and armed forces; at the beginning the number of European army would be sixty – hundred thousand, but further it is planned to bring it up to two hundred forty thousand people. These forces will be equipped with the latest military equipment, and they will possess strategic opportunities [2, с.124].

## Methods

The situation, connected with the security cooperation between the European Union and Central Asia, is mainly considered through systematic approach and with the use of quantitative methods. The authors study the documents, such as EU strategies, resolution of the UN Security Council, and apply comparative analysis in contemplation of level of security cooperation between each Central Asian country and the European Union.

## Results

The EU enlargement will inevitably lead to an increased international responsibility of the EU on the world arena. Ambassador Hugo Paemen has assumed that «as Europe continues to integrate domestically, it will be forced to reassess the image that it projects in the world. As it does so, institutional reform will become even more compelling if the European Union is to conduct the coherent external policy that most people in the world expect of it» [3]. The EU intends and would have to position itself as a geopolitical force in such regions as Middle East, the Mediterranean, the Caucasus and Central Asia, in its relations with Russia, Iran, China, South Asia, Asia Pacific, Latin America and Africa. Sooner or later, the united Europe will face with the problem of review of its foreign policy of 'Atlantic dimension', which means that it needs to review its relations with the United States and its policy within NATO.

As for Central Asia the official EU institutions presented a number of initiatives for democratization and pluralization of political processes in Central Asian republics [4], [5], initiatives to suppress the spread of drug trafficking throughout the territory of Central Asia [6]. Often the measures used by the EU countries in the early 1990's were intuitive reaction to a suddenly formed geopolitical vacuum in the vast expanses of Central Asia.

The political position of the EU for Central Asia is set out in the EU strategy [7], its implementation is under the control of the Council of the European Union [8]. The EU policy in the region focused on security and conflict prevention, elimination of sources of political and social instability, as well as improving the investment climate in Central Asia (with assistance of such programmes as TACIS, TEMPUS, etc.) [7].

In fact, one of the major challenges for the EU is to try to restrain the drug flow coming from Afghanistan via Tajikistan and further to Europe. Cen-

tral Asian traffic entirely provides a drug market in Europe and the USA with heroin. The problem of drug trafficking is inextricably linked with the problem of terrorist groups that put control over the drug flow, making them the source of terrorist activities' financing. The UN debates on drug trafficking resulted in the following affirmation: «Success in the global fight against trafficking in drugs..., as well as the associated problems of transnational organized crime and money-laundering, required interlocking national, regional and international strategies rooted in global cooperation» [9]. The Resolution 1373 of UN Security Council on counter-terrorism has been supported by the EU as an official response to Islamic groups in Central Asia. The support is rendered on all levels and the EU exerts every effort in order «to facilitate the implementation of the Resolution in the framework of the main assistance programmes and programming documents» [10].

The desire of the EU to improve the investment climate in the region is declared as a measure of political nature, although, obviously, the main reason is the desire of the biggest countries-investors to control their investments in the economies of the Central Asian region. Ultimately, the politicians in the EU aspire to form the so-called 'Security belt' or 'quarantine' in the region of Central Asia, verging on the Islamic world, and threatening the security of Europe by immigration, terrorism, as well as by distributing narcotics.

The EU as Western entity has its own idea of democracy, Central Asian countries, having declared their adherence to democratic transformation have their own view on that issue. Such misunderstanding can impede to cooperation and thereby complicate relations in security sphere. All participants of cooperation need to take into consideration the differences in diagnosis, prognosis and underlying beliefs of Western and Central Asian 'frames' [11].

Let us give a brief characteristic of cooperation of the EU with each country of Central Asia. The biggest challenge of the EU policy in Central Asia is a regional search for a partner and guide of the EU influence in the region, because none of them succeeded in establishing a democracy and they are still governed by authoritarian regimes. But still it would be impartially to say that the most suitable candidate for being such a partner should be considered Kazakhstan. 'At the regional level, Kazakhstan is a priority country within the European Union and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership' [12]. Economic performance and the intensity of political cooperation with the EU, including the OSCE, make Kazakhstan a key figure in Western policy, capable,

according to the EU, to convey a positive impulse to other regional players too. First of all it concerns the processes of democratization in the region.

The EU is developing a much more cautious policy regarding Kyrgyzstan. As the 'weakest link' both politically and economically Kyrgyzstan is a buffer zone between Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan, which will inevitably affect the maneuverability of its political actions, including in the face of the EU. 'In the aftermath of the ethnic clashes of 2010, the EU quickly mobilised funds for support of institutional reform and democracy consolidation, and has remained engaged in this area ever since' [13].

Tajikistan is considered to be the most dangerous zone in Central Asia. One of the lowest levels of life in the world, coupled with the problems of drug trafficking which has become chronic, passing through the territory of Tajikistan, unwittingly throw it into the embraces of Islamic radical groups. As a countermeasure against the radicalism the EU countries traditionally rely on the implementation of democratic reforms in the country. 'Tajikistan also benefits from thematic support through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, migration and asylum and funding channelled through global initiatives like Global Partnership for Education, and the Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation. Tajikistan will continue to benefit, under the Instrument for Stability and Peace, from support to address narcotics and the fight against organised crime' [14]. However, Emomali Rakhmonov's regime prefers to remain in Moscow's sphere of influence, offering it certain guarantees in exchange for loyalty to the policy of Russia in Central Asia [15].

Turkmenistan is involved in the sphere of the economic interests of the EU. Although the current regime in this country does not imply any democracy and is not establishing a regime of transparency, the economic benefits of a joint cooperation between the EU and the official Ashgabat in the oil and gas fields outweigh differences in political matters. 'The EU and Turkmenistan have also signed a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the field of energy (2008), to support the information exchange on energy policies, the diversification of transit routes and the promotion of renewable and energy efficiency' [16].

Uzbekistan is economically attractive for the EU because it has a potentially good industrial base. However semiauthoritarian model of government of Islam Karimov, coupled with the closeness of the economic impact from the outside, at the moment

does not give the EU hopes to develop a steady and constructive political or economic dialogue with Tashkent. 'Recent and ongoing EU projects in Uzbekistan have focused on the rule of law and criminal justice reform, social services – in particular mother and child health and inclusive education – rural development, civil society and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)' [17].

One more impediment in progressive cooperation between the EU and Central Asia follows from the European identity cultivated by the EU. It is most vividly revealed in the concept of «East vs. West», the issue which is profoundly analyzed by the prominent scientists Z. Brzezinski [18], and S. Huntington, who confirmed that 'West at the peak of its power confronts non-Wests that increasingly have the desire, the will and the resources to shape the world in non-Western ways' [19]. This is probably the oldest and most well-established of these one-to-one oppositions. One of the most striking oppositions of this kind presents in the idea that the East is 'another world', which was cultivated for many generations of Western or, more precisely, European thinkers. Nowadays the EU practices the same approach. The EU is a closed space, which in the political, economic, and cultural terms, is trying to realize itself primarily through the negation of the «Other». This «Other» is presented today mostly by migrants, as well by those political, economic and cultural realities that exist in the vast space and moving on Atlantic to the Pacific. The main shortcoming of the EU policy in respect of the megaregion is in the full absence of a sense that Europe – EU is a part of a single, indivisible Eurasian space. Today the Western Europe perceives Central Asia as five former Soviet republics, their population is subject to 'education', and natural resources should be extracted and exported outside the region.

But such an approach doesn't allow taking into consideration the fact that Central Asia is also a unique cultural and civilized space, where the people continue to find their place in the world. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and considering the fact of continuation of fundamental reformatting of the Eurasian space the main task of the EU should be new comprehension of the European essence, in other words the search for alternative interpretations of 'otherness'. There is a necessity to admit that the Western Europeans should finally realize that European civilization can exist only under conditions of diversity, especially at the time when its geopolitical significance is decreasing. Either overvaluation of material and intellectual resources

of the EU or the underestimation of a geopolitical potential of a broader Eurasian space (including the integrated European countries, Russia and Central Asia), as well as a one-sided self-image of Europe are those factors, which have become a hindrance to the EU itself in conduct of its foreign policy. Recognition of the need for the original forms in which there is a variety, which is not included into traditional West European system of views, will be vital factor for the successful opposition to future challenges.

The other factor impeding the effectiveness of security cooperation is most directly related to the Caspian region. We may say that the European Union is the second major political force that intends to play its own role and has its own interests in this region. At the first glance the EU could be characterized as a non-military power, but recently it has been making forward movements to develop its own collective foreign and defense policy. 'The European Security and Defence Policy aims to strengthen the EU's external ability to act through the development of civilian and military capabilities in Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management' [20]. Nevertheless the most significant shortcoming of EU policy in the Caspian region is the lack of a coherent political strategy [21, p.21]. The first step to be undertaken in this direction is the development of a common European energy policy and energy security of the EU by the European Commission. But there are evident obstacles: first, the European Commission and the European Council can't find common point of view on the future of energy supply in Europe and its interrelation to security and environmental issues, second, the national interests of individual states prevail over the pan-European, but the interests of oil companies are placed higher than the national ones, and third, the EU, relies primarily on the logic of market relations and economic feasibility in making decisions, which are greatly impeded by the discrepancy in estimates of hydrocarbon reserves in the Caspian Sea, the high investment costs, an extremely slow process of transformation in the countries of the region and a high potential for conflict, and finally, the low estimate of growth prospects of the European economy need in the export of hydrocarbons.

### Discussion

As a special player in Central Asia, the European Union today spends uneven policy toward the region. It is obvious that there is an imbalance

in the ratio of political and economic components of foreign policy of the EU. The absence of a coherent foreign policy within the EU deprives it from the real capabilities to penetrate into the region at the political level, reducing its actions to the activities of NGOs, human rights organizations and advocacy attempts to democratize fundamentally undemocratic societies.

The weakness of EU policy is due to both the organizational complexity and heterogeneity of union. Some of the EU countries are focused on Washington's actions, which in fact leads to the erosion of a common foreign policy of Brussels, the statements of some EU countries before the USA invasion of Iraq clearly reveals that fact [22].

There are several instruments of the European strategy: 'Partnership and Cooperation Agreements, Commission and Member States programmes, cooperation frameworks such as the Baku Initiative and political dialogue, using the variety of CFSP instruments. Cooperation with the UN, in particular the ECE, the OSCE, the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe, NATO, international financial institutions and with other regional organisations' [23]. In fact, Europe has no strategy for Central Asia and Kazakhstan, if we understand by this term a systematic policy. The analysts of think tank in the in-depth analysis, presented for the the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs have asserted that «the EU's Central Asia Strategy is ambitious, given that member state activities indicate only a minimal interest in the region. It is an area that is not a geopolitical priority for Europe» [24].

At the same time, the EU objectives in the region have been clear from the outset, but lacked the tools to achieve them. These aims are ambitious, and the means are very modest. At the EU level the situation found expression in the fact that the entire activity of the EU has been directed to the regions nearby its borders. The OSCE virtually has no resources to implement the European strategy. As for the policies of the European states taken separately, they suffer from low level of strategic interests, the lack of historical presence, and clearly defined priorities.

After September 11 the EU has got the possibility to contribute to the security in the region and to be involved in regional politics more extensively. European Commission apprehends that Caspian resources should play an important role in energy security of Europe in future (and at the same time could reduce the EU dependence on Russia.) In addition, the EU is concerned about

such problems as drug smuggling. In general, the strategic and normative objectives of the EU are the establishment of liberal democracy in the region, the rule of law and human rights through the liberalization and democratization, the opening of the region for the European and international economic system.

### Conclusion

Thus, the EU is not sufficiently taking into account all geopolitical and foreign policy factors, occurring in the region. In the beginning European politicians have done wrong conclusions concerning the regularities that have developed in Central Asia and have promoted the development of these countries in the way preferred by the EU. This sort of mistakes does not allow strengthening of the European policy in the region. The EU was occupied by inner problems, mainly connected with the expansion of the European Union and the formation of a common foreign policy and security policy. The weakest part of the EU as a geopolitical center is the lack of a unified strategy (geo-political will), though this will is extremely needed in order to diminish the concerns of Europe, connected with the various threats emanating from Central Asia - drug trafficking, illegal migration, the growth of social tension, winding down the democratic process, the establishment of outright dictatorships in some republics and growth of risk of economic collapse there, and finally, rise of radical and militant Islam, supported by interested external forces and fed by internal instability.

Kazakhstan's scientist M. Gubaidullina asserts, that «...the European Union is directly involved in regional security policy. In this scenario, the European Union can establish itself in Central Asia on the condition that it will continue to pursue a strategic line in the region consistently and strongly. Europeans form it with considerable caution, fearing existing risks in Central Asia, and with an eye on the US, Russia and China» [25].

She defined the policy of the EU in relation to Central Asia as 'liberal pragmatism', as the EU «... prefers soft penetration tools: development, support and even aid programs aimed at systemic reforms and modernization of each of the republics of Central Asia. The policy of the Central Asian states to the EU is like 'concomitant' pragmatism» [25].

In general, EU policy can be characterized as irrational strategy. This means that in fact the EU has not developed an effective strategy for the Central Asian region. But nevertheless there are some improvements in cooperative relations, including security ones, and certainly there is a potential for further improvement. For example, the Agreement on expanded partnership and cooperation between the European Union and Kazakhstan, signed on 21 December 2015, can be the first step on this way and «serve as an example for other Central Asian countries... The Agreement consists of more than 20 articles which reinforce the current level of relations between Kazakhstan and the European Union within the framework of economic, cultural, environmental, financial, investment, educational, and innovation collaboration» [26].

One more important and reasonable opinion is presented by Kazakhstan scientist K. Baizakova, she considers, that «undoubtedly, the EU cannot claim a full geopolitical presence in the region. This is due to the geographical distance and contradictions that exist in the EU itself. But the EU is another alternative player. And we need such a player from geopolitical considerations. Thus, the EU remains one of the most important geopolitical and geo-economic values that determine the future and security of Central Asia, but the EU must at last act as a serious force. In addition, the EU could more closely coordinate its strategy with other international actors» [27].

Thus, considering the abovementioned conclusions, it is possible to affirm that the factors impeding the effectiveness of security cooperation between the EU and Central Asian countries are removable and solvable but require real efforts in this direction from powers of both regions.

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