

“Impact of the Pandemic on Central Asia: Initial Lessons, Coronacrisis and Prospects for Transformation”

Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan, UWED and GCRF COMPASS
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Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The highest representative body of the state is the Oliy Majlis, the Supreme Assembly of the Republic of Uzbekistan. This body exercises legislative power. In accordance with the results of the Referendum of January 27 2002 the structure of the Oliy Majlis was changed. The Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan was enacted on June 1, 2004 as a bicameral parliament and consists of a Legislative chamber and a Senate.

The Senate (upper chamber) of the Republic of Uzbekistan consists of territorial representatives (senators) by 6 from: the Republic of Karakalpakstan, each region of Uzbekistan (now there are 12) and Tashkent city, chosen by the Legislature thereof. The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan also appoints 16 members of Senate from most authoritative citizens. All 100 senators elected for a term of five years. The Senate and the Legislative chamber of Oliy Majlis adopt and amend the Constitution and laws of Republic of Uzbekistan, legislatively regulate customs, currency and credit systems, problems of the administrative - territorial structure, and alteration of frontiers of the Republic of Uzbekistan and approve of the state's budget. They ratify of the decrees of the President on the establishment and abolition of the state institutions of country.

The Senate of Oliy Majlis shall elect its Chairmen and other officers and may determine of its Proceedings. The Senate ratifies of the decrees of the President on the appointment and removal of the higher officials of country and elections of the Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, Higher Economic Court of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and other representative bodies, ratifies the international treaties and agreements and realizes other activity.

The **University of World Economy and Diplomacy (UWED)** was established on September 23, 1992. It is functioning under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan. It is a higher educational institution that provides training, retraining and

advanced training for specialists and academic staff as well as conducts high-level fundamental and applied research in the areas of International Economics and Management; International Relations and Political Science; International Public and Private Law; Guiding and Interpreting.

The [GCRF COMPASS project](#) (ES/P010849/1, 2017-21) is an ambitious UK government capacity-building funding initiative, aiming to connect UK research with regional global scholarship, to address the challenges of growth and sustainability in the developing countries. Notably, the COMPASS project led by the University of Kent, together with the University of Cambridge as its partner, seeks to establish '**the hubs of excellence**' at the top-level HEIs in Belarus, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, to enable them to become the centres of knowledge sharing and transfer for **research integration, impact governance, and sustainable communities**.

Preface

The devastating impact of the coronavirus pandemic was a truly serious test for the entire world community in 2020. The spread of this virus has long passed from the category of “the most significant challenge to the sustainability of public health systems” into an existential threat to all spheres of human activity. In the fight against the growing threat, almost all countries of the world have chosen the path of isolation from the outside world, which means the closure of national borders, the cessation of civil transport communications, as well as the suspension or significant restriction of the activities of large industrial enterprises.

The current coronacrisis served as a test of management effectiveness, preparedness for extraordinary situations and the strength of the entire system in many countries of the world. The pandemic not only revealed sanitary and epidemiological omissions, but also had an impact on the geopolitical, economic and financial systems of states.

This pandemic has seriously damaged many years of efforts to expand globalization, develop international institutions and create regional cooperation mechanisms. The sharp rise of the role of sovereign states and national governments in the fight against coronavirus has generated widespread discussion about the end of the era of globalization and the failure of international and regional integration formats. Systemic gaps in the supply chains of goods, suspension of passenger services, closure of borders, tightening of visa rules, increased protectionism, and the lack of clear international coordination in the fight against the pandemic have largely paralyzed all the significant achievements of the globalization era.

The main tasks of states are

- the necessary systemic solutions for public health in order to prevent the spread of infection;
- development of a strategy for overcoming the coronacrisis, restoration of tourist flow, attraction of investments, economic growth, restoration of transport corridors, etc.;
- improving the regulatory framework for timely and coordinated response to emergencies;
- resistance to the infodemic in extreme conditions;
- introduction of innovative management methods;
- prevention of dramatic increase in poverty, inequality and food crisis.

Aims and objectives of the Conference:

- discussion of the development strategy for the post-pandemic period;
- investigating the best practices of confronting coronavirus infection;
- generalization and development of recommendations for overcoming the crisis in all areas;

- analysis of the transformation of international and regional systems of governance, cooperation and joint response to crisis situations;
- study of forcing the processes of digitalization of governance systems in both the public and private sectors;
- exploring legal practice, improvement of e-government legislation;
- assessment of the need to formulate national and universal normative acts in order to ensure a united response to such challenges in the future;
- discussion on strengthening and expanding both international and regional cooperation in coordinating measures to overcome the coronacrisis;
- analysis of the prospects for maintaining the positive results of globalization;
- discussion of paths to mitigate the negative social and economic effects of the coronavirus outbreak;
- exchange of views on the impact of the pandemic on the foreign policy of Central Asian states and their strategic non-regional partners.

Tanzila Narbaeva* - Welcoming speech

Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen. I am pleased to welcome all the participants of the international conference dedicated to today's topical issue.

In the last 100 years of human history, our planet has faced an unprecedented catastrophe - the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic around the world. The coronavirus pandemic, by its scale and scope, has not only caused problems in healthcare, but has also led to economic losses, and social and humanitarian crises. For all of us, the pandemic has become a very serious test. This catastrophe has shown once again, that the countries of the world are interconnected and calls for unification of forces of the world community.

Distinguished participants of the conference, ensuring security, peace and stability in Central Asia, the development of comprehensive cooperation with the countries of the region, including Afghanistan, have been identified as priorities of our country's foreign policy.

Due to the positive and radical changes taking place in Uzbekistan in recent years, our dialogue with the countries of Central Asia has intensified, and our relations have reached a qualitatively new level. As a result of the renewed foreign policy pursued under the leadership of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, friendly and mutually beneficial relations with Uzbekistan's neighbours in the region are steadily developing.

As a result, a completely new political environment is being created in Central Asia. Mutual trust and respect are being significantly strengthened. Economic ties are growing at an unprecedented rate.

Obstacles to cooperation have been removed. The region is becoming a zone of calm, sustainable development and good neighbourliness.

Today, at a time when the whole world, the whole of humanity, is going through a complex and testing period because of the coronavirus, our countries did not abandon each other. Through regular dialogue, the heads of our states identified the necessary measures for cooperation in combating the pandemic, and mutual assistance was provided.

Owing to this peril, they have been providing practical assistance to each other in solving the problems that arise for each state, including repatriation of citizens, providing transport corridors, rendering humanitarian assistance.

Uzbekistan, while mobilizing all available resources to combat the pandemic of the new type of coronavirus, is also rendering humanitarian assistance to many countries, including the neighbouring ones. In turn, the Central Asian countries are taking all measures to curb the epidemiological situation and protect the health of the population.

Distinguished participants of the event, thanks to the large-scale and systemic reforms carried out in all spheres of society over the past four years at the initiative of

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President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, our society is adequately fighting all pandemic-related challenges.

Comprehensive measures are being taken to combat the epidemic. Great efforts and funds have been directed to strengthening the healthcare system of the republic. There have been strict quarantine measures introduced, timely detection of infections and their treatment based on foreign experience.

The multilateral comprehensive epidemiological measures taken to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the pandemic and eliminate its consequences include the protection of the socially vulnerable, securing employment, provision of comprehensive support for small businesses and sectors of the economy.

Civil society, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and the media were widely involved and played a major role in the fight against the pandemic.

Based on our current experience, I would like to draw your attention to the following key areas in the fight against coronavirus.

First. In such a complex situation, one of the urgent tasks is to protect the health and lives of the population, as well as to gradually restore all sectors of the economy, to create conditions for people to earn a living.

Second. During the coronavirus pandemic, creating a source of income for families with worsened social situations and living conditions, protecting the labour rights of the population, especially women and youth are amongst the topical issues.

Third. It is important to provide social assistance to the poor and vulnerable population, especially women and children, and to organize charity events.

Fourth. Great attention should be paid to such measures as preventing conflicts in families, especially creating greater opportunities for women to enjoy full access to healthcare.

Fifth. Despite the current difficult situation, all countries must ensure the full implementation of all international obligations incurred and agreements signed, and continue the active development of mutually beneficial cooperation with each other.

In particular, it is necessary to develop international legal norms regulating the formation of "green corridors" for the uninterrupted transportation of goods under quarantine and the repatriation of citizens.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I believe that this video conference will result in important recommendations for post-pandemic development strategies in Central Asia, drastically reducing its impact on the economy, education, health and gender equality, addressing social issues and further strengthening cooperation between countries.

I think the results of our conference will be useful for all of us.

I wish you all success.

Thank you for your attention

Sodyq Safoev* - Lessons from the pandemic and imperatives for the future. COVID-19: Rise of a new geopolitical reality

The coronavirus pandemic has put **the world in disarray**. Today the questions on the table are: What will the main consequences of this pandemic be? What **impact** will it have on the current trends in Central Asia? How will it affect the **regional political and economic landscape**?

In order to answer these questions, one should realise that the world has not faced a **disaster of non-military nature** during the past century, which the COVID-19 turned out to be. Never before were **billions of people isolated** at homes, **state borders shut**, and the **world economy practically paralyzed**.

Here are some **observations**:

If all previous global crises – military or economic – led to the **alliance** of even longstanding rivalries, this virus **alienated** even most loyal partners.

The virus most devastatingly hit **developed countries**. Many of them unexpectedly showed that their healthcare services **have failed**.

This time, none of the great powers were able to play a role of **global leader**; what is even more important was that **no one expected** it from any of them.

The **international organizations** – both global and regional - showed a **lack of readiness** for the crisis. It was preordained by the absence of actionable legal and institutional levers.

Diplomacy failed to set the agenda and mobilize bilateral and multilateral efforts to resolve emerging problems.

A **recession** began in the **global economy**. Its main **reasons** are the **decrease in demand** for products of industries that depend on freedom of movement, the **destruction of economic ties**, as well as the reduction of financial resources' availability.

This naturally had a negative impact along the entire value chain, supply and demand for all sectors of the economy and segments of the population.

According to the IMF, we will end 2020 with a smaller global economy than at the start of the year. 170 countries will be worse off.

These initial observations lead to two conclusions:

First, the pandemic is **not just biological** — it is now geopolitical, economic and ecological too. The world will suffer **increasing consequences** unless the international community starts behaving differently.

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Second, we must understand that the **problems of today** are not caused by the pandemic. COVID-19 has only exacerbated the **acute controversy** that has been brewing for a long time. The international community has failed to develop **legal norms and mechanisms** governing global environmental, geopolitical and financial systems.

The next question for us: ***is it the beginning of de-globalization?***

One factor was repeatedly mentioned as driving the rapid and all-encompassing spread of the virus – **globalization**. Subsequently, some analysts concluded that the pandemic should lead to **de-globalization**.

However, mobility of labour, capital, goods and information opens up unprecedented prospects for increasing economic efficiency and human development. Resistance to globalization is **counterproductive**.

The pandemic once again has demonstrated the degree of **irreversible interdependence** among all states. It is compulsory to learn how to use the opportunities provided by globalization and the **synergy of international interaction**. Governments, international organizations, and experts' communities are obliged to forge **mechanisms for the survival** of humanity during such global challenges.

The next lesson from the ongoing pandemic is that political and economic **reforms must be accelerated**, not reversed.

At its peak, there were claims that the **democracy was crushingly defeated**, whereas authoritarianism appeared to be more efficient. Yet there is nothing new here. In times of crises, a craving for strong power always emerges.

The greatest challenges were faced by the very countries that could not **gain public confidence** due to the failure of government institutions, **corrupt systems** and an inability to engage with civil society.

However, many emerging democracies worldwide were quite successful. For instance, the **reformist government** of Uzbekistan has taken confident and timely steps.

A National Action Programme¹ was formulated, **mobilizing all public and private healthcare** resources. In collaboration with the **civil society**, a Social Protection System was implemented. The number of **recipients of social benefits** increased almost 1.5 times.

Special attention was given to **mitigating the impact of the pandemic on the economy**. A number of business assistance packages totalling close to **\$ 5 billion** have been adopted.

As a result, the country was able to avoid the **worst-case scenario** and achieve one of the **lowest death rates** in the world. Moreover, the government of Uzbekistan sent large consignments of humanitarian aid to **11 foreign countries**.

¹ President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's Address to the Oliy Majlis. // Official web-site of the President of Uzbekistan, 29 December 2020. <https://president.uz/en/lists/view/4057>

According to the World Bank, Uzbekistan is one of the few countries in the world whose economy will not decline but **grow steadily**.

There is no doubt that the effectiveness of the anti-crisis measures was **preordained** by the fact that Uzbekistan, under the leadership of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev since 2016, has embarked on **ambitious reforms** aimed at ensuring genuine political and economic modernization.

In parallel with Uzbekistan's dynamic transformation, its **foreign policy** has seen a substantial shift. Proactive steps have been taken towards building strong partnerships with its immediate neighbours, including Afghanistan.

The regional countries' response to this crisis reflects **a new reality**: the **state-building process** here is now complete. Central Asian countries are able to assume a **new geopolitical role**, moving away from a periphery of obscurity and political irrelevance.

As a result of recent trends, Central Asia has become more **open and predictable**. The states' increased connectivity and openness has led to the growth of foreign trade. The common goal is to transform Central Asia into **a single, capacious market** that will be attractive to foreign investors.

Central Asia is regaining its **enormous transit potential**, capable of providing the **shortest links** between the East and West, Asia and Europe.

This can be evidenced by the construction of the first ever **railway in Afghanistan**. Furthermore, the involved parties recently have agreed to extend it up to Herat opening access to the ports in the Persian Gulf. Likewise, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan are working on a new **trans-Afghan corridor** aimed at the construction of the Mazar-i-Sharif-Kabul-Jalalabad-Peshawar railroad, leading to the ports of the Indian Ocean.

These projects will not only increase the transit potential of all Central Asian states, but will also facilitate the **economic recovery and peace process** in Afghanistan.

This way a more favourable environment is emerging in the region, which allows to be **optimistic about the prospects** for its sustainable development.

At the same time, it is clear that only the **primary layer of problems** was resolved. More difficult questions are awaiting next. And today's conference, in my mind, is intended to contribute to the understanding of these next steps.

Allow me, in this regard, to make a number of suggestions for possible consideration in the upcoming discussions:

Our common task is to impart an **irreversible character** to the emerged trend of **strengthening trust** among the countries of the region. Foremost, this is due to the creation of **a legal framework** for cooperation.

It is important to work out **common fundamental principles** of cooperation in Central Asia. In my opinion, these principles could be enshrined in the **Charter for Regional Cooperation**. It should become a platform for further strengthening trust. First

of all, it means finalization of **demarcation of state borders**. Without this, it is premature to talk about full-fledged trust and the end of the transit period of the region's formation.

Secondly, it is a time to think about creating a system of **Collective Responsibility** for the sustainable development of the region. It should include a clear list of the rights and obligations of the states. Among them are environmental problems, a water-shortage, fight against transnational threats to peace and stability.

Thirdly, it is necessary to develop common approaches for the development of intra-regional trade. Its volumes are much lower than the world average. If the **trade turnover with neighbouring countries** in other regions is over 60%, the figure for Central Asia is ten times less.

Fourthly, we must develop effective mechanisms for **regional scientific cooperation**. There is an obvious need for **joint research** by the analytical structures.

I hope this forum will become one of the important steps in this direction.

I sincerely wish its participants meaningful and productive discussions.

Rahmatulla Nurimbetov* - COVID-19 pandemic as a serious test for the SCO

The coronavirus pandemic has been a major test for cooperation within international organizations. The unilateral measures taken by many countries to combat the pandemic have undermined the work of many international and regional structures.

But on the other hand, over time, it has become increasingly clear that states alone are unable to successfully combat the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath. This could be a good opportunity for international organizations to prove their effectiveness.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which includes four Central Asian countries (Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan), Russia and the largest countries in Asia – China, India, and Pakistan, is cited by international experts and the media as one of the most successful regional organizations. So, can this organization demonstrate its effectiveness in fighting the pandemic? It is very reasonable to put this question on the agenda, because China is one of the leading members of the SCO, and it is from this country that the coronavirus began to spread around the world. Meanwhile, Beijing says it has "won" the disease.

First of all, it should be noted SCO activities also significantly suffered because of the pandemic. In 2019-2020, large-scale work was planned by the Russian Federation, which is chairing the organization. In particular, in accordance with the Action Plan of the Russian Presidency of the SCO, a total of about 100 events at various levels were expected to be held during the year. However, to date, not even half of them have been implemented. Most meetings and events were held in video conference format which does not give rise to the expected results. This, in turn, has a negative impact on the preparation of many documents being developed within the SCO and on the reconciliation process between the eight member states. Due to the pandemic, the Russian side was forced to postpone indefinitely the SCO Summit to be held on July 22-23 in St. Petersburg.

The fact that the leaders of the member states will not be able to meet in person within the framework of the Summit is a great loss for the organization. One of the advantages of the SCO is that it is a convenient platform for direct discussion of issues related to the strategic activities of the organization in the framework of the Summits with the participation of leaders. In addition, many bilateral meetings and talks are also held within the framework of the Summit.

Second, the pandemic is already undermining multilateral economic cooperation between the SCO member states, which has not yet gain strong roots. In particular, the fact, that China, the largest political and economic member of the organization, has imposed severe restrictions on foreign economic relations, closed borders, disrupted traffic, restricted contacts between business circles and businesses is seriously affecting economies of other SCO members as well as trade and economic relations within SCO in general.

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And the lack of high-level meetings due to the pandemic, does not allow the discussion of these topical issues within the SCO.

Third, no common strategy to combat COVID-19 has been developed among the SCO member states. Of course, certain efforts and initiatives in this direction are being put forward by the member states and the Secretariat of the organization in Beijing. However, they are not systematic and consistent.

The issue is being discussed within the framework of the main working bodies of the SCO - the Council of National Coordinators, the Council of Foreign Ministers and the Council of Ministers of Health, and there have been conducted also several joint events (in the form of videoconferences). Also, several statements were made on further strengthening solidarity between the SCO member states in the fight against COVID-19, and there were verbal agreements on the establishment of a Coordinating Working Group between the Ministries of Health to combat the disease.

However, these agreements and statements still remain on paper for now.

Fourth, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that the SCO has not developed effective, qualitatively new mechanisms for the prevention and joint fight against dangerous infectious diseases and other cross-border threats, compromising security. The lack of such a system and working dialogue and even exchange of experience between the relevant agencies (e.g., Ministries of Health and Emergency Situations, scientific institutions) has led to the rapid spread of the disease throughout the SCO space. For example, if such a system was established within the SCO, China could have quickly and openly communicate information about the disease to other partner countries.

One more thing is very noteworthy. Leading members of the SCO, such as Russia, China and India, are known to be developing a vaccine against COVID-19. Theoretically, the SCO could be a convenient platform for their common cooperation in this area. There are certain reasons for this. First, as noted, no such system has been established within the organization. Second, these three countries are considered rivals not only in the superiority in production of the vaccine, but also in other priorities on the SCO agenda.

In conclusion, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, cooperation within the SCO is expected to decline in the near and medium term. During this period, all its members will be engaged in rebuilding their national economies and will naturally refrain from multilateral initiatives. The lack of effective working mechanisms and strategic policy documents in the trade, economic and health spheres in the organization does not allow to put from statements into practice the joint fight against the consequences of the pandemic.

On the other hand, the pandemic is also an opportunity to discuss in detail the ways to develop broad and effective cooperation in the SCO and to overcome the problems in this area. The extent to which this is used will depend on the formation of political will among member states to reach a strategic agreement on the future of the organization and its priorities on the agenda.

Andrey Kazantsev* - The coronavirus epidemic: international political aspects related to Central Asia.

The coronavirus epidemic is a very complex phenomenon that not only has medical but also international political aspects. It is the latter that I want to talk about, as a specialist in international relations.

1. *Coronavirus as an issue of the effectiveness of domestic policy.* It should be noted that the coronavirus epidemic imposes a very heavy burden on the political and administrative systems of all countries of the world, including the countries of Central Asia. At the same time, how the systems cope shows their effectiveness. If the systems fail, then this creates problems not only for the population of a given state, but also for neighbours, including Russia, since this territory can turn into a long-term hotbed of transboundary infection.

The most "problematic" in this regard are Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. In both countries, the medical infrastructure (especially in the provinces) is in very poor condition after the collapse of the USSR due to a lack of funding. Also, the authorities of both countries, including, possibly for political reasons, for some time officially claimed that there was no epidemic in their countries, and, as a number of experts believe, in this regard, they were late with the introduction of quarantine measures. Tajikistan, in the end, introduced quarantine, but in Turkmenistan the situation is still quite difficult. Moreover, if we recall that the previous president of Turkmenistan, Saparmurat Turkmenbashi, at some point completely eliminated the entire medical system with the exception of the one located in the capital, and Tajikistan suffered from a severe civil war, then the situation in both countries is predictably difficult.

Turkmenistan. Due to the lack of reliable information, the situation in this country is the least studied. Official sources of information distort the situation for propaganda purposes, while opposition sources of information may not fully describe the situation objectively.

Among the measures taken by the country's leadership, in March-April, the following are noted:

- strengthening the system of sanitary and phytosanitary control, veterinary supervision, primarily at the border; restricting the entry of foreigners, the introduction of quarantine for citizens returning from abroad;
- cancellation of some mass events, strengthening of educational work in enterprises and in the education system;
- measures for disinfection, primarily by measures of traditional medicine;
- strengthening of medical control inside the country, aimed at identifying possible virus carriers; introduction of a number of restrictions on movement within the country.

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At the same time, in the initial stages of the epidemic in neighbouring countries, Turkmenistan continued to hold mass events¹ and celebrate holidays with the participation of a large crowd of people (the celebration of Nowruz, an annual greening campaign, a nationwide bike race, the day of the Turkmen horse, football matches).

Tajikistan. Among the measures taken by the government in March and early April, the following can be noted:

- checks in areas of arrival from abroad;
- air traffic was interrupted and land borders were closed;
- recommendations to airlines not to sell tickets to those who plan to come to the country from Italy, Iran, Afghanistan, China and South Korea;
- recommendations to travel companies to temporarily refuse to organize both domestic and foreign tours;
- the Council of Ulema of Tajikistan issued a fatwa that allows mosques to be closed in order to prevent the potential spread of coronavirus;
- Cancelled a number of festive events;
- Established production of our own antiseptics (sodium hypochlorite)².

Experts also note the shortcomings of the measures taken in the country (in late March-early April, mass events were not stopped, schoolchildren were not sent on vacation or online education). It was only at the end of April that additional measures were announced, similar to those introduced in Russia and neighbouring countries in the region.

In contrast to these cases, the situation in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan is much better due to the fact that quarantine was introduced in these countries in a timely manner, and the state of the medical infrastructure is better. In Kazakhstan, GDP per capita is comparable to that in Russia (i.e., it is at the level of average development), and the costs of maintaining healthcare were quite high in comparison with other post-Soviet countries. Uzbekistan has a fairly effective management system, which also makes it possible to effectively respond to the challenges of the coronavirus.

It must be admitted that in connection with the coronavirus, certain problems have emerged with migrants in Russia. Quite a lot of people who worked in the sectors of the economy affected by the epidemic and quarantine (for example, in construction) found themselves without work and means of living. The Government of the Russian Federation took a number of measures aimed at improving the situation of migrants who continued to work actively, including those from Uzbekistan.

In the early stages of the epidemic, an important problem was also the situation with the citizens of Central Asian countries who could not leave Russia due to the closure of

¹ Azatlyk Radiosy website. Published on 2 May 2020 at: <https://rus.azathabar.com/a/30588714.html>

² Tajikistan submits all tests to WHO. Regnum.ru website. Published on 22 April 2020 at: <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/2925380.html>

transport links. This happened, among other things, due to the insufficient organisation of a number of Central Asian countries themselves.

2. Coronavirus as an issue of international cooperation. The countries of the region (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan) directly border the People's Republic of China, where this virus first appeared, as well as (Turkmenistan) with Iran, where the spread of the epidemic turned out to be extremely wide. There is a fear that in conditions of war, Afghanistan, neighbouring Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, could be severely affected by the epidemic.

Experts have expressed different versions regarding the further development of the coronavirus epidemic in Central Asia. It can follow both the Sino-Korean scenario (rapid decay) or the Italian version (long-term growth). However, the implementation of the Sino-Korean scenario requires serious quarantine measures and good healthcare systems. There are fears that the situation in Turkmenistan may ultimately follow the Brazilian scenario (where the leader of the country denied any threat from the coronavirus for a long time which was followed by the situation going out of control), which would be undesirable for all neighbours of Turkmenistan.

Coronavirus is the enemy of all states in the world, in this regard, their maximum rapprochement and joint struggle against this evil would be natural. Unfortunately, however, a number of great powers and the organizations they support are trying to use aid to the Central Asian countries in the fight against coronavirus in order to promote their own "soft power".

There is also a Public Relations war going on between Beijing and Washington. The regional media of Central Asia are actively used for this. At the same time, there is an active discussion of both global topics (discussion about who created COVID-19) and those related directly to the region. In Kazakhstan, the Central Reference Laboratory (CRL) in Alma-Ata, built with financial support from the US defence department on the basis of the former Soviet Plague Control Research Institute, was at the centre of public discussions. A similar situation has developed around the National Centre for Highly Dangerous Infections (formerly KSCQZI)³ which was also funded by the US.

3. Coronavirus and economic cooperation. The key story for the international relations scholar is the impact of the epidemic on international economic cooperation.

In Central Asia, based on the experience of the fall in world oil and gas prices in 2014, a serious economic crisis is expected. For Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, we are talking about direct losses in export revenues, while Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan will suffer from a decrease in the remittances of migrants from Russia and Kazakhstan.

Turkmenistan still faces serious problems (for example, in terms of food supply) due to the previous phase of the fall in oil prices in 2014. In 2019 (partly as economic aid) Russia agreed to purchase about 5.5 billion cubic meters at a price no more than 110

³ Coronavirus and the expansion of the American army in Kazakhstan. Stan Radar website. Published on 23 April 2020 at: <https://stanradar.com/news/full/39264-koronavirus-i-ekspansija-amerikanskoj-armii-v-kazahstane.html?fbclid=IwAR1u0aLsSNQNkDEs4dfYY3vt0WVYvMDNWfYWvKEh5o2cOOcl9WzBSozSkwQ>

dollars per thousand cubic meters. In fact, at the moment, this is the main expected foreign exchange income of the country. In early 2017, due to an economic dispute, supplies of Turkmen gas to Iran were cut off. The main consumer of Turkmen gas is China (about 35 billion cubic meters), however, a significant share of payments for gas goes towards paying off debt for the development of Turkmen gas fields and the construction of pipelines.

Kazakhstan will suffer more from the fall in oil prices than other countries in the region. So far, expert assessments of the threat vary. According to the forecast of the Ministry of National Economy of Kazakhstan, the country's GDP by the end of 2020 will amount to 69.7 trillion tenge (\$ 155.5 billion), which is 0.9 percent less than in 2019⁴. It is indicated that the volume of exports will decrease by 32 percent, to 35.1 billion US dollars, and imports - by 22 percent, to 26.6 billion US dollars. Analysts at Fitch Ratings expect Kazakhstan's GDP to shrink by 1.5 percent in 2020⁵. The Asian Development Bank is more optimistic, predicting only a decrease in growth rates in 2020 to 1.8 percent⁶.

A decrease in Chinese investment in the region is also expected due to a slowdown in economic growth in the PRC. After the 2014 crisis, it was the economic support of China that was the main factor in stabilizing the economic situation in Central Asia; now this factor is beginning to disappear. China is reducing not only investment, but also resource consumption. Since March 2020, China has reduced the volume of its purchases of Turkmen and Kazakh gas⁷.

Two countries: Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan will suffer the most from the reduction in money transfers from labour migrants working in Russia (and a number of other countries, primarily Kazakhstan). The transfers will decrease due to the fact that: 1) under conditions of quarantine and the accompanying decline in economic activity, many migrants will be left without work⁸; 2) the exchange rate of the national currency of a number of countries, first of all, of Russia, is falling; accordingly, the amounts transferred in dollars will decrease. A similar situation already developed in 2015, but then the crisis was on a much smaller scale.

Uzbekistan will also suffer certain losses. In absolute terms, most of the labour migrants from Central Asia transferred money from Russia to citizens of Uzbekistan, but the share of Uzbekistan's GDP in 2013 from remittances amounted to 9.69 percent, in 2015 during the crisis it dropped to 3.74 percent, then again began to grow to 12 percent of Uzbekistan's GDP in 2017 and 15 percent in 2018⁹. In 2013, remittances accounted for almost 44 percent of Tajikistan's GDP, in 2014 just over 37 percent, in 2015 income fell to 29 percent, in 2016 to 27 percent, but then this share rose again to 31 percent in

⁴Kazakhstan expects a recession. Published on 2 April 2020 at <https://kursiv.kz/news/ekonomika/2020-04/kazakhstan-ozhidaet-recessiya>

⁵ What will happen to Kazakhstan economy in 2020. Published on 20.04.2020 at: <https://kursiv.kz/news/ekonomika/2020-04/cto-budet-s-ekonomikoy-kazakhstana-v-2020-godu>

⁶ The ADB told about the positive forecast for the GDP of Kazakhstan. Published on 3 April 2020 at: ... <https://kursiv.kz/news/ekonomika/2020-04/v-abr-rasskazali-o-pozitivnom-prognoze-po-vvp-kazakhstana>

⁷ What the fall in oil prices can turn out for Central Asia. Published on 16 March 2020 at: <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/central-asia-economy-gas-oil/30490014.html>

⁸ Russians will replace migrants at construction sites. Published on 23 April 2020 at: https://lenta.ru/news/2020/04/23/building/?utm_source=news.mail.ru

⁹ What the fall in oil prices can turn out for Central Asia. Published on 16 March 2020 at: <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/central-asia-economy-gas-oil/30490014.html>

2017 and 29 percent in 2018¹⁰. Remittances accounted for 30 percent of Kyrgyzstan's GDP in 2014 and fell to about 25 percent in 2015, then rose to 29 percent in 2016 and to 33 percent by 2018¹¹. Routes alternative to Russia and Kazakhstan for labour migration from Central Asia (Middle East countries, Turkey, Japan, South Korea) are also closed due to the coronavirus epidemic. Of course, a complete “zeroing” of the transfers of labour migrants cannot be expected. Many of them have adapted to the epidemic situation (for example, workers specializing in the delivery of goods in large Russian cities). However, the size of the transfers of migrants from Russia is already decreasing, and many of them have been left without work.

Kyrgyzstan also additionally suffers from a reduction in the transit trade of Chinese goods in the EAEU countries (primarily Russia), at certain periods of time, according to various estimates, this share reached one third of the country's GDP (a significant share of this trade was “in the shadows”, which makes estimates difficult).

Falling out of a significant share of GDP in 2020-2021 will lead to an increase in social and political tension in all countries of Central Asia. Unfortunately, this will further exacerbate a number of negative security trends, which are characteristic of the region's countries. These include, first of all, the difficult political situation that has developed in neighbouring Afghanistan, where the gradually ongoing withdrawal of American troops is accompanied by an internal political crisis, continuing clashes of government forces with the Taliban and the infiltration of ISIS, including in the areas adjacent to Tajikistan and Turkmenistan¹².

The economic crisis can also provoke a “loosening” of the internal political situation in a number of countries in the region. This is especially true for Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. In Kazakhstan, the negative impact of the economic situation on the political situation related to transit is possible after Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev took office in March 2019. Already in 2019, there were more anti-government demonstrations in Kazakhstan than in the entire decade before 2019¹³. Parliamentary elections (Jokorgu Kenesh) are due to be held in Kyrgyzstan on 4 October 2020, and the difficult economic situation could contribute to the victory of opposition parties.

In the face of growing economic difficulties, the countries of Central Asia and Russia should step up cooperation in order to overcome problems mutually.

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¹¹ Ibid

¹² Kazantsev A. ‘Coronavirus epidemic and the situation in Central Asia’. Published on 7 May, 2020 at: <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/epidemiya-koronavirusa-i-situatsiya-v-tsentralnoy-azii/>

¹³ “People are tired.” 2019 protests: causes and consequences. Published on 30 December 2019 at: <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/kazakhstan-2019-year-protests-sauses-and-consequences/30351048.html>

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Ibragim Mavlanov* - Lessons for the post-pandemic period: preventing future threats to national security

The COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic has had a huge negative impact on the development of almost all countries in the world and their interconnections. Tens of thousands of scientific studies have been published on the extent of this influence from various perspectives.

In our opinion, this once again showed and confirmed the ineffectiveness, unpreparedness and fragility of the entire national security system in many countries of the world in preventing internal and external threats of a non-military nature.

What was missing? Most countries have focused and are focusing their attention on the development of military or defense capabilities to counter military, terrorist, extremist and other threats of a similar nature. Non-military threats that have a negative and destabilizing effect on the environment, economy, resource management, information of social, scientific and technical nature, energy, innovation, law, culture, and security of the country are a result of underestimation of their penetration, influence and consequences.

Most non-military threats are of latent, creeping and transformational nature over extended periods of time. They must be identified in advance by means of observation and tracing, by locating them not only in the country, but also abroad, especially through diplomatic ties. Therefore, the effective provision of national security in each country, keeping in mind its national interests and values, should be entrusted not only to the system of military and security structures, but also to the entire system of state power, its institutions and apparatus.

The importance of preventing and ensuring state security and protecting the interests of the Republic of Uzbekistan from external and internal threats are mentioned in the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures to improve the system of state security of the Republic of Uzbekistan"¹.

We systematically studied the potential internal and external threats to national security systems and have been repeatedly published², as well as reported at international and republican conferences.

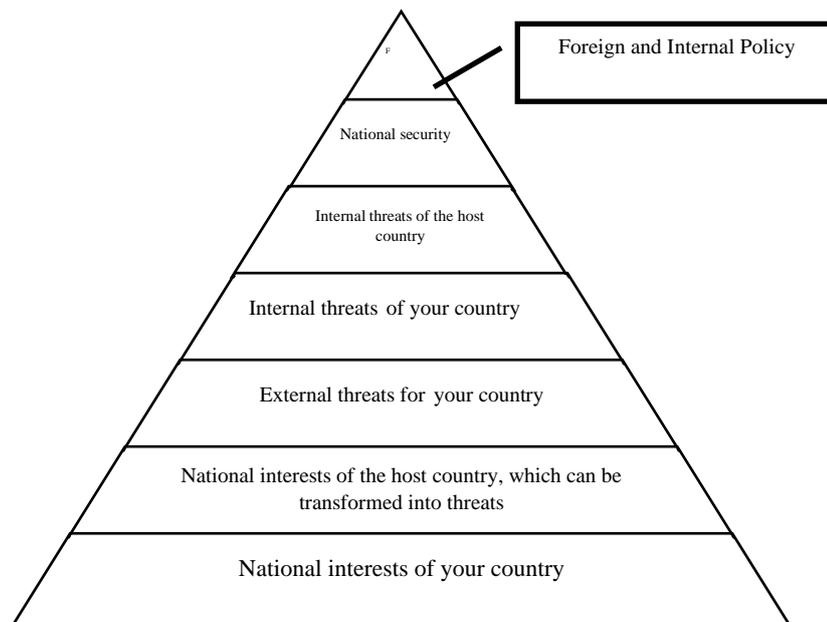
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¹ Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. UP-5379 dated 14 March 2018 "On measures to improve the state security system of the Republic of Uzbekistan". Accessed at: [UzA https://www.gov.uz/ru/news/view/15383](https://www.gov.uz/ru/news/view/15383)

² Economic diplomacy and its role in ensuring the national interests of Uzbekistan. - Tashkent: UWED, Higher School of Diplomacy, 2019; Economic diplomacy. - Moscow: "Aspect Press", 2016; Some theoretical aspects of national interests and security // International relations: politics, economics, law. - Tashkent, 2014. - No. 1. - P.5-14; Threats Assessment of Terrorism and Security Measures: The Case of Uzbekistan // Central Asia and Regional Security (September 30, 2013) / Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies (Kolkata). Kolkata (India): KW Publishers, 2014. P. 173-186; Economic diplomacy and security. - Tashkent: UWED, 2010; Threats to Regional Security in Central Asia: Focus on Uzbekistan // AAKROSH, Asian Journal on Terrorism and Internal Conflicts. - New Delhi, 2007. - Vol.10. - No. 36. - P. 52-69; Economic diplomacy. In 2 volumes - Tashkent: UWED, UNDP, 2007. Vol. 1.

The formation of domestic and foreign policies and their implementation should be performed on a permanent basis and go through systematic evaluation with regard to the impact of external and internal threats (Fig. 1.). At the same time, national security should be considered not only as the protection of national interests, but also the readiness of government institutions to create in advance mechanisms for implementation and protection of national interests and the country's development.

Fig. 10. Diagram of the relationship between national interests, security, foreign and domestic policy



At the present stage of the post-pandemic period of historical development, there are objectively real internal and external threats to the national security of the state, and their prevention should be an essential element of the national security strategy. The identification of possible threats to national security and development of measures to prevent them or minimize their negative consequences are of paramount importance in the system of ensuring national security.

Threats in the sphere of the national economy of any state are complex in nature and are usually caused by low rates of growth of the economic potential of the state, an increasing lag in technological development, the level and quality of life of the population, inefficient use of resources, a decrease in the ability to adequately resist threats associated with changing trends in world markets and world globalization.

Therefore, the activities of public authorities at all levels should be aimed in the coming period at preventing and countering the following external and internal threats to national security:

- A decline in the population and its ageing, which in the long term entails a significant reduction in the labor potential of the state and an increase in the demographic burden on the declining working-age population;

- Degradation of social institutions, restriction of access of low-income population groups to health care system, education; an increase in the morbidity of a significant part of the population, uncomfortable living conditions, reduction and deterioration in the structure of the human diet, poor ecological environment, etc.;
- Criminalization of the economy, its penetration into key sectors of the economy due to the weakening of the state control system;
- Preservation and possible strengthening of significant property differentiation (property stratification) of the population with a high proportion and possible increase in the population living below the poverty level (subsistence minimum), and the unemployed, limiting effective demand and economic growth in the state and leading to a disruption of social peace and public consent;
- Structural deformation and inefficiency of the structure of the economy, expressed in the preservation of its fuel and raw materials orientation, insufficient development of science-intensive and high-tech industries, especially in mechanical engineering, a low level of investment activity, strengthening of the objectively existing territorial differentiation of the levels of economic and social development of regions;
- Low competitiveness of the economy with a possible tendency to further decrease, due to: the backwardness of the technological base of most industries, high energy and resource intensity, low product quality and high production costs; low innovation activity, technical and technological backlog of production; deterioration of the state of scientific and technical potential, loss of positions in certain areas of scientific and technological development, in part due to “brain drain” abroad and to other areas of activity, loss of prestige of intellectual work; curtailment of applied research and studies, insufficient quantity and quality of new or improved products, technologies and management procedures; reduction of R&D funding, including from the state budget;
- overexposure of the country's economy, of all its major spheres, on the external economic environment, on political and economic decisions of integration groups of foreign countries, international financial and trade organizations that infringe on interests in the field of economics. Factors that determine threats in the foreign economic sphere: the existing fuel and raw materials orientation of country exports; weak government support for exports, primarily of science-intensive products; the transfer of industries and enterprises that are of key importance for the economy and ensuring the national security of the state, under the control of non-residents and the re-profiling of these industries in a direction that contradicts the interests of the development of the domestic economy; maintaining the state's dependence on international financial organizations and foreign states in connection with foreign debt obligations; dependence of the national monetary system on international or national currencies and balance of payments of other countries; formation of discriminatory for the country pricing mechanisms in foreign markets;

- Acquisition of enterprises by foreign firms in order to displace domestic products from both the external and internal markets and, as a result, their conquest of the internal market for many types of consumer goods and the country's dependence on imports of many types of products, including strategic value, food goods, as well as components for mechanical engineering;
- Underdeveloped transport infrastructure for export-import operations and other areas that need to be systematically studied.

In conclusion, the identification of threats to national security at any stage and the development of measures to prevent and eliminate them should become the most important task of every government body.

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Gulnoza Ismailova* - Higher education in Uzbekistan: genesis and way of overcoming the crisis based on international experience

Keywords: *education, competencies, distance learning, pandemic.*

Introduction. The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan establishes the right of everyone to education¹. Back in the early 1990s, when Uzbekistan felt an acute shortage of new personnel, education was proclaimed a priority in the field of social development of the Republic of Uzbekistan. On 29 August 1997, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Education" and the National Program for Personnel Training were adopted, which laid the foundation for the educational system of independent Uzbekistan (*today these two acts have lost their force – G.I.*). These normative acts, at the stage of the formation of the statehood of Uzbekistan, were developed based on an analysis of world achievements in the education system and were focused on the formation of a new generation of personnel with a high professionalism, creative and social activity, the ability to independently navigate public-political life, and capable of setting and solving problems for the future.

In 2001, by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the state educational standard of higher education² was approved, it reflected the public standards for taught specialties, aimed at the formation of theoretical and practical knowledge, abilities and skills in specific specialties. This normative act determined the general requirements for the content, curricula, and programs of disciplines in areas and specialties of higher education, focusing on the formation of practical professional and research competencies.

The sphere of education provides for multifaceted relations and it has undergone reforms several times. Over the past 4 years, great changes have occurred in the development of the economy and management system in terms of personnel training in Uzbekistan. In the Strategy of Actions on five priority directions of development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017-2021³ in the development of the social sphere, the task of improving the sphere of education is particularly noted.

To determine the priority directions of the systemic reform of higher education in the Republic of Uzbekistan, to raise the process of training independently-minded highly qualified personnel with modern knowledge and high spiritual and moral qualities to a qualitatively new level, to modernize higher education, develop the social sphere and economic sectors based on advanced educational technologies, there was approved the Concept for development of higher education system of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030⁴.

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¹ The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Accessed at: <https://lex.uz/docs/4032775>

² Accessed at: <https://www.lex.uz/docs/359620>

³ Accessed at: <https://lex.uz/docs/3107042>

⁴ Accessed at: <https://lex.uz/ru/docs/4545887>

Today, 114 higher educational institutions function in the Republic, of which 93 are domestic and 21 are foreign higher educational institutions and their branches. In particular, over the past 3 years, 6 higher educational institutions and 17 branches, as well as 14 branches of foreign higher educational institutions have been created⁵. Although, the level of enrollment in higher education remains low and the content of the current qualification requirements does not correspond to the current realities.

The dilemma of 2020. President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, in his Address to the Oliy Majlis on 24 January 2020⁶, paid special attention to education. He put forward an initiative to improve the standards of higher education, based on foreign experience; instructed to revise the directions and structure of the disciplines studied, to reduce the number of disciplines that are not related to the acquired specialty. Taking into account the requirements of the present time, a new version of the Law "On Education" was adopted on 23 September 2020⁷. It aims to help eliminate problems in the education system, radically improve the system to the level of international standards, and improve the quality of education.

Universities will introduce advanced higher education standards, in particular, a phased transition from education, whose curricula are aimed at obtaining theoretical knowledge, to an education system aimed at developing practical skills based on international experience.

The Law "On Education" includes such norms and rules that were not previously provided for by legislation, such as teaching and upbringing, taking into account national and universal values, providing students with the necessary amount of knowledge, qualifications, and skills according to the curricula of basic secondary education, developing students' abilities of independent thinking and analysis, adult learning, inclusive education and private teaching. These norms were developed by the deputies of the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the process of working on the bill. While improving it, 238 norms and rules were revised, 123 norms were excluded from the project by reducing the number of departmental regulatory documents and 54 were replaced by articles of direct action. At the same time, the classification of forms of obtaining education has been expanded, with a resident (full-time) and non-resident (evening, distance, part-time learning, e-learning, which is remarkable)⁸.

Today distance learning is more relevant than ever. The coronavirus pandemic is a global crisis with huge consequences for people as well as the education system. More than 1.5 billion students and youth across the planet are or have been affected by school and university closures due to COVID-19⁹. COVID-19 has forced more than 1 billion

⁵ Accessed at: <https://lex.uz/ru/docs/4545887>

⁶ Address by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev to the Oliy Majlis. Accessed at: <https://www.un.int/uzbekistan/news/address-president-republic-uzbekistan-shavkat-mirziyoyev-oliy-majlis-0>

⁷ Accessed at: <https://lex.uz/ru/docs/5013009>

⁸ Accessed at:

https://www.norma.uz/novoe_v_zakonodatelstve/novyy_zakon_ob_obrazovanii_korotko_o_glavnom

⁹ Accessed at: <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/globalcoalition>

students and youth out of school, triggering the world's biggest educational technology (edtech) implementation in history, almost overnight¹⁰.

“Closing schools and transferring students to distance learning is ineffective in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic”¹¹, said Hans Kluge, Director of the European Regional Bureau of the World Health Organization. One of the biggest dilemmas governments face is the question of schools amid the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic. School closures can lead to a “lost generation” of students and it will become more difficult for parents to return to work. Leaving schools open can expand the spread of the disease. If governments choose the latter, they will need additional ways to contain the virus. The World Health Organization adopted the 2019 Coronavirus Infection (COVID-19) Transmission Research Protocol in Schools and Other Educational Institutions, dated 30 September 2020¹², to clarify recommendations for case definitions and surveillance to characterize key epidemiological parameters of infection. However, they did not determine exactly whether it is worth continuing to study online or in-class.

According to a new Ipsos survey for the World Economic Forum by 2025, higher education will be a hybrid of in-person and online learning¹³. As a second wave of COVID-19 saw cases resurging across the globe in October, more than 27,500 adults in 29 countries were asked how they saw higher education being conducted in their country, five years from now. Almost three-quarters (72%) of respondents said higher education in their country would be conducted online at least as much as in person, if not more. The pandemic saw as many as 1.3 billion learners affected this year, as schools and universities were forced to close, and adopt ‘blended’ learning strategies, which mixes online teaching with face-to-face teaching¹⁴.

Following the closure of schools during the first wave of the pandemic, many European leaders have pushed for allowing students to resume normal classes after the summer break. Now that new cases of the disease are on the rise again, the question has arisen: what to do with schools.

A couple of decades ago, a person wishing to acquire new knowledge was forced to regularly visit educational institutions or libraries. Today you only need a computer with Internet access to study. Sudden immersion in distance education revealed the pros and cons of this system.

How will higher education be conducted in 5 years? One in four adults surveyed (23%) believe higher education will move mostly online, while around half (49%) think it will be split between in-person and online. Only 29% think it will be delivered only or mostly in-person. Nearly half of respondents in China (48%) and Japan (47%), which have had relatively low numbers of COVID-19 cases, think traditional in-person teaching

¹⁰ Resetting the way we teach science is vital for all our futures. Accessed at:

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/08/science-education-reset-stem-technology>

¹¹ Lockdowns in Europe avoidable, vaccines 'not a silver bullet' - WHO Europe. Accessed at:

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKKBN27Z1B0>

¹² Accessed at:

https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/336253/WHO-2019-nCoV-Schools_transmission-2020.1-rus.pdf

¹³ Is this what higher education will look like in 5 years? Accessed at:

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/11/higher-education-online-change-cost-covid-19/>

¹⁴ Ibid

will still be in place. But only a third of adults in India (31%), where cases have been the second highest in the world, and less than a fifth of adults in Brazil (18%), third highest for cases, agree higher education will be face-to-face¹⁵.

The advantages are that the students learn to educate themselves, which is important in the modern world. The opportunities available from the Internet in the selection of bright, colorful demonstration material, the use of video and audio content, contribute not only to retaining attention but also to the development of critical thinking. The online education requires from students to assimilate new knowledge and skills independently. This improves the memorization and understanding of the topics covered. But there are also disadvantages to it, this requires strong willpower, responsibility, and self-control. Not everyone succeeds in maintaining the desired pace of learning without outside supervision. Teaching some specialties that involve a large number of practical lessons is especially difficult remotely. In an online lesson, it is difficult to include all students in a general discussion or even have a dialogue. Usually, 15–20 percent of those present participate in the discussion. Most teachers lack real practice and the ability to build online learning and many of them do not distinguish between distance and e-learning. They have also faced the problem of organizing group work among students during the online classes. Therefore, this form of training is not suitable for the development of communication skills, confidence and teamwork skills.

According to the ILO, the coronavirus pandemic could have a particularly negative impact on young people in the long term, especially career prospects and educational opportunities. In a new report, «Youth and the COVID-19 Pandemic: Impact on Jobs, Education, Rights and Mental Health»¹⁶, 65 percent of young people reported that they received less knowledge during the pandemic due to school closures.

Contemporary trends in the education sphere of Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan is carrying out consistent work on reforming the education system by training highly qualified personnel that meet the requirements of the labour market, implementing international standards for assessing the quality of education, creating effective mechanisms for turning innovative scientific achievements into practice and implementing the tasks defined by the Action Strategy for five priority areas of development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017 - 2021.

At the same time, the incompatibility of professional education programs with the levels of the International Standard Classification of Education adopted by UNESCO, and the inadequate introduction of the National Qualification System of Uzbekistan in the educational process prevent trained personnel from their place in the labour market.

Although most young people in Uzbekistan indicated satisfaction with the present educational infrastructure, the situation is less favourable in rural areas than in urban centres. Students want their learning environments to be more positively motivating, to be more practice oriented, and to provide better-quality education (particularly in language skills, business literacy and preparation for professional life). The participants

¹⁵ Is this what higher education will look like in 5 years? Accessed at:

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/11/higher-education-online-change-cost-covid-19/>

¹⁶ Youth and COVID-19: impacts on jobs, education, rights and mental well-being. Accessed at:

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_753026.pdf

in the study remarked that the cost of education is a source of personal stress and frustration, i.e. the necessity for private tutoring, to pay bribes and to pay high tuition fees in order to enter institutions of higher education¹⁷.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) supports efforts to equip students with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes needed to build a more inclusive, equitable, peaceful, and sustainable world. In its resolution 72/222 in 2017, the UN General Assembly recognized ESD as “an integral part of the SDGs for quality education and a key factor in achieving all other SDGs” and reaffirmed UNESCO's role as the lead agency for ESD. UNESCO has developed a Roadmap that guides the Member States and other stakeholders to implement ESD by 2030.

The President of the country adopted the Decree "On additional measures to further improve the system of vocational education"¹⁸, where it was instructed to create in the Republic of Uzbekistan, starting from the 2020/2021 academic year, a network of educational institutions with the introduction of a new system of primary, secondary and secondary specialized vocational education and differentiated educational programs corresponding to the levels of the International Standard Classification of Education. In the execution of this decree, a resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers «On Measures to Organize the National System of Professional Skills, Knowledge and Abilities in the Republic of Uzbekistan»¹⁹ was adopted the National Skills Framework. National Skills Framework is a competency assessment system that provides a single mechanism for recognition of skills at all levels of vocational education at the national and international levels, providing an interdisciplinary and international comparison of skills, an institutional component of the national system of professional skills, knowledge and the basis.

What knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values will today's students need to thrive in and shape their world? How can education systems help students develop these knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values? To answer these questions, teaching and learning frameworks are being developed using the most up-to-date research.

Education can no longer be about transferring explicit knowledge across generations. According to the OECD 2030 Future of Education and Skills Project²⁰: “We need to replace old education standards with an educational framework that combines knowledge with 21st century needs of creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration.” This won't be achieved by simply moving classes from the chalkboard to a Zoom call, but radically transforming the way we teach and learn skills, from one-way content dissemination and memorization to personalized and self-directed learning. In a rapidly changing world, where we cannot predict what technologies will be ascendant in the future, we have to teach children to teach themselves. Students need not just knowledge, but also skills, attitudes and values to thrive in and shape their future for a more empowered global citizenship. This has never been more evident than in the current pandemic.

¹⁷ Youth of Uzbekistan: Challenges and Prospects. Accessed at: <https://www.unicef.org/uzbekistan/media/3541/file/Youth%20of%20Uzbekistan-%20Challenges%20and%20Prospects.pdf>

¹⁸ Accessed at: <https://lex.uz/docs/4500929>

¹⁹ Accessed at: <https://lex.uz/docs/4814154>

²⁰ OECD Learning Framework 2030. Accessed at: <https://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/>

For the first time, the OECD Future of Education and Skills 2030 project conducted comprehensive curriculum analysis with a wide range of stakeholders including policymakers, academic experts, school leaders, teachers, NGOs, other social partners and, most importantly, students. This report highlights the economic, societal and environmental changes are happening rapidly and technologies are developing at an unprecedented pace, but education systems are relatively slow to adapt. Time lag in curriculum redesign refers to the discrepancies between the content of today's curriculum and the diverse needs of preparing students for the future²¹. Now is the time for teachers and students to put into practice this 'new learning world'. To share what they need and not need from the other. By learners and teachers co-creating learning processes together, this new reality of offline and online learning will become our world²².

Teaching science, technology and engineering skills for the real world have never been more important. In the Fourth Industrial Revolution, if we want students to solve the world's biggest challenges, we cannot perpetuate outdated educational systems. We must align public policies and investments in education, science and technology to develop 21st century skills in young people to prepare them for a changing future²³. The Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted a Resolution "On measures to improve the system related to the organization of the educational process in higher education institutions" on December 31, 2020. According to it, the credit-modular system of educational process in higher education institutions has been adopted, based on European Credit Transfer and accumulating system (ECTS). This will improve student mobility, interoperability training programs and qualifications, training students on an individual variable part of educational and vocational programs, improving the quality of training and competitiveness, access to labour markets and enhance the prestige of higher education in Uzbekistan.

The University of World Economy and Diplomacy (UWED) is a leading university for training personnel for the diplomatic service. UWED (in accordance with the Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures to radically improve the activities of the University of World Economy and Diplomacy") is part of the system of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan and is a basic higher educational institution that provides training, retraining and advanced training of specialists and scientific and pedagogical personnel, conducting at a high level of fundamental and applied scientific research²⁴, based on credit-modular system of educational process.

Conclusion. Social and economic changes in the country, the development of a market economy, competition in the labour market require a scientific and practical reassessment of ways to solve the problem of preparing young people for work and life. Unfortunately, today young people are one of the most vulnerable segments of the population. Young people are often the target of outside influence. Young people

²¹ What Students Learn Matters. Towards a 21st Century Curriculum. Accessed at: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/what-students-learn-matters_d86d4d9a-en

²² Overcoming education challenges: The coronavirus crisis turns us all into learners // <https://oecdedutoday.com/overcoming-education-challenges-coronavirus-learners/>

²³ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/08/science-education-reset-stem-technology>

²⁴ Gulnoza Ismailova. (2020). Women in Diplomacy a Reflection of Attitude to Female in the Country. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology*, 17(7), 8556-8568. Retrieved from <https://archives.palarch.nl/index.php/jae/article/view/3638>

themselves can change a lot if they have the personality traits necessary to adapt to the environment, as well as certain knowledge and skills.

The goal is to teach students to think, to develop their necessary skills, abilities and knowledge. Our model should be aimed at developing the necessary competencies (values, behavioral attitudes, practical skills, knowledge and critical understanding). The teaching process is the most important on the agenda today. An analysis of all educational documents should be carried out and a map of the content of the curriculum drawn up taking into account the current realities. Several tasks we face are:

- Curriculum overload, taking into account outcome and consequences of the pandemic
- Managing the time lag between today's curriculum and future needs
- Ensuring equity through curriculum innovations
- Managing curriculum flexibility and autonomy
- Embedding values / competences into the curriculum
- Designing/planning for effective implementation

Today, it is important to strengthen online student communication through platforms like Moodle and ensure the teachers' responsibility for working with students. Each teacher should try to enhance their knowledge and skills continuously by implementing modern teaching techniques and technological innovations. Contemporary realities demonstrate that young specialists are completely unprepared for the practical solution of their organizations' pressing problems of . This is not surprising as that the programs taught at universities have been missing practical aspects. Therefore, it is precisely the linking of theoretical material with practical skills that should be the most effective teaching methodology for students. Taking into account the interests of students and the conditions dictated by the pandemic, a lot of work remains to be done to improve the education system based on the study of advanced foreign experience, introducing modern curricula and educational programs. There is an urgent need to improve the quality of education with the student at the forefront. This needs immediate attention and investment.

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Marina O. Dmitrieva* - Central Asia and Russia in the context of pandemic: new opportunities for cooperation

The speed at which the coronavirus pandemic spread around the world proves how tightly the states are connected within it. It proves how events occurring in one part of the world can have unexpected consequences for another.

It is interesting that in the Primorsky territory (Far East of Russia), the first infected persons were those who came from the Western part of Russia, and not from China. The Far East has more than 4,000 kilometres of common border with China and, in theory, it should have had the first victims of the coronavirus. However, it did not happen, although the land border with China was closed only at the end of January, a month after official recognition of the epidemic in Wuhan by the Chinese authorities. In this case, the low intensity of cross-border contacts saved the Russian border area from the epidemic. Thus, it is impossible to talk about the priority of cooperation between countries: contacts between them are "peripheral" – they are characterized by low intensity, low dynamics and low interdependence.

I. Zuenko, a researcher at the Far Eastern Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, notes that the situation was similar in, say, Central Asia, the "periphery" of Chinese contacts, which was also highlighted by the coronavirus pandemic. So, the first case of the disease in Kazakhstan came from Germany, in Uzbekistan – from France, in Kyrgyzstan – from Saudi Arabia¹.

With this we can conclude that the pandemic forced us to pay attention to those problems that we preferred to keep silent. Those declarations on mutually beneficial cooperation and shared prosperity that were not confirmed in the actions of governments and various structures at the time of the crisis need to be rethought and possibly changed.

When considering the impact of the pandemic, it should be remembered that it affected not only the functioning of states, supranational structures, and economies, but also the lives of ordinary people. As is usually the case, the most vulnerable categories, including migrant workers, were hit. According to surveys, more than a third of migrants in Russia have lost their jobs. The lack of opportunities to return to their home country is compounded by the fact that they will also face unemployment there. Labour migrants now represent a very convenient group for overexploitation in the context of the expected decline in the standard of living of countries that migrant labour provides, not least because of a drop in the flow of money transfers from Russia.

Many people who worked in the sectors of the economy affected by the epidemic and quarantine (for example, in construction sector) found themselves without jobs and funds. There were fears that all this could cause an outbreak of crime, and also because of the conditions of crowded living of the unemployed - provoke an increase in the

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¹ Zuenko I. Yu. 'Coronavirus pandemic and Russia-China regional cooperation.' // Izvestiya Vostochnogo instituta. 2020. # 2. p. 15–28. Published at: at <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/pandemiya-koronavirusai-rossiysko-kitayskoe-regionalnoe-sotrudnichestvo>

epidemic. In this context, experts discussed issues of granting unemployment benefits to migrants and their retrainers.

More than half of the 5.5 million people who came to work to Russia are from just two countries: Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. 2.1 million people, or 38 percent, came to Russia from Uzbekistan. This is every tenth working age resident of Uzbekistan. From Tajikistan — 1.2 million, or 21 percent, every fifth working age resident².

According to the Central Bank, in 2019, individuals sent almost \$13 billion in money transfers to neighbouring countries. Almost a third of the total amount was sent home by residents of Uzbekistan: \$4.7 billion. The average amount per transfer is \$377. In the second place were citizens of Tajikistan: \$2.6 billion and \$162, respectively. In the third place — visitors from Kyrgyzstan: \$2 billion and \$188³.

As noted in an interview with the head of research at the Institute for dialogue of civilizations, A. Malashenko, the coronavirus has become a serious test of the strength of the political systems of Central Asian countries⁴. Despite the serious socio-economic consequences of the pandemic, we can conclude that the regimes have resisted. But in the long run, the quarantine and strict restrictions imposed will serve as reminders and expose old problems. Among the most acute are unemployment and the threat of radical Islam. Both these problems are connected.

Due to COVID-19, remittances of labour migrants to the region have sharply decreased. In search of new sources of income, residents of the region may be attracted by the ideas of radicals who promise "easy money" and "social justice of the world Caliphate".

Money sent home by migrants plays a significant role in the economy of most Central Asian States, especially Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The amount of this money will reduce due to the fact that under conditions of quarantine and accompanying decline in economic activity, many migrants remain without work. The fall in the exchange rate of national currencies also leads to a decrease in transfers.

According to the Director of the Centre for Research on Central Asia and Afghanistan at MGIMO, A. Kazantsev, the loss of a significant share of GDP in 2020-2021 will lead to an increase in social and political tensions in all Central Asian countries. The economic crisis may also provoke a "loosening" of the internal political situation in a number of countries in the region⁵. Unfortunately, this will reinforce a number of negative security trends that are characteristic of the countries of the region. "These include, first of all, the difficult political situation in neighbouring Afghanistan, where the gradual withdrawal of American troops is accompanied by an internal political crisis, ongoing

² 'How much money labor migrants withdraw from Russia? And how the economies of the CIS countries depend on these transfers' Published at: // <https://journal.tinkoff.ru/perevod-stat/>

³ External sector statistics. Central Bank of Russia. Published at: https://www.cbr.ru/statistics/macro_itm/svs/#a_71459

⁴ 'Pandemic May Expose Social Protest in Central Asia' // RIAC website. Published on 3 August 2020 at: <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/interview/pandemiya-mozhet-obnazhit-sotsialnyy-protest-v-tsentralnoy-azii/>

⁵ Kazantsev A. 'Coronavirus epidemic and the situation in Central Asia'. Published on 7 May, 2020 at: <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/epidemiya-koronavirusa-i-situatsiya-v-tsentralnoy-azii/>

clashes between government forces and the Taliban, and the infiltration of it to neighboring territories, including areas adjacent to Tajikistan and Turkmenistan”⁶.

In the context of the coronavirus epidemic, Russia has allocated serious humanitarian assistance to Central Asian States. It is based on sets of test systems and reagents. Kazakhstan received permission to conduct 30 thousand tests for coronavirus infection, Kyrgyzstan — for 25.6 thousand tests, Tajikistan — for 33 thousand, Turkmenistan — for 9 thousand and Uzbekistan — for 48.5 thousand. In addition, remote body temperature measurement devices were sent to some republics⁷.

In addition, experts give optimistic forecasts: the Central Bank detected a record volume of transfers from Russia. In July, it was \$837 million⁸. The last time a similar indicator was registered almost two years ago. Individuals began to actively send money to other countries. First of all, we are talking about labour migrants who returned to work and began to earn enough to transfer money home.

Russia has taken some steps to somehow ease the situation of migrants. For example, the right to work without permits for some time. In addition, the Ministry of internal Affairs did not decide whether to deport, expel or not to allow foreign citizens to stay in Russia.

It is expected that after overcoming the pandemic, the liberalization of migration legislation and increased flexibility in managing migration processes will continue. For example, the easing of the situation of migrants introduced by a personal presidential decree in the context of the pandemic, the legislative consolidation of the possibility of retaining previous citizenship when accepting Russian citizenship, the abolition of temporary residence permits, and the introduction of categories when obtaining citizenship can be regarded as the beginning of this process.

More foreign labour is expected to move to Russia’s Far East. According to data for 2019, the total number of foreigners who arrived in the Primorsky territory was 13.1 thousand, while 9.4 thousand left. A significant part of the arrivals are representatives of the CIS countries (8.6 thousand people), and 6.6 thousand people left. Among them, the most representative groups were from Kyrgyzstan (2,6 thousand) and Uzbekistan (3,7 thousand). From non-CIS countries, the largest group of arrivals in Primorsky territory were representatives of China (3,2 thousand people), North Korea (471 people) and Vietnam (237 people)⁹.

In Primorsky territory, the number of foreign workers from North Korea and China is decreasing. This is due to changes in exchange rates, and Russia's accession to UN sanctions that provide for the refusal of labour from the DPRK, priority employment of Russian citizens, and so on.

⁶ Ibid

⁷ ‘Countries of unafraid patients. How Tajikistan and Turkmenistan ended up free of COVID-19’. Published on 22 April 2020 at <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4327770>

⁸ ‘The Central Bank announced a record volume of transfers abroad, mainly in the CIS’. Published on 18.09.2020 at: <https://tj.sputniknews.ru/migration/20200918/1031921642/russia-rekordniy-obem-perevodov-za-granitsu-SNG.html>

⁹ ‘Those days are gone’: Primorye loses migrants.’ Published on 28.07.2020 at: <https://konkurent.ru/article/30361>

According to S. Pushkarev, Chairman of the Primorsky territory regional public organization "Consultation centre for migration and interethnic relations", North Koreans who worked on the Russian territory on a work visa, with the expiry of its validity, left for their homeland. This happened gradually in the fall of 2018. Without a possibility of replacement for the employer. It is not an exaggeration to say that migrants from the DPRK played a significant role in the labour market of the Primorsky territory, especially in the low-cost construction of social housing facilities. One can replace them with Chinese, but the Chinese are very expensive today. Thus, migrants from Central Asia have the opportunity to take these popular places. The problem is that most do not have the qualifications to perform a certain type of work¹⁰.

There are already examples when Chinese people who traditionally work in the fields of the Primorsky territory are replaced by citizens of Uzbekistan. This was due to the fact that workers from China at the end of 2019 went home to celebrate The New year according to the Eastern calendar. Then the PRC closed the borders, and people were not able to travel back to Russia.

For farmers, the opportunity to hire workers from Uzbekistan was a real salvation in the conditions when the annual arrival of labour from China became impossible. Moreover, they noted the higher quality of work of the latter in comparison with workers from China. In addition, the language barrier is erased, which also helps to improve the results of work. Often, the foremen are Chinese workers who stayed in the Primorsky territory and did not leave for their homeland prior the closure of borders. They train Uzbek workers and tell them about the peculiarities of the coastal climate.

In March last year, the Consulate General of the Republic of Uzbekistan was opened in Vladivostok. Among the most important areas of cooperation between Primorsky territory and Uzbekistan are trade, tourism, transport and logistics. It is the only one in the Russia's far East, and it demonstrates the readiness for cooperation, which is necessary for an early way out of the difficult situation in which the whole world finds itself.

K. Bogdanenko (the Vice-Governor of the Primorsky territory) stressed that today eight enterprises with Uzbek investments are actively operating in the region, all of them carry out their activities in the field of trade. At the end of 2018, the volume of trade between the Primorsky territory and the Republic of Uzbekistan amounted to \$1.7 million¹¹.

The Consul General Rustam Ismailov said that currently fruit and vegetable farms and textile production are actively developing in Uzbekistan. Entrepreneurs are interested in organizing the supply of products directly to Primorsky territory and are currently working on options for cooperation.

¹⁰ Pushkarev Sergey. 'In Primorye, we are all migrants' Published on 19.07.2020 at: <https://primamedia.ru/news/823660/>

¹¹ Consulate General of Uzbekistan - visit us. Utro Vostoka. Monthly Newspaper, #139. E-version. Published on 27 March 2020 at: http://www.ytro-vostoka.ru/118/Novosti/Genkonsulstvo_Uzbekistana_k_nam/

Today, the forecast about the impact of the epidemic on integration processes in Central Asia (within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, as well as through the integration of the EAEU and the "One belt, one road" project agreed by the leadership of Russia and China) is contradictory. A number of factors will contribute to the weakening of integration, while others will strengthen it. It should be noted that after the end of the epidemic, in the context of an acute economic crisis, some of the Central Asian countries (Uzbekistan and Tajikistan) may be more interested in speeding up negotiations on cooperation with the EAEU. Russia can theoretically take an advantage of this opportunity, although this will depend on the state of the Russian economy in 2020-2021. Thus, today there is a space that will be occupied by the one who first understands this and takes decisive steps to gain a foothold in the desired place.

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Munira Shahidi* - Pandemical COVID–19 and perspectives of transformation of Central Asia

International Conference under the title: “Impact of the Pandemic on Central Asia: Initial Lessons, Corona crisis and Prospects for Transformation”, organized by the University of World Economy and Diplomacy in cooperation with Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan and United Nations Development Program in the fall of 2020, was among the first international gatherings in the zoom format. The main focus of the conference was to discuss the critical situation in the region in the period of corona–crises, opening new perspectives of transformation within new global challenges.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to extend my gratitude to the leadership of UWED for the invitation to participate in this authoritative meeting online with the key figures of the current policy of Uzbekistan, as well as representatives of the academic institutions and international organizations.

As an orientalist in cultural studies with decades of experience in comparative studies of literatures / cultures of the East and West and as the head of the GCRF COMPASS national group at the Tajik National University, I consider the first experience of international discussion of the pandemic problem under the leadership of Mr. Sodyq Safoev, First Deputy of the Senate, as well as direct participation of the Chairperson of the Senate, Mrs. Tanzila Narbaeva, as a decisive step not only in identifying measures to protect the health of the region’s community and beyond, but also am encouraged to contribute to solutions of some problems, which are being presently discussed within the global academic community. One of them is resilience of poetics of civil society in the region, going back to reform movement of 19-20th of the last century, inspired, in turn, by the specifics of regional modernity.

Uzbekistan, like Tajikistan and other Central Asian countries, is a country with a collectivist culture. The basis for resilience is poetics in a civil society, however, the specifics of the formation of a regional culture are not considered by some specialists, studying Central Asia, both inside and outside the region. Although countries with a collectivist culture are more successful in coping with the pandemic than more developed countries of Europe and the United States, that success is also being discussed through the prism of the European model rather than through the application of an original lens. Following a single model (European) is fraught with risks of not only weakening the system of knowledge as a global phenomenon, it also causes distrust of science, both among the ruling structures and the working masses. The solution of the problem is comparative studies of organization of European Union and protecting the natural regional unity of Central Asia, despite its divisions. Though these specifics have been highlighted during 50s-80s of the 20th century, the process has been stopped within the transition period from the planned to the market economy.

The starting point to renew an authentic regional unity is to highlight specifics of regional integration of Central Asia and EU, which stretch back to the realities of the world after World War II. The main challenge was to contradict militarization of mind within the ‘cold war’ and uniting people within the regions. If the paradigm for unification of Europe

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was the production of coal and steel with a further emphasis on competition and rivalry, then in Central Asia, especially in Tajikistan, along with the creation of new academic schools, one of the priority areas of study has been the collection of manuscripts, created over the last millennium and to launch their re-evaluation in the new conditions in the region. Focusing rather on transformation of minds in time and space, than in the quantitative and qualitative accounting of the cultural heritage, the scholars were more interested in modernity, which was started in 15-16 cc., creating international, intercultural, inter-regional movement 'art vs power'. Although the methodology of collection and classification of the manuscripts were based on Russian-European experience, academic studies and research in Tajikistan followed Ibn Sina/Avicennian (b.980, in Bukhara) schools, the holistic sense of the world, which can be met by ordinary people more easily and economically via 'rhythm and melody'. To what extent has that aspiration been explored by *outsiders*?

The post-war period and the presence in the country of outstanding Russian orientalists such as A. Semyonov, who moved in the early 50s from Tashkent to Stalinabad, now Dushanbe, along with E. Bertels, A. Boldyrev, to name a few, were met by S. Ayni, B. Gafurov, A. Mirzoev and their followers, as well, as Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Turkmen experts, and emerging national theatres and musical orchestras, frequently meeting, created a new considerate community. Research integration has been empowered by internal resistance to ideological frames of the state system, though the shadow of repressions were still alive in the air. Highlighting cruelties and injustices of numerous invaders of the region since the time of Alexander the Great, research integration, impacting formation of the new forms of arts of 20 c., has significantly impacted formation of the civil society in the region, as a whole. That environment and its sources, however, was mostly unfamiliar to Western academic studies¹. That ignorance came back to the region within the dissolution of academic collaboration of the former system of knowledge, with all its positive and negative findings. To reconnect the findings of the near past to transform the region into multilingual, morally and spiritually interconnected region globally, I want to bring back one of the crucial contributions of the 1960s, followed by further research of interconnection of realism and mysticism of the last century.

A brainstorm of the international scientific community occurred when the initiator of the national school of Tajik–Persian studies, a graduate of the Leningrad University of Oriental Studies, academician Abdulghani Mirzoyev made a presentation at 26st international congress of orientalists, first held in Moscow, and then in Delhi in 1964. Dedicating his presentation to the interconnection of the literatures of Mawarannahr and India in the 16-17th centuries, Mirzoyev highlighted the transformation of poetic thought, which interconnected three different regions: Central Asia, Iran and India². That interconnection became the impetus for multilateral development (economy, science and culture) in the region of that period. The new style of poetic thinking was called the 'Indian style' of Tajik-Persian poetry and was adopted by the new generation of the actors of culture. During the Soviet period that synthetic poetics impacted crucially on policy,

¹ Shahidi, Munira, abstract of the dissertation: Place and role of E.G. Brown in the study of Tajik-Persian literature. Dushanbe, 'Donish' publishing house, 1972.

² Mirzoyev Abdulghani. Facts of the history of literary contacts between Mawarannahr and India in the second half of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th centuries. Moscow, 1963

creating intercultural communication of Soviet Union with the neighbouring countries of Asia and Europe. Therefore, at the Tashkent conference on pandemic problems, I suggested to update the original regional model of transformation, based on the harmonization of national and interregional cultures rather, that rivalry and confrontation, as was customary in Europe of the modern era. Since specificity of cultural diplomacy has already been laid down by the previous generation of Central Asian scientists and cultural figures, development of the regional capacity is a challenge globally.

The specificity of Central Asian cultural diplomacy, which influenced 'by default' the change in the policy of the Soviet state, has not yet become the subject of special study. However, traditionally based on anti-pyramidal structure of global power through the interaction of politics, science and industry, today it, unfortunately, again stagnates due to the loss of general regional cultural production, namely, common festivals of theaters and cinema, music and contemporary novels and poetry. Though the challenges of the community to the problems of the pandemic has increased many times, the fact is that Tajikistan and Uzbekistan during this period became the first neighbors in the region to jointly solve these problems, opening new perspectives for new novels, operas and arts. Reshaping the older art production, we can also find a number of common ideas among neighboring countries. The feeling of a renewing academic collaboration in the region and in Eurasia, as a super-continent, largely echoes the fundamental provisions of the international project GCRF COMPASS funded by the UKRI.

The pandemic, having equalized the world in all its diversity, has shown common problems, among which the lack of cooperation between research schools in Russia and Central Asia is of concern. Discussing the philosophy of science in the study of modernity, V.P. Vizgin identifies the main reasons for the crisis of the project of European modernity, which is the victory of mechanical science in the 17th century, gradually turning into anthropocentrism by the end of the 20th century. However, already from the 17th century, the interaction of European and Asian cultures has been practically interpenetrating. Thought started by colonization and bombing of Asian navigation by British fleet, it turned very soon into one sided structural development, breaking the process of cross-cultural development³. Paradoxically, the pandemic has accelerated development of precisely horizontal interactions, opening up the capacity for independent and direct relationships between communities of Eurasia. But there is also the danger of controlling various communities with today's technology. How will this control be directed within the mankind, as a whole? In whose favour will the problems, determined by the world community, be solved?

David Chandler, professor at the University of Westminster in the UK, views modern cartography as a policy of governance through interventions and interaction processes. By tracking heightened sensitivity in real time (especially during a pandemic) through new technologies and data collection over the Internet, law enforcement agencies are working to rewrite and reshape relationships in new and creative ways.⁴ But is it possible to control poetic resilience with the help of even the most brilliant technical developments?

³ Nolan, Peter. Crossroads. The end of wild capitalism and the future of humanity. Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2010.

⁴ Chandler, David. Ontopolitics in the Anthropocene: An Introduction to Mapping, Sensing and Hacking. Routledge, 2018

Are deeply synthetic poetics of Saiydoi Nasafi's gazelles (17) or Bedil's poems (18) amenable to analysis or subjected to any cartography?

The cultural hermeneutics of the Tajik-Persian poetics of civil society, always popular in all Central Asian countries, has not yet been studied globally. Even classical poetry, its content, play of meanings and spatial coverage of the world in the heritage of famous names common to Iran, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Turkey, Pakistan and India and, partly, in China, Russia and Europe, are not known widely as Eurasian and the basis for Central Asian societies. Poets such as Hafiz, despite being translated in Russian many times, is still not clearly understandable for a Russian reader. And the structuring of the quatrains of Omar Khayyam in the poem by Edward Fitzgerald, published back in 1868 in English, aroused admiration of the British, and of Europe, but was met with skepticism in Tajikistan in the 60-70s. This skepticism, however, created a new understanding of sensing of the world, and re-thinking their own holistic vision of the world. Communicating via arts ihas been replaced by mercantile interests of the market economy, dominant globally, but regional civil society is opening its perspectives.

A preliminary critical observation of the first lessons of the COVID-19 in Tashkent in September 2020, highlighted and reinforced the principles discussed at the Dushanbe conference⁵, which considered two specific documents developed in the discussions. Specifically, the National Development Strategy of Tajikistan until 2030 (NDS-2030) and changes in the EU's strategy towards Central Asia. However, discussion in Dushanbe now could be more developed, rethinking them via events in Tashkent.⁶

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⁵ Tajikistan and Cultural Diplomacy in Central Asia & Eurasia. // GCRF COMPASS Conference proceedings, Tajik National University, December 2019. <https://research.kent.ac.uk/gcrf-compass/wp-content/uploads/sites/1767/2020/01/TNU-Conference-proceedings-2019-final-online.pdf>

⁶ Ibid

Antonio Alonso Marcos* - Regional cooperation in times of Covid-19: The role of Uzbekistan

Introduction. Central Asia is a landlocked region and there were no borders among them for centuries. During Soviet times, there were only administrative borders which were crystalised into international ones after independence (1991). As a means to reaffirm their independence, cooperation among nations was not the rule but the exception. Moreover, there was no international organisation composed only of the five countries only. They were accompanied or led by other foreign powers (for example, CIS, SCTO, SCO, and GUUAM).

Something changed after the Iraqi invasion (2003) and after Obama became President of the United States of America (2009). Later, the US started withdrawing from scenarios abroad and were more focused on domestic affairs, especially with Donald Trump as President (2017)¹. In those years, Putin wanted to recover the Russian influence in their near abroad and China started its economic growth and expansion. Those international events changed the mentality of Central Asian leaders, they realised that cooperation among those five countries is not only necessary but it is a must.

It is possible to find in 2016 the definitive inflection point of this change of attitude. In that year, president Karimov died and was succeeded by Shavkat Mirziyoyev. He inaugurated a new way in political life, domestically and regionally². Many problems were solved after his arrival³. Kazakhstan also realised that a change was necessary and Nazarbayev started a good number of initiatives for peace and accord; that change was definitive when he resigned and was succeeded by Kasim-Yomart Tokaev (2019).

The crisis of the coronavirus has shown that regional solidarity is needed to face some challenges: border agreements, health emergencies, environment, water (not only river) management and the control of illicit traffic among others.

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¹ Marquina Barrio, Antonio (ed.), 2019: La Política Exterior de Estados Unidos. Un atardecer desfigurado. UNISCI, Madrid.

² Alonso Marcos, Antonio: "Energy Sovereignty in Uzbekistan: Between Realism and Liberal Institutionalism", Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Political Science. №4 (70), 2019, p. 65. Published at <https://bulletin-philospolit.kaznu.kz> . Alonso Marcos, Antonio: "Una lectura neorrealista de los veinte años de la independencia de Asia Central", en Requena, Miguel (ed.) (2012): Seguridad y conflictos: una perspectiva multidisciplinar. Madrid, IUGM, pp. 279-306. Published at https://iugm.es/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/libro_IV_JORNADAS_DE_EST_DE_SEG.pdf.

³ "New Momentum and Dynamism in EU-Central Asia Cooperation and Partnership. I am pleased to note that through these years our partnership has matured and, in particular, in recent years it acquired new content and dynamism also thanks to a pro-active attitude of our partners to inter- and intra-regional cooperation. Indeed, we clearly registered this new spirit of regional cooperation and solidarity in Samarkand in 2017 during the Conference on regional development and security. We welcome these "new positive winds blowing" in Central Asia conducive to strengthening regional cooperation. Regional cooperation as a factor of stability and sustainable development is deeply rooted in EU's DNA. That is why the EU very much welcomes and supports this direction and wants to help and contribute to translating this positive spirit into concrete action". Burian, Peter: "European Union and Central Asia: New Partnership in Action", The Astana Times, 9 September 2019. Published at: <https://astanatimes.com/2019/09/european-union-and-central-asia-new-partnership-in-action/>.

Finally, it is important to keep in mind the international system, the global environment, what kind of relationship great powers want to establish with the Central Asian republics.

Intra-regional cooperation. For the purpose of this paper, the term “intra-regional cooperation” refers to the cooperation among the five countries of Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. However, this region is not completely isolated from the rest of the world, but, on the contrary, is linked to neighbours and to great powers (Russia, China, USA and European Union). In that sense, Central Asian countries have to be involved in the pacification of the Afghan conflict and have to be key players in giving international aid to Afghanistan. Besides that, this region is connected to South Asia (Pakistan and India), Iran, Turkey and South Caucasus

In the context of this international conference on “Impact of the Pandemic on Central Asia: Initial Lessons, Coronacrisis and Prospects for Transformation”, it is useful to remember the *Joint Statement of the Consultative meeting of the heads of states of Central Asia* held in Tashkent on 29 November 2019⁴. It is written there,

“The participants of the meeting:proceeding from the common interests of the states of Central Asia in strengthening stability, security and sustainable development in the region, ensuring well-being of its multimillion population,based on common aspiration of the participating states of Consultative meeting towards expanding multilateral mutually beneficial interaction, deepening regional cooperation and solidifying good-neighbourly relations among the countries of the region,[...]5. The prospects of stable development in Central Asia are linked to achieving peace in neighbouring Afghanistan.”

Generally speaking, during two decades Central Asian leaders were more worried about competition between them, reaffirming their own personality and keeping strong positions vis a vis the rest⁵. Even more, there were some eruptions of ethnic violence that endangered the regional situation. Of course, there were agreements, also, but the general environment was mainly “not good for accords”. Nowadays, although there are also some episodes of violence, everything is solved with a phone call among presidents.

2016 signalled a new momentum. In September 2016, Islam Karimov died and was succeeded by Shavkat Mirziyoyev in December. Since that moment, many things changed in that country, especially in the Uzbek Foreign policy: a new dynamic was created, a wave of positivity (good vibes) was widespread as he facilitated the relationship with its neighbours, Tajikistan⁶ and Kyrgyzstan⁷, established a highly soft visa regime to

⁴ “Joint Statement of the Consultative meeting of the heads of states of Central Asia”, Tashkent, 29 November 2019. Published at: <https://www.un.int/uzbekistan/news/joint-statement-consultative-meeting-heads-states-central-asia>

⁵ Fernández Sola, Natividad: “Asia Central y el Cáucaso Sur en la estrategia de la UE”, Real Instituto Elcano, DT 21/2009. Published at: http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_es/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_es/zonas_es/asia-pacifico/dt21-2009

⁶ “Tajikistan, Uzbekistan resume flights after 25 years”, *India.com*, April 11th, 2017. Published at <https://www.india.com/news/agencies/tajikistan-uzbekistan-resume-flights-after-25-years-2016608/>.

⁷ Toktonaliev, Timur: “A Turning Point for Kyrgyz-Uzbek Relations? Landmark meeting indicates progress over trade and border issues”, *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, September, 8th, 2017. Published at <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/turning-point-kyrgyz-uzbek-relations>.

receive more tourists from dozens of countries⁸. Something changed also in Kazakhstan as Nazarbayev, a wise leader, projected some long-term strategies for his country⁹ and started a new, better regional rapprochement. Once the two main countries changed their attitude towards the region, the other three leaders could inaugurate a new era of peace and accord. Of course, before 2016 there were signs of openness, but that year has far more symbolic Changes.

The Covid-19 and its crisis. According to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)¹⁰, an agency of the European Union, the total cases of coronavirus in Central Asia was 237.321 (as for September, 13th 2020), distributed as follows:

Table 1: The cases of coronavirus in Central Asia

Country	Cases	Deaths	Confirmed cases in the last 14 days
KAZAKHSTAN	136384	1955	5711
KYRGYZSTAN	44881	1063	1061
TAJIKISTAN	9014	72	533
TURKMENISTAN	-	-	-
UZBEKISTAN	47042	388	5739

Source: European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, 13 September 2020

This pandemic has affected countries in different ways. One of the main lessons learned from this crisis is that it is useless to fight against this virus alone, like a Lone Ranger, but rather international cooperation is needed¹¹. It is possible to measure the effectiveness of the answer to this crisis looking at some issues. First of all, the response to the necessity to come back home, or repatriation¹². There were problems with Tajiks

⁸ "Uzbekistan seeks to grant visa-free status to more countries", Azernews. Published on January, 16th, 2018, at <https://www.azernews.az/region/125588.html>

⁹ For example, Kazakhstan's 2030 Development Strategy - https://extranet.who.int/countryplanningcycles/sites/default/files/planning_cycle_repository/kazakhstan/ndp_kazakhstan.pdf and The Strategy 2050 - <https://kazakhstan2050.com/2050-address>

¹⁰ Published at: <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data?f%5B0%5D=geo%3A812>.

¹¹ Albright, Madeleine: "Coronavirus Should Be a Wake-Up Call for World Leaders to Work Together", *Time*, 20 March 2020. Published at <https://time.com/collection/apart-not-alone/5807169/madeleine-albright-coronavirus-cooperation/>.

¹² "Department of State Coronavirus Repatriation Statistics", at <https://www.state.gov/coronavirus/repatriation/>.

and Uzbeks living in Russia, as they were stranded in bad conditions in Moscow, Saint Petersburg and other big cities¹³. The situation worsened when they tried to get home by car as they were stranded at the Mashtakovo border checkpoint in Samara (on the Russian side between Russia and Kazakhstan) since April¹⁴. Although some 2,000 migrants were allowed to travel across Kazakhstan to get to their home countries in July¹⁵, other migrants clashed with Russian Police still there in August¹⁶. Paradoxically, though hundreds of Central Asians were trying to leave Russia, thousands more were hoping to move to the Russian Federation¹⁷. So, the first point to measure the level of cooperation is this, how do they solve the problem of repatriation by diplomatic means.

The second issue should be humanitarian aid. In times when medical supplies are needed in your own country, sharing those vital elements can be called “more than solidarity”. At least once per month, Uzbekistan sent humanitarian aid to Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan¹⁸ since April 2020. Tons of food, material support, but also technical assistance were sent to those countries from Uzbekistan to help to contain the pandemic. For instance, on April 9, Uzbekistan sent 18 railway wagons with medicines and food products to Tajikistan: protective overalls, goggles, liquid sodium hypochlorite, respirators, gloves, pyrometers, and flour products. In May, a 24-ton cargo consisted of medicines, mostly antibiotics¹⁹. On May 8th, eight Uzbek virologists and 10 tons of medical equipment, including 10 lung ventilators, were sent to Dushanbe²⁰. On May 9, 144 medical containers were sent to Tajikistan from Uzbekistan for a temporary hospital at the Bofanda Stadium in Dushanbe²¹. For example, Uzbekistan sent another batch of humanitarian aid to Kyrgyzstan, backing anti-coronavirus battle, on July, 4th. They sent an eight-ton humanitarian cargo delivered by air, including 50 kits of portable oxygen concentrates and 100 non-invasive devices for artificial lung ventilation²².

¹³ “Uzbekistan: Heartbreak and despair for expat laborers trapped by COVID”, *Eurasianet*, 5th June 2020. Published at <https://eurasianet.org/uzbekistan-heartbreak-and-despair-for-expat-laborers-trapped-by-covid>.

¹⁴ “Several hundred Uzbek citizen are at the border points of the Russian Federation”, *UzDaily*, May, 13th, 2020. Published at <http://www.uzdaily.com/en/post/56926>.

¹⁵ “Some 2,000 Uzbek Migrants Stranded In Kazakhstan Allowed To Cross Border, Head Home”, RFE/RL, 9th July 2020. Published at <https://www.rferl.org/a/uzbek-2000-migrants-stranded-kazakhstan-allowed-home/30716461.html#:~:text=pandemic.&text=SARYAGHASH%2C%20Kazakhstan%20%2D%2D%20So%20me%20%2C000,been%20allowed%20to%20enter%20Uzbekistan.&text=The%20embassy%20officials%20added%20that,checkpoint%20for%20Tajikistan%20via%20Uzbekistan>.

¹⁶ “Migrants Clash With Russian Police Near Kazakh Border”, *The Moscow Times*, August, 5th, 2020. Published at <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2020/08/05/migrants-clash-with-russian-police-near-kazakh-border-a71057>.

¹⁷ Eraliev, Sherzod and Urinboyev, Rustamjon: “Precarious Times for Central Asian Migrants in Russia”. *Current History* (2020) 119 (819): 258–263.

¹⁸ “Uzbekistan sends humanitarian aid to Afghanistan”, *UzDaily*, April, 1st, 2020. Published at: <http://www.uzdaily.com/en/post/55764>.

¹⁹ “Uzbekistan sends another batch of humanitarian aid to Tajikistan”, *Kun.uz*, May, 26th, 2020, at <https://kun.uz/en/news/2020/05/26/uzbekistan-sends-another-batch-of-humanitarian-aid-to-tajikistan>.

²⁰ “Eight virologists from Uzbekistan to help their Tajik colleagues to fight COVID-19”, *Kun.uz*, May, 8th, 2020. Published at <https://kun.uz/en/news/2020/05/08/eight-virologists-from-uzbekistan-to-help-their-tajik-colleagues-to-fight-covid-19>.

²¹ “Uzbekistan Will Help Tajikistan to Build a Temporary Hospital”, *Orasam*, May, 8th, 2020, at <http://orasam.manas.edu.kg/index.php/en/tajikistan-2/3203-uzbekistan-will-help-tajikistan-to-build-a-temporary-hospital>.

²² “Uzbekistan sends another batch of humanitarian aid to Kyrgyzstan, backing anti-coronavirus battle”, *Kun.uz*, July, 4th, 2020, at <https://kun.uz/en/news/2020/07/04/uzbekistan-sends-another-batch-of-humanitarian-aid-to-kyrgyzstan-backing-anti-coronavirus-battle>.

Another topic of cooperation could be the border agreements, as they ease the life in both sides and help to improve the economic situation of hundreds of families. Maybe, the best example of that is Fergana Valley. Tension among local communities in rural areas are usual in border regions; sometimes, these eruptions of violence are labelled as “ethnic violence”, but deeper research shows that those episodes started as fights between two people or groups of people because of a roadrage or a daily life issue, not racism. In February, there was a serious case in Masanchi (South Kazakhstan, Zhabul Region, 70 km far from Bishkek) between Dungans (descendants from Chinese people) and Kazakhs²³. On May 31, in Sokh district²⁴, an incident ignited around noon after residents of the Kyrgyz village of Chechme and residents of the Uzbek village of Chashma argued about the ownership of a spring located in that area²⁵; the area was visited by Prime Minister Aripov²⁶ on June 1st and by President Mirziyoyev²⁷ on June 5th, and tensions eased. In August, there was another case of tension between Uzbeks and Kazakhs in Qosmezgil (20 km northwest Turkestan), easily mitigated with more presence of policemen²⁸.

And lastly, agreements on border delimitation should be mentioned²⁹. Has delimitation anything to do with coronavirus crisis? Not directly, of course, it is just another piece in this complex situation in which mutual trust and good-neighborly relations need to be considered. This is a way forward in bridging these countries which share history and culture for centuries.

For decades, the five countries needed foreign powers to work together. And, of course, they are part of the Foreign agenda of great powers such as Russia, China, India, Iran, Turkey, USA and the EU. There is a new race among those powers to be the best friend of Central Asian countries. Sometimes, the foreign influence is seen as a challenge. Some countries understand the Belt and Road Initiative as a Chinese attempt of soft power³⁰ (or even hard power in some cases)³¹, many think that Russian expansionism is more and more evident every week, Americans are seen not as powerful as forty years

²³ “More Than 50 People Go On Trial In Kazakhstan After Ethnic Clashes”, *RFE/RL*, 3rd December 2020, at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/more-than-50-people-go-on-trial-in-kazakhstan-after-ethnic-clashes/30981996.html>.

²⁴ Sokh is one Uzbek exclave within Kyrgyzstan's Batken region, populated mainly by ethnic Tajik.

²⁵ “Dozens Injured As Fresh Clashes Erupt Along Kyrgyz-Uzbek Border”, *RFE/RL*, 1st June 2020, Published at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/dozens-injured-as-fresh-clashes-erupt-along-kyrgyz-uzbek-border/30646065.html>.

²⁶ “Members of government land in Sokh district”, *The Tashkent Times*, 2nd June 2020. Published at <https://tashkenttimes.uz/national/5356-members-of-government-land-in-sokh-district>.

²⁷ “Events in Sokh should not affect our friendship with the Kyrgyz people” – Shavkat Mirziyoyev”, *Kun.uz*, 6th June 2020. Published at: <https://kun.uz/en/news/2020/06/06/events-in-sokh-should-not-affect-our-friendship-with-the-kyrgyz-people-shavkat-mirziyoyev>.

²⁸ Najibullah, Farangis and Isa, Dilara: “Containing Ethnic Conflict? Kazakhstan Probes Violence in Mixed Uzbek-Kazakh Village”, *RFE/RL*, 4th August 2020. Published at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/containing-ethnic-conflict-kazakhstan-probes-violence-in-mixed-uzbek-kazakh-village/30766325.html>.

²⁹ “Uzbekistan, Tajikistan sign border demarcation protocol”, *Azernews*, 8th January 2020, Published at <https://www.azernews.az/region/160433.html>. See also Putz, Catherine: “Uzbekistan Reportedly Completes Demining Work on Tajik Border”, *The Diplomat*, 10th January 2020. Published at: <https://thediplomat.com/2020/01/uzbekistan-reportedly-completes-demining-work-on-tajik-border/>.

³⁰ See “‘Debt trap’ diplomacy is a card China seldom plays in Belt and Road initiative”, *The Japan Times*, September, 1st, 2020. Published at <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2020/09/01/commentary/debt-trap-diplomacy-bri-china/>

³¹ Bhagwagar, Rayan V.: “China’s Overseas Military Bases”, *Modern Diplomacy*, August, 31st, 2020 By at <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2020/08/31/chinas-overseas-military-bases/>.

ago but still influential and, finally, EU is seen as a cultural neo-colonial power (the Brussels “lever”). In spite of their promises to keep their independence unbroken, what are the true purposes of great powers in this region? How long will multivector policy be durable? Will they be able to keep that equilibrium?

Conclusions. As conclusion, it is necessary to underline that this is a pandemic, not a local infection, so all the countries have to unite to fight the same enemy. Although every district has a different situation regarding coronavirus infections and it is different in rural or urban areas inside the same country or even region, it is clear that measures have to be coherent in order to fight effectively against this disease.

Sooner than later, we will win this fight against the virus. Without any doubt. The main question here is how we fought against it. Were we focused only on ourselves? Did we take care only of ourselves or were we worried about the situation of our neighbours?

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Nargis T. Nurulla-Khodzhaeva* - COVID-19, our virtual experiment and common resilience in Central Asia

The pandemic has led the world into recession that is likely to get worse. A few days ago mass-media circulated the news that more than one million people have now died from COVID 19. Some researchers declared: we've been set back about 25 years in about 25 weeks. The exceptional scale of violence is taking place at various levels of nationalization, including vaccines. Those trends based on old-style context 'us-in-opposition-to-others'. The dichotomy is not new. It reflects the main contradictions of modern pre-pandemic philosophy, such as, philosophy-theology, consciousness-body, East-West, Christianity-Islam, and science-practice among others.

Some speakers have already commented on the necessity to connect politicians and scientists during this pandemic. Citing that correlation, I would like to raise a question: what does it mean to be 'intellectual' in our days? Will you agree that most of us are committed on steady structuralizing our approach to each other and the pandemic around us or 'me as a subject, and you as an object'? The "objectification" of modernity (the "body") is proclaimed, and the large-scale ideology of the modern liberal state is attached on it. Yet, what if we try to initiate a discourse on reconsidering the hierarchy constructed on the contradictories, and thus expand the epistemological zones that are approved by "objectification"? I understand that the goal is ambitious but needs to have a beginning. Here I would like to offer to do a thought experiment. Let's invite to the conference some common ancestors, those intellectuals who were among those who know the world, God, and the Human soul on the basis of realization, not imitation.

The risk of such an experiment is value, because I am from Tajikistan, and with all our Central Asian colleagues, we share common cultural-historical roots. Customarily when we have such scenario, we think that ancestors would be amazed by the achievements of modern science. They would probably wonder at the style and our distances, by enormous amounts of information circulated by participants of our conference. Probably, we acknowledge that we like to juggle with 'numbers' and 'facts'. But I presume our 'guests' would be astonished by a different side of our common modernity. Sadly, behind those 'facts' most of us mysteriously have lost the ability to see contrasts, shades in the process of perception of universal values, our common Humanity.

Among our invited 'quests' is Saadi Sherozi (1210-1291), the great poet declared that "Ba'ni Odam a'zoi yakdigarand / Ki dar ofarinish zi yak gavharand / Chu uzve ba dard ovarad ro'zg'or / Digar uzvkhoro namonad qaror. / Tu, ki az mehnati digarond beg'ami, / Nashoyad ki nomat nihand ODAMI..." (Adam's descendants are members of one body, / One essence was at the core of the foundation. / If only one part of the body is wounded, / the whole body will tremble, / You have never cried over the grief of men, / So will people say that you are human?). If we try to apply modern terminology to these lines, then it is possible to get the following: in the XVIIIth century Saadi wrote about the extension of the lesson of citizenship from one individual's right, to broad (and justified) responsibility, and social interrelations, on the basis of which individuality should be formed.

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This approach, i.e., the organic universal interdependence of the consciousness of the people of the East and the West (Orient and the Occident) was brilliantly represented by a galaxy of scientists of Khorasan. Among them were Abdurakhmani Jami (1414-1492) and Alisher Navoi (1441–1501), whom we invited as our ‘speakers’ as well. They might ask us: *“If a human body reacts to the virus, and can even die from it, does it not indicate that Human has a similar organic composition with it? It illustrates that it is not merely about the virus but the human being, who cannot remember that we are all interconnected with everything in this world”*¹. By this approach Jami and Navoi reminded us about the ‘wholeness’ of Human and the world (“odam va olam”). Here we have one more key speaker – Ibn Sina (Avicenna) (980–1037), who was born near Bukhara (the mystical spiritual centre of Central Asia). The scientist conceived the first virtual experiment of humanity, creating a soaring man (called ‘flying’ or ‘floating’ sometimes). To visualize this image, remember the *Vitruvian man* of Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519). This is the artistic embodiment of the experiment itself. Da Vinci knew about Ibn Sin’s ‘Flying man’, since Avicenna’s treatise “De anima” was among the bestsellers in Italy in XV-XVI century². The connection should not surprise us. The ‘Floating man’ from Bukhara became a creative prolongation of ancient Greek philosophy, via philosophers of Medieval Europe, and it appeared more clearly in Rene Descartes’ (1596–1650) reflections. It is important to note that the virtual experiment of Ibn Sina introduced a modified understanding of individual identity, and human commitment with self-awareness, the advancement of the system of knowledge of the whole world. Such a topic was raised first time in the philosophical discourse of the world. On such a platform we do not have hierarchy, it does not arise, because the existing dichotomy: body-minds conceived rather as a connection that made Human, a Human.

If we review the intellectual tradition of our ‘invited guest speakers’ in a broad perspective, it is clear that this tradition did not allow for the sharp distinction between subject and object that was a prerequisite for the rise of modern science. In this tradition, all reflections and thinking start with an understanding of the Primal Unity that lies beneath and beyond surface multiplicity and gives meaning to all things, from Sun and celestial mosaic, to stones and animals, from prophetic teachings to political sciences and physics. Here we have a Central-Asian version of the required resilience.

If we remember our common intellectual tradition proposed and developed by past generations, we might have the contours of global resilience where our common humanity can be seen. Even more: just yesterday Mr. Sodyq Safoev during underlined an urgent need to improve regional connectivity between Central Asian countries. Such connectivity might be restored via revelation that rational discourse is just one of the options for discourse. The world’s ‘Healing’ is possible when a relational discourse is established in the social environment of Central Asia, when one grasps the recognition of the One in oneself, in the Other, and around us; because “you are everything, inside of everything, and from everything”, said one of our invited ‘speakers’.

¹ с.84 Афсах,зод А. Абдурах,мони Чомй.- Душанбе: Маориф, 1978. -189 с. [р.87 Afsah'zod A. Abdurahmoni Jomi. Dushanbe"Maorif, 1978- 189 Pp.]

² Шахиди М. Ибн Сино и Данте. Душанбе: Дониш. 127 с. [Shahidi M. Ibn Sina and Dante. Dushanbe: Doniw, 127 Pp.]

Rustam Makhmudov* - Impact of the pandemic on Central Asia: initial lessons and prospects for transformation

The issue of the nature of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the region and overcoming its consequences must be considered in several dimensions.

First of all, this is an assessment of the very scale of the impact of the pandemic on the states of Central Asia and finding ways to overcome its consequences by means of regional cooperation.

Before the crisis, the volume of trade, tourist exchange, and other transactions between countries grew steadily. One of the catalysts of this process was the new regional policy of Uzbekistan, but the adoption by countries of measures regarding the movement of citizens and goods to curb the spread of coronavirus had a negative impact on economic ties within the region.

Today, the first steps are already being taken to restore transport links - regular flights are resumed in some directions, such as Tashkent - Almaty and Tashkent - Bishkek. However, here it is necessary to take into account that the restoration of economic ties in full will be very problematic without *changing the situation in the key foreign trade and economic partners of the Central Asian countries and the price environment in world markets.*

The question is that for virtually every Central Asian country, the leading trade and investment partners are still not regional neighbors, but countries geographically far away. For Uzbekistan, these are China (PRC) and Russia, while Kazakhstan is traditionally in third place. In 2019, of the total volume of Uzbekistan's foreign trade of \$ 42 billion, the PRC accounted for 18.1 percent, Russia - 15.7 percent, Kazakhstan - 8 %¹.

For Kazakhstan, by the end of 2019, Uzbekistan was the 9th largest trading partner (\$ 2.75 billion), while Russia was in first place (\$ 19.6 billion) and then China (\$ 14.4). If we evaluate the total volume of trade with European countries, then Europe is in the first place. The total volume of trade between Kazakhstan and Italy, the Netherlands, France, Switzerland and Spain exceeded \$ 24 billion².

The largest trading partners of Turkmenistan are China and Turkey³. For Kyrgyzstan, China and Russia are the biggest trading partners, but Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are strengthening their positions⁴. Only Tajikistan in 2019 had a regional

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¹ Uzbekistan's foreign trade turnover rose to \$ 42.2 billion on January 17, 2020. Accessed at: <https://uz.sputniknews.ru/economy/20200117/13239749/Vneshnetorgovyy-oborot-Uzbekistana-vyros-do-422-mlrd.html>

² Top 10 main trading partners of Kazakhstan. 21 February 2020. Accessed at: <https://inbusiness.kz/ru/news/top-10-glavnyh-torgovyh-partnerov-kazahstana>

³ Turkmenistan Economic Statistics 2019. Accessed at <https://tradecouncil.org/turkmenistan-economic-statistics-2019/>

⁴ Top 10 main trading partners of Kyrgyzstan in 2019. September 16, 2019. Accessed at: https://kaktus.media/doc/397326_top_10_glavnyh_torgovyh_partnerov_kyrgyzstana_v_2019_gody.html

partner - Kazakhstan in second place, and Russia and China were in first and third places, respectively⁵.

Thus, it can be seen that the situation in external markets will play one of the key roles in overcoming the consequences of the pandemic by the countries of Central Asia. The increase in the inflow of foreign exchange from the export of goods and the recovery of remittances from labour migrants will contribute to the growth of business and consumer activity within the countries of the region, which in turn will have a positive effect on trade, economic and tourism in Central Asia as a whole.

However, here there is another, *third dimension of the problem of overcoming the consequences of the pandemic in the region*. The fact is that the coronavirus pandemic is not in the entire story. Its unexpected appearance was superimposed on deeper and more fundamental processes in world politics and economics, which fundamentally distinguish the current global crisis from the financial crisis of 2008-2009.

Among the fundamental processes, one can note the entry of the world into an active phase of geopolitical and geo-economic transformation, characterized by the transition from a unipolar to a multipolar international system. All the leading foreign trade and investment partners of the Central Asian countries - Russia, China, the European Union, the USA, Japan - participate in the observed competition.

We see a war of sanctions, an increase in protectionism, a revision of treaties and documents that are pivotal for international security, a struggle for the redistribution of global oil and natural gas markets. This was already happening before the pandemic, it did not stop during the pandemic, and is highly likely to continue after it.

The pandemic has become another catalyst for this global competition, introducing into it the aspect of competition between leading countries for a faster pace of overcoming the consequences of the coronavirus in their economies and the speed of vaccine development, which in turn amplified the effect of the Thucydides trap - the phenomenon of distrust between the leading and emerging powers.

Naturally, this raises the question of how this competition will affect the pace of recovery of the world's leading economies and key commodity markets, what is the fate of the already established global supply and value chains, investment flows, and multilateral international projects.

All of this is strategically important for Central Asia and its COVID-19 recovery strategy. On the one hand, these global trends actualize the need to take into account the risks they pose for the development of Central Asian countries and develop appropriate response measures. On the other hand, they open up many opportunities that need to be used. *If the process of reformatting and reconfiguring global value chains accelerates*, then the Central Asian countries simply have to take part in it, providing appropriate conditions for attracting some of them to themselves.

⁵ Tajikistan's foreign trade turnover increased by 7.1%. 01/22/2020. Accessed at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/ru/экономика/внешнеторговый-оборот-таджикистана-вырос-на-7-1-1709960#:~:text=По%20данным%20таджикского%20Министерства%20экономического,вел%20торговлю%20с%20105%20странами> .

Another point that concerns the countries of Central Asia and is crucial for strategies to overcome the consequences of coronavirus and long-term development is the *layering of the pandemic on the formation of a new technological order based on the 4th industrial revolution*.

This process has a wider horizon of influence than the pandemic itself. In the long term, new technologies will change the structure of industrial production, the labour market, investment flows, the distribution of global wealth and geopolitical influence. During the pandemic, it was high-tech companies that demonstrated the highest rates of capitalization growth. In July 2020, Apple's market value exceeded \$2 trillion, overtaking Saudi Aramco in terms of capitalization⁶. Capitalization of Amazon, Alphabet and Microsoft exceeded \$1.5 trillion. Such a popular startup as Zoom has increased its capitalization - from \$20 billion in early 2020 to \$50 billion in May 2020.

The countries of Central Asia are making efforts to bring in the process of digitalization and the 4th industrial revolution, the region needs new technologies, knowledge, investments of high-tech companies and venture capital funds. And in this regard, the aggravation of global technological rivalry, which continues during the pandemic and is increasingly moving away from the principles of free market competition towards the use of various restrictive measures, creates certain risks for the digital and technological transition of Central Asia.

And, finally, the pandemic showed that its appearance did not stop the process of the formation of new values, which, on the one hand, are generated by the processes described as Postmodernity with its acentrism in thinking models, and on the other, by a new technological order that changes the economic basis of societies. The problem is that technologies from the 4th industrial revolution are mostly technologies that replace traditional jobs (replacing technology). This can create a value split both within countries and at the civilizational level - between those who have successfully fit in the new way of life, and those who have not. This can affect the entire society, including its political sphere.

Taking this into account, the countries of Central Asia in their strategies for overcoming the consequences of the pandemic through the technological component, of course, will need to take into account the value aspect.

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⁶ Apple became the second-largest company in history with a capitalization of \$2 trillion. Accessed on 19 August 2020 at: www.bbc.com/russian/news-53836156

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Akram Umarov* - COVID-2019: Implications for Central Asia¹

The devastating impact of the coronavirus pandemic has become a truly serious challenge for the entire world community in 2020. The spread of this virus has long passed from the category of “the most significant challenge to the sustainability of public health systems”² into an existential threat to the existing chains of production and supply of goods, air and railway markets, and the tourism sector, for many multinational corporations and for millions of local companies worldwide. In the fight against the growing threat, almost all countries of the world have chosen the path of isolation which means the closure of national borders, the cessation of civil transport links, as well as the suspension or significant restriction of the activities of large industrial enterprises.

The first cases of coronavirus infection were officially registered in Kazakhstan on March 13, Uzbekistan on March 15, and Kyrgyzstan on March 18, Tajikistan on April 30, while no cases of infection have been detected in Turkmenistan³. The response of the three Central Asian countries in which cases of coronavirus infections were detected first were similar. Tight restrictive measures were introduced to contain the spread of the pandemic. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan established a state of emergency, and Uzbekistan imposed strict quarantine on almost the entire territory of the country.

The reasons for the implementation of such tough measures include the following:

1) Despite some successes and improvements, in general, the healthcare sector in the countries of the region faced systemic problems such as low level of financing, inefficient use of allocated funds, deficiency of modern medical equipment, difficulties in upgrading staff qualifications, and staff shortages due to unfair wages and poor working conditions, as well as the use of outdated treatment standards. Given these problems, regional countries could not allow a critical increase in pressure on health systems by a large number of infected people, as happened in Italy or Spain. In order to avoid a collapse of the healthcare sector, it was and continues to be important for the countries of Central Asia to stop the spread of infection at the initial stage by applying “draconic” quarantine measures.

2) So far, the countries of the region do not have the necessary information technology to fully monitor all contacts of infected people in recent days. Also, the countries are not fully prepared to massively test the population to identify all potential carriers of the virus and isolate them due to the lack of a large number of test systems

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¹This paper is based on the author's earlier publication on the “Cabar.asia” website - https://cabar.asia/en/covid-2019-lessons-for-central-asia-and-impact-on-foreign-policy/#_ftn2.

² van Elstrand Sabine L., Ryan O'Hare. 'COVID-19: Imperial researchers model likely impact of public health measures'. // Imperial College London, Published on 17 March 2020 at: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/news/196234/covid19-imperial-researchers-model-likely-impact/>

³ Timerkhanov, T. Coronavirus in Central Asia: What measures are the authorities of the countries of the region taking? Published on 30 March 2020 at: Asia-Plus, <https://asiaplustj.info/ru/news/tajikistan/security/20200330/koronavirus-v-tsentralnoi-azii-kakie-meri-predprinimayut-vlasti-stran-regiona>

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and their high cost⁴. To solve the problem with an insufficient number of test systems Kazakhstan⁵ and Uzbekistan⁶ have already supported their scientists in developing national tools for the detection of coronavirus, which are currently undergoing test procedures and official registration. Along with this, many citizens in all countries of the region did not pay due attention to softer warnings and recommendations on restricting visits to public places, observing safety precautions and social distancing.

Based on the development of the world situation with coronavirus, it is important for the Central Asian states to pay attention to the following factors when building short- and medium-term foreign policy priorities:

China's role in the post-coronavirus world. China, being the source of the spread of the new virus, has undergone a significant information attack in the initial stage of the pandemic. However, as significant successes in the fight against infection were achieved, China began to actively pursue a new foreign policy line to build a positive image of the country in the international arena. Beijing launched a "medical diplomacy" humanitarian relief campaign, which included protective masks and suits, gloves, test systems and medical equipment sent to Italy, Serbia, Spain, Iran, the Philippines, Pakistan, Iraq and other countries affected by the spread of the coronavirus.⁷

Obviously, without the use of Chinese manufacturing facilities, it is impossible to defeat the current pandemic. Before the crisis, China produced two million medical masks per day in 2019, which amounted to about 50 percent of world production, and in March 2020, Chinese factories increased their production of medical masks to 110 million per day⁸. Moreover, 20 percent of the global production of artificial lung ventilation apparatus (ALVA), which is critically needed by seriously ill patients with coronavirus worldwide, is supplied by China⁹. According to some estimates, countries such as the United States and the UK were in urgent need of supplies of 760 thousand¹⁰ and 20 thousand of ALVA¹¹ respectively. While the governments of Western European countries, Russia and the United States have restricted the export of medical equipment, China can become the main supplier for Central Asia and a kind of "saviour of the world" in confronting the pandemic. Such a position in the future will have a significant impact on the growth of

⁴ According to the World Health Organization, the cost of a coronavirus test is 30-60 USD and varies by country. Published on 17 March 2020 at: <https://ria.ru/20200317/1568743896.html>

⁵ Kazakhstan has created a sensitive test for coronavirus. Published on 25 March 2020 at: // IA REGNUM, <https://regnum.ru/news/society/2895126.html>

⁶ 'Uzbekistan has developed its own test systems for the diagnosis of COVID-19.' Published on 24 March 2020 at: <https://uz.sputniknews.ru/society/20200324/13752572/Uzbekistan-razrabotal-sobstvennye-test-sistemy-dlya-dagnostiki-COVID-19.html>

⁷ Sieren, Frank. 'Sieren's China: Aid with ulterior motives.' Published on 26 March 2020 at: // Deutsche Welle, <https://www.dw.com/en/sierens-china-aid-with-ulterior-motives/a-52931397>

⁸ Ren, Daniel. 'China boosts face mask production capacity by 450 per cent in a month, threatening a glut scenario.' Published on 16 March 2020 at: <https://www.scmp.com/business/companies/article/3075289/china-boosts-face-mask-production-capacity-450-cent-month>

⁹ 'China races to increase output of ventilators.' Published on 31 March 2020 at: <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/regional/2020/03/31/china-races-to-increase-output-of-ventilators>

¹⁰ 'Factories in China work 24/7 to build ventilators for Italy, US.' Published on 24 March 2020 at: <https://www.straitstimes.com/business/companies-markets/factories-in-china-work-247-to-build-ventilators-for-italy-us>

¹¹ 'Coronavirus: Plan to ramp up ventilator production 'unrealistic'. Published on 16 March 2020 at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-51914490>

importance and the leading role of the Celestial Empire in the post-coronavirus world. In a situation where the leading powers of the world demonstrate a shocking unpreparedness for the pandemic and the actual collapse of traditional institutions of multilateral cooperation, the role and influence of Beijing in Central Asia can significantly increase.

2. Anti-crisis plans and the importance of maintaining a balance between external actors. As part of the response to the pandemic, all three Central Asian countries affected by the coronavirus announced plans to support various sectors of the economy that were severely affected by the introduced restrictive measures. Kazakhstan announced the adoption of an anti-crisis plan, including costs of 10 billion USD, Uzbekistan approved a package of measures worth about 1.3 billion and various benefits and deferrals to businesses in the amount of 2 billion USD.¹² Kyrgyzstan also announced its anti-crisis plan at estimated cost of about 500 million USD and aims to involve international financial support¹³. The announced programs all involve improving the material support of the medical staff involved in the fight against coronavirus in Kazakhstan from 470 to 1900¹⁴, in Uzbekistan from 520 to 2600¹⁵, in Kyrgyzstan from 460 to 550 US dollars¹⁶, the stable functioning of the economy, tax and customs exemptions, support for entrepreneurs, large-scale infrastructure investments to support employment and social support for the population.

Under these conditions, countries of the region will consider potential borrowing opportunities on the international market to cover part of the planned costs of anti-crisis packages. Diversification of loan sources will be important in maintaining a balance of interests of leading powers and influential international financial institutions both in individual countries and at the regional level. At the same time, a large volume of external borrowing can dramatically increase the external debt of the Central Asian states and have a negative impact on their macroeconomic stability in the short and medium term.

3. The importance of regional cooperation. In response to the spread of coronavirus in the region, the countries of Central Asia announced the closure of state borders, the suspension of passage of citizens of other states and the suspension of air traffic with the outside world. These measures are certainly justified in the process of confronting the pandemic. However, along with this, Kazakhstan¹⁷ and

¹² 'New measures have been taken to support the business.' Published on 3 April 2020 at: <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2020/04/03/business-support/>

¹³ 'Kyrgyzstan - COVID Policy Responses.' Published on 13 May 2020 at: https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Kyrgyzstan_COVID%20Policy%20Responses.pdf

¹⁴ 'In Kazakhstan, premiums to the salary of doctors reached 850 thousand tenge.' Published on 30 March 2020 at: // Sputnik, 30 March 2020. <https://ru.sputniknews.kz/economy/20200330/13443784/kazakhstan-razmery-nadbavok-dlya-medikov.html>

¹⁵ 'Uzbek doctors will receive bonuses of up to 25 million UZS for the fight against COVID-19.' Published on 30 March 2020 at: <https://uz.sputniknews.ru/society/20200326/13777693/Uzbekskie-vrachi-budut-poluchat-nadbavki-do-25-mln-sumov-za-borbu-s-COVID-19.html>

¹⁶ 'Doctors will be paid 46 thousand 360 KGS for work in quarantine zones.' Published on 28 March 2020 at: https://24.kg/obschestvo/148364_vracham_zarabotu_vkarantinnyih_zonah_doplatyat_po46tyisyach_360_somov/

¹⁷ 'Kazakhstan has introduced a ban on the export of essential food products – a list.' Published on 24 March 2020 at: <https://ru.sputnik.kg/society/20200324/1047548503/kazahstan-zapret-vyvoz-produkty-spisok.html>

Kyrgyzstan¹⁸ imposed a ban on the export of a number of food products such as wheat flour, pasta, sunflower oil, sugar, chicken eggs, feed, salt, vegetables and cereals. In recent months, Uzbekistan has not yet imposed restrictions on exports from the country, except for the ban on the export of medical masks and pharmaceutical products¹⁹. Such unilateral decisions can aggravate the situation in neighbouring countries and lead to serious socio-economic consequences.

Central Asia should more closely study the negative experience of European countries, when the desire to isolate themselves from the virus by minimizing contacts with neighbouring countries and restricting the export of certain goods did not help them avoid a pandemic. Such unilateral measures have undermined many years of trust and further exacerbated the crisis with the spread of coronavirus in Europe. It is noteworthy that Uzbekistan seeks to be consistent in its policy of prioritizing Central Asia and increasing regional cooperation in foreign policy activities. In order to exchange views on the emerging epidemiological situation in Central Asia and establish coordination since mid-March, the President of Uzbekistan held telephone conversations with the heads of all countries of the region and Afghanistan. Uzbekistan also provided humanitarian assistance to Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan in the fight against coronavirus, sending medical masks, protective suits, tests, food and clothing. It would be useful to hold an online meeting of the heads of Central Asian countries in the near future to discuss measures for regional coordination of the pandemic response and mutual support.

None of the regional states will be able to ensure their own security and sustainable economic development by suppressing coronavirus only on their territory while the outbreak of the virus continues in neighboring countries.

In the current difficult situation in Central Asian countries, regional cooperation, coordination of actions, information exchange and mutual assistance are extremely important in overcoming all the negative consequences of the pandemic. None of the regional states will be able to ensure their own security and sustainable economic development by suppressing coronavirus only on their territory while the outbreak of the virus continues in neighboring countries. The current crisis is a test of the willingness of Central Asian countries to build regional political interaction, remove trade barriers, increase economic cooperation and resolve other harmful long-term regional problems.

Conclusion

In the context of a global pandemic, it is extremely important for the countries of Central Asia to carefully monitor global trends and take them into account when building their own domestic and foreign policy priorities. Obviously, having analyzed the negative experiences of a number of countries that were the first victims of coronavirus infections, the regional states decided to establish strict quarantine measures already at the very

¹⁸ 'The authorities banned the export of flour and other goods from the Kyrgyz Republic for six months – list.' Published on 23 March 2020 at: <https://ru.sputnik.kg/economy/20200323/1047520957/qts-gps-gsbehp-kontrabanda-ehksport-zapret.html>

¹⁹ 'Export of medical masks will be discontinued.' Published on 15 March 2020 at: <https://pv.uz/ru/news/uzbekistan-discontinues-the-export-of-medical-masks>

'Uzbekistan temporarily bans export of pharmaceutical products.' Published on 19 July 2020 at: <http://en.kabar.kg/news/uzbekistan-temporarily-bans-export-of-pharmaceutical-products/>

initial stage of the first confirmed cases of coronavirus. At the same time, the current development of the situation and the urgent development of anti-crisis measures, the accelerated construction of new hospitals and the sudden revision of foreign trade policies demonstrate the lack of readiness of many countries of the world, including Central Asia, for such a crisis. Despite the fact that most countries of the world, along with Central Asia, had at their disposal at least two months after reports of any outbreak of coronavirus, the preventive measures taken during this period were insufficient and require revision of many socio-economic programs in the “manual control” mode.

At the same time, it is important for the region now to think about the post-crisis world, think out its own strategy in the new conditions and prepare for the expected structural changes in the world order and economic system. Cohesion and coherence of regional efforts in confronting potential emergencies require further strengthening of regional cooperation, expanding a range of confidence-building measures in Central Asia, as well as deepening trade and economic cooperation. Strategic planning, mutual support and a balanced foreign policy can be key factors in overcoming the pandemic quickly and stabilizing the epidemiological and socio-economic situation in Central Asia.

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Gulnoza Muminova* - Impact of the pandemic on the energy security system of the European Union

This article attempts to analyse the impact of the pandemic on the state of energy security of the European Union. Without pretending to be complete, we will try to formulate the main points based on the research of experts working in this area.

Since its inception, the European Union (EU) has faced a large number of problems, which it has managed to solve with varying degrees of success. All EU member states face different challenges. In particular, these are the problems associated with high prices for energy resources, under the conditions of politicization of energy security issues, etc. These points are relevant due to the fact that the energy issue occupies one of the leading places on the agenda of the EU.

The EU entered the 21st century, realizing the reality of its state in terms of energy supply. The EU member states do not have their own energy resources that would allow them to develop without relying on energy imports. A study carried out by the European Commission in 2000 indicated an inevitable and potentially unprecedented increase in the EU member states' dependence on energy imports. By 2020-2030, the external dependence of the Western EU member states may reach 70 percent for gas, 90 percent for oil, and 100 percent for coal. The dependence of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe on gas imports will increase from 60 percent to 90 percent, oil - from 90 percent to 94 percent, and from net coal exporters, they may turn into importers, satisfying by import 12 percent of their coal demands¹.

For the EU, as well as for the entire world community, the pandemic is a time of testing for viability. The coronavirus pandemic that has swept the world is compared to a hurricane, shock, or war, which came unexpectedly and required a serious restructuring of policies in various directions. In Europe, at first, they thought that the pandemic would go in the direction of the developing countries of Africa and Asia, but it spread widely in Europe. There are many reasons for this. Among them, according to some experts, is lower degree of discipline of the population in a number of cases. Also, the current situation has clearly demonstrated the failure of the commercial approach to the social sphere and the policy of minimizing social services. This was clearly manifested in the field of health care, which in some countries was not ready to receive and treat such a large number of patients.

The coronavirus has demonstrated the obvious shortcomings of healthcare as a commercial service. Another important point: European unity turned out to be exaggerated to a certain extent². The actions taken by member countries to overcome the current situation were fragmented. The countries of the south reproached the EU for

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¹ Pashkovskaya I.G. Problems of energy supply of the European Union. "World Economy and International Relations". - 2008. - No. 10. - pp. 51-56. Published at: <https://mgimo.ru/upload/iblock/411/411c7132ecb909c0861693686f6f9cf3.pdf>

² Gushchin A. The pandemic has exposed problems in both the European and the Eurasian Union. The crisis becomes an opportunity to rethink the directions and models of development. Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 26th of March 2020. Accessed at: https://www.ng.ru/kartblansh/2020-03-26/3_7828_kartblansh.html

the lack of support. Lack of unity in decision-making today, as never before, has an extremely negative effect on the state of recovery from the current situation in Europe.

Until now, disagreements remain between the EU countries on many aspects: discussions are underway on the financial and economic consequences of the current pandemic crisis and, mainly, on determining those mechanisms that will be optimal. France and Germany have agreed on a €500 billion loan to EU member states to offset economic and social damage to the sectors and regions most affected by the pandemic. Meanwhile, a number of countries are against this initiative at large - for example, Austria, the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark.³

As for the studied area of energy security, there are a large number of different opinions of Western, Russian and other experts regarding the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and the further development of the situation in the field of energy security in the world and in the EU.

According to the International Energy Association (IEA), the COVID-19 pandemic, which has paralyzed most of the world's economies, is the biggest shock to the global energy market since World War II. In this regard, in 2020 the demand for energy resources in the world will decrease by 6 percent, which is 7 times more than during the crisis of 2008. The greatest decrease in demand will occur in developed countries, where the decline will be 9 percent. For example, demand is expected to fall by 9 percent in the US and 11 percent in the EU⁴.

A group of scientists from the Energy Centre of the Moscow School of Management SKOLKOVO note that today it has become obvious that the global crisis caused by the spread of the coronavirus infection, COVID-19, is not an ordinary cyclical recession, but a shock that can lead to a serious change in the organization of the world economy, social structure and energy markets. It is likely to be the deepest economic recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s. For the fuel and energy sectors, the coronavirus strikes a triple blow: 1) the direct impact of the coronavirus on workers in the fuel and energy complex and the sustainability of the enterprises; 2) the consequences of various kinds of restrictive measures to combat the coronavirus, leading, on the one hand, to disruptions in supply chains, and, on the other, to a sharp decline in economic activity and a decrease in demand for energy resources; and 3) stiff price competition provoked by a drop in demand and, as a result, a sharp drop in prices⁵.

³ Chizhov V.: the effect of the pandemic for the EU does not mean the beginning of the end yet. MFA of the Russian Federation, «International Life» magazine. 27th of May.2020. Accessed at: <https://interaffairs.ru/news/show/26466>

⁴ Biggest shock since WWII: The IEA has assessed the impact of the coronavirus on the energy market. Business Magazine «Neftegaz.RU» 1st of May 2020. Accessed at: <https://neftgaz.ru/news/finance/546730-samy-bolshoy-shok-so-vremen-vtoroy-mirovoy-voyny-mea-otsenilo-vliyanie-koronavirusa-na-energetiches/>

⁵ Corona crisis: the impact of COVID-19 on the state of the fuel and energy complex in the world and in Russia. Review of the energy center of the Moscow School of Management Skolkovo. 10th of April 2020. Accessed at: https://energy.skolkovo.ru/downloads/documents/SEneC/Research/SKOLKOVO_EneC_COVID19_and_Energy_sector_RU.pdf

The EU, in comparison with other countries, has been hardest hit by the coronavirus and has introduced the toughest quarantine. According to the latest data from Eurostat, the EU economy contracted by 3.5 percent in the first three months of 2020. At this rate, it will fall by 13 percent over the year, and Europe will miss almost 2 trillion euros. The largest political alliance on the planet, with a population of over 450 million, has suffered the most. At the end of the year, Europe will lag even further behind its competitors. According to the International Monetary Fund, the collapse in the European Union (-7 percent) will be more significant than in the US (-6 percent) and Japan (-5 percent), and the EU rival in the fight for the title of the second largest economy in the world, China, will completely avoid falls (+1.2 percent)⁶.

Plus, the topic of sanctions amid a pandemic remains relevant today. Recently, the UN Secretary General called on the G20 countries to lift sanctions on other states in order to facilitate the fight against coronavirus. One might recall that in December last year, the US imposed sanctions on the pipelayers of Nord Stream 2 and the Swiss-Dutch company Allseas stopped work on the construction of the pipeline. If the US position on both the first and the second draft was consistent, then the EU did not have show such consistency. In addition, Nord Stream 1 was included in the official list of projects of common strategic interest of the EU⁷.

According to the expert from the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), N. Kaveshnikov, in the current situation, when the demand for gas in Europe is obviously stagnating, the unfinished construction of Nord Stream 2 will not pose a threat to the EU energy market. The supply of this gas in the coming years is not vital for Europe. Nord Stream 2 is a constant irritant between the US and a number of European countries. In his opinion, if Nord Stream 2 is completed, the US will not increase the sanctions pressure on the Europeans and Russia post factum. However, any attempts to complete construction will be met in Washington with new sanctions. Russian companies have technical capacities at their disposal, but they require adaptation and modernization, and this modernization is possible only with the use of foreign technical capacities. Whether foreign, primarily European, firms will be ready to assist in the modernization of Russian ships is an open and controversial question. Therefore, the possibility of completing Nord Stream-2, according to the expert, is a very difficult question. Nevertheless, in Europe, they state the stability of the energy system in the context of the coronavirus pandemic. This is stated in a message following a video conference of EU energy ministers, published recently on the official website of the Croatian presidency of the EU Council. During the discussion, the heads of departments came to the conclusion that at the peak of the pandemic it is worth considering the transition to green energy. By doing so, the energy sector is expected to contribute to economic recovery⁸.

Today, in the structure of energy consumption, the largest decrease has affected almost all main types of energy carriers. Global coal demand in 2020 will decrease by 8

⁶ Kalmikov A. Europe has calculated losses from coronavirus. The worst predictions come true. BBC Russian service. 1st of May 2020. Accessed at: <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-52493422>

⁷ Chizhov V.: the effect of the pandemic for the EU does not mean the beginning of the end yet. MFA of the Russian Federation, «International Life» magazine. 27th of May.2020. Accessed at: <https://interaffairs.ru/news/show/26466>

⁸ EU energy system demonstrates resilience amid pandemic – communiqué. Independent information and analytical website dedicated to nuclear energy in Russia and the world. 28th of April 2020. Accessed at: <http://atominfo.ru/newsz01/a0491.htm>

percent, gas demand will fall by 5 percent, for natural gas, for oil the IEA has already predicted a drop in global demand by a record 9.3 million barrels per day. The only exception will be renewable energy sources (RES), the generation on which may show an increase of 5 percent in 2020. Restrictive measures aimed at containing COVID-19 have led to a noticeable increase in the use of alternative, low-carbon sources of generation, including wind, sun, hydro - and nuclear power., Having dropped behind coal for the first time in 2019, renewable energy sources can strengthen their leadership in a crisis. The fall in demand for hydrocarbons in 2020 will also lead to a record decrease in CO2 emissions - by 8 percent.⁹

According to a study conducted by the Finnish energy equipment company Wärtsilä in the EU and the UK, the share of RES in the total consumption was 43 percent, and the volume of carbon emissions in the energy sector from 10 March to 10 April 2020 decreased by almost 20 percent compared to the same period of 2019. In the period from 10 March to 10 April, RES generation accounted for 46 percent of total energy generation, which is 8 percent higher than the same indicator in 2019. At the same time, Wärtsilä experts noted that European energy systems are successfully coping with the increased share of RES -generation, despite the opinion of sceptics that such growth can lead to the collapse of energy systems. It is noted that the Covid-19 pandemic has significantly accelerated the energy transition to carbon-free energy in the short term, thereby providing a unique opportunity to see how energy systems operate with a much higher share of renewable energy generation¹⁰.

The pandemic today has already delivered a powerful blow to various areas of human development around the world. At the same time, the fight against coronavirus infection provides a new opportunity for pragmatic cooperation. Analysis by the IEA shows that governments directly or indirectly influence over 70 percent of global investment in the energy sector. Today, according to the head of the IEA, F. Birol, they have a historic opportunity to direct these investments on the path of sustainable development. Therefore, discussions about the transition to a low-carbon economy will not stop, but will sound with renewed vigour after the spread of the coronavirus is stopped¹¹.

A brief analysis of some of the factors leads us to the conclusion that, firstly, the EU, at this difficult stage, requires an unprecedented degree of mobilization and concentration of resources. The solidarity of countries and the willingness to make sacrifices for the common good will be critical. The EU, as we can observe, has been going through many crises lately and is facing new and more serious tests. But, in our opinion, these tests only strengthen it in an effort to preserve unity.

⁹ Alifirova, E. Biggest shock since WWII: The IEA has assessed the impact of the coronavirus on the energy market. Business Magazine «Neftegaz.RU» 1st of May 2020. Accessed at: <https://neftegaz.ru/news/finance/546730-samyi-bolshoy-shok-so-vremen-vtoroy-mirovoy-voyny-mea-otsenilo-vliyanie-koronavirusa-na-energetiches/>

¹⁰The coronavirus pandemic has accelerated the decarbonisation of energy in the EU and the UK. The portal RusCable.Ru 24th of April 2020. Accessed at: https://www.ruscable.ru/news/2020/04/24/Pandemiya_koronavirusa_uskorila_protsekk_dekarboni/

¹¹ Dolinchuk S. Survival Mode: How Global Energy Will “Answer” the Coronavirus. «Mind Club» materials 24th of March 2020. Accessed at: <https://mind.ua/ru/publications/20209091-rezhim-vyzhivaniya-kak-globalnaya-energetika-otvetit-na-koronavirus>

Secondly, the Covid-19 pandemic has significantly accelerated the energy transition to carbon-free energy in the short term, thus providing a unique opportunity to see how energy systems operate with a much higher share of renewable energy generation.

Thirdly, the new geopolitical conditions prevailing today require close interaction between at least the US, China, and the EU. But, unfortunately, the pandemic has exacerbated earlier divisions between China and the US. Now it is often said that there is no leader in world politics and several countries are claiming this role at once. This situation creates new opportunities for the EU, given its reputation as a player capable of offering constructive solutions to problems, acting in different directions and in the most difficult situations. In the future, its ability to act as soft power will become even more important¹².

The above brief overview of the current situation in the EU in general, and in the European energy system in particular, is part of further research.

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¹² An interview with the high representative of the Union for foreign Affairs and security policy Josep Borrell RBC. 30th of April 2020. Accessed at: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/30/04/2020/5ea3284a9a7947d7381ae50b>

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Gavkhar Sultanova* - Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on poverty in Uzbekistan

The coronavirus pandemic is wreaking havoc on economies and living standards in many countries around the world. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the global economy is in the worst recession since World War II. According to the World Bank's baseline forecast, global GDP is expected to contract by 5.2 percent in 2020, the deepest recession in the global economy in decades. In most emerging and developing economies, per capita incomes will fall significantly this year, likely pushing millions of people back into poverty¹.

“The pandemic and shutdown of advanced economies could push as many as 60 million people into extreme poverty – erasing much of the recent progress made in poverty alleviation,” said World Bank Group President David Malpass.²

The International Labour Organization (ILO), using the general equilibrium model (CGE), predicts an increase in the number of poor³ working-age population in developing countries by 9-35 million people in 2020⁴. IFPRI estimates that a 1 percent reduction in global GDP growth will increase the number of the world's poor (poverty line of \$ 1.9 per person per day) by 14-22 million⁵.

According to a study by scientists from the UN University (UNU-WIDER), the COVID-19 pandemic poses a real threat to the UN Sustainable Development Goal to end poverty by 2030, as global poverty may increase for the first time since 1990. Depending on the poverty line, such an increase could wipe out decades of efforts to reduce global poverty.

The study assesses the potential short-term economic impact of COVID-19 on global monetary poverty⁶ through reductions in per capita income or consumption (estimates are based on three scenarios of declining per capita income or consumption: low 5 percent, medium 10 percent, and high 20 percent). Under the most extreme scenario of a 20 percent reduction in income or consumption per capita, the number of people living in poverty could increase by 420-580 million compared to the latest official data for 2018. In conclusion, the authors note that as a result of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the values of non-monetary indicators of well-being in countries, such as infant and maternal mortality, malnutrition, and student performance, may

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¹ World Economic Prospects. June 2020. World Bank Group. <https://www.vsemirnyjbank.org/ru/publication/global-economic-prospects>

² World Bank Group: 100 Countries Get Support in Response to COVID-19 (Coronavirus). Press-release №: 2020/193/EXC, 19 May 2020. Published at: <https://www.vsemirnyjbank.org/ru/news/press-release/2020/05/19/world-bank-group-100-countries-get-support-in-response-to-covid-19-coronavirus>

³ When using the \$ 3.2 per person per day threshold.

⁴ ILO (2020) ‘COVID-19 and the world of work: impact and policy responses. Published at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/--dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_738753.pdf

⁵ Vos, R., W. Martin, and D. Laborde (2020b). ‘How much will global poverty increase because of COVID-19?’. <https://www.ifpri.org/blog/how-much-will-global-poverty-increase-because-covid-19>

⁶ Using international poverty lines of \$1.90, \$3.20 and \$5.50 per person per day.

change. The severity of the impact will depend on how long the pandemic lasts and on the response of national governments and the international community⁷.

Poverty is one of the main problems of the social sphere in Uzbekistan. The share of the population below the poverty line (\$ 1.95 per day) is 10 percent, which is much higher than the poverty level in neighbouring countries with lower GDP per capita⁸ (Tajikistan - 3 percent, Kyrgyzstan - 1 percent). According to the World Bank, the poverty level in Uzbekistan was 9.6 percent, with an international poverty line of \$ 3.2 per day and 36.6 percent with an international poverty line of \$ 5.5 per day.

According to the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev: "Poverty reduction requires the implementation of a comprehensive economic and social policy - from stimulating entrepreneurial activity to mobilizing the abilities and potential of the population, creating new jobs."⁹ In January 2020, the President instructed, together with international organizations, to develop a Poverty Reduction Program in Uzbekistan.

By the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures to radically update state policy in the field of economic development and poverty reduction" in order to introduce in the country a system for implementing an optimal state policy for reducing poverty through an effective macroeconomic policy. In addition to ensure stable economic growth and to improve the business environment, the Ministry of Economy and Industry was transformed into the Ministry of Economic Development and Poverty Reduction of the Republic of Uzbekistan.¹⁰ Development of poverty reduction strategies and programs, as well as tools and mechanisms for their implementation were identified as the tasks of the Ministry in the field of poverty reduction; implementation of measures to achieve national goals and objectives in the field of sustainable development; ensuring high-quality development of the labour market; development and implementation of programs for the development of human capital.

According to the Ministry of Economic Development and Poverty Reduction, 12-15 percent of the population or 4-5 million people in Uzbekistan are below the poverty line. Poverty rates are higher than the national average in remote and sparsely populated rural areas of Karakalpakstan, Khorezm, Jizzakh, Namangan and Surkhandarya regions, where the majority of households are engaged in agriculture. At the same time, in densely populated urban areas of Tashkent, Fergana, Bukhara, Samarkand, and Andijan regions, the poverty level is lower than the national average.

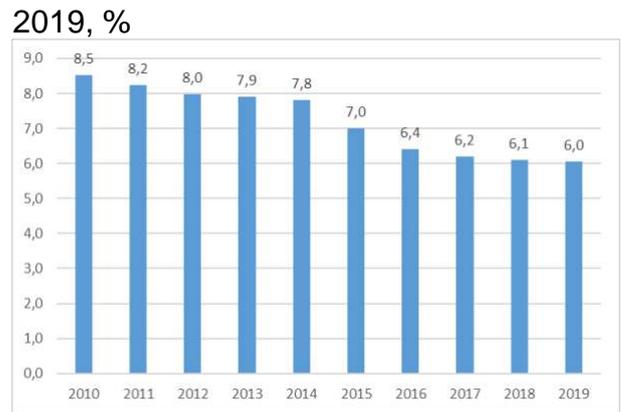
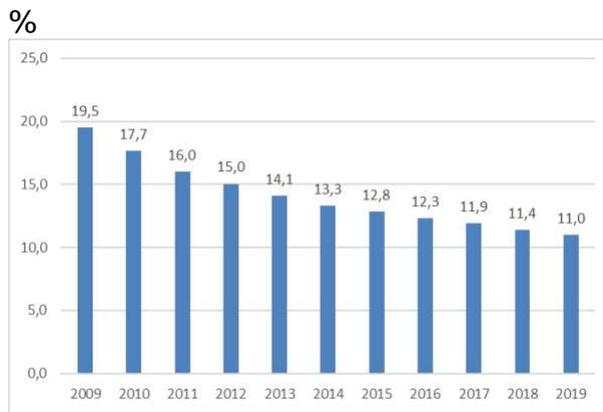
Fig. 1. Share of low-income population in the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2009-2019, Fig. 2. Coefficient of differentiation of the population by 10 percent groups in 2010-

⁷ Sumner, Andy, Chris Hoy, and Eduardo Ortiz-Juarez. 'Estimates of the Impact of COVID-19 on Global Poverty'. UNU-WIDER, April 2020. <https://www.wider.unu.edu/sites/default/files/Publications/Working-paper/PDF/wp2020-43.pdf>

⁸ In the World Bank ranking of the countries in terms of GDP per capita (in current prices) for 2018, Uzbekistan ranks 158th (USD 1,532), Kyrgyzstan in 165th place (USD 1280), Tajikistan in 176th place (USD 827). USA) among 195 countries.

⁹ Message of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev to the Oliy Majlis (24.01.2020). <https://president.uz/ru/lists/view/3324>

¹⁰ Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures to radically update the state policy in the field of economic development and poverty reduction" No. UP-5975 dated March 26, 2020 <https://www.lex.uz/docs/4778531>



Source: State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics

According to the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the share of the low-income population has been decreasing over the past 11 years and amounted to 11 percent in 2019¹¹ (Fig. 1). However, the elasticity of poverty reduction to GDP growth in Uzbekistan was low: a 1 percent increase in GDP per capita corresponds to a 0.5 percent decrease in the poverty rate, which is below the average for developing countries¹².

Differentiation coefficient for 10 percent groups in 2010-2019 also had a downward trend and in 2019 amounted to 6 percent (Fig. 2). Specifically, in 2019, the 10 percent of the poorest households¹³ accounted for 3.7 percent of income, while the 10 percent of the wealthiest households had 22.6 percent of the income. The World Bank estimated the Gini coefficient in Uzbekistan at 35.3 in 2003. Uzbekistan in the world ranking for this indicator is on the 100th place along with countries such as Burkina Faso, Liberia and Vietnam¹⁴. All this testifies to a relatively high degree of social stratification in society. However, according to official figures, the Gini coefficient fell from 0.39 in 2001 to 0.3 in 2018, which indicates positive changes in ensuring a fair distribution of income in society.

Figure 3. Provision of the population with durable goods in 2013-2019, the number of goods per 100 households

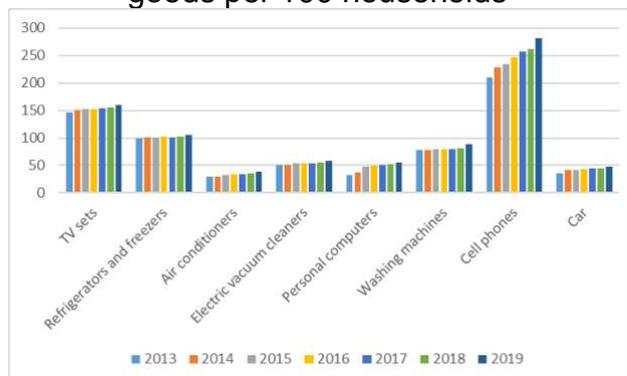
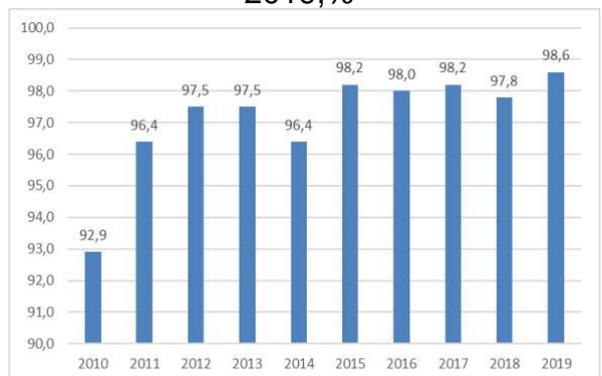


Figure 4. Share of population using safe drinking water services in 2010-2019, %



¹¹ Poverty estimates based on 2,100 kcal / day recommended by the World Bank

¹² Uzbekistan towards the new economy. Country Economic Bulletin 2019 World Bank Group. P. 13. Published at: <https://documents.worldbank.org/curated/pt/750691563976140831/pdf/Uzbekistan-Toward-a-New-Economy-Country-Economic-Update.pdf>

¹³ Average composition of households in Uzbekistan - 5 people in 2019

¹⁴ Published at: <https://www.indexmundi.com/facts/indicators/SI.POV.GINI/rankings>

Source: data from the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

There are no calculations of the multidimensional poverty index for Uzbekistan. However, some statistical data from Goskomstat allow us to indirectly judge some of the indicators of this index. In particular, in recent years there has been an increase in the indicator of the provision of the population of Uzbekistan with durable goods (Fig. 3). In addition, over the past 10 years, the population's access to safe drinking water has improved significantly. According to official data, in 2019, 98.6 percent of the population of Uzbekistan used safe drinking water services (Fig. 4). At the same time, according to some estimates, more than 10 percent of the rural population of the republic does not have access to drinking water¹⁵.

According to the results of a study conducted to determine the poverty profile of households in Uzbekistan, a representative low-income family consists of 7 people, the average age of the head of the household is over 50 years old, and he does not have a higher education. In 11 percent of the respondents, the head of a low-income household does not have a job and in 93 percent does not have a higher education, and only 24 percent of respondents have a secondary specialized education. 43 percent of low-income households do not have a permanent job, and 11 percent are considered unemployed. 93 percent are not connected to the central heating system, 96 percent do not have access to the central sewerage system, 66 percent are not connected to the central water supply¹⁶. Studies of poverty factors in Uzbekistan confirm the importance of human capital development, qualitative development of the labour market and its structure, improvement of housing and living conditions in the regions for solving the problem of poverty in the country.

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit Uzbekistan's economy hard: the economic growth slowed and unemployment rate increased. The country is experiencing a decline in economic activity, a drop in domestic and foreign demand. Decreases in exports and remittances of migrants (by more than 26 percent in March 2020 compared to March 2019) are contributing to a widening current transactions deficit. In order to mitigate the negative impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the economy, funds from international financial organizations were attracted, which increased Uzbekistan's external debt. In general, the economy is experiencing a decline in domestic investment and consumer demand and the total income of the population.

The number of people living below the poverty line increased during the pandemic. The World Bank predicts that poverty rates (using a threshold of \$3.2 per person per day) will rise to 8.7-10 percent after the COVID-19 pandemic begins, compared to estimates of 7.4 percent before the virus spread to Uzbekistan. This means that between 450,000 and 880,000 people could fall below the poverty line this year as a result of declining living standards¹⁷.

¹⁵ Development Strategy Framework of the Republic of Uzbekistan by 2035. INNGO "BUYUK KELAJAK". P. 24. <https://uzbekistan2035.uz/uzbekistan-2035/>

¹⁶ Khamidov B. Poverty in Uzbekistan. Journal "Ekonomicheskoe obozrenie", №5 (245) 2020, P. 64. <https://review.uz/journals/05-245-2020>

¹⁷ Economic and social impact of COVID-19. Updated information of the project "Listening to citizens Uzbekistan" as of June 2020. <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/908941595427703739/L2CU-COVID19-impacts-June2020-ru.pdf>

As a result of the introduction of quarantine restrictions, a large number of people lost their jobs and sources of income, which was especially pronounced in the informal sector of the economy, which accounts for 50 percent of Uzbekistan's GDP. According to the World Bank's Listening to the Citizens of Uzbekistan (L2CU) survey, the proportion of households with at least one family member in employment fell sharply by 40 percentage points in April but subsequently recovered by 33 percentage points in June¹⁸. The employment rate in the country remains significantly lower than in 2019. At the same time, the decline in employment was the most noticeable and lasting among the self-employed. Most of the decline in employment was observed in such sectors as tourism, recreation and entertainment, catering and education.

A significant portion of the citizens who participated in the L2CU survey indicated that they cannot afford to meet their basic needs and have no savings. The number of those unable to afford food rose from less than 9 percent to over 11 percent between April and June. The study notes that the financial situation of households is in a very precarious position: more than half indicated that they have no savings, and 40 percent - that they could not pay unforeseen expenses in the amount of 100 thousand soums (\$ 9.8)¹⁹.

The decline in cross-border remittances is one of the most important drivers of poverty growth in Uzbekistan. According to the L2CU survey, in April the share of L2CU participant-households receiving any kind of remittances fell 54 percent year-on-year, recovering only marginally in May and June. In April, the share of L2CU participant-households whose members are currently working abroad dropped to 13 percent (compared to about 17 percent in 2019). Among those who were still abroad in April, active employment fell from 88 percent to about 73 percent. Expectations for future migration have also deteriorated radically. Thus, the number of people considering the option of labour migration in the future has decreased by more than 95 percent compared to last year²⁰.

In order to mitigate the negative impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the economy, on March 19, 2020, a package of anti-crisis measures²¹ was adopted, including the creation of an Anti-Crisis Fund in the amount of 10 trillion soums (US \$ 1 billion), social support for the population, support for working citizens, food provision, support for entrepreneurs, support for exports and financial stability.

To support socially vulnerable groups of the population, a nationwide movement "Kindness and Support" was launched, within the framework of which more than 307 billion soums were allocated to about 540 thousand low-income families.

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Economic and social impact of COVID-19. Updated information of the project "Listening to citizens Uzbekistan" as of June 2020.

<http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/908941595427703739/L2CU-COVID19-impacts-June2020-ru.pdf>

²¹ Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On priority measures to mitigate the negative impact on the economic sectors of the coronavirus pandemic and global crisis phenomena" dated March 19, 2020 <https://uza.uz/ru/documents/o-pervoocherednykh-merakh-po-smyagcheniyu-negativnogo-vozdey-03/20/2020>

In accordance with the "Temporary Order" developed by the government for creating a source of income for families with an unfavourable social status and living conditions in connection with the coronavirus pandemic, measures were taken to create income sources for about 233 thousand citizens from low-income families.

According to the Ministry of Economic Development and Poverty Reduction, in July-October of this year more about 257 thousand needy able-bodied families must be provided with a source of income. To this end, measures will be taken to provide employment through family entrepreneurship, handicrafts, public works and self-employment system. Other mechanisms of engagement will be employment in existing and newly created enterprises, work at sites where construction and repair works are carried out at the expense of budget funds, involvement in planting profitable crops on the land, freed from crops, etc.

As part of the work to reduce poverty, comprehensive and regional programs were developed, including the following measures: introduction by the end of 2020 of the Unified Register of Social Protection to simplify the procedure for assigning social benefits to low-income families; introduction of criteria for determining and methods for calculating the poverty line; development of a regulatory framework for determining the subsistence level and the minimum consumer basket. The Ministry of Economic Development and Poverty Reduction is developing a strategy and concept for poverty reduction in Uzbekistan until 2030, which provides for the use of advanced foreign experience in poverty reduction.

To prevent a sharp increase in the level of poverty in Uzbekistan in the context of a pandemic, it is necessary to expand targeted social protection of vulnerable groups of the population with the introduction of a mechanism for distributing cash benefits through digital platforms, providing food to low-income families, restoring a full-fledged job of the labour market as quarantine restrictions are eased, supporting small businesses and private entrepreneurship, development of the service sector.

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Farruh Khakimov* - Impact of COVID-19 on Central Asia: regional developments and geopolitical implications

Introduction. Central Asia has been at the centre of geopolitical and geostrategic constructions of global and regional actors thanks to the region's rich natural resources, strategic location, economic, transport, logistic and for tourism which offer multiple opportunities for development.

Uzbekistan having a shared border with all the Central Asian States (CAS), including Afghanistan, possesses a unique geopolitical advantage that allows it to influence political, security and economic processes in the heart of Eurasia. Consequently, Central Asian region has always been the main priority of Uzbekistan's foreign policy, as regional security and development directly related to the country. Under the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Central Asia, the processes of regional development and geopolitical situation are entering into a new phase that potentially might change the status quo after the coronavirus pandemic.

COVID-19 and Central Asian cooperation. Since coming to power, the new president of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, has launched wide-range reforms almost in all spheres and prioritized strengthening regional connectivity and international cooperation. President Mirziyoyev's proactive regional strategy created a friendly climate of diplomacy among CAS. The President's speech at the UN General Assembly in September 2017 and his initiative to hold consultative meetings with Central Asian leaders were supported by all heads of states of the region. Two such consultative meetings have taken place already, one in Astana (March 2018) and the other in Tashkent (November 2019) with all five Central Asian leaders.

Because of Uzbekistan's open and pragmatic policy towards Central Asian countries, regional connectivity and borders have reopened; air, bus and rail routes re-established and enriched with new directions; and people-to-people connections were also facilitated which consequently encouraged regional economic and trade relations. As a result, Uzbekistan's total volume of trade with Central Asian countries reached \$5.2 billion in 2019.¹

At the very beginning of the global pandemic, the leadership of Uzbekistan has again demonstrated its commitment to regional cooperation and called for a common response to COVID-19 in Central Asia. Especially, President Mirziyoyev has been particularly active in talks with regional and non-regional leaders for that purpose. Since the global spread of the virus, President Mirziyoyev held telephone conversations with all leaders of Central Asia and Uzbekistan has provided humanitarian support particularly for neighbouring countries.

Despite all countermeasures, the global COVID-19 pandemic has been reshaping healthcare systems of CAS, as well as presenting challenges to national economic development and trade relations. Therefore, policy measures in Central Asia should

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¹ 'Central Asia - priority of foreign policy of Uzbekistan.' Published on 15.07.2020 at: <https://www.uzdaily.uz/en/post/58469>

address both disease containment and managing economic consequences at national and regional levels.

The current geopolitical positions of non-regional actors. The global COVID - 19 pandemic may be the very start of a change not only concerning regional power balance, but also concerning a shift in the international system and global balance of power.

Following the recent positive changes in CAS and inter-regional processes in the region, both global and regional actors have increased their focus on Central Asian affairs. For instance, the US and the EU have reviewed their Strategy for Central Asia, on other hand traditional players such as Russia and China have been also striving to strengthen their presence through Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Especially, since the beginning of the global pandemic, non-regional actors have also intensified their interactions with CAS both bilaterally and multilaterally, to combat COVID-19 and also in other spheres such as political, economic, security and humanitarian sectors. Particularly, international humanitarian assistance for Central Asian region from the US and Chinese sides were considerable. According to Chinese Ambassador to Uzbekistan Jiang Yan “Beijing from the beginning of the spread of infection has sent over 41 tons of humanitarian supplies and also shared its experience in countering COVID-19.”² The humanitarian aid included thousands of medical overalls, masks, gloves, medical surgical masks, non-contact electronic thermometers, coronavirus testing kits and others. Moreover, China offered Uzbekistan cooperation in testing a coronavirus vaccine. The United States has also supported Uzbekistan to combat the COVID-19 pandemic by providing life-saving equipment, laboratory and medical supplies as well as technical assistance. As of September 3, 2020, American humanitarian assistance totalled approximately \$8.6 million.³

It is important to mention that the region is not only the subject of rivalry between global powers such as Russia, China, the United States, and the European Union over influence but also regional powers like Turkey, Japan, South Korea, Iran, India, and others. All these external actors, engaged to Central Asian geopolitics, have their own selfish and sometimes coinciding interests in the region.

For instance, Russia has been a leading geopolitical actor in Central Asia for a long time and the region has an important place in the geopolitical architecture of Russian foreign policy as a periphery and buffer zone.⁴ Due to the Soviet legacy, the region’s infrastructure system and economic supply chains have been constructed with a link to Russia which is still functioning at certain levels. Besides, Central Asian labour migrants

² Virtual conference on comprehensive strategic partnership between China and Uzbekistan. Published on 11.07.2020 at: <http://uza.uz/en/society/virtual-conference-on-comprehensive-strategic-partnership-be-11-07-2020> .

³ ‘U.S. Provides Ventilators to Help Uzbekistan Battle COVID-19’. Published on 03.09.2020 at: <https://uz.usembassy.gov/u-s-provides-ventilators-to-help-uzbekistan-battle-covid-19/> .

⁴ Sahakyan, Mher, ‘Russia, China and Central Asia: cooperation over competition’. Published on 06.02.2020 at: <https://www.asiaglobalonline.hku.hk/author/mher-d-sahakyan> .

contribute considerably to their countries' economy from Russia. In addition, Moscow has significant influence in the region through its "soft power". Russian mass media, as well as films, TV series, and theatrical performances are popular among local people.⁵

According to Leonid Gusev, a Russian expert at the Centre for Studies of the Problems of Central Asia and Afghanistan of the Institute of International Studies MGIMO, Russia's foreign policy in Central Asia has three main goals:

- the first is promoting security and military-technical cooperation through bilateral agreements and multilateral structures (CSTO, CIS, SCO);
- the second is facilitating energy projects in the oil and gas sector and hydropower;
- the third is strengthening the integration institutions of the EAEU.⁶

Regarding Uzbekistan's cooperation with EAEU, Uzbekistan considers the organization as a new economic opportunity to boost national and regional development. Therefore, the Senate of Uzbekistan has approved the country's application to join the EAEU in the capacity of an observer state. A corresponding resolution was passed on 11 May, 2020.⁷

As the result of Western sanctions, oil price crisis and the impact of COVID-19, Russia is in an unfavourable position to finance huge foreign projects and support economic growth in Central Asia which limits its geopolitical manoeuvres.

At the same time, in the foreseeable future, Russia will likely remain the most prominent external power in Central Asia, both in terms of high-level political and security cooperation and its wide range of investment projects in the region.

Due to certain factors, China is another important geopolitical player in Central Asia. Initially, China has had only economic interests and influence in the region, however, since major changes in national development of China and Chinese foreign policy strategy, especially, after the launch of the BRI, its priorities and presence in Central Asia have been changing. In turn, for Central Asian countries BRI has become very favourable which has the potential to boost regional connectivity and trade, and also modernize local infrastructure.⁸ Despite the COVID-19 impact on national economies throughout Eurasia, China is able to adopt its BRI strategy to a post-pandemic world as China's economy could recover very quickly from the pandemic and manage the situation in the country. In the meanwhile, COVID-19 has created a real opportunity for China to deepen its existing links and strengthen its position in Central Asia. Since the pandemic, there has been a further acceleration of Chinese long-stalled projects and discussions of debt relief.⁹ Moreover, on 16 July 2020 China held its first meeting with the foreign

⁵ Gusev, Leonid. 'The Importance of Central Asia for Russia's Foreign Policy.' Published on 03.10.2020 at: <https://www.ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/importance-central-asia-russias-foreign-policy-24071>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ 'Senators approve Uzbekistan's participation in the EAEU as an observer.' Published on 11.05.2020 at: <https://kun.uz/en/news/2020/05/11/senators-approve-uzbekistans-participation-in-the-eaeu-as-an-observer> .

⁸ Nurgozhayeva, Roza. 'How Is China's Belt and Road Changing Central Asia?' Published on 09.07.2020 at: <https://thediplomat.com/2020/07/how-is-chinas-belt-and-road-changing-central-asia/> .

⁹ Pantucci, Raffaello. 'Beijing Binds: COVID-19 and the China-Central Asia Relationship.' Published on 19.06.2020 at: <https://centralasiaprogram.org/archives/16339> .

ministers of all five Central Asian countries in the “5+1” format, which to some extent has demonstrated Chinese interest in multilateral cooperation despite slowed economic activity in China.¹⁰

Truthfully, China views any security threats from Afghanistan to Central Asia and its western regions with great concern. Therefore, China focuses on the “Three Evils” (terrorism, extremism and separatism) and strengthening regional security in Central Asia through bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Moreover, for the last years, Beijing has sought multiple means to address this threat. Between 2015 and 2020, China made significant investments in the security sector of Central Asia, expanding its share of the region’s arms deliveries to 18 percent.¹¹ China has also strengthened security coordination in the region through the “Cooperation-2019” anti-terrorism exercise, which was held between Chinese and Tajik forces in August 2019. “China is also considering new measures for the protection of Chinese BRI investments in Asia, to include the greater use of private security companies (PSCs) such as the Frontier Services Group (FSG), which has been constructing a training camp in Xinjiang.”¹²

At present, despite recent Chinese gains, Russia remains the dominant external security partner for the region and largest supplier of arms. Russia accounts for 62 percent of the regional arms market over the past five years and maintains substantial military infrastructure in three out of five of the Republics.¹³

According to experts, in the post-pandemic period, the long-term trajectory will continue to bend towards China, as the region will find itself increasingly reliant on the Chinese economic machinery to get itself going once again. Moreover, with Chinese economy aiming to recover very quickly from the pandemic, CAS will open their economy to their Eastern neighbour which has a potential to shift the geopolitical landscape in the region.

Although Chinese investment and Russian security cooperation are often considered as dominant factors in Central Asia, there is a high demand for alternatives. This makes the United States, the EU and others welcome partners for certain reasons.

For instance, **the United States (US)** has a distinctive geopolitical interest in the region given the above-mentioned geostrategic importance of Central Asia. Preventing the emergence of any dominant power in the region is considered the US’s geopolitical task in Central Asia. Moreover, the role of Afghanistan and counter-terrorism is central to the US strategy in the region.

In the meanwhile, the new United States Strategy for Central Asia defined the US’ primary strategic interest in the region “to build a more stable and prosperous Central

¹⁰ Hashimova, Umida. ‘China Launches 5+1 Format Meetings With Central Asia.’ Published on 20.07.2020 at: <https://thediomat.com/2020/07/china-launches-51-format-meetings-with-central-asia/>.

¹¹ Bradley, Jardine, and Lemon, Edward. ‘In Russia’s Shadow: China’s Rising Security Presence in Central Asia.’ *Kennan Cable* 52, (May, 2020): 2.

¹² Sukhankin, Sergey: ‘The Security Component of the BRI in Central Asia, Part One: Chinese and Regional Perspectives on Security in Central Asia.’ Published on 15.07.2020 at: <https://jamestown.org/program/the-security-component-of-the-bri-in-central-asia-part-one-chinese-and-regional-perspectives-on-security-in-central-asia/>.

¹³ Bradley Jardine, and Lemon, Edward, ‘In Russia’s Shadow: China’s Rising Security Presence in Central Asia.’ *Kennan Cable* 52, (May, 2020): 1.

Asia that is free to pursue political, economic, and security interests with a variety of partners on its own terms; is connected to global markets and open to international investment; and has strong, democratic institutions, rule of law, and respect for human rights. A stable and secure Central Asia contributes directly to US efforts to counter terrorism, support regional stability, promote energy security, and enhance economic prosperity in the region and beyond.”¹⁴

Indeed, the new US strategy for Central Asia “should be considered a significant “win” for Central Asia because it maintains full US engagement and assistance in an era when the United States is pulling back from its engagements elsewhere in the world.”¹⁵ According to some American scholars due to recent positive changes in the region, such as transitions of political power, economic reforms, and also current challenges of COVID-19 pandemic have created new openings for the US. Philip Caruso, researcher on “Foreign policy”, pointed out that it is an opportunity for the US to build stronger relations with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and support regional developments in Central Asia.¹⁶ In this regard, successful Uzbek-American cooperation can play a significant role in stabilizing the situation in Central and South Asia. The US is a crucial strategic partner for Uzbekistan, given its pivotal role in international security.

Uzbekistan played a constructive role through its recent efforts for peace in Afghanistan by hosting the Tashkent Conference and other important events regarding the reconciliation of conflicting parties. In this vein, Washington’s growing interest and involvement in the region has been observed in the form of the recently initiated Trilateral format of cooperation, which also highlights Uzbekistan’s role in Afghan issues and Central Asian affairs. The “Uzbekistan – United States – Afghanistan” Trilateral forum was launched successfully, which was held via videoconference for the second time on 21 July 2020. “The new trilateral fits into existing efforts to increase regional cooperation and integrate Afghanistan into Central Asian thinking,”¹⁷ as the leadership of Uzbekistan has numerous times stated that “the security of Afghanistan is the security of Uzbekistan”. Certainly, today there is a need for a common regional strategy and support for the construction of peaceful life in Afghanistan.

The **European Union (EU)** also sees Central Asia as one of the most strategically important regions. Trans-regional challenges such as human trafficking, trafficking of drugs, organised crime and terrorism influence EU interests. Therefore, the EU has been supporting CAS through various development and cooperation mechanisms. In this regard, the new EU strategy for Central Asia (2019) sees opportunities in terms of cooperation and economic development “whereas the old strategy (2007) mostly saw

¹⁴ ‘United States Strategy for Central Asia 2019-2025: Advancing Sovereignty and Economic Prosperity’. Published on 10.02.2020 at: <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/FINAL-CEN-Strategy-Glossy-2-10-2020-508.pdf>.

¹⁵ Hoagland, Richard, ‘U.S. National Security Strategy for Central Asia: a significant win for the region.’ Published on 14.02.2020 at: <https://www.caspianpolicy.org/u-s-national-security-strategy-for-central-asia-a-significant-win-for-the-region>

¹⁶ Caruso, Philip, ‘COVID-19 Heats Up the New Great Game in Central Asia.’ Published on 03.08.2020 at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/08/03/covid-19-china-new-great-game-central-asia>

¹⁷ Putz, Catherine, ‘US-Afghanistan-Uzbekistan Trilateral Tests Out New Format for Engagement.’ Published on 29.05.2020 at: <https://thediplomat.com/2020/05/us-afghanistan-uzbekistan-trilateral-tests-out-new-format-for-engagement>

challenges in terms of security.”¹⁸ Moreover, the new strategy does not present the EU as a partner or competitor in the Central Asian region against any global or regional powers. Indeed, as one of the world’s largest economies the EU “remains an important economic partner for Central Asian countries, both in terms of trade and as an investor.”¹⁹

Concerning regional powers engaged in Central Asian geopolitics, **Turkey’s** changing foreign policy in Central Asia should be mentioned. As in the past few years, “Ankara has also been striving to build a silent but important strategy towards Central Asia.”²⁰ Some changes in other main actors’ strategy in geopolitics of Central Asia, caused corrections to Turkey’s foreign policy in the region. By acknowledging the leading positions of Russia and China in the region, Turkey has adapted its own cooperation and connectivity project – “the Middle Corridor” in the Eurasian continent.

Uzbekistan’s economic and political openings have been considered as a great opportunity for Turkey. In 2019 Uzbekistan joined the Turkic Council and has become an active member of the Council. It should be noted that the institutionalization of Turkey’s relations with the Turkic-speaking states of Eurasia facilitated its multilateral ties and interactions. In April 2020, the President of Uzbekistan with other member states took part in an extraordinary online summit of the Turkic Council to discuss current issues and coordination of efforts in combating the spread of COVID-19 in the countries.

India as an emerging regional power is in the process of demonstrating its new position at regional and global levels. India is also striving to establish itself as an important regional actor in Central Asia since the region belongs to its so-called “extended neighbourhood.”²¹ India’s cooperation with Central Asian states is developing on a bilateral and multilateral basis. In addition, the first meeting of “India - Central Asia” Dialogue with participation of Afghanistan at the Ministerial level took place on 13 January 2019 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. The next meeting in this format was planned to be organised in New Delhi in 2020. Energy projects with future participation from India, such as the CASA-1000 project and the TAPI Pipeline projects could become a prospective “peace pipeline” in case of peaceful settlement of Afghanistan and Indo-Pakistan issues.

Japan was the first country to institute “Central Asia - Japan” – “5+1” cooperative format at ministerial level in 2004, followed by South Korea in 2007 and later by others (the EU, US and the latest - China). Japan is considered as an economic giant at the global level by CAS and Japan-Central Asia relations have been predominantly economic in nature, and will continue to remain so in the coming future.

The Republic of Korea has also invested heavily in Central Asian states and interested in expanding its economic presence in the region. In addition, the engagement of South Korea to Central Asia could be seen in conjunction of its New Northern Policy

¹⁸ Boonstra, Jos. ‘New EU Strategy for Central Asia: From Challenges to Opportunities.’ Published on 03.10.2019 at: <https://www.ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/new-eu-strategy-central-asia-challenges-opportunities-24062>.

¹⁹ Bhutia, Sam. ‘The EU’s new Central Asia strategy: What does it mean for trade?’ Published on 05.06.2019 at: <https://eurasianet.org/the-eus-new-central-asia-strategy-what-does-it-mean-for-trade>.

²⁰ Köstem, Seçkin. ‘The Power of the Quiet? Turkey’s Central Asia Strategy.’ Published on 03.10.2019 at: <https://www.ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/power-quiet-turkeys-central-asia-strategy-24069>.

²¹ Yakubov, Ildar, ‘India and Central Asia: The Thorny Path of Cooperation. Published on 6.02.2020 at: <https://cabar.asia/en/india-and-central-asia-the-thorny-path-of-cooperation/>.

Strategy, which represents Korea’s current regional vision for connectivity and energy resources development projects.

The prospects of inter-regional cooperation and future relations with external actors in a post-pandemic era. Over the historically short period, the level of intra-regional trade between Uzbekistan and other Central Asian states has considerably increased. For example, at the end of 2019, the volume of trade with Central Asian countries reached \$5.2 billion. Until 2016, the annual commodity circulation of Uzbekistan with the countries of the region averaged \$100-150 million, then, according to the results of last year, commodity circulation with all countries increased by more than 50 percent on average. With Kyrgyzstan, trade grew 8 times, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan - 5 times, and with Kazakhstan - increased by \$1 billion.”²²

Despite new challenges posed by Covid-19 pandemic, according to Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan I. Nematov, Uzbekistan will continue to develop relations and “strengthen political dialogue with all countries of the region, and attach great importance to economic cooperation. In the coming years, the volume of trade with Kazakhstan should reach \$5 billion, with Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan to \$1 billion.”²³ Meanwhile, due to certain factors Central Asian countries apply different trade regimes to each other and their trade relations, including labour and capital movements are different. Consequently, dissimilar trade regimes affect and hinder more intensive cooperation and interaction between them.

For example, current state of trade regimes as follows:

- Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, as members of the EAEU benefits the common customs area;
- Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are members of the WTO;
- all Central Asian countries (except Turkmenistan) are part of the CIS free trade area (FTA).

Table 1: The share of CA region in country's total trade in 2019

	Share (in percent) of total trade with:				
	Countries of CA	Russia	China	European countries	The USA
Uzbekistan	12.4	15.7	18.1	18.0	1.4 596 mil
Turkmenistan	4.1	3.8	62.5	14.0	-
Tajikistan	30.6	23.3	14.6	10.6	1.0

²² ‘Central Asia - priority of foreign policy of Uzbekistan.’ Published on 15.07.2020 at: <https://www.uzdaily.uz/en/post/58469>.

²³ Ibid.

					45 mil
Kyrgyzstan	19.8	23.4	26.4	18.1	1.4 93 mil
Kazakhstan	4.8	20.5	15.0	32.6	2.3 2,2 bl.

Source: *Review.uz*

If we analyse the importance of inter-regional trade in Central Asia, it is possible to observe interesting trends:

- Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (30.6 percent and 19.8 percent) are more oriented to the regional market than Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan (4.8 percent and 4.1 percent), whereas Uzbekistan has relatively intermediate position (12.4 percent). A lesser share of Central Asia in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan's foreign trade is related to their predominant exports of hydrocarbons mainly to the EU and China.

At the same time, the above-mentioned trade regimes contribute to reducing trade barriers between Central Asian countries in varying degrees. Moreover, CAS also have bilateral agreements on regulating mutual trade. Therefore, there is a high demand for unification of inter-regional trade regimes and economic relations, which subsequently would deepen regional trade and economic cooperation.

As most of countries of the world prepare to follow China's lead in managing the pandemic and quick economic recovery, scholars and analysts predict that COVID-19 will also accelerate the shift in power and influence from West to East at the global level.

According to experts, COVID-19 has created a real opportunity for China to deepen its existing links and strengthen its position within the region. While in the first instance, at the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak in China, Central Asian countries sent aid to China, later Beijing responded with waves of medical equipment, doctors' visits, webinars and more to help the region manage the crisis.²⁴ Observers point that by this way China is looking to project its 'soft power' through the pandemic response and advance its economic ambitions with its BRI, since COVID-19 does not change China's underlying strategic rationale for the BRI. In fact, COVID-19 will only strengthen China's willingness to push forward with the BRI in the long-term. Central Asian states, in turn, are likely to become economically closer to China in a post-pandemic world.

The analyses of strategic actions and intentions of external powers in the region demonstrate that mainly Western countries – the US, UK and the EU member states; and Asian countries such as Japan, South Korea, have been supporting attempts of CAS for integration and regional approaches to common challenges, therefore their multilateral platforms are inclusive and "C5 centric" like C5+1 (Central Asia plus the USA, the EU, Japan and etc.).

²⁴ Pantucci, Raffaello, 'Beijing Binds: COVID-19 and the China-Central Asia Relationship.' Published on 19.06.2020 at: <https://centralasiaprogram.org/archives/16339>.

Whereas, traditional powers like Russia and China prefer mostly bilateral format and/or within “their” multilateral institutions such as (EAEU, CSTO, SCO, BRI). However, China’s recent initiative of C5+1 is also interesting, as it may add some corrections to the Chinese approach to the region.

Another interesting aspect in actions of non-regional actors is that countries like Turkey, India, Iran, and Pakistan along with their own interests mostly demonstrate Russian or Chinese centric view on the region to avoid direct competition and conflict of interests in the Central Asian region.

Under current geopolitical developments and conditions, most experts from Central Asia suggest the maintainence of a multipolar approach with more than one player and to concentrate more on intra-regional cooperation. In this context, deepening regional cooperation is the key factor to enhancing the importance of Central Asia and to address economic and security challenges and also to maintain geopolitical balance for the benefits of the region.

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Muattara Rakhimova* - Some aspects of the activities of international organizations in a pandemic

The global crisis due to the coronavirus pandemic and measures to combat it is gaining momentum, but there is already a lot of discussion about how the world will come out from the current ordeal. There are notably many predictions that 2020 will bring back the era of nation states. A situation that was impossible to imagine at the beginning of 2020 - the single world economy was paused (transport links between states were stopped, world trade was partially paused, a significant part of industrial production was stopped in many countries, technological and production chains of the global economy were interrupted, etc.), and the majority of the world closed from each other.

Of course, the world will come out of this crisis, but with a “changed face” - not economically, but in general. During the time the crisis is growing, all international organizations of a global nature have damaged their reputation. Now it is increasingly said that an era of national fencing and national sovereignty is coming, no one believes supranational structures and global organizations: where was the European Union (EU), or what was the United Nations (UN) doing during the pandemic? These are the questions that are discussed everywhere.

All these international organizations are different in their legal nature, in the scope of their powers, in their field of activity. Researchers often compare the EU and the UN. They have some common features, for example, both reflect the idea of a bright future both for themselves and the members of their organization, and for all of humanity as a whole. Here we can give another example: when the UN was created, it was presented as a prototype of a global government, the creators of the EU tried to do this at the European level.

From our point of view, the degree of integration within the EU is quite strong, and the powers of its leadership are great. The UN member states are united only by the norms of international law and adherence to various peace-loving principles. Only the UN Security Council has the functions of punishing or pardoning. When the UN was created, it was conceived as an organization with the potential of a world government, but even without this, the UN is a good way to promote globalization - all kinds of projects to unify various forms of human existence and consciousness.

The coronavirus pandemic has put everything in its place - the UN is losing its influence, as is the EU. During the pandemic, not a single statement of the Security Council was submitted on a problem that surpassed in its consequences everything that has been in recent history, and strikes a blow on the very idea of a single and successfully globalizing humankind.

International organizations took a wait-and-see attitude, and supranational structures proved to be ineffective. European politicians started talking about the collapse

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of a united Europe, for example, in Italy, some politicians were removing the EU flags from their offices¹.

The world has dispersed to national compartments. For example, in the past four years, the United States and Britain have been busy primarily by themselves. In the United States, there is a struggle between globalist cosmopolitans and anti-globalist nationalists of Trump, and their positions on the world stage are weakening at an accelerated pace. And Britain is busy "divorcing" the EU.

So, the current pandemic was the impetus for the fight against globalization². The global economic shock and the global economic crisis unfolding behind it will indeed weaken the positions of that part of the West that is determined to continue working on the globalist project and is not going to give it up even in the current conditions. Now even such a key project of globalists as the EU will stagger - not only conscious opponents of European integration, but also the simplest citizens will ask questions like - why do we need the EU if it does not help us in any way?

The current, not really pleasant, situation will be used by those states that have long been striving to dismantle the Atlantic project and create images of a new world order. This should include those countries that are pursuing a policy of preserving their sovereignty, and those who want to strengthen it. That is, there will be a strengthening of national states. But at the same time, in order to implement projects about the future, you need to coordinate your ideas about the future - and everyone has their own plans for the future world order. Some want to build a club of equals; and others are suspected of intending to simply replace the Anglo-Saxon globalization with their own.

The main difficulty in creating a new architecture of the world order is not that it will need to be aligned with strong national states and regional associations like ASEAN for example, but that it will need to be done in parallel with the already functioning globalist system. That is, if it's easier to say, you will need to simultaneously live in a house half-built by others, and build your own inside it, not destroying the first until the construction of the second one is completed.

And here lies the main trap for all opponents of the current model of globalisation - they will start bargaining and offer not to build anything new, not to break an unfinished house, but simply to agree on a new architecture within the framework of already completed works. In other words, to give a new order to old architects.

This is exactly what Gordon Brown, the former British prime minister, who, during the last crisis, initiated the convening of the first summit of the Big Twenty, a club of great powers³, said about this. He called for the creation of some form of global government to deal with the pandemic and crisis on an interim basis. And proceeding from the fact that

¹ The European Union flag is lowered in the Italian parliament. Published on 31 March 2020 at: <https://soldat.pro/2020/03/31/v-italianskom-parlamente-spyskaut-flag-evropeiskogo-souza/>

² Malyshev V. Pandemic: a blow to globalization. "Century" internet newspaper. Published on 31 March, 2020 at: http://www.stoletie.ru/tekuschiy_moment/pandemija_udar_po_globalizacii_736.htm.

³ Lebedev A. London G20 Summit Completed. Published on 2 April 2020 at: <https://www.alebedev.ru/archive/67/69/zavershilsja-londonskij-sammit-bolshoj-dvadcatki/>

now the situation is worse than in 2008, his claims that it was an economic problem that had an economic solution: "Now we are faced, first of all, with the need for urgent medical care, and for its solution joint action is needed. But the more you interfere with emergency care, the more you put the economy at risk ...

It is impossible to deal with this challenge in a single country. There must be an agreed global response ... The pandemic requires a more draconian international approach. We need some kind of working governing body. If I were to tackle the current crisis, I would empower the G20, because in the current circumstances it is necessary to listen to countries most affected by the crisis, countries that matter, and countries that have the potential to help large numbers people affected by the crisis, for example in Africa.⁴ "

Of course, to save lives, there must be a "special force" uniting world leaders and heads of international organizations to form a "global working group" to combat the pandemic. Here will be required "a coordinated effort to find a vaccine, as well as to organize production, procurement and prevent speculation."

"The working group could ensure that central banks are coordinated, take action to prevent capital outflows from emerging market economies, and agree on a joint approach to using public funds to stimulate growth."⁵

Mr. Brown also proposed to increase the budget of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to strengthen the G20 with the long-term goal to build the global government. It is important that, for example, the World Bank and the IMF will be its instruments. That is, Mr. Brown wants to use the current crisis to take globalization to a new level: creating a working prototype of world government.

But as noted above, through the efforts of states, the UN was created and, in its structure, there is an organization that should deal with pandemics. And this is WHO - the World Health Organization. The current pandemic is a real reason to unite all countries under the auspices of WHO to solve very specific and extremely urgent tasks. One of the functions of WHO during epidemics is coordination of measures taken by different countries in the fight against infectious diseases. In the case of coronavirus, the organization should stimulate international cooperation on issues such as conducting scientific research on COVID-19, as well as developing tests, drugs and vaccines. WHO initiated an international clinical study, during which experts are testing existing drugs for their effectiveness against coronavirus.

Usually, WHO informed the entire world community about terrible epidemics threatening planet Earth, for example, such information was provided on the Ebola fever.

But Ebola is not transmitted by airborne droplets, that is, if you wash your hands after a certain contact with the carrier, you can avoid infection, so Ebola can never, under any circumstances, become a threat to a developed country. It was only a threat in Africa, and spread through African hospitals with latrine type toilets. And this kind of

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

communication about Ebola was a classic example of the behaviour of the international bureaucracy in order to obtain additional funding.

The introduction of an international emergency regime is a last ditch-measure that WHO can take. In this case, additional resources are allocated to fight the infection. The declaration of a state of emergency also provides for the development of specific recommendations for member states of the Organization - for example, on introduction of quarantine measures or restrictions on the movement of people. Although the guidelines are not binding, countries generally follow them.

In the case of the coronavirus, from the very beginning, the WHO should have been very active, but the reality was different. At the end of 2019, an epidemic began in Wuhan, but only a month later, WHO informed us that the virus was not transmitted from person to person. The new disease was initially called the "Wuhan virus", which is in line with medical tradition - diseases are constantly named by their place of origin, for example, Marburg virus, Ebola fever, West Nile virus, Zika fever, etc.

But breaking tradition, on February 11, 2020, WHO announced the official name of the new disease: COVID-19⁶, which did not indicate the place of origin in any way. Immediately after that, a propaganda campaign was launched in the world against the name "Wuhan virus" as politically incorrect and racist.

It is known for certain that infectious diseases are caused by viruses and bacteria, and the fight against them requires new technologies of the XXI century, but so far, we are fighting the epidemic in exactly the same way that we fought the plague in the XIV century - quarantine!

Our knowledge has gone far ahead in comparison with the XIV century. During the pandemic, we have become almost experts on the coronavirus: how it enters the human body, how it is tested, how to make medicines, vaccines etc.

In early March 2020, WHO officially declared the outbreak of coronavirus a pandemic - thus, the organization only recognized the fact that the spread of the new virus has reached global scale.

There are other aspects of this pandemic, for example, on April 8, 2020, in Washington during the daily briefing of the Coronavirus Working Group, the US President accused the WHO of being ineffective in the fight against coronavirus and threatened to stop making contributions to it⁷. In addition, he previously stated that WHO had failed in its fight against the coronavirus pandemic.⁸

It should be noted that the WHO budget for 2020-2021 is \$ 4.8 billion, and about a fifth of this amount comes from the assessed contributions of the organization's 194

⁶ CoV 2019-n received the official name of the disease - COVID-19 (WHO). Published on 11 February 2020 at: <http://medicina.dobro-est.com/2019-ncov-poluchil-ofitsialnoe-nazvanie-covid-19-voz.html>

⁷ Trump Called Daily Coronavirus Briefings a Waste of Time. Published at: https://rg.ru/2020/04/26/tramp-nazval-ezhednevnye-brifingi-po-koronavirusu-pustoj-tratoj-vremeni.html?utm_source=yxnews&utm_medium=desktop

⁸ Tramps Twitter. Published at: <https://polit.info/tags/tvitter-trampa/1>

Member States. The contribution rates are determined depending on the solvency of a particular country.

Most of the budget comes from voluntary contributions from WHO Member States, as well as from foundations, UN agencies, non-profit organizations and individuals. Over the decades, this portion of funding has grown steadily. For example, according to the German UN Association (DGVN), in 2010-2011, the ten largest donor states (including mandatory and voluntary contributions) together accounted for more than 60 percent of WHO's budget. Among other countries, the top ten includes the United States, Japan and Germany. And in 2012-2013, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation became the largest donor to the organization: in terms of the funds allocated by WHO, it even surpassed the United States.⁹

WHO encourages countries to adopt a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach, built "around a comprehensive strategy to prevent infection, save lives and minimize impact. Even though these measures are causing heavy damage to the economy." WHO has summarized the actions that the authorities of the countries of the world must take to combat the penetration and spread of the virus:

- prepare and be ready;
- identify, protect and treat;
- reduce transmission;
- innovate, learn.

In the practice of the Republic of Uzbekistan, international cooperation in combating the pandemic is also strengthening. So, on April 17, 2020, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Sh. Mirziyoyev held a meeting on strengthening cooperation with international financial institutions in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic.¹⁰

In 2020 it was planned to master the finances allocated by international and foreign financial structures. The existing projects are being optimized based on the current situation, and funds are directed primarily to the medical sector. International organizations express their readiness to assist Uzbekistan.

A lot of work has been done in the country, among the implemented measures one should note the equipping of the hospital in the Zangiata district and the quarantine zone in the Yukorichirchik district of the Tashkent region with modern medical equipment with the assistance of the Asian Development Bank.

The Ministry of Health was tasked with purchasing 2.3 thousand artificial ventilation devices and other equipment at the expense of funds from the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank. A large list of sanctions, restrictions, embargoes, imposed at the

⁹ Bill Gates considers it dangerous to stop funding WHO. Published on 15 April 2020 at: <https://ria.ru/amp/20200415/1570095457.html>
-<https://p.dw.com/p/3ae75>

¹⁰ Speech by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh. Mirziyoyev at the extraordinary summit of the Cooperation Council of Turkic-speaking states on April 10, 2020. Published on -<https://pv.uz/ru/news/ozbekiston-respublikasi-prezidenti-shavkat-mirziyoyevning-turkiy-tilli-davlatlar-hamkorlik-kengashining-navbatdan-tashqari-sammitidagi-nutqi>

instigation of leading Western countries and in the current situation turning not just into a nuisance, but into a deadly noose around the necks of countries desperately fighting the pandemic, are still operating in the world.

At such a moment, the UN was supposed to consolidate the efforts of the world community in the fight against the pandemic: this is the development and launch of real mechanisms of international assistance to countries affected by the disease, in connection with the pandemic - rejection of any "trade wars" and sanctions, whoever they are directed against, the end of the practice of discrimination against peoples, states and any persons etc. In fact, other countries¹¹ provide real assistance to the countries most affected by the attacks of the epidemic solely on their own initiative.

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¹¹ Uzbekistan provided humanitarian aid to Tajikistan. Published on 10 April 2020 at: <http://muslim.uz/index.php/rus/novosti-2018/item/19768-uzbekistan-okazal-gumanitarnuyu-pomoshch-tadzhikistanu>

Nargiza Sodikova* - EU-CA: development of relations during the pandemic

The coronavirus pandemic has demonstrated the fragility of the established world system, and has presented humanity with a number of new challenges that can significantly change the situation in the world, ranging from political and economic relations at the international level to relations at the household level. The pandemic has adversely affected all areas of human life. Both developed and developing states are faced with an urgent task to make quick decisions to resolve the current critical situation. The main purpose of this study is to examine the internal European position at the beginning of the pandemic, as well as its impact on changing the EU's course in combating Covid-19 and on the EU's desire to maintain foreign policy relations with the CA region during the crisis.

A number of European countries, such as Italy, Spain and France, were among the first to be hit by Covid-19. Not having enough experience in the fight against the new virus, these states adopted a position of self-isolation, began to act alone to avoid the spread of the virus. In this case, there was an acute lack of pan-European solidarity and unity. It was this phenomenon that challenged the existing notion of unity within the EU, since states began to act at national levels, not relying on mutual assistance and reciprocity, which is the basic principle of the EU. The adoption of measures at the level of states, the closure of internal borders, the introduction of certain restrictions demonstrated the existing internal problems of the European continent. It was a kind of test for the EU as a single subject of international relations.

The current situation prompted the EU to change its uncoordinated course and ad hoc unsystematic response in the fight against the virus. Further isolation of countries, action only at the national level, without the support of the EU as an organization as a whole, could cause a change in the perception of the EU as a single actor, which would lead to a weakening of its position at the international level. Since the EU seeks to position itself precisely as an actor in international relations, it became necessary to confirm its unity. One example of easing the situation within the EU is the speech at the April 2020 session of the European Parliament by the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, where she apologized on behalf of the EU to the residents of Italy¹, where almost a thousand people died every day, because hospitals were overcrowded and lacked protective equipment and medical equipment, which made residents feel abandoned at times of need².

However, despite the current difficult internal situation, the EU continues to pursue its foreign policy. In particular, cooperation with Central Asia, both at the regional and bilateral levels, remains one of the important areas on the European side. Due to the fact that Covid-19 has seriously affected the Central Asian region, the EU and regional states were forced to revise the timing of the implementation of early agreements, the main

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¹ Brussels apologizes to Italy. Published on 16 April 2020 at: <https://ru.euronews.com/2020/04/16/eu-parliament-ursula-corona>

² EU Coronavirus Marathon: All Tracks Run, Published on 19 April 2020 at: <https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/78019/coronavirus-marathon-es-run-all-track-ru>

areas of cooperation, identifying priority problems and ways to solve them. In my opinion, in a pandemic, the following areas of EU-CA (Central Asia) interaction come to the fore:

First, assistance in the restoration and development of the economies of the Central Asian region has always been one of the priority areas in EU-CA cooperation. In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, EU assistance in this area becomes even more important. In particular, there is a broad emphasis on support for the improvement and development of the private sector³. On this issue, an online meeting was held between the OECD and ministers and deputy ministers of the Central Asian countries, which was held as part of the political and economic component of the “Central Asia Invest” initiative, implemented with financial support from the EU. The EU and OECD are interested in further assisting the “Central Asia Invest” participants in such areas as planning measures for economic recovery, support in the implementation of long-term reforms, in particular aimed at improving the legal environment for entrepreneurship.

Second, the implementation of the New EU Strategy in relation to the CA countries: “EU and CA: New Opportunities for Strengthening Partnership”⁴ continues its activities in the context of a pandemic. The European side seeks to strengthen cooperation within the framework of this strategy, where the priority areas should be issues of “green” recovery after a pandemic, sustainable cooperation in the field of human rights, civil liberties, security issues, combating terrorism and drug trafficking, border management, water resources, assistance in the development of economies and education⁵. As part of the assistance to the development of the countries of Central Asia and in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic, the EU provided assistance to the Central Asian region in the amount of 123 million euros, which is aimed at the needs of the socio-economic recovery and the necessary needs in the medical field⁶, which, in my opinion, should be allocated for the improvement of hospitals, the provision of necessary medical equipment, transport, sanitary and hygiene means and essential medicines.

Third, in a bilateral format, the EU allocated 40 million euros to Uzbekistan for the development of the agricultural sector⁷, which are aimed at implementing the new State Strategy for the Development of the Agri-Food Sector for 2020-2030⁸. In addition, to strengthen cooperation Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Charles Michel had a telephone

³ EU and OECD Share Experience on Economic Recovery with Central Asian Countries at Online Ministerial Meeting, 11 June 2020. Published at: <https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/uzbekistan/80716/EC-и-ОЭСР-делятся-опытом-по-восстановлению-экономики-со-странами-Центральной-Азии-ru>

⁴ Joint communication to the European Parliament and the council, The EU and Central Asia: New Opportunities for a Stronger Partnership, Brussels, 15 May 2019. Published at: <https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/joint-communication-the-eu-and-central-asia-new-opportunities-for-a-stronger-partnership.pdf>

⁵ Videoconference of the High Representative of the European Union Josep Borrell with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Central Asian countries, 12 June 2020. Accessed at: <https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/uzbekistan/80825/видеоконференция-верховного-представителя-европейского-союза-жозепа-борреля-с-министрами-ru>

⁶ Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Central Asian and EU countries discussed regional and international problems. 13 June 2020. Accessed at: <https://www.ritmeurasia.org/news--2020-06-13--glavy-mid-stran-ca-i-es-obsudili-regionalnye-i-mezhdunarodnye-problemy-49466>

⁷ The EU allocated 40 million euros to support the agricultural sector of Uzbekistan. Published on 12 March 2020, <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2020/03/12/eu/>

⁸ Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the approval of the Strategy for the Development of Agriculture of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2020-2030. Accessed at: <https://lex.uz/ru/docs/4567337>

conversation⁹. Issues of multilateral cooperation were discussed, the results of the joint work carried out earlier, the prospects for cooperation in the context of a pandemic were positively assessed, and Charles Michel announced the EU's readiness to provide Uzbekistan with financial and technical assistance in the amount of 36 million euros¹⁰ in the fight against the global challenge. Also, in order to deepen regional cooperation, by promoting programs and projects in the field of trade, investment, transport, health, it is planned to work on the issue of holding a multilateral Ministerial Conference to determine the priority steps and goals in a pandemic, planned for the end of 2020¹¹.

An agreement was also reached on further work on the draft Agreement on Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation between the EU and Uzbekistan¹², negotiations for which began in February 2019. In the context of the pandemic, it is planned to conduct the sixth round of negotiations online. The EU is also ready to assist Uzbekistan in joining the WTO and in obtaining the GSP+ regime in trade with the EU, which allows exporting 66 percent of tariff lines¹³ duty free to EU markets. Uzbekistan's accession to this regime will also contribute to sustainable growth and diversification of its foreign trade with the EU.

Fourth, the European Investment Bank, the EU's financial institution, has provided the region with a significant loan portfolio to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus. In particular, after considering the request of the Uzbek side, an agreement was reached on the allocation of 50 million euros by the European Investment Bank to support the health care system, as well as on the opening of credit lines in the amount of 80 million euros to commercial banks of Uzbekistan to finance domestic manufacturers, enterprises¹⁴, primarily for minimizing the negative consequences of the coronavirus pandemic in Uzbekistan.

Fifth, the EU has adopted a Green Deal¹⁵, which aims to combat climate change. Climatic and environmental problems have shown their relevance during a pandemic. In

⁹ Weekly schedule of President Charles Michel, 20 April 2020, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/04/20/weekly-schedule-of-president-charles-michel/>

¹⁰ The EU will provide Uzbekistan with € 36m. on the fight against coronavirus. Published on 21 April 2020 at: <http://www.ca-irnews.com/ru/central-asia/uzbekistan/86056-ec-предоставит-узбекистану-€36-млн-на-борьбу-с-коронавирусом>

¹¹ A telephone conversation between the President of Uzbekistan and the President of the European Council took place on April 20, 2020. Accessed at: <https://uza.uz/ru/politics/sostoyalsya-telefonnyy-razgovor-prezidenta-uzbekistana-s-pre-20-04-2020>

¹² Ibid

¹³ Uzbekistan can get access to the GSP+ system of preferences by the end of the year, Published on April 10, 2020 at: <https://review.uz/ru/post/uzbekistan-mojet-do-konca-iyunya-poluchit-dostup-k-sisteme-preferenciy-gsp>

¹⁴ European Investment Bank will allocate 130 million euros in financial assistance to Uzbekistan. Published on 25 April 2020 at: <https://centralasia.news/6548-evropejskij-investicionnyj-bank-vydelit-130-mln-evro-finpomosci-uzbekistanu.html>

¹⁵ "The existence of mankind under threat", Head of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen - on the new "European Green Deal". Published on 13 December 2019 at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4194339>

this regard, cooperation in this direction also takes place in joint actions of the EU with partner countries, including the Central Asian region¹⁶.

An online meeting was held between experts from Central Asia, the EU and the Italian Ministry of the Environment, and Land and Sea (IMELS) dedicated to cooperation and coordination of actions on the environment and climate change. This is the meeting of the Steering Committee of the EU - Central Asia Working Group on Environment and Climate Change (WGECC), which is organized by the EU project entitled, "European Union - Central Asia: Cooperation on Water, Environment and Climate Change" (WECOOP)¹⁷. According to the WECOOP work plan for 2020, given the current global conditions, the European side will provide support to Central Asian experts on the issues of waste management, water and air quality, energy development and available methods and technologies.

For the European continent, issues of climate change, global warming, environmental protection, waste recycling, water and air pollution, rational use of energy resources, conservation of biodiversity, conservation of endangered species of wild animals have traditionally been the priority areas of international cooperation. Humanity must realise that the planet's resources are limited, it is necessary to gradually minimize the consumption of plastic products, replacing them with environmentally friendly alternatives, reduce hydrocarbon emissions by creating environmentally friendly technologies, create conditions for cycling, and improve conditions for public transport. Accordingly, even in the context of a pandemic, issues related to climate change are not left without attention and coordination of actions between the EU and Central Asia is carried out.

Today, the European side believes that it was able to fully mobilize in all areas and that the EU is aware of the need for joint action and solidarity, where the principle of multilateralism and partnership should operate. In my opinion, countering the spread of coronavirus infection alone will not bring the expected effective results compared to coordinated actions in the fight against the pandemic together with other EU members. First of all, this concerns joint measures of economic incentives and regulation within the organization, the establishment of certain criteria for the provision of state aid, and joint purchases of important medical equipment and sanitary and hygienic means is also no small matter.

It should be noted that assistance to developing countries and the implementation of goals and projects, both planned and unplanned, with partner countries, in particular with Central Asia, also continue to function during a pandemic. The pandemic has caused significant damage to the economies and prosperity of the countries of Central Asia, the restoration of which takes a lot of money and time. Coordinated actions of both parties, adherence to established norms and obligations will speed up the process of implementing the set goals and objectives, both at the regional level and in a bilateral

¹⁶ EU and Central Asia Coordinating Environment and Climate Action in a Pandemic. Published on 15 June 2020 at: https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/uzbekistan/80884/ес-и-центральная-азия-координируют-действия-по-окружающей-среде-и-климату-в-условиях-пандемии_гү

¹⁷ EU and Central Asia Coordinating Environment and Climate Action in a Pandemic. Published on 15 June 2020 at: https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/uzbekistan/80884/ес-и-центральная-азия-координируют-действия-по-окружающей-среде-и-климату-в-условиях-пандемии_гү

format. For their part, it is advisable for the Central Asian countries to effectively and efficiently distribute financial assistance and support provided by the EU in order to strengthen cooperation and trust between the parties.

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Surayyo Usmanova* - Effects of the pandemic age on tourism in Uzbekistan: risks, measures, and expected results.

Introduction. The global problem of pandemic, along with the unification of all mankind, is causing an economic crisis in many countries. Tourism has become one of the most affected industries in this regard. Given the unprecedented introduction of travel restrictions around the world, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) expects international tourist traffic to decline from 20 percent to 30 percent in 2020 compared to 2019¹. Consequently, this will reduce the number of planned visits per year from more than 80 countries with a visa-free regime to Uzbekistan.

At the beginning of the year, the Republic of Uzbekistan planned to increase the number of tourists to 7.5 million by 2020², however, COVID-19 is expected to have a significant impact on the tourism industry of this country. The goal was to move to the second stage of development of tourism, which is a strategic sector of the economy, this year, providing quality structural changes in all related sectors of Uzbekistan. Official statistics for the current year and February 2019 show that the number of tourists visiting this country increased by 11.9 percent. That is, while 393,493 tourists visited in February 2019, their number increased to 440,198 in February 2020³. The spread of the coronavirus around the world and the quarantine situation in Uzbekistan, which has lasted for several months, to some extent affect the realization of these goals and plans, as in other countries with developed tourism around the world. Here some cases will be analysed further.

Foreign practice on tourism development during the pandemics. As for the situation abroad, the Italian tourism sector is experiencing “the worst crisis in recent history”. Even if the pandemic is eliminated, there is no hope that the situation in the country will return to its previous state this year. Italian Minister of Culture and Tourism Dario Francheshini outlined in his interview that it would take 1 or 2 years to return to the previous status. According to the Italian Tourism Association of Confturismo, Italy has already lost 30 million tourists - this is only for the period from March to May 2020⁴. Considering that the tourist season in the country usually starts during the European Easter holidays, this year's period has been missed. However, most hotels are now cancelling reservations for autumn trips, which means that tourists are not so optimistic about a positive turn. In this case, it may take several years for Italy to regain its former status in the tourism industry. For the tourism developed country with millions of tourists' arrival in a year, this year is a year of loss so far.

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¹ “International tourist arrivals could fall by 20-30 % in 2020”. 26th of March 2020. Last seen on 28.04.2020 Published at: <https://www.unwto.org/news/international-tourism-arrivals-could-fall-in-2020>.

² “President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's Address to the Oliy Majlis has been completed”. 24th January 2020. Accessed on 23.03.2020 Published at: <https://uza.uz/uz/politics/prezident-shavkat-mirziyoyevning-oliy-majlis-palatalariga-mu-24-01-2020>

³ “The number of foreign tourists in February 2019 and February 2020”. Accessed on 30.03.2020 Published at: <https://uzbektourism.uz/cyrl/research>

⁴ “Italy to remain closed for tourism until the end of the year”. Accessed on 28.04.2020 Published at: <https://www.google.co.uz/amp/s/nation.com.pk/26-Apr-2020/italy-to-remain-closed-for-tourism-until-end-of-year%3Fversion=amp>

While some European countries are accepting the situation, other states have already begun to act to save the tourism industry. To prevent a crisis in this area, governments are developing specific action plans. In particular, China has enacted a law on April 12 to require medical certificates on coronavirus-free status from guests, who are going to stay in hotels in Beijing. The medical examination should be conducted not more than one week before the tourists' visit. Police have also been instructed to step up surveillance measures to circumvent certificate forgery⁵. The Chinese capital was the first city to take such action against a second wave of the coronavirus, and other megacities are expected to follow Beijing. This measure could help, to some extent, to continue the functioning of hotels, however, there is no guarantee for the spread of coronavirus in case, if the tourists are virus carriers during their travel which can lead to the spread of the illness in states they visit.

Since the beginning of April, the world tourism community has been actively discussing the introduction of "immunity passports" - certificates confirming the presence of coronavirus antibodies in visitors. Initially, researchers at the Helmholtz Centre in Germany put forward such an idea. The Immunization Identification Initiative was supported by Deutsche Bank as a way to quickly lift the ban on travel around the world. A similar possibility is being discussed in the UK and the US⁶. Due to the financial crisis, this measure may be implemented in developed countries until the development of the vaccine against Covid-19. Moreover, the "immunity passports" can be used by diplomatic missions, official bodies, and other people when travel is necessary to perform important functions. Unfortunately, the majority of countries continue to retain a ban on international travel at present. However, the circumstances with internal tourism are not as complicated as international travel. Therefore, Uzbekistan, along with the other states is taking considerable measures to support the progress in the sphere of tourism.

Uzbekistan: measures against Covid-19 in the sphere of tourism. In this regard, it is expedient to dwell on what legal and organisational benefits are created for business entities operating in the Republic in the sphere of tourism. Thus, following the Presidential Decrees No. 5969 of 19 March 2020, and No. 5978 of 3 April 2020, several benefits were provided to businesses, including tourism, during the pandemic. Tour operators, travel agents, and accommodation facilities are exempt from land tax and property tax until 31 December 2020. They also pay social tax at a reduced rate (1 percent), the calculation of property tax, land tax, and fines for the use of water resources for accommodation facilities, restaurants and other entities with existing property has been suspended, no measures have been taken to collect the tax debt, and income tax from individuals and entrepreneurs in the tourism sector (family guest houses, guides, handicrafts) was reduced by 30 percent.

Besides, benefits for export-import operations; penalties for overdue receivables on foreign trade operations (for tourist services sold to foreign partners) were stopped and moreover, tax audits were cancelled. The State Committee for Tourism Development is working to develop "online tourism" and support entrepreneurs and start-ups.

⁵ "World Tourism News: Italy, Spain, China" ("Новости в сфере туризма: Италия, Испания, Китай") 15th April 2020. Accessed on 20.04.2020 at: <https://uzbektourism.uz/cyrl/newnews/view?id=1119>

⁶ Ibid

According to the will of the head of state, these measures, supported by the government, will prevent further deterioration of the financial situation of business entities by exempting them from taxes and loans in today's difficult economic environment. At the same time, it helps to avoid unemployment. Aziz Abdulkhakov, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Chairman of the State Committee for Tourism Development, said that the main goal is to preserve jobs and improve the welfare of the population⁷. This is because of the priorities in tourism development is to save jobs and improve the living standards of the population. One of the most important goals of any state is to achieve employment of the working population, which is a prerequisite for economic growth and social stability in the country. This policy is implemented through a set of measures to influence the labour market. It focuses on the sphere of social and labour relations aimed at reducing unemployment and the creation of conditions for more employment opportunities. The maintenance of permanent employment is one of the priority policy objectives. Tourism is among the world's most important exporting sectors; and is labour, rather than capital intensive, which means that it has a great capacity to create new jobs in times when unemployment has reached unthinkable rates and when this issue may undermine the future of the world's economy and society. In general, the development of tourist infrastructure in Uzbekistan has led to the creation of new jobs in the country. Considering the number of people employed in the numerous service sectors, such as hotel and restaurant, handicraft making, small business which is connected to tourism, this sphere is important for Uzbekistan. A notable fact is that many sectors within tourism do not demand complicated or special high education skills. A broad spectrum of professionals were and will be employed in this sphere. Consequently, this will reduce the number of unemployed in the country.

The Presidential Decree on "Urgent measures to support the tourism industry to reduce the negative impact of the coronavirus pandemic" and "On additional measures to develop the tourism industry in strict compliance with the requirements of the enhanced sanitary-epidemiological safety regime"⁸ dated May 28, 2020, were expected to make a significant contribution to the development of the prospects of this sector in the country. Moreover, to restore the tourism sector at a rapid pace and formulate new directions of its development after the restoration of the sanitary and epidemiological situation in the country, the President of Uzbekistan signed a new decree "On additional measures for the development of tourism in strict compliance with the requirements of the enhanced regime of sanitary and epidemiological security"⁹. Under the decision, additional privileges and preferences were provided to business entities.

The important subject in this Decree was the establishment of "A Safe Tourism Fund". From this Fund, foreign tourists are paid compensation payments in the amount

⁷ 'Abdulkhakov. A.: Quarantine is not a reason to sit idly by - Uzbekistan will develop "online tourism" and "distance sports" (Азиз Абдулхакимов: Карантин не причина сидеть сложа руки - в Узбекистане будет развиваться «онлайн-туризм» и «дистанционный спорт»). 10th April 2020. Accessed on 23.04.2020 at: <https://uzbektourism.uz/cyrl/newnews/view?id=1114>.

⁸ "Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan on urgent measures to support the tourism sector to reduce the negative impact of the corona virus pandemic". №УП-6002 28.05.2020. Accessed on 10.07.2020 Published at: <https://lex.uz/docs/-4831118>

⁹ 'The President signed a new decree: "On additional measures for the development of tourism in strict compliance with the requirements of the enhanced regime of sanitary and epidemiological security.' Accessed on 01.08.2020 Published at: <https://uzbektourism.uz/en/newnews/view?id=1235>).

of 3 thousand US dollars in case of infection with coronavirus (COVID-19) during their trip on the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan¹⁰. However, this could cause the risk of spread of the COVID-19 in tourism-oriented cities of Uzbekistan. There is no guarantee for the absence of the virus in tourists. On the other hand, payment of 3000 US dollars to tourists may have negative impact on the economy and cause misunderstanding among the unemployed population, people who's income have reduced due to the quarantine measures taken in the country.

According to the State Statistics Committee, in the second quarter of this year, Uzbekistan's foreign trade turnover decreased by 25 percent and exports by almost 33 percent (based on preliminary data of the State Statistics Committee for the first half of 2020 and the first quarter). However, many changes can be observed in the structure of exports. In particular, a sharp decline in exports of natural and artificial gas and tourism services, as well as an increase in the share of gold in exports¹¹. Unfortunately, tourism statistics for the pandemic period in Uzbekistan remain unavailable, which makes it difficult to make forecasts and do further research in the area of tourism.

The world's tourism sector could lose at least \$1.2 trillion, or 1.5 percent of the global gross domestic product (GDP), having been placed at a standstill for nearly four months due to the coronavirus pandemic, UNCTAD said in a report published on 1 July¹². Therefore, it is expedient to develop cooperation between the Central Asian states on measures to reduce the impact of the pandemic on tourism, including the signing of an agreement on this issue in the regional context or development of the "Road Map".

Moreover, against the background of travel restrictions, the UNWTO stressed the importance of international dialogue and cooperation in addressing the negative impact of the coronavirus issue, including close cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO), acting jointly with countries affected by the pandemic; and the need to be prepared to emphasize the sustainability of tourism and support recovery of this sector¹³. In this regard, the effectiveness of legal norms (rules of justice), research and practice in overcoming the outbreak of 2019-nCoV is scientifically recognized¹⁴.

Conclusion. Based on the above, it is considered expedient to develop the following conclusions and recommendations to stabilize the development of tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan during and after the pandemic:

- due to the lack of a single scientific opinion on the way to the complete elimination of the pandemic in the world - focusing on improving the organizational and legal aspects

¹⁰ Keith, L. 'Uzbekistan is offering visitors compensation if they catch COVID-19.' Accessed on 01.08.2020 Published at: <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/articles/uzbekistan-covid-free-guarantee?fbclid=IwAR01anoz20Shve9XhvsGR0pYQa1j09UbCSJOHCrQFAtZTAE1d3XZ0i3V2h0>.

¹¹ 'Impact of the pandemic on Uzbekistan's foreign trade: forecast and facts.' ("Пандемиянинг Ўзбекистон ташқи савдосига таъсири: прогноз ва фактлар") July 29, 2020. Accessed on 12.08.2020. Published at: <https://uzanalytics.com/iqtisodi%D0%B5t/7942/>

¹² 'Coronavirus will cost global tourism at least \$1.2 trillion.' Accessed on 25.07.2020 at: <https://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=2416>.

¹³ 'COVID-19: putting people first.' Accessed on 14.04.2020 at: <https://unwto.org/tourism-covid-19>

¹⁴ Jamal T., Budke Ch. 'Tourism in a world with pandemics: local-global responsibility and action.' Journal of tourism futures, 2019. P.4. Accessed on 29.04.2020 at: <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/JTF-02-2020-0014/full/pdf?title=tourism-in-a-world-with-pandemics-local-global-responsibility-and-action>.

of domestic tourism in the country, rather than on the growth rate of the flow of foreign tourists;

- further development of international, regional and bilateral intergovernmental international cooperation and cooperation between non-governmental organisations in the development of important measures in the field of tourism;

- Taking into account the fact that the period of the pandemic in Uzbekistan has been going on for several months (half a year), it is recommended to elaborate and present the tourism statistics in Uzbekistan for this period;

- Providing more organizational and legal benefits and privileges in this regard to entrepreneurs, start-ups and young newly graduated professionals in this sphere;

- Development by the government of a security action plan or a Roadmap for airports, border posts and tourist destinations based on international experience in the prevention and spread of COVID-19;

- Attracting tourists (especially from Central Asia and the CIS countries), who cancelled this year's trips to Europe and America, to visit Uzbekistan in the autumn and winter season, promoting Uzbekistan as a country with relatively lower COVID-19 incidence.

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Saidakmal Ikramov * - Features of the legal protection of material cultural heritage in a pandemic

The realities of the current situation in the world since March 2020, namely the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, dictate their own rules for the conduct of both international and domestic relations. The pandemic has had a tremendous impact on all spheres of society and the individual. The sphere of cultural heritage protection is no exception.

In science, legal protection of cultural heritage is understood as a set of measures and mechanisms, including statutory regulation and institutional framework for the preservation and protection of cultural heritage sites, carried out both at the national and international levels. In a pandemic, not all of them can work effectively, which requires additional or special measures to protect cultural heritage.

As reported on the UN official website: **“More than 80 percent of UNESCO cultural heritage sites are closed to the public due to the COVID-19 pandemic.** There are not working theatres, museums and cinemas around the world; daily economic losses are in the millions; hundreds of thousands of people were left without work.”¹ These processes have a corresponding effect on the state and further fate of cultural heritage sites.

Objects of cultural heritage, especially their material part, are most vulnerable during a pandemic. These objects, being unique historical and cultural phenomena and representing artistic, historical, aesthetic and scientific value, need constant monitoring and care. In addition, they need protection, which includes all measures aimed at their integrity and safety for future generations. During a pandemic, the most acute issue is the state protection of objects of material cultural heritage. In conditions of strict quarantine, when the majority of citizens of the state, including employees, as well as the management responsible for the protection of objects cannot be physically present and fulfil their duties due to quarantine measures, aggravates the situation on their protection from encroachment. Quarantine conditions create a favourable environment for an increase in cases of vandalism, looting, damage and destruction, illegal restoration work, illegal construction in relation to objects of material cultural heritage. Naturally, today there is technology like video surveillance for the protection of objects, but, unfortunately, not all places where material cultural heritage is kept are equipped with them and thus cannot be monitored in this way.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, UNESCO has been making an effort to raise awareness of the importance of cultural heritage sites and to ensure that they remain open during the pandemic. Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, has convened meetings with ministers of culture to “identify remedial measures” that can address this important issue. For example, an international social media campaign called “#ShareOurHeritage” to provide access to culture and cultural heritage education during quarantine took place in the form of online exhibitions. UNESCO has also shared first-hand information from World Heritage Site leaders who are particularly knowledgeable

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¹ “UNESCO about the emergency situation in the sphere of culture”, UN News, 15th April 2020. Published at: <https://news.un.org/ru/story/2020/04/1376152>.

about the impact of COVID-19 on sites and the communities around them. In addition, with the technical support of Google Arts & Culture platform, UNESCO has organized virtual exhibition of dozens of cultural heritage sites around the world. “The organization also during this period provided up-to-date information through a virtual map on its website and through social media about the impact of COVID-19 on World Heritage sites, which are partially or completely closed to visitors in due to the pandemic 89 percent of countries, as well as measures to respond to this impact.”² On World Art Day, UNESCO launched a global campaign to support culture. The work carried out by UNESCO was very timely and appropriate. “UNESCO is committed to leading a global debate on how best to support artists and cultural institutions during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, and to ensure that everyone has access to the heritage and culture that binds us to our humanity,” notes Audrey Azoulay.³

Numerous restoration and restoration works on tangible cultural heritage sites around the world have been halted due to the imposed quarantine measures to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, in Afghanistan, work to restore the Topdar stupa dated to early period of our era had to be stopped. Recent renovations and restoration began in 2016. The drum of the stupa and the base were successfully processed, but the entire structure needed reconstruction. It is difficult to say when the restoration work will be completed now.⁴ After a fire in Notre Dame Cathedral in the spring of 2019, the first phase of restoration work - a full inspection of the building frame - was supposed to be completed this summer, but this process has now been suspended due to the pandemic⁵. In Gao, Mali, an ambitious project to rebuild Askia's tomb was recently launched but has been put on hold. In Spain, the famous Temple of the Sagrada Familia, begun back in 1882, has not yet been completed.⁶ Although it is expected to be completed in 2026, the imposed quarantine measures have resulted in an indefinite halt to any further restoration of the temple. All of these examples show that the pandemic is negatively affecting cultural heritage sites around the world.

Culture ministers from more than 140 countries also took their own initiative, meeting on April 20, 2020 to discuss the “cultural crisis”. At this meeting, Nourah Al-Kaabi, Minister of Culture and Knowledge Development of the United Arab Emirates, made a compelling case for cultural action and “protecting individuals and companies, working in the creative sector”. “The impact and response tracker published by UNESCO shows that ministries of culture in countries such as Iran, Italy, Argentina and Egypt are highlighting

² “The Impact of COVID-19 on the Protection of Cultural Heritage by Nadia Al-Said”, IPI Global Observatory, 17th June, 2020. Published at: <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2020/06/impact-covid-19-on-protection-of-cultural-heritage>

³ “UNESCO supports culture and heritage during a period of massive institutional closures due to COVID-19”, UNESCO, 9th April 2020. Published at: <https://ru.unesco.org/news/yunesko-podderzhivaet-kulturu-i-nasledie-v-period-massovyh-zakrytiy-uchrezhdeniy-iz-za-covid-19>.

⁴ “The Impact of COVID-19 on the Protection of Cultural Heritage by Nadia Al-Said”, IPI Global Observatory, 17th June 2020. Published at: <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2020/06/impact-covid-19-on-protection-of-cultural-heritage>

⁵ “UNESCO about the emergency situation in the sphere of culture”, UN News, 15th April 2020. Published at: <https://news.un.org/ru/story/2020/04/1376152>.

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the importance of developing digital platforms to ensure that knowledge on cultural heritage continues to be transmitted."⁷

The deputies of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan also factored in the issues of protecting cultural heritage. Thus, the deputy, O. Litvinova, rightly notes that "the preservation of the cultural heritage of the peoples of Uzbekistan includes all types of material heritage. This category also includes works of fine, applied, folk art, documents, books, photographs and much more, which makes up the museum, archival and national book funds. The task of forming a single electronic information space on the basis of digitized book, archival and museum funds collected in the National Electronic Library and national electronic archives in various fields of creative activity is of great importance."⁸ Today, this issue is especially relevant in connection with the conditions produced by the pandemic and the provision of the cultural rights of citizens.

The most important problem with respect to the protection of tangible cultural heritage sites in a pandemic is the financing of this sector. As O. Litvinova emphasizes, "given that the State budget is still the main source of ensuring the vital activity of all types of culture, the draft law "On Culture" provides for the possibility of financing through public-private partnership mechanisms, as well as attracting investments in accordance with the legislation."⁹ This issue, in our opinion, is very relevant and requires the adoption of prompt measures.

During the pandemic, the activities of international and regional organizations in the field of cultural and humanitarian cooperation intensified. Thus, the SCO Secretary General, V. Norov, noted that cultural and humanitarian cooperation is one of the most important areas of the SCO's activities. Currently, "the world community is faced with serious trials associated with a sudden scourge called COVID-19. The SCO Secretary General emphasized that "based on the rich cultural traditions of our peoples, together and in close cooperation we will be able to overcome any difficulties and trials."¹⁰

The Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan also took urgent measures to maintain tourism and cultural heritage during the quarantine period. Thus, the President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, signed a decree "On urgent measures to support the tourism sector to reduce the negative impact of the coronavirus pandemic." "At the same time, taking into account the new realities due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the requirements for the process of organizing tourism and leisure, creating safe conditions for domestic and inbound tourism, the project 'Uzbekistan. Safe travel guaranteed'" has been developed to address these problems. The project is a new system of sanitary and epidemiological safety for tourists based on world standards. Certification of tourism objects and related infrastructure, tourism services based on new sanitary and hygienic

⁷ Ibid

⁸ "On culture in its broadest sense", Parliament.gov.uz, 6th August 2020. Published at: <http://parliament.gov.uz/ru/events/opinion/31239/>.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ "SCO Secretary General Defends Cultural Diversity Amid Pandemic", Tass.ru, 21st May 2020. Published at: <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/8525355>.

requirements will be mandatory for objects of material cultural heritage, museums, theatres and other cultural sites."¹¹

Naturally, the digitalization of cultural heritage and its subsequent virtual accessibility to the population is a positive phenomenon and will contribute to its preservation and further popularization. But at the same time, it should be noted that nothing can replace real (physical) access to cultural heritage objects, which contributes to both material and spiritual understanding of the essence and value of these objects. After all, their primordial preservation, rational use and accessibility to people plays a most important role in the formation of a personality with strong civic positions, moral, ethical and aesthetic ideals. Efforts are being made in various countries to incorporate cultural heritage into distance learning. For example, "in Mexico, the Ministry of Education launched a program called 'Aprender en casa' (Learning at Home) using UNESCO videos on World Heritage Sites, Contemporary Heritage and Creativity, which were broadcast on television and over the Internet to teach history, Science, Ethics and Civic Consciousness. In Mongolia, the National Cultural Heritage Centre and the National Academy of Children's Cinema broadcasted a television program called Tsets (Sages) about the traditional culture, customs and lifestyle of nomadic Mongols to the general public, especially children."¹²

In view of the above, we consider it expedient to supplement the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On the Protection and Use of Cultural Heritage Sites" with separate articles regarding the additional protection of tangible cultural heritage sites, in particular immovable sites, during a pandemic. First of all, this concerns the issues of additional financing of the cultural heritage protection system during a pandemic. And also, to reflect in individual laws and by-laws the provisions on the digitalization of cultural heritage sites and ensuring citizens' access to these sites both at normal times and during a pandemic (virtual tours, etc.). These issues are of particular relevance in connection with the implementation of the State Program 2020 "The Year of Science, Education and Digital Economy Development."

"While the COVID-19 pandemic has suspended global tourism, millions of quarantined people are seeking cultural and tourism experiences right from home. During this period, culture has proven its own high importance, and the demand for virtual access to museums, cultural heritage sites, theatres and performances reached unprecedented levels", says the official website of the World Tourism Organization.¹³

According to Ernesto Ottone, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Culture, "people need culture now more than ever". "Culture enhances our resilience. It gives us a hope. It reminds us that we are not alone. This is why UNESCO is doing everything it can to support culture, preserve our heritage and empower artists and creators, now and

¹¹ "Aziz Abdukhakimov: Uzbekistan launches a new system of safe tourism", Uzbektourism.uz, 3rd June 2020. Published at: <https://uzbektourism.uz/ru/newnews/view?id=1196>

¹² "CULTURE & COVID-19", Unesco.kz, 3rd June 2020. Published at: <http://ru.unesco.kz/culture-covid-19>.

¹³ "Cultural tourism and COVID-19", UNWTO / Unwto.org. Published at: <https://www.unwto.org/ru/cultural-tourism-covid-19>.

after this crisis is over.”¹⁴ The entire cultural sector will need special attention as its financial sustainability is at stake.¹⁵

At the same time, against the background of the general need for culture and education, certain negative phenomena arise directly in relation to the objects of cultural heritage on the ground

A. Yarkulov, Head of the Department of Archaeology and Work with UNESCO of the Main Scientific and Production Directorate for the Protection and Use of Cultural Heritage Objects, notes that “today, during various kinds of work, including construction and restoration, in historical cities at the design stage it is important to combine the conservation monuments of history and culture with sustainable development.” A. Yarkulov emphasizes: “Ancient cities should retain their original appearance, while developing and being comfortable for living. The abundance of electrical wires and pipes, which do not add authenticity and beauty to the facades of houses in old quarters, concrete or asphalt road surfaces also do not harmonize with the historical appearance of the streets of the old city. Therefore, there is a need to use the experience of UNESCO consultants, as well as architects for the conservation of monuments.”¹⁶ Naturally, during the period of a pandemic and tough quarantine measures, attempts to unauthorized construction or repairs in the territories of material cultural heritage sites will become more frequent. At the same time, no one can guarantee the preservation of the pristine and authenticity of certain objects due to circumstances that do not allow effective control of this process.

“In 2016, Shakhrisabz was included in the List of World Heritage Sites in Danger. However, in 2018, at the 42nd session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in the city of Manama (Bahrain), Uzbekistan, promised to strengthen work on the preservation of historical sites and defended its position. The mission of the World Heritage Centre and the International Council for the Conservation of Monuments and Sites, which visited these places in early 2019, noted the positive measures taken, big changes for the better, and at the same time the due attitude to ancient architecture, and the level of qualifications of the specialists employed in this field. There is a moratorium on all types of construction work at World Heritage sites in Uzbekistan.”¹⁷ Nevertheless, on the territory of the Khoja-Gaukushon ensemble in Bukhara, during the period of initial quarantine, restoration work was carried out by the khokimiyat of the Bukhara region¹⁸ (namely, water reservoir and the adjacent territory covered with tiles was completely torn apart) without agreement with the Department of Cultural Heritage Protection of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic Uzbekistan, which is contrary to the current

¹⁴ “UNESCO supports culture and heritage during COVID-19 mass closures”, UNESCO, 9th April 2020. Published at: <https://ru.unesco.org/news/yunesko-podderzhivaet-kulturu-i-nasledie-v-period-massovyh-zakrytiy-uchrezhdeniy-iz-za-covid-19>

¹⁵ “Decalogue about the post-COVID-19 era”, United Cities and Local Governments”, Uclg.org, 22nd April 2020. Published at: https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/decatalogue_rus.pdf.

¹⁶ “Узбекистан и ЮНЕСКО: сохраняя историческую память (Uzbekistan and UNESCO: preserving historical memory)”, Pravda Vostoka (The Truth of the East), 19th May 2020. Published at: <https://pv.uz/ru/newspapers/uzbekistan-i-junesko-sohranjaja-istoricheskiju-pamjat>.

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ “The Ministry of Culture said that the restoration of the Khoja-Gaukushan ensemble is being carried out illegally. The materials will be transferred to the Prosecutor General's Office”, Podrobno.uz, 22nd April 2020. Published at: <https://podrobno.uz/cat/obchestvo/minikult-zayavil-chto-restavratsiya-ansamblya-khodzha-gaukushan-provoditsya-nezakonno>.

legislation.¹⁹ Soon, all construction work was stopped by order of the Ministry of Culture. In early September 2020, on the territory of the historical centre of Samarkand, which is under the protection of UNESCO, the historical building - house number 14 on Amir Temur Street was demolished by the city authorities without proper procedure and without the knowledge of the Ministry of Culture, which is also a glaring fact. At the moment, checks are being carried out on these violations.²⁰ These examples once again confirm how vulnerable cultural heritage is and needs additional protection measures in a pandemic.

Thus, in order to ensure the proper protection of material cultural heritage in a pandemic, it is necessary to pay due attention to the following tasks: 1) additional state funding for the system of protection of cultural heritage sites; 2) strengthening of public control and raising the legal awareness of citizens in relation to the protection of objects of material cultural heritage; 3) digitalization of cultural heritage, creation of media storages, archives accessible to the population, digitalization of the activities of museums, galleries, libraries and other places where the objects of cultural heritage themselves or information about them are located; 4) toughening up the penalties for damage, improper handling of objects of material cultural heritage during the quarantine period; and 5) ensuring the availability of cultural heritage to the population in all its manifestations, including education in the field of cultural heritage, for the full formation of a well-rounded personality and a citizen.

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¹⁹ Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures to radically improve activities in the field of protection of objects of material cultural heritage" PP-4068 of 19.12.2018. Published at: <https://lex.uz/docs/4113474>.

²⁰ “A house was demolished in the historical part of Samarkand”, Uz24.uz, 14th September 2020. Published at: <https://uz24.uz/ru/articles/snos-bez-vladelca>. See also “Notified after demolition. The Ministry of Culture reacted to the destruction of a historic house in Samarkand”, Gazeta.uz, 21st September 2020. Published at: <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2020/09/21/demolition-of-history>.

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Farangis Khasanova* - Introduction of the "force majeure" clause in international sales contracts

Introduction. The parties of the contracts for the international sale of goods can independently determine the terms of the contract, based on the principle of freedom of contract, and in many cases, they act that way. One of the most important terms that the parties must agree on in international contracts for the sale of goods is the clauses on the ground, conditions and consequences of exemption from liability. In international commercial practice, this clause is abbreviated as "force majeure clause". By including a force majeure clause in the contract, the parties determine in which cases they can be relieved of liability and what conditions must be met by the party to claim the exemption as well as determine one of the most important issues concerning what kind of liability the party is being exempted from (damages, penalty, interests, etc.).

For the purpose of unification of international commercial law on this issue, the United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods (CISG), UNIDROIT principles and "Force Majeure Clause" of International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) were adopted. In fact, the parties can also agree on the direct application of these rules to their sales contracts. However, it may not always be in the best interest of the parties to include the provisions of force majeure into contracts without modification. For this reason, force majeure clauses must carefully be included in international sales contracts.

"Force majeure" & "Force majeure clause". By including a force majeure clause in the contract, the parties determine in which cases the party is excused from liability, what conditions it must meet in order to excuse the party from liability, and most importantly, issues relating to the consequences of it. Moreover, the conditions of force majeure affecting the fulfilment of the obligation are also indicated in the force majeure clause. For example, a contract can be extended for a period of force majeure, or the contract can be terminated automatically if the period of force majeure exceeds a certain period. Therefore, it can be concluded that the force majeure and the force majeure clause are not exactly the same concepts. This is because, while the force majeure governs the issues of exemption from liability of the party applying to it, the force majeure clause also applies to the issue of performance of obligations under the contract and the termination of the obligation.

How to draft a force majeure clause? In practice, three different ways of expressing force majeure clauses have emerged. In the first way, a force majeure clause is briefly included in the contract. Some clauses are so short that it can be said without any exaggeration that there is no point in making such clauses. An example of the abovementioned clauses would be the statement: "the affected party is exempted from a liability in force majeure". In such cases, there is a risk that the exemptions for the parties from liabilities will be determined by the law applicable to the contract. It is not recommended that the parties include such a clause in a contract, given that the prerequisites for exemptions and the consequences thereof differ in various legal

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systems, and even within one legal system. The notion of force majeure does not even exist in common law.

The second one is to incorporate the norms of the CISG or the UNIDROIT principles without direct modification into sales contracts. However, as noted above, the drafting of force majeure clause in this way may subsequently be contrary to the interests of the parties. For example, in practice, arbitrators or judges often refer to existing concepts of national law when defining the concept of “impediment”. In particular, in one of the arbitral awards, the prerequisites of exemption in accordance with Article 79 of the CISG were compared with the doctrines of national law, such as “force majeure” and “economic impossibility”. The arbitral tribunal ruled that financial difficulties should not exclude the liability of a party, as this is not a risk beyond the control of the party, or is not considered a very extraordinary event such as force majeure¹.

The third way is the direct indication of events and circumstances that would serve as the ground for releasing the parties from responsibility, such as war, strike, natural disaster, and so on.

The inclusion of a list of events and circumstances in a contract can be done in two ways. In the first case, the list is complete. Determining the grounds for exemption from liability through an exhaustive list can pose two risks. First, the occurrence of another event that is not included in the force majeure statement may deprive the party of the right to demand exemption from liability. The second risk is that the definition of the literal meaning of words is up to the courts. The parties want such terms to be both strict and volatile when they include a force majeure clause in the contract. However, in order to clearly identify force majeure, the parties making such a list of events and circumstances should take into account that this list is not exhaustive.

Another issue related to the force majeure clause is the identification of force majeure events in accordance with the *ejusdem generis* rule. However, courts often prefer to ask the parties what they intended to do when concluding the contract, rather than using *ejusdem generis*. For example, the English courts in a number of cases did not take into account the event specified in the contract, when excluding liability on the basis that this event was not taken into account by the parties at the time of the conclusion of the contract.

The next way to define the wording of force majeure clause is to create an open list. That is, the parties include in the force majeure clause a list of events and circumstances that may interfere with the performance of the contract at the time and place of performance, and determine that events that meet certain prerequisites, even if they are not specified, may constitute as force majeure. Such criteria are determined by the law applicable to the contract.

There are various opinions among scholars as to how to interpret the force majeure clause, and those are supporters of the different ways mentioned above. V.A. Kanashevsky concluded that a force majeure clause should be expressed through the

¹ Arbitral Award of Schiedsgericht der Handelskammer - Hamburg, Germany. 1996.
<http://www.unilex.info/cisg/case/195>

inclusion of specific events². In this respect, agreeing with V.A. Kanashevsky, we believe that the events and the circumstances should be indicated in the list explicitly, along with the fact that the force majeure clause should not be exhaustive.

Derogation. One of the most controversial issues concerning the interpretation of the force majeure clauses is the debates on the inclusion of additional provisions on force majeure clauses in contracts by expanding the concept of force majeure, as defined by law or international instruments. That is, the question is whether the parties can change the criteria set out in the law applicable to the contract, or, conversely, not treat certain events and/or circumstances as force majeure, even if they meet the criteria of force majeure. Scholars have come to two conflicting conclusions on this issue. Some of them believe that the subjective will of the parties to the contractual relationship cannot impart force majeure to events and circumstances which in its nature should be objective³. The second group of scholars, on the other hand, believes that the parties may, at their own discretion, define events and circumstances as force majeure in the contract, and that has a corresponding effect⁴.

In our opinion, the legal force of force majeure clause included by the parties to an international sales contract depends on the law applicable to the contract. If the applicable law is a peremptory norm and the prerequisites of force majeure must be determined only by law, then a force majeure clause contradicting the peremptory norm is considered invalid.

If the provisions of the international documents and national laws governing force majeure are dispositive, the parties can also indicate the force majeure clause in a way that does not comply with the requirements of them. Article 6 of the CISG gives the parties the right to exclude CISG's application or derogate from its provisions. Article 79 of the CISG also does not exclude the provisions of Article 6 of this Convention. Thus, an international sales contract may include a force majeure clause that differs from the criteria set out in Article 79 of the CISG. According to Saidov, "Indeed, it may often be the case that where the parties have defined force majeure in the contract, they have in fact intended to derogate from Article 79. However, this will not be the case in all situations. It is argued that the issue should be resolved only on the basis of the interpretation of the contract."⁵

In one of the arbitral awards, the buyer's request to be exempted from liability under Article 79 CISG was rejected since the force majeure clause in the international sales contract was expressed through the inclusion of an exhaustive list of force majeure circumstances discharging them from liability for non-performance of their contractual obligations.⁶

² Kanashevsky V.A. Conditions on force majeure in foreign economic contracts // Journal of Russian law. 2009. No. 2., pp. 91-99.

³ Bublik V.A. Civil legal regulation of foreign economic activity in the Russian Federation: problems of theory, lawmaking and the right to use: Monograph. Yekaterinburg, 1999, p. 190.

⁴ Dimatteo Larry A. The Law of International Contracting. Kluwer Law International, The Hague. 2000. P. 59.

⁵ Saidov, Djakhongir. 2003 ; Vol. 7. Cases on CISG Decided in the Russian Federation. In: Vindobona Journal of International Commercial Law and Arbitration. pp. 1-6

⁶ Russian Federation Arbitration proceeding 123/1992 of 17 October 1995. Published at: <http://cisgw3.law.pace.edu/cases/951017r1.html#cx>

Alimova highlights that, sometimes a party can be exempted from liability on the basis of applicable law, regardless of the force majeure clause included in international sales contracts⁷. We can agree with Y. Alimova only if it is permitted by the provisions of applicable law and force majeure clause in the sales contract is not exhaustive.

ICC Force Majeure Clause 2020. To date, the ICC Force Majeure Clause has been re-adopted several times. The ICC Force Majeure Clause 2003 was in force until March 20, 2020. The ICC Force Majeure Clause 2020 includes the following changes, which were not in the previous edition:

1. The main difference from previous editions is that the 2020 ICC Force Majeure Clause has been developed in two different forms: “long form” and “short form”. The last one is intended to facilitate its understanding for SMEs and generally for non-lawyers. It is reduced version of "long form" and covers only the essential issues.
2. Another change has been made to the definition of force majeure. In the ICC Force Majeure Clause 2020, force majeure is defined as an event or circumstance that prevents or restricts a party from fulfilling one or more obligations. In this case, the hindered party must prove that:
 - a. such an impediment is beyond reasonable control of the obligor;
 - b. it was not possible to take this into account when concluding the contract;
 - c. the party failed to reasonably avoid or overcome the consequences of the impediment.

The party seeking the exemption from liability will have to prove the existence of the above three conditions. The inclusion of the criterion of "reasonableness" in each condition made it easier for the parties to be exempt from the liability for the occurrence of force majeure.

The next change concerns the consequences of force majeure. In the ICC Force Majeure Clause 2003, the occurrence of force majeure only relieves the party from liability or protects the other party from using other remedies, while in the 2020 edition, in addition to the the above, the party is also relieved from the duty to perform its obligations.

The list of force majeure events has also been changed. In particular, the threat of siege, military embargo and unrest, as well as armed conflict are excluded from the category of hostilities.

The list is reduced by summarizing a number of concepts in the category of natural disaster or extreme natural events. For example, the expression "Acts of God" has been left out of use. The epidemic has been listed as a force majeure event, but the pandemic is not mentioned in this publication. Long-term non-functioning of information systems or energy sources is included in the list of man-made disasters. The suspension of work at the enterprise has been replaced with a term “general labour disturbance”. Since the listed events which amount to force majeure include frequent events and most important

⁷ Alimova Ya.O. No. 2016, 12 (28). Problems of formulating certain types of conditions of an international commercial contract. Legal science vector. Bulletin of the O.E. Kutafin University (MSLA) pp. 20-32

circumstances the parties can make changes by introducing additional events to the list or vice versa.

In general, the ICC Force Majeure Clause 2020 is considered to be better in terms of legal technique than the previous edition. This is due to the fact that the new edition has reduced the number of references and used clear expressions.

Taking into account their needs Parties can incorporate the “long form” by reference or use it as a basis for drafting the force majeure clause (“tailor-made” clause”) to international sales contracts.

Regarding the definition of force majeure, the ICC Force Majeure Clause 2020 is aimed at reaching a compromise between general conditions for force majeure, which must be met in any case and events that cannot be taken into account when concluding a contract and are assumed that they do not depend on the will of the parties. For this purpose, paragraph 1 of the ICC Force Majeure Clause 2020 provides a general definition of force majeure, and paragraph 3 provides a listed events that can be recognized as force majeure.

Paragraph 3 of the ICC Force Majeure Clause 2020 provides a list of events that are considered force majeure only if they meet the requirements of paragraph 1 of the Clause. Events that are presumed as force majeure are usually classified as force majeure events. Therefore, in the presence of one or more of the listed events, it is not required to prove the existence of the conditions of sub-paragraphs a) and b) of paragraph 1 of the ICC Force Majeure Clause by the affected party. However, the other party can prove the opposite and demand not to release the party who has not fulfilled its obligations from liability.

In any case, even if the parties modified the list by including other events or excluding them the affected party must prove that the condition of sub-paragraph c) of paragraph 1 of the ICC Force Majeure Clause 2020 has been met.

We noted above that the validity of force majeure clauses depends on the extent to which they comply with the peremptory provisions of law applicable to international sales contracts. It should be noted that this rule also affects the validity of the ICC Force Majeure clause. Kanashevsky believes that at the time of the consideration of the dispute in court, the court does not have the right to expand or reduce the list of events given in the contract, or to interpret the clause in accordance with national law, even if similar expressions are present in national law.⁸

The parties can also allocate the risks among themselves in the force majeure clauses. According to V.I. Sergeev, the terms of the force majeure clause are of great importance, because, despite the fact that the event or circumstances meets the criteria of force majeure, the party may be at risk of force majeure.

⁸ Kanashevsky V.A. 2009. No. 2. Conditions on force majeure in foreign economic contracts // Journal of Russian law. pp. 91-99

It is highlighted that a risk bearing term about the risk of exchange rate fluctuations is borne by the obligor may be included in the contract⁹. Kanashevsky believes that the introduction of such term into the force majeure clause will be higher than the fact of force majeure for the parties, and therefore does not agree with the opinion of V.I. Sergeev.

From *Bender&Sons, Inc. v. Crown Recreation Inc* case¹⁰ it is clear how important a well-elaborated force majeure clause is. In this case, the seller, Crown Recreation Inc. applied to court with a request to exclude its liability for failure to fulfil its obligations as a result of the derailment of the train. The seller referred to Articles 2-615 of the Uniform Commercial Code (“Commercial Impossibility”). However, the court ruled that derailment of the train was a risk for the seller due to “human foreseeable circumstance,” and rejected the seller's claims. L.A. Dimatteo believes that a carefully thought-out force majeure clause would have changed the court's decision.¹¹

Consequently, whether to agree with the opinion of one or the other of the above-mentioned scholars about assigning the risk on a party as a result of force majeure depends on the peremptory rules of law applicable to the contract. For example, Article 6 of the CISG or US law gives the parties the right to share such risks in their contracts. Unless binding rules prohibit the application of such force majeure provisions, they are valid and the party assuming the risk would be responsible

ICC Force Majeure clause 2020 does not contain any terms, according to which the party may assume a risk referring to the force majeure situation. This means that the parties will also have to take this into account when including ICC Force Majeure clause 2020 in the contract.

The force majeure clause also includes informing the other party about the force majeure, providing confirmation of the force majeure (for example, a certificate confirming the occurrence of the force majeure) and the consequences of the force majeure. Paragraph 4 of the ICC Force Majeure Clause 2020 states that the party prevented from the fulfilment of the contractual obligations must immediately notify the other party. The parties may change this abstract term called “urgency” for a specified period in the contract. If the parties do not indicate this abstract term, which is considered “urgent”, the court or arbitration tribunal should clarify this term.

Finally, the contract should also be very clear about the legal consequences of force majeure upon the occurrence thereof. If the contract includes only events and circumstances which are force majeure, but does not indicate its consequences, the relations between the parties regarding the exemption are governed by the law applicable to the contract, and does not always fully correspond to the interests of these parties.

Paragraph 5 of the 2020 ICC force majeure clause states that the party using this clause will be exempted from the fulfilment of its obligations under the contract, as well as any liability in the form of damages or from the application of contractual remedies in

⁹ Sergeev V.I. 2001. No. 6. Force majeure circumstances in business practice // Law and Economics. pp. 65-70.

¹⁰ *BENDE AND SONS, INC., Plaintiff, v. CROWN RECREATION, INC., KIFFE PRODUCTS DIVISION, Defendant.* No. 78 Civ. 428. United States District Court, E. D. New York. September 21, 1982. Published at: <https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp/548/1018/1650559/>

¹¹ Dimatteo L. A. 2000. *The Law of International Contracting.* Kluwer Law International, The Hague. p. 55

the event of a breach of the contract on conditions that the party notifies the other party the occurrence of the obstacle. If the notification is not sent immediately, the exemption takes effect (comes into force) from the moment the other party receives the notification.

From the 2020 ICC Force Majeure Clause, it is clear that for a party that has not fulfilled its obligations due to force majeure, there exist three consequences. First, a party has the right not to fulfil its obligation as long as the impediment is in effect. Secondly, a party that has not fulfilled its obligation due to an impediment does not pay the other party the damage, penalty, interest caused by it, in other words its liability is excluded. In addition to the consequences, the 2020 ICC force majeure clause states that if the length of the obstacle deprives a party of most of its contractual interests, it has the right to terminate the contract by notifying the other party. According to the 2020 ICC force majeure clause, if the obstacle is valid for more than 120 days, the party has the right to terminate the contract. However, this period may be reduced or extended by the parties.

Conclusion. Thus, the force majeure clauses should be clearly defined when concluding the contract by designating the circumstances that constitute force majeure, by identifying what actions the parties must take when force majeure occurs and the legal consequences thereof.

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Farangiz Zaynobiddinova* - Peculiarities of the economic and investment activities during the pandemic (COVID-19)

Introduction. COVID-19, which threatens the whole world today, has had a profound effect on the social, cultural, political and economic life processes of mankind. The coronavirus, first recorded in late 2019, has been disrupting the trade and industrial chain between China and other countries for months. As a result, the world economy has suffered greatly. In the words of experts: "The unexpected and rapid spread of the new coronavirus epidemic in the world has become a catalyst for serious changes in the economic, political and social spheres in most countries of the planet. Urgent problems are developing rapidly, the issues of efficient use of available resources and technological advances have come to the fore. "Apart from the sanitary-epidemiological situation, the world economy has been hit hard."¹

Since the outbreak of the coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19), more than 1 million people have lost their lives due to the pandemic, and the global economy is expected to contract by a staggering 4.3 per cent in 2020. Millions of jobs have already been lost, millions of livelihoods are at risk, and an estimated additional 130 million people will be living in extreme poverty if the crisis persists. These are grim figures that reflect the immense challenges and human suffering caused by this pandemic².

Obviously, the coronavirus pandemic is seriously testing the social and economic sectors. At the same time, the economic crisis, which came under the term "Great Lockdown" during the pandemic, broke the "value chains" in international economic relations, negatively affecting the service sector and began the recession of the world economy³.

The head of the International Monetary Fund, Kristalina Georgieva, predicts the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression⁴. This year, the financial institution estimates that per capita income growth will be negative in more than 170 countries.

Also, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has cut its 2020 global economic growth forecast by 0.5 percent⁵. "As a result of trade wars and political tensions, the world economy on the brink of collapse is facing problems such as the current supply chain disruption, slowing demand for resources, declining tourism and declining consumer confidence due to disease," the OECD noted.

Application analysis and problems. Investment activity, which is necessary for economic stability, has not escaped the influence of today's negative processes. In the current situation. According to experts, the crisis in the world's leading stock exchanges

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¹ Nemtsev, Yu., Impact of COVID-19 on the Latin American Economy. International affairs. 15th April 2020. Published at: <https://interaffairs.ru/news/show/26016>

² Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Trade and Development, Transitioning to a new normal. United Nations, 2020. Published at: https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/osg2020d1_en.pdf

³ 'The Great Lockdown': IMF Confirms Global Recession. Coindesk, 14th April 2020. Published at: <https://www.coindesk.com/the-great-lockdown-imf-confirms-global-recession>

⁴ IMF chief says pandemic will unleash worst recession since Great Depression. Reuters, 9th April 2020. Published at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-imf/imf-chief-says-pandemic-will-unleash-worst-recession-since-great-depression-idUSKCN21R1SM>

⁵ Coronavirus: The world economy at risk – OECD. OECD Interim Economic Assessment, 2nd March 2020. Published at: <https://www.oecd.org/berlin/publikationen/Interim-Economic-Assessment-2-March-2020.pdf>

caused by the sale of shares by investors due to panic, is unprecedented in the last 10 years.

Björn Fogler, a Berlin-based economist, said: "The temporary closure of borders, manufacturing facilities and construction sites will lead to premature delays in the preparation and implementation of investment projects." According to UNCTAD and OECD forecasts, "global direct investment in 2020 could fall by 30 percent compared to 2019 due to supply constraints, sharp changes in external demand and declining investor confidence."⁶

Indeed, today the economies of many countries are facing difficulties due to the pandemic. In particular, the International Monetary Fund forecasts in April that in 2020 the world economy will be in a zone of negative growth for the first time since the global financial and economic crisis of 2007-2008 and will record the strongest "3 percent decline" for the first time since the Great Depression of 1930s⁷

In these accounts, Uzbekistan also faced economic difficulties. Since the second half of March this year, the country faced a decline in economic activity, a decrease in domestic and foreign demand. The main factor in the slowdown in economic growth was the decline in investment and consumer activity due to the cessation of several sectors of the economy⁸.

Thus, in the first quarter of 2020, the volume of investments decreased by 10.2 percent, and the growth rate of retail trade turnover decreased by 3.8 percent. According to preliminary estimates of the Central Bank, GDP growth will slow to 1.5-2.5 percent. Significant changes are expected, especially in the areas of tourism, hotel business, international transport, entertainment, sports and special services⁹.

It should be noted that China, the epicenter of the coronavirus COVID-19, is Uzbekistan's largest trading partner, and its foreign trade turnover with this country in 2019 will reach 7.6 billion USD (18.1 percent of the total foreign trade turnover), exports - 2.5 bn. USD, imports - 5.1 bn USD. **(Table 1)**

⁶ Discussion of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on foreign investment with the Berlin Economics research group. Investment Promotion Agency under the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan 10th June 2020. Published at: <https://invest.gov.uz/uz/mediacenter/news/discussion-on-the-impact-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-on-foreign-direct-investment-with-the-berlin-economic-research-group/>

⁷ IMF World Economic Outlook, The great lockdown; April 2020. <https://www.imf.org/~media/Files/Publications/WEO/2020/April/English/text.ashx?la=en>

⁸ Zaynobiddinova, Farangiz "Economy and Investment Activity in the Context of a Pandemic: Problems and Practical Proposals. Scientific research results in pandemic conditions (COVID-19). USA, 2020. P. 157-165.

⁹ Malosabirova. O. How will the pandemic affect the economy? New Uzbekistan, 13th May 2020. Published at: <https://pv.uz/ru/newspaper/kak-otrazitsja-pandemija-na-ekonomike>

Table 1¹⁰

<i>Ten top countries</i>	<i>Foreign trade turnover</i>	<i>Export</i>	<i>Import</i>	<i>Share %</i>
PRC	7620.09	2519.0	5101.9	18.1
Russian Federation	6626.9	2492.5	4134.4	15.7
Kazakhstan	3367.8	1429.7	1938.0	8.0
Republic of Korea	2755.4	93.5	2661.8	6.5
Turkey	2525.2	1203.6	1321.6	6.0
Germany	980.1	53.9	926.2	2.3
Kyrgyzstan	829.1	679.0	150.0	2.0
Afghanistan	618.0	615.1	2.9	1.5
USA	596.2	29.1	567.1	1.4
Turkmenistan	541.9	145.1	396.8	1.3

**Countries with highest external turnover with the Republic of Uzbekistan
(January-December 2019, million USD, share in%)**

Source: The State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics

The decline in demand for energy resources in China will lead to a decrease in Uzbekistan's exports to China, including natural gas. Given that Uzbekistan's exports of energy resources and oil products (i.e., natural gas) are in third place (14.1 percent), 36.4 percent of total exports to China come from energy resources and petroleum products, it leads to a reduction in foreign exchange earnings, no doubt¹¹.

It should be noted that in the context of the pandemic, two factors threatening the economy of Uzbekistan are widely manifested. The first is the slowdown of the business environment within the country, and the second is the slowdown of the world economy, especially the countries that have close economic ties with our country.

The reasons mentioned above have made it necessary to take important and effective short-term measures in response to this situation in Uzbekistan. In this regard, more than a dozen documents have been issued by the President and the Cabinet of Ministers in order to prevent the threat of the coronavirus to our country. In particular, by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On the establishment of the

¹⁰ Foreign trade turnover of the Republic of Uzbekistan (January-December 2019). The State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics 1st May 2020. Published at: <https://stat.uz/uz/press-sluzhba/novosti-gks/8314-o-uzakh-respublikasi-tazqi-savdo-aylanmasi-5>

¹¹ What is the impact of global economic changes on the Uzbek economy and what important measures should be taken? Uzbekistan national information agency, 11th March 2020. Published at: <https://uza.uz/uz/society/dunyedagi-global-i-tisodiy-zgarishlarini-zbekiston-i-tisodi-11-03-2020>

Republican Special Commission for the preparation of a program of measures to prevent the introduction and spread of new strains of coronavirus in the Republic of Uzbekistan" No. 5537¹² and the Resolution of Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On additional measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus infection in the Republic of Uzbekistan"¹³, No. 176, in order to protect the life and health of citizens ensuring the sanitary and epidemiological well-being and safety of the population in the Republic of Uzbekistan, there was established the Republican Special Commission and imposed quarantine and some restrictions across the country.

In addition, an Anti-Crisis Fund with a budget of more than \$ 1.0 billion has been established to combat the spread of coronavirus infection in Uzbekistan in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, to support entrepreneurship and to ensure the sustainable operation of economic sectors. In order to comprehensively cover all issues and address the problems in the field of business in a timely manner, the "Operational Republican Headquarters for Support of Exporters and Entrepreneurs" was established.

Besides, with the purpose of strengthening social protection of the population and providing support to the functioning of sectors in the economy, some opportunities were provided, such as the cessation of the calculation of a fixed amount of personal income tax and social tax for individual entrepreneurs who are forced to suspend their activities during the quarantine period; granting the right to interest-free deferral (payment of a number of taxes) until October 1, 2020 to micro-firms, small businesses and individual entrepreneurs, whose income decreased by more than 50 percent compared to the average monthly amount in the first quarter of this year, notifying the tax authorities; provision by commercial banks deferrals until October 1, 2020 on payments on loans of legal entities and individuals, individual entrepreneurs facing financial difficulties; non-imposition of penalties and recovery/collection measures on collateral for overdue loans of borrowers, which are adversely affected by the activities of the quarantine regime.

The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in its report on global investment under the title "Post-pandemic international production"¹⁴ as a result of the reforms implemented in our country, also reflected the positive changes in the economy of Uzbekistan. This is explained by the large-scale measures taken to liberalize the economy in our country. In addition, the report notes that by 2020, the volume of foreign direct investment due to the pandemic will decrease by 40 percent in the world, and in 2021 by another 5-10 percent¹⁵.

In addition, in the Message¹⁶ of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, to the Oliy Majlis on December 29, 2020, it was noted that to mitigate and eliminate the consequences of the pandemic, the state implemented a set of

¹² National Legislation Database, January 29, 2020, No. 07/20/5537/0116. Published at: <https://lex.uz/docs/4720398>

¹³ National Legislation Database, 24.03.2020, 09/20/176/0358, 17.04.2020, 09/20/234/0453. Published at: <https://lex.uz/docs/4772484>

¹⁴ World Investment Report 2020 - International Production Beyond the Pandemic (UNCTAD/WIR/2020) 16 June 2020. Published at: https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/wir2020_en.pdf

¹⁵ Uzbekistan's economic growth recognized. New Uzbekistan, 10th May 2020. Published at: <https://www.pv.uz/en/news/uzbekistan-s-economic-growth-recognized>

¹⁶ President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's Address to the Oliy Majlis. 29th December 2020. Published at: <https://president.uz/en/lists/view/4057>

measures totaling 82 trillion sums, including: an Anti-Crisis Fund was created, more than 16 trillion sums were allocated from the budget for measures related to countering coronavirus, supporting the population and enterprises. In addition, almost 8 million citizens were granted tax benefits totaling 66 trillion sums, practical assistance was provided to extend the terms of lending and financial support. The Head of state also noted with satisfaction that, according to the analysis of the International Monetary Fund and international rating agencies, despite the trials of this year, Uzbekistan is among the few countries in the world that has maintained positive growth rates.

Foreign practice. Today, there is no country on Earth that is immune to the effects of a pandemic. Self-isolation has a negative impact on the economies of countries, including investment activities.

The economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is causing more profound and serious damage to the U.S. than most experts initially thought. The coronavirus pandemic turned out to be a real stress test for the American economy¹⁷. The Donald Trump administration, in particular, took unprecedented steps to rectify the difficult situation through the CARES Act¹⁸, passed by the Senate and Congress and signed by Trump on March 27, worth \$2 trillion, or 10 percent of the country's GDP. The economic aid measure is the largest in the history of the United States.

Unlike the United States, Europe does not have a single fiscal support body, so each country makes its own decisions. Another problem is the high degree of integration of production and value chains in the EU. The EU's economic strength lies in the multiplicity of small businesses and their integration into global supply chains which is taken into account by the EU itself. Even countries that are less affected by the virus than others are inevitably waiting for a spillover resulting from the disruption in relations within Europe.

Experts have noted that the effects of the coronavirus will affect the global economy, including countries in the Latin American region. First, it affects the overall development of national economies. In particular, a sharp decline in consumption could have a negative impact on production, employment and investment in the coming months. Second, there is a sharp decline in investment and capital outflows. That is, in any crisis, more capital inflows are made to the most developed countries. In such a situation, the outflow of capital from developing Latin American countries, mainly to the United States, will lead to a reduction in production and a decrease in the competitiveness of national currencies¹⁹. In particular, as a result of the intensification of sanitary and epidemiological work, the suspension of production, problems with the supply of raw materials have led to the restriction of the activities of many manufacturing enterprises around the world.

In addition, isolation between countries has led to a significant decline in the global tourism industry. In particular, the temporary closure of tourist facilities, a sharp decline in tourist flows, seriously disrupts the activities of hotels, kitchens, services, creating jobs,

¹⁷ Filippov A. Covid-19 as a stress test for the economy of the USA. EAdaily, 29th April 2020. Published at: <https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2020/04/29/covid-19-kak-stress-test-dlya-ekonomiki-ssha>

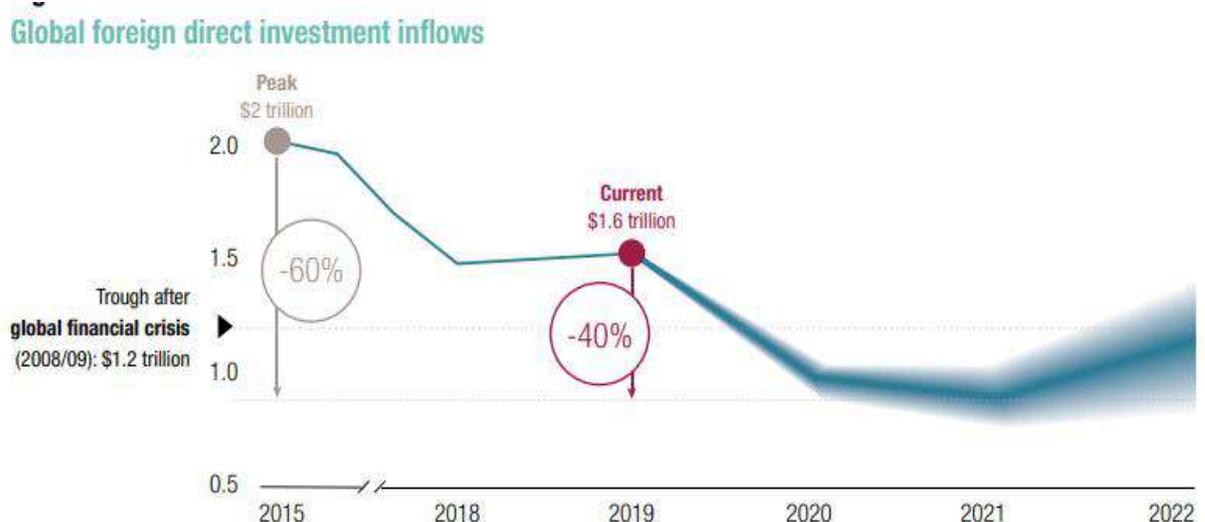
¹⁸ S.3548 - CARES Act. 06.03.2020. Published at: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/3548/text?q=product+actualizaci%C3%B3n>

¹⁹ Nemtsev, Yu., Impact of COVID-19 on the Latin American Economy. International affairs. 15th April 2020. Published at: <https://interaffairs.ru/news/show/26016>

rising unemployment and social tensions. In particular, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), in the first four months of 2020, tourism revenues fell by \$ 195 billion due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The number of tourists has dropped by almost 97 percent since the introduction of travel restrictions in all countries²⁰.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an immediate and negative impact on foreign direct investment (FDI) in 2020. The outlook remains dire, with further deterioration projected in 2021. The exceptional global circumstances as a result of the pandemic led to delayed implementation of ongoing investment projects and the shelving of new projects, as well as the drying up of foreign affiliate earnings of which normally a significant share is reinvested in host countries. As a result, global FDI figures are forecast to decrease by up to 40 per cent in 2020, from their 2019 value of close to \$1.6 trillion (Figure 2).

Figure 2²¹



Source: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

It should be noted that the coronavirus pandemic has ushered in a new phase of relationships around the world. That is, it has moved many parts of social, economic and political life to the internet. Bilateral and multilateral relations are now developing through virtual communication.

Indeed, it is now necessary to minimize physical contact between people, which is why electronic representations and paperless transactions are becoming increasingly important. Of course, the delivery of goods and raw materials still requires physical effort, but it is necessary to move to the widespread use of electronic data exchange systems in information exchange operations. That is, it is expedient for the parties to such a relationship to use competing electronic alternatives instead of traditional paper exchanges. It is also necessary to dematerialize the process through automation, electronic payments and digital printing. In this way, it will be possible to reduce the risk

²⁰ MARKET INTELLIGENCE. UNWTO World Tourism Barometer 15th May 2020. Published at: <https://www.unwto.org/market-intelligence>

²¹ Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Trade and Development, Transitioning to a new normal. United Nations, 2020. Published at: https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/osg2020d1_en.pdf

of virus transmission from contaminated surfaces and protect the health of citizens. At the same time, it is important to strengthen measures to combat cyber threats to ensure the security of online negotiations and data exchange.

After the end of the coronavirus pandemic, venture capitalists will invest more in companies that organize remote business processes, financial and medical technologies and online commerce²², said many experts from Russia's leading state news agency TASS. Thus, the prospects of the economy depend on the criteria for the effective use of modern information technologies. This situation creates the need for the development and implementation of new innovative ideas for the development of the industry.

Suggestions and conclusions. The consequences of the coronavirus pandemic require all countries to take prompt and effective action. The foundations for economic recovery must be laid today in order to overcome the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the state economy, in particular on investment activities. Therefore, in order to increase economic activity and ensure the stability of the investment climate, the following can be promoted:

First, in order to maintain the country's investment attractiveness and ensure a stable investment climate, it is necessary to organize more rational use of domestic resources and develop free economic zones and mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic on tourism.

Second, delaying the implementation of commitments on the implementation of investment projects in order to avoid disputes arising from the untimely fulfillment of contractual obligations due to quarantine restrictions. Also, in case of change of terms of execution of the investment project, signing of the additional agreement provided to the investor for change of the established terms of the unused taxes and other privileges in proportion to the revised new terms of the investment project.

Third, to amend the terms of implementation of individual investment projects to support investment activities in a complex epidemiological situation, to develop a bill that would mitigate punishment for breach of terms of investment contracts under quarantine conditions for the legal protection of investors.

Fourth, to provide additional support to enterprises implementing investment projects in the pandemic-affected sectors to address the consequences of coronavirus infection. These include interest-free loans for payroll, direct disinterested financial support to address current pressing issues, and the possibility of deferring state property rent payments.

Fifth, paying attention to descriptions of the websites and social networks informing on investment activities, investor-friendly investment projects and opportunities, preparation of analytical materials on new optimal investment policy and increase the scale of necessary conditions, additional benefits and acceptable investment projects for reinvestment of capital in order to maintain the amount of investment in the country.

²² Experts: Investors after the pandemic will pay attention to new technologies and online shopping. InvestFunds, 11th May 2020. Published at: <https://investfunds.ru/news/67593/>

Sixth, to create the necessary conditions for implementation of virtual communication in investment activities and to encourage the formation of smart contracts and to ensure data security.

Seventh, in today's fast-paced trading environment, governments need to establish a clear and fast information exchange, create favourable conditions to provide all interested stakeholders with the necessary information, and update online information and reference tables on a regular basis. Also, by providing remote access to all forms and requirements in trade information systems, to ensure that the subjects of the relationship can find relevant information on all the required items on the Internet.

Eighth, to strengthen additional support for fiscal and monetary policy in the country, reduce tax rates for a certain period, create opportunities for "tax holidays", "tax credits" and long-term repayment, and expand financing of small businesses, extend the grace period for loans, stimulating economic activity.

Ninth, to take decisive and effective measures to ensure employment, encourage the creation of short-term jobs (especially through seasonal jobs) and provide targeted assistance to the needy.

Tenth, announcement of a moratorium for a certain period of time when quarantine measures are in force - on bureaucratic procedures, reporting and inspections, as well as prompt resolution of obstacles and problems in investment and business processes etc.

The above-mentioned recommendations are not an inexhaustive list for locating solutions to the problem, but these measures can serve to stabilize the economic environment in the country and support the efficiency of investment activities. In today's struggle, the promotion of international relations between states, effective cooperation between citizens and all stakeholders, as well as ensuring common goals and coordination of joint efforts are of paramount importance in solving the global problem facing humanity.

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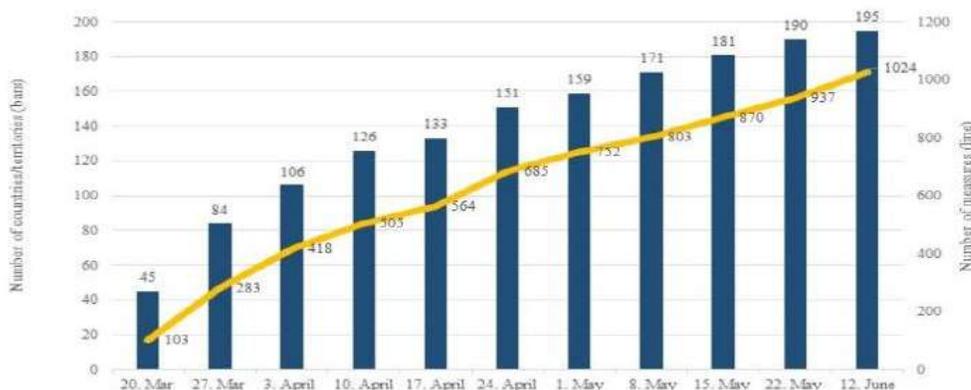
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Rano Djuraeva¹ - Social policy of Central Asian states in the period of COVID pandemic

The coronavirus pandemic has caused the global crisis, which differs fundamentally from traditional economic crises. Its magnitude and effect on the world economy are more significant. Experts evaluate this crisis as the deepest one for the past 100 years. According to the World Bank forecast, decrease of global GDP will reach 5,2% in 2020 – this is the maximum rate since the second World War. Moreover, decline in the global GDP per capita is expected to affect the largest number of countries since 1870². The analysts of the Oxford Economics Centre and rating agency Fitch forecast decrease in global GDP in average up to 4-5% in 2020³.

The pandemic has caused widespread decline in the income of populations worldwide and have increased poverty in the world. According to preliminary estimates of the World Bank, 60-150 million people will be below the poverty level depending on the poverty estimation scale (poverty line of 1,90 US Dollars per day for all countries; or 1,90 US Dollars per day for poor ones, 3,20 US Dollars per day for the income below average, and 5,50 US Dollars per day for countries with an upper-middle and high income) ⁴. In other words, the global poverty level will rise in 2020 for the first time since 1998. It is a major challenge for reaching SDGs 2030, which were aimed to reduce inequality and liquidate poverty. To date more than 190 countries worldwide have introduced social protection measures especially designed for overcoming the negative social effects of the pandemic.

Figure 1. Trends in number of countries/territories & social protection measures



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² Global Economic Prospects, (GEP). Review of the World Bank, June 2020. <https://www.vsemirnyjbank.org/ru/publication/global-economic-prospects>

³ Global GDP Forecast Stable as Coronavirus Disruption Eases, Mon 29 Jun, 2020. <https://www.fitchratings.com>.

⁴ Preliminary assessment of the World Bank Science Department. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/impactcovid-19-coronavirus-global-poverty-why-sub-saharan-africa-might-be-region-hardest>

Source: Gentilini U. (WB), Almenfi M. (WB), Dale P. (UNICEF), Lopez A.V. (WB), Mujica I.V. (WB), Quintana R. (WB), and Zafar U.(WB). Social Protection and Jobs Responses to COVID-19: A Real-Time Review of Country Measures. (June 12, 2020). https://www.ugogentilini.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/SP-COVID-responses_June-12.pdf

These measures have helped to save lives of many people, to provide them with livelihoods, and keep employment and business afloat. Fiscal measures worldwide are being currently estimated as 11 trillion US Dollars, in comparison to 8 trillion US Dollars, which have been estimated in the fiscal monitoring in April 2020. Half of this amount (5,4 trillion US Dollars) involves additional costs and loss of state budget incomes. Another half (5,4 trillion US Dollars) is related to liquidity support costs, i.e. credits, equity investments and guarantees, also through state banks and business, which help to support cash flows and to limit bankruptcy, but can increase public debt and deficit in the future⁵.

One of the major priorities of an anti-crisis policy is social protection. World experience has shown that the most common and effective way to support the population's income is cash transfers. According to experts of the World Bank and UNICEF, 124 countries in the world have introduced new cash benefits (104 countries) in May 2020 to fight the impact of crisis or have changed existing payment programs by adapting them to the crisis conditions. This adaption of a cash benefit program to new conditions focuses on the following four areas:

1. Easier access to financial assistance (simplification of administrative rules for granting benefits or for conditions of payment);
2. Increase coverage by including new groups into the existing benefits or by introducing new temporary benefits;
3. Increase rates of cash benefits for existing recipients;
4. Combination of all three modifications.

More than 1 billion people all over the world are being covered with these policies. Countries applying the fourth scenario are characterized by high level development of social protection institutions, and by multiple tools for personal income support. Unfortunately, there are not so many countries in the world like that. That is why another group of countries is prevailing – these are the states increasing coverage of population with existing social protections measures (167 countries) (Fig. 2). It is a step in the right direction, because increasing social protection coverage facilitates implementation of long-term social policy⁶.

⁵ A Crisis Like No Other, An Uncertain Recovery; World Economic Outlook Update, June 2020 <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2020/06/24/WEOUpdateJune2020>.

⁶ Ruslan Emtsov. Cash transfers and overcome the COVID-19 crisis: experience of Russia and China in an international context. <https://isp.hse.ru/data/2020/06/08/1605618185>.

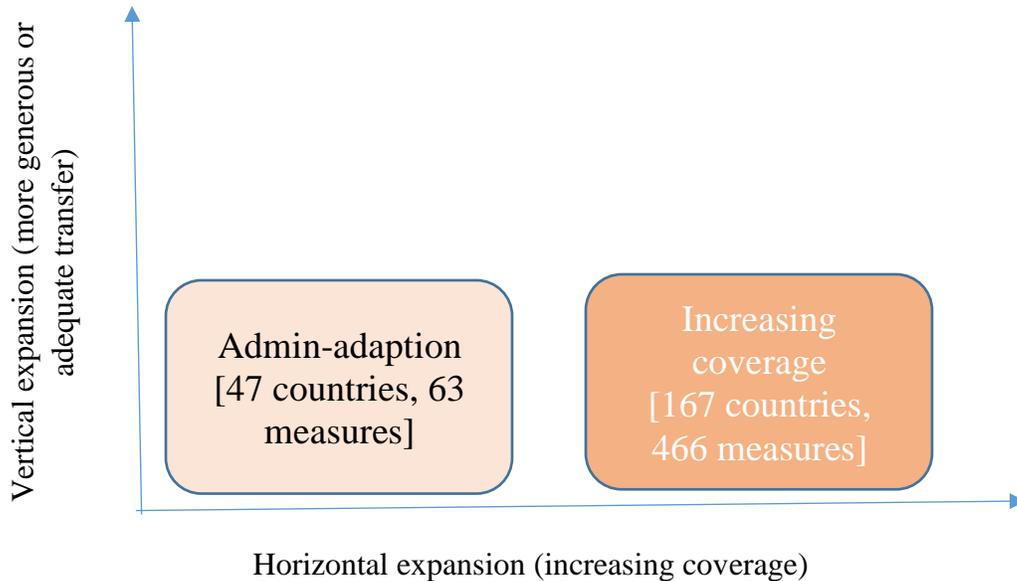


Figure 2. Adaption of cash transfers to the world crisis.

The number of people receiving different kinds of social support by means of all ways of program adaption (i.e. administration, adequacy and coverage) amounts to more than 1,7 billion people. 1,2 billion of them are people receiving support in cash form. States like Russia and China have provided social assistance to their population by means of administrative simplification, increase of coverage and payment levels.

Virtually the whole world seeks to develop such anti-crisis measures system, which will subsequently align to long-term goals of social equity. That is why many countries channel additional resources to fight the crisis along the lines that represent long-term priorities of social protection system development. Main directions of social protection implementation are:

- Establishment of minimum income level;
- One-time cash payments;
- Payments for poor families with children;
- Unemployment benefits.

For instance, Spain has already introduced a long overdue program of Guaranteed Minimum Income. These now cover for about 5 million of the poorest families. By means of a single electronic database of food assistance beneficiaries (more than 230 million of the poorest households), India has implemented one-time cash payments for people living in zones of where the disease has spread. This measure was determined as a strategic objective of the social support system long before the crisis.

At the time of COVID-19, Russia introduced new benefits for children from 3 to 7 years from poor families. Payments for maternal capital were also significantly increased, which corresponds to national priorities of the demographic policy.

China has increased social support payments for the poorest people under the programme, “Di Bao”, which covers 4% of the least well-off population. Beside this, the government has facilitated access for migrants to emergency temporal payments and to unemployment benefits. Tailored programmes for migrants’ income support were introduced in particular localities.

Targeted social assistance (RSA) in France was increased by 100-150 EUR per month, while a Stabilization Fund in Turkey allocated funds for local budgets to increase payments for different segments of low-income population. Italy has provided self-employed workers with tax-free cash benefits at the rate of 600 EUR and has also established the “Last Hope Fund” with 300 million EUR, designed to support workers and self-employed citizens not eligible for cash benefits, but having interrupted, reduced or suspended their activity because of outbreaks of COVID-19. Families with children in Great Britain previously provided with free school meals are getting increased cash payments now. In the USA all the taxpayers with an income lower than 75 thousands US Dollar per year, have been given payments at the rate of 1200 US Dollar for adults and 500 US Dollar for each child, regardless of whether they have already been social support recipients or not.

The informal economy has suffered the most due to the crisis. Social support of workers in this sphere also responds to the long-term priorities of social policy. Therefore, many countries have expanded coverage with social support measures for the population being occupied in this sector. For instance, self-employed workers and workers of platforms and aggregators in the USA (such as UBER) previously not being socially insured, became eligible for unemployment benefits. One million families in Brasilia, who have not passed test for income level before and have not been considered as poor, became recipients of monthly payments at the rate of 115 US Dollar for each family member under the social support program (Bolsa Familia), while informal employment was considered as their income source. The government of Spain allocated unemployment benefits for people taking care of children or older persons, independently of their insurance contributions.

Another way being chosen by some states is granting money to the population to stimulate an aggregate demand. For example, Hong Kong and Singapore have introduced generous one-time payment to all citizens (about 1000 US Dollar and 120 US Dollar respectively). The same way was chosen by Serbia. South Korea has introduced one-time payment for 70% of all households.

The measures taken by Central Asian states in terms of pandemic include broad social support of their population and economy. All the countries in this region have implemented a package of measures for sanitary-epidemiological and fiscal support, which constitute, according to preliminary estimates, about 1,5% of GDP in Uzbekistan

(10 trillion UZS), 5,6% in Kyrgyzstan and 9% (4,4 trillion KZT) in Kazakhstan⁷. These packages include measures targeted at the provision of health sector with means to combat the epidemic and at supporting business and households.

Table 1.

Anti-crisis measures of Central Asian states to combat the pandemic.

State	Measures taken in public health sector
Kazakhstan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declaration of a state of emergency • Borders closure for foreign citizens • Closure of public places • Major cities were quarantined • Suspension of air and railway traffic • Ban on basic foodstuff export • Price control on foodstuff
Uzbekistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declaration of strict quarantine • Borders closure • Ban on public gatherings • Closure of public places • Introducing isolation measures • Suspension of inland and city transport
Kyrgyzstan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declaration of a state of emergency • Imposition of a curfew in the capital • Temporary ban on entering the country for foreign citizens • Suspension of passenger trains' traffic • Closure of schools and public places • Ban on basic export of foodstuff
Tajikistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land borders closure • Ban on international flights • Regulating the market of foodstuff • Price control on foodstuff • Informational campaign
Turkmenistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land borders closure • Imposition of restrictions for movement of people and goods

⁷ COVID-19 CRISIS RESPONSE IN CENTRAL ASIA. OECD, 2020. <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/covid-19-crisis-response-in-central-asia-5305f172/>.

Source: Drafted by the author based on Report of Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), on the April 15th, 2020. <https://caa-network.org/archives/19649>

Anti-crisis measures in Central Asian states were developed in accordance with the speed of coronavirus spread, with incidence rates and with resulting situation in domestic and global economy.

Serious economic and social consequences of the pandemic forced the governments of Central Asian states to spend huge resources to make business and population survive. Against declining business activity and significantly lower export earnings, these measures resulted in fiscal deficit in all states of this region in 2020. International Monetary Fund (IMF) claims that budget deficit in Kyrgyzstan will be the greatest and will reach up to 10% to the GDP of the country⁸. Furthermore, the public debt will increase up to 70% to the GDP in 2020 due to the external borrowings⁹. Public debt in Tajikistan will reach 50% of the GDP¹⁰, and about 36% in Uzbekistan¹¹.

Table 2.
Budget deficit / surplus in Central Asian countries,
in % to GDP

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Kazakhstan	2,57	-0,57	-5,26	-2,68
Kyrgyzstan	-0,59	-0,14	-9,62	-6,43
Tadjikistan	-2,78	-2,1	-6,43	-3,0
Uzbekistan	2,14	-1,1	-3,3	-1,32

Source: data from national statistical offices of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan.

The overview of social protection measures being implemented in Central Asian states shows, that these countries have taken steps to administrative simplification, to expanding coverage of existing measures and to increase payments. In Kazakhstan a part of population got payments at the rate of minimum wage (42 500 KZT) twice. Moreover for the second time it was paid not only to those, who previously had an official

⁸ Kyrgyz Republic: Request for Purchase Under the Rapid Financing Instrument and Disbursement under the Rapid Credit Facility. IMF Country Report No. 20/90, March 2020.

<https://www.imf.org/~media/Files/Publications/CR/2020/English/1KGZEA2020001.ashx>

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Republic of Tajikistan: Request for Disbursement under the Rapid Credit Facility. IMF Country Report No. 20/151, May 2020.

<https://www.imf.org/~media/Files/Publications/CR/2020/English/1TJKEA2020001.ashx>

¹¹ Fitch Affirms Uzbekistan at 'BB-'; Outlook Stable. Fitch Ratings, 9 October 2020.

<https://www.fitchratings.com/research/sovereigns/fitch-affirms-uzbekistan-at-bb-outlook-stable-09-10-2020#>

job, but also to self-employed and informal sector workers. Pensions and welfare benefits were indexed at 10% with funding at the rate of 200 billion KZT. Also 800 thousand of citizens in need were provided with food packs¹².

Measures taken by the Kyrgyzstan in response to the pandemic in the social protection sphere were limited and were mostly focused on provision of food. Food packs at 800 KGS each (10-12 USD) were distributed among 225 000 of vulnerable households, and prices for the basic food products were taken under the strict control. Social protection by means of supporting low-income families and paying unemployment compensation for the workers, who have lost their jobs, was not strengthened¹³.

The government of Tajikistan has increased the amount of benefits for low-income families from 400 TJS (39\$) up to 464 TJS (45\$). Benefits are being paid quarterly at the rate of 116 TJS (11\$) per family¹⁴.

Uzbekistan has announced, already in March and April of this year, a number of measures to support business and vulnerable segments of the population. In the following months the measures to support business and population were complemented several times, including one-time payment from the state budget for low-income families (at the rate of 100\$ per family) and for ambulance workers to celebrate the Qurban Hayit (totalling \$9,8 million), increase of pensions and social benefits rate up to 10%, increase by 2 times the number of needy families (up to 700 thousands families) receiving benefits.

¹² <https://primeminister.kz/ru/news/reviews/itogi-socsfery-za-5-mesyacev-2020-goda-vosstanovlenie-zanyatosti-i-novye-vidy-podderzhki-255839>

¹³ <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/626026/covid-19-kgz-socioeconomic-vulnerability-impact-ru.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://asiaplustj.info/ru/news/tajikistan/society/20200527/v-tadzhikistane-s-1-iyulya-maloimutshim-semyam-naznachat-sotsialnoe-posobie>

Table 3.
Social protection measures taken by Central Asian countries as of June 12, 2020

Countries	SOCIAL ASSISTANCE				SOCIAL INSURANCE				LABOR MARKETS			
	Cash-based transfers *	Public Works	In-kind (in-kind/school feeding)	Utility and financial support	Paid leave / unemployment	Health insurance support	Pensions and disability benefits	Social security contributions (waiver/subsidy)	Wage subsidy	Activation (training)	Labor regulation adjustment	Reduced work time subsidy
Kazakhstan	✓		✓	✓								
Uzbekistan	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Kyrgyzstan	✓		✓	✓				✓				
Tajikistan	✓											
Turkmenistan												

Source: Compiled by the author based on Gentilini U. (WB), Almenfi M. (WB), Dale P. (UNICEF), Lopez A.V. (WB), Mujica I.V. (WB), Quintana R. (WB), and Zafar U.(WB). Social Protection and Jobs Responses to COVID-19: A Real-Time Review of Country Measures. https://www.ugogentilini.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/SP-COVID-responses_June-12.pdf

Slowdown in economic activity leads to increased unemployment, which also causes poverty. According to the Republican Scientific Centre for employment and labour protection under the Ministry of employment and employment relations the unemployment rate in Uzbekistan for the period from January to July 2020 was 13,2%. In the first half of 2020 the unemployment rate in Kazakhstan was 5% and could reach 6,1% by the end of the year²⁸². The total rate of unemployment in Kyrgyzstan for the same period of time was 6,2%, and 2,5% in Tajikistan. There are also a large number of people employed in the informal sector, and returning migrant workers, who exacerbate the crisis situation in employment even more. Only 13% of total employment is being employed in the formal sector in Tajikistan. In Uzbekistan this number is about 30%. The IMF has estimated at least 1,5 million people in Kazakhstan and about 1,8 million people in Kyrgyzstan to take unpaid leave or to have lost their jobs²⁸³. According to official figures more than 9,4 thousands of people in Tajikistan were on compulsory leave initiated by employers in the first half of this year, whereby 7,8 thousands of them were on leave without pay²⁸⁴.

For this reason focusing most allocations of anti-crisis measures in this direction or easier access to unemployment benefits are measures contributing to expand the coverage of state support for low-income groups. Thus, in Kazakhstan under the “Anti-crisis measures package” salaries and unemployment benefits were subsidized. Additionally 1 trillion KZT were allocated to support of employment under the program named “Employment road map”. In Uzbekistan the key role in supporting business and population employment was given to establishment of Employment Promotion Fund and Social Work Fund, which provided employment to 140 thousands of unemployed people, as well as extensive support of particular sectors of the economy, including construction.

Therefore, the analysis of the main social support directions in Central Asian states in the period of COVID-19 leads to the following conclusions:

– In general Central Asian states have so far succeeded in avoiding catastrophic scenarios at the peak of the pandemic with tens of thousands of infected and thousands of dead, as was the case in some countries and regions globally²⁸⁵.

– However, the crisis may lead to significant poverty growth in Central Asia. According to experts from the World Bank, about 1,4 million people of the region could fall below the poverty line due to the crisis, if daily income at the rate of \$3,2 is being considered, or 2,6 million people, if daily income at the rate of \$5,5 is being considered as criteria. This undermines the progress in reducing the poverty and inequality and in reaching sustainable development goals in general.

– The depth and the speed of decline in real income of the population are so huge that all countries of Central Asian region have introduced social protection measures, which are specifically aimed to overcome negative consequences of the

²⁸² <https://liter.kz/bezraboticzu-v-kazahstane-v-2020-godu-prognoziryuyut-na-urovne-61/>

²⁸³ <https://caa-network.org/archives/19649>

²⁸⁴ <https://asiaplustj.info/ru/news/tajikistan/society/20200820/v-tadzhikistane-okolo-10-tisyach-chelovek-nahodyatsya-v-vinuzhdennih-otpuskah>

²⁸⁵ <http://mirperemen.net/2020/07/vyxod-iz-koronakrizisa-tri-puti-dlya-centralnoj-azii/>

pandemic, by means of administrative simplification, increasing coverage and payment rates. Limited budget resources were mostly used to support vulnerable businesses, to defer payments and to provide emergency assistance to the most vulnerable groups by virtue of direct cash transfers (mainly special benefits and grants), of support in kind and public work programs. Despite these efforts, the limited coverage of unemployment benefits and other social protection schemes led to many difficulties to prevent the damages in countries, especially for workers and households being occupied in informal economy.

– In response to increasing budget expenditures and declining revenues, the fiscal deficit will grow in all countries with no exception in 2020. According to IMF, the largest deficit (almost 10% of the GDP) is expected to be in Kyrgyzstan. Therefore, there is a rising trend of public debt: in Kyrgyzstan it will grow up to 70% to GDP; in Tajikistan more than a half of GDP, and 36% of GDP in Uzbekistan.

Main recommendations:

– It is necessary to provide corresponding short-term anti-crisis measures for protection of the population with long-term goals to decline the poverty and inequality, to support social justice based on principles of targeting needs. Importantly, attention should be given to the next phase, which includes post quarantine economic recovery. This phase determines the long-term potential and sustainable development of many countries.

– The labour market is the sector most affected by crisis, and efforts of government should be focused on arranging workplaces and stimulating business-activity. Enabling low-income groups of the population to earn money is a rational approach in terms of economic activity growth and tackling the problem of poverty.

– Supporting workers in the informal sector, among them migrant workers, including them into the system of social protection is a long-term social policy priority for Central Asian countries.

– Further digitization of economy will enable not only to adapt to the new requirements in terms of the pandemic, but also to find new business opportunities in the post-coronavirus period. These initiatives correspond well with digital priorities and achievements within the past few years in the Central Asian states.

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