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POST-SOVIET COOPERATION AND CONFLICTS

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ENCLAVES IN CENTRAL ASIA: MYTHS AND REALITIES

The article is devoted to the appearance, formation and development of enclaves in the territory of the Central Asian republics. How have these anomalous areas appeared in the region? How have the peoples of these closely intertwined states managed to live and cross enclave and exclave territories for so many years? And after all, who benefits from “pulling the rubber” with a resolution of these issues? Who and how is trying to disintegrate these states? In one article it is not easy to analyze the whole situation and problems that have accumulated for years, but still, the author makes an attempt to answer these questions.

Key words: *Central Asian enclaves, resolution of enclave problems, unresolved border problems, “apple of discord”.*

And so, it is difficult to say exactly how and when enclaves appeared on the territory of Central Asia. But, if we look through the leaves of history, moreover, history that is not so stale in centuries of dust, it can be concluded that majority of disputed border problems had arisen during the time of the Soviet Union. As the past shows, the Soviet Union was a great power, one big friendly family, where all peoples and nations were tolerant and lived in the “dream” that ideology would never fall. It is indisputable that the top authorities looked at the Central Asian region through “pink glasses.” They saw small neighboring countries with similar roots, almost identical peoples and nations, similar culture and traditions, one religion, intertwined by bonds of brotherhood and kinship. But it was not that simple, these small neighboring countries, although somewhat identical, each has its own history, culture and traditions. Each of these countries is a mystery in itself and, accordingly, each culture and tradition is peculiar in its own way. And, since we are back in the near future, it is vital to draw a little from it.

At the moment, there are eight enclaves in the Central Asian region, which belong to Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Having learned a little from history, it becomes obvious that the process of delimitation of state borders between these countries took place during the national-territorial delimitation of the Turk-estan region in 1924-1925. The process, for various reasons, lasted until 1927,

it had shortcomings in terms of taking into account the geographical, economic, cultural and ethnic characteristics of the population living there, but officially it passed all the necessary procedures.

The division of boundaries practically was not based on the national principle, so enclave territories in these countries appeared at the inter-ethnic level. This is how the main enclaves of Central Asia look like.



Drawing. 1. Enclaves of the Ferghana valley¹

Roughly speaking, the territorial division among the countries lasted until 1957, when Moscow set up a parity commission to establish a demarcation line between the republics of the Soviet Union. The work of the commission was nicely presented officially, but in fact it failed to achieve its goal and to fulfill the tasks that were vital for the republics, while still in the USSR. At that time, at the heyday of Soviet ideology, no one could have imagined the collapse of such a great power. Of course, there is an opinion that it is highly likely that Moscow wanted to “always keep [the republics] on a short leash” and “don’t let go of the reins”. Accordingly, by growing “the apple of discord,” it could always have the rights of “the main taster permitted to cut off this or that part of it.”

After the collapse of the USSR, the young Central Asia states faced acute problems of delimitation of state borders, which to this day remain on the agenda of almost all countries of the region. In the early 1990s, young states, as independent subjects of international law, learned to take their first steps on their own. Accordingly, each of the post-Soviet countries faced difficulties and problems. On its way to independence Tajikistan faced most difficulties. Due to external factors and threats, a young and inexperienced state, whose geopolitical loca-

¹ See: Enclaves of the Ferghana valley. See – URL: www.wikipedia.org (date: 03.05.2017).

tion is really unfortunate, survived an unforgettable civil war, which not only destroyed the country and its people, but for 20 years pushed the country into chaos and crisis. Despite all the difficulties, since the 2000s, the countries have made repeated attempts to resolve the issues of disputed and enclave territories. Many territorial disputes have been resolved, but the enclave issue remains a serious stumbling block in the foreign policy of these countries¹.

How did enclaves and exclaves in Central Asia emerge? If we look at the Fergana valley, we find there Sokh district (236 sq.km), the largest enclave in the world, belonging to Uzbekistan and located within the territory of Kyrgyzstan. Along with Sokh, Uzbekistan has two more exclaves in Kyrgyzstan: Shakhimardan and Chongara (Northern Sokh). An unusual feature of the Sokh is that the vast majority of its population are Tajiks, so that the ethnic composition of the enclave does not coincide with either the mother or the surrounding states. Sokh is isolated from the rest of Uzbekistan by the territory of Kyrgyzstan (Batken region, between Botkin and Kadamzhai regions) and is an enclave in relation to Kyrgyzstan and an exclave in relation to Uzbekistan. In addition, Sokh consists of two parts: Northern Sokh (Chongara, Kalacha, Lower Sokh) and Southern Sokh. This exclave appeared in 1955, the specific causes of this are unknown. From history we know that Sokh was leased to Uzbekistan for 70 years and since the collapse of the USSR has been a stumbling block in relations between the two countries. There were repeated attempts to connect the exclave with the maternal state by creating a corridor, but all the attempts failed. Accordingly, there are many problems in this exclave, the main one is inter-ethnic conflicts and tensions, secondary ones are water shortage, demographic explosion, multiple checkpoints and corruption².

It should be noted that the Central Asian region is located in the highlands and tensions are aggravated by the complexity of geopolitics. In this regard, the construction of high-tech roads and corridors is still an unrealizable dream.

A similar situation and identical problems exist in the Shakhimardan enclave (Jangal – 90 sq.km) also located in the Fergana Region of Uzbekistan, which is located in the valley on the Northern slopes of the Alai range at an altitude of 1550 meters. Geographically, together with a small village of Jordan, it forms an enclave surrounded by the lands of the Batken region of Kyrgyzstan. Its ethnic composition is mainly Uzbek and the distance to the mother country is about 17 km.³

Exactly the same situation develops in the enclave of the Northern Sokh, consisting of Chongara (or Kalacha), a village in Rishtan district of Fergana Region of Uzbekistan, the population of which is mainly Kyrgyz. This disputed territory

¹ Author's conclusions.

² Sokh district. See – URL: www.wikipedia.org (date: 03.05.2017).

³ Shakhimardan district. See – URL: www.wikipedia.org (date: 03.05.2017).

is a hot spot of conflict in relations between the two countries. Its main problem is mining of borders by Uzbekistan, which regularly causes deaths among the civilians¹. Another Uzbek enclave is Gangal located in the Batken region of Kyrgyzstan, whose territory is only 1 sq.km.

It is common knowledge that enclave and exclave territories are always the source of political and international conflict situations, and in this regard, the priorities of the foreign policy of the bordering states should be signing of agreements and treaties, resolution of these issues in a constructive manner, an exchange of enclaves and a compromise as a last resort.

So, having considered the enclaves of Uzbekistan located in the territory of neighboring Kyrgyzstan, it should be noted that there are also enclaves and exclaves of the neighboring states in the territory of Uzbekistan. One of them is Barak, an exclave of Kyrgyzstan (4 sq. km), 60% of whose population are Kyrgyz and the rest are Uzbek. Barak is located in Kara-Suusk district of Osh region of Kyrgyzstan and is geographically surrounded by Kurgantepa district of Andijan region of Uzbekistan. It is separated from the main territory of Kyrgyzstan by a 1.5 km wide strip of land. Residents of this exclave are constantly experiencing great difficulties when crossing the Kyrgyz-Uzbek state border. Barak is practically isolated from the mother state. Such isolation has undermined the rule of law and order in the region and deprived its population of means of livelihood. In this way Uzbekistan is pushing a mass migration of the Kyrgyz from Barak and immigration of Uzbeks in the village.

As for the enclaves and exclaves of Tajikistan, they are: Sarvak, an enclave in Uzbekistan, a large enclave of Vorukh and a small enclave of Elm in Kyrgyzstan. Formation of Tajikistan enclaves and exclaves, their development and the resolution of their problems within the “triangle” depend on the competent approach of the heads of states. For the moment, it remains to hope for the best.

According to the author, the delimitation of the borders of the Central Asian region will stay in the “box” for a long time. In any case, if the delimitation process in this region is successfully completed, it will not remove the remaining problems, namely the issue of enclave territories. The high conflict potential of the Fergana valley will remain relevant and unresolved on the agenda. Currently, this “Gordian knot” has not been unleashed and, for various reasons, the leaders of the neighbouring countries have so far refrained from touching it. In this regard, enclave issues in the Ferghana valley are a time bomb and can at any time become a “detonator of all kinds of conflicts”.

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