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Nikolai Shmelyov,

Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences,

Director of the Institute of Europe RAS

**RUSSIA IN THE EAST – WEST DICHOTOMY
50 YEARS LATER**

Before forecasting Russia's future in fifty years from now, I'd like to dwell on the following aspect: it's good that we have proclaimed a socially-oriented economy. However, the real state of affairs is different. During the past ten to fifteen years our economy has been the most socially unjust among all civilized states. Chronic mistrust to one another, to business and the state appeared at the time when our government was headed by Yegor Gaidar and the population was robbed of 95 percent of all their savings (even in Stalin's time the "great robbery" of people in 1947 was not so cruel). It's good that at present the government's guarantees of people's savings have been raised to 700,000 rubles. Although it might have been possible to pay a one hundred percent compensation as in certain European countries. We cannot get along without market and credits. The latter have been taken for buying land, real estate, yachts, football clubs, and what not... But not for making sizable investments in geological prospecting, for example. And this means that in some ten to fifteen years the country will have much less valuable raw material. Meanwhile, you, gentlemen, will find yourselves in Miami, or somewhere else where it's so pleasant

to live and have fun. Perhaps, the grandchildren of our present-day tycoons will do business more reasonable. But meanwhile, most wealthy people have no culture of using their wealth decently, tastefully and usefully in the social sense. It should be noted that thieves' psychology has penetrated many spheres. For example, a big sum has been allocated for the development of some enterprise or a branch, however, it turns out that part of it has been changed into dollars and transferred abroad. Our economy (up to 80 percent of the GDP) is still dominated by oligarchic capital. This is a major strategic error of the preceding decades.

What can we expect from the present crisis? The reserves of the state are not limitless and it spends from \$ 15 to 20 billion every week. But it cannot be excluded that society may win from the crisis. The point is that wealthy people will have to think less about financial machinations and more about demand for the goods manufactured by their enterprises. If they are not bought they will have no profit.

The people of Russia have been living in an almost constantly bad mood for five generations. There is hardly any other people in history who have lived through so many sanguinary wars and no less sanguinary revolutions for the past one hundred years, let alone mass famines. There have been eight large-scale wars: Japanese, World War I, Civil war, Polish, Finnish, Great Patriotic war with Germany, the Afghan war, and the last, Caucasian war, which still continues. As to revolutions, the one in 1905, February 1917, October 1917, the terrible collectivization of 1929–1933, the no less deadly Stalin terror of 1937–1938, and lastly, the present “democratic” revolution which can be compared to the previous ones in its “social cost” and consequences.

Naturally, of the two basic scenarios of Russia's development for the next 50 years – pessimistic and optimistic – the first which comes to

mind is, of course, the pessimistic one with an impending catastrophe and “the end of history” of Russia. Too many circumstances prompt this.

The current view, based on reality, is that the Russian people have simply “petered out, ruptured themselves,” that they will never be able to restore the gigantic genetic damage inflicted on them by wars and pitiless experiments of all and sundry revolutionaries from their midst. In accordance with the theories of such philosophers and sociologists as O. Spengler, A. Toynbee, L. Gumilyov and others, the Russian people have already passed the peak of their “passionarity” and they will only have to slowly degenerate (if painlessly), dissolving in more powerful and viable civilizations. The last wealth left to them by the centuries of accumulation was expended in the years of Bolshevik terror and in the mayhem of World War II. The 20th century broke the backbone of Russia, which was proved by the disintegration of the great superpower, the Soviet Union, in 1991. As a result, we now have many historically nonviable territorial splinters and the huge amorphous massive of Russia proper whose existence can only be guaranteed by the missile-nuclear potential preserved since olden times. But will it last long?

The alignment of forces in the international area does not add optimism to attempts to visualize the general picture of the world in the nearest half-century. Life has shown that the hopes of mankind for universal peace and prosperity in the 21st century are as illusory as ever. Selfish interests, arbitrariness, desire to resolve old and new problems from positions of strength, fight for geopolitical space, etc. have remained the main motive force in international relations this century, just as they have always been from time immemorial. And there are no grounds to believe that in several generations the world will learn how to live by other laws – mutual tolerance, compromise, consideration of

interests of all members of the world community – big and small, and unity of efforts of all nations for resolving urgent universal problems.

The present conflict and struggle for influence of the two leading world centers of force – the United States and China – seem the most serious ones in the foreseeable future. With the preservation of the present-day dynamic development in the military-political, economic and even scientific-technological spheres it may be quite possible that by the mid-21st century the United States will have to relinquish its superiority in the world arena to China (especially if it reunites with Taiwan peacefully). If the multifarious influence of China in South and Southeast Asia continues to grow at the present rate (and judging by all signs it's going to be such), and if it succeeds to establish allied relations with the other Asian giant – India, it may be possible to speak (using the criteria of “passionarity”) not only of the “decline of Europe,” but also of the beginning of the decline of the entire Euro-Atlantic civilization.

In this struggle Russia will have to choose the side it should be on – the United States and the European Union or the new East-Asian community headed by China (if only Russia does not choose blind self-isolation and the state of a “besieged fortress”). In both cases it will be playing the secondary role of a state going after the leader. Under such circumstances the end of the “independent history” of Russia will, naturally, be a matter of time.

Another crucial and, most probably, long-term factor in the present international situation is the upsurge of Islamic fundamentalism and international terrorism, which became its natural off-spring. It can hardly be denied that World War III has already begun, a war without frontiers and rules, and it is not known when, where and how it will end. However, in contrast to the struggle of the two leading world centers of force – Euro-Atlantic civilization and the East-Asian

community – this war will hardly take the form of a direct armed confrontation (all the more so, with the use of all modern arms). The aggression of Islamic fundamentalism has a specific feature, namely, that it is aimed at an armed struggle and may thus be crushed by the armed force sooner or later. Will such force be organized in the form of a full-scale international allied coalition waging an open and direct struggle at all fronts where fundamentalism and terrorism throw a challenge at it. And it is now difficult to imagine whether new Russia will be an active participant in such coalition.

However, it is clear that in any event Russia will face a stubborn and costly struggle against Islamic extremism and international terrorism, first, at its borders with Central Asia and the Caucasus, and secondly, inside the country, where the many-century inter-confessional peace and tranquility may also become fragile. Naturally, it will require serious efforts and, doubtlessly, will hamper Russia's recovery from the present systemic crisis.

Finally, there is another universal threat, which will be very serious for Russia for the next half-century. We mean the slow but true proliferation of nuclear weapon all over the world and the threat of its use in any local conflict or in another attack of international terrorism. There are more than enough potential seats of possible nuclear explosion in the world: the continuing conflict in the Middle East and the impending nuclear confrontation between Iran and Israel, the deepening irrational conflict of ideological nature between Iran and the United States, the old rivalry between Pakistan and India on territorial issues, the conflict between North and South Korea (together with the latter's ally, the U.S.A.), finally, the possibility of nuclear weapon falling into the hands of the most rabid terrorists, – all this makes the world unstable both today and tomorrow. It is not important whether nuclear flame will burst near or far from Russia's border, or

even inside the country. In any event, following the natural instinct of self-preservation Russia will be forced to spend enormous means on the protection of its security, no less than in Soviet times. This can prove unsustainable for the country, half-ruined as a result of rash and insufficiently prepared reforms.

Naturally, one can hardly be able to enumerate all outside threats to Russia in the forthcoming decades. The world chaos will also be increased by unbridled and pitiless globalization in favor of the “golden billion,” which leaves aside from its achievements most people on our planet. Apart from that, mention should be made of the many-million flows of spontaneous migration changing the ethnic and civilizatory image of the present-day world, primarily, the countries which form the core of Euro-Atlantic civilization; bloody regional and interethnic conflicts on almost all continents; drug trafficking and trans-border crime; ecological dangers, natural and anthropogenic disasters, epidemics, illnesses, hunger, illiteracy of millions of people, etc. Of course, it is possible to hope that during the next fifty years mankind will be able to create at last something looking like a world government, which will be able to put these destructive processes under control or arrest them, or at least alleviate the possible world chaos. But, judging by past experience, the hope for such development of events is extremely weak.

As we see, the forthcoming end of the “independent history” of Russia (in its traditional image) is connected not so much with external factors as with the present state of affairs in the country. Russia is sick, sick genetically, and the “revolutionary therapy” applied to it after 1991 has only aggravated the destructive symptoms and processes which ripened inside it beginning from Soviet times.

The first on a long list of sicknesses of modern Russia is the sharply accelerated process of depopulation, deepening demographic

crisis and desolation of vast territories, noticeable shifts in the ethnic structure of the population, the outflow of the population from eastern regions to western ones, and not vice versa (as was the case before the October coup), which decreased due to political and administrative measures curbing immigration. At the same time, there is the growing emigration of the most active, capable and educated part of the population. All this gives rise to well-founded apprehensions that Russia will not be able to keep within its structure West Siberia and the Far East, and, probably, the belt of the North Caucasian autonomies. Where the eastern border of Russia will lie in the mid-21st century – along the Lena River, the Yenisei River, and, perhaps the Ob River or along the Ural Mountains?..

One thing is clear, namely, that to overcome the danger of the natural further disintegration of the country will be impossible without the purposeful state efforts, with an emphasis on state investments and encouraging social policy, because the elements of market will not be able to tackle these tasks. Unfortunately, today's authorities guided by ultraleft ideology neglect this major problem of our time, or, what is worse, consciously lead the country to deliverance from the “superfluous burden,” just as consciously they initiated the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 under the same pretext of “delivering Russia from the burden of all and sundry spongers.”

We cannot be sure that Russia will be able to overcome the consequences of those harsh structural economic changes, which it had to suffer during the past 15–20 years, within the next half-century, that is, during the time of two generations. Except the energy-raw material sector and partly the military-industrial complex, the old economic potential of the country which had been created over decades, was destroyed or almost destroyed: traditional heavy industry, engineering, instrument-making, aircraft and automobile industry, railway

construction, ship-building, the entire complex of consumer industries, the agrarian sector, etc.

It should also be said that the situation in the country turned absurd from the point of view of a sound-minded person: it does not need money (investment and other means). All this is accompanied with colossal financial requirements for tackling the urgent necessary investment, social and cultural tasks. During the past fifteen years from \$ 300 billion to \$1trillion of private capital “have fled” the country. There has never been such a mass economic “blood-letting” in history. But even this proved too little. The state itself has transferred something about \$ 200 billion abroad, which it accumulated in the form of currency reserves of the Central Bank and savings of the Stabilization Fund. And all this money was virtually invested in the economy of the West on the most favorable conditions, but not in the economy of Russia. Russian policy at the time was determined by the slogan “The less money in the country the better!” which seems absolutely incomprehensible to all normal people. Will this money ever come back and when? Of course, never. The economy of the West had enough time to imbibe and digest it.

Hopes for internal Russian accumulations are as illusory. As is known, the biggest investor in the world is not Rockefeller, but a granny who placed her meager savings in the bank. The average Russian money-owner, who was robbed by the state at least twice (in 1992 and 1998), does not trust today either the bank or share market, or pension funds, or the state itself, and nobody knows how many decades it will take to restore his trust. So far he prefers to keep his money “under his mattress,” and according to estimates, the size of this money is not much less than that placed in banks.

What is left in the country is obviously not enough for solving its basic structural problems. The energy-raw material sector, trade, civil

construction, alcohol production, financial transactions, criminal turnover, and, partly, telecommunications – these are the spheres where the internal accumulations of our business are kept.

There is another potentially considerable source of means – foreign investments. But as a producer of high-tech commodities (that is, a strong competitor) Russia is of no interest to them. Russia is attractive only as a very rich energy-raw material appendage to the leading countries (the United States, the European Union, and rapidly developing China). And also as a considerable and not yet sufficiently developed market for the entire range of consumer goods – from pantyhoses to cars and airplanes. We think that in this sense Russia will have to face serious tests with unpredictable result, especially in view of its entry in the World Trade Organization and the inevitable sharp increase of foreign competition on domestic commodity and financial markets. In any case, in the western mass media one may come across views that after the complete “opening” of Russia up to 90 percent of its manufacturing industry will simply “collapse.”

And so, as concerns the means for a massive high-tech “breakthrough” of Russia, the situation does not look too encouraging. Matters are not much better with regard to the inner driving motives for organizing and stepping up such “breakthrough.”

In the sphere of the private capital formation and automatic market capital movement from branch to branch (primarily from less promising to more promising high-tech, innovative ones) Russia will have to pay for the fundamental errors committed in the 1990s for quite some time. There is no such mechanism today, and nobody can say when it will appear. This is historical payment for gratuitous fallacious privatization of enormous state assets organized from the top, which turned scoundrels and pushy crooks into multimillionaires and multibillionaires in a jiffy, and secondly, for government-run ventures

like the emission of the notorious state short-term bonds with annual profitableness up to 200–300 percent, which fully depraved the Russian business world, which agrees only to a profit no less than 100 percent, whereas businessmen in the rest of the world are satisfied with 5 to 15 percent, considering it quite acceptable. The first generation of Russian businessmen (older and middle ages) who will pass away from the scene in 20–30 years are simply hopeless in this respect. Will their children and grandchildren who will act in the second quarter of the 21st century more civilized, less rapacious and more responsible before society and their country – one can only guess but cannot be sure. And what if this disease has acquired a chronic, even genetic, character? Although, for the sake of justice, it should be noted that there are some signs and hopes in connection with a better education and broader horizon of some members of our business community.

In any case, it should be stated that up to now there has been no serious operative motive for private innovative activity and accelerated development of high-tech branches in our country. But given present-day ideology, which is still guiding the Russian upper crust and the current state of affairs, the state will hardly take upon itself the main responsibility and burden of organizing such “breakthrough.” The slogan “As little state interference as possible!”, the tendency to lowering state activity in all spheres of the economy – not only in industrial construction, but also even in the infrastructural branches, the actual non-participation of the state in crediting the economy and supporting innovative entrepreneur activity, primarily small-scale and medium businesses, and lastly the desire to transfer means of the budget proficit (definitely premature) abroad, and only a small part of the growing state incomes from the world oil prices use inside the country – all this leads to the conclusion that there is no effective

impetus to innovative development in the public sector of the Russian economy.

The third crucial factor determining the prospects of innovation “breakthrough” of the country, that is, the state of Russian “brains” does not add any optimism. For the past fifteen years the nearsighted policy of the Russian leadership was largely based on the premise that fundamental and applied research, education, health protection system and culture are redundant for the country, unattainable luxury and unbearable burden which should be got rid of the sooner the better. The 10-times reduction of expenditures on science and 5-times reduction of expenditures on education, the state allocations for research work amounting to 0.3 percent of the GDP (in all advanced countries today this figure is two to four percent of the GDP), the beggarly level of wages and salaries of scientists, design engineers, teachers and workers in the health service and culture have forced the most active and talented part of our creative intelligentsia to go abroad or enter the sphere of business.

Meanwhile, after the mass emigration of scientists from Germany in the 1930s that country is still unable to restore fully its scientific potential. Something similar awaits us in the future, near and far. Meanwhile, the country continues its downward movement.

The general social conditions in the country evoke great alarm. Naturally, there are no grounds to expect something like the Pugachev’s revolt of the late 18th century or the new 1917 revolution. Russia is fed up with violence and blood. But apathy, lack of confidence in the morrow, substandard living conditions and abject poverty of many millions, the rapidly growing gap between the fabulously rich persons and ordinary people, millions of homeless adults and children, and finally, unbelievable corruption and crime – all these vices of modern Russian society continue to undermine it.

It's unreal to speak or dream of any "breakthrough" in today's Russia. To make this "breakthrough" it will be necessary to solve the basic social tasks facing the country, namely, to abolish the deep gap in average wages and salaries of the four generations of Russians and those received by workers in all developed countries: this gap reaches 6–10 times and even more; secondly, to reduce the great difference in incomes between the upper and lower sections of the population, which amounts to 15:1 (unofficially 60:1) today, whereas this difference in all Euro-Atlantic countries is 5–6:1; thirdly, to build in the country a genuine "social market economy" harmoniously combining market and non-market (including natural) forms of satisfying public requirements in the social sphere.

In other words, it is necessary to take into account the real threat of ending the "independent history" of Russia, or turning it into the history of another state, European and regionally important, but limited to the bounds within which the Moscovy state was in the epoch of Czar Fyodor Ioannovich (the late 16th century). However, it may be possible to visualize another scenario of the future of Russia by the mid-21st century, much more optimistic.

First of all, proceeding from the Russian past, the assertions that the Russian people have ultimately petered out and become tired, and exhausted the reserves of their creative energy do not hold water. Destructive foreign invasions, periodic ruin, all and sundry bloody riots and revolutions constantly accompanied the entire thousand-year-old history of the country. Russia has revived practically from non-being more than once, and it reemerged even more powerful.

The 1917 revolution, the Civil war, collectivization of agriculture, Stalin's terror, and the terrible losses in World War II have cost the country much more than the present prolonged systemic crisis. Some of our experts in genetics assert that the losses of the genetic fund

of the country during the years from 1917 to 1953 will be compensated in about five generations, that is, by the mid-21st century.

Meanwhile, for the next two or more generations the common aim of Russian society may be the preservation and welfare of the people, creation and construction, further development of the country in all spheres, and worthy and reliable life of each person. Such swift upsurge of a nation in the lifetime of one or two generations is not a miracle for the modern world. It knows several examples of the kind: Germany and Japan after their defeat in World War II, the “Asian tigers,” certain Arab countries, Brazil, India, and, of course, China. And there are no objective grounds to believe that the Russian man is more stupid, lazy or morally weak than anybody else.

Possibly, the future development of the international situation will not be unfavorable for Russia. Even in the event of the greater international collective regulation of controversial world processes (be it the reformed United National Organization or the “Big Eight” in its present or an enlarged form, or a network of other authoritative international organizations), Russia will be able to build a system of independent, equal and mutually advantageous relations practically in all fields of international politics within the next half-century.

It is even possible that Russia’s relations with the leading centers of force – the United States and the European Union – will become closer to stable strategic partnership based on mutual trust and mutual interest. After many decades of existence on the brink of mutual destruction neither the United States nor Russia is a real threat to each other, and will hardly be such in the future. In essence, the main problem for the United States in the future seems to be a possible (not obligatory) close alliance of Russia with its main strategic rival – China. At the same time the United States and Russia have objectively become allies in the fight against the new world threat – international

terrorism. In the future Russia will have to fight the aggression of Islamic fundamentalism at the “Northern front,” primarily in Central Asia and, possibly, in the Caucasus. As to the course of the United States aimed at opposing the strengthening of the CIS and supporting all and sundry “color revolutions,” it is not yet quite clear.

The prospects of Russia’s relations with the European Union, even if they continue to broaden, do not pose any threat to the country. In any case, the end of the “independent history” of Russia should not at all be expected from that side. Military confrontation between Russian and the European Union is simply impossible, the absorption of Russia by the European integration process is unreal (the inclusion of Turkey, the Balkans, Ukraine and Russia in the European Union would mean the collapse of the entire historical project of “United Europe”). All existing differences will probably be resolved in due course on the basis of mutual compromises through negotiations.

Moreover, the process of the further “discovery” of Russia (including its entry in the WTO) considerably enhances its attractiveness to the European Union as a promising partner, an energy and raw material base of the European continent, a profitable sphere of applying capital, a competitively weak, but sufficiently vast market, and finally, a country with a still powerful military-industrial and scientific-technological potential, which could be quite useful for united Europe.

The concept of “four European areas” adopted by the sides, although amorphous, has all chances to turn Russia into a European state within the next few decades, without harming its political independence. The free movement of goods, capital, knowledge and people across all European borders, the drawing closer of the legal foundations of statehood, guarantees of human rights, etc. – if this goal

is achieved during the period of only two generations, it may be possible to talk of a great historic success of our country.

Russia is not only a European, but also a Eurasian country, and this fact should not be disregarded. The future of Russia (especially its eastern regions) largely depends on its relations with the leader of the East Asian community – China. History shows that except one case (Indochina) the Middle Kingdom had never been after territorial expansion. China is not so much interested in territories, as in the possibility to increase and consolidate its energy, raw-material and water base. Secondly, it needs new markets for its traditional, and now high-tech commodities, and thirdly, it wishes to facilitate conditions for the migration of the most mobile (not always marginal) part of its population in search for the spheres of employment and the use of its capital. By now the political base for long-term cooperation and interaction of our two countries has been created. There are all grounds to believe that such a delicate problem as labor migration (in which both sides are interested) will be satisfactorily solved, which will make it possible to put the flows and number of migrants under proper control.

The future relations of Russia with the CIS countries, which remain the traditional sphere of Russian influence, are not too gloomy either. Of course, the former Soviet Union will hardly be recreated. But the creation of a kind of free confederation of independent post-Soviet states, whose backbone will be formed by Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, within the next half-century is a real prospect even after the crisis in the relations with Ukraine. Besides, other post-Soviet states may also be able to join this alliance. These newly-formed states are not needed by anybody in the world today, and their real economic potential, given the present scope of international competition, can hardly be overestimated. Even in such specific sphere as energy, the

Caspian fuel and energy resources (which the West regards today as a reserve in case of a large-scale conflict in the Middle East or difficulties in Latin America) can only be developed effectively and reliably within the framework of a major multilateral international project which does not contradict, but on the contrary steps up integration processes in the post-Soviet area, naturally with the active participation of all interested western partners.

However, it is absolutely necessary to ensure the freedom of movement of people, commodities, capital and knowledge in the entire post-Soviet area. Another matter is that without firm reliance on mutual cooperation, primarily with Russia, it will be impossible to solve such a historically important problem as water supply in the Central Asian countries, or the construction of a new system of West-East communications, or the problem of the self-proclaimed unrecognized states, or traditional guarantees of the existence of Armenia or Georgia, especially in the conditions of the growing aggression of militant political Islamism. It seems that to resolve all these problems initiatives should be put forward not so much by Russia as by the post-Soviet states.

In the growing rivalry between the United States and China Russia should not take the side of any one of them. It should maintain maximally good relations with both of them. If Russia succeeds in overcoming the present internal systemic crisis, it will have all opportunities to remain a self-sufficient and most influential country with a reliable defense, powerful economy, and highly developed science and culture, a country open for business cooperation with all who are interested in it. Incidentally, it concerns the undersurface rivalry between the U.S.A. and China for access to the development of Russian fuel and energy resources, especially in the eastern regions of the country.

One of the most crucial problems facing Russia today is the demographic problem. However, it can be solved, in one way or another, if the state and entire Russian society exert maximal efforts to find the necessary means to encourage childbirth and the family, introduce a ramified system of privileges, first and foremost, concerning housing conditions of young families, and liquidate the national disgrace – homelessness and abandonment of millions of people, from orphaned children to helpless old folk and invalids. Secondly, it is necessary to revive the previous migratory policy of Russia due to which the country was able, within a historically short period of time, partly to settle and develop Siberia and the Far East. Thirdly, all administrative barriers should be removed in letting people from former Soviet republics immigrate to Russia. This immigration could become one of the ways to populate empty Russian rural areas and small towns. Fourthly, there will be nothing surprising if in the next half-century the Russian leadership returns to the policy pursued by Empress Catherine the Great in the 18th century, who had organized mass immigration of people from European countries to Russia.

It's difficult to guess whether it will be people of European or Chinese origin, or, perhaps, according to a rather exotic idea expressed by the well-known Russian scholar of Africa A. Davidson, it might be Africaners or people of European origin driven out of South Africa.

Belief in the better fate for Russia makes it possible to hope that in the not-so-distant future it will have an economic system in which an artificial conflict between the state and market, state and private ownership, government regulation and free enterprise will disappear at last.

It is possible that the Russian state will revise its tax system in the near future, exempting all capital investments for expanding and

modernizing production from taxes, on the one hand, and on the other, introducing taxes on private incomes irrespective of their level and origin (there is no such practice anywhere in the world except Russia).

Proceeding from our concrete conditions, the state should concentrate attention on several most important economic functions. This is, first, the further development of the basic part of the country's infrastructure: roads, communications, pipelines, electric energy production and distribution, construction of water reservoirs, big ports, public buildings, schools, hospitals, environmental protection systems, etc. Secondly, the need will continue to exist for state-owned and state-run enterprises of the military industry. Thirdly, the state should become the foundation of the entire credit system of the country, the crediting and insuring authority of the "final instance," as it is in all well-to-do countries. Fourthly, small and medium-size business, which has long become the main driving force of economic progress and source of innovations in the entire world, will never become stronger and will never come out of the "shadow," where over 40 percent of the country's GDP is created, without stage help in the form of fiscal loosening, favorable credits and protection from bureaucratic and criminal racket.

State assistance is also necessary to the agrarian sector, be it individual farms, farm cooperatives or agro-industrial companies. This sector receives budget support in all developed and developing countries.

Finally, even in the genuine "market" society science, education, health protection and culture do not exist and develop without the decisive participation of the state in their financing. Russian business will never be able to take this function upon itself.

Naturally, the state as the regulator of the economic climate and rules and standards is irreplaceable in any system. Money, the budget, taxes, currency, civil and economic legislation have always been and remain the main prerogative of the state. Nobody contests this principle, however, its practical implementation and priorities of tasks are always a subject of doubts and arguments.

Today, the regulating activity of the Russian state should concentrate on the following functions: first, the creation of firm guarantees of inviolability of private, individual and corporative property, compulsion of business to observe the generally accepted rules and standards of business ethics, struggle against all and sundry unlawful seizures of alien property, against corruption, organized crime and criminal turnover; secondly, restoration of trust of domestic and foreign investors in the Russian credit-financial system, which has been undermined by irresponsible actions of certain elements of the powers that be; thirdly, refusal from the absurd budget surplus (which is absent in the world practice), which drastically limits budget expenditures when they should not be reduced at all; fourthly, implementation of strict anti-monopoly policy, inasmuch as the activities of natural and artificial monopolies are the main reason for the still existing inflation.

The fact that the Russian “savage market” of the 1990s is becoming civilized little by little instills certain optimism. The epoch of “barons-robbers” is nearing its end due to natural reasons, and the global financial-economic crisis is among them. New generations of businessmen come to the fore to replace them, who are getting used to observe the “rules of the game,” accepted in the world. There are fewer spheres of business ensuring sky-high profits, the “client is always right” psychology is entrenching itself, and the practice of resolving economic disputes through courts is becoming widespread.

A crucial problem facing the country is how to arrest the outflow of capital from Russia, which has become so intensive in the past two years. Administrative measures (and tax ones, too) can only give a temporary and rather limited effect. Meanwhile, the country's future directly depends on solution of this problem. There should be firm state guarantees that the Russian state will never allow the existence of any threats to private property in the country and that political, economic and social stability will always prevail in no lesser degree than in the countries where our capital fled and continues to flee

The time of two generations is enough, in our view, to get rid of another inherited vice of Russia, namely, too low wages and salaries of working people. The share of wages and salaries in the country's GDP amounts to 30–32 percent today, whereas in all economically advanced countries the figure is 50–70 percent. It goes without saying that this has an unfavorable influence on the labor activity of Russian man, results of his work and his moral condition. Forced idleness, criminal activity, alcoholism, drug addiction, collapse of family life, etc. are the consequences of poverty, but not by sinful human nature.

What is necessary for carrying out a social reform? First of all, to bring the share of labor remuneration in the GDP to the level existing in highly developed countries. Naturally, such a radical change in the country's social system cannot be made at once. But without it there can be no hope to raise labor productivity, develop the economy properly and create a socially stable and effective balance between market and extra-market forms of granting the vitally important social services to the population.

Will this be achieved in the process of civilized parliamentary struggle, or will it take place spontaneously, or will it be a result of the implementation of the widely popular tripartite social partnership (the state – employer – trade union) – it's difficult to say. But one thing is

clear: poverty which has existed in the country for many decades has always been and remains the main brake, which does not allow Russia to take a worthy place in world civilization, according to its size, culture and natural and human resources.

Thus, in a favorable, unbiased view, the balance between pessimistic and optimistic forecasts of Russia's development during the next half-century looks 49:51 in favor of the latter. Of course, a more important role than logic in such assessments and forecasts is played by faith: some people believe in catastrophe, others in a better future. This has always been the case. But according to pure logic, the present Russian upper crust should not stubbornly deny or ignore the need to have a strategic, long-term development plan of the country, which should be clear to all – the authorities, business, broad public and our foreign partners. This plan should also include a long-term structural industrial policy.

However, there is no sense to look and forecast further than 15 to 20 years from now, for during this time there can happen something which will turn everything upside down. For example, who could have predicted, even not 20, but only five years earlier, such world-historic event as the sudden collapse and disintegration of the Soviet Union? Or the tragedy of September 11, 2001, in New York?

As to the place of Russia, be it in the East – West or North – South dichotomy, one thing is clear: in some 15 to 20 years Russia will not be able to identify itself with either one of these worlds. And Russia will have to repay all advances and debts for a long time to come.

“Triyedinstvo Rossii pered Blizkim Vostokom i nedalyokim Zapadom”, Moscow, 2012, pp. 337–358.

Igor Kotin,

D. Sc. (Hist.) (St. Petersburg)

**ISLAM IN RUSSIA AND PERSPECTIVES
OF CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE**

Introduction

In Madeley's framework of church-state relations in Europe, Russia is part of the historic mono-confessional Orthodox culture bloc. Undeniably, from the time of Vladimir the Saint (ninth century A.D.) Orthodox Christianity has been the dominant religion in Russian politics, from Kiev Rus' until the Russian Empire. However, during the same time Russian territorial expansion also brought vast Muslim areas under imperial control. After the 1917 October revolution and the formation of the Soviet Union in 1922 the new communist rulers deprived the Russian Orthodox Church of its privileges as the state religion, exactly for being too closely associated with the Tsarist Empire. Consequently, other religions such as Islam acquired more equality, though it was the equality of the poor and the deprived. The atheist policy of the Soviet government led to the closing of most churches, mosques and temples and induced a considerable secularization of society. Remaining places of worship fell under strict control of the government.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1992 brought the independence of former Union republics with a Muslim cultural heritage in Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan) and Transcaucasia (Azerbaijan) and reduced the proportion of Muslims in the country considerably, when compared with its forerunners: the Soviet Union and the Russian Empire. Still, in the Russian Federation, Muslims remain a significant religious minority and Islam is entering the political arena.

The aim of this paper is to describe the relations between the state and Islam in post-Soviet Russia and the perspectives of inter-faith dialogue by focusing on different political-geographical contexts: the traditional Muslim areas of Tatarstan and Dagestan, and the metropolitan areas of Moscow and St. Petersburg, where Muslims are immigrant communities. Russia's own stand (compared to Western and Central Europe) will be further illustrated by the reaction to the recent "Cartoon issue." We shall start with an overview of the different Muslim communities in Russia and their geographical distribution, followed by a section on central Muslim institutions, regional situation and issues of Muslim concern in relation with Russian society, and perspectives of the inter-faith dialogue.

The Geography of Russian Islam

The major Islamic enclaves in the Russian Federation are located in the Volga-Urals, the North Caucasus, and Central Asia. Russian Muslims are concentrated in the eight autonomous republics of Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Adygea, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, Ingushetia, Dagestan and Chechnya.

As indicated by the recent census of the Russian Federation (2002) ethnic groups with Muslim heritage constitute 10 percent of Russia's population. 56 ethnic groups, which constitute their identity using Muslim symbols, total 14.3 million out of 145.1 million of Russia's population. This is enough to call Muslims the largest religious minority in the country. It is, however, less than it was popularly assumed by the public and the media, which speak of the Muslim share of Russia's population as 20.0 percent. Further, it was the perception of Russia's Muslims themselves that they constitute at least 20 percent of Russia's population. This figure is certainly an overestimation. However, if we take into account that significant part of

Russia's population is constituted by non-believers, ten percent looks quite significant.

The debates over the census showed the importance of the Muslim identity problem. Before the 2002 population census was carried out, Muslim lobbies raised the question of including "religion" or at least the "Muslim identity" as a census category. The Census organizers rejected this, but in case of the largest ethnic group with Muslim heritage we can see that Islam is becoming the ethno-differentiating factor. While Muslim Tatars are included into the category "Tatar," their co-ethnics with Christian cultural roots chose the category "*Kresheni*" ("Converted to Christianity" Tatars). For 56 ethnic groups of the Russian Federation, Islam is the religion of their ancestors and it is very much part of their ethnic identity.

Despite a two-fold rise of the Kumyks and Ingushis and a relative rise in numbers of particular ethnic groups, for example, of the Chechens from 899,000 in 1989 to 1,361,000 in 2002, and of the Azeris from 336,000 in 1989 to 621,000 in 2002, it should be said that the largest ethnic groups with Muslim heritage did not rise significantly. For example, the number of Tatars, the largest ethnic group with Muslim heritage, rose only from 5,522,000 to 5,558,000, less than 0.7 percent.

The demographic profile of ethnic groups with Muslim heritage in the Russian Federation varies geographically. This indicates the existence of three major categories of persons with Muslim cultural roots in the country. The first group consists of the people of the Volga region who constitute up to 7 million of Russia's Muslims. Most of them live in the Tatar and the Bashkir republics, where they constitute half of the population. The second group is constituted by the people of the North Caucasus, where more than 30 ethnic groups claim Muslim heritage as a part of their ethnic origin. They account for about

4 million of the population of the Russian Federation. The third group is that of migrants in Russian territory, who are mostly from former Transcaucasia and Central Asia as well as from the North Caucasus, although in western Siberia some Muslims are the so-called Siberian Tatars in Turkic-speaking enclaves who can claim to be descendants of the old Muslim population, who lived there before the Russians came. The third group consists of up to 3 million. In addition, there may be millions of Russian converts to Islam, but we do not have separate statistics for religion. Our estimates are based on ethnic figures. Another important source of our knowledge about Muslims in Russia is a list of mosques registered by the Ministry of Justice. The number of registered mosques shows a large-scale Muslim revival in the Russian Federation.

In contrast to the tendencies of 21-st century Europe, religious revival is typical of Russia, especially among Russia's ethnic Muslims. Islamic revival is seen mostly in the territories of traditional Muslim dominance. The major regions of Islamic revival in the Russian Federation are located in the eight autonomous republics of Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Adygea, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, Ingushetia, Dagestan and Chechnya. Most Muslims belong to the Hanafi *madhab* (the juridical school) of Sunni Islam, although Dagestani (except the Nogais) and Chechen Muslims adhere to the Shafii *madhab* of Sunni Islam. There is also a small Azeri Shia community in Southern Dagestan. Azeri Shias recently became numerous in many big cities of Russia. A large number of the Dagestanis, as well as the Chechens and the Ingushis, profess Sufism – a mystical form of Islam.

We know that the Muslim population of Moscow is nearly 200,000–250,000, or even more.

The State and Islam: Central Muslim Institutions

There is no universally recognized hierarchy within the *umma*, or world Muslim community. Thus the state deals not with a hierarchically organized unity but with the Muslim *umma*, or the community of the followers of Islam in the country. At the same time the followers of Islam consider Muslims in other countries as their brethren and part of the universal *umma*. The State-Islam relations always have international aspect. Generally the state is supposed to protect Islam, while Islam prescribes loyalty to the state. It is supposed, however, that the state should be Islamic and Islam should be state religion. Thus theocracy is supposed to be a part of the government system. The traditional division of countries by Muslim ideologists into the Dar al-Islam (country of Islam, where Islamic law dominates), the Dar al-Harb (countries where Islamic forces struggle for domination) and Dar as-Suhl (non-Muslim country in temporary peace with the Muslim world, generally under the protection of Muslim power) does not help much, as the ideology of Islam does not recognize non-Muslim power. In principles, Muslims should either struggle against non-Muslim power or take a refuge in another country where Muslim law operates. In practice, many Muslim territories have experienced non-Muslim rule, where solution has been found in offering Muslims protection and giving them, a sort of governing body, which, being appointed by non-Muslims, can be considered sort of substitute for the Muslim state. This body guarantees the rights of Muslims and also operates as the highest Islamic court.

In the Russian Empire the *Dukhovnoye Upravleniye Musulman Rossiiskoi Imperii*, the Spiritual Board of Muslims of the Russian Empire, was established in 1789. The *Dukhovnoye Upravleniye* had its headquarters in Orenburg but later moved to Ufa (both in the Volga-

Urals region). The *Dukhovnoye Upravleniye* was in charge of Muslim religious needs and conveyed a message from the ruling elite of the Empire. Islam was allowed as regional religion, but was not welcomed as the political ideology of the popular masses. In the 1880s under Alexander III, relations between the state and Islam deteriorated as the Tsar allowed the activity of Russian Orthodox Christian missions among Muslims. It should be said, however, that Alexander III also supported Russian Orthodox missionary activity among Roman Catholics and Protestants in the west of the Empire.

The pre-revolutionary decades of the 20th century saw the foundation of Muslim parties and political organization in Russia. The liberal-democratic Party of Tatar Muslims known as *Ittifaq-al-Musulimin* had its representatives in the state *Duma*, the first Russia's parliament. Soon the Duma got the Muslim lobby consisting of 30 Muslim deputies. The Muslim lobby later diminished and in 1907 it had only eight members. The brief period of legal political activity of Muslim political groups and parties (1905–1917) gave impetus to separatist feelings among the Muslims everywhere in the Russian Empire, including the Volga-Urals regions.

The break-up of the Russian Empire gave rise to hopes of independence in the Muslim dominated regions. Attempts to establish a Muslim theocratic state were made in the North Caucasus. Azerbaijan saw the establishment of a liberal-democratic government. Muslims in the Volga-Urals region dreamt of the foundation of the *Itil-Ural* state. These foundations and dreams proved short-lived. By the time of the foundation of the Soviet Union in 1922 all Muslim-populated regions of the former Russian Empire were incorporated into the country controlled by the atheist *Bolsheviks* (Communists).

The period between 1922 and 1943 saw no concessions for the Muslims, or for any other religious groups, but in 1943 four Spiritual

Boards for Muslims were established in an attempt to counter the effect of Nazi propaganda, which was partly aimed at the Muslims of Russia. Among the established boards were the *Dukhovnoye Upravleniye Musulman Evropeiskoi chasti Rossii i Sibiri* (The Spiritual Board of Muslims in European Russia and Siberia) and the Spiritual Board of the North Caucasus, based in Makhachkala. The two other boards controlling Muslims on the Transcaucasia and Central Asia are now based abroad. In the 1990s the Spiritual Boards collapsed and separate *Muftiyats* (Boards) for major regions appeared. As a result the following Muftiyats have been established in the Russian Federation: the Muftiyat of Moscow and Central Russia, the Muftiyat of Tatarstan, the Muftiyat of Bashkortostan, the former Muftiyat of European Russia and Siberia which lost power but was not dissolved. The importance of the Muftiyats depends on their power and influence. In the 1990s several Muftiyats competed for first place in the hierarchy. Among them: the Central Spiritual Board of Muslims of Russia and European New Independent States. Its head is Talgat Tajuddin. Its Headquarters are based in Ufa. The Board claims to control nearly half the mosques in Russia. Its importance, however, is diminishing.

The Higher Coordinating Center of Muslims in Russia. The head is Gabdulla Galiulla (now replaced by Nafigulla Ashirov). The headquarters are in Kazan. The Center was organized as the body opposing the Highest Muftiyat. It has proved, however, to be less influential.

The Council of Muslims of Central part of European Russia. The head is Ravil Gainuddin. The headquarters are in Moscow. It seems to be a real rival to the Tajuddin-led Muftiyat. Many mosques and religious organizations show their loyalty to both the Central Spiritual Board and the Council of Mufties.

In the 2000th the situation developed further. The number of Muftiyats grew, but they lost in importance. They became regional organizing centers for traditionalist Muslims in each province (republic or region) where significant numbers of the followers of Islam exist. There are such Muftiyats as the Muftiyat or *Dukhovnoye Upravleniye* (Spiritual Board) of Muslims of Chechnya, Dagestan, Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Perm and Nizhni Novgorod Region, etc., where the Muftiyats are in close relations with the local elite. Some of the Muftiyats also recognize national Muslim organizations, but their local links are more important than the links with the center.

After 1992, several major Muslim political parties or political movements emerged in present-day Russia. These are the “Muslims of Russia,” the “Nur” and the All-Russia Union of Muslims.” The first party is more popular in the Volga-Urals region and in Moscow, and the third has support in the North Caucasus. However, local ruling elites of “ethnic Muslims” belonging to the mainstream politics generally have more influence than loose all-Russia Muslim parties. It is also against the election law to have religion-based parties in the country. Thus, for the majority of Muslim political activists in Russia regional links with local branches of national parties are again more important than belonging to a religion-based party.

We will consider two major republics in the two regions where the local non-Russian ruling elite has Muslim roots, Tatarstan in the Volga-Urals region, and Dagestan in the North Caucasus.

Tatarstan

Present-day Tatarstan is a relatively-developed region with rich oil and gas reserves, with developed petrochemical industry and urbanized population. Its population is nearly half-Tatar half-Russian, but the political leadership is in the hands of the Tatar elite as a result of

the Soviet nationalities policy in ethnic regions. All main leaders of the Tatar elite are former Soviet bosses who chose to change loyalty towards Islam after the downfall of Communist ideology. In 1990–1992 the Tatarstan leadership, together with the leadership of Chechnya, favored the disintegration of the Russian Federation. In 1992 they refused to sign the Federal Treaty. Instead the Tatarstan President Mintimer Shaimiyev suggested a redistribution of power between the center and the regions. He demanded that more power and resources be left in the republic than sent to the center. Russia’s President B. Yeltsin agreed, so Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, with their rich oil and gas resources, kept a significant share of taxes for themselves and enjoyed relative prosperity, while some other Muslim-populated center-supported republics, particularly Dagestan, suffered from the lack of resources. In February 1994 a power-sharing treaty between Moscow and Kazan was signed, which secured Tatarstan’s remaining within the Russian Federation but gave a special status to that republic. The treaty meant an agreement to share power and resources with formal Moscow supremacy. However, recent political changes after Yeltsin, particularly the formation of Federal *okrugs* (super-regions), which include autonomous republics, may mean the end to the relative autonomy of Tatarstan. Yet, at the moment President Shailiyev is one of the leaders of the pro-Putin party “*Edinaya Rossiya*” (United Russia), which supports Moscow and enjoys its support as well.

While at the center, Islam is recognized as a traditional religion, at the regional level in Tatarstan Islam is the dominating religion. There is an active Tatar national movement regionally under the leadership of the All-Tatar Public Center (VTOTS), the Party of *Ittifaq* (Union), *Milli Majlis* (National Assembly), and the *Azatlyk* (Freedom) movement in Tatarstan. All these parties and organizations use Muslim slogans and symbols. Tatar national symbols, architecture, and

monuments include Islamic elements. Tatarstan's authorities encourage a faster pace of building mosques, Islamic schools (madrasahs), and other Islamic institutions in comparison with Russian Orthodox construction. For example, in 1986 there were 18 Muslim and 15 Russian Orthodox registered communities with their mosques and churches accordingly. In 1992 the number of Muslim registered communities and churches grew to 89. By 1997 there were 802 registered Muslim communities and mosques and 171 Russian Orthodox communities and churches in Tatarstan.

The federal-regional power-sharing treaty allows local power to control ethno-regional and local components of the school curriculum. Hence, textbooks describing Islam as the main source of culture in Tatarstan have been published since 1992, when President Shaimiyev encouraged the secession of Tatarstan's Islamic authorities from the Federal Islamic structures represented by the Central Spiritual Board of Muslims of Russia and European states of the CIS (TSDUMR, formerly DUMES), based in Ufa (Bashkortostan). Tatarstan's leadership has regarded the independent Tatarstan *Muftiyat* as an important attribute of sovereignty. In February 1998 the Shaimiyev administration organized the election of the President's relative, Gusman-hazret, as the new Mufti of Tatarstan. The Kazan-supported Islamic organizations call themselves *Jajidist*, or liberal Islamic organizations, claiming the heritage of Tatar *Jajidists* from the pre-1917 period. The radical revivalists (Salafi or Wahhabi) missionaries are watched by the regional authorities with suspicion. Their presence in the region is considered dangerous, but Kazan is interested in securing monetary investment from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and financial support for the Hajj-goers, controlled by the Salafi missionaries.

The opposition to regional power also uses Islamic slogans. Founded in 1998 by ex-Mufti of Tatarstan, Gabdulla Galiulla, a new

provincial movement “*Omet*”(Hope) unites the nationalist party (the *Ittifaq*), communists and some Islamists. The movement, as well as the populist Muslims of Tatarstan movement and the Safi Islam group, revolve around particular personalities and lack public support.

While regional leaders have used Islamic slogans to attract public support in their struggle for power with the center, they sometimes find themselves in an unpleasant situation when they are asked which Islam to support. In August 1992 the Congress of the Imams of Tatarstan elected Gabdulla Galiulla as Mufti of the Kazan-based the Muftiyat of Tatarstan, independent of Ufa-based Supreme Mufti Talgat Tajuddin. In his turn, Mufti Talgat Tajuddin did not recognize this move and supported the formation of the alternative Board (Muftiyat) in Zelenodolsk in 1994. In 1996, Kazan-based Galiulla supported Ravil Gainutdin, the self-proclaimed Mufti of Central European Russia (Moscow), in the creation of another anti-TSDUMR institution – the Council of Muftis of Russia. Tatarstan’s President Shaimiyev supported the regionalist movement and in 1998 the Unifying Islamic Congress, organized by the Tatar authorities, legalized the break-up with neighboring Ufa, but appointed another Mufti, pro-Shaimiyev Gusmanhazret. While the Kazan-based Muftiyat claims to control 1,200 Muslim communities in Tatarstan and even a dozen more in the neighboring Perm region, the Ufa Mufti Talgat Tajuddin claims to control 170 Muslim communities in Tatarstan. The Muslim authorities in neighboring Dagestan maintain contacts with all these umbrella organizations.

The change of President of Tatarstan did not cause any change in the relations between the regional authorities and the religious leaders. The relationship is seen as balanced and friendly by both Islam and

Dagestan

Dagestan is another region of Russia with a dominant Muslim population. Dagestan receives more means from the center that it gives in return. Dagestan lacks natural resources and suffers from high unemployment. It is a multinational republic, with 14 main groups, of which several largest ones struggle for power. The biggest group is the Avars (757,000), the Dargins (510,000), the Kumyks (423,000), the Lezgins (412,000), the Laks (157,000), and few others. The Chechens (92,217), Russians (150,054), and Azeris (88,327) are also numerous in the republic. Dagestan has a long history of Islamic dominance since the 8th century A.D. For centuries Islam in the North Caucasus was connected with Sufism. The first Sifis of the Tariqa (Sufi brotherhood) of Abu Bakr Derbendi appeared in Dagestan in the 11th and 12th centuries. The tariqatists attribute supernatural characteristics to the *mazars* (the graves of Sufi sheikhs and other shrines) and sanction *ziyarat* (visiting the shrines of well-known sheikhs), which contributed to the isolated existence of local Islam.

The 18th century was the time of the Russian occupation of the territory and local Muslim resistance. From 1785 to 1790 Sheikh Mansur united Chechnya and Dagestan in an anti-Russian political-military union. Between 1824 and 1859 Imam Shamil ruled the *Imamat* on the territory of Chechnya and Dagestan in resisting the Russian forces. In 1877–1878 the Russian troops defeated the Islamists, and Dagestan was finally incorporated in the Russian Empire. After the turbulent events of 1917, rebellious Dagestanis and Chechens proclaimed a theocratic emirate, which was soon crushed by the Bolsheviks in 1921. In the Soviet period the Avars dominated the political, economic and police bodies in Dagestan. The Avar-dominated *Naqshband tariqa* coexisted relatively well with the

authorities, and prospered. The local Communist party structures were close to the Naqshband-related structures. In the 1940s, during the period of relative religious liberalization, the Dagestan city of Buinaksk (near Makhachkala) was the venue of the formation of the Spiritual Board of Muslims of the North Caucasus (Muftiyat), in which the leading positions were taken by the Dagestani Islamic elite linked with the Naqshbandis.

Dagestan remained an agrarian republic, strongly dependent on federal subsidies, which helped preserve the clan and Sufi social network in return for the region's formal loyalty to Moscow. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the withdrawal of financial support from Moscow resulted in changes of power. It also opened Dagestan's door to foreign Islamic missions. While the struggle for power involves several ethnic groups and remains under control of the Sufi leaders, Salafism (Wahhabism) is gaining support from the unemployed and dispossessed population, especially from the Chechens and the Nogais of Dagestan. The Wahhabis of the region publicly protest against the low standards of morality and the Communist past of the majority of the present-day Muslim clergy. The first Wahhabis turned up in Dagestan in 1988, and soon the republic was the scene of an open military struggle between the Wahhabis and the Sufis over the main Sufi shrines. In 1998 three villages in the Buinaksk district of Dagestan proclaimed themselves Islamic territory under Sharia law. In these circumstances the Dagestani leadership has opted for ruthless political and administrative suppression of Wahhabis. Common hostility united the Dagestani secular political elite and Islamic officialdom, represented by the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Dagestan (SBMD).

The victory over Wahhabis heralded the unity of power and Sufi imams, who quickly proclaimed loyalty to Moscow in exchange for subsidies. Thus, the struggle for power in Dagestan continued between

the Sufi-controlled government and the Saudi-supported Wahhabis. Ethnic movements in Dagestan also use Islamic symbols and slogans, as do political parties. The political parties include the Islamic Renaissance party (IRP), and the Islamic organization Al-Islamiyya, the Supreme Religious Council of the Peoples of the Caucasus, and the regional association of Muslim women, Maslima, plus the Dagestani branches of the All-Russia Union of Muslims and the popular political movement ‘*Nur*’ (Light), which has become the Islamic party of Russia.

One of the most important sources of Wahhabi influence is the annual Hajj. The Wahhabis advocate strict monotheism (*tawhid*) and oppose tariqatism as a deviation from Islam. The Wahhabis also accuse the Islamic officialdom of corruption, involvement in dirty politics and financial fraud, and fear of open discussion of religious issues. The Wahhabis thus operate as an anti-*nomenklatura* egalitarian and, to a certain extent, an anti-state force in Dagestan.

Chechnya

In post-Soviet Chechnya, Chechen Naqshbanddis, who had representatives in the major political and economic spheres in Soviet times, distanced themselves from the Chechen radical nationalists under the leadership of General Dudayev. The first Chechen Mufti Muhammad Bashir, a Naqshbandi, refused to back Dudayev in the presidential elections of 1991. The failure of the Chechen nationalists to mobilize the Naqshbandi network for the war of independence facilitated their rapprochement with another Sufi tariqa, the Qadiris, who were much more disadvantaged than the Naqshbandis during the Soviet period. Bekmurza, the elder brother of General Dudayev and the regional leader of the Qadiris, played an important role in forming the alliance. The two Chechen wars resulted in the demise of

the Dudayev regime and his successors. However, Chechnya's new Mufti, Kadyrov Sr., was appointed as the new Chechen leader by Moscow. After his death, his son Ramzan Kadyrov, became the real ruler of Chechnya. This succession heralds the dominance of the Qadiri and other Sufi-related Muslim leaders in Chechnya.

Muslim Population in Russian Metropolitan Cities

In the Volga-Urals region and the North Caucasus Muslims can proclaim Islam as their ethnic religion in the territory. However, in Moscow and St. Petersburg, which both have significant Muslim populations, Muslims are immigrants and they live in a Christian and atheist-dominated environment.

In 1994 the Muslim population of Moscow was estimated to be about 250,000. Until the break-up of the Soviet Union, Muslim Tatars dominated the Muslim community in Moscow. Now Azeris are also quite numerous. Estimates for 2000 give a figure of 170,000 Tatars in Moscow, while the number of Azeris is 33,000. An increase in the number of mosques in Moscow is a relatively new post-Soviet phenomenon. Before 1994 there was only one registered mosque in Moscow, *Jami Masjid*. In 1994 the Moscow government returned the historical mosque in *Zamoskvorechye* to Muslims. In 1997 two more mosques appeared in the city, in Otradnoye and on Poklonnaya Hill. Another Shia mosque in Otradnoye was built by a rich Azeri businessman, and there is a Shia mosque on the premises of the Iranian Embassy in *Noviye Cheryomushki*. In all, there are eleven mosques in Moscow, and also several unregistered Muslim prayer halls. The Moscow *Jami Masjid* is traditionally a Tatar-dominated mosque and is often called the Tatar Mosque. The historical mosque in *Zamoskvorechye* has a significant number of North Caucasian and Arab

parishioners. The mosque in Otradnoye is dominated by Muslims from Nizhni Novgorod region of the Russian Federation.

The St. Petersburg Muslim community is also large and varied. More than one-third of the city's Muslims are Tatar. The Azeris are nearly as numerous as the Tatars, but they are newcomers and Shias, which makes them outsiders among other Muslims. The Azeris have opened their own prayer-house. The main conflict is between the Tatars and the rest of the Sunni community of St. Petersburg, as well as between the "old" established groups and the "Young Muslims." The conflict came to the surface over the opening of a new mosque in St. Petersburg. The city's largest Muslim organization, the Spiritual Muslim Department, accused a rival group, which planned to build a new mosque, of being Wahhabi. The new radical group named Al-Fath, received support from the Moscow-based Union of Muftis of Russia, while the Spiritual Muslim Department asked for support the Ufa-based Central Muftiyat. The municipality of St. Petersburg was also involved in the conflict. The construction of the new mosque was allowed by the City Construction Board and Architectural Committee, but the Spiritual Muslim Department asked the Kalininsky district authorities to stop the construction of the mosque. The conflict also involved personal interests and ambitions. The Mufti of the oldest mosque in the city, Jafar Panchayev, claims control over the local Muslim community and is at loggerheads with its former imam and the leader of Al-Fath, Hafiz Mahmudov. In November 2006 the construction began under control of the newly-formed *Dukhovnoye Upravleniye Musulman Sankt Peterburga i Severo-Zapada Rossii* (Spiritual Board of Muslims of St. Petersburg and North-West of Russia).

The “Cartoon Issue” and the Reaction of Muslims in Russia

The publication of cartoons in the Danish *Jyllands-Posten*, which provoked a heated debate in Europe and a political scandal in the Middle East, had little effect, if any, in Russia due to the strong state control of the mass media. The cartoons published in *Jyllands-Posten* in September 2005 provoked a protest in the local Muslim community, which spent several months rousing denunciation of the cartoons, which it considered blasphemous. The reproduction of the cartoon sketches in Norway in December 2005 provoked a wide protest from European Muslims and their brethren in the Middle East. Then Danish Muslims arranged a tour in the Islamic world spreading information about the cartoons published in the Danish newspaper. The cartoons published in the *Jyllands-Posten* triggered a diplomatic crisis and Europe-wide discussions of the blasphemy issues and freedom of speech. Among the newspapers which entered the fray were the French daily *France Soir*, Germany’s *Die Welt*, Italy’s *Corriere della Serra*, and Spain’s Catalan daily *El Periodico*. The reproduced sketches included a portrayal of Mohammed wearing a bomb-shaped turban and as a knife-wielding nomad flanked by two women wrapped in black. Although both the European justification of freedom of speech and the Muslim demand for laws on blasphemy exaggerated the importance of the initial publication, the result was a full-scale political crisis in Denmark and a rise of anti-Danish and anti-European and anti-Western sentiments in the Muslim world.

For the first week after the cartoons were published in Denmark, the Russian media did not comment on the news at all, presenting it as a purely Danish affair. Information concerning the issue was only available on western channels and in foreign-language newspapers. However, the increasingly wide-scale anti-Western hysteria in the Arab

world soon gave momentum to Russian Muslims' demands for anti-blasphemy laws to be introduced in Russia. The Russian news media seem to have received directives on how to deal with these events in Europe. The first newspaper, which dared publish a sketch in relation to the "cartoon issue", the Volgograd-based *Gorodskiye vesti*, was closed the day after publishing a cartoon showing Jesus Christ, Moses, Mohammed and Buddha saying to fighting villains "We did not teach you this." Another provincial newspaper was in Vologda, which was also closed after reproducing the Volgograd cartoons. Many Russians regarded the eagerness of the authorities to stop any publication critical of such things as a revival of Soviet times. Russian Muslims, however, expressed gratitude to the Russian authorities for their protection of traditional religious values. A news conference convened by Abdul-Vahed Niyazov, the Head of the Islamic Cultural Center of Russia, demonstrated a trend to strengthen the loyalist Muslim forces. Niyazov even tried to use the situation to give an anti-American and anti-Western tint to the event.

Islam now plays an important role in the politics of the Russian Federation, more than in the past. The country can no longer be regarded as an mono-confessional Orthodox state, especially at local and regional levels. Islam can be a key factor in the relations between the state and the church, depending on the ethnic-religious composition of the population involved. In the traditional Muslim regions, such as Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Adygea, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, Ingushetia, Dagestan and Chechnya, Islam is not only a protected religion, but also the faith of the ruling elite, compared to the former Soviet Union, religious freedom in general has increased considerably, which has also benefited Islam.

A very different situation exists in metropolitan areas, such as Moscow and St. Petersburg, where Muslims form immigrant

communities comparable to the Muslim communities in West European cities. In these cities Muslim influence on local politics is considerably lower, as a consequence of the high level of secularization and the traditional Orthodox Christian dominance among the religious population. In general the local authorities in metropolitan areas are not willing to allow the construction of mosques. Internal divisions within the Muslim community further complicate the situation. These divisions have ethno-religious character: Wahhabis versus popular Islamists, Tatars versus non-Tatars, old timers versus newcomers. The economic background is also worthy of note. For example, wealthy groups of Muslims which can afford to build their own mosques conflict with poor Muslims who depend on the local municipality.

The “Cartoon issue” illustrates the growing sensitivity of the central government regarding the feelings of Muslim citizens. It shows the difference between Russia, on the one hand, and the West and Central Europe concerning the relationship between the state and Islam. The need for inter-faith dialogue between the state and society is increasingly felt by the latter.

History of Relations between Main Confessions of Russia

Christianity and Islam are the two main confessions in Russia. The history of their relations corresponds to the main stages of Russian history, and vice versa, as each major event in the history of Russia has had some impact on the destiny of the adepts of these two confessions. It is important to remember that although Christianity and Islam have been the dominant religions in Russia, neither religion has held an exclusive monopoly and they have never been united. For this reason, within Christian and Muslim communities today there are numerous

groups with differing notions regarding the importance and prospects of inter-confessional dialogue.

Recent events surrounding the demise of Patriarch Alexey II of Moscow and All Russia have highlighted the profound respect in which eminent Muslims hold the leading Orthodox Christian clerics and the Orthodox community of the country. Yet, the relations between Muslims and Orthodox Christians in Russia can hardly be considered serene. Sometimes serious disagreements arise even in the Inter-religious Council of Russia. One reason for disagreements is the rigorous hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church and the lack of a corresponding hierarchy among Muslims. The non-hierarchical structure of Islam is understood by some as a kind of democracy, while others consider it a disappointing barrier to equality in dialogue and a fact that makes it difficult for ordinary members of the communities to accept formal mutual agreements reached by Orthodox clerics and representatives of Muslims.

While doctrinal differences certainly interfere with serene relations, the main interference is a product of history. In the millennial history of the Russian state Christians and Muslims have fought in opposing armies, but more often, they have fought together against a common external enemy. In internal wars fought within Russia for political and economic goals, Muslims and Christians used religious slogans to bolster up their opposition. Slogans like “the Church in war,” and “the Holy war” (“the Jihad of sword”), which do not represent the original ideals of either Christianity or Islam, have been used by various politicians for the political and military mobilization of the religious population, and they have shaped the attitudes of each side toward the other.

It is unwise to idealize the formative stages in the development of either religion, as each one of them pretends to be the only true

exponent of religious knowledge and the only way to salvation. This claim, in which both traditions are equally culpable, presents a serious problem. Many truly believing Christians and Muslims consider the faith of the other an error or delusion, and those who disagree are not “true believers.” This disrespectful attitude and the lack of mutual recognition and understanding are by-products of wars waged for political and economic purposes and they drastically interfere with relations between Muslims and Christians today.

At present, circumstances necessitate a change in attitude. The world is suffering a crisis of faith concerning all religions, including Christianity and Islam. The world situation today – the problems of war and peace, the struggle against hunger and poverty, and the need to avoid ecological and nuclear catastrophes – necessitates our transcending the traditional confessional boundaries to join forces and develop common strategies. Here, given the exigency of the situation, the questions of “faith” and the perceived errors perpetuated by adherents of other faiths yield in priority to the issues of restoration of faith among Christians and Muslims accordingly. For Christians and Muslims trust in God is the principal requirement of faith, and passivity in our earthly lives is not an option. These questions along with the questions of the future of Russia can and must be solved together by Russian Christians and Muslims.

The Russian Federation is the legal successor of the Soviet Union, which in turn inherited the major part of the Russian Empire with all its merits and issues, population diversity, and religious and cultural traditions. The Russian Empire was the successor of the Moscovy State, Vladimir and Kievan Rus’. The baptism of the people of Kievan Rus’ in 988 A.D. was the most important event which defined the development of Eastern Europe for the next millennium. Hebraic monotheism and Islam were already well established among

the people of the Volga region. Hebraic monotheism was the official religion of the Khazar Kaganate, and Islam was popularized in the Volga region by Arab missionaries and merchants. Prior to the fall of the state of Khazars, Islam became widespread in the Volga region, having been adopted as the official religion of the Volga Bulgars.

Remarkably, the first inter-confessional dialogue in Russia was the legendary dispute that occurred at the court of Prince Vladimir between representatives of Christianity, Islam and Judaism over the future religion of Rus'. Vladimir chose Christianity, the religion of the southern neighbor, the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium). Later the schism between Rome and Constantinople, further splits within the Catholic Church, and the emergence of national Protestantism, as well as further divisions among other Protestant denominations (Methodism, Baptism) made the peoples of Eastern Europe define their relations not only in terms of Christianity and Islam, but also in terms of the branches of Christianity. These definitions were dramatically framed in intra-church conflicts, which were sometimes more fierce than conflicts between different faiths. Finally, the schism within the Orthodox Christian Church itself, caused by the reforms of Patriarch Nikon, led to the emergence of the Old Believers, some of whom, (the Nekrasov Cossacks) were employed by the Ottoman Sultan to fight the "Prince of Darkness," who they beheld as the Orthodox Tsar.

The foundation of the Russian Empire by Peter the Great aimed at centralizing power throughout the vast territory of Russia, and this centralization affected the religious communities as well. In 1721, in St. Petersburg, the Holy Synod ministry on Orthodox religion was established. Other religions found themselves under the supervision (far less strict) of the Department on Non-native Religions. Empress Catherine the Great, who was in power several decades later after the

death of Peter the Great, considered herself his successor. Like Peter the Great she took care of public life in Russia, including organizing and supervising the religious life of the country. Catherine the Great emphasized her spiritual kinship with the French philosophers of the Enlightenment and as an enlightened monarch. In 1773 she issued the edict on religious tolerance, which allowed people of Russia the formation of “non-native” communities, notably Muslims and Lutherans, and also the construction of new mosques and Lutheran churches. The title of the epistle to the Holy Synod was especially remarkable: “On tolerance of all faiths and on ban against bishops against taking part in deals concerning different faiths and against building houses of worship for different religions which should be the concern of the secular authorities.”

In 1800 in Kazan, a publishing house was established that specialized in issuing Muslim religious books. The broader rights of believers heightened their interest in Enlightenment. In the Muslim world, it generated the reform (“judidist”) movement, which was largely connected with the activities of Ismail Gasprinsky (1851–1914). From 1888 Gasprinsky issued the newspaper *Tarjiman* (“Translator”), which was very influential in the sphere of Muslim education in the Crimea, the Volga region, and Turkestan. Gasprinsky issued new textbooks and school curricula and founded the “new-method” schools in the Crimea. Later these schools became widespread throughout the Muslim territories of Russia, as far south as Samarkand and Tashkent and the dependent emirate of Bochara. Due to these progressive schools a new generation of Muslim intellectuals emerged in the first decade and a half of the 20th century. They were educated in the European tradition but retained their Muslim identity.

Under the policy of greater Russification, which characterized the reign of Alexander III, the reform movement became weaker in the

communities of all faiths and the conservative trend strengthened. During the late imperial period the Department of Spiritual Affairs and Foreign Religions took control over all ideological movements regarded hostile to both Orthodox and Muslim subjects of the Russian Empire. During the reign of Nicholas II, efforts to continue the conservative policy of his predecessor and to rely on the most traditional forces among the representatives of all major religions proved unsuccessful. As a result, bowing to popular pressure, Nicholas II made serious concessions to the Old Believers and Protestants and declared freedom of conscience for all subjects by his imperial manifesto.

The 1917 February revolution abolished the autocracy and thus terminated the special status of the Russian Orthodox Church. At the same time the revival of the Patriarchate gave hope for the restoration of the authority of the church during the period when ex-emperor Nicholas II fell into disgrace with the population.

During the “Brezhnev stagnation period” that followed Stalin’s despotism and Khrushchev’s “voluntarism,” a pragmatic approach to the major confessions and to believers prevailed. Many churches, mosques and synagogues remained open for the religious communities and believers could worship freely, but religious propaganda was prohibited: priests, imams and community leaders were under surveillance, and religion became mainly a family affair. Owing to the maintenance of big family and clan links in Central Asia and the Caucasus, these limitations caused Islam to become a largely “ethnic religion.” At the same time, Orthodox Christianity lost its links with the majority of the ethnically Russian population, which was generally deprived of family ties and ties to location by the state. In this sense, Orthodox Christianity was more weakened than Islam by Soviet atheism.

The mass revival of Orthodox Christianity began in 1988, when the U.S.S.R. celebrated the millennium of the Baptism of Rus'. By this time the *perestroika* (renovation) of the economy and the policy of *glasnost* (openness) in the field of knowledge had borne fruit. People displayed interest in religion, mostly in the faith of their ancestors. Religious organizations grew stronger, the government decided to express legally its attitude toward religion and major confessions. As a result, two laws on religion in Russia were passed, namely, the Federal laws "On Freedom of Worship" (1990) and "on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations" (1997).

The latter law requires cooperation between the government and religious associations, meaning that "the state is to cooperate with and support the charitable activities of religious organizations, as well as the implementation of their socially significant cultural and educational programs and undertakings."

Despite the significant achievements and enormous positive role of the Russian Orthodox Church and Muslim communities, it is important to note their "Achilles' heel," which is their dependence on the central and regional authorities, their tendency to rely on government support, and their hope to get administrative resources. This dependence sometimes makes the Orthodox Church and Muslim communities especially sensitive, and even aggressive, in their relations with their rivals. It concerns particularly the activities of the Roman Catholic Church and the Baptist and Methodist churches.

The recent efforts of the Russian government have created a regime of patronage embracing the four traditional religions, that is, Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Judaism. The problem of Muslim representation on the Russian Inter-religious Council is not simple. The Council was founded by the Central Muslim Spiritual Board of Russia, the Mufti Council of Russia, the Russian Orthodox

Church, the Congress of Jewish Religious Organizations and Associations in Russia, and the Buddhist Traditional Sangha of the Russian Federation. By mutual agreement each confession should have an equal number of representatives. Ideally, this formula is one religion one vote. However, in reality the situation is clouded by the ambiguous position of certain muftis from the North Caucasus and Tatarstan, who have their own independent administrations and no representation on the Inter-religious Council of Russia. There is also the Supreme Muftiate of the CIS headed by Mufti Sheikh-ul-Islam Talgat Tajuddin.

During the term as the Metropolitan of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, the present Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia in an interview to the newspaper *NG – Religii* said, among other things, that the existing disagreements in the Islamic community of Russia are its internal issues, and the Russian Orthodox Church cannot interfere in the resolution of these issues. On the other hand, the existence within the contemporary umma of different centers of certain importance pretending to represent the interests of the entire Muslim community at the federal level significantly complicates general contacts between the Russian Orthodox Church and Islam. Metropolitan Kirill said he does not think that “for an effective dialogue it is important to unite all Muslims under a common administration. It would be a mistake to suppose that the territorial administration scheme (accepted by the Russian Orthodox Church) is optimal for every confession and to demand organizational unity as an important condition for cooperation between Islamic, Buddhist and Jewish communities. The Islamic umma of Russia is heterogeneous in both its ethnic and religious aspects, and the coexistence of different spiritual centers is quite reasonable as long as there is peace between them.”

Contrary to the opinion of some researchers and journalists, Metropolitan Kirill did not see the adoption of Islam by Russians as a

threat: “Every year a few dozen Russians adopt Islam as a result of their spiritual striving or mixed marriages, but today even more ethnic Muslims become Christians for the same reasons. Such cases of changing religion are not a result of some task-oriented activities of the Russian Orthodox Church or the traditional Muslim centers of Russia, and they do not complicate our inter-religious affairs either. For our religions, it is a top-priority task to revive traditional religiousness in its proper place, and it is obvious that strict limitations on mutual proselytism are one of the main conditions for our good-neighborly relations.”

As we can see, most prominent representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Muslim community of Russia are not disposed to accentuate their dogmatic differences. It is an ordinary matter for them to remember the common (“Abrahamic”) roots of Christianity and Islam and their mutual respect for the personalities of Jesus Christ and Virgin Mary, who are revered in both religions. At the same time, the question of religious symbolism and its interpretation has suddenly become a painful issue and source of tension for a number of Muslim muftis. Particularly, muftis see the so-called anchor crosses, on which the Cross is superimposed over the Crescent as “suppression of the Muslim Crescent by the Christian Cross.” There is no need to investigate the origin of the Christian and Muslim symbols closely in this article, but the fallacy of such an interpretation is obvious to all experts. In the Christian tradition, the crescent is the symbol of Our Lady’s purity and has in no way any pejorative meaning for Islamic symbols. The power of human fallacy, including religious fallacy, has always been great. There is, for example, a depiction of the sun and the crescent in St. Stephen Cathedral in Vienna. The sun and the crescent stood for the union of the Pope and the Emperor of the Roman Empire. After the unsuccessful siege of Vienna by the Turks and the defeat of

the army of the Grand Vizir, the citizens of Vienna insisted on removing the depiction of the crescent as allegedly the symbol of the power of Islam.

Similarly, certain muftis view Christian symbols, for instance, the depiction of St. George the Dragon-slayer on the Moscow coat of arms as symbolic of the union of the government authorities and the main local religions. In Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, however, the authorities obviously favor Islam and Islamic symbols.

In the Volga region and the North Caucasus Islam is given priority by the authorities who are mainly “ethnic Muslims”: Tatars, Bashkirs, Avars, etc. The biggest and richest republic of the “Muslim zone” of the Volga region, Tatarstan, preserves its sacred Orthodox objects, but there are many more mosques built than new churches, which has caused some observers to note “Islamic advancement” there. According to some of them, we are dealing with the clash of civilizations – Christian and Muslim. However, according to the official position of the Tatarstan government, the population in the republic lives in inter-confessional peace and concord, with priority given to the “traditional religions.”

Tatarstan undoubtedly has the largest number of mosques. According to the data provided by the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation, in 2003 there were 971 mosques in the republic. In Dagestan there were 567, in Bashkortostan 405, in the upland republics of the North Caucasus: Kabardino-Balkaria 99, in Karachay-Cherkessia 103, and in Adygea 22. Also, in Orenburg region there were 129 mosques, in Ulyanovsk region 101, and in Samara region 89.

Practical Steps towards Inter-faith Dialogue

Finding ways to resolve disagreements between Orthodox Christians and Muslims is incumbent on leading Orthodox clerics and

prominent representatives of the Muslim community. However, search for solutions also involves the local hierarchs and activists of religious communities. There are positive examples of activities already taking place at a local level. In 2007, in Stavropol Territory Orthodox Christian and Muslim young people organized a summer camp under the motto “The Caucasus Our Common Home.” Theophanes the Bishop of Stavropol and Vladikavkaz, noted: “Conflicts are usually rooted in banal ignorance. Often inter-religious and international conflicts occur due to ignorance of cultures and traditions of the other side and inability to find a common language.” Summer camps provide an opportunity to draw young people closer together and help them learn to appreciate one another and communicate with one another.

The Russian Orthodox Church and the Muslims of Russia need to develop a more congenial attitude toward atheists, including confirmed atheists, as well as toward representatives of the non-Orthodox Christian churches: Catholics and Protestants, and also Buddhists, Judaists, Shamanists, and also representatives of the new religious movements, among them those who follow Russian paganism and seek to restore the ancient Slav religion. The representatives of all religions need to foster a clear and unswerving attitude toward violence and terror, which today (unlike in previous times) is associated primarily with radical Islamists.

Conclusion

The necessity of inter-faith dialogue in Russia is evident. The key actors in this dialogue are Russian Orthodox Christians and Muslims. The non-religious population is also important though is not necessarily active in this dialogue. The themes of the dialogue are the globally important issues of war and peace, assistance to the victims of wars and natural disasters and cooperation in the most diverse fields,

including education, health protection, and social stability. Discussion of theological questions should be conducted by educated and tolerant experts and should not be exposed to general discussion by representatives of the broad public. The interests of all major communities, including Christians and Muslims, require avoiding or even strongly banning any offense against any religion.

*“World Religions in the Context of the Contemporary Culture: New Perspectives of Dialogue and Mutual Understanding”,
St. Petersburg, 2011, pp. 44–62.*

A. Yunusova,

D.Sc. (Hist.), Director of IEP, Ufimski NC of RAS

**NATIONAL POLICY AND ETHNIC-CONFESSIONAL
PROCESSES IN BASHKORTOSTAN IN THE CONTEXT
OF “STRATEGY OF NATIONAL SECURITY
OF THE RUSSION FEDERATION TILL 2020”**

The international unity in such multinational and poly-confessional country, as Russia, is the most important condition not only for further development and modernization but primarily for existence of the state itself. In post-Soviet Russia the consolidation of spiritual common character of the Russians, side by side with development of national cultures and languages of the peoples of Russia, was indicated as a priority task reflected in “The Conception of the State National Policy of the Russian Federation” (Decree of the President of Russia N 909 of 15.06.1996). It is stipulated in the Decree as follows: the main aims of the state national policy of the Russian Federation consist in ensuring conditions for the social and national-cultural competent development of all peoples of Russia, consolidation of the all-Russian civil and spiritual-moral community on the basis of

observation of human and civil rights and freedoms and of its recognition as the highest value.

The conception provided for elaboration of state measures of early warning of inter-national conflicts and related criminal displays of mass troubles. But, as it was shown by practice, the policy in the sphere of inter-national relations was and is characterized as the forced reaction, when many decisions were taken after the events. And “propaganda and agitation inciting social, racial, national and religious hatred and hostility”, as well as “propaganda of social, national, religious or language superiority” – all this, contrary to the Constitution, became a reality of the of the contemporary society. Not only daily reports on criminal acts, criminal proceedings against members of extremist groups of various ideological trends but also mass disturbances in Moscow in December 2010 give evidence to this.

At present, it is evident that the conception of national policy has not attained the desired objective and has become obsolete morally, while displays of extremism represent an essential threat to national security of Russia. Hence, there is the need of the raised attention to consolidation of civil content and inter-national mutual action in the country, including the Republic of Bashkortostan. The year of 2011 by the Decree of President R.Z. Khamitov was declared to be the Year of Consolidation of Inter-National Unity. The Decree was a well-timed political act. The Decree of the President of Bashkortostan R.Z. Khamitov on proclaiming in 2011 the Year of Consolidation of Inter-National Unity in the Republic of Bashkortostan shows a high level of readiness of the republic to react adequately to the ethnic-confessional processes.

Thanks to the good sense of the peoples of Bashkortostan living in the prolonged and close mutual action there has formed in Bashkortostan the sustainable balance in the field of inter-national

relations. In its turn, it is based on a number of laws and state programs directed to satisfaction of cultural needs of the peoples, first of all to prevention of extremist national and religious displays.

Various zones of the rising multilevel instability (social-political, ethnic-political and military-political) are marked by the existence of Islamic factor, the growth of radical Islamic organizations, movements, groups and regimes making as a whole the radical Islamic movement. This problem directly concerns the Russian regions, including the Ural-Volga Basin with the population traditionally professing Islam. Some new trends are seen in development of inter-religious and of state-religious relations in the Ural-Volga Basin region characterized by the complicated ethnic-confessional composition.

1. A certain re-distribution of believers among traditional and new confessions is going on. The Ural-Volga Basin is called to be a Muslim-Christian boundary region, although about 30 religious trends exist there side by side with Islam and Orthodoxy. The adepts of new Protestant, Eastern, inter-religious and ecumenical teachings do not correlate their nationality with their religion. There are among them representatives of Russian, Tatar, Bashkir, Jewish, Chuvash, Ukrainian and other ethnic groups, who became members of new religious communities as if “contrary” to the ethnic tradition. For instance, Tatars and Bashkirs make now 30% of the followers of Protestantism in Bashkortostan. The dynamic development of Protestant communities causes dissatisfaction on the part of the clergy of the so called “traditional” confessions, particularly of Orthodoxy; the trend of regarding Protestantism as sectarianism leads to aggravation of inter-confessional relations.

2. It is possible to see the redistribution of the Islamic space in the Ural-Volga Basin. The representatives of the Council of Muftis of Russia (CMR) and of the Spiritual Department of Muslims of the Asian

Part of Russia (SDMAPR) intensified their activities in the regions controlled by the Central Spiritual Department of Muslims of the RF (CSDM). A new Muslim spiritual center is being formed in Russia; it has nothing to do with historic Islam and local realities and represents a kind of Islamic holding, which directs capture of mosques, incites dissatisfaction of believers with traditional priests and provokes scandals. In the Sverdlovsk, Tyumensk and Chelyabinsk regions the new structures initiated “election” of new imams out of representatives of Diaspora from the Central Asia, the North Caucasus and the Trans Caucasus, and the cultural loss of communication between mosques and believers occurred.

3. The re-division of the Islamic space is carried out under conditions of intervention of radical ideologies to the Islamic space of Russia. The Muslim environment is characterized by the rise of radicalism, extremism and terrorism. For the period of 2005–2011, the criminal proceedings on activities of the forbidden in the Russian Federation international terrorist organization “Khizb ut-Tahrir al-Islamia”, named by itself a religious-political party, and also of other radical organizations, built according to the system of the hierarchic structures’ network, were arranged in Chelyabinsk, Magnitogorsk, Argayash, Orenburg, Tuimaza, Baimak, Davlekanovo and Ekaterinburg – in all regions of the Ural and Ural Basin. Members of these organizations enjoy support of representatives of the SDMAPR. For instance, Nafigulla Ashirov publicly accused the law enforcement bodies of prosecution of Muslims. Just the regions, where function Muslim parishes of SDMAPR (Tymenskaya, Chelyabinskaya and Sverdlovskaya regions), are marked by creation of various human rights organizations with the aim of giving legal support to extremists, by publication of “human rights” newspapers like “KhukmaT”, “Sakaafat” and others. The Muslim clergy generates often radical

demands and claims to the state power (“Manifest” of Umar Idrisov, the demand to establish the post of a Muslim deputy premier, to create quotas in the State Duma according to the religious principle etc.). These phenomena – redistribution of the Islamic space and intervention of radical ideologies – reflect the general trend of formation in Russia of new structures of “new Islam” and “new Muslims”. The first stage of this process – is the opposition to traditional Islam in all its displays (organizational, social-cultural and mental).

4. At the same time, Islam as usual is characterized by the sustainable difference between “rural” and “urban” Islam, between Islam of “the elders” and “the youth”, by the low level of social-cultural adaptation of older Muslims to the changing realities, by orientation of the clergy and the leaders to the state and by deliberate loyalty to the highest leadership of the country and the regional authorities.

5. The two last decades were marked by a high level of migration. The indigenous residents of the Central Asian and the South-Western countries of the CIS literally fulfilled the labor market and city markets in Bashkortostan. Side by side with the big Armenian Diaspora, there emerged in the republic the Diasporas of Tajiks, Azerbaijanis, Moldavians and Ukrainians, who are engaged in trade, construction and transport. The representatives of the Diaspora prefer (more correctly, are obliged) to settle within the framework of closed social groups, where all members submit to the traditional stereotypes of behavior. These stereotypes prevail in relations with “the external world”. Hence, a number of social problems: avoidance of registration, daily conflicts with the environment coming to narcotics trade and criminalization of these communities as a whole.

The above mentioned circumstances actualize the raised attention to the problem of extremism within the context of the strategy of national security adopted on 12.05.2009 by the Decree N 537-UP of the

President of the Russian Federation “Strategy of National Security of the Russian Federation till 2020”. The main provisions of the Strategy proceed from the statement that Russia has overcome the consequences of the social-economic crisis in the end of the XX century – has brought to a stop the fall of level of living and quality of life of Russian citizens, has stood up against the pressure of nationalism, separatism and international terrorism, has prevented discredit of the constitutional order, has kept sovereignty and territorial integrity, has restored the chances for raising its competitiveness and protection of national interests as a key subject of forming multi-polar international relations. As it is stressed in the document, the civil content is consolidated on the basis of common values – freedom and independence of the Russian state, humanism, international peace and unity of cultures of the multinational people of the Russian Federation, observance of family traditions and patriotism. The Russian Federation for ensuring national security in the sphere of state and social security for a long-term perspective proceeds from the need of constant perfection of law protection measures aimed at finding out, preventing, liquidating and exposing acts of terrorism, extremism and other violations of human and civil rights and freedoms, of property rights, of public order and public security, of the constitutional system of the Russian Federation. For counteraction against threats in the sphere of culture the forces of ensuring national security in cooperation with institutions of civil society ensure efficiency of the state-legal regulation of support and development of variety of national cultures, tolerance and self-respect as well as development of inter-national and inter-regional cultural ties.

“The strategy of social-economic development of the Volga Basin Federal District for the period till 2020” adopted by decision N 165-r (07.02.2011) of the government of the Russian Federation corresponds to the tasks of realization of the strategy of the RF. As it is

stressed in the document, the cultural diversity of the District represents its competitive advantage. The international image of the District as a unique model space for advancement of inter-cultural dialogue forms the interest to the District on the part of countries and international organizations interested in study and use of experience of the District in ensuring peaceful ethnic-confessional relations.

At the same time, the cultural variety may become a challenge, if ethnic and religious factors are used for destructive purposes. It may undermine harmonic inter-ethnic relations in the District, may weaken the all-Russian civil identity of representatives of various ethnic and religious communities. In this connection the created and successfully functioning in the Federal Volga Basin District system and infrastructure of reciprocal action of all branches of power, social and religious organizations, was directed to development of inter-cultural dialogue, preventive measures against inter-national and inter-confessional tension and therefore should be developed further. The elaboration of the complex of preventive measures against extremism and terrorism is of great significance for realization of the strategy of national security of the Russian Federation till 2020. The activities of the state and society aimed at prevention of extremism and terrorism are based on the federal law N 35-FZ of 06.03.2006 “On Counteraction against Terrorism” and on the federal law N 114-FZ of 25.07.2002 “On Counteraction against Extremist Activities”.

The Anti-terrorist Commission of the Republic of Bashkortostan on 01.04.2009 adopted the decision N3 “On Complex Plan of Preventive Measures against Terrorism and Extremism, Ensuring Security of the Population and Territory of the Republic of Bashkortostan for 2009–2012”. The Decision of the Government of the Republic of Bashkortostan N 31 on 08.02.2011 adopted the republican

purposeful program “Preventive Measures against Terrorism and Extremism in the Republic of Bashkortostan for 2011–2013”

The active measures aimed at ideological counteraction against extremism were taken following adoption of the program. In 2011, four seminars and two scientific conferences devoted to problems of extremism on religious basis were held by the committee for state-inter-confessional relations at the presidential office in Bashkortostan; representatives of the clergy, law enforcement bodies and scientific circles attended these conferences. A group of lecturers regularly visited districts of the republic. Of great significance was participation of the clergy representatives in the work with the part of the youth subjected to influence of extremist ideology.

It is of great significance that according to p. 2 of the Decision N 31 of 08.02.2011 the analogous programs were adopted in the districts and in city municipal entities. For instance, the program “Preventive Measures against Terrorism and Extremism, Guarantees of Security of the Population and the Territory of the Municipal Blagovarsky district of the Republic of Bashkortostan for 2011–2013” was adopted on 10.03.2011 by the decision N 32-384 of the Council of the municipal Blagovarski district of the Republic of Bashkortostan. It provided for implementation of the state policy of the Russian Federation in the sphere of preventive measures against terrorism and extremism on the territory of this district by perfection of preventive measures against terrorism and extremism, by formation of respectful attitude to the ethnic-cultural and confessional values of the peoples settled on the territory of this municipal district. The same program was adopted in the Fedorovski district of the RB (decision N 20 (312) of 16.06.2010), as well as in Gafuriiski, Chashminski, Alsheevski and other districts.

At the same time, it should be mentioned that programs adopted in municipal districts are schematic and do not reflect specifics of each district and provide for active preventive measures to prevent conflicts on the social-political, religious and ethnic basis; the programs aim at ensuring social-political stability in the republic and on the basis of overall and harmonic ethnic-cultural development, and these programs aim at forming the all-Russian citizenship's values of the peoples living on the territory of the municipal Blagovarski (Chashminski, Gafuriiski etc.) district of the Republic of Bashkortostan.

* * *

As a whole, the appraisal of efficiency of the policy directed to consolidation of the inter-national content should take into account the following components of the regional national policy: the normative-legal basis, the instruments and mechanisms of realization of national policy, the practice of carrying out national policy, the institutional foundations of its implementation and financial resources. The normative-legal basis of national policy in the Republic of Bashkortostan is characterized by thorough development; and the laws and normative documents of ministries and departments as well as state programs have been adopted. Both the state-administrative resources and the institutions of civil society are being used in the process of realization of the national policy.

In terms of appraisal of the current national policy the main features of the Republic of Bashkortostan are as follows:

- the existence of the main conditions and chances of ensuring sustainable development of all ethnoses without exclusion in the poly-ethnic region – the national republic;
- the existence of the system of state and public ensuring of the national minorities' rights.

At the same time, the non-standard decisions were not adopted, although they were expected in connection with the new personnel composition of the Administration of the President of the RB.

Given development of the institutional foundations, it should be mentioned as follows: a) the consultative organ at the President of the RB for affairs of national policy and inter-national relations functions nominally, not efficiently and not in the public regime; b) the activities of the Assembly of the Peoples of Bashkortostan as a public organ is not efficient as a whole, despite activities of the leaders of national-cultural associations.

The lack of all-Russian constructive programs of national policy as well as of the needed normative legal acts summoned to regulate various aspects of inter-national, federative and national relations lets itself known about it. It is evident that the state national policy of Russia in the beginning of the XXI century should be preventive and not reactive. At present, one can see that this policy is outdated for reaction to the emerged problems and conflicts; on the other side, it is fragmentary and is directed to solving separate problems for the general political context. At present, the leadership of the Russian Federation pays great attention to the state of inter-national relations as a whole and to inter-relations in its subjects, including Bashkortostan. For the year of 2011, President D.A. Medvedev visited twice Bashkortostan and in public spoke about the state approach to the issues of consolidation of inter-national content under conditions of growing migration processes and globalization challenges in the form of spread extremism and terrorism, having stressed that extremism had no nationality and religious belonging and was a threat to spiritual security of the whole society.

“Rossiya i ee regiony v poiske grazhdanskogo edinstva i mezhnatsionalnogo soglasiya”, Ufa, 2011, pp. 20–27.

Laura Erekesheva,
D.Sc. (Hist.) (Kazakhstan)
**ASPECTS OF CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENT
OF ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY
IN THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN**

The history of Kazakhstan as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious space has always been linked with interaction between cultures and religions of the West and East. Intensive interplay of various cultural systems for more than two thousand years has paved a way to their co-existence and elaboration of a specific cultural code that allowed synthesizing the best of different cultures. The Great Silk Route considerably enhanced and fixed this particular paradigm. On the one hand, this caused the spread in the territory that now comprises Kazakhstan of all world religions (Buddhism, Christianity and Islam) and pools of local and other beliefs (such as Tengri cult, Shamanism, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Mithraism). On the other hand, the Great Silk Road led to the creation of specific syncretism in the culture of the local population, which has always favorably distinguished this region, and thus paved a way to forming the tradition of tolerance and respect.

With introduction of Islam, these vectors were given further boost. The Muslim Renaissance of the X-XIII centuries in the Arab world and Middle Asia became a linking thread joining the achievements of Ancient Greece with the European Christian Renaissance, which occurred later. One could say that without the bright figures of early medieval Muslim thought, such as al-Ghazali, ibn-Rushed (Averroes), ibn-Sina (Avicenna), and al-Farabi, it would not have been possible for European scholiasts to become acquainted with either Aristotle or Plato. Though it is also worth noting the

tremendous translation work accomplished with the help of the Christian (particularly Nestorian) community, which speaks for itself.

Later, the spread in Central Asia of the ideas of Western enlightenment and modernity enhanced the understanding of co-existence and the interactions between different cultures. The idea of the complementarity of East and West cultures was highlighted and further propagated by XIX–XX century Kazakh philosophers and enlighteners such as Chokan Valikhanov, Abai, Shakarim, Mashkur-Yusup Kopei-uly. The idea of the peaceful co-existence of the values of different cultures and religion thus became the basis for the further development of tolerance.

The specific feature of contemporary Kazakhstan is its multi-confessional and multi-ethnic heterogeneity – there are more than 40 religious confessions and denominations. As in the case of ethnic diversity, in 1990s religious plurality could have become the destabilizing factor. However, due to the historical traditions of rather peaceful coexistence of the various religious communities, primarily Islamic (Sunni) and Christian (Orthodoxy), and due to the high degree of tolerance embedded in nomadic culture, the absence of inter-religious strife and the rather well balanced state policy have made inter-confessional tolerance normative.

Considerable changes in religious sphere took place in independent Kazakhstan, including striking (compared to the Soviet period) growth in the number of religious entities, up from 661 in 1989, to 2192 in 1998, and 3259, as of January 1, 2006. In 2003, the proportion of religious communities was: Islam 53.7%; Orthodox 7.8%; Catholic 2.9%; Christian-Baptist 12.3%; Lutheran 3.2%; new sects 11.1%; and others 3%. It is worth noting the reduction of Islamic dominance, which had never been absolute, which speaks to the multi-confessional character of Kazakhstani society: During independence the

number of Orthodox parishes increased in 4 times and Catholic parishes doubled. There are more than 1000 Protestant missions and prayer houses and 21 Jewish communities, and, for the first time in many centuries, a Buddhist temple was built. The number of followers of Islam also grew, from 46 communities in 1989, 679 in 1996, more than 1000 in 1998, 1652 in 2003, and 1766 as of 1 January 2006.

Data provided by the Spiritual Assembly of the Muslims of Kazakhstan (so-called DUMK) gives higher figures for both the followers of Islam and Islamic religious organizations: in 2008 “there were about 9 million Muslims in the republic, which comprises 67% of the population. Out of 2337 Muslim organizations acting in Kazakhstan, 2334 belong to Sunni and 3 to Shia Islam”; “Muslim organizations possess 2195 mosques”.

The historical form of Islam in Kazakhstan is Sunni Islam of Khanafi mazkhab, characterized by a rather high degree of tolerance towards other believers and the use of norms of regular law (adapt) and analogous thinking in the legal field (al-kiyas), which in the theological field (in fikh) paves the way for the “use of rational attitudes in resolving legal issues”, and which originates in Aristotelian logic”.

The followers of Khanafi Mazkhab comprise a majority of the Kazakhstani Muslims of various ethnic origins. The exception is the Chechen and Ingush followers of the Sunnism of Shafia mazkhab which has been strongly influenced by Khanafi and Malikit mazkhabs. “Institutionally, the Sunnism of Shafia mazkhab is not a formal structure though there are some mosques, particularly the Almaty mosque that opened in 1998 and in Pavlodar the mosque “The House of Kazakhstan” or so called Vainah mosque, officially registered in February 2001. The Moslem world the Sunnism of Khanbali mazkhab is characterized by the denial of freedom of ideas in religion, fanatic observance of religious rites and the legal norms of sharia, and by the

restricted usage of kiyas. Such practices “began pouring into the Kazakhstan” with increased international links.

The institutional milieu reflected the changes in the religious sphere, first in the establishment in January 1990 of the Spiritual Body of the Muslims of Kazakhstan (or DUMK), headed by Mufti Ratbek-kazhi Nisanbayuli, and later, since June 2000, by Mufti Absattar-khazi Derbisali. There is such specificity of Islam in the country that “the majority of the population of Kazakhstan consider themselves Muslims. But I’d like to stress that the dominance of Islam in Kazakhstan by no means opposes the full-scale functioning of other beliefs”.

The independent Kazakhstan Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) was also institutionalized. In general Orthodoxy can be considered the second, after Islam, historically developed traditional religion in Kazakhstan. While there were only 55 parishes in 1956, as of 1 January 2008 the Orthodox Church had 281 religious entities in Kazakhstan, including 257 cult buildings. As for of 1 January of 2003 the Russian Orthodox Church had 222 parishes and 8 monasteries, compared to 62 parishes in 1989, and 131 in 1993.

Initially, in structural terms, the Orthodoxy in Kazakhstan performed as the Kazakhstan Eparchy, which in 1991 was divided into three eparchial bodies, Almaty-Semopalatinsk (with Astana), Shymkent, and Uralsk. Additionally, since 2002, “the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church decreed that Archbishop of Astana and Almaty Alexiy had to oversee the spiritual life of Orthodox Christians living in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region of the People’s Republic of China (currently there are no Orthodox Churches in China)”. On May 7, 2003, the Synod decided to establish a Metropolitan district in Kazakhstan which would comprise the Astana, Uralsk, and Shymkent eparchies, with Astana as its center and Metropolitan Mefodiy (Nemtsov) as its Head.

The official visit to Kazakhstan of Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill in January 2010 gave new impetus towards developing Orthodoxy in the country, and became a step in strengthening relations between Orthodox and Islam communities. The Uspenskiy Cathedral in Astana, blessed by the Patriarch, has come to be known as the biggest Christian Cathedral in Central Asia (its height is 68 meters and at the footprint is 2000 square meters), which can embrace up to 4000 worshippers at a time.

The high status of Orthodoxy in the republic and the state policy in the religious field is evident in the institutionalization, since 2006, of the Orthodox Christmas and Kurban-ait festivals as non-working days: “For the first time in our history the important religious festivals were declared non-working days, so to let the believers fully perform the cults and rites”. It is also evident in the President’s annual address, on January 7th, to all Kazakhstanis and especially to Orthodox Christians, congratulating them on the birth of Jesus Christ.

Kazakhstan constantly stresses that the idea of confessional interaction as vital for regional stability originated in its history and geography. The other form of this policy can be traced in the attempts to strengthen the dialogue between Islam and Christianity, both in national and foreign policies.

The state policy in the confessional dialogue with Christianity also embraces Catholicism and cooperation with the Vatican. The spread of Catholicism in Kazakhstan is related to the settlement of (starting as early as the XIX century) Poles, Germans, and Ukrainians in the region. Since the 1900s, the Catholicism has undergone some structural-administrative transformations. In spring 1991, in particular, the Apostolic Administratura of Kazakhstan and Middle Asia was established, which included also Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, with the center in Karaganda. In August 1999, the

Apostolic Administratura of Kazakhstan was transformed into the Karaganda Eparchy (embracing parishes of the Karaganda and Eastern Kazakhstan regions). Then three Apostolic Administraturas were established in Astana, Almaty, and Atyrau. Further, following decisions by the former Pope John Paul II, the Apostolic Administratura in Astana was upgraded to the Archdiocese of Saint Mary, and consequently the Episcopal Conference was established in Kazakhstan. Currently, there are 90 Catholic communities in the structure of Roman Catholic Church in Kazakhstan, out of which 82 are registered as judicial entities and branches. They possess more than 40 temples, and about 200 chapels and prayer houses. More than 60 priests (mainly foreigners – Italians, Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians, Koreans, etc.) and 70 nuns work there.

In the international arena, Kazakhstan became the first CIS country to sign on September 24, 1998 the “agreement on Mutual Cooperation between the Government of Kazakhstan and the Holy See” (diplomatic relations were established earlier, in October 17, 1992). The first official state visit of former Pope John Paul II to Kazakhstan, which occurred September 22–25, 2001, was an important event in the spiritual and political life. During that visit, the Pope performed a solemn mess in Astana, which embraced more than 20,000 pilgrims from Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Russia, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

With the combined history and links between the Catholic Church (dating from the XIII century, and the travels of Franciscan and Minorite monks Plano de Carpini and de Roebruk) and the Orthodox Church (within the Russian empire), Kazakhstan has now become a historically justified and convenient ground for the dialogue between Catholicism and Orthodoxy. It is worth mentioning that, on November 30, 2010, the Vatican donated the shrine with relics of Saint Andrew Protokletos to the Metropolitan district of the Russian Orthodox Church

in Astana. The shrine was brought to Astana by the State Secretary of the Holy See, Cardinal Tarcizio Bertone, second in the Catholic hierarchy after the Pope, in cooperation with the Head of the Metropolitan Diocese, Metropolitan bishop Alexander (from the Orthodox Church), and others.

Along with Orthodoxy and Catholicism, the Protestant Church is also rather widely represented in Kazakhstan, what can perhaps be explained by the history of Kazakhstan as a multi-religious space. The beginning of the spread of Protestantism goes back to the colonial history of Kazakhstan and is related to the settlement of Germans – colonial army people and civil servants. In the XIX–XX centuries, the settlement of ethnic Germans, particularly during the Stolypin reforms of early XX century and especially during the World War II, resulted in the high increase of Protestants. Since the beginning of the XXI century, despite emigration of ethnic Germans after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Protestantism has continued to spread in the country, with “850 entities of more than 30 Protestant confessions”. According to 2007 data, the total number of all Protestant entities and groups (including traditional Pentecostals, Presbyterians, as well as representatives of non-traditional charismatic branches) comprised 1173. By this number Protestantism is second only to Islam, which numbers 2345 religious entities and groups. In general, the Protestant branch of Christianity has a rather considerable presence in Kazakhstan.

* * *

Nowadays, Kazakhstan can be regarded as a convenient ground for institutionalized religious dialogue, which has been successfully developed within the frameworks of the Congresses of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions held in 2003, 2006 and 2009 (in

international arena) and the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (on national level), all of which were aimed at promoting the ideas of the “culture of peace” and social cohesion.

The Congresses of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions were initially conceived as a common ground for convening various religious leaders to reflect on the mega-tendencies of modern time – globalization and simultaneous differentiation and the issues of identity. The leitmotif of the Congresses can be assumed-up as follows: Exiting from the dead-end of global culture is impossible through political actions only. The role of spiritual leaders is decisive; the cultural and religious diversity of the world is a reality which must be understood and accepted. Any other approach by politicians can explode the world. The issue of today is not only about the interaction of religions; it is about the global dialogue between the religious and secular worlds as well, and there is need for balance between the traditions and the search for the new.

A sampling of these Congresses allows a better perception of the transformations on global level and it reflects the global-local correlation, highlighting the attempts of one particular state towards instituting a new paradigm of development.

The first Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions took place in Astana, September 23–24, 2003, and gathered 17 delegations. The Second Congress, in 2006, gathered 29 delegations, and the third Congress, in 2009, gathered 77 delegations from 35 countries of the world.

Congress I adopted a resolution stating that confessional dialogue is a most valuable tool in sustaining peace and concord among countries. In addition, one of the most powerful results of the Congress was institutionalizing the idea of interaction among the leaders of various confessions and providing a framework for discussions on the

international level. As President N. Nazarbayev mentioned, “There was no such universal forum before (for sharing the perspectives of confessions’ representatives)”. The first meeting established the working body of the Congress – the secretariat.

Congress II took place in 2006, and highlighted the new relations between confessions at a time of escalation of conflicts, particularly in Iraq, which was reflected in the key theme of the Congress – “Religion, Society, and International Security” – as well as in its decisions. The final Declaration stated views on the role of religion in the modern world and the role of religious leaders in maintaining global peace and international security.

Strikingly, the concept of the Congresses was expressed symbolically in the new Palace of Peace and Concord (in the form of a Pyramid) built by the time of the second Congress, as a project of Norman Foster.

He opening address by N. Nazarbayev was representative in presenting the traditional issues related to the role of religion in maintaining international security. He highlighted a range of conceptual philosophical ideas, which can be broadly summarized as the implementation of “the old principle of non-violence in thoughts, words and actions”. He relates non-violence in thoughts, i.e. in the inner spiritual world, to the field of religious searchers, and non-violence in words, in mass-media, and non-violence in action, to the political field: “The abstention from violence on the level of religious doctrine, mass-media, and political action is the only basis for survival in the modern world.

Nazarbayev considers this specific “triad” of religion, mass-media, and politics to be the basis of world peace, with non-violence in the religious sphere as the foundation: “when religious leaders seriously discuss the advancement of one religion over the other, then it becomes

clear that the conflict is laid at the beginning. When mass-media savors mockery over the sacred feelings of believers, sooner or later those journalists will face mockery of their own beliefs. When politicians without hesitation order the use of force in ethnic-religious conflicts, it becomes clear that the war will come to the threshold of their own houses. In this triad, there should be no aggressive parts, and the foundation attitude of religious leaders must be free of aggressiveness.

The triadic principle of nonviolence is further regarded in the context of modern life as “a carcass for understanding”. It is not yet a dialogue, but it is basis for dialogue. Without such basis, any dialogue is a “waste of time”. Beyond the basic structure, the principles of dialogue include the following: abstention from stereotypes and intrusion into other sacral spheres, and answers to new non-standard challenges developed jointly by world and traditional religions.

These principles define a certain framework for religious dialogue. In this sacred field one can carry the thesis directly leading to the theological level in order “to search for the basis of dialogue through the divine in a man, not through the human in the divine”. The purely theological thesis seems to bears a special meaning in modern world allowing us to find the basis for mutual understanding in religious interlinks.

The next two issues relate to the concepts of cultural and religious diversity and religious-secular dialogue. From the late XX century, these issues have been highlighted in the academic, theological, political, and social fields, including in the decisions of inter-governmental organizations. However, addressing the issues on the theoretical and policy levels does not deny the practical level.

The idea of maintaining cultural and religious diversity is highlighted here in relation to the multiplicity of cultures, based on a

“cult of God”. Through thousands of years, faith-based cultures kept their word alive in history. In a certain sense, maintaining their religious spirit is the guarantee (pledge) of survival in a history of whole people”. Hence the idea that “the world cannot be built on the basis of only one civilizational project... The attempts of one cultural tradition to impose its own values on other cultures... will not lead to understanding. On the contrary, such tough cultural expansion elicits tough resistance. Only respect for the historical traditions of other people, justice, and sincerity among civilizations, religions, and people are able to create the world of concord and spirituality”.

Congress III of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions took place 1–2, 2009 in Astana. 77 delegations from 35 countries participated in the Congress, which was organized with technical assistance of institutions of the United Nations Organization. In 2009, the world situation was characterized by the problems of social instability, financial crisis, terrorism, nuclear disarmament, etc, which was reflected in the main topic of the Congress – “The Role of Religious Leaders in Building Peace Based on Tolerance, Mutual Respect, and Cooperation”. Socio-economic cataclysms caused the participants to look anew at the issues of spirituality, moral, and social solidarity and dialogue. The idea that the real probable cause of economic and social cataclysms is the lack of even absence of spirituality was discussed at the Congress.

The national meetings were mainly defined by such themes as: 1) Moral and spiritual values, world ethics; 2) Dialogue and cooperation; 3) Solidarity, especially in a time of crisis. The general concept of the Congress reflected the idea that current crisis cannot be overcome without a change of mind and the firm observance of moral norms and high principles: “only a just world order can become a basis of flourishing in human society”.

The activity of the new International Centre of Cultures and religions should work to address these issues, and new ideas and policy recommendations will be elaborated in the specific laboratory of the Congresses.

The growing interest in the Congress, reflected in the growing number of participants, and the actuality of the issues discussed facilitates its becoming an effective meeting place for dialogue, as a part of a much broader global process of building and maintaining cooperation among religions. The Congress addressed issues also being addressed through such mechanisms as the “Alliance of Civilizations”, initiatives of Russia (International High Level Group of Religious Leaders, Consultative Council at UNO on Religions) and the Saudi Arabia Inter-religious Dialogue, which resulted in the adoption in 2008 of the Madrid Declaration on Inter-religious Dialogue.

One of the practical results of the work of the third Congress was the Address of the Congress participants disseminated in the United Nations as an official document of the UN General Assembly and Security Council. This document promotes the ideas and concepts of the forum in the international arena.

*“World Religions in the context of the Contemporary Culture:
New Perspectives of dialogue and mutual understanding”,
St. Petersburg, 2011, pp. 115, 123–129.*

S. Sushchi,

Political analyst

**THE CONTEMPORARY NORTH CAUCASUS –
SYSTEMIC CRISIS OR DEVELOPMENT
FROM FORCE OF INERTIA**

For the last years, the situation in the South of Russia, primarily in the North Caucasus, was marked by sustainable deterioration, to the

view of a great part of the Russian experts' community. And this is a systemic process. The systemic crisis was discussed as the evidence, which needs no justification, by the mentioned below conference held by the RAS.

There are many definitions of the notion "crisis" in scientific studies, which define it as an overturn, a break, or as a fast rise of negative trends, as the exit of the organism/system from the zone of sustainable development to the sphere of unpredictable development. Given all possible differences in the definitions, all of them stress a great deterioration of the state of the studied phenomenon.

The year of 2008 was the last year, when the development of the North Caucasus according to scenario from force of inertia, realized since the beginning of the century, was able to lead this national macro-region to the constructive vector of development, thinks V.A. Aksentiev. Already since 2009 there has been realized the scenario of negative conflicting events demanding principally other governance's efforts and decisions. As an outcome there was proposed the quickest change in governance of the most complicated macro-region of the RF for systemic "management" (let us note that the complex application of the latter represents a vital need not only in the South of Russia, marked by its problems, but also in the rest of the RF – in all spheres of federal and regional governance's practice).

The analysis of the processes going on in the North Caucasus reveals a lot of negative trends. But it is not the exclusive content of the complicated macro-region. A rather superficial review of the local social dynamics for the last years reveals its multilateral feature, the complex of contradictory trends, local achievements and losses, marked by different correlation in separate republics and in each aspect of their social life.

In this connection, the question arises: to what extent the events in the contemporary North Caucasus may be defined as a systemic crisis. Given the limitation of the present publication, the review of above problem may be regarded only as an initial study. It is worth briefly mentioning the most urgent aspects of the social situation in the North Caucasus, which in principle let speak about the crisis over there.

The terrorist activities. The minimal level of the terror in the macro-region was marked in the middle of the 2000s, when it seemed that after the essential reduction of the number of terrorist bands in Chechnya for the years of 2003–2005 the situation gradually approached the time of almost complete liquidation of regional bandits' underground. But instead of this there followed its spread to terrorist activities to Dagestan and Ingushetia. The Chechen epicenter remained and was supplemented by the other two terrorist centers in the North Caucasus. Their total fighting potential was lesser than the Chechen capacity of fighters for 2001–2002.

For the last years the “replacement” of terror continued in the North Caucasus. The most evident change was marked by a rapid rise (since spring 2010) of bandits' activities in Kabarda-Balkaria and the parallel reduction of terrorist activities in Ingushetia for the period of 2008–2009, characterized by almost highest rate of terrorist activities in the North Caucasus. For 2010, the activities of underground bandits groups were kept at the level of two previous years, while in Chechnya a certain reduction of capacity of bandits groups was noted. For the period of two last years, the law enforcement bodies intensified their activities aimed at liquidation of leaders of bandits' groups, and in 2010 there were liquidated or neutralized the groups of 400 fighters, including 30 their leaders, while 400 terrorists were detained.

At present, the groups of bandits succeed to rectify the sustained defeats by recruitment of new bandits. However, taking into account the demographic factor (gradual reduction of youth generations being potential for recruitment of new fighters), it is possible from the period of 2014–2015 to foresee a certain reduction of the bandits' underground and of the infrastructure serving this underground. The successful work of the law enforcement bodies alone is not enough to achieve the radical turnover in the struggle against terrorism. The situation for 2010–2011 as a whole in the North Caucasus did not change for worse. The situation is rather marked by oscillatory changes in terrorist activities, by territorial transformation of their areas and epicenters, by changes in forms of subversive activities and in correlation of financing sources of these activities. For the last years, the terrorist “complex” in the North Caucasus lacked any growth but was going on through the process of transformation / adaptation, which is quite logical taking into account the scales of the anti-terrorist campaign.

The social-economic sphere. The characteristic and scale of economic problems of the republics in the North Caucasus are well known. The post-Soviet economic archaic system was characterized not only by the de-industrialization, the loss of a great part of capital assets but also by the “shadow” type of the most profitable segments of economy and by the loss of skills of industrial culture formerly possessed by the local population. In its turn, the latter is one of the reasons of high level of unemployment in a number of republics promoted inter alia by the large scale subsidies to the social sphere from the federal budget and by the related development in republican communities of “parasitical complex”. As a result, a chain of negative social-economic correlations was formed for the period of the last 10–15 years.

However, the situation is marked by essential differences in separate republics. In this respect, the most complicated situation exists in Ingushetia and Chechnya, which are characterized by the lack of a real mechanism of exit from the state of chronic economic stagnation. And economy of these republics was not marked by any new phenomena for the last years. It is hardly correct to speak about “economic crisis” in these republics, since their communities are to a large extent adapted to the existing social-economic situation, while the stable large scale financial assistance from the federal center represents a significant additional factor of stabilization. The economy of other republics of the North Caucasus is characterized by greater dynamics. Each of them experienced significant difficulties but has achieved certain successes and potential of development and the directions of growth. Dagestan, the adjacent to Chechnya republic, for some years demonstrates rather fast tempos of economic (including industrial) growth and, side by side with Stavropol krai, is the region-leader of the NCFD (the economic upsurge of the republic is evident with all possible critical remarks). Evidently, “Strategy of Social-Economic Development of the NCFD till 2025”, worked out and adopted in 2010, is not a panacea. It will not become the panacea even in case of its full realization (its realization is rather doubtful). The economic sphere of the macro-region will remain “highly problematic” for the visible perspective, and it will be very difficult to realize the existing growth potential, as demonstrates the practice. But the situation in this respect is not hopeless. The economic process in most republics of the North Caucasus seems to be qualified as a development from force of inertia and not as a systemic crisis.

The sphere of state governance and activities of law enforcement bodies. The low professional quality of the governance apparatus and of the law enforcement bodies, a high level of their corruption and their

ethnic-clannish feature represent another “Achilles heel” of republican societies. The total roster of “evils” of the local power was originated in the Soviet past, and in the contemporary “unfold” form is fixed in republican life since the middle of the 1990s (minimum 10–15 years). A rather negative response should be given to the question whether for the last years the efficiency of functioning of bureaucracy in the republics of the North Caucasus was worsened. But the other matter is the need to take into account the factor of public “patience”: with due account of the past time even the fixed level of “fallaciousness/incompetence” is being received by society with growing irritation becoming one of the main reasons of the growth of protest potential in the republics.

For the last years, the North Caucasus demonstrated examples of positive changes in the above mentioned sphere. In Ingushetia the leadership made steps directed to “self-cleaning” of the authorities, reduction of corruption’s scales and rise of the professional level of taken decisions. The ruling power extended the channels of the return ties with society letting passage from monologue to real reciprocal action (reduction of the terrorism’s scale is a result of this work). The efficiency of the republican authorities will hardly be raised, but its worsening is hardly probable. With due account of increased attention of the federal center to this problem as well as the complex of processes in adjacent spheres of social life in the North Caucasus, the scenario of the very slow rise of efficiency of functioning of the republican authorities and law enforcement bodies is not excluded.

The sphere of inter-national relations and religious life. Given the evident complicated situation in the inter-national reciprocal action in the North Caucasus, the chronic ethnic-political tension in Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachai-Cherkessia with further aggravation, the last years in the macro-region lack large scale inter-national conflicts analogous

to the conflicts of the period on the eve and in the first half of the 1990s. Evidently, the state of “friendship of peoples” characteristic for the period of Soviet stability in the macro-region for the 1960s–1970s will not come back in the visible perspective (let us recall that stability of inter-national mutual action of the Soviet period did not always mean its real optimal state). The tectonic changes of social life in the end of the XX century transformed ethnic policy in the North Caucasus into “stable instability”. Probably, it is a long historic period.

The federal center and the republican authorities should keep under their control and regulate in good time the ethnic-political situation and prevent even its increased tension transforming into the critical point of social bifurcation fraught with unpredicted dynamics. To a certain extent the state power has already mastered to regulate the ethnic-conflicts situations, so much as principally new threats and risks in the sphere of inter-national mutual action did not appear in the North Caucasus for the last years.

“Islamization” of society and rapid rebirth of religion for the post-Soviet period is one of the main important factors of the contemporary social dynamics of the North Caucasus determining inter alia its ability for systemic modernization. The religious “zealousness” of a part of the population connected with social-ideological radicalism is one of the reasons of the wide spread in the North Caucasus of extremist practice and the significant condition of tenacity of the regional terrorist underground. Nevertheless, there are some reasons to suppose that the peak levels of religiousness of the youth in the republics with most problems in the macro-region have been already attained, and the share of the most “zealous” people in further young generations should be lower. At least, for the period following 2015 the reduction of the level of religious fanaticism seems to be more probable than preservation of its present level and all the more its further growth.

Thus, the social dynamics of the North Caucasus of the last years, as it seems, reveals as a whole not so much the sustainable trend, as the curve consisted from a number of “sinusoids”, when each of them reflects the complicated dynamics of one of the segments of ethnic-political, ethnic-confessional, social-economic and social-cultural life of the given macro-region and its separate regional communities. The contours of these “branch” sinusoids do not coincide in time. It means that at the same period of time some indexes fix certain stabilization (or even amelioration) of the situation, while according to other indexes the dynamics turn out to be negative.

The total sum of data relating to diverse vectors turns out to be too complicated and multilateral to make the conclusion that the North Caucasus as a whole takes a sustainable way to the negative scenario of development. Taking into account the complicated character of this macro-region, such “integral” evaluation/statement is hardly possible at all. It is possible to speak rather about only fixing the main trends of separate republican societies.

Probably, more important is something else. It is possible to suppose that a separate problem of the North Caucasus does not exist at all for Russia, that there is one integral problem “Russia for itself” – the problem of its own systemic state: social-political sustainability and social-economic dynamics, ability/inability to solve the main problems of its development (from demographic to scientific-technical). The roster of the urgent tasks forming the common “super-task” includes as a component the problem of the North Caucasus.

The analysis of the dynamics of the RF for the first decade of the XXI century makes it possible to speak about scenario of development from force of inertia, which will continue for the second decade with greater probability. This scenario may be called as a way of

conservative-bureaucratic evolution, which does not allow the country to make a leap in decision of the set strategic tasks but not to neglect the situation in any sphere of social life to such extent, when it would destabilize the RF to the state of a deep crisis and more so to result in a social revolution. This scenario of development from force of inertia is clearly seen in the social dynamics of the contemporary North Caucasus.

*“Narody Kavkaza v prostranstve Rossiskoi tsivilizatsii: istoricheski opyt i sovremennye problemy”,
R-na-D, 2011, pp 80–84.*

Aleksey Malashenko,

D.Sc. (Hist.)

TAJIKISTAN: CIVIL WAR’S LONG ECHO

In terms of internal and external security, Tajikistan has been among the most problematic countries in Central Asia. It is the only state in the region to have gone through a protracted civil war (1992–1997), which, according to various estimates, killed between 23,500 and 100,000 people (perhaps even more) and left the economy in ruins. The causes of this war were rooted not only in political confrontation, but also in confrontation between different regions, clans, and personalities, as well as confrontation within Islam between those who sought to build a secular state and those who wanted an Islamic state.

Tajikistan is an ethnic and linguistic exception in Central Asia. Unlike most of the region’s population, which is of Turkic origin, the Tajiks belong to the Iranian group and, though they have many features in common with their neighbors, nonetheless maintain a unique ethnic and cultural identity of their own. The Tajiks are a settled people,

which makes their traditions, mentality, and behavioral norms different from those of their (until recently) nomadic neighbors. The Tajiks are more religious, hence the earlier and more intensive revival of Islam which began during the late Soviet period and which was steadily politicized. It was in Tajikistan that the first and only remaining legal religious party in the post-Soviet area was formed, the Islamic Revival Party (IRP).

Events in Afghanistan (where ethnic Tajiks make up 27–38 percent of the population) have a greater impact on Tajikistan than on any other Central Asian country. The 1,400 km-long Tajik-Afghan border zone is one of the most volatile in the Central Asian region. More than any country, Tajikistan wants to see peace in Afghanistan. The conflict in Afghanistan resounds in a constant tragic echo across Tajikistan. At the same time, few remember now that in the mid-1990s, Afghan politicians in turn had worried about Tajikistan’s civil war. It was in Kabul in 1995 that the first real peace talks took place between the warring parties in Tajikistan’s conflict, under an initiative organized by then Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani and Ahmadshah Masoud, a distinguished Afghan of ethnic Tajik descent. Renowned film director and public figure Davlat Khudonazarov, who took part in the talks, said that the choice of Kabul as venue for the talks was fortunate also in that “The very atmosphere of this city in ruins was a warning signal to the Tajiks to give up armed confrontation and seek peace.”

In 1997, the civil war ended in a compromise between the Popular Front and the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), at the foundation of which was the IRP. The two sides signed the Agreement on Peace and National Accord. The Popular Front, however, saw this deal as a victory. President Emomali Rakhmonov (he later “de-russified” his last name by removing the “ov” at the end) set about

building an authoritarian regime. Three circumstances made him confident of success: first, ordinary people yearned above all for security and stability after the civil war years, and most of society thought a firm hand at the top could bring them these things; second, Russia, which in fact had supported Rakhmonov, both during his battle with the opposition and as a mediator at the peace talks, tacitly backed the idea of an authoritarian regime (essentially a dictatorship) in Tajikistan; third, Rakhmonov, like the other Central Asian presidents, had positioned himself as the bulwark against Islamic extremism and the only person who could save Tajikistan from going down the Taliban road (the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan in 1996).

Rakhmon had been head of state since 1992, when he became chairman of the republic's Supreme Soviet. In 1994, he was elected to a five-year term as president, was re-elected in 1999 and again in 2006, (to a 7-year term; the Constitution was amended accordingly in 2003.) Consolidating his regime, he set about purposefully removing his rivals from the former UTO, thus renouncing the national reconciliation policy, and gradually removed from power those among even his allies who looked capable of becoming potential rivals. The list of politicians removed from the stage includes Abdumalik Abdulladzhonov (prime minister in 1992–1993), Safarali Kenzhayev (founder of the Popular Front, killed in 1999), Yakub Salimov (former interior minister), and Abduzhalil Samadov (prime minister in 1993–1994, died in Moscow in 2004).

Rakhmon used carrot and stick tactics. Many of the prominent opposition figures, including field commanders, received large land holdings, enterprises, and control of some local markets after 1997. This was payment in exchange for abandoning political activities. Head of the UTO Said Abdullo Nuri, who moved into a fine villa in the center of Dushanbe, also took a passive stance. The IRP had two seats

in the Tajik parliament. Gradually however, Rakhmon started taking tougher measures in order to remove real and potential rivals. In 2009, for example, former head of the country's Emergency Situations Ministry, Mirzo Zeyev, one of the most prominent figures in the UTO, died under unknown circumstances.

Pressure on the media increased. As well-known opposition journalist Dododzhon Atovulloyev put it, "Tajikistan had a free press before Rakhmon... Under Rakhmon Nabiyeu [the previous president. – *A.M.*], each time our newspaper, *Charogi Ruz*, came out, we'd get calls at our office from the head of the presidential administration... dozens of officials were fired. Ministers trembled when they got a visit from our paper's journalists. [President] Rakhmon's arrival in power was the day that marked the death knell for our free press". The freedom of the press index published by Reporters without Borders placed Tajikistan at number 122 of 179 countries in 2011–2012 (previously it had been at number 115.)

The ruling regime faces several internal challenges: a permanent economic crisis, regionalism, domestic political confrontation, and the presence of radical Islam. These dangers are all closely interwoven. To a great extent, political confrontation is rooted in contradictions between the regions, (the Sogd, Garm, Kulyab, and Gorny Badakhshan) and radical Islam, espoused by the opposition, which has its base primarily in the Garm and Gorny Badakhshan regions. During the civil war, separatist tendencies even emerged in the Gorny Badakhshan Autonomous Region (though the region's ethnic diversity would hardly make it realistic to actually carry out such ideas).

After an initial lull following the civil war's end, the Islamists gradually stepped up their activity once again. Rakhmon at first pretended that the problem concerned no more than a few criminal

groups, but since 2007 he has been using various pretexts to send troops into the Rasht Valley, where the Islamist opposition forces have the biggest support (in 2009, for example, troops were sent there ostensibly to destroy the poppy crop, although poppies had never been grown in the valley in the first place.) The situation worsened in 2010 when rebels emerged in parts of the country under the leadership of intransigent field commanders Abdullo Rakhimov and Alovuddin Davlatov, who were dubbed the “Tajik Taliban.” They engaged in armed clashes with army forces in which both sides suffered losses (specifically around 50 servicemen killed and dozens captured by the rebels).

Abdullo Rakhimov (Sheikh Abdullo), one of the most prominent figures in the UTO, refused to sign the Peace and National Accord Agreement in 1997. In 1999, he left for Afghanistan, returned to Tajikistan in 2009, and resumed his struggle against the current regime. There are around 300 armed rebels active in the country, but, depending on the circumstances, they could be joined by tens of thousands of the discontented, and could receive support from abroad.

The IRP’s position influences the relations between the Islamic opposition groups and the regime. Since the death of Said Abdullo Nuri in 2006, the IRP has been headed by Mohiddin Kabiri, who espouses reformist views and can be seen as a pragmatic opposition figure willing to engage in dialogue with the authorities. What is interesting is that one of the factors prompting this dialogue is the increasing popularity of the unrecognized Hizb at-Tahrir party and the Bayat organization, which act independently from IRP and want to establish a Central Asian caliphate. This runs counter to the ideology promoted by the IRP, which wants to build an Islamic Tajik state. Kobiri’s influence among Muslims has increased in recent years. It is telling, too, that he has concentrated much effort of late on supporting Tajik

migrants working in Russia, coming to Russia to hold meetings with them.

A struggle for Islam is underway today in Tajikistan, with each side battling for the right to be the sole true guardian of tradition, speak on behalf of Islam, and use it as a political instrument. Rakhmon tried to “monopolize” Islam and deepen its hold on society, setting up a system of religious education controlled by him, building a huge mosque in Dushanbe that can hold 100,000 people (some say 150,000 people), and professing Hanafi Islam while trying to diminish the influence of other currents, above all Salafi Islam. He proclaimed 2009 the “year of the Great Imam” (in this sense, one can draw a parallel between Rakhmon and Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, who, though a secular politician, is a proponent of Chechnya’s total Islamization.)

However, Rakhmon’s declared Islamization policy then began to spin out of his control. A parallel religious education system developed that was not controlled by the president, and the sermons read in the mosques were not always in line with Hanafi Islam or with the official ideology. Not all of the clergy has been loyal to the regime. Rakhmon soon realized that he had failed in his bid to bring Islam under his own control, and as a result Islam’s increasing influence in society began to threaten the regime itself. He then took measures to curtail religion’s political influence. In 2010, he started closing mosques in which non-loyal clerics preached, ordered 1,400 students studying in Islamic institutes abroad to return home (including 200 from Iran), and banned women from wearing traditional Muslim clothing in public places, above all in state institutions. This de-Islamization reached a peak in 2011 with the adoption of the law on Parental Responsibility for the Education and Upbringing of Their Children, which bans children under 18 from attending mosques unless accompanied by older family

members. The law drew fierce criticism from Muslim faithful and has been violated *en masse*.

Having lost in the Islamic field, Rakhmon continued to strengthen his authoritarian regime, trying to remove any real competition to himself. A total of 70.6 percent of the voters supported the presidential National Democratic Party in the February 2010 parliamentary election, and it won 52 of the 85 seats. The IRP got two seats (it came in second place with 8.2 percent of the vote), as did the Communist Party, the Party of Economic Reform, and the Agrarian Party. Not without justification, the opposition accused the authorities of falsifying the elections, and Rakhmatullo Zairov, leader of the Social Democratic Party, which did not make it into the parliament, spoke of an “usurpation of power.”

Rakhmon’s desire for absolute rule has sometimes gone to absurd lengths. It is now customary in Tajikistan to address the president as “*Chanobi Oli*,” an expression identical in meaning to “Your Majesty.” The political system has taken the nepotistic turn typical of Central Asian regimes, with practically every member of Rakhmon’s family (and he has nine children) getting a high official post.

Tajikistan’s regime looks similar in some respects to Kurmanbek Bakiyev’s toppled regime in Kyrgyzstan. The Tajikistan News website features very telling and even provocative comparisons between the two countries. The author of one comment wrote, “The Kyrgyz agreed among themselves, got together, and within a day sent Bakiyev packing. Yes, people were injured, there were victims, but they achieved their goal, and kicked him out!”

“After going through a stabilization period, Tajikistan has once again returned to the crisis point it was at in the early 1990s, when open struggles between the central government and the regional elites spilled

over into civil war,” wrote journalist and analyst Sanobar Shermatova in 2010.

In 2010–2011, Rakhmon apparently realized (prompted by his survival instinct) obviously realized that it would be dangerous to tighten the screws any further, all the more so with the country in such a difficult economic situation. According to the National Bank of Tajikistan, per capita income in 2009 came to \$ 879 as calculated at current price levels. Tajikistan has 45 percent of its people living below the poverty line. There was a slight improvement in the economy in 2011, but this had practically no impact on living standards for most of the population.

In any event, in a hint of the regime’s new willingness to liberalize a little, it began dismantling the personality cult that had built up around Rakhmon. Photos and posters of Rakhmon disappeared from the streets in March 2011. Several rebels were amnestied at around the same time. In August 2011, coinciding with the 20th anniversary of Tajikistan’s independence, Rakhmon signed a law that made possible the biggest amnesty the country had seen yet: 15,000 prisoners were eligible under its provisions, of which around 4,000 were freed. Makhmadsaid Abdullayev, speaker of the upper house of parliament and mayor of Dushanbe, made a call to protect personal rights and act within the law. Rakhmon proposed removing articles 135 and 136 (slander and defamation) from the Criminal Code and including them in the Civil Code instead, which could be seen as opening the way to greater freedom of the press (however, on January 12, 2012, an attempt was made on the life of independent journalist and opposition figure Dododzhon Atovulloyev, though it is practically impossible to find out who exactly was behind this crime.)

Finally, in response to rising food prices in February 2011, Rakhmon gave the order to top up the market with stocks of buckwheat,

rice, and flour from the country's strategic reserves. These, however, have only been half measures. Public discontent continues to grow and social tension still runs high. Dododzhon Atovulloyev said that the only way to change the current regime would be to "organize our own Tajik 'Tahrir'".

To replicate the mass protests on Cairo's main square that toppled Egyptian President Mubarak's regime in the spring of 2011, however, would be difficult, if not impossible. Rakhmon's regime does have its supporters, above all among the numerous bureaucrats, who in turn are all backed by their own clans. The president can count on the support of the region around his home town Kulyab, too. The Tajik drug trafficking mafia, which includes a sizeable number of bureaucrats, is also happy enough with the status quo. Thus, if the opposition does succeed in organizing mass protests, they will encounter stiff resistance. The situation in this case would be more reminiscent of the confrontation just before the civil war began, when the so-called Islamic-democratic opposition gathered on Shakhidon, one of Dushanbe's two main squares, and the regime's supporters gathered on the other main square, Ozodi. Rather than leading to a painless regime change, a new confrontation could usher in a new civil war.

Even if the opposition were successful, it is by no means clear who would come to power. The IRP, the regional clans, who feel slighted by Rakhmon and his team and are fed up with the Kulyab clan holding power, and the local drug mafias all have their eyes on power. A hypothetical victory of the opposition would not bring down the level of internal instability. The IRP saw its influence grow considerably in 2010–2012, and its support among the public now surpasses the 5–10 percent that experts were giving it before. Islamist victories following the Arab revolutions in the Middle East have clearly played a

part here. The IRP sees itself as their ideological ally and is ready to take on the responsibility of government once the authoritarian regime falls. The party's criticism of the regime has become noticeably stronger and more uncompromising in 2011–2012.

What impact on the situation in Tajikistan do outside actors have: China, Russia, the United States, and immediate neighbors, in particular Uzbekistan? None of these countries would want to see a sharp escalation of the situation in Tajikistan, not to mention the country's collapse. First, this would destabilize the entire Central Asian region; second, it could open the way for radical Islamists with ties to their ideological allies in Afghanistan to take the stage and turn the country into another base for international terrorism; and third, it would inevitably provoke a new flood of refugees streaming in different directions, and their presence could affect the situation in neighboring countries as well as in Russia.

Thus, no matter what the state of relations between outside actors and Rakhmon and his regime, no one is prepared to provide support to his opponents. Some experts say that Tajikistan “is trying to win itself the status of a Chinese province”, and Beijing is perfectly happy with this. Washington has been increasing financial aid to the Tajikistani government, incorporating it into its security strategy for the region. Neither the United States nor China have any interest in a potential “Tajik spring.”

Russia, of course, by no means wants anything of the kind either. Moscow wants to keep Tajikistan within its sphere of influence by taking part in key projects there (especially energy projects) and providing military aid. The foundations for this military cooperation between the two countries were laid in the period of civil war, when Russia paid half the costs for defending the Tajik-Afghan border. This mutually advantageous cooperation played a big part in helping

Rakhmon stay in power. Rakhmon was later able to count on the support, albeit tacit, of Russia's 201st Division, which remained in Tajikistan and became the backbone of the Russian military base established there in 2004.

After Moscow's decision to upgrade the base's arms and equipment, Russian military hardware worth an estimated \$1 billion will be handed over to Tajikistan, including 160 tanks (T-62, T-72), 140 armored personnel carriers, 169 infantry carrier vehicles, an artillery repair and maintenance complex, a portable surface-to-air missile Iгла, 30 Shilka and Osa air defense systems, and 4 helicopters. These weapons, though outdated, nonetheless provide great support for the regime in its fight against domestic opponents and can help to protect the borders, including by acting as "a deterrent in Tajik-Uzbek relations".

Migration is the other big factor linking Tajikistan to Russia. One in three Tajik families has at least one family member working abroad, the vast majority of them in Russia. According to the Tajikistan Migration Control Directorate, there were 1.032 million Tajiks in Russia at the end of 2011 (since the spring of 2012, a special newspaper for them, *Mukhodzhir*, even started coming out in Dushanbe.) In 2011, the migrants sent \$ 2.96 bln home, which came to 45.4 percent of Tajikistan's GDP.

A conflict erupted between Russia and Tajikistan in 2011 over the detention and arrest of Russian pilot Vladimir Sadovnichy (who was arrested together with Estonian citizen Alexey Rudenko). The two were accused of smuggling aviation-related spare parts illegally crossing the border and violating international transport regulations. The pilot was sentenced to eight-and-a-half years in prison, which provoked an extremely negative reaction on behalf of Russian politicians (including President Medvedev) and fuelled nationalist

sentiment in Russian society. Some State Duma deputies demanded that Russia deport Tajik migrants and introduce visas as a means of punishing Tajikistan.

The tension abated after Rakhmon decided to release Sadovnichy and let him return home. Still, the fact that Moscow showed its willingness to use migration as a means of exerting pressure on Tajikistan will certainly have a negative impact on future relations between the two countries and force Dushanbe to put more emphasis on a multi-vector policy and the search for alternative partnerships.

What's more, the conflict over the Russian pilot's arrest came at a bad time for Moscow (in the second half of 2011, when the Kremlin was actively promoting the Customs Union and Eurasian Union projects and trying to engage Tajikistan as well). The authorities in Dushanbe have barely even considered the possibility of joining these organizations at a high level and have so far only hinted at the hypothetical possibility that they might participate.

On the issue of Tajikistan joining the Customs Union, let alone the Eurasian Union, Tajik analysts also take into consideration Uzbekistan's negative attitude towards these projects, and believe think that it would not be particularly advantageous for Tajikistan to join both of these organizations if Uzbekistan is not also involved. Of course, Tajikistan's participation would remove obstacles in the way of migrants going to Russia and reduce the costs of energy imports, grain, and some other goods, but it would also deal a blow to cheap imports from China, Iran, and Turkey, and spell financial ruin for the businesspeople involved in trade with these countries. As Tajikistan's Foreign Minister Khamrokhon Zarifi said, "If Tajikistan were to join the Customs Union now the benefits would be insignificant." Nonetheless, Russia still hopes to see Tajikistan take a positive decision

with regard to the new forms of cooperation within the framework of these organizations.

Tajikistan will hold a presidential election in 2013. No one can say yet exactly what it will look like. Under the Constitution, Rakhmon cannot stand for another term in office, but the practice in the Central Asian countries is for their rulers to get around this law by adopting amendments to the Constitution to allow them to stay in power. It is not yet known whether Rakhmon will take this road. Whatever the circumstances, if he does decide to relinquish the presidency to whoever it be, he will demand firm guarantees of security for himself and his relatives from his successor.

Another possibility would be to carry out a rotation along the lines of Russia's "tandem" solution, with the next president just filling the seat for Rakhmon, who would then return to office in 7 years' time. This, however, is an unlikely scenario because the coming years in unstable Tajikistan could bring events that would cut Rakhmon and his clan out of power for good.

If events follow the Constitution, Tajikistan will have a new president, who will have the job of tackling the problems left by his predecessor and making changes to the political system. We cannot say yet whether the new president will continue to bolster the authoritarian regime or will take the risk of at least partially drawing on Kyrgyzstan's reform experience.

The new president will have to act in two seemingly mutually exclusive directions: maintain a fragile stability, yet at the same time carry out reforms and fight corruption and drug mafia. To undertake these two tasks simultaneously will be quite a challenge.

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**Институт научной информации
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Нахимовский проспект, д. 51/21,
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**Отдел маркетинга и распространения
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