

**RUSSIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
INSTITUTE FOR SCIENTIFIC
INFORMATION
IN SOCIAL SCIENCES**

INSTITUTE OF ORIENTAL STUDIES

**RUSSIA
AND
THE MOSLEM WORLD
2013 – 9 (255)**

**Science-information bulletin
The Bulletin was founded in 1992**

**Moscow
2013**

Director of publications L.V. SKVORTSOV,

Deputy Director of the Institute for Scientific
Information in Social Sciences
of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS)

Founder of the project and scientific consultant –

ALBERT BELSKY

Editor-in-Chief –

ELENA DMITRIEVA

Editorial board:

OLGA BIBIKOVA

(First Deputy Editor-in-Chief),

ALEXEI MALASHENKO,

DINA MALYSHEVA,

AZIZ NIYAZI

(Deputy Editor-in-Chief),

VALIAHMED SADUR

CONTENTS

Vladimir Yegorov, Olga Savina. Common Cultural-Civilizational Foundation as a Factor of Reintegration of Post-Soviet Community	4
Abdulbari Muslimov. Socialization of the Umma. Direct and Indirect Mechanisms	10
M. Astvatsaturova. Spiritual Board of Muslims of Stavropol Territory	15
Nuradin Khanaliyev. Islam in Political-Cultural Matrix of North Caucasian Peoples	18
T. Chabiyeva. Religious Identity of Young People and the Wahhabi Trend in Ingushetia	23
Samat Kumyspayev, Guldariga Simukanova. The Role of Religion in the Educational System in the Context of Globalization: Kazakhstan's Experience	31
Yevgeni Borodin. The Place and Role of Kyrgyzstan in the Modern World	39
L. Vasilyev. The Geopolitical Situation in Central Asia	45
Dina Malysheva. The "Arab Spring" as Seen by Russian Scholars	51

Vladimir Yegorov,

D. Sc. (Hist.), Moscow State Regional University

Olga Savina,

Research associate, Institute of the CIS Countries

**COMMON CULTURAL-CIVILIZATORY FOUNDATION
AS A FACTOR OF REINTEGRATION OF POST-SOVIET
COMMUNITY**

The economic, political and military cataclysms now experienced by mankind with frequent regularity show that the world is standing on the eve of systemic transformations. There are no grounds to believe that the coming metamorphoses will be painless, and hardly anyone doubts that the world community will have to revise many orientations and values which seemed immutable.

In these conditions Russia, which has lost orientations of social perspective during the past two decades, should hardly strive to implement a project of social development taken from abroad on its national soil. All the more futile are our country's attempts to introduce foreign "progressive values" in the community of the post-Soviet countries, which are closely connected with Russia historically and culturally.

The principles of rationalism laid in the foundation of Russian policy toward the Union republics of the former U.S.S.R. have not brought the desired integration effect. Moreover, along with the

establishment of western cultural values in the post-Soviet area, the social foundation of the centripetal tendencies is becoming weaker.

The data showing the growing destructive attitude of the population of Kazakhstan and Belarus to integration with Russia corroborate the above-said contention.

The views of the Kazakh population concerning the Customs union of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia were divided as follows; 52 percent support this integration project, and 48 percent are against it or indifferent.

An additional poll carried out in April-May 2012 showed that 78.7 percent of Kazakh respondents deemed post-Soviet integration inexpedient. It is indicative that among them were representatives of big and medium-sized business, financial bodies, law-enforcement agencies, and government officials.

As to Belarus, the number of those who favored union with Russia dwindled from 58 percent in 2003 to 32 percent in 2011.

From a pragmatic point of view this state of affairs is quite logical. Orientation to western centers of the world force looks more attractive than prospects of unification with Russia, which has not yet acquired a stable tendency of economic growth. However, the foundation of Eurasian integration is based on something more important than pragmatism, it is cultural-civilizational community which has evolved for centuries in integration of interethnic traditions, which created certain identity bordering on irrationality.

Indicative in this respect is a statement of the Kazakh expert on strategy M. Laumulin who said that “after the downfall of the iron curtain and establishment of contacts with foreign countries Kazakhstan’s people have become convinced that they were unlike many neighbors from the Islamic world, despite certain Muslim renaissance in our republic. In the Soviet Union the inhabitants of

Central Asia were considered ‘Asians,’ but after closer acquaintance with Chinese and other Far Eastern nations it became clear that they were unlike real Asians. They had more in common with other citizens of the CIS countries, and this is why the term ‘Eurasians’ was more apt.”

In his famous book “A Clash of Civilizations” Samuel Huntington justly noted that integration and disintegration borders of the modern world pass along the cultural lines. In his view, culture and various types of cultural identification (which are identification of civilization at the highest level) determine the models of cohesion, disintegration and conflict.

It is not “liberal values” or the attempt to eradicate once and for all the possibility of a war breaking out in this part of the world that is the main foundation of European integration, but cultural-civilizational community, which is based on the historical tradition of the Old World.

Historically, Russia has been not only a state, but, above all, a cultural and civilizational archetype forming and absorbing traditions and social values and orientations of many peoples.

Even when the people of near-to-border territories did not have integration urges and calls on the part of the Great Empire, they actively carried on cultural exchanges with Russian society. The modus of cultural interaction has become one of the determining qualities of the Russian world order, and each cultural component of it was a self value independently functioning as an inalienable part of the whole. In this sense it is difficult to imagine even in the conditions of state independence the cultural autarchy of Russians, Kazakhs, Ukrainians, Kyrgyz, etc.

Usually, when speaking of common destinies and common social perspectives it is customary to appeal to Slav unity. However, the threads of genetic “authentic being” of Russians with the peoples of the

Caucasus and Asia are no less important from the point of view of their cultural-civilizational impact.

The preservation and development of the multifaceted “*Russian world*” seems to be a problem no less, perhaps even more, important than the economic and political integration of the post-Soviet area. The loss of this “exclusive product” would mean, above all, the shrinkage of the national and cultural foundations, and for Russia itself, which preserves a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional matrix, the loss of the possibility of full-fledged consolidation of Russian identity and reintegration (as the bearer of cultural genotype), in the full-fledged development center of regional community.

For centuries Russia has been accumulating the cultural potential of the peoples united in one civilization area and playing the role of the generator of its own creative activity. By playing this role for a long historical period Russia could not but become the center of intellectual reflection of cultural-civilizational identity, which has been formed as a result of active cultural exchanges between the peoples inhabiting it.

Russian scholars P. Savitsky, N. Trubetskoi and L. Gumilyov were the first to declare the Russian cultural-civilizational type as Eurasian. The Eurasian concept absorbed the notion of mobility and insufficiency of Russian identity, the intrinsic mastering of multicultural values and rejection of “Eurocentrism” and universality of progress, and militant economic reductionism of the West.

The post-Soviet political reality has confirmed the true nature of and loyalty to the Eurasian concept. Right after the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. the states and ethnic groups, which were not integrated in the cultural-civilizational community (the European countries of the so-called socialist camp and the Baltic republics) immediately oriented themselves to unification with the European Union. Having suffered from a destructive influence of the centripetal factors during the post-

Soviet period, Eurasian identity has for a long time been in a deprived state, yet it remains a reality influencing the integration process.

The Eurasian ideas become the methodological foundation of the processes going on lately in the post-Soviet area.

For one, the important concept of cultural pluralism and the “inherent worth” of each component of the cultural-civilizational community has been realized in the organizational principle of “movable geometry” of the CIS, which has been consolidated after the adoption of the Concept of the further development of the CIS in 2007.

This concept contains the notion of the future of the Community initiated by the Russian side as a multifaceted regional organization ensuring a maximal integration potential, and at the same time giving each participating country the possibility to determine the format and sphere of cooperation. The Russian language remains a means of communication, cultural exchanges, and the functioning of supranational structures in the process of preserving Eurasian cultural-civilizational values.

However, the main significance of the Russian language lies not in this important sphere of the integration process. The Russian language remains the only instrument of moving identification symbols and practical actions to existential depths when each individual becomes a subject of unification tendencies.

In 2006 associates of the Center for the Study of Interethnic Relations at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences carried out a poll in Bishkek, capital of Kyrgyzstan, which contained several linguistic questions. The poll’s results have confirmed the fact of very wide distribution and popularity of the Russian language among the residents of the capital, including Kyrgyz and Tatars.

The Russian language is used by representatives of the titular ethnos independently, and along with the Kyrgyz language, in from 56 to 81 percent of cases.

A relatively high orientation of Kyrgyz young people to the Russian language is a positive factor determining the prospects of the Russian language in Kyrgyzstan.

In the view of almost 60 percent of Kyrgyz residents of Bishkek, who took part in a sociological poll, non-Russians in Kyrgyzstan need to know the Russian language.

Among young people aged 19 to 29, 35 percent said that they definitely need the Russian language, and only 19 percent gave a negative answer.

All this goes to show that there are comparatively favorable conditions in Kyrgyzstan for the use and development of the Russian language.

Despite an intensive policy of derussification pursued by the western-oriented administrations, the position of the Russian language remains quite firm and stable in Ukraine. According to the data of IS NANU monitoring (2007), there were many people in that country who think exclusively in Russian. Among those older than 55 the percentage was 30, 30 to 35–36, and up to 30–40, and the number of Russian-speaking young people is growing.

Thus, the stepping up of integration initiatives in the post-Soviet area is conditioned not only by the up-to-the-minute political situation, but by the existence of a deep historical-cultural basis of the interrelations of the nations united by Eurasian identity.

As has already been said, the formation of a full-fledged regional association is a *nonlinear* process and can be influenced by all and sundry factors, including foreign ones.

However, the working out of the strategy of long-term policy in this direction should take into account the realities of the cultural-civilizational factor of reintegration.

*“Obozrevatel – Observer,”
Moscow, 2012, No 12, pp. 42–50.*

Abdulbari Muslimov,

Deputy Head of the Spiritual Board of Muslims
of Nizhny Novgorod Region

SOCIALIZATION OF THE UMMA. DIRECT AND INDIRECT MECHANISMS

At present, as we see, Muslims here are not in the best situation, both socially and culturally. We have to traverse a long path, despite the fact that we have already done much.

I will not touch the political problems of the development of the umma, inasmuch as they are foreign, in my view, as related to its other problems, but I will concentrate on some of the problems facing Russian Muslims.

First, the Muslim community of Russia is practically in an atomized state. Except organizational pluralism, the believers more often than not find themselves divided in many respects – from ethnic to age-related.

The migration flows from the Central Asian countries and the Caucasus have made our communities in big cities poly-ethnic, and this is why our imams should take this into account in their Friday sermons, switching from the Tatar or Bashkir language to Russian.

Each imam should realize that he is the first person to begin socialization of a Muslim-immigrant, he initiates the integration process in Russian society and the Russian umma, and the formation process of

a unified Russian umma is started by him. Official statistical data show that the educational level of immigrants is low, and therefore one of the tasks facing the imam is, apart from spiritual guidance, to raise the educational level of his parishioners. Numerous examples in Central Russia and in the Volga area show that the active position of the imam in his relations with migrant-parishioners helps not only avoid contradictions within a community, but also contributes to the formation of friendly interethnic and interconfessional relations within concrete municipalities.

We should also bear in mind the assistance rendered to spiritual boards of Muslims by government bodies and institutions of civil society in the matter of integration of migrants. In turn, the Muslim clergy should realize that this assistance could be more effective if we correctly distribute the resources and means received.

Another important problem of the development of the umma is that of socialization of young Muslims.

We see at present that our young people are virtually defenseless in the face of the enormous flow of information from TV and the Internet. Simple decisions prompted them by the so-called well-wishers bring them to the idea of abandoning old traditions, to searching for new meanings and choosing more fashionable orientations. Unfortunately, the level of their knowledge and comprehension of the Islamic sources is low. They do not know the Holy Koran and do not understand and accept the values and wisdom contained in it. In essence, the conflict of the younger generation with the older generation is based on the tragedy of the interrupted theological tradition, it is the conflict based on the absence of a proper knowledge. Young people are more radical today, they prefer to orient themselves to foreign authors who speak with them in a more primitive language. Our Muslim young people do not have, as a rule, a proper Islamic

theological and secular education. From the sociological point of view, they are marginal sections who have received points of orientation in a ready-made form.

The third problem of the umma, which I'd like to single out, is that of the qualification level of imams.

We often see that the level of knowledge of the Holy Koran and Sunna of the Prophet Mohammed and competence in certain theological questions do not allow an imam to give proper answers to questions of believers, which causes their negative reaction. This situation is typical of many mosques, especially in rural districts and small towns. We all understand full well that the 70 years of planned purposeful work to eradicate Islam from the life of Muslims were not lost and to restore what has been destroyed during all those decades within twenty years is far from simple. At present we see that a new system of Russian Islamic theological education begins to emerge, which is oriented to the idea of mutual complementariness between the religious and secular blocs. A student of a madrasah or Islamic institute should not only know the Holy Koran and Sunna to perfection, but he should also become well-versed in history, sociology, legal sciences and culture, in other words, he should be a versatile specialist. In this connection mention should be made of the assistance rendered by the state to Muslim educational institutions. However, much has to be done by Muslims themselves.

Now, I'd like to turn your attention to the proposals as a subject of discussion and development within the framework of the practical activity of Muslim spiritual boards. These proposals deal with the direct and indirect methods of the socialization of the umma.

I consider the entire bloc of questions connected with the successful functioning of the institution of the spiritual board of Muslims to be the direct mechanisms of the socialization of the umma.

The modern spiritual board of Muslims should be not only a religious organization, but a multifunctional center of Muslim culture, which could include the following duties in its activity:

- maintenance of organizational foundations of the activity of the spiritual board;

- creation of conditions for receiving religious education and raising the qualification of imams within the framework of spiritual board;

- maintenance of the work of mosques and their provision with high-quality imams;

- work with young parishioners;

- work with Muslim-immigrants (including teaching them the Russian language and foundations of culture of Russian Muslims and Russian society).

The integrated work of imams, Muslim educational institutions and associations of young Muslims within the framework of the spiritual board of Muslims will allow them to become the institutions of the umma around which Russian Muslims will unite both ideologically and organizationally. The spiritual board can work with all Muslims irrespective of the legal school they belong to. This will make it possible to lower considerably the threat of emerging pseudo-Islamic extremist organizations and establish mechanisms of socialization of young Muslims, and ultimately to form stable foundations for the tradition of Russian Muslims based on the Holy Koran and Sunna of Prophet Mohammed and works by world-famous theologians, as well as on works by Russian Islamic theorists. The present generation of Muslims is able to pass on to their children a stable tradition supported by serious theological basis.

Indirect mechanisms of socialization include everything which could help Muslims preserve their culture and enhance its wealth in the modern world:

Among them are the use of the mass media and the Internet, which are now often directed against the Muslim community; introduction of secular disciplines aimed at the formation of integral world outlook (history, philosophy, sociology, political science) in the curricula of Islamic educational institutions; formation of a section of scholars of Islam, journalists, authors writing about Islam, and publishers who could represent the interests of the umma in a worthy manner within the framework of Russian society and the world community. It should be noted that serious steps are being made in this direction on the part of the state and spiritual boards of Muslims in cooperation with the academic community.

The spiritual boards of Muslims should closely cooperate with law-enforcement agencies and also be on guard over public law and order.

Thus, in the process of the socialization of the umma we see imam and the spiritual board of Muslims as the central elements. Their work could radically change the negative tendencies which we spoke of. It is natural that their activity should be more socially oriented.

The spiritual board of Muslims today is a multifunctional institution of the socialization of the umma which should perform several important functions: religious, educational, information, and even conceptual. With a strategic view into the future the Muslim umma and spiritual boards will be able to implement serious tasks given them by our Lord. This is why it is up to us to preserve and enlarge our community and strengthen our tradition and our Faith.

“Idealy i tsennosti Islama v obrazovatel'nom prostranstve XXI veka,” Ufa, 2012, pp. 38–42.

M. Astvatsaturova,
Political analyst
**SPIRITUAL BOARD OF MUSLIMS
OF STAVROPOL TERRITORY**

In 2010 an independent Spiritual Board of Muslims was set up in Stavropol Territory, which was preceded by numerous discussions, arguments, and assessments, often contradictory. The creation of the Spiritual Board was conditioned by quite a few objective factors.

First, the presence of indigenous ethnic groups living close to one another and believing in Islam (Abazin, Karachai, Nogai, Turkmen, Circassian).

Secondly, the presence of numerous migrant groups also believing in Islam and living quite close to one another (Azerbaijanis, Darghin, Kabardians, Meskhetin Turks, Chechens), which emerged as a result of migration processes during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods.

Thirdly, the formation of common Stavropol regional interests among representatives of different Islamic ethnic groups.

Fourthly, the broadening of the social base of Islam in Stavropol Territory, and the increasing number of believers and mosques with the proper infrastructure.

The creation of the independent Spiritual Board of Muslims of Stavropol Territory followed the formation of the North Caucasian Federal district (area), in which Stavropol Territory is the main administrative unit by virtue of its accumulated managerial experience in the sphere of ethno-political and ethno-confessional relations. The setting up of the independent Spiritual Board of Muslims of Stavropol Territory had numerous aspects – political, administrative, organizational, and socio-cultural.

Among the positive effects of this project mention should be made of the neutralization of influence on the Muslims of Stavropol

Territory by radical Islamic trends (Wahhabi, for example), and organizational consolidation of the local Muslims on the basis of general Russian world outlook. Another reason was cohesion of Muslims on the basis of common Stavropol cultural values, intensification of inter-Islamic dialogue and accord among believers in Islam, as well as greater involvement of confessional leaders in the public life of the territory. Interconfessional contradictions and differences within the Muslim umma have become lower, and the effectiveness of interaction of the Spiritual Board of Muslims and the Russian Orthodox Church has grown noticeably.

One of the motives of the formation of the Spiritual Board was the emergence of new opportunities to ensure effective interaction of Muslim communities with the bodies of state power: the Council on Public and Economic Security of Stavropol Territory, the Territorial Committee on Nationalities and Cossack Affairs, the Committee of Young People, as well as with municipal bodies of power.

At the same time, the creation of the Spiritual Board has caused certain contradictions between Muslim communities of the territory (especially in its eastern districts) on the questions of development strategy, construction of mosques and madrasahs, and work of the Coordination Center of Muslims of the North Caucasus.

There was also rivalry between Muslim communities in the matter of electing the head (mufti) of the Board.

In the course of one year the new spiritual leader, Muhammad-Hajji Rakhimov succeeded in establishing contacts with all groups of Muslims living in various districts of Stavropol Territory.

At the beginning of 2011 there were twenty-three Muslim communities in the territory, and at present their number reached forty, and all of them have legal registration.

Mufti Muhammad-Hajji notes that one of the most important problems is ensuring high-quality Islamic education. Young imams are taught in Nalchik and Cherkessk where there are special Islamic educational institutions. An important sphere of Islamic activity in the territory is the establishment of ties with such centers of the Islamic world as Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt, where students from Russia study at Islamic religious institutions.

The Spiritual Board is paying much attention to the construction of mosques and religious schools, and also to the problem of returning old buildings, which belonged to spiritual institutions, to the Muslim umma. The mufti of Stavropol Territory emphasized significance of consolidation and unity of Muslims of the entire southern region of Russia, including the North Caucasus.

A new structural body in the Islamic world of Russia is the Russian Association of Islamic Accord (RAIA), and Muhammad-Hajji Rakhimov is its co-chairman. This organization is in charge of young Muslims' education and activity, helps believers to tackle difficult problems of life, and takes part in resolving interethnic and interconfessional contradictions. RAIA has an office in Moscow. The association deals with theoretical and practical problems of the strengthening of traditional Islam and helps adapt it to modern social and political processes.

Mufti Muhammad-Hajji Rakhimov actively cooperates with bodies of power and the Orthodox Christian Diocese of the South of Russia. The Spiritual Board of Muslims of Stavropol Territory interacts with educational institutions, public organizations, scientists and scholars, and the mass media.

“Etnopoliticheskaya situatsiya v Rossii i sopredelnykh gosudarstvakh,” Moscow, 2012, pp. 265–266.

Nuradin Khanaliyev,

2nd Secretary of the Foreign Ministry
of the Russian Federation

**ISLAM IN POLITICAL-CULTURAL MATRIX
OF NORTH CAUCASIAN PEOPLES**

The use of the religious factor in world politics has long-standing traditions and is timely in the crucial periods of socio-historical development. Historical experience shows that religion has a powerful ideological potential of social, economic, political, ethno-national and socio-cultural differences and conflicts. Under certain conditions religion can easily acquire radical and extremist forms. In the view of expert L. Mitrokhin, certain conflicts of a very earthly character can be raised by religion to a virtually cosmic level and formulate them in a generalized, absolute form excluding any compromise. However, the sources of these contradictions and conflicts should be sought not in the essence of this or that religion, but in the socio-economic, ethno-national, tribal, confessional, socio-psychological, socio-cultural, political, geopolitical, or any other realities of one or another region.

From this point of view the problem of influence of the so-called political Islam on the socio-cultural and political-cultural realities of the national republics of the North Caucasus is of great interest.

Islam continues to play a key role in the life of many Caucasian peoples and the formation and evolution of their spiritual, socio-cultural and political-cultural image. World religions, by virtue of their universal character tend to obliterate race, ethnic, language, political, and other differences between people. But there exists a definite connection between religions and national self-consciousness. As shown by historical experience, one or another nation chooses the concrete interpretation of its religious system in order to denote its distinctions from neighboring nations. Moreover, in many countries,

including a number of national republics of the Russian Federation, Islam has become one of the most essential components and instruments in the struggle for power. In this respect it is of special importance that from the confessional point of view this region is part of the so-called Muslim North, which is part of the much greater Muslim world. No wonder that after the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. the peoples of the post-Soviet republics mostly believing in Islam have begun to display growing interest in news and trends from the greater Muslim world.

It is also necessary to take into account the fact that the Caucasus is one of the links of the so-called Islamic arc of instability stretching from the Balkans to Kashmir. Throughout its entire length all and sundry fundamentalist movements, which are characterized by the pronounced politicization of Islam, are coming to the fore. This gives ground to speak of “political Islam,” or “Islamism,” which exerts a considerable influence on the public, political, socio-cultural and political-cultural spheres of life of the countries drawn in these processes. One of the main premises of this radical trend is the organic fusion of the state and religion. Its adherents regard the Sharia law as the source of power (al-hakimiya al-Islamiya). They are guided by the slogan “God is our aim, the Prophet is our leader, the Koran is our Constitution, Jihad is our way, death in the name of God is our superb striving.”

Islam is used here as a means of achieving concrete political aims, determined by concrete interests of political struggle. In this sense it should be regarded not so much as religion, but rather as a political ideology. Ayatollah Homeini openly declared it when saying that “...Islam is a political-religious teaching in which politics is complemented by divine service, and divine service is complemented

by politics.” He substantiated this thesis by the idea that “there are more political precepts in Islam than religious ones.”

Political Islam is the collective name to denote various religious-political trends offering their own ways, forms and means of solving the problems engendered by modernization, and overcoming its shortcomings and negative consequences. From the point of view of the state of affairs in the Caucasus, the Wahhabi trend occupies the main place among these trends. This term is used to denote various Islamic groupings which are united by non-acceptance of traditional Islam and the official clergy. The modern Wahhabi trend is not monolithic, it has moderate, radical and fundamentalist tendencies.

The main aim of political Islam is to gain the dominating positions in Muslim states themselves. But as any radical ideology it tends to become stronger along the road to expansion abroad.

It is not surprising that rebirth of Islam in the conditions of the disintegration of the Soviet Union coincided with the powerful upsurge of the self-consciousness of many peoples. The rapid downfall of trust in the communist system was accompanied with growing interest in Islam as a more natural system of value orientations. Many people in the post-Soviet area, trying to find a reliable base for arranging their life, connected their prospects with Islamic nations and cultures. Quite often they regard Islam as some integral spiritual component of the ethnic culture of the indigenous peoples. Moreover, many researchers believed that in the new conditions Islam could become an influential integration force capable to reunite ethnic groups and nations.

Naturally, religion fulfills integrative and regulative functions, playing an important role in achieving and preserving unity and integrity of society and blocking and neutralizing various problems facing it. It is precisely this role that Islam is playing in most Muslim countries. It can safely be said that in a number of national republics it

was precisely Islam that was one of the crucial factors stopping the most hot-headed young people at the boundary, the crossing of which could have been fraught with unpredicted dire consequences for them.

At the same time it cannot be denied that under certain conditions religion could provoke contradictions and conflicts not only between adherents of different faiths, but also between representatives of different trends within the framework of one and the same religion. This is shown by the fact that in the post-Soviet area Islamic ideas were being used in the struggle for property and power between different ethnic groups, regional clans and political parties. Moreover, some groupings adhering to the Wahhabi trend and other forms of Islamic fundamentalism have turned into a factor seriously destabilizing the social and political situation in the Caucasus, especially the North Caucasus. Intra-elite and inter-clan struggle has been especially active in Dagestan, Chechnya and other national republics of the region. The main aim of the organizers and sponsors of this struggle is to oust Russia from the North Caucasus, create a unified Islamic state on the territory of the North Caucasian national republics, and enhance its territory at the expense of other Russian territories.

The Wahhabi challenge as a form of radical politicized Islam lies in the socio-economic and political spheres. However, no less significant is the fact that after the collapse of communist ideology, along with the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. many peoples, North Caucasian nations included, have lost spiritual and ideological values and orientation points, in other words, they have found themselves in an ideological vacuum. This vacuum soon began to be filled with Islamic ideology.

The growing sympathies for fundamentalist Islamic ideas could also be explained by arbitrary actions of the authorities, especially representatives of the law-enforcement agencies, corruption, organized

crime thriving in the North Caucasus, and other negative phenomena in society's life. It is not accidental therefore that the main target of terrorists in the North Caucasus is government officials, policemen, and court employees.

At the same time it would be wrong to regard Islam as an exclusively negative factor in the life of the North Caucasian peoples, which allegedly contributes to the destabilization of the existing situation and the growth of radical and separatist movements and sentiments in the region. Although it should be noted that certain fundamentalist trends of Islam are indeed used by radical and extremist groupings for their own political purposes. Secondly, it would also be incorrect to regard Islam as an exclusively cultural-confessional and purely spiritual phenomenon which is not connected with politics and is oriented exclusively to peace, welfare and stability in society.

These and some other factors show the complex character, status, role and importance of Islam for the life and destinies of the peoples of the North Caucasus. Islam in the region is far from monolithic. One can speak of local forms of Islam, which have a national tint which can be related to territorial and ethnic affiliation. In this sense Islam can be used as one of the important elements of nationalism and an instrument in the struggle for power.

It should also be borne in mind that conflicts may arise sometimes between ethnic groups having one and the same faith. This is a case, for example, of the Republic of Dagestan, where the Spiritual Board of Muslims has been divided into several national communities.

But the overwhelming majority of the population of the national republics of the North Caucasus has not accepted political Islam as a system-forming ideological-political construct. The very fact of growing interest in faith should not be viewed as a definite tendency toward a radical change of the way and pattern of life based on Islamic

standards, and Islam itself as the factor determining the form of the political self-organization of peoples.

While realizing the danger of radical trends of political Islam for the social and political stability of the republics of the North Caucasus and the national security of the entire Russian Federation, it would not be correct, nevertheless, to speak of the total Islamization or fundamentalization of the North Caucasus. Likewise it would be wrong to extrapolate the situation of Islamic fundamentalism in Iran or the influence of Islam on the political life of such countries as Sudan, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, etc. on to the Muslim republics of the former U.S.S.R.

An analysis of the real state of affairs shows that in many cases the revival of interest in traditional Islam, as well as the Wahhabi and other trends of Islamic fundamentalism bears a formal character. One could agree with those experts and scholars who maintain that religious fundamentalism often serves as a substitute for ideology and mythology of ethno-national, cultural, confessional or other self-identification.

“Vlast,” Moscow, 2013, No 4, pp. 79–83.

T. Chabiyeva,

Political analyst

**RELIGIOUS IDENTITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE
AND THE WAHHABI TREND IN INGUSHETIA**

The processes of re-Islamization exert a serious influence on the socio-political situation in the North Caucasus. The radical Islamist trends which have tried to proclaim themselves a public and political force right after the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. are playing a special role. In the 1990s adherents to the Wahhabi trend emerged on the Russian political scene, which immediately began to fight for

domination among Muslims and opposed the official authorities. Then came a legislative ban on their activity and the Wahhabi trend went underground. Following this, political influence of traditional Islam in Russia has increased.

In experts' views, the Wahhabi trend and its adherents took the niche in the social and spiritual life of Muslims in the North Caucasus, which was not occupied by traditional Islam. The view is current that the Wahhabi trend became so widespread in the North Caucasian region, particularly in the Republic of Ingushetia, due to the absence of the active resistance on the part of the authorities and clergy. However, the real reasons for this phenomenon are much deeper. The spreading of Islamic radicalism has largely been due to the high level of unemployment (along with the high birthrate and high population density). In the first decade of this century the army of the unemployed in the republic grew by 3,500 people annually. Among other factors are the increasing social differentiation of the population and continuing interethnic tension. In the conditions of contradictory social problems the role of religion has grown considerably. The motive of social injustice proved the initial ideological point of departure which explains the popularity of and demand for Wahhabi political views.

The ranks of extremists are constantly replenished by young men from the marginal sections of society. But in recent years young students and institute graduates have joined their ranks. There are widely-known cases of young people telling their relatives and friends about their going to take exams, but in reality they join the terrorist underground in Ingushetia itself, or leave for training centers in other Muslim countries.

The spreading of Wahhabi ideas in Ingushetia reached its peak in 1993–1994, the years often referred to as “religious renaissance.” In

1997, the Wahhabi Muslims organized a study and training center in the mountains of Ingushetia where they taught Arabic and fundamentalist Islam to local residents free of charge. Simultaneously, instructors from Arab countries taught them methods of armed combat. When the authorities learned about the camp it was immediately closed, but the institution of “parallel Islam” through which part of Russian traditional Muslims began to interact closely with representatives of the Arab world has become stronger and more influential in the region. There were several channels of Wahhabi ideas’ penetration in Ingushetia. Among them Muslim education received by Ingush young men in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Kuwait. Then there was the “chain reaction” of the Wahhabi trend spreading in Dagestan and Chechnya. At the initial stage there were many Arab lecturers and instructors at the Ingush Islamic Institute and their lectures and lessons were of a fundamentalist character.

In the neighbouring republics of Chechnya and Dagestan the Wahhabi trend took its radical form at the very beginning. But in Ingushetia it coexisted with “traditional” Islam. The activity of the “Ingush Wahhabis” manifested itself in the late 1990s. On July 30, 1998, a conference of the republican clergy and public took place in the republican capital which declared that “the Wahhabi trend opposes traditional Sufi Islam and that the Wahhabi ideas are alien to modern Ingush society and its century-long traditions and customs.” On August 2 the republican leadership, mosque imams and religious authorities decided to ban the Wahhabi trend officially.

Since then the mass media have been publishing numerous articles and features denouncing Wahhabi ideology. The actions of all religious organizations were placed under control of the republican authorities. The law-enforcement agencies were instructed to expel persons without Russian citizenship and who were engaged in “illegal

religious activity in the Wahhabi spirit” from the republic and cancel the licenses for educational work of those organizations which were financed from abroad. These measures were supported by the public.

Religion in Post-Soviet Societies

The Dagestani authorities, jointly with the Muslim spiritual leaders, have also begun a broad campaign to eradicate radical Islam in their republic, and within a short space of time have restored control over the situation in the religious sphere. On September 16, 1999, it was announced at a session of Dagestani parliament that “all Wahhabi trends were banned on the territory of the Republic of Dagestan, and all adherents of Wahhabi ideas were placed on the same footing as extremists and terrorists and outlawed.” Persons suspected of adhering to Wahhabi trends were put on register by law-enforcement agencies, and suspicious communities (jamaats) were closed. Similar measures have also been taken in other republics of the North Caucasus.

In North Ossetia there are twenty-four Muslim communities at present. Besides, according to statistical data by 2010, 28,300 Ingush and 16,100 Kumyks live in Ossetia. In recent years many Chechens have moved to Mozdok district, and now 2,200 people of that nationality live there. In the view of the Ossetian leadership, there are no grounds for the activities of the adherents of Wahhabi trends in North Ossetia.

In 2002, the State Duma of the Russian Federation adopted the federal law “On Opposing Extremist Activity.” But despite all attempts of the authorities to restrict Wahhabi activities, it is too early now to speak of stopping Wahhabi propaganda altogether.

At the initial stage adherents of Wahhabi trends preached at mosques where adherents of tariqat (followers of Sufi) offered their prayers. When contradictions between them took an acute form

radically-minded young people were driven out from these mosques. Later, Wahhabi believers began to open their own mosques. The authorities continue to work on establishing control over mosques. Sermons there are often attended by representatives of the federal security service and representatives of the muftiate.

Apart from lectures and sermons read by representatives of the Wahhabi trend, among the sources of radical ideas in the republics of the North Caucasus are books and numerous pamphlets published by members of the Wahhabi movement. Inasmuch as this movement is supra-national, it is striving to spread its views among as many people as possible, and, consequently, literature containing propaganda of radical views is published in the language understood by all, that is, in Russian. This was the case of the North Caucasus during the period between the early 1990s and the autumn of 1999. But in Ingushetia religious literature of extremist nature began to be distributed in big circulations in the early 2000s.

The basis of the confrontation between Caucasian young people and the older generation is their position on Islam. Part of young people is bent to radical Islam or “pure Islam” of the Wahhabi trend and is against “traditional Islam.”

Fundamentalism in Islam is manifested in its radical-conservative political essence. The ideas of fundamentalism in the North Caucasian region were actively implemented in accordance with the situation there and under different slogans. For instance, in Chechnya this idea boiled down to the independence of the republic, and in Dagestan the idea was to create an Islamic state. In Ingushetia this movement had no clear-cut political essence.

In 1998 the Coordination Council of Muslims of the North Caucasus was set up. From that time on the muftis of the republics in the South of Russia decided to join efforts to oppose the spreading radical

religious currents. However, the measures adopted against the Wahhabi elements only hampered their activity and forced them to go underground, but they changed their tactic in influencing rank-and-file believers.

Today the number of adherents and supporters of the Wahhabi trend cannot be ascertained exactly. According to various estimates, there are from 20,000 to 100,000 active Wahhabi members in Dagestan. In Ingushetia their number is several hundred, and in Chechnya about a thousand.

The negative attitude to the Wahhabi trend in Ingushetia has intensified due to mass murders of Muslim religious leaders, who enjoyed popularity among local inhabitants.

Attempts on the life of spiritual leaders in Ingushetia are a natural continuation of Wahhabis' demands that imams and mullahs should be appointed only from among the fundamentalists. Such actions are a challenge to society and they enhance anti-Wahhabi sentiments in Ingushetia.

Since 2004 terrorist acts against representatives of the police and law-enforcement agencies have become more frequent. They are the main target of terrorists in Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia and eastern districts of Stavropol Territory.

In Ingushetia contradictions have been growing between fundamentalists and traditionalists, and both these currents are politicized and radicalized.

Those adhering to the Wahhabi trend in Ingushetia have strong and weak sides. Among the former is their powerful ideological potential which attracts whole groups of the population. These are the ideas of fraternity, a unified Sharia state, equality and justice. However, there is no clear-cut program. Social differences between the followers and opponents of the Wahhabi trend are sometimes due to the absence of experts in the Islamic law – fikh. The Wahhabi trend rejects the idea

of a dialogue with any traditional religious community, and this partly undermines its social basis.

One of the specific features of the fight against the Wahhabi trend in Ingushetia is cooperation between state power and the muftiate. The state bears the main responsibility for opposition to radicalism and initiates the necessary measures in this sphere. Ruslan Aushev, when he was the President of the Republic of Ingushetia, banned the Wahhabi trend. He recognized only traditional Islam on the republican territory. The influence of the state on the religious life of Ingush society is confirmed by the introduction of Sharia courts and lessons of “true” Islam in schools. It can be said that Islam in Ingushetia has become part of the system of state power and government bodies. Sometimes mullahs and imams give lectures to servicemen in the Ministry for the Interior on “traditional” and “non-traditional” Islam and their difference.

The death of the Chechen separatist leaders Abdulkhalim Saidulayev and Shamil Basayev, the destruction of the Kabardino-Balkarian underground in 2005 made it possible to believe that the armed Wahhabi resistance was suppressed. However, after the announcement by Doku Umarov about the creation of the “Imarat Kavkaz,” local radical groupings in Ingushetia have become more active. The republic became a battleground between militants and government forces, and some people predicted it the fate of “another Chechnya.” In 2007 armed clashes became more frequent, streets were patrolled by military vehicles, army and police units were deployed virtually in all districts of the republic. At that time the mass “anti-Wahhabi purges” were carried out in the republic. All this caused justified indignation of the population who were unable to lead a normal life. People accused the republican authorities of inability to cope with the situation, and they were afraid of the breaking out of military hostilities similar to those in Chechnya.

In the summer of 2009 the regime of the counter-terrorist operation in Chechnya was lifted, but subversive and terrorist activity moved over to the neighboring republics – Ingushetia, Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkaria.

In 2010 the authorities in Ingushetia were able to turn the tide for the better. Thus, Ingushetia, just as Dagestan and Chechnya, managed to rebuff the onslaught of Wahhabi elements.

Yet the Wahhabi movement still draws young people in Ingushetia to its ranks and destabilizes the situation in the republic. Terrorist acts do not stop and civilian population continues to suffer.

Although the control of the authorities and clergy over religious life restrains the spreading of the Wahhabi trend, the radicalization process of people, especially young men, continues in the present conditions, which should be changed, above all.

The authorities should act in the social sphere. They should end unemployment by creating new jobs and improve the population's living conditions. It is necessary to realize that religious persecutions have strengthened the positions of the Wahhabi elements which have gone underground. As experts, note, the present situation in Ingushetia is a principally new challenge to Russia. It requires new approaches and new decisions and solutions unlike those used in Chechnya.

In order to lead Ingushetia out of the present difficult situation, it is necessary to implement broad socio-economic transformations, organize constant dialogue between the younger and older generations, and carry on joint work by the republican authorities, clergy and civil society's bodies. It is necessary to give the young people a social perspective and foster knowledge about their people's history and culture in them.

“Etnopoliticheskaya situatsiya v Rossii i sopredelnykh gosudarstvakh v 2011,” Moscow, 2012, pp. 272–281.

Samat Kumyspayev, Guldariga Simukanova,

Political analysts, Kazakhstan

**THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN THE EDUCATIONAL
SYSTEM IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION:
KAZAKHSTAN'S EXPERIENCE**

Globalization has engulfed all spheres of the activity of our societies. Not a single country can now exist outside the context of globalization. The time of the autonomous, closed development has passed never to return, since it has no future. Although there are different assessments of this phenomenon – from favorable to harshly critical – one thing is absolutely clear: globalization is the fait accompli. The world is becoming quite open and therefore an interdependent and uniform organism. The state of its separate parts, that is, countries and regions, directly depends not only on the general global system, the world economic and political situation, but also on spiritual and cultural realities. This is why the development of our states should correspond to the world cultural trends.

But globalization processes provoke definite reaction of many people in reply, the feeling of patriotism is growing, and a search for self-identification is going on. This is why ethnocultural and religious values in this aspect forming part of national education acquire principal importance. The role and significance of religion in the educational process are growing with every passing day. Modern realities are such that the problem of religious upbringing and education is important as never before.

Transfer from the socialist economic system to a market one has contributed to the process of deideologization, when simultaneously with the situation of real pluralism in world outlook, a desire has emerged to search for new substantiations of the meaning of life and multifaceted identity. At the end of the 1980s – beginning of the 1990s

many citizens displayed mental frustration. In those years, when the system of values became much weaker and revision and change of world outlook and socio-humanitarian knowledge took place almost everywhere, the criteria of scientific perception of the world have also become considerably lower. New conditions have emerged in which quasi-scientific, occult, and pseudo-religious ideas penetrated in mass consciousness. Religiousness and religion have become an original backdrop of the offensive activity of non-traditional beliefs alien to our culture, and the pseudo-religiousness and pseudo-religion produced by them have become the main directions of influence on the model of ethnocultural, confessional, civil and political identity founded on the factors of stability and accord, which have historically taken shape in Kazakhstan.

The religious situation largely depends on active influence on it of educational, ethnic and demographic specificity, as well as the political, economic and legal situation both within the country and outside its borders. The general picture of interconfessional relations has a complex character and should combine traditions, religiousness and tolerance.

The situation in certain post-Soviet countries has seriously changed during the past decades. The period of independence was marked by religious renaissance. People received an opportunity to freely satisfy their spiritual requirements. However, certain people regarded religious freedom as all-permissiveness. This situation was used by those who regarded religion as an instrument of gain, a means for reaching selfish aims. An influx of missionaries of dubious cults and radical movements who used the low religious competence of the population to their advantage swept several republics of the former U.S.S.R.

Examining the present-day religious situation, including in Kazakhstan, we can state that a citizen of Kazakhstan reckoning himself Muslim, or another believer, expresses not only his world outlook, but also national his self-consciousness.

Islamization is more noticeable in Kazakhstan now. In recent years radical Muslim trends have become more widespread in the republic, and the threat of terrorism has become greater. In 2011 several big acts of terror were committed in Kazakhstan. The events in the settlement of Shubarshi, Aktyubinsk region, were the most noticeable. Members of the Salafite community, in revenge for the arrest of one of their fellow-members in early July 2011 shot and killed two policemen. During the pursuit operation another policeman was killed. The authorities were forced to call units of the special forces of the Ministry for the Interior, Nine of 11 Salafites were apprehended and killed in the house in which they were hiding and firing from for the whole night.

The spreading and popularization of Islam in Kazakhstan can also be seen and felt from outside. Women in traditional Muslim dress are a common sight in urban streets now. Not a single public occasion passes without the presence of imams of mullahs. Observers note the growing interest in non-traditional trends of Islam, especially in South and Western Kazakhstan with the predominantly Kazakh population. There are quite a few Salafites and Koranites among the imams of local mosques.

The exacerbation of the socio-political situation in these conditions is inevitable. Along with the growing number of the supporters of radical Muslim movements, their struggle against secular regimes is transferred from the religious-ideological to the military-political sphere.

As experience and practice have shown, during the past several years the number of confessions traditional to Kazakhstan is bigger

than the number of believers. This is why it's quite evident that a man may not regard himself a devout believer, but he will refer himself to one or another confession due to historical-cultural traditions.

We should understand that the religious factor becomes not only an element of ethnic self-identification of each Kazakh, but it also plays a great role in the educational process.

Throughout all years of its sovereign development Kazakhstan, as a law-abiding, secular, democratic and socially-oriented state, has been creating conditions for real pluralism, and despite the fact that Kazakh society is not fully religious, it represents virtually the whole range of not only world and traditional religions, but also new faiths and cults. Quite often, these cults and faiths have nothing in common with religion and spirituality.

Although religion in Kazakhstan is separated from the state and education is secular, nevertheless, the problem of the need to carry on some sort of religious education in schools and institutions of higher learning is quite pressing in society. In 2010, when Kazakhstan was the chairman of the OSCE, heated debates were going on concerning the introduction of the subject called "Religion Studies." At OSCE conferences calls were heard for adopting recommendations to ban division into traditional and non-traditional religions. We cannot agree with this, inasmuch as division into traditional and non-traditional confessions means for us the presence of historical-cultural and temporal aspects in religious activity on the territory of Kazakhstan.

The role of the subject "Religion Studies" for upbringing and education in the broadening globalization process is quite significant. Its introduction is of primary importance. And "critical reaction" to the publication of a textbook edited by Academician G. Esim on the part of the opposition forces proves its timeliness and usefulness. This shows the exacerbation of the ideological-political confrontation in society

along the line “religious – pseudo-religions, secular – quasi-religious” consciousness, and the clear-cut political (*antistate in its basis*) bias of those who are against the introduction of the subject in question.

The need for this subject calls for training special teaching personnel and selecting its balanced content (there should be no special axiological accents). Such subject will help students orient themselves in the multitude of world outlooks, which exists in Kazakhstan, on condition of scientific-methodological approaches to its inclusion in the curriculum.

It should be borne in mind that religion and the state are separated in Kazakhstan. The secular character of the state is envisaged in the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan. However, this does not mean the identity of secularism and atheism. Observance of traditional Islam in its Khanafite form does not contradict the interests of public morality.

Inasmuch as changes are constantly going on in the conditions of the transformation of the political and social system and the economic structure in society and changes are always taking place in the system of value preferences, the state and society should not abandon the levers of ideological influence on civil mentality. The absence of specialized systematic study and monitoring of mental processes on the basis of the latest methods and technologies of research leads to the possibility of manipulating mass consciousness and its politicizing by pseudo-religious organizations and quasi-religious leaders.

At the same time, as we have already noted, one of the main priorities will be the preservation of secularism, which is not identical to atheism. The world has accumulated rich experience in preserving various forms of secularism, and we shall have to evolve one of our own. This means to determine in what spheres of society’s life participation of religion would be the most constrictive and useful, and

where and how it will be able to serve as a consolidating and creative factor of progress. How can the ethical potential of religion be used to soften and alleviate many processes engendered by the inner and global socio-economic shifts. It is strategically important for us to ensure a stable balance of the interests of the state and religion in the person of religious associations. It is important to establish such relations in which there would be no place for religious radicalism. A new model of relations should a priori form immunity with regard to destructive religious ideology and absolute non-acceptance of extremist views in the consciousness and behavior of society, and also direct the energy of believers to a positive channel.

It would be expedient to introduce other subjects within the framework of this curriculum in schools and other educational institutions teaching the foundations of religion, history of world religions, lessons of ethics, and other such subjects.

There are no mechanisms in our society of preemptive reaction to possible protest manifestations of discontent, which lead to undermining civil consolidation and weakening trust in the institution of power. In this connection it is important constantly to carry on information and consultation work with the population in view of the possible deterioration of the situation on the basis of pseudo-religious ideology. The state should have and wield the levers of ideological control. This is vividly reflected in the state policy toward young people.

In this respect experts recommend to introduce corresponding specialization at closed educational institutions for the professional training of young people, compile educational programs about traditional religions on government TV channels, and organize a uniform data bank of socio-humanitarian research of the religious situation in the Republic of Kazakhstan. On the example of specially

organized training seminars for government officials, leaders of religious and ethnocultural associations, and heads of non-governmental bodies, the problems of the strengthening of trust and public accord become reliable imperatives of intercultural dialogue.

It is also important to show political vulnerability of terminological discussions and arguments about tolerance and freedom of conscience and work out an effective and uncontroversial glossary for religious legislation.

The well-known Kazakh expert on religion Asylbek Izbaïrov has justly noted the following: “The destructive outside forces are trying to undermine our strong and consolidated state which intends to unite with certain other countries. Geopolitically, Kazakhstan is of great interest for outside players: its oil riches, advantageous geographical position, etc. The first direct and serious challenge to our country was thrown by the fetwa of Abu Munzir ash-Shinkiti who substantiated two premises in March 2011. The first: Kazakhstan’s citizens should not go for jihad to Chechnya or Afghanistan; they can fight for their faith inside their own country. The second: the main objects of jihad are employees of law-enforcement agencies. The further chain of events and subversive acts became the embodiment of the aims of the radicals in our region: to shatter the religious situation on which socio-political stability depends. Radical believers are only an instrument in the global struggle for the promotion and satisfaction of somebody’s interests. Islam has become a victim of the geopolitical games of world powers.” As we see it, this aspect will somehow touch on the problems of upbringing and education.

In this respect we think that the words of the Chief Mufti of Kazakhstan A. Derbisali are quite appropriate: “In the context of the education of young people in Islam we see that knowledge is unviable if it contradicts the principles, rules and premises of religion. This is why the system of education and theory of upbringing put forward

in the East and West should be regarded not as the latest ideas worked out by man alone, but as the fruits of human experience and perception, which can be both true and false. We consider them only as a material which can be used and ignore that part of it which leads to distortions and blasphemy. The distorted part of any philosophy or system is purified, ennobled and enriched by belief in God and profound observation of the Universe surrounding us. In this sense science and lessons could be turned into an effective means of upbringing and education, just as along the road to faith and knowledge.”

The aspects of religious activity should be regarded comprehensively. First of all, it is necessary to understand that religion is not a party which can be united or disbanded. Religion is a state of human soul which is impossible to control. Hence, it is necessary to adopt a program for the future aimed at working out a state policy for the development of religious activity.

In our view, a spiritual dialogue should be established and promoted by efforts of the leaders of religious communities helped by “secular” support in the person of authoritative political figures and men of science and culture. The dividing line between the spiritual and the secular in the life of the state and society is thin and vulnerable enough.

“Idealy i tsennosti Islama v obrazovatel'nom prostranstve XXI veka,” Ufa, 2012, pp. 88–89.

Yevgeni Borodin,

Political analyst

THE PLACE AND ROLE OF KYRGYZSTAN IN THE MODERN WORLD

The present socio-economic situation and development of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan is a result of the most complex processes taking place in the post-Soviet area. The unstable character of the development rate of the real sector of the economy and the worsening of the situation on the domestic labor market determine the greater spontaneity in migration processes which leads to the destabilization of the socio-economic situation, national security, and growing social tension in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. The directions and scope of internal and external migration flows violate the demographic balance and the rational distribution of the population on the territory of the republic. The scope of the migration flows of the population of Kyrgyzstan during the period of independence was truly unprecedented.

During the past five years the population of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan has been increasing by about 1.5 percent annually, and at present reaches more than five million four hundred thousand.

The labor market of Kyrgyzstan is characterized by a high rate of unemployment. An increase of the population of the able-bodied age continues, young people at the age of reproduction (after graduating from school, college, institute, etc.) are an additional source of workforce. They replenish mainly the low-paid labor market of the country.

A characteristic feature of Kyrgyz society is its de-urbanization, that is, decrease of the share of the urban population due to a high birthrate in the countryside. Because of a high level of unemployment young people leaving villages replenish the army of black-market dealers. And as a consequence of these processes, there is considerable

growth of religious-nationalistic sentiments, criminalization of young people, increasing social tension, and growing protest movement.

The sharp worsening of the world economy has been the main reason for the noticeably growing unemployment in most countries of the world. This tendency continued up to the years 2010–2012. Unemployment in Russia and Kazakhstan, where a greater number of Kyrgyz migrants have found jobs, will persist in the next few years. The lowering of the employment level in these countries has already influenced the possibility of job placement and the income level of Kyrgyz migrants. One should also take into account the natural surplus of the able-bodied population and labor migration from the neighboring countries – Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and China. Total pressure on the labor market of Kyrgyzstan by 2012 grew up to 200–250 thousand people. In these conditions the republic's economy could not absorb such amount of new labor resources, which would cause a new wave of instability in the region.

Despite the general trend of eliminating poverty in the Kyrgyz Republic, 31.7 percent of the country's population can still be considered poor. During the post-Soviet period the poverty level has gone down from 63 percent in 2000 to 31.7 percent in 2009, calculated by consumption. Today, the difference between the standards of living in town and countryside is quite great. The poverty level among the urban population is 32.2 percent, and that among the rural population is considerably higher, reaching 38.2 percent, (The rural population amounts to two-thirds of the entire population of Kyrgyzstan).

An analysis of the structure of the population's diet, housing conditions and health service confirms the presence of serious problems concerning the quality of life of the Kyrgyz people.

All these economic and social problems prompt protest- and conflict-breeding sentiments in Kyrgyz society. The negative migration

balance and “labor migration” are the natural consequences of these processes. During the past nineteen years 670,000 people have left the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, and up to one million people are “labor migrants” in Russia alone. The money remitted by the Kyrgyz “labor migrants” back home is equal to the budget expenditures of the Kyrgyz Republic. Thus “labor migration” to Russia is an important factor of the relations between our two countries. Another major component of the ties of the Kyrgyz Republic with the Russian Federation is that 34 percent of people in the republic speak Russian.

The macroeconomic indices of Kyrgyzstan examined in our analysis have shown that it lags behind many CIS countries. The per capita GDP in 2009 amounted to \$872, which is 13 times lower than the world average indices. The Kyrgyz Republic holds one of the last places among the CIS countries by the rates and level of socio-economic development.

During the post-Soviet period an economic structure has taken shape in Kyrgyzstan which is far from perfect. The share of just one “Kumtor” enterprise (gold mining) in the industrial production of the entire republic amounts to 40 percent. At the same time many important industries oriented to manufacturing consumer commodities and high-tech instruments and equipment are standing idle or reoriented to producing primitive goods. The raw materials produced in the republic, especially agricultural raw materials, are either exported or consumed domestically in unprocessed form, whereas many enterprises of the food, dairy and light industry are either standing idle or use their production capacities by five to ten percent.

The budget of the Kyrgyz Republic has a big deficit and is spent mainly on operational work and social welfare, yet, the republic is an active recipient of various grants and transfers. Throughout its existence as an independent state Kyrgyzstan actively resorts to foreign

borrowings. Its state foreign debt grew from 31 percent of the GDP in 1991 to 57 percent in 2009. As a result, a threat emerged to Kyrgyzstan's ability to service its foreign liabilities, which involves a whole range of negative consequences for the financial system and the economy of Kyrgyzstan as a whole. The proposals submitted by the leadership of the republic to write off the debt in exchange for "ecological security" do not raise the prestige of the republican leaders in the international arena, and the growing foreign debt weakens not only the economic, but also national security of the country.

Kyrgyzstan's interest in the United States and the latter's policy toward that country during the years of independence did not go beyond the bounds of commerce. There were no political, economic or any other aspirations. Economic cooperation and American investments camouflaged the real desire to use the United States as a new sponsor and creditor. The United States actively supported the actions of the then President of Kyrgyzstan Askar Akayev and his democratic choice. Evidently, Kyrgyzstan's entry in the World Trade Organization has been supported by the United States.

Nowadays, the economic presence of the United States in Kyrgyzstan is rather negligible and it will hardly increase in the near future. The American University of Central Asia has opened with support of the U.S. government and the Institute of Open Society has gradually become an ordinary educational establishment. It is virtually neglected by the government of the two countries and is not a subject of any negotiations between them.

An important place in the implementation of the plans concerning the presence of the United States in the Kyrgyz Republic has been given to American, international and other foreign non-governmental organizations. Such organizations as the Peace Corps, the International Republican Institute of the U.S.A., the East European

Democratic Center, the “Counterpart Consortium,” the “Eurasia Foundation,” and the “War and Peace Institute” function on the territory of the republic with a view to “developing democracy,” but in actual fact, their officials play the role of “instructors of revolutions.” The National Democratic Institute of the United States has rendered financial, technical and methodological assistance to all opposition parties and organizations of Kyrgyzstan.

The mutual relations of Kyrgyzstan and the United States largely depend on Russian-American relations, the activity of the regional international organizations, in which the Kyrgyz Republic is participating, and cooperation with international economic and financial organizations, primarily the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which are actually under American control. The present government of Kyrgyzstan cannot fully withdraw from cooperation with these organizations and this is why the only possible way lies in joint work along with the protection of the interests of Kyrgyzstan’s society.

An analysis of the socio-economic and political situation in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan has shown the following:

1) Despite an improvement of the socio-economic situation in the years from 2000 to 2009, the republic is one of the poorest countries in Central Asia and the CIS. Its economy is practically dependent on big countries – the United States, Russia, China, Kazakhstan and the European Union;

2) The presence of potential military threats conditioned by global, regional and internal problems, and all and sundry contradictions of different character prompts the need for military-political integration of the Kyrgyz Republic with other states of Central Eurasia, primarily with Russia, with a view to creating an effective multifaceted system of ensuring regional and national security;

3) The presence of serious political, economic and other contradictions aggravated by border, territorial and resource claims of the Central Asian countries bordering on Kyrgyzstan determines the many-vector policy of the republican leadership trying thereby to ensure the independence and territorial integrity of Kyrgyzstan;

4) The process of Kyrgyzstan's integration with Russia is obstructed by the United States and the European Union which are striving for the weakening of such joint organizations as CSTO and SCO, and the future transformation of Central Eurasia into a zone of their influence;

5) The United States and the European Union are trying to create such conditions in the Kyrgyz Republic under which there would be no consolidation of civil society. They manipulate the ruling elites whose only real aim is to preserve their own power and convert it into material wealth;

6) The stake of the Kyrgyz Republic on foreign partners invariably leads to growing interstate rivalry in the region for investments and foreign aid, exacerbating the existing interstate contradictions and claims. The latter can result in extending the practice of forcible economic or another pressure and contribute to the destabilization of the situation in the states of the region;

7) Among foreign threats to the statehood of the Kyrgyz Republic the main one is the absence of strategy in the conditions of globalization, when a small and weak country is unable to oppose foreign influence in the conditions of growing geopolitical rivalry in the region, which entails the desovereignization, which is already taking place, and the danger of the actual loss of all possibilities to preserve its statehood;

8) Energy generation, agriculture and development of communications are the most promising spheres for economic cooperation and economic progress of Kyrgyzstan;

9) Russia is interested in establishing stability in Kyrgyzstan and strengthening its long-term influence on the republic because of its cultural and geopolitical position. Russia is ready to invest real money in the real economy of Kyrgyzstan, instead of giving grants for “democratization” or any other geopolitical projects, provided the political vector of Kyrgyzstan’s leadership is responsible and predictable.

“Vnutripoliticheskoye i sotsialino-ekonomicheskoye razvitiye Kyrgyzstana,” Moscow, 2011, pp. 132–136.

L. Vasilyev,

Senior research associate of IFES RAS

THE GEOPOLITICAL SITUATION IN CENTRAL ASIA

The Central Asian region occupies an important geostrategic position. Geographically, it is the shortest possible route from the Caucasus and the Middle East to the countries of East, South and North Asia. It provides the best opportunities to control transit routes, as well as the deep-lying districts of the biggest states of Asia – China, India and Russia.

In the present conditions the significance of the Central Asian region has considerably increased in its geo-economic aspect. The presence of rich deposits of oil and gas, uranium, gold and other non-ferrous metals and rare earth elements, combined with convenient conditions for laying out international communication lines, attracts many world powers. Right after the disintegration of the Soviet Union

at the end of the 20th century there were several countries – Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran, apart from Russia, – fighting for influence in the region, whereas now a virtual war is going on between the leading world investors (the United States, China, Japan, India, Russia, and the European Union) for access to the raw material resources of the region, and also for control over the routes of their transportation.

It should be noted that at the end of the 20th century the development of the political situation in the region was strongly influenced by the new sovereign states of Central Asia, which had for a long time been parts first of the Russian Empire and then the Soviet Union. On the one hand, it allowed the feudal states of Central Asia to make a qualitative leap forward in their economic and political development. But on the other hand, these evolutionary leaps had also certain negative consequences.

Due to the absence of experienced and skilled local personnel the Soviet leadership was forced to resort to extensive migration of the population from the European part of the country to these republics, which caused a certain “Russification” of their state and public life. Apart from that, the absence of practically all basic branches of a modern industry on the territory of the region, plus a big shortage of experienced and skilled personnel, was the main reason for giving a raw material character to their economies. Finally, centralized power in the conditions of a unitary state considerably retarded the development of local self-government, which, in turn, lowered the level and capabilities of the local authorities.

As a result, after proclamation of their state sovereignty the new Central Asian countries had to create new power and administrative bodies, the army, police, etc. in the conditions of a great shortage of time and financial and other means, which had a negative effect on their

quality and efficiency. Apart from that, the local elite of certain states of Central Asia in their desire to protect national sovereignty from possible threats on the part of Russia has decided to oust non-indigenous nationalities living in these states, mainly Slav nationalities, from their territory. This proved to be an additional blow at the socio-economic situation in young states, which aggravated the state of affairs.

Besides, in the conditions of national rebirth interstate relations in the region have exacerbated, and this included: \

- territorial disputes;
- incompleteness of the demilitarization process of their borders;
- problems of supplies of energy and raw material resources;
- distribution of transborder water resources;
- presence of enclaves and places of compact residence of non-indigenous peoples;
- transborder trade and development of adjacent territories;
- unregulated migration of the population;
- transit cargo transportation through territories of neighboring states;
- different orientations of the states of the region in the foreign-policy and domestic-policy spheres.

Proceeding from the existing situation the Central Asian countries have chosen a many-vector strategy of their foreign policy. This was largely a result of the unpreparedness of Russia, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, to evolve an adequate policy with regard to the development of cooperation with these countries in the present conditions.

The policy of western countries toward the Central Asian region has always been based on the preservation of the priority of their national interests. It should be noted that the protection of the

traditional western values – democracy and human rights in Central Asia – is no longer a priority matter for western countries, and is now used as a means to protect their economic and political interests. However, quite a few processes going on in Central Asia are regarded by western political figures from their own point of view, which sometimes leads to distortion of reality and formation of false stereotypes.

At present Central Asian states are developing their own statehood, and each nation living there has the firm desire to establish its self-identification and take its own place in the world community. International relations in the Central Asian region, even bilateral relations, often acquire multilateral character envisaging participation (official or unofficial) of other regional or outside actors in them. However, it should be borne in mind that the ethnocultural specific features, historical development path, and the modern situation of the peoples of Central Asia do not provide a favorable foundation so far for building a democratic state by western standards. On the contrary, forcing the western standards of the way of life and state structure will lead to the exacerbation of the situation and chaos in Central Asian countries.

Analyzing the influence of negative foreign-policy factors on the Central Asian region one can draw the conclusion that the main contradiction knots in the policy toward it pursued by the world powers are as follows:

- the desire of certain states to ensure their leading positions in the region with a view to establishing effective control over the possible development ways of the emerging political situation;
- the struggle for the right to possess the resources of the region, as well as control over strategic interregional communications;

- rivalry in the supplies of arms and military equipment to the region, as well as material-technical provision of the armed forces of Central Asian states;

- rivalry for influence on the leaders of Central Asian countries;

- striving for control over the strategic branches of the industry of regional states;

- rivalry in the cultural and educational sphere and attempts to dominate the minds of local young people.

It should be noted that the region is playing a major role in the sphere of security. The specificity of its geographical position, on the one hand, makes it a convenient object of attack by Islamic extremists from the southern and south-western directions, and on the other, it is a buffer for such countries as Russia and China, from these extremists. Besides, practically in all states of the region there are considerable groups of the population propagandizing the ideas of separatism and Islamic extremism and using the methods and means of terrorism to achieve their aims.

Such situation in the Central Asian states is conditioned by internal socio-political and ideological reasons. Summing up the internal political reasons for instability in the countries of the region it is possible to reveal their main groups which are inherent, as a rule, in all states of the region. They include:

- economic and social crisis, unemployment and impoverishment of a considerable part of the population;

- keen feeling of social exclusion and defenselessness in a considerable part of the population;

- considerable growth of social stratification of society;

- de-industrialization of the economy and marginalization of a considerable part of the population, mostly young people, connected with it;

– loss by many people of ideological and spiritual orientations, destruction of moral values, distortion of premises of traditional Islam and the growing influence of its radical trends;

– ethnic and religious conflicts, and radical changes of world outlook caused by major social upheavals.

Indicative in this respect is the fact that for ten years the leaders of regional states succeeded in changing the political establishment rather painlessly, even in crisis situations, like the sudden death of Saparmurad Niyazov in Turkmenistan, and keeping the situation under control. The main specific feature of the political regimes in Central Asia is their common tendency: on the one hand, authoritarianism, personification of power, and on the other, the desire to modernize the political system and build a modern state.

However, frequent changes of government in Central Asian states and uncertain position of officials in connection with constant personnel changes lead to the insufficient and ineffective use of the existing potential. As a result, state interests are subordinated to private interests of individual persons and groupings, and their confrontation is fraught with serious risks for a country's stability.

It should be noted that the Central Asian states can stably develop and integrate only on condition of regional stability and a proper geopolitical balance. Among the possible negative foreign-policy factors of the worsening geopolitical situation in the region are:

1. Difference of the views of the leaders of Central Asian states in determining the strategic priorities of development, which seriously hampers the process of regional integration.

2. Rivalry in solving general problems of the region with a view to receiving maximal dividends for one's own country, which leads to the establishment of barriers in trade and border problems of

neighboring states, and also causes interethnic tension, mistrust and conflicts.

3. Different level of the economic development of the countries of the region, which lowers the effectiveness of solutions of common problems facing the Central Asian region.

4. Close proximity to unstable Afghanistan and Pakistan, persisting threat of penetration of large groups of Islamic extremists in the region, as well as the presence of separatist and extremist movements on the territory of the Central Asian countries themselves.

5. Possibility of turning Central Asia into one of the world's "trouble spots" in an event of the aggravation of rivalry between the world powers in the region with all ensuing consequences.

*"Mirovye derzhavy v Tsentralnoi Azii,
"Moscow, 2011, pp. 7–12.*

Dina Malysheva,

D. Sc. (Politics), Institute of World Economy
& International Relations,
Russian Academy of Sciences

**THE "ARAB SPRING" AS SEEN
BY RUSSIAN SCHOLARS. "THE MIDDLE EAST,
ARAB AWAKENING AND RUSSIA: WHAT NEXT?"**

The book under review (published in Moscow in 2012) is a jointly written monograph thoroughly analyzing a very complex and contradictory phenomenon of the "Arab spring," or "Arab awakening." The authors reveal a broad range of competing interests and numerous factors and prerequisites which have determined the original features of the wave of protest sweeping the Middle East. Besides, the book gives a detailed forecast of the further turn of events and scenarios of the

future political configuration of the Arab East, and shows the specific features of the attitude to the developments in the Middle East of representatives of the Russian academic community and, what is especially important, the significance of the events and situation there for Russia. One of the first articles in the book under review was written by Academician Yevgeni Primakov, a well-known political and public figure and an authority on Middle East problems. Another article belongs to V. Naumkin, Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, also a well-known expert on Middle Eastern affairs. All articles are based on trustworthy factual information and documents from various sources. The authors tend to regard the “Arab spring” as the beginning of the transformation of Arab societies. There were many obstacles preventing this transformation, among them the archaic political superstructure in a number of countries which were ruled by “strong men” like Colonel Gaddafi or General Mubarak, the absence of civil freedoms and social lifts, social and property disproportions, systemic corruption, weak social policy, economic stagnation, etc. The “Arab awakening” is regarded as a consequence of the incomplete decolonization and the global economic crisis, and also as a sign of developing democratization. All this has exacerbated the problems in the unstable part of the Arab world and has not allowed the Arab economy to progress by the beginning of the protest movements. And the latter developed differently in different countries, according to their own laws.

One of the results of the “Arab awakening”, in the view of Russian scholars and experts, was that an “unstable and contradictory balance of interests and forces emerged between various factions, which, in one way or another, are products of the former rule. New forces have come to the fore, which often position themselves as Islamic, they are radically-minded, demand changes and their own

place under the sun.” Some countries of the region run the risk of renouncing the idea of stable development and entering a new round of slowing down growth and losing incentives to progress. All these circumstances conditioned numerous interpretations of the “Arab spring” as a result of the influence of outside forces. This version is offered in the article by O. Pavlov who writes that “everything that has been going on in the Middle East in the past three years is a result of the actions of the world financial-political elites which prod Washington, and London and Paris along with it, to bring to the logical end the globalization processes, and with the help of Islamic radicals to complete the destruction of national sovereign states in Eurasia (in this their aims coincide with those of the Islamists), create the situation of chaos in which it would be easier to prolong the life of the dying dollar, and prevent the formation of the really multipolar world. The creation of big regional blocs of states having their own strong regional currencies capable to throw a challenge to the present currency-financial system could become the foundation of such world. This is why the sharp edge of “Arab revolutions” is aimed not at Arab dictators, but at the Eurasian Union and China taking shape before our very eyes now.”

Some other articles of the book comment on the absurd nature of the attempts to reduce the entire complex character of the present-day motley international relations in the Middle East only to the struggle of the outside forces for control over resources and for the geopolitical re-division of the world, the first fiddle in which is played by the United States. It would be wrong to present the Egyptian or Tunisian opposition leaders, as is sometimes the case of Russian political analysts, as people manipulated by the West and used in its selfish aims. There are articles which note the positive role of Russia and China which come out with the idea of mediation and bringing the two

warring side in the Syrian conflict to a national dialogue. An analysis of the twists and turns of outside interference in the Arab affairs enables the authors of the collection to draw certain lessons concerning serious changes of the international climate, not for the better, unfortunately. The point is the growing importance of the military force in the interventionist drive on the part of a number of western countries. As V. Naumkin justly notes, “the large-scale military confrontation, which resulted from the struggle between the rebels and the ruling regimes in Libya and Syria, has pinpointed the question of legitimacy, permissibility and conditions of interference with internal conflicts on the part of outside forces, including for the declared humanitarian purpose of protecting the civilian population.”

The interpretation of the events in Libya in the collection cannot but attract attention. It differs from the version widely publicized in the West, and partly in Russia, according to which there was confrontation between the supporters of the archaic and cranky ruler and the positive forces of democracy supported by the West. When turning to the complex history of Libya and the role of different secular ideologies and Islamic trends there, it may be possible to understand the specific features of the political struggle in that country. A. Yegorin writes that in the formation of statehood and national strategy in Libya throughout the past two centuries two main stages could be singled out: religious-political asceticism based on Sunnism and Sufism, and “Gaddafism” based on the power of the people as statehood and “direct democracy” based on Islamic religious dogmas. The internal confrontation was conditioned not only by the ideological factor – differences between supporters of “Gaddafism” and those adhering to Sunnism and Sufism, but also dissatisfaction of the national medium-sized and big business with the slow pace of reforms. Outside interference has only deepened and widened the internal political split.

The Syrian conflict is analyzed in connection with the anti-government actions and manifestations in the late April – early May of 2011. According to the latest historical tradition, the army and its command have been playing the key role in decision-making in domestic and foreign policy of the country. This distinguishes the Syrian conflict from the Libyan one. In the latter the army actually betrayed its commander Gaddafi, whereas in Syria the army remained the consolidating force of the regime, which is still capable to rebuff the attacks of the well-armed units of the patchy opposition supported by outside forces.

The authors of the collection come to the conclusion that the events in the Arab world, or the “Spring of Wrath,” did not look at first like revolts or mass protest movements typical of developing countries so far. Neither were they analogous to the “color revolutions,” inasmuch as the model worked out by western political technologists for the non-violent change of the ruling regimes in countries of East and Central Europe and the post-Soviet area could not prove efficient in the conditions of the clan structure of Middle Eastern societies. As it is claimed in the collection, the events of the “Arab spring” are rather similar to the national-liberation revolutions which swept the Middle East in the 20th century and brought independence to Arab countries, along with major shifts in the economy, politics and other spheres. This is why it cannot be excluded that the “Arab spring” will be regarded as a milestone on the road of establishing democracy, naturally with an Arab and Islamic face. This was not a class, anti-imperialist or religious revolution, but trans-social, trans-national and trans-confessional revolution. It is another matter that revolution is prepared and begun by some people, and later it is usurped by others. This is why the authors of this collection pay attention to another important subject – the role of the religious factor in the “Arab awakening.” Despite all differences in

the Middle East countries, the protest movements there had one common feature: at the initial stage in street manifestations there was no noticeable participation of Islamic extremists in them, no demands were put forward to renounce the secular character of the state or introduce the Sharia law in judicial practice and public life. At a later stage, instability following revolutionary development has turned a number of countries into a haven for terrorists who are doing everything possible to increase their activity and influence.

Meanwhile, the forces referred by the West to “political Islam” and often called “Islamist” (the Egyptian “Muslim Brothers” are among them) are not unified organizationally. They consist of numerous groups, movements and currents whose members and participants adhere to either radical or relatively moderate views, remain serious, and sometimes, the only opponents to the ruling regimes. It cannot be excluded that some of them who are termed “Islamists” today are trying to implement a modernization project according to the one implemented by the Party of Justice and Development in Turkey. Or they will implement social programs aimed at improving the life of rank-and-file Muslims, like it is being done by the Palestine HAMAS movement or the Lebanese “Hezbollah.” It is indicative that the leading opposition party of Egypt “Muslim Brothers” has called, after the removal of the former president Mubarak, for the establishment of a civilian government and consolidation of the “guarantees of human rights and freedoms” in the Constitution of the country. Thus, the “Muslim Brothers,” just like the Turkish Party of Justice and Development, have quite easily abandoned traditional religious terminology and switched over to the language of general civil intercommunication. This enlarges the opportunities of the “Muslim Brothers” to take part in the country’s life as a systemic political party and allows some researchers to hope for certain people in Egypt being

able to search for a balance between religious principles, on the one hand, and pragmatism in domestic and foreign policy, on the other. The growing role of the religious factor as a result of the “Arab spring” gives ground to Vitali Naumkin to suppose that the present developments in the Arab world could be called the “Great Islamic revolution.” According to some data cited by L. Kulagina and V. Akhmedov, the Iranian ruling elite tends to regard the revolutionary events in the Arab world part of “Islamic awakening.” However, this does not mean that adherence of the Islamists to democracy is a fait accompli, inasmuch as it is still not clear whether the Islamists (of course, moderate and enlightened enough) are ready to live according to the rules of a secular state, or they will persist in reaching their main aim – the creation of an Islamic state. The authors conclude that the Arab revolutions have changed the balance of forces in the region. First, Turkey has actively joined the struggle for influence in the region, claiming the role of the new regional leader. Secondly, a new role has been taken by the monarchies of the Gulf, especially Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Thirdly, the collapse of the regimes which have ruled Egypt, Tunisia and Libya for decades, and possibly those who will be forced to leave the political scene (Syria) has noticeably increased uncertainty in international relations in the Middle East, especially against the backdrop of the old conflicts which had been contained by the overthrown secular regimes.

The transformation of the Arab East is taking place against the background of the changing international context. The economic and military interest of the United States and its allies in the region has diminished to a certain extent due to the successful development of the alternative energy source, namely, shale gas, which reduces interest in and demand for the Middle East hydrocarbon resources. Along with this, the United States still wishes to raise the strategic importance of

the Middle East by drawing Central Asian countries to this region within the framework of the project of the Greater Middle East and the New Silk Route. At the same time the direct interests of the United States in the Middle East have suffered a great damage, where, as a result of the war in Iraq and the downfall of Saddam Hussein's regime, the positions of Iran have become more solid and influential. Besides, the information monopoly of the United States on the interpretation of all conflicts and world events has been shattered due to the growing influence and prestige of "Al Jazeera" Company. In general, the time has passed never to return when Washington could place and remove the rulers in Eastern countries at its own free will. The "Arab awakening" can influence, though indirectly, the situation in the regions of Russia, with the predominantly Muslim population. If radical Islamists succeed in realizing their aims in the Middle East, the wave of extremism may reach the South of Russia, the Caucasus and Central Asia. True, such alarmist version is not wholly accepted by the authors of the collection. Some of them say that there are hardly any grounds to speak of any special scenario of the foreign forces for Russia on the pattern of the "Arab spring," if the causes of the protest movement in the Arab East are explained exclusively by the schemes of the West. Equally counterproductive would be to transform the Syrian conflict and slightly more strained relations of Russia with the United States and the West into calls for harsher foreign policy. It would not be worthwhile to pursue such a course in the context of a very fragile international trust which is constantly facing new challenges.

It is another matter if new realities in the Middle East place Russia in the face of new serious challenges. They might reveal themselves not only in the further destabilization of the Greater Middle East and its Islamization, which will be combined with the latter's penetration in the southern regions of Russia. There is another

important circumstance, namely, the fact that “the United States regards practically all developments in the Middle East in terms of its struggle with Iran, which has become the main target of American policy in the region,” in the view of Academician Yevgeni Primakov. He connects Washington’s course at overthrowing the Asad regime in Syria, which is so friendly with Iran, with the Iranian factor. On the whole, destabilization of the situation close to the Russian borders in connection with the attempts to change the ruling regimes in Syria or Iran increases threats to Russia from the Middle East, inducing it to more effective actions aimed at opposing the use of military force in the region.

For those who deal with the Middle East professionally the work under review will undoubtedly be very useful because it contains a thorough analysis of quite a few socio-economic, political, cultural and religious problems of the region. It will also help those who would like to better understand the development of the post-Soviet republics of the former Soviet Union, including the Russian Federation. The book may give answers to questions which are of crucial importance for all states with transition economies, inasmuch as the range of the problems discussed goes far beyond the framework of the Middle Eastern region.

*“Rossiya v globalnoi politike,” Moscow,
2013, No 1, January – February.*

**РОССИЯ
И
МУСУЛЬМАНСКИЙ МИР
2013 – 9 (255)**

Научно-информационный бюллетень

Содержит материалы по текущим политическим,
социальным и религиозным вопросам

Гигиеническое заключение
№ 77.99.6.953.П.5008.8.99 от 23.08.1999 г.
Подписано к печати 5/IX-2013 г. Формат 60x84/16
Бум. офсетная № 1. Печать офсетная. Свободная цена
Усл. печ. л. 3,75 Уч.-изд. л. 3,5
Тираж 300 экз. Заказ № 189

**Институт научной информации
по общественным наукам РАН,
Нахимовский проспект, д. 51/21,
Москва, В-418, ГСП-7, 117997**

**Отдел маркетинга и распространения
информационных изданий
Тел. Факс (499) 120-4514
E-mail: inion@bk.ru**

**E-mail: ani-2000@list.ru
(по вопросам распространения изданий)**

Отпечатано в ИНИОН РАН
Нахимовский пр-кт, д. 51/21
Москва В-418, ГСП-7, 117997
042(02)9