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**FORMATION OF CIVILIZATORY IDENTITY
AS SOCIAL CAPITAL OF MODERN RUSSIA**

The Russian state and society are now at a stage of the fundamental socio-cultural transition and a search for the ways and technologies of evolution in the 21st century. This transition is accompanied with indefiniteness of new socio-cultural forms and turbulent development. However, if we look at the entire panorama of the development of the world community we shall see that the entire world is in a state of transition to turbulence, and Russia is not in any special position. The fundamental shifts in world development connected with the rapid leap into “post-modernity” have not only aggravated socio-political, cultural, civilizatory, and other contradictions, but put to the fore the problem of identity. The processes of globalization and localization, secularization and religious renaissance, post-modernization and archaism have complicated and muddled the social and cultural-civilizatory landscape of our epoch. This whimsical intertwining in a uniform chronological field of antipode worldviews, cultural standards and principles lead to a paradoxical effect, when, for example, in Saudi Arabia women are flogged for driving a car, and in Europe one-sex marriages are legalized

almost everywhere. In such world full of contradictions and paradoxes to the limit, the problems of identity invariably come to the fore.

Ethnic Confession as a Factor of Disintegration

In studying the problems of identity in Russia we should take into account the general situation in the world, inasmuch as it lays an imprint on many processes going on here. However, within the Russian socio-cultural medium contradictions between the universal and the local (specific), between tendencies of secularization and powerful processes of religious revival, between post-modernization and archaism become ever more evident. Such ambivalence of the evolution of the socio-cultural medium of Russia demonstrates considerable disunity of Russian society and the presence of actors with completely different values and cultural standards in it. Emphasis on cultural, ethnic and confessional differences sometimes provokes conflicts.

Such situation is natural, inasmuch as there is a crisis of integration forms of identity, along with the strengthening of ethno-confessional identities, which quite often come out as a disintegrating factor. As a result, conflicts flare up regularly on an ethnic and confessional basis, which are largely due to ethno-cultural differences. The exacerbation of the situation has taken place after the disintegration of the U.S.S.R., when in many areas of Russia, especially in the North Caucasus, the processes of ethnic and religious revival began to develop without any control. Ethnic and confessional identities, which had been suppressed for many decades, have “suddenly” become the key ones determining almost everything. As a result, group identities of some peoples of the Russian Federation have come to the fore primarily as ethno-confessional, and only then as civil.

One may argue that the key to solving interethnic and inter-confessional problems in the present-day Russian Federation is the

integrating structuring of identification area, which presupposes renunciation of the priority of ethnic-confessional factor and establishment of civil and civilizatory identities as the priority ones. However, to implement this model is far from simple because the present situation is not in favor of the integrating identities.

This assertion is confirmed by the results of sociological surveillances carried on in different Russian regions. For example, as shown by a survey in Bashkortostan in 2012, ethnic identification prevails over state-civil one at present, due to a number of reasons (socio-economic, political, security, etc.).

This conclusion is in line with the conclusion made after our survey carried out in some parts of the Southern Federal region in 2009. At that time ethnic identity was named as “very important” or simply “important” by 83.6 percent of respondents, which gave it the key role among all types of identity. At the same time ethnic identity was defined as “very important” by 55.9 percent of respondents, which largely surpasses the similar attitude to civil identity (35.2 percent). We made a conclusion that although civil and ethnic identities are not mutually exclusive and are included in the uniform “bag of identities” of modern Russian citizen, they compete with each other in the region under review. Such situation exists not only in the south of the country, but in other regions as well.

Naturally, such rivalry does not need to renounce any one of these types of identity. Ethnic and civil identities are related to each other not in the category “either – or” (one should oust the other), but in the category “and – and.” At the same time it is necessary to note that a sharp increase of ethnic identity is a direct consequence of the collapse of Soviet identity and weakness of Russian civil identity. It can be said that along with increasing civil and civilizatory identities and their

integrating character the significance of ethnic, as well as confessional identities will gradually be reduced.

As to confessional identity, its significance in the structure of identities of modern Russian citizen is quite great. This concerns certain republics of the North Caucasus. The ideology of unity of all Muslims and their imperative affiliation with the world Muslim umma make it possible to talk not only of the value-worldview, but also of civilizational separation of the North Caucasus as a Muslim region.

As a result of actualization and politicization of ethno-confessional identities a conflict of identities arises in the format of individual being, and also in big social groups. The ideas of national consolidation and civil unity concentrated at the level of civil identity do not always get priority over narrow ethnic and narrow confessional values and principles. Such conflict of identities is expressed, for instance, in unwillingness to observe the principles of secular society, in preservation of archaic socio-cultural models in the conditions of modernization. The presence of such conflict shows weakness of the modern variant of Russian civil identity and its insufficiency to ensure the national unity of the Russian Federation.

Weakness of Russian Civil Identity

Indeed, Russian civil identity in modern Russia is a very important but relatively simple construction based on the formal fact of citizenship. It forms citizens, but does not create a people. Insufficiency of civil identity as the foundation of national unity is manifested in intercultural relations in Russian society, when representatives of various cultural areas often feel mutual alienation, and sometimes even hostility. Social consciousness continues to be dominated by numerous ideological and cultural stereotypes. This leads to disunity of people who do not understand the essence of their unity, despite their being

citizens of one state, and do not see common aims and social orientation points. In the conditions of intercultural disunity, disharmony of worldview principles and value orientations, civil identity plays the role of the formal marker of citizens' affiliation to a definite state, and nothing more. Civil community formed on the basis of civil identification is devoid of deep-going integrating ties today, the cementing ties which make society consolidated and precludes conflicts between citizens.

According to sociological polls revealing civil identity in 2011, 95 percent of those polled identified themselves as “citizens of Russia,” and 72 percent felt their community with Russian citizens “to a considerable degree.” Judging by the results of surveillance, this is the strongest and more confident identity among other quite significant identities.

In our view, such conclusion can be made with regard to a great part of the Russian population at the present time. The point is that the Russian people have been included in the processes of ethnoconfessional revival in lesser degree and throughout the post-Soviet years remained a people oriented not to ethno-determined structures and organizations, but to the state. In determining Russian nationalism and its manifestations and taking into consideration the measures undertaken for the revival of Orthodox Christianity, a great part of the Russian population has been, and remains, uncommitted ethnically and indifferent enough to religious problems. The level of ethnic mobilization of the Russian population and the degree of its religiousness are much weaker than those of other peoples of the Russian Federation. In Soviet time the Russian population in national republics played a considerable stabilizing and integrating role. After the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. and the actual eviction of Russians from a number of national republics of the North Caucasus, the

situation has become rather tense, and separatist tendencies have grown much stronger there. As a result, there were two Chechen wars and virtual cultural-civilizational disintegration of the eastern republics of the North Caucasus.

A view seems quite justified that it is precisely the Russians who influence the formation of common all-Russia cultural values and orientations to supporting Russian self-consciousness and patriotism. The Russian population also plays an important role of the stabilizing element in interethnic relations in the region, preventing tensions and conflicts between groups and between titular ethnic groups, which have historical roots. In the conditions of the total reduction of the numerical strength of the Russian population the significance of the common Russian values and symbols in the North Caucasian region have sharply diminished. In this connection one can argue that in some national republics of the Russian Federation civil identity means, first of all, loyalty to the state which is regarded as the patriarchal origin rather than the real feeling of affiliation to its values and symbols.

It was due to this reason that the modern variant of Russian civil identity is unable to solve the task of overcoming interethnic and interconfessional contradictions. In other words, Russian identity has formed, but it has not resulted in any improvement of the interethnic situation in the country, moreover it becomes exacerbated from time to time.

Naturally, solution of the complex of ethnoconfessional problems is a systemic task requiring socio-economic progress, political stability and cultural efforts. But in our view, the problem is concentrated in the identification field. If civil identity, at least in the form of its existence in the mentality of Russians nowadays, is not effective enough, it is necessary to search for such form of identity which would give an opportunity to advance along the road of solving the task of

harmonization of ethnoconfessional relations in the Russian Federation. Civilizational identity, that is, a considerable social capital of modern Russia, is precisely such form of identity.

Formation of Civilizational Identity – Foundation of Ensuring National Unity of Russia

Interest in civilizational identity as a new opportunity to ensure national unity of Russia has become much greater. Against the backdrop of the collapse of the policy of multiculturalism in many European countries, it became evident that reliance on the formation of civil identity alone with the absolutization of civilizational self-determination does not justify itself.

The subject of searching for civilizational identity is developed in the Strategy of state nationalities policy of the Russian Federation during the period until 2025. It noted, among other things, that the modern Russian state is united by the single cultural (civilizational) code based on the preservation and development of Russian culture and the language, historical and cultural heritage of all peoples of Russia and characterized by striving for truth and justice, respect of original traditions of the peoples inhabiting Russia and ability to integrate their best achievements in single Russian culture.

The concept of “civilizational code” fulfills the most important function to consolidate the ideas of continuity of Russia’s being in the world and in the mentality of Russian citizens. It is the mythology of the civilizational code that lies in the basis of the formation of civilizational identity of present-day Russian society. The main component of this civilizational identity is the idea of unity and inviolability of the millennium-long historical experience of Russia’s existence, conviction of the need to preserve cultural and civilizational constants, which became part of our present life, despite the collapse of

the state systems of Russia in different epochs – Kiev Rus, Moscovy Czardom, and the Soviet Union.

In this sense the new Russian state is a historically conditioned modification of the cultural-civilizatory tradition, which has been developing for over one thousand years already. The formation of civil identity of new Russia should proceed on the basis of the trans-historical civilizatory principles symbolizing the continuous development and entirety of the millennium-long existence of Russia in world history. The crisis of civil identity, which has not yet been overcome, is conditioned by the crisis of civilizatory identity, the loss of deep-going ties with the civilizatory code of Russia and its cultural and historical heritage. As a consequence, civil identity is built on the basis of the new Russian state and its symbols, which have largely lost their historical aura and sacral meaning in the mentality of Russian citizens.

Full-fledged civil identity constituting such important parameters of human life as values, meanings, principles, cultural standards, etc. is only possible on the basis of civilizatory identity. Inasmuch as the latter is only at the time of origination, becoming an expression of an abstract civilizatory code, Russian citizens often do not feel their community, they have no common socio-cultural values and orientations, which may result in inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts.

Ethnocultural differences between citizens of the multinational Russian state, having no integrating cultural-civilizatory foundation, become a conflictogenic factor, but not an advantage of Russia as compared to other states which Russian political figures often talk about. The ethnocultural variety of Russia will become a factor of development and modernization, when it is founded on the common Russian cultural-civilizatory platform enriched by the quintessence of the positive experience of Russian civilization in its thousand-long history. Civilizatory identity is an enormous social capital of modern

Russia capable to contribute to the harmonization of interethnic and inter-confessional relations, as well as to ensure national unity of the Russian Federation.

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**TATARSTAN: PROCESS OF RE-ISLAMIZATION
AND MODERN DEVELOPMENT TRENDS
OF MUSLIM IDENTITY**

Religious renaissance of the Tatars, taking place in the form of re-Islamization, has traversed an arduous path during the past two decades. In the early 1990s – during the crisis years of Soviet identity and in the conditions of social vacuum in the post-Soviet area the Tatars, just as the greater part of the country’s entire population turned to the “original roots of the people,” the “faith of the ancestors.”

Re-Islamization was going on at the time in the form of ethnic confessionalization, when religion was taken for a part of popular culture, as national tradition, and Muslim identity among the Tatars bore the character of “religious nationalism.” That was a period of the beginning of the restoration of the traditional Muslim status of the Tatars and the extensive development of the Muslim sphere of the republic; an ever greater number of Tatars self-identified themselves as Muslims declaring that “they were born Muslims.” More mosques were built, more religious functions were arranged at various places – theaters, stadiums, at home, and elsewhere. However, the general level of interest in religion was limited to symbolic and cultural aspects.

The actualization of Muslim identity at the time was regarded not as the growing religious activity of the population and its return to religion, but rather as a growing requirement for stable cultural-civilizational characteristics in the life of the individual and society.

More mosques were built and opened in the early 1990s against the backdrop of a shortage of educated and skilled enough imams. The main part of the clergy consisted of representatives of the so-called people's Islam. Most of them, especially in villages, did not have an elementary religious education. By the beginning of the 1990s, of 55 imams 41 were older than 60, and only one of them had a theological education of a university level, and eight had a secondary religious education. The imam was the authority for parishioners only in the sphere of performing religious rites. The mass of believers took Islam for a system of rites and an element of ethnonational self-consciousness.

The next stage – the middle and second half of the 1990s – was the period of the strengthening institutionalization of Islam in Tatarstan. The Spiritual Board of Muslims became more authoritative, the number of mosques and religious organizations was growing, and a system of religious education was developing more rapidly. It was at that period that clashes took place between new young imams, some of whom received a religious education abroad, and imams of the older generation oriented mainly to the so-called people's Islam. It was not only a clash between the “traditional” and “new” interpretations of Islam, not only a conflict between “fathers and sons,” and between the traditional and the new, but a struggle for the spheres of influence. The ability of theologically educated young imams to explain in a simple language the difficult language of the Koran, give clear and understandable instructions and spiritual orientations to each parishioner, in contrast to the formal and dogmatic approach to Islam

and the Koran of “old” imams, strengthens their positions and increases the number of their adherents. At that period, due to the broadening field of information, greater number of religious means of mass information, the Internet-resources, big flows of religious literature, and wider and more frequent contacts with Muslims abroad during the hajj, studies at foreign educational institutions, etc, Islamic values were becoming more popular, and a new interpretation of Islam emerged. The previous perception of Islam as a popular ethnocultural tradition in the form of various rites was not enough for modern man who began to understand his disaccord with the inner spiritual and moral essence of Islam and its system of social, worldview and religious standards.

At the turn of the 2000s, “normative Islam” became stronger and more influential, and the number of its adherents grew considerably. “New” religiousness became more widespread and characterized by the growing “theologization” of consciousness, especially among urban young people. A new Islamic subculture began to be formed and distinguished by the strict observance of religious precepts and instructions in everyday life, actualization of the socio-ethical image of a Muslim, and active propaganda of Islam. This “new” religiousness was less connected with ethnic interests, feelings and culture.

Certain distance of ethnicity from Islam among modern Tatars was due to a certain lowering of their national and linguistic competence as a result of Russification of society’s life and the emergence of a whole stratum of Russian-speaking Tatars who do not know their mother tongue well enough. A definite role in this was also played by powerful migration flows, which broke the traditional national composition of Volga area towns. More and more people from Central Asia and the North Caucasus can now be seen among the parishioners of local mosques. The traditional Tatar language of sermons is more frequently replaced by Russian.

Some Muslim traditionalists believe that these processes are largely due to the Tatar intelligentsia who are more concerned over the reformation of Islam, that is, their efforts are mainly concentrated on the idea to “construct” Islam without namaz, without the necessary prayers. These efforts considerably retard re-Islamization of Tatars who, refusing to perform namaz and leave mosques, which are occupied by their more devout colleagues from the South. These processes are dangerous for the very future of the Tatar nation and its ethnic component. It would be difficult to unite and preserve a people without such consolidation center as mosque.

A new development stage of Islam in the Republic of Tatarstan is connected with the formation of a theological legal sphere. Complex theological problems come to the fore, and polarization of ideas concerning the development of Islam in the Tatar community becomes deeper.

In the view of Islamic scholars, one can talk of the three basic groups having an essential influence on the religious situation in Tatarstan: the Khanafites, or defenders of the local traditions of Islam, Sufi-traditionalists and neo-traditionalists, and Salaphites. Apart from them, there are small groups of scholars – modernists/liberals, Sufi of various shades, and representatives of organizations banned in the Russian Federation – Khizb at-Tahrir and Jamaat at-Tablig.

The two first trends (Khanafites-traditionalists and Sufi) are in the group of neo-traditionalists. Their main characteristic is acceptance of the positive value of the local tradition in contrast to western values and unitary Islamic models offered by radical Islamists. The Salaphites represent the ideology of liberation from non-Islamic western influence and from local distortions of the “initially pure” religious ideas of the time of Prophet Mohammed.

The main differences between neo-traditionalists and Salaphites boil down to dogmatic contradictions, rite differences, and ethnical controversies.

The Salaphite / Wahhabi form of Islam becomes widespread in the young people's community, where various views exist side by side – from moderation to radicalism and extremism. While radicalism existed within the framework of Salaphite communities, the local authorities did not have serious grounds for taking any strict measures against them. Certain connivance with them on the part of official Islamic institutions and spiritual boards could be explained by the fact that many present-day muftis have bolstered up their positions at the expense of “Arab” money. Salaphism for them is associated with religious values formed in the full-fledged Muslim society and therefore they can well be a form of Islamic revival in the region.

E. Khojayeva, a popular sociologist, while studying the Islamization process among modern young people, comes to the following conclusion:

“In the conditions of the mass media interpretation of Wahhabi trend as the social ground for radical extremist ideas and terrorism, young believers are forced to exonerate themselves and their faith emphasizing that the word ‘Wahhabism’ should not exist at all. People should be divided into good and bad. The ‘Wahhabi’ trend is a current of Islam. This is not a teaching calling for committing evil deeds. It calls for everything useful to man. The word ‘Wahhabi’ has become the convenient marker to brand all those who disagree with ‘real Muslims’ and have nothing in common with them.”

In general, it is rather difficult to define the ideological essence and trend of religious views of modern young people.

Tatarstan is gradually becoming an arena of clashes between the tolerant Khanafite mazkhab traditional for Tatars and the radical trends

of religious fundamentalism brought in from abroad. In the past several years there have been several acts of terror connected with the activities of extremist groups in the republic. They were mostly members of the international terrorist organization “Khizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami.” The peak of religious confrontation was the attempt on the life of the Chairman of the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Tatarstan Ildus Faizov and the murder of his deputy Valiulla Yakupov, which took place in Kazan on July 19, 2012. They adhered to the school of the Khanafite mazhab traditional for Tatars and were resolute opponents of the radical forms of Islam from abroad.

After this tragic event there was an extraordinary meeting of the republican State Council at which the deputy premier of Tatarstan A. Safarov called on all citizens, all religious organizations, local authorities, institutions of civil society, and the mass media to unite in opposition to extremism and terrorism for the sake of peace, tranquility and wellbeing of all Tatars.

Will the form of Islam traditional for Tatars be able to come out in this situation as a restraining factor in the process of radicalization of Islam? In contrast to radical Islamism, the Khanafite mazhab traditional for Tatars is distinguished by loyalty to the Russian secular state, and respect for other traditional confessions in the Russian Federation.

Thus, the process of re-Islamization of Tatars at the end of the 20th – beginning of the 21st century is of a complex character. The revival of Islam is taking place in two forms – as a popular tradition and as a worldview. The first decade of the post-Soviet period was characterized by ethnic confessionalization based on mutual ties and interdependence of the ethnic and the religious in self-consciousness. The Muslim identity of Tatars had largely an ethno-religious character,

whereas at present the “Muslim self-consciousness” of Tatars is becoming more religious.

“Grazhdanskaya, etnicheskaya i regionalnaya identichnost: vchera, segodnya, zavtra,” Moscow, 2013, pp. 119–125.

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“SOFT ISLAMIC REVOLUTION”

IN MODERN ADYGEA

On November 24, 2012, a regular congress of Muslims of Adygea and Krasnodar territory took place in Maikop. The previous congress was held on November 12, 2008. The last congress was a very important one for the revival of Islam in Adygea, because it changed the paradigm of religious life in the republic. There were 177 delegates at the congress. The report was made by the mufti of the Spiritual Board of Muslims N. Emizh, who acquainted all those present with the board’s activity and financial position. Among other things, he mentioned the fact that many local people in recent years preferred to go to various sects, but not to mosques, and this was why the Spiritual Board adopted the following decision in 2012: if a member of an Adyge family joins a sect, he and members of his family will not be allowed to be buried at the local Muslim cemetery.

The key event at the congress was the election of a new mufti. During the discussion of the subject two groups were formed: one proposed to vote for the present mufti, N. Emizh, the other wanted to elect a younger one. Thus, the boundary was formed between Muslims of the older and the younger generations. Among candidates to the post of mufti were four men: the present mufti N. Emizh, the imam of the

Maikop mosque A. Kardanov, the imam of the cathedral mosque I. Shkhalakhov, and the imam of the mountain village of Mafekhabl H. Muhamad of Kosovo origin.

As a result of the open vote, the post was taken by A. Kardanov. In the view of the author of the article, the election was a “transition stage” of a “soft Islamic revolution” in Adygea. Young Muslims came to leadership in the Muslim umma of Adygea. A more neutral person was elected for the transition period, who became a more formal rather than the real leader. Actually, spiritual power was taken by the new Council of the Spiritual Board, in which there were stronger leaders who became the main actors in the new Islamic reality in the Republic of Adygea after December 2013.

Evidently, at the congress power was changed in the Muslim umma of Adygea by a *democratic procedure*. Now the Spiritual Board of Muslims will be headed by “young Muslims,” as they are now called, who want to introduce their own methods and forms, and view differently the process of Islamic revival in Adygea than it was viewed by N. Emizh, who stood at the head of the board for twelve years

It should be noted that such “struggle for power” within Islamic community and Islamic institutions is characteristic of many republics of the North Caucasus. For example, we witnessed almost similar situation in the past ten to fifteen years in Kabardino-Balkaria, where “young Muslims” were striving for power, although using quite legitimate means of influence on the Muslim community, but suffered defeat, after which they turned to violent methods and were ultimately crushed by the local and federal law-enforcement agencies. A question arises as to why young Muslims suffered defeat in Kabardino-Balkaria, whereas in Adygea there was a “peaceful transfer of power” into their hands. What similarities and differences were there, in these two republics of the North Caucasus?

For all years he was in power as the mufti of Adygea N. Emizh pursued a definite and well-thought-out policy of Islamic revival in the republic. In his work he often turned to scholars who rendered him support. And we always felt his good-natured and honest attitude to Islamic communities. In 2002–2006 we often talked with mufti Nurbi Emizh, discussing the problem of “confrontation” between Muslims of different generations, especially after the well-known events in the city of Nalchik in October 2005, when there were bloody clashes between “young Muslims” and the republican authorities of Kabardino-Balkaria. We talked of a possibility of such turn of events in the Republic of Adygea. Nurbi Emizh was quite sure of himself, his position and the correctness of his course. He maintained that the control network he had set up, his activity, his personal relations with Muslims of different age and social position, in other words, mutual understanding between himself and the republican umma would allow him to keep power in his hands and control the activity of young Muslims.

Young Muslims came to power in the Spiritual Board, and the transfer of power in this case was not as radical as in Kabardino-Balkaria. In our view, it was a natural and legitimate process. N. Emizh was a reasonable and far-sighted person, and he did not resort to a struggle with young Muslims accusing them of radicalism and demanding to fight them with the help of force and administrative resources, as was the case of Kabardino-Balkaria.

A year has passed since the beginning of the work of the new Spiritual Board. The latter is now largely oriented to young people. Lectures, lessons and sermons for them are now more frequent, more of them receive proper theological education, much is being done *to develop their religious consciousness and improve everyday behavior.*

At the present time there are only five well-educated imams in the Republic of Adygea. The Spiritual Board plans to give special lectures on Islam to district imams; in all, there will be forty-five such imams.

On June 21, 2013, the head of the Republic of Adygheya Aslan Thakushinov met with representatives of the Spiritual Board: mufti Askarbi Kardanov, and imam Sobo Mafekhabl Muhamed Hasani. He discussed with them the questions of rites and rituals and educational problems. By the way, it is planned to open a madrasah in Adygea for training well-educated imams to work in rural districts.

Some theorists and theologians predict the emergence of conflicts between the older and younger generations, that is, between “traditional” and “young” Muslims. But we think that since the latter have received power in our Muslim umma, there will be no need to fight for it. Most probably, there may be a certain tension between the Spiritual Board, on the one hand, and various institutions of state authorities.

*The article has been written specially
for the Bulletin “Russia and the Moslem World”.*

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REASONS FOR AND CONSEQUENCES OF A SPLIT OF THE MUSLIM ELITE IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS

Islam in the Russian Federation is predominantly in its Sunni version of Khanifite trend. Until recently researchers clearly differentiated two areas of widespread Islam in the Russian Federation – the Volga area, the Urals and West Siberia, on the one

hand, and the North Caucasus, on the other. During the past two decades religious-political extremism and terrorism have become a grim reality in the North Caucasus and therefore we concentrate our attention on it.

Just as in other regions of Russia and the world, for that matter, Islam is not uniform, it exists in quite a few trends and currents. In the North Caucasus, just as in other parts of the Russian Federation, the Sunni version of Islam dominates (there are about 45,000 people in the southern part of the Republic of Daghestan preacher the Shi'ite version of Islam).

As to mazkhab, or legal schools in Islam, the North Caucasus can be divided into two parts: the North-western and Central Caucasus (Adygea, Karachaevo-Circassia, Kabardino-Balkaria and North Ossetia-Alania) are dominated by Khanifite mazkhab, which is considered rather soft and more flexible. In the North-eastern Caucasus (Daghestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia) Shafiite mazkhab predominates, which is stricter than Khanifite.

However, the most significant difference lies in ideological currents of Islam (traditionalism, fundamentalism, modernism). The main dividing line is along traditionalism – fundamentalism. Each of these trends is fighting for greater influence on believers. The modernist trends are weak and contradictory in the region so far, and therefore they do not play any significant role in the general alignment of forces. Inasmuch as the most Islamized republic of the North Caucasus is Daghestan, we shall use and rely mostly on Daghestani material on the subject.

Traditional Islam is represented above all by the institutionalized Muslim clergy – the administrative-managerial apparatus of religious organizations: the spiritual boards of Muslims and their subordinate bodies (mosques, Islamic educational institutions, etc.). These bodies

are considered “official Islam,” or “mosque Islam.” In the North-east Caucasus there is another institutionalized group of traditionalists – supporters of “non-mosque Islam” represented by numerous Murid fraternities of three Sufi tariqats headed by their leaders – sheikhs.

Traditional Islam is a complex, multilevel and contradictory phenomenon. And it is not uniform either. The spiritual boards of “official Islam” register numerous conflicts of interests between individual Muslim priests. Comparatively recently, in certain republics of the North Caucasus, particularly in Daghestan, there have been several ethnically oriented spiritual boards. There are also contradictions between spiritual boards of Muslims of different North Caucasian republics. Within the framework of the Coordination Center of Muslims of the North Caucasus set up in 1998 conflicts frequently flare up between certain muftis rivaling for the supreme post in the center. Rotation of the personnel of “official Islam” also takes place, so that among the imams of mosques and other Muslim priests there are now persons who have received theological education abroad, and this is why they are often far removed from the traditional values in the region.

Another influential section of traditionalism playing an important role in the religious-political situation in the republics of the North Caucasus is Sufism, or Muslim mysticism. For example, in Daghestan alone there are some twenty Sufi sheikhs. The total number of Sufi adherents in the republic, according to various estimates, is up to 55,000, three-quarters of them live in the north and west of Daghestan.

Sufism is also widespread in Chechnya and Ingushetia where there are more than thirty such fraternities. Moreover, adherence to Sufism among the Vainakhs (Chechens and Ingushis) is stronger than among Daghestanis. We should note that Sufism is not widespread in the central and western parts of the North Caucasus, which explains

their weaker Islamization as compared to the North-east Caucasus. At the same time there are strained relations between various Sufi organizations and their sheikhs and Murids.

Hence, one may say that traditional Islam in the region (“mosque” and “non-mosque”) is full of contradictions. Naturally, this is reflected in feelings and views of common believers, most of whom can be referred to traditionalists. North Caucasian traditional Islam is outside the field of modernization processes observed in other Muslim regions of Russia, above all in the Volga area.

During the post-Soviet period there has been steady politicization of traditional, and above all, “official” Islam. As a rule, this process is distinguished by the interaction and cooperation of the authorities and the official clergy. The former often use Muslim rhetoric and try to base themselves on the prestige of Islam and Muslim priests. For example, in the 1990s there was the view current among certain republican authorities that the “salvation” of national republics lies exclusively in their orientation to Islam. In turn, Muslim leaders try to draw closer to power and its institutions, claiming, among other things, that it was only they which are able to oppose Islamic radicals. However, the main reason for politicization of official Islam was its struggle with the Salaphites, in the course of which the secular authorities finally joined the official Muslim clergy.

Simultaneously, the infrastructure of official Islam strengthened steadily. For instance, in Daghestan alone there were 2,240 Islamic organizations (2,220 Sunni, about 1,900 mosques, 178 prayer houses, 16 Islamic higher educational institutions and their 15 branches, 116 madrasahs, as well as 20 Shi’ite organizations). There were more than 2,500 imams, muezzins, and other religious persons.

Islamic organizations have their own mass media. For example, the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Daghestan has its own official

newspaper “Assalam,” which is published in eight main local Daghestani languages, and in Russian). Apart from that, there are the weekly “Islamsky vestnik,” the journal “Islam,” and the newspaper “Nur-ul Islam.” Besides, electronic versions of these publications are in the Internet. The Islamic organizations of Daghestan widely use the republican radio and TV. Islamic propaganda is carried on by several radio stations, and religious literature in many languages of Daghestan is published in broad circulation. According to available data, this situation is typical of other republics of the North Caucasus.

Muslim associations of the North Caucasian republics have a wide network of organizations relying on the traditional moral orientations of Islam, the authority of spiritual leaders (alims and sheikhs), and undertake active steps to increase their influence on the processes going on in republican societies. The strengthening positions of spiritual boards of Muslims in regulating inter-confessional relations engendered centralization of religious power, and on the other hand, it strengthened centrifugal tendencies and deepened intra-confessional differences and contradictions in Muslim communities.

As we have already noted, the main opponents and antagonists to traditionalists in the region are fundamentalists (Salaphites or neo-Wahhabis), whose ideal is return to the realities of the “golden age” of Islam (the period of life of the first three generations of Muslims, or the period connected with the life and activity of Prophet Mohammed and four “righteous” caliphs) – “Shariaization” of social life and recreation of a state in the form of Caliphate. Confrontation between traditionalists and Salaphites has led to greater Islamization of North Caucasian republics, especially in its north-eastern part, although during the first half of the 1990s the authorities dissociated themselves from supporting any one of the sides, considering it an internal matter of Islamic organizations and their leaders, who were allegedly engaged in purely

theological disputes. However, beginning from the mid-1990s and largely due to the efforts of the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Daghestan representatives of the federal and regional authorities began to be drawn in inter-confessional confrontation, and they took a course aimed at fighting “Wahhabism.” In 1999 an “anti-Wahhabi” law was adopted in Daghestan, and the secular authorities entered into alliance with representative of “official” Islam.

Despite certain negative realities and trends in traditional Islam, the federal and republican authorities justly regard it as “tolerant” Islam which needs all-round support. Such view during the 1990s was absolutely correct, but today it is erroneous in many respects. In actual fact, traditional Islam is largely politicized, and sometimes too radical and even aggressive practically in all republics of the North Caucasus, which is fraught with the growing tension and conflicts in the midst of traditionalists, and likewise between traditionalists and representatives of other currents of Islam, above all “Wahhabism” (or rather “neo-Wahhabism”). This is true, first and foremost, of the Northeast Caucasus where Sufism is playing an important role. In the concrete historical conditions in the North Caucasus two polar forms of identity are opposed to each other: the “traditional identity” and the extremist “Wahhabi identity” brought from the outside.

In the absence of modernized North Caucasian Islam the secular authorities have no other choice than to support traditionalists. However, to connive to them in everything becomes dangerous, because politicization and radicalization of Islam do not weaken, embracing new territories of the Russian Federation. It should be emphasized that this process has begun precisely in Daghestan.

The well-known Daghestani scholar of Islam K. Khanbabayev (1956–2011) singles out four stages of radicalization of the Islamic movement in Daghestan. In his view, at the initial stage (end of the

1980s–1991) there was an “Islamic call” which boiled down to introduction of the main ideological premises of Islamism in the mass consciousness of Daghestani people.

In the next, organizational stage (1991–1999) there was the process of institutionalization of radical groupings. In that period, beginning from 1997, mass reprisals were hurled on to the “Wahhabi” elements, which was the main reason for their leaving Daghestan and moving to neighboring Chechnya, where their center began to function in the settlement of Ulus Martan. It was there that the complete consolidation of Daghestani and Chechen “Wahhabites” took place, and that process was strongly influenced by foreign extremists, especially from certain Arab countries.

The third, violent, stage (1999) began with calls for jihad, which was interpreted as an armed struggle against the “enemies of Islam”, for establishing an Islamic order, and seizing power in Daghestan by force. Using the pretext of an armed opposition to the bands of militants from Chechnya, who invaded Daghestan, a law was adopted on September 16, 1999, banning Wahhabi or any other extremist activity on the territory of the Republic of Daghestan.” According to that law, all “Wahhabi” elements were declared extremists and terrorists and outlawed. Meanwhile, that law was adopted too hastily, on the spur of the moment and the wave of indignation caused by the invasion of Chechen militants.

At the fourth stage (since the beginning of the 2000s up to now) Islamists radical groupings, having suffered defeat in an open struggle, have gone underground and switched over to terrorist acts against representatives of the state and municipal bodies of power, law-enforcement agencies, and plain citizens.

At the same time it should be emphasized that contrary to the established views, the fundamentalist grouping in the North Caucasus

emerged in the 1970s in the form of small underground cells in Daghestan, and their founder was M. Kebedov (Muhammed Kizilyurtovsky). In the late 1980s – beginning of the 1990s, at the height of Gorbachev's *perestroika*, they emerged from the underground and, with a powerful influence and assistance from outside began to broaden and strengthen their activity. This process increased sharply during the first Chechen campaign (1994–1996) due to active participation of many foreign “mojaheds” in bandit units, as well as radically-minded representatives of other North Caucasian republics. During the interval between the two Chechen campaigns (1996–1999) fundamentalism became institutionalized on the territory of the unrecognized Chechen Republic of Ichkeria. In the course of the second Chechen campaign the Salaphite current spread over the entire territory of the North Caucasus, thus predetermining the complex political process in the entire region.

Inasmuch as the characteristic of the stages of politicization and radicalization of Islam suggested by K. Khanbabayev adequately reflects the processes going on in Daghestan, but does not fully take into account the situation in other North Caucasian republics, all the more so in part of the Russian Federation far removed from this region, it would seem expedient to offer several other stages of politicization and radicalization of Islam in the Russian Federation, which differ in some aspects from the above-listed stages. All the more so, since the religious-political processes of the past two or three years have caused serious changes in the structure and geography of spreading Islamism and its extreme forms. Here is our version of division into periods of radicalization of Islam.

1. The 1970s – early 1990s was the first stage. Young people's Salaphite groupings begin to emerge in Daghestan, not without

influence from abroad, and special services revealed and “softly” stop their activity.

2. The beginning of the 1990s – 1994 – at that time there was the practical legalization of Daghestani Salaphite groupings, creation of Islamic circles where their members studied the concepts and principles of jihad in their Wahhabi interpretation. At that time, “cultural centers” were being opened at the embassies of certain Muslim countries, and quite a few Islamic publications were being brought to and distributed in Russia. Simultaneously, such literature began to be published locally. Missionaries, preachers and teachers of Muslim disciplines began to arrive in Russia. At the same time more young Muslims were going abroad to receive an Islamic education. Daghestan was the main territory of Islamization during these two periods.

3. December 1994 – beginning of the 2000s was characterized by the greater role of Chechnya in the radicalization process of North Caucasian Islam. The two Chechen wars and a three-year interval between them were accompanied with the concentration of foreign “mojaheds,” mainly Arabs, in that republic. Islamic centers abroad rendered serious financial and ideological support to them. Special study centers were set up on the territory of Chechnya to train fighters (the most notorious of them was one at Serzhen-Yurt settlement headed by the well-known Arab terrorist Emir Khattab, a person close to the “Al Qaeda” leader Osama bin Laden. In 1998 radical Islamists from Daghestan moved to Chechnya where Chechen and Daghestani Salaphites, as well as their counterparts from other North Caucasian republics and from abroad consolidated and strengthened their positions to such a degree that they decided to invade neighboring Daghestan. But their fighting units were defeated.

4. September 1999–2007. This stage was characterized by the beginning of the second Chechen campaign, defeat of the fighting units

of the separatists, and their switchover to a guerilla war. During that period Chechnya became the epicenter of radical Islamists, and the idea of jihad now became widespread all over the North Caucasus. The infrastructure of jihad developed at a rapid pace, there were more terrorist acts committed by Islamic militants not only in the region, but elsewhere in the Russian Federation.

In the 1990s the North Caucasian Wahhabi elements were mostly moderate radical and ultra-radical, whereas in the course of the second Chechen war the local Salaphites turned to religious political extremism and open terrorism camouflaged by Islamic teaching. Nevertheless, there were still moderate radical in the North Caucasus. However, the local authorities, unable or unwilling to distinguish between moderates and ultra-radicals, undertook harsh forcible measures against both of them. Such approach diminished the number of moderate radicals, small as it was, and they switched over to extremist positions.

5. 2007 – up to now. The new leader of the virtually existing Chechen Republic of Ichkeria Doku Umarov announced the nationalist plan of building the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria and simultaneously made public new geopolitical project – “Imarat Kavkaz.” According to it, the new state – “Imarat Kavkaz” was created in the North Caucasus on Islamic principles, which should be ruled on the pattern of Islamic states of the past (caliphates). “Imarat Kavkaz” consists of provinces (vilayets), that is, other republics of the North Caucasus. In the future, other regions of Russia will be included in this Islamic state. The vilayets included sectors consisting of primary Islamic groupings – “jamaats”, which are virtual subversive terrorist bands.

6. The end of the first decade – beginning of the second decade of this century witnessed the spreading of influence of “Imarat Kavkaz” and its leaders on other “Muslim” territories – the Volga area, the Urals and West Siberia, and, above all, Tatarstan.

7. In the past year or two new Islamic groupings emerged in “Islamic enclaves” in non-Muslim parts of the country, which gathered around mosques appearing in these territories, and this can be viewed as the latest trend in the radicalization process of Russian Islam, spreading over the entire territory of the country. Similar processes have taken place earlier in the United States and certain countries in Western Europe.

Evidently, the latest three stages of radicalization of Islam and the Islamic movement directly touch on not only the North Caucasus, but also other regions of Russia, forming a qualitatively new structure of Islamic groupings, and preparing the ground for evolving spectacular geopolitical plans to change the political structure of the country. If we ignore this negative trend, we would hardly be able to fight successfully against this religious-political phenomenon destroying Russian statehood.

On October 7, 2007, the new leader of unrecognized Ichkeria Doku Umarov appointed himself supreme ruler – “amir of mojaheds of the Caucasus,” “leader of jihad,” and also the only legitimate power in all territories where there were mojaheds, even in the vast territories far-off from the North Caucasus – right up to Tatarstan and Buryatia in East Siberia. Thus, the idea of national independence was replaced by the idea of liberation from “power of the infidels.” As it was declared, the main aim of the creation of “Imarat Kavkaz” was the establishment of the Sharia rule over the entire territory of the North Caucasus.

Thus, a big and autonomous network terrorist cluster has taken shape in the North Caucasus, which is united with similar network structures in different regions of the world by common ideological ideas and aims. There is a ramified network terrorist structure in the region possessing such specific institutions as courts, a fiscal system, and bodies of executive power at different levels. The system is vital

due to a combination of the ideology of radical Islamism with North Caucasian social institutions and social and political conditions.

The subversive and terrorist activity of “Imarat Kavkaz” and its branches has sharply increased, especially on the eve, in the course and after the “five-day war” with Georgia. For example, in 2009 on the territory of the Southern Federal area, including the North Caucasus, 641 acts of terror were committed (in 2008 there were 491 such incidents, increase by 30 percent). In 2009 alone 251 employees of law-enforcement agencies and military men and 32 civilians were killed (in 2008 the figures were 484 and 68 respectively).

The level of terrorist activity remains high at present, too, especially in Daghestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and Chechnya. During the past three years there have been over one thousand terrorist acts in the North Caucasus, including 732 in Daghestan, 253 in Ingushetia, 222 in Kabardino-Balkaria, and 198 in Chechnya.

Under the impact of the North Caucasus radicalization of Islam has begun in the Volga area, above all in the Republic of Tatarstan. In 1993 the heads of the new “Yoldfyz” madrasah in the city of Naberezhniye Chelny signed an agreement on cooperation in the sphere of education with the charity organization “Taiba” from Saudi Arabia. As a result the madrasah was turned into a training center of religious radicals. One of the graduates from this madrasah, Denis Sartakov, was among the organizers of terrorist acts in Moscow. Later several more students of the madrasah were found to be participants in such acts. Besides, facts have become known of cooperation of the heads of the madrasah with the Chechen field commanders Basayev and Khattab, who gave an opportunity to several madrasah students to receive military training in Chechnya. In the early 2000s similar centers of young radicals were found in Almetyevsk, Nizhnekamsk, Kukmor and in some other populated centers of Tatarstan.

The latest history of Islamic terrorism in Tatarstan began with the first acts of terror on gas pipelines in rural districts in 2003–2005. Then “forest” militants have emerged in Nurlat district of Tatarstan where a band of fundamentalists tried to organize an armed underground grouping in a local forest, on the North Caucasian pattern. On November 25, 2010 an armed gang was smashed by troops of the Tatarstan’s Interior Ministry forces. It became clear at the time that stable groups of radical Salaphites came into being, and permanent ties were established between them and ethno-nationalists and representatives of the criminal world. The head of the Ministry for the Interior of Tatarstan noted that there was transformation of organized crime groups into ethnic-religious groups of criminals, and Islamization of participants in criminal gangs merging with supporters of the Salaphite Wahhabi movement. Apart from that, Islamist-Salaphites are engaged in preaching at mosques, prisons, and in the criminal medium, drawing dozens of persons to their ranks annually. These “Muslim teams” do not rival or oppose one another, they are bound by similar ideas and support one another. Well-organized and strictly disciplined, with enough criminal experience these people present a real threat to society today.

In 2010 the leader of the North Caucasia Islamists, “amir of Imarat Kavkaz” proclaimed that the entire territory of the Volga area and the Urals was now considered “vilayet Idel-Ural.” Thus the process of institutionalization of the bandit underground began with the growing number of Salaphite members.

In the view of experts, there are now about three thousand Salaphites and their active sympathizers in Tatarstan, and their number is growing: in Saudi Arabia alone there are 120 Tatar students, and in 2011 twenty more men went there to study. The situation in the republic is sharply deteriorating. In January 2012 in the village of

Memdel of Vysokogorsky district of Tatarstan a home-based laboratory producing explosives and the so-called “Shaheed belts” was discovered, and on July 19 of that year a senior clergyman V. Yakupov was killed in Kazan and the mufti of Tatarstan I. Faizov was heavily wounded. According to Tatar experts, the situation in the Volga area at present reminds of events happening in the North Caucasus some ten to fifteen years ago. The first mufti of Daghestan was killed in 1998. After that, more than fifty muftis, their assistants, and local imams adhering to traditional North Caucasian Islam were killed.

And so, stable Salaphite groups have been formed in the Republic of Tatarstan, and experts predict that their number will grow and spread all over the Volga area, the Urals and West Siberia, just as it was the case of the North Caucasus. These groups regard themselves as stable enough communities with their own specific features, interests and possibilities to protect them, using legal means. This path has already been traversed by their North Caucasian fellow-thinkers, having formed a whole number of such law-enforcement organizations for their defense. For example, in Daghestan channels of legal support of the activity of the armed extremist underground were formed in the first decade of the 2000s through public associations. The most notorious one was “Mothers of Daghestan.” The leaders of these organizations maintain contacts with extremists and sharply criticize the activity of the law-enforcement agencies, accusing them of mass violations of human rights.

Such position evokes the view among plain people that allegedly unjustified harsh measures applied by the law-enforcement agencies are one of the main reasons forcing young men to join the ranks of militants. Moreover, certain experts maintain that a stable and influential “Islamist lobby” has emerged in Russia. Using this, the “Salaphite wing” of Muslims has resorted to the practice of organizing

officially permitted meetings in various regions mobilizing supporters at these meeting and accusing the federal authorities of persecution of Islam all over the country. For instance, on February 8, 2013, more than two thousand Salaphites – supporters of radical Islam who were waging struggle against the Russian state, held a meeting in the very center of Makhachkala, capital of Daghestan. The meeting proved a reflection of the new reality: supporters of Salaphites today comprise from ten to seventeen percent of the total number of all Muslims of the republic.

We should note that when Daghestan was first shattered by huge explosions in 2005, the number of Salaphites, according to the Ministry for the Interior, was less than 2,000. People involved in the acts of terror in the capital of Daghestan Makhachkala carried black and white flags with religious inscriptions in Arabic. Similar symbols were also used at meetings in Kazan, capital of Tatarstan, organized by parishioners of the “Al-Ikhlās” mosque in the summer of 2012. Later Kazan experts told the mass media and public that the flags and symbols were fully identical to those used by members of the international religious organization “Khizb-ut-Tahrir al-Islami” in many countries.

Hence, it becomes evident that all attempts to lay the blame for reprisals and violence on representatives of law-enforcement agencies and troops of the Ministry for the Interior, who were allegedly interested in stepping up reprisals against believers, were absolutely false.

The next stage of spreading “Wahhabi” trend, in our view, is the strengthening of the positions of its adepts in “Muslim enclaves” that have appeared in certain Russian big cities in recent years. True, such enclaves have long taken shape in some European countries, for instance in France, and therefore their experience may seem useful for Russia, too.

European realities show that ethnically and religiously homogeneous communities of migrants are actively and successfully enough forming the “enclave” life environment, which is localized within definite territorial boundaries with a mosque or prayer house as its center. Simultaneously, one of the consequences of the appearance of such “enclaves” is growing criminalization and religious-political radicalization of a certain part of migrants, which inevitably leads to the emergence of latent seats of socio-political conflicts and inevitable confrontation with the local population.

In our view, there can be no talk of any tolerant “Euro-Islam,” we’d rather could talk of Islamization of Europe in very dangerous forms. The events of the first years of the new century in Spain, Britain, France, and other European countries have convincingly confirmed the correctness of this assertion. As a consequence, in recent years European political figures have begun to talk almost in unison about the failure of the ideology and practice of multiculturalism in Europe and about incompatibility of Islamism and western liberal values.

Similar “enclaves” have appeared in Russian cities, too, and their results began to be seen and felt almost immediately. At a prayer house near one of the city markets in St. Petersburg several men were detained in February 2013, who distributed literature of a religious-extremist character. They also did this in private houses and flats. In all, 271 men were detained, most of whom proved foreigners, including immigrants from Afghanistan and Egypt.

The character of the Islamist threat in St. Petersburg and the region can be compared with the North Caucasian situation. In the course of the operation adherents to the radical currents of Islam were apprehended, who presented a threat to the state, denied secular power, and were striving for the establishment of a caliphate.

Thus, a steady process of politicization and radicalization of Islam and Islamic groupings has been going on in the Russian Federation during the post-Soviet period due to the weakening of the institutions of state power and under a strong influence from abroad. Apart from that, non-traditional Islamic currents have appeared and become institutionalized in the country's territory. This process was aggravated by the weakness and disunity of traditional and official Russian Islam and implementation of separatist projects in certain regions of the country, primarily, in the North Caucasus.

Due to a number of reasons, and objective and subjective factors stable groups of radical Salaphites have appeared in many parts of Russia, which were initially institutionalized in certain North Caucasian republics. Later the ideas of jihad spread practically all over the North Caucasus, and in the past decade prerequisites have emerged for the creation of radical Salaphite groupings in the Volga area, the Urals and West Siberia, as well as in the "Muslim enclaves" of big Russian cities.

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**IRAN: INTERESTS IN CENTRAL ASIA
AND OPPORTUNITIES OF INFLUENCE**

For the past decades Iran's interest in the Central Asian countries has changed, however, it has always wished to take the leading positions in the region, changing different forms of influence – ideological, cultural and economic. Inasmuch as the foreign economic ties of the Islamic Republic of Iran were oriented to world markets, its

economic interest in the same-type economy has markedly diminished in recent years. However, the increased sanctions of the West against Iran, a curtailment of economic ties with it to virtual isolation, and reduction of political contacts with western states have resulted in the growing attention of Iran to Central Asian countries. This can be seen and heard in statements of Iranian leaders, and during visits made by high officials of that country. But the possibilities of Iran's economic influence on Central Asia are sharply limited due to the world crisis, which has also touched it, and also because of the sanctions. Economic development has slowed down, plans evolved in 2008–2010 to turn Iran into the regional economic leader by 2020 have become unfeasible, and competitiveness on regional markets has lowered markedly.

What then are Iran's interests and positions in the region at present?

Iran is interested in searching for and finding niches and projects which do not present considerable interest for foreign investments and which will be an important development factor for all Central Asian countries.

Iran does not take an active part in oil and gas extraction in countries of the region where the leading role is played by western and American companies, companies of Russia, and in recent years China has become one of the leading countries among the investors.

But Iran is rather active in such sphere of the fuel-and-energy complex as transportation of oil and gas via its own territory or in participation in collective projects of transporting energy carriers. For example, it has commissioned a terminal of liquefied gas in a port in Turkmenistan. Such cooperation for Iran is a form of escape from international isolation. However, opportunities to take part in such projects are few and far between.

First, Central Asian countries, especially Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, where the positions of foreign capital in the gas-and-oil ranch are strong, cannot but take into account the presence of the regime of sanctions against Iran. Secondly, the desire of the Central Asian countries exporting oil and gas to weaken their dependence on the Russian pipeline system with the help of Iran may result in their dependence on Iran with its complex relations with the West and the Persian Gulf countries.

Oil deliveries from Kazakhstan via Iran (just as Russia and, possibly Turkmenistan) on the SWAP scheme are not regular and not too big (about one million tons).

Practical participation of Iran in the pipeline system of Central Asia is not too great. A gas pipeline has been laid out by Iran to two deposits in Turkmenistan. Iran is definitely interested in transporting its resources through pipelines to regional markets. But it is also interested in participating in international projects of laying out pipelines through its territory, which will ensure certain guarantees to its security, especially in the present situation, which does not exclude military solution to its nuclear program. It seems that Iran is more interested in reducing its isolation, lowering the possibility of a forcible solution of its nuclear program, and raising its security level than in securing its purely economic benefits.

For the countries connected with Iran by pipelines the situation is quite reverse. Iranian gas pipelines to Turkmenistan, Armenia and Turkey are more advantageous to these countries than to Iran. They not only sell gas (like Turkmenistan), or receive gas (like Turkey and Armenia), but they now feel more independent as far as the prices of gas on the market are concerned, especially in their relations with Russia.

Iran is striving to expand its cooperation in the sphere of power production and supply through participation in building power plants, transmitting electric energy, and creating a unified energy system of the region. In this respect Iran's positions can be more solid, because this sphere has not got under sanctions. For the Central Asian countries the problem of energy security is very urgent, especially for the countries with a great potential of hydro-resources, like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The latter urgently needs the supply of electric energy and the completion of construction, including with the help of Iranian companies, of Sangtudinskaya and Shurobskaya power plants on the Vakhsh River, and "Aini" plant on the Zeravshan River. Perhaps, after the commissioning of Rogunskaya power plant the situation will change, but so far it remains crucial, and Iran is quite competitive on this market.

Iran can and does use great interest of Central Asian countries in creating a transport system which would allow them to overcome their isolation from sea routes. This is why Iran offers projects for expanding its road network (highways and railways) and connecting them with neighboring countries, and also for building roads in the latter, for instance, in Afghanistan. Roads have been connected with Turkmenistan. Iran has built a railway line in Afghanistan and elaborated a project connecting a road with Tajikistan through Afghanistan. Iran is building a tunnel connecting Dushanbe, Tajikistan's capital, with the North of the country. The Central Asian countries seem to have been interested in these projects offered by Iran on a bilateral basis, and on the basis of agreements with several countries or within the framework of the Organization of Economic Cooperation, since the use of the developed Iranian transport system will give these countries an access to ports of the Persian Gulf.

But everything is rather difficult for Iran there. The project of building a railway line along the shore of the Caspian Sea, which Iran is lobbying and which has been supported by Central Asian countries recently, has now been frozen. The latest events connected with the refusal of Turkmenistan from the services of an Iranian company ready to build this railway on the shore of the Caspian Sea make it possible to suppose that the reason for such action was pressure brought to bear on Turkmenistan by other countries. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have shown their interest in the project of a railway line bypassing Iran – from Azerbaijan to Kars, which will give access to the Black Sea.

It can be assumed that Iran's participation in these spectacular projects, which might be advantageous for Iran politically and economically, enhances its interest in greater stability of the region.

The economic influence of Iran on Central Asian countries through foreign trade is not too great due to their one-type economy. But at the present time when Iran is faced with the pressing task to increase its non-oil export it can be expected that Iran will expand its foreign economic ties, including at the expense of its military-industrial complex. (The biggest volumes of Iran's foreign trade with Central Asian countries are based on bilateral relations; the Organization of Economic Development accounts only for about five percent of Iranian turnover).

The Caspian problem is a common one for the entire region, and it has different aspects. For Iran it is primarily the problem of security, because there are no American or NATO forces at the Turkmen stretch of the Iranian border. Iran's claims to a vast area of the Caspian Sea surface at present have not been caused by economic interests, but most probably are a pretext to drag out a solution of the legal status of the sea and to prevent the presence of the naval forces of third countries there.

Iran is not drawn too deeply in solving the pressing problem of the distribution of trans-border waters. It is rather the problem directly connected with Afghanistan and with Central Asian countries, through the construction of hydrotechnical installations in Tajikistan.

The cultural-ideological aspect of Iran's relations with the Central Asian countries has also been predominant up to the present time. During the past twenty years Iran has been using the common historical and cultural past for broadening its influence in the region. In all countries of the region, including Afghanistan, Iranian cultural centers have been working with the help of the Islamic foundation and the Committee of Imam Khomeini. The idea has been put forward to form an alliance of Iranian-language countries (Iran, Tajikistan, Afghanistan), the leaders of these countries meet within the framework of this virtual alliance, and although there has been no tangible results so far, a certain effect has been achieved. Iran demonstrates its participation in a political regional dialogue, although Tajikistan and Afghanistan hope to receive much more help from the West.

The ideological expansion of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the form of the export of Islamic revolution, which was rather intensive in the first years after the revolution, has petered out. Iran has not undertaken anything to realize this with regard to Central Asia, moreover, the experience in resolving the armed conflict in Tajikistan and maintaining contacts with the Talibs in Afghanistan has shown that Iran did much to play down extremist actions and ensure a calm and quiet situation along its borders. Of course, Iran's influence on the Islamic movements in Central Asian countries is seriously limited, although it emphasizes the need for unity within the framework of the common Muslim umma.

However, there can be another variant, when Iran, ousted from all economic projects and pushed into the corner, may try once again to

use the Islamic factor, supporting movements against the secular regimes of the countries of the region. Besides, already now Iran is actively using its cultural centers to distribute and popularize not only works of its literary classics, but also works by Islamic ideologists, it open religious schools, pays for the study of students from Central Asian countries at universities and madrasahs of Iran. Suffice it to recall Iran's experience of maintaining relations with Islamic Sunni organizations, for instance, Hamas and IDU.

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However, Central Asia gives an opportunity to Iran to reduce its political isolation. It does not wage a struggle for resources or for border changes. It is not a rival to Russia or China. Iran objectively assesses Kazakhstan's claims to leadership in the region. Its influence on it has been stabilizing, in the main, so far. Its support of Islamic movements has not reached the level of their official government support or the level of confrontation with state power in Central Asian countries.

The low level of economic, military (a military agreement has been signed only with Tajikistan) and political interdependence makes it possible to suppose that in case of a military solution of the Iranian nuclear program, it will not be supported by Central Asian countries. But it should be taken into consideration that Islamic sentiments in the region are very strong, despite the secular character of power in Central Asian countries. It should also be borne in mind that the clan economy characteristic of the regimes of the Central Asian countries and the close ties of their ruling clans with big companies of the United States and Europe also bolster up Islamic opposition sentiments. The potential of social explosion is very high. This is why in case of a military solution of the Iranian nuclear problem, assistance to Iran by voluntary

Islamic units and through Islamic organizations may well be predicted, despite differences in religious currents, which tend to be forgotten when a Muslim country falls victim to aggression. Besides, there will be another wave of Islamic extremist sentiments.

*“Vyzovy bezopasnosti v Tsentralnoi Azii,”
Moscow, 2013, pp. 102–105.*

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**“SOFT POWER” AS AN INSTRUMENT
OF AMERICAN POLICY IN CENTRAL ASIA:
TAJIKISTAN**

Tajikistan is unable to claim the role of a principal ally of the American Agency for International Development objectively, due to its insignificant political weight, economic weakness and transport deficiency. Nevertheless, that country has a certain value as a potential seat of instability for the U.S. policy close to the borders of Russia, China and Iran. A coup d'etat and destabilization of the socio-political situation in Tajikistan would be a blow to the security of the aforementioned countries. The republic will become a source of fundamentalism, terrorist activities and drug trafficking.

The crucial role in destabilizing the situation in different countries, which are the objects of interest of the U.S.A., has been assigned to “soft power”, affecting the social processes going on there through a foreign-funded network of non-governmental organizations, the media and the Internet, and, as it has vividly been demonstrated, by “color revolutions” in former Soviet republics, and developments in North Asia and the Middle East. A mechanism of this type has been used in Tajikistan.

USAID is the leading U.S. agency responsible for the distribution of allocations for non-military purposes. In 2010, \$48.3 million was allocated by the U.S. budget for a variety of projects in Tajikistan, of which \$32.3 million – through the structure of USAID. In all, the Agency has distributed \$320 million since 1993, mainly in the form of grants by U.S. and international non-governmental organizations. The most active non-governmental organizations, receiving USAID grants, were those working under in coordination with the U.S. Embassy in the early years of independence of Tajikistan, such as the Aga Khan Foundation (humanitarian assistance), the Soros Foundation (Support Press), Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International (monitoring of human rights). Subsequently, the list of USAID partners has undergone changes that occurred as a result of the pressure brought to bear by Emomali Rahmon's government. Currently, USAID cooperates with more than 30 western partner organizations in Tajikistan. Among them are ACTR/ACCELS, UCA, IOM, Pragma Corporation, Deloitte Consulting, AECOM International Development Inc., DCA Office in Washington, TBD, Winrock International, IREX, Population Service International (PSI), Creative Associates Int., ACIDI/VOCA, Internews Network, Care International, Mercy Corps, Save the Children, etc.

The position of the non-profit segment in Tajikistan differs significantly from that in neighboring Kyrgyzstan, which is comparable in terms of the population. In Tajikistan, a network of international NGOs is much less developed and their financing channels are not so stable. No wonder that regional offices of most of the above-mentioned USAID contractors are concentrated in Bishkek and Almaty, and only some of them, humanitarian and socially-oriented, tend to have representative offices in the Tajik capital, as, for example, Mercy

Corps. Basically, Western non-governmental agencies work through their local partners in Tajikistan.

Besides, in Tajikistan, foreign associations have fewer opportunities for constant presence in regions, in comparison with Kyrgyzstan, where the NGO network covers not only the region of the capital, but also other localities, for example in Osh and Jalal-Abad regions. However, back in 1997–2000, USAID funded the creation of six centers of civil society support in major cities of the country. These centers have been opened as a platform for the activities of and access to information resources, more than 5,000 local representatives of NGO went through training at them. Currently the Aga Khan Development Network, AKDN, has managed to establish a dialogue with the Tajik leadership. Imam Aga Khan the fourth, the worldwide leader of the Ismaelites, heads the foundation, accumulating up to \$1.5 billion annually, and investing huge sums in the countries of residence of the adherents of the Shi'ite branch of Islam. According to various estimates, there are between 15 and 20 million Ismaelites in the world. In Tajikistan, AKDN has been implementing several projects for economic development and education in areas densely populated of the Ismaelites. The Aga Khan Foundation, a division of the AKDN, is the recipient of a number of U.S. and European grants. Aga Khan the fourth has got a secular education at Harvard and maintained extensive contacts with the Western establishment, despite his spiritual status. Being an authoritative religious leader, he has a significant influence on the informal representatives of the "Pamir" ethno-territorial group, acting in opposition to Rahmon during the civil war in Tajikistan.

American NGO activities are causing concern among the Tajik elite, but the latter has to take into account the position of Western governments that provide assistance to the country. The Tajik government has changed the law on public associations and imposed

objective administrative restrictions on them after the revolutions of 2003–2005 in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan.

In spring 2007, the parliament adopted the Law of the Republic of Tajikistan “On Public Associations” in a new version instead of the outdated legislative act in 1998. Foreign nationals cannot create public organizations, if they do not reside permanently on the territory of Tajikistan and do not have a residence permit under the provisions of the new law, and they cannot become heads of NGOs either. Foreign NGOs should apply for accreditation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan, in addition to the general registration procedure at the Ministry of Justice of the Republic. An extensive list of grounds has been compiled for refusing registration and setting permissions as a means to control NGOs.

Moreover, the law prescribes that all previously created associations should be re-registered for 2007. Subsequently, the government used this provision to curb the activities of some of the most politicized Western NGOs. By the spring of 2008, 116 of 145 international organizations had been re-registered in Tajikistan, and not a single new association has been registered since then.

The administrative and legislative restrictions imposed by Tajikistan prompted Americans to reconsider their previous approach to supporting non-governmental associations financially, and pay more attention to ones set up by citizens of the republic.

Among others, the resources of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) were involved, whose activities are focused on the support of local pro-Western NGOs and the media, unlike USAID, distributing grants between NGOs and providing financial assistance to the Government of the Republic. NED has allocated \$300–400 thousand a year to about ten local organizations in Tajikistan over the past few years.

The essence of NGO activities has also undergone certain changes in the Republic. Currently, most foreign organizations implement projects in the spheres of health, agriculture, water supply, the rights of women and children, etc. Such nationally oriented NGOs function quite freely in the country, being in dire need of help and do not feel targeted by administrative pressure, according to observers. At the same time, foreign emissaries' activities have been reduced in the political sphere, such as the creation of oppositional political blocs and movements. But the United States Americans has maintained programs to support media, the Internet, education and civil society institutions, which have a direct impact on public opinion, and indirectly – on the political situation in Tajikistan. In 1996, USAID initiated a project of promotion of the Tajik mass media, and later emphasis was laid on the development of online resources. Americans experts have organized supply of equipment, education and training of journalists, as well as technical assistance for the creation of "independent" broadcast media.

American experts have also been involved in the drafting of legislation on the mass media in Tajikistan. In 1999, the National Association of Independent Media of Tajikistan was established with their assistance, which united more than 70 newspapers and 12 television stations, and was aimed at protection of “freedom of speech and the rights of journalists in the country.”

The State Department has not only supported the “independent” press in Tajikistan, but has also provided political and diplomatic protection if necessary. The Government of Tajikistan has blocked several news sites and mass media, and the U.S. Embassy, in collaboration with the diplomatic missions of Britain, Germany, France and the European Union mission, addressed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan a request to ensure freedom of speech and to restore the interrupted broadcasts in October 2010. Then the Tajik

authorities have softened their position and lifted restrictions on the activity of the affected mass media.

The U.S. Embassy in Dushanbe is also engaged in information work, according to local journalists. The Website of the diplomatic mission is translated into Russian and information about humanitarian activities involving the embassy appears in time.

The United States has assigned an increasingly important role to the electronic media and the Internet and considers them as one of the priorities in the Tajik social and political life.

Tajik journalists, who have returned from training in the United States recently, said that they have been taught there to send and receive encrypted information (which has been implemented for special programs and keys), to “unwind” their home pages, overcome blocking traffic systems, and to operate through the “alternative Internet” in case of overlapping network.

Reports on the use of the Facebook for organizing street protests in Tajikistan are another alarming signal. The country's first flash mob took place in April 2011, and in June Tajik football fans staged their act together with the help of this resource.

Certain new U.S. documents show that the White House will seek to strengthen its efforts in this direction.

According to a report of the international organization “Internet World Stats”, the number of new subscribers to the “World Wide Web” in Tajikistan is rapidly growing and is now one of the highest in Central Asia. Among the Facebook users are mainly journalists, intellectuals and businessmen. About 80 percent of Tajikistan's population has access to mobile communications and the number of supporters of the “mobile Internet” among them has increased in the last two years, despite its high cost.

More and more citizens of Tajikistan receive instant access to information other than the official one from the authorities in the development process of communication technologies and also due to lower prices of mobile communication services and the Internet. As a result, loyalty of the population to the present government of the republic is gradually decreasing.

Dushanbe is attempting to respond to the threat of the Internet expansion by administrative measures, realizing the danger of “information shock.” The Tajik authorities have proposed to block the Facebook because of the growing influence of this social network, which became popular in November 2012.

Support for the NGOs implementing various projects in the field of education, has become another area of focus of Americans (Institute for War and Peace Reporting, IWPR, the Soros Foundation, etc.). Various study courses involved not only journalists, human rights activists and other members of civil society, but also employees of the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, the Customs, the armed forces, law-enforcement agencies, municipal leaders, entrepreneurs, and religious figures. In addition, more than 170 citizens of Tajikistan go to the United States to study annually in accordance with various programs financed by the U.S. government (FLEX, JFDP, MUSKIE, TEA, UGRAD, IVLP, and Fulbright).

All this not only contributes to the pro-Western elites' activities, but also expands the U.S. intelligence capabilities in the country. It's no secret that the U.S. government agencies and foundations, including USAID, NED, the Peace Corps, have been used not only for the allocation of budget resources, but also as a cover for the activities of the American special services.

One cannot ignore the objective difficulties faced by representatives of the non-profit sector in Tajikistan, which employs up to 20,000 people. The Tajik NGOs have less support of the White House than their counterparts in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. On the other hand, the NGOs in Tajikistan, stricken of strongest corruption, have turned into a profitable business. The bulk of money gets into the pockets of Americans and their numerous intermediaries, seeking to enter the country to take advantage of NGO budget funds.

There is awareness in the U.S. expert community that the current vicious system needs to be changed. Variants of allocating funds directly to state and municipal bodies have been discussed. At present special agencies under appropriate ministries have been set up by a decision of the Government of Tajikistan. They exist in the form of Project Management Unit (PMU), Project Implementation Unit (PIU) and Project Coordination centers (MCC) and are engaged in the distribution of grants provided by the World Bank, ADB, the governments of Japan, the Netherlands, France, etc. However, it is unlikely that the involvement of near-state structures (although they include foreign representatives) will help to reduce corruption.

Thus, our analysis shows that although the NGOs in Tajikistan financed by Americans are mostly apolitical at the moment, subject to corruption and poorly represented in regions, a significant proportion of the local information space and the growing space of the Internet belong to them. Probably, the main threat to the internal stability of Tajikistan comes from them.

World practice shows that the non-governmental segment can be used by the West, if necessary, for increasing discontent and raising protest sentiments, which is especially dangerous for countries with weak economies and harsh political regimes.

“Tsentralnaya Aziya: problemy i perspektivy (vzglyad iz Rossii i Kitaya),” Moscow, 2013, pp. 43–56.

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**HYDROPOWER CONTRADICTIONS IN CENTRAL
ASIA AND THEIR INFLUENCE
ON STABILITY IN THE REGION**

The variety of vital important issues of today facing humanity starts with catastrophic environmental pollution, resource depletion, imbalances of demographic processes and food shortages and ends with a common global problem – the preservation of mankind.

A significant role is assigned to water resources in the Central Asian region, considering climatic and demographic characteristics. The entire water management system in the region works to meet the growing needs of the population for irrigation and a solution of energy problems.

The region's water resources are divided unevenly between the rich ones located in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, and those depending on the former located in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

The water resources of the region include surface water streams from several trans-border rivers – the Amu Darya and Syr Darya (flowing throughout the region), the Chu and Talas (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan), the Ily (Kazakhstan), the Tarim (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan), the Irtysh, Tobol, Ural (Russia, Kazakhstan), etc. It should be noted, that the first two of these rivers provide about 80 percent of the needs of the population of Central Asia. Also, water resources in Central Asia are represented by large lakes and reservoirs, such as the Idar-Arnasau, Sarykamysh, Solyonoe, Sarez, etc; artificial reservoirs: the Toktagul (Kyrgyzstan), Karakum (Tajikistan), Shardarinskoe (Kazakhstan), Water Utility Dostyk (mainly on the territory of Uzbekistan); and groundwater reservoirs.

On the whole, water reserves are estimated as 170–180 thousand cubic kilometers and considered sufficient to meet the needs of about 50 million people.

The main principle of the use and distribution of water resources is state priority in the Central Asian region, and leaders of certain countries use them to achieve their political goals.

Thus, the rational use of hydropower resources is an important issue of economic cooperation in the region, because the mechanism of mutual deliveries does not work. For example, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan do not fulfill supply commitments in full volume, which affects the work of Kyrgyzstan's power plants.

The basic contradictions between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan concern excess water extraction from the Syr Darya and its pollution by Uzbekistan.

The crisis around the Aral Sea has aggravated the existing contradictions between countries in the region.

The Aral Sea has shrunk more than four times and the volume of its water has decreased ten times. This was why concentration of salt in the water has increased and the area of deserts has expanded.

Annual water runoff in Kyrgyzstan will decrease three times by 2040 due to the reduction of glacier area, if adequate and coordinated intergovernmental steps are not taken, according to a UN report for 2009. Today, annual runoff is about 55 cubic km. of water, and it will be reduced to 19 cubic km in the future.

Climate changes in the region, threatening the natural and economic complex of Central Asia, spring frosts in Talas and Chui regions, resulting in huge losses taking place in agriculture in Central Asia, have demonstrated the need for joint efforts to solve the problem of the Aral Sea at the regional level.

Hydropower resources of the region are another important aspect of the problem under review. The Unified Energy System of Central Asia has been in deep crisis for the time being, its development is limited by technological parameters and seasonal flow regulation in Central Asia. In this context the introduction of a market mechanism to manage regional interaction has been actively discussed. The growing competition of hydropower and agricultural priorities of transborder water management inhibits the transition to sustainable use of the water potential.

All countries in the region declare their rights to water, repeatedly violate the agreed-on arrangements, and poorly develop international projects.

This problem should be regarded in close connection with the demographic situation in the region. First, it is necessary to satisfy the needs of the population. The soaring population growth, its high density, and in connection with this the increasing need for water have been the distinguishing features in the region at present. It should be noted that the growth of the population of Central Asia will continue in the near future. According to UN statistics, the population of Kazakhstan in 2025 will be 16 million people, Kyrgyzstan – 7 million, Uzbekistan – 34 million, Tajikistan – 8 million, and Turkmenistan – 7 million.

Lack of cooperation between the countries to solve this problem, attempts to separate the exploitation of the traditionally united energy system of Central Asia, competition in the field of water consumption – all this negatively influences regional stability and cooperation. However, the ruling circles of the region do not believe that the crisis of hydro-energy balance has destabilized the political situation in the region, and this is their big mistake.

It is only a comprehensive approach to the problems of the Aral Sea and the hydropower resources of the region that is the most promising, both in terms of the development of the region and in terms of cooperation with other states.

Three aspects – natural, technological and social – are the basis of all global problems. Preserved in their entirety in our time, they are complemented with new characteristics. These include, in particular, a substantial environmental degradation, depletion of natural resources and social polarization, which continue to grow and breed conflicts in society.

*“Lomonosovskie chteniya. Vostokovedenie,”
Moscow, 2013, pp. 256–259.*

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