

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

**INSTITUTE OF ORIENTAL STUDIES**

**RUSSIA  
AND  
THE MOSLEM WORLD  
2013 – 3 (249)**

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

**Moscow  
2013**

Director of publications L.V. SKVORTSOV,

Deputy Director of the Institute for Scientific  
Information in Social Sciences

of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS)

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## **WHAT RUSSIA NEEDS TODAY FROM THE WEST**

When we say “today” we do not mean just only the present moment. Naturally, we imply the usual words “for the seen perspective”. The first and the most important need of any viable state is, evidently, the security and primarily security from external threats. The historic experience of Russia in its reciprocal relations with the West in this sense was not only clearly defined but really tragic. For the last 400 years the following events should be cited: the Polish-Swedish intervention for the XVII century, the Napoleonic invasion, the Crimean war in the middle of the XIX century, the First World War and, finally, the Great Patriotic War, which exceeded all previous world events in terms of cruelty and destruction. Given also the cold war of the second part of the XX century of which both parties were guilty at least equally, one may only be amazed of the fact that Russia in general was able to survive in time of such enormous external pressure. Evidently, the certain “genetic”, so to say, distrust is inherent in Russian people in case of any changes of the external political situation.

Therefore one should not be surprised that the urge towards preservation of a chance to deliver “a retaliatory” or “a retaliatory-encounter” stroke will be always the characteristic action of our state,

in spite of any (and all the more merely verbal) assertions that the anti-rocket defense constructed by the West is not directed against Russia. The chance to keep at least a chosen (not necessarily total) retaliated stroke represents for Russia “the categorical imperative”. And if for the last time some features of emergence of a new cold war emerge, it is through no fault of Russia, which actually refuses to participate in arms race for “parity” but does not abandon the guarantees of its existence even if in a weaker state.

However, under the contemporary conditions the problem of external security is not limited for Russia (like for many other states) with a probable “apocalyptic” scenario. The roster of great and small external threats for the country is limitless. The Near East and the Arabic-Israeli conflict for more than 60 years; the unforeseen by anybody “Arabic tsunami” with unclear direction; the further probable aggravation of the situation in the region of Iran-Afghanistan-Pakistan-the post Soviet republics of Middle Asia ...In addition, the spread of nuclear weapons all over the world; the rise of international terrorism and Islamic extremism; the decaying local conflicts (particularly in the Caucasus), fraught with any adventures like the war in August 2008; the global narcotics traffic and the trans-border criminality – all this, as experience shows, is subject to international regulation by agreements, though not final, which in some or other case are acceptable for all. All this is the natural sphere for cooperation of the West and Russia.

Certainly, today it is too early to speak about creation of something like “the world government” with the corresponding powers. But the principal growth of the coordinated actions of the West, Russia and other directly interested countries might ensure preservation of the world civilization in its diversity even under the conditions, when the world is on the brink of acting out of concord. It is justified to say that at present the role of Russia in these international changes and troubles

is primarily defensive and not offensive. At least, no politician or public representative of Russia has expressed the idea publicized in the West (though not officially) about the need of division or breaking up at any pretext some foreign territories, including Siberia and the Far East.

For the Soviet time, Russia was in international isolation, although also for that time mutual cultural, scientific, sport and other ties kept their certain meaning testifying to some deep-rooted civilization unity of the forces opposing each other in many respects. Finally, the artificially erected walls fell down; democracy, multi-party system, superiority of law, common human values and freedoms, including also freedom of travel all over the world, became accessible also for the Russian people. At present it is senseless seriously to predict the scale and forms of rapprochement of the West and Russia: the process will go on for decades and cannot be measured by years. But each significant step had and will have the principal meaning: either actual abolition of capital punishment in our country or democratic reforms in its political system, including erection of the foundation of efficient democracy – the local self-government (the process, which was started for the XI–XII centuries in Europe) or, finally, the accession of Russia to the World Trade Organization, or, the matured but still questioned repeal of the limitations installed by the Schengen regime etc. Probably, the most distinguished achievement of new Russia is the development of its relations with the European Union on strategic partnership and cooperation, which has good chances for extension, despite the counter action of some, primarily “young” members of EU. The four “travel maps” marked within its fixed framework (external security, internal security, economic reciprocal action and cultural cooperation) are significant are significant, particularly for Russia, not only and not so much significant from the point of view of today as the historic perspective of this decision.

Should these aims be achieved some time, united Europe will acquire a principally other image in terms of politics, military situation, social order, human mentality and common economic space (freedom of trans-border movement of goods, capital, work force and services) and united scientific-technical, educational and cultural potential. It seems that these “maps” may become the most important civilization orientation for the present and future generations. And Europe may become the united mighty world center, which will be almost equal to the other contemporary world centers of force – the U.S.A. and China.

Of great significance for contemporary Russia in the epoch (exactly epoch) of the next modernization were the favorable external conditions of realization of reforms primarily in the economic and social sphere. Do they favor or hinder the set aims? The answer may not be one-sided: they may promote them and may be neutral, but they may also prevent them. For instance of the greatest importance is the question: who renders financial assistance under contemporary conditions? Does the West, as many think so, give financial support to Russia or, on the contrary, Russia renders financial assistance to the West? Given the outward paradoxical appearance of the answer, it is quite evident: Russia gives financial support to the West. For the last twenty years the correlation was approximately 1:3 in favor of the West, i.e. the amount of \$ 1 inflow in the Russian economy for the benefit of the West corresponded to \$ 3 (and more exactly the size) to \$ 4 of legal and illegal outflow of the Russian economy. All kinds of outflow of capital from the country are estimated today in the sum at least \$ 1 trillion. In particular, for the last years the investments of only state currency reserves of the RF in foreign (primarily American) state securities with extremely low annual profitability in size of \$ 1.0-2.0 exceeded the vast sum of \$ 550 billion. Especially regrettable is the fact that such chronic drainage (blood-letting) of the Russian economy is

going on against the background of colossal unsatisfied needs of the country in investments of practically all fields, including production, infrastructure and social sphere. The outflow of capital abroad deprives the country of not less than one fourth of its fund of accumulations.

Certainly, the accumulation of funds is first of all the internal problem of the country. At present, Russia possesses quite a lot of potential chances to raise the norms of capital accumulation (from the present inadmissibly low level of about 20% to the needed 30–35% of the GNP) and of the rational use of the existing financial means, which Russia still directs to rather arguable objectives. Why Russian investors, given the evident weakness of the national credit system are unable to get loans from the Russian state reserves paying not annual 8–10 %, as they have to get from foreign private banks, but to get loans of annual 1.5–2.0 %, i.e. for the sum, which equals the Russia's loans to its foreign partners? All the more, the last crisis showed as follows: the Russian state at any rate had to save its main national debtors abroad by a massive and actually non-returnable input of state financial means. The debt of Russian companies and banks to foreign private banks is almost equal to our state reserves, which are kept in foreign banks at low prices.

It is impossible to ignore the evident chances for the rise of investment resources of the country, such as follows: the change of the unjustified and unknown in the world (for the benefit of private companies) distribution of the natural rent for energy and other natural raw resources; the introduction of the efficient control over movement of the currencies abroad; the restoration of the obligatory sale of foreign currency receipts into rubles earnings; the extension of emission and credit operations of the Central Bank (in the role of the creditor of the final instance); the tax and amortization benefits for the investors, particularly for the investors executing modernization of the

production; the abrogation of “the flat scale” of income tax; the efficient system of administrative, budgetary, tax and credit stimulation of the small and middle business etc.

But all these measures do not reduce the significance for Russia of the import of foreign capital, particularly of direct foreign investments. Up to the present time, the share of them is relatively small: about 3% of the total capital formation in the country. The foreign investments are put primarily either in financial speculations (“hot”, short-term money) or in the super-profitable branches (“long-term” money), which rarely create a great modernization effect. It concerns, particularly, cosmetics, brewing, pharmaceutics, tobacco industry and production of non-alcoholic drinks, communication, cars assembly and others. The foreign investments are most actively made in the fuel-energy complex (up to 30% of the amount). At the same time, as it is significant, only 3% of foreign investments are put in the engineering industry. The attraction of foreign capital and its mutual connection with the national capital, expansion of TNC (there are already 20 such companies, including Russian origin) represent as a whole a salutary process, which promotes economic rise and growth of well-being of all its participants. It is only significant to observe and to keep the balance of interests of the parties. And if for a given period of time some partners consider it to be necessary to introduce certain limitations relating to foreign investments (for instance, in the industries, which are important for Russia in terms of defense or other political matters, like in the West), this fact should be accepted quietly as the grounds of this action. The grounds of this action may be regulated by means of mutual concessions and compromises for the benefit of both parties in its time.

As the Russian economy is marked by the growth of openness it becomes the economy, which is more organically connected with the

world currency-financial system and more dependent on its sustainability. For instance, if dollar further weakens and even loses its still dominant position, Russia is interested in the long period of this process, going on for many years and probably decades. Many countries, including China, Japan and Russia possess enormous assets in dollars, and up to the present time about two thirds of the world trade is subject to financial service settlement in dollars. Under these conditions, the collapse of dollar will be the most brutal blow to the whole world economy. The collapse of euro will be a less but also a brutal blow followed by the disintegration of the Euro-zone (at present, Russia keeps about half of its currency reserves in euro). And a new world currency-financial system on the basis, supposing, of an artificial currency of IMF or of Chinese Yuan or some new currency “basket” may be created sometime in the future or may not exist at all. Modernization for Russia today means first of all re-industrialization or a kind of “second industrialization”. The ill-thought and speedy reforms carried out in excitement resulted in demolition (destruction) of not less than half of the national industrial and technological potential of the country. Given the existing trends, i.e. the accelerated process of capital assets becoming obsolete, the growing deficit of investments and the ambiguous as a whole industrial policy of the leadership, in the period of 7-10 years the remained half of the national potential will be finally demolished. It is necessary to cite as well the withdrawal from circulation of one third of agricultural lands of Russia. And one should mention, according to estimation of some experts, the loss of one third of “brains” of the country as a result of destruction of its science (both of fundamental and particularly applied sciences), emigration of scientists, passage of many scientists to other, primarily commercial, spheres of activities.

The re-industrialization demands concentration of efforts in a number of the main directions of the long-term economic policy.

First, it is the selection of the main strategic priorities of industrial renovation (including the whole infrastructure). The cruel international competition without interruption grows and aggravates in the markets of high technological industrial, information, agrarian and other production. It is difficult to find out some market niches for the future. The coordinated and agreed efforts with the leading world producers of such production would be quite helpful. Russia also might expect of its partners (particularly of European Union) implementation of the proposed by them specific project of support and development in Russia of enterprises and even industries, which might let it brake out from natural energy dependence and revive the machine building industry. The document “Partnership for Modernization” recently signed by EU and Russia, for instance, seems to be regarded by Europe not as an exotic matter.

Second, renovation of the remained industrial capacity and all the more construction of a new such capacity will demand (as in the past) a massive inflow to the country of foreign technique and modern technology. All this exists in Europe, the U.S.A., and Japan (and at present in China). After accession of Russia to the WTO, achievement of the corresponding be-lateral and multi-lateral agreements, and abrogation of outdated restrictions the Russian demands may and must become one of the most important factors of maintenance of sustainable machine building, electro-technical and other export from the highly developed industrial countries. At the same time, the stable markets for the Russian natural energy resources will be kept in the West, probably, even in case of present changes for the benefit of different energy and other alternatives. One should not forget about possible international credits.

Third, Russia confronts today, probably, the most acute and complicated task: de-monopolization of its economy and creation of an automatic mechanism (certainly, in some reciprocal action with administrative measures) for stimulation of innovation process. At the present transcendental level of profitability received by natural and artificial national monopolies the latter lack any significant stimuli for modernization of old and all the more for construction of new industrial capacities with new technologies. Certainly, it is primarily the political, economic and institutional problem of Russia, and what is more – the question of resoluteness or of its lack of our authorities. But cooperation and competition with the West both in terms of import and export, as well as the support by both parties of direct foreign investments (particularly in projects of small and medium business) might provide a rather great additional input to the passage of Russian economy to a real market and new structural proportions in its industrial capacity.

Fourth, the West may play a very important role in rebirth of science and education in Russia. There will be no modernization of the country and no its passage to “economy of knowledge”, if the financial support of science and education by the federal budget is not raised in terms of the share of budgetary expenses at least in two-three times. A special matter is the private capital: the expectations for its participation in solving the all-national tasks of this scale may be realized not earlier than some decades later. The active academic (research and education) reciprocal exchange between the West and Russia may, as some accumulated experience shows, be developed not only on “charitable” principles but also on the commercial mutually beneficial foundations. It is especially important for Europe as a whole, which still continues to be behind the U.S.A. in many spheres of the

next scientific-technological revolution but has all chances by the united efforts to achieve its level in the coming decades.

Of particularly important problem in relations of Russia with the West are also integration trends in the European (more exactly, Eurasian) continent. The West-European integration (European Union) has not only proved its high viability and organic character but also by the present time seems gradually to get rid of delusions and excessive ambitions of “youth”. In reality, both today and in a rather distant perspective the question is not the further extension of European Union (everything in the world has its limits) but first of all the need to avoid its disintegration under the influence of merely economic, particularly financial, reasons. Under these conditions, nobody in EU, of course, seriously thinks about accession to European Union of probable new members, such as Turkey, Ukraine or all the more Russia. But such sensible considerations do not prevent some influential circles in EU to express jealousy and even hostility to integration trends in the post-Soviet space, and it seems that these views are caused not at last by the similar position by the U.S.A. administrations replacing in turn each other. The present situation is marked by a rather wide dissemination of the idea, expressed both in Russia and in the West, that the integration in the post-Soviet Eurasian economic space and the integration within the framework of European Union objectively not only do not contradict and do not oppose each other but may (and must) have the common final, though not near, aim.

Indeed, is it possible for some arbitrary reasons in the post-Soviet space no longer to take into account the centuries-old mutual ties – the civilization, national economic, cultural and simply human relations, which have penetrated in flesh and blood of countries and peoples? Especially as it concerns the countries, which today as well represent really a united common market demanding only abrogation of some

barriers and obstacles hindering its development? This process is going on, in particular, within the limits of the three-partite Tax Union of Byelorussia, Kazakhstan and Russia with the target of creation for the nearest years of the United Economic Space with further probable accession to it of other post-Soviet states. What thoughtful and rational deliberations may be expressed against restoration of actually destructed for two last decades the united infrastructure of these countries (ensuring energy, transportation and education) leaving aside the formed for many years cooperation ties among enterprises, in essence the united market of the labor force? Evidently, the creation of the United Eurasian Economic Space is not at all the reanimation of the Russian Empire but a natural and organic process, which resembles the process within the framework of European Union.

The common sense means that without joint international planning and uniting the material-technical, financial and cadre resources of various countries it is impossible, for instance, without any conflicts to ensure energy needs of Europe. Competition in this field is not destructive but, on the contrary, is favorable. For the seen perspective, all participants have place in this vast market: traditional suppliers of oil and gas, producers of alternative sources of energy, including condensed gas and oil shell: Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Iran and Arabic Near East, North Africa and Norway and even other secondary producers of other mainly small countries. It is also impossible to ensure transportation and transit of energy resources without coordinated actions of all interested countries-partners. Naturally, the interests of both integrations should not be opposed but should supplement each other.

And what single national or even regional force (either in the West Europe or in the East Europe, or China, or the U.S.A.) may solve the problems, such as the dangerous for the world rapid rise of narcotics

trade through Central Asia and/or Islamic radicalism and terrorism, or other problems, such as enormously large-scale task to save the Aral Sea, Amu-Darya and Syr-Darya, or creation of the international transport corridor (systems of corridors) West–East, or, finally, development of vast territories in Central Asia, China, Mongolia, Siberia and the Russian Far East? It means that creation for the period of decades of the common economic space from Lisbon to Vladivostok (or from Vancouver to Vladivostok) is not a chimera but a real aim, if, certainly, we exclude a chance of some global catastrophe. But achievement of this aim demands not a conflict, not the opposition of two integrations developing in the Eurasian continent and, certainly, the outlived primitive attempts to undermine from inside new just born constructive trends but demands a thorough comprehension of the shaped and probable realities. One should not ignore the fact that less non-alternative and more alternative solutions of problems remain in the world both at the continental and regional level in the West and in the East.

In terms of its history, culture, world outlook and in general of its way of living Russia was, is and will be Europe. Certainly, it has its unique, quite often tragic past and its mistakes, and it possesses the same ideals and hopes like other European countries and peoples. Being a European country by its spirit, Russia is at the same time a self-dependent and in certain sense self-sustainable civilization. It has all (literally, all) in order to keep and to consolidate its place in the world, given thoughtful strategy. Of course, we can not but see that for the last decades “the eastern vector”, “the East-Asian accent” start to play greater role in development of Russia – in politics, in economy, in demography and in other fields. Taking into account geography of the country, it is not and not so much the alternative but rather the historic inevitability, which should be taken into account like it or not. And the

question is not what kind of regime will be consolidated in future in the country – classic democracy or “democratic regime of Caesar” or some form of autocratic regime. The question is that some civilization “symbiosis” in life of Russia (between European and East-Asian influence) with due account of its past, the present and the foreseen future is, evidently, also the most possible perspective. And it is not only the question of faith or disbelief of the human choice. This is the question of the evident, objective – world and probably super-world inevitability.

*“Dialog cultur v usloviyah globalizatsii. XII Mezhdunarodnye Likhachevskie nauchnye chteniya”, SPB, 2012, pp. 237–241.*

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## **RUSSIAN MUSLIMS AND FOREIGN POLICY (CAN THE ISLAMIC FACTOR BECOME ESSENTIAL)**

For Russian Muslims, foreign policy is the continuation of the home policy. As part of the global 1.5-billion-strong community, they identify themselves and their interests with what is happening to their coreligionists abroad. However, in view of domestic peculiarities, it is mainly Muslim elites that are active in the international arena, whereas for the masses these problems are important largely due to religious principles, rather than calibrated political interests.

When Vladimir Putin led Russia into the Organization of the Islamic Conference (now the Organization of Islamic Cooperation), he met stiff resistance from his close circle, including siloviki, energy tycoons and liberal economists. At the same time, he did not find much support from Muslims, either. Since then, Moscow has made several

major statements about rapprochement with the Islamic world and respect for Muslims in Russia, and several landmark events have taken place, among them Russia's entry as an observer into the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), an analog of UNESCO, established by the OIC; a visit of Hamas leaders to Moscow; the sending of a Chechen battalion to Lebanon after the 2006 war; and the Russian president's historic visit to Saudi Arabia.

Putin became the first ever Russian leader to officially recognize at the highest level that Russia is a Muslim country as well. No tsar, emperor or secretary-general had done that before. Putin also said that Russian Muslims have every right to feel part of the global Ummah and that Russia had always been, and remained, a geopolitical ally of Islam.

In a televised Q&A session with the nation last winter, he again emphasized that "Islam has always been one of the foundations of Russian statehood, and, of course, the state authority in Russia will always support our traditional Islam". This statement marked the second historical step to adapt Islam to the political and social conditions in Russia. The first step had been made 250 years before, under Catherine the Great, who proclaimed Islam to be a "tolerated" religion (the discrimination against Islam was finally abolished only in the revolutions of 1905 and 1917 only to return in Soviet times). Before Catherine, the Russian state had sought to assimilate Muslims.

While serving as head of state, Dmitry Medvedev echoed Putin's remarks: "The Russian Federation, as an observer at the OIC, is determined to further expand the constructive dialogue with the Islamic world. I am confident that this active interaction will help create a more just system of international relations and resolve conflict situations at the global and regional levels". During a meeting with OIC Secretary-General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu several years ago, Medvedev said: "Russia and the OIC are bound by special relations. We are not only

observers at the organization, but we also want to have full-fledged relations with it in various formats and on various platforms". Ihsanoglu replied that "the entire Islamic world welcomes Russia's membership [as an observer – Ed.] in the OIC and favors the development of these relations".

Moreover, Medvedev was the only top-level world leader to personally meet with the Chairman of the Hamas Political Bureau, Khaled Mashaal – an event that raised eyebrows even in Muslim capitals. Even though the president of the Palestinian National Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, has personal sympathy for Russia, Moscow has no supporters in the Palestinian Fatah organization. Of all the great powers, it is only Russia that has direct relations with Hamas. Since no real Middle East settlement is possible without Hamas, the Kremlin thought it would be politically expedient to significantly upgrade relations with the Islamic Resistance Movement. For Mashaal, his talks with the Russian president came not only as a confirmation of a special status of Hamas in the Palestinian arena but also as recognition of its special role in the Islamic world.

It is noteworthy that the Russian leadership, along with Russian Muslims, links the internal Islamic factor to the external one. Putin from the very beginning viewed regions with a predominantly Muslim population as possible centers of integration with the Islamic world, ranging from Central Asia to Arab countries and Malaysia. Apparently, he believes that this is natural for them and justified. After all, why should the whole of Russia look west? Part of it may well look east. First of all, this concerns the economy.

The president understands perfectly well that Moscow, as one of the largest cities in the world, will not want to reorient itself to the Islamic world. And this is not really needed. So, there must be other centers – Kazan, Grozny, Ufa or Makhachkala. The idea of

rapprochement with the Islamic world initially had serious regional implications, which was to become an additional driving force for the development of some Russian regions.

Incidentally, the role of Muslims as agents of economic interests of their country in the Islamic world is historically justified. In his speech at a ceremonial gathering in Kazan in August 2005 to commemorate the city's 1,000th anniversary, Putin said: "Russian rulers realized that in order to build strong and lasting relations with the Khanate of Kazan, Russia had to become a Eurasian power... Russia's role as a bridge between two civilizations (European and Asian) is more visible here in the Volga region than anywhere else. Historically, Kazan has played a huge role in the development of Russia's business life, and in the expansion of its economic and political influence. Suffice it to say that Kazan's merchants, above all ethnic Tatars, were involved in original and progressive ways of promoting the Russian empire's domestic capital and political influence first in Siberia and then in Central Asia and Transcaucasia".

The problem is that Putin's important statements and attempts to start a 'strategic dialogue between Moscow and the Islamic world' have received no tangible response from the other side. Indeed, Muslims are very interested to see such initiatives advanced; however, they have never had the strength, skills or resources for that. Moscow's participation in the OIC is still declarative, being rather a strategic groundwork for the future, which is little understood by Russian experts, officials and the public. As in the remote past, the "Eastern Party" in Russia is much weaker than the "Western Party".

The reaction of Russian Muslims to developments in Yugoslavia in 1998–1999 was a typical illustration of the discrepancy between the mainstream of Russian foreign policy and public sentiment, on the one hand, and Russian Muslims' attitude, on the other. The Muslim

community did not conceal its resentment at the fact that Moscow fully sided with Belgrade, paying no attention to discrimination and crimes against Kosovars.

There is a lack of information about Russia in the Greater Middle East, and people of various walks of life there have much prejudice against this country. The same is true for Moscow. Foreign-policy makers in Russia, including those setting policies towards the Islamic world, lack understanding of what modern Muslim countries, the OIC and the global Islamic community are and how they can be useful for Russia.

Russian Muslims love to complain about the activity of certain political and corporate strata and groups that oppose the development of relations with the Islamic world. Indeed, there is a system of lobbyist structures linked to part of the Russian bureaucracy, which hinder this initiative. It is a fact. They do not have a common platform, and they pursue this line for different reasons. But their negative attitudes and relevant political procedures do exist.

However, the key problem is not with them but with the fact that Russian Muslims do not have such a lobbyist structure. And this factor has a negative effect on the situation. As a partner of Moscow, the Islamic world ranks third after the West and China. The same is true for the majority of Muslim countries. Fine words aside, they view Russia primarily as a counterweight to the U.S. policy, as Muslims often say in private conversations, the stupid and ill-conceived policy of Uncle Sam. But, of course, there are countries that would like Russia to act as a systemic opponent of America and to cover them with its nuclear umbrella.

Russia lags behind other great powers in terms of systemic work with the Islamic community. Americans, for example, have an extensive network for lobbying, influencing and harmonizing interests

in the Arab-Muslim world. They have contact with large sections of society and parties to conflicts. Even with Iran, the United States not only has a bitter confrontation but also a long history of agreements: the Iran-Contra affair (some experts say that in those years Tehran received support not only from the U.S. but also from Israel), serious cooperation on Iraq, and common ground on Afghanistan.

In Russia, problems discussed in this article are dealt with by various Foreign Ministry departments, as well as by special departments in the Ministry of Defense and intelligence agencies. They handle these problems not very professionally, to put it mildly, in contrast, for example, to Russia's relations with Europe. There is also the half-bureaucratic Strategic Vision Group, which has not met for several years now. This policy area is mainly dealt with by veteran diplomats and intelligence officers, which suggests that this segment of foreign policy is formed and filled according to a leftover principle.

Russia's foreign policy is largely bureaucratic. Moscow maintains contacts only with ruling regimes but not with counter-elites and societies, and this is especially fatal in the Middle East. This is why Moscow supports even doomed regimes to the uttermost, as they are the only way for Russia to be present in the region (or rather, Russia itself makes them so). And even if the situation changes against Russia's will, it takes Moscow a long time to adapt to the changes; instead of reacting, it complains all the time and looks for enemies. By the way, the Muslim Brothers, who have come to power in Egypt and some other Arab countries, are due to a misunderstanding still listed as terrorists in Russia, contacts with whom are banned.

There is no business organization in Russia that would be oriented towards the development of relations with the Islamic world. Efforts by Yevgeny Primakov and the Russian-Arab Business Council, in the establishment of which he played a major role, have not been

very successful yet. There are some economic projects, but the bulk of interaction is still about military-technical cooperation.

Shamil Sultanov, president of the Center for Strategic Studies Russia-the Islamic World, has expressed his concern that “there is no actor for developing partner relations between Moscow and the Islamic world; this is the key point. Meanwhile, the Kremlin needs a strategic study into this issue, Sultanov went on. Putin repeatedly said: “We have a Muslim community; come on, work on it. There was no response to his words. Then he said: Offer your ideas and suggestions. Again, no heed was paid”.

An international conference called “Islamic Doctrine Against Radicalism”, held on May 25-26, 2012 in Moscow, filled the strategic dialogue between Russia and Muslims at least with some content. The Islamic world, represented by its most eminent theologians, came to Russia for the first time. The scholars, invited to Moscow by the International Al-Wasatiya Center (Kuwait), the Al-Wasatiya Scientific-Educational Center (Russia) and the Foundation for Supporting Islamic Culture, Science and Education, supported Russia’s efforts to counter extremism. The internationally known Islamic scholars adopted a theological declaration condemning the use of such terms as jihad, takfir and Caliphate for political purposes. The Moscow Declaration is ranked together with similar Amman and Mecca Declarations. The scholars did not discuss foreign policy proper, but the Arab media still described the visit by such prominent and influential persons (in the Islamic world a theologian is more than a theologian) as a step towards Moscow, despite its position on Syria, which does not meet with understanding in the Arab-Muslim world.

Thus, despite all the difficulties and political instability in Arab countries and their attitude towards Russia, the influential theologians showed their willingness to work with this country, viewing it as a

strategic partner of the changing Islamic world. Russian Muslims, who organized this dialogue, maybe for the first time acted as a bridge between Russia and Islam.

Incidentally, Al-Wasatiya is now the only Arab organization whose activity is officially approved in Russia. Beginning in the early 2000s, all Arab foundations and centers were closed because of suspected financing of Chechen separatists. Tiny but oil-rich Kuwait, which has been promoting the concept of Islamic moderation, has become Russia's window to Arab countries in the Gulf area, with which Russia has never had close relations, and to the Muslim world in general. In 2010, Dmitry Medvedev decorated the Undersecretary of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Adel Al-Falah, with the Order of Friendship for his special contribution to the development of Russian-Arab relations. It was the first time this order has been awarded to an Arab religious figure.

This is not to say that official Muslim organizations in Russia are absolutely passive and have no contacts with their coreligionists abroad. The Council of Muftis is doing its best to strengthen the Eurasian vector, chosen by Vladimir Putin (the initiative of the Eurasian Economic Community, the Collective Treaty Security Organization, the Customs Union, etc.). The Council's leaders were the first Russian officials to tour Arab Spring countries in North Africa, where they met with their new leaders. But these efforts are made by a small group of the elite, whereas among ordinary people, especially indigenous Muslim groups, there opponents of Eurasian integration, which naturally increases migration pressure on Russia from Central Asia.

It may seem strange to someone, but Russian Muslims do not always support immigration to the country because the number of their coreligionists in Russia is growing quantitatively but not qualitatively.

The Council of the Ingush People has recently openly demanded barring entry to Ingushetia for migrant workers. “Despite the critical unemployment situation, we see a very significant influx of migrant workers from Central Asian states to the republic”, the Council has said in a statement. “We understand that there are spheres where they are needed, but what we see in our streets, towns and villages has gone beyond the bounds of reason. However, the authorities are mobilizing all their resources to counter us and they do not assign much significance to the problem with migrants, who are indifferent to the authorities’ shortcomings”.

### **Options for Russia**

Russian Muslim ideologues propose various foreign-policy concepts.

Russia, in alliance with Iran, should lead “the world’s poor” in alter-globalist protests, proposes the chairman of the Islamic Committee of Russia, Heydar Jemal. However, the proposed way to implement this idea is very strange. Jemal says that the fall of the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria would unite countries where the Arab Revolution has won, and that this united Sunni bloc would enter into war against Iran and would subsequently pose a threat to Russia’s integrity. Therefore, Moscow should make every effort to defend the Syrian president and Tehran’s positions in the Mediterranean and, building on this success, it should lead everyone who lives on less than two dollars a day to struggle against the West.

Russia, in alliance with the entire Islamic community, should oppose the West in “the ongoing war of civilizations”, says analyst Shamil Sultanov. He holds that the very logic of geostrategy makes Moscow and the Islamic world, which are under threats from the West, seek each other’s friendship. Azhdar Kurtov, an expert of the Russian

Institute for Strategic Studies and Editor-in-Chief of Problems of National Strategy journal, shares this view. “When Russia was a great power, it could assist the Islamic world as a weighty ally in its confrontation with its geopolitical rivals, which are countries of the West, as all Muslims admit, Kurtov says. If Russia gains strength through right actions during Putin’s six-year presidency, this will have a beneficial effect on the positions of the Islamic world”.

Russia should move closer to Muslim countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States, say scholars Damir Mukhedinov and Damir Khairetdinov. “Violence and the specter of colored revolutions are roaming near the CIS borders”, they say. Therefore, Russia and Central Asia “should develop together to meet the needs of their citizens and to keep civil peace and stability”. Mukhedinov, who is first deputy chairman of the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of European Russia, holds that the main role of Muslim leaders in integration processes should be to carry out Dmitry Medvedev’s instructions given to Muslim leaders at a July 2011 meeting in Nalchik. Medvedev said that the leaders of large communities must “address such complex issues as social adaptation of migrants”.

Russia should give more attention to Arab Spring countries and Turkey, says Ruslan Kurbanov, researcher at the Russian Academy of Sciences’ Institute of Oriental Studies. Arabs are willing to invest heavily in Russia; they need to diversify their investments in order “not to get caught on the West’s hook, as all their accounts may be frozen and arrested by Americans one day for some trumped-up reasons”, he says. Kurbanov points out that Russia has never fought with any Arab country. “We never drove Iraq into the Stone Age with bombs; we have always supported the Palestinians and even received Hamas at the highest level. In general, Russia did much good in Arab countries in the

20<sup>th</sup> century. It still has a chance to become a privileged partner of the new Arab world. But Russia now risks having no allies left in the Middle East, in the Arab and Islamic world. These unpleasant prospects arise from Moscow's inadequate reaction to the Arab Spring. It should not give grounds for speculations that Moscow has become an ally of Iran's Shia imperialism and an opponent of the Sunni Awakening. The Arab Spring has a clear Sunni nature", Kurbanov says. According to those who share his position, attempts are now being made to form an Ankara-Cairo-Riyadh-Doha military-political bloc. This is a new promising force in the region. It would be shortsighted to be in opposition to it, to Arab peoples in general and to the Sunni world which has risen up in the name of a better life. Russia, as a world power and an arbiter, should maintain relations with all parties to the process. It should not put all its eggs in one basket and should, at least, avoid demonstrating a clear preference for those who have increasingly dim prospects.

All these concepts assign Russian Muslims the role of a link between Moscow and the Islamic world. The only problem is that Muslims themselves do little to fill the strategic partnership, so much spoken about by Putin, Medvedev and Lavrov, with political, let alone economic, content. Special mention should be made of the fact that, strangely enough, there is not much difference between foreign-policy priorities of the two main groups of Russian Muslims (Tatars/Bashkirs and North Caucasians), although, of course, the former are mentally closer to Turkey, while the latter, to Arab countries. The divide rather goes along the lines of personal ideological and cultural preferences.

By and large, Russian Muslims do not pin much hope on any benefits that could be derived from foreign-policy activity. Perhaps, they draw conclusions from their past experience, when Moscow's wonderful relations with Islamic countries did not at all guarantee any

preferences for them. For example, Arab and other Muslim countries were active friends with the Soviet Union, but they “failed to notice” persecutions of Muslims in this country. And today too, Muslim countries are slow to complain to the Russian authorities, for example, about bans on books about Islam, although these bans directly concern some of them, such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Even Russia’s ally Iran said nothing when a district court in the Penza region banned Imam Khomeini’s “Testament” in contrast to India which was outraged by a Russian court’s attempt to ban “Bhagavad Gita” as extremist literature. Sometimes, the presence of the internal Muslim factor even complicates the development of Russia’s ties with the Islamic world, causing the parties to pay attention to “annoying” problems and complaints from “the always dissatisfied minority”.

On the whole, foreign policy is a minor, if not peripheral, issue for Russian Muslims. True, Russian-language Islamic websites broadly cover information about troubles (more frequently) and achievements (less frequently) of Muslims in other countries (from Myanmar to the United States), and comments often contain anti-Israeli and anti-Western statements. At the same time, the same commentators and writers often point out the high level of religious freedom in the West and the number of mosques in “Islamophobic” London or New York, which cannot be even compared with that in “Islamophile” Moscow. But all these things are incommensurate with the reaction to Russia’s internal affairs relating to Muslims’ religious, ethnic and civil needs.

Of course, Muslims would like Moscow to move closer to Islamic states and help them. They take to heart tragic events in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and especially Palestine. Russians being Muslims are even ready for sacrifice for the sake of their foreign brethren, and ready to tolerate some things and close their eyes to something in their country in the name of the common interests of Islam. After all, all

Muslims are one Ummah, and it is their religious duty to sympathize with their coreligionists.

The Palestinian issue is probably the most important foreign-policy issue for Russian Muslims. They actively welcomed and supported the invitation of the PNA and Hamas leaders to Moscow. At the same time, the Kavkaz-Center website, the news portal of the “Caucasian Emirate”, not long ago wrote, in all seriousness, that “the main jihad is now taking place in Chechnya”. The Palestinian issue, very important to Muslims around the world, is not at all a top priority for North Caucasian radicals. Moreover, they even criticize Hamas for its moderation and friendship with Moscow.

But these are all opportunistic reactions. Even a cursory analysis shows that domestic politics matters much more to Russian Muslims. Meanwhile, their views of events abroad - now in Syria and earlier in Libya - and of how Moscow should react to them may be opposite. What Muslims, like all Russians, desire most of all is that Russia's foreign policy be reasonable and adequate and contribute to wellbeing (material and spiritual) of every individual.

“Rossiya v globalnoy politike”,  
M., 2012, Vol. 10, N 3, May-June, pp. 109–118.

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**POWER AND RELIGION IN THE REPUBLIC  
OF BASHKORTOSTAN**

From Soviet times and right up to 2010 supreme power in the Republic of Bashkortostan belonged to President Murtaza Rakhimov, Bashkir by nationality, who was the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Bashkiria under Soviet rule. Actually, the republic was under the

authoritarian rule, one of the most repressive in all parts of the Russian Federation. The opposition parties in the republic were practically non-existent. A serious challenge to the regime was thrown only once, when industrial tycoon, Alexander Veremeyenko, put forward his candidature at the presidential election campaign in 2003. However, before the second round of the elections he was forced to remove his candidacy, but this demarche showed that Rakhimov's power was not limitless.

Rakhimov's religious policy was not too repressive and had certain original features. On the one hand, his government rendered certain material assistance to religious organizations and did much to direct their activities into legal channels. In the late 1990s about 130 old buildings were returned and more than 100 new buildings were given over to these organizations. Apart from that, they were granted considerable tax privileges. During the entire period of Rakhimov's rule there was the post of chairman of the Council on religious affairs.

Murtaza Rakhimov always advocated equal, impartial and correct attitude to all confessions. In 1998 the republican Law on freedom of conscience was adopted which declared equality of all religions, without dividing them into "traditional" and "non-traditional." The republican authorities did not oppose missionary activity of the Protestant churches in Bashkortostan.

On the other hand, they were against the presence of religious organizations in educational institutions, government bodies, and their activity in public life.

Despite loyalty and direct material support of "traditional" religions, Murtaza Rakhimov strictly limited their activity, including Islamic organizations. The Muslim clergy had no access to educational institutions and official bodies. Rakhimov feared that the broad participation of religious organizations in various spheres of life in the republic might explode interethnic and social peace.

Islam in Bashkortostan is the religion of its two peoples – Bashkirs and Tatars. Bashkirs are not too religious. There are still heathen survivals among many of them. But the revival of Islam coincided with the process of the national revival of the Bashkir people and the exacerbation of contradictions between the Bashkir and Tatar communities in the republic. During the years of *perestroika* the number of mosques in the republic increased by more than thirty times over, and new secondary and higher religious institutions were opened.

Nevertheless, the process of religious revival in Bashkortostan was accompanied with serious conflicts within the Islamic community. A major conflict was connected with the contradictions between Talgat Tajuddin, chairman of the Central spiritual board of Muslims and supreme mufti of Russia, and the young Muslim clergy, who were dissatisfied with his policy of compromise toward the Federal Russian authorities. In 1994 the radical opponents of the pro-Russian spiritual board succeeded in removing Tajuddin from power, though temporarily. However, in December of that year he managed to return to his post.

Tajuddin's opponents accuse him of immoral behavior, drunkenness, and even drug addiction. But more important are accusations against him concerning his ideological position. Tajuddin declares that Sharia should not be the standard of law, but only the inner law of a Muslim ("Sharia should be in the heart of each Muslim"). He asserts that the many-century stay of Muslims in Russia is not an evil, but a boon for them, and that "the Muslim way of life in Iran or Sudan should not be a sample for us." In his speech at the All-world Russian Assembly in December 1999 he said that "sacred Rus was an important concept for the Russian Muslims, too." Tajuddin adheres to the ecumenical position, calls for rapprochement between all

Abrahamic religions and wishes to strengthen contacts with the Russian Orthodox Church.

Tajuddin's ecumenical orientations and his desire to make Islam more modern objectively reflect the views of a considerable part of the Russian Muslims who received European education and accepted western values.

In the early 1990s the Bashkir imam N. Nigmatullin and the Tatar imam N. Ashirov headed the opposition to Tajuddin. On their initiative a spiritual board of Muslims of the Republic of Bashkortostan was set up headed by Mufti Nigmatullin, with Ashirov as his deputy, in 1992. This new body adopted a more radical theological and political position. It is oriented to the Muslim countries of the Middle East and one of its aims is firmly to establish the Sharia law in public life of the republic. N. Ashirov succeeded in establishing close contacts with Muslim organizations in Middle Eastern countries, and in 1996 he admitted that the board began to receive financial assistance from them.

In the first half of the 1990s the board invited several dozen Muslim teachers from these countries, and Muslim preachers came to work in Bashkortostan.

In contrast to Tajuddin, who is striving for establishing closer ties with the Russian Orthodox Church, the Spiritual board of Muslims of Bashkortostan maintains only formal relations with it initiated by the republican authorities. Tajuddin accuses the board leaders of spreading political and religious extremism, national enmity, and maintaining ties with the Wahhabis. In its turn, the board accused Tajuddin of immoral behavior, servility to the Russian Federation authorities, ecumenism, and even in Freemasonry.

Revival of Islam among the Bashkirs is not independent, but is rather subordinated to national-political aims. Most Muslim clergymen (up to 90 percent) are Tatars, which causes tension and friction.

The nationalist Bashkir parties and movements (the biggest of them is the Bashkir national center “Ural”) considered it very important to revive Islam during the first years of *perestroika*, as a factor ensuring the preservation and cohesion of the Bashkir ethnus. On the initiative and money of the center the Koran was translated into the Bashkir language in 1994, and a great many religious editions in this language came off the press.

From the latter half of the 1990s the Bashkir national center and other Bashkir national organizations began to lose interest in Islam and became more secular.

In 1992–1994 the Spiritual board of Muslims of Bashkortostan, in the wake of the movements for republican sovereignty and also due to the Bashkir national revival and desire to cleanse Islam from Russian-Soviet influence became more influential and popular and enjoyed greater support of the authorities and public. But the situation began to change gradually.

Tajuddin succeeded in using definite sources in his support and proving his loyalty to the republican authorities. Simultaneously, he consolidated his ties with the Moscow authorities. Besides, he was able to demonstrate to a considerable part of the Tatar community of Bashkortostan that he could be its ethnic leader, at the same time flirting with the Bashkir community.

In 1995 Tajuddin, while holding the post of the supreme mufti, set up the regional Bashkir mufti board in the city of Salavat. However, this initiative failed through and the Salavat board was closed in 1997.

In the latter half of the 1990s the Spiritual board of the Republic of Bashkortostan began to lose its positions and influence. One of the main reasons for this was the radical views and behavior of its head N. Ashirov. His bellicose rhetoric began to frighten the authorities and public. Preachers and teachers from foreign countries caused irritation

not only of the authorities, but also the local population. Foreign preachers and teachers, protecting pure Islam, denounced local religious customs and traditions, and this evoked strong protest of local parishioners. They held several big meetings and demanded that the authorities expel foreign Islamists (and the authorities complied with their demands).

In 1997 N. Ashirov left Bashkortostan, after he managed to create the Spiritual board of Muslims of the Asian part of Russia and took the post of its mufti. His successor Ayub Bibarsov adhered to more moderate positions. He and his supporters maintain official relations with Tajuddin, their rhetoric is milder, but the principal ideological premises and aims remained the same.

It should be noted that Islamic religiousness in Bashkortostan is rather weak, weaker than in any other traditional Islamic region of Russia. The mosques are half empty, there are no intellectuals among Muslim believers, and most of madrasah pupils are those who failed to enroll in any other educational establishment.

Adoption of Christianity (mainly Pentecostal and Evangelical churches) has become a frequent phenomenon among both Bashkirs and Tatars; fewer people adopted Orthodox Christianity and Catholicism. The Islamic leaders and representatives of nationalist organizations express their indignation over this fact, but cannot do anything, all the more so since the authorities do not oppose this.

At the same time the leaders of the Bashkir national movement cultivate specific features of Bashkir spiritual culture and emphasize Islamic religiousness of the nomadic people and their common traits with Kazakhs and Nogais, but not with Tatars.

Conflicts flare up on the wave of the national movement in connection with the numerical preponderance of Tatars among the Muslim clergy. Mention should also be made of sentiments among a

certain part of Bashkir public in favor of forming some specific Bashkir faith on the basis of occultism and Turkic mythology.

In the early 1990s the President of Bashkortostan Murtaza Rakhimov was in a serious conflict with the Moscow authorities on the problem of greater independence of his republic. He used the activity of Bashkir nationalist organizations as a lever of pressure. In 1993 the Constitution of the Republic of Bashkortostan was adopted which proclaimed the “sovereignty” of the republic, and in 1994 a treaty was signed between Bashkortostan and the federal government “on delineation of competence and mutual delegation of powers,” which gave broader legitimate rights to the republican authorities going beyond the framework of the Constitution of the Russian Federation. After that the relations between Moscow and Ufa have stabilized. In 2002 the Constitution of Bashkortostan was formally brought in line with the Constitution of the Russian Federation, but it had little impact on the self-consciousness of the Bashkir people and the republican political elite.

Rakhimov’s religious policy has always been rather moderate and cautious. Religious organizations in the republic had equal rights and religious minorities were never discriminated. Nevertheless, the sympathies of the authorities have always been quite evident. And the anti-Tatar trend of the Bashkir national movement has always created problems for the republican authorities in their relations with the Tatar community.

Since the mid-1990s the republican authorities and public have displayed growing fear in the face of Islamic fundamentalism and extremism. From 1997 onward the authorities began to expel all foreign preachers and teachers of Islam. In November 1998 six Pakistani citizens were driven out from Ufa “for their anti-Russian statements aimed at fanning national and religious enmity.” In August 2002 a big

group of Turkish citizens, who were members of radical Islamic groupings “Suleimanjdi” and “Nurjular,” was expelled. They took part in educational work with children fostering the “spirit of pan-Turkism and religious fanaticism” in them.

By the 2000<sup>th</sup> it became evident that mufti T. Tajuddin succeeded in reestablishing his positions in society, which was largely due to the fact that Murtaza Rakhimov made hajj together with him in 1995. The mufti was especially active during the presidential election campaign in 1997 demonstrating his support to Rakhimov’s candidature. Tajuddin was also very active in 1997–1998 when a whole complex of mosque-cum-madrasah “Lale-tyulpan” was being built in Ufa at the expense of the republican budget. The ceremonial opening of the mosque took place at the end of 1998 in the presence of M. Rakhimov and T. Tajuddin, which symbolized unity of the two leaders.

The Rakhimov administration has declared equality of all religious organizations (except the Wahhabi). Its religious policy is keynoted by the desire to foster the feeling of tolerance and wish to cooperate. The authorities are striving to preclude enmity between religious figures and attacks against the clergy in the mass media.

The local authorities in the Republic of Bashkortostan reveal understanding and sympathy toward Muslims and their organizations. It is only the Wahhabis and their followers that are persecuted.

The development of Orthodox Christianity in Bashkortostan is directly connected with the person of the head of the eparchy during post-Soviet time, Archbishop Nikon. The Archbishop of Ufa and Sterlitamak Nikon (N. Vasyukov) has been heading the eparchy since August 1990. He pursues a policy open to all national minorities and is cautious with regard to conversion of Bashkirs and Tatars to Orthodox

Christianity. (It should be noted that there have been quite a few cases of Tatars turning into Orthodox Christians).

The activity of the Orthodox Christian eparchy in the sphere of religious education is not too successful. There are no religious educational institutions, and the branch of the St. Tikhon University, which had been working in Ufa for several years, was closed in 2008. There are many Orthodox parishes in Bashkortostan, and their number continues to grow. However, the clergy for these parishes are educated and trained in other eparchies. Sunday schools are open in big cities where professional teachers work.

Muslims and Orthodox Christians in Bashkortostan expressed discontent over the policy of the Rakhimov administration aimed at restricting the role of religion in public life. But in the summer of 2010 President Murtaza Rakhimov had to resign. He was replaced by the former manager of the big state-owned company “RusGidro” Rustem Khamitov. His behavior and attitude to religion and political pluralism considerably differ from those of his predecessor. Khamitov is much more tolerant and democratic. Moreover, certain changes have emerged in religious policy. In contrast to Rakhimov, Khamitov not only does not prevent active participation of religion in public life, on the contrary, he welcomes it. Bashkortostan is one of the few regions where religion is directly financed by the state. If a new mosque is built, a Russian Orthodox church is built also. The republican leadership has no prejudice toward Protestants. Interestingly, Bashkir Muslims are more friendly and cooperative with Protestants than Orthodox Christians. The problem of access of religion to general educational school is under consideration. Khamitov’s position was a strong impetus to the development of social work (including spiritual) at hospitals, orphanages, etc.

Rakhimov's resignation and the election of the new president of Bashkortostan Rustem Khamitov in July 2010 have resulted in noticeable changes in religious policy in general, and especially in relations with Muslims. President Khamitov often visits mosques and says he is devout Muslim. Religious organizations (including Islamic ones) have now been given more rights and assistance, and at the same time greater control over the activity of Islamic communities has been introduced. This change of policy toward Muslims has been conditioned by the administration of the President of the Russian Federation when the Foundation for supporting Islamic culture and education has been set up. On its initiative and with its support the Islamic higher educational institution "Partner" has been opened in Bashkortostan where future imams are trained.

The district administrations of the republic now have commissions on interconfessional relations dealing with problems and conflicts arising between religious organizations. The authorities do not conceal the fact that the main problem is Wahhabism. Numerous measures have been evolved to combat it. Special educational groups of lecturers have been formed on the basis of the Ufa Pedagogical Institute. Members of these groups travel around the republic preaching traditional Islam and denouncing Wahhabism. The commissions on state-interconfessional relations recommended to organize young people's groups at all levels, because many imams of the old generation often lose respect of the broad public.

In 2011 the compulsory certification of all imams was introduced with a view to precluding extremism. The imams who passed it receive special grants from the Foundation for supporting Islamic culture and education.

Despite all and sundry measures, an aggressive Wahhabi terrorist underground still exists in Bashkortostan. For example, two armed

uprisings took place in the town of Oktyabrsky in 2009 and 2010 staged by mojahed units numbering over 50 men. The republican special force captured a group of militants headed by “Emir Bashkirsy”, the leader of the local terrorist underground. His real name was Bashir Pliyev. According to information available to the special service, he has traveled to the North Caucasus where he met the head of the Chechen terrorists Doku Umarov, who appointed him “Emir of Bashkortostan and Samara region.”

In early 2011 the construction of a huge Islamic complex began in Ufa. It will include a mosque, Islamic university and offices of Islamic organizations. Its activity will definitely be aimed, among other things, to opposing extremism and terrorism.

“Strany Vostoka: sotsialno-politicheskiye problemy v kontekste globalizatsii”. Moscow, 2012, pp. 197–217.

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## **THE ETHNO-POLITICAL PREREQUISITES FOR EXTREMISM IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS**

For the whole post-Soviet period the North Caucasus (NC) represented a clearly pronounced zone of ethno-political and socio-cultural turbulence. In many sectors of social reality the intensity of conflicts either raises or reduces but remains rather high for the whole time. Thus, at the present time, the re-politicization of ethnicity goes on after the period of the relative de-politicization in the middle of the first decade of the XXI century. One other trend is the continued process of religious rebirth and politicization of religious processes in the region.

These two factors play greater role in the socio-cultural and political processes in the South of Russia (SR), while religion is often used as an instrument of raising ethno-political tension. The acute ethno-political problems of the NC region, the general and a rather high level of conflicts' generation of its socio-cultural area represent a favorable ground for emergence and development of extremism in various expressions starting with mental predisposition to extremist activities and finishing with terrorist acts. Evidently, today the rise of extremism and terrorism is the most significant and the most painful problem of NC, the problem, which has an essential influence on the situation not only within the region itself but also in the Russian Federation (RF) as a whole.

The federal law on the counteraction against extremist activities regards as extremist activities the following actions: propaganda, public appeals and financing directed to the forceful change of the foundations of the Constitutional order and violation of integrity of the RF, undermining of security of RF, seizure or embezzlement of powers, creation of illegal armed groups and carrying out of terrorist activities. It is said in the law that the subjects of extremist activities may be organizations, mass media, groups of persons, individuals, while the objects of extremist activities may be the state and social groups, as well as their representatives (officials, representatives of the law enforcement bodies and citizens).

The significant characteristic of extremism is rejection of existing social and political conditions. This characteristic is not the only one for the analyzed notion, since otherwise practically any conflicting reciprocal action might be considered as a display of extremism. R.Abdulatipov considers that any form of extremism is enforcement of your own ideas and values related to violation of human rights, personal dignity, rights and dignity of peoples or other social

societies. “Enforcement” is not the most significant and final objective of extremist activities. To the authors’ mind, it is a stage related to any form of conflicting reciprocal action, but use of force does not take place always in case of conflict. The passage from radicalism to extremism is realized by means of fixing the objective and by selecting means of the objective’s achievement. One party in the conflict may doubt in the system’s ability to propose the acceptable decision or regard it as an objective obstacle. Finally, it may lead to fixing of such targets and to selection of such means, which will threaten existence of the system and security of the citizens. For instance, the demand to change radically the principles of migration policy (for instance, to restrict essentially arrival to the region’s territory of labor migrants from other regions of the country for the reasons not directly connected with their social belonging) is a display of radicalism.

On the other side, the attempts to eject migrants without assistance, application of psychological and physical forceful action against them as representatives of the certain social group is a display of extremism. In the first case radicalism is not necessarily connected with nationalism, and, on the contrary, the question is such changes in migration policy, which are directed to protection of the rights of the labor migrants belonging to one or other ethnic group. And what is more, it is possible to think about the situation, when one or other political force seeking to arrange a pressure against the authorities in the interests of migrants in its activities crosses the framework of legislation and takes forceful measures. Thus, any political group, irrespective of the values proclaimed by it, is an extremist group, if it fixes extreme aims and uses extreme means.

Analyzing the main approaches to definition of extremism as well as the Russian legislation relating to this matter, the authors regard extremism as a form of conflict. At the same time, the main indication,

which distinguishes extremism from radicalism and moderate conflicting situation, will be the attitude of subjects of a political or socio-cultural conflict to the social system in the broad sense and to the use of force as an instrument of realization of the fixed aims and tasks. E. Ulezko, the author of article “Extremism and Terrorism” published in magazine “Philosophy of Law” (2009, N 5), considers that as extremist may be called only such actions, which surpasses the needed rate of action irrespective of the used means: physical force, moral enforcement, economic pressure etc. He writes that extremism, aggravating the situation, directs it to the extremes and radial contradictions, and therefore the constructive solution of the problem, as a rule, becomes impossible. If extremism is the extreme, terrorism is the last extreme presenting itself rather as the logical but not obligatory development of extremism. Extremism potentially may transform itself into terrorism. At the same time, extremism may be limited with the sphere of ideological abstractions, while terrorism is a phenomenon coming out of the social-political practice with its own ideology, though. Extremism may be the ground (as ideology, social basis etc.) for terrorism. In the same way, the “softer” definition – radicalism may potentially outgrow into extremism. It is possible to consider terrorism as a method of solving contradictions emerging between the social groups (communities) and the state and supposing offence against the health or life of people as an action of influence on the state. Terrorism is a form of conflict, which is characterized by the offence or a threat of offence against health or life of the people directed to formation of discourse about the lack of protection with the view of compulsion to fulfill demands of certain social groups by society and the authorities.

The information disseminated by the persons affiliated with extremist and terrorist organizations is directed to formation of the discourse, which considers extremist and terrorist activities as “struggle

for justice” and “struggle for the rights of the oppressed”. The terrorists are proclaimed to be heroes, while the negative image of their antagonist is formed, regarding its position as “demonic” and making it subject to disparagement. These assertions may be justified on the basis of political and religious ideas of different orientations, which characterize the level of this conflicting process. According to the opinion of some experts (V. Chulanov and V. Gurba), the idea of justice is the most significant factor of legitimization and of public support given to terrorism. They pointed out that from the ancient times justice was considered as the most significant virtue and the main principle of the world order. The norms of justice correspond to the ideal of social system and are accepted by the majority of the population, since they promise every person the requital according to the deserts. The ideal of justice includes the principles letting the person form the space of free realization of his own interests with due account of interests of all others. However, the principles of justice are not quite universal – they proceed from the universal nature of man, but historic conditions, social rules and the way of living of the social group, of the community have an impact on the contents of the principles.

Thus, there shapes each person’s own scale of appraising justice, which makes the person in a specific way evaluate his own and the other’s deeds. To the authors’ view, the values, phenomena of the social environment and the social system as a whole may be subject to such subjective appraisal. As a result, the formula snaps into action: “what is terrorism for someone, the other one considers as a struggle for freedom”. A. Omarov, the official representative of the Republic of Dagestan in Stavropol krai, shares this point of view. In his interview to magazine “Expertise of Power” he said as follows: “The photos of fighters are stuck around the city of Stavropol. There is among them the

twenty years man born in village Aigurski of the Apanasenkovski district. Eight years ago the families of shepherds were evicted from the district. Probably, the family of this fighter was victim of injustice on the part of the authorities, and the sun escaped to the forest exactly due to this injustice? And at present we again come back to this practice of injustice...”

The mentioned above religious rebirth for the post-Soviet period became one of the most important trends of the socio-cultural transformation of the North-Caucasian region. At present, religion as a logical consequence of this process is the dominant of the identification process in the space of NC. At the same time, the relations among some ethno-confessional groups in the region aggravated greatly creating prerequisites for development of conflicting reciprocal actions. The significance of religion for residents of NC is shown by the results of the research arranged in 2009 on the territory of four subjects of the former SFD: in Stavropol krai, Krasnodar krai, the Karachay-Cherkessia republic and Kabardino-Balkaria republic. The confessional identity is very important for young residents of the South of Russia. As “very important” or “important” it was appraised by 76% of respondents. The Christian part of the South of Russia is secularized to a rather large extent, and this fact had its impact on “the rating of identities” of the youth of the South of Russia, fixing it at the third place.

The rapid rise of importance of religious identity contributed to the fact that the extremist-terrorist underground in NC started actively to use religion as an instrument in political and ideological struggle. For religious terrorists the forceful action (or terrorism) is a sacred duty, justified by Holy Writ (either Bible or Koran). The forceful action legitimized by religion becomes a self-supported act, since the forceful actions by themselves are regarded as “sanctioned” by God. However

this assertion made by RAND Corporation (<http://rand.org>) lets make different conclusions on the influence of the religious factor: numerous analyses of biographies of the known members of religious terrorist organizations showed that these people did not get a thorough religious education and most of them by origin are members of the families with moderate religious views. These conclusions correspond quite well with the position taken by A. Khloponin, the Political Representative of the President in the North Caucasian Federal District, who thinks that at present, Islam is not comprehended even by those, who take refuge in it. However, at the same time, it is impossible to ignore the fact that many terrorists justify by religion their activities and very often use some or other provisions of Islam as an ideological foundation of terrorism.

According to some researchers, comprehension by Muslims of their religious identity demanded its consolidation as well in political life of society. The politicization of Islam went on at different levels and in various forms. On the one side, the attempts were made to include Islam in the political system by creation of Muslim public-political organizations, some kind of attempts to form new “pure Islam”, and, on the other side, the spontaneous politicization was going on, including radicalization of Islam in small social groups. It was noted as well, that as a result of uncontrolled processes of religious rebirth the society in NC became very quick on the uptake of religious ideas interpreted often in the radical sense. As a result, there shaped favorable conditions for development in the North Caucasian region of the radical Islamic underground.

One of the prerequisites for the spread of Islamic radicalism is, first of all, the national-territorial arrangement: the principle itself of the territorial-administrative separation according to the national reason contradicts the history of peoples of NC. Two peoples of the North

Caucasus turned out to be separated by inter-state borders – the Ossetians and the Lezgins. A considerable number of the North Caucasian peoples are separated by internal (inter-republican) borders. This factor disunited the peoples of trans-border regions and lets Islamists use the opposition among peoples of NC for intensification of their activities.

Second, the so-called “Asian” or traditional structure of employment is characteristic for employment. The aboriginal population is engaged mainly in agriculture and trade, and “new comers” (mainly Slavonic people) are employed in industry. The region is marked by excess of labor force, and unemployment is characteristic primarily for the rural districts, where the main part of the indigenous population is settled. Exactly the traditional rural way of living of the indigenous population, as some researchers think, promotes dissemination in these districts of radical Islamic ideas and in this way raises the general level of conflicts’ generation. The absolute and relative overpopulation of NC and at the same time the impossibility of the main part of indigenous residents to participate in industrial production engender the social tension. Many inter-national conflicts in NC emerged due to the territories fit for agriculture – they are the so called “agricultural conflicts”. It is easy to explain why the authorities of two mountainous republics (North Ossetia and Ingushetia) quarrel so stubbornly for a long period of dispute about territorial belonging of the Prigorodny district. The flat country, agricultural Prigorodny district was the main granary for the Ingushis, who lost it, and is one of the most fertile zones in North Ossetia, which acquired it.

The third reason of dissemination of Islamic radicalism in NC lies in attractiveness of some ideas of religious fundamentalism for rather large groups of the population confining themselves to traditional Islamic values. For instance, the neo-wahhabies regard subordination of

Muslims to the authorities as inappropriate for them and come forward for creation of the Islamic state (existing according to the laws of shariat). These ideas are shared mainly in the regions of wide dissemination of neo-wahhabism, where about 70% of the residents live, in essence, in the traditional society in a way practically unchanged for the times of the Soviet power. It is significant to note that the ideas of religious radicalism and extremism find the broadest response in the environment of the young people. As R.G. Landa mentions, the main secret of success of fundamentalists (rather relative almost in the whole post-Soviet space) consists in their count on the youth. The main pre-requisite of radicalization of the youth in the North Caucasus is the deep religiousness of young people implanted in them since the childhood. According to the data of the sociological opinion poll, the basis of the world outlook of the emerged new generation is religion. The great majority of the participants of the contemporary terrorist underground in NC consist of young (15–20 years old) people, who differ much in their ideological directions from the generation of the 25–30 years people, who confine themselves to more secular and moderate views.

Fourth, the inefficiency of the state power and legal nihilism, characteristic practically for all Muslim regions of the former USSR, promote the social basis of Islamic radicals. For instance, at present in Dagestan the state power is actually divided in two strata of society – the former party nomenclature and the so called “new Dagestanians”, i.e. the criminal authorities possessing their own armed groups. The conflict of wahhabies of the village of Karamakhi in Dagestan with the authorities of official Makhachkala appeared after their refusal to pay contribution to the local criminality. In this situation many Muslims lose faith in the efficiency of the secular authorities’ actions and come

round to the view that it is possible to overcome lawlessness only in the case, if society lives according the norms of shariat.

Fifth, the financial might of fundamentalists to a rather great extent promotes their influence.

In conclusion, it should be said that the ideology of contemporary terrorism, as a rule, consists of radical religiously determined views and of the count on forceful action and extremism in solving public contradictions and carrying out social reforms. The complex of contradictions of social development is changed for simplified schemes of social dynamics greatly bearing resemblance to social Darwinism. In this case, they recognize “revolutionary type” of development but not development as an evolutionary transformation. The world outlook within the framework of binary opposition “we – they” is a display of the extreme intolerance to heterodoxy and doubts. The adherence to the group comes forward as a founding value, and the norms of groups are idealized, while the given society is considered as a hostile environment. The common human values, primarily the human right for life are repudiated. As a rule, the responsive actions on the part of society are marked by the opposite result – they consolidate the preservation of the group, diminish differences in the group and create moral alibi. At present, there has been formed in NC the discourse, which asserts intolerance to the civil secular society, has as its aim creation of the state with legal norms based on religion – the theocratic state of the so called “Caucasian Imarat”. At the same time, the activities of terrorist groups are not reduced to the separatist trend relating to Russia, since the question is the involvement of the whole Islamic ummah in the struggle against “the unfaithful” on the territory of Russia and outside it. The appeal of religious radicals to senses and faith promote consolidation of such political and religious views.

Extremism and terrorism represent the continued display of ideas of radicalism based on the rebirth of religion.

“*Nauchnaya mysl Kavkaza*”,  
*Rostov na Donu, 2012, N 1, pp 35–39.*

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## **INTERACTION OF RELIGION AND THE STATE IN TAJIKISTAN: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS**

In the Central Asian countries, particularly Tajikistan, the population's interest in Islam, especially among young people, has grown considerably in recent years. This is due, above all, to a difficult socio-economic situation and the ideological and spiritual vacuum in Tajik society. The ideas of a secular, law-abiding and democratic state proclaimed by the Constitution of Tajikistan are not fully implemented in society. Proceeding from this, the population, especially young people, turn to religion, namely, to Islam ever more frequently in search of truth and justice.

Meanwhile, in the absence of well-developed and high-quality secular education most young people grow up illiterate, with narrow spiritual horizon, and this is why, while visiting mosques, they can possibly become objects of manipulations on the part of religious figures of various kind. This is one of the most serious problems in modern Tajik society.

Another serious problem in Tajikistan at present is a shortage of high-quality religious education. It is the latter that can become the basis for the development of tolerant Islam in Tajik society. The growing influence of Islam in many transition societies of Central Asia is not prevented by anyone or anything at present. A question arises

whether the development and strengthening of western-type democracy become an alternative to the growing role of Islam, and whether democracy as a West-European value is necessary to Central Asia.

Today many believers are sure that it is only the Islamic principles that are able to solve their social problems. In the absence of a pluralistic political field in Central Asian countries, Islam could, perhaps, become a platform or an instrument for expressing the social protest of the distressed population. In this case, as I see it, the political influence of Islam will grow in modern Central Asian societies. In this situation Islam will demonstrate its other essence, for Islam is not only a religion, it is also a political doctrine. It should be taken into account that Prophet Mohammed was the spiritual, religious and political leader.

Proceeding from this, one can forecast that most political regimes in Central Asian countries have an opportunity to control the growing role of Islam. This is the legalization of moderate Islamic movements – for instance, the Party of Islamic revival in Tajikistan was legalized, and also the state put forward initiatives to revive Islam. For example, the Khanafite mazhab was proclaimed the official trend of Islam in Tajikistan. This was done by the Tajik state in order to reduce the possibilities of distributing other Islamic trends, for instance, Salafism in Tajik society. In this case, Islam is possibly integrated in national ideology. But what then should be done in this context with the principle of secularism in the Tajik state?

Another road is to adopt radical measures against the growing influence of Islam in society. But such “secular extremism” on the part of the state can provoke the growth of religious extremism.

There is also the third, alternative development way, namely, the formation of a stable civil society.

Islam began to spread on the territory of Central Asia at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. This process lasted several centuries, and as a result Islam became state religion of many Central Asian countries. All civil, criminal, family and other laws were based on the Muslim Sharia Law. The form of state government was feudal and in essence it was not religious, but Islam played the leading role in politics.

Further on, the social revolutions in Europe and scientific and technological progress did influence Central Asia. The first Islamic political reformers in Central Asia and Afghanistan during that period were Djamoliddin Afghani (1842–1899) and Ahmadi Donish (1820–1886). The Tajik scholar Usmon Dawlat writes: “Under the influence of Europe the idea of separating religion from the state and politics came to the Muslim world at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During several decades, especially after World War II, the rulers of the newly-emerged independent Muslim countries began to oust religious groups from power. Nevertheless, the idea of the unity of Islam and politics became, and still remains, one of the foundations of the political culture of the Muslim world.

In order to better understand the political situation connected with the revival of Islam in Central Asian countries today it will be necessary to turn attention to the stepping up of religious processes on the territory of Central Asia at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the ideas of pan-Islamism and pan-Turkism based on Islam began to be formed on the present territory of Central Asia. Pan-Islamism, propagated by the Jadid movement placed the reformation of the existing system and creation of an Islamic state at the center of the problem. Among the outstanding propagandists of these ideas were Ahmadi Donish and Abdurauf Fitrat. Advocates of

pan-Turkism were also armed with Islamic ideas and propagandized the creation of Islamic caliphate under the aegis of Turkey.

After the October revolution of 1917 Soviet power deprived religious leaders of the opportunity to take part in political affairs, yet during the Soviet period Islam was used by the Soviet leadership for foreign-policy aims.

In 1943, the First Congress of Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan was held, which formed the basis for the setting up of the Spiritual board of Muslims, in other words, legalization of Islam took place, and it was included in the further socio-political process.

The most active revival of Islam and its greater participation in public and political life in post-Soviet countries began along with the process of *perestroika* initiated by M. Gorbachev. In 1990 the U.S.S.R. Islamic party of revival was formed in Astrakhan. However, it should be noted that the revival and development of Islam in Central Asian countries played the role of a destabilizing factor and exacerbated the political situation there.

After the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. a spiritual vacuum has formed in Eurasian society. Political storms and uncertainty in the 1990s, material deprivations and the loss of the former status made the life of common citizens extremely difficult, and their emotional world was thrown into turmoil. In these conditions people began to turn to traditional symbols and rituals in order to find calm and quiet and civil orientation. Islam gave them the feeling of stability.

In Tajikistan the underground Muslim organization of young people created by Said Abdullo Nuri became quite active in 1974 (Later he headed the Tajik united opposition). This illegal organization armed with the ideas of Djamiliddin Afghani and other Muslim reformers had the aim to revive Islam. At the same time its activity was also aimed at changing the existing political system. During the period of *perestroika*

such Islamist movements were regarded democratic because they had an openly anti-communist character. But as soon as these Islamic organizations began to claim political power, their leaders were immediately taken for fundamentalists, religious extremists, and the like.

Meanwhile, it should be noted that for political representatives of the legalized Islamic movement in Tajikistan the words “Tajik” and “Muslim” were synonyms. It should be remembered that Islamic movements in Tajikistan had no plans for the revival of Islam in Tajik society.

The Tajik scholar Murodullo Dawlatov writes: “One of the reasons for the civil war in Tajikistan was connected with the fact that the entire political field in the country was filled with international Islamist projects. After the proclamation of independence of Tajikistan, various trans-national Islamist projects have been put forward, because the Tajik Islamists did not, and could not, have any project of their own. Thus, they actually tried to implement the ideas and plans of other people, who did not take the national interests of Tajikistan into account.”

The civil conflict in Tajikistan, in which the Islamic opposition took an active part, was settled thanks to a dialogue between the secular and religious forces. Tajikistan played the role of an original socio-political laboratory, as it were, in which various models of secular-religious dialogue were evolved, and which could be used in other Central Asian countries if need be. Above all, it is participation of a religious party in the political processes going on in Tajikistan. Today, the Party of Islamic revival of Tajikistan is sitting in the republican parliament and taking part in the country’s political life by using legal political methods. Legalization of the Party of Islamic revival in Tajikistan made it possible to minimize the spreading of radical

extremist sentiments among the population, but did not solve all problems connected with religious life in Tajik society.

Some followers of the party considered its compromise with the government of the country a deviation from the principles and ideas of an Islamic party. Disappointed and disillusioned by the party's activity, these people switched over to other religious organizations and movements.

Meanwhile, during the post-conflict period in Tajikistan the "Salafia" movement stepped up its activity. The chairman of the Party of Islamic revival of Tajikistan Muhiddin Kabiri wrote the following about it: "At first some persons in the republican government preferred to use Salafites against our party, inasmuch as adherents of this movement proceeded from the premise that Islam forbids the formation of political parties, and the head of state, whoever he might be, bears the title 'Amir Abd-al Mumin' ('the emir of all the faithful in any country'). The Salafites maintain that opposition to the Amir Abd-al Mumin contradicts all principles and standards of Islam. These assertions had an impact on many government officials, and in 2008 Salafites were given time on the radio and TV for propaganda of their ideas among the population, whereas representatives of the officially registered religious political party (Party of Islamic revival) were practically deprived of time on the radio and TV. Nearsightedness and opportunistic approach of government officials have led to the rapid distribution of Salafite views in the country, especially among young people. But in a year's time, the authorities swayed to another extreme by banning the Salafite movement altogether."

On March 5, 2009, a new law was adopted in Tajikistan – "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations". According to the law, the Islamic legal school "Hanafia" was recognized as the official religious movement. Presenting this draft, the Minister of culture of

Tajikistan Mirzoshohruh Asrori said that the new law should replace the existing law “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations” adopted by the republican parliament in 1990. Religious radicalism, nihilism and some other trends of Islam which emerged lately, but are alien to the Tajik people, were the reason for the adoption of the new law. At present there are about 3,000 mosques and 18 religious associations officially working in Tajikistan. They have been registered as followers of the Hanafite trend of Islam, which was why this trend was pronounced the official religious current in Tajikistan.

In the view of the leader of the Party of Islamic revival Muhiddin Kabiri, this decision was adopted because the overwhelming majority of Tajik Muslims (over 95 percent) believe in Hanafite Islam. “Hanafia” exerts a profound influence on culture. The distribution and popularity of the Hanafite legal school in Central Asia can be explained as follows. It is known that there are two main trends in Islam: Sunna and Shia. The former has four basic legal-theological schools: Hanafism, Malikism, Shafiism and Khanbalism. The Hanafites are the most loyal to adat (customs), the Malikites and Khanbalites strictly adhere to the Sunna orthodox principles, while the Shafiites stand in between representatives of these mazhab. The overwhelming part of Muslims in the Central Asian region, including Tajiks, has for centuries believed in Islam of the Hanafite mazhab. It is the most rational and flexible of all, opening broad opportunities for innovations. As to Salafism, the authoritative encyclopedic dictionary “Islam” defines Salafites as religious Muslims calling for orientation to the way of life and faith of the early Muslim community, “righteous ancestors,” and rejecting all “innovations” in life and religion.

Modern Salafite fundamentalist groupings come out for jihad, that is, an armed struggle not only against the infidels, but also against all Muslims who oppose the Salafite interpretation of Islam.

The Constitution of Tajikistan declares it a secular country where religion is separated from the state. Meanwhile, many people, some researchers included, believe that the principle of dividing the functions and competence of religion and the state is impossible in an Islamic country; it can only be implemented in the Christian world.

Many western countries do not take into account this specificity of Muslim communities and negatively assess the present religious policy in the countries of Central Asia, which is aimed at strict control over religious processes. For instance, the new law of the Republic of Tajikistan “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations” adopted by the republican parliament on March 5, 2009, was criticized by the U.S. mission at the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe. It said that the law gave too much power to the state in controlling the activity of religious organizations, introducing strict censorship of religious literature, banning certain religious ceremonies, restricting religious activity and religious education of children, and creating conditions for political interference in appointing imams and organizing the work of mosques. On the whole, this law gives a gloomy picture of the situation with regard to religious tolerance in Tajikistan. At the same time, the United States fully understands natural concern over growing religious extremism and the need for solving this problem in a comprehensive manner.

Indeed, this law gives the state more power in controlling religion and religious institutions. In this connection it should be said that in Islam the state and politics are inseparable from religion. Despite the fact that Hanafism, in the view of certain Tajik researchers, allows the state to secularize, to a degree, politics without harming religion, and make Islam more tolerant to cultural and civilization diversity, nevertheless, it will reflect, just as other religious-legal schools, inseparability of religion from the state. This means that the

proclamation of an Islamic state on the territory of present Central Asia is not impossible; the only question is when it can happen.

Today, according to the logic of the ruling elite, the principle of the separation of religion from the state, which has been proclaimed by the Constitution of Tajikistan, cannot be realized in Tajik Muslim society. That is, if the state weakens its control over religious processes, then sooner or later even moderate Islamic movements will try to win power. It should be admitted that Tajikistan, despite declaring itself a secular state, has Muslim society where Islam, due to the weakness of civil society, increases its influence on all spheres of public life.

Western researchers, and not only they, write that Islam does not confine its activity to purely religious matters, it is a political system. Although some of its most civilized and progressive followers want and try to separate religion from politics, they cannot do it because all Islamic theories are based on the premise that religion and politics are inseparable and cannot and should not be divided.

The Tajik authorities are facing a serious problem. On the one hand, they should restrict the influence of various Islamic movements and control religious life, and on the other, they are bound to give the people greater freedom in search for their religious identity. In our view, it is necessary to think not only of the problems of religious identity. The Tajik state should create conditions for the political and socio-economic self-realization of the population.

Representatives of the secular state should realize that in the conditions of the narrowing down the secular area, which is protected by civil society, the political and social interests of the various groups of the population are expressed by religion through religious organizations. It should be borne in mind that the social agents of civil society in Tajikistan – political parties, the independent mass media, scientific and educational societies, etc. – have very limited

opportunities to realize their potential. This is why in the absence of the opportunities to implement their political and social rights and interests, people will turn to religion more and more frequently and go to the mosque. However, there is no guarantee that in the mosques people will get trustworthy, and not distorted, information, which could only contribute to social disorientation of people.

At present, the poor and distressed (and they comprise about 70 percent of the entire population) trying to receive help in solving various social and other problems go to mullahs ever more frequently. For example, sick people without money to pay for a visit to a doctor or for treatment go to mullahs who either read them excerpts from the Koran or give various charms for help. In search for solving psychological or any other problems, many people also go to mullahs.

Muslim marriages become more popular in Tajik society. Parallel to that, polygamy is also widespread in Tajikistan, although it is banned by law. This form of marriage is of greater significance for newlyweds than official marriage. Today the Tajik mass media discusses these problems, particularly, legalization of polygamy.

There are broad discussions on wearing the traditional Islamic headscarf – hijab so widespread among young girls and women. Today, according to an order issued by the republican Ministry of education, it is prohibited to wear hijab at schools and institutes. However, there are more and more girls and women wearing it everywhere. The number of people visiting mosques for prayer is growing, especially on Friday. Visiting any government body, one may not find the necessary person at his place of work, because he left for namaz. Students also miss their lectures and lessons for the Friday namaz. Soon, Friday may become the day-off as in all Islamic states. People go to mosques to discuss any problem of importance to various social groups. Among the subjects are

absolutely all problems – from purely personal to global political and economic ones.

In Tajikistan today mullahs give answers to their parishioners on all socially important questions, and it is in the mosques that public opinion is formed.

The mosque and Islamic clergy answer both theological and other questions reflecting the realities of modern Tajik society. It can safely be said that they actively participate in forming public consciousness, and also choosing social behavior, especially of young people. But why are the Tajik authorities unable to answer such question as, for example why young people do not have work and have no opportunities for economic and political self-realization? Why is the overwhelming majority of the population so poor? Why has corruption penetrated all spheres of state and public life in the republic? True, it should be said that the living conditions of most school pupils and students have improved, and education has become better, although the professional level of teachers of religion is not always up to the mark. Another problem in this sphere is the unwillingness of religious figures to introduce and complete reforms in religious education, because they fear that as a result of these reforms they may lose their status, work and comfort.

The absence of clarity concerning the above-mentioned problems leads to growing social protest and creates seats of social tension. There are many of them due to poverty and corruption in Tajikistan and other Central Asian countries. If the belt of chronic poverty widens in one of the most dangerous and highly-explosive regions – the Ferghana Valley – Islamist projects will become an instrument of social retribution, because the masses of poor Muslims in the transition societies of Central Asia place their only hope on the revival of Islam. But there is another variant of the development of Central Asian

countries. When corresponding conditions for the development of political parties, public associations and the independent mass media in transition societies are created, the state may acquire an opportunity, as international experience shows, to manage socio-political processes and create mechanisms to eliminate seats of social tension. For this purpose it will be necessary to create conditions for the development of real democracy.

Modern history shows that in order to preclude various socio-political conflicts Central Asian societies need to create a pluralistic political system. Under this system diverse political, public and other organizations adhering to the most diverse (sometimes entirely opposite) views on different social problems can exist and function quite freely. But the modern history of the post-Soviet states shows that in most of them, despite the existence of a market economy, there is neither a stably developing middle class nor a pluralistic political system. Today a state needs to develop a normative legal base to create conditions for the interaction of state power bodies and organizations of local self-government with religious institutions in order to oppose the growing activity of religious extremists. In the sphere of relations with religious organizations Tajikistan should do the following:

Support the atmosphere of mutual respect and dialogue in society;

Contribute to improving legislation aimed at prevention of manifestations of religious extremism, religious intolerance, etc.;

Improve the mechanisms of state control over observance of legislation by religious institutions;

Create conditions for cooperation between the existing institutions of civil society and religious organizations to solve important problems facing civil society;

Create conditions for disseminating knowledge about the history of religious faiths at general educational institutions with a view to developing tolerance toward other confessions. It will be necessary to introduce and study the subject “Introduction to Religion” at general educational establishments, which should be taught in a neutral and objective form;

Create the legal foundation for integrating religious institutions in the sphere of social services to socially vulnerable sections of the population. As is known, mosques collect donations of Muslims, but nobody keeps a record of these means or of how they are spent. Probably, religious institutions should be allowed to set up charity organizations whose activity would be directed to solving social problems facing people, and not only pursuing purely religious aims;

Evolve mechanisms of cooperation of government bodies with religious institutions in combating drug addiction, alcoholism, and other social ills;

Government bodies and civil institutions should also:

Study international experience in the sphere of religious education, personnel training for religious institutions, methods of teaching history of religion, etc.;

Use the potential of the mass media in disseminating knowledge about the history of religion and modern religious processes in society. This concerns, primarily, the production of TV and radio programs, creation of an Internet page in the Tajik language, etc. Tajik society needs the development of specific journalism which would be oriented to objectively describing religious processes in the country. Such information backing of relations between the state and religion would help the two sides adopt correct decisions on disputable questions;

Carry on constant monitoring of religious processes, above all, sociological surveys on questions dealing with the attitude of the state and its citizens to religion;

Evolve mechanisms of the interaction of religious organizations with special services with a view to preventing breaches of law among the population. It is necessary to educate officials at law-enforcement agencies in the spirit of religious and civil tolerance. Today's Tajik newspapers carry information about the police and special services using crude force in dealings with people suspected of illegal religious activity;

Work with religious institutions in fostering leader qualities in women. In present-day Tajik society women bear the brunt of social responsibility. This is due to the considerable migration of the male part of the population to other countries in search of work. This means that everyday economic and social problems have to be tackled by women. This is why the implementation of projects aimed at raising the role of women in society and fostering of leader qualities in them will help solve many problems of present-day Tajikistan. It is important to make society and women themselves realize that Islam does not restrict their right to economic and political self-realization.

The Islamic factor in the countries of Central Asia is especially important in the socio-political sphere. Islam today takes part in forming value orientations of people and adjusting relations between them. In doing this Islam can play the role of an instrument in the political sphere with due account of the socio-political situation in the Central Asian region, and its role as such will be growing. And it may cause certain confrontation between secular radicals and religious groupings.

Today various religious organizations of an extremist nature are stepping up their activity in Central Asia. This can negatively influence stability in society and engender new threats.

At present, religious organizations and their objects become ideological centers uniting people and fostering the feeling of collectiveness and solidarity in them. However, it is not yet known where these centers will lead people to. Some religious leaders, whose activity is not controlled by the state, may manipulate public consciousness, especially of young people. The growth of religious extremism and dissemination of the ideas of Islamic fundamentalists among young men are quite possible in the region due to the difficult socio-economic situation.

Despite the active work of government bodies, the activity of such religious groupings as, for example, “Hizb-ut-tahrir” in Central Asia, could not be stopped. According to information from various sources, the activity of “Hizb-ut-tahrir” has become more widespread and radical. And as shown by international experience, radical Islam can destabilize the socio-political situation in society very rapidly.

The developing relations between the state and religion require search for new legal forms of cooperation and improvement of the models of these relations in Tajik society. Solution of various problems in the sphere of religion should be a strategic priority in the activity of the republican government.

At the same time the Tajik state is concerned with the problem of political Islam penetrating Tajik society. At present, neither the state nor religious institutions clearly understand that relations between them should be based on the principles of partnership.

The Tajik authorities should contribute to the development of civil society in the country. It is only the high level of public

consciousness and culture that can prevent the dissemination of religious fundamentalism and extremism in Tajik society.

*“Islam v SNG”, Moscow–Nizhni Novgorod,  
2012, No 2 (7), pp. 28–35.*

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## **VIRTUAL SECURITY OF CENTRAL ASIA**

The forthcoming withdrawal of western coalition troops from Afghanistan and the possible deployment of arms and operational bases of the United States on the territory of certain states in Central Asia create a new situation in the region. One should consider the decision of Uzbekistan to suspend membership in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) taken at the end of June 2012 in this context. The Charter of the organization prohibits the deployment of military bases of the third countries on the territory of the Organization's member-countries. Non-participation will allow Uzbekistan, on a legal basis, to receive any military-technical means, including arms, from NATO, which the latter deems necessary to leave on the way out from Afghanistan.

True, official claims and complaints of Uzbekistan to the Organization boil down to the fact that the latter remains symbolic, even virtual. When things go as far as to the need to rebuff the real threats to security and stability, as was the case of the invasion of Islamic militants in 1999 and 2000, or the Osh massacre of 2010, the Organization did not play any role at all. Are these complaints well-substantiated?

The sum total of the problems connected with the security and stability in Central Asia can conditionally be divided into two groups. On the one hand, some of them stem from the international position of the Central Asian regions and the geopolitical risks caused by the diplomatic and strategic activity of the outside players – the great powers (the United States, China and Russia) and regional states (Turkey, Iran and Pakistan). On the other hand, there are threats, risks and challenges of an intraregional character. True, it is difficult to draw the dividing line between the problems of the first and second type.

First, the growth of political extremism in Kyrgyzstan connected with the unpredictable economic and socio-political situation of the country is causing serious apprehensions. Neither its neighbors in the region, nor Russia, nor outside players (China, the United States, the European Union), nor even international organizations are in a hurry to assume responsibility for the present situation.

Secondly, the development of the situation in Tajikistan is not too calm and simple and begins to resemble the one in Kyrgyzstan.

Thirdly, demarcation of societies by the ethnic and clan features proceeds rather rapidly, and today latent ethnic conflicts turn into open hostility.

Fourthly, the forthcoming change of political elites and the uncertain vector of political development turn the mechanism of transition of power from existing presidents to their successors into a secret which is hard to solve.

Fifthly, the growing influence of political Islam in practically all countries of Central Asia force their ruling regimes to tolerate, in one way or another, the activity of organizations propagating the ideas of fundamentalist Islam, despite the official ban; moreover, they become more active not only in rural areas, but also in cities.

Finally, Afghanistan is not only an external factor, but also an internal one. It has turned into a source of constant instability largely due to the ill-conceived actions of the global actors. The legal ability and efficiency of Hamid Karzai's government are very doubtful. After the withdrawal of the United States and NATO countries from Afghanistan, the countries of the region and Russia will have to look for answers to the entire range of problems connected with the situation themselves, just as was the case at the beginning and in the middle of the 1990s. The main one of them is the prospect of a new wave of Islamic radicalism and the renewed activity of the Islamists.

The extremist religious-political movements born in Central Asia, such as "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," "Akramiya," "Tabligi Jamaat," "Islamic Party of East Turkestan," "Jamaat of Mojaheds of Central Asia," "Hizb-ut-Tahrir-al-Islami," have found refuge on the territory of Afghanistan. The growing activity of these movements connected with transfer of military actions to the north of Afghanistan and the worsening of the general situation in certain countries can create a real threat to the secular political regimes.

There is another threat, namely, turning Afghanistan into the world center of narcotic drug production, and drawing "agents" from among the organized crime barons in Central Asian countries into drug trafficking. It should be admitted that among these "agents" are many representatives of special services and government officials called upon to fight the drug business. But the gravest threat is the rapid growth of drug addicts in the countries of Central Asia and neighboring Russia. Unfortunately, quite a few high officials in Central Asia, especially in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, underestimate the significance of this terrible circumstance.

The activity of the western forces in Afghanistan (including in the fight against drug production and trafficking), as well as various

geopolitical projects (for instance, “Greater Central Asia”) which regard this part of Eurasia as a zone of “vital importance for the U.S. interests” evoke many questions. The interests of the regional states, and Russia, too, are not taken into account. So far, most experts assess the situation as stalemate – the coalition cannot stay in Afghanistan, but it cannot leave it completely without big losses.

Certain experts believe that in ensuring security of Central Asia, in the context of “post-Nato” Afghanistan, the key role should be played not by the Collective Security Treaty Organization, but by another body – the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which includes all countries of the region, except Turkmenistan. This organization can contribute already now to the formation of a foreign political surrounding favorable to Afghanistan, maximally block the export of narcotic drugs from there, cut financial aid to the Afghan opposition, render economic assistance to Kabul, and finally, create conditions for limiting dissemination of radical Islamist ideas. For this purpose no special agreement with the Afghan government is needed and, what is more important, with the command of the western coalition forces. There should only be the political will of the SCO member-states.

In the new conditions the Collective Security Treaty Organization is faced with greater responsibility, and the effectiveness of this military-political alliance becomes urgent necessity. In the view of experts from Russia and the CIS countries, CSTO should have clear-cut ideology based on the idea of stability in the region in order to raise its role in the international arena. Various proposals have been prepared and put forward by the Institute of modern development (Russ. abbreviation INSOR) in 2011 for the transformation of the Organization.

First of all, it was suggested that the system of adopting decisions in the Organization should be reformed. So far all questions have been solved by consensus. INSOR suggested that the principle of adopting decisions should be changed, and the Charter of the Organization should have the premise that decisions be adopted by a simple majority of votes. True, after the withdrawal of Uzbekistan from the Organization this point has lost significance, inasmuch as it was only Uzbekistan that took a special stand on almost each question. Further, INSOR suggested that the model of the Organization's relations with NATO be changed, correlating its new strategic documents with the strategic concept of NATO approved in 2010, and ensuring, at least partially, tactical compatibility with its contingents.

Finally, the Organization should be turned into the main peacekeeping force of Central Asia and adjacent regions. On agreement with the UN the bloc could take part in peacekeeping operations even beyond the boundaries of the zone of its direct responsibility. It was also proposed to introduce an institution of special representatives of the Organization (like special representatives of NATO on various questions).

It cannot be said that Russia's efforts proved fruitless. By the end of 2011 the allies agreed on a list of foreign-policy problems on which they would have similar views, like it is the case of NATO and the European Union. At the end of 2011 there was a summit meeting of the Organization at which the presidents of its member-countries signed an agreement on military bases (the principal decision on this matter was adopted at the summit in Astana in August). According to this document, foreign military presence in the Organization's member-states was only possible with the support of and on agreement with all its members. In recent years it was the only agreed political decision.

(Most probably, it was the decisive argument for Uzbekistan to withdraw from the Organization).

However, there are loopholes in the document which can allow its signatories to circumvent certain premises. The term “military base” definitely requires broader interpretation. For example, the U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has discussed with representatives of Kazakhstan the possibility of jointly using the logistic center of the Aktau sea port. The “Navoi” airport in Uzbekistan is also an international logistic junction serving the U.S. armed forces in Afghanistan. In Kyrgyzstan, apart from the well-known “Manas” logistic center (which used to be a military base prior to 2009), an anti-terrorist training center has been set up in the town of Tokmak, where a big group of American servicemen is constantly deployed. Similar situation exists in Tajikistan. All these objects are foreign military bases, or can become such bases within a short time.

At the end of 2011 chairmanship in the Organization was given over to Kazakhstan. The latter considers it necessary to protect the information area of the Organization, which is especially important after the “Arab spring” events. Another important task is, in the view of Nursultan Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan’s President, to strengthen further the Collective Rapid Reaction Forces. The third task is the preventive protection of the airspace of Central Asia. Kazakhstan also intends to concentrate efforts on the strengthening of the fight against drug production and trafficking and the evolution of an antidrug strategy.

Striving to overcome the pernicious tendency toward geopolitical rivalry in Central Eurasia, Kazakhstan put forward the idea of strengthening the collective security system at the Astana summit in December 2010. It presupposed active interaction of all institutions of security operating in Central Asia – NATO, CSTO, OSCE and SCO (possibly, the Conference on Interaction and Measures of Trust in Asia,

which was put forward on Kazakhstan's initiative in 1994, an Asian analogue of OSCE). In general, as the chairman of OSCE in 2010 Kazakhstan exerted great efforts to resolve the problem of international recognition of CSTO. It achieved this, partly, having stated in the Astana Declaration that the zone of OSCE responsibility in the sphere of security is not Euro-Atlantic, but Eurasian now.

However, the problem of its legitimization has not been solved so far. The United States and NATO consider CSTO a virtual structure devoid of any practical meaning and political substance. This is shown, among other things, by a cable from the diplomatic archive of *Wikileaks*. In it the U.S. representative in NATO said on September 10, 2009, that it would be counterproductive for the alliance to establish ties with CSTO, an organization created on Moscow's initiative for opposing the potential influence of NATO and the United States in the post-Soviet area. CSTO has shown its ineffectiveness in most spheres of its activity and has gone through political split. NATO ties with CSTO could lend greater legitimacy to this "fading" organization.

The West does not believe in any reformation of CSTO, and prefers to solve all problems with members of the Organization on a bilateral level. (It should be admitted that Russia, too, often relies on bilateral military-political relations with countries in the region). The return of Vladimir Putin to the Kremlin could be an event which would influence Russian policy in the Organization and its attitude to international cooperation. As is known, improved relations with the West, including along the CSTO – NATO line, is not an end in itself for Putin, in contrast to his predecessor D. Medvedev, who placed stake on "resetting." Given any development trends, the role of CSTO should objectively be growing after 2014. If the new/old Russian leadership tackles integration in the military-political sphere as enthusiastically as in organizing the Customs union, the Eurasian economic area and the

Eurasian Union, hopes for progress in the transformation of the Organization might materialize.

Uzbekistan's withdrawal from CSTO has caused a new wave of discussions about the prospects of the Organization. Tashkent's foreign policy can be compared with the movement of a pendulum: once every two or three years Uzbekistan turned away from Russia and its CIS partners and drew closer to the West, and vice versa. But in 2005, after events in Andizhan, Tashkent's relations with the West deteriorated so much that Uzbekistan was about to be declared an international pariah. At the time Moscow and Beijing rendered support to Tashkent (Kazakhstan soon joined them).

During that period of semi-isolation Uzbekistan's foreign policy changed considerably from the geopolitical and geo-economic points of view: Tashkent began to orient itself to Asian countries to a greater extent. Its views on the problems of security, relations with Russia, policy towards the CIS countries, regional integration in Central Asia, etc. also changed. But in 2009 serious changes were noticed in Uzbekistan's international situation. The pendulum was again set into motion. At the end of January 2010 President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan signed a Plan of cooperation with the United States. That document was based on the results of the first round of Uzbek-American consultations. Washington placed stake on interaction with Uzbekistan in the political, social and economic spheres, and also in the problems of security. The dialogue between the governments of the two countries was initiated by the Assistant Secretary of State of the United States Robert Blake who visited Tashkent shortly before that.

The premise concerning cooperation in the sphere of security envisaged training and retraining of Uzbek army officers at the leading U.S. military academies and schools, including within the framework of International Military Education Program.

In early February 2009 the U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton signed a document allowing the United States to resume technical aid to Uzbekistan in the form of deliveries of non-lethal weapons and equipment to that country.

Tashkent's strategy toward Russia is based on balancing between Moscow and Washington in the strategic sphere and Beijing in the economic sphere in order to force Russia to cooperation on conditions acceptable to Uzbekistan. Russia's policy is of a passive, inertial character and based on the conviction that by domestic political and foreign political reasons Uzbekistan will, sooner or later, return to the integration structures under the Russian aegis.

The Uzbek leader Islam Karimov has repeatedly voiced the view that Moscow tried to force its security strategy on the post-Soviet area through CSTO, pursuing its neo-imperial ambitions. Tashkent is categorically against the expansion of the military-tactical and strategic competence of CSTO on the basis of the Corps of Rapid Reaction Forces. Uzbekistan is convinced of the fact that all integration activities of Russia are aimed at creating a new "mini-U.S.S.R."

After establishing contacts with the new administration of the White House President Karimov began to think of withdrawing from all alliances with Russia – EurAsEC and CSTO, which indeed took place in 2010–2012. Tashkent believes that Russia and Central Asia should solve the problems of national security independently. In the view of Uzbek experts, the Russian Federation should contribute to the strengthening of the independent states situated around it not by drawing them closer to its territory, on the pattern of EurAsEC and CSTO, but on the basis of their independent regionalization.

Actually, Uzbekistan's foreign policy is of a multi-vector character, just as Kazakhstan's, but there are certain complications. This policy bears a certain forced, sometimes contradictory, character.

As Uzbek analysts admit themselves, as a member of international organizations Uzbekistan has been unable to detach national interests from international and supranational. Its foreign policy has passed three stages. At the first stage it was oriented to Russia, which could be explained by post-Soviet inertia. At the second stage it turned toward the West, particularly the United States, which could be assessed as the “approbation of independence.” The present stage is, in essence, a modification of the first two “courses,” which could be called global adaptation.

Washington regards Uzbekistan as the principal and more influential player in Central Asia. This state has regional hegemonic ambitions and can throw a challenge to Moscow, in contrast to its Central Asian neighbors. There are big Uzbek diasporas in these neighboring states, which enables Tashkent to interfere with their policy. It also has advantages as being self-sufficient in terms of food products and fuel and energy (except Kazakhstan). Uzbekistan borders on Afghanistan, but not Russia. It has to be admitted that the main vector of the “multi-vector” policy of Uzbekistan is anti-Russian (in contrast to Kazakhstan), and this engenders a good many problems facing Tashkent.

In this connection mention should be made of Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan relations. Uzbek policy toward Kazakhstan has never been based on clear-cut concepts or long-term strategy. On the contrary, it was often influenced by fluctuations and subjective emotions of the leadership, and it suffered from negative or stereotyped ideas. It was demonstrated, among other things, by Uzbekistan’s negative attitude to Kazakhstan’s integration initiatives.

The Uzbek political elite harbors the idea that stability of Central Asia depends on Uzbekistan and its relations with the neighboring

countries, and that Islam Karimov has the decisive say on all important regional problems. However, it is far from reality.

As the deadline of the withdrawal of the coalition forces from Afghanistan draws closer, the prospect of long-term military presence of the United States in Central Asia looks more realistic. Washington has announced plans of creating special objects, for instance, the Foundation of the U.S. Central Command for fighting drug production and drug trafficking has declared its intention to allocate means to set up military training centers in Osh (Kyrgyzstan) and Karatag (Tajikistan), as well as a cynological center and a helicopter base near Alma Ata.

Washington made public data about the volume of assistance which it intended to give to the countries of the post-Soviet area in 2013. Military aid to Uzbekistan will comprise \$1.5 million. Similar sums will be given to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Kazakhstan will get \$1.8 million and Turkmenistan -- \$685,000. After the withdrawal of the U.S. troops from Afghanistan, American military hardware and equipment can remain in Central Asian countries. The Pentagon has been holding negotiations on the subject with Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.. Part of military equipment and machines will be given gratis. Afghanistan's neighbors may also receive medical equipment, means of communication, fire-fighting machines and equipment, and also mobile training centers. Tajikistan would like to get military equipment for border-guards and for operations in the mountains. Kyrgyzstan would wish to have drones.

Washington's decision to transfer military equipment will strengthen its position and influence in Central Asia. The presence of American and NATO hardware and equipment in some countries of Central Asia will entail the need to train specialists, supply spare parts and modernize their armies according to patterns of the United

States and NATO countries. As a result, it may lead to greater cooperation of the CSTO countries with the West and their breakaway from Moscow.

The United States prefers to discuss all these questions within the framework of bilateral relations, without drawing regional organizations, such as CSTO. The implementation of this plan will allow the United States to broaden military cooperation with the CSTO member-states behind the back of Moscow. True, Moscow will not be isolated from these processes, for if the question of the logistic center in Ulyanovsk is resolved, western hardware and equipment, as well as military personnel will have to pass from Central Asia through Russian territory.

In June 2012 it became known about the signing of new treaties by NATO with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan on transit of cargoes and military equipment from Afghanistan. The former agreements dealt with air transportation, whereas the new ones opened new routes on land. New agreements will give NATO more opportunities and flexible transport network for withdrawing their troops, hardware and equipment from Afghanistan by the end of 2014.

The new documents signed show that the parties have agreed on the price of “backward transit” from Afghanistan along the Northern route, as well as on economic, political and military preferences which the countries of the region will get in the process of withdrawing troops from Afghanistan, and after it. The Pentagon regards the use of military bases in Central Asia as an ideal variant.

*“Rossiya v globalnoi politike,” Moscow, 2012, N 4, July-August, pp. 86–94.*

РОССИЯ  
И  
МУСУЛЬМАНСКИЙ МИР  
2013 – 3 (249)

Научно-информационный бюллетень

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№ 77.99.6.953.П.5008.8.99 от 23.08.1999 г.  
Подписано к печати 12/II-2013 г. Формат 60x84/16  
Бум. офсетная № 1. Печать офсетная. Свободная цена  
Усл. печ. л. 4,75. Уч.-изд. л. 4,4  
Тираж 300 экз. Заказ № 42

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

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(по вопросам распространения изданий)**

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