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MODERN RUSSIA: IDEOLOGY, POLITICS, CULTURE AND RELIGION

IGOR DOBAEV. INTERNAL POLITICAL AND ETHNO-
CONFESSIONAL SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN ON THE
EVE OF THE ENTRY OF SOVIET TROOPS (12.27.1979).*

*Keywords: Afghanistan, confession,
Islam, Islamism, tribes, Pashtuns, ethnic
groups.*

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Abstract. The article examines the internal political and ethno-confessional situation in Afghanistan on the eve of the entry of Soviet troops into this country on December 27, 1979. The dominant influence on the intra-Afghan processes of ethnicity, first of all, the Pashtun factor. This factor is based on traditional genus tribal relations, historically developed among the Pashtuns, who are the state-forming

* Translation of the title is presented in author's version.

people of Afghanistan. Ignoring ethnic features of Afghan Muslims, especially the synthesis of the Pashtun nationalism, their customary law (Pashtunwali) and traditional forms existence of Islam by external forces leads to negative for them consequences. It is not for nothing that Afghanistan is called the "graveyard of empires". Examples from Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and now the United States convincingly confirm this thesis.

Being a country with an ancient history, Afghanistan for many centuries had been territorially part of other states. In the 18th century, the territory of Afghanistan was part of the Persian Empire, but after the tragic death of Nadir Shah Afshar in 1747, this empire collapsed. The most combat-ready units of the Persian army – the Afghans – returned to their homeland, where in the same year, on the initiative of the Pashtun leader Ahmad Shah, for the first time in history, an Afghan state proper, the Durranian state, arose. During its heyday, its southern shores were washed by the waters of the Indian Ocean. However, under the successors of Ahmad Shah, the huge Afghan state broke up into a number of independent territorial and political entities – Peshawar, Kabul, Kandahar and Herat.

In the 19th century, in the vast theater of the Eurasian Rimland, the geopolitical interests of the Russian and British empires came into conflict. This multifaceted struggle, which received the metaphorical name "Great Game" in the literature, provoked three Anglo-Afghan wars (two in the 19th century and one in the 20th century), but the British did not succeed in establishing colonial domination over Afghanistan, and as a result of the third war, the British were forced to recognize the independence of Afghanistan. At the same time, at the end of the second Anglo-Afghan war, the Pashtun super-ethnos was divided roughly in half, and a new border was drawn between British India and Afghanistan along the so-called. "Durand Line", named after the political adviser to the British Viceroy at that time.

After gaining independence in 1919, Amanullah became the first emir of Afghanistan, at the same time this state was the first to recognize the RSFSR, and diplomatic relations were established between them. In 1926, Emir Amanullah, getting down to the modernization of the country, abolished the emirate and declared himself king and the country a kingdom. At the end of 1928, a rebellion broke out in Afghanistan with the support of the British, and an adventurer closely associated with the British special services, an ethnic Tajik Bacha-i Sakao ("son of a water carrier"), came to power. However, he was soon overthrown and killed, and the Pashtun Nadir Shah became the king, after his death in 1933 his son Zahir Shah inherited the throne and in 1973 was overthrown by his uncle, Mohammed Daoud. He proclaimed the formation of a republic and began to implement the relevant reforms, but no obvious success was achieved. In the same period, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), which was created in the mid-1960s and declared Marxist-Leninist principles, was gaining strength in the country. Soon after its creation, the party split along ethnic lines. The Khalq (people) wing was headed by the Pashtun Nur-Mohammed Taraki, and the Parcham (banner) wing was headed by the Tajik Babrak Karmal. However, by the spring of 1978, both wings united again, and on April 27, 1978, with the leading role of the PDPA, a military coup was carried out, during which Daoud Khan and his entourage were killed, and the PDPA came to power. The first leader of the proclaimed Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) was the Pashtun Nur-Mohammed Taraki, and in fact the second person in the state was the Pashtun Hafizullah Amin. The inner-party struggle within the PDPA flared up with renewed vigor, and soon H. Amin, having physically eliminated N.M. Taraki, became the new leader of the DRA. Carrying out reforms in the cruelest way, H. Amin turned against himself the population of Afghanistan, as a result, a struggle against the regime unfolded everywhere. The difficult situation caused Taraki, and then Amin, to repeatedly appeal to

the Soviet leadership to send troops into the country. On December 27, 1979, after two dozen appeals to Moscow by Taraki and Amin, after the overthrow and assassination of Taraki, Soviet troops entered Afghanistan. The Khalqists were removed from power, and the leader of Parcham, the Tajik Babrak Karmal, became the head of Afghanistan.

In the context of the foregoing, it seems relevant to consider the ethno-confessional situation in Afghanistan on the eve of the introduction of Soviet troops, ignoring which by the Soviet leadership, led to extremely negative results for the Soviet Union.

Afghanistan has been a multi-ethnic state since its inception. In 1979, the population of the country totaled 15.5 million people, with the following ethnic composition: Pashtuns – 45 per cent of the total population (7 million people), Tajiks – 25 per cent (3.8 million people), Hazaras – 10 per cent (1.5 million people), Uzbeks – 8 per cent (1.2 million people), Charaymaks – 6 per cent (980 thousand people), Turkmens – 3 per cent (460 thousand people), Nuristani, Kyrgyz, Baloch, Indians, Kurds, Persians, etc. – 3 per cent (460 thousand people) [1, p. 4]. It should be emphasized that all Afghan peoples were characterized by the presence of stable tribal ties, adherence to ethnic solidarity, regardless of whether they led a sedentary (80 per cent of the population), nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle, whether they lived in the city or in the countryside. This situation, in general, persists at the present time. To a greater extent, this is typical for the Pashtuns, the Hazaras, the Charaymaks, the Balochs, the Turkmens and the Kyrgyz. These peoples are divided into tribes, and they, in turn, into genera and families. There are also associations in tribal unions. An active role in the life of Afghan society is still played by such traditional forms as the institutions of tribal meetings (jirga) of tribal elders and religious authorities, while often the elders and mullahs act in one person.

Tribes have always strived for substantial autonomy and independence from central authorities. Many Afghan tribes,

especially nomadic and semi-nomadic, were distinguished by a pronounced military-tribal organization. The Afghans of the southern, southwestern and eastern provinces never part with cold, and often firearms, which has become their tradition since ancient times. Military training in the tribes, especially among the Pashtuns, is ongoing. They have their own armed detachments led by their leaders. If necessary, they are replenished by armed members of the tribes, including teenagers and even women. Strict discipline is established within the tribes, there is a reliable warning system. At the same time, there are contradictions between the various Afghan peoples and tribes, often leading to serious conflicts. They have always appeared between the Pashtuns, who traditionally dominated the country, and the non-Pashtuns. Contradictions in Afghan society took place and are still taking place on religious grounds, especially between Sunnis (they are the majority) and Shiites (they are less than 20 per cent of the population). The Pashtuns, being the state-forming people of Afghanistan, made up and make up almost half of the population of this country. However, it should be borne in mind that in Pakistan, as a result of the Anglo-Afghan wars of the 19th century, at the end of the 70s of the 20th century, 9 million Pashtuns lived, from the areas bordering Afghanistan to India (tribes of Vazirs, Afridis, Mangals, Shinvari, Momands, Jaji, etc.).

Actually in Afghanistan, the Pashtuns are settled mainly in the southern, southeastern and eastern parts of the country (the provinces of Herat, Farah, Gur, Kandahar, Zabol, Ghazni, Paktia, Paktika, Parvan, Laghman, Kunar, and also in Kabul), that is, from southwestern borders (with Iran) to the eastern (with Pakistan), where their resettlement directly passes into Pakistani territory. The total number of Pashtuns in Afghanistan and Pakistan in 1979 was 17 million people (at present – over 60 million people – I.D.), united in more than 60 tribes and clans. Artificially divided by the so-called “Durand line”, the Pashtun tribes continue to be connected by close tribal, family and other ties. In terms of composition, the Pashtun tribes of Afghanistan

are classified into three main groups: the western Durrani tribal association (in 1979 – more than 3 million people), the eastern Ghilzai tribal association (more than 1.5 million people), the Karani tribal association (about 1.5 million people), as well as a number of individual large tribes that are not included in these tribal associations. Durrani tribes live mainly in the southwestern regions of Afghanistan, on a vast territory from Kandahar to Farah in the south and Herat in the west. The largest tribes of this union are the Barakzai, Popelzai, Alikozai, Acekzai, etc. The Durrani tribal union plays a leading role in the formation and subsequent formation of the Afghan state. All the ruling dynasties of the Afghan state came out of it. A special place in this regard was for a century and a half occupied by the Mohammedzai clan, whose representatives were the former king Zahir Shah and the former president M. Daoud. We also note that in this tribal association, the barakzai and popelzai tribes have historically been at enmity. Ghilzais live mainly in a number of southern and southeastern provinces – Zabol, Ghazni, Paktia and Paktika, as well as in Pakistan. The most authoritative Ghilzai tribes are Suleiman-Kheil, Ahmadzai, Ali-Kheil, Taraki, and others. The Ghilzai tribes, along with the Durrani, have occupied and continue to occupy a prominent place in Afghan history. There was a constant rivalry between the Ghilzais and the Durrani for predominant influence in the state. For example, the last pro-Soviet leader of Afghanistan, the Pashtun Najibullah, was from the Ahmadzai tribe. The Karani tribal association includes the tribes of Afridi, Mangals, Jajis, Momands, Wazirs, Shinvaris, Jadrans, etc. They are mainly settled in the southeastern regions of Afghanistan. A number of Karani tribes live on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistani border, and a large number of them live in Pakistan, their center is the city of Peshawar.

The relationship between the ruling circles of Afghanistan and the Pashtun tribes has always been complex and controversial. Pashtun nomadic tribes have traditionally enjoyed

significant privileges compared to other peoples. They were completely or partially exempted from taxes, military service, etc. However, not a single Afghan government has managed to establish any form of effective control over the nomads.

It should also be emphasized that, being the largest ethnic community and traditionally playing a dominant role in Afghan society, the Pashtuns often showed and still show arrogance and demonstrate their own superiority in relation to other peoples. The "code of honor" - "Pashtunvalai" has a great influence on the life of every Pashtun. It includes many moral values, among them - dignity, truthfulness, sincerity. The Pashtuns would rather give their lives than allow an attack on the honor of their women or the authority of their elders. The Code instructs them to be faithful to the truth, regardless of the consequences, to keep their word at any cost, to show firmness and perseverance, fearlessness and courage, to be hospitable and not to forgive an offense (a Pashtun can wait for years for an opportune moment to take revenge on the offender). Taking into account that Afghanistan almost always, with rare exceptions, was ruled by representatives of the Pashtuns, and the ruling circles of the state pursued a policy of assimilation for decades, the Pashtunvalai laws penetrated quite deeply into Afghan society, becoming a value guide for the rest of the peoples of the country. Among other ethnic groups of Afghanistan, the Tajiks should be singled out. They are not only the second largest ethnic group, but also the most economically developed part of the country's population. Tajiks have tribal relations, but they are expressed to a much lesser extent than among other peoples. Tajiks make up a significant stratum of the population of cities, and the percentage of literacy among them is higher than that of other peoples. In addition, like the Pashtuns, Tajiks consider themselves descendants of the legendary Aryans. However, being a national minority, they have never played such a role in the political life of the country as the Pashtuns.

The rest of the peoples of Afghanistan (Khazarians, Uzbeks, Charaymaks, Turkmens, etc.) are national minorities, their influence on the political processes in the country has always been hardly noticeable. However, already in the mid-60s 20th century the politicization of ethnicity and their certain consolidation was fixed. In this field, a demarcation takes place along the line of Pashtuns - non-Pashtuns. This applies not only to the "left" PDPA, which soon after its formation in 1965 split into two wings - "Khalk" (headed by the Pashtun N.M. Taraki) and "Parcham" (the Tajik B. Karmal), but also branch Islamist structures of the local Moslem Brotherhood. Among the latter, the formation of party groups along ethnic lines also took place. The Islamic Party of Afghanistan (IPA) was headed by the Pashtun G. Hekmatyar, and the Islamic Society of Afghanistan (ISA) was headed by the Tajik B. Rabbani. In this regard, it seems important to consider the state of Islam at the time of the entry of Soviet troops.

Historically, Islam has played and continues to play an important role in Afghanistan. Since its spread in Afghanistan for centuries, Islam has reigned supreme among other religious cults, especially in rural areas. Under the flag of religion, the rulers carried out the unification of Afghan lands and the conquest of other territories. When the threat of colonial conquest by the British hung over Afghanistan, religion began to be used as a means of rallying the Afghan peoples in the struggle against the colonialists [2, p. 60–61].

Islam actively intervened in the development of social and political life, using various channels to influence people and their public opinion. Moreover, religion, represented by clergymen who participated in various parts of the state apparatus, directly influenced the formation of the state policy and the official ideology serving it.

The majority of the population of Afghanistan has always had a deep commitment to Islam and experienced the full influence of the clergy. The proportion of the clergy in Afghan

society was very significant. So, at the beginning of 1980, out of the nearly 16 million population of the country, there were more than 250,000 ministers of worship and theologians of various ranks. Over 15,000 mosques functioned in the country. In Kabul alone, there were 545 mosques [3, p. 7]. During the same period, approximately 80 per cent of the country's population was Sunni Moslem, 18 per cent Shiites, and about 2 per cent other religions. Moreover, a highly developed Sufism in the Sunni direction of Islam was characteristic of Afghanistan, as well as various Sufi tarikats and brotherhoods. In the west of Afghanistan, the Chishtiyya tariqat is widespread, its supporters mostly live in cities. In the east of the country, on the border with Pakistan, adherents of the Suhraverdiyya tariqat live. In the northern and central regions, the Naqshbandiyya tariqat is widespread. Among part of the Pashtuns there are supporters of another major tariqat – Qadiriyya. We emphasize that the last two Sufi tarikats (Naqshbandiyya and Qadiriyya) became widespread in the North-Eastern Caucasus (Dagestan, Ingushetia and Chechnya), and on the basis of the ideological doctrine of the Naqshbandiyya tarikat in the 19th century, a powerful religious movement unfolded there, which became known as “Caucasian Muridism” [4, p. 21]. In connection with the widespread development of Sufism in Afghanistan, the cult of veneration of tombs (mazars) and “holy places” (ziyarats), of which there are more than eight thousand, is widespread. The most revered of them are the tomb of “Mazar of St. Ali” (Mazar-e-Sharif), the place of storage of the “rags” of the Prophet Muhammad (Kandahar), the Sahi Mosque (Kabul), the tomb of the religious thinker, Saint Akhund-zade (Jalalabad), as well as the central mosque in Herat [3, p. 5].

The Shiites in Afghanistan (the Khazars and a small part of some other peoples, including a number of Pashtun tribes) are represented by a group of trends and sects, among them the Imamis, Ismailis, Ali-illahs, Roshaniya, Ahmadiyyas, and others. The Imamis enjoy the support of Iran, especially after the

February Revolution of 1979 in this country, when the Islamic clergy came to power, and the state turned into the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI). In the course of the historical development of Afghanistan, the clergy turned into an influential, privileged stratum. However, due to a number of circumstances, there has never been a recognized leader among the Moslem clergy of the country who has the right to act as the head of the religious community of all of Afghanistan. At the same time, in some regions of the country, sometimes covering large territories, various spiritual authorities acted. Among them are seids (who consider themselves descendants of the Prophet Muhammad), hazrats, sheikhs, pirs, ishans (heads of various sects and Sufi tarikats), who have numerous followers and unquestioned authority among the believers of their district. The most influential among them was the Mujaddedi family. During the period of the monarchy, its representatives occupied a dominant position in the highest governing body of the clergy – the Ulema Council (“Jamiyat-i-ulama”). The Gilani family, supplying confessors to the Afghan monarchs, also enjoyed significant influence. The large clergy were economically closely connected with the feudal landed aristocracy, and some part with the merchant bourgeoisie [3, p. 7–9].

Of course, the higher and middle clergy, adhering to extremely conservative views, and before the April 1978 coup, advocated the preservation of traditional orders, opposed the democratization of the country’s public life and cooperation with the Soviet Union. Already in the second half of the 60s, branch structures of the Islamist organization “Moslem Brotherhood” appeared in Afghanistan. It was created at the turn of 1928–1929 in the student environment of Egypt, headed by their leader, Hassan al-Banna [5, 18–19]. The breeding ground for the emergence of such organizations in Afghanistan was Kabul University, where the political party “Moslem Youth” was created. Among the founders of the movement were A. Sayaf, B. Rabbani, G. Hekmatyar, later they were joined by Ahmad Shah Masud.

The clerics conducted active political agitation among various segments of the population, especially among students, and their organization Moslem Youth acted under the slogan "Long live the struggle for the Quran throughout the world!" Religious extremists already at that time hatched plans to create a theocratic state in Afghanistan headed by a "righteous president" elected from among the clergy. After the 1973 coup d'état carried out by M. Daoud, the authorities in Afghanistan began to pursue a tough anti-Islamic policy, which caused the transition of local "brothers" from political to armed struggle against the regime [6, p. 141]. In 1975, they attempted an armed anti-government rebellion, which failed. As a result, the rebel leaders fled to Pakistan, where already in 1976 a split occurred in the leadership of the Moslem Youth. Two parties were formed - the Islamic Society of Afghanistan (ISA), headed by the Tajik B. Rabbani and the Islamic Party of Afghanistan (IPA), led by the Pashtun G. Hekmatyar. Hekmatyar's party consisted mainly of Pashtuns, while Rabbani's structure included, respectively, Tajiks. Subsequently, splits along ethnic lines became the rule in the formation of other Afghan religious and political parties and movements. After the April 1978 coup, his opponents continued to actively and skillfully manipulate the slogans of the defense of Islam, which were supported by some provisions of the Sharia, as well as quotations from the Quran and the Sunnah. At the same time, quite specific political goals were pursued - the overthrow of the "Marxist" leadership, the power of the PDPA and the restoration of the monarchy, or the establishment of an Islamic republic. These forces often grouped around mosques, trying to turn them into their strongholds. Turning to open armed struggle, they declared "jihad" against the Kabul regime. The armed struggle was led by various "Islamic" parties and organizations: the Islamic Party of Afghanistan, the Islamic Society of Afghanistan, the Movement of the Islamic Revolution of Afghanistan, the Islamic Nationalist Revolutionary Party of Afghanistan, the Union of Islamic Warriors, etc., often led by

representatives of the large and middle clergy of the country. Among them are S. Mujaddedi, B. Rabbani, maulavi M. Nabi and others. Already in January 1980, under pressure from foreign "sponsors", the so-called "united national Islamic front" was organized, which later transformed into the so called "union of seven Islamic parties." Undoubtedly, all this was facilitated by the radical reforms, completely disastrous in the conditions of Afghanistan, carried out by the new leadership of the country. Starting under N.M. Taraki, such "reforms" under H. Amin acquired an unprecedented scope, accompanied by state terror against "dissidents". All this led to a full-scale deployment, in fact, of a civil war in the country.

Opponents of the regime, with massive outside support, began to create, train and arm sabotage and terrorist detachments. Some of them were formed in Afghanistan, others, having been trained in special camps and bases in Pakistan and China under the guidance of American, Chinese, Pakistani and Egyptian instructors, crossed the Afghan border. An important role in these detachments was played by the mullahs, who carried out propaganda activities against the Kabul regime. Using armed Basmachi and terrorist forms of struggle, moral and psychological pressure on the supporters of official Kabul, in order to undermine the new government, they sought to destabilize the internal and complicate the international position of the new state.

One of the main directions of anti-government propaganda was the idea of "defending Islam", accusing the regime of godlessness, militant atheism. Moslem clerics who joined the "mujahideen" accused the PDPA and its leaders of allegedly seeking to eliminate Islam in Afghanistan and that for this purpose mosques were burned, sacred books were destroyed, "holy places" (mazars and ziyarats) were desecrated, Moslems were forbidden to perform religious rites, children in schools were taught godlessness, that party members cultivated anti-religious morality, and so on. Trying to substantiate their

accusations with facts, Islamists often staged provocative arsons of mosques, desecration of “holy places”, destroyed sacred books, scattering their pages in public places, and made provocative speeches to believers, allegedly on behalf of official authorities [2, p. 65]. For the same purposes, taking into account the illiteracy of the bulk of the population, colorful leaflets began to be actively used, on which “enemies of Islam” – prominent state and political figures of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan – were depicted in a caricature form, and, conversely, “fighters for the faith” and their leaders looked heroes. At the same stage, audio cassettes were actively distributed, the records on which presented Islam as a religion that brings social liberation, opposes inequality and exploitation. The guarantee of the creation of a just society, according to Islamic ideologists, should be the observance of such principles of Islam as the voluntary donation of the rich, and not the forcible seizure of their property in favor of the poor, which, according to the early Bolshevik model, was practiced by the Afghan authorities. In turn, the Shiite clergy and part of the Shiite population, living mainly in the western and central provinces of the country, enjoyed the support of the Iranian authorities, who provided them with ideological, moral and material assistance, sending money, equipment, propaganda and special literature with recommendations on issues conducting subversive activities against the new authorities, cassettes with recordings of the speeches of the “Rahbar” – Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Tehran radio broadcasts on religious topics with the aim of inciting hatred not only of the Shiites, but of all believers in Afghanistan towards the Kabul regime.

As a result of such a massive mobilizing ideological impact, the opponents of the PDPA managed to win over a significant part of the Afghan population, especially in rural areas. Propaganda agencies of Pakistan, Iran, as well as radio stations in the US, Great Britain, Germany and other Western countries, actively joined the ideological anti-government campaign, seeking to play the “Islamic card”. The US plans were to draw the

Soviet Union into direct military participation in the internal Afghan conflict, and then to transfer the "holy war" to Soviet territory, primarily to Central Asia, where they had not yet forgotten about the armed struggle of the Bolsheviks with the local Basmachi. Of course, the implementation of such plans posed a serious threat to the Soviet state.

At the same time, as emphasized above, on the eve of the military coup in Afghanistan in 1978, the four Sufi Sunni *tarikats* were most widespread, there were also numerous sects, both in the Sunni and Shiite directions. The extreme ethnic, tribal and confessional (within Islam) disunity and heterogeneity of the Afghan society for a long time prevented the consolidation of resistance forces on any basis. The leader of each of the Islamic parties defended his independence in every possible way, there were frequent bloody skirmishes between militants, supporters of various religious and political movements. To a certain extent, the unifying religious factor in rallying the opposition, according to the Americans and their allies, could be the planting of Saudi Wahhabism in Afghanistan [7, p. 56-67], but for this it was necessary to ensure the direct involvement of the Soviet armed forces in the intra-Afghan conflict. The Americans have long been plotting about a kind of "Vietnam" for the Soviet Union, with the ensuing consequences. Such an opportunity finally presented itself: the civil war in Afghanistan was gaining momentum, and its leaders (Taraki and Amin) indeed repeatedly turned to the Soviet leadership with a request to send troops to this country. After much deliberation, the "Kremlin elders" decided to send a "limited military contingent" to Afghanistan. Most likely, geopolitical moments prevailed in this decision, especially since in February 1979 the Shah's regime, a US ally in the region, was overthrown in neighboring Iran, which gave reason to talk about the weakening of American positions in the region. The Soviet leadership did not succeed in occupying them, since the Iranian mullocracy that came to power soon took not only an anti-American, but also an anti-Soviet position. In such a dynamically

changing environment, the Soviet leadership, apparently, considered it necessary to take active steps in the Afghan direction, intercepting the strategic initiative from the Americans [8, p. 31–33]. As a result, without thoroughly calculating all the risks and without taking into account historical, domestic political, ethno-confessional factors, without properly predicting the reaction of the international community, on December 27, 1979, a Soviet “limited military contingent” was brought into a neighboring, friendly country.

The Soviet military presence in Afghanistan that stretched for almost nine years (December 27, 1979 – February 15, 1989) had geopolitical consequences on a global scale, setting in motion negative domestic political processes in the Soviet Union, while simultaneously weakening it on the world stage. Party functionaries with “new thinking” who came to the leadership of the USSR in 1985 and initiated the notorious policy of “perestroika” soon led to the collapse of a great country.

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VALENTINA SCHENSNOVICH. PROBLEMS OF ADAPTATION AND INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS IN RUSSIA: THE ROLE OF RELIGION. Condensed abstract.

Keywords: socio-cultural adaptation, adaptation and integration of migrants in Russia, state migration policy, intercultural interaction, stereotypes, perception of cultural differences among youth, religious factor, transnationalism, diaspora.

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The article by Olga Kulbachevskaya, research associate, Institute of Anthropology and Ethnography RAS, [1] examines the relationship between migrants and Russian society, as well as its impact on integration processes. According to the Migration Policy Concept for 2019–2025, environment for adaptation of migrants is

set to be established through new mechanisms of social and cultural adaptation; measures to prevent segregation of migrants are also required.

The author notes that there have been improvements in the area of adaptation of migrants in Russia in recent years; however, there is still no state-based infrastructure covering the entire country, which would use common standards of training, information and socio-cultural programmes for migrants. To date, there is neither specific television channel focused on socio-cultural adaptation of labour migrants nor accommodation infrastructure for them. Adaptation and integration issues are mainly addressed by the public sector that possesses both experience and techniques, but lacks administrative and financial resources. Civil society institutions are thus unable to provide services to migrants to the extent necessary.

The researcher believes that migrants from rural areas who come to cities are the ones who need adaptation the most; this is basically social adaptation to urban space that has nothing to do with ethno-cultural characteristics. Language adaptation is also of essence, given that the more time has passed since the collapse of the USSR, the more migrants without sufficient knowledge of the language come to Russia from the former Union Republics.

The immediate tasks in the area of socio-cultural adaptation and integration are assigned to the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs (FADN), which is responsible for developing a comprehensive multi-level system of adaptation and integration of foreign citizens in Russia, taking into account different lifestyles of the population and national interests of Russia. FADN undertakes activities designed to promote social and cultural adaptation of migrants and therefore ensure interethnic and interreligious peace on the territory of Russia.

The author points out that from the standpoint of conflict-free interethnic coexistence, integration is the most preferable and efficient solution, which provides migrants with the opportunity to preserve their cultural identity and at the same time adopt foreign

cultural attributes. Integration suggests an intercultural dialogue between migrants and the ethnic majority; assimilation by newly arrived immigrants of the basic values and norms of the Russian sociocultural environment; and adjustment by the host community of social institutions to the needs and demands of new ethnic groups.

However, the level of interest in integration of migrants exhibited by the local population of Russia remains considerably low. The locals tend to put animosity of some migrants down to negative stereotypes about them. Negative stereotypes and migration risks are primarily formed in the context of differences in cultural backgrounds. Having analyzed multiple comments about online articles on migration, the author notes that most of the comments have a negative connotation and indicate hostility towards migrants. Only a few per cent of the total number of commentators are speaking up for migrants.

It should be noted that schools and universities bring migrant and local students closer together, make them find common ground during their studies. This makes educational institutions the best environment for acquiring the skills of intercultural dialogue and integration of migrant children into Russian society. In this regard, the Institute of Anthropology and Ethnography RAS, together with the Network for Ethnic Monitoring and Early Warning (EAWARN), conducted a series of surveys in Moscow schools and universities in 2017–2018. The objective of the study was to establish whether there was a need for ethno-cultural education and define the nature of the relationship between foreign and local students. The polls were carried out by means of questionnaires in secondary educational institutions (schools, lyceums, gymnasiums) and universities of Moscow.

The study shows that more than half of the respondents are neutral about joint education with migrants, and one third of those surveyed welcome it. Only one tenth of the respondents express their negative attitude towards migrants in classes and

groups. At the same time, almost half of students believe that migrants are fully integrated into the educational process. All this generally indicates the existence of amiable interethnic and intercultural relations in schools and universities of Moscow. This is also confirmed by the overwhelming majority of respondents (almost 90 per cent) who have not encountered negative attitudes because of their language, nationality and religion. A little more than one tenth of the interviewees have received negative attention, with half of them because of nationality, the other half because of language and religion.

In general, the research shows that Moscow youth have a neutral view of cultural differences and little interest in national cultures of others. Those students who take into account cultural differences pay attention primarily to traditions and norms of behaviour of foreign students; language and nationality are the second and third most important factors for them, respectively. Fewer young people pay attention to religious differences. According to the results of the study, neutral stereotypical attitudes prevail in schools and universities of Moscow, with more than half of the students holding such views. The stereotypes are as follows:

- One third of the respondents: "I do not really trust them, but they do not bother me either";
- A quarter of the respondents: "I do not support them, but do not shun them either";
- A quarter of the respondents: "I get neither benefits nor problems from them";
- One fifth of the respondents: "I have no particular interest, but allow communication".

The author notes that students are most prejudiced about fellow students of other religion. The respondents feel that students with other native languages are more integrated into society than those of other religions. Half of the respondents believe that migrants of other faith are fully integrated; one fifth of them indicate significant or certain level of integration; and

only one tenth of the respondents feel that fellow students with other religious backgrounds are totally isolated from the society.

The author concludes that despite negative stereotypical views about students of different cultures, shared by more than one tenth of the respondents, most of the students are tolerant; positive developments of relations between students of different cultural and religious backgrounds are obvious. State institutions might find it helpful to use the educational process as one of the tools for adaptation and integration of migrants. It is vital to introduce a unified methodology for developing the skills of intercultural dialogue into schools and universities.

Despite the fact that proper environment for successful integration of migrants in Russia is yet to be created, there have been positive changes in this area over the past few years. Firstly, the efforts to teach the Russian language, history and fundamentals of law have been stepped up. Secondly, the authorities are actively supporting non-profit organizations that carry out activities to help adaptation and integration of migrants into the host society.

Viktoriya Ledeneva, DSc(Sociology), Institute of Sociology RAS, and Bakytzhan Begassilov, Narxoz University, [2] analyze the role of the religious factor in adaptation of migrants into socio-cultural, linguistic and ethno-religious environment of the host community, as well as the influence of religious practices on their integration in Russia. In globalizing world, migrants create new behaviour patterns and transnational practices (including religious ones) that may either facilitate or hinder their integration into a new society. According to transnationalism theories, immigrants of the 21st century belong to two communities at the same time – a native one and a foreign one – but they are gradually included in the institutions of the host country.

In the study, the authors are trying to assess the role of diaspora in shaping the religious identity of migrants. Diaspora is essentially a bridge connecting migrants with their homeland,

which means the collective memory of the homeland and strong ethnic awareness caused by a sense of discrimination in host communities. In September 2020, a survey of the members of the expert council of the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs (FADN) was conducted; experts highlighted an important role of diasporas in everyday life of migrants in Russia. In recent years, there has been a qualitative change in the activities of diasporas. They have stepped up their efforts to facilitate adaptation and integration of migrants, have assumed greater responsibility for the actions of compatriots arriving from abroad and have set up the Russian language courses for them. However, sociological monitoring conducted annually by Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VTsIOM) show that Russians are still apprehensive of Muslim migrants.

In November 2019, at the request of FADN, VTsIOM conducted an all-Russian survey on interethnic relations in Russia. They specifically examined the attitude of Russians to religion, faith and migrants. According to the results, only 7.8 per cent of Russians dislike representatives of other religions: 9.2 per cent of Orthodox Christians, 1.6 per cent of Muslims and 7.2 per cent of people of other faiths have religious prejudices. The most frequent objects of hostility are 'Islamists' and 'Muslims', as the interviewees put it. It should be noted that the actions of migrants, as a rule, do not trigger interethnic and interreligious conflicts; however, the majority of respondents argue for some kind of control in order to prevent radicalization of Muslims. The poor are particularly alarmed by the huge number of migrants since they have to compete with them in the labour market; they are more likely to lose than benefit from the presence of migrants.

The authors note that those migrants who are successful in the job market prefer to do business with relatives and people of the same faith as theirs. Moreover, studies demonstrate a link between the religious activity among migrants and illegal business based on family and religious ties. The respondents critically assess the situation, pointing out that with the growing

number of migrants the likelihood of intense interethnic conflicts is increasing, which in turn hampers the integration of migrants into local communities. The local population, on the whole, sees migrants as carriers of an alien culture; a source of crime; a cause of unemployment and a decrease in wages; and a threat of spreading of infectious diseases.

Negative attitude from the bulk of the local population sometimes trigger a backlash from migrants, making them behave insolently and flout traditions, culture and laws of the host country. Cultural and socio-economic barriers and lack of social roots further alienate migrants from the local population, forcing them to unite in order to solve common problems. The regularization of migrants, which is obligatory in Russia, affects both the labour activities of a migrant and his choice whether to adapt to the host society or alienate from it. Official statistics do not allow monitoring the number of legal migrants from Central Asian countries, but only shows a general trend in the employment of migrants, many of whom live and work in Russia illegally. According to the officials from the Main Directorate for Migration Affairs (GUMV) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, there are about 3 million illegal migrants in Russia. As a rule, newly arrived labour migrants from Central Asia have zero experience of living in a foreign cultural environment, which increases social and interethnic tensions. Migrants break away from familiar social environment and find themselves in a completely different ethnic, cultural and linguistic environment. They lack motivation to adapt to the environment where there is a developed network of ethnic diasporas with a high level of social autonomy; consequently, this gives rise to spatial segregation and enclavization – migrants choose to reside together in order to preserve their traditional religious patterns of conduct. Flouting of the law on the part of foreign citizens and the presence of illegal migrants among them create a favourable environment for shadow economy and corruption. Members of migrant families, especially children, face challenges that foster

their maladjustment; it should be noted that these problems are much more acute for the second generation, initially uprooted from their homeland. According to FADN experts, those territories where resettlers from Central Asia and Transcaucasia live in enclaves are of special concern. There is an increase in the number of representatives of non-traditional Islam who adhere to other values than those of traditional Islam. This naturally fuels local conflicts on religious grounds.

The authors point out that since there is no developed infrastructure for ethnic communities in Russia, kinship, clan and national ties serve as a major adaptation mechanism. Migrants join these social groups by choosing an ethnic community over a host society. Labour migration provides a breeding ground for the development of transnational religious networks. Religious networks, in large part, solve the problems of employment and livelihood of migrants.

The authors conclude that a thorough examination of the religious practices of Muslim migrants from Central Asian countries to Russia has identified the main reasons for their weak integration into Russian society. It is impossible to attain harmonious development of society without social, cultural, linguistic and legal education or integration programmes. Conceptual issues remain the same: creating a management model for migration processes with the objective of solving the problems regarding integration of migrants, as well as implementing effective practices to counter the emergence of ethnic enclaves. The major conclusion of the study is that the religious factor plays a crucial role in the lives of labour migrants. Growing tensions among migrants caused by unfair attitude at work and intolerance of Russian citizens may lead to isolation and consolidation of migrants coupled with the religious element; these tensions, moreover, could be used for political purposes. This should be taken into account when developing and implementing state migration policies.

PLACE AND ROLE OF ISLAM IN REGIONS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, THE CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA

ZAID ABDULAGATOV. EXTREMES OF RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS
IN THE SYSTEM OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION OF THE REPUBLIC
OF DAGESTAN. (ENDING. OPENING IN NO 4–2021).

*Keywords: extremity of consciousness,
Islamic educational institutions, Dagestan,
Russia, fundamentalism, extremism,
secondary school.*

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Abstract. The author, basing on sociological surveys of different years, showed the extremes of the religious consciousness of Moslems who studied in Islamic educational institutions of the Republic of Dagestan. The statistics of Islamic education in the republic are shown. The factors that strengthen the role of religious worldview in the socialization of Dagestan youth are revealed. The issues discussed are considered from the standpoint of the interests of the secular state in

solving the problems of social stability, the formation of a secular legal culture, countering religious extremism and terrorism.

Statistics of Islamic Education in Modern Dagestan

According to the survey of the Dagestan region, in 1892 in Dagestan there were 646 Moslem mosque (primary) schools, where 4,306 students studied. The ratio of maktabas and madrasahs was within 15:1.³² The assimilation of the madrasah program enabled to translate the Quran, to write correctly in Arabic. Madrasah had two varieties – secondary and higher madrasah.

By 1978, there were only 27 officially operating mosques in Dagestan. Nevertheless, there was not a single mosque school, especially a madrasah, in Dagestan at that time. The Moslem clergymen of Russia were mainly trained at the Mir-Arab madrasah located in Bukhara, as well as at the Imam Al-Bukhari Islamic Institute in Tashkent. Foreign Islamic education could be received by the very few gifted students who successfully passed the relevant competitions. According to experts, there were many clandestine Islamic educational institutions on the territory of Russia in the pre-perestroika period. As of 1998, 108 educational institutions were already registered, which in general were secondary educational institutions, although some of them were formally called higher ones.³³

By the beginning of the 21th century, the quantitative indicators of the Islamic educational system in the RD went up sharply, as evidenced by the data in the following table.

Table 1

Moslem educational institutions of the RD on 01.02.2001³⁴

Total educational institutions	Higher				Secondary		Primary	
	HEI	Students	HEI branches	Students	Madrasahs	Students	Mosque schools	Students
438	17	2835	44	2045	132	5329	245	3306

In total, by the beginning of 2001 13515 people were studying in the Islamic education system of the RD. This figure is twice as high as the same indicator in 1913.

By the end of 2002, as official data show, the number of students enrolled in Islamic universities increased. In total, about 17 thousand people studied Islam in 2002, including: in madrasahs - more than 5,700 people, in primary schools - more than 4,200 people.

Further development of the IEI shows that after 2005 there was a decrease in the number of students in madrasahs, maktabas, universities. The number of maktabas has sharply decreased.

Table 2

**Universities, madrasahs, maktabas in the Republic of Dagestan.
2005–2012.³⁵**

	Higher educational institutions			Madrasahs			Maktabas		
Year	2005	2008	2012	2005	2008	2012	2005	2008	2012
Total EI	16	16	15	132	116	79	278	94	201
Number of students	2600	2500	1770	4400	3000	2970	4000	700	–

The downward trend in the indicators of Islamic education in the RD continued after 2012. According to data received from the Ministry of National Policy and Religious Affairs of the Republic of Dagestan, as of January 1, 2021, there are 6 Islamic higher educational institutions in the republic, in which 624 students study, 16 madrasahs and 1 madrasah branch 1310 students, 173 mosque primary schools (maktabas) 4527 students. The total number of students in Islamic educational institutions as of January 1, 2021 amounts to 6461 people.

The reliability of statistics for the mosque schools is low, since they arise and cease their activities spontaneously.

Official statistics are not interested in information about Islamic education, which is practiced by individuals at home. At the same time, it is an important segment of primary Islamic

education. It is at this stage that the fundamental worldview foundations of personality formation are acquired and consolidated. According to the 2019 sociological survey conducted by the author among students of comprehensive schools in the Republic of Dagestan, significantly more young people are involved in the initial segment of the Islamic educational process in relation to the official data on maktabas.

The involvement of pupils of comprehensive schools of the Republic of Dagestan in the Islamic educational process is shown in Diagram 1.

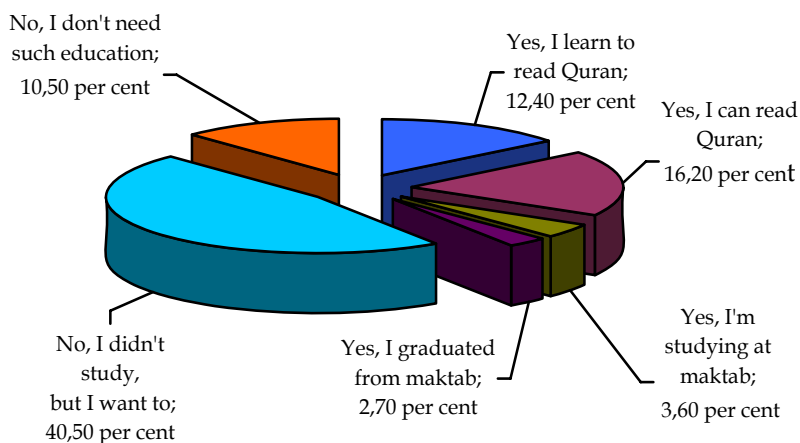


Diagram 1

**Distribution of answers to the question "Have you studied (or are you studying in parallel) religious sciences?"
RD. 2019 Students. (per cent).**

According to Diagram 1, more than one third of comprehensive school students (General – 34.0 per cent; Boys – 41.7 per cent; Girls – 30.7 per cent) have or are receiving Islamic education. 34.0 per cent of the total number of students in municipal and state comprehensive schools of the Republic of

Dagestan (total – 413,230 students³⁶) is about 27,000 people. Of course, this group not only learns the Quran, the Arabic script, but also receives the ideological and normative knowledge corresponding to Islam. If we take into account that another 40.5 per cent want to receive such education, then it must be admitted that this desire for sacred knowledge has embraced more than three quarters (74.5 per cent) of schoolchildren. This is an important factor in the formation of the religious consciousness of young people, which in the North Caucasus, in contrast to the Volga region, does not have its own scientific research.³⁷

Islamic socialization in the Republic of Dagestan is actively carried out by religious leaders, using the possibilities of the general education school. According to the survey data, more than 60 per cent of pupils say that at school clergymen hold conversations with them “often” or “rarely”.

An important, systematically used tool of Islamic socialization is the course “Fundamentals of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics” (FRCSE), more precisely, its module “Fundamentals of Islamic Culture”. In 2012, 13 786 students studied in the Islamic module of the FRCSE course in Dagestan schools, and in 2015 – 13 715 students of grades 4–5. This is about 40 per cent of all students in the four modules of the FRCSE course, which take place in the comprehensive schools of the Republic of Dagestan. In the opinion of the absolute majority of the interviewed teachers who teach this module, the content of the textbook, according to which the student learns the “Fundamentals of Islamic Culture”, “mainly forms a religious worldview, introduces children to religion, teaches children that there is God, that faith in God is necessary for man.” – 53.0 per cent. Only 11.5 per cent of the respondents said that it forms a secular worldview. It should be noted that 91.6 per cent of the teachers surveyed considered themselves to be believers, which testifies to the impartiality of the expressed assessments.

Experts working in the Russian Academy of Sciences made an unambiguous conclusion about the inadmissibility of using

the existing textbooks on FRCSE in schools of the Russian Federation. According to A.V. Smirnov, Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Doctor of Philosophy, Deputy Director of the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences (now Academician, Director of the Institute of Philosophy at the Russian Academy of Sciences), scientists “were actually completely removed from the preparation of four of the six modules - those modules in the title of which appears the name of any of the four religions. These modules ... wholly, one hundred per cent, categorically from the very beginning were given to the confessions. They weren't written by scientists. ... The Russian Academy of Sciences, as an organization, did not do any expertise ...”. At the same time, the state declared that the course of the FRCSE should be secular and not doctrinal.

Results of Opinion Polls

In the course of the study, the results of several sociological surveys conducted by the author were used. The following indicators were used as indicators of the extreme religious consciousness of the respondents:

1. Denial of the need to adapt Islamic norms to modern public and state life;
2. The negative attitude of the believer to visiting “holy places” (ziyarats, mazars) by Moslems, the definition of Sufis as lost Moslems;
3. Recognition by believers of the priority of sharia norms in relation to the laws of a secular state;
4. Negative attitude towards secular culture, recognition of the culture of the Arab-Moslem world as the most acceptable for Dagestani;
5. Recognition of radical Salafis (“Wahhabis”) as “true” Moslems;
6. Approving attitude to the activities of Dagestanis in ISIS;

7. Negative attitude towards cohabitation with a Russian person;
8. Negative attitude to patriotism from religious motives;
9. Negative attitude towards secular education;
10. Expression of the exclusivity of religious identity for a person, the insignificance of Russian identity for a Moslem, etc.

In this text, due to the limitations of its volume, only a part of the above indicators is used to identify extremes.

The main issue with which the manifestations of the extremes of Moslem consciousness are connected is the issue of adaptation to the conditions of modern life. These are secular norms, laws, innovations determined by changes in social relations, globalization processes, etc. The problems of Salafism are well known, it resolves very rigorously not only the issues of its attitude to secular norms, but also its attitude to other trends in Islam. From the point of view of the general problems of adapting a Moslem to modern conditions, "traditional" Islam in Dagestan, by which Sufi, Tariqa Islam is understood today, has almost the same problems. In a narrow sense, Islamic fundamentalism in this text is understood as a state of religious consciousness and social behavior corresponding to this consciousness that do not meet the objective requirements of life, generally accepted norms, and laws of the state. These are manifestations of the Islamic consciousness, which could not "digest life", is not able to "digest" it for objective or subjective reasons. Or, it does not want to do this because of the "firmness" of the religious position. As a consequence, fundamentalist adaptation is understood as opposition to existing norms and values. This manifestation of "fundamentalism" takes place both in Salafism and in "traditional" Islam, although to varying degrees of severity.

"The main question of fundamentalism" – the question of a Moslem's attitude to changes in Islam in order to match the time during surveys in Dagestan was asked repeatedly. The survey revealed exclusively extremes of consciousness, which only

supposedly can hinder successful secular socialization, contribute to extreme behavior, extremism.

The respondents were asked the following question: “What do you think:

a) The Islamic religion should be the same as it was under the Prophet Muhammad;

b) The Moslem religion should change over time, as life changes;

c) I find it difficult to answer.”

According to the 2010 survey among the youth of the RD, the following results were obtained.

Table 3

Distribution of answers to the question whether the Moslem religion should change over time, or should remain the same as it was under the Prophet Muhammad. Education groups. 2010 Youth survey. (per cent).

Groups by education	Groups by relation to adaptation			
	“Fundamentalists” (The Moslem religion should be the same as it was under the Prophet Muhammad)”	“Modernists” (the Moslem religion should change over time, as life changes)	I find it difficult to answer	Rank
Primary (grades 4–6)	50,0	33,3	16,7	9
Secondary basic (grade 9)	73,3	6,7	10,0	5
Secondary general (grades 10–11)	74,5	11,3	9,9	4
Secondary special	71,7	6,5	8,7	6
Higher incomplete (after the 3 rd year at a HEI	64,6	11,0	15,9	8
Higher secular	67,4	5,8	20,9	7
Moslem primary (maktab, mosque school)	100,0	0,0	0,0	1
Moslem secondary (madrasah)	84,6	1,9	1,9	3
Moslem higher	91,7	8,3	8,3	2
A Teacher of an Islamic educational institution	100,0 per cent	0,0	0,0	1
A clergyman	100,0 per cent	0,0	0,0	1

The “fundamentalism” of respondents with an Islamic education was significantly higher than that of Moslems who received only a secular education. The influence on the process of fundamentalization of Islamic consciousness on the part of the bearers of Islamic normativity – teachers of IEI, clerics is obvious. The same question was asked in 2016 during a study of the state of Islamic education in the RD. “Fundamentalism” among pupils and students of higher educational institutions as an average indicator in this case turned out to be quite high – 91.1 per cent. It should be noted that according to repeated surveys of the population of the RD as a whole, and not just young people, this figure was slightly more than 50 per cent, the maximum was 52.1 per cent (2007). Kabardino-Balkaria – 52.8 per cent (2011), Chechnya – 86.7 per cent (2011).

Despite the fact that the identified group of “fundamentalists” in the answers to other questions of the questionnaire reduced its level of “fundamentalism” – in some answers to 30 per cent and below, it steadily maintained a hard core, which distinguished it from other survey groups by the worst indicators of social adaptability.

The polls touched upon the issue of attitude to the laws of the state, which is relevant for a modern Moslem and the state. The meaning of the Islamic attitude to the laws of a secular state is that they are evaluated as secondary, “second-rate”, invented by people, changing over time. Nevertheless, a Moslem in “traditional” Islam, in moderate Islam, can follow the laws of the state, but cannot allow the thought that they are above Sharia.⁴⁰ In radical Salafism, in religious and political extremism, this position finds an extreme form of its manifestation: a) a Moslem cannot be judged or sworn to the court of Shaitan (Satanic) laws, in addition to the laws sent down by Allah; b) a Moslem cannot grant “the right to legislate to anyone other than Allah (only Allah makes laws).”⁴¹ We see the practical implementation of the second of these positions in the activities of radical Salafists in the North Caucasus.

One of the questions that revealed the extremity of the respondent's Islamic consciousness was the question of Sharia and the laws of the state.

Table 4

Distribution of answers to the question
"Do you think sharia norms are higher than the laws of the
state?" by the nature and level of education of the respondents.
Survey 2010 N - 574. Youth. (per cent).

Groups by education	Variants of response			
	Yes	No	I find it difficult to answer	Rank
Primary (4-6 grades)	16,7	16,7	33,3	9
Secondary basic (9 grades)	46,7	26,7	16,7	6
Secondary general (10-11 grades)	50,0	16,8	26,3	5
Secondary specialized	43,5	26,1	21,7	7
Incomplete higher education (after the 3rd year of a HEI)	53,7	17,1	23,2	4
Higher secular education	43,0	19,8	27,9	8
Moslem elementary (maktab, mosque school)	71,4	0,0	28,6	3
Moslem Secondary (madrasah)	88,5	1,9	7,7	2
Moslem Higher Education	100,0	0,0	0,0	1

As it turned out, firstly, for respondents with an Islamic education, the norms of Sharia have a much higher significance compared to the laws of the state. Secondly, with the growth of the level of Islamic education, the importance of religious normativity for the respondent also tends to increase. Thirdly, in comparison with respondents with a secular education, respondents who have received an education in an IIE are about twice as likely to declare the priority of Sharia norms. This shows the negative impact of Islamic socialization, especially in the field of Islamic education, on the formation of the legal culture of young people.

The influence of sharia norms on the legal culture of students of HEI was concretized by the question of the official behavior of a Moslem.

Table 5

Distribution of answers to the question “What should a Moslem do if the performance of official duties contradicts the norms of Sharia?” RD. 2016
(as a percentage of the number of answers). N – 776.

Groups	Variants of response				
	A Moslem should not do anything contrary to Sharia in the performance of official duties	The performance of official duties is mandatory. At the same time, violations of Sharia norms are permissible	By observing official norms, you can violate the provisions of Sharia, but you cannot in your heart consider that these norms are higher than the norms of Sharia	I find it difficult to answer	What else? (write)
Youth	52,0	6,6	14,9	21,3	0,7
Older generation	31,6	19,4	19,8	21,7	2,8
Believer	48,1	8,8	17,2	19,5	1,2
Unbeliever	25,6	27,9	11,6	18,6	4,7
City	39,4	13,9	15,8	24,5	1,6
Village	49,6	9,6	16,2	18,7	1,3
Secular educational institutions	52,3	6,4	14,8	21,5	0,6
Religious educational institutions	68,2	13,6	0,0	9,1	0,0
General	44,7	11,1	16,6	21,4	1,4

Students of IEI speak about the need to follow the Sharia contrary to official duties, significantly more than other survey groups – 68.2 per cent. None of the students of IEI chose a moderate position for a Moslem – “observing official norms, you can violate the provisions of Sharia, but you cannot in your heart believe that these norms are higher than the norms of Sharia”. In Dagestan, supporters of “Wahhabism” in government structures have been repeatedly exposed. The head of the republic, the Interior Minister spoke about “traitors among their own people.” Among them was the mayor of Makhachkala, head

of the Pension Fund of the Republic, employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the RD.

Currently, the state print media of the Republic of Dagestan almost never use the terms “religious extremism” and “religious-political extremism.” Islamic leaders actively object to the combination of the words “Islam”, “extremism”, “terrorism”. On December 1, 2014, at a meeting with religious leaders within the framework of the II Congress of Religious Figures of the North Caucasus, the Head of the Republic of Dagestan at that time R.G. Abdulatipov said: “I banned the use of the expression “Islamic extremism and terrorism” in Dagestan”⁴².

As shown in Table 6 below, the religious factor plays a significant role in the possible protest behavior of young Moslems in the Republic of Dagestan, and in IEI it is dominant, far ahead of other reasons.

Table 6

Distribution of answers to the question “In what case could you show disobedience to the state?” Religious and secular educational institutions. RD. 2013 (per cent). N- 855.

Respondent groups	Variants of response					
	If the laws contradict my faith	If the laws relating to my vital interests are not implemented	In no case, since all power is from God	If the law is not fair	If the laws are violated by the prosecutor's office, courts, police, power	I find it difficult to answer
Religious educational institutions	50,0	1,7	6,9	13,8	12,1	10,3
Secular educational institutions	18,0	7,9	6,4	25,0	19,6	21,1

One of the complex problems of modern Russia is the low level of patriotic consciousness of the population, especially young people. The State Duma was unable to adopt two draft laws submitted for discussion in 2018 - the Law on the Russian Nation and the Law on Patriotic Education in the Russian Federation, which indicates serious ideological problems in the field of education in general. There are many factors of negative influence on Russian patriotism. As polls show, one of the significant factors of this nature in the Moslem component of the North Caucasus is the state of Islamic consciousness. In the region, on the pages of the print media, publications of the Muftiate of the Republic of Dagestan, in the activities of the Committee for Youth Affairs of the Republic of Dagestan, there was open opposition to the cultivation of Russian patriotism, the need for a Moslem to perform his official duties, even if they interfere with Sharia norms. The large-circulation newspaper *Novoye Delo*, popular in the Republic of Dagestan, answering the reader's question, "Can a Moslem be a patriot of a non-Sharia state?" gives the answer: no, he cannot⁴³. The Secretary General of the World Union of Moslem Scientists (WUMS), Sheikh Ali Muhiddin al Karadagi, while staying in the republic in 2014, gave the following instructions to the Dagestani Moslems: Dagestan is the territory of Islam, "which means that the laws of the territory of Islam should apply to it, and its rulers should strive to apply the norms of Sharia"⁴⁴, "you are obliged to live according to Sharia"⁴⁵, "observance of laws that do not contradict Sharia"⁴⁶, "serving the Motherland so that such patriotism does not contradict religious devotion in the framework of achieving good."⁴⁷ The results of the survey on patriotism in the Dagestani consciousness are presented in the following table.

Table 7

Distribution of answers to the question
“What do you think, can a Moslem to be a patriot
of a non-Sharia (Islamic) state?” RD. 2016. (per cent).

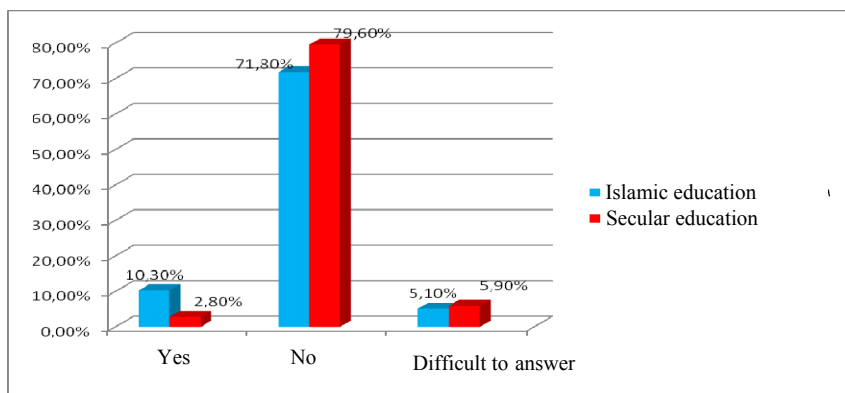
Respondent groups	Variants of response		
	Yes	No	I find it difficult to answer
Youth	41,0	19,3	21,3
Older generation	53,4	13,8	16,2
Pupils, students of secular educational institutions	43,3	18,9	23,0
Pupils, students of religious educational institutions	22,7	31,8	22,7
Clerics	40	50	10
Workers, peasants	44,2	23,1	15,4
White-collar workers	54,5	13,8	15,0
City	45,5	14,2	20,0
Village	44,1	21,8	18,7
General	44,7	18,4	19,3

According to the survey, the least Russian patriotism is expressed by pupils and students of religious educational institutions and representatives of the Islamic clergy. The negative influence of religious consciousness on patriotism is more pronounced in the position of young people. This circumstance indicates a possible strengthening in the future of religious motivation in the departure of the population of the Republic of Dagestan from the positions of Russian patriotism.

The negative influence of Islamic education on Russian patriotism in the same survey is confirmed by the respondents' attitude towards the Russian people. The attitude towards the

Russian person is one of the indicators of Russian patriotism and Russian identity. The desire to live with a Russian person in certain conditions (there is no representative of their ethnic group nearby) in the early 90s of the last century, was expressed by from 40 per cent to 50 per cent of representatives of the Dagestani ethnic groups. They also chose each other (an Avar – a Dargin, a Kumyk – a Lak, etc.) within 4-8 per cent. More than 15 years later, the desire to live with a Russian person among Dagestanis has greatly diminished – to 14.4 per cent in the total sample. Moreover, what is important in connection with the discussed issues, among those who consider themselves, first of all, a “citizen of Russia”, there are 17.1 per cent, “a Moslem” – 11.2 per cent. For believers this figure is 14.1 per cent, for “non-believers” – 27.8 per cent. Among the pupils, students of Islamic educational institutions, there was no one who expressed a desire to live with a representative of the Russian people in conditions when there are no representatives of their ethnic group nearby.

In 2016, ISIS was very active. Many young Dagestanis left for Turkey without stating their purpose, and then flew to Syria and joined ISIS. The poll showed that the Moslem community of Dagestanis supported the activities of ISIS – 4.1 per cent in the sample as a whole. Youth - 4.8 per cent, older generation – 2.0 per cent. In the total sample of those who said that they may, for one reason or another, find themselves in the ranks of those fighting on the side of ISIS, there were 2.7 per cent. In recalculation per person it makes approximately 60,000 people of the adult population of the Republic of Dagestan. Comparison of secular and Islamic educational institutions in the answers to this question showed that among respondents with Islamic education, the extremes of consciousness are much more pronounced. (See Histogram 1).



Histogram 1

Distribution of answers to the question: "Could you, for any reason, be in the ranks of those fighting on the side of ISIS?"

RD. 2016 Groups with secular and religious education

10.3 per cent of the respondents with an Islamic education claim that they may find themselves in the ranks of ISIS. Another 5.1 per cent of them found it difficult to answer, that is, they are not sure that they will not become participants in extremist, terrorist activities, which are essentially against the interests of Russia. These are high indicators of the extremeness of the Islamic consciousness of those who studied at the IEI of the Republic of Dagestan.

Main Conclusions

1. Islamic educational institutions of the Republic of Dagestan have ample opportunities in the implementation of programs of Moslem education and upbringing of youth. Despite the fact that in recent years order has been restored in matters of licensing and accreditation of IEI, state statistics do not provide complete, reliable information about the degree of involvement of the republic's youth in the Islamic educational process. This

applies to the educational activities of mosque schools, and, in particular, home (individual and collective) teaching of religion.

2. The comprehensive school has lost its secularity. According to the leading scientists of the Russian Academy of Sciences, as well as the teachers of the course FRCSE in a general education school, the textbooks of the FRCSE religious module educate religiosity in pupils of grades 4-5. They are not culturological, but doctrinal in nature.

3. For various reasons, including those of legal nature, more than 40,000 school teachers in the Republic of Dagestan are not involved in solving the issues of shaping the secular worldview of students. This is one of the factors in the strengthening of the role of the religious worldview of the youth of the Republic of Dagestan.

4. IEI reinforce the extremes of Islamic consciousness that take place in the minds of the youth of the Republic of Dagestan. Among the respondents with completed Islamic education, studying at the IEI, the highest extremes of Islamic consciousness among the survey groups were revealed. In particular, under the influence of Islamic education: a) the indicators of Russian patriotism are decreasing; b) the possibility of religiously motivated disobedience to the state increases; c) a negative attitude is formed towards living together with a Russian person; d) the indicators of adherence of young Moslems to a secular legal culture are decreasing; e) the performance of official duties becomes optional if they contradict the norms of Sharia; e) the fundamentalist components of Islamic consciousness are strengthening.

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AKYLAI ALIEVA. CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS OF REALIZATION OF THE “BELT AND ROAD” INITIATIVE IN CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES. *Condensed abstract.*

Keywords: Central Asia, China, BRI, infrastructure, challenges, problems.

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Matthias Schmidt, PhD, Augsburg University, [1] analyzes a long history of external influences on the political and economic space of Central Asian countries, focusing on the current role of China in the region. The author notes that the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) raises not only great hopes, but also challenges and risks for the countries of Central Asia. The researcher believes that long-established value of Central Asia lies in its role as a bridge between the East and the West. During the golden age of Central Asia – the early Middle Ages – trade between China and the West was carried out along the Silk Road. In the

following centuries, the Russian Empire (and later Soviet Russia) dominated the region. After being confined to the Soviet boundaries, following independence the region opened up to international trade and cooperation. The states of Central Asia now participate in global trade and communication networks. The researcher notes that China's Belt and Road Initiative facilitates further reorientation. As a key transit region, Central Asia has the major role in the BRI. Infrastructure development is therefore needed in order to realize the potential of the region. First and foremost, a well-functioning railway system should be put in place. At the moment, two different railway systems mean transshipment at border stations. Thus, Chinese investment could meet the need to improve transport infrastructure and connect the densely populated Fergana Valley with Xinjiang. This is essential for Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, since they are unable to fund such projects on their own. Moreover, China supports the construction of hydroelectric power plants and the modernization of power lines, which would make transmission of electric power to Xinjiang possible. However, the author points out that China's endeavours to develop transport and energy infrastructure in Central Asia could significantly contribute to the economic development of the region, if it were not for the associated large public debt.

The change in the trade structure of Central Asia is yet another consequence of the opening of borders with China and its active presence in the region. Low trade barriers enabled some countries, Kyrgyzstan in particular, to assume the role of hubs for the transshipment of Chinese goods throughout the region. For instance, 80 per cent of final consumption goods in Kyrgyzstan are imported from China. The author believes that Central Asia will remain a market for Chinese goods in the future, despite the accession of Kyrgyzstan to the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the corresponding amendments to the foreign trade policy. The growing geopolitical and economic influence of China and massive investment, notably within the framework of the Belt

and Road Initiative, are perceived with optimism, but also raise suspicions in the region. The region is of great interest to China and Europe and could become a major supplier of energy resources, given a high potential for the use of renewable energy sources. However, underdeveloped transport and energy infrastructure and erratic governance hamper the development of resource potential. Therefore, the Chinese initiative offers Central Asia an opportunity to become an exporter of energy resources, thereby reducing its dependence on Russia. At the same time, the influence of China is steadily increasing; today China already controls 30 per cent of all oil production in Kazakhstan. Thus, Chinese investments could not only improve infrastructure and facilitate economic development in the region, but also deepen its dependence on China.

Moreover, Chinese investments increase the risk of a debt crisis in recipient countries, especially in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. About 50 per cent of their external debt is owed to Chinese institutions. Nevertheless, Dushanbe intends to continue to increase the public debt in order to finance infrastructure projects in the energy and transport sectors. This is also facilitated by rather favourable credit conditions offered by China. The fact that Chinese loans have no domestic policy requirements is appealing for the governments of Central Asian countries. The fact that China expects its borrowers to be committed to the One-China policy is often neglected.

The researcher highlights the following significant issues:

- All the loans allocated by China physically remain within Chinese borders. The lending system works in such a way that a Chinese lending bank reinvests in a Chinese contractor company, which in turn supplies the recipient with Chinese equipment and workforce.

- China's increasing presence and influence is provoking xenophobic reactions among the population in Central Asia. The local population fears Chinese migrants taking all the jobs, as well as the possibility of China demanding land to settle the debt.

The author concludes that China's presence in Central Asia is expected only to grow, despite the region's high dependence on Chinese investments and loans and a large debt burden. After over a century as a major external power in the region, Russia no longer dominates the economic and cultural space. As for other players, the EU remains an important partner and donor for Central Asia, as well as the US. To a certain extent, Iran, Turkey and the states of the Persian Gulf are involved in the cultural and religious sphere. Meanwhile, China is now the largest economic player in the region. Thanks to the Belt and Road Initiative, China's economic dominance in the region is expected to boost its political influence. Until now, the BRI has not yet generated vast job opportunities or brought about economic diversification. A new 'great game' could mean an array of opportunities for Central Asia, but limited natural and human resources, economic and political constraints, and weak intraregional and external strategic position narrows down the choice of the development vector. Nevertheless, the Chinese project remains a good chance for development and access to world markets. The author deems the multi-vector foreign policy of Central Asian states is a reasonable strategy to avoid absolute dominance of a single player in the region.

The article by F.T. Kukeyeva, DSc(Hist.), Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, and a group of authors [2] studies cooperation in the field of transport infrastructure between China and the countries of Central Asia and identifies problems that might hinder the effective implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative. The authors examine relations between China and the countries of Central Asia through the prism of the theory of sustainable development and the "New Regionalism" concept. According to the article, projects of cooperation between Central Asia and China should be reviewed in terms of long-term effects and compliance with the standards of sustainable development of the countries in the region. Otherwise, cooperation aimed at short-term profits may prove to be unprofitable in the long run.

Integration of the new regionalism with regard to Central Asia is the idea of the growth of economic interdependence, establishment of autonomy “from below” and multidimensional nature of cooperation.

The authors note that due to the favourable prospect for the region to become the focal point in the new architecture of the global economy, China enjoys the unequivocal support of Central Asian governments. At the same time, the low degree of relevance of the objectives of the BRI to the strategic needs of the region may give rise to variety of challenges and risks. Thus, the authors provide a brief overview of intra-regional debates on the topic. Pointing out a number of problems in cooperation with China, Kyrgyz and Tajik experts emphasize the need to modernize the transport system for the development of states in the region. The authors note that the concept of the development of regional infrastructure has been formulated through Kazakh State programmes since 2014. Back then Nursultan Nazarbayev identified the establishment of a transport and logistics system as a key to the development of Kazakhstan. Uzbek experts believe that the implementation of the Chinese initiative might strengthen the regional foreign policy of Uzbekistan. Meanwhile, Turkmenistan highlights the operational advantages of the International North-South Transport Corridor (NSTC) passing through Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. On the whole, the constraining factors for the implementation of the initiative are the following: the geographical features of the region, disagreements between countries in the region and geopolitical threats. However, the discourse on the problems with implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative is still developing, as well as the initiative itself.

Discussing challenges associated with the implementation of the initiative, the researchers point to the clash of different powers in the region. Its nature parallels the global (West-Russia and US-China rivalries) and regional patterns of relations (India-Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, as well as Russia’s “pivot to the

East"). As for Sino-Russian relations, the authors note that both Russia and China support the status quo in Central Asia. By creating the NSTC Russia seeks to increase its transit attractiveness and undermine the competitiveness of the BRI. At the same time, Russia's efforts to maintain its monopoly in the region are hindered by the debt of certain countries to China. Confrontation with the West and security-related issues bring China and Russia closer together.

The authors point out that transport logistics in the region is hampered by the poor quality of roads. Only 30 per cent of international corridor routes are paved. Along with the inability of the internal market of Central Asia to meet the growing demand for transport services, poor roads slow down cargo transportation and result in wear and tear of vehicles. Differences in the technical specifications of railways complicate multilateral projects with China. The lack of up-to-date wagons and technologies slows down transportation and reduces competitiveness of transportation through Central Asia.

Institutional and political problems in the region also slow the flow of traffic. Most often, there are customs problems, such as different customs procedures and corruption within customs administrations. Political challenges mean difficulties in bilateral relations that could affect border checks, as was the case between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan when Astana imposed greater controls on the Kyrgyz border. In order to fully realize the transit potential, it is essential that Central Asian countries remove existing barriers and develop transport infrastructure.

The authors note that in parallel to the Chinese projects, other cargo transportation lines are being developed. Despite the political instability in Afghanistan, there are a number of projects designed to connect the country with Turkey, Europe and Iran. The countries in Central Asia aspire to be part of those projects involving Iran and Afghanistan. Uzbekistan has already established a train service with Afghanistan and works on its further development. In 2014, the Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran

railway line was put into operation. Multiple alternative infrastructure projects make it clear that there are numerous ways for Central Asia to become a hub for the whole of Eurasia. The most ambitious project, however, is China's Belt and Road Initiative.

The authors come to the following conclusions. The Belt and Road Initiative in Central Asia faces both technical and geopolitical challenges. To solve some of the issues, the countries of Central Asia should harmonize their railway system with the Chinese one, improve transport routes and resolve problems at customs. It should be noted that customs issues arise from corruption and intraregional disagreements. Alongside the work on the BRI, Central Asia should also develop transport projects with other countries in order to reduce the economic burden and the perils of overdependence on China.

ELENA DMITRIEVA. DYNAMICS OF THE RELIGIOUS
WORLDVIEW OF BASHKIRS AND CIVIC IDENTITY OF THE
POPULATION OF BASHKIRIA IN THE POST-SOVIET PERIOD.
Condensed abstract.

*Keywords: religious outlook, Islam in
Bashkiria, civil and ethnic identity,
international relations, religiosity of the
population.*

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E.V. Migranova, PhD(History), the Institute of History, Language and Literature, RAS [1], analyzes the transformation of religious outlook of the Bashkirs, using data of two ethno-sociological surveys of the population of the republic. The 2019/20 survey questions are almost identical to those asked in the 1986 survey.

The researcher notes that in recent decades in the Republic of Bashkortostan (Bashkiria) there has been an increase in the influence of religion on many aspects of life and on all age, gender and social groups of the population. In the 1986 opinion poll, a small number of Bashkirs (only 5 per cent) stated that they observed fasts; in the 2019/20 survey, approximately 60 per cent of Bashkirs answered affirmatively to the same question. The number of those who have the Quran at home has increased, reaching almost 60 per cent of the respondents (10.5 per cent in 1986); the number of those who know prayers has also increased several times – 56.8 per cent compared to 9.6 per cent in 1986. Almost 2.5 times more people (82 per cent) seek the assistance of the clergy (33.5 per cent in 1986). Many of the respondents admit that certain life situations demand presence of a clergyman and offering prayers. For the Bashkirs, Islam is not only a religious characteristic, but also a defining element of the ethnic group.

According to the author, the upsurge in religious identity of Bashkirs is primarily attributable to the search for moral principles, largely lost after the collapse of the USSR; at the same time, atheism as a worldview was strongly criticized, being

placed as though outside culture and often regarded as the antithesis of culture.

The author lists the following factors that have facilitated the revival of religious consciousness:

- state support for religious institutions;
- widespread use of religious ideology in media, including in imaginative ways;
- courses on religious cultures taught at schools, etc.

In the Republic of Bashkortostan there is a variety of spiritual literature and periodicals, religious websites, thematic seminars, events and holidays. Bashkiria celebrates Kurban Halal Fest, Eid al-Adha for Children and other religious holidays, attended not only by Muslims. The Bashkirs, in turn, celebrate Epiphany, Christmas, Easter and Maslenitsa along with the Orthodox population of the Republic, thereby proving that these religious festivities go beyond one religion and are now platforms for communication and bonding between members of various ethnic and religious groups.

The article [2] by I.M. Gabdrafiyev, PhD(History), the R.G. Kuzev Institute for Ethnological Studies (RAS) and V.O. Glukhovtsev, PhD(Philosophy), the Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation discusses the current state of civic identity in Bashkortostan on the basis of data provided by three mass surveys in 2013, 2014 and 2020.

The 2013 survey shows that the majority of people believe that others should see them as fellow citizens; the number of those who answered "As a member of their ethnic group" is insignificant. According to the survey, regional identity comes first for 21 per cent of the respondents. More than half of the respondents believe that Russia is the most suitable country to achieve their goals for the future; less than one third of the respondents ticked the box "Another state"; and only one sixth of those asked found it difficult to answer. More than 80 per cent of the respondents state that they have no inconveniences due to their nationality, which indicates a high level of interethnic public

tolerance in Bashkiria. The authors note that xenophobic attitudes are relatively low in the Republic of Bashkortostan, e.g. 78 per cent of the respondents have no reason to have something against any particular nation, while 80 per cent feel the same way about religion.

In 2014, as part of the study “Young People in Polyethnic Regions of the Volga Federal District”, a mass survey of students in Bashkiria was conducted. The survey data show that a general Russian civic identity is prevalent among the students of Bashkortostan, since 65 per cent of the students in the region associate the concept of ‘Motherland’ with Russia. The patriotic feelings of young people are linked primarily to Russia. The authors note that while answering to the question “What modern Russia could learn from previous historical periods?” the majority of the respondents mention the Stalin era and the Russian Empire. The idea of Motherland varies considerably depending on the ethnicity of the respondents: 74 per cent of Russians, 61 per cent of Bashkirs and 65 per cent of Tatars ticked the box “Russia is my Motherland”. At the same time, 58 per cent of Bashkirs, 51 per cent of Tatars and only 30 per cent of Russians feel that “My region is my Motherland”. The authors point out that young Russians in the republic have a stronger Russian civic identity than young Bashkirs or Tatars; young Bashkirs are more republic-oriented; and young Tatars have a slightly stronger local identity (city, district and village). Based on the results of this survey, the researchers also note that the shaping of ethnic stereotypes, including negative ones, is largely influenced by media and social networks. The authors believe that students are not well versed in Russian history, since they get fragmented information mainly from feature films, not from educational courses; young people lack a systematic understanding of Russia’s past. Therefore, modern textbooks, manuals and educational programs on the multinational history of Russia are necessary to prevent young people to fall prey to nationalist delusions.

The 2020 study “The Ethnic Factor in the Social and Political Life of Russian Regions: From Ethno-Political Mobilization to Civil Integration” shows that a general Russian civic identity is predominant in the Republic of Bashkortostan. According to the survey data, 75 per cent of the respondents choose to be seen by others as citizens of the country, while 17 per cent have a strong sense of regional identity, wishing to be perceived as residents of a certain region. Also, the answers seem to have an ethnic component: 80 per cent of Russians believe that others should perceive them as citizens of the country, followed by 71 per cent of Bashkirs; 15 per cent of Russians and 24 per cent of Bashkirs want to be seen as residents of a certain region; and only 8 per cent of Russians and 24 per cent of Bashkirs choose to be perceived as representatives of a certain nationality. Thus, the concepts of ‘one’s own nationality’ and ‘one’s own faith’ do not dominate the citizens’ scale of values. The answers to the question “What may contribute to strengthening of Russian civic identity and foster the formation of the Russian nation?” have mostly positive connotations: 64 per cent of the respondents identified economic success and an increase in the standard of living, followed by the strengthening of Russia’s international authority, the Victory in the Great Patriotic War (1941–1945), state and cultural symbols of the country, as well as sporting achievements of Russians.

The authors conclude that the population of the Republic of Bashkortostan has a high level of civic identity, which is much more significant for people than the ethnic and religious components of their identity.

ISLAM IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

OLGA BIBIKOVA. TURKEY IS BUILDING A NEW CANAL TO THE BLACK SEA: POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES.

Keywords: canal, Erdogan, Bosphorus, Dardanelles, Russian Navy.

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Abstract: The Turkish President is building a canal parallel to the Bosphorus Canal. This canal will provide financial benefits to Turkey, but will create difficulties for other countries, including Russia.

“This is my dream,” so Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan called the Istanbul project, speaking on January 16, 2020. We are talking about a canal that he wants to build parallel to the Bosphorus Strait.

In fact, the idea of creating an artificial transport canal originated in the 16 century, during the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (1520–1566). Then it was about a canal that was supposed to connect the Izmit Bay, a narrow and long tectonic fault on the Anatolian coast, with Lake Sapanka and the Sakarya

River. It is characteristic that this project has been considered by 7 different sultans for 400 years. Naturally, in those days there was no need to build a canal for the passage of multi-tonnage vessels. It was about the transportation of wood, the main building material, both for buildings and ships. It was supposed to deliver wood in this way not only to Istanbul, but also to Trabzon and Thessaloniki. With such a canal, the cost of transporting wood would be lower, and as a result, more ships and buildings would be built.

Many articles have been written about this project, the authors saw in its implementation a way out of the chronic backwardness in which Turkey was at that time. In particular, the Turkish historian Omer Faruk Yilmaz (1898–1969),¹ argued that the Turkish elites considered the absence of such a canal a serious competitive disadvantage in relation to Europe, where canals were commonplace already in the 19th century.

In 1994, the leader of the Democratic Left Party and former Prime Minister of Turkey Mustafa Bulent Ejevit (1925–2006) returned to the idea of building a canal (already in the European part of Turkey). The main task of the new canal, Ejevit indicated as d unloading the Bosphorus. He also came up with a name for it – “Istanbul”. However, the project was never implemented.

On April 26, 2011, then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in his speech that “the dream will come true.” However, unlike the unrealized project, the new project is supposed to be implemented in the European part of Turkey, and not for the supply of wood, but for the passage of ships.

According to the “Montreux Convention on the Regime of the Turkish Straits”² (signed on November 9, 1936), all vessels have the right to move freely through the Bosphorus Strait without having to resort to the paid services of a pilot.³ According to the convention, Turkey has no right to close the passage for ordinary vessels, and the passage of military vessels is strictly regulated. The Black Sea countries have priority.⁴

The foreign public compared the project of the new Istanbul canal with the construction of the Egyptian pyramids, but soon the Turkish press wrote about it as a large-scale project that should not only unload the canal through the Bosphorus, but also ensure the socio-economic development of the entire Marmara Bölgesi - Marmara region, which includes 18 provinces.

The implementation of the project is consistent with the initial hopes of the authorities for a significant increase in the country's economic growth and ensuring Turkey's strategic position in the international arena. This project was included in the 11th five-year plan adopted for the period from 2019 to 2023, and included grandiose projects dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the Republic of Turkey.⁵ The route of the canal was approved in January 2018, according to it the new canal will pass to the west of Istanbul through the districts of Küçükçekmece, Sazlıdere and Durusu, it will be able to pass about 160 vessels per day, including tankers weighing up to 300 thousand tons.

Erdogan explained the need for the construction of a new shipping canal by economic reasons. According to the calculations of Turkish experts, by 2050 approximately 78 thousand ships a year will pass through the Bosphorus, while 25 thousand ships are guaranteed safe passage. "We look at the new project as a project to save the future of Istanbul. We have conducted all the necessary studies, including probing and environmental impact assessment,"⁶ Erdogan said.

In addition, the Turks are thinking about expanding the recreational area. Turkey has an extensive coastline of four seas (Black, Marmara, Aegean and Mediterranean), warm and suitable for recreation. The total length of the coastline of Turkey is 8333 km, of which 1067 km falls on the coastline of the islands belonging to Turkey. Tourism makes a significant contribution to the overall budget. According to official data, the share of tourism revenues in 2019 (for the period from January to September) reached \$26.63 billion.⁷ In 2021, the Turkish

authorities have set a goal to receive at least \$35 billion net profit from the tourism industry.⁸ However, the pandemic has made its own adjustments. In the future, if it is possible to create new resorts on the coast of the Black, and the other seas, then it will bring additional income to the country.

The construction of the canal is estimated to cost Turkey \$15 billion, part of the amount is likely to be attracted from abroad. For example, from Qatar. It is known that Erdogan has repeatedly visited Doha, where he probably concluded agreements for multibillion-dollar investments. It is believed that the canal will pay off in 15 years: the expected revenue is \$1 billion per year.⁹

The designers believe that the canal will allow the transit of 300,000 DWT¹⁰ vessels, which are on average 10 per cent wider than the maximum allowable width in other canals, such as, for example, the Suez Canal.

Moreover, it is assumed that the soil that will be dug during the implementation of the project will be used for the construction of a new airport designed for 60 million passengers per year. This will be the third airport in the European part of Turkey. The second Istanbul Airport, opened on 29.10.2018, has already established itself as one of the largest in the world in terms of capacity (200 million passengers per year).¹¹ The new airport is designed for 60 million passengers per year.¹²

The advantage of an artificial transport corridor will be the absence of sharp turns. The sharpest turn of the Bosphorus is 90°. Given the strong currents and heavy traffic in the strait, this seriously increases the risk of accidents.¹³ However, the construction of the Istanbul Canal (parallel to the Bosphorus Strait) will be only the first stage. The second will be the duplication of the Dardanelles.

Usually canals are built in order to reduce the transit time on the way. The Suez Canal saves on average from 16 to 34 days of sailing, the Panama Canal saves from 5 to 14 days of travel. In the case of the projected Istanbul Canal, there will be no time

savings: the duration of the voyage to the Black Sea from the Sea of Marmara will remain the same. However, the waiting time for passage through the canal will be significantly reduced. The average cost of downtime per day is 20 thousand dollars per day.

The congestion of the Bosphorus Canal is well known: due to the constant traffic that has arisen in the Bosphorus – Dardanelles Strait, ships sometimes have to wait from 15 to 72 hours. Of the 50 thousand ships passing through the canal annually, 10 thousand are oil tankers from 150 to 500 thousand tons, the most fire-hazard objects.

Ship collisions and fires have repeatedly occurred in the Straits, and had serious consequences. In 1960, the Yugoslav tanker *Zoranich* collided with the Greek vessel *World Harmony*. 12 tons of gasoline and 10 thousand tons of oil got into the water. The fire spread to the Istinie district (the north-western part of the European coast of the Bosphorus), which almost completely burned out. The burning vessel drifted to the Beykoz district, in the Asian part of the city, and as the result of that a number of people perished. The tanker burned for 52 days. To extinguish it a special vessel for extinguishing fires on the water arrived from the USA. In 1979 the Romanian tanker *Independent* collided with the Greek cargo ship *Evriali* at the entrance to the Bosphorus near the Haidarpasha station on the Asian coast. As a result of the accident, 95 thousand tons of oil fell into the waters of the Bosphorus, 43 deaths were recorded.¹⁴ For half a century, 430 major accidents have occurred in the waters of the Strait. 27 large vessels are resting at the bottom of the Bosphorus.¹⁵

The Istanbul Canal project is extremely complex, not only because of its goals, but also because of the choice of its location, the serious socio-economic impact it will have on the region. Critics claim that the new canal may cause environmental damage to the territory through which it should pass. According to the mayor of Istanbul, the Social Democrat Ekrem Imamoglu,¹⁶ the real cost of the canal construction cannot be less than \$80 billion. He believes that in the process of implementing the

project, issues may arise with providing the city with fresh water. Fresh water sources in the European part of Istanbul, as well as Lake Terkos, from where water was taken even in ancient times, will be under the threat of salinization. To compensate for the losses, it will be necessary to supply the city with water from Asia, and this will be more expensive, and the quality of river water there is lower.

The mayor of Istanbul called this project "a betrayal of Istanbul."¹⁷ In protest, he terminated the cooperation protocol that the previous municipality had agreed with the Government.

Professor Doganai Tolunai from Istanbul University, believes that the canal threatens the complex ecosystem of the region: "The dune landscapes in the north are home to protected forests, streams and pastures that are important to the ecosystem and are home to hundreds of species of plants and animals."¹⁸ In addition, in his opinion, the canal and residential complexes along its shores will be built in an earthquake-prone zone, etc.

Turkish environmentalists spoke out against the "construction of the century". They claim that as a result, "the delicate balance between the Black and Marmara Seas may be disrupted. The salinity of the Black Sea is lower than that of the Marmara Sea. Water from the Black Sea will begin to flow into the Marmara Sea along with bacteria, which will eventually lead to the shallowing of the Black Sea and pollution of the Marmara Sea."¹⁹ According to oceanographer Cemal Saidam, professor at Hacettepe University in Ankara, "the construction of the canal will entail irreversible consequences for the ecosystems of the Black and Marmara Seas. The complexity of the situation lies in the fact that the level of the Black Sea exceeds the level of the Marmara Sea by about 30–50 cm. The situation is different in the Bosphorus Strait: there are two differently directed currents that do not allow the Black Sea to become shallow, since they feed it with the waters of the "neighbor""²⁰

The opinion of Turkish ecologists coincides with the opinion of Russian hydrologists, who remind that "The Black Sea

was once the same inland body of water as the Caspian. The water in the sea ... is much fresher than in the Marmara Sea, but this is only its upper layer. At a depth of about 200 m, there is practically no oxygen in the water mass, and the sea is a lifeless hydrogen sulfide environment in which there is nothing alive. At the same time, the Black Sea is the largest storage of hydrogen sulfide among all the seas of our planet. And the situation is getting worse. This relatively fresh surface layer of water is getting thinner. If the layer breaks through, hydrogen sulfide will rush into the atmosphere, an ecological catastrophe will arise."²¹ In addition, experts warn that the canal may have a negative impact on the tectonic fault lines that lie deep under the territory of Istanbul. The new canal will turn the Istanbul agglomeration into an island and make it less protected from earthquakes. However, Erdogan does not share the views of environmentalists.

Skeptics believe that Erdogan is using the project to distract the Turkish population from his expansionist plans in Syria, Libya, Afghanistan, on the Mediterranean shelf, where he came to close quarters with Greece, in the Armenian-Azerbaijani direction, etc. Rumors play an important role, according to which, land plots along the future canal have already been bought up by the president's inner circle, which will enrich itself on the project.²² The Republican People's Party, Turkey's largest opposition party, criticized the project as being carried out "behind the taxpayer's back."²³ According to polls, up to 80 per cent of the city's residents are against the new canal.²⁴

The Turkish president is well known for his penchant for gigantic projects in Istanbul, be it a new airport, tunnels running under the Bosphorus²⁵ – he built all this in a short time. Let's add here the conversion of Christian churches to the religious needs of Turkish Moslems, etc. In the same context, we can recall the Russian-Turkish Akkuyu nuclear project.²⁶

It is obvious that the introduction of a new canal will inevitably lead to the temporary closure of the canal through the

Bosporus, which needs cleaning. A number of studies have noted severe pollution caused by the discharge of waste water from ships, as well as ballast water. In addition, sea transportation is inevitably associated with ecosystem disturbances, especially in cases when the vessel crossed several seas with different fauna and flora. Since the 1990s, the Bosporus has already suffered from the spread of jellyfish, originally living off the coast of North America, which was imported by ships. In the spring of 2021 the surface of the Marmara Sea, covered with slime. This is the so-called "sea saliva", which appeared due to pollution – untreated sewage discharged into the sea. It has a jelly-like texture consisting of a variety of organic components, including dead algae, animal flesh. Experts believe that the cause of its occurrence is waste that people dump into the water, as well as climatic changes. Usually such masses are formed in those areas of water that are warmer than the rest. This mucus seems to be superficial, but its thickness reaches 40 m in places. Naturally, it negatively affects the life of marine flora and fauna. In addition, it is necessary to clean the bottom of the strait from the mixture of petroleum products accumulated there. The spillage of petroleum products is quite common and usually occurs as a result of a collision of ships. So, in December 1999, a Russian-made tanker split in two at the mouth of the strait, a fuel spill led to pollution of six miles of coast.

The new canal will have advantages. The fact is that the Istanbul Canal will be more direct, while passing through the Bosporus, some vessels must maneuver fifteen times during their passage to get from one end of the strait to the other, Two of its fifteen maneuvers – off the coast of Pashabahce and in front of the Yenikei – are considered especially dangerous, since they require 85° and 70° turns.

The cost of passage through the strait depends on the draft of the vessel²⁷, tonnage, height of deck cargo, time of filing an application for passage through the strait. In addition, for passage through the strait, ship owners pay a "lighthouse fee" to

maintain the operation of navigation signs, by which the captains are guided.

In 1994, Turkey introduced additional rules, according to which vessels from 150 to 200 m in length must give the strait administration a 24 hours notice of their passage, vessels from 200 to 300 m with a draft of more than 15 m – a 48 hours notice. The Turkish Maritime Administration must be notified 10 days in advance about the passage of vessels with a length of more than 300 meters²⁸. Another new rule has been introduced for ships carrying military cargo,²⁹ these vessels are now equated to military. The precedent that led to the initiation of such a step was the US attempt to deliver military goods through the Bosphorus by commercial vessels in August 2008 during the armed conflict in South Ossetia.

Naturally, the rules of passage through the Straits, fixed in the Montreux Convention of 1936, will not apply to the new canal. The Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits are a natural passage from one sea to another. As for the Istanbul Canal, we are talking about an artificial water passage, the construction of which was undertaken by Turkey. In this regard, Turkey has the right to charge passage fees from absolutely all vessels, whether civilian or military. However, there is a question about the rights of the Black Sea States. Their rights were fixed in the Montreux Convention, but in the new conditions it is necessary to take into account their opinion regarding the number of vessels, their classification, etc., the number of vessels located simultaneously in the Black Sea.

It is obvious that Ankara will not stop at the construction of a canal parallel to the Bosphorus. There is already a project that will create a Dardanelles Strait stand-in. It will not be so expensive, because its length will be much shorter. As a result of the implementation of the second project, the Galipoli Peninsula (as well as the area around the city of Istanbul) will become an island. Thus, Turkey will create a new, artificial route from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea (with a call to the Marmara).

Given the military-political situation in the Eastern Mediterranean, it is necessary to calculate the consequences of the construction of this huge project for the Russian Federation, which actively uses the Black Sea Straits, both for commercial and military purposes.

Turkey, being a member of NATO, in the new conditions can conclude a special agreement with its partners on the navigation regime on the Istanbul Canal. It is possible that Ankara hopes to "lock up" the Russian fleet in the Black Sea in this way. The Russian and Iranian presence in Syria prevents Erdogan from carrying out his plans to seize a number of Syrian territories, primarily Idlib, located in northwestern Syria. And although Alexey Yerkhov, the Russian ambassador to Turkey, stated that "The presence or absence of an additional waterway in the form of the Istanbul Canal between the Black and Marmara Seas will not change the international legal regime of the Montreux Convention..."³⁰ it is obvious that the implementation of this project will create certain difficulties for the Russian fleet.

According to some experts, the "alternative Bosphorus" project was put forward by Erdogan as a certain element of bargaining with Moscow and as an instrument of influence on processes in the regions of the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean.³¹

In the context of Erdogan's Syrian policy, it is obvious that in this way he wants to minimize the presence of the Russian fleet near the coast of Syria, to prevent the supply of weapons and food to this country, which, according to Erdogan, should contribute to the removal of Bashar al-Assad and replace him with a figure more loyal for Turkey. There are also more distant goals – to declare Turkey as a world power and try to realize Erdogan's main goal – to restore the territory of the Ottoman Empire under his influence.

The fact that Erdogan wants to "bury" the Montreux Convention is evidenced by his early statement. In 2011, when the plan for a new canal was just being discussed, Erdogan said:

“Traffic on the Bosphorus will be reduced to zero... Water sports will take place on the Bosphorus, transport will be established within the city, Istanbul will return to its former times.”³² This statement was published by the authoritative magazine *New Civil Engineer* (Great Britain).³³

The new canal does not fall under the jurisdiction of the Montreux Convention, since the artificial canal is not a strait,³⁴ so shipowners, as we have already noted, will have to pay for passage, resort to the services of pilots and pay other fees. In the case of both transport routes, the advantageous and free status of the Bosphorus, compared to the expensive Istanbul Canal, is unlikely to encourage transport vessels to use the new waterway.

As noted earlier, vessels passing through the Bosphorus Strait do not have to pay taxes or pay duty. Regarding the future of the canal, the Turkish authorities have already announced that they plan to introduce a payment³⁵ to finance the maintenance of the Bosphorus, as is done for other canals. It is expected that the canal will pass about 55,000 vessels per year (compared to 41,000 for the Bosphorus in 2019). For comparison, in 2018, a total of about 18,000 ships passed through the Suez Canal.³⁶

In April 2021, a loud scandal occurred in Turkey. First, the speaker of the country's parliament, Mustafa Shentop, said that President Erdogan “even tomorrow” could withdraw from the Convention.³⁷ His statement drew harsh criticism. Then 103 retired admirals of the Turkish Navy wrote an open letter expressing their concern about Turkey's possible withdrawal from the 1936 international agreement. This attack angered the Turkish leadership, and after the Prosecutor General's Office launched an investigation, 14 admirals were arrested.

In their letter, the admirals called the Montreux Convention a diplomatic victory for Turkey, which restored its sovereign rights to the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits. The authors of the letter stated that the discussion on the revision of this agreement in connection with the Istanbul Canal project was unacceptable. The letter also expressed the opinion on the need to preserve the

current Constitution of Turkey against the background of Turkish leader Tayyip Erdogan's calls for the development of a new basic law of the country, which they consider as a desire to "abandon the precepts of the founder of the republic Mustafa Kemal Atatürk."

There is an ambiguous attitude towards Erdogan's project in the Turkish press. Thus, the columnist of the Evrensel newspaper Yusuf Karataş writes that "Erdogan in his statements stressed that the Montreux Convention limits Turkey's sovereignty over the straits, but sovereignty over the Istanbul canal will be completely in the hands of Turkey. In addition, the Turkish leader said that Turkey will remain committed to the Montreux Convention until it finds a better opportunity." According to the author, "Erdogan considers the Istanbul Canal as a project that will invalidate the Montreux Convention and open the doors to a new bargaining around the straits." ³⁹ Turkish journalist Taha Akyol in his article "What did the Montreux Convention give?" writes: "it is dangerous to open a canal whose rules of use are not established by international documents, and thereby neutralize the operation of the Montreux Convention." ⁴⁰

There is no doubt that with the commissioning of the Istanbul Canal, Ankara will receive new levers of pressure on its Black Sea neighbors. Experts tend to see in what is happening the desire of President Recep Erdogan to strengthen Turkey's influence in the region. Indeed, Turkey can become the main moderator of traffic in the Black Sea-Eastern Mediterranean basin. Such a situation risks adding additional difficulties to the already complicated configuration of the Syrian conflict.

Obviously, a new international discussion will be needed on the legal status of ships in the Black Sea, the use of the Bosphorus Strait, as well as new canals. Imagine the situation: according to the Montreux Convention, military vessels cannot stay in the Black Sea for more than three weeks, and their total tonnage should not exceed 45 thousand tons. But this provision is

mandatory for ships that have passed the Bosphorus. And if other vessels passed through the Istanbul Canal at the same time? Erdogan is quite capable of resorting to manipulations, because the status of the new canal has not yet been indicated in any way.

In addition, the situation in the Black Sea may change after the ships of Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Iran enter its waters through the Eurasia Canal, most of which will pass through the natural Kumo-Manych depression.⁴¹ The construction of the canal was initiated by Russia, although the idea of such a canal appeared several centuries ago. Kazakhstan, which thus can gain access to the world ocean, is primarily interested in this canal. The Eurasia Canal will give a good impetus to the development of the EAEU, will promote closer cooperation between Russia and Kazakhstan. At the same time, the canal is also beneficial to India, which will be able to send its goods to Europe. One of the investors of the project is China, which implements the One Belt, One Road strategy. Some analysts believe that the Eurasia Canal will work to reorient the European economy from the United States to China. In Turkey, this canal is seen as an opportunity to develop closer ties with the Turkic states of Central Asia.

In conclusion, it should be recognized that Russia, despite the danger of locking its navy in the Black Sea, has the means to prevent such actions by offering the opportunity to use the Eurasia Canal.

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KAMIL AZIMOV. THE SITUATION OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

Keywords: Lebanon, Syria, refugees, economic crisis, loss of hope and confidence in the authorities.

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Abstract. There are currently 1.5 million refugees from Syria in Lebanon. This is an immense burden for a country in permanent economic crisis. However, the Syrians do not want to return to their homeland. One of the consequences of this situation is the deterioration of relations between fraternal peoples.

On December 26, 2020, a Syrian refugee camp was set on fire in the Minyan region of northern Lebanon. 75 families lived in the camp. According to witnesses, the fire arose as a result of a quarrel between Syrian refugee workers and Lebanese employers from the local Al-Mir clan. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported the hospitalization of several victims. This is not the first time that Lebanese aggression against Syrian refugees has occurred. A month before the events in the camp, 270 Syrian families left the city of Bsharre in northern Lebanon after a Syria born shot a Lebanese.

There are about 1.5 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon, most of whom live in camps in the Bekaa Valley and the Akkar region in the north of the country. UNICEF claims that more than

90 per cent of Syrian families live below the poverty line. The Lebanese authorities have repeatedly called on the international community to assist in the return of Syrians home. The Syrian authorities, with the support of the Russian Federation, held the first international conference on the return of refugees to the SAR in Damascus in November, but Western countries ignored this initiative.

The economic, political and health crisis that has severely affected the Lebanese population in recent years has also had many consequences for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. This already vulnerable population is now in a critical state. The lack of an adequate legal status, the deterioration of already difficult living conditions and tensions with Lebanese society increase its vulnerability. At the same time, most refugees are not ready to return to their homeland.

Lebanon has not signed the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951)¹ and the Additional Protocol (1967). The reason for this was the reluctance to have Palestinians on their territory, who, by the use of the proximity of Israeli territory, organized terrorist attacks against it for a long time. As a result of retortion measures, the civilian population of Lebanon suffered. In 1982 and 2006, the presence of Palestinians in Lebanon caused armed conflicts between these countries.

By 2017, the number of refugees in Lebanon (Palestinians, Syrians, Iraqis, Somalis, etc.) amounted to about 2 million people. There is an average of 232 refugees per thousand Lebanese.² Lebanon occupies the first place in the world by the number of refugees per thousand original residents.³ It should also be noted that together with the Syrians, Palestinians who had previously lived in several refugee camps in Syria also moved to Lebanon.

The negative attitude of Lebanese towards those seeking asylum in that country can be explained by these reasons. After refugees rushed to Lebanon from Syria, where the civil war began, the Lebanese government refused to organize camps for the temporary residence of Syrian refugees, arguing its position

by the negative experience of the Palestinians staying in the country. However, over time, the country's leadership has come to the conclusion that it is more reasonable to keep refugees under control. On September 11, 2014, Minister of Social Affairs Rashid Derbas announced the creation of the first camps in the Bekaa Valley and the North of the country.

Syrians were severely restricted in their rights and did not have refugee status in Lebanese territory, although they satisfy all the requirements of the international law. The Government of Lebanon classifies them as "temporarily displaced persons," as a result of which they cannot claim special protection. Such a position of the Lebanese government is explained by political considerations, as well as, as it was already noted, the experience of the long-term presence in the country of Palestinian refugees⁴ who moved to Lebanon from 1948 to 1967.⁵

The Lebanese state allowed the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to register Syrian refugees before 2015. As a result, refugee status was presented to Syrian citizens, which, although was not recognized by Lebanon, gave the right to a temporary residence permit. According to the agreement reached with the Lebanese Government, Syrian refugees were assisted, assuming that as soon as the conflict ended, the Syrians would return to their homeland or emigrate to a third country.

However, the situation in Syria continued to deteriorate, and then in the same 2015, the Lebanese authorities adopted a number of measures aimed at reducing the influx of refugees to Lebanon. Since then, Syrian citizens have been forced to receive visas to enter Lebanese territory.⁶ In the visa application, they must indicate that the purpose of their arrival is a "short-term stay" in Lebanon.⁷

This toughening of living conditions has led to an increase in the number of Syrians living illegally in Lebanese territory. The fact is that the border between these two states has never been strictly controlled. That is why, it is impossible to name the

exact number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. According to Lebanese authorities, only 879,000 of the 1.5 million Syrian “displaced persons” currently living in Lebanon, are registered by UN services.⁸

As for Syrians who took refuge in Lebanese territory before 2015, their situation is regulated by the UNHCR protocol. Syrians who had been registered in Lebanon through UNHCR had the opportunity to renew their residency free of charge. For those who are not registered, it remains possible to find a sponsor and pay \$200 to obtain it.⁹ This is difficult enough for people who are extremely disadvantaged. Thus, registration with the UN Refugee Agency is the key to legal defense.

According to NGOs estimates of refugee protection, three quarters of Syrian refugees living in Lebanon have no legal residence. Most of them live in tents in the Shuf or Bekaa region, where access to water or electricity is limited. They live in fear of being arrested by the security forces. UNHCR, UNICEF and the World Bank were able to provide schooling for only 100,000 Syrian children.¹⁰

With the influx of Syrians into Lebanese territory, criminality is growing. The authorities of dozens of municipalities have taken measures against those who are bashfully called “foreign workers,” that is, illegally working Syrians. In particular, only for them a curfew was introduced. In addition, unsuitable living conditions push refugees to crimes. This measure was introduced due to the fact that in an attempt to combat the unstable situation, some refugees become aggressive and steal what they are not able to buy. And their places of residence become a breeding ground for garbage (up to 7.5 tons of garbage daily), as well as a place for illegal fishing and the formation of criminal groups.

In May 2015, the Lebanese government suspended the registration of Syrian refugees by UNHCR, which led to a shrink of officially registered refugees. However, Syrians who apply to UNHCR offices are still considered “registered,” which retains

their access to humanitarian assistance and support, as well as registered refugees, but they cannot count on the legal support provided to registered ones.

Some Syrian citizens who had no right to legal residence in Lebanon were arrested and deported to Syria.¹¹ Such a situation made Syrians vulnerable to fluctuations in political interests. The Lebanese authorities sometimes have contradictory intentions. On the one hand, the reception of such a large number of refugees is strategically important when contacting international donors, on the other, politicians fear the long-term presence of Syrians and their potential naturalization. Nevertheless, under international law, Lebanon was obliged to respect the principle of “non-refoulement,” which is applied against return to a country in which a person has reason to fear persecution.

The lack of legal residence and limited access to economic resources made the living conditions of Syrian refugees very complicated. Persons who do not have a residence permit cannot get a labour permit, and if they work, they do it illegally and for a small fee. Even those who live legally in the territory, the Lebanese government in December 2014 limited their ability to work in agriculture, construction and cleaning of premises and streets.

With the deteriorating economic situation, Syrian refugees faced not only job losses, but also prices increase for basic products. UNHCR, the World Food Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund reported an alarming fact in their latest report on the vulnerability assessment of Syrian refugees in Lebanon at the end of 2020. Almost 89 per cent of Syrian refugees currently live below the poverty line, compared with 55 per cent in 2019. The crisis has forced many families to reduce their food consumption. Some are no longer able to meet their basic needs and face hunger and lack of access to medical assistance.¹²

Even before the outbreak of coronavirus in Lebanon, half of Syrian refugee families were content with less than \$2.9 USA per

person per day, and 58 per cent of school-age children did not attend school.¹³

Regarding the situation of Lebanon's indigenous population, the report of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), published in September 2020, highlighted the serious impact of multiple crises for the living standards of the Lebanese population. Lebanon is currently seriously suffering from the economic and financial crisis, which has led to increased unemployment and impoverishment of Lebanese society. An increasing number of Lebanese are currently facing difficulties in meeting their basic needs, including food. In addition, the coronavirus pandemic increases the country's economic instability. According to May 2020 data, 55 per cent of the population lives in poverty compared to 28 per cent of the previous year. In Lebanon in 2020 there were 2.7 million poor people of the total population (estimated at 4.8 million people), which is 1.4 million more than in the previous year.¹⁴ On January 14, 2021, new strict suppression measures were introduced in connection with the coronavirus epidemic. These measures include sufficiently severe restrictive measures, up to the closure of the vast majority of food stores, further aggravating the situation of both Syrian refugees and Lebanese in precarious situations.

Economically, especially after the explosion in the Beirut port (04.08.2020), the damage from which ranged from \$3 to \$5 billion, Lebanon needs international support. However, in the context of general problems (lack of resources, debt, unemployment, political instability alienating foreign investors), the presence of Syrian refugees exacerbates the situation. In spring 2020, Lebanon's public debt reached 170 per cent of GDP, one of the highest in the world.¹⁵

Under these tense economic conditions, the presence of Syrian refugees in Lebanon has increased tensions with the local population. In particular, Syrian refugees were accused of violating the current price policy in the labor market and,

therefore, competition, which led to a decrease in wages of indigenous population. This position was reflected in 2019 in statements by Jebran Bassil, the former foreign minister at that time, who stated that “Lebanese have superiority over them (i.e. refugees – auth.) ... and naturally, we protect the Lebanese workforce... Lebanese, first of all!”¹⁶ It should be noted that Jebran Bassil’s remarks were negatively received by Lebanese society. Several hundred people gathered in the evening of June 12, 2019 at Samir Kassir Square in Beirut in support of Syrian and Palestinian refugees who were victims of racist statements by Foreign Minister J. Bassil.

In the face of unstable situation in the country and lack of work, skilled Lebanese or dynamic youth continue to leave the country. The weakness of the national economy has a serious impact on the employment sector. The unemployment rate among the Lebanese population is rising sharply, which the Government attributed to the presence of Syrian refugees, who agreed to work in much harder conditions and for much lower wages than Lebanese. In addition, they also offer child labor. In many families, children are sent to work to meet the vital needs of Syrian families.

The data of the Lebanese Ministry of Economy allow us to assess, apart from the problem of employment, the main factors of the economic crisis (in connection with the Syrian problem), in which the country is now, which provides refugees with its infrastructure and resources to the detriment of its population. The economic problems that had arisen with the influx of a great number of refugees had indeed affected various sectors, including the education of refugee children. This area should be taken under control by the Government of Lebanon, which, as we have already noted, does not have sufficient authority in the face of continuing institutional instability. Even before the start of the Syrian conflict, the lack of educational infrastructure was already problematic: public schools were overcrowded and there was lack of funds. With the arrival of thousands of refugees, the situation continues to deteriorate. The figures are alarming, and

protests are raised by Lebanese who are suffering from the consequences of the situation. Indeed, according to the Ministry, 50 per cent of the students attending school in Lebanon are now Syrian refugees.

With regard to resources, the results also concern. Prior to the Syrian crisis, access to water and electricity in a number of areas had already been hindered. Since the civil war, water services have operated only three days a week, and electricity has been cut off from three to twelve hours a day, depending on the region. The consumption of 87 million liters of water and 200 megawatts of electricity (that is, two hours of electricity) by refugees per day, costs the state, according to the ministry, quite expensive.¹⁷ The same is happening in the sphere of supplies. Even basic food such as bread, the state has to subsidize. Refugees consume 5.4 million units of bread every day.

Currently, according to a study conducted by the World Bank, the Syrian crisis has already cost Lebanon \$7.5 billion between May 2011 and May 2014.¹⁸ At the same time, the World Bank noted that “approximately 170,000 Lebanese are already below the poverty line due to a doubling of unemployment and an increase in government spending to \$1.1 billion.”¹⁹

Naturally, a part of the population is disliked by Syrian refugees, who receive relatively regular food aid from NGOs and financial assistance from UNHCR, while many Lebanese in need do not even have such an opportunity.²⁰ This tension has also been exacerbated by the health crisis. Many certified specialists, especially doctors, leave the country, receiving invitations to work from the Gulf countries.

The tragic events that followed showed a deterioration in relations between Syrian refugees and the Lebanese population. At the end of November 2020, a Syrian refugee killed a Lebanese citizen in the city of Bsharra in the north of the country. The mayor of the city, supported by many local residents, called for the expulsion of Syrian refugees living illegally in the area, some Syrian houses were burnt. There were demands for “collective

punishment” among the population. The authorities were forced to introduce police force. The accused surrendered to the internal security forces, after which the investigation began. Conflicts also occurred in other parts of Lebanon.

The Syrian leadership hopes that the refugees will return when the government takes control of 70 per cent of the country. According to UNHCR, this is still too early to talk about, since it is still not safe in Syria. Many destroyed buildings, roads, some territories need demining. “Sleeping cells” of jihadists periodically wake up, which the army should pacify. The European Union conditions aid in restoring normalcy by political settlement of the conflict, thus implying the need for regime change.

On November 11–12, 2020, Damascus, with the support of Moscow, organized a conference on the return of refugees. Representatives of Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Venezuela, China, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Sudan were invited and participated. However, Damascus did not achieve the expected result: the European Union boycotted the conference, and Turkey, which received the largest number of Syrian refugees (3.6 million people – 2019 data),²¹ was not invited, given its support for the opposition. Only Lebanon and Iraq were represented among the major host countries.²²

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad called on Syrian refugees to return. In his opening remarks, he said that “millions of Syrians want to return home,” although this is not confirmed by the number of those who had the courage to return to the destroyed country.²³ Syrians in neighbouring countries – in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan – are not yet inclined to return, despite the fact that living conditions in host countries are significantly deteriorating. People are afraid to be forcibly called into the army or arrested by Syrian intelligence due to their possible involvement in the Syrian opposition, although several reconciliation events have already been held in the country and amnesties have been announced.

Sharbel Wehbe, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lebanon, who spoke at the Damascus Conference, called on the international community to “intensify international efforts to ensure safe return of Syrian displaced persons,” believing that the current conditions are favorable for such a return.²⁴ However, Syrian citizens increasingly appeal to the consulates of member countries to the 1951 Convention for asylum.

It should be noted that the situation with Syrian refugees elsewhere is even less joyful. People live in the absence of information, feed on rumors and fear to return to their homeland. For example, in the southeast of the province of Homs, near the Syrian-Jordanian border, the Al-Rukban refugee camp is located. It is located in the zone of responsibility of the US base in At-Tanf and was organized after the Jordanian authorities stopped receiving refugees from Syria.

According to the Russian Defense Ministry, there are people in the camp who would like to leave it and return home. However, life in the camp is controlled by militants who demand ransom from the Syrians or leave relatives hostages in the camp.

In February 2019, the Syrian government, with the assistance of the Russian military, opened two humanitarian corridors for refugees from the Al-Rukban camp. Two checkpoints were specially created. At the same time, the authorities envisaged a whole range of measures aimed at providing returning compatriots with everything necessary: from the issue of documents to them in a simplified manner and the provision of basic necessities, to delivery to the place of residence.

However, the militants operating in the camp area intimidated the refugees, preventing them from taking advantage of this safe route. In turn, the American side did not allow buses intended for the export of refugees. Nevertheless, from March to the end of September 2019, 17,934 people left the camp (of which 5,125 were women and 8,994 were children).²⁵

Such checkpoints were created on the initiative of the joint Russian-Syrian coordination headquarters. According to the

Russian newspaper Izvestia, "with the support of Russia, thousands of educational and medical institutions have been restored for Syrian refugees and civilians in various parts of the country, more than 5 thousand houses have been rebuilt, six road bridges and more than a thousand kilometers of roads have been repaired, and power lines have been laid. Water supply facilities, bakeries, electric substations, gas stations began operating. And most importantly, more than 14 thousand industrial enterprises went into action."²⁶

On the example of the Al-Rukban camp, where more than 3 thousand Syrians still remain, it is clear that there are forces inside the camps that do not want Syrian citizens to return to peaceful life. It is known that often young people are forced to serve in gangs, intimidate their relatives. Misinformation is a favorite means by which refugees are bullied, which makes them lose hope of return.

A survey of Syrian refugees in Lebanon indicated a desire to return to their homeland, but not immediately. Most respondents believed that so far it is premature. A third of respondents doubted that they would ever be able to return to Syria. It seems that the socio-economic conditions in Lebanon do not play a significant role in the decision-making on return. People are mostly afraid of repression. Some did not have information about the state of their housing or, on the contrary, could not return, knowing that their housing was destroyed...

It is obvious that the process of returning Syrian refugees to their homeland will take several years. To force it, it is necessary to enlist the media, which will help create a true picture of modern Syria, where new houses are built, roads are cleared and children can go to school.

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VALENTINA SCHENSNOVICH. IRAN UNDER NEW US SANCTIONS. *Analytical Review*.

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Abstract. The article contains the analysis of the changes that occurred in Iran in 2018-2020. During this period, the US administration again began to pursue a policy of sanctions pressure on Iran. The sanctions affected Iran's religious, political and military leaders. It should be emphasized that the sanctions are aimed primarily against the Islamic regime of Iran.

Introduction

The authors of the articles analyze the situation that occurred in 2018–2020 in Iran. After the conclusion of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA, 2015), Iran began to

restore its economic potential and strengthen its political influence in the region. The government of Hassan Rouhani has embarked on expanding ties with the West, gradually limiting the influence of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) inside and outside the country. However, since 2018, the United States has resumed the policy of tough sanctions pressure on Iran. The US sanctions affected almost all sectors of the Iranian economy, the most efficient companies in the country.

The articles consider the main trends in the socio-economic and political development of Iran after the US withdrawal from the JCPOA and the return of American sanctions. The intensification of confrontation with the United States in the region, the economic downturn, the growth of internal protest potential, the confrontation of political elites, the radicalization of power, the coronavirus pandemic – all this threatens the stability of the Islamic regime.

The US Sanctions

The sanctions regime has become a constant factor of development for Iran since the creation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI), N.M. Mamedova PhD(Economy), IOS RAS [3] notes. Its introduction was explained to the population of the country as the desire of the West and Israel to destroy the Islamic regime and served as a factor uniting Iranian society with the authorities.

After 2007, the sanctions regime acquired an international character, which was associated with the development of Iran's nuclear program. The sanctions are mainly directed against companies associated with the extraction and export of Iranian energy resources to the world and regional markets. In response to the sanctions, at the initiative of the country's leader, Rahbar Ali Khamenei, the concept of the “economy of resistance” was developed under the government of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Its goal was to reduce the dependence of the country's economy on

the export of crude oil and on the import of components necessary for the operation of Iran's industrial enterprises.

N. Mamedova gives a macroeconomic analysis and assesses the political situation in Iran. After 2012–2013, when GDP fell by 7.7 per cent, the fall in oil prices on the world market intensified the negative effect of sanctions. The deteriorating economic situation began to threaten not only economic development, but also the Islamic regime. As a result, the pragmatic interests of the ruling clergy outweighed ideological considerations – Rahbar Ali Khamenei was forced to negotiate a reduction in the nuclear program. The religious leadership supported the arrival of the team of pragmatist Hassan Rouhani, close to the reform wing of political forces, which resulted in the signing of the JCPOA in Vienna on July 15, 2015. In January 2016, the parliaments of the countries participating in the signing of the treaty confirmed their agreement with it, which meant the beginning of the official lifting of sanctions. The dynamics of Iran's GDP has become positive again.

The author notes that GDP growth in 2016–2017 was mainly due to oil production. The share of oil in Iran's exports, even in the most difficult years for Iran, was more than 60 per cent, and only in 2015–2016 it almost equaled non-oil exports (50.6 per cent). As a result of the improvement of the economic situation, the positions of the liberal wing of the political forces that shared the views of the Hassan Rouhani team on the need to expand ties with the West strengthened, the IRGC's influence has decreased – both inside and outside Iran – the secularism tendencies that periodically manifest themselves in Iran have intensified. The situation began to change radically after Donald Trump came to power in the United States. D. Trump said in May 2018 that the “highest level” of sanctions will be imposed against Iran, which will affect banks and companies operating in all sectors of the Iranian economy without exception. But the main thing for the country was the ban on purchases of Iranian oil, the main source of foreign exchange earnings.

The strengthening of the sanctions regime falls on 2018–2020. The first package of the US sanctions against Iran, imposed since the fall of 2018, affected more than 700 individuals, various companies, and 50 Iranian banks. By 2020, there was not a single industry or large company that has not been sanctioned. On January 10, 2020, new sanctions were imposed against Iranian companies engaged in the production of high-quality steel in demand on the world market.

The sanctions of January 10, 2020 were the result of measures taken by Iran in response to the murder on January 3, 2020 of Qasem Suleimani, the head of the IRGC Kods unit operating outside Iran. The sanctions affected significant political figures. Among them was, in particular, the brother of Kasem Suleimani, who heads the Basij militia, Golamreza Suleimani. Sanctions against the IRGC were imposed in April 2019. D. Trump declared this structure a terrorist organization. Hassan Rouhani sought to limit the political, military and economic influence of the IRGC, while Rahbar Ali Khamenei considered the Corps the main pillar of the regime. On November 4, 2019, on the anniversary of the 1979 seizure of the US Embassy in Tehran, sanctions were imposed against nine Iranian citizens, including Ali Khamenei's son.

The most painful for Iran are sanctions on purchases of Iranian oil. Most of the agreements signed with Iran by foreign, including European and Russian companies, after the signing of the JCPOA, concerned mainly the participation of these companies in oil exports. The United States has managed to achieve its goal – the export of Iranian oil has more than halved. Under these conditions, Iran is ready to reduce the prices of exported oil. Mamedova concludes: the illegal oil market continues to operate, albeit in limited amounts. Turkey, China, India and other Asian countries remain the main buyers of Iranian oil. Despite the sanctions, oil from Iran enters the market mainly through third-country companies. Many companies in

Europe and Asia faced a dilemma: which is preferable – Iranian oil or attempts to avoid the US sanctions.

Not only Iran, but also the rest of the JCPOA participants found themselves in a difficult situation. Germany, Great Britain and France have developed a special trade and financial mechanism INSTEX (Instrument for Supporting Trade Exchanges) to circumvent sanctions, which Iran has joined. France and Germany tried to expand the number of INSTEX participants and preserve the JCPOA. On November 29, 2019, Finland, Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden joined this payment system. The author believes that if Iran had joined the international organization FATF (Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering) – the “Group for the Development of Financial measures to combat money Laundering”, which interacts with the UN, the IMF and the World Bank, INSTEX activities could have been more successful. INSTEX was unable to resist the US sanctions until 2020, especially due to the aggravation of Iranian-American relations.

The Budget as a Reflection of the US Sanctions

The impact of sanctions on the state of the Iranian economy was reflected in the formation of the budget for 2020/2021. In the draft budget submitted to the Mejlis in December 2019, oil export revenues were reduced by more than half, although they previously made up the bulk of the budget. As the author notes, Iran's oil revenues are difficult to predict, since the sale agreements are kept secret due to sanctions. The budget is based on the calculation of the oil price of \$50 per barrel, but even if the price on the world market is higher, the difference in the price due to which the National Development Fund is formed will not be high, since Iran is forced to sell its oil illegally and at reduced prices.

In order to reduce the budget deficit, which can be estimated at 50 per cent, the new budget assumed borrowing of

about \$11 billion from the National Development Fund, as well as income from the sale of government bonds. These bonds belong to the category of “sukuk” – the so-called Islamic securities backed by assets of state-owned companies. There is a high probability that the Central Bank will be forced to increase the amount of money in circulation, which will lead to an increase in inflation. The budget deficit forces the government to reduce capital projects, but, according to N. Mamedova, this will unlikely be able to radically change the system of social assistance to the population. In recent years, Iran has reduced compensation payments by introducing targeted support for the poorest. It has become difficult for the country to maintain prices on the domestic market, to carry out charitable housing projects, to pursue a policy to increase wages, the level of health care and education.

The situation in Iran on the eve of the 41st anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, primarily due to external economic pressure from the United States, has become more complicated. Nevertheless, the regime, despite economic difficulties, the researcher concludes, remains strong in terms of social support for the population. In addition, the experience of neighboring countries, such as Syria, Iraq and Libya, shows that confrontation with the legitimate authorities leads to chaos and deterioration of the situation of the population. Negotiations with the United States are one of the solutions to the problems that have arisen, but the consent to hold them depends on the position of the country's leader, Ali Khamenei. The religious leadership of the country has repeatedly demonstrated its ability to prioritize in order to preserve the Islamic regime, to expand the limits of its evolution.

The Goals of the US Anti-Iranian Policy

E.V. Dunaeva PhD(Hist.), IOS RAS, Associate Professor of the IAAS of Lomonosov Moscow State University and V.I.

Sazhin PhD(Hist.), Professor of IOS RAS [1] argue that D. Trump's anti-Iranian policy, implemented by him since coming to power, led to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018 and the introduction of tough sanctions that undermine the Iranian economy. However, by the spring of 2019, it became clear that the American president's goal of causing economic damage to Iran in order to provoke social upheavals in the country that could lead to regime change had not been achieved. Despite psychological pressure and sanctions, Iran manages to survive, maintain internal stability and maintain its position in the Middle East. In May 2019, the United States increased the sanctions pressure by removing privileges for 8 importing countries of Iranian oil, trying to "turn to zero" its exports and put maximum pressure on the Iranian economy. According to the researchers, the administration of D. Trump has set the task to force the Iranian leadership to sit down again at the negotiating table with the United States on its terms on a wide range of issues, ranging from nuclear and missile programs, Tehran's activities in the Middle East and ending with human rights. If this plan were implemented, Iran's policy would undergo drastic changes. D. Trump's challenge to Iran creates a difficult situation inside and around the country.

The US withdrawal from the JCPOA has shaken up the nuclear deal, which in the future could turn into disastrous consequences. Although the United Kingdom, France and Germany, as participants in the JCPOA, opposed D. Trump's anti-Iranian policy, at the same time they were unable to force entrepreneurs of their countries to work with Iran under sanctions measures. Tehran was waiting and hoping for Europe. However, over the past time, the EU countries have not been able to adjust the INSTEX mechanism for Iran. The religious and political leadership of Iran, which sought to preserve the JCPOA in the face of tougher sanctions and the failure of EU countries to fulfill their obligations, decided not to withdraw from the nuclear

deal. Tehran has announced a reduction in the fulfillment of part of its obligations, signaling to the EU that it is ready for a full return to the JCPOA at any time when the partners lighten the sanctions burden. At the same time, Iran called on other participants to fulfill the terms of the agreement – to counteract the United States and circumvent American sanctions. However, since May 2019 Tehran has begun to implement a plan that provided for a phased suspension of the implementation of some points of the nuclear deal. During this time, Iran has succeeded in rebuilding its nuclear infrastructure. The amount of stored enriched uranium and heavy water was enlarged, the enrichment level was increased from 3.76 per cent to 4.5 per cent. At the same time, Tehran has maintained cooperation with the IAEA and constantly declares its readiness to return to the terms of the agreement in the event of the lifting of the US sanctions.

If the resolution on maintaining the regime of lifting sanctions against Iran is not adopted, the Security Council will re-introduce sanctions measures against Iran, which will be of an international nature. The EU can join the US and impose its own sanctions against Iran. Under these conditions, the Iranians may, in response to the actions of the EU, withdraw from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which radical circles in the country are calling for, as well as from the control of the IAEA. Thus, Iran will open a free path for the unaccountable development of its nuclear program, including its military component. It is necessary to take into account the reaction of Israel and the United States to the uncontrolled development of Iran's nuclear potential. In this case, the researchers say, the probability of an Israeli and/or US strike on Iranian nuclear facilities will approach, which will be the beginning of a serious conflict in the Middle East.

By 2020, tensions between Iran and the United States had reached a peak. The escalation of tension began in May 2019. At that time Tehran, which was waiting for the resolution of the conflict over the nuclear deal in connection with the imposition of

sanctions, lost hope and moved to decisive action. In the summer, a “tanker war” broke out in the Persian Gulf, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) destroyed an American drone, Saudi Arabia's oil facilities were hit by Iranian missiles, Iranian hackers intensified cyber-attacks against the United States. At the end of December 2019 a bombardment of the American military base in Iraq near Kirkuk has begun. The United States blamed the Hezbollah group, supervised by Tehran, for these actions and carried out airstrikes on Iranian targets in Syria and Iraq. In response, Iraqi Shiites in Baghdad tried to storm the US embassy. Following this, D. Trump ordered the destruction of Iranian General Qasem Suleimani, believing that he was behind the attack on American bases in Iraq and the embassy in Baghdad. However, despite the provocative rhetoric towards each other, neither Tehran nor Washington are interested in a large-scale war, the authors emphasize. At the same time, with the current state of relations between Iran and the United States, which are in a “gray zone” where a hybrid war is going on, even, at first glance, an insignificant episode can lead to catastrophic consequences.

The Economic Situation in Iran

The strengthening of the sanctions regime in 2019 led to a reduction in oil exports. Currently, Iran does not officially provide any data on the sale of hydrocarbons, because, trying to circumvent sanctions, it uses black export schemes. Iran's annual oil export revenues have decreased by more than \$10 billion. Negative dynamics in the oil and gas sector (– 37 per cent) caused a drop in economic growth.

One of the main problems of the Iranian economy in 2018–2019 remained inflation, for the year its growth amounted to 35.1 per cent. The government, despite its attempts to regulate prices, the introduction of restrictions on the import of luxury goods, failed to keep consumer prices. As a result, food prices in

cities increased by more than 40 per cent, manufactured goods by 28-35 per cent, which led to a decrease in the purchasing power of the population. Attempts to level the situation by increasing salaries, allowances, and targeted assistance payments failed to weaken the process of rise in prices due to the devaluation of the rial and led to an increase in the money supply in circulation, amounting to 29 per cent over the past year.

Compensating for the budget deficit due to the reduction in oil revenues, the government, within the framework of the “economy of resistance” strategy, pays great attention to import substitution in order to develop non-oil exports. Despite the difficult situation in the sanctioned manufacturing sector, in 2019-2020 the Iranian automotive industry localized the manufacture of parts of components at local factories, refusing to purchase parts abroad and saving EUR 16.7 million. Exports of non-oil products for the year amounted to \$38.5 billion. It becomes a source of replenishment of the revenue side of the budget in the context of a reduction in oil revenues. The main directions of Iranian non-oil exports remain China – 23 per cent, Iraq – 22 per cent, Turkey – 12.9 per cent and the UAE – 10.6 per cent.

The need to mobilize internal potential to ensure the growth of production was emphasized by the country's spiritual leader Ali Khamenei. Special attention will have to be paid to the diversification of production, the creation of new capacities in the petrochemical industry and the promotion of exports to Asia. In this regard, the authors note the entry into force in October 2019 of Interim agreement on a free trade zone between Iran and the EAEU. By the end of 2018, Iran's exports to the EAEU countries increased by more than 27 per cent. However, the overall situation remains difficult. The reduction in revenues will not allow the government, even using the reserves of the National Stabilization Fund, to support production and realize its social obligations.

Protest Actions

At the beginning of 2018, a wave of opposition demonstrations swept across the country, which demonstrated the growing discontent of the population with the deteriorating socio-economic situation and the actions of the authorities. Although the unrest was suppressed for several days, individual actions and strikes continued in 2019. These speeches were caused by delays in the payment of pensions, salaries and social benefits, the closure of enterprises, and the reduction of state subsidies. The inefficiency of the management system demonstrated by the government, the unfeasibility of many promises made against the background of the ongoing, but without much success, fight against corruption, the bankruptcy of industrial enterprises, the growth of unemployment - all this leads to an expression of distrust of the authorities.

In November 2019, a protest broke out, the reason for which was the decision to raise gasoline prices and set quota for its release at lower prices. During the November actions, the focus was mainly on everyday difficulties and the problem of unemployment, and the protests were mainly of an economic nature. At the same time, political appeals against the regime were heard in some cities and attacks on religious institutions and clerics, who were accused of forgetting the disadvantaged, were observed. However, these actions did not receive support. The unrest was severely suppressed. The number of dead and wounded people exceeded hundreds. According to the authorities, an external factor played a big role in the emergence of the protests. However, neither representatives of the Organization of the Mujahideen of the Iranian People (OMIN) nor pro-Shah forces have a significant influence in Iranian society, although some groups of young people show interest in their propaganda materials on Internet sites and in social networks.

Iranian political scientists note the growing separation of power from the people and the more radical and destructive nature of the actions of the protesters, the increase in the participation of young people under 30 in riots and the large coverage of the territory. The factor of activation of such actions may be the struggle of political elites playing out their own scenario. Radical conservative forces, sharply criticizing the actions of the president, accusing him of being ready to make concessions to the West, are whipping up the discontent of the masses, provoking them to speak out against the government.

Aggravation of the Internal Political Struggle

The US withdrawal from the JCPOA and the aggravation of socio-economic problems in the country weakened the position of the government of H. Rouhani, have practically nullified its achievements in reaching an agreement with the world community and strengthened the positions of those who criticize the conservative president's policy. Since the radical conservative wing relies on the support of the IRGC, fears are expressed in society, because the current situation opens up the possibility of military interference in political life, which could lead to the radicalization of the country's foreign and domestic policy. Holding of parliamentary elections in February 2020 and the presidential elections in the spring of 2021 exacerbated the internal political struggle.

On the eve of the elections, the liberal camp found itself in a difficult situation. Since President H. Rouhani failed to fulfill his promises, supporters of reformers and moderates could not count on the support of the population. According to social surveys at the beginning of 2020, 85 per cent of the population are dissatisfied with their situation and the situation in the country and show political indifference. Many reformist candidates were not allowed to participate in the elections. The majority of votes was received by the conservative coalition (75 per cent). Liberal

candidates who refused to act as a united front under the slogan of reforms received 9 per cent of the vote. The remaining seats are occupied by independent deputies and representatives of religious minorities, who are allocated 5 seats in parliament. The analysis of the new deputy corps shows a 2-fold increase in comparison with the previous composition of the Mejlis of representatives of the IRGC and the clergy, among whom radical conservatives predominate.

The new alignment of forces in parliament may significantly complicate the last year of the government's work, since the conservative Mejlis will seek to weaken the president and the positions of moderate forces as much as possible in order to prevent their candidate from being re-elected in the presidential elections of 2021. However, since conservative MPs represent different currents and they have strong internal disagreements, it is unlikely that they will present a united front and demand the resignation of the cabinet or the withdrawal of the IRI from the JCPOA. In the light of the presidential elections of 2021 the lack of progress towards improving the situation in the economic sphere poses a threat to the conservatives. But, in the authors' understanding, it is impossible to solve the country's problems in the short term.

Iran's Nuclear Program

As noted by J. Karami the DSc(Political Science), the University of Tehran, and E.V. Dunaeva PhD(Hist.), IOS RAS [2], since the beginning of the 21st century, the main problem in Iran's relations with the international community has been the development of its nuclear program. European states tried to force Tehran to make concessions in order to restrict Iran's access to nuclear technologies. Without reaching an agreement, they handed over Iran's "dossier" to the UN Security Council, which introduced a system of international sanctions. At the same time, the United States and the European Union imposed tougher

sanctions on Iran, including an embargo on the purchase of Iranian oil and disconnected it from the SWIFT international settlement system. Other countries have also joined this package, fearing to fall under secondary sanctions. Only after the liberal-minded H. Rouhani, came to the leadership of the executive power, according to the researchers, there appeared opportunities to reach a compromise.

In July 2015, by signing the JCPOA, Iran showed its readiness to go to the limitations of its nuclear program. The IAEA established control over the fulfillment of all obligations of the IRI, and its permanent access to all nuclear facilities of the country was ensured. Iran's victory can be considered recognition of its right to peaceful nuclear activities. Despite attempts by Republicans in Congress to oppose this international document, they failed to block it. The US President's decree of January 16, 2016 lifted sanctions against Iran imposed in the context of its nuclear program.

The government of H. Rouhani had high hopes for the JCPOA. It was supposed that by assuming commitments to reduce nuclear activities, Iran would be able to participate in international trade, attract investments, and develop cultural and humanitarian contacts. Tehran's chances of participating in conflict resolution processes in the Middle East were increasing. The JCPOA defused the international situation around Iran, opened up opportunities for the country's return to the world economic market. The lifting of sanctions has led to positive changes in the economy. The government managed to reduce inflation, increase the inflow of foreign currency by restoring oil production and exports, and ensure economic growth.

Donald Trump against the JCPOA

The US administration that came to power in 2017 came to the conclusion that the JCPOA does not meet the interests of the West and contributes to strengthening the political and military

power of the Islamic regime. On May 8, 2018, Donald Trump officially announced the US withdrawal from the agreement under the pretext that Iran continues to develop nuclear weapons. At the same time it was announced the curtailment of cooperation with Iran and the restoration of unilateral sanctions. Russia and China strongly condemned the US position. It was noted that America's unilateral actions discredit international diplomacy, as well as strike a blow to the authority of the IAEA. The religious and political leadership of Iran decided to preserve the JCPOA, demonstrating loyalty to international obligations.

Tehran was not ready to renegotiate and expand the agreement, which the United States insisted on. Washington's discontent is caused not so much by the nuclear program, but by the regime itself, pursuing an independent political course and strengthening its positions in the Middle East. Donald Trump pursued the goal of destabilizing the economic situation in order to push the people of Iran to oppose the government. However, the regime has confirmed its stability and readiness to resist any threats, as evidenced by the numerous demonstrations that took place on the anniversary of the revolution, the authors note.

The Sanctions Regime in the New Conditions

The introduction of an embargo on the purchase of oil was supposed to damage the recovering economy of Iran and, possibly, in the future, lead to a change of power. However, by such actions, the United States has been drawn into conflict with many states. Realizing that it would not be able to turn unilateral sanctions into multilateral ones and create a united anti-Iranian front, the United States made concessions. Eight states - Greece, Italy, India, Turkey, South Korea, Japan, China and Taiwan - until May 2019 were able to continue importing oil while reducing the volume of purchases. The funds received by Iran from these sales could only be spent on humanitarian needs.

In the current situation, the sanctions are not officially international in nature, and even the European Union recognizes their illegitimacy. At the beginning of 2019 The United Kingdom, Germany and France stated that in order to preserve the JCPOA, they created a tool to support commercial transactions to circumvent sanctions – INSTEX. Tehran assessed this initiative as a step towards dialogue, hoping that this mechanism will help to carry out settlements on oil sales and purchase other goods it needs from European firms.

Conservative forces inside Iran stated: Iran has surrendered its positions in the nuclear sphere, which does not meet the national interests. With the beginning of the implementation of the Joint Plan, its opponents directed all the force of their criticism at the moderate liberal H. Rouhani. His opponents realized that the agreement is a real success of the government, it strengthens the positions of liberal forces in power and increases the chances of H. Rouhani for re-election as president. Strengthening of anti - Iranian rhetoric with the arrival of Donald Trump and the withdrawal from the JCPOA strengthened the positions of these groups and intensified calls for withdrawal from the agreement and the resumption of nuclear activities inside Iran.

Socio-Economic Consequences of the Return of Sanctions

While under sanctions, Iran has managed to develop various schemes to circumvent them. Even under the conditions of multilateral oil sanctions, it found ways to adapt to them and sold oil to non-state companies at low prices, used secretly leased tankers, turned off the geolocation systems of oil tankers during oil transportation, resorted to barter transactions. The impossibility of completely squeezing Iranian oil from the international market is also noted in OPEC. Some importing countries were able to create their own financial instruments to pay for Iranian supplies using national currencies. Such payment

schemes have already been used in relations with China, India, and Turkey. An agreement has been reached on the transition to settlements in national currencies between Russia and Iran.

In an effort to reduce the share of oil revenues in the country's total revenues, the Government of Iran is betting on the development of other industries, including oil refining, to reduce crude oil exports in the future. It is planned to diversify export-import directions. Particular attention is paid to the Asian direction as a whole and neighboring countries as potential importers of Iranian products. Attention to the East is the trend of Iran's economic diplomacy. In the context of the complication of relations with the West, Iran has relied on its geopolitical resource – direct access to international waters and proximity to 15 states in order to activate trade and economic relations. For 2019–2020 Iran has managed to increase the volume of non-oil exports to neighboring countries. 44 per cent are manufactured goods, 32 per cent are petrochemicals, 11 per cent are gas condensate, 9 per cent are agricultural products, the rest are mineral raw materials and hand-made goods, mainly carpets. These countries are also considered as suppliers of goods.

In the context of the return of broad American sanctions, J. Karami and E. Dunayeva note, Iran is going to sign a Temporary agreement on the formation of a Free Trade Zone (FTA) between the EAEU and Iran, which will lead to a significant increase in trade turnover. The year that has passed since the US withdrawal from the agreement has shown: Although Iran is facing difficulties, it has not lost this economic war. In an effort to minimize losses, Tehran is looking for opportunities to compensate for the lost oil revenues, is ready to use both internal reserves and economic diplomacy.

Researchers note the “reverse actions” of the US sanctions. Instead of the expected overseas growth of Iranians' protests against the authorities, there is a consolidation of society based on condemnation of Washington's actions. This fact can be seen as a moral victory for Tehran. The strengthening of psychological

pressure from the outside, the increase in the military threat contribute to the growth of anti-Western sentiments, national cohesion. The Islamic leadership of Iran, the authors conclude, demonstrates a willingness to use diplomatic tools to preserve the regime.

Conclusion

The challenges that Iran has been facing lately complicate the socio-economic situation and threaten the stability of the Islamic regime. The fall in oil prices leads to a reduction in a small part of the income that can be obtained by circumventing US sanctions. A further decline in living standards, rising unemployment, and the collapse of small businesses, inevitable in a crisis, will lead to an increase in protest potential and to new, possibly more massive and destructive actions. The Government is taking measures to increase salaries, pensions, allocates benefits to combat the pandemic that has brought Iran to the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe, and offers interest-free loans. Reports on the launch of the INSTEX mechanism for the purchase of necessary medicines and their delivery to Iran from the UK, France, Germany gives hope for the possibility of transactions and the expansion of cooperation between the EU and Iran, and the accession of other states to this mechanism. According to the evidence, the United States gave permission to several international banks to unfreeze Iranian accounts for the purchase of humanitarian goods, while emphasizing that there is no question of lifting sanctions. However, without lifting sanctions and carrying out structural changes in the economy and political sphere, it is impossible to solve the problems of Iran on a long-term basis.

According to the authors of the articles, Iran has only one way out in the future – negotiations. Iran already has the opportunity to negotiate with the Europeans, Russia and China,

this is necessary to form a real base of contacts between Iran and the United States, the researchers emphasize.

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VLADIMIR KIRICHENKO. IRAQ'S YAZIDIS PAST AND PRESENT

Keywords: Iraq; Kurdistan; Yazidis; Kurds.

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the history and modern situation of the Yazidis in Iraq. The Yazidis were able to maintain their identity despite centuries-long oppressions. The Yazidi community suffered huge damage in 2014 when their place of residence was captured by the Islamic State.

The Yazidis live in the northern and northwestern regions of Iraq. They inhabit the mountainous regions of Sinjar district 120 kilometers west of Mosul, as well as Sheikhan in the northeast of Sinjar district.¹ Also, the Yazidi population lives in the Taklif district, and the villages of Zahu and Samil in the province of Dahuk.²

Most scientists consider the Yazidis an ethno-confessional group of Kurds. At the same time, it should be noted that in recent years, more and more Yazidis consider themselves to be representatives of a separate ethnic group.³ The Yazidis believe in the one God, but in addition, seven more angels are worshipped, the main of which is Malak-Tawus (Peacock Angel).

According to Yazidi traditions, when God commanded the angels to bow down before man, this angel refused to do this, saying that he bows down only before God and will honor only

him. For disobedience, he was expelled from paradise and sent to rule hell. Thousands years later, God forgave him and put him in charge of the angels. In this legend, the influence of Judaism and Christianity is visible. The Yazidis believe that the peacock angel was embodied in the sun. Due to the veneration of the fallen angel (guilty of God), they are often accused of worshiping Satan.⁴ There are two religious sources about the Yazidi cult – the Book of Revelation and the Black Book. Religious orders are handed down orally from generation to generation by spiritual leaders and according to the ideas of the Yazidis themselves have existed for more than five thousand years.⁵ It should be noted that it is impossible to become a Yezidi, and marriage outside the community is prohibited.⁶ They call their language “Ezdkî,” it is very similar to the language “Kurdmanjî” (belonging to one of the dialects of the Kurdish language).⁷

Since the Arab conquest in the 7th century, the Yazidis have been Islamized. Radical Muslims considered and still consider them “devil worshippers” and do not see them as “followers of the Book.” Pulling through oppression and forced Islamization, the Yazidis fled to the mountains, that limited their contacts with other ethno-religious groups.

Until the 7th century A.D. in historical sources, the term “Yazidis” is not mentioned. In the 10th century, the Arab historian Al-Samani (1166) in his book *Al-Ansab* (Genealogies) claimed that the Yazidis were faithful to Yazid ibn Muawiya, the second caliph of the Umayyads. In some communities in the Kurdish regions, this false claim still exists today and is often used as an argument and justification for looting and enslaving the Yazidis. Even now, some Shia and Alevis⁸ believe that the Yazidis are followers of Yazid ibn Muawiya, who killed the sons of Imam Ali Hassan and Hussein, who were supposed to succeed Muhammad. In Turkey, where Alevis were also discriminated, Yazidis had long refused to communicate with other religious communities. Contact between the Yazidis and Alevis has been

established only in recent decades, they currently conduct a dialogue.⁹

The Yazidi society is divided into laity and clergy. The religious hierarchy is a priestly caste led by an emir recognized by religious authority. Most Yazidis are engaged in agriculture, although there are still semi-sedentary tribes.¹⁰ A special role for the Yazidis is played by the figure of the Sufi sheikh Adi bin Musafir,¹¹ who lived in the 12th century. Due to his activities, the Yazidi religion took its final form, absorbing elements of Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Islam and other beliefs.¹² His tomb is located in the Lalesh temple 13 km from the city of Sheikhan north of Mosul. Visit of it is considered mandatory for the Yazidis, but the Yazidis do not have fixed pilgrimage time.

Repressions of the Yazidis also took place in Turkey and Iraq. They especially intensified under the Ba'ath party regime in Iraq (1968–2003). The Baath regime tried to Arabize the Yazidis by imposing an Arab identity, which led to a split among the Yazidis. Those who accepted the idea of the Arab origin of the Yazidis followed Bayazid al-Umaoui, whom the authorities officially appointed as the emir of the Yazidis in 1980, another group remained faithful to the previous leader of the Yazidis¹³ – Mir Tahsin-Beg.¹⁴

In the 1970s, Mir Tahsin-Beg joined the armed groups fighting for the autonomy of Kurdistan, after which he left Iraq. He was in exile until 1981, when the Iraqi authorities granted him amnesty, after which he returned to his homeland. In 1992, with the help of the United States and its allies, the Kurds gained autonomy. A border was actually established between Iraqi Kurdistan and the rest of Iraq, and part of the Yazidi areas (the location of the Lalesh temple and a number of nearby villages) fell under control of the Kurdistan administration. The emir's family decided that the head of the Yazidis who ended up in the Kurdistan administration would be Kheri-Beg, brother of Mir Tahsin-beg, and Tahsin-beg himself would remain the emir of the

Yazidis under the control of the Iraqi authorities, and would retain control over Lalesh.¹⁵

In 1975, Yazidis from villages in the region of Mount Sinjar were forcibly resettled. The campaign was carried out “as part of the modernization of the Yazidi lifestyle.” Nevertheless, small farmers were not provided with modern agricultural equipment, and their resettlement points did not receive the necessary irrigation. They had to be hired as laborers in neighbouring areas belonging to Arab tribes. In the end, under pressure from the Baathists, more than 90 per cent of the Yazidis changed their ethnicity and registered as “Arabs.”

According to some reports, the Ba’ath government forced the Yazidis to engage in hostilities against Muslim Kurds. The captured government documents included in the 1998 Committee on Human Rights report describe the Yazidi military units that participated in Operation Anfal¹⁶ in 1988–89, which were used to “persecute and attack” Muslim Kurds. The Ba’ath government had previously persecuted the Yazidis. For example, 33 members of the Yazidi community of Mosul arrested in July 1996 are still missing.¹⁷

The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 changed the socio-political situation in the country. Sunni Arabs lost their privileged position in the country’s political institutions. The Sunnis negatively perceived the fact that representatives of religious minorities were involved in working at US military bases or joined the new Iraqi armed forces.

The Americans could not ensure the security of northern Iraq. Through this region, foreign jihadist fighters easily entered Iraq. In 2007, radical Islamists kidnapped and killed Yazidi workers in Mosul. In April of that year, unknown militants killed 23 Yazidis in the Kurdish city of Bashika.¹⁸ In the same year, 796 Yazidi civilians were killed and 1,562 injured in the cities of Kahtania and Jazeera in northern Iraq. As a result of the explosions, more than 1000 Yazidi families became homeless.

In August 2007, more than 200 people died as a result of a terrorist attack in two Yazidi villages.¹⁹

As a result, there has been an escalation of the tension between the Yazidis and Sunnis since 2003, as evidenced by letters and leaflets condemning the Yazidis as “unfaithful.” In the first half of 2008, at least 5 Yazidis were killed in Sinjar. On December 7, 2008, two Yazidis were killed in a wine store in Mosul. On the night of 14 December 2008, unknown persons shot dead a Yazidi family in their home in Sinjar.²⁰

As previously noted, until 2014, the Yazidis were mainly concentrated in the Sinjar region of northern Iraq. In total, about 600,000 people lived there. On August 3, 2014, IS forces moved into the Sinjar region, while Peshmerga (the armed forces of Iraqi Kurdistan) retreated, depriving the Yazidis of protection. The terrorist organization occupied Sinjar. Almost 200,000 Yazidis fled to Mount Sinjar, but were quickly surrounded by militants. As a result of this operation, it became known that hundreds of Yazidis died of heat, dehydration, malnutrition and suicide. After all, American, Iraqi, French, Australian and British forces were able to drop humanitarian aid, while Syrian Kurdish forces (YPG) opened the corridor between Mount Sinjar and Syria, allowing people to flee. IS fighters kidnapped women and girls to sell them into slavery, sent boys to ISIS training camps and executed men and elderly women.

In regions of Ninawa province, Islamic State militants committed numerous atrocities against religious figures of Iraqi minorities and conducted a systematic campaign to expel and destroy entire religious communities.²¹ In August 2014, the UN announced the highest level of emergency in Iraq due to the humanitarian crisis caused by the Islamic State (IS) in the north of the country. After the IS attack on Sinjar, Kurdish officials announced a critical situation in the city of Duhuk, as 150,000 displaced people arrived there.²² Since the occupation of Sinjar, at least 5,000 Yazidis have been killed. Many mass graves were found.²³

In March 2015, the Iraqi Council of Ministers declared IS crimes against the Yazidis genocide, but Iraq's domestic legislation does not include provisions on war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.²⁴

On January 28, 2019, the Head of the Yezidis around the world, Mir Tahsin-Beg, died. Several candidates fought to become the new leader of the Yazidis. The main pretender was Hazem, the eldest son of Tahsin-Beg. His main competitor was Hazema Kamiran-Beg, the son of Mir Kheri-Beg, married to the daughter of Tahsin-Beg. In the end, with the support of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, Hazem was actually appointed leader of the Yazidis.²⁵

When he was proclaimed the head of the Yazidis, the new head of the Yazidi community, Mir Hazim Tahsin-Beg, promised to support the Yazidis of Shingal (or Sinjar), who are still suffering from the displacement and destruction of the city, after the Islamic State captured the city in 2014.

The new leader also promised to create a new community council and give seats to the Yazidis of Sinjar. The same refers to the already existing Spiritual Council, which discusses theological issues.

"We will create a Yazidi council, and Yazidis from Sinjar will make up 60per cent of its composition," the new Yazidi leader said. "We will also expand the spiritual council so that ordinary people and religious figures of Sinjar can join it," he added.²⁶

In October 2020, an agreement was concluded between the Iraqi government and the Kurdistan regional government on Sinjar.

In Sinjar, Nineveh Province had two administrations in the past, one was appointed by Erbil²⁷ and the other by Baghdad. In addition, this area is crowded with armed forces fighting for increased influence, including representatives of the Kurdistan Workers Party, Sinjar resistance units, detached forces of national mobilization, as well as federal authorities and Kurdish militants of Peshmerga.

The agreement was considered by the UN mission as "the first and important step in the right direction" for the region, which saw the genocide carried out by the Islamic State against the Yazidis in 2014. "The agreement will directly give a boost to the return of displaced families to their homes and ensure their stability in their areas," said Bashir al-Haddad, deputy speaker of the Iraqi parliament. However, the Agreement was criticized by some Yazidi representatives.²⁸

It should also be noted that a number of Iraqi Shiite deputies expressed strong discordance with the Agreement. So, member of the Iraqi parliament Ahmad Kanani, along with four other deputies, said, after a visit to the area: "We are against this deal, like the residents of Shingal (Sinjara-ed.)," Kanani said. "This agreement between Erbil and Baghdad will only end with death of the boys from Shingal."

Under the Erbil-Baghdad agreement, the Iraqi Government will have to establish new armed forces enlisted from the local population and to expel fighters from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and associated groups. Shiite deputies insist that units of the Popular Mobilization Forces²⁹ remain in the area.

At the same time, Shiite spiritual leader Sinjara Mahmoud al-Araaji expressed his support for the deal. In his opinion, the agreement will help "to return peace and stability to this area, and people will be able to return to their homes peacefully."³⁰

On August 16, 2021, Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kazimi visited the Sinjar district and the mass graves of the Yazidis killed by Islamic State terrorists there in 2014. During the visit, the politician said: "We will work to create a museum to memorialize the martyrs of this place, including children, women and brave fighters who defeated terrorism on behalf of the goodwill of the whole world."³¹

For centuries, the Yazidis were persecuted. Despite this, they retained their unique religion and culture. The 2014 lodgment of the Yazidi district of Sinjar by IS terrorists ended in disaster for the community. We can only hope that the infrastructure of the region will be restored as soon as possible and that the Yazidi refugees will return home.

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ANDREY BELINSKY. “AT HOME AMONG STRANGERS”*
MIGRANTS IN GERMAN POLITICS.

*Keywords: Germany, migrants,
integration policy, CDSS / CSU, SPD,
“Union 90 / Greens.”*

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Abstract. The article examines the participation of various groups of migrants in the political life of Germany. It is noted that initially the authorities and politicians of Germany, which judged from the temporality of foreign workers' stay in the country, were not interested in their social and political integration. However, the growth of the migrant community and the liberalization of legislation on citizenship made political parties change their position gradually. First, the Union 90/Greens, and then the rest of the political parties, began to work actively with various groups of migrants. Nevertheless, the number of citizens of Germany with migrant roots among the deputies of the Bundestag or in*

* “At Home among Strangers, a Stranger among his own” c.

senior positions in the government machine is still relatively small, which is explained by a number of factors (isolation of the migrant community, prejudice in society, miscalculations of the party leadership).

“Not a Country of Migrants”

The formation of migrant community of Germany dates back to the late 1950s – early 1960s, when the West German government concluded agreements on hiring of labor with Italy (1955), Spain, Greece (both in 1960), Turkey (1961) to maintain high rate of economic growth. Numerous migrants, most of whom represented young people from poor southern regions, were supposed to put fresh impetus into the ThiessenKrupp factories, the Ruhr coal mines, the shipyards of Bremen and Hamburg.

At the same time, initially for the German authorities (as, however, for most foreign workers), that entailed only short-term labor hiring, followed by the return of guest workers to their historical homeland. Unlike England, France or Belgium, which had a rich colonial history and maintained close economic, political and cultural ties with the former colonies,¹ German politicians considered their agreements with southern European countries exclusively through the prism of business interests.

Meanwhile, contrary to the initial calculations and plans of West German politicians and officials, the migrant community was growing gradually, which was due to both the needs of the economy and the attractiveness of Germany for immigrants from southern Europe. At the turn of the 1970–1980s migrant community in West Germany was several million people, vast majority of which was from Turkey (about 1.5 million people). Meanwhile, the country’s authorities still considered migrants exclusively as a “driver” of the economy, but not potential citizens and compatriots. “It was a mistake – admitted Chancellor Helmut Schmidt – to accept so many migrants. However, now we must ensure that migrants do not take advantage of this mistake.”² The conservative-liberal coalition of the CDU/CSU and

FDP, which came to power in the autumn of 1982, fully adhered to the course of its predecessors. "Germany is not a country of migrants" (Deutschland ist kein Migrationsland) – declared publicly the Federal Chancellor G. Kohl. And in 2013, the British government published secret minutes of the Chancellor's negotiations with British Prime Minister M. Thatcher. In a conversation with his colleague, the Chancellor announced his radical plan to solve the migration problem. "Chancellor Kohl declared... [...] Over the next four years, it is necessary to reduce the number of Turks by 50%. However, he cannot speak openly about it."³ The reduction of the Turkish community was planned through the allocation of a large amount of money in exchange for return to their homeland. At the same time, anti-migrant sentiments and prejudices (especially against immigrants from Muslim countries) were quite strong in German society in the 1980s.

Even in the early 1990s descendants of migrants who successfully integrated into society and managed to make a successful political career, which in those days was very rare, were still perceived as "strangers." D. Ozdemir, one of the first deputies of the Bundestag who had migrant roots, and later the leader of the Union 90/Greens party described his conversation with the Secretary of State, representing the conservative Christian Social Union. "The Secretary of State declares:" Mr. Ozdemir, you must explain to your compatriots... And then I say: "Are you my compatriot, tell me what I have to explain to you?" And he stared at me so foolishly, and then it came to him that we both have the same citizenship."⁴

Fall of the Wall

The process of migrants' integration into German society essentially began in the late 1990s when the Social Democrats and the Greens came to power. Notably the children and heirs of 1968 ("green") at that time were one of the few forces in the country

(along with the Party of Democratic Socialism and various human rights organizations) that consistently advocated the integration of migrants. In 2000, the “red-green” coalition, despite the resistance of its opponents from the conservative camp, adopted a law on citizenship, which gave migrant children the opportunity to become citizens of the country in accordance with the “Jus soli” (soil principle – lat.) A. In 2005, the law on migration went into effect (Einwanderungsgesetz – German), which organized the process of moving foreigners to Germany.

However, in the near future it turned out that the concept of multiculturalism, which is very reminiscent of the theory of the “melting pot,” did not lead to the formation of a single civil nation based on common values, but to the division of society and the appearance of peculiar national-religious ghettos in the quarters of large cities. The reasons for the failure of this policy were quite diverse, but two of them can be emphasized, which, in our opinion, were crucial. First, by granting citizenship to migrants and their offspring, the authorities did not take care of their social, cultural and political integration. Secondly, when implementing their course, they did not take into account the factor of the presence among migrants of ethnic or religious groups with their culture and values, which were not always correlated with the standards adopted in Germany. This primarily concerned representatives of the Turkish, Kurdish and Arab diasporas.

And already in 2010, Chancellor A. Merkel was forced to admit that the old concept of integration failed. It was quite obvious that genuine social, cultural, and most importantly political integration was needed, since a migrant can only feel like a full citizen when he is actively involved in politics, has the opportunity not only to vote, but also to act as a political actor, be it a member of the Bundestag or the land parliament.

Who Chooses Whom?

How are migrants and their descendants involved in German politics today? Which political parties and forces do they prefer? How widely are they represented in land parliaments, Bundestag and ministries?

Today, about a quarter of German citizens have migrant roots, while half of them have German citizenship. However, their political activity remains significantly lower than that of the indigenous population. According to the report of the Minor Kontor research group, during the Bundestag elections in 2013, 87.2% of indigenous Germans took part in the vote, while among migrants this figure was only 79.2%.⁵

The model of electoral behavior among different ethnic groups is of sufficient interest to the researcher. The above-mentioned Minor Kontor report presents the following data.

Table No. 1

Participation of various ethnic groups in the Bundestag elections in 2013 (%)

Ethnic group	Percentage of voters in the elections
Former eastern provinces of the German Empire	86,9%
Eastern Europe	81%
Former republics of the Soviet Union	58,5%
Turkey	67,5%
Rest of Europe	53,8%
Other countries	66,7%

As we can see, the political activity of representatives of migrant communities can vary significantly, which is determined by both socio-cultural and specific economic conditions. The high proportion of the Poles and people from Eastern European countries who voted in parliamentary elections is explained both

by similar political attitudes and by the better integration of these groups into German society. As for rather low political activity of former residents of the USSR and immigrants from Muslim countries, this is most likely due either to the lack of democratic traditions (immigrants from the former republics of the Soviet Union) or to an orientation towards their community, which was still considered as the main defender and expression of the interests of a particular ethnic group (Turks, Kurds, Arabs).

The political preferences of various migrant communities are also very interesting. If immigrants from the post-Soviet space and Poles traditionally voted for the CDU/CSU, then representatives of the Turkish community preferred the SPD, the Greens or the Left, who presented themselves as defenders of their interests.⁶

Overhead

And what about representatives of migrant communities in party and state positions, in various ministries and departments. Until the early 1990s citizens of Germany, whose parents had moved in search of a better life in West Germany, were quite an unusual occurrence in the political beaumont. The “pioneers” in this area were D. Ozdemir, already mentioned above, who in the early 1990s became deputy from the Union 90/Greens party. However, even after entering big politics, they were largely perceived as “strangers,” not Germans. I remember running for the administration of the party's land branch, delivering a speech in the everyday Swabian dialect and saying something about glacial plants, about protecting migratory falcons, in short about everything possible that I was interested in then. [...] But everyone wanted to know: What is the situation with migration, with co-residence, Turkey, human rights, Kurds?”⁷

Qualitative changes began in the mid-2000s, when political parties began to deal with the migration issue seriously. Seeking the support of the migrant community, which has already

become a significant factor in the country's domestic policy. In addition, by this time, a small middle-class layer had formed within migrant communities, whose representatives, as a rule, had a university education, were well integrated into society and sought social or political activity. To date, many representatives of migrant communities have been able to take a worthy place in the party and state hierarchy. CDU Secretary General Paul Cymiak (Poland), Bundestag deputy from the SPD Karamba Diabu, Commissioner of the Federal Government for Integration Aidan Ozoguz (Turkey), Chairman of the FDP Philippe Rösler (Vietnam) – are the most striking examples of migrants or their descendants who managed to achieve impressive success on the political field. However, behind the magnificent showcase there is a more complex picture, which does not always correlate with the statements of politicians. According to sociological studies, only 58 of the 709 deputies of the Bundestag have migrant roots.⁸ Their number is not too large in leadership positions in parties.

The reasons for this imbalance between the number of citizens of Germany with migrant roots and their representation in the political sphere can have completely different reasons, from low political activity and poor integration into the social structure of society to the inability of party structures to work effectively with citizens with migrant roots.⁹

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THE MOSLEM WORLD: THEORETICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS

ANATOLY KHAZANOV. SVETLANA GASRATYAN. THE
ROLE OF THE "SHIITE CRESCENT" IN THE PRESENT
SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST (2000–2020)

Keywords: "Shiite crescent";
Iran; Lebanon; Syria; Iraq; Hezbollah;
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Abstract. The article reveals the meaning of the geopolitical term "Shiite crescent". This term is used to refer to the region of the spread of Shiism in the Middle East. At present, Iran which is trying to create a broad coalition of states where the majority of the population is Shiites is claiming strategic dominance in the "Shiite crescent".

"Shiite crescent" is a geopolitical term used to refer to the area of the spread of Shiism in the Middle East. It includes Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran, a number of Persian Gulf states. The term "Shiite crescent" was first used by King Abdullah II of Jordan. In 2004, Abdullah II, in an interview, warned against the danger of a "Shiite crescent", which, after the overthrow of the Sunni regime of Saddam Hussein, would spread from Iran through Iraq, Syria to Lebanon. "This crescent can play a very destabilizing role for the states of the Persian Gulf and for the entire region," the King of Jordan said at the time. Since then, the "Shiite crescent" has become a frequently mentioned geopolitical phenomenon, which is especially often spoken of by the conservative Sunni states of the Persian Gulf, primarily Saudi Arabia. This kingdom is the strongest regional opponent of the Shiite regime in Iran (of course, with the exception of Israel) (although 4 million Shiites live in Saudi Arabia, i.e. 15 per cent of the total population).

Saudi rulers consider themselves surrounded by "vassals" of Tehran. Saudi Arabia uses fear of Iran to justify not only its brutal suppression of the Shiite minority in its own country, but also its military operations in neighboring countries - Bahrain and Yemen.

What is the "Shiite crescent" really? Lebanon forms the left edge of the crescent. In Lebanon, the Shiites are the largest community. An accurate assessment of the percentage of the Shiite population in Lebanon faces a difficult problem: since 1932, the country has not conducted a census based on religion. According to estimates, 2 million inhabitants of Lebanon are Shiites, i.e. 55 per cent of the country's population. At the same time, the US State Department estimates the Shiite population of Lebanon at 27 per cent of the country's total population¹. Shiites live in the poorest southwestern region of Beirut, as well as in Saida, Nabatiyah and in villages in southern Lebanon².

The most significant military force in Lebanon is the pro-Iranian Shiite organization Hezbollah (Party of Allah), whose

armed units are conducting military operations against Israel. In Beirut and all over Lebanon, multicolored Hezbollah flags are hung. They feature a Kalashnikov assault rifle and the inscription: "Moslem resistance. Hizbullah will win."³

Hezbollah is currently fighting in Syria on the side of the government of Bashar al-Assad. During this time, thousands of its militants died there. The Syrian war has cost Hezbollah far more casualties than the conflict with Israel that has been going on for more than 30 years.

In Syria, Shiites make up 5 per cent of the population (these are mainly Alawites). But the Alawites are in power there. President Bashar al-Assad himself and his inner circle are Alawites. English historian and journalist Peter Mansfield, who spent many years in the Middle East, argued in 1980: "The Syrians have a strong sense of belonging to a particular community, it was fueled by the French among the minorities in different parts of Syria - 160,000 Druze living in the Jebel Druz region and 500,000 Alawites near Latakia".⁴

According to the Russian researcher V.A. Ushakov, "in general, the Islamic factor, on the one hand, brings Tehran and Damascus closer, especially considering that the President of the SAR, H. Assad, is an Alawite, i.e. adheres to religious views close to Shiite, on the other hand, Islam also separates them. The fact is that, representing the country's Sunni majority, Damascus assigns a secondary role to Islam in its political program, which in the 1980s envisaged an orientation towards the Arab model of socialism. This was unacceptable for Islamic Iran, a theocratic state that is alien and even hostile to the ideals of socialism and democratic principles, as Imam R. Khomeini has repeatedly stated".⁵

However, coming to power in Syria of the new President Bashar al-Assad has radically changed the situation. In order to stay in power in the conditions of the war with the jihadists, Bashar al-Assad is forced to resort to the help of Iran and Shiite volunteers from other countries. In particular, in addition to

Hezbollah, other Shiite armed formations are fighting on the side of Damascus. There is, for example, Liwa - Fatimiyun - detachments numbering more than 10,000 people. Liwa recruits its fighters among the Hazaras, the Shiite minority in Afghanistan. In addition, there is the Liwa Zainabiyun armed formation, in which Pakistani Shiites are fighting. This group has several hundred militants. Both of these formations, with their yellow banners adorned with green lettering and a Kalashnikov assault rifle, clearly show that they are taking lead from Hezbollah, whose logo looks much the same. There is no doubt that Syria is the most important player for the Iranian project in the region. For several decades, the Iranians have invested in many sectors of the Syrian economy. Their investments and influence in Syria have grown since President Bashar al-Assad came to power. Unlike his father Hafez al-Assad, whom the Iranians called the "big mountain" that prevented their penetration into Syria, Bashar was forced to accept Iranian help during the civil war, including on the battlefields with ISIS militants and jihadist groups such as Jabhat al-Nusra" and others. For their part, the Iranians view the civil war in Syria as part of their struggle against the Saudis and the United States, which see Iran as a possible rival and power capable of dominating the Middle East. In addition, and this is very important, Iran is the world's most important oil supplier, and therefore a competitor to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United States, and is trying to seize the initiative in the energy market.

In this regard, the statement of the commander of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) K. Soleimani is quite characteristic: "The battle for Aleppo (Syria) is the first line of defense of the Iranian Islamic revolution."

It should be noted that there is an attempt to introduce anti-Shiite sentiments in Syria. This is manifested in speeches against B. Assad himself and his Alawite entourage, although the Syrian Alawites are a fairly liberal secular sect that categorically rejects religious extremism.

In Iraq, Shiites (there are 22 million of them) make up approximately 65 per cent of the country's population. Under the regime of Saddam Hussein, they were subjected to the most severe discrimination. After the overthrow of S. Hussein, the Americans counted on the support of the Iraqi Shiites. However, the leader of the Iraqi Shiites, Muqtada al-Sadr, strongly opposed the American occupation and formed an armed group called the Mahdi Army. The leaflets he published contained calls to "fight the American occupiers." It was Muqtada al-Sadr who led the armed Shiite resistance. He repeatedly stated: "The current Iraqi president (J. Talabani from 2006 to 2014 – ed.) says that America is our partner. And I declare that America is our enemy." ⁶

Since the Shiites came to power in Iraq with the help of the United States, Tehran has included it in its plans to spread its influence. Iraq has become a strategic foothold for Iran in the struggle for dominating influence in the region.

Many Iraqi oppositionists were hiding in Iran. In particular, it was there that Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim (1939-2003) created the Badr Brigades, which initially fought against Saddam Hussein. This brigade had about 10,000 equipped and trained soldiers. Later the "Badr Brigades" began to fight against ISIS. Today they are fighting in Syria.

In Iraq itself, the situation remains precarious due to persistent unemployment and corruption. And here, just as in Syria, they are trying to impose anti-Iranian sentiments on the population. However, Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei blamed the Western intelligence services for organizing the protests in Iraq. Stakeholders in the anti-Iranian protests in Iraq are both Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Emirates, which very likely provided money through their emissaries to the Iraqi rioters. In Yemen, where the Shiites make up a significant part of the population, a civil war has been going on for many years, which forced more than 2 million people to flee the country and cost the lives of more than 10,000 civilians. 80 per cent of the population of Yemen, in order to survive, are forced to rely on international

assistance. Since March 2015, a military alliance led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE has been fighting against the Iranian-backed Houthi militia. The Houthis have controlled, since 2012, the northwestern region of Yemen. Tehran has been active in Yemen, including providing humanitarian aid, since 2011. Since then, Iran has trained hundreds of militants and for some time supplied weapons to the rebels by sea.

The fact that the Houthi (Houthis) are not Imami Shiites, like the Iranians themselves, but Zaidis, is not the reason why Tehran refuses to help them. Religious autocracy can be pragmatic if it serves its own ends. While Saudi Arabia and its allies are spending huge amounts of money to defeat the Houthis, Iran is pursuing a more cunning and less costly policy of using pinpricks to hurt their Sunni adversaries.

A similar scenario is possible in Bahrain. Most of the local population of this dwarf state are Shiites (more than 60 per cent). However, they are ruled by the Sunni ruling house. Since this island state in the Persian Gulf was once captured by the Persians, Iran from time to time has ideas to return this territory. The fact is that in 1602 the Persians conquered the island of Bahrain, and it remained under their rule until 1783. But in 1783 the island was captured by the Utubi tribe, who came from the coast of Qatar⁷. In 1822, the Persian authorities in Shiraz and the British political resident in the Gulf, Captain William Bruce, entered into an agreement by which the latter recognized Persian sovereignty over Bahrain. However, this agreement was not approved by the British government⁸.

Iranian politicians are calling Bahrain a "lost province" that should once again be returned to Tehran's control. During the Arab Spring in 2011, tens of thousands of Bahrainis protested against the royal house. It was only with the help of Saudi Arabian troops that it managed to crush this uprising. In Bahrain, there are radical underground groups Saraya al-Ashtar and Saraya al-Mukhtar, which the authorities accuse of committing dozens of arsons of police stations and security services in

Bahrain. Several members of these groups have already been executed.

The Arab Spring influenced the mood of the Shiite youth of Bahrain. Naturally, the discontent and dissatisfaction of young people is an ideal breeding ground for a social explosion. Under these conditions, the ruler of Bahrain, King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa, pins his hopes on the presence of the Fifth American fleet in Bahrain.

In November 2010, WikiLeaks, a group led by Julian Asange, released hundreds of secret US diplomats' reports concerning the Middle East and the Persian Gulf. Among them there was a telegram from Saudi King Abdullah (2009) in which he asks the US government to attack Iran in order to "cut off the head of this snake"⁹. In 2010, Bahrain's King Isa al-Khalifa met with US Central Command Commander General David Petraeus and asked him to take military action against Iran's nuclear program. "This program must be stopped," said the King of Bahrain. "The danger of allowing it to develop outweighs the danger of stopping it."¹⁰

The Shiite factor in Iran's foreign policy is explained by pragmatism and national interests. Behind the intensification of the Sunni-Shiite confrontation there is, first of all, Iran's attempt to create under its auspices the "Shiite Crescent" coalition - the unification of Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon on the basis of a religious community. A series of events of the first decade of the 21st century led to increase of fear among Sunni governments, especially in the Gulf, of the possibility of such an alliance, dubbed the "Shiite Crescent".

This concern is aggravated by the policy of a number of Arab media, which form in the public opinion the image of the Shiites as enemies of the Sunni Arab world, and the interest of such important players in the Middle East as the United States and Israel in undermining Iran's positions.

Another important factor that influenced the formation of the image of the enemy in the person of the Shiites is the Arab

Spring. During the events of 2011-2012 in the Middle East, the Gulf States were particularly concerned about the Shiite uprising in Bahrain, which was crushed by Saudi forces.

Finally, the war in Syria exacerbates the Shiite-Sunni confrontation. The fact is that the United States and the Arabian monarchies, interested in the defeat of B. Assad, are trying to ignite a conflict between Sunnis and Shiites inside Syria, emphasizing that President B. Assad belongs to a small offshoot of Shiism. The Alawite community in Syria (from 10 to 12.5 per cent of the population) during the years of the rule of the Assad family – H. Assad and B. Assad – turned from a poorly educated layer into representatives of the middle class, they made up a significant part of the Syrian officer corps. According to the Arabian monarchies, a possible alliance between Damascus and Tehran could contribute to the rise of Iran, its formation as a regional power, and hinder Saudi Arabia's plans to lead the Moslem world.

It should be noted that modern Shiism still relies on that part of the population that is acutely aware of social injustice. At one time, the famous Arabist E.A. Belyaev explained the spread of Shiism in Iran by the class struggle between the feudal lords and the peasantry. In his opinion, the feudal lords of Iran adopted Islam in its Sunni form, and the peasants, in defiance of the feudal lords, adopted Shiism. "In Iran," he argued, "... the peasants, who made up the bulk of the population, began to convert to Islam only when Shiism began to spread, a special form of Islam that was opposed to the dominant direction of this religion (Sunnism)"¹¹.

As Arif Aliyev writes, "Shiism is sometimes mistakenly considered a product of the Iranians, a kind of Persian understanding of the ideology of Islam, a reaction of the Iranian spirit against Arabism."

The first Shiites were undoubtedly the Arabs, and only during the years of the Umayyad Caliphate (660-750) with its

capital in Damascus did a significant part of the Mawali¹² from among the indigenous population of Iran¹³ join them.

Academician V.V. Bartold remarked on this occasion: "Shiiteism found fertile ground among the Persian people, but the element of opposition was in this case more important than the element of nationality"¹⁴. As a result, in ethnically diverse Iran, a religious homogeneity of the population arose, the majority of which were Moslems – Shiites.

Shiism is not a holistic unified doctrine or a single church organization. It has numerous sects: Zaidis, Imamis, Ismailis, Alawites and many others. All of them are connected by common historical roots and ideological fundamental provisions. The main one is the recognition of the fourth Caliph Ali and his descendants as the only legitimate successors of the Prophet Muhammad as the spiritual and secular head of the Moslem community (Imam).

Among them, the rather moderate sect of the Zaidis, who live mainly in Yemen, attracts attention. In the civil war, which has been going on for more than a year on the territory of Yemen, belonging to Zaidism contributes to the rallying of northerners who opposed the alliance of the country's authorities with Saudi Arabia, who supported the idea of restoring the imamate that existed in Yemen until 1962¹⁵.

Druzes are also classified as Shiites, since the doctrine originated in Fatimid Egypt, where the authorities adhered to Shiism. This direction arose in 1017 in the mountains of Lebanon. The Druze doctrine bizarrely combines the provisions of Islam and Christianity. On Thursdays, Druzes read the Quran and the Bible. They do not recognize the concepts of heaven and hell mandatory for Moslems and Christians. They have their own sacred book, which cannot even be touched. You can't become a Druze, you have to be born. Druzes practice monogamy¹⁶. Believers are divided into initiates, who have the right to participate in special rituals, and the uninitiated, which includes most of the women. Druzes live in Lebanon, Syria and Israel. It is

curious that in Israel they are subject to conscription into the army¹⁷.

It should, however, be noted that the modern Druzes consider themselves a separate religious movement.

A special place in the family of those who profess Shiism is occupied by the Ismailis, some of whom live outside the Middle East. The beginning of the Ismaili movement is traditionally associated with a split among the Shiites in the middle of the 8th century. They got their name from Imam Ismail ibn Ja'far, the appointed spiritual successor of Ja'far as-Sadiq. The other branch, the Imamites, accept Musa al-Kazim (d. 799), Ismail's younger brother, as the true Imam. There are several branches within Ismailism. In particular, the spiritual head of the largest branch, the Nizari, is the Aga Khan IV. The core of the religious and political doctrine of the Ismailis was the doctrine of the imamate, the need for the existence of an infallible imam from the descendants of Ali¹⁸.

From all of the above, it should be concluded that the Islamic Republic of Iran interprets the current events in the Middle East from the standpoint of Shiite philosophy as a sign of the imminent arrival of the Mahdi and as an opportunity to establish its dominant influence in the so-called "Shiite Crescent" – the region where Shiism spread in the Middle East. To varying degrees, Iran exerts its influence on four countries – Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Bahrain. Moreover, it is trying to create under his auspices a broad coalition with the participation of all countries where Shiites live.

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