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# MODERN RUSSIA: IDEOLOGY, POLITICS, CULTURE AND RELIGION

ELENA DMITRIEVA. ISLAMIC FINANCIAL SYSTEM AND ITS PROSPECTS IN RUSSIA

*Keywords: Islamic banks; partner financing; pilot experiment; Russian Muslims; Sharia norms; commercial activities of the bank; geopolitical situation.*

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*Abstract. Currently, the Islamic financial system (Islamic banking) is developing dynamically and becoming an integral part of the global financial market. A significant number of Muslims live in Russia and therefore Islamic banking is relevant in the financial and economic spheres of the country. The changed geopolitical situation requires Russia to take more active steps in the field of introducing Islamic banking, which can become one of the tools for developing and*

*increasing the competitiveness of the country's economy, attracting investment from the countries of the Muslim world under the sanctions imposed by the West.*

The Islamic financial system (Islamic banking) is becoming more and more popular in the world and has already received recognition even in those countries where the predominantly non-Muslim population lives. Many major global banks offer Islamic financial products in parallel with their core activities. The Islamic banking system allows Muslim clients to source bank services without violating Sharia principles.

To integrate the Islamic financial system into the classical one and to attract more Muslim customers, banks must meet a set of specific conditions. To do this, banks create special units or even subsidiaries that deal with Islamic financial products, but in recent years more and more banks have offered such services within their core activities. The principles under which banks offering their services to Muslim clients must operate include a number of requirements: no interest on loans; prohibition on transactions related to risk, speculative operations, rejection of investments prohibited for Muslims (i.e. not to invest money, for example, in alcohol and tobacco, gaming and pornography business, etc.); mandatory interest in profit or loss; social responsibility of business; monitoring compliance with Sharia standards through the creation and involvement of special expert committees in the work of the bank. The difference between Islamic banking and classical banking is that according to Sharia, the object of trade is a commodity that, figuratively speaking, can be touched and which can be traded, marking-up. For example, the bank does not give money at interest to buy real estate, as it is according to the classic scheme in banks, but buys this real estate into the ownership of the bank and resells it to the client in installments with its own trade mark-up. The bank's income consists in this markup, as the bank cannot operate in the red for itself, like any other bank. There is also a principle of lease, when

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an Islamic bank buys an object and leases it to a client for a certain period, after which the object will be freehold to the client. To make investments in the Islamic banking system, there is a principle of partnership, which is that a bank financing a business becomes one of the partners and shares all entrepreneurial risks with the client, also bearing losses in the event of bankruptcy. In the partnership scheme, the bank receives income in the form of a share in the business. The Islamic bank is also allowed to conduct foreign exchange transactions, where the commission from operations goes to the bank's income. The tax on charity is the mandatory rule for an Islamic bank

Nowadays, Islamic banking has become a full-fledged component of the global financial market. A client of an Islamic bank can become not only a believing Muslim, but also any person who is not related to the Islamic religion. For example, in Malaysia, more than 50 per cent of Islamic bank customers are non-Muslim. [1] Non-Islamic clients choose an Islamic bank given the greater stability, low risks. But, in fairness, it should be noted that for all the attractiveness of the Islamic banking system, some offers of Islamic banks.

However, in fairness, it should be noted that for all the attractiveness of the Islamic banking system, some offers of Islamic banks in comparison with ordinary banking products can be more expensive (the bank compensates the lack of interest for services with higher fees or rents), so the clients of Islamic banks are mainly Muslims, for whom compliance with Sharia norms is primarily important. Despite the fact that Islamic banks offer products and services that comply with Sharia norms, they inherently have a similar economic essence with the same products in classic banks. No bank, either Islamic or classical, will operate at a loss.

In Russia, a multi-religious society has historically developed, including a significant share of adherents of the Islamic religion. The number of people practicing Islam in Russia has grown in recent decades, due to the high birth rate and migration from the former Soviet republics of Central Asia. In the Russian banking system, Islamic banking has not become widespread yet,

although some steps have been taken in those regions of Russia where the predominantly Muslim population lives. At the moment, Russian laws do not establish the procedure for carrying out Islamic financial transactions and therefore commercial activities, which are the basis of the activities of Islamic banks, do not comply with the basic Federal Law "On Banks and Banking Activities" [2], but there are regulations of the Central Bank of Russia that in some way regulate certain services of banks to carry out "Islamic" operations. Mainly in Russia, Islamic banking services are currently provided by various commercial and microfinance organizations.

To regulate the system of Islamic financing in Russia, the concept of an experimental right-wing regime was proposed, which is relatively new to Russian legislation. In August 2023, Russian President V.V. Putin signed the law "On conducting an experiment to establish special regulation in order to create the necessary conditions for the implementation of partner financing activities in certain territorial entities of the Russian Federation and on amending certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation" [3]. It concerns the experimental introduction and regulation of the Islamic banking system in four regions of Russia, where the Muslim population traditionally lives - the Republic of Bashkortostan, the Republic of Dagestan, the Republic of Tatarstan and the Chechen Republic.

Within two years from 01.09.2023 to 01.09.2025, an experiment will be carried out in these regions to implement the so-called partner financing in practice. Both credit organizations and non-credit financial organizations, consumer societies, various foundations, non-profit organizations or business partnerships can become its participants, but all of them must have the status of a resident of the Russian Federation. During the experiment, program members will be able to carry out operations and transactions to attract and provide funds in the form of a loan, financing persons by means of purchase and sale of goods by installments, finance by providing property under the leasing contracts that is, in all schemes conforming to the norms of Islamic

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law. The Central Bank of Russia will have to establish the procedure for informing customers about the activities of the participants in the experiment, as well as determine the amount of open information for customers, the procedure and timing of its provision. The new Federal Law does not provide for restrictions on religious grounds when applying for partner funding. The law does not mention Islamic banking or the Islamic financial system, and these concepts are defined by terms such as "partnership" and "partner financing." Clients of financial institutions participating in the experiment can be not only individuals, but also legal entities. According to the results of the experiment, the Russian government will be able to expand the scope of the Islamic financial system and extend its operation in an experimental mode.

The experiment in Bashkiria, Dagestan, Tatarstan and Chechnya will make the model of Islamic banking in Russia efficient and effective, which will become attractive for business. The development of the Islamic financial system will allow Russian Muslims to use the Islamic banking system, which does not contradict their religious beliefs, which will attract more customers to banks, and for the non-Muslim population of the country will create a variation in banking services. It should be noted that we should not expect a big difference in interest (in the case of traditional Russian banks) and markups (in Islamic banks) when selling certain types of services, since the country should maintain a unified financial system regardless of the form of financial institution.

The pilot experiment in four regions of Russia is designed to develop mechanisms that will overcome differences in the financial system of Russia and countries where Islamic banking is legally approved. This will allow developing closer cooperation in the financial sector not only with the countries of the so-called non-CIS countries, but also with the CIS countries, where banking legislation has already been adapted to the requirements of Islamic banking, for example, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan. So far, the share of Islamic finance in these three

Central Asian republics is low – from 0.2 per cent to 1.5 per cent, [4] but the potential for growth is great, given their geopolitical position and changes in the global economy.

The new geopolitical situation and the reorientation of Russia from the European market to states in Asia and Africa, where the Muslim population is a large share, were an incentive for the adoption of a new Federal Law on Partnership Financing. Russian entrepreneurs will be able to export to Muslim countries, and investors from Muslim countries will invest in the Russian economy. Business in Russia on the principles of Islamic partner financing is intended to become an alternative to Western financing, which is currently limited by the framework of sanctions. For Russia, the introduction of the Islamic finance system can contribute to the development of the entire national economy.

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## KSEНИЯ АТАМАЛИ. АРАБ ПРЕСС ОБО ВСЕХ СОБЫТИЯХ В УКРАИНЕ

*Keywords: Russia; Ukraine; crisis; Arab world; media.*

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*Abstract. This article includes a review of news reports and publications by political experts and observers posted on Internet resources of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon and other Arab countries. The purpose of the work is to familiarize readers with the attitude of the Arab world to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.*

Since the very start of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict on February 24, 2022, the world media has been closely watching the developments, and the press of Arab countries is no exception. In addition to coverage of the events, Arab media also publishes the results of public opinion polls (especially among Arab youth), as well as articles by Arab researchers, political experts and economists. One can find a variety of expert evaluations and forecasts regarding the events in Ukraine on news websites (both in Arabic and in English) of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon and other Arab countries. Arab journalists and experts tend to write about the impact of the Ukrainian crisis on the Arab world, both from political and economic perspective.

Thus, in May 2022, the pan-Arab news resource *Al Araby Al Jadeed* published a detailed article on Egypt's stance on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict by academician Takadam al-Khatib, an Egyptian researcher at the University of Berlin. Al-Khatib writes that Egypt is trying to remain neutral by keeping up good relations with both Russia and the West; according to the author, this could lead to the loss of both allies. The article defines Egypt's position on the Ukrainian crisis in a single phrase: "With Russia, but against the war with Ukraine". Cairo is primarily guided by personal reasons, and the conflict entails negative consequences not only in Europe, but also in the Middle East and North Africa. Although Russia remains Egypt's strategic partner, the US is Cairo's main ally that provides financial and military assistance. But still, Egypt keeps purchasing weapons from Russia: Russia delivered five Su-35 fighters in 2018, twelve aircraft in 2022, and another twelve are set to be delivered during 2023, which is a large sale for Russia due to imposed sanctions.

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However, the US decision to allow the supply of F-15 fighter jets to Egypt may alienate Egypt from Russia. [1] As reported by the website *Egypt Today*, Egypt's Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry believes that cooperation between Arab countries is tantamount to cope with the Russian-Ukrainian crisis and its repercussions. [2] At a press conference in Moscow on April 4, 2022, Shoukry proposed Arab countries - Egypt, Jordan, Algeria, Iraq, Sudan and the UAE - as mediators between Russia and Ukraine. [3] President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi issued directives to the government to prepare various scenarios to deal with the repercussions of the crisis. Egypt also formed a crisis committee to counter the impact of the crisis, similar to the one that formed during the COVID-19 pandemic. [4]

In an article for the website *Egyptian Streets*, Amina Zaineldine, an Adjunct Professor at the American University in Cairo, points out that the fallout of any geopolitical conflict is never limited to the borders of the states involved and goes beyond a purely military matter. The Russian-Ukrainian crisis is no exception. At the beginning of 2022, the global economy was just beginning to pick up after the COVID-19 pandemic, when the events of February 24 sowed new chaos and uncertainty in the global market, causing new disruptions in supply chains and boosting energy and food prices. Within that turmoil, Egypt faced deep economic problems. "But is conflict abroad the only thing behind the problems?" the author asks. Russia and Ukraine are the two largest suppliers of wheat to Egypt, which is the world's largest importer of the commodity [5] and consumes more than 150 kg of bread per capita annually. In early April 2022, Egypt announced that its strategic wheat reserves would last for at least three months of consumption, though the harvest season for local wheat, which provides almost 50 per cent of demand, was just beginning. [6]

Russia and Ukraine are also among Egypt's largest suppliers of tourists (in 2019, Ukraine ranked second highest source of tourists after Germany). Due to restrictions during the

coronavirus pandemic, tourism industry revenue (\$14 billion in 2019) dropped by two-thirds in 2020 and was just beginning to recover by 2022. With all of the Ukraine's ports closed, economic sanctions against Russia, and import / export issues of various countries, world trade slowed down, affecting traffic on the Suez Canal, which in 2018 provided Egypt with 5.5 billion dollars in revenue. [6]

Russia is a key player in the oil and gas industry. Consequently, the fallout of the conflict resulted in the highest oil prices in the last decade. Egypt, historically a net importer of oil and gas, has marginally broken even since 2021, meaning that the direct impact of high oil prices should be minor. However, the author believes that high energy prices will affect the global economy, which in turn will undoubtedly affect the growth of the Egyptian economy. Against the background of these events, at the end of March 2022, the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) raised the key rate, which resulted in Egyptian pound falling and prices for essential goods increasing. There was a similar situation in 2016, when Egypt had to conclude an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a loan of \$12 billion. Egypt floated its currency and devalued it by 50 per cent, and also cut public spending, especially subsidies. Although these steps were taken in order to strengthen the economy, citizens were unable to contend with rising prices. To cope with the repercussions of the current crisis, Egypt turned to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Gulf countries for help. The recurrence of the situation makes one wonder whether this economic downturn is a direct consequence of the armed conflict in Europe or whether there are more fundamental problems in Egypt's economy that systematically cause such crises. [6]

Samer Atallah, Associate Dean at the Department of Economics at the American University in Cairo, believes that while events in Ukraine certainly affected the current situation in Egypt, they are not the primary cause. He argues that the

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vulnerability of the Egyptian economy makes it susceptible to external shocks, making the Ukrainian crisis “the last straw that broke the camel’s back”. All these turbulences are harmful for a fragile economy; investments received by Egypt are referred to as ‘hot money’ and those are the first-to-come, first-to-leave kinds of investments. Egypt has been attracting such investments since 2016, and while profitable in the short term, they are vulnerable in the face of any economic, financial or political shocks. There has been little direct foreign investment to provide the economy with stable foreign capital and thus strengthen the economy and stimulate its growth. For Egypt to attract long-term direct investment, Atallah believes that structural changes to the country’s economic landscape are necessary. Egypt is lagging behind in creating an advantage for itself in terms of manufacturing and exports, and the booming construction and real estate sector has not boosted the country’s economy or given Egypt an edge in the global market. The staggering effect that events in Ukraine have had on Egypt exposes the vulnerabilities in Egypt’s national economic model. [6]

Speaking about the grain crisis in Egypt, it should be noted that in 2020 Russian imports amounted to \$2.5 billion, of which 64 per cent (\$1.6 billion) was wheat. *Egypt Today* states that same year the volume of imports from Ukraine reached \$1.6 billion, including grain crops worth about \$1.2 billion (wheat and corn worth 690 and 461 million dollars, respectively), which amounted to 75 per cent of total imports. [7] On February 24, 2022, Ihab Nasr, Egypt’s ambassador to Russia said that over the last period Egypt had increased strategic wheat reserves, which would help cushion the blow. [5] In early March, Egypt’s Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation announced that 3.65 million tons of wheat had been harvested since the beginning of the year. After the start of the harvest season, annual wheat production would amount to 10 million tons by the end of 2022. Imported wheat was expected to cover the population’s needs for four months starting in March, while Egyptian wheat was going to

meet demand until the end of 2022. [8] Cabinet spokesperson Nader Saad noted that although imports of wheat from Russia and Ukraine were difficult, it had no impact on supply of other commodities from other countries. [9] Thus, Minister of Supply and Internal Trade Ali al-Moselhy reported that 63,000 tons of wheat was being delivered from France, and another 189,000 tons (63,000 tons each) was set to be shipped from Romania, Russia, and Ukraine. [8] As of June, Egyptian farmers had supplied 3.92 million tons of wheat, which was estimated to be enough to meet the country's needs until January 2023. [10]

On July 22, 2022, in Istanbul, representatives of Russia and Ukraine, with the mediation of the UN and Turkey, signed an agreement to unblock Ukrainian Black Sea ports for 120 days. According to *Egypt Independent* (English language version of the website *Al-Masry Al-Youm*), since August 1, 622,000 tons of grain had been shipped from Ukrainian ports. [11] In August, Ali al-Moselhy said that since the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, the government had purchased 4.2 million tons of locally-grown wheat in order to produce subsidized bread, and imported 1.8 million tons of wheat of various origins. [10] On November 17, 2022, the Black Sea Grain Initiative was extended for another period of 120 days, and in March and May 2023 – for 60 days each. The agreement expired on July 17, 2023.

In order to prevent future bread shortages, the Egyptian government intends to increase the area of the wheat crops by 1.5 million feddans (630 hectares) over the next three years. [12]

In addition to the import of commodities to Egypt, one should mention Egypt's exports to Russia and Ukraine, which were also adversely affected by the conflict. According to *Egypt Today*, Egypt prevents exporting medicine if the country suffers a shortage in the local market. However, at the end of March 2022, Presidential Advisor for Health Dr. Mohamed Awad Taj El-Din said that the crisis in Europe would not affect Egyptian pharmaceutical companies, which had sufficient strategic reserves. [13]

As for food exports, in 2014, food exports to Russia amounted to merely 17 million dollars, but in 2021 reached 64 million; in total, food exports amounted to \$267 million between 2014 and 2021. The total volume of Egyptian non-oil exports to Russia in 2021 amounted to \$484 million. Egyptian food exports to Ukraine amounted to \$3.3 million in 2021, reaching a total of about \$21 million between 2014 and 2021. Egypt's non-oil exports to Ukraine in 2021 amounted to \$99 million. [14]

Looking at hard numbers, according to Egypt's Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, at the beginning of June 2022, the Russian-Ukrainian crisis affected Egypt as follows: [15]

	Before the crisis	After the crisis
Economic growth rate	6,4 per cent	5,5 per cent
Inflation	7-7,5 per cent	10 per cent
Unemployment	Less than 7 per cent	7,5-8 per cent
Investment rate in GDP	18 per cent	15,5 per cent

The news website *Arab News*, based in Saudi Arabia, reports that the events in Ukraine created an economic crisis in Egypt, which is experiencing a shortage of foreign currency. In 2022, the Egyptian government cut down government and commercial energy use in order to ramp up exports of natural gas, which is a major source of foreign currency income. Among other energy saving measures was the decision to use daylight saving time after a seven-year gap. Changing the clocks "comes in light of global circumstances and economic shifts as the government strives to rationalize energy usage," the cabinet said. [16] Another unorthodox decision was to allow expatriates to import cars for personal use free of customs duties and taxes in exchange for a deposit in foreign currency. As of April 2023, the initiative had already raised \$385 million, and according to Minister of Finance Mohamed Maait, the government works on attracting \$1.6 billion within the framework of the initiative. [17] Arab News writes that in December 2022, the IMF agreed to provide Egypt with

\$3 billion through a 46-month agreement. The IMF expected the agreement to encourage investments into the country worth approximately \$14 billion from international and regional partners including Gulf countries. However, the IMF estimated that Egypt would face an external financing gap of \$16 billion. It should be noted that since the beginning of the conflict, prices for oil and raw materials in Egypt have soared, and the Egyptian pound has been devalued against the dollar. [18]

Between April 26 and May 4, 2022, *Arab News* and *YouGov* conducted an opinion poll on the events in Ukraine in 14 Arab countries in the Middle East and North Africa. Out of 7,835 respondents, 66 per cent take no stance on the conflict, 18 per cent support Ukraine, and 16 per cent support Russia. More than half (53 per cent) of respondents believe that Arab countries should act as mediators to try to resolve the conflict diplomatically, 38 per cent support maintaining neutrality, 5 per cent say Arab countries should side with Russia, and 4 per cent – side with Ukraine. Also, 27 per cent of respondents have faith in Arab outlets, 21 per cent trust Western media coverage of the conflict, 8 per cent trust Russian media coverage, and 11 per cent rely on other sources of information. However, one-third (33 per cent) trust no media coverage of the conflict. [19]

At the end of March 2023, *Arab News* published a noteworthy article by Dr. Mohammed Al-Sulami, Head of the International Institute for Iranian Studies. Al-Sulami notes that although the West has developed a strong informal diplomacy aimed at resolving all sorts of conflicts, there are very few Track II diplomatic meetings dealing with the Russian-Ukrainian crisis. His explanation is that organizations like the Carnegie Endowment have decided to close their offices in Moscow – ostensibly for security reasons – at a time when they are most needed. In addition, there are no Ukrainian institutions willing to take part in such informal diplomatic activities. For Arab states and research institutions, this lack of civilian diplomacy would come as a surprise, since there have often been informal meetings

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to bring peace to countries such as Iraq, Yemen, Syria and Libya. According to the author, this can be explained by the politicization of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in the West, amplifying the Western discourse on the Russian “invasion” of Ukraine, and the information war. Given the lack of high-level political negotiations, he deems it necessary for non-Western think tanks to be part of Track II diplomatic activities regarding the Ukrainian crisis. This would benefit not only Europeans, but also the entire world, given the international repercussions of the conflict. [20]

It should be noted that Saudi Arabia has expressed its willingness to act as a mediator between Russia and Ukraine. As reported by *Al-Ekhbariya*, speaking during an official visit to Moscow in early March 2023, Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal affirmed the Kingdom's support for all efforts to find a political solution to the conflict. His Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov expressed his appreciation for the Kingdom's efforts toward regional and international peace, especially with regard to the crisis between Russia and Ukraine and the conflict in Yemen. [21] At the same time, Saudi Arabia is actively providing humanitarian assistance to Ukraine: 168 tons of aid containing shelter materials, electric generators and medical supplies were shipped by two planes via Poland. Also, the Kingdom signed a memorandum on providing an additional package of humanitarian assistance worth \$400 million. [22]

Speaking about tourism, one should mention ‘energy tourism,’ as the Saudi website *Asharq Al-Awsat* calls a new European trend. Ahead of winter 2022/23, ‘energy refugees’ from Europe booked resorts in Egypt and Turkey to escape exorbitant tariffs for heating. The energy crisis stems from cuts in Russian gas supplies due to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Travel companies were trying to exploit the situation by selling tours to southern countries, primarily Egypt, Tunisia, Turkey and Morocco. As of September 2022, Egypt reported an increase in the number of hotel bookings for the winter period. [23]

In March 2023, *Arab News* published an article on visa-free travel by Dr. Diana Galeeva, the author of books on Qatar and relations between Russia and the Gulf countries. Russia is preparing intergovernmental agreements to allow visa-free travel to 11 countries, including the Gulf states Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Oman. The Kingdom expects Russian tourism spend to reach about \$2.2 billion in 2023. The economic benefits of easing visa restrictions are vital for Russian economy, which has been hit hard by sanctions. Further developments in the Ukrainian conflict, or possible pressure from Washington, may slow down the process. Nevertheless, as recent policies of all Gulf states have shown, they are increasingly prioritizing their national interests. [24]

Discussing the press of the United Arab Emirates, one should have a look at the website *Arabian Business*, which in September 2022 published the results of an opinion survey of Arab youth on the conflict in Ukraine. According to the 14th annual ASDA'A BCW survey, 31 per cent of respondents blame the US and NATO for the start of the conflict, and 18 per cent blame Russia. Moreover, 41 per cent of young people surveyed in the Levant and 29 per cent in North Africa believe the US and NATO should be held responsible, while Gulf youth are more divided on the issue: 22 per cent place responsibility on Russia and 21 per cent – on the US and NATO. [25]

Out of Lebanese media resources, the pan-Arab website *Al Mayadeen* is one of the most prominent ones. On the anniversary of the start of hostilities, *Al Mayadeen* published an article by Ilyas Farhat, a military observer and retired brigadier general of the Lebanese army. Farhat believes that Russia will be victorious in the confrontation with the collective West. The author gives a detailed analysis of the historical background of the conflict since the beginning of the last century and emphasizes that Russia opposes not so much Ukraine, but all of NATO that seeks to divide the state. According to the author, NATO fears that Russia's victory in Ukraine will be the end of

the unipolar world. Farhat points out that the US is involved in the conflict only financially, not losing any soldiers; at the same time it uses Ukraine as a testing ground for confrontation with Russia. The political commentator believes that the current conflict may drag on, but Russia will win in the end. [26] Also, a columnist for the online version of the Lebanese newspaper *Ad-Diyar* discusses the Russia-China clash with the US. He believes that ongoing global developments are beginning to shape a multipolar world that has its roots in the Middle East. [27]

Hamzah Rifaat, an analyst for *Al Mayadeen English*, notes that Ukraine does not desire peace since it spurns veteran US diplomat and former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's call for de-escalation of the conflict and pursuing negotiated peace with Russia. The author believes that multi-billion dollar military aid packages from the US artificially prolong hostilities, and the lack of negotiations between the parties further fuels the conflict. [28] In another article published to commemorate the 24 February anniversary, Rifaat gives his opinion on the roots of the conflict, linking its onset to NATO's historical expansionist ambitions in Eastern Europe. Taking a look at the first year of hostilities, he draws readers' attention to the human and material losses, the flow of refugees into Europe, and the entire world struggling with the disastrous economic repercussions of the conflict. Rifaat writes that the sanctions strategy "constitutes a quintessential hegemonic power play where the world is being divided into pro-Ukraine and pro-Russian camps with little room for neutrality or sanity to prevail." He emphasizes that most countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East have refused to isolate Moscow. [29]

Another *Al Mayadeen* author, Hannan Hussain, writes that the protracted conflict has cost the global economy more than 1.6 trillion dollars, 11 thousand counterproductive sanctions against Moscow are driving ideological rifts between countries, and Western offensive diplomacy has not brought the parties any closer to peace. The author criticizes Washington and NATO for

the lack of proactive diplomacy and pressuring neutral countries into taking sides at the expense of energy and economic stability. He calls for an immediate, people-oriented, diplomatic approach to resolving the conflict in Ukraine. [30]

As for Jordanian online media, there is a great English-language website *Jordan News*. Articles by Osama Al Sharif, a journalist and political commentator based in Amman, deserve special attention. In one of the articles, the author makes a reference to the US-British invasion of Iraq, the US occupation of Afghanistan and Israel's aggression towards Palestine, drawing a parallel with the Ukrainian crisis. He notes the failure of the UN as an instrument of conflict resolution, and also draws our attention to Western selective justice and double standards in implementing international law. The West rushes to accuse Russia, but at the same time turns a blind eye to the events in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine. According to the author, the world's post-1990 legal structure finds itself in a state of entropy and beyond repair. In conclusion, he writes that justice is blind in its impartiality, but in the case of Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan and other countries, Western justice is not only blind, but also mute and deaf. [31]

In another article, Al Sharif examines Russia's efforts to normalize ties between Syria and Turkey against the backdrop of the developments in Ukraine and rising tensions between Moscow and the West. He notes that the operation in Syria was a great success: there are now permanent naval and air bases, which have allowed Russia to extend its military and political influence across the Mediterranean to Libya and the Red Sea as far as Sudan. The author compares Russia's military presence in Syria to that in Ukraine, noting that Russia seeks to secure its gains in Syria and bolster its shaky alliance with Turkey, which supports Syrian rebels. A rapprochement between Damascus and Ankara would deal a solid blow to the Syrian opposition and would likely put an end to Turkish military support for rebel

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groups in Idlib. He concludes that this would allow Russia to focus on the Ukrainian crisis. [32]

International news commentator Faisal Al Yafai draws a parallel with Syria, noting that a conflict on the scale of the Syrian war has vast external consequences that indirectly, yet immensely affect politics, economics and social order of countries far beyond the conflict. Therefore, it can be tempting to freeze the conflict to deal only with externalities such as refugees or border skirmishes. The author notes that in a year the conflict in Ukraine may be frozen. With both sides determined to escalate hostilities, there is no hope to resolve the situation diplomatically any time soon. Al Yafai stresses that frozen conflicts benefit the aggressor, because they remove the momentum from their opponents, and rely heavily on other political events to distract supporters. Eventually, something unexpected happens that pressures third countries to find a solution, however imperfect. [33]

As for the economic consequences for the country, *Jordan News* refers to a statement by Jordan's Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, Nasser Shraideh, announcing that the Kingdom's GDP grew by 2.7 per cent in 2022. Shraideh particularly emphasizes the role of national industry and the growth in foreign investment and tourism sector in the rise of GDP. Thus, despite global economic challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the repercussions of the Ukrainian crisis, Jordanian economy has not suffered. [34] According to Dr. Yusuf Mansur, economist and former Minister of State for Economic Affairs, inflation in Europe and the US has slowed and is expected to continue to slow during 2023, though interest rates do not seem to be heading toward a recession. Meanwhile, Jordan, which was facing a 13-year long depression, saw slight gains in terms of growth rates in 2022. This is due to the fact that the Kingdom benefits when the world goes into a recession as the prices of imports, which are almost three times its exports, fall. Mansur also notes that prices of certain commodities, such as wheat, may rise due to shrinking supply. In 2022, Jordan got

lucky because wheat purchases had been made before the Russian-Ukrainian conflict began; however, the cost of wheat will rise in the future. [35]

In conclusion, the Arab media covers the events in Ukraine comprehensively, paying attention to particulars; it reports on both political and economic matters of the conflict. It should also be noted that journalists and political commentators around the world tend to view the Russian-Ukraine conflict in the context of its repercussions for their native countries, especially focusing on the economic aspect.

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

IGOR DOBAEV. CENTRAL ASIA AT THE CROSSROADS  
OF GEOPOLITICAL TENSIONS

*Keywords: Afghanistan; geopolitics; geopolitical processes; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Uzbekistan; Tajikistan; Turkmenistan; Central Asia; Central Asia.*

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*Abstract. The article focuses on understanding the modern political processes taking place in the sovereign states of Central Asia in the post-Soviet period, basing on the historical past of these territories. It is shown that the current borders of the Central Asian states were determined by the Bolsheviks, and with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the former borders of the union republics became interstate ones. This*

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*circumstance has given rise to many ethnopolitical and ethnoterritorial conflicts, both within specific states and in interstate relations. It appears that the place and role of the new states of the region in the modern system of international relations have not yet been finally determined. In this regard, experts are considering a wide variety of scenarios for the development of the geopolitical situation in the region in the future.*

Central Asia is a vast region that includes five post-Soviet states: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. From the point of view of traditional geopolitics, it is part of the "Heartland" - a term that was introduced into scientific circulation at the beginning of the twentieth century by the Englishman H. Mackinder. Starting from the middle of the 19th century the struggle for control over this region was waged by two powerful rivals of that time - the land-based Russian Empire and the maritime Great Britain.<sup>1</sup> Russia won.

The history of the region is rich in events. The Huns, the warriors of Alexander the Great and Genghis Khan, passed through there, in the 14th century a powerful Timurid state emerged with its capital in Samarkand, but in the 16th century it was replaced by the Bukhara Khanate. In the middle of the 16th century, having defeated the army of the Delhi Sultans, the descendant of Genghis Khan and Tamerlane, Babur, founded the Great Mughal Empire in part of the territories of modern India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. However, by the 19th century the political map of the region changed: on the territory of Central Asia and part of modern Kazakhstan there were three monarchical states: the Kokand and Khiva khanates and the Bukhara Emirate. The Kokand Khanate, with its capital in Tashkent, included most of modern Uzbekistan and the southeastern part of Kazakhstan; Khiva - present-day Turkmenistan, part of Uzbekistan and the southwestern territories of Kazakhstan, and the Bukhara Emirate (Bukhara) - Tajikistan and part of Uzbekistan.

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In the last third of the 19th century Central Asia became part of the Russian Empire. The Khanate of Kokand, which offered fierce resistance to the advance of the imperial troops, was abolished and directly incorporated into Russia, and the Emirate of Bukhara and the Khanate of Khiva became its vassals. All these territories were united into the Turkestan Governor-General with a centre in Tashkent, which included the Transcaspian, Samarkand, Semirechensk, Syrdarya and Fergana regions, as well as the Bukhara Emirate and the Khanate of Khiva, which were vassals of the Russian Empire. Gradual but large-scale diverse reforms began, with the goal of organically incorporating Turkestan into provincial Russia. However, these large-scale plans were not implemented due to the outbreak of the First World War, the coups d'état of 1917 and the civil war that followed.

Events during the civil war in Central Asia developed dynamically and dramatically. Soviet power was established there after the October events of 1917, and already in January 1918, the counter-revolutionary separatist uprising of the local Moslem nobility, who tried to create "Kokand Autonomy" in the Fergana Valley, was suppressed. However, it was not possible to completely localize this movement; as a result, the Bolsheviks soon encountered a broad movement of rebels – Basmachism, the ideological basis of which was pan-Islamism and pan-Turkism (Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks and Turkmen are Turkic peoples; Tajiks belong to the Iranian branch of the Indo-Europeans; they all profess Islam, predominantly Sunni).<sup>2</sup>

If in 1918 the main centre of resistance was the Fergana Valley, then in 1919–1920 it spread throughout almost all of Central Asia. Inciting religious fanaticism and acting under the slogan of "holy war against the infidels," the leaders of the gangs pursued the goal of separating Turkestan from Soviet Russia and restoring medieval feudal orders there. The leaders of the Basmachi had a relatively wide supporter base, which included the bai, most of the commercial and industrial bourgeoisie and

the Moslem clergy, who had significant influence on the mentality of the bulk of the local population. This made it possible to put together numerous gangs, freely navigate the developing situation, and also be supplied with weapons, ammunition, food and horses.

The main forces of the Basmachi were defeated by the Red Army in the early 20s, but they and their Western patrons managed to escape final defeat. In 1924-1925 the Basmachi, with the active assistance of Great Britain, reorganized and received centralized control under the leadership of Ibrahim Beg, the nuker of the former Bukhara emir. He was actively supported, trained, supplied with weapons, ammunition and equipment by a number of foreign intelligence services, primarily Great Britain. After heavy losses during military clashes with the Red Army, the Basmachi, as a rule, went to the territory of Afghanistan, where ethnic groups related to them lived (and still live - *I. D.*) in the northern provinces - Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmens, etc. There they regained their strength, replenished their troops with people and weapons, receiving comprehensive assistance, first of all, from the British (to a much lesser extent, the territory of Persia (since 1935 - Iran - *I. D.*) was used for the same purposes). As a result, in the second half of the 20s the Soviet government undertook harsh political pressure on Afghanistan. As a result, the Afghan Emir Amanullah Khan sharply limited assistance to the Basmachi, forcing some of them to leave the country.

However, at the end of 1928, a rebellion broke out in Afghanistan with the support of the British, as a result of which power was seized by the adventurer Bacha-i Sakao ("son of the water-carrier"), closely associated with the British intelligence services, an ethnic Tajik, with whom the "best intelligence officer of all times and peoples" Colonel of British intelligence Lawrence of Arabia allegedly worked. As a result, the position of the Basmachi in Afghanistan has improved dramatically. In this regard, Red Army troops twice (in April 1929 and June 1930) crossed the Afghan border, destroying Basmachi gangs and their

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support infrastructure throughout the north of Afghanistan, right up to the spurs of the Hindu Kush. Bacha-i Sakao was overthrown and killed. King Nadir Shah, who came to power in Afghanistan, after a harsh Soviet ultimatum, disarmed part of the Basmachi troops, and in the spring of 1931, the bases of the irreconcilable Ibrahim Beg were struck by a sudden attack by the cavalry of nomadic Turkmen, who were well paid by the Afghan government, apparently with Soviet money. By this time, the mood of the Central Asian population had also changed and its representatives began actively join voluntary Basmachi-fighting detachments, and in the mass mentality and in the mass mentality bandits were no longer perceived as "basmachi" (raiders), but as "dushmans" (enemies) and "shaitans" (demons).

Only after this the Basmachi movement began to fade away. However, their individual attacks were recorded until 1939-1940. The last Basmachi groups disappeared after the Soviet Union and Great Britain agreed in 1942 to stop subversive activities from the territory of Iran and especially Afghanistan, which once again emphasizes the geopolitical conditionality of the Basmachi in the territory of Soviet Central Asia. However, in the post-Soviet period, in some Central Asian states Basmachi leaders are often glorified for political purposes, presented as fighters who defended the interests of their peoples.

In the post-revolutionary period in the USSR, national-territorial demarcation of the territory of the Central Asian region was carried out. As a result of this process, which lasted from 1925 to 1936, four union republics were formed within the Soviet Union: the Kirghiz SSR, the Uzbek SSR, the Tajik SSR and the Turkmen SSR. Part of the territory of the former Central Asian possessions of the Russian Empire, during the national-territorial delimitation, was included in the formed Kazakh SSR, making up the southern part of this union republic. Kazakhstan also received serious gains in the north due to the alienation of the territories of the Cossack troops from the RSFSR. Thus, administrative boundaries during the Soviet period often changed their

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configuration, thereby creating a potential for conflict in the future. At that time, the Central Asian region was called "Central Asia and Kazakhstan."

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, on the initiative of the first president of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, this region began to be called Central Asia in 1992. The former Soviet republics became sovereign states with the borders that were determined by the Bolsheviks. As already noted, four republics (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan) are inhabited predominantly by Turks, and Tajiks belong to the Iranian branch of the Indo-European family of peoples. Tajiks, like Persians and Pashtuns, are descendants of the ancient Aryans, and the Tajik language can be called a dialect of Persian (Farsi). The total area of the countries of Central Asia is slightly more than 4 million sq.km, and the population is about 70 million people. The region is an immeasurable depositary of natural resources. There are huge deposits of oil (Kazakhstan), gas (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan), gold, copper, uranium, in total more than 100 types of mineral raw materials. However, due to the presence of a number of conflict-producing factors, including those caused by the historical past, it is necessary to talk about positive or negative medium-term and long-term trends in the development (up to 2050) of the situation in the region with a certain degree of caution.

In particular, the region is expected to experience accelerated demographic growth of titular ethnic groups, with a simultaneous reduction in the share of the Russian and Russian-speaking population and a decline in the influence of Russian culture. As a result, according to some data, by 2050, if current trends continue, local elites will no longer speak Russian, with all the ensuing consequences. The serious rejuvenation of the indigenous population is accompanied by the growth of ethnic, religious and political extremism. We are talking, first of all, about expanding the ideology and practice of pan-Turkism and radical Islamism. The predominantly raw materials nature of the

economies of the countries of the region, stagnation of industrial production, job cuts lead to demodernization of public life, powerful migration processes, primarily to Russia, which is fraught with the emergence and strengthening of ethnic enclaves in the most developed regions of the Russian Federation.

Almost all states in the region have developed authoritarian and neo-patrimonial regimes, which, as we know, are very unstable. The preserved traditional social system of local societies, which is based on clans, tribes and tribal unions, is not able to predetermine the modernization of these states. Authoritative domestic political scientist A.B. Krylov notes that although "in reality, all post-Soviet states have all the mandatory attributes of Western democracy: parliament, political parties, public, non-governmental and human rights organizations, universal suffrage; a declared commitment to the principle of separation of powers, etc., but at the same time all this is of a decorative nature and has little effect on the real mechanism of functioning of power and on the daily life of society."<sup>3</sup> The above can be directly applied to all post-Soviet states of Central Asia.

In connection with the borders arbitrarily drawn during the Soviet period, international and interethnic conflicts arise and develop, including based on the lack of water resources and unfair, according to some experts, water distribution.

In January 2022, during the attempted coup in Kazakhstan, external observers, perhaps for the first time, heard about the Kazakh zhuzes (senior, middle and junior), the tribes and clans included in their composition, and the primacy in the state of representatives of some clans of the senior zhuz. However, it should be borne in mind that similar traditional social systems exist in other Central Asian countries, as well as in some Russian subjects. Of course, these points must be well known and taken into account in practical activities. As the main character of the famous Soviet-era film, Red Army soldier Sukhov, said, "The East is a delicate matter...".

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The consequence of the conflict-generating factors noted above is the “fragility” of the states in the region, the instability of their development, and high security risks. All this leads to centrifugal tendencies, which are aggravated by external influences. During the Soviet period, the Central Asian republics were politically and economically isolated from the outside world and external influence. They were predominantly connected with other Soviet republics. In the post-Soviet period, the dominant factor in the foreign policy of these states was the multi-vector nature of foreign policy and foreign economic relations. The multi-vector policy lies, first of all, in the fact that the leaders and elites who have come to power in new states do not want to again become “younger brothers” not only in relation to Russia, but also to other states. However, this kind of multi-vectorism, especially in relation to the collective West, is extremely dangerous. Numerous successful and failed “color” coups in the post-Soviet space, inspired by Western intelligence services, clearly indicate this.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the attempted coup in Kazakhstan revealed that for many years the West, primarily the United States, had been purposefully creating a network of “liberal-oriented” NGOs and NCOs in this republic. Their number ranges from 16 to 20 thousand. Thousands of similar structures operate in other Central Asian states, especially in Kyrgyzstan. As a result, this republic has become a record holder for “color” events, where they were recorded three times: in 2005, 2010, and 2020. At the same time, in Turkmenistan, artificially closed from external influence, there were no attempts to carry out “color” coups, since there are no Western or pro-Western NGOs there, and the authorities harshly suppress all attempts to create them.

The position of the West in the economies of the countries of the region has also become significant. In particular, in Kazakhstan, up to 70 per cent of assets in the oil industry ended up in the hands of Western “partners.” Since the main oil fields are located in the west of the republic, in the settlement territory

of representatives of the junior Zhuz, they fell into serious socio-economic dependence on Western oil companies, which have the main assets in this industry. Of course, Western companies are interested, first of all, in making a profit, and not in spending on social projects. Therefore, most of the local population lives poorly, one might say, in poverty, and the country's leadership has not solved this problem in any way. Moreover, the country's leaders lined their pockets. It is not surprising therefore that the first protests with economic demands began precisely in the west of Kazakhstan, and only then, being just the detonator of subsequent processes, they developed on the territory of the senior Zhuz, primarily in Almaty, the former capital of Soviet Kazakhstan.

From the point of view of economic macro indicators in Central Asia, the leading positions are occupied by Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, where the economy, due to the presence of oil and gas, is of a raw material nature. At the same time, the level of productive economy is extremely low, hence the shortage of jobs and high unemployment. Impressive indicators of annual GDP, as well as per capita GDP, are recorded here. However, the distribution of income received is clearly inequitable, resulting in widespread poverty. There are no hydrocarbons in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, so these states are experiencing difficulties economically. According to official statistics, the poorest state in the region is Tajikistan, followed by Kyrgyzstan. As for Uzbekistan, under the current president Shavkat Mirziyoyev, who came to power in 2016, the socio-economic situation in the republic is clearly on the rise, which allows this country to take a leading position in the Central Asian region. At the same time, it should be noted that the shadow economy is overdeveloped in the region, often associated with crime, primarily drug trafficking, mainly from Afghanistan.

The above conflict-generating factors create high security risks in the region. In general, experts consider the following

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scenarios for the development of the geopolitical situation in the region for the future:

1. *"Reintegration of the post-Soviet space."* Initially, in the post-Soviet period, the emphasis was placed on the reintegration of the post-Soviet space within the CIS, which turned out to be an amorphous organization. Then the process of accelerated bilateral and multilateral integration began. First of all, this concerns the union state of Russia - Belarus. At the same time, multilateral military and economic cooperation with other sovereign states is developing. The CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization) emerged, a military-political structure that includes Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In January 2022, this organization demonstrated its effectiveness by providing assistance to Kazakhstan, which was subject to terrorist attacks. The Eurasian Economic Union also operates, which includes all of the specified CSTO members, except Tajikistan. The central link of these integration projects is the Russian Federation, without which they would not be possible. In addition, Russia has military bases located on the territory of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which strengthens its geostrategic potential. However, despite these integration projects, there is no need to talk about recreating a mini-USSR, due to a number of reasons. Nevertheless, Russia's influence on diverse processes in Central Asia is undeniable, and these positions should be purposefully strengthened.

2. *Western liberal project.*<sup>5</sup> This project consists of attempts by the collective West to exercise control over the Central Asian region. Great importance is attached to strengthening its geostrategic potential, since the region borders the main geopolitical competitors of the West: Russia, China and Iran. Let us note that after the events of September 11, 2001, the United States already had military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, developed military cooperation with a number of states in the region, their attempts at a military presence in the Caspian Sea were recorded, etc. However, the consolidated West is clearly

stagnating, and the actual flight of American troops from Afghanistan has sharply weakened their position in the region. As a result, there are currently no states willing to provide their territory for the deployment of American bases.

Another direction of Western expansion in the region is geo-economic interests, which consist in control over resources, primarily hydrocarbons. Already today, Western companies have serious assets in this area. In order to ensure the stability of its economic presence and protect itself from possible nationalization, the West is interested in weak states that are dependent on them, the constant turnover of local leaders and elites, for which purpose "colored" events are instigated.

3. *"Sinocentric world."* We are talking about strengthening China's geopolitical influence on the states of Central Asia. Beijing believes that the Central Asian region plays a strategically important role in ensuring the national security of modern China. As for Russia, this region acts as a kind of deep rear for it, especially since China has a common border with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Since the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (East Turkestan), where Moslem Turks live, is located in the north-west of China, the PRC is in no way interested in implementing in Central Asia the pan-Turkist project initiated by Turkey, or the Western liberal model, which fuel separatist processes in East Turkestan. Unlike other centres of power, China is implementing its geopolitical project in the region, first of all, through strengthening its geo-economic positions, which are bearing positive results. At the same time, the full achievement of the goals set by China in this region is hardly possible due to the wary attitude of the local population and elites to the historical past in their relations. In addition, the negative perception of China and the process of "Sinoization" is fueled by the internal policies of the PRC in East Turkestan.

4. *"Pan-Turkist integration."* As noted, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are predominantly inhabited by Turks. Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, there

was only one Turkic state – the Turkish Republic. In the post-Soviet period, five such countries appeared on the political map of the world: four in Central Asia and Azerbaijan. In the 1990s in Turkey, there reigned an atmosphere of euphoria regarding the possibility of implementing a pan-Turkic project to unite all Turkic states, with the leading role of official Ankara. However, Turkey did not and does not have the necessary resources to implement such a large-scale project, especially in Central Asia, where Turkey's pan-Turkic aspirations are opposed by global players – Russia, China and collective West. In this regard, in recent years, Turkey has set a course for gradually strengthening its influence in the region, relying on "soft power" (economy, education, science, etc.), creating a new structure in 2021 – the "Organization of Turkic States." Taking into account the above, the implementation of the "pan-Turkic integration" project seems unlikely, especially since the local elites are not eager to exchange one "big brother" (Moscow) for another (Ankara).

5. *"Islamist integration – caliphate."* The vast majority of the region's population are Sunni Moslems. Since the late 80s here, as in other parts of the post-Soviet space populated by Moslems, not without outside influence, a process of politicization and radicalization of Islam was observed<sup>6</sup>. However, the practical experience of implementing the ideas of radical Islam had an excessively negative impact on the local population. The civil war in Tajikistan, the failed coup d'état in 2005 in Uzbekistan, inspired by the "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan" (now the "Islamic Movement of Turkestan"), the participation of local Islamist militants on the side of the "Islamic State" in Iraq and Syria<sup>7</sup>, and finally their attempted coup d'état in January 2022 in Kazakhstan seriously undermined the position of Islamists in Central Asia. However, it seems premature to discount them in the general balance of geopolitical forces.

6. *"Central Asian integration"*. Individual states in the region are in no way subjects of regional, much less global,

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geopolitics. They act only as objects of these processes. Their economic and political integration could increase their geopolitical potential. This process, as practice shows, is facilitated in those regions where there is a central leading state. There is currently no such state in Central Asia. For a long period, Kazakhstan claimed this role, but after the events of January 2022, it lost its chances for regional leadership. Uzbekistan's potential is growing, but it is still not enough to achieve a leading position. Moreover, as already noted, there are numerous conflicts, open and latent, between the countries of the region. As a result, the states of Central Asia interact much more actively with extra-regional actors than with each other, and regional institutions and organizations find themselves increasingly dependent on other states.

Some analysts do not exclude the complete collapse of statehood in Central Asia. However, the likelihood of such a scenario occurring is extremely low. In conclusion, we can conclude that the Central Asian states are not subjects of regional geopolitics. Here, at this stage, the Russian, Chinese and Western geopolitical projects dominate, and the pan-Turkic and Islamist ones are secondary, but they should not be discounted.

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VALENTINA SCHENSNOVICH. GEOPOLITICS OF TAJIKISTAN IN MODERN CONDITIONS AND STRATEGIC TASKS OF THE STATE. *Analytical Review*

*Keywords: Central Asia; Republic of Tajikistan (RT); strategy; polycentric world; international cooperation; COVID-19 pandemic; geopolitics; regional security; integration; sovereignty; independence; priority development programs; CIS; SCO; EAEU; CSTO; labor migration.*

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*Abstract. The review analyzes the development of the Republic of Tajikistan in the conditions of the formation of a polycentric world. The cooperation of Tajikistan with regional and global actors during the COVID-19 pandemic is studied, the main trends in the system of geopolitical coordinates of Central Asia are determined.*

## **Introduction**

Global processes affect geopolitical dynamic of Central Asia. Into the emerging geostructure of the world Russia, China, India are making their own allowances, which historically closely interacted in Eurasian space and became centres of force in the new conditions. During the pandemic period, threats to the national security of Central Asian States remain, proceeding from Afghanistan, as well as unresolved ethno-territorial problems on the Tajik-Kyrgyz border.

Since the “National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the period up to 2030” requires significant resources for its implementation, thus in the “Activity Plan of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan on preventing impact of potential risks of coronavirus pandemic in the world on the national economy” (2020) not only internal resources, but also resources of international donors (UNDP, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, OSCE, USAID) were drawn on.

## **Geopolitical Trends in Modern Tajikistan**

Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor of Russian-Tajik (Slavyansky) university G.M. Maitdinova (Dushanbe, RT) [1] notes: during the pandemic, Tajikistan, like many countries of the world, used the tactics of “self-isolation” from the surrounding states: border closure, termination of air and rail transportation. The spread of the pandemic in the country has led to a weakening of ties between industrial and agricultural production and supply of goods, interruption in the work of civilian aircraft

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and railway communications, tourism, etc. Consequence of border closure was the rise in price of food and basic industrial goods, and due to the quarantine measures introduced in countries of traditional stay of labor migrants fell the inflow of remittances.

In the process of spreading the pandemic in Tajikistan, it was necessary: the development of anti-crisis measures, the accelerated construction of hospitals, the involvement of external medical and financial resources, tactical changes in priorities in the work of foreign affairs agencies. In the "Activity Plan of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan on preventing impact of potential risks of coronavirus pandemic in the world on the national economy" (2020), special attention is paid to: providing the consumer market abundance with essential products (including flour, oil, meat, sugar, eggs, vegetables); increasing production and preventing price increases; ensuring timely fulfillment of the state's social obligations; to support vulnerable segments of the population; providing tax concessions to small and medium-sized businesses, reducing and postponing non-tax inspections; attracting financial assistance from international financial institutions.

The effects of the pandemic on the country's domestic and foreign trade were especially acute. They also affected the volume of foreign direct investment, tourism and services, and the transportation sector. According to expert evidence, the total damage to the country's economy will be about \$2 billion. Tajikistan needs to develop projects for external investors, such as construction and joint ownership of interstate railways, new large international airport, a textile mill; it is necessary to invest external financial resources in the extraction and processing of rare metals and rare earths, in the creation of enterprises of large chemistry, modern agricultural and travel holdings. In addition, demographic processes in the republic in the future will require a significant increase in jobs, houses, schools, kindergartens, where serious investments are needed.

Since the beginning of 2020, Tajikistan has received humanitarian assistance from 43 countries of near and far abroad. In the context of the pandemic, the interaction of the republic with the states of the Central Asian region in a bilateral format has intensified. The Government of Uzbekistan sent medicines, medical staff and a mobile clinic to Tajikistan, Kazakhstan sent a batch of flour to Tajikistan. Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan also gave their support.

Mutual assistance of the states of the region, which themselves are experiencing a negative impact of the global crisis and the coronavirus pandemic on the state of their economies, indicates that the stable development of economic and public life after the pandemic will depend on the efforts of regional cooperation and solidarity.

The top three donors which provided assistance to Tajikistan were Uzbekistan - about \$2.5 million, China - about \$2 million and Russia - \$865 thousand. In the context of rising cases of coronavirus, Iran and India also provided significant humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian aid from international donors came in the form of medicines and food products. Only in the first half of 2020, Tajikistan was assisted in the fight against the pandemic or foreign donors expressed a desire to allocate grants: Swiss Development and Cooperation Office; UNICEF; the European Union; the USA; the World Bank; The Asian Development Bank and others.

On December 17, 2020, there was hosted the approval ceremony of the draft of the UN Development Program (UNDP) "Assistance in eliminating the economic consequences of COVID-19 through improving living conditions, employment opportunities and regional cooperation in the Ferghana Valley of the Republic of Tajikistan," for the implementation of which the Russian Government allocated \$2 million. The project provides for the strengthening of cross-border cooperation with Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, the exchange of best practices between the countries of Central Asia. The implementation of two UNDP projects is

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also important for the social development of the republic: "Strengthening communities in the Khatlon region and the Rashta valley of Tajikistan" and "Youth for business and innovation," funded by the Russian Federation. Since 2014, Russia and UNDP have implemented in the country nine projects worth \$17 million. Due to cooperation between Russia and UNDP, over the past three years, hundreds of jobs have been created in Tajikistan, more than 15 thousand people have been able to improve their professional level.

The pandemic demonstrates the interconnectedness and interdependence of states not only of the region, but also of the world, since no state can independently and effectively fight the crisis and ensure its own national security. In this regard, Central Asian states need a regional roadmap to counter the pandemic. The unity of the countries of the region around common goals should be carried out on the basis of a series of summits that determine the political vector in the name of regional stability in organizations such as the CIS, CSTO, SCO, EAEU.

It is obvious that regional integration in the post-pandemic period will be strengthened around the EAEU, therefore, the expansion and deepening of the EAEU is becoming relevant. Tajikistan hasn't made a political decision to join the EAEU yet. During the pandemic period there increased the importance of the SCO and the EAEU as multilateral institutions in conditions when due to the confrontation of the United States with China and Russia most global governance tools, including the UN, may be less effective. Considering, that the core of the SCO's economic potential is made up of the world's largest economies (Russia, China, India, Iran, etc.), which prefer to interact economically with states regions in a bilateral format, it is important to discuss within the SCO opportunities for joint implementation of major country projects built-in national strategies.

A reflection of the increased attention of external actors to Central Asia was the emergence of new formats of interaction.

There is interest in the “5 + 1” format from many external forces, for example: “C5 + 1” with the USA, “5 + 1” with the PRC, in 2020, the C5 + Russia format was created. In this format consultations were held: Japan - “Japan plus Central Asia”; Korea -South Korea plus Central Asian countries. Development of a common EU strategy in Central Asia and its participation in the ministerial dialogue of foreign policy leaders the region and the formation of the C5 + EU dialogue platform indicate the increased geopolitical role of the Central Asian region.

### **Iranian-Speaking Alliance Afghanistan - Iran - Tadzhikistan**

Analyzing the formation and development of the Iranian-speaking cultural and economic alliance “Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran” G.M. Maitdinova [2] considers its modern state in conditions of geopolitical change. The author focuses attention on joint communication and energy projects of these three states, assessing the potential for their interaction. Special attention in the article is paid to the analysis of the influence of Afghan factors for integration processes in the Iranian world. The researcher concludes that Tajikistan’s relations with Iranian-speaking states which are close culturally and geographically, harmoniously fit into the concept of its multi-vector foreign policy. At the same time, rapprochement with Iran and Afghanistan was due not only to the civilizational community of the three states, but also to pragmatic considerations: in particular, Tajikistan needed the transit potential of neighboring states to implement its communication strategy, and the creation of Afghan-Pakistani, Afghan-Iranian-South Asian, Caspian-Iranian-South Asian corridors were not of interest only from an economic point of view, but also had deep humanitarian meaning. The author states: appearance in the Central Asia of the Iranian-speaking geopolitical field allowed Tajikistan not just acquire an additional resource for development, but make a

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breakthrough beyond the closed post-Soviet borders into the Islamic world.

Such interaction, the researcher emphasizes, contributes to the restoration of the geopolitical integrity of the region and the modernization of the countries of Central Asia, and in the future may lead to the formation of a new important pole development in a polycentric world. In the foreign policy of Tajikistan, an important place is occupied by cooperation with Afghanistan and Iran due to the cultural, historical, religious and linguistic proximity of the three countries. Ensuring national Tajikistan's interests and maintaining stability in the region depends on interaction between them.

Iran-Afghanistan-Tajik cooperation in the post-Soviet period began to develop during the years of independence of Tajikistan. During the period the inter-Tajik conflict of the 1990s, Iran helped stabilize the situation in Tajikistan, playing an important role in reconciling the opposing parties (1997). The sovereignty of Tajikistan, which was perceived as part of Iranian power elites as part of "Greater Iran," forced official Tehran to think about creating a new geopolitical Tehran-Kabul-Dushanbe axis, which could compete with Turkish integration projects carried out in Central Asia and the Caucasus. For Tajikistan, Iran was one of the key investors, which also has the richest reserves of oil and gas. As for Afghanistan, the main interest for Dushanbe was its transit opportunities, using which the Tajik state could withdraw from communication blunt axe. In addition, Afghanistan, like Iran, is rich in minerals, but their development is difficult due to lack of necessary infrastructure. Rapprochement of the three countries should have contributed to the large-scale construction of railway lines from Iran through Afghanistan to Tajikistan. Great importance was also attached to the implementation of energy projects.

The global changes that took place at the beginning of the third decade of the 21 century made adjustments to the implementation of national development strategies and to

geopolitical processes in Central Asia as a whole. National Development Strategy up to 2030 adopted in Tajikistan.

In November 2018, in his appeal to the country's parliament, President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon reminded of the implementation of four strategic tasks - communication, energy and food security, secondary industrialization. The first strategic task - communication - was achieved by implementing a number of joint projects with China, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. The industrialization of the country should be the new national objective. The President emphasized that by 2030 the share of industry in the gross national product (GNP) should increase 22 per cent, but this result can only be achieved by the secondary industrialization. This requires high technology, sea and land communications, but the main thing is long-term stability. All this can ensure regional cooperation. Coronavirus pandemic has become a serious test for Central Asian states in 2020-2021 and threatened the sustainable development of Tajikistan. The interaction of industrial and agricultural production has weakened, the supply of goods has been disrupted, a forced break came in the work of civil airlines and railways, the tourism industry as well ran into difficulties. Not less the national interests of Tajikistan were damaged by the aggravation of military-political situation in Afghanistan, where the Taliban movement banned in Tajikistan and in the list of terrorist organizations came to power. The Afghan crisis of 2021 increased the risks associated with drug trafficking and the activities of extremist groups in Afghan-Tajik border. In addition, it placed in jeopardy the implementation of joint communication and energy projects - functioning of the KTAI transit corridor (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Iran), construction of a bridge over the river

Pyanj in Kunduz and the Jaloliddin Rumi - Lower Pyanj railway, as well as the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline (TAPI), implementation of Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Pakistan-India electricity transportation plan (CASA-1000), etc.

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The most painful for Tajikistan were the complications associated with the construction of the trans-Afghan railway Termez-Mazari-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar. It would allow Dushanbe to strengthen cooperation with the states of South Asia, gain permanent access to their markets, as well as access to the southern seaports of Karachi and Gwadar, which would give the opportunity to diversify already existing logistics flows to the Iranian ports of Chehbehar (Chabahar) and Bandar Abbas, increase commercial transit, reduce the cost of freight transport and their time periods. The road was planned to be built in 5 years, spending about \$5 billion on credit from a consortium of international financial institutions. Realization this project would not only bring communication and energy benefits to Tajikistan, but also provide an opportunity to restore the economy of Afghanistan and begin its modernization. Iran and Pakistan are also interested in the construction of the highway, the potential of their ports of Chehbehar (Chabahar) and Gwadar is proposed to be used as part of the project. In the implementation of the project "Termez-Mazari-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar" India and China were also involved. The reconstruction and operation of the port of Gwadar is carried out with the direct participation of China as part of the implementation of the Belt and Road initiative, and the modernization of the port of Chehbehar was carried out with the participation of India.

After the start of the highway, the main trade routes will pass through India, Iran, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan or through India, Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Afghan crisis 2021 negatively affected the construction time and cost of the project. Prolonged political uncertainty in the country raises construction risks and reduces its investment appeal, and the failure of Afghan authorities to secure transit forces participants of the project to look for ways to solve communication problems. For Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, which have no access to sea routes, alternative communications are especially important, for example: access to the Caspian Sea through ports

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in Turkmenbashi (Turkmenistan) and Aktau (Kazakhstan) and then, through Baku (Azerbaijan) or Bender-Enzeli (Iran) to a key point – the port of Chekhbehar (Chabakhar). Such a route allows the meridional integration of the states of Central and South Asia. Iranian and Afghan vectors, the researcher believes, in Tajikistan's foreign policy, which is guided firstly by its national interests, remains one of the key. This means that Tajikistan will participate in solving the "Afghan problem" and develop partnership with Iran, despite all the difficulties and contradictions.

The basis of Afghan policy of Tajikistan is an ideology of "security through development" which implies assistance to Kabul in the restoration and development of the national economy by coordinating and implementing infrastructure projects (building communications, encouraging investment, trade facilitation, etc.). Characterizing relations between the two countries at the modern stage, the author notes: for the first time in a long time, a new stage of cooperation has come in Tajik-Iranian relations. The new Iranian President Said Ibrahim Raisi made his first official visit to Tajikistan (September 15-16, 2021). During this visit, the parties agreed on the development of a long-term program of trade economic cooperation to 2030 and signed eight new international legal instruments on interaction. Presidents of Tajikistan and Iran called on Afghanistan to form an inclusive government that would include representatives of all ethnic groups. At the anniversary summit of the SCO in Dushanbe (September 2021), the admission procedure was started for Iran as a full member of the Organization. In the context of the geopolitical transformation of Central Asia, the intensification of the integration processes of South and Central Asia, as the Afghan state stabilizes politically, there are all opportunities for intensification of cooperation in the Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran triangle, strengthening the economic and humanitarian components of the trilateral union of Iranian-speaking states.

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The history of Iranian-Afghan-Tajik relations at the beginning of the 21 century shows that the alliance among the three Iranian-speaking states and their integration are based primarily on cultural and linguistic affinity. However, in modern geopolitical processes, the civilizational factor is no longer decisive for rapprochement, and the activation of Iran in Tajikistan and the difficult political situation in Afghanistan largely "outweigh" centripetal trends. It is not surprising that in these conditions, a priority for Tajikistan is cooperation with the states of the post-Soviet region, with which it is associated with allied relations within the CSTO and partnership relations within the CIS and SCO.

### **Social and Economic Development of Tajikistan**

In an article by professors of the Tajik State Pedagogical University named after S. Aini M.H. Malikova and A.K. Khusainov [3], the socio-economic and cultural development of the republic over the years of independence discussed. Even during the inter-Tajik conflict, the new government was developing a program to restore the ruined economy of the country and its further revival. Four programs appeared: energy, takeaway of the country from communication isolation, food program and the program of industrial and agricultural development of the country. At the same time, the fulfilment of the tasks of these programs began as the inter-Tajik conflict was resolved, when the country was in a political and economic crisis. Legislatively there were defined goals and strategic directions of building a market economy in Tajikistan, a new policy and ideology of an independent state.

Emomali Rahmon's government paid focused attention during the years of independence to the state of energy, the sustainable work of which was necessary for the entire national economic complex, and the Tajik opposition purposefully destroyed the objects of the national economy. The government

undertook emergency measures to revive energy industry during the transition period.

In 1992-1994 destroyed power grids, electric substations and units, small power plants were repaired and put into operation. In parallel, the Pamir, Khorog-1, Sangtua-1, Sangtua-2 and Rogun hydroelectric power plants were built, the renewal of which is under special control - its completion doubles electricity production in the republic; allows the country to provide full energy independence. At the same time, work began on small energy programs on small rivers and their feeders. Electricity production increased from 17 billion kWh in 1991 to 21 billion kWh in 2020. For revival of the energy economy of the republic 32 construction investment companies were involved in, investing \$2.5 billion US. As a result, activity of energy economy of the country fully resumed, the pace of construction of energy objects accelerated; electricity is used in labor-intensive processes of industry, agriculture, construction, communications, culture, everyday life.

By 1994, the volume of carriage of passengers and goods down public roads in the Republic of Tajikistan was significantly reduced, by 1995 cargo transportation decreased by 6.4 times, passengers - by 136.7 times.

These shortcomings had to be eliminated in the shortest possible time and measures to attract foreign investors functioned effectively here. In general, over the years of independence more than 53 investment projects have been used for these purposes, more than 2,200 km of roads of international importance were built. With involvement of only investments, but also specialists, equipment, facilities of a number of neighboring states there was built the 354-kilometer Dushanbe-Boston-Chanak highway with improved road quality and much more, which contributed to the exit of Tajikistan from complete communication isolation. By the river Pyanj there were constructed several bridges connecting Tajikistan and Afghanistan. The targeted construction during the years of

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independence of the Kurgan-Tyube-Kulyab, Dushanbe-Yavan-Kurgan-Tyube railways was important for economic development; airlines Dushanbe-Moscow, Dushanbe-Minsk, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Turkey, India, UAE, Saudi Arabia opened etc.

In 2015, Tajik Air and Somon Air aircraft rendered air services to the population in 33 directions to nine countries of near and far abroad.

The social well-being of the country, and first of all its villages, largely depended on dealing with the agrarian issue. Therefore, the government led by Emomali Rahmon assumed issues on the revival of the country's agricultural sector. Over the past 15 years in agriculture there has been implemented investment projects for the amount of 3.7 billion somoni, and at present more nine projects worth 1.5 billion somoni are being carried out.

During the years of independence, the restoration and development of industry, construction and communications was required. A row industrial areas was formed, including: two oil enterprises, three cement plants, textile plants, construction of three enterprises of the chemical industry, two large metallurgical enterprises for processing of non-ferrous metals, gold. Over the past nine years, the country's GDP has increased by 7.5 per cent.

The total volume of the state budget increased during this period from 12 billion to 23 billion somoni.

The development of sectors of the economy and an increase in domestic gross production became the basis for the successful development of education, science, culture. Government of sovereign Tajikistan tried to create a solid financial fund of education, science and culture. Independent Tajikistan became a full member of the UN and a number of world and regional - state and public political organizations. 178 countries confirmed the status of sovereign Tajikistan more than 100 countries maintain economic and cultural relations with it. In 40 countries

of the world, embassy and consular services are fully functioning. Today Tajikistan's authority in the world community has grown. It became a member of the CIS, CSTO, UNESCO, World Bank, World Health, Asian Development Bank, Islamic Bank, World Ecological Organization for the Salvation of the Aral Sea, etc.

### **Prospects for the Development of Relations between Russia and Tajikistan**

Relations between Russia and Tajikistan are developing in political, economic, military, cultural spheres. Between the two countries permanent political contacts at the top level have been established. In recent years, the volume of Russian-Tajik foreign trade turnover has been growing. There has been a success in the development of strategic partnership between the two countries and in other areas.

D.A. Umerov [4], an applicant for the Institute of Law and National Security of the Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration under the President of the Russian Federation, pays special attention to problems in Russian-Tajik relations. From this perspective the article considers situations related to the construction of the Rogun hydroelectric power station, labor migration and possible Tajikistan's entry into the EAEU, recommendations are given to solve these problems.

Speaking about the water and energy cooperation of Russia and Tajikistan, the author notes that relations between the two countries will be effective if competitive advantages of each other are used. Rogun hydroelectric power station has become a particular symbol, the national idea of Tajikistan. This competitive advantage must be skillfully dealt with. However, the country does not have enough financial resources, foreign investment is needed. Tajikistan is particularly interested in the development of hydropower to meet the needs of the state. At the same time, new jobs would be created, which is relevant for the country with its excessive labor resources. In addition, electricity

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can be supplied both to the neighboring Central Asian republics and to the south, to Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, in accordance with the CASA-1000 project. Currently, these issues are partially solved due to the launch of the first two units of the Rogun hydroelectric power station. Efficient use of water and energy resources gives chance to intensify integration cooperation between countries of the region. Providing allies with the necessary resources to which electricity belongs is an important condition for the success of integration processes.

Limited access to water resources in Central Asia has a high multiplicative effect on various socio-economic aspects of the development of the countries of the region. In 2020, Tajikistan, due to water shortages, was unable to fulfill its obligations to supply electricity to Afghanistan. If current climate trends of temperature increase continue, then it will be impossible to implement the project CASA-1000. The energy aspect of this problem is also influenced by international factors, in particular construction by Uzbekistan of nuclear power plant with the participation of Russia, the first stage of which should be put into operation, according to plans, in 2028. It should also be noted that in 2019 Russia proposed Kazakhstan to build a nuclear power plant on its territory, which the country needs, since its energy balance is currently turns mostly on coal.

From a tactical point of view, these actions of Russia can be considered as contrary to the interests of Tajikistan. However, strategically, taking into account the mentioned climate trends, they can contribute to the long-term reliable energy supply of Central Asian countries. Thus, to solve the water-energy problem in Central Asia, various factors influence. Among them are climate trends, relations between the countries of the region, funding problems, etc. Some of them have long-term, strategic nature, while others short-term and essentially tactical one. Both should be taken into account when forming the positions of Russia and the countries of the region relating to the water-energy problem.

## Labor Migration from Tajikistan

In recent years, external labor migration from Tajikistan is growing at a high rate. There are from 1.5 to 2 million migrant workers. Unofficially, more than 1 million people of them are in labor migration in Russia. Over 90 per cent of Tajik migrants go to work to Russia. External labor migration in the Russian Federation helps reduce the level of social tension in Tajikistan. Annually labor migrants send at least 2 billion dollars to Tajikistan. According to the World Bank, in 2018, money transfer accounted for 31 per cent of Tajikistan's GDP. It saves the population of the country from extreme poverty. However, migration flows also have the flipside. In Russia have repeatedly had problems with ethnic criminality, and the Tajik community has questions for Russia, especially concerning living conditions and safety of migrant workers.

To solve the urgent problems of the migration aspect of Russian-Tajik relations, the policy of "integration before migration" is currently being developed. It consists in providing potential migrants with additional information about the culture and history of the destination country. Implementation of the principle "integration before migration" will create conditions for the integration of migrants into Russian society, and not into national diasporas, as is currently happening. If the implementation of such a migration policy is successful there will be less conflict and problems in this area. However, in the long term Tajikistan doesn't get benefits from mass migration because the country loses the most valuable - labor, or human capital. Therefore, the implementation of the principle of "integration before migration," according to the researcher, should be only the first stage in resolving the contradictions of the migration aspect of Russian-Tajik relations.

Option of the policy of circulation of labor migrants, according to the author, best suited to interests both country of origin of a migrant, and the country of his stay. With this

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approach, the goal is to harmonize the strategy and tactics of the Russian-Tajik relations in their migration aspect. It could be proposed in Russian-Tajik relations. But such a policy will be possible only if Tajik labor migrants are able to realize at home the knowledge and skills gained in Russia. Considering that the main economic partner of Tajikistan is Russia, more effectively this task can be solved in the process of developing cooperation between the two countries.

### **Tajikistan's Accession to the EAEU**

Issues of Tajikistan's accession to the EAEU are considered by various experts from different points of view. The theoretical basis for the study of the question of Tajikistan's entry into the EAEU can be the theory of the customs union of J. Weiner. Dynamic effects appear only after longstanding substantial integrative work. Static integration effects, taking into account their short-term nature can be called tactical, and dynamic - strategic. As in other areas of activity, there are some contradictions between them. States and national companies would like to receive the benefits of integration as quickly as possible however it is well known that fast effects become obsolete as quickly.

Within the framework of the EAEU, it is already noted today that the effects of zeroing of customs tariffs in trade between the participating countries have almost exhausted their possibilities, although in 2020 the Union turned only five years old.

Therefore, in the course of Eurasian integration, other integration effects should be included, such as a single industrial, energy policy, digital agenda, and they are the dynamic effects of the customs union. Meanwhile in matters of attracting new members to the EAEU in the first place is occupied, as a rule, by the problems of the implementation of static effects of the customs union. For example, Tajikistan is worried about the prospect of losses of national business in the opening of the Tajik

market for the EAEU countries, since it is less competitive compared to Russian, Belarusian and Kazakh companies. Strategically, dynamic integration effects are no less important than static ones, although they will not appear immediately. Another important point in analyzing the possibility of Tajikistan joining the EAEU is not to consider the Union only in its current state, but to make provisions for future development.

Hard work is underway on Strategy for further development of integration processes within the framework of the EAEU. Experts offer various directions for deepening of this integration. It would be beneficial for Tajikistan to join this work today, because this way it will have the opportunity to take into consideration its national interests in building Eurasian integration for years to come.

For the successful development of relations between Russia and Tajikistan, the researcher concludes, it is necessary to combine skillfully the strategy and tactics of foreign policy activities.

The strategy provides for long-term goals for the implementation of national interests. Foreign policy tactics include short-term actions aimed at realization of the strategy and the use of various monetary circumstances in the implementation of national interests.

The water-energy problem is one of the most important in the Russian-Tajik relations and in the region of Central Asia - it can both open up new prospects in the cooperation of Tajikistan and other countries of Central Asia, and aggravate relations between them. Russia must take part in its solution. Another important problem in Russian-Tajik relations is connected with the mass labor migration of Tajik citizens to Russia. There are many problems in the migration processes of Tajik citizens to Russia, the policy "integration before migration" should be used more widely to overcome them.

However, in the long term, it's necessary to move to the policy of "circulation of minds." Strategically, this policy the most suits both the interests of Russia, and Tajikistan. There are

different opinions in the matter of Tajikistan's accession to the EAEU. Strategically, the dynamic effects of Eurasian integration should be analyzed closely. Realization of the competitive advantages of Tajikistan, according to D. Umerov, it will be the most complete transcendence of the country outside the national framework.

## Conclusion

Central Asian states should coordinate their national development strategies with reference to formation of a new economic system. Projection of the Global Crisis in Central Asia showed the need to develop regional political, economic, humanitarian cooperation, and an accelerated solution to ethno-political problems.

During the pandemic, threats to the national security of Central Asian states emanating from Afghanistan, as well as unresolved ethno-territorial problems on the Tajik-Kyrgyz border remained. In the regions of South and Central Asia it is needed a new security format that would strengthen cooperation among the states situated around the borders of Afghanistan (Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Pakistan, China), and countries with priority interests in the Afghan state (Russia, the US, India).

Tajikistan has always supported regional integration, coordinated its actions with regional actors with implementing of its National Strategy - 2030, sought to develop an agreed position on many pressing issues of regional development, and also took part in the elaboration of common approaches to the prospects for the development of the region in the context of increased globalization.

Researchers emphasize acute problems for Tajikistan: water and energy one, the problem of migration and the country's entry into the EAEU. When solving them, it is necessary to take into account the interests of Tajikistan, Russia and the dynamics of Eurasian integration.

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## ISLAM IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

VLADIMIR KIRICHENKO. RUSSIAN-IRANIAN RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE RF SPECIAL MILITARY OPERATION IN UKRAINE

*Keywords: Iran; Russia; Ukraine; special military operation; cooperation.*

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*Abstract. The article is devoted to the impact of the Special Military Operation in Ukraine on relations between Iran and the Russian Federation. Tehran was sympathetic to Russia's launch of a special military operation in Ukraine. Iran's position can be explained by the fact that Ukraine is not a direct neighbor of Iran, economic relations between the two states are poorly developed, while the Iranian authorities consider Russia a strategic partner. Cooperation between Russia and Iran countries covers energy, military and trade spheres. The development of relations between Iran and the Russian Federation is of particular importance in connection with the international sanctions imposed on both countries.*

Official Tehran's reaction to Russia's launch of the Special Military Operation (SMO) in Ukraine was balanced and restrained. On February 24, 2022, after it began, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Iranian President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi had a telephone conversation. During the conversation, the Iranian President expressed his understanding of Russian security concerns due to the destabilizing actions of the US and NATO in the world.<sup>1</sup>

Iran's position can be explained by the fact that Ukraine is not a direct neighbor of Iran, economic relations between the two countries are poorly developed and are not of particular interest to Tehran. In turn, Russia is increasingly becoming a strategic partner. Apparently, Iran perceives the events in Ukraine as a hybrid war between Russia and NATO.

However, Iran refused to recognize Crimea, Donbass, Kherson and Zaporozhye regions as Russian. This was probably due to fears of getting new sanctions from the West.<sup>2</sup> Iran has been under Western sanctions for more than forty years. For decades, Tehran has accused Washington of meddling in internal affairs, supporting Israel, and deploying military bases in the Persian Gulf. Tehran considers these bases as bridgeheads against the Islamic Republic.<sup>3</sup>

The situation escalated even more in 2019 after the US imposed sanctions against the top leadership of Iran, including Ayatollah Khamenei, as well as the recognition of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)<sup>4</sup> as a "terrorist organization". The extreme point of the deterioration of relations between the countries was the liquidation by the American intelligence services of the head of the Iranian elite Qods<sup>5</sup> detachment, General Qasem Soleimani, in Iraq in 2020.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the interaction of Iran with the Russian Federation in various fields can be considered by the West as support for Russia, including Russia's SMO in Ukraine.

In 2022, the trade turnover between Russia and Iran increased by 15 per cent and amounted to \$4.6 billion, the cooperation between the two countries covers the energy, military and trade spheres.<sup>7</sup>

The main export items from Russia to Iran in the first half of 2022 were: agricultural products (92 per cent of the supply value), cereals (67 per cent), fats and oils (24 per cent). Russia imported from Iran food and agricultural raw materials, as well as chemical products. It should be noted that Iran increased the export of industrial products to Russia by 30 per cent (pumps, machine tools for metalworking, auto parts, and so on).<sup>8</sup>

At the end of May 2022, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak agreed in Tehran with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Mokhber to merge Shetab and Mir payment systems. The meeting also discussed the intention to create a Russian-Iranian oil and gas hub. At the same time, Russian energy carriers would go to Northern Iran, and Iranian ones would be exported to the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>9</sup>

In the context of Western sanctions, the development of the North-South transport corridor connecting Russia, Iran and India<sup>10</sup> has become of great importance for Russia. The length of the route is 7200 km. It runs from the port of Nava Sheva (Mumbai, India) to St. Petersburg through Iran. Transportation of goods will be carried out using sea, river and rail transport. In July 2022, the Iranian fleet successfully completed a trial route from India to Russia and back.<sup>11</sup> On May 17, 2023, a Russian-Iranian agreement was signed on the construction of a section of the railway between the Iranian cities of Rasht and Astara, which will become part of the North-South corridor.<sup>12</sup>

The importance of relations between Russia and Iran for both countries is also evidenced by the fact that the Russian President made his second foreign visit after the start of the SMO to Tehran in June 2022. It should be noted that during the visit of V.V. Putin, the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) and Gazprom signed a memorandum on energy projects worth about \$40 billion. This includes the development of two gas fields (Kish and North Pars) and six oil fields.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, the Russian President took part in the summit of the "Astana Troika", which took place in Tehran.

This platform, created in 2017 to develop measures to normalize the situation in Syria, unites Russia, Iran and Turkey.<sup>14</sup>

Military cooperation between Iran and Russia also continues. In early 2023, it became known that Iran would buy Russian Su-35 fighter jets.<sup>15</sup> There is a version about the use by Russia in Ukraine of Iranian drones Shahed-136 and others. The Russian side claims that in fact Russian Geran-2 and other domestically produced drones are used. According to Western media citing Iranian sources, Tehran has announced its readiness to supply Russia with surface-to-surface missiles of the Fateh and Zolfagar types. The supply agreement was reached during the visit of the Iranian delegation to Moscow on October 8, 2022.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, Iran officially denies the supply of weapons to Russia. Such cooperation between Russia and Iran is very likely, but it makes no sense for either side to make it public.

Rumors about the supply of Iranian drones to Russia caused a hysterical reaction from the leadership of Ukraine. On December 17, 2022, the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry called Iran an "accomplice in Russia's military aggression". Kyiv called on the Islamic Republic to immediately stop the supply of weapons to Russia under the threat of "severe responsibility".<sup>17</sup>

In March 2023, Ukrainian President Vladymyr Zelensky imposed new sanctions against 141 legal entities. This time, in addition to Russian companies, the sanctions list included enterprises from Iran and the United Arab Emirates. In particular, Kalashnikov Concern JSC, Almaz-Antey Air and Space Defense Concern JSC, Iranian companies Mahan Airlines, UAV companies Shahed Aviation Industries Research Centre and Paravar Pars Company and others fell under the sanctions. Sanctions are imposed for a period of ten years, among other things, provide for the freezing of assets, restricting trade operations, stopping the fulfillment of economic and financial obligations, imposing a ban on the transfer of technology, intellectual property rights, etc.<sup>18</sup> For its part, Washington has also imposed export restrictions against the Iranian companies

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mentioned above, mainly for production of drones that US authorities believe are being used by Russia in Ukraine.<sup>19</sup>

In March 2023, US media reported that the Russian armed forces, as a result of a special military operation, were able to seize some of the American and other Western weapons previously transferred to Ukraine. Furthermore, the Russian military then transferred part of the captured weapons to Iran. According to the American press, this was done in order for the arms factories in the Islamic Republic to try to create similar weapons of their own production based on American designs.<sup>20</sup> It has been argued that the weapons transferred may have included anti-tank and man-portable air defense systems.<sup>21</sup>

In November 2022, Mikhail Podolyak, adviser to the head of Vladimir Zelensky's office, called for strikes against Iran, explaining this precisely by the supply of Iranian drones to Russia. Responding to these accusations, Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian stated that the drones were indeed handed over to Russia even before the start of the special operation in Ukraine.<sup>22</sup>

On the night of January 29, 2023, a drone attack took place on the Iranian military production complex in Isfahan. Later, explosions occurred at several more military-industrial facilities of the Islamic Republic.<sup>23</sup> The Wall Street Journal, citing American officials, said Israel was behind the attacks.<sup>24</sup> After that, adviser to the head of Zelensky's office, Mikhail Podolyak, published a post on Twitter, which, in particular, he said: "The explosive night in Iran is the production of drones and shells, oil refineries. Ukraine warned you."<sup>25</sup>

The Iranian Foreign Ministry considered this Ukrainian statement "consent with the involvement of this country in the attacks on the industrial complex" in Isfahan.<sup>26</sup> After that, the Ambassador of Ukraine was called "on the carpet" to the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

It should be noted that the situation in Ukraine may have a negative impact on the Iranian nuclear deal. The next round of

negotiations that took place in September 2021 reached an impasse. Iran is interested in continuing the dialogue on the nuclear deal, but is unlikely to agree to its resumption on the terms offered by the United States. The removal of sanctions from Iran can greatly contribute to the restoration and development of the country's economy. However, after the events of 2022, the parties are unlikely to come to a compromise. The fact is that the West is still confident that Iran is supplying Russia with military drones of its own production for use as part of a special military operation.<sup>27</sup>

The Ukrainian crisis has launched a new phase of international polarization. Sweden and Finland join NATO. Russia and China are expanding the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS, which is considered NATO's most prominent competitor in the East. In this regard, it is important that in November 2022, Iran submitted an Application to join the BRICS.<sup>28</sup>

Russia played a key role in Iran's admission to the SCO.<sup>29</sup> In November 2022, the Mejlis of Iran by a majority vote approved a bill on the accession of the Islamic Republic to the SCO. Iran's entry into the organization takes place against the backdrop of a growing interest among the member countries of the organization in the creation of new mechanisms of international politics aimed at forming a system of relations that is not oriented towards the West.<sup>30</sup>

In April 2023, it became known that Saudi Arabia joined the SCO as a partner.<sup>31</sup> It should be noted that this happened against the background of the emerging thaw in relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Improved relations between Tehran and Riyadh contributed to the return of Syria (an ally of Iran) to the League of Arab States.

Previously, the US Middle East policy was built on the irreconcilable enmity of Iran and Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia - the oldest and most reliable ally of the Americans - began to move away from the influence of the United States. The

establishment of friendly relations between Iran and China was largely facilitated by the rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Russia. A big role in this was played by the fact that Saudi Arabia is not involved in the Americans' attempts to limit oil prices. In this matter, the kingdom acted together with Russia, contributing to their rise.<sup>32</sup>

At the same time, Iran and Russia actively contribute to the improvement of relations between Turkey and Syria, as well as Syria and other countries of the region. Thus, in April 2023, the delegations of Turkey, Syria and Iran, headed by deputy foreign ministers, gathered in Moscow for technical consultations on the possible restoration of diplomatic relations between Ankara and Damascus. The next meeting on Turkish-Syrian issues was held on May 10, 2023 in Moscow. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said that it was constructive and Turkey is set to continue the dialogue.<sup>33</sup> In May 2023, Syria returned to the Arab League. This event, in fact, is a project of Riyadh, which it carried out in close coordination with Damascus, despite the rejection of this step by Washington<sup>34</sup>. The visit of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi to Syria on May 3, 2023, is the first visit by an Iranian head of state in the last ten years, and confirms the close relationship that exists between Syria and Iran.<sup>35</sup>

The next meeting on Turkish-Syrian issues was held on May 10, 2023 in Moscow. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said that it was constructive and Turkey is set to continue the dialogue.<sup>36</sup>

From the very beginning of the Syrian crisis in 2011, V.V. Putin supported the Syrian leader in every possible way. Russia supplied Bashar al-Assad with weapons, protected him in the UN Security Council, and also kept the Syrian army and economy afloat. Direct military assistance to Syria by the Russian armed forces was of no small importance for Bashar al-Assad himself.<sup>37</sup>

In recent years, Russia's authority in the Middle East has grown, while the United States is losing its position in the region

due to many domestic political problems. However, it is too early to say that the US will leave the Middle East.

In March 2023, Iranian leader Ayatollah Khamenei delivered a speech in which he touched on some important foreign policy issues, including the situation in Ukraine. Khamenei reaffirmed Iran's position on the war in Ukraine, saying that Western claims about Iran's involvement in the war are false. The Iranian leader also said that the US was responsible for starting the war in Ukraine, which arose from US efforts to expand NATO to the East.<sup>38</sup>

On May 21, 2023, the G7<sup>39</sup> summit ended in Hiroshima (Japan), marked by anti-Russian and anti-Iranian statements by the heads of participating countries. Later, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani strongly rejected the G7 leaders' claims regarding Iran's nuclear program and providing Russia with unmanned aerial vehicles for use in the war in Ukraine. "As we have repeatedly said, the Islamic Republic of Iran never supplied drones to Russia during the Ukrainian crisis and continues to push for a political solution to the crisis," an Iranian official said.<sup>40</sup>

In the summer of 2023, an agreement between Russia and Iran on visa-free group travel should come into force. The document will give citizens of both countries the opportunity to visit another state for tourism purposes in groups of up to 50 people for a period of no more than 15 days without issuing a visa.<sup>41</sup>

On May 29, 2023, the Ukrainian parliament supported a draft resolution on the imposition of sanctions against Iran for a period of 50 years. The draft resolution was submitted to the Verkhovna Rada by President Vladymyr Zelensky. The sanctions include a complete ban on trade operations with Iran, a halt in the transit of resources, flights and transportation on the territory of Ukraine, a ban on the withdrawal of capital by Iranian residents from Ukraine, and so on.<sup>42</sup>

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After the start of a special military operation in Ukraine, Russia and Iran stepped up cooperation. It is of particular importance in connection with the international sanctions imposed on both countries. In fact, both countries are currently opposed to the West.

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## OLGA BIBIKOVA. PROBLEMS OF LEBANON, SYRIA AND JORDAN AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF FOREIGN POLICY CHANGES IN THE REGION

*Keywords: Special Military Operation (SMO); Lebanon; Syria; Jordan; USA; sanctions; Arabic press.*

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*Abstract. Until recently, when considering the position of the Arab countries in relation to Russia, it was necessary to take into account their ties with the United States. Today the situation has changed. At the same time, the “Arab street” is predictably supporting Russia. The formation of a more independent view of the ruling elites on what is happening in Ukraine has become a new factor in Middle East politics. A comparative analysis of the policies of Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan makes it possible to understand the factors that influenced the development of the positions of these countries regarding the SMO.*

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Russia's Special Military Operation (SMO) in Ukraine was met with mixed reactions in the Middle East. At the UN, representatives of the Arab countries for the most part supported the resolutions condemning Russia. Over time, some representatives began to avoid voting or to explain to Russian diplomats behind the scenes that it was impossible to vote otherwise due to pressure from Western countries.

However, inside the Arab states, despite the lack of complete and truthful information about what was happening, a different opinion was formed, which was predetermined by the growth of anti-American sentiment, which intensified against the backdrop of the events of recent decades in Iraq and Syria, as well as a result of Washington's consistent persecution of Iran and Shiite organizations (including in the Arab countries) which took part in the fight against ISIS.

Not the last role was played by the authority of Russia and its predecessor, the USSR, which traditionally advocated the interests of the Arab countries. Thus, the reaction of the Arab countries to the Russian Special Military Operation in Ukraine was not what the West expected. Most of the Arab countries, thanks to the consistent policy of our diplomacy, quickly realized that the United States and NATO are behind Ukraine's actions.

In the future, the rapprochement occurred between Russia and some Arabian states to the detriment of the United States, as well as the emergence of China as a new player on the map of the region, raised hopes for the stabilization of the situation (including in Syria, Yemen and Iraq) and the economic recovery of the region. In addition, China, by taking over the organization of diplomatic contacts between Tehran and Riyadh, has achieved significant results on the path of reconciliation between Iran and Saudi Arabia. In this context, conflict situations in the Middle East were reconsidered and plans were outlined to resolve them.

Nevertheless, within the framework of the UN General Assembly, most of the Arab countries condemned the Russia's SMO that began in Ukraine. Thus, on February 24, 2022, the

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Lebanese Foreign Ministry issued a statement condemning Russia's actions in Ukraine, calling them an "invasion", and called on Moscow to immediately stop hostilities. Then Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdallah Buhabib tried to soften his position in the Nida al-Watan newspaper, saying that with regard to the events in Ukraine, Lebanon stands for the observance of the basic principles of international law. It is curious that this statement was condemned by representatives of the Lebanese diaspora in Moscow. And a little later, Ali Hamia, the Lebanese labor minister, said that the minister's opinion was not agreed with the government. The absence of a clear position of the Lebanese government can be explained by the fact that Lebanon at that time was on the eve of the end of the presidential term. Michel Aoun, who was then head of the state (from 10/31/2016 to 10/30/2022), wanted to see his son-in-law Gibran Basil, the leader of the Christian Free Patriotic Movement, as the successor. However, the latter in November 2020 fell under US sanctions. He was accused of corruption and links to the Hezbollah organization.<sup>1</sup> Supporting the accusations against Russia, as some leaders of other states did, was also risky, especially since after the explosion of 3 thousand tons of ammonium nitrate in the port of Beirut (08/04/2020), which destroyed the elevator, the first aid came from Moscow: at the direction of Putin 5 transport aircraft from Russia brought wheat to Lebanon.

Until now, it has been argued that the deep economic crisis in which Lebanon finds itself is the work of its corrupt authorities. According to the World Bank, Lebanon is facing its worst financial crisis over the 150 years.<sup>2</sup> Today it is clear that the crisis was provoked from outside. As the independent US news site The Grayzone noted, "Washington has suffocated Lebanon and its neighbors with an aggressive economic war, clearly designed to paralyze the country and weaken the Shiite organization Hezbollah, one of the most active resistance forces in the region, which has successfully resisted US and Israel plans, helped Syria fight against ISIS and al-Qaeda, drove out the Israeli

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army after two decades of brutal military occupation of southern Lebanon.<sup>3</sup>"

It is known that the United States forced the country's leadership to refuse the help of rich Arab countries, as well as Lebanese emigration, to protect Lebanon from the ongoing Israeli attacks in the border area.<sup>4</sup>

The crisis in Lebanon is the result of a US strategy to crush the so-called "axis of resistance" where Hezbollah is a key player. In 2017, it prevented Jabhat al-Nusra militants from entering Lebanese territory. Thus, it defended the sovereignty of Lebanon in cooperation with Christian, Sunni and Druze militias, as well as with the Lebanese National Army.

In addition to Hezbollah, Syria and all those who prevent Washington from using the region and its subsoil for their own purposes are in the "axis of resistance". The most powerful sanctions imposed by the United States against Iran and Syria rebounded on the Lebanese economy, and military operations in Syria provoked an unprecedented outflow of refugees, some of whom took refuge in neighboring Lebanon and Jordan. According to unofficial data, the number of refugees in Lebanon amounted to more than 2 million people, with a population of 8 million. Naturally, Lebanon is not able to provide livelihoods or employ such a number of refugees. At the same time, assistance to refugees from specialized UN organizations is minimal. Those who managed to obtain refugee status from the UN can count on only \$13 per month.<sup>5</sup>

The practice of confiscation of savings abroad also played an important role. This practice is based on the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA, 10/28/1977), "which allows the President of the United States to issue special executive orders in the area of the economy in response to possible threats to America's national security".<sup>6</sup> Today, such measures are especially actively used against Iran and foreign organizations affiliated with it, which include, for example, the Lebanese Hezbollah, which acts on the side of the government of

Bashar al-Assad in Syria. In Iran itself, the British authorities blocked the assets of the Mellat bank, saying that the bank was involved in financing Iran's nuclear program. Thus, the applied sanctions can be considered as an "instrument of political pressure".<sup>7</sup> In 2018, the US Treasury, as well as 5 Arab states, imposed sanctions against the leaders of the Hezbollah movement, which was included in the list of terrorist organizations.<sup>8</sup> That same year, the US Treasury accused the Central Bank of Iran and Al-Bilad Islamic Bank of financing Hezbollah and imposed sanctions against them.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the United States imposed sanctions on wealthy Lebanese living outside the country, who, for fear of being accused of supporting terrorism, were forced to refuse to help their homeland. These actions deprived Lebanon of several billion dollars in cash that members of Lebanese families abroad sent home to their relatives. It should be noted that the Lebanese diaspora numbers more than 12 million people, which is significantly more than the population of the country.

Thus, US sanctions against Lebanon prevented the diaspora, as well as the Gulf states, from helping to restore the Lebanese economy. Let me also remind you that the damage from the recent tragedy in the port of Beirut (08/04/2023) was estimated at 10-15 billion dollars. The explosion turned out to be the sixth (among non-nuclear) in terms of power in the history of mankind.<sup>10</sup> One of the consequences of the explosion was a new powerful emigration from the country.

Measures to weaken Lebanon can also include control over the Lebanese army, which the United States prohibits from receiving weapons from Iran or Russia. With great fanfare, the Lebanese Air Force was presented US Cessna aircraft, which "in California are used to pollinate the fields."

It is known that Lebanon in the UN votes for anti-Russian resolutions. However, there is no consensus in the country about SMO. And this is not surprising. It should be noted the role of the Association of Graduates of Russian and Soviet Universities,

which took a pro-Russian position. In the current situation, it is very important that graduates (and there are 18,000 of them) have created several websites that publish materials about Russia, including those about the SMO. The most significant materials from the Russian media are published in translation into Arabic. On one of the Lebanese radio stations there appeared a program called "What They Don't Tell You About" (لـك يـقـولـون لـمـا). This program included original materials about the SMO, Ukraine, and even about American biological laboratories scattered around the world. In addition, there were organized several mass meetings, rallies in support of Russia, and on May 9, a demonstration was held in Beirut in honor of the Victory Day.

At the end of May, in Lebanon, at the initiative of the Association of Graduates, the Pravda media platform (<http://www.Pravdatv.org>), which publishes information in Arabic, English and Russian began its work.

In addition, on the initiative of Lebanese graduates, from December 1 to December 5, 2022, the XI meeting of the Union of Arab Associations of Graduates of Russian and Soviet Universities was held. More than 200 professionals with Russian diplomas gathered in Beirut. Among the issues discussed at this meeting was the question of countering Russophobia.

In general, it should be noted that the majority of Lebanese sympathize with Russia. This sympathy has deep historical roots.

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Neighboring Syria is also backing Russia, which has helped Damascus liberate much of the country from militants. The SAR President Bashar al-Assad called Vladimir Putin the day after the start of the military operation and expressed strong support for Russia.

Even before the start of the military operation, there were statements that Damascus would recognize the DPR and LPR as sovereign independent states. The position of Damascus was

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confirmed by the statement of the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the SAR, Bashar al-Ja'fari: "Syria supports the position of Russia and its legitimate right to defend their national security against aggressive Western policies.

After the start of the SMO, Damascus was concerned about the consequences that could arise from the development of events. The Syrian Council of Ministers held a mini-session to discuss the consequences of the military operation for the Arab Republic. Naturally, the Syrians feared that Russia would withdraw its troops. However, this did not happen.

The reduction of the Russian military contingent in Syria and the transfer of some units to the Ukrainian front only slightly affected the tactical capabilities of the Syrian troops opposing the militants. In addition, since most of the country has been liberated, there has been a general decrease in the intensity of hostilities on the Syrian front, although airstrikes on Syrian territory continue.

The Syrian government pays great attention to the return of its citizens who have taken refuge in neighboring countries. Damascus has repeatedly declared amnesty for those who fought on the side of the opposition. According to a joint statement by the interdepartmental coordination headquarters of Russia and Syria, as of early May 2023, 2,435,508 Syrians returned to the country.<sup>13</sup> The return of Syrian refugees to their homeland is one of the key issues on the domestic political agenda.

The US sanctions have hurt the Syrian economy by restricting cash flows, equipment, and curtailing exports. The presence of the United States in northeast Syria and its control over oil and gas production deprives Damascus of important income: all pre-war oil production in Syria was 380 thousand barrels per day, or about 18.5 million tons. Without taking into account the cost at \$60–70 per barrel, this makes \$1.1–1.2 billion.<sup>14</sup>

The weakening of the financial base affected the country's economy. The price of bread has doubled, the price of gasoline has nearly tripled. Climatic and environmental disasters have

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been added to the deterioration of socio-economic conditions. In the summer of 2021, Syria, already vulnerable to water supplies, experienced its worst drought in 70 years. Foreign NGOs sounded the alarm, as they were convinced that more than 5 million people in Syria are on the verge of starvation.<sup>15</sup> As a result of the drought (as well as Turkish misconduct in the upper reaches of the river), the water level in the Euphrates River has decreased, which has negatively affected energy generation. Agricultural lands have not received proper irrigation. Before the invasion of ISIS militants (a terrorist organization banned in Russia) into Syria, the country annually produced up to 4 million tons of wheat, in 2018 only 1.8. Under these conditions, the constant supply of humanitarian aid from Russia, including after the devastating earthquake, has become an important factor in food security. In addition, the drought caused new displacements of the population, forced to leave their dry lands and move to less affected territories.<sup>16</sup>

These climatic disasters, as well as the long war with ISIS, have deprived the country not only of vital energy sources, but also of rich agricultural resources. In the Jazira region, animal husbandry has practically disappeared, cotton fields have come under Turkish control, grain fields have been burned and need to be rehabilitated. Before the war, agriculture and oil production together gave the country about half of its GDP.

The country's leadership is particularly concerned about the presence of the US military (900 people) in the northeast of the country. The US authorities in the Raqqa region began to create a "Free Syrian Army", which includes the leftovers from ISIS<sup>17</sup>. The goal of the "army" is not only to destabilize the situation in this country, but also to force Russia to fight on two fronts. It is obvious that the liberation of this region will also require great efforts by the international community, since here, in addition to the United States, the interests of Turkey and Kurdish armed groups are still tied up.

Syria is also interested in our victory because it needs to receive international support in the issue of returning the territories occupied by Turkey in Idlib in the north-west of the country.

The most difficult is the return of Idlib. The fact is that during the hostilities, the militants who lost but were spared and their families (including the Uighurs)<sup>18</sup> were brought there. Thus, a multinational colony has gathered here, hostile to the legitimate authority in Syria. In addition, this region, with its four million inhabitants living in dire sanitary conditions, has shown high incidence rates during the COVID pandemic. Families of the militants and the remaining locals are in difficult conditions, although the ceasefire established in March 2020 is maintained despite fairly frequent violations.

Naturally, civilians suffer the most from these skirmishes. The local population is in a state of information vacuum, and since possible information comes only from the leaders of the militants, the political situation outside of Idlib is interpreted from the point of view of anti-Syrian and anti-Russian positions.

It is not surprising that in Idlib they condemn the Russian operation, drawing graffiti on the walls of houses in support of Kyiv. Even before the start of the Russian military operation, the Syrian-Ukrainian businessman Tariq al-Jasim announced the recruitment of volunteers for his detachment, which suggested the participation of foreign mercenaries in the Donbass on the side of Kiev. Today, his detachment, consisting mainly of Syrian opposition fighters, is stationed in Odessa, where he simultaneously oversees the drug trade.

As for the return of the territory of Idlib to Syria, we must remember how in the 1930s Turkey (with the help of France) took over the territory of Alexandretta / Iskanderun, arranging a fictitious census and a pseudo referendum, as a result of which this territory (now Hatay) became part of Turkey. It looks like Ankara may use a similar scenario.

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The territory of Idlib is 6,097 km<sup>2</sup>, which is twice the territory of the state of Luxembourg (2,586 km<sup>2</sup>). A strategic highway passes through Idlib, linking Latakia, Syria's main seaport, with Aleppo, the country's economic capital. There are settlements with Sunni, Alawite, Christian and even Druze populations. The Idlib problem was discussed in September 2021 at a meeting between the presidents of Russia and Syria. Without naming Turkey directly, the Russian president acknowledged the obstacle posed by Turkish forces in the Syrian project to liberate Idlib: "The main problem, in my opinion," said V.V. Putin, is that foreign armed forces remain in certain areas of the country without the approval of the United Nations and without your permission".<sup>19</sup>

It should be noted the impact of the strengthening of relations between Russia and Saudi Arabia on the general situation in the region and, above all, on the attitude of the Arabian states towards Syria, which once had a negative attitude towards Damascus. The return of Syria to the League of Arab States means not only the strengthening of the Arab ranks, but also the indispensable return of the still occupied Syrian territories. This will undoubtedly be followed by the participation of rich Arab countries in the restoration of the Syrian economy, which in turn will affect both the growth of their prestige and the improvement of the socio-economic situation in the entire Arab East.

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Changes in the political climate in the Middle East are perceived somewhat differently in the Kingdom of Jordan. 2023 pleased the Jordanian people with the marriages of members of the royal house: first, the eldest daughter of King Abdullah II of Jordan and Queen Rania, 26-year-old Princess Iman, married a businessman of Greek origin Jamil Alexander Termiotis, after which the engagement of the Crown Prince of Jordan Al-Hussein

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was announced with Saudi Arabian citizen Rajwa Khaled bin Musaed bin Saif bin Abdulaziz al-Saif. However, there was a scandal within the ruling family 2 years ago, or rather an attempt to overthrow the ruling king Abdullah II and replace him with a half-brother.<sup>20</sup>

It was alleged that Prince Hamzeh<sup>21</sup>, who claimed the throne, managed to rally opposition forces in the kingdom, including the leaders of some Arab tribes, as well as high-ranking officers in the security services. The root cause of what happened was the late King Hussein's refusal of the ladder / seigneurial right of succession, according to which power is transferred from the elder brother to the next brother in age. Thus, Jordan, following Saudi Arabia, switched to the traditional / majority inheritance system adopted in most countries of the world, which was facilitated by intrigues within the family on the eve of the death of King Hussein.<sup>22</sup> The plot involved Ibrahim Awadallah, a high-ranking dual-citizen official who was also an economic adviser to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

What explains the role of Saudi Arabia in the conspiracy? The fact is that the Saudi dynasty is suspected of wanting to take away from Jordan the status of the guardian of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The monarchs of Jordan since 1924 (they are the closest descendants of the Prophet Muhammad) have been officially recognized as the guardians of the Temple Mount, known to Moslems as Haram al-Sharif or the Noble Sanctuary.<sup>23</sup> This is the third shrine among Moslems and the title of its custodian is highly revered. In turn, the king of Saudi Arabia - (Harith al-Haramain) is the keeper of two shrines (Mecca and Medina). Considering the ambitions of Riyadh, which wants to become the leader of the Arab-Moslem world, King Abdullah is afraid of losing his status. Moreover, 60 per cent of the population of Jordan are Palestinians, most of whom do not have the political rights of an indigenous inhabitant of the country, and claim Jordanian territory.

Another problem is refugees from Syria and Iraq. The number of them in Jordan is not exactly known. According to the

UN HCR, there are approximately more than 1.5 million of them in the country (out of a total population of 7 million). Naturally, for Jordan, with its underdeveloped economy, the maintenance of such a number of refugees without the help of the UN is an impossible task. As *Gazeta Ru* noted: "The maintenance of refugees cost the country up to \$1 billion a year, while Jordan itself suffered from financial and environmental problems."<sup>24</sup> The problem of water has become especially acute, because Jordan is among the ten countries most experiencing water shortages. The camps built by the Jordanian authorities to accommodate refugees have practically turned into cities with their own structure. Thus, the Zaatri camp, designed for 60 thousand refugees, accommodated 150 thousand people, becoming the 4th settlement in Jordan in terms of the number of people living in it.

The Jordanian authorities are also concerned that the refugee camps have become breeding grounds for drugs and suppliers of militants to ISIS and its affiliated gangs. This circumstance suggests that radical sentiments persist among the refugees living in the camps.

The current changes in the Middle East in particular the proposed reduction of the role of the United States, are fraught with trouble for Jordan. Since the United States is Jordan's main financial donor. With the predicted reduction of the American presence in the Middle East, King Abdullah is afraid of losing the confidence of his main sponsor – the United States – if he leaves the region. This explains the fact that after Biden took office, the first person to visit Washington was the Jordanian king. The fact is that the United States is the kingdom's main donor in the military-technical and financial spheres. From 1946 to 2018, Jordan received \$22 billion in financial assistance from the United States. Since 2015, the kingdom has received \$1.5 billion worth of military equipment and weapons from the United States.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to the United States, Arabian monarchies also gave money to the economy of Jordan. But Amman's relations with them are not the best either way. The tribes inhabiting Jordan are mostly

of Saudi origin, and still orient themselves towards Riyadh. It should be noted that what is happening on the territory of Ukraine was originally described in the Jordanian press from a pro-American point of view. However, after some time, information appeared from Syria and Lebanon. Jordanian intelligentsia, politicians, public figures and journalists signed a collective petition condemning the media that broadcast materials calling for violence against Russian military personnel and negatively interpreting Russia's position. They called for impartial transmission of information, taking into account the positions of all parties involved in the Ukrainian crisis. In the appeal, the signatories noted that the Jordanian society was divided in opinions about the crisis in Ukraine, however, they were unanimous in their opinion that the media were politicized and biased.

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In general, it should be noted that the enlightened people of the "Arab street" support Russia. Of course, there are those who do not seek to understand the situation, or live in isolation from the changes taking place in the Middle East. However, it is very important that in the upper echelons of power there is a growing understanding of the role of the United States in unleashing the conflict in Ukraine, as well as in the destructive nature of American policy in the Arab world. And this affects the reassessment of the situation in the Middle East, strengthens hopes for an increase in the role of Arab countries in the international agenda. Subsequent events showed that the countries of the League of Arab States perceive the events in Ukraine as one of the next US measures on the path to establishing a unipolar world. The proof of this was the return to the Arab League of Syria, whose membership was suspended during the period of hostilities. It can be stated that the reaction of the Arab countries to the Ukrainian crisis reflects respect for the growing potential of Russian foreign policy.

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## KANYBEK KUDAYAROV. ANALYTICAL CENTRES OF THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA\*

*Keywords: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; think tank; thought factory; brain centre; analytical centre; publication; journal; article.*

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*Abstract. To date, analytical centres of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), continuing its progressive development, form almost half of the total number of regional "thought factories". At the same time, quantitative indicators of the KSA are quite correlated with qualitative indicators expressed in the degree of involvement of university academic circles and the number of scientific papers of the expert community. Despite the differences in the publication activity and other indicators, however, in general, the position of the analytical industry in Saudi Arabia has a fairly positive development dynamics.*

## **Introduction**

The states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) are enjoying rapid economic growth that promotes various fields of activity, primarily innovative projects and modern technologies. However, the development of the analytical industry is also essential for the adequate development of their scientific and intellectual base. To date, there are 16 'think tanks' in Saudi Arabia, almost equalling the total number of analytical centres (AC) in the entire GCC region, which is 22 (excluding Oman). Overall, the UAE has 11 think tanks, Kuwait – 4, Qatar – 5, and Bahrain – 2.

It should be noted that, unlike other states of the Arabian Peninsula, the composition of the expert groups in the analytical centres of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is relatively larger. Another distinctive feature of the Saudi think tanks is their efficiency of providing high quality research and analytics, making the Saudi think tanks superior throughout the GCC countries. They are composed not only of many 'best minds' of the Arabian Peninsula, but also of eminent experts from the countries of the West and South-East Asia, who have achieved tremendous success in establishing and promoting high-tech industries and possess a highly developed scientific and academic infrastructure. Many of the KSA's think tanks are government-controlled organizations with powerful state funding, which to a great extent determines

the number of full-time and freelance experts and scientific developments of the research centres in Saudi Arabia. Being the largest state of the Arabian Peninsula and the GCC, as well as one of the richest countries in the Arab world, Saudi Arabia has a large number of regional and international ACs. This allows for a greater openness to the outside world and, therefore, attracts a greater number of foreign experts, both for research and management purposes, including within the Board of Directors. Experts believe that this has positive effects on building management strategies and their effectiveness.

The rapid development of advanced technologies in various sectors of the economy, as well as in the field of cyber security, environmental and food security and other areas, allows Saudi Arabia to make a breakthrough in its development. Despite the fact that some experts criticize little influence of analytical centres on the state policy in Saudi Arabia, they are still significant for promoting scientific research and boosting efficiency in certain sectors of the state.

This is especially evidenced by the publication activity of analytical centres and their scientific potential.

Nevertheless, without entering into details of the development of think tanks, it would be useful to list think tanks in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and indicate the level of their scientific activity.

This review provides information about 16 analytical centres in Saudi Arabia that cover all the state priority sectors:

1) **Centre for Desert Agriculture (CDA), Desert Agriculture Initiative** is one of the top think tanks in the country that studies, tests and implements sustainable crop production systems. The staff of the organization of over fifty people comprises experts from various countries (USA, EU and China), who work under the guidance of the former director of the Transnational Genomics Research Institute and Clemson University (USA), R.A. Wing. The Centre studies terrestrial ecosystems in order to promote biodiversity conservation and

combat desertification and climate change; explores the possible use of wild and underutilized plants for the development of sustainable farming; as well as studies genome, physiology and development of *Phoenix* (a genus of palm). The primary objective of CDA is to find smart and efficient solutions to produce high quality crops and staple food in order to curb dependence on water, fertilizers and pesticides. Most scientific papers of the Centre are unavailable mainly and are published as a list, which is probably due to certain secrecy of these studies.

2) **Asbar Centre for Studies, Research and Information (Asbar)** was founded in Saudi Arabia in 1994 and is engaged in social, economic and strategic research, as well as sociological surveys. Asbar publishes *Asbar Council: Monthly Report* in Arabic [3] and a number of annual publications in English, including *Report Saudi Water And Food Security: Issues And Strategies*; and *Asbar Council – King Salman Humanitarian Aid And Relief Centre*, which addresses issues of humanitarian assistance to countries and regions in need. [1] The staff of the organization consists of over a hundred local experts. The Centre publishes a monthly report on the most important political, social and intellectual issues.

3) **King Faisal Centre for Research and Islamic Studies (KFCRIS)** was founded in 1983. KFCRIS is as a scientific and educational platform for local, regional and global research in social sciences and humanities. For this purpose, the Centre invites top scientists from various countries on a regular basis. The Centre publishes a lot of periodicals, books and analytical notes, including *The Journal of Linguistic Studies* on the study of the Arabic language; the *Al-Faisal* magazine in Arabic; and *International Journal of Humanitarian Studies*. The staff consists of approximately forty people, mostly citizens of Saudi Arabia educated in the US.

4) **King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Centre (KAPSARC)** is a global energy economy and sustainable development think tank that service organizations and authorities in the Saudi Arabian energy sector. The staff employs approximately seventy experts, both local and foreign specialists.

Most of the local experts were educated at universities in the US and Europe. The organization publishes extensively: periodicals (*KAPSARC Journal Article*, *Instant Insight*, *KAPSARC Oil Market Outlook*); monographs, research and analytical reviews, etc. [11] The Centre focuses on such spheres as evaluation of public investment projects; prospects for transport development and fuel demand; regional energy markets; climate change policy; prospects for the development of global oil and natural gas markets; productivity and economic diversification; economic vulnerabilities of the energy sector. Despite being headed by the Minister of Energy of Saudi Arabian, KAPSARC does not pose itself as an organization affiliated with the government. The Centre's budget is based on donations, which guarantees non-interference from the state. The research programme of the think tank is also drawn up by the leadership of KAPSARC and is not influenced by the government [4, p. 23].

5) **King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST)** develops programmes that support the national research and innovation system, including trainings and research funding in various fields of science. The activities of the analytical centre are reflected in the annual reports [14] and in the news section on KACST's official website. The think tank employs 129 experts.

6) **Gulf Cooperation Council Interconnection Authority** is a joint stock company established in 2001 by the Arab states of the Persian Gulf. The organization deals with energy security and economic development. The activities of the organization are reflected in the annual reports, as well as in the *GCC Grid* periodical [12].

7) **Gulf Research Centre (GRC)** founded by Saudi businessman A. Sager in Dubai in 2000 was later registered in Geneva so that it would be regulated under Swiss NGO laws that require certain management parameters. The GRC leadership believes that this makes the activities of the analytical centre more credible and transparent for its benefactors. The international GRC team of 34 experts studies international

relations, economic development, defence and security issues, as well as environmental issues. Region of the research includes the GCC countries, as well as Iran, Iraq and Yemen. The Centre's numerous works are included in *The Gulf Yearbook*, as well as published as monographs and articles [13]. The organization cooperates with leading research centres in Europe and Asia, and holds international events, such as conferences and round tables.

8) **Rasanah: International Institute for Iranian Studies** analyzes domestic and foreign policy of Iran. The staff consists of 41 Saudi experts. Rasanah's publications include the monthly *Rasanah Issues Iran Case File* [8], the *Annual Strategic Reports*, books such as *Iran's Software Piracy and Digital Militias: Its Threats and Unannounced War Against the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia* (2019) and *Military Institution in Iran Between Revolution and Statehood* (2017), and numerous articles [2].

9) **King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST)** is a world-class science and technology research university. It is headed by T. Chen, ex-chancellor of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST). The organization studies advanced membranes and porous materials; conducts oil engineering studies; explores agriculture in desert conditions; researches cyber security, etc. The works of university scientists are entered into such databases of scientific literature as *Elsevier Scopus Database* and *ISI Web of Knowledge*. The activities of the university are regularly published in *KAUST Insight* [5], *KAUST Discovery* [6] and other periodicals.

10) **King Abdullah Institute for Research and Consulting Studies (KAI)** is one of the thought factories of Saudi Arabia. KAI was established in 1996 as a consulting and research centre in the field of finance and economics, business analytics, legal business relations, etc. KAI management consists of the residents of Saudi Arabia. There is no available information on the number of experts working at the Institute or any publications.

11) **Sustainable Energy Technologies Centre (SET)** is an analytical centre focused on the development of sustainable

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energy technologies, dealing with almost all types of renewable energy sources. The staff is largely represented by local experts and totals of 27 people. SET publishes papers on such projects as the innovative Fresnel collector with a polar solar tracking system for solar-driven polygeneration (electricity and water); development of new solar water heating systems; and boosting the performance of solar photovoltaic (PV) generators. The Centre mainly researches electrical materials; synthetic energy systems; solar photovoltaic systems; hydrogen technologies; nanomaterials; and energy conversion and storage.

12) **King Abdullah City for Atomic and Renewable Energy (KACARE)** is one of the Saudi Arabian think tanks implementing the state policy in the field of development of nuclear energy and renewable energy sources. Also, KACARE supports joint research projects between Saudi Arabia and international academic institutions in order to remain on cutting edge of scientific developments in nuclear power and renewable energy technologies. In 2017, KACARE launched the Saudi National Atomic Energy Project (SNAEP), which consists of four components: Large Nuclear Power Plant (LNPP); Small Module Reactor; Nuclear Fuel Cycle; and Nuclear and Radiological Regulatory Commission

13) **King Salman Centre for Local Governance (KSCLG)** is analytical centre of Saudi Arabia that specializes in the functioning of local government. The centre studies the activities of *muhafazah* (governorates), district, municipal and local councils. The research team consists of nine people, mostly not citizens of Saudi Arabia. KSCLG regularly publishes the *Handbook for Municipal Councilors in Saudi Arabia*, various papers, analytical reviews, etc. [7]

14) **Prince Sultan Institute for Environmental, Water and Desert Research of King Saud University** was founded in 1986 for the purpose of developing and conducting scientific research related to assimilation of deserts and combating desertification in the Arabian Peninsula. The Institute bi-annually publishes the *International Journal of Water Resources and Arid Environments*.

In addition, the organization publishes collective monographs in Arabic on subjects under study.

15) **King Abdullah Institute for Nanotechnology (KAIN)** is one of the top think tanks in Saudi Arabia involved in nanoscience and technology (since 2007). The institute employs 27 researchers; some of them invited experts from various countries. KAIN has high publication activity, judging by the number of articles, which numbered over 90 in 2019 [9]. Overall, KAIN holds 39 patents in the field of nanotechnology.

16) **Naif Arab University for Security Sciences (NAUSS)** was founded by the Arab Interior Ministers Council in Riyadh in 1985. It is the leading centre of the Arab world in the field of studying different aspects of security. In the context of safety research, NAUSS identifies four priority directions: cyber security, environmental security, terrorist threats and combating drug trafficking. NAUSS publishes a number of annual periodicals: *Journal of Information Security and Cybercrimes Research*, *Arab Journal for Security Studies*, and *Arab Journal of Forensic Sciences and Forensic Medicine* [10].

## Conclusion

In conclusion, think tanks in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia make up the most numerous and qualitatively vital stratum of thought factories, now represented by different kinds of organizations: with different structures and forms of management; with diverse staff of experts that vary in numbers, nationality and citizenship; with different types of financing, either through state support or through sponsorship by private individuals and legal entities. Despite the fact that experts maintain that the structures described above have zero influence on state policy, we can confidently state that they play an important role in the development of the state's scientific and analytical potential, since they comprise large expert groups

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represented by university and academic circles, as well as various local, regional and international experts.

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## SWETLANA POGORELSKAYA. GERMANY: ISLAM AND SOCIETY. OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION

*Keywords: Islam in Germany; German Islam; anti-Moslem racism.*

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*Abstract. While the state and Moslem organizations of Germany, in the course of many years of work of the Islamic Conference at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, find ways of interaction with the aim of integrating moderate Islam into public structures on legal paths, the problems of interaction at the level of society still remain. Moreover, sociologists have begun to use the term "anti-Moslem racism" and talk about its strengthening in society. The indigenous population feels not only misunderstood, but also unprotected, moreover, attacked by their own politicians. The article provides an overview of the situation over the past year.*

For 17 years now, German politics, having created a permanent institution of the Islamic Conference under the Ministry of the Internal Affairs, has recognized that Islam in Germany has long ceased to be a religion of temporary contingents of the population, has become, as Minister of the Interiornal Affairs Schäuble stated at the opening of the conference, "a part of Germany"<sup>1</sup> and, therefore, must, like other great religions represented in Germany, find its place in the

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system of institutions of the rule of law state and society. At that time, just over 3 million Moslems lived in the country.

The path traveled over the years has not been easy, but the success of the Islamic Conference is indisputable. Recognizing, albeit very belatedly, the fact that, due to structural deficits in immigration policy from the early 1960s to the late 1990s Germany eventually acquired its own, and very heterogeneous, Moslem community, federal policy made serious efforts towards the integration of Islam capable of this process, involving large Islamic associations and motivating federal states to cooperate with moderate Moslem unions in the same framework in which cooperation with other religious communities is being carried out. Solutions were found to a number of pressing issues in the everyday life of Moslems, for example, regarding the teaching of Islam as part of the school subject "religion" and the training of imams in higher educational institutions in Germany<sup>2</sup>.

Today, the legal, cultural and social situation of the Moslem population in Germany is not comparable to what it used to be, Islam, which is interested in integration, is much better tied into legal, social and social structures than in the early 2000s.

And yet, at the end of June 2023, the concept of "anti-Moslem racism" of the Germans appeared in the media and began to be intensively introduced into the public consciousness, no, not the state and not its institutions, but the indigenous population. The concept of "racism" sounds much more serious than "hostility to Islam" (Islamfeindlichkeit), which from time to time accused the inert, "deep" German population by left-liberal politicians and intellectuals. How does such an accusation correlate with the visible progress in the social, professional and political integration of moderate Moslems? Did the increasing share of Moslems in elite professional communities and in public and political life lead the Germans from their vague and obscure "hostility" to open "racism"? And how can "racism" be manifested in relation to religion in general? The answer is simple: it was not the Germans and their attitude towards

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Moslem fellow citizens and migrants that changed, but the ideological and political climate in the country - after the infamous interdisciplinary "post-colonial studies" came to Germany (branding even Immanuel Kant a "colonialist"), as a part of the collective West, was overtook by a fashionable and in the English-speaking world for a long time no longer new interdisciplinary "studies of racism"<sup>3</sup>, which, not having had time to get stronger and develop a clear conceptual scientific apparatus, began to take root in the public consciousness at the journalistic level. In the proposed short review, I would like to consider the current situation in the context of "anti-Moslem racism".

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In 2020, in Germany, at the initiative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, an "Independent Expert Group for the Study of Hostility towards Moslems" (UEM) was created. Funding came from the funds of the Islamic Conference under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which has been dealing with this phenomenon since 2012, also from the state budget. It should be clarified that at the same time, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the internal intelligence service (Constitution Protection Service) fought against the growing Islamism and the danger of Islamic terrorism inside the country, observing or even prohibiting suspicious associations in this regard, expelling them from the country or (in the case of German citizenship) placing suspicious persons under the supervision. Intersecting information, on the one hand, about the activities of the state to ensure security against Islamic terrorism (disclosure of ever new terrorist groups, prevention of terrorist acts) and, on the other hand, about "anti-Moslem" speeches on the ground left a natural impression that "hostility to Islam" is not part of activities of state institutions, but implies an exclusively civil, if not everyday level, although in fact the fears of the population were mainly fueled by media reports about the

multiplication of Islamic terrorism in the country, about the allegedly increasing desire of local Moslems to "live according to Sharia", etc. The criminal actions of right-wing extremist groups were not aimed at Islam as such, but against certain categories of migrants who were its bearers, i.e. had the ethnic character of discrimination inherent in Nazism. There were no burnings of Qurans and similar public anti-Islamic gestures in Germany.

At the end of June 2023, the Independent Expert Group for the Study of Moslem Hostility presented the final report "Hostility to Moslems - German Balance"<sup>4</sup>. The nearly 400-page publication contains an extensive analysis of "German racism" against Moslems and "contains extensive recommendations for policy, administration and society"<sup>5</sup>.

On the one hand, the study separates "hostility towards Islam" from "anti-Moslem racism", making it clear that racism is aimed at individual bearers of religion in the country, on the other hand, it introduces into circulation a controversial (according to the author of this article) concept from a scientific point of view, since it unites all the Moslems of the country into one object suffering from discrimination by society (the indigenous population), which is not true. Not to mention the fact that Islam in Germany, due to its specificity as a religion and, in particular, its ethnic and geographical diversity, was not able to come to an agreement even within itself (create a single parent organization for cooperation with the state on the model of other religious communities),<sup>6</sup> it is incorrect to present it as a single object of discrimination. The fears and hostility of the German population are not diffuse, they still have a cultural-ethnic and concrete, everyday character, they are not directed at religion and not at all its bearers, but are tied to realities. They manifest themselves, for example, in confrontations with criminal migrants, with attempts to introduce mosques (especially with minarets) into German regions, in cases when mosques are moved into closed Christian churches. The Pegida movement against the Islamization of the "West" was again directed against

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the political course of its own elites, and not impersonally against Islam and Moslems, etc.

Since the direction in which the study was carried out is relatively new for Germany, there is no clear scientific conceptual apparatus in it. At the beginning of the study, the authors try to develop a working conceptual apparatus.

However, these not very well-founded attempts to pass off working concepts as universal ones are less problematic than the very attempt to unite all forms of discrimination under the general term "racism", and not just at the level of a working concept, but as a definition for a whole area of research. It is understood that Islamophobia is a form of culturally conditioned racism, which, in turn, "ethnicizes" religious affiliation<sup>7</sup>. The "Racism Monitor"<sup>8</sup>, run by the aforementioned Centre for Integration and Migration Studies, postulates that culture, mentality and religion perform the same function in "neo-racism" as the term "race" does in older forms of racism.

The practical application of this concept in empirical studies leads, for example, to the publication by the Alliance Against Enmity towards Islam and Moslems<sup>9</sup> of data such as: "Over the past year, at least 898 anti-Moslem torts took place in Germany, an average of two per day... Of these 22 per cent discrimination, 20 per cent abusive behavior and 58 per cent verbal attacks" - and controversial findings: "Anti-Moslem racism is not a far-right phenomenon, it is rooted in the very middle of society... It defines the daily lives of its victims and manifests itself mainly in the public space, but also in schools, universities and even kindergartens<sup>10</sup>".

The momentary political benefit from bringing all social forms of discrimination under the single concept of "racism" is obvious - this is the maximum moral condemnation, since in the society of modern political correctness, the accusation of racism is, in fact, a ticket to the status of a political cast-off. As a means of attracting public attention and mobilizing the state to take drastic action, such a move can be understood, it remains debatable what this has to do with scientific research.

The unification under the single concept of "racism" of diffuse phobias of the "deep people", criminal torts of right-wing extremists and real cases of ethnic genocides that still take place in the world (not in Germany) is debatable, not only in scientific, but also in a far-reaching perspective – and in a political sense, because it devalues the concept of "racism" as such, even if you call it "neoracism". It seems that the introduction of the concept of "anti-Moslem racism" in Germany and, especially, its widespread use not in a narrowly scientific discussion, but in a public one with a political outlet (i.e. in the public sphere), regarding specific issues of interaction between the Moslem and non-Moslem populations, is most likely will entail, precisely because of the conceptual uncertainty and lack of clear boundaries, not repentance, but the embitterment of the native German population and, as a result, the political strengthening of the right-wing populist forces, which are already gaining strength.

How, for example, to assess the opposition of the German population to the construction of a mosque in the Frankfurt district of Griesheim, reports of which did not leave the newspaper pages in June 2023?<sup>11</sup> Is it an act of "anti-Islamic racism"? The Islamic centre, which settled in this area, without integrating, but without disturbing the indigenous population, declared its desire to expand, and acquired a land plot on which it decided to build a mosque. Or is this a case of opposition to Islamism – after all, it turned out that the site was acquired not at all by the harmless Centre (it only called for donations), but by the German Moslem Community, an organization that is under the supervision of the secret services due to its ties with the Moslem Brotherhood. But isn't the very clarification of this fact by the Germans a case of "anti-Moslem racism"? At least the Centre itself, in its statement on this issue, speaks of "creating an atmosphere of fear and mistrust towards the Moslem community".<sup>12</sup>

Or a recent case from school life in the state of Baden-Württemberg, where since 2020 it is forbidden to wear a burqa in

schools. A teenage girl, a student of a sewing school, due to her religious beliefs, came to class in a paranja, while safety regulations prescribed that students wear short-sleeved clothes when working on sewing machines. The girl filmed a conversation with the director on this topic on her phone and posted it on Tik-Tok with the statement that she had become a victim of anti-Moslem intolerance. The subsequent educational actions of the directorate (exclusion from school for a week), if desired, could well be assessed as “anti-Moslem racism”<sup>13</sup>.

Thus, it seems that in Germany at present there is a premature removal to the public sphere and politicization of a conceptual apparatus that has not yet been clearly developed at the scientific level and is not defined from a legal point of view from the new interdisciplinary direction of “racism studies”, and in such a significant for internal political stability topic, as the life of the Moslem diaspora and its interaction with the non-Moslem population of the country. The price of the rapid growth of the popular scientific direction of “racism studies” and hasty publications about the “anti-Moslem racism” of German society can be not only numerous unresolved methodological problems at the scientific level, but also, which is really dangerous for the “state of political parties” (which Germany calls itself) – a shift in electoral sympathies towards right-wing populist forces.

### *Application:*

#### **Moslem community in Germany, data:**

The Moslem population in 2023 is 5.5 million, its share in the total population (83.17 million) is about 6.6 per cent.<sup>14</sup> 45 per cent of Moslems are from Turkey (about 2.5 million people). Their share in the total number of Moslems decreased compared to 2015 (53 per cent) due to the increase in the number of the Arab population during the migration crisis of 2015–2016. Moslems of Arab origin make up 27 per cent of the total number

of Moslems in Germany, they come from Syria and North Africa, followed by Moslems from Southeast Europe (19 per cent) from Afghanistan and Iran. Three quarters of Moslems are Sunnis. The proportion of Shiites in the total Moslem population is 4 per cent. About 8 per cent are Alevis. Representatives of the Ahmadiyya and other directions make up one percent each. According to surveys, 70 per cent adhere to ordinary religious rules, for example, in drinking and eating, 66 per cent say they celebrate religious holidays. The proportion of those who pray five times a day is 38 per cent. About 25 per cent do not pray at all. Three-quarters of Moslems living in Germany say they fully (56 per cent) or partially (20 per cent) observe Islamic fasting. The remaining quarter does not fast. Volunteers in mosques number slightly less than 12.5 per cent. However, the actual number of believers who regularly visit the mosque or volunteer at it is much higher. About 65 per cent communicate with the native German population at least once a week.

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2. Prior to this decision, Islam was taught to children in "Quran schools" at mosques, the teachers were imams sent from abroad, and the radicalness of their views depended on which Islamic union the mosque belongs to. Thus, there was a religious radicalization of children and adolescents, which the state had no opportunity to prevent. Therefore, the teaching of Islam in schools was one of the first issues at the Islamic Conference.
3. Enormous funds were allocated from the budget to integrate the new direction into the scientific and university process. The German Research Community (DFG), the largest academic funder of scientific research, alone funded 581 large-scale projects between 2015 and 2019 with a total value of 238 million euros, according to its own data. In January 2023, at the Centre of Integration and Migration Research there was created the "Information Network for Racism Research" ("Wissensnetzwerk Rassismusforschung" (URL: <https://www.dezim-institut.de/projekte/projekt-detail/wissensnetzwerk->

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## THE MOSLEM WORLD: THEORETICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS

ALEKSEY ILIN. MILITARY AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATION HAMAS. CONFRONTATION WITH ISRAEL: KEY FEATURES AND IDEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

*Keywords:* *Hamas; Israel; Middle East; Gaza Strip; Palestine; war.*

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*Abstract.* *In October 2023, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict riveted the attention of the entire Muslim world, with the media laying it on thick and spreading information about the imminent start of the third world war. While the scientific community is trying to determine the causes of the conflict, leaders of virtually all countries are urging Israel and Palestine to lay down their arms. Analysts say that the conflict may become protracted, as the parties are not yet ready to enter into*

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*negotiations. According to political scientists, unlike in previous cases, the struggle for territory is not at the root of the current confrontation. Today, the cause of the conflict is dissatisfaction of Hamas with the shift of world centers of power.*

The Islamic Resistant Movement (Hamas) came to power in the Middle East 27 years ago in a democratic election. According to official data of the Palestinian Central Election Commission, Islamic radicals won 76 seats – more than half of the total number of deputies in the 132-seat Palestinian parliament. [1] Hamas won the elections largely due to the show of the unity and a carefully thought-out election campaign. In order to participate in the elections, the organization increased its annual budget to approximately \$90 million. About 85 per cent of the money was spent on the group's political activities and the remaining funds on terror operations. [2] Having the ability to solve social problems, the organization invested substantial efforts in changing its image. It replaced the established image of militant radicals with the image of a constructive political force, although the change did nothing to reassure Israeli politicians. After the Islamist victory, former deputy from the right-wing Likud party Silvan Shalom said that it was "an earthquake that will set us [Israel] back 50 years and ultimately lead the entire Middle East to chaos". [1] The prophecy is beginning to come true, and the escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can not only reshape the entire region, but also global political contours.

It should be noted that the Hamas leadership is based in the Gaza Strip but has many branches in Palestine itself and beyond. The political and military bodies of the organization are intertwined and practically inseparable. An important fact is that Hamas showed the world how to succeed in a political race against weak secular regimes. This was a big surprise for people in the West, but not for Palestinians, who see the organization as a symbiosis of religion and politics among 21st-century Muslims. As noted by researchers A. Krylov and V. Morozov, "the

emergence of the Islamic Resistance Movement (*Harakat al-Muqāwamah al-Islāmiyyah*, Hamas) in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank was a direct consequence of the fact that the idea of Arab unity, once popular among the major organizations of the Palestinian resistance movement, had run its course. Even though during the Arab-Israeli wars of 1948–1949, 1956, 1967 and 1973 this idea was indeed the main factor uniting the countries of the Arab world, it quickly lost its relevance after signing the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel in March 1979 on the basis of the Camp David Accords. Arab nationalism and Arab unity were replaced by new forms of ethnical and territorial nationalism, including Palestinian nationalism, which had a distinct radical Islamic orientation.” [3] As a result, Islamist groups and organizations emerged, many of which set themselves the goal of overthrowing secular regimes and establishing Sharia-compliant political authorities.

It is worth noting that Hamas has a rather complicated political structure. Hamas’s governing body is the Majlis al-Shura (Shura Council), which is backing the political leadership of the organization and is engaged in spreading of the ideology. The Council is formed through multi-staged elections. First, the Electoral College is selected by secret ballot in four ‘districts’. They are roughly divided as follows: the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Israel (prisoners) and foreign cells. Then, the local Shura Councils and their representatives are elected by secret ballot. And finally, a number of them are elected as members of the Majlis al-Shura; thus, the Council always has representatives from each ‘district’. In the the Majlis al-Shura there are 45 members from Hamas, while another 12 members are elected from other branches of the Muslim Brotherhood. Each stage of the election lasts three or four months. [4] Importantly, the elections are held in strict secrecy, and the names of the Council members are not disclosed. It is also interesting that there is no internal political campaign, and the final decision rests with the

members of the Political Bureau. The Chairman can only hold office for two terms. The 2017 elections to the Political Bureau (when Ismail Haniyeh took over from Khaled Mashal) showed that only influential and senior Hamas officials can run for the office. The Chairman of the Political Bureau has key influence on the activities of the organization in Gaza, Samaria and Judea, as well as outside Palestine. However, he is obliged to coordinate crucial decisions with the Majlis al-Shura, which was stipulated by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the ideologist of the movement. [5]

The Hamas security system is quite curious because security forces are rather branched out. The police keep order both onshore and offshore. Note that the police are made up of elite rapid response units and naval Special Forces. Therefore, the police have the right to arrest senior officials, put down demonstrations, and protect the coastal zone near Gaza.

In addition to the police, Hamas has domestic security agencies, security and safety apparatus, national security agencies and civil protection authorities. "Domestic security agencies work closely with the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, and their members are often part of the Brigades. Training of the staff of domestic security agencies is such that they can serve as both soldiers of a regular army and guerrilla fighters in case Israel enters the sector. The safety and security apparatus was created to ensure that top Hamas officials are protected. National security agencies are responsible for monitoring Egyptian borders with border crossings, and overseeing smuggling through tunnels and the sea. They have fired at Israeli ships on more than one occasion in order to ensure uninterrupted supplies for the assembly and subsequent installation of missile launchers. Civil protection authorities are responsible for the domestic security of Gaza, preventing the infiltration of Israeli intelligence agents or members of Fatah into the strip." [6]

In general, the Hamas structure is built vertically, but all major decisions can only be made through a deliberative process.

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Administrative apparatus is required to take into consideration the opinion of the Majlis al-Shura and high-ranking military personnel. The maintenance of the military wing of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades costs approximately \$260 million per year. [7]

Hamas has a rather powerful army and an extensive system because of the fact that the Arabs of the Middle East perceive Israel as the root of all evil. It all started in 1947, when the UN General Assembly created two independent states - an Arab one and a Jewish one - thus creating strife between Israel and Palestine. The fact is that the creation of the state of Israel was perceived as a threat not only by the Arabs of Palestine, but also by the neighboring Arab states. In December 1947, at a meeting in Cairo, the leaders of Arab states expressed concern about Zionist ambitions in the Middle East. They feared that the ultimate aim of all the Zionists was "the acquisition of all of Palestine, all Transjordan and possibly some tracts in Southern Lebanon and Southern Syria." Also, after taking control of the country, the Zionist 'politicians' would stop treating the Arabs "nicely", and once feeling "strong enough," they would begin "squeezing the Arab population off their lands... [and] if necessary out of the State." [8] The fears of the Arabs were confirmed. The young Jewish state set itself the goal of building up its military potential so it could subsequently expand its borders. At the end of 1947, Israel started to set up military organizations in Palestine, such as Haganah, Stern and the Irgun. It was officially stated that they were there to protect the borders, but in reality they were tasked to 'cleanse' the territory of the Arab population. It should be noted that the activities of Israeli armed forces were not limited only to territories intended for the Jewish state. In 1948, the strategy was confirmed by the leader of the Irgun, M. Begin: "While the five Arab states (Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Transjordan) were preparing for joint aggression, we continued our forays into Arab territories. However, it was obvious that forays alone could not help us establish control over the entire territory... At the end of January 1948, the Irgun commanders set

four strategic goals: Jerusalem, Jaffa, the Lydda-Ramla plain and the triangle (the territory in the center of Palestine with the corner points of Nablus, Jenin and Tulkarm). We considered these plans to be alternative, meaning that they might meet our capabilities at one time or another. Out of the four objectives, we only achieved the second one, though the capture of Jaffa was of paramount importance.” [9] The Zionist armed forces thereby conducted 13 major military operations, eight of which were carried out outside the Jewish state.

Thus, the creation of the new state of Israel in the Middle East was followed by escalation of the Arab-Jewish confrontation, which was not so much a diplomatic dispute as an armed conflict. Therefore, the apprehensions of journalists, politicians and political scientists that the conflict in the Middle East could escalate into World War III might not be merely making headlines, but quite possibly become a reality. The thing is that Hamas has a global outreach. “For a long time, the Hamas headquarters were in Syria with the Chairman of the Political Bureau K. Mashal. Damascus supported the movement’s activities since it is in opposition to Zionism. However, all ties were severed in 2012 after Hamas supported opposition sentiments and spoke out against the regime of President Bashar Assad. However, in 2019, I. Haniyeh was ready to show flexibility, saying that Hamas merely sought to distance itself from internal problems in Syria.” [10]

Hamas has many cells in Lebanon and has links to Hezbollah. Hamas also has close ties with Tehran, especially with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. “Iran’s military has more than once offered its assistance in preparing the Palestinian resistance movement, providing Hamas with logistical support and weapons. Often, various schemes for transporting money and weapons use Hezbollah as a transistor. However, there have been tensions between Tehran and Hamas, primarily due to the Syrian issue. Since 2017, Hamas has been sending delegations to

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Tehran hoping to settle their differences and reinforce the 'Iranian Axis' in the region." [11]

Hamas has an operational base in Turkey, and Hamas representatives have established strong ties with SADAT, a private Turkish military company. "Hamas representatives own Turkish commercial companies, open bank accounts and sponsor activities of their organization." [12] In addition to the cells in Palestine and Arab countries, Hamas supporters can also be found in Europe and the US.

The current conflict between Israel and Hamas, which broke up again with more violence, is no longer caused by a territorial dispute between Palestinians and Jews. It is caused by the shift of world centers of power. The fact is that the US is in a confrontation with radical Islamists, and Israel serves as an outpost on the borders with the Arab world. It is obvious that Palestine and Israel are unlikely to start negotiations. Therefore, the radicals of the Arab world are going to support Hamas, and the US is going to support Israel. The question of World War III depends on whether the US and the Arab world get openly involved in the confrontation between Israel and Palestine.

It is worth noting that the conflict is unlikely to end soon. On October 17, 2023, the UN rejected a Russian resolution calling for a ceasefire with a rather perplexing explanation: "The resolution proposed by Russia does not condemn the actions of Hamas." [13] The concern is that people on both sides lose their lives due to the military confrontation every day. The point of no return has been passed, but what may be the reason for other countries to join the conflict remains to be seen.

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## IBRAHIM USMANOV. SUFISM AND FIQH: DIFFERENT VIEWS ON ISLAMIC LAW

*Keywords: Islamic jurisprudence; Sharia; Sufism; madh'hab; interpretation; Sufi; Ahl al-Ra'y; Ahl al-Hadith; political power; Sufi sources.*

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*Abstract. In early Sufi literature, Sharia and spirituality were usually viewed as an inseparable whole. Sufis tried to interpret Sharia from a spiritual perspective in order to show that Sufism remains within the boundaries of official Islam. During the early Abbasid period (750–861), the hermeneutic unity between Sufis and jurists was broken. Sufi authors of the 10th–11th centuries emphasized in their works that their views fully comply with the principles of Sunni Islam and a certain madh'hab. Islamic faqihs also lamented the decline of formal jurisprudence and called for taking into account the spiritual aspect. At the same time, the faqihs called on the Sufis to study the basic provisions of fiqh. They believed that jurisprudence and mysticism should complement each other for the benefit of society. In conclusion, the article examines Sufism and jurisprudence as understanding of Islamic law from two different perspectives.*

### **Introduction**

There is no universally accepted position on the relationship between the concepts of 'Sharia' and 'fiqh' in

modern Muslim jurisprudence. Instead, there are different and quite opposite points of view, which reflect the historical evolution of these concepts to a certain extent. Various aspects of Muslim religious consciousness were still united during the early stage of development of Islam. It is known that at that time fiqh sometimes denoted mastering of the entire complex of tenets of the new religion, knowledge of the precepts of Islam that regulate all aspects of believers' lives, behavior and way of thinking. In this sense, fiqh was virtually identical to Sharia: "...Allah has sent down a path of righteous life that is pleasing to Him, a path leading to Heaven." [1]

Initially, aqidah, fiqh and Sufism were all called fiqh (*Fiqh Akbar* – faith, *Fiqh Awsat* – Sufism, *Fiqh Asghar* – Islamic jurisprudence). [2, p. 225] This was characteristic for the initial period of the formation of Islamic law (approximately until the mid-8th century), but later a distinction between the concepts was made. The religious percepts of Islam as revealed in the Quran and Sunnah were referred as Sharia, while fiqh meant making independent decisions when the sacred scriptures offered no ready answer to a particular question. As a result, fiqh came to mean Islamic jurisprudence, one of the aspects of Sharia, as well as a set of norms of conduct; scholastic theology studied purely doctrinal matters (*kalam*); and Sufism (*tasawwuf*) focused on Islamic spirituality and purification. [1]

When the Abbasid Caliphate annexed new territories inhabited by peoples of other cultures the legal settlement of issues became problematic. New legal realities called for profound changes in Islamic jurisprudence, which was at odds with non-Muslim legal cultures. [3, p. 86]

As the famous medieval scholar Ibn Qutaybah (d. 889) wrote, there were two major movements in Islamic jurisprudence that emerged in the 8th century: *Ahl al-Ra'y* and *Ahl al-Hadith*. In the 10th century, Ibn al-Nadim (d. 978–988) classified jurists as follows: the Maliki school (*madh'hab*); Abu Hanifa and his followers (the Hanafi school, originating in Iraq), i.e. *Ahl al-Ra'y*;

Imam al-Shafi'i and his followers (the Shafi'i school); Dawud al-Zahiri and his followers (the Zahiri school); Shia jurists; *Ahl al-Hadith* and muhaddith faqihs; Ibn Jarir al-Tabari and his followers; Kharijite jurists. [4, p. 385]

The approach of the schools of *Ahl al-Ra'y* and *Ahl al-Hadith* to the issue of using hadith was markedly different. In the 9th century, in their treatises, muhaddith jurists mostly quoted hadiths and rarely expressed their own opinions. Despite the differences between two schools (for example, regarding *isnad* citation), there were also points of convergence (for example, muhaddith faqih Ishaq ibn Rahwayh (d. 853) and Imam al-Tahawi (d. 933), one of the first Hanafi jurists to apply the requirements of *Ahl al-Hadith* to the chain of transmitters). [4, p. 398] Performing *ijtihad* The Hijazis relied in on the Quran and Hadith and rarely resorted to *Ahl al-Ra'y*. The home of the Muhajirs and Ansars, Medina was *Ahl al-Hadith* centre of sorts, since many hadiths corresponded to the way of life and everyday problems of the citizens. At the same time, different customs, habits and other factors forced the jurists of the Iraqi school to often resort to analogy (*qiyas*).

During the early Abbasid period (750–861), the hermeneutic unity between Sufis and faqihs was broken. As opposed to living is luxury, some believers chose asceticism and hermitage. Sufism developed from asceticism, and Islam itself promotes an ascetic way of life in one form or another.

## Results of the Research

It should be noted that great jurists showed interest in Sufism, for example, Malik ibn Anas (d. 795), a famous scholar from Medina, founder of the Maliki madh'hab. An ascetic inspired by the Salimi teachings of the Sufi Sahl al-Tustari (d. 896), he led a pious life in Medina, for which he was included in the Sufi biographical sources of al-Sarraj and al-Qushayri. [3, p. 89] There were also Sufis who studied fiqh, for example,

al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi (d. 932) in his works "Nawadir al-usul" and "Isbat al-ilal" discusses the relationship between fiqh and mysticism. Al-Tirmidhi goes beyond merely asserting that Sufism conforms to the requirements of the Sharia; for example, he invites the faqihs to look at the analogy (*qiyas*) from the Sufi point of view. He argued that the sacred texts are the same to both Sufism and jurisprudence, but jurists and Sufis perceive them differently. Due to the literal approach, jurists make superficial decisions because they take into account only the apparent meaning (*zahir*) of the Quran and Sunnah, while the hidden meaning (*batin*) remains beyond their understanding. According to al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi, issues of spiritual development are more important than issues of jurisprudence, since a person faces spiritual and moral problems every day, unlike most legal concerns.

It is worth noting that fiqh and Sufism not only have common basis (the Quran, Hadith and other sources), but also common objectives. Thanks to the affinity between their ideas and aspirations, fiqh and Sufism represent different paths leading to a common goal. According to Islamic scholars, the purpose of Sufism is to transform the inner self of a person; jurisprudence exists to regulate a person's behavior; and the purpose of aqidah is to direct the mind, thoughts and faith of a person in the right direction. [2, p. 204-205]

Sufism had its own way of interpreting issues of jurisprudence, trying to formulate rules, methods and norms in accordance with Sharia. One of the main questions is whether Sufism is trying to bridge the gap between the letter of the law and spirituality. In early Sufi literature, Sharia and spirituality were considered inseparable. Most jurists, however, did not seek to unite these two concepts and settled for a simplified interpretation of the law. Sufis interpreted Sharia in its spiritual aspects. Jurisprudence and Sufism together regulated the life of society. [2, p. 226]

Ensuring that the Muslim community was united in its beliefs, rituals, prayers and interactions shaped Islamic law. Under the auspices of political power, jurists directly influenced Muslim society through Islamic law. In contrast, Sufis focused on inner transformation, spiritual perfection and purity of heart. The ever-increasing number of followers and growing influence of the Sufis raised serious concerns among both the authorities and jurists. Sufis called jurists *ahl al-zahir wa-r-rusum*, i.e. those limited by superficial understanding and images, and themselves *ahl al-haqa'ik wa-l-bavatin*, i.e. those who understand the truth and inner essence. Moreover, they put their knowledge above the 'pseudo' knowledge of jurists. [5]

There were points of friction between Sufis and traditionalists due to the unusual mystical experience and opinions of the former. Alien to Sufi practices, traditionalists could not fully comprehend their logic and system of images. Sufis considered the traditionalist approach to the Quran and Sunnah one-sided and insisted that it was inadmissible to disregard the hidden meaning of things, while emphasizing that their knowledge was not in conflict with the knowledge of muhaddith and faqihs. [6] Jurists accused Sufis of innovation in religious matters (*bid'ah*), and Sufis, in turn, accused jurists of choosing to take a 'literal approach' and neglecting the spiritual aspects of religion.

Tensions between Sufis and jurists were further fueled by the conflict between Ahmad ibn Hanbal and Harith al-Muhasibi, execution of major figures of Sufism (including Mansour al-Hallaj and Shihab al-Din as-Suhrawardi), and other similar events. The situation worsened with the crackdown on Sufis in Iraq, especially after inquisition of Ghulam al-Khalil in 833, when more than 70 Baghdad Sufis were accused of heresy, including the famous Junayd al-Baghdadi. [7] Their opponents also argued that Sufi views were "quite similar to those of Shi'a", as is known, the Abbasids were greatly concerned about the Shi'a Fatimid Caliphate (909–1171) in the Maghreb. The famous Sufi Abu Nasr

as-Sarraj (d. 988) distinguished between traditional scholars (*muhaddith*) and jurists, and Sufis; he noted that “traditional scholars and jurists have knowledge of the Quran and Sunnah, while Sufis have knowledge of the truths of faith.” [3, p. 91]

In order to be accepted by Sunni jurists, the Sufis revised some of their viewpoints and sought to adapt their practices to the Sunni environment. As a result, many Sufis departed from esoteric Sufism and chose to operate within the framework of the Ashari and Maturidi four legal and theological schools. After Sufism was harmonized with Islamic jurisprudence and theology, more attention was given to the spiritual state and morals of believers. Subsequently, this had a profound impact on language, interpretation of sacred scriptures and literature, resulting in significant changes in the Muslim intellectual tradition. [3, p. 94]

By the end of the 10th – beginning of the 11th centuries, the formation of the Sufi mystical tradition was over. It is during that period that dozens of treatises, biographies and works of both theoretical and practical significance were written. It is worth noting that Sufi authors of that time usually outlined their theological views at the beginning of their writings, thereby emphasizing that their paths were in line with Sunni Islam and a certain Sunni madh'hab. The main purpose of the works of Abu Nasr as-Sarraj (d. 988), Abu Bakr al-Kalabadhi (d. 990), Abu Talib al-Makki (d. 996), Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami (d. 1021), Abu al-Qasim al-Qushayri (d. 1074) and Ali ibn Uthman al-Hujwiri (d. 1073/74) was to prove that Sufism was in perfect agreement with the teachings of the founding fathers of Islamic law and theology, such as al-Hasan al-Basri, Sufyan al-Thawri, Abu Hanifa, al-Shafi'i and al-Ash'ari. [8, p. 130–131]

In light of the conflict with the jurists, Sufis – such as Harith al-Muhasibi, Sahl al-Tustari and al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi – were trying to express their feelings through poetry and tafsir. We can say that they succeeded in revealing the essence of Sufi hermeneutics of sacred texts. In the 11th and 12th centuries, Sufis, especially al-Sulami, al-Qushayri and al-Hujwiri, did much to

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harmonize Sufism and Islamic jurisprudence. They tried to fuse Sufism and traditional Sunni sciences (mainly fiqh and tafsir) together. [3, p. 94]

According to traditionalist mystics such as Abu Talib al-Makki, Abu Nu'aym al-Isfahani, etc., Sufism was the essence of true Islam. They did not acknowledge the existence of various contradictory views in Islam in their writings. However, in the works by as-Sarraj, al-Sulami and al-Kalabadhi there are some hints at differences between Sufi and traditional views. Sufi authors of that time expressed their views in accordance with their theological and legal madh'hab. There were also a lot of discussions regarding fiqh and the science of kalam. Sometime later, authors such as al-Qushayri and al-Hujwiri formulated their mystical views with the help of fiqh and kalam. "The Treatise of al-Qushayri" (*Al-Risala al-Qushayriyya*) became famous because it contained the views of both traditional scholars and Sufis, and Sufism was combined with Sharia education. [9, p. 96–102]

Thus, Al-Qushayri and al-Hujwiri managed to present Sufism in the spirit of the theological traditions of Ash'ariyyah and Maturidiyyah. As for Islamic law, topics related to Sufism were considered within the teachings of Sunni madh'hab. Although al-Kalabadhi, al-Qushayri, al-Hujwiri and others went to great lengths in order to temper Sufism, "The Revival of the Religious Sciences" (*Ihya-u Ulumi'd Din*) by Abu Hamid al-Ghazali is largely considered to be the epitome of moderate Sufism. [9, p. 106]

Al-Ghazali writes that the official Islam is so formal that all the duties of the faithful are reduced to mechanical rituals that leave no room for emotions. However, in Sufism, feelings play such a large role that there is sometimes no moderation in the teachings, resulting in a potential clash with Islam. The author introduces some mystical elements borrowed from Sufism into official Islam and enlivens rigid formalism. We can say that his experiment proved to be successful and there remained only a small number of most rigorous believers. He also verifies all the

provisions of Sufism and establishes whether they can be consistent with the Sunnah. Al-Ghazali creates an entire system of moderate Sufism where irrational and ecstatic elements are reduced to a minimum, while rituals are brought into focus. [10] Thanks to al-Ghazali, the influence of Sufism in society increased greatly.

Despite the fact that in the 9th and 10th centuries there were tensions between Hanbalis and Sufis, a while later a rapprochement between them began. For example, Ahmad ibn Hanbal generally thought highly of Sufis and Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (d. 1166), the founder of the Sufi tariqah, was a staunch Hanbalite. Another famous Hanbali jurist, theologian, and commentator Abu 'l-Farash al-Jawzi (d. 1201) has a special place in the history of relations between Sufism and Hanbali jurisprudence. His work "The Devil's Delusion" (*Talbis Iblis*) is considered to be 'anti-Sufi' due to sharp criticism of some heresies and superstitions that penetrated Sufism. In fact, following in the footsteps of al-Ghazali, Ibn al-Jawzi put forward the idea that jurisprudence and Sufism complemented each other. [3, p. 103]

In "Captured Thoughts" (*Sayd al-Khatir*), Ibn al-Jawzi argues that Sufism and jurisprudence must be combined so that the soul can be righteous. He believes that the knowledge of fiqh and Hadith alone is not enough to achieve this, claiming that one needs heart softeners (*raqa'iq*), and the stories from the lives of righteous people of the past are a perfect fit. Ibn al-Jawzi shows how *Ahl al-Hadith* is overly focused on with finding short chains of transmitters (*sanad*) and accuses jurists for seeking victory over their opponents in debates. He calls for studying fiqh and Hadith along with the lives of the righteous and promotes taking into account the spiritual aspects of legal issues. [3, p. 104]

At different times and in different parts of the Muslim world, the relationship between fiqh and Sufism received considerable scholarly attention. In particular, the famous Moroccan jurist and Sufi Ahmad al-Zarruq (1442-1493), an embodiment of both fiqh and Sufism, in his work "The Principles

of Sufism" (*Qawa'id al-Tasawwuf*) composed 225 principles in order to demonstrate that Sufism is consistent with Sharia. The work examines the connection between Sufism and Islamic sciences, such as fiqh, kalam, usul, etc. The fourth principle is: "There is no Sufism without jurisprudence, because divine exoteric (*zahir*) rules can be known only through jurisprudence. Nor is there any jurisprudence without Sufism, for action (*amal*) cannot be carried out without sincerity and turning towards God." [11, p. 22] Principle No. 20 is: "Jurisprudence and Sufism are partners in pointing to God's regulations and His rights." [11, p. 29]

The conflict between the people of Sharia and the people of truth, i.e. jurisprudence and Sufism, respectively, will remain in the history of Islam regardless of the controversy. It was a struggle between the authorities and jurists, who sought to govern and control the Muslim community, and the Sufis, who had the support of the public majority. [5]

In public sphere, fiqh and Sufism complemented each other. [2, p. 226] It should be emphasized that the primary objective of jurisprudence and Sufism is to help the faithful find happiness in two worlds. Thus, jurisprudence furthers the correct understanding of the origins of Islam, while Sufism contributes to a correct understanding of the soul. [2, p. 210]

## Conclusion

In conclusion, in early Sufism it was important to point out that Sufi understanding of Sharia was superior to that of the jurists, while in the later period, al-Ghazali and Ibn al-Jawzi presented Sufism as an interpretation (hermeneutics) of fiqh. In the early Islamic period, Sufism was perceived as a parallel interpretation of Sharia, but it gradually became an alternative interpretation. Although many scholars consider Sufism and Islamic law as two opposite ways of thinking, in recent years a number of Islamic scholars have rejected this generally accepted notion.

Some researchers study the contribution of Sufis as jurists to the development of jurisprudence. Propagated by many Islamic scholars, the claim that there is an irreconcilable conflict between Sufism and Islamic law is now called into question. This should be understood as the end of systematic opposition between Sufism and jurisprudence, with the exception of certain historical cases. In other words, Sufism and jurisprudence are not at odds, though they can be considered as interpretations of Islamic law from two different perspectives, providing comprehensive understanding of Sharia that is common to all.

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