

## Russian Education System of Muslims Within Global Challenges of the XXIst Century: Modern Fundamentalism

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**Abstract:** The urgency of this problem is caused by the emergence of global challenges in the form of secularization, radicalization and globalization, thereby defining the strategy for the development of Islamic education and its role as an integrated system in addressing the challenges of Russian Muslims community. The study aims to analyze the conceptual aspects of Islamic education development in Russia, namely within the boom of mosque construction, the formation of the Muslim communities and their organizational structures in the 1990s the problems are revealed which worry our society and which led to negative phenomena, such as fragmentation and unhealthy rivalry of muftiats, legal and administrative obstacles that impede constructive social and spiritual activities, which appear on the basis of Foreign influence and radical and extremist ideas among the youth.

**Key words:** Euro Islam, Tatar Islam, religious education, ethno-religious factor, intercultural dialogue, spiritual revival

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### INTRODUCTION

In many ways, the lack of knowledge, an informative presentation about Islam conditioned the appearance of the term “Islamophobia”. At the same time, the traditional system of Islamic education destroyed during the Soviet period opened an opportunity for other, non-traditional Muslim organizations to fill an educational niche in the community of Russian Muslims. Questions revival of traditional Islamic education, confessional identity, the training of qualified leaders of the Muslim clergy, the characteristics of Islam in Russia at large, attracting the attention of researchers in the science of history especially since the beginning of the 1990s. The important areas of scientific research are related to the study of revival platform formation concerning traditional religious education, the state of Islamic studies during the pre-revolutionary period.

In summarizing developments, the thesis is spread according to which the unifying effects of integration processes in various spheres of social life are opposed by self-identification elements increasing its power and reflecting the originality (civilization, socio-cultural, ethnic, religious) of multidimensional entities. This aspect is directly related to the Muslim community of Russia which is related to the Russian community and the global Muslim Ummah.

Besides, Islam manifests itself as one of the fastest growing religions in the world (primarily because of

demographic indicators). The social and political transformation of society put the most difficult issues concerning the determination of the social and spiritual direction in respect of state-confessional relations. The globalization of public life determined the appearance of conflict zones in the relations between civilizations. Against this background, the choice of Islamic education development trend is determined by the traditions of Russian Muslims and becomes very important. This choice is complicated by the break of theological and educational traditions, lack of personnel, scientific and methodical literature, Foreign influence on religious education development. Therefore, the study of this process from the research point of view and from the social and political one becomes very popular in order to ensure tolerant mind and harmonious development of public-Islamic relations. The totality of these problems makes the learning of all possible prospects of Russian Islam as a whole as well as traditional education in particular a relevant one. The consideration of these problems in this aspect may be the most productive because the revival of institutions and the development of religious education political and legal platform will be the basis for the “vecto” of Islam development in Russia. Islam at its core, in addition to the religious component, according to the established historical tradition initially bears the legal, socio-economic and educational importance. The importance of this research area is related to the process of Muslim Ummah consolidation.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**The objectives of the research:** During the study, the following tasks were solved:

- To show the dynamics of local Muslim religious organizations and educational centers in post-Soviet Russia
- To explore the ways of the traditional Islamic education development and the overcoming of radical and unconventional trends
- To analyze the peculiarities of Islamic education “reaction” to the global challenges and to determine the prospects of the system further development

**Theoretical and empirical methods:** In order to test the hypothesis the principles of historicism and objectivism, the general-scientific methods of analysis and synthesis as well as the comparative historical and problem-chronological methods were used which allowed the complex determination of the main trends concerning the formation and development of Islamic education system in the context of a holistic historical process.

**The basis of the research:** The basis of the research were Muslim educational institutions of 1990-2000s in the context of religion revival within the former Soviet Union territories.

**Proceedings and description of the experiment:** The first stage of the research is devoted to the dynamics of Islamic education system revival and development study, the formation of educational complex structure and the importance of Islamic institutions role in this whole process. During the next stage, we managed to review the materials about the state of religious education and to identify the key issues of Muslim education during the post-Soviet period. The subsequent analysis emphasizes that the creation of Islamic education system allows to create a set of protective measures against the introduction of unconventional, radical and sometimes extremist movements and groups bearing a social threat.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Revival of Islamic educational centers in post-Soviet Russia:** Since, the mid 90s and during the next 5-7 year, for example, the number of Muslim parishes increased annually in Tatarstan by almost 100 communities, at the same time 7 madrassas appeared (secondary vocational schools). Initially, the main sources of these institutions replenishment by staff became, first of all, older people

pensioners without special vocational training and secondly, the sending of young people in Foreign religious centers young during a short-term or for longer courses. At that the return of shakirds, who underwent the religious training abroad in other non-traditional conditions, the penetration of Wahhabi literature in appropriate in local conditions, the teaching of basic of religious-governmental disciplines in Muslim schools by mullim teachers of Foreign states, weak knowledge of religious teaching among Imams engaged in ritual cult activities were the basis for the creation of conditions for the radicalization of religious consciousness and the behavior of the Muslim youth. A serious signal in the development of this situation in this area during 90s was the participation of a number of shakirds from the madrassas “Yoldyz” (Naberezhnye Chelny) in terrorist groups (Shahram, 2001, 2012).

In the early 90s, neither religious organizations nor state agencies were ready for a timely evaluation and appropriate actions on cooperation in education issues. Muslim institutions were left to themselves at the neutral attitude of a state against the immediate needs and problems of the Muslim Ummah educational area. At the same time, the positive attitude of a state and society towards religion was reinforced by concrete steps: the celebration of the 1000th anniversary of Orthodox Christianity adoption, 1100th anniversary of the official adoption of Islam in Volga region Bulgaria, the adoption of democratic laws “About the freedom of faith” (1990), “About the freedom of conscience and religious associations” (1997) (Bourdeaux, 2002), etc. In 1997-1998, a number of steps was taken that played a fundamental importance for the development of Muslim education within this policy in Tatarstan. First of all, there was the strengthening of the state body on religious affairs under the Government of the Republic of Tatarstan with subsequent determination of its functions under the Article 7 of the republican law “About the freedom of conscience and religious associations” (1999); secondly, there was the assistance from the government in the organization of unified congress of Muslims that allowed to structure Muslim institutions. Thirdly, RIU was founded in 1998 with the support of the republic authorities (new personnel for new Russia, 2009).

The process of three-stage education formation and approval was accelerated: iptadiya (initial) sanaviya (average), gallium (higher) (Nabiyev, 2006). At that, the issue of registration and obtaining of a license for the educational activity by Muslim schools was considered from two perspectives: the supporters of total control intended to carry out the registration and licensing at all levels of educational activity. In practice, this procedure

proved to be an impossible one. In real life, the provision of only secondary and higher levels of professional religious education by state registration and license was confirmed, i.e., this applied to those schools that trained professional ministers of religion. Such issues as the availability of teachers trained in local madrassas; educational literature, consistent with local Muslim traditions and the works of Tatar Jadida theologians; the ratio of secular and religious subjects in curriculums; the management of Muslim religious schools and higher education schools could not be solved during one academic year. Therefore, their solution required persistence and consistency during the years. In 1999-2000, all schools had a unified program.

The determination of an educational institution level and the provision of the status “average” or “superior” one is the prerogative of the founder, i.e., DUM. Although, the license for higher religious education is provided by the Federal Ministry of Education and Science, however, the name “higher” is practiced at the obtaining of a national level license (e.g., higher madrassas “Muhammadiya”, higher madrassas “named after 1000th anniversary of Islam adoption” in Kazan). The reference was taken on the integration of religious education in educational space of Russia. Taking into account this circumstance RIU, since the founding by its organizational and legal form it became a non-state higher professional.

Educational institution which is entitled to issue a state diploma and allow to solve the social problems of graduates by expanding their employment opportunities.

**The development of traditional Islamic education and overcoming the influence of radical and innovative trends:** The concept of traditional education development in former Soviet Union started to be discussed in the light of Ummah development. For example, at the beginning of 2007, the Islamic educational system had 75 registered middle and high schools and its total number was 239,26 among them are higher education institutions and 203 are secondary educational institutions (Silantyev, 2008). The Islamic Ummah of late XX early XXI century is a multilevel structure, solving a number of tasks, depending on the vector of its development. According to one of the Muslim leaders Waliullah Hazrat Yakupov, the Muslim clergy in Tatarstan, is a complex conglomerate, experiencing the dynamic process of transformation. It is gradually increasing its prestige in society and consequently, political influence (Yakupov, 2005). The development of Muslim Ummah in the context of these vectors determine more often the main “engines”, the most important of

which is the educational discourse. At that, defining the features of Islam in Russia in the framework of terminology, there is a certain fragmentation of concepts: “Tatar Islam”, “Russian Islam”, “Euro-Islam” (Khakimov, 2003a, b), “traditional Islam”. According to Mukhametshin (2005), the Muslim community of Tatars became the form of survival in heterodox environment that required from Islam mobility, flexibility and adaptability to new conditions. The understanding of “traditional Islam” in Russia is more exploratory by nature in order to find such points of support in Islamic traditions which provide a calm and stable development of society. In particular, in Kabardino-Balkaria Islam carries the traditions of the Balkars, the Kabardians, in Chechnya, Ingushetia; the traditions of Chechens, Ingush, in Dagestan; the traditions of the multinational republic peoples in symbiosis with the Shafii and Hanafi madhhab, in Tatarstan, Bashkortostan; the traditions of Tatars and Bashkirs with Hanafi madhhab. In the North Caucasus, many believe that traditional Islam is presented by Sufi tariqa and orders that have existed for centuries and preserved the traditions of the people, respect for ancestors. The development of Islamic traditions in the Volga-Ural region is built on the inevitability of mutual co-existence of two major religions-Islam and Orthodoxy. In Russia it is a progressive Islam, based on the traditions of Muslim Tatars and developed dynamically in accordance with the applicable law on the legal platform of state-confessional relations and an interfaith dialogue.

**The “reaction” of Islamic education to the global challenges and the prospects of the system further development:** Within the context of globalization and the need to integrate the Muslim Ummah in the socio-cultural life of the country and the Russian Educational Space, the creation of a competitive education system in relation to the Islamic world becomes an urgent one. Total 10-12 million of immigrants settled in Western Europe. These immigrants or their parents came from countries belonging to the Muslim world (Al-Alwani, 2004). This issue is also important for Russia. The migration situation emphasizes that the representatives of Central Asia and a number of Foreign countries, where Muslims make up the majority, are the most active subjects (Omar, 2004). Unlike European countries, Russia has a positive experience in an interfaith dialogue and strong traditions of Islam. Thus, at the structural planned formation of Islamic education system development, the program of adaptation suggests a positive outcome in accordance with the traditional Islam in Russia.

The next important vector is a counter-radicalization of younger generation, the prevention of extremism and unconventional trends (Gest, 2010). Russia of the XXIst century is the state with the implementation program of social and economic potential till 2020, developing the program of activities for the development of the Russian nation until 2025 (Ignatenko, 2005). Thus, the Islamic educational discourse in the issues of Muslim Ummah development and its integration into the social processes in order to ensure a peaceful coexistence and the dialogue among religions is an extremely important aspect of social and cultural development of society. The socio-cultural factors are an important lever for the balance and stability of the Russian political ethnical and religious state during its functional impact.

The nature of the research problem marked by its interdisciplinary nature determined a number of features in historiography. First of all, these are the reseaseher aimed at the consolidation of various materials and historical data proving Russian traditional Islamic education and its weakness during the post-Soviet era. The research performed by Khakimov (2003a, b), Mukhametshin (2003, 2005), Nabiyeu (1993, 2002, 2006), Habutdinov (2004, 2005) and Yakupov (2003, 2005), filled the vacuum of analytical and review data aimed at the highlighting of Muslim education traditions.

### CONCLUSION

A comprehensive study of religions allows us to understand Islam as a peaceful religion with a respectful attitude to all religions. The education becomes the guarantor of an inter-religious dialogue. The system of Islamic education is not just a certain number of educational institutions in a particular area, it is a holistic educational complex with a four-level education, a wide range of teaching aids, the structures that have the issue of a further long-term development, endowments and the foundations of self-financing, the Council of Ulema, publishing centers and the colleagues of Islamists involved in the development of new issues and the preservation of already traditional educational technologies.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The materials of the study may be used in the training process, at the creation of generalizing works concerning the development of Islam in Russia, the history of

state-confessional relations, in educational work with students, at the making of management decisions in socio-cultural sphere.

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