

**Globalization and the Role of Islam in the post-Soviet Central Asia**

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**Introduction**

The collapse of Communism at the turn of the twenty-first century attracted much interest in the affairs of the central Asian region, which was the Muslim area of the former Soviet Union. Since then, not only the Muslim world but also the Western world has been involved in this region. The re-emergence of Islam in the newly independent republics of Central Asia sparked the emergence of an ideological battle ground. Much debate is taking place among policy makers to discuss a return to civil society, but so far no one has come up with an acceptable variant. Yet, in addition to educational and cultural programs, the Islamic groups in the region are involved in political activities in the age of globalization.

Like the rest of the world, the Central Asian societies have been deeply affected by globalization. The life of their peoples have been changed, as have their thought patterns, and sense of creative expression. One of the underlying causes of such anxiety has been a multifaceted cultural concern: how to protect a unique heritage in the face of global pressure; to uphold religious traditions; to preserve linguistic purity; to defend social institutions; and ultimately, to maintain a viable identity in the midst of a rapidly changing global environment.

Here an important question is that: has Islam played a substantial role in the politics and society of post-Soviet Central Asia in the age of globalization? This paper aims to address this question. It explores how Islam has played role in Central Asia's affairs in the age of globalization. To this, investigation of the broader impact of globalization experience is essential for a proper understanding of the role of Islam in region. The paper will contribute to a clear understanding about the nature, direction and outcome of Islam in the republics under

the present and future global process. In fact, the paper tries to understand how the process of globalization influences Islam and its role in Central Asia.

### **Globalization: General Assessment**

Globalization has introduced new opportunities for integration into world markets, access to new technologies and population mobility. Eased flow of goods, people, ideas, culture and capital can create new prosperity.

The term globalization refers to the increasing interconnectedness of nations and peoples around the world through trade, investment, travel, popular culture, and other forms of interaction. Many historians have identified globalization as a 20th-century phenomenon connected to the rise of the Western-dominated international economy. However, extensive interaction between widespread peoples, as well as travel over vast distances across regions of the world, has existed for many centuries.

Indeed, globalization in its literal sense is the process of transformation of local or regional phenomena into global ones. It can be described as a process by which the people of the world are unified into a single society and function together. This process is a combination of economic, technological, sociocultural and political forces. Mary Kaldor argues that globalization generates schisms and the excluded often take recourse to a parallel globalised war economy that flourishes with new wars.<sup>1</sup> She argues that states in Africa and Asia have to cope with the disillusion of hopes generated by independence, the failure of the developing project to overcome poverty and inequality, the insecurity of rapid urbanisation and the break-up of traditional rural communities, as well as the impact of structural adjustment policies of stabilisation, liberalisation and deregulation.<sup>2</sup>

Globalization is a process of interaction and integration among the people, companies, and governments of different nations, a process driven by international trade and investment and aided by information technology. This process has effects on the environment, culture, political systems, economic development and prosperity, and on human physical well-being in societies around the world.<sup>3</sup>

Globalization is a multifaceted phenomenon: it is a political globalization, an economic globalization, a cultural globalization and media globalization and scientific globalization and technological globalization. The most alarming fact, in this regard, is that all these globalizations are interdependent. There can be, for instance, no cultural globalization without a political and economic globalization to pave the way for it through pressure and intimidation or lure and deceit.

One characteristic of globalization in the modern age has been expanding commerce between countries around the world. The roots of this phenomenon reach far back in history. Long-distance trade routes grew out of the transportation systems that developed out of the need to move resources by land and sea. In turn, trade and expansion led to increased contact between different civilizations and societies. This contact enabled Indian influence, including that of Buddhism, to spread over the land and sea trading routes into Central Asia, Tibet, China, Japan, and Southeast Asia between 200 BC and AD 1500.

Globalization is not new, though. For thousands of years, people and, later, corporations have been buying from and selling to each other in lands at great distances, such as through the famed Silk Road across Central Asia that connected China and Europe during the Middle Ages. Likewise, for centuries, people and corporations have invested in enterprises in other countries. In fact, many of the features of the current wave of globalization are similar to those prevailing before the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.

Policy and technological developments of the past few decades have spurred increases in cross-border trade, investment, and migration so large that many observers believe the world has entered a qualitatively new phase in its economic development. Since 1950, for example, the volume of world trade has increased by 20 times, and from just 1997 to 1999 flows of foreign investment nearly doubled, from \$468 billion to \$827 billion. Distinguishing this current wave of globalization from earlier ones, author Thomas Friedman has said that today globalization is "farther, faster, cheaper, and deeper."<sup>4</sup>

This current wave of globalization has been driven by policies that have opened economies domestically and internationally. In the years since the Second World War, and especially during the past two decades, many governments have adopted free-market economic systems, vastly increasing their own productive potential and creating myriad new opportunities for international trade and investment. Governments also have negotiated dramatic reductions in barriers to commerce and have established international agreements to promote trade in goods, services, and investment. Taking advantage of new opportunities in foreign markets, corporations have built foreign factories and established production and marketing arrangements with foreign partners. A defining feature of globalization, therefore, is an international industrial and financial business structure.

Technology has been the other principal driver of globalization. Advances in information technology, in particular, have dramatically transformed economic life. Information technologies have given all sorts of individual economic actors—consumers,

investors, businesses, valuable new tools for identifying and pursuing economic opportunities, including faster and more informed analyses of economic trends around the world, easy transfers of assets, and collaboration with far-flung partners.<sup>5</sup>

There is also a perspective that argues that globalisation and market-oriented reforms would lead to greater prosperity for an ever increasing number. There are positive economic indicators in terms of GDP growth and FDI in some countries. However, these do not necessarily translate into improved living conditions. Is it because of economic mismanagement, lack of transparency and widespread corruption, where by a small group of entrepreneurs and government officials increasingly benefit from economic expansion, leaving the rest of the society behind? Or, the reforms are structurally flawed and would necessarily give rise to social inequalities? One can say that the globalization process is making entire world into one small village. The process enhances interregional and cross-regional interactions.

Although globalization may have a positive impact on the human life, its negative side is no less problematic. This phase of globalization has bulldozed all native cultures homogenizing them in one sweep through various media channels. Also, this homogenization is being promoted through gross commercialization of culture. This commercialization has bulldozed all religious, cultural and civilizational values too.

It is this bulldozing of cultural and civilizational values which has created strong reaction from traditional religious elite and has resulted in what is being termed as religious fundamentalism. This is a major challenge which has emerged during the current phase of globalization.

All T.V. channels and print media are at the service of those attempting the bulldozing. Also, unlike earlier colonial days, there is no coercive imposition which could be strongly resisted. In this phase it is attempt at popularization through commercial channels. The economic elite consider it their privilege to accept western culture. During colonial phase different colonial powers dominated various colonized countries though Britain was largest among them. In this phase one single country the United States has established its domination in all spheres political, economic and cultural.

To discuss the role of globalization in the post-independent Central Asia, one must therefore, reckon with the fact that each of the successor states in this broad geocultural zone displayed distinct and diverse trajectories in both internal and external spheres.

Indeed, the process of globalization, interaction and interrelations of the Central Asian republics with the world community started developing from the beginning of 1990s i.e. from

the moment of getting independence and forming of the national state, accompanied by transformation of economic, cultural, socio-political structure of the society.<sup>6</sup> There is no doubt that globalization has its appreciable impact on all aspects of the republics' life specially the role of Islam.

### **Islam in Central Asia: A Historical Background**

The arrival of Islam in the Central Asian region is attributed largely to the wars fought between the Arab raiders and the native tribesmen in the third quarter of the seventh century. The year 644 AD. marked the beginning of Arab conquests and by the end of the seventh century, most of the region had been conquered by the Arabs.<sup>3</sup> Although Islam was not the first monotheist religion to be introduced in Central Asia, it has remained alive in the Central Asian culture since the seventh century AD.<sup>4</sup>

One of the key tenets of the Soviet system was that religion was incompatible with communism, and the communists methodically set about repressing all forms of religious expression.<sup>7</sup> In Central Asia, as a part of the general aggressive Communist policy towards religion, and with the help of indigenous 'modernising' elements, who regarded Islam as an obstacle to development, Moscow embarked on a thoroughgoing attack on Islam.<sup>8</sup> Of course, before the Bolsheviks, the Tsarist regime evidently had also the same view about the deadening influence of Islam as their Soviet successors.<sup>9</sup> Both the Tsarist and Soviet regimes criticised Islam due to Muslims' anti-colonial actions against Russian conquest, colonisation, economic exploitation, and political discrimination. M.I. Venyukov, geographer, statistician, ethnologist and publicist, (1832-1901), wrote that Russia 'should provide Central Asian peoples access to industrial progress, proselytise 'Christianity', while replacing the elements of Mohammedan fanaticism by humanizing elements' and consequently freeing man from the narrow bondage of Islam.<sup>10</sup> Compared with the Tsars, who did not destroy or desecrate Islamic institutions such as mosques, the Soviet anti-Islamic movement was much wider and deeper.<sup>11</sup> However, the intensity of persecution varied over time. In the early years, 1917-1920, Moscow pursued official tolerance of Islam, but turned to repression in the period of industrialisation and collectivisation and became especially ferocious in the late 1920s and 1930s. During the Second World War, Stalin evoked religion as a patriotic factor, and persecution stopped. It resumed for a while under Nikita Khrushchev (1953-1964), but ceased under Leonid Brezhnev (1964-1982), though advancement still depended on keeping religious affiliations private.<sup>12</sup>

Marxism and atheism were imposed as a new ideology on the people of Central Asia through destroying Islamic social, cultural and educational systems. During the 1930s in particular, the Soviet government placed enormous difficulties in the way of practicing Islam (as it did also in regard to Christianity) by closing or demolishing most mosques and *madrassas* (religious schools), forbidding formal teaching of religion to anyone under the age of 18, and making the practice of Islam a bar to advancement.<sup>13</sup>

Although the Soviet regime regulated and sometimes persecuted formal religion, communism was never able to destroy its unofficial and private practice. Personal religion retained force, especially in rural areas where peasants did not expect advancement, communist party structures were weak or non-existent, and traditions remained strong. However, the attack on Islam did not arouse wide opposition in the region, except from the Turkestan National Liberation Movement (Basmachi), 1916-1930s, motivated at least in part by the anti-Islamic campaigns of the Soviet government.<sup>14</sup>

One issue which has had a significant impact on Islam in Central Asia is the presence of the Central Asians in Afghanistan during the invasion of this country by the Soviet Union. In 1980s, thousands of the Central Asians were recruited in the Red Army to fight the Afghan Islamist warriors. Consequently, they got introduced to the wider Muslim concepts and Muslim brethren. Despite the fact that Central Asian Muslim soldiers were brought to fight for their Communist masters against their co-religionists they got deeply impressed by the devotion of the Afghan Mujahideen towards Islam. A large number of Central Asian soldiers who were taken as prisoners of war were indoctrinated and joined Mujahideen.<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, one can say that to some extent, Islam could play an important role in Central Asia's history, culture, and society, bringing fundamental changes to all aspects of life, and creating an Islamic civilization that gave the people of the region a new identity.<sup>16</sup> However, some scholars have debated the extent of Islam's impact on the region.

### **The Collapse of the Soviet Union and the Central Asian Independence**

When the Soviet Union collapsed the Central Asian leaders reluctantly viewed the independence from Soviet rule as unwanted blessing. Central Asia stood connected to Moscow by strong communication, transport and administrative network. Therefore, its centuries old ties with Russia could not be broken instantly due to demarcation of new borders.

The presidents of five newly incepted Central Asian States met in Ashkabad, Turkmenistan, on the eve of December 12, 1991, to formulate a strategy to cope with the new

transition that their nations were faced with. The Minsk Treaty which disbanded Soviet Union had not even been presented to the Central Asian leaders for consultation.<sup>36</sup> Central Asian leaders faced the fears of running independent states; problems of inflation, security and foreign policy among others.

The leaders embarked on policies of political suppression and media censorship as the only solution to counter the growing domestic problems of these states.<sup>37</sup> Few democrats in Central Asia looked up to Russia for political inspiration and Central Asian youth drew inspiration from Muslim states for new ideological guidance. The reinforcement of Islam in Central Asia got enhanced by absence of any religious and political system. This gave way to the strengthening of ethnic ties and anti-Russian sentiments. Among the politically and economically dissatisfied youth, teachings in madarssahs ingrained the spirit of conservatism and aggressiveness towards un-Islamic political system. Natural antagonism towards modernisation and democratic ideals was also developed. Popular support winning slogans such as "building the caliphate", or "justice and equal opportunities for all" were raised by the students of these madarssahs; these slogans praised the importance of Islamic economic system as a remedy to all poverty-related problems.

### **Islam in the Post-Soviet Central Asia in the Age of Globalization**

In mid-1980s President Mikhail Gorbachev promulgated the policy of restructuring, called "Perestroika." Perestroika comprised of a set of strategies aimed at liberalisation of political and social policies. This set of policies did not include the lifting of constraints from religious practices but the people of Central Asia interpreted this slight lift of ban as an opportunity to revitalize their religious practices.<sup>17</sup> As a result, the Central Asian peoples showed deep interest in Islam. Thousands of mosques were built and Islamic literature was brought in from all over the Islamic world. The Islamic reading material was distributed among the population by the itinerant clerics who became public orators and prayer leaders in these Makhallas.<sup>18</sup> The main reason for this instant bent of the population towards Islam was that Islam never relinquished its appeal even during the era of the severest Soviet oppression. The survival of Islam in Central Asia is attributed to the strong ethnic Islamic traditions and the external support of the Muslim and the Western hemisphere to keep Islam alive during the Soviet era. The itinerant Islamic clerics and the Sufi societies which operated in a covert manner contributed enormously to the survival of Islam in this period.

Indeed, Gorbachev policy let low key religious elements to establish their organisational framework. This was the era when Islamic revivalism became a vital religious

movement for the Central Asian people to follow.<sup>19</sup> This trend intensified further after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and resulted in the rapid growth of madrassahs across Central Asia. The madrassahs were an outcome of the Afghan-Soviet war and initially operated in the region adjacent to the Afghan territory. Religious Scholars who operated these madrassahs belonged to Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Jordan, Egypt, Chechnya and Pakistan. They were trained in Islamic schools in Pakistan's North-western territory.<sup>20</sup>

Initially, the strengthening of the madrassah network was not taken seriously into consideration by the autocratic regimes of the Central Asian republics, but subsequently as the power and influence of the Islamic factions were increasing the republics leaders viewed Islam as a serious threat to their regimes. In addition, long borders with war-ravaged Afghanistan also proved to be a constant source of cross-border infiltration of militants that further bolstered the operational capability of the Islamic groups. The Central Asian governments became more concerned about the Islamic groups' presence in this region after the US and Russia perceived threat from these militant groups.

Islam resurfaced in Central Asia in the 1990s after being in hibernation for more than seventy years during the Soviet era. The Soviet breakdown gave way to the stifled ethno-religious sentiments of the region's people. Independence from the Soviet Union brought forth economic and political tribulations for the unprepared Central Asian republics that were further intensified by accompanying social and cultural transition. However, one can say that the collapse of the Soviet rule came as both, a blessing and affliction for the societies of the region. The Soviet collapse left a religious, cultural and political vacuum which needed to be filled by some alternative substantive system.

The renaissance of Islamic traditions and culture in Central Asia in the 1990s is attributed to the recurrence of the phenomenon that existed in the Soviet Union in the late 1960s when the activities of low key Islamists became noticeably evident. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan remained the nucleus of clandestine ventures of the Sufis who strived for the restoration of Islam during that period. Despite the fact that these activities were crushed by the tough Soviet policies, religious elements remained active in the social sub-strata of the Soviet republics.

As for Islam's role in restructuring the region, its importance as a factor affecting nation-state building is still being fiercely debated. Some observers believe that Islam could play a role in rebuilding the nation and even the political system. S. Hunter, for instance, has argued: "Islam's legacy thus has important implications for the current process of nation and institution-building and governance in this region."<sup>21</sup> Yet, existing conditions in the states



indicate that Islam has had no room to play an effective role in their politics. The leaders' intention has certainly not been to create Islamic theocracies.

The leaders, especially Karimov, have been attempting a dangerous balancing act, emphasising their personal commitment to Islam while suppressing and undermining any elements of 'political Islam' that might be outside their control.<sup>22</sup> In fact, for these regimes Islam is neither a vision of the future nor a blueprint for action. The ruling elites made their careers in the Soviet Union, in which education was based on atheism and opposition to religion. Consequently, it is obvious that they would not show enthusiasm for Islamic ideology, and have continued the Soviet policy of controlling Islam in their societies.<sup>23</sup> Some of them consider Islam a threat. Uzbekistan's president Karimov, for example, views the Islamic religion as an 'ideological and political threat' promoting him to crackdown against unofficial, independent Islamic worship and impose state-sponsored official Islamic observance.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, Uzbekistan's *Oliy Majlis* (Parliament) passed a law in May 1998, 'On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations' instituting stricter punishments for violating the rules for teaching religious subjects, and for preparing and disseminating materials containing ideas of religious extremism. The law required all mosques and religious groups with more than 100 members to register.<sup>25</sup>

Although one can assume that the ruling elites have been greatly affected by the Soviet culture and associated themselves with its political culture, it is not the only factor in forming their attitudes to Islam. Separation of state and church is a principle observed in all Western democracies to a great or lesser extent.<sup>26</sup> Marxism is itself a product of European thought. The creation of the Central Asian republics was based on the European concept of states based on a defined territory and single dominant ethnicity (at the time they were formed, Kazakhstan was an exception, because the high death rate of Kazaks during collectivisation meant they were outnumbered by Russians, but their high birthrate, the low Russian birthrate, especially in the last forty years, and the departure of Russians, mean that Kazaks now outnumber Russians in Kazakhstan). That the state should officially be secular is a principle not just of Communist but of modern democratic states. Therefore, in denying Islam a political role, the Central Asian leaders are not merely applying the old Soviet model, they are also applying one of the assumed criteria of a modern state, similar to Turkey, where Islamists may occasionally hold power but where the military sees itself as guardian of the secular tradition instituted by Atatürk, and deposes governments it sees as violating that tradition.<sup>27</sup> All leaders have retained clauses in their constitutions that describe their states as secular, a claim also seen as part of being 'modern'<sup>28</sup> Of course, the separation of the political

and religious spheres is the opposite of what Islamist parties such as *Hizb ut-Tahrir* (Party of Liberation), and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) believe.<sup>29</sup> Yet, almost all states' leaders, indeed, wish to keep the republics secular, and have avoided using some Islamic norms, such as *Jihad*, in describing their political or economic reforms.<sup>30</sup> In response to a question on whether Uzbekistan corresponds to 'the standards of the Muslim world' Karimov said a categorical 'no' 'We are out of keeping with the Muslim standards because we are a secular state.'<sup>31</sup> Turkmenistan's president thought along the same lines: 'We have firmly proclaimed the principle that Turkmenistan is a secular state. . . We have no grounds to think that someone intends to change this principle.'<sup>32</sup> President Nazarbayev also revealed his deep secular belief when he said:

Having been a Soviet people, we are atheists, but Kazak's background is Moslem. We do not allow religion to interfere with politics. And when working with Moslem states, we strictly define that there will be no religious interference in our country, and that goes even for literature, which is published in their countries.<sup>33</sup>

The consequence is that, after more than a decade, Islam has had no effective impact on the republics' political establishments. The leaders have been concerned about their own power and looking for investors rather than for Islam.<sup>34</sup> Arguably, in such circumstances, ruling elites are particularly concerned to combat all potential threats. Karimov, as mentioned above, has characterised political Islam as a threat, and used this to deepen his suppression of any opposition to his autocratic regime.<sup>35</sup> The region's presidents not only wish to stay in power, but also worry that even signs of instability will scare off potential investors.

However, notwithstanding the pressure on Islamic movements in Central Asia, particularly in Uzbekistan, the rise of political Islam in recent years cannot be denied.<sup>36</sup> The increase in Islamic movements has prompted the governments to pursue a series of policies directed against them. President Nazarbayev initiated the first of these in an attempt to reduce the spillover effect of perceived Islamic fundamentalist activities in neighbouring Uzbekistan. He severed the country's religious ties with the Muslim Board of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, and created a separate *muftiate* (Spiritual Directorate for Muslims) for his country in 1990.<sup>37</sup> The second policy has involved legislation and constitutional provisions designed to define the parameters of religious activities, violations of which would enable the governments to level criminal charges against individuals and organisations. Another policy to combat fundamentalism has taken the form of repression and crackdown on the religious

opposition, systematically in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, but also in Turkmenistan and Kazakstan. President Karimov, for example, has spoken out harshly against Islamic extremists, stating that "such people must be shot in the forehead! If necessary, I will shoot them myself."<sup>38</sup> In another statement he declared: "I am prepared to rip off the heads of 200 people, to sacrifice their lives, in order to save peace and calm in the republic. If my child chose such a path, I myself would rip off his head."<sup>39</sup> Finally, the regimes have resorted to assimilation of the Islamic forces and appeasement of the general public in an effort to stave off the perceived fundamentalist tendencies.<sup>40</sup>

### **Cultural Globalization and Islam in Central Asia**

Globalization, as mentioned earlier, in fact, is an integrated system where the political and the economic aspects intertwine, and both aspects complement the social and cultural one. None of these aspects quite stands by its own. Therefore, cultural globalization is a phenomenon which is fully endorsed by the political and economic influence of the strongest protagonists on the international scene. The information revolution is the solid base of cultural globalization and represents the driving force of the new era. In order to have a clear idea about the climate in which cultural globalization exerts its influence on peoples and nations, we adduce here brief and concise data published and currently used by the specialized international press that is interested in keeping track of

Information technology is the propelling force of cultural globalization in the light of the new sophisticated boom of information technology; the world seems to be divided into three major categories:;

1. 15 % of world population provide all modern technological innovations;
2. 50 % of world population are able to assimilate this technology as regards consumption and production; and
3. The rest of world population, that is 35 %, live isolated and insulated from this technology.

Indeed, cultural globalization has penetrated poor and needy societies which lack the capacity of resistance even if they have preserved their sense of difference. We can easily assess the general situation in the Islamic world and particularly the Central Asian region from the following statistical data:

- a. World population has reached so far 6 billion people. This figure increases at a rate of 100 million people each year. 90 % of this increase takes place inside 127 countries, all of which belong to the developing world that cannot absorb such a rapid increase. The Islamic world is of course part of the developing world;
- b. At the dawn of the 21st century, one third of world population lives below the poverty line (that is with a per-capita income of 300 dollars). The vast majority of the peoples of the Islamic world are affected by this situation;
- c. According to the statistical studies conducted by UNICEF, 12 million children under the age of 5 die every year of a curable disease. That is 33.000 children die every day of causes that can be avoided, including malnutrition. This study concerns also the children of the Islamic world which stretches from Bangladesh to Mauritania;
- d. According to the statistical data released by the United Nations, more than 75 million people have been driven out of their homes during the last quarter of the 20th century as a result of wars and religious, ethnic and tribal conflicts. As the 21st century unfolds, more than 60 million people still live as refugees. A high percentage of these refugees are either Arab, African or Asian Muslims ; and
- e. More than 75 countries enter the 21st century with complete or partial submission to the dictates of the International Bank. They apply its dictated policy to avoid being declared in a state of bankruptcy or in deficit. Accordingly, these countries pledge to orient their economies in a direction which does not generate development, by cutting expenditure and subsidies for consumer goods which are meant to support poor people. Muslim countries feature among these states.<sup>41</sup>

Cultural globalization is forced upon the Islamic world under these hard conditions and circumstances. This state of affairs should prompt us to work toward determining the causes and factors which were conducive to the economic weakness of the Islamic world, as well as to relate the treatment of the negative effects of globalization to a serious initiative which should be based on solid grounds.

What is important is that nowadays instantaneous and worldwide communication links are allowing the Central Asian Muslims to experience the reality of different Islamic cultures. Such experiences reveal not only what is common among these Muslims but also what is different. For example, gender relations and dress codes for Muslim women are structured in different ways in Muslim countries like Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Uzbekistan.

## **The Role of Islam in the Central Asian Foreign Relations**

Besides Islam's role in internal affairs, its role in the region's international relations is also a matter of debate. Initially the Islamic world hoped that Islam could play a significant role in its relationships with the newly independent republics, but more than a decade of relations has demonstrated that Central Asia's historic ties have had no prominent impact on the republics' policies toward Muslim countries. Partly, as J.O. Voll has also pointed out, this is because Muslim Central Asia had become a weak part of the Islamic world, so Islam could not be accounted the prevailing factor in determining the states' international relations.<sup>42</sup> Instead, economic relations and interdependence have bound republics more than the ideological/civilizational leverages dividing them. States consort with any civilization, however alien, as long as the price is right and goods are ready. As F. Ajami has argued, civilizations do not control states, instead states control civilizations.<sup>43</sup> It seems that for the countries of Central Asia economic development has been more essential than ideological matters. During the last decade, the greatest challenge to the newborn republics has been how to rebuild their economies, and change all sectors of society. They, as mentioned earlier, have sought secular models, like that of Turkey, rather than an Islamic model.<sup>44</sup>

Nevertheless, some Islamic nations such as Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have viewed Islam as an important factor in their relations with the republics. And some observers believe that, after the inception of the *glasnost* policy in the late 1980s, official efforts to forge ties with countries of the Islamic world increased, as did the role of Islamic - oriented institutions in domestic politics.<sup>45</sup> Others, however, argue that even the relations of some figures in Muslim countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan with Central Asia have had a negative effect on the region's governments. S. Akbarzadeh, for instance, pointed out that, although Karimov initially spoke respectfully about the importance of Islam to the Uzbek way of life, increasing Saudi, Iranian and Pakistani investment in building new mosques and seminars in Uzbekistan, particularly in the first years of independence, he subsequently re-evaluated his approach, and has now become even more cautious in his support for the Islamic establishment.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, some have seen Islam, particularly political Islam, as a factor that has affected outsiders' relations with these countries. According to J. Schoeberlein, Director of the Program on Central Asia and the Caucasus at Harvard University, -armed incursions into Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan by radical Islamists whose declared aim is to establish a religious state in Central Asia have sent shock waves through Central Asia, and have drawn as much international attention to the region as any issue since independence.<sup>47</sup>

## Conclusion

Globalization is an objective, natural historical process conducting to speed-up moves of society and state due to the using of new transport, communication and information know-how, to reduction of room and time of the sectioning people. In these conditions the civilization is exhibited in new quality and with new capabilities for progressing.

This paper highlighted how the interaction between local and global Islam took place in Central Asia. Most of the region's states are tensed and agitated about their policy on how to rule people belonging to the Islamic orders.

Yet, it is not easy to view the Central Asian republics as part of the modern Islamic world. Islam has affected the society, but not influenced the politics. To one degree or another these countries remain concerned about preserving the secular governments and societies they inherited at independence, and resist attempts to be categorised as Islamic. This is partly because of the long isolation of Central Asia from the main centres and cultural processes of the Muslim world, and shortage of religious literature and restricted religious practice and the decline of the level of religious education, the result of an anti-religious policy. The region's regimes have given only lip service to traditional Islam as a factor of social conservatism. They have tried to retain the Soviet-era system of control over the official clergy, which has power over the great mosques in the region.

In short, the Muslim Central Asian republics cannot stop the spread of cultural globalization because it is a real phenomenon which is imposing itself by the forces of political influence, economic pressure, media and information domination exerted by the new world order. In fact, dealing with cultural globalization must be based on economic power, political stability, social justice and progress in all fields of life. These can be attained first by the implementation of necessary reforms, correction of the situation of the Islam and firm establishing of the bases of joint Islamic action at all levels, so as to enhance cooperation among these Muslim countries towards a more promising perspective and future.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Kaldor, Mary , *Human Security: Reflections on Globalization and Intervention*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007, pp. 134-136..

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pp. 146-148.

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- <sup>3</sup> John Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999, pp. 34-41.
- <sup>4</sup> Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization*, New York: Random House Inc, 2000, pp.22-24.
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- <sup>6</sup> Mohammad Karim, "Globalization and post-Soviet Rival of Islam in Central Asia and the Caucasus" *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 25, No. 3, December 2005, pp. 539-448.
- <sup>7</sup> A. Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002, pp. 34-42, 87-91.
- <sup>8</sup> G. Jukes, *The Soviet Union in Asia*, Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1973, p. 47, Russian Orthodox Christianity was attacked as viciously as Islam.
- <sup>9</sup> G. Wheeler, *The Modern History of Soviet Central Asia*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964, p. 140. For an overview of Soviet campaigns against religion in general and Islam in particular see J. Delaney, "The origins of Soviet antireligious organisations" in R.P. Marshal, Jr., T.E. Bird and A.Q. Blane, eds., *Aspects of Religion in the Soviet Union 1917-1967*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971, pp. 103-129, F.E. Bryan, "Anti-religious activity in the Chechen-Ingush Republic of the USSR and the survival of Islam" *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1984, pp. 99-116, H.C. DeEncausse, *Islam and the Russian Empire*, California: University of California Press, 1988, pp.7-36, G. Abdullin, "Islam in history of Volga Kama Bulgars and Tatars" *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1990, pp. 1-11, Y.S. Keler, "Islam in Soviet Central Asia, 1917-1930: Soviet policy and struggle for control" *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1992, pp. 25-50, S. Akiner, "Post-Soviet Central Asia: Past is prologue" in . Ferdinand, op. cit., pp. 4-35, and E. Ten, "The role of Islam in the post-Soviet Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan" at <http://www.prof.msu.ru/omsk/43.html> [accessed 19/12/2008].
- <sup>10</sup> Quoted in M. Hauner, "Central Asian Geopolitics in the last hundred years: A critical survey from Gorchakove to Gorbachev" *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1989, pp. 1-19.
- <sup>11</sup> See A. Bennigsen, and L. Q. Chantal, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1967. S. Akiner, *Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983.
- <sup>12</sup> M. Muriel, *The Suitable Battle: Islam in Soviet Tajikistan*, Philadelphia: Foreign Policy Institute, 1989.
- <sup>13</sup> See J. Voll, "Central Asia as a part of the modern Islamic world" in B.F. Manz, ed., *Central Asia in Historical Perspective*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1994, pp. 62-81.
- <sup>14</sup> Jukes, op. cit., p. 47.
- <sup>15</sup> Rashid, op.cit. p.32.
- <sup>16</sup> For more on Islam's role in Central Asia see R. Frye, "Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic Cultures in Central Asia" and M. Mazzaoui, "Islamic culture and literature in Iran and Central Asia in the early modern period" in R. Canfield, ed., *Turko-Persian Historical Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 12-31 and 65-84.
- <sup>17</sup> Rashid, op.cit. p. 42.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid. p.43
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid. p, 78.
- <sup>20</sup> [www.jang.com.pk/thenews/sep2008-daily/19-09-2008/main/main7.htm](http://www.jang.com.pk/thenews/sep2008-daily/19-09-2008/main/main7.htm) [accessed 20/12/2008].
- <sup>21</sup> Hunter, *Central Asia Since Independence*, p. 13.

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<sup>22</sup> Abdullaev, op. cit., pp. 245-298, A. Appelbaum, "Migration experts ponder refugee management tactics in Central Asia" *Eurasian Insight*, 27 September 2001 and Jonson and Esenov, eds., *Political Islam and Conflicts in Russia and Central Asia*. President Karimov has put repressions first against the Islamic organisations and the Muslim clergy, then common Muslims.

<sup>23</sup> As noted before, on 1 May 1998 the Parliament of Uzbekistan passed a law imposing new restrictions on religious groups. It required all mosques and all religious groups with more than 100 members to register.

<sup>24</sup> Cited in E.S. Simpson, "Islam in Uzbekistan: Why freedom of religion is fundamental for peace and stability in the region" *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies*, No. 2, 1998/1999, pp. 110-150.

<sup>25</sup> See Oly Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan, at

<http://www.parliament.gov.uz/www/parleng/om.htm#> [accessed 16/11/2008], and The World Uyghur Network News, Produced by the Eastern Turkistan Information Centre, No. 78, 4 May 1998, and Malashenko, op. cit., pp. 9-18.

<sup>26</sup> V. Nasr, "Religion and global affairs: secular states and religious oppositions" *SAIS Review*, Vol. 18, No. 2, Summer/Fall 1998, pp. 32-37 and N. Berdichevsky, "How religion confronts the modern state" *Contemporary Review*, Vol. 274, No. 1596, January 1999, pp. 47-49.

<sup>27</sup> Y. Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002, I. Bal, *Turkey's Relations With the West and Turkic Republics: The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Model*, Burlington: Ashgate, 2000, pp. 11-18, M. Ashirbek, "Traditional and modern religious-theological schools in Central Asia" in Johnson and Esenov, eds., *Political Islam and Conflicts in Russia and Central Asia*, pp. 104-115.

<sup>28</sup> Allworth, ed, *Central Asia, 130 years of Russian Dominance: A Historical Overview*, pp. 131-150, Akbarzadeh, "The political shape of Central Asia" pp. 517-542, see also M. Pywkin, "Islam and new Soviet Man: 70 years of evolution" *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 1987, pp. 23-32.

<sup>29</sup> Turkmenistan Constitution (1992) Article 1: Turkmenistan is a democratic secular state operating under the rule of law whose government takes the form of a presidential republic. Uzbekistan Constitution (1992), Article 12: No ideology shall be granted the status of state ideology. Kyrgyzstan Constitution (1993) Article 1.1: The Kyrgyz Republic (Kyrgyzstan) shall be a sovereign unitary democratic republic created on the basis of a legal secular state. Kazakstan Article (1993) Article 1.1: The Republic of Kazakstan establishes itself as a democratic, secular, social, rule of law state for which the highest value is the person and her or his life, rights, and freedoms. Tajikistan Constitution (1994), Article 1: The Republic of Tajikistan is a sovereign democratic, rule of law, secular, and united state.

<sup>30</sup> M.B. Olcott, "Revisiting the twelve myths of Central Asia" *Working Paper*, No. 23, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, September 2001, pp. 3-11. Just as an example, in Algeria the President Houari Boumedienne (1965-1978) called the economic reform in his country a "big *Jihad*" (*Jihad Akbar*).

<sup>31</sup> Quoted from *Narodnoye Slovo* (Tashkent), 12 November 1997, by Malashenko, op. cit., pp. 9-18. Despite the secularist approach, political or radical Islam, as noted before, does not differentiate between government and Islam. Indeed, "the distinction between religious and temporal is irrelevant to radical Islam." Akbarzadeh, "The political shape of Central Asia" pp. 517-542, The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, for example, has been seeking to topple Karimov's regime by guerrilla incursions. D.K. Roelofsma, "Commentary: US, Islam and Central Asia" *The Washington Times*, 18 March 2002. This depiction of Islam was brought to the Islamic world after Iran's Islamic revolution of 1979. For an overview of the impact of Iran's Islamic Revolution on Central Asia, see H. Braker, "The implication of Islamic question for Soviet domestic and foreign policy" *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 2, No. 1, July 1983, pp. 111-128.



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- <sup>32</sup> Cited from *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 20 January 1992 by Malashenko, op. cit., pp. 9-18.
- <sup>33</sup> Quoted from [http://www.khilafah.com/ca\\_special/Report/Kazak.htm](http://www.khilafah.com/ca_special/Report/Kazak.htm), [accessed 4/6/2008]
- <sup>34</sup> See A. Hyman, *Power and Politics in Central Asia's New Republics*, London: Research Institution for the Study of Conflict and Terrorism, 1994, A. Matveeva, 'The Islamist challenge in post-Soviet Eurasia' in Johnson and Esenov, eds. *Political Islam and Conflicts in Russia and Central Asia*, pp. 38-48.
- <sup>35</sup> Roelofsma, op. cit., p.10.
- <sup>36</sup> See B. Badadzhanov, 'Islam in Uzbekistan: From the struggle for religious purity to political activism' in Rumer, ed., *Central Asia: A Gathering Storm*, pp. 299-330, M. Keith, 'Whither Central Asia's Islamic Radicals? A comparative framework for examining political Islam in Central Asia' in Johnson and Esenov, eds., *Political Islam and Conflicts in Russia and Central Asia*, pp. 19-37 and Abdullaev, op. cit., pp. 245-298.
- <sup>37</sup> Haghayeghi, *Islam and Politics in Central Asia*, pp. 158-160.
- <sup>38</sup> Islam Karimov Speech at the parliamentary session in 1998 BBC Monitoring report of Uzbek Radio second program, 1 May 1998.
- <sup>39</sup> Agence France-Presse (AFP), 2 April 1999.
- <sup>40</sup> Haghayeghi, *Islam and Politics in Central Asia*, pp. 158-160.
- <sup>41</sup> Mohammad Assammak, 'The Future of Arab Journalism under Globalization', *Al Hawadith*, No. 2310, London, March 9, 2007, p. 62.
- <sup>42</sup> Voll, op. cit., pp. 62-81 and Stislav Zhukov, 'Adapting to Globalization' in Boris Rumer, ed. *Central Asia and the New Global Economy*, New Delh: Akabr Book, 2003, pp. 154-161.
- <sup>43</sup> F. Ajami, 'The summoning', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 4, September/October 1993, pp. 2-9.
- <sup>44</sup> For more on this issue see Bal, op. cit., pp. 43-106, Malashenko, op. cit., pp. 9-18, and M.B. Olcott, 'Central Asia's catapult to independence', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 71, No. 3, Summer 1992, pp. 108-131.
- <sup>45</sup> Manz, op. cit., p.165. For comprehensive information on *glasnost* see D.E. Powell, 'Soviet glasnost: Detentions and dimensions', *Current History*, Philadelphia, Vol. 87, No. 531, October 1988, pp. 321-327, and J. Gibbs, *Gorbachev's Glasnost: The Soviet Media in the First Phase of Perestroika*, Texas: Texas A and M University Press, 1999.
- <sup>46</sup> S. Akbarzadeh, 'National-Building in Uzbekistan', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 1996, pp. 23-32.
- <sup>47</sup> Cited in ICG, 'Central Asia: Islamist Mobilisation and Regional Security', *Asia Report*, No. 14, Osh/Brussels, 1 March 2006, 1-6.