

be interested in new major economic projects with the Caspian countries.

Fourth, it should be expected that the United States, in order to preserve the geopolitical positions created in the Caspian Sea over the past three decades, will intensify contacts with the countries of the Caspian region, the South Caucasus and Central Asia on economic cooperation and security issues to prevent their transition into the sphere of influence of Russia.

VALENTINA SCHENSNOVICH. SOCIO-POLITICAL
INSTABILITY IN KAZAKHSTAN AND KYRGYZSTAN.
Condensed abstract.

*Keywords: Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan;
socio-political instability; Islam; elite splits;
opposition; development forecasts;
destabilization; economy; labor migration;
interethnic conflicts.*

Valentina Schensnovich,
Research Associate,
Asia and Africa Department member,
INION RAN,
e-mail: vl-lyuba9@yandex.ru

Citation: Schensnovich V. Socio-political instability in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. *Condensed abstract* // Russia and the Moslem World, 2022, № 3 (317), P. 63–70. DOI: 10.31249/rmw/2022.03.06

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E.A. Ivanov and S.Yu. Malkov [1], researches from HSE University, analyze socio-political situation in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and offer scenarios of future developments. For the medium term (2021–2025), the authors expect further socio-political destabilization in the countries of the former USSR, where political and economic modernization fails to keep pace with world leaders. It is obvious that the change of generations of political elites and the transformation of regimes are followed by developments in other areas.

Today, a controlled transfer of power is ongoing in Kazakhstan. Having stepped down from the Presidency, Nursultan Nazarbayev retains the key control levers in the country, thus ensuring political stability for the time being. Nevertheless, Kazakhstan faces new challenges, which may require original solutions and fundamental changes in the country. Kyrgyzstan lacks Kazakhstan's political stability and the ability of the elites to achieve a lasting consensus. Kyrgyzstan should consolidate its statehood. The issues of distribution of power should be addressed not by means of 'street democracy', but through established institutions and practices. Among other things, the economy of Kyrgyzstan lacks Kazakhstan's margin of safety.

The authors note that the political systems of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan received a modernization impulse while still part of the USSR. However, further development was hampered by the transition period from a planned economy to a market economy, from Soviet semi-isolation to openness, and from an analog technological practice to a digital one. The political regime of Kazakhstan is based on the policy of centralization and stability. In contrast, Kyrgyzstan is a state with a fragmented society and highly turbulent political processes. The authors consider major division lines, which can cause socio-political destabilization in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in the coming years.

Since the mid-2000s, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have managed to reduce income inequality. Despite this, in Kazakhstan, a segment of wealthy businessmen has been formed

due to resource rent. There are fewer entrepreneurs of this magnitude in Kyrgyzstan, though in terms of GDP its economy is 20–30 times smaller than Kazakhstan's.

The authors emphasize that due to complicated global political and economic situation, a sharp decline in the standards of living is expected in many countries. There are various possibilities for Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to counter negative trends. Kazakhstan endeavors to equalize life in urban and rural areas, to implement better targeted assistance, but has not yet yielded the desired results. In Kazakhstan efforts are winding down due to the fact that the republic's economy is largely dependent on the export of hydrocarbons and metals. Moreover, today these countries can hardly qualify for international assistance. Central Asia is not a priority region for Western countries, and assistance from China is fraught with aggravation of long-term credit obligations. This situation, however, provides an opportunity for the Arab Gulf countries to strengthen their influence in Central Asia, though in return for their assistance the Gulf monarchies will demand Islamization policy, which is fraught with social and ideological difficulties.

Considering the division between Islam and secularism, the authors note that in the post-Soviet period, many people retained certain religiosity, even though ideology and materialistic approach crowded out religious consciousness; some centers of Orthodoxy, Islam, Buddhism and other religions survived all the repressions. During the period of active de-secularization, two major dissensions began to take shape. In the 1990s, the first rift was between Soviet atheists and supporters of clericalization; it was more common in Central Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. The second rift was between the 'old type' believers and the adherents of new interpretations of religious precepts; it greatly affected the states and regions where most of the inhabitants are so-called ethnic believers. These communities retained vestiges of their own religious traditions, e.g. Muslim traditions; having survived the Soviet period and merged with local traditions, this

version of Islam has become 'folk religion'. Having had the opportunity to be educated in world Islamic centers, i.e. Egypt, Syria, etc., the younger generations came into conflict with the older generations back home, whose understanding of Islam was regarded by the youth as a wrong one.

In Kazakhstan, Islamization proceeded at a more subdued pace than in Kyrgyzstan, which at the state level proved to be unable to contain spontaneous Islamization and the spread of radical and extremist ideas that followed. For a long time, organizations that were recognized as extremist in a number of countries, including Russia, continued to operate in Kyrgyzstan. The rise of Islamic State (IS; banned in Russia) in Syria and Iraq has exposed the depth of these problems. Many citizens of Kyrgyzstan – some of them labor migrants who worked in Russia – were recruited by IS supporters and left to fight in the Middle East. The outflow of radicals from Kazakhstan to IS was not large, but it showed that there were radical cells and lone radicals in the country. The western and southern regions are at greatest risk, since that is where imported radical ideas infiltrated the country. In addition, in Kazakhstan, there are two types of youth: moderately religious/non-religious urban youth, looking up to the West or developed countries of Asia; and religious youth involved with world Islamic centers, i.e. Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey. Therefore, in Kazakhstan, the rift between secularism and religion (Islam) may be deeper than in Kyrgyzstan, where the level of Islamization is higher. At the same time, in Kyrgyzstan, the risks of destabilization associated with radicals and extremists are significantly higher.

Researchers also examine intra-elite splits. By 2021, Kazakhstan had been in a state of a controlled 'soft' transfer of power for two years: from a personalistic regime headed by Nursultan Nazarbayev to different patterns of configuration of political institutions and elite groups. As president, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev supports moderate changes of the political regime with respect for the legacy of N. Nazarbayev. In order to

make the transfer of power smoother and allow the opposition to vent, the Tokayev administration is conducting targeted political liberalization. For the time being, Tokayev retains the foundations of the established political system, working to revitalize it through personnel replacements and introduction of new management approaches. However, the authors are not sure whether Tokayev's presidency is a transitional period or whether it is a foundation for the entire future political system.

In 2020, there was the third revolution in Kyrgyzstan, this time in October. Sixteen political parties took part in the parliamentary elections, many of which were in opposition to the current government and enjoyed widespread public support. Following the announcement of the preliminary election results, protestors began to gather in the center of Bishkek. The storming of government buildings resulted in clashes with the police and the subsequent escalation of violence. Politician Sadyr Japarov, who was leading the protests, and his supporters managed to cancel the results of the October elections, forced Sooronbay Jeenbekov to resign from the presidency and secured new presidential and parliamentary elections. In the near future, the stability of the political system of Kyrgyzstan will depend on compromises between local elites.

As far as the issues of foreign policy are concerned, the authors note that Kazakhstan carries out a balanced foreign policy. Russia remains the main trading partner of Kazakhstan, ahead even of China, which continues its active expansion in world markets. The authors believe that Kazakhstan should stay the course, viz. diversify the range of foreign partners while maintaining positive relationships with everyone. In the medium term, Kazakhstan might become a state dominated by ethnic Kazakhs, for whom independence and self-sufficiency of their country is a priority.

The authors point out that the choice of foreign policy is of great importance for the people of Kyrgyzstan. The authors conditionally outline three main parties, as follows:

- The ‘party of migration’, which promotes the idea of Eurasian integration with Russia and Kazakhstan. In general, citizens of Kyrgyzstan support rapprochement with Russia: over 80 percent of respondents are positive about the EAEU.

- The ‘re-export party’ or ‘smuggling party’, whose economic basis is made up of entrepreneurs and businesses related to the import of goods from China in violation of the law.

- The ‘Liberal Democracy Party’ or ‘NPO Party’ leans towards the West, primarily the US and the EU. Representatives of this party make an extensive use of the media to create an ideological platform for a loyal segment from among the most active and educated part of society.

In conclusion, the authors speak about the peculiarities of the socio-political situation in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and offer some development forecasts. There is a large potential for socio-political destabilization in both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The split in Kazakhstan is mainly caused by socio-economic and intra-elite factors.

In Kyrgyzstan, the situation is different from the one in Kazakhstan. If in Kazakhstan splits have practically no effect on the public political field, in Kyrgyzstan around each split there is a coalition of interested players, i.e. politicians, parties and their sponsors. At present, there are two major splits in Kyrgyzstan: a regional one (North vs. South) and an intra-elite one (clans of the North vs. clans of the South). Apparently, Kyrgyzstan is going to remain a pocket of instability until the country manages to achieve political and economic balance and sustain it for the next 10–15 years.

M.V. Sharueva [2], PhD(Law), Russian State University for the Humanities, examines the economic consequences of coups d’état in Kyrgyzstan; the predominance of the clan system and distinction between northern and southern political elites; the policy of maneuvering, which Kyrgyz leaders have resorted to on many occasions when forced to seek a compromise between various pressure groups within the country and abroad. While emphasizing the importance of interethnic relations for steady

economic development, the author points out the risk factors that Kyrgyzstan has to face.

The thirtieth anniversary of independence (1991) represents the opportunity to draw some conclusions. The author analyzes economic achievements and losses of the country, as well as identifies the main trends of social and economic development of Kyrgyzstan in the 1990s–2010s. Hundreds of plants and factories in the country were closed because the goods manufactured turned out to be redundant in the new conditions. Only extractive industries survived, since oil, gas and metals were in high demand abroad. In December 1998, Kyrgyzstan became the first post-Soviet country to join the WTO. In order to expedite the entry procedure, the authorities of the republic made unprecedented concessions in the sphere of trade in goods and services, including banking. This allowed international companies and organizations to actually capture all niches in the country's national market. Foreign investments were much less than anticipated; moreover, the authorities of the republic were no longer able to protect the national market and manufacturers failed to compete with cheap and high-quality imports.

The author notes that there still were achievements in the 1990s. In no time, high-tech plants and factories were built with the use of foreign investments. The economy gradually adapted to the market rules, but steady development of the republic was impeded by political events. The state entered an era when presidents were changed as in a game of musical chairs; each new president canceled all the reforms of his predecessors, sometimes even efficient ones, and introduced yet another development path. Interethnic contradictions, along with corruption, organized crime and political and economic uncertainty, have caused serious damage to the national economy. The south of Kyrgyzstan, home for about 1 million ethnic Uzbeks, can be explosive in terms of ethnopolitics; typically, interethnic conflicts are caused by an economic factor. Since the Uzbeks control local businesses, they enjoy a higher standard of living than the

Kyrgyz. The mutual grievances of the Uzbeks and the Kyrgyz result in multiple conflicts with a large number of dead and wounded on both sides. Sometimes it even comes to military clashes on the border between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

In the future, the situation in the republic might be further aggravated due to geopolitical factors. The Taliban (banned in Russia) have already instigated several armed conflicts with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the immediate neighbors of Kyrgyzstan; the republic itself might fall prey to the subsequent expansion of the Taliban.