

## RELIGION IN SOCIETY

**THE MUSLIM EAST  
IN THE EARLY 21ST CENTURY:  
CURRENT DEVELOPMENT TRENDS AND  
PROSPECTS**

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Religion and various aspects of its development are still the most urgent issues of our day. This is especially true of Islam, which is frequently regarded as an obstacle on the road to progress. It is commonly accepted that the religion itself, which concentrates on the afterworld, is mainly indifferent to the ideals of earthly existence and social processes. It is not religion itself but the related culture, primarily political culture, customs, and ideas which give rise to these concerns. In this sense, we can compare these two very different concepts as Islam and development.

When discussing Islam we are not referring to religion itself, but rather to the society related to it, and not so much Islamic society in the profound and omniscient meaning of the word, but Islamized, or Muslim society. For the purpose of our comparison let us take politically shaped communities as

an example, the majority of which are internationally recognized states. They are described as Muslim either because Muslims comprise the majority of their populations, who acquired the faith themselves or inherited it from their ancestors, or because their titular nations consist of Muslims in the sense described above and claim control over the state's entire territory or its largest part by force of tradition.

What is meant by development? There are three sides to it. The first side is economic, or the production and consumption of commodities and services; improving and widening their range; eliminating hunger and destitution; and bringing down the level of chronic unemployment and poverty. The second, the political side, lies in ensuring security and conditions for the civilized and peaceful life of the people in the absence of conflicts, manifestations of separatism, and stable alienation from pow-

er which disrupt the fabric of social life. The third is the sociocultural side, associated with conditions conducive to wider literacy and broader access to education and information sources and technologies, as well as to means of health protection, hygiene, and sanitation.

No one doubts Muslim society's ability to efficiently develop in all three spheres, thus promoting regional and world progress. At the same time, the Muslim states are currently lagging behind the non-Muslim countries in terms of the above and certain other criteria. Moreover, the stumbling blocks of world development are directly and indirectly connected with the area of Islam and the negative processes unfolding in it. I have in mind local and global terrorism, domestic and

interstate conflicts, corruption and nepotism common in the Muslim countries, inefficient bureaucracy, social passivity of women, the closed nature of society and its basic cells, authoritarianism and abuse of power.

It is not my intention to explain the causes of the above, or the very phenomenon of "Muslim exclusiveness." Both are obviously the product of a set of factors: historical (or vertical in the scale of time) and situational (or horizontal) depending on the current situation and the external environment. While leaving the vast range of problems outside the scope of the present article, let us concentrate on the specific features of the Islamic world as represented by the Muslim East, a key and endemic Islamic region.

## Configuration

The academic community has been using the term "Muslim East" for a long time now, yet the classical works by academician Vassili Bartold, for example, treat it as synonymous to the Muslim world that, in this sense, was opposed to the West, or the Christian world.<sup>1</sup> Today, any discussion of the Islamic factor in the context of international affairs and geopolitics should impart the term with a different meaning. Indeed, Islam has left the limits of its initial area where a Big Bang of sorts took place over 1,400 years ago; it covers a much wider territory.

In the first place, the recent (in historical terms) Muslim migration and, to a great extent, proselytism brought Islam to the West (Western Europe and the United States). Today we can talk about the Muslim West—a term that covers those European regions to which it came much earlier, during the Ottoman expansion. We can also talk about the Muslim North (by which I mean the Volga Area and the trans-Ural regions of Russia) and the Muslim regions of Northwest China.<sup>2</sup> There is also the Muslim Southeast, of which Indonesia, a Muslim country with one of the world's largest populations, is part. It borders on the Muslim area of South Asia (where Bangladesh is the only Muslim state). Finally, the Muslim South is easily identified; demographically it consists of the rapidly growing Muslim states of Africa (Nigeria being the largest among them). The Arab Maghreb countries are also part of the Muslim South. The fact that they belong to the south of Europe, with which they cooperate as one of the sides of the Mediterranean, is their most important political feature.

Having identified the Muslim West, North, Southeast, and South, we can describe the Muslim East as an area consisting of a wide stretch of states extending from the northeast to the southwest, from the center of Eurasia to the east of Africa and from Kazakhstan in the north to Sudan in the south. In the terms of mathematical economics, the area can be presented as a graph connecting Kazakhstan with Kyrgyzstan, the latter with Uzbekistan, and further with Tajikistan. Then the graph goes to Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, and Turkey. From Turkey it goes to Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan; from the latter it goes to Oman, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, and further to Iraq. From the latter it goes to Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and Sudan. To complete the graph we should connect Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan and Sudan with Saudi Arabia.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See: V. Bartold, *Islam i kul'tura musul'manstva*, Moscow, 1992, pp. 131-133.

<sup>2</sup> See: D.B. Malysheva uses this term. See, for example, her article "Islamskiy faktor v politike razvivaiushchikhsia stran i Rossii," in: *Meniaushchiyasia mir i Rossia*, Moscow, 2004, p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> See: G. Avondo Bodino, *Economic Applications of the Theory of Graphs*, Gordon and Breach, New York, 1962.

In this way the Muslim East includes 23 states which are very different in terms of their territorial and population size, economic development level, and material wealth. They also differ in culture, despite the fact that the Muslims comprise the majority in all of them. No matter how closed the region might look to us with its lines of internal connections (the number of which is much larger than those outlined above), it remains an open structure. This means that it has inter-civilizational border zones. In the north it borders on the Russian civilization, which is especially obvious in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan; in the east it is adjacent to the Indian civilization (expressed in the combined culture of Pakistan). In the south it borders on the African civilization across Sudan (itself divided into the Arabian North and the African South). In the west, Turkey is the border country, whereby it is disjunctive with part of it belonging to Europe, having historically close ties with the European civilization, and claiming EU membership.

At the same time, the Muslim East is the true historical, cultural, political, and economic center of the Islamic world. In historical terms, this is the place where Islam was born; the area where the Arab-Muslim, Iranian-Muslim, and Turkic-Muslim statehoods appeared. In cultural terms, this is the zone of the Arabic tongue, the sacred language of religion and literature that also used Persian as the second "Islamic" tongue. In political terms, this is the place where the main Muslim organizations (the Arab League and the OIC), as well as regional groups (the Gulf Cooperation Council and the ECO), have their headquarters. Recently, the Muslim media (the Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya TV companies, the *Khaleej Times* newspaper, and others) moved their offices there. Finally, in economic terms, this is the place where the Islamic Development Bank and other Islamic financial organizations are found and the zone of the world's largest hydrocarbon reserves. The ellipse that includes the Gulf and the Caspian areas contains, according to the assessments of the mid-1990s, up to 70 percent of the world's oil reserves and over 40 percent of natural gas; the Gulf zone dominates with 65 and 31 percent, respectively.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, demographically this is the largest Muslim area. According to the World Bank, in 2002, 572 million lived in the region's 23 states; Muslims comprised an absolute majority there, while the total Muslim population in the world was assessed at 1.2 billion.<sup>5</sup> From this it follows that over half of the world's Muslim population lives in the East, which is much more than in any of the other four areas.

Practically all large international conflicts are associated with the region: the Middle Eastern, Palestinian-Israeli, and Cashmere (between Pakistan and India). The troublesome zone of the Northern Caucasus borders on this region, while Afghanistan and Iraq are found in its center. The situation in the latter two is far from normal; Sudan, another state of the same region, is torn apart by internal armed strife.

The Muslim East is the epicenter of Islamic radicalism, otherwise known as Islamism, which challenges the West and the entire world community, the ideology of globalism and modernization. It was in the mid-1990s that Zbigniew Brzezinski called the region that roughly coincided with the Muslim East the Eurasian Balkans. As distinct from the Balkans of the late 19th-early 20th century, today the religious factor, rather than a national awakening or the struggle against the dynastic and polyethnic empires for national liberation, plays the main destabilizing role. Religion unites all radical political forces against the new type of hegemony and worldwide expansion for which, they say, the West headed by the United States is responsible. The anti-globalist ideology is varied, yet its Islamist variant is one of the most radical and most effective.<sup>6</sup>

The world of Islam is structurally very complicated; the situation in the region and outside it is closely connected with this. Iran is the main geopolitical center of the Muslim East, first, because of its central geographic location. It is connected with the northern belt (the Caucasian-Central Asian), with

<sup>4</sup> See: G. Kemp, R. Harkavy, *Strategic Geography and the Changing Middle East*, Washington, 1997, pp. 111-112.

<sup>5</sup> See: D.B. Barrett, T.M. Johnson, *Annual Table of World Religions, 1900-2025* [<http://www.wnrf.org/cms/statuswr.shtml>].

<sup>6</sup> On the Eurasian Balkans, see: Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Basic Books, New York, 1997. Chapter 5. For more details about Islamic fundamentalism and Islamist populism see his new book: *The Choice: Global Domination or Global Leadership*, Basic Books, New York, 2004.

the middle belt (Turkey in the west and Afghanistan and Pakistan in the east), and with the southern belt of states (Iraq and the Gulf countries). Second, Iran is an oil-rich country and one of the largest oil producers in the region (about 200 million tonnes in 2001). Third, Iran is the center of Shi'a, the most radical of the Islamic trends concerned with the inner life of the Islamic world. According to Alexander Dugin, the Shi'a discern "sacral meaning not so much in the wars against the unfaithful... as in the conflict inside the Islamic umma... It is precisely this war that the Shi'a world finds paradigmatic."<sup>7</sup>

To a certain extent the sharp inner regional confrontations and conflicts between Islamic states are caused by the fact that Iran is the center of Shi'ism in the East. For example, 89 percent of the Iranian Muslims are Shi'a Imamis; Iran spreads Imamism to Afghanistan with its 10 to 15 percent of Imamis among the total Muslim population, as well as to Pakistan (20 percent), Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, Iraq (60-65 percent), Lebanon and Palestine. This is a belt of instability and disturbances, instigated to a great extent by the Iranian revolution of 1978-1979 that brought Shi'a theologians to power.<sup>8</sup>

It seems that contradictions inside Islam, along with the changes in the socio-historical environment outside, are responsible for the rise in Islamic radicalism and conservative revolutionary passions which served as the ideological basis for international terrorism sometimes described as anti-systemic. It was Iran that played the leading role in the process. This role is still manifested by its "principled" confrontation with the United States and the role it plays in the Arab-Israeli conflict, the region's (and probably the world's) most important conflict.

This explains, to a great extent, the place of Iraq, Iran's neighbor and an old antagonist, on the international agenda. Under Saddam Hussein, the Shi'a, who comprised the majority in the country's population, were treated as a religious minority. It seems that the oil factor along with the Iranian factor are behind America's aggressive policy in the Gulf area. Unless it subjugated Iraq, the U.S. would never have been able to sort out the Iranian problem, or the problem of Arab-Israeli relations for that matter. Iran has assumed the role of fighter against the infidels, which is historically alien to it. It is not yet clear how far it is prepared to go.

## Demographic Prospects and Economic Dynamics

Its population size explains the role of the Muslim East. According to information supplied by the national statistical structures and published by the World Bank in its recent publications, by the early 21st century nearly 10 percent of the world's total population lived there (see Table 1); the figure for 1980 was 7.6 percent. In absolute figures, the population of the 23 regional countries increased from about 340 to 570 million in 22 years. This trend will continue: by 2015, growth will exceed 10 percent and bring the number of people to 720 million.

The central belt of the Muslim world stretching from Turkey to Pakistan has the largest population. The absolute figures of population growth are impressive: from 180 million in 1980 to 300-325 million in 2002-2004. The approximate growth in Turkey was from 45 to 70 million; in Iran, from 40 to 65; in Afghanistan (despite the war and migration), from 16 to nearly 30 million; and in Pakistan, from 80 to 145-150 million. By the middle of the second decade of the 21st century, their combined population size will be nearly 400 million. While in Turkey and Iran the population will grow at a moderate pace, in Afghanistan and Pakistan the process will be much more intensive. This is supported by the current assessments of the fertility coefficient (the number of births per woman between 15 and 45). While in Afghanistan the coefficient is very high, in Pakistan it is inflated. In ten years' time, the total population of

<sup>7</sup> A.G. Dugin, *Filosofia politiki*, Moscow, 2004, p. 361.

<sup>8</sup> About the revolution and its repercussions, see: *Iranskaia revoliutsia 1978-1979. Prichiny i uroki*, ed. by A.Z. Arabajan, Moscow, 1989.

Table 1

## Demographic Growth in the Muslim East

Countries	Population in 1980,* million	Population in 2002,** million	Population in 2004,*** million*	Fertility coefficient*** in 2003*	Population in 2015,* million
Kazakhstan	14.9	15.0	15.1	1.9	15.2
Kyrgyzstan	3.6	5.0	5.1	2.7	5.8
Uzbekistan	16.0	25.0	26.4	3.0	30.2
Tajikistan	4.0	6.0	7.0	4.1	7.2
Turkmenistan	2.9	5.0	4.9	3.5	5.8
Azerbaijan	6.2	8.0	7.9	2.4	9.3
Turkey	44.5	70.0	68.9	2.0	77.8
Iran	39.1	66.0	69.0	1.9	82.1
Afghanistan	16.0	28.0	28.5	6.7	39.5
Pakistan	82.7	145.0	159.2	4.3	192.9
Oman	1.1	3.0	2.9	5.9	3.3
Yemen	8.5	19.0	29.0	6.8	26.5
Saudi Arabia	9.4	22.0	25.8	4.1	32.1
UAE	1.0	3.0	2.5	3.0	3.8
Qatar	—	0.7	0.8	3.0	1.2
Bahrain	—	0.6	0.7	2.7	1.2
Kuwait	1.4	2.0	2.3	3.0	2.9
Iraq	13.0	24.0	25.4	4.4	31.3
Syria	8.7	17.0	18.0	3.6	21.9
Lebanon	3.0	4.0	3.8	2.0	5.2
Jordan	2.2	5.0	5.6	2.9	6.8
Egypt	40.9	66.0	76.0	3.0	80.0
Sudan	18.7	33.0	39.1	5.0	40.0
World as a whole	4,430.1	6,199	6,379	2.6	7,084.3
Region, in % of the world	338.3 7.6	572.3	623.9 9.8		722.0 10.2

*Sources:* \* 2001 World Development Indicators, The World Bank, Washington, pp. 44-46;  
 \*\* The Little Green Data Book 2004, The World Bank, Washington, 2004;  
 \*\*\* CIA World Factbook [<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/countrycode.html>].

these two countries (which geographically form a single zone between Central Asia and the Arabian Sea) may reach 240 million. This is fraught with serious problems which will impede economic and social development in this part of the Muslim East.

The number of people living to the west of Afghanistan and Pakistan will grow at a more moderate pace. Due to its younger population, Iran will outstrip Turkey: the fertility coefficients of both countries are almost identical and low (twice as low as that of Pakistan, for example) yet, more likely than not, demographic growth will continue there.

In the past 20-25 years, the population of the northern belt (the Caucasus and Central Asia) has been increasing at a fairly slow pace: from about 50 to 65 million; the annual growth rates there are somewhat lower than the world's average (their share has dropped from 1.1 to 1 percent). It seems that this trend will go on. The fertility coefficients are very high in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan and compare with those of Pakistan. Uzbekistan, the largest of the local countries in terms of population size, demonstrates an inflated fertility coefficient. By 2015, the combined population of the six local countries may reach the figure of nearly 75 million.

Between 1980 and 2002 the countries of the southern belt greatly increased their populations in absolute and relative figures: from 110 to 200 million and from 2.4 to 3.2 percent (Table 1). According to the *CIA World Factbook*, the population size of 13 countries of this belt was even larger (232 million, or 3.5 percent) by the beginning of the 21st century. It is forecasted that in 2015 the share will remain the same, while the absolute number will be close to 260 million.

We should bear in mind not only the differences in the two rows of figures (they are considerable for some of the countries, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia in particular), but also the fact that non-citizens are also included in the population size. They are especially numerous in the countries rich in petrodollars: Saudi Arabia (5.6 million in 2004), Kuwait (1.3 million), and other Gulf countries. Arabs, mainly from Egypt, predominate among the non-citizens living in Kuwait; and the number of South Asians from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka is very large in the UAE, Oman, and Saudi Arabia.

Pakistan has the largest population in the Muslim East. While in 1980 the difference between its population size and the number of people living in Turkey, Iran, and Egypt was 30-40 million, by 2015, under normal conditions, the gap will be 110-115 million. These countries are still second, third and fourth in terms of population size. In the future, Sudan, Afghanistan, and Yemen, the poorest and least fortunate states of the region, which the U.N. describes as the most underdeveloped ones, will join this group.

When talking about population growth we should bear in mind the two sides of the process—the birth (and the fertility coefficient as the best possible index) and mortality rates (average post-retirement life expectancy calculated according to the mortality rate by age). Significantly, in recent decades post-retirement life expectancy (also described as the average life span) sharply increased. In nearly all the states of the region, with the exception of Afghanistan and Iraq, it exceeded 60 years, while in the mid-20th century it was 35-45 years. Noticeable progress in medicine and health protection in the Muslim East has greatly increased the share of middle-aged and elderly people, thus confronting the state with the problem of the growing number of dependants.

The region's economic level is twice as low as the world's per capita income. The GDP calculated by the purchasing power parity was 4.8 percent in 2002; the share of the total population is over 9 percent. In the near future, this correlation will hardly change.

The gap calculated by incomes based on the official exchange rates is even wider. The states of the northern belt (with the exception of Kazakhstan) and Pakistan, Yemen, and Sudan belong to the low-income group (under \$735). Turkey, Iran, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria belong to the average low-income group (up to \$2,935). The group of countries with average-high incomes (up to \$9,076) includes Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Lebanon; Kuwait and Bahrain belong to the group of countries with high incomes. There is no information about the UAE (which is close to the latter category), or about Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, and Iraq. The nominal per capita incomes in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan are assessed as being lower than in Yemen and Sudan.

Table 2

Economic and Social Development Indices in the Countries of the Muslim East  
(estimates for 2002-2003)

Countries	GDP calculated by PPP, billion dollars*	Per capita income according to PPP, dollars*	Per capita income according to the exchange rate, dollars**	Number of people living below the poverty level (in percent)*	Number of unemployed (in percent)*	Correlated net national savings (in percent of GDP for 2002)**
Kazakhstan	105.5	6,300	1,520	26	8.8	18.3
Kyrgyzstan	7.8	1,600	290	50	7.2	-10.5
Uzbekistan	44.0	1,700	310	—	0.5	-46.6
Tajikistan	6.8	1,000	180	60	40	-4.8
Turkmenistan	27.9	5,800	—	34	—	-32.1
Azerbaijan	26.7	3,400	710	49	1.1	-35.3
Turkey	458.7	6,700	2,490	18	10.5	9.8
Iran	478.2	7,000	1,720	40	15.7	0.1
Afghanistan	20.0	700	—	23	—	—
Pakistan	318.0	2,100	420	35	7.7	13.4
Oman	36.7	13,100	7,830	—	11.4	—
Yemen	15.0	800	490	16	3	—
Saudi Arabia	287.8	11,800	8,530	—	—	-17.9
UAE	57.7	23,200	—	—	—	—
Qatar 1	17.5	21,500	—	—	—	—
Bahrain	11.3	16,900	10,500	—	—	—
Kuwait	41.6	19,000	16,340	—	2.1	-27.3
Iraq	37.9	1,500	—	—	—	—
Syria	58.0	3,300	1,130	20	20	-13.6
Lebanon	17.8	4,800	3,990	28	18	-6.8
Jordan	23.6	4,300	1,760	30	—	18.2
Egypt	295.2	4,000	1,470	16,7	9.9	2.7
Sudan	71.0	1,900	370	—	—	4.8
Total	2,464.2	—	—	—	—	—
World as a whole	51,480.0	8,208	5,120	—	—	8.8

Sources: \* CIA World Factbook; \*\* The Little Green Data Book 2004.

The economic and social development indices (see Table 2) show that many of the region's countries (primarily the oil producers) have a low coefficient of net savings. Here I have in mind a new indicator—corrected savings minus amortization and uncompensated, from the point of view of society, consumption of natural resources, as well as ecological damage; the funds spent on education are included in net savings. In Iran and the Arab oil producers the savings calculated by this pattern are close to zero or even below zero.

It should be added that most countries of the Muslim East have large defense budgets (from 3 to 5 percent of the GNP, or even up to 10 percent and more). Dual wastefulness—at the stage of using natural resources and at the stage of using the means and capacities for non-production purposes—is fraught with numerous problems for the countries with a young population structure and a widening gap between the rich and the poor. The Gini coefficient, which measures statistically the unevenness in income distribution, has come close or even exceeds the critical level of 0.4 in the many of the region's countries for which there is relevant information (0 corresponds to the absence of such unevenness; 1 means complete unevenness).

## Sociocultural Changes and Democracy

There are certain positive trends in nearly all the countries of the Muslim East (see Table 3); this is particularly true of the level of female literacy. In the past 12 years, the female literacy index increased from 50 to 69 percent in Saudi Arabia; from 38 to 65 percent in Oman; from 66 to 79 percent in Turkey; from 54 to 70 percent in Iran; and from 48 to 74 percent in Syria. These changes completely correspond to the sums spent on education: in 2002, Saudi Arabia spent 7.2 percent of the GNP on education; Jordan, 5.6 percent, and Kuwait, 5.0 percent.

It seems that female literacy is a good indicator of the countries' sociocultural state and the degree to which their populations are exposed to contemporary trends. Due to the protracted national crisis, the level of female literacy remains extremely low in Afghanistan (there are no exact figures for this country); it is also low in Pakistan (29 or, according to different sources, 31 percent); in Yemen, 29 percent; in Egypt, 44 percent; and in Sudan, 49 percent. In fact, there has also been some progress in these countries: an increase of about 10 percent in the past 12 years. The absolute growth rate in these countries is less spectacular. It seems that the situation regarding female education has deteriorated across the post-Soviet expanse. For example, the available figures show that in certain new Central Asian states the share of girls attending primary schools has dropped to 84-92 percent.<sup>9</sup>

Yet there is one more positive circumstance: availability of the latest means of communication and information, primarily the Internet. During 2002 alone, the number of Internet users in some of the countries of the Muslim East increased 2- to 3-fold (4-fold in Egypt). There are 5.1 million Internet users in Turkey, 3.2 million in Iran; 1.9 million in Egypt; 1.5 million in Pakistan; 1.3 million in Saudi Arabia; nearly 0.5 million in Lebanon; and 0.3 million in Jordan.

The Internet is an individual, rather than family, information and communication means. Its revolutionary effect is comparable to cable TV, yet the Internet is free from the limitations of the latter. As far as we know, none of the Muslim Eastern states bans access to the Internet, as distinct from China where such a ban exists.

In terms of the freedom of speech index, nearly all the region's states are found at the bottom of the list. Lebanon and, quite unexpectedly, Tajikistan and Afghanistan (according to the latest assessments) are higher than the rest. Turkey occupies a relatively high place, while Jordan and Egypt are lower than one might have expected.

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<sup>9</sup> See: *The Little Green Data Book 2004*, pp. 120, 126.



Table 3

**Sociocultural Development  
Indicators**

Country	Female literacy (in percent)		Number of Internet users (per 1,000)		The freedom of speech index (number by decreasing index, 167 states)**
	1990*	2002*	2001*	2002*	
Kazakhstan	98	99	9	16	131
Kyrgyzstan	—	—	30	30	107
Uzbekistan	98	99	8	11	142
Tajikistan	97	99	1	1	95
Turkmenistan	—	—	2	—	164
Azerbaijan	—	—	3	37	136
Turkey	66	79	60	73	114
Iran	54	70	16	48	158
Afghanistan	—	—	—	—	97
Pakistan	20	29	4	10	150
Oman	38	65	46	66	—
Yemen	13	29	—	—	135
Saudi Arabia	50	69	46	62	159
UAE	71	81	315	337	137
Qatar	76	82	66	115	105
Bahrain	75	84	203	247	143
Kuwait	73	81	88	106	103
Iraq	—	—	1	1	148
Syria	48	74	4	13	155
Lebanon	—	—	78	117	87
Jordan	72	86	45	58	121
Egypt	34	44	9	28	129
Sudan	32	49	2	3	132
World as a whole	63	71	106	131	

*Sources:* \* *The Little Green Data Book 2004*; \*\* The countries' rating by the freedom of speech index [<http://www.rating.rbc.ru>].

In terms of the corruption perception index, practically all states of the Muslim East are found at the bottom of the corresponding list. Special polls among businessmen reveal the extent to which bureaucrats are prone to take bribes. This index can hardly be identified exactly, therefore the results of international investigations cannot be taken for absolute. They should not be underestimated either: to some extent they reflect the specifics of state discipline, public morals, and the state of affairs in the economy. Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, and Iran demonstrated the best indices among their neighbors in the Muslim East; Pakistan and the Central Asian countries, the worst.

The situation regarding freedom of speech and corruption demonstrates, in an indirect way, that the civil society culture in these countries is comparatively low. At the same time, elements of a new political culture can be clearly discerned. The “third wave” of democratization that started, according to Huntington, in the mid-1970s is gradually enveloping (with a time lag of 20 to 30 years) the Muslim East. This refers not only to the change of the form of government.

Constitutionally these countries represent a variety of regimes: there are four absolute monarchies (Saudi Arabia is one of them); three are constitutional monarchies, six are presidential republics in which the president wields real complete executive power; eight are republics of a mixed (presidential-parliamentary) type, while Turkey and Lebanon are parliamentary republics.

Parliamentarism is not widespread in the region, yet there is an obvious trend toward it. In the past five years, 15 countries elected their parliaments (including the three constitutional monarchies—Bahrain, Kuwait, and Jordan—and four post-Soviet republics). In 2005, parliamentary elections will take place in six countries, including Iraq. Few of the local political systems can be described as competitive multiparty ones, yet nearly all of them have extra-parliamentary centers of power and influence (represented by the court, president, army, clergy, and party-bureaucratic nomenklatura).

Federalism is weakly developed in all the region’s political and administrative systems; unitary structures predominate despite the fact that many of the local states are polyethnic. Apart from the UAE, which is a federation of absolute monarchies, Pakistan is the only unitary-federative state; only Azerbaijan and Tajikistan have federative elements in the form of Nakhichevan and Gorny Badakhshan.

It should be said that in the past 15 years, two states—Lebanon and Tajikistan—managed to overcome the state of a civil fratricidal war independently, even though with some external support. When semi (or pre-) democratic order is established in Afghanistan and Iraq (the latter may become a unitary-federative state with the Kurdish autonomy) Turkmenistan will become the only regional state without civil (free from total state control) sociopolitical structures. It should be said that they are highly varied and highly specific. Specificity is often ascribed to the Muslim state, while it is Muslim society that is specific. Its specific features belong to two levels: historical (connected with the traditional democracy of the caste, clan, tribe, and neighbor communities) and structural (created by elements selected from the world’s democratic arsenal).

It is recognized that civil societies may display specific features in the global, regional, and country contexts.<sup>10</sup> It is believed that no society will voluntarily abandon its cultural and cultural-political traditions; normally it is recognized that all societies should share some comparable political features. The main demands are made on the state, on the way it communicates with its population and individual citizens. Meanwhile, this can hardly be resolved in an unambiguous way. Independence is the universal trait of an individual within any culture, therefore the main difference, the most important for progress, is the difference between the “state of freedom” and the “state of fear,” that is, between the degree of freedom of an individual and his fear of power. In the East, where the individual does not stand opposed to a collective (be it a small community or the state) but voluntarily or unconsciously blends with it, the antithesis of “the state-the individual” is replaced with the “state-collective of individuals or non-individuals” formula. The latter deprives the Muslim East’s determinism to follow the general democratic development path of its rigidity.

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<sup>10</sup> See, in particular: J. Keane, *Global Civil Society?* Cambridge, 2003.

It seems, however, that the prevalence of collective psychology and passivity toward the state belongs to passing (albeit slowly) historical circumstances. It will weaken as the share of the socially active middle class grows. It is composed of fairly educated, well-off, and socially and economically independent people. The Muslim countries will probably acquire their own idea about individualism and civil society and their own specific structure of its basic cells. We should not expect the state and society to blindly copy alien patterns, but nor will they reject the experience of democratic development accumulated elsewhere in the world.