
THE WORD OF THE GUEST EDITOR

Iran is a country of an ancient and highly developed civilization. Its inhabitants at the beginning of III millennium BC created their own written language and original culture, which then improved over many millennia. The ancient Iranian religions (Zoroastrianism, Zervanism and Manichaeism) had a significant influence on the development of philosophical views of the ancient world and on the emergence of eschatological teachings in Christianity and Islam. Many works of ancient and early medieval Iranian literature were translated into Arabic, Syrian, Armenian and other languages, and then - during the Renaissance and later - the masterpieces of the literature of the West and the East were inspired by them. The works of art created by the masters of Ancient Iran became an integral part of the world culture's treasury.

Today, the Islamic Republic of Iran borders on 15 states. Having extensive ties with four regional groups of countries - Central Asia and the Caucasus, the Persian Gulf, the Eastern Mediterranean and South-West Asia, Iran claims to play the leading role in the development of economic ties, political influence and intercultural dialogue in the region.

Despite the pressure of severe sanctions connected to the US withdrawal from the Vienna Agreements in 2015, the country is trying to maintain domestic political and economic stability. Iran is making great efforts to modernize the country, which, according to the country's leadership, can take place only within the framework of Islam. Iran is of a great interest in terms of its historical, cultural and religious aspects.

This issue is entitled "Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran" and contains studies of Russian and foreign scholars on pressing issues of modern Iran. The essays presented in this issue are truly remarkable due to a wide variety of topics they cover. They include the country's modern politics and its past, the philosophical and religious aspects in historical retrospective and the role that Persian cultural heritage plays for modern Iran. The first essay by Anna Ardashnikova and Tamara Konyashkina, "Modernization versus tradition in the struggle for a republic in 1920s Iran" is devoted to the first attempts to establish a republic in Iran in the early 1920s. The revision of the principles of the monarchy was not based on a single movement: on the one hand, the traditional leader Kuchik Khan, was a supporter of the Soviet political model, and on the other hand, Prime Minister Reza Khan, advocated the establishment of a dictatorship based on the principles of nationalism. Analyzing historical material, the authors show that examples of neighboring Turkey and Soviet Russia, which attracted Iranian nationalists with the possibility of a national level leader coming to power, turned out to be unclaimed by society. The authors use a wide layer of little-known archival materials. The essay claims to be unique and, as it seems to us, can be of

great interest both to Iranian scientists and to those involved in Persian studies. The Bulgarian researcher Bogdana Todorova in the essay "Khomeini's Political-Religious Approach of the 'Iranian Nation'", continues the topic of the first essay, talks about the geostrategic position of Iran and the importance of the modern Islamic revolution not only for Iran, but also for the future of the entire Islamic world and the international world system. According to the author, the revolution of Imam Khomeini carried not only the spirit of Iranian modernization, but also the pathos of social democracy. The revolution in Iran, according to Todorova, was based on the desire to preserve the traditional values rather than utopian ones that Western society offered. The article emphasizes the special role of the Iranian leader Khomeini in building the new political system of Iran. The Shiite system of government includes the concept of leadership, and Islamic realities – the Ummah and Imamah – correspond to the eastern tradition of understanding politics. "Unity in religion" and "the power of the Quran" are the most prominent formulations of the revival of Islamic unity after the Iranian revolution.

The third essay by Marina Kameneva and Elena Paimakova, "Culture Factor in the Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran," raises the topic of culture as an important component of the political and ideological state doctrine of Iran. The essay attempts to analyze the role of the Islamic factor and cultural heritage in the cultural policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran over four decades of its existence. In this context, special attention is paid to the role of the theory of dialogue of civilizations proposed by M. Khatami. The topic of relations between Iran and the Western world today is becoming especially acute for Iranians. That fact undoubtedly contributes to its politicization. The authors emphasize that Iranian culture is gradually turning into an important component of the "soft power" policy, which is actively supported by the leadership of the Islamic Republic of Iran and finds a positive response in Iranian society. While writing the essay, the authors used an extensive bibliographic material of both Russian and Iranian authors, as well as media materials and the official website of the President of Iran, which makes the essay rich, modern and very informative.

Andrei Lukashov's essay "Faith and Infidelity in the Context of the Notion System in the Works by Mahmud Shabistari". The author explores the theme of faith and unbelief, tolerance and intolerance on the example of the work of the medieval Persian Sufi poet and philosopher Mahmoud Shabistari. According to the author of the essay, tolerance or intolerance is not a goal itself. Intolerance is limited to what is unacceptable to humans. The essay examines the issues of disbelief in the context of the worldview of Mahmoud Shabistari based on an analysis of his texts. A. Lukashov speaks of a certain system of views of the poet-philosopher and his system of thinking, which can be traced through the system of basic concepts that we can find in his works. The author concludes that being a Muslim, from Shabistari's point of view, is not just possessing the external attributes of Islam, it is having a worldview that denies the existence of any other

deity, except for one God.

The theme of Sufism continues to be discussed in the essay by Iranian scholars Morteza Nuray and Bachman Zeynali "Tolerance Heritage: The route of Sufism from Khorasan to the Balkans". They draw attention to the fact that the need for peaceful coexistence today clearly indicates the need to study tolerance. The vast region from Central Asia and Khorasan to the Balkans over the centuries has had its ups and downs in the cultural and historical perspective. The diversity of peoples emphasizes significance of common cultural components. The idea of Sufism throughout its development was based mainly on tolerance and gradually took shape of the concept of peaceful coexistence. The authors explore the development of Sufism among different peoples on the way from Khorasan to the Balkans, identify the common between different Sufi groups in different countries. As Sufism develops, concepts such as "cultural Sufism" and "ideological Sufism" appear. According to the authors, this new trend means an estrangement from the traditional for the followers of the system aspects of cultural function and tolerance. They conclude that the homogeneity of the cultural components of Sufism in the geography of the region constitutes an important mean of subsequent dialogue.

The opinions expressed in these essays belong to the respective authors, not to the Journal. I express my deep gratitude to Dr. Mirosljub Jevtić the editor-in-chief of the *Politics and Religion Journal*, for inviting me to become the guest editor of the second issue of the Journal and for giving me the opportunity to bring to your attention little-known pages of historical factual material on Iranian history of the early 20th century; opinions on the history of Iranian modernization; introduce cultural features of the development of Iranian society; the history of the development of Sufism in the region; familiarization with the philosophical and religious aspects of Persia through the work of the poet and philosopher Mahmoud Shabistari.

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