

Politics of Language in Ex-Soviet Muslim States. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2001, 260 p.

Tchanguiz Pahlavan



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- 1 This book, as the authors clearly state at the outset, intends to contribute to the study of the politicolinguistics in the six new independent ex-Soviet Muslim republics. The authors seek to evaluate the mutual impact of language issues and ethnopolitics in these states. During March-April 1997 and September 1998 they visited five of these so-called "Turkic" states, without being able to visit Tajikistan, the only predominantly non-"Turkic" state, apparently due to security problems. As a result, this book is the outcome of the collected printed materials in the field and interviews with officials and scholars involved in language policy-making. For Tajikistan, the authors relied only on published sources, which they consider did not offer complete information.
- 2 The real period of the present study stretches approximately over the decade of 1988-1998, thus it includes the last few years of Soviet Union.
- 3 A law enacted on 13 March, 1938 (i.e. under Soviet rule) made Russian a compulsory subject at school. As a result, many citizens became more fluent in a foreign language than in that of their ethnic group. But very few Russians who had moved into the various republics were ready to learn the native languages, which they did not really need. Even now, according to the authors, Russian predominates in all areas of life. At the same time, a search for nation-building on the basis of culture and language of the titular ethnic group can be observed to differing extents in these countries. The authors believe that language may act as a cohesive, as well as a disruptive, political force in the bilingual or multilingual states. But despite all these aspects of cultural and political life in the countries concerned the authors think that the language issues are crucial for the present and future of the six newly independent states.
- 4 The book is divided into 10 chapters. These chapters are devoted to different aspects of the politics of language. Language politics in the Soviet Era, Language Politics in the Independent Republics, Language Laws and Decrees, Alphabet Change, Lexical and

Orthographic Intervention, Language of Instruction and Language Instruction are among many themes the authors attempted to discuss in regard to these republics. The book is accompanied by a number of illustrations and tables.

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Thèmes : 4.6. Histoire de l'Asie centrale et Caucase (à partir de 1917)

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