

Professor Gulkhumor Tuychieva & Dr Angeline Low

Uzbekistan: Negotiating Transition

Wednesday, 11 March 2009, 5:15 - 6:45 PM

CAIS AL FALASI LECTURE THEATRE, BUILDING 127, ANU

Uzbekistan and Islamic Extremism: History, Confrontation, and Popular Responses

According to its Constitution, the Republic of Uzbekistan is a secular state, while Islamic extremists operating in the Fergana valley aspire for an Islamic caliphate. Confrontation is inevitable. Uzbekistan, a predominantly Muslim country, has a proud history as a centre of Islamic enlightenment and scientific discovery, as well as religious tolerance and moderation. This legacy, which survived the colonial and Soviet period, has been changing since independence was gained eighteen years ago. The slow pace of socio-economic development coupled with the rise of international Islamism has led to a situation where voices from Islamic radicals are finding their pitch in Uzbekistan. The presentation will examine the enduring patterns of Muslim culture in Uzbekistan, the threat presented by the extremists, the government response to it, and the position of civil society vis-à-vis the message of Islamism.

Professor Gulkhumor Tuychieva is a leading scholar in Oriental studies and gender development in Central Asia, and in particular a specialist on the women's movement, education and civil society in Uzbekistan. She holds the post of Professor of Persian Studies at the Tashkent State Institute of Oriental Studies where she lectures in philology, Persian literature and literary theory. She has published 12 books and more than 50 papers on the history of Persian literature, and about 30 works on social and political issues. Professor Tuychieva is a visiting scholar with the UTS Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Research Centre, where she is working on a study of women's leadership in Australia and Uzbekistan. *Prof Tuychieva's Lecture is made possible with the generous support of the Australian Academy of the Humanities and host institution, the University of Technology Sydney.*

The Social Innovators: Muslim Women Entrepreneurs in Uzbekistan

Muslim women entrepreneurs in Uzbekistan are invisible to the western world. Why do women in Uzbekistan choose entrepreneurship against other career options? Did these women have any options in the first place? In going into business, Uzbek women have strong desire for self-actualization and caring for their families. The stories and voices of Muslim women entrepreneurs in Uzbekistan need to be told and heard. Socially innovative, their entrepreneurship results in increased social capital and impacts on their families and communities in different ways. Consequently, there are wide policy implications for the economic inclusion and advancement in the status of women in transitional economies like Uzbekistan.

Dr Angeline Low is the University of Technology Sydney, Chancellor's Postdoctoral Research Fellow. Dr Low specializes in entrepreneurship studies with research interests in leadership, gender and ethnicity. Her current research projects cover three countries, namely Uzbekistan, Australia and Canada where she studies Muslim women entrepreneurs and the impact of their change leadership on families and communities. Dr Low's academic record includes top paper awards, journal publications, and a forthcoming book on Immigrant Women Entrepreneurs in Contemporary Western Societies with Edward Elgar Publishers, USA.