Despite the suggestion in the preface of the book, which holds that the region presents interests only to historians and archaeologists, Central Asia continues to challenge political scientists, sociologists of religions and anthropologists working on migration. With Afghanistan and the Xinjiang Uyghur region in the People’s Republic of China as its neighbors, Central Asia participates in the global questioning on the renewal of Islam along with various forms this religion displays today.

The Muslim community of Central Asia and the Caucasus, whose diversity and heterogeneity have been going through a particular shake-up for twenty-seven years, has emerged from its pre-1991 “Soviet isolation chamber” with an agenda shared with other parts of the world: re-Islamisation of practices, the penetration of fundamentalist preaching, and a radicalisation of a fraction of the population, especially the young. Since the fall of the USSR, it has undergone a profound metamorphosis triggered by multiple causes: historical, economic, social, endogenous and exogenous, the effects of which spread along a more or less deep line of fracture in these post-communist societies.

If it is no longer possible to speak of Central Asia or the Caucasus other than by referring to their geographical position, we have a right to question the respective influence of foreign Muslim actors who have acted more or less openly for nearly three decades in each of their national segments.

This is the purpose of this didactic book written by a political scientist who has the merit of associating these two spaces, generally disjoint in regional approaches and rarely connected to the dramatic question of religious renewal. The first thirty-page chapter entitled “The inherited Islam” offers a quick look back at history from the origins of Islamisation, the colonial period and the trajectory of the “Soviet umma” for seven decades to contextualise the on-going transformations.

Then the heart of the book is based on the contribution of exogenous actors by carefully describing the most influential groups, their more or less successful insertion according to their location and by analysing their methods and their results. Thus, out of 295 pages of text, 183 is divided into four chapters which analyse the four main sources of external influence of the Islamic revival, whether state or private: Turkey, Iran, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Indian subcontinent.
As a specialist of the Turkish influence in Central Asia, the author gives a reasoned picture of the network of state as well as private actors in the two zones. He presents the trajectory of the Fetullah Gulen school network, since its significant installation until its quasi-eviction, against the SEBAT school network in Kyrgyzstan that was taken over by the government (the current President Sooronbai Jeenbekov pledging greater allegiance to Turkey than his predecessor). The author concludes that Turkey has exported more Islam than secularism, which in no way contradicts the changes in the political situation in Turkey since Erdogan came to power, and especially the failed coup d’état of July 15, 2016 which was attributed to the Gulen Movement.

The influence of Iran is described with great care, as a minor religious actor but ultimately active in the Caucasus where there are millions of Twelver Shi’ites, but without being really able to use its “soft power” in a region still culturally defined as Turkish-Persian.

The countries of the Arabian Peninsula, especially Saudi Arabia, are essential not only for their financial resources, but also with the sacred place of Mecca, which since 1991 has attracted thousands of pilgrims from Central Asia, Middle East and Caucasus, as well as a large Central Asian diaspora that will be at the origin of what the author calls the “migratory and diasporic gateways” between Central Asia and Saudi Arabia.

The influence of Southeast Asia, while more distant compared to the three others described above, is nonetheless the most intrusive today, through the proselytic and pietist network of Djama’at al Tabligh which have set their sights on Central Asia, (having no interests in the Caucasus), especially on Kyrgyzstan, the only country where it is not prohibited. Thus, the author explains that despite an unequal implantation in the region where Djama’at al Tabligh raises the fear of the authorities, the fundamentalist movement was able to adapt itself to the identity expectations of a population, disconnected from its political elites and which, because of its transnational nature could in the long run, change the social equilibrium in each country where it could operate.

The final chapter presents the current state of management in the religious field. It is based on the ban of collective management of religion inherited from the Soviet time (the famous spiritual direction of the Muslims of Central Asia of Tashkent (Sunni) and Shi’ite-Sunni one in Baku) along with its replacement by a muftiyat in each state, a kind of official Islam in continuity with the previous period. Starting from this period, these structures propagate an identity of a “good Islam”, as emphasized by the author, based on the national ideology that aims to reduce the influence of oppositional Islam, djihadist or Salafist variances, through control carried out by the security agencies and checking the imams along with their trainings.

These sources of influence, which act on different segments of local societies, are quite important in a way that the social ground they are irrigating has been severely despiritualized by seven decades of atheism, which alternated between repression and co-optation and very low levels of religious knowledge. All of this has made them conducive to any well-grounded exterior discourse. The question can be posed as to what will be the ultimate impact of these discourses on national Islamic identities.