Retraditionalization from Below: Women’s Attitudes in Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan

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Abstract:
My project analyzes the rise of traditional values among young, educated, urban women in Kyrgyzstan, a modern secular state. What accounts for the popularity of such views among women in a state governed by elites who encourage gender equality? I will explore attitudes of young women regarding Soviet gender equality policies, traditional gender and familial roles, Islam’s understanding of the role of women in the family and society, and formal and informal religious education. I will also investigate secular and religious elite understandings of the “proper” place of women in post-Soviet society. The qualitative research I propose, focus groups with Kyrgyz students from secular and religious universities and interview with secular and religious elites, will generate hypotheses that will serve as the basis for the quantitative piece of my project, which is a large N survey I will conduct in the future after analyzing data collected this fall. I will seek external funding for this survey from the National Science Foundation and the Social Science Research Council.