

IN SEARCH OF A CONFESSIONAL COMPROMISE IN THE “RELIGION-SOCIETY-THE STATE” CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

To suppress the worst forms of religious intolerance, the ideas and constructive potential of tolerance and peace need the public support of the constitutional principles of the freedom of conscience and religion in the “religion-society-

the state” context. Today, the so-called ideological platform of nationalist forces, which is taking shape within the extremist and terrorist international organizations, is inspired by the idea of administrative and territorial changes in Russia’s regions and, as such, presents the greatest danger to Russia’s territorial integrity. The clear statement that, despite the difference in their interests, members of social communities should observe the rules and norms based on compromises, mutual concessions and the principles of tolerance raises no doubts. In real life, however, tolerance is not easy to practice amid different or even clashing interests, ideas, traditions, preferences and ambitions. Intolerance and xenophobia, the reverse side of the gradually increasing religious and cultural diversity, a typical trend of our times, negatively affect the sociocultural context and make coexistence much harder to achieve. Pluralism and actualization of differences and divergences multiply private interests and make it twice as important to

find their common denominator. In Russia in recent years the problem of extremism has acquired new meanings, while the threat of extremism in the regions of the Russian Federation became more obvious. Radicalization of society provides fertile soil for extremism to flourish. The state, therefore, should concentrate on the prevention of extremism rooted in axiological shifts, the absence of unifying ideology, social problems that may be exacerbated by an economic crisis, corruption, a low cultural level, numerous phobias (Russophobia, Islamophobia), etc. The widening gap between the rich and the poor, spiritual disorientation and disagreements between religions and confessions, likewise, breed extremism. International extremist and terrorist organizations, whose criminal activities are spreading far and wide across the country, are especially dangerous, partly because young people with no life experience who are left to their own devices by their parents and society are especially susceptible to radical ideas.

KEYWORDS: *tolerance/intolerance, confessions, extremism, Russia, regions.*

Introduction

Today, the world as we know it is a multilayered structure; simple and straightforward concepts are a thing of the past. Mass consciousness is aware of the mounting wave of changes that have so far eluded adequate academic definitions. The conceptual framework tries to take changes in stride and fails: the fairly vague reality itself should be reformulated.¹

The attempts to identify the direction and the ultimate aim of the turbulent flow of social life and to guess how things may unfold in the future never stop even in the sensitive sphere of interaction between the state and religion.

In the 1990s, the independent post-Soviet states, Russia included, experienced an upsurge of religious feelings and religious activities; they have not lost their interest in this side of public life:² there is a widely shared consent that the interaction between the state that declares its intention to establish a civil society and the confessions present in the territory of any particular state (the followers of which are its citizens) should assume civilized forms.

¹ See: Yu.M. Ebzeeva, I.S. Karabulatova, *Transcultural Language Personality: Statement of the Problem and Conceptual Space*, Man in India, Serials Publications, New Delhi, 2017, pp. 97, 23, 255-262.

² See: I. Karabulatova, S. Galiullina, K. Kotik, “Terrorist Threat in Russia: Transformation of Confessional Relationships,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 18, Issue 3, 2017, pp. 93-104.

Today, there is a growing awareness that the framework of interaction between the state and public forces should be strictly outlined along the fields where this cooperation can be maximally useful for spiritual revival, social harmony and counteracting extremist trends. Experience accumulated all over the world and an adequate analysis of the prospects that have become apparent in other countries can and should be used to create the mechanisms of this interaction with adjustments for any given state. To achieve this goal, we should identify the basic trends that have come to the fore in the process of interaction between the civil society and the religious component. We have written this article to trace the trends that have already taken shape in Europe due to the long history of interaction between the state and religion in their territories and to adjust this experience to the situation in Russia.

Methods and Materials

In Russia the importance of interreligious dialog can hardly be overestimated; in fact, in some constituencies of the Russian Federation it has already demonstrated its efficiency. Special committees for religious and confessional affairs and nationalities have been already established at the republican, regional and municipal level. The Administration for Religious Affairs with the powers of a state structure, transformed by the Decree of President of Tatarstan Mintimer Shaimiev of 26 August, 2008 from the Council for Religious Affairs under the Cabinet of Ministers of Tatarstan, is one of the pertinent examples. The same fully applies to the Committee for Nationalities, Religion and Cossacks under the Administration of Rostov-on-Don; the Council for National and Confessional Relationships under the Government of the Sakhalin Region, the Council for Religious Affairs under the Ministry for Nationalities Politics of the Republic of Komi; the Committee for Religious Affairs under the Government of the Republic of Daghestan, etc. Before reaching its highest stage, extremism is preserved in latent forms (extremist ideology and its propaganda) within religious organizations and groups and is gradually heated to its boiling point by social contradictions. This means that preventing extremism is as important as counteracting extremist feelings and actions.

In the Russian Federation federal laws are adjusted to local conditions; today, there is a vast number of regional normative legal acts intended to prevent extremism in interethnic and interreligious relationships.

An analysis of this multidimensional problem is based on six semantic blocks.

- The first comprises scholarly works related to the meaning and content of identity³ in the context of primordialism, constructivism and instrumentalism.
- The second block is represented by the studies of ethnopolitical forms of ethnic groups: diasporas, national-cultural autonomies, their institutional features, properties and functions;⁴ the ethnoconfessional identity of the diaspora or diaspora-related identity;⁵ search for the ways and means required to integrate the diaspora into the host environment.⁶

³ See: E.H. Erikson, "Psychosocial Identity," in: *A Way of Looking at Things. Selected Papers*, ed. by Schlein, New York, 1995.

⁴ See: R. Brubaker, *Accidental Diasporas and External "Homelands" in Central and Eastern Europe: Past and Present*, Vienna, 2000; R. Cohen, "Global Diasporas: An Introduction," in: *Global Diasporas*, ed. by R. Cohen, Second edition, New-York, 2008.

⁵ See: M.P. Kovalev, *Einokulturnaia identichnost diaspor v globaliziruiushchemia mire: spetsifika sostoiania i vektory izmenenia v protsesse repatriatsii*, Author's abstract of a Ph.D. thesis, Tomsk, 2011.

⁶ See: R.V. Borisov, *Iazykovaia kompetentnost kak sredstvo vyrazhenia etnicheskoy identichnosti i formirovaniia mezhetnicheskoy tolerantnosti uchashcheyisia molodezhi*, Author's abstract of a Ph.D. thesis, Makhachkala, 2007.

- The third block contains the works that deal with the political aspects of regional studies;⁷ theoretical studies of ethno-political processes and conflicts at the national and regional levels, an analysis of ethnic interaction in the republics of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan.⁸ Studies within the framework of conflict-related paradigm were united into a separate group within the third block. They allowed the authors to identify the very important or even decisive role played by the way people involved in a political process perceive ethnic borders.⁹
- The fourth block consists of academic writings related to the politicization of ethnicity and ethnic identity in the contemporary world and an analysis of political governance mechanisms utilized in ethnic and diaspora-related processes.¹⁰
- The fifth block contains recent works by contemporary scholars engaged in the studies of information space and its interaction with the political and ethnic spheres of social life, as well as the contributions made by the media, Internet portals of regional powers and regional officials.¹¹
- The sixth block analyzes the normative and legal basis for ethno-political interactions at the regional level.¹²

Discussion

On the whole, philosophers and political scientists agree that society is moving from secular to post-secular development stage. According to the prominent German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, “A ‘post-secular’ society must at some point have been in a ‘secular’ state.”¹³ This means that this terminology is applicable only to the Western community, or, to be more precise, the developed European countries, the U.S., Canada, Australia and New Zealand. This highly important clarification helps us understand that there is no universalism in the development of the post-secular trend in the contemporary world.

The postmodern generation comprises 40-50% of contemporary Russian population;¹⁴ it lives in a multi-variant milieu and is strongly affected by globalization. Cultures and traditions are being ac-

⁷ See: K.S. Mokin, N.A. Baryshnaia, *Etnopoliticheskoe issledovanie: kontseptsii, metodologiya, praktika*, Nauka Publishing Center, Saratov, 2009; I.Iu. Riabkov, N.B. Cheremin, “Etnopoliticheskie aspekty razvitiya sovremennykh gosudarstv v epokhu globalizatsii na primere Rossiyskoy Federatsii,” *Vestnik Nizhegorodskogo universiteta im. N.I. Lobachevskogo*, Series *Sotsialnye nauki*, No. 2 (26), 2012.

⁸ See: D.I. Igonin, *Diskursivnye osnovaniya gosudarstvennoy migratsionnoy politiki v sovremennoy Rossii (federalny i regionalny aspekty)*, Author’s abstract of a Ph.D. thesis, Kazan, 2012.

⁹ See: A.S. Kim, *Etnopoliticheskoe issledovanie sovremennykh diaspor (konfliktologicheskii aspekt)*, St. Petersburg, 2009; T.G. Stefanenko, *Etnopsikhologiya*, Moscow, 2007.

¹⁰ See: O.V. Kinoian, *Politizatsia etnicheskoy identichnosti kak faktor mobilizatsii etnicheskikh grupp v usloviakh konfliktov*, Ph.D. thesis, Nevinnomyssk, 2009; O.V. Borisov, *Fenomen politizirovannoy etnicheskoy identichnosti: teoretiko-metodologicheskii analiz*, Doctoral thesis, Moscow, 2000.

¹¹ See: T.V. Polikanova, *Informatsionnoe obespechenie optimizatsii mezhnatsionalnykh otnosheniy v Rossiyskoy Federatsii*, Ph.D. thesis, Moscow, 2007.

¹² See: G.F. Gabdrakhmanova, R.N. Musina, *Identifikatsionnye protsessy u russkikh i tatar Tatarstana v 1990-2000 gg.: kollektivnye predstavleniya i konstruktivistskaia role elit. Etnologicheskie issledovaniya v Tatarstane*, ed. by G.F. Gabdrakhmanova, G.I. Makarova, R.K. Urazmanova, Issue VI, Kazan, 2012.

¹³ J. Habermas, “Notes on a Post-Secular Society,” 18 June, 2008, available at [<http://www.signandsight.com/features/1714.html>].

¹⁴ See: “Distribution of Population by Age Groups (as of 1 January, 2007),” Blagotvoritelny fond podderzhki molodezhnykh initsiativ ‘Moe pokolenie’, available at [<http://www.moe-pokolenie.ru/412/389/>], 6 August, 2017. From among the total

tively blended, thrusting the familiar black-and-white stereotypes aside along the way.¹⁵ This is a very real process visually apparent on the streets of Moscow and tied closely with the “guest workers” concept.¹⁶

The question of whether the canonical norms of traditional religions of Russia can be related, legally or otherwise, to state laws, is a particular aspect of the problem posed by constructive interaction between state and religious institutes. This adds special importance to the data obtained in an opinion poll carried out by the Institute of Sociology, Russian Academy of Sciences,¹⁷ according to which the opinion that secular and religious laws should not correlate, was predominant, especially in the non-Christian religious groups.

Results

According to the Federal Migration Service, as of the end of 2012 there were about 14 million migrants in the Russian Federation; 77% of them citizens of the CIS countries (Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine) who came as guest workers.¹⁸ This seemingly large number constituted a meager 6-7% of the total Russian Federation workforce, yet they bring culture and traditions that differ radically from Russian culture and Russian traditions.

Many of the young men who arrive from Central Asia prefer to refer to themselves as Muslims rather than Tajiks, Uzbeks, etc., which causes a lot of problems because of the stereotypes deeply rooted in human minds.¹⁹

According to the All-Russia population censuses, between 2002 and 2010²⁰ the total number of those who arrive from Central Asia and are permanently residing in the territory of Russia has practically doubled.

This is especially apparent in Moscow where, according to expert assessments, those who are habitually called guest workers constitute up to one-quarter of Russian capital’s total population. This means that Russia today is confronted with the problems that Europe had to sort out some time ago.²¹

population strength of Russia (142,221 thousand as of 1 January, 2007) the age group of 10 to 39 years (62,108 thousand) can be identified in the first place as a post-modernity generation.

¹⁵ See: E. Ermakova, M. Jilkisheva, G. Fayzullina, I. Karabulatova, Kh. Shagbanova, “The Media and Fiction: Post-modernist Discourse of Contemporary Terrorism in the Context of Apocalyptic Rhetoric,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 17, Issue 2, 2016, pp. 61-69.

¹⁶ See: G.V. Osipov, I.S. Karabulatova, G.F. Shafranov-Kutsev, E.R. Kucheryavaya, S.D. Galiullina, L.R. Sadykova, “Problems of Ethno-Confessional Extremism in Russia as a Reflection of Deviation Processes in the Society,” *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 6, No. 6, S. 3, 2015, pp. 95-103.

¹⁷ See: M.M. Mchedlova, Iu.A. Gavrillov, A.G. Shevchenko, “Religia i obshchestvo v Rossii: mezhkonnessionalnye otnoшения i protivodeystvie ekstremizmu,” in: *Rossia reformiruiushchaia*, An Annual, ed. by M.K. Gorshkov, Issue 8, IS RAN, Moscow, 2009, pp. 344-345.

¹⁸ See: “According to the FMS, Every Year Up To 14 Million Guest Workers Come to Russia,” RIA Novosti, available in Russian at [<http://ria.ru/society/20121102/908857122.html>], 16 December, 2017.

¹⁹ See: I.M. Gabdrafikov, I.S. Karabulatova, L.G. Khusnutdinova, Kh.S. Vildanov, “Ethnoconfessional Factor in Social Adaptation of Migrant Workers in the Muslim Regions of Russia,” *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 6, No. 3, S. 4, May 2015, pp. 213-223.

²⁰ See: “National Composition of Population. All-Russia Population Census of 2002,” available in Russian at [http://www.perepis2002.ru/ct/html/TOM_04_01.htm], 30 July, 2012); “National Composition of Population. All-Russia Population Census of 2010,” available in Russian at [http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/Documents/Vol4/pub-04-01.pdf], 30 July, 2017.

²¹ See: I. Karabulatova, “Ethnocultural Communication Systems in the Northern Caucasus and the Problem of Radical Islam,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 17, Issue 4, 2016, pp. 71-79.

This also means that education and unprejudiced information about the alien religious culture that has already struck root in the habitual and seemingly immutable space should become another important step towards tolerance in contemporary society. Since the mid-2000s, Russian society has been discussing the question of whether this sort of education should be implemented at schools. The latest opinion poll carried out by the Levada Center to find out what citizens of the Russian Federation thought about religious education for children and whether the fundamentals of religions should become part of the school curricula produced the following results:²² 74% did not object to religious education for children; 20% preferred purely secular education. More than half of those who supported religious education believed that it should be left to parents; 9% preferred to entrust the task to the Church; 11% wanted the fundamentals of religions to be included in the school curricula. This means that the society has arrived at the conclusion that its members should know more about the variety of religious cultures in Russia and that the Fundamentals of Religious Culture and Secular Ethics course as part of school curricula would push the public opinion towards tolerance and respect of other/alien/different cultures.

In Tatarstan, authorities adopted a paternalist attitude to the Islamic institutes, while in Bashkortostan authorities prefer to keep the religious sphere at a certain distance.²³ In the Nizhny Novgorod Region the Muslim community looks after its own affairs based on the legal norms of the Russian Federation.

These practical measures related to social life will bring no results if the main factor in the state-religion relationship is ignored.

On the whole, the Muslim structures of the Volga Federal District are working towards a stronger All-Russia civil identity when preserving and developing national cultures, harmonizing international and interconfessional relationships and engaging in intercultural and interreligious dialog.²⁴

Much is being done to satisfy the local population's social and spiritual requirements to a greater degree, to establish conditions conducive to the preservation of cultural and spiritual values of local peoples and their multiplication.

Conclusion

Sociologists and political scientists should define the fundamental principles of interaction between the state and religion at the current stage of social development. We can be at least sure of the following: despite what liberals say about the present state of religion as having no resources and nothing to offer to all those seeking meaningful self-identification, religion has already assumed the key role in shaping contemporary human identities with all the inevitable and predictable consequences for the state.

²² See: "It Turned Out that Citizens of the Russian Federation Wanted Religious Education for Their Children without Involvement of Either the State or the ROC," RIA Novy Region 2, available in Russian at [<http://www.nr2.ru/society/426965.html>], 24 December, 2017.

²³ See: L.G. Khusnutdinova, Kh.S. Vildanov, L.M. Andreeva, R.Kh. Iliasova, I.M. Gabdrifkov, "Sotsiokulturnaia adaptatsia trudovykh migrantov v Povolzhie: nekotorye aspekty regionalnoy politiki (na materiale Samarskoy oblasti)," in: *Sotsialno-ekonomicheskie i gumanitarno-filosofskie problemy sovremennoy nauki*, Vol. 3, UGUES, Moscow, Ufa, Rostov on Don, 2015, pp. 135-142.

²⁴ See: R.R. Zamaletdinov, I.S. Karabulotova, I.E. Yarmakeev, E.N. Ermakova, "Linguo-Propaedeutics of Ethnic Conflicts as a Basis for Stability in Complex Polyethnic Regions," *Asian Social Science*, Vol. 10, No. 20, 2014, pp. 164-173.

In Russia, the religious factor is even more important than in Europe, since it is moving into the axiological void left by the communist ideology that could not be tolerated indefinitely.

Based on the above we can state that religion is acquiring a new quality in post-Soviet post-secular space. It is moving away from its previous image of a sum-total of dogmas and norms of conduct towards a cultural and civilizational criterion of affiliation²⁵ able to determine the state's political agenda.

To transform this phenomenon into creative advantage we should rely on the experience already acquired by other countries, Western European countries first and foremost. The secular European society has already learned that without tolerance and a clear understanding of the state's mission, prevalence of civil identity and the desire to build an inclusive state, the process might move in a wrong direction, polarize society and split it along the key social and ethical lines. The relationships between the state and religion as one of the components of contemporary society determine many aspects of social life to a great extent.

In case of Russia, tolerance is seen as an acceptance of traditions of intercultural and interreligious interaction that ensures the stability of Russian civilization in the context of social solidarity among the followers of different confessions.

The problem of tolerance and the related issue of ensuring a constructive interconfessional dialog and overcoming extremism imply that we should take into account a variety of factors in Russia, which is a poly-ethnic and poly-confessional country. Interpreted within the Russian tradition, tolerance may mean the coexistence of different ethnoconfessional traditions. It is not enough to define Russian civilization as Orthodox even if the impact of Orthodox Christianity on Russia's culture and history is much more pronounced than that of all other religions present in Russia. We should admit, however, that the religious traditions of Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Protestantism, and national religions, likewise, played an important role. This state of affairs demonstrates their mutual influence and mutual enrichment, as well as the joint efforts to create and protect common values and the state in the integrated geographic, political, economic and spiritual space. As a result, it creates an awareness of a common historical destiny, the archetypal ideas common to different ethnoconfessional communities, and common identities.

²⁵ See: M.M. Mchedlova, "Sotsiokulturnaia reinterpretatsia politiki: potrebnosti v novykh gnoseologicheskikh skhemakh i novykh smyslakh," in: *Dialog tsivilizatsiy i postkrizisny mir. Doklady i vystupleniya XI lubileynoy nauchno-prakticheskoy konferentsii s mezhdunarodnym uchastiem, posviashchennoy 50-letiiu RUDN, Moskva, 25-27 noyabrya 2010 g.*, ed. by N.S. Kirabaev, Iu.M. Pochta, B.G. Ivanov, RUDN, Moscow, 2010, p. 53.