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Islamic Value Orientations in the Context of Strengthening National Identity in Russia and in the World

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Abstract

Introduction. The study focuses on the problem of religious intolerance growth in the modern world which hinders both the development of interstate relations and the process of strengthening the national consciousness of citizens. The development of Islamophobic sentiments in the world especially after the well-known events of September 2011 is reflected in the ethno-confessional well-being of people professing the Muslim religion.

Materials and methods. The methodological basis of the study was a set of methods, the choice of which is determined by the goals, objectives and specifics of the subject of study. The main methodological foundation was an interdisciplinary approach, the application of which is caused by the modern requirements of humanitarian reflection and the ongoing socio-political transformations.

Results. Religious restrictions on Muslims in countries where they are a small social group lead to their marginalization and disunity between citizens on an ethno-confessional basis. At present, according to sociological studies in Russia, young people have a low level of knowledge about the ethno-cultural specifics of the Russian peoples, and a lot of people consider the role of the Muslim religion to be negative in the country.

Discussion and conclusion. The article points out that for the effectiveness of national policy in Russia, a conceptual recognition of the Eurasian basis of the state is necessary, which will increase the sense of responsibility for the fate of the country of representatives of all Russian ethnic groups without exception. The author draws attention to the fact that the elements of this idea have already been identified in the political doctrine of the country, but it is possible that the authorities are postponing its official recognition until the spread of this idea among the general population.

Keywords: national policy, religion, ethnicity, Islam, hijab, identity

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Научная статья

Исламские ценностные ориентиры в контексте укрепления национальной идентичности в России и в мире

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Аннотация

Введение. В исследовании акцентируется внимание на проблеме роста религиозной нетерпимости в современном мире, которая тормозит как развитие межгосударственных отношений, так и процесс укрепления национального самосознания граждан. Развитие исламофобских настроений в мире, особенно после известных событий сентября 2011 г., находит отражение в этноконфессиональном благополучии людей, исповедующих мусульманскую религию.

Материалы и методы. Методологическую основу исследования составили методы, выбор которых обусловлен целями, задачами и спецификой предмета исследования. Основным методологическим фундаментом выступил междисциплинарный подход, применение которого вызвано современными требованиями гуманитарной рефлексии и происходящими социально-политическими трансформациями.

Результаты исследования. Религиозные ограничения в отношении мусульман в странах, где они являются малочисленной социальной группой, ведут к их маргинализации и разобщенности между гражданами по этноконфессиональному признаку. В настоящее время, по данным социологических исследований в России, молодежь имеет низкий уровень знаний об этнокультурной специфике российских народов, а значительная доля населения до сих пор придерживается мнения о негативной роли мусульманской религии в стране.

Обсуждение и заключение. В работе указывается, что для эффективности национальной политики в России необходимо концептуальное признание евроазиатской основы государства, что повысит чувство ответственности за судьбу страны представителей всех без исключения российских этносов. Автор обращает внимание на то, что элементы этой идеи уже обозначены в политической доктрине страны, но не исключено, что власти откладывают ее официальное признание до распространения этой идеи среди населения в целом.

Ключевые слова: национальная политика, религия, этничность, ислам, хиджаб, идентичность

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Introduction. The scale of migration flows of the population in the modern world actualizes the issue of regulating ethnocultural dialogue between people. At the heart of many ethno-nationalist challenges is the problem of ethno-confessional identity. Therefore, finding a compromise between different ethnocultural communities, overcoming various phobias and intolerance to representatives of other ethno-confessional groups, respect for the rights of citizens on the principle of religion is an important component of the policy of many countries.

Materials and methods. The purpose of this study is to analyze the modern state of religious rights of the Muslim population in the world and the prospects for strengthening their civic identity. The work uses the methodology of discourse analysis of speeches and statements of political, public and religious figures, content analysis of media. The relationship between ethnicity, religiosity and general civil identity in conditions of close interfaith and interethnic communication is most clearly traced.

Results. Today, the issue of developing a state strategy in the field of national and religious policy has become acute. Russia has already developed and approved by Decree of the President of Russia No. 1666 of December 19, 2012 “Strategy of the State National Policy of the Russian Federation for the Period until 2025” [1], which led to the progress on resolving issues of interethnic interaction and development of national cultures.

Nevertheless, in scientific circles of Russia, they began to increasingly raise the issue of resolving the controversial situation associated with the law-enforcement practice of the provisions of the Constitution of the Russian Federation and the Federal Law “On Freedom of Conscience and on Religious Associations”. Thus, in accordance with the Constitution, the state has the principle of separating religious associations from the state, and in practice a cooperative model has been established, which implies cooperation between the state and faiths in the socio-economic, cultural, spiritual and moral spheres.

As the results of sociological studies of recent years show many countries in order to ensure socio-political stability and strength of power mainly resort to restrictions on religious freedom.

Thus, sociologists of the world’s largest research center for the study of the role of religions, Pew Research Center, (the study covered 198 countries) revealed that the number of people living in countries with a high level of religious restrictions and religious intolerance reached in fact 5.9–6 billion people, which is 78.5 % of the total population of the globe in 2017. This level has increased by 1.1 billion people since the beginning of the study of this problem in 2009. Moreover, the surge in intolerance concerns not only underdeveloped countries, but also the country with the world’s leading economy, that is the United States. According to the same source, the level of religious animosity increased by 3.5 points (2009 – 2.0; 2014 – 5.2; 2015 – 4.2) [2].

It is noteworthy that the fact of an increase in the level of religious animosity is inextricably linked with an increase in social intolerance caused by restrictive actions of the state towards religion. As a result, the development of the economy also suffers greatly. In countries with low levels of restrictions on religious freedom, rare manifestations of religious animosity, the dynamics of innovative policies are higher, economic indicators are twice as high as in countries with significant religious restrictions [3].

The European study ISPI (Institute for International Political Studies) found that in 27 European countries (60 %) in 2015, widespread persecution of religious groups was practiced (in 2014 – 17 countries). And in 24 countries (53 %) force against religious groups was used (in 2014 their number was 15–33 %) [4].

Thus, ISPI researchers conclude that restrictions on religious freedom in a multicultural environment are counterproductive in the process of creating social cohesion and political consensus. At both the national and international levels, they are achievable only by strengthening opportunities to protect the individual and collective right to religious freedom.

This is fundamentally important for polyconfessional Russia, in which almost 28 thousand religious organizations operate.

It should be noted that many Russians consider their personal place in social relations from interpersonal to international on the basis of belonging to their ethnic and religious community.

The study by Jonathan Fox (which is based on a comparison of Israel, Turkey, Iran and Arab cities in North Africa with the rest of the world in 1994–1995), on the relationship between discrimination against religious minorities and ethnic conflict intensification, shows that any encroachment upon the faith is perceived by people extremely painful and provokes an increase in tension. At the same time, according to J. Fox, in the conflict, the ethnic factor in most cases prevails over the religious factor: only in 12 of the 105 cases examined by Fox, religion was at the heart of the conflict [5]. Despite this, the factor of religion can play a significant role in the growth of ethnic tensions, that is, religiosity can increase the contradictions between the conflicting parties.

Similar conclusions can be found in the studies of domestic authors, in their opinion, if ethnic groups profess different religions, and one religious structure strengthens its influence, another religious structure (and, as a result, another ethnic group) can feel slighted, which, in turn, can lead to an increase in ethnic tension [6, p. 123].

The issue of ethno-confessional identity becomes especially important during social conflicts and contradictions. At the same time, the basis for interethnic tension may be the alleged or real fears of representatives of small peoples and migrants in infringing their linguistic, ethnic and religious identities.

In our opinion, among the main problems of social adaptation and integration of people of different cultural-religious codes economic asymmetry can be distinguished, forcing the population to spontaneous migration from depressed regions of the country to the “rich”, deforming the living space and integrity of the federal state, and a low level of knowledge about the features of other religions and cultures (moral values, norms of behavior, objects of worship, etc.), which sometimes lead to difficulties in establishing mutually respectful relations.

Consequently, strengthening of the population civilian identity, in contrast to the ethnic identity that is formed in the process of socialization and is of an ascriptive, primordial nature [7, p. 70], requires the purposeful activity of the state on bridging the gaps in the economics of the Russian regions and/or further strengthening of work in the direction of expanding population’s knowledge of the ethnic culture of Russian peoples, the development of inter-religious dialogue, ensuring real confessional equality, etc.

The reality indicates that there are serious problems both from the groups of the population migrating to a different cultural environment and from the host community. Insufficient knowledge of the peculiarities of other religions and cultures sometimes causes the separation of nations, tendencies towards the closure and isolation of people on an ethno-religious basis. Evidence of this is the scandalous caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad published in the magazines of a number of European countries which provoked protest movements in many Muslim countries.

If in the case of socio-economic inequality of immigrants (as well as residents of domestic depressed regions) injustice can be overcome, as already mentioned, on the ways of social adaptation and integration, then the simple, mechanical integration of different religions, cultures, values (unification, depersonalizing peoples) seems unpromising.

People tend to live together and build relationships, but Islamophobia leads to disunity. Speaking from the rostrum of the United Nations in 2019, the Prime Minister of Pakistan paid special attention to the problem of rising Islamophobia

in the world, especially in Europe and the US. The main message of his speech was aimed at educating the population of Western countries about the specificity of Muslims' attitude towards their religion, without which it is extremely difficult for them to adequately assess reactions to "caricatures" and, on the contrary, it is easy to accept perceptions of Islam as an intolerant religion that rejects freedom of speech. He noted that according to Islam, everyone has the right to profess their religion, places of worship are protected, everyone is equally responsible before the law regardless of their religion and color. The Prophet Muhammad is an ideal for Muslims on whom they try to be equal, he lives in hearts of Muslims, and when he is mocked, it is painful. And that is why this is a reaction of Muslims (to caricatures of the Prophet). Hence, it is essential to be sensitive to what may cause pain to other members of society.

At the same time, he blamed a group of people in the West who provoke such sentiments knowing in advance the consequences of their actions. "Unfortunately, some leaders of Western countries have equated Islam with terrorism and radicalism. All this is painfully perceived by Muslims. We, citizens of Muslim countries, face Islamophobia in foreign trips and travels. In European countries this leads to marginalization of Muslim communities, and we know very well that marginalization leads to radicalization... There are radicals and moderate supporters in all communities, this is typical for all communities. However, Islam itself cannot be radical as well as Judaism, Christianity and Hinduism. No religion preaches radicalism, the basis of all religions is peacefulness and justice" [8].

The Turkish president, as the political leader of a major Muslim country, also notes that EU governments do not take concrete actions to combat Islamophobia. "Attacking the Quran is a religious hate crime. The burning of the Koran cannot be allowed in any way within the framework of freedom of expression", he emphasized [9, p. 3].

The UN Secretary-General has recognized the problem of oppression of Muslim communities around the world: "The world's nearly 2 billion Muslims reflect humanity in all its glorious diversity. But they often face bias and prejudice for one reason – their religion. The growing hatred towards Muslims is not an isolated phenomenon; it is part of the rise of ethno-nationalism, neo-Nazi ideologies of white supremacy and violence against vulnerable communities" [10, p. 1].

According to the results of a study by a public organization in Australia, globally the lion's share of Islamophobic content in social networks comes from just 3 countries: 86 % of anti-Islamic content in social networks is generated by users from the USA, UK and India [11, p. 1].

Muslim women who wear the hijab have come to be seen in Western society as a threat to life, traditional values and, finally, national identity. Therefore, the main events in the state-confessional sphere are unfolding around the "hijab".

An experiment of scientists from the Dutch Utrecht Institute, Oxford Center and German Centre for the Study of Integration and Migration showed that women wearing hijabs face discrimination in France, in the Netherlands and in Germany [12].

It should be noted that conflict situations over the hijab also take place in modern Russia. In the republics of the North Caucasus, the "problem of headscarves" has come to naught. Earlier, hijab bans in educational institutions of Dagestan and Ingushetia became a source of acute social discourse. We can say that the adoption by the Chechen Parliament of an amendment to the local law allowing students of the republic to wear clothes or symbols in accordance with their folk traditions and religion [13] was a response to public disputes.

Nevertheless, in the whole country, a resonant discussion periodically rises in the information field around the topic of hijab bans, the construction of a mosque, sacred Muslim written sources. Although, in recent years, there has been a downward trend in the number of such discussions.

According to the "Public Opinion" Foundation, there is a positive trend in the perception of Islam in Russian society. To the question "Does Islam, in your opinion, play a positive or negative role in Russia today?" the following results were obtained: in 2012, 13 % of respondents announced the positive role of Islam, and in 2014 almost twice as many respondents chose the option of a positive role for a similar question. Opinions about the role of Islam in the world are more polarized.

At the same time, according to this foundation, rather high level of distrust of the Muslim religion remains in Russia (about a third of the respondents noted that this religion plays a negative role in Russia) [14].

The uncertainty of the general civil identity largely stems not only from its "youth" and immaturity, but also from the very modern realities of economic and social reality [15, p. 147].

Therefore, unfortunately, attempts to undermine domestic Russian unity on the basis of ethno-confessional affiliation are possible. Using objective factors of the unfavorable economic and interethnic situation of recent years in Russia, the

West is trying to informationally prepare representatives of traditional Russian faiths for the idea of the impossibility of their joint existence within the framework of one state. This is being done according to a certain scenario and by the well-developed in other regions methods [16, p. 200].

Discussion and conclusion. As for the formation of a single socio-cultural identity of Russians, this problem has become especially relevant against the background of a certain social disunity of the Russian people and strengthening of external threats. In principle, we are talking about solving in the applied policy the task of introducing into the mass consciousness of the country's population uniting ideologies and convincing them that they are identical to each other. The difficulty of implementing the goals comes down to the absence of an officially formalized national doctrine appealing to the historical foundation: "We are a great Euro-Asian country". Why hasn't it been formulated yet? Because the technocratic part of the elite is afraid of these words, and the other part resists this because it is afraid of Russian (ethnic) nationalism, which is destructive for us because we are a "multinational people". Although in the national understanding of "Russianness" both the Tatars, the Bashkirs, and the Chechens are also the Russians. It must be admitted that in the state political doctrine, most of its elements are already present even if they are not officially formulated in the form of a manifesto. Most likely, in the near future, when the idea of a "nation of ethnocultural diversity" for the vast majority of Russians will become natural, and not artificial, one can expect the documentation of this ideology.

But while there is a possibility for a contradictory interpretation of legislative provisions in the field of conscience and religion freedom, cases of conflict situations associated with the opposition of religious and secular value guidelines are common.

For example, in the country, cases of expulsion of students from educational institutions for wearing headscarves as an act that does not comply with the rules of internal regulations and academic discipline are recorded. In this case, the argument is completely ignored about the prescription in Islam of the mandatory covering of the head of a Muslim woman and the absence of a direct fall of wearing a headscarf under any forbidden paragraph of the charter of the organization carrying out educational activities (as a rule, the charter prohibits wearing things that promote war, violence, fascist ideology and other symbols contrary to the Constitution of the Russian Federation).

It should be noted that the facts of headscarves ban in educational institutions, affecting the rights and interests of a large number of Muslims, create tension in Russian society. It is no coincidence that this issue was raised at the level of the State Duma and the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation. The deputy of "United Russia" from Dagestan publicly addressed the head of the educational department of Russia. "What is more important in our country, the opinion of the director or the Constitution? Muslims are the same citizens of Russia, so figure it out, put an end to this issue" [17], he said.

Legal and public (if you want political) components of headscarves problems in educational institutions today turned out to be closely interconnected. Not only the triumph of legality will depend on its solution, but also the practical implementation of numerous declarations of national and confessional unity in Russia [18, p. 2].

For the Russian Federation, issues of interethnic relations in the country are extremely important, especially given the modern attempts of geopolitical competitors to destabilize the domestic political situation in the country. It must be admitted that recently the authorities have begun to react quite quickly to incidents that could provoke an increase in interethnic tension in Russia. Timely and carefully considered decisions of local authorities lead to a decrease in the negative information background around them and prevent further escalation of conflict situations.

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