

Ethnic and Religious Identities in the Multi-Ethnic Region (Based on the Ethnosociological Research Conducted in Bashkortostan)

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Abstract — In the conditions of risks and challenges of globalization and modernization, civil nationalization in Russia, security and stability of regional development continue to update the issue of religious identity of Russian people, especially in the Russian regions. The article studies the example of the Republic of Bashkortostan, where there is national, cultural, and confessional diversity. By the number of the Muslim population in the Russian Federation, the republic occupies one of the leading positions. At the same time, the Orthodoxy has strong traditions. Other confessions are also represented in Bashkiria which creates a serious load on the ethno-confessional situation in the region, poses challenges for the government authorities. Over a long historical period, the republic has gained positive experience of interaction between different nationalities and religions. The main purpose of the article is to identify the state and trends of development of religious identity in the republic, which is necessary to understand whether the situation creates a problem for interfaith and inter-ethnic interaction and stability of regional development. On the other hand, it is necessary to identify the relevance of religious identity for developing civil identity. The results of the study can be used for developing regional education policies. The article used materials of scientific researches and data of surveys conducted from the 1990s to 2016.

Keywords — *identity, national security, regional security, religious identity, social dysfunction, social tension, radicalism, extremism, destructive influence on society, extremism prevention*

I. INTRODUCTION

The issue of religious identity of Russians became relevant after the collapse of the USSR. Despite the fact that more than a quarter of a century has passed, the issue of Russia's civilizational identity remains crucial. The article "Russia: the national issue" by V. Putin says that Russia is not an ethnic state and not an American melting pot ... Russia has developed for centuries as a multi-ethnic civilization sealed by the Russian cultural core" [1]. Today, "the uncertainty of a civil and national identities makes it necessary to look closely at alternative forms - ethnic, confessional, various local identities ..." [2]. Public discussions around the issue of identity of modern Russia are now in full swing. They cannot fail to take into account an increasing role of religion and its influence on identification of an individual and a group.

II. MAIN BODY

According to M. Guboglo, a well-known Russian researcher studying ethnicity, the study of identities is included in the program of sociocultural transformations which determine the transfer of society from one state to another one. There are a lot of identities: ethnic, social, professional, gender, civil, confessional, property, racial, etc. Moreover, identities form and develop depending on situations varying from cooperation to conflicts, from splitting to a new symbiosis [3]. The basic personality structure can be represented as a set of identities acquired in various situations or at various life stages under the pressure of human needs and environmental prescriptions [3].

It is obvious that in modern Russia, ethnic identity and civic identity complement each other. At the same time, in recent years, the influence of religion on ethnic consciousness has been significantly actualized. There is a close relationship between ethnic identity and religious identity. Under ambiguous globalization, modernization of the Russian state, and social tension, ethnicity and religion influence on the society. This influence can be stabilizing and socially destructive, dysfunctional.

Identity is a psychological representation of person's ego. Human consciously and unconsciously identifies himself with one or another typological category (social status, sex, age, role, model, norm, group, culture, etc.). In the social sphere, there are social (self-identification with a social position or a status), cultural (self-identification with cultural traditions), ethnic (self-identification with a particular ethnic group), group (self-identification with a particular community) identities [4].

Modern scientific literature emphasizes terminological ambiguity of a religious identity. The dictionaries say that it is an integral phenomenon, a part of social identity, individual and collective self-awareness built on awareness of belonging to a particular religion, one of the first forms of human self-consciousness. It is at the origin of other identities.

In the conditions of a deep identification crisis of modern Russian society, it is necessary to address the issue of religious identities of citizens.

In 2004, a large-scale study was conducted by a working group of the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Based on the results, it was concluded that Russians' attitude to religion stands apart, "the country is between "old Europe", for which religion is less important, and the USA, where the role of religion is more significant" [5]. For post-Soviet Russia, where atheism officially dominated for almost 70 years, this conclusion showed that in the face of a growing religious identity, religion does not play a central role in the list of priority values of Russians and has no frightening tendencies for national security and stability of Russia. However, in the conditions of dissatisfaction of Russian citizens with the society that has developed in Russia, social tensions the situation can quickly and dramatically change, so this issue requires a serious approach and constant monitoring.

The study of the religious identity and its development trends on the example of the Republic of Bashkortostan seems relevant due to the uniqueness of the current situation. The population of the Republic of Bashkortostan is more than 4 million people. Representatives of 160 nationalities and 13 ethnic groups live in the Republic. In 2010, there were 9 of the most numerous nationalities, whose population exceeded 10 thousand. Three nationalities (Russians, Bashkirs and Tatars) accounted for 90% of the population of the republic (more than 3.6 million people) [6].

The multi-ethnicity of the republic is complemented by various religions. According to the data of 2016, there are 12 religious centers, 1,657 religious associations in the region. Islam and Orthodoxy are leading religions. The associations of these confessions make up about 87% of the total number of religious associations of the republic. 68% of associations are Islamic ones, and 19% - Orthodox organizations [7]. Therefore, inter-ethnic stability and civil consent largely depend on effective government policies and successful interaction of representatives of different ethnic groups and religions. At the same time, both the region and the republic have a positive experience of coexistence and interaction of representatives of different nations and religions. This experience can and should be studied.

The end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries were marked by active growth of both ethnic and religious identities. After the collapse of the USSR and the crisis of the former system of values, an ideological vacuum was formed. It was filled by religion. Despite 70 years of fading or reviving anti-religious Soviet policies, religion has retained its social roots. The researchers of modern ethno-confessional processes paid attention to the study of external manifestations of religiosity. The issues of the content and depth of religiosity of the population remained beyond the scope of their studies. The current situation is actualizing more valuable issues.

The following trends were characteristic of the Russian regions and the Republic of Bashkortostan in the post-Soviet period: growing authority of religion, positive changes in the status of churches and mosques, construction of religious facilities [8].

The data of sociological forecasts give deep insights into the state of religiosity of modern Russian society. In Bashkortostan, they have been carried out since the 1990s.

According to the results of the sociological survey conducted under the guidance of R.D. Karamysheva in 2007–2008, 49.6% of respondents identified themselves with Muslims, 27.7% - with Orthodox Christians, 4.8% - with Protestants, 10.5% of respondents did not determine their religious identity, 2.9% identified themselves with pagans.

According to the sociological study by the Center for Social and Political Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Bashkortostan conducted in 2008, 87% of respondents said they are believers. 48.1% identified themselves with Muslims, 31.9% - with Orthodox Christians, 0.9% - with other religions, 6.1% of respondents found it difficult to identify themselves with a specific religion. At the same time, 10.1% of respondents did not consider themselves believers, 2.9% of respondents found it difficult to answer [9].

In 2011, L.M. Droizhevoy, a researcher of the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, conducted a sociological survey. According to its results, 85% of the Russian population of the Republic identified themselves with Orthodox Christians, 4.4% - with Muslims, 86% of Tatars - with Muslims, and 5.8% - with Orthodox Christians, 92.3% of Bashkirs identified themselves with Muslims, and 1.7% - with Orthodox Christians. The survey identified a significant number of Protestant Christians and Old Believers in Bashkortostan [10].

According to information received by the 'Sreda' agency in 2012, 38% of respondents said they profess Islam, but they are neither Sunni nor Shiite; less than 1% said they belong to the Sunni. Orthodox Christianity is confessed by 25% of respondents; 15% of respondents believe in God (supreme power), but do not profess a particular religion; 8% of respondents do not believe in God; less than 6% practice other Christian trends, 2% of respondents worship gods and forces of nature, 2% - have a different worldview. Religion plays an important role in the life of 14% of respondents; 8% of respondents try to observe all religious prescriptions [11].

Ethnic sociological surveys conducted by the Department of Ethnic political studies of the Institute of Ethnological Studies n.a. R.G. Kuzeev of Ufa Scientific Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences directed by F.G. Safin give rather deep insights into the state of religiosity of the modern population, including the youth of Bashkiria.

In August 1995, the ethnosociological survey on the project "Interethnic tolerance and intra-national solidarity in post-Soviet Russia" was conducted. According to its data, 48.9% of Russians, 38.1% of Bashkirs, 48.7% of Tatars and 37.2% of respondents of other nationalities said they are believers. At the same time, only every tenth out of one hundred respondents, regardless of ethnicity, observed religious rites. At the same time, half of the Tatars surveyed, and every second of the five Bashkir respondents admitted that they did not read the Quran. Just over 15 people out of one hundred Bashkirs and only 6 people out of one hundred Tatars said that they read the entire text of the Quran. The rest of the Muslim respondents (more than 20%), read some suras or heard about them.

In March 1997, the ethnopolitological survey on the research project “Ethnopolitical Representations of Youth: Formation and Functioning” guided by F.G. Safin was conducted. It showed that the youth were involved in religious rites.

In January 2014, the sociological survey on the research project “Modern ethnic processes in Bashkortostan: ethnicity, identity and tolerance” was conducted. It identified a significant growth of the religious identity of the population of the republic. 81.3% of Bashkirs, 77.2% of Russians, 78.9% of Tatars and 73.0% of other nationalities said they are believers. Every fifth out of one hundred Bashkirs and Tatars, more than one quarter of respondents of other nationalities and 13.6% of Russians observed religious rites. The share of non-observant believers has increased. The share of fluctuate believers and people who are indifferent to religion reduced. In 2014, the share of atheists who called for combatting religion was less than one percent.

In February 2014, the ethnosociological survey of the UFA youth on the research project “Social trusting and tolerance in a multicultural youth environment” was conducted. The survey identified that for almost every fifth respondent regardless of his/her nationality, religious identity was not significant. About two-thirds of the Bashkir and Tatar youth considered a religious wedding to be a prerequisite.

The surveys revealed that the majority of Tatars and Bashkirs adhere to “superficial Islam” determined only by formal characteristics: ethnicity, participation in Muslim holidays, rites. Thus, despite the fact that some researchers talk about religious renaissance, the data of ethnosociological studies indicate that religious identity is rather superficial. It is not a basic life value. According to one Imam-Khatib of the Republic, only 1% of Muslims attend Friday Namaz, and less than 1% attend Kurban Bayram. Many people want to adhere to traditions rather than the canons of Islam. There are a lot of external changes. For example, many mosques are being built, but many of them are empty or closed.

The well-known specialist in history of religions Yunusova said that in Bashkortostan, religious identity is characterized by ambiguity. New trends can be identified. First of all, dualism has become characteristic of the identity of young people. 29% of the youth recognize the importance of both ethnic and civic identities. This trend is reflected in the state of religious identity of young people. It is characterized by diffusion or mutations, redistribution of believers between religions, regardless of their ethnicity. Ethnic Muslims - Tatars and Bashkirs - are converted to Christianity, take interest in Neo-eastern religions; ethnic Russians and Ukrainians convert to Islam, Neo-eastern and Protestant religions. Tatars and Bashkirs make up 30% in the share of all Protestant associations. This indicator demonstrates the popularity and attractiveness of the Protestant churches [12].

III. CONCLUSION

Thus, after according to the analysis of the results of various sociological studies, one can conclude that the majority of the residents of the republic identify themselves with one or another religion which is often traditional for their

ethnic groups. At the same time, the share of practicing believers is very low – less than 5%, and the share of those who try to observe basic religious rites ranges from 8 to 12.5% [11].

Islam plays a significant role in the social and political life of the Republic of Bashkortostan. In the public consciousness of ethnic Muslims, Islamic life-cycle rituals play a significant role. They are a tribute to traditions and norms of everyday life. However, only a small number of the population adhere to the tenets of Islam. Today, one can hardly consider Islam as a mobilizing factor for the population of the republic. Mmigration flows do not change the situation.

Despite radical extremism, especially in the young subculture, the stable ethno-confessional situation is characteristic of the republic. People believe that all religions are equal and they have freedom of belief, can express their religious needs based on internal motives. At the same time, the peculiarity of the modern religious situation is that people consider themselves to be believers, but they do not know basics of the religion or do not follow religious prescriptions, being focused on the secular way of life. There are alarming “signs” related to the activities of ISIS and other groups, whose ideology still attracts a small percentage of the youth. It is necessary to understand the reasons and work with young people so that religious ideals continue to be the spiritual strength of society, consolidate it in the name of progress, individual and universal good. Therefore, systematic and appropriate work of government, law enforcement agencies, educational institutions is required for prevention of extremism and terrorism and further harmonization of interethnic, interfaith relations in order to reduce extremism, xenophobia, destructive phenomena and attitudes in the society.

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