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Abstract. This article analyzes some aspects of religious tolerance and interethnic relations in Uzbekistan.

In its centuries-long history, Uzbekistan has been and remains a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country. Being president of the Republic of Uzbekistan I.A. Karimov noted: "Millions of people of different nationalities and religions have their destiny and their future connected with Uzbekistan and live in peace in this ancient and generous land" [1. P. 175].

We know that interethnic relations are often represented as a major component of public policy in multinational democratic societies.

In our multi-human society, in terms of structure and character, special attention is paid to the maintenance of inter-ethnic harmony. Therefore, the first President of the Republic of

Uzbekistan I.A. Karimov emphasized the nature of inter-ethnic relations in our country and said: "Uzbekistan has a lot of wealth, but our greatest wealth is our greatest value, particularly peace, inter-ethnic friendship and solidarity in our society" [2. P. 181].

From this perspective, another important task today is to ensure that the idea of inter-ethnic harmony in our country is a permanent priority. In the minds of the people of our country, which is keen on building a humane, just and legal society, it is important to note that each nation has its own national culture, that every ethnic group is unique in the world in order to respect attitude to them, and not the preference of one over the other, is extremely important.

When it comes to religion, it is rationally to think of such a universal concept as "tolerance," which harmonizes religious and secular views, and to think of the problems associated with this concept.

The Declaration of Principles on Tolerance adopted by UNESCO in 1995 in the UN defines and describes the essence of the concept of tolerance as follows: tolerance means respect, acceptance and understanding of various ways in which different cultures of the world demonstrate self-expression and distinctive characteristics.

Tolerance generates knowledge, sincerity, open communication, independent opinion, conscience, and faith. Tolerance is in the unity of diversity. This is not only an obligation, but also a political and legal necessity. Tolerance is a force that promotes peace and leads society from war to a culture of peace.

Tolerance is not a concession, not a prudence or flattery, but an attitude to the admission of universal human rights and freedoms. Any way, the tolerance does not infringe above-mentioned values. Tolerance must be demonstrated by all people, groups and states.

Tolerance is a commitment to assert human rights, support the victory of pluralism (including ethnic and cultural pluralism), democracy and law.

Tolerance is a concept that recognizes the principles set out in international human rights law and means denial of doctrine and the establishment of absolute truth.

Demonstration of tolerance does not mean indifference to human rights or tolerance of social injustice or freedom from one's beliefs and support of others' ones. This means that everyone can freely profess their religion, and everyone must recognize that others have this right. This means that people differ from each other in their appearance, image, behavior, speech, values, and that they have the right to live in peace and maintain their individuality. It also means that views cannot be imposed on others [3. P. 91-92].

The impact of religious tolerance on inter-ethnic relations is:

Firstly, religion and religious values do not oppose the ethnopolitical paradigm that is forming in Uzbekistan, but contribute to development by their own means and methods. The strategic goal of the ethnopolitical paradigm is applicable to all members of the community, including representatives of religious beliefs, confessions and religious organizations.

Secondly, Uzbekistan is a secular democratic and legal state in which religion is separated from the state and religion does not interfere in the affairs of the state, and the state does not also interfere in the internal affairs of religious organizations. However, this does not mean that religion and religious authorities do whatever they want and that they can be indifferent to the state and society. The state and society cannot be indifferent to social and moral, as well as political and legal values of believers.

Thirdly, when people, nations live together in peace, when they take strategic goals as their life goal, they can achieve social progress.

Fourthly, ethnocultural pluralism and polytheism are natural in multi-ethnic states. One of the challenges of the ethnopolitical paradigm is to maintain a compromise between multi-ethnic pluralism and polytheism and to ensure that they serve the interests of social development.

Fifthly, religious tolerance is not a sympathy for destructive groups, fundamentalism and terrorism, but a phenomenon that can constantly distinguish positive or negative characteristics of actions and ideological views. The fact that man is a “social being” imposes certain requirements, even restrictions, on his actions and ideological views. These social requirements and restrictions are determined by legal norms and spiritual and moral imperatives.

Sixthly, the reliance on religion and religious values in inter-ethnic relations is ensured by freedom of conscience. This is the constitutional right of a person to profess any religion, respect, promote and promulgate any religious values. However, religion and religious organizations cannot directly interfere in inter-ethnic relations, somehow organize them and create one nation against another. Religion or religious organization based on national and ethnic affiliation contradict the multi-ethnic and polytheistic character of the state. Religion does not choose a nation or ethnicity, confession of religion is the concern of every person for choice.

Seventhly, the application of historical and cultural, sociocultural experience accumulated by religions and religious organizations in inter-ethnic relations is of practical importance for both sides, especially for social development. However, the ethnopolitical paradigm must always take into account that there are conservative and dogmatic elements in religion and that destructive groups of people try to use them. Due to the fact that religious fundamentalism and terrorism are widespread, it became a reality to look at each other doubtfully rather than to believe each other in inter-state and international relations.

Polytheism has been established in Uzbekistan: more than 95 per cent of the population profess Islam and the rest of people profess other religions.

Traditionally, as a place for development of ancient religions, our country occupies a special position in the history of world civilization. On this blessed land, our predecessors always respected people of other religions, and no one can deny that they fought for the freedom of the country with these people. Indeed, our region became the centre of diverse religions, cultures and lifestyles and ensured peaceful coexistence of different peoples.

It is impossible to divide world religions into different groups that do not support democracy, contradict democracy or are neutral. For example, Christianity supported both royal rights and the republican drive for equality. Some groups support authoritarian regimes, while others protect democracy and human rights. Therefore, as a complex social phenomenon, religion can have diverse and sometimes contrary to progress and growth sects and groups. One of the most important challenges at present is the use of positive aspects of religion, which serve the progress and spirituality of mankind, as well as form religious tolerance.

Religious tolerance is an idea based on ethnic tension, civil war and fanaticism, bad historical experience. Religious tolerance means not freedom from one's faith and religion, but respecting human dignity, freedom of conscience and freedom of thought.

The existence of equal rights based on the priority of human rights and freedoms among various religious communities living in our country and established interfaith cooperation form the basis for social stability in the country. The fact that our state is occupied with religion is based on the principle of "people cannot live without faith," which contributes to the improvement of interfaith relations. Article 31 of our Constitution states: "Freedom of conscience is guaranteed to all people. Everyone has the right to profess or not to profess any

religion. Any coercive imposition of religion is unacceptable" [4. P. 8]. There are described basic principles of relations between the secular state and religion. According to it:

First, the state is committed to pursue anti-religious policies in accordance with its basic law;

Secondly, it is recognized that to profess or not to profess any religion is an inalienable right of everyone;

Thirdly, on the basis of the two above-mentioned fundamental principles, the state guarantees that it does not allow the forced acceptance of religious views by people in the regulation and maintenance of religious relations in society.

During the years of independence, the number of religious organizations increased. If in 1990 there were 95 religious organizations in the country, then by 2015 their number exceeded 2200.

During the years of independence, the system of religious education also developed. For example, before independence, there were only two Islamic religious schools, and today there are 11 such schools.

For the first time, there were granted scholarships for religious students. Over years of independence, the level of religious education of imams increased significantly. In 1997, only 4.2% of them had higher and advanced education, and in 2005 this proportion was 84.5%, and today it is about one hundred percent [5. P. 116–17].

Religious interests of representatives of nations and nationalities in Uzbekistan are respected. Churches, churches, preaching houses and sanctuaries seized in Soviet times and used for other purposes were returned to believers.

Actually, there are more than 30 Orthodox churches in our country. Alexander Nevsky, St. Vladimir, St. Uspensky in Tashkent, St. Sergeyevesky in Ferghana, St. Uspensky in Almalyk and other churches serve to develop inter-ethnic relations and spread the idea of respect and veneration of other nationalities.

It is noteworthy that representatives of different nations and nationalities also participate in construction of churches. For example, local population participated in the construction of an Orthodox church in Termez [6. P. 35].

The most confessional regions in the country are the city of Tashkent and Tashkent region. They are followed by Syrdarya, Ferghana, Samarkand and Navoi regions.

Inability to estimate the role of religion in a society that can affect the mind, heart and spirit of millions of people, failure to harmonize religious values with development and laical spirit can lead to negative consequences.

Religious tolerance in Uzbekistan is based on Eastern values, life force of Eastern civilizations and their positive experiences. Many of our values are historically associated with Islam and its humanist traditions.

In our opinion, we need to explore and promote more widely the values of the new ethno-political paradigm in Islam and socio-moral ideas that will help maintain peace, brotherhood and tolerance in our country.

Interfaith relations play a critical role in multinational and polytheistic states. Building interfaith relations based on the principles of tolerance will affect the general spiritual environment in society, as well as socio-political stability.

As Islam Karimov noted: "In our independent, liberal, multinational country, as well as in Islam, other faiths, such as Orthodoxy, Judaism and Catholicism, function freely. No matter religion or sectionalism, we are glad that representatives of these faiths work with us and work hard for the prosperity and growth of the peoples of Uzbekistan" [7. P. 175].

Whereas religious tolerance is based on human values and aimed at strengthening inter-ethnic relations, it ensures social stability in society.

The new ethno-political paradigm in our country directs all religions and faiths to achieve the goals of democratic development.

As a result, the strategic goal of the Republic of Uzbekistan, that is, to build a democratic legal state and civil society, to form a new generation with high moral standards, became a common goal of religions and faiths. They create noble intentions and noble deeds in people; they establish spiritual and moral standards in interpersonal relations through high beliefs and belief in God. Religion enhances social and spiritual progress by cleanup of a human soul of evil thoughts and intentions. That is why it is vital from a social perspective to rely on these positives in religion and use them to develop inter-ethnic relations.

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