
PLACE AND ROLE OF ISLAM IN REGIONS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, THE CAUCASSUS AND CENTRAL ASIA

YUSUF DJABRAILOV. PRESENT RELIGIOUS SITUATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF DAGHESTAN IN THE CONTEXT OF NATIONAL (CIVIC) IDENTITY // *Article was written for the bulletin "Russia and the Moslem World."*

Keywords: religious identity, civic identity, national identity, religiosity, Islam, Christianity; confession.

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Abstract. Based on the results of a sociological survey carried out among Daghestani youth, the article establishes the relationship between the aspects of religious and national (civic) identity in the light of the respondents being citizens of Russia.

The author of the article notes that issues relating to religious and confessional identity remain high on the international agenda and has entered the public discourse of

Russia. Consequently, with Russia seeking to strengthen national unity, a better understanding of the issues regarding mutual influences of the social identities of its peoples is required. A thorough analysis of the transformation process of the religious identity of Daghestanis and identification of its current development trends within a multiethnic society require an in-depth sociological study. Historically, long-term interaction of ethnic and religious aspects results in religion taking root in the psychology of peoples and affecting almost all areas of public and personal life: culture, politics, habits, customs, etc.

At the 2013 meeting of the Presidential Council for Interethnic Relations, Vladimir Putin said the following: *"Our core objective is to enhance peace and harmony in the multiethnic Russian society, so that our people feel that they are citizens of a single country regardless of their ethnicity and religious beliefs. I see this as key to the sustainable and successful development of our nation. [1]"*

The author points to the fact that interest in religion, and in particular Islam, has grown considerably among the youth. Thus, the survey conducted among senior students of almost all large universities in the Republic of Daghestan is intended to determine possible religious discrimination and its impact on the shaping of national (civic) identity.

A total of 560 young people of 16 nationalities took part in the survey; 32 respondents (5%) did not report their nationality. All ethnic groups of Daghestan were represented among the respondents: Avars - 201 (36%); Dargins - 94 (17%); Lezgins - 78 (14%); Kumyks - 44 (8%); Laks - 37 (7%); Tabasarans - 20 (4%); Russians - 18 (3%); Azerbaijanis - 9 (2); Rutuls - 7 (1); Tsakhurs - 7 (1); Aghuls - 6 (1); others - 7 (1%). Two thirds of the respondents (378 - 67%) indicated that they lived in urban areas, while one third (182 - 33%) resided in rural areas; of the individuals surveyed 277 (49%) were men and 283 (51%) were women.

The method of the sociological research was a questionnaire based survey. The study confirmed that the population of Daghestan is extremely religious.

Table 1

Do you consider yourself a religious person?

Response options	<i>(Percentage of the total number of respondents)</i>
Yes, I do	84.7
No, I don't	5.9
I believe in a higher power, but I do not adhere to any religion	5.1
Not sure	4.3

Table № 1 indicates that a large majority of the respondents (84.7%) are religious; 5.9 per cent do not consider themselves religious; 5.1 per cent believe in a higher power, but do not adhere to any religion; and only 4.3 per cent find it difficult to answer.

Table 2

If you are a religious person, to which religion or religious movement do you belong?
(Percentage of the total number of respondents)

Response options	<i>(Percentage of the total number of respondents)</i>
Islam	88.1
Christianity	2.5
Agnosticism, atheism	1.5
Not sure	7.9

The vast majority (approx. 96%) of the population of the Republic of Dagestan is Muslim. Table № 2 provides the distribution of responses to the question “*If you are a religious person, to which religion or religious movement do you belong?*” Of those questioned, 88.1 per cent are Muslim, 2.5 per cent are Christian, 1.5 per cent are agnostic or atheist, and about 7.9 per cent found it difficult to answer.

Table 3

**If you are a religious person, do you follow all
the mandatory religious observances?
(Percentage of the total number of respondents)**

Response options	<i>(Percentage of the total number of respondents)</i>
Yes	40.7
Yes, partially	37.9
No	14.5
Not sure	6.9

The question “*If you are a religious person, do you follow all the mandatory religious observances?*” (Table № 3) is intended to measure religiosity of the respondents. According to the responses received, 40.7 per cent of the respondents practice all the religious observances (the author calls them devoutly religious); 37.9 per cent follow some of the observances (those are religious); 14.5 per cent do not practice religious observances (those respondents question their faith); and only 6.9 per cent found it difficult to answer.

The question “*What is religion for you personally?*” has multi select answer options. The results obtained are as follows: 72 per cent of the respondents say it is closeness to and communication with the Almighty; 45 per cent consider religion as moral and ethical compass; 38 per cent think that religion means observance of religious rites and practices; 15 per cent view religion as the basis of their national tradition and culture; only 5 per cent characterize it as a relic of the past or prejudice; and 9 per cent of the respondents found it difficult to answer the question.

Analysis of the results of the study identified the following pattern: the more religious the respondents are, the more they view religion as a reflection of a believer’s personal relationship with the Almighty and, conversely, the less religious they are, the higher proportion of the respondents consider it as the basis of the national tradition and culture.

Table 4

**In your opinion, is the principle of equality
of the traditional denominations being violated in Russia?
(Percentage of the total number of respondents)**

Response options	(Percentage of the total number of respondents)
Yes	30.9
No	31.8
Not sure	37.3

Table № 4 shows the distribution of responses to the question *“In your opinion, is the principle of equality of traditional denominations being violated in Russia?”* It indicates that 30.9 per cent of the respondents are of the opinion that the principle of equality of confessions in Russia is violated; also, almost one third of those interviewed for the sociological survey say that there is ethnic discrimination. Almost the same number of people (31.8%) holds the opinion that in Russia the legislative norms of equality of traditional confessions are fully respected. The majority of the respondents (37.3%) found it difficult to answer this question.

The study goes on to explore to what extent Daghestani young people accept their being part of Russia’s civil society, and sharing civil responsibilities and duties. And in this regard the respondents were asked about their sense of community with the citizens of Russia. In order to determine the place of civic identification in the hierarchy of social identities, the respondents were also asked about their feeling of community with other social groups (Table № 5).

Table 5

**How do you evaluate your sense
of community with the following social groups?
(Percentage of the total number of respondents)**

	Strong	Moderate	None	Not sure
Citizens of Russia	38.4	40.9	12.5	8.2
People of the same nationality as myself	60	28.6	5.5	5.9
Residents of my city or village	54.3	30.6	8	7.1
People who follow the same religion as myself	62.5	25	3.6	8.9
Residents of my republic	48.6	33.9	8	9.5
People who share my political views	23.9	38.9	20.7	16.5
People with the same level of income as myself	24.4	25.9	29.5	20.2
People in the same profession as myself	44.3	35	10.7	10
People who have the same outlook on life	55.6	27.5	8	8.9
People of my age	31.3	36.4	18	14.3

As shown in Table № 5, there is a clear dominance of ethnic and religious identities in the Republic of Daghestan. It also worth noting that young people display civic identity to a lesser extent than other group identities, such as: residents of my city or village; residents of my republic; people in the same profession as I; and people who have the same outlook on life.

It should be noted that the indicators of civic identification are slightly higher for non-religious respondents than for religious ones. Thus, 48 per cent of non-believers and 39 per cent of believers state that they have a strong feeling of community with the citizens of Russia. However, the indicators of civic identification of Christians

and Muslims differ significantly. According to the responses received, 79 per cent of Christian respondents have a strong sense of community with the citizens of Russia, while only 39 per cent of Muslim respondents feel that way.

The author points out that all Christian respondents are Russians. Consequently, it is not a purely religious factor, but more likely an ethnic and religious one. As the religion of constituent people, Orthodoxy has the capacity to address the right of its followers to spiritual, moral and ethnocultural development.

The author notes that the study does not aim to determine the areas of possible ethnic and religious discrimination, which requires further sociological research. Nevertheless, politicians and public and religious figures most frequently raise the issue of the ban on hijab and construction of mosques in cities when discussing religious discrimination. In this connection, a Duma deputy from the A Just Russia party said the following: *“Even given a strong desire and funds for construction, it is impossible to build a mosque in Moscow today, which provides grounds for justified outrage in the Muslim community. [2]”*

It should be noted that these issues do not lead to social differentiation in the traditionally Muslim regions of the North Caucasus (Daghestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia). Here in Daghestan, known as the cradle of all traditional religions of Russia, members of many ethnic groups and religions have centuries-long experience in mutually respectful coexistence. But outside the region, Muslims experience a certain “religious discomfort” that prompts them to draw a line between their territories and the territories of others. This is due to the federalist system, which implies that the development of a particular religion is determined by the national composition of the population of the federal subject.

With this approach, Orthodoxy as the religion of the constituent people has a broad range of opportunities throughout the country, while Islam is becoming a regional factor rather than a federal one. Thus, it is rightly noted that the current state of affairs results in the following pattern: parochialism -

conservatism – archaization and marginalization of religious consciousness [3]. Consequently, in order to “federalize” Islam it should be officially given federal status, simply by virtue of the fact that Islam has historically been a federal phenomenon.

Many centuries of development of world religions on the territory of Russia has created additional advantage over countries with a religious minority in developing a strategy to address problems of religious practices within a foreign cultural environment. It also gives a significant impetus for developing a conflict-free strategy to help the representatives of all religions adjust to the life in a secular state. The author optimistically predicts that the future of Russia is based on the pluralism of various social and cultural groups who share civic values. Any attempts to emphasize religious and ethnic exclusivity in the country are a serious disruptive factor in the formation of a single political nation and a supranational and non-denominational civic identity.

However, Muslims citizens of the North Caucasus are given no privilege in the religious sphere over migrants from Muslim countries. In a sense, a migrant temporarily living in a foreign country is better able to tolerate religious discrimination than a believer holding citizenship. In this case, being a citizen only makes a person feel inequality in the country more acutely.

The author notes that further study of civic identity among Muslims confirms that Islamic socialization of young people does not impede shaping of civic identity. Thus, 43 per cent of devoutly religious Muslim respondents, 34 per cent of religious respondents and 21.4 per cent of hesitant respondents state that they feel significant social connection with citizens of Russia. As we can see, the more religious Muslim respondents are, the higher their indicators of solidarity with citizens of Russia. 40 per cent of Muslim respondents evaluate their sense of community with Russian citizens as “moderate”, while 13 per cent of those questioned do not feel any social connection. Among Muslims with strong sense of community with people of their faith, 46.3 per cent of the respondents have high indicators of civic identity.

Muslims who do not feel social connection with fellow believers have significantly lower level of civic identification (30%). According to sociological studies conducted in other regions of Russia, respondents who feel no social connection with fellow believers have significantly lower key indicators of trust, which is vital for interethnic harmony, as compared with those who feel such a connection [4].

In our opinion, increasing sense of local identity in the minds of young people and lower indicators of civic identity stem from systemic social and political problems of the state which keeps individuals from enjoying their full citizenship. According to the 2019 nationwide monitoring of public opinion by the Levada Center, which covered a sample of 1600 people over the age of 18.58 per cent of the respondents do not believe they can influence events in the country; 11 per cent believe they can influence to a great extent; 27 per cent think their scope of influence is significant; and 4 per cent of the respondents found it difficult to answer [5].

The author identifies uneven representation of multiple identities in the social, political, economic and cultural structure of Russian society as the major obstacle to a common national identity. Consequently, the state, as the main regulator of the nation-building process, should address the interests of representatives of all confessions and ethnic groups and guard against any imbalances.

The study goes on to examine day-to-day interreligious relations. The respondents were invited to consider the Bogardus scale (Table № 6).

Table 6

Are you ready to accept a person of other religion as your ...

	Yes	No	Not sure
Boss	81.9	9.6	8.5
Colleague	89.4	4.6	6
Neighbour	91.8	2.9	5.3
Friend	77.8	10.3	11.9
Spouse	24.9	53.2	21.9

According to the answers received, Daghestani students have positive attitudes towards people of other faith in different areas of social interaction. The overwhelming majority of the respondents are ready to accept a person of other faith as their boss (81.9%), colleague (89.4%), neighbour (91.8%) and friend (77.8%).

At the same time, there is a certain social distance between representatives of different religions when it comes to spouses. Thus, 24.9 per cent of the respondents expressed their readiness to marry a person who adheres to a different religion. It is most likely because of their desire to preserve own religious traditions and values. According to the Shafi'i madhhab widespread in Daghestan, restrictions on marriage between a Muslim woman and a non-Muslim man are imposed due to the fact that women are influenced by their husbands and their religion to a greater extent. A number of conditions must be met in order for a marriage between a Muslim man and a Christian woman to be considered permissible. According to the Hanafi madhhab, which has become less widespread in Daghestan, there are no conditions for such a marriage other than the Christian faith [6].

This explains that 33.9 per cent of Muslim women and 66.1 per cent of Muslim men are ready to marry people with other religious background. According to the degree of religiosity, 17.9 per cent of Muslims with deep religious faith, 18.3 per cent of believers and 54.3 per cent of those that remain hesitant are ready to marry people of other faith. As far as religious affiliation is concerned, 20.8 per cent of Muslims and 50 per cent of Christians are ready to have a person of other religion as a life partner.

Conclusion

The author concludes that at present, in the Republic of Daghestan, young people retain high levels of religious and ethnic identities. The study identified a relationship between a weak national (civic) identity amongst young people and their perception of being ethnically and religiously discriminated. At the

same time, it was found that neither strengthening nor weakening of religious identity would have any impact on the sense of community of young people with the “citizens of Russia” social group. However, the study found that devout Muslim respondents have a higher level of civic identity compared to those who partially follow religious observances or do not follow them at all. Also, Muslims with a robust sense of community with fellow believers have higher indicators of civic identity.

The vast majority of young people are ready to accept representatives of other religions and ethnic groups in the sphere of interpersonal relations, which confirms that interfaith relations in the region remain stable.

Nevertheless, the results of this study show a significant discrepancy in the indicators regarding ethnic and religious discrimination between Russians and non-Russians. This is partly due to a different understanding of the relationship between civic and ethnocultural identities on the Islamic-Orthodox borderline. Russian young people associate involvement in the historical development of the country and inclusion in a single cultural space with the Russian identity to a larger extent than representatives of other ethnic groups. For representatives of the peoples of the Caucasus and other ethnic groups, Russian citizenship and the sense of unity of many peoples under the wing of a single state seem more relevant [7].

Thus, the first step towards strengthening of civic identity amongst Daghestani youth is to ensure the important constitutional principle of equality of all citizens under the law, regardless of their gender, race, nationality, language, origin, property and professional status, place of residence and religious views.

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ASIYAT BOTASHEVA. PROBLEMS OF THE ELITE CONFLICT IN KARACHAYEVO-CIRCASSIA // *Article was written for the bulletin "Russia and the Moslem World."*

Keywords: political power, political elite, elite conflict, federal elite, regional elite, civil society, Karachayevo-Circassia.

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Abstract. Political elite is a social group that has risen to political "stardom" as claiming to exercise authority and control the masses. The elites are undoubtedly generated by social inequality rather than unequal amounts of talent or individual, spiritual other differences. Elite education, professional success, great ambitions, extensive expertise, standing in society, the right connections, assertiveness, etc. are of great importance.