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OLGA CHIKRIZOVA, YURII LASHKHIA. RELIGIOUS FACTOR IN WORLD POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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Abstract. The article is dedicated to identifying the key features of the influence of the religious factor on world politics in the light of the traditional science of international relations ignoring religion and defending the position on the separation of “secular” and “spiritual” in the studies of international relations.

For a long time, the religious factor was practically not considered by the theory of international relations (TIR). Having emerged as an academic discipline after World War I, the science of international relations initially reflected the position, according to which, under the pressure of secularization processes, religion would have a very limited value for the world order. As a result of this conviction, religion was paid very little attention, especially in the United States, where most of the leading experts in international relations lived.

The political realism that has prevailed in America since the 1940s and 1950s is based on three fundamental premises, which can be formulated as follows: 1) the foreign policy of states pursues two main goals – the accumulation of material goods, mainly resources and power; 2) all states share similar international motives and goals; 3) the international system is an anarchic self-help system characterized by conflict, competition and strategic cooperation [1].

Another, no less important, aspect of realism is the clear separation of foreign and domestic policy. Within the framework of this paradigm, it is usually believed that the opposing forces within the country are united in order to protect the objectively existing “national interests”, the main of which realists consider ensuring the security and survival of the state, which, in turn, is conceived by the supporters of this school as the primary unit of analysis and the primary ontological unit in international relations. As for non-material factors, realism in all its diversity naturally sees in them a kind of tinsel, which individual states, as necessary, use as a grounding and justification for their policy, which is in fact determined by “real” national interests, which is always due to some kind of material factors. Liberal and neoliberal approaches to the study of international relations also do not pay much attention to the religious factor. For liberals, the global system is an intertwining of various problem areas, including trade, the environment, energy, human rights, and democracy. Along with the state, liberalism recognizes the

importance of transnational actors, such as intergovernmental organizations and transnational corporations (TNCs). Religious actors are also recognized for transnational importance, but their importance is considered in terms of specific issues, in particular those identified above, and not in general [2]. Truly speaking, some liberal authors (for example, Madeleine Albright in her book "Religion and World Politics") tried to deal with the issue of religion, starting from their own beliefs, but in some places their works are extreme emotional and lacking of some important knowledge. So, M. Albright makes extremely controversial judgments about the religions of the peoples of Africa south of the Sahara, and also actually reproduces the colonial division of Islam into "black" (Islam noir) and "Arabic", linking it with another, not indisputable, classification of Islam into "moderate" and "extremist" [3].

Marxism, the third classical school of understanding the nature of international relations, and its derivative, neo-Marxism, offer a view of world political processes as a manifestation of the class struggle. Religion is not considered by neo-Marxists as an important aspect of class-based conflicts and is seen by them as a veil that hides the true economic interests of the subjects of international relations.

Among the reasons underlying the traditional theories of disdain for religion as a factor in foreign policy and international relations, one should name, firstly, the worldview inherited from the Enlightenment, according to which religion and other "irrational" forms of cognition and thinking will eventually give way to secular mind. Secondly, the modern system of international relations dates back, as is commonly believed, to 1648. For more than a century, religious wars and their attendant violations of sovereignty served as the main cause of strife in European politics, however, after the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia, this type of conflict in Europe disappeared [4]. In political science and international relations of the XX century skepticism towards religion reached an even greater degree.

Traditional schools of international relations and their analytical tools are extremely ill-suited to research.

Of great importance for the theory of international relations is the period of the "third debate" (1970s), when reflectivist approaches, primarily constructivism, came to the forefront of science. Unlike traditional paradigms, constructivism is not so much a school or a coherent theory as a method. An important unifying element of all research and work produced in the mainstream of constructivism is the giving of central importance to ideas, norms, cultural traditions and identity. Moreover, it was the constructivists, and not the adherents of classical theories, who began to write detailed works on the topic of the religious factor in international relations. It is the constructivist approach that is able to provide researchers of religion in world politics and international relations with the proper tools due to its concentration on non-material factors.

Although relatively suitable methods for the study of the religious factor in world politics and international relations have appeared, some of the questions related to this topic have not yet found definitive answers, acting as points of disagreement in the scientific community. The main of them should be considered the lack of a generally accepted definition of the term "religion", which creates significant difficulties for delineating the boundaries of the phenomenon it denotes and, consequently, determining its place in political processes; the rest, in one way or another, stem from or are related to this problem. Be that as it may, religion today has taken place as a factor in international politics, which makes it necessary to attract the closest attention of the scientific community to it. Being inextricably linked with the worldview, being its basis or influencing it in some other way, religion to some extent sets the patterns of human thinking and, consequently, its activities, including in the field of politics.

Today, religion sets the patterns of behavior for both state and transnational players. As for state religious entities, only two countries are currently considered to be such in the full sense of

the word – the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Besides them, no other state in the world proclaims religion as a guiding principle in domestic and foreign policy at the level of a framework law, although they also cannot be considered the only state entities with a religious identity. In general, religion is a very powerful persuasion tool that allows one state actor to influence the heads and citizens of other states, and in the context of global politics, it is used to justify very different lines of foreign policy activity. Religion in international relations “is a double-edged weapon that can bring benefits to any actor” [5], since one state is able to resort to it in confrontation with another state, but the second can also use religion against the first. A similar thing is observed in the case of the Sunni-Shia confrontation, in which Iran and its proxies, primarily the Lebanese group Hezbollah, compete with the countries of the Sunni world, in particular with Saudi Arabia.

Religiously motivated state subjects of world politics found themselves on opposite sides of the barricades during the “Arab spring” in Syria, where, among other things, the Turkish-Qatari alliance based on the Moslem Brotherhood* clashed with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the vector of foreign policy formation of which is set by the Wahhabi current of Sunni Islam [6].

But, naturally, religious legitimacy has limits, since the arguments of a particular religious movement are fully accepted only by its supporters and inevitably reveal differences with adherents of other areas of the same religion, not to mention non-believers and secular players. The more particularistic thinking a political subject manifests, forming arguments in support of its own course, the fewer other subjects will be inclined to support it. For example, this is one of the obstacles to the spread of the Saudi model in the Islamic world, since Wahhabism is largely known for “its excessive severity and fanaticism in the methods of its implementation” [7].

* The organization is banned in the Russian Federation.

However, paradoxical it may seem, but sometimes the governments of officially secular countries adhere to religious doctrines to one degree or another. For example, Israel is a Jewish state only in the national sense, remaining secular since its declaration in 1948. Nevertheless, it is difficult to say that its government is always and in everything guided by considerations of a narrowly understood pragmatism. In particular, a very important place in the vision of Israeli political figures is occupied by Jerusalem, which should not be allowed under any circumstances to be controlled by Moslem Arabs, since it is extremely holy to the Jews. The situation is complicated by the fact that Jerusalem is also important for Moslems, because it was this city that played the role of the first qibla (direction for ritual prayer) and is second in importance only to Mecca and Medina. The issue of Jerusalem's allegiance is one of the significant stumbling blocks between Israel and countries with a Moslem majority population, primarily partially recognized Palestine, which maintain the relevance of the Arab-Israeli conflict, its dependence to this day.

States outside the Middle East and North Africa do not always ignore religion either. Thus, Christian religious beliefs clearly shaped the foreign policy approach of the 43rd President of the United States, George W. Bush. George Bush argued that it was by the will of God that the United States was spreading freedom and democracy in the Middle East [8]. It is also necessary to mention the coming to power in India in 2014 of Narendra Modi, professing the Hindutva (Indian nationalism with religious Hindu overtones) the leader of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which is known to the general public in various countries of the world for its policy aimed against Indian Moslems. For example, the BJP, together with another ideologically similar organization, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, was behind the destruction of the Babur Mosque (Babri Masjid) in Ayodhya in 1992.

According to many Hindus, Moslems in the 15th century built a mosque on the ruins of the temple of Rama destroyed by the commander of Babur Mir Baki Tashkandi, and the land itself is revered as the birthplace of Rama (janmasthan). The legal battle over the place of importance to followers of both religions continued for many decades, and the issue of land ownership has become one of the key issues of Indian politics. On November 9, 2019, the Supreme Court of the Republic of India recognized the right to the disputed territory for the Hindus, while the Moslems were awarded another site in Ayodhya for the construction of a new mosque to replace the destroyed Babri Masjid. Finally, in 2020, despite the quarantine, Narendra Modi laid a Rama temple in this area [9].

It is also interesting to pay attention to the ways in which state religious players implement their policies. They often act directly, as partly illustrated by the examples above, but they may also use indirect means. For example, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia spreads its vision of Islam in politics through its wealth, which to this day remains the main thing for this country - petrodollars. As part of the programs to promote the socio-economic development Saudi Arabia manages to practice the so-called "mosque diplomacy", which consists in financially supporting the construction of mosques around the world. Islamic scholars who work in mosques and Islamic centers funded by the Kingdom promote the Saudi understanding of Islam, often as graduates of the Saudi educational institutions. Saudi Arabia implements its strategy through the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, as well as the Saudi Development Fund and numerous charitable foundations, formally non-state, but in fact headed by one of the members of the ruling family or a person close to it [10].

However, the main religious subjects of world politics and international relations today should not be considered states, but various and quite numerous transnational religious organizations. Examples include the Roman Catholic Church

with its headquarters in the Vatican; the Anglican (in America Episcopal) church centered in Canterbury, England; the World Council of Churches, consisting of about 350 Protestant churches with headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland; The Organization of Islamic Cooperation, an intergovernmental organization of Moslem countries, which includes 57 members and 5 observers. The OIC headquarters is located in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Speaking about the role of international organizations, it is impossible to ignore Pope John Paul II, whose name is associated with the era of the demise of the ideology of communism in Europe. The leader of the Vatican in the eyes of many people is as bright a symbol of it as the first and last President of the USSR Mikhail Gorbachev. At the same time, John Paul II was not only an ardent anti-communist, but also criticized the negative aspects of the modern capitalist world, and also exposed political authoritarianism. During his papacy, the Vatican declared its rejection of the US-British invasion of Iraq.

The variety of transnational Islamist organizations, some of which practice methods of struggle called "terrorist" should be noted separately. It must be said that the very concept of terrorism is largely conditional, since there is no universally recognized definition of it and various actors in international relations can often consider to be "terrorist" the organizations, which is not necessarily so from the point of view of other actors. In this context, the example of Hezbollah is indicative, it is considered terrorist and is banned in the United States, Great Britain, the Gulf countries, Egypt and many other states, but is not considered in a similar capacity by Russia, Syria and Iran. The same is the case with another political Islamist organization – the Palestinian HAMAS. Russia, Norway, China, Turkey, Qatar, China and the OIC do not recognize this organization as a terrorist organization, while, for example, the position of the United States, Canada, the EU, Japan and Israel is the opposite.

It is equally important to understand that even organizations famous for their truly impressive atrocities, such as

the infamous IS, banned in the Russian Federation, often enjoy the support of the population they control. The main reason for this is considered to be, and apparently not unreasonably, the effective social policy of the "caliphate" and other similar groups. For example, after the capture of Mosul by the IS group, three-quarters of the population of more than one and a half million of the city did not relocate, besides, about 35 percent of citizens felt that the city became cleaner and safer under the militants than under the internationally recognized Iraqi government [11].

Among the most likely reasons for successful social policy and popularity among the broad masses, it is necessary to list the following: the absence of a cumbersome bureaucratic apparatus and the relative simplicity of the structure of jihadist organizations [12]; the small distance between the cell leaders and the rest of the members; the lack of legal grounds for rebel formations to exercise political power.

Finally, it is impossible to ignore the role that some Sufi brotherhoods (tariqas) play today. Being powerful transnational network organizations, modern Sufi tariqas and communities, as the Ukrainian Islamic scholar O.A. Yarosh convincingly shows, are "one of the tools for attracting indigenous residents of Western countries to Islam, which is facilitated by the aura of "mysticism", familiarization with the "innermost" surrounding them, the cult of "divine love", which arose, to a large extent, thanks to the efforts of orientalist scientists and became widespread in the works of Western esotericists and "traditionalists". At the same time, Sufi tariqas in the West attract not only seekers of "enlightenment", rushing between different spiritual traditions and teachers, but also those who sincerely seek to radically change their own way of life and worldview through religious conversion" [13].

Currently, in almost all countries of the world with very rare exceptions, there are old and even new Sufi groups, which differ from each other in a number of parameters, including in relation to the Islamic normative tradition. Not always directly

involved in politics, Sufis usually have a significant impact on the culture and identity of the societies they are a part of, and therefore it is quite possible to influence domestic and foreign policy.

Also, Islam in general and Sufism in particular sometimes merge with all kinds of countercultural paradigms, including politicized ones. The so-called “anarcho-Islam” should be considered one of the most interesting manifestations of this. Adherents of its diverse interpretations combine self-identification as Moslem believers or are influenced by some Islamic, often Sufi, concepts with an anarchic worldview. The first personalities in the history of European Islam who tried to synthesize Islam and anarchism in their views have been known since the last century and are represented by the names of the Swedish artist and the first student of Al-Azhar of Western origin, the author of the term “Islamophobia” Ivan Agueli (Ageli; 1869-1917); Italian anarcho-pacifist and feminist Leda Rafanelli (1880-1971); Swiss feminist and researcher Isabelle Eberhardt (1877-1904), as well as French cartoonist and philosopher Gustave-Henri Josso (1866-1951).

Nowadays, among the most famous there are an African-American anarchist thinker Mohammed Jean Venez, whose interpretation of the principle of divine unity in Islam (at-tawhid) is to worship only God, but not artificial political institutions; a British blogger, journalist and writer Yunus Yaqoob Islam (Julian Hoare); American short story writer and founder of the musical style taqwacore Michael Muhammad Knight, an American philosopher Peter Lamborn Wilson (pseudonym Hakim Bey). It cannot be denied that this and other similar trends will continue to develop and in the hypothetical future there will be political organizations defending similar concepts as a basis for a more just and organic way of life.

As you can see, there are quite a lot of religious actors and they all have their own specifics, expressed in a specific form of religious worldview and means of realizing political interests. For

example, the Pope uses his authority as the head of the most numerous Christian church in the world and makes judgments on the burning problems of our time, which are invariably listened to. Islam, unlike the Orthodox and Catholic interpretations of Christianity, does not know the phenomenon of the church, and, as an American Islamic scholar Ira Lapidus points out, Islam as a civilization is based on the "network principle", that is, it traditionally existed in the form of networks of ulema (Islamic scholars), Sufi tariqas, merchants, etc., acting over the boundaries of the possessions of specific polities. In addition, the Moslem communities themselves (Jamaat) were "networks of relations between its constituent groups" [14].

Some religious actors, such as Sufi tariqas, do not always directly interfere in politics, but often have a noticeable impact on the cultural and civilizational identity of society, and the foreign policy of any state actor is formed under the influence of both external and internal factors. Moreover, a relatively large community hypothetically may eventually get the opportunity to lobby for its interests and to some extent adjust the country's foreign policy course. Given the attractiveness of Sufism for Western spiritual seekers, we can assume a further increase in the number of Sufi groups and even the emergence of new ones identifying themselves as Islamic and demanding acceptance of Islam from new members, as well as conditional "heterodox" focusing exclusively on the so-called "spirituality".

It is impossible, as the authors believe, to discount the likelihood of the emergence of new religious and political movements, including the most unusual and capable of combining elements of different worldviews in their ideologies. No matter how strange it may look at first and superficially, in fact, the appearance of such groups is very likely. So, in his debut novel *The Taqwacores*, a representative of the punk scene and "anarcho-Moslem" Michael Muhammad Knight described a fictional community of Moslem punks who gathered at the home of the main character, Pakistani-American engineering student

Yusuf Ali. This unusual book already in the early 2000s, when it was first published, inspired the emergence of a whole musical subculture playing punk rock with Middle Eastern motifs and often interesting lyrics, and quite politicized.

Thus, M.M. Mchedlova notes, “modernity is changing the traditional meanings and forms of religion, and the religious factor is changing traditional theoretical constructions and political configurations: religion in new and multiple forms permeates social reality, blurring traditional political constants and forcing us to reflect on the algorithms of the socio-political process, the meaning of life and value imperatives and needs” [15].

There are a “politicization of religion and confessionalization of politics” [16], indicating the fallacy of the ideas traditional for the science of international relations about the complete disappearance of religion from the research field of social sciences. All this gives grounds to speak, firstly, about the need for an urgent revision of the statement about the universality of classical paradigms of TIR, which has been overdue for a long time, and secondly, to include areas of public space on which religion has a serious influence in the subject of the science of international relations, which is already happening in the West. In Russia, there are still very few specialists who feel this trend.

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