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SHARIPOVA GUZAL. A BRIEF HISTORY OF MULTICULTURALISM IN MALAYSIA

Keywords: multiculturalism; ethnic groups; Islam; Buddhism; Christianity; multiethnic society.

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Abstract. This article discusses a brief history of the formation of multiculturalism in Malaysia, gives examples of the development of the culture of interethnic and religious relations and considers the influence of religious teachings on the policy of multiculturalism.

Introduction

The political and ethnic history of any nation is historically conditioned and depends on cultural, primarily religious, factors [1]. Thus, in the second half of the 20th century, there were substantial changes in world politics that affected self-identification of many countries. As a result, there was also a change in the form of state structure, which led to the fact that now there are 21 federations in the world, while about 180 states are unitary in terms of political and legal organization. The issue of ethnic diversity, therefore, remained open, resulting in a general problem of the ethnic self-identification of society. This issue has been addressed not only in ethno-cultural and religious literature, but also in social and political writings, which demonstrates the relevance of this problem.

In this connection, Nathan Glazer, a well-known sociologist from Harvard, discussed the issue of globalization and democratization of a multinational society and promoted the idea of civil rights of different social groups. He subsequently became one of the strong advocates of multiculturalism, having published the book *We are all multiculturalists now* [2]. As a result, ideas of ethnic, cultural, racial and religious diversity and equality have been voiced more and more often. The number of advocates of the idea of multiculturalism has been increasing by year.

Contemporary studies on the topic of cultural diversity in the context of globalization reflect ubiquity and popularization of the multicultural model of the state. The works of such researchers as S. Benhabib [3], A. Fleras [4], A.S. Laden and D. Owen [5], B.C. Parekh [6] and many others illustrate the relevance of ethnic diversity issues. The author notes that the works of contemporary scientists and researchers, such as S. Benhabib, R.M. Alimova, V.I. Aleshkov, M.V. Orlova, A.R. Embong, A.M. Kuznetsov and I.N. Zolotukhina discuss some aspects of the issue from historical, political and economic perspective.

The Results of the Study

Malaysia seeks to implement multicultural policy that combines state structures and political institutions, established according to internationally recognized democratic standards with the historically developed system of values that is inherent in civilizations of Southeast Asia. The development path of Malaysia is based on the creative assimilation of international experience with comprehensive consideration of national peculiarities and cultural traditions.

The term 'multiculturalism' was coined in 1971 by the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in Canada. Multiculturalism, on the other hand, is a policy aimed at the development and preservation of cultural differences both in a particular country and in the world in general; and on the other hand, it is a theory or ideology that justifies such a policy. An important distinction from political liberalism is that multiculturalism recognizes the rights of collective actors: ethnic and cultural groups. Such rights may be reflected in giving ethnic and cultural communities permission to manage their education, express their political opinions, etc [7].

The author notes that there are unique multicultural models that relate to a certain type of state. Thus, the multicultural model of Malaysia emerged on the basis of historical, social, cultural, political and psychological context. Undoubtedly, in the mid-twentieth century, people in Malaysia noticed ethnic differences, but no longer treated each other with prejudice of the past. There may have been other reasons for racial tensions in the 1950s and 1960s, but at least those that could be attributed to the inequities in the distribution of national wealth were largely eliminated [8].

The author points out that in order to understand the scale of the policy of multiculturalism, one should examine the ethnic composition of the country. Today, there are about 180 ethnic and sub-ethnic groups in Malaysia [9], the majority of which are

Bumiputera (Malays and various indigenous peoples) – 62.5 percent, Chinese – 20.6 percent, Indians – 6.2 percent, others – 0.9 percent, non-citizens – 9.8 percent (est. 2019) [10]. Peninsula Malaysia is inhabited by communities of indigenous people known as Orang Asli (lit. original people), whose numbers reach 150 thousand people. Orang Asli are divided into three main categories: Semang (Negrito), Senoi and Proto-Malay, with 18 sub-ethnic groups.

Aboriginal languages belong to the Austroasiatic and Austronesian language families [11]. There are several languages currently used in Malaysia: Bahasa Malaysia (official), English, Chinese (Cantonese, Mandarin, Hokkien, Hakka, Hainan, Fuzhou), Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Punjabi and Thai. In total, there are currently 134 living languages in Malaysia, of which 112 are indigenous languages and 22 non-indigenous languages, which upholds the linguistic rights of citizens. Thus, it is possible to observe the introduction of necessary balance between the state language (languages) and the obligation of the state to support and respect the preferences of linguistic minorities. Government protection of the linguistic rights of citizens contributes to the preservation of linguistic diversity and promotes the development of a unique linguistic environment.

The author emphasizes that Malaysian ethnic environment has undergone changes throughout history which had a beneficial effect on further integration into the world community. Thus, ethnic Han Chinese is the second largest ethnic community in Malaysia (20.6 percent of the country's population). Most of them are Buddhists, Taoists and Confucians, and only a small number consider themselves Christians [10]. Ethnic Han Chinese people arrived from Fujian and Guangdong to trade throughout Indochina, Malacca and the islands of the Malay Archipelago [13, P. 192]. Hence, a new trade route made it possible not only to build bilateral trade relations, but to reinforce ethnic ties of the Han people who wished to stay in Malacca. As a result, increasing number of Han Chinese in Malacca and the islands of

the Malay Archipelago influenced the formation of an ethnic diaspora in Malaysia.

A large Indian diaspora (about 6.2 percent of the population) holds an important position in the country. The majority of the Indian community is Tamil, but there are also Malayalis, Punjabis and Gujaratis. Most of them are Hindus and Buddhists, though there are some Muslims and Christians, as well as representatives of Sikhism [10].

Malaysia is also home to immigrants from the Middle East, Thailand and Indonesia and their descendants. There are also Europeans (the British, for instance) who have lived in the country since colonial times. Thus, the Kristang in Malacca are a creole ethnic group of people who are descendants from liaisons and mixed marriages of the Portuguese and Malays. A small number of Cambodians and Vietnamese settled in Malaysia after the Vietnam War (1965–1973) [12]. Signs of the shift in the national society towards multiculturalism appeared during centuries-long history of Malaysia, which demonstrates a gradual assimilation of the indigenous population into neighbouring peoples and countries

The question is what factors bolster and promote religious tolerance and harmony in Malaysia. First, there is the Federal Constitution of Malaysia and Malaysian law. As we know, the priority of the rights and the interests of civil society strengthen interethnic and interfaith relations. Second, Malaysia is not a usual Islamic state, despite the fact that the majority of the population is Muslim; Malays naturally predominate in multi-ethnic society. Even though there is certain superiority, it does not affect the quality of life of non-Muslims in the country. Malaysian legal bodies work to promote the idea of religious tolerance and harmony among the Malaysians.

The main argument for this is Article 3 (1) of the Constitution of Malaysia [13], which provides that every person has the right to profess and practice his own religion throughout the country, which guarantees freedom of religion. Article 8 by clauses (1) and (2) of the Constitution of Malaysia [13] states that

all persons are equal before the law and entitled to its equal protection and guarantees no religious discrimination against citizens, thus illustrating freedom of conscience and the fact that citizens are not subject to any coercion in determining their attitude to religion. Article 12 (3) of the Constitution of Malaysia [13] proclaims non-interference in the religious practices of non-Muslim communities, therefore the state guarantees protection for all its citizens. Article 11 (2) of the Constitution [13] allows for religious propaganda with proper regard to legality.

On the example of Malaysia, one can analyze various ethno-cultural and ethno-confessional institutions that have retained their unique traits, lifestyle, cultural traditions and religious values, which are dictated by national (social) specifics. It is reflected in a study based on racial and religious census data published by the Malaysian Department of Statistics in 2010. According to the study, which examined the factors contributing to the prevalence of religious tolerance, Malaysians prefer teachings that promote religious tolerance and harmony [14].

It should be noted that there have been no ethnic violence in the country for 40 years. Malaysia shows the world that it has a history of interethnic relations based on conflict-free coexistence and compromises [15]. Malaysia demonstrates a unique model of religious multiculturalism in Southeast Asia.

The author notes that many researchers have been exploring the fact that there is religious acceptance and tolerance of ethnic minorities in a society where Islam is prevalent. To understand such a situation, one should examine religious teachings of both Muslims and non-Muslims. Studying religious teachings of Muslims, Christians, Jews, Buddhists and other religious groups helps to understand their thoughts about tolerance and their tolerant attitude towards ethnic (national) minorities. It is worth noting that many religious works contain teachings about tolerance and harmony. This, in turn, facilitates the spread of teachings that promote religious tolerance and harmonious social development.

As stated above, the number of Muslims prevails in Malaysia. It should be emphasized that today Islam has the second highest number of followers in the world; such a rapid spread of Islam and the impact it has on the world have become the object of research. Many agree that Islam preaches tolerance and cooperation with both Muslims and non-Muslims.

The following are examples from the Quran, the holy book of Islam. Surah Al-Baqarah (2:256) says that "There shall be no compulsion in (acceptance of) the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong [16]." The surah expressly forbids Muslims from coercing non-Muslims to convert to Islam, since Islam wants people to convert to Islam of their own free will and with full understanding.

Surah an-Nahl (16:125) says: "Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best [16]." This confirms that a Muslim resorts to wise explanation and good instruction when he encourages someone to convert to Islam. If a Muslim faces reluctance or rejection to convert, he should stay respectful and understanding. Surah Al-Kafirun (109:6) "For you is your religion, and for me is my religion [16]" proves that Islam accepts other religions and is willing to coexist with them in harmony and mutual respect. This, in turn, confirms commitment to the principles of religious tolerance in Islam. Thus, Muslims, the majority religious group in Malaysia, follow the abovementioned principles of religious tolerance and harmony both with Muslims and non-Muslims.

Islam teaches that human dignity does not depend on religion, skin colour and gender: Surah Al-Isra (17:70) "And We have certainly honoured the children of Adam [17]." Islam recognizes Christianity and the Christian Gospel, the prophet Jesus, and Judaism and the Torah written down by Moses [18]. It should be noted that God, when addressing the prophet Muhammad, said in Surah Al-Ma'idah (5:82): "...and you will find the nearest of them in affection to the believers those who say, 'We are Christians [16]'. This ayah shows respect and

tolerance for Christians. As it was once said, "The Arabs, to whom God has given power over the world these days, as you know, not only do not oppose Christianity, but praise the priests and saints, the Almighty, help churches and monasteries [19]." Once again, this proves commitment to religious tolerance. Christian doctrine also teaches religious tolerance and harmony.

The author draws our attention to the religious teaching of Buddhism, which has many followers in Malaysia. Buddha teaches that each person must grow up to embark on a spiritual quest and approach a mentor to gain secret knowledge. Those who are looking for the meaning of life have the right to choose any teaching or to seek true spirituality on their own. Neither Buddha, nor his true followers taught to forcefully 'save' or 'fix' people by converting them [20]. Moreover, it is described in the Udanavarga, a collection of verses from the Buddhist canon [21].

The 14th Dalai Lama once said that there should be not only political democracy but also religious democracy. He believes that if you find something that works for you, you have the right to choose [22]. This confirms the fact that Buddhists encourage freedom of creative and spiritual quest, which, in turn, contribute to tolerance, respect for each other's beliefs, cultures, and religious values. The ability to recognize differences and respect them is the best indicator of interreligious dialogue. As the Gospel of Luke (6:27-28) reminds us: "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you [23]." This proves tolerance for all religious beliefs.

The author notes that the concept of religious tolerance in Hinduism is very old. Hinduism is the religion of an individual with the roots in the Vedas and the Bhagavad Gita. It means that one gets closer to a personal God individually, depending on his temperament and inner evolution [24]. We should take into account that at every mention of his own religion, one thinks about the requirements of religious dogma, and not about the fact that he is a follower of this religion. Believers who look out upon

the world through the prism of their own religion are able to understand the religion of others. This teaches us to understand other faiths.

It is important to note that all religions have such concepts as tolerance, peace, love and humanity regardless of the diversity of religious views. Therefore, it is possible to implement public policies aimed at religious tolerance, on the basis of the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance that stipulates “respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world’s cultures” and “harmony in difference [25].”

The author notes that according to 2008 data published by the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, Malaysia received approximately 155,700 refugees and internally displaced people, thus becoming the country of first asylum. Most of them travelled from the Philippines – 70,500 people, Myanmar – 69,700 people, and Indonesia – 21,800 people [26].

Conclusion

The author concludes that the policy of multiculturalism in Malaysia makes it possible to build steady, harmonious intercultural and interethnic relations. This suggests that there is a shift in the relationship between citizens in the democratic, legal, multicultural and tolerant Malaysian society, thanks to various religious doctrines.

It should be emphasized that here have been no ethnically motivated violence for 40 years in Malaysia. Malaysia demonstrates the outside world its experience of interethnic interaction based on conflict-free coexistence and compromises [17]. Malaysia has built a unique model of religious multiculturalism in Southeast Asia. The fact that multiculturalism is an integral part of the state policy of Malaysia fosters interethnic dialogue as a means to maintain durable, balanced intercultural and interethnic relations. Many researchers concur that this way of life promotes

religious socialization. In addition, it facilitates coexistence between different religious values and norms.

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SWETLANA POGORELSKAJA. ISLAM AND THE NEW IDENTITY OF GERMANY

Keywords: Germany; Islam; "German Islam"; German identity; hybrid identity; Islamism.

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