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RAZIL GUZAEROV. RUSSIA AND THE ISLAMIC WORLD: YOUTH COOPERATION

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Abstract. International youth cooperation is beginning to play an increasingly important role in the process of promoting the country's image in the international arena. The youth policy of Russia has a long and difficult path of formation and is still at the stage of transformation. However, this fact did not prevent gaining good experience in youth cooperation with other countries. The Republic of Tatarstan plays an active role in this process, which has been building international youth cooperation with the countries of the Islamic world for a long time. The experience of the Republic should be extended to other regions of Russia for the uniform development of the country.

In the modern era, youth are beginning to play an increasing role in the development of the state, which requires a carefully developed state youth policy. One of the significant areas of youth policy is international cooperation. Active international youth cooperation is becoming a factor in increasing the competitiveness of states in the international arena, the stability of the state and the formation of high potentials. In Russia, special attention is paid to this aspect by some regions, whose positive experience in establishing international youth cooperation can be used as a guide for the development of this direction of youth policy.

Youth policy of Russia: Legislative and Institutional Framework

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia began to search for a new format for conducting youth policy. Many options were proposed from preserving the Soviet system to giving youth complete freedom, or the need for systematic work in the field of youth policy was completely denied. During this time, more than 10 federal bodies responsible for youth policy were created. The constant transformation of approaches to state youth policy, the change of institutions led to a lack of continuity in the activities of these bodies.

Currently, the following bodies are responsible for youth policy:

- The Department of State Policy and Educational Activities of the Ministry of Education and Science of Russia, which develops the state policy and legal framework in the field of youth policy, supports the development of youth public associations and the implementation of their initiatives, promotes international youth cooperation, etc.;

- The State Duma Committee on Youth Policy ensures the consideration of draft laws in the field of youth policy and prepares them for consideration in the State Duma, holds

parliamentary hearings, analyzes the practice of law enforcement. The introduction of the Committee includes issues of supporting youth initiatives, promoting social activities, supporting youth associations, promoting international cooperation, etc.;

– Federal Agency for Youth Affairs (Rosmolodezh) – federal executive body. Rosmolodezh provides public services in the field of youth policy. The agency's powers include the development and implementation of measures aimed at supporting talented youth, the development of civic activity of young people, and the protection of their social and legal interests. Rosmolodezh develops international youth cooperation, involves young people in international projects;

– An important role is also played by state authorities of the constituent entities of Russia, local self-government bodies, various associations, for example, the National Council of Youth and Children's Associations of Russia.

The legislative framework in the field of state youth policy is fragmentary and does not have a common conceptual framework. Activities in this area are regulated through “point” regulation on the basis of decrees of the President of Russia, resolutions of the Government. At the moment, the foundations of the youth policy of Russia are determined at the disposal of the Government of the Russian Federation “Basic Principles of the State Youth Policy of the Russian Federation for the period until 2025.” The strategy is aimed at creating long-term goals for youth development, finding answers to challenges before youth development issues, determining the parameters for investing public money in youth projects, etc.

The main challenges for the implementation of youth policy are the following problems:

- reduction of the total number of young people in Russia;
- outflow of talented youth;
- high incidence of youth;
- growth of xenophobia, nationalism, marginalization of youth, etc.

The last point is especially important in the context of Islam and Russia's interaction with the Islamic world. A survey of the Public Opinion Foundation conducted in 2015 showed the following results:

- 9% of respondents associate Islam with terrorism, bandits, 7% as an alien religion, 5% with hostility;
- 26% of respondents would have reacted negatively to the fact of the adoption of Islam by close acquaintances (positively 16%);
- 18% refer negatively to Islam;
- and among 10% the attitude towards Islam has deteriorated over the past year;
- for 32%, Islam in Russia plays a negative role, and for 40% negative one on a global scale.

Even despite the large number of Russian citizens professing Islam, a negative attitude towards Islam remains in a part of society. There is a risk of Islamophobic sentiment rising. At the same time, fear of Islam is born in society due to banal stereotypes, which is manifested primarily in everyday Islamophobia. This fact seems to be one of the facts of limiting contacts with the Islamic world. From this point of view, the development of international youth activities in the direction of Russia - Islamic World is becoming important. The expansion of youth ties with the countries of the Islamic world not only allows foreigners to be introduced to the culture and existence of Russia, but also helps Russian youth to know this world. Such experience is necessary for the younger generation to build intercultural and inter-civilization dialogue in the future to establish harmonious relations with these countries.

Experience of the Republic of Tatarstan in Youth Cooperation with Islamic Countries

The Republic of Tatarstan has extensive experience in international youth cooperation. Tatarstan is one of the leading

regions of Russia, forming a unique synthesis of Islamic and Orthodox cultures. For a long time, the republic's authorities have been developing ties with the countries of the Muslim world. Cooperation takes place, among other things, in the youth sphere.

In 2006, on the initiative of E.M. Primakov and M.S. Shaimiev, the Russia-Islamic World Strategic Vision Group was created. As part of the meetings, the Group discusses a wide range of problems in the Middle East and the entire range of relations between Russia and the Islamic world.

Since 2018, under the auspices of the GSV, the International Summer School in the city of Bolgar has been organized annually. The goal of the school is the development of an international platform for the dialogue of civilizations, learning by foreign participants of the rich culture of Russia. During panel sessions, foreigners get acquainted with the Russian point of view on the development of the Muslim world and its interaction with Russia. Communication with peers from Russia allows them to understand Russia better, get rid of stereotypes. Traditionally, participants from Turkey, Iran, Syria, etc. arrive at the School.

In 2019, the All-Russian model of OIC was organized. The purpose of the event was to familiarize international students with the principles of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. During the work of the committee, the most significant issues for the organization were discussed, options for a solution were proposed and a general resolution was drawn up on the agenda.

Using this experience, in the same year, the First International Model of OIC – Eurasia was organized in Kazan. It was attended by more than 100 participants from Russia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Indonesia, Azerbaijan and other countries. They discussed topical issues on the international agenda, participated in the modeling of OIC meetings. In addition to developing certain diplomatic knowledge, skills, such models contribute to active intercultural dialogue. A common resolution is created during debates, discussions and participants get

acquainted with the views of representatives of other countries, broadening their horizons. In addition, young international students are working out the necessary competencies to work with the structures of the OIC, representatives of Muslim states. All these events include a cultural program, introducing foreigners to Russia.

The Kazan Forum of Young Entrepreneurs of the OIC countries, which has been held annually since 2014, has become traditional. The forum brings together developers from Russia and the OIC countries who are interested in investing in the implementation of their startups. During the forum, more than 1000 representatives from 50 countries took part in it, and the amount of investment amounted to \$2 million. Participants listen to lectures by startup executives, venture capitalists, technology firm executives. Later, they work together with mentors who help them work out their ideas. As a result of absentee participation, the authors of the best thirty startups come to Kazan, where they present their ideas to experts.

In 2020, the Project Office of International Youth Cooperation in the direction of "Russia – Organization of Islamic Cooperation" was created in Kazan. The agreement on the implementation of such a federal project was signed by the head of Rosmolodezh A. Bugaev and the head of the Ministry of Youth Affairs of the Republic of Tatarstan D. Fattakhov. The initiative to create an office was actively supported by the Russian Foreign Ministry. The main goal of the office is to promote projects through Russia – OIC in the youth sphere.

At the same time, the Office conducted the Educational Intensive course Russia – OIC. As part of the it, participants from Russian universities presented their projects to develop youth cooperation with the countries of the Islamic world. In the future, the presented projects fell into the calendar of events of the Project Office, and the participants of the intensive course became the asset of the office. Thus, such a project allows initiative youth to implement their own ideas.

At the moment, the Project Office has held two international events: the International Youth Festival of Modern Muslim Culture and the International Youth Camp "Russia – OIC." The festival brought together cultural figures from Russia and the countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation 100 participants from 10 countries. The participants were divided into six areas: theater, cinema, music, choreography, etc. Participants were able to demonstrate all the beauty of their culture, its authenticity and splendor. Foreigners, in turn, plunged into Russian culture. Such a cultural dialogue between young people removes barriers to intercultural interaction and contributes to the popularization of Russian culture abroad.

There were 100 people from 19 countries in the international camp, including Pakistan, Indonesia, Egypt, Tunisia and others. The main theme of the camp was project management. Participants underwent online training in advance and within the framework of the section worked out this topic in the field of volunteering, education, entrepreneurship and tourism. Such a topic is associated with the desire of the office to launch cooperation with similar projects in the countries of the Muslim world. Camp participants, using all the bundle of the knowledge gained at the event, will be able to facilitate this process. At the same time, this activity should be accompanied by expert control of the departments of the Russian Foreign Ministry, public figures and businessmen. The creation of similar offices in foreign countries will contribute to the close coordination of public organizations, NGOs and others wishing to implement measures in this area. More importantly, in this way Russia will have the opportunity to implement its own initiatives abroad, actively working with the youth of Muslim countries.

Also, an international economic summit "Russia – Islamic World: Kazan Summit" is held annually in Tatarstan. The summit acts as a negotiating platform for representatives of Russia and the countries of the Muslim world, strengthening trade, scientific, social and cultural ties between them. Each summit doesn't do

without the participation of young people. Students participate in the event as attachés, translators, volunteers and even organizers. Thanks to this, the younger generation learns to interact with representatives of politics and business of Muslim countries, gain new skills and the necessary experience for future professional activities.

Within the framework of the Summit, the Forum of Young Diplomats of the OIC countries is organized. Within the framework of the forum, an informal horizontal dialogue is being built between the younger generation of diplomats and experienced representatives of diplomacy and power. The dialogue of young people, who in the future will determine the policy of their country, is necessary to establish a trusting relationship between young diplomats, which will contribute to the close interaction of countries. Within the framework of the session, representatives of Muslim countries explain Russia's position on the most important issues of state interaction. The Forum promotes the interests of Russia abroad and contributes to strengthening ties between countries. According to E. Primakov, the forum is one of the most effective platforms for discussing a wide range of issues related to Russia and the Islamic world.

Such efforts on the part of Tatarstan in working with the countries of the Islamic world were justified. In 2022, Kazan was declared the youth capital of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. A similar status is awarded by the board of the OIC Youth Forum. According to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation S.V. Lavrov, the fact of awarding such a status to Kazan serves as evidence of progressiveness in the dialogue between Russia and the OIC and the development of relations in all areas.

During the year, Russia-OIC events are planned in the Republic: cultural festivals, youth forums, a global youth summit, scientific conferences, e-sports competitions, etc. The events will cover the entire range of international youth

cooperation and will open up new opportunities for young people of Muslim countries to know Russia.

In addition, activities within the framework of the status of the youth capital will be aimed at intergovernmental cooperation. New agreements have already been signed in this area with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Active work is underway by relevant departments to expand relations along the parliamentary line.

Thus, Tatarstan has developed clear mechanisms for interaction with other countries in the field of youth cooperation. Traditional and annual events are complemented by new formats of interactions, the authors of which are often students themselves. All this helps to maintain the creative potential of students and promote a positive image of the country abroad.

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With transformation of the international system and transfer of the center of international relations to the East, Russia should increase activity in the Islamic world. In addition to traditional trade and economic, political ties, it is necessary to develop cooperation in the youth sphere. Holding youth events in Russia provides an opportunity for young people from Islamic countries to discover the country from the inside, establish a dialogue with its youth, and see all the opportunities revealed in cooperation with it.

This way, the experience of interaction between Tatarstan and the states of the Islamic world in the youth sphere deserves attention. The republic was able to establish active cooperation in the inter-parliamentary line with public organizations. During the events, participants are introduced to local culture, lectures explain Russia's position on significant issues.

Certainly, Tatarstan was able to seize leadership in this area and the bulk of the events in the line Russia - Islamic World is taking place in the Republic. However, it is necessary to

expand the geography of events. There are many regions in Russia with a large number of Muslim populations that can become a center of attraction for young people. An increase in the number of events and their geography will improve the situation in the field of youth policy in the regions. In addition to the constant improvement of the necessary infrastructure, these same events will make it possible to attract more Russian youth to international activities. In addition, these formats can be adapted for other regions of the world. Russian students in the regions will be able to become part of the international activities of their country, contributing to it. The youth of the Muslim world, visiting Russia, will discover it from a new perspective, which will have a positive effect on the country's international image in the future.

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