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Religious Risks as a Threat to State Security in Interconfessional Regions

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Abstract

This paper is devoted to the study of religious risks, which create a direct or indirect possibility of inflicting damage to both an individual and a multi-confessional state. Particular attention is paid to the crisis of religious identity and the growth of proselytism. The paper involves analysis of the consequences of globalization, religious conflicts and religious migration. Various technologies used by external forces to form new values amid complex socio-political processes were also considered. To study the stated topic, a synthetic approach was used to identify the most significant directions of socio-political changes through studying the shifts in the system of value and behavioral patterns of both believers and neophytes that can cause an increase in religious tension. In the course of the research, the author came to the conclusion that religious risks develop under the influence of certain conditions and factors often created and used purposefully to demonstrate the religious diversity of the internally contradictory integrity of a multi-confessional state, deepen social inequality and exacerbate socio-political tensions caused by a political-ideological confrontation and identity differences. The success of external forces in the situation destabilization is largely due to an incorrect assessment of threats. In order to prevent this, it is necessary to rethink the role of religion in the context of globalization and rapid socio-political transformation, as well as the religious factor in explanatory models of social development.

Keywords: Religious risks, Security, Migration, Identity, Political cults, New religious movements.

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Introduction

In the early 20th century, the research problem underlying the emerging religious identity of the values' dynamics amid socio-political transformations emerge full-blown (Elsanousi, 2017). It becomes more and more clear from the scientific point of view that the process of identifying a person continues throughout his/her life and changes in response to the challenges of time. At the same time, an increasing number of mostly young people today have an unstable, contradictory religious identity, constructed from various perceptions and fragments of religious beliefs, which often belong to different religious systems, purposefully built under the influence of an external factor and the media (Khazaal, 2017).

All this caused the manifestation of interest in finding significant social changes through studying the shifts in the system of values and behavior patterns of people identifying themselves with traditional and non-traditional religious groups. This issue is especially relevant in connection with the growth of threats (Tarasevich, 2013: 23) to state security and proselytism.

One of the most frequent threats of the present time are religious extremism, proselytism, threats to the loss of religious traditions and values of the people of Russia under the influence of internal and external factors, as well as the activity of non-traditional religious or pseudo-religious associations with a destructive orientation. All this is somehow associated with a change in religious identity and poses a threat both to the state as a whole and to the individual in particular.

The scientists note that religious identity is a kind of measure that allows us to evaluate and analyze social life at the turn of the century, which is characterized by inconsistency in resolving a religious issue: from anti-religious propaganda and the loss of religious landmarks to the rise of various new religious movements.

The difficulty in studying the problem of religious risks is due to the fact that scientific research has always been conducted only on certain narrow issues, and the private theories on local aspects of the topic under study do not form its integral vision and understanding. The active inclusion of religious and confessional meanings in political discourse now demonstrates the exhaustion of the epistemological potential of the secular paradigm. This means that the issues raised in the study require their further investigation and application of new theories and methodologies.

Methods

The traditional theoretical and methodological base is not enough today to reveal the "religion-politics-conflict" connection. This has predetermined the use of interdisciplinary synthetic approach (Semenenko et al., 2012: 7) in the study. It is based on the integration of the analysis of macro-political processes and their projections on the level of the individual or entire communities with which the person associates him-/herself, the identification of the interrelations between individual and collective self-determination amid socio-political upheavals that either occur independently or are of external nature.

It should be noted that within the framework of this study there is a deliberate abandonment of the primitive paradigm and emphasis is made on the use of instrumental and constructive paradigms, as well as on the consequences of using religion as a tool in managing conflicts and creating external threats to national security. This position is due to the emergence and rapid development of a new strategy of appeasement based on the idea of transforming religious identity through the creation and implantation of new types of non-traditional religiosity. This strategy has increasingly become used to manage local conflicts and pointedly influence the internal situation of a particular state and region.

Discussion

So what the “conflict” as a term is, and why the threats to public security develops in the religious environment. Why religion has become widely used as a tool (Ballard, 2017). Conflict is a relationship that develops between two or more parties who have or think that they have incompatible goals. It never arises on its own; a conflict is like a virus. Its appearance needs a certain environment, which, as a rule, is created by people, in most cases, consciously, purposefully. Each person, when entering into conflict, has a certain motive which can be either conscious, formed in the process of socialization, or generated, but not deemed as such.

When talking about a religious conflict, first of all, we mean a conflict where the religious component is of great importance. Its subject is the doctrinal provisions of religion or confession, religious practices, institutional provisions, as well as property disagreements. However, it should be noted that they, as well as religiousness, are not conflictual, but become conflict agents when implemented in practice by subjects who identify themselves with one group and oppose themselves to representatives of other groups.

Therefore, conflict management is carried out through influencing precisely the subjects of the conflict, raising or lowering their critical thinking. Increasingly, conditions are created under which a person renounces his/her former traditional beliefs, a system of values, and completely changes his/her way of life, leaving traditional religions for cults or other destructive organizations that have their own system more understandable for a disillusioned person. As a rule, there is a break both with the family and with the inner circle and friends. A person is placed in a new environment with its particular values, often opposing social values and norms.

Religious anomie develops in the society as a result of the loss of religious values that form the basis of traditional culture. Often to do this, destructive organizations use the offer of material or social benefits to people in need or in distress, resorting to psychological pressure or the threat of violence, or simply using various phobias of people for the purpose of recruiting them. They also use faith as a state of ultimate interest. Interest in these organizations leads to the fact that non-traditional "deviant" forms of religiosity begin to get more widespread.

A relevant question arises – why and who needs this? The widespread revival of religions after the “cold war” leads to that the religious factor begins to play an important role in world politics and the conflicts it engenders. In the XXI century, not only the processes of a religious nature, but also the socio-political situation become complicated at both macro and micro levels. A new phenomenon emerges – a political cult.

Despite the breakdown of colonial systems and the fall of empires, the imperial character and ambitions of a number of subjects of international relations have been preserved, and the processes of globalization, "open borders" and the formation of a "citizen of the world" contribute to their implementation, often through the missionary activity. The spread of "new religious movements" is a characteristic feature of the modern era of globalization caused by the need for a new religious identification as a process of searching for and acquiring a new religious identity that resolves the internal contradictions of people.

The idea of the gradual formation of a new all-planetary religion, absorbing all other religions, the main goal of which is the universalization and unity of mankind, is common to find in the scientific research. A number of researchers believe that the activities of extremist organizations are purposefully and actively used by international structures aspiring to world domination as a means for destabilization and further destruction of particular states and nations (Pchelin, 1999).

If turning to the history of South Vietnam, we will see that this is not entirely a product of modernity and theory of conspiracy. Technologies of using the religious factor have been applied since the second half of the XVII century, and now they are developing and improving. For example, the spread of the Catholic faith and the replacement of local faith in South Vietnam began with missionary activity (Zabarchuk, 2008: 24).

Within the framework of the considered technology, the missionary is a "messenger" with a special mission, the essence of which is to propagate its values and dogmas in an alien environment, and which should result in replacement of the relevant key elements of local culture with something new. That is, the main mission of the missionary of those days was the destruction of the religious tradition, the essence of which is that the elements of this tradition, organically inscribed in the local worldview system, culture and social relations, fall into an alien context. The consolidation of a new religious identity takes place by reading specially prepared and distributed literature or communicating with a "missionary" who acts as a mentor.

But the missionary activity in South Vietnam resulted in a dilemma of adaptation. It is about the adaption of the cultural environment in the country, which citizens became a target of a new religious identity, or adaptation of the religion itself, its individual elements. Moreover, missionaries themselves experience the impact of adaptation, because immersion in the environment affects them.

The confrontation of civilizations, the differences between Eastern and Western cultures, the collision of developed and developing societies with traditional ones have demonstrated the immunity of alien values, especially in opposing religious and secular aspects. Despite the facts known in history, the political leaders of many countries still rely on the adaptation mechanism in the migration policy.

As V.N. Kolotov notes (2005: 94), it was possible to solve this dilemma by creating and spreading in the victim country the destructive non-traditional religious organizations that are compatible with the local environment, but at the same time do not pose a threat to the missionaries themselves and the countries that create and direct them with the aim of destroying local cultures and weakening their potential of resistance to spiritual and armed colonization, as well as the formation of a new type of religious identity.

This problem became especially acute in connection with the transit of democracy, the sharp change in ideological grounds and the development of religious anomie, the crisis of the family and identity. The most dangerous is destruction directed against socially significant values such as family, state, society, since it is focused on the destruction of norms, values, social relations, which are objectively necessary amid modern socio-political instability. Identifying oneself with one type of religiosity or a socio-political construct, thus, often implies a sharp opposition to the other as alien.

Today it comes to such a pitch that the very state institution is discredited inasmuch that even with an awareness of external influences that poses a clear threat to its national security, there is no unity for the sake of preservation among the population. Proceeding from this, it can be concluded that the danger of losing local traditions can be caused by both internal and external factors.

A peculiarity of the modern religious situation is the variety and diversity of religious formations that go beyond local cultures and challenge traditional denominations that use the method of discredit, including the desacralization of local traditions and cults, by transforming the public consciousness, and as a consequence, loss of faith, the odor of sanctity, and also unwillingness to identify oneself with them. This can lead to fragmentation and a sharp polarization of Russian society.

Perhaps, realizing these problems has contributed to the sharp tightening of Russian legislation and led to the imposition of stringent laws on missionary activities carried out by foreigners, as well as the activities of foreign organizations ("foreign agent").

In general, the basis of all technologies of using non-traditional religiosity in managing conflicts and destabilizing the situation in individual states or entire regions has a number of common elements. First, they are all related to the change in the religious identity of the most susceptible part of the population. Therefore, often "messengers" resort to the use of various tests to assess the level of criticality, launched in social networks or conducted under specially designed shares. Obviously, before that, they are studying traditional doctrines in order to be able to reason with their criticism, thereby lowering the level of distrust to themselves.

Secondly, the establishment of a certain layer of specially trained charismatic people at local level in the event of the expulsion of the messengers from the victim country. Personnel and methodical tools, as a rule, are key. In this connection, a whole viable system of training the personnel reserve in the victim country is created.

Thirdly, the provocation of persecution by local authorities, contributing to the consolidation of the newly formed community, withdrawing from which is "punishable". As a result, this ensures the irreversibility of changing the religious identity, which becomes "fragmentary" or "stained-glass".

Conclusion

The following conclusions may be drawn:

Firstly, the conflict containing the religious factor is one of the most explosive and rapidly developing due to the mobilization of its sympathizers. Such conflicts cannot be resolved, and will always be accompanied by a "social trauma". Unresolved religious conflicts can provoke the intensification of religious extremism.

At the same time, it should be noted that despite the fact that indeed every religion, from the perspective of dogmatic principles, seeks to establish its own comprehensive character and prove the falsity of other religious teachings, such doctrinal conflict nature of religious systems does not always manifest itself as an irreconcilable confrontation. In many respects this depends on the perception, position and behavior of the parties. Religious extremism acquires the greatest urgency in case of using religious ideology to justify nationalist or separatist tendencies in poly-confessional states, especially in cases of coincidence of religious and ethnic self-identification of peoples.

Secondly, the management of religious conflicts is based on the creation of technologies for changing religious identity, which are irreversible. This once again demonstrates that religion is one of the most powerful means of both creation and destruction. This is important to remember always when using it as a tool.

Thirdly, it is possible to confront the activities of "messengers" only by informing the population about the mechanisms of their creation and functioning and maintaining a high level of critical thinking and inquisitiveness. This is possible through constant self-education and regular exit of a person from his/her "comfort zone".

And what is the main, despite the fact that the study of identity is one of the most popular scientific areas, it is necessary to continue developing this problem in order to form new methodological horizons that determine the study of religious identity, conditioned by the transformation of social processes and institutions, taking into account the changing values and characteristics of modernity.

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