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#### ANTHROPOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICT IN POST-SOVIET URBAN SPACE DURING SOCIETY TRANSFORMATION

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#### *Abstract*

Depending on the specific historical and socio-political situation in society, religious factors can play various roles. In times of social crisis, it becomes one of the most influential forces used by various social and political groups in their own interests. In the capable hands of both individuals and statesmen, religion has the ability to influence the internal political situation and the mobilization of society. This was especially evident in the transit period of our country's history, when the historical prerequisites for the reforms defined the essence of socio-economic, political, spiritual development of the USSR in the second half of the 1980s - early 1990s. During this period, the development of the spiritual field of Russian society was characterized by a growing interest in Islam. All the prerequisites for the re-Islamization process have been established here. In this context, the Republic of Dagestan can serve as a local example, the development of which in the post-Soviet period of Russian history was conditioned by a difficult and sometimes rather complicated socio-political situation closely intertwined with the Islamic factor, headed by religious leaders who created a conflict situation. Concentrating attention on the role of the individual in the formation and development of social and religious processes, in the proposed article the authors try to consider the confrontation between society and the state in the struggle for the dominance of religious ideas against the background of the existing socio-economic and socio-political factors in the conditions of increased national consciousness in the Dagestan society.

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## **1. Introduction**

Religion, the religious component has always had and is able to act as a unifying symbol and mobilizing force, as well as a detonator of social conflicts in society. At the same time, religious self-consciousness becomes an increasingly important paradigm of thinking. In this regard, religious conflict as a type of social conflict in the era of globalization has acquired the status of "manageable" in society. The growth of such conflict a priori can have a significant impact on the nature of social relations in society: first of all, political, economic, as well as national.

Today, there is a noticeable increase in interest in the problem of religious conflict in academic circles (Filatov, 2007; Zelenkov, 2007). In their statements, they emphasize that the latter often takes the form of struggle for political rights, national (ethnic) independence, social justice, gender equality, etc. Religious identity is often a cover-up for national (ethnic) identity, an ideological resource that is easily manipulated by political elites and ruling groups to achieve material, rather than religious and spiritual goals (Rutkevich, 2016). On this basis, the place and role of religion in the society is connected, first of all, with its politicization, as well as with the parallel trend - the religion of politics (Berger, 2005).

## **2. Problem Statement**

The above hypothesis of the Austrian theologian and sociologist is clearly marked at the local level in the conditions of post-Soviet Dagestan. The empirical case study is the symbiosis between politics and religion - Islam. As an integral part of Dagestani society, even during Soviet times, the Islamic religion, despite pressure from the party authorities, maintained a certain degree of tradition in everyday life. The significant role of the Islamic religion in the development of culture of the peoples of Dagestan was also conditioned by the religious revival in the transition period of society development. Prospects for the post-Soviet development of religion were based on the belief that Islam could become a factor that would unite numerous social groups and movements, while preserving ethnic diversity, and contribute to the consolidation of citizens and the prevention of existing conflicts (Khalilova & Lebedev, 2015). However, at the initial stage of the development of the spiritual sphere of Dagestani society, the subjective factor of religious conflict became clearly visible. In this regard, using the classical definition of the term "conflict" as "...serious disagreement, acute dispute or confrontation of subjects with the purpose of realization of their conflicting interests, positions, values and views", the center of our study are religious social and Islamic groups headed by their leaders able to unite the society on the basis of their religious and ethnic confrontation, first of all, with the authorities.

## **3. Research Questions**

For this reason, the subject of this article is to identify the specifics of the mutual influence of religious and social processes in the post-Soviet urban space of Dagestan through the prism of religious conflict.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this article is to show the place and role of religious conflict, which arose on the basis of ideological differences. Factors of the conflict are individuals with their religious non-traditionalist views and socio-political orientations who oppose official structures in the struggle for a dominant position in society, where the cornerstone was a new religious idea. The authors proceed from the thesis that the growth of this kind of conflict a priori has a significant impact on the nature of social (political, socio-economic, national) relations in society, as exemplified by the ethnic split of the DUMD in the article.

#### **5. Research Methods**

Theoretical and methodological bases of research in the presented article are general philosophical principles and methods of research: the principles of system approach, comprehensiveness, historicism, specificity. The author was also guided by the methods of modern sociology and social psychology; comparative research and social forecasting. The article uses unpublished documents identified in the State Archive of the Russian Federation (Moscow). The article uses materials of the republican periodical press, expressing and interpreting the events described. The combination of historical and sociological methods allowed us to reveal the assessments in the mass consciousness of Dagestanians in order to confirm the transformations that took place in Dagestani society in the 80-90s of the 20th century.

Transformations in religious orientations, according to sociological studies, have led to radical changes in the dynamics of the population's religiosity. If at the end of the '70s. In the 80's of the 20th century, various surveys recorded 5-10% of the "religious population" in our country, and already in 1995. 60.8% of the population identified themselves as believers (Garadja, 1995). The religion of believers was reinforced by the ubiquitous quantitative growth of religious buildings (Odintsov, 2007), whose religious panorama in Russia in the first half of the 1990s was very diverse. The lack of any links with institutional religious organizations and the minimal familiarity with any religion under atheistic censorship, and the institutionalized religious life of the Soviet people was minimized and limited to episodic visits to church services. As a result, primitive religious ideologemes and beliefs of the most diverse origins spread spontaneously in society (Filatov, 2011).

The growth of the religious factor was so urgent that religion began to be associated with an ideological springboard and in solving many of the problems of society that emerged in the post-Soviet period as a result of the democratization of society in the late 1980s.

The so-called "religious renaissance" had its own peculiarities in the national regions, particularly in Dagestan, closely intertwined with societal factors. The attempt to consider this problem a little wider leads us to the identification of such factors as lack of stability in the society, deepening property and material and financial inequality, outflow of rural population to the cities and increase in the number of unemployed, inflation, lack of legal protection. Voucher privatization of state property, its appropriation by representatives of the central and regional authorities of the power structures, the groups close to them in the early 1990s, contributed to a marked deterioration in the social conditions of most Russians. There was rapid and fabulous enrichment of the minority and significant impoverishment of the majority of the country's population. The statistics showed a numerical increase in the population with monetary incomes

below the subsistence minimum. Analysis of statistical data showed that in 1996, the average per capita cash income of 22% of the Russian population was below the subsistence minimum (Aralovets, 2015).

The majority of Dagestani residents (49.8%) expressed their negative opinion on the changes that took place in 1985-1990s in the course of the sociological survey conducted by Dagestani scientists in 2016 with the aim of deep analysis and establishment of the assessments and attitude to the events of those years in the mass consciousness of Dagestani people. The share of those who characterized positively the transformation of the perestroika period is more than 2 times less than that of the subgroup of the negatively adjusted part of the respondents and amounted to 20.8%. Respondents motivate the choice of this position by positive changes in the society, expressed in democratization and publicity, freedom of choice, etc. Further, one in ten respondents from all over the world shows total indifference to the transformation of the perestroika period (Khalidova & Danilyuk, 2018). Thus, the results of the research are the basis for the conclusion that the mass consciousness of the Dagestani people is mainly dominated by negative assessment of the events of the 80s - 90s of the XX century.

## 6. Findings

Among the republics of the North Caucasus, Dagestan has always been notable for its special religiousness. In Soviet times, Dagestan was one of the national regions where the Muslim population was 94.5% of the total population (Mirzabekov, 2012). The policy of perestroika has clearly indicated the further development of Islam, giving it the opportunity to start building a new model of relations with the authorities. This was the beginning for the rapid development of the material basis of Islam, including the growth of the number of its religious buildings. According to the Committee on Religious Affairs of the Government of the RD, the growth dynamics of mosques was as follows: 1992 – 800, 1994 – 1050, 1996 – 1180, 1998 – 1495, 1999 – 1555 (Abdulagatov, 2002). Only during 1990-1991 in Dagestan 125 mosques were built or restored. The activity of 106 ziyarats was resumed. In the same years, the number of Muslims who committed hajj increased: from 345 to 889 people (CSA RD). In the post-Soviet period, the number of those who considered themselves believers in Dagestan ranged from 81% to 95% (Malashenko, 2009).

However, in the process of revival of the Islamic religion, the problem components of this period began to manifest themselves, related to the emergence of alternative, non-traditional areas of Islam (Makarov, 2003). On the rise of the "new Islamization" against the background of the general crisis, a part of Muslims accepted the radical Islam introduced from outside, which is not typical for the way of life of local religious communities and their ideas about the order of the world order (Buttaeva, 2012).

Even in the years of perestroika in the republic there were Murid fraternities, the number of which increased from 5 to 7 by 1989. Even then, the Commissioner for DACSR A.-S. Devrishbekov Murid groups attributed to the currents of an extremist nature. He noted that such groups posed a risk, as they were trying to impose their will on believers and form a strong opposition not only to registered clerics, but also to the assets of registered mosques. There were cases of unauthorized seizure of mosques.

Later, the processes of transition associated with the expansion of international relations of the USSR, including with the Islamic world, provided an opportunity for believers to go to study in the Middle Eastern educational institutions, which allowed to penetrate deeper into the basics of Islamic religion. This, in turn, has led not only to better training of the graduates of these educational institutions, but also caused

discrepancies in the interpretation of some canons of Islamic doctrine. So-called activists of the Islamic socio-political project appear, demanding the transfer of the entire life of believers to the principles of Islam, but without the priestly "caste of priests". According to the new Islamists, following the backwardness and prejudices of the unenlightened, the followers of such a faith turned the religion of Truth into a heap of folk superstitions and irrational mystical "knowledge" (Kisriyev, 2007).

The re-Islamisation of Dagestan, which had not yet touched upon the authorities, did not cause any threat from official circles. However, the events unfolded rapidly. In May 1989, the first conflict situation arose in Dagestan ASSR with the active participation of Salafis. As a result, the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the North Caucasus was successfully abolished. The reason for re-election was certain abuse of the Mufti's position by Gekkiev. Among them are various machinations, "squandering" of material means and values of the Spiritual Administration, deviations from the legal provisions of Islam. In addition, he was accused of weak protection of interests and the rights of believers guaranteed by the USSR Constitution. Speaking about the reasons that caused unhealthy moods in the society, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers for Religious Affairs L.F. Kolesnikov pointed out only a formal, bureaucratic approach of the officials of the republic when considering letters, complaints and applications of believers (GARF, 2008).

However, there was another underlying cause of the conflict - the economic one. The control over the DUMD, to which the leaders aspired, opened access to huge monetary resources, first of all, to the income from the hajj organization. The result was the situation around the hajj, which gained a wide resonance in the republic and testified to the attempted coup d'état by a group of believers led by a prominent Islamic radical X. Hasbulatov.

Hasbulatov Hasbulat was a resident of a Gubden of Karabudakhkent district, and was known for his oratory skills. In the late 1980s, when the basis was laid for active participation in the social and political life of the Republic of Dagestan's traditional Islamic institutions, gradually turning into a serious political player and trying to influence political decision-making, religious party groups began to appear in the republic as a kind of defensive reaction to the changes. The first such party was the party "Jamiatul Muslimin", established on January 25, 1990 in the village of Gubden (from the Arab. Jama'at al-Muslimin), initiated by Kh. Khasbulatov, A. Taimov, M. Hajimuradov, N. Garumov, M. R. Akhmedov. Initially, the organizers focused on uniting Caucasian Muslims in their political activities in order to further strengthen Islam on the basis of Shariah requirements, especially in the observance of Muslim rituals regarding marriage and family, as well as in everyday life, to expand their ties with their fellow believers abroad, to create political opposition to the pro-Soviet government of Dagestan and to gradually transform the republic into an "Islamic state" based on Shariah principles. On September 23, 1990, the leaders of the party organized a congress of Muslims of Dagestan in the village of Gubden, which was attended by 486 representatives from 57 villages, towns and hundreds of curious Gubden residents. Despite the multitude of urgent and significant problems posed by the leaders of this party to the Muslims (study of the Islamic culture of Dagestan, protection of the political rights of believers, taking immediate measures to stabilize the situation in the republic and overcoming the crisis), none of them was implemented.

The situation around the hajj gained a wide resonance in the republic when a group of believing "hajjists" attempted a coup d'état on the central square of the city of Khujand. Makhachkala, headed by the

leader Kh. Khasbulatov. Despite the attempt to resolve the problem “from above”, the growth of protest sentiments among the believers did not stop. Attempts of the authorities to somehow settle the situation, for example, by adopting a resolution on June 4, 1991 "On measures to organize the pilgrimage of Muslims of Dagestan to Mecca", as well as the declaration of Friday as a non-working day in the republic, led to the reverse actions of the protesters. There was an ultimatum about the trip of all comers or no one. There were persistent calls to close the railway and the Rostov-Baku highway, seize the airport and the House of Soviets, dissolve the Supreme Soviet, recall the deputies, and obtain the government's resignation.

To solve this problem, the republic's leadership repeatedly visited Moscow, where meetings were held with the leadership of the Council of Ministers, other ministries, departments and the central bank of the RSFSR. After each visit M.M. Magomedov and A.M. Mirzabekov informed the believers about the meetings in Moscow. The rally lasted 12 days. One day, Deputy Mufti Abubakarov Saidmagomed addressed the protesters. In his speech, he asked me to stop rallying and prepare for the Hajj. After the last meeting of the republic's leadership with the protesters in the crowd, a signal was heard to storm the Government building. The women were the first to rush, and the men followed them, throwing rocks at the windows of the building. One of the stones hit a policeman, wounding him, and the police opened fire upwards, but a bullet hit one of the attackers with a ricochet. As a result, a resident died in Chirkei of Buynak district Abdurakhman.

The unprecedented situation with the hajj organization clearly signalled the existence of a deep crisis in the society itself, and, accordingly, in the power structure. As a result of this conflict, interethnic splits resulted in the emergence of several conflicting Muslim structures, including in the DUMD itself.

## **7. Conclusion**

Thus, the post-Soviet Islamic phenomenon was caused by a whole complex of reasons, the roots of which in most cases are latent and obvious social, economic and political ills, and not in the pathology of psychological qualities of individuals. However, the underestimation of the Islamic factor by both the Soviet leadership and the lack of a clear secular state ideology that takes into account the interests of believers and non-believers, as well as the loyalty of the republican authorities in the early 1990s, led to mistakes that have irreversible consequences for the republic. The attempt of the republican authorities to solve this problem was not successful, but only "smoothed" the situation. The growing inter-ethnic contradictions in the national republics served as a basis for giving Islam an ethno-confessional coloring. A situation was created when religion was used as an ideological springboard in the struggle for leadership in power. In Dagestan the confrontation between different ethno-political elites, first of all, between Avar, Dargin and Kumyk elites was growing. On the other hand, the increase of national consciousness among the Dagestani peoples was one of the reasons for the crisis of spiritual management of Muslims. The internecine squabbles and ineffective struggle with their opponents led to the politicization of spiritual management, distancing it from believers and depriving it of its authority (Shakhbanova, 2016).

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