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Nune MELKONYAN,
Garik KERYAN

THE NEGATIVE FACTOR OF ISLAMIC MENTALITY AND VALUE SYSTEM IN INTEGRATION PROCESSES OF MUSLIM COMMUNITIES IN WESTERN EUROPE

Abstract

Migration has long been a controversial issue of debate in various aspects and by specialists in different fields. It poses problems to the migrants and the target country as those people need to settle down in, sometimes, absolutely new environments and integrates into societies unfamiliar to them. This can be affected by several circumstances. This work studies how various factors, like mentality and value system, have affected the integration processes of Muslims into Western societies and how traditions, religious habits, and lifestyles of Muslim citizens hamper them from integration and political engagement. The research broadly covers the opinions and positions of Russian researchers on the issue.

Keywords: Islamic mentality, religious value-system, Western Europe, Muslim communities, integration.

Introduction

Developed democratic states of Western Europe, where the church has long been separated from the state, and education from religion, where broad human rights and freedoms characterize political systems, and where the freedom of conscience and religion is at its highest, have become the most favourable region for the formation and activities of Islamic communities outside Muslim countries. Political elites of Western European countries used to believe current globalization processes would be accompanied by the effects of incorporation of global religious realms and by political integration of cultural, household, national-psychological setup, behaviour, and mode of thinking of religious communities. However, even after three or four decades, integration has not been fully completed. This is the verity to be registered both by researchers in the sphere of social-political sciences and by top government officials.

Scientific Hypothesis

Several realities of modern global politics have influenced Islamic mentality. Despite a few exceptions, all efforts to move western values to the East have failed. As some political scientists believe, this is not a matter of incompatibility between the East and the West, but rather the confrontation between the East with its Islamic civilization and the West with its Euro-Atlantic Christian civilization, which has accompanied human development throughout centuries. The conflict between these two global powers is increasingly becoming dangerous.

Research Results

Before proceeding with the opinions of other researchers, it is worth starting with A. Tsivelev's (2011) remarkable and instructional opinion according to which pan-European reality is that atheism and manifestations of a secularism-

led civilization during the first decades of the 21st century, as well as the increase in the number of so-called "godless" people, have given rise to a qualitatively new type of post-Christian society, which automatically facilitates the expansion of political Islam. Meanwhile, the simplicity and accessibility of the basis of the religion, absence of complicated metaphysical structures, and capability to produce a comprehensible picture of the global community have evolved broad opportunities to engage new masses in Islam.

G. I. Mirskiy (2010), a researcher on the issue, notes that to forestall this process. For propaganda reasons, Islam is called "the civilization of the poor", "a simplistic religion", "the most bellicose religion", "the religion of intolerance and fanatism", "the religion of the desert", "the religion of perpetual humiliation" in western analytical publications. However, none of these descriptions and labels can define the essence of the Muslim religion.

Islam is one of the three dogmatic monotheistic religions affirming eternal truths and professing the unique transcendent God. Meanwhile, concerning human relations in spiritual and social aspects, there are wide-ranging differences among these religions, which, in turn, form the basis for significant divergence in the mentality of vast masses of people belonging to different religions. We believe this has a direct influence on political behaviour. A. Umnov (2011) and some other researchers of Muslim dogmas asserting that this religion underestimates the role of an individual describe it as a religion denying subjectivity (being a subject) because Islam, specifically Sunnism, draws an insurmountable line between the human and God: one cannot possess divine features. This is where the fundamental difference between Islam lies as it has developed some dogmatic, not objective mode of thinking, albeit Christianity.

Another researcher, V. V. Mojarovskiy (2002), believes that among monotheistic religious mentalities, Islam is non-subjective. Subordination of a subject's or personality's active role, especially if it does not coincide with the dogmas in the holy book – the Qur'an, we believe, has an intimate influence on the demonstration of political participation and activeness of a citizen.

This is the conclusion traced mostly in political studies dedicated to the research of religious mentality. For example, Abd el-Mashy (1983) believes routine religious ceremonies, under which Muslims perform five obligatory prayers daily, instil the necessity to carry out all obligations before Allah; they engrain the culture of obedience. Some researchers of radical Islam (Khvylya-Olinter, 2007) and political scientists studying the politicization of Islam in modern political processes (Zinchenko, 2010) also hold this opinion. Islamic mentality and value system, along with political-civilizational bearings, can also explain the fact that secularism and atheism are practically hard to find among broad masses professing Islam. They can be found solely in limited circles of political, economic-financial, and intellectual elites, such as A. Yu. Umnov (2011) notes secular ideas can be found among the marginal sector of the Muslim population as a result of Western propaganda and dissemination of liberalism and Westernization by pro-Western activists. Besides, Islam still maintains the exceptionally criminal rendition of quitting the religion, which is one of the harshest crimes deserving capital punishment (Syukiyaynen, 2007). Muslim understanding of law claims that renunciation of the religion of Islam empowers others to kill the convert. This is what centuries-old and religion-based legal norms are like, and few believe in their reforming. While others, like A. I. Fursov (2012), offer "re-ciphering/codifycation of the Islamic civilization" or its amendment. This contradiction with antagonistic nature can be resolved through a civilization based on monotheistic values, biblical roots common with Islam, and shared moral values.

Researchers like V. Mojarovskiy, Abd el-Mashy, A. Khvylya-Olinter, A. Umnov, and some others point out the following circumstance

closely linked to the present survey. Reflecting upon Islamic mentality and value-system, they write that western-leaning groups have regularly emerged in some Islamic countries under the influence of the West and have seen the way to the "liberalization" of their nations in speedy "westernization", in borrowing western household and cultural values, economic practices, and political culture. In other words, this is full integration in all aspects. These authors also believe that most born-again Muslim masses did not opt for this path. Instead, we witnessed a "return to the roots" imbued with the initial purity of Islam, which the Muslim world had regularly lived through since its origin during periods of confrontation with (specifically Christian) infidels and significantly crucial threats were posed to its lifestyle and social order.

The political mentality of the Islamic world on the verge of the 20th-21st centuries, just like one millennium ago, constitutes solidarity values and traditions deeply rooted at any communal level – from family to rural, city, country, and, finally, world community. The most significant mentality factor is the centuries-old experience of confrontation with the mainly western, partly also eastern, Christian world, as well as the memory, referring not only to the victories over the Europeans but also to the failures, humiliation, deprivations, and disasters of the colonial era, which, as most Muslims believe, has not ended yet. Meanwhile, it is fair to note that certain aspects of pro-Westernism and modernization are already traced in the Islamic mentality. Nevertheless, they are not prevalent and cannot change the nature of the Islamic mentality. Moreover, they are subordinate and are demonstrated in a neo-traditional way. Thus, in due course, social values integrated into the political culture of Muslims, yet now they are being introduced as means of Islamic equality, justice, and mutual support by fellow believers on the one hand and as anti-western formulas to fight the injustice deriving from infidels. R. Landa (2005) has devoted an extensive study to this phenomenon.

It is worth highlighting again that several political researchers view Islamic mentality in the context of evaluating the personality (subject). Often the analysis is done via comparison with the Christian religion. Indeed, this approach makes the incentives of political activeness level of a person professing Islam more evident. For instance, L. Perevozchikova (2008) writes that in Christianity, human nature is understood as "the image and after the likeness of God", while man acts as the potential and genuine master of creative will. Indeed, Christianity was the first in human history to come up with the idea of recognizing every individual's dignity and personality. This is how humans get an opportunity to be the subject of creation, act as the initiator of something independently, and implement creative Godly capabilities. The subjectivity principle further developed and drastically transformed in the Reformation era. According to V. Mojarovskiy (2002), this is when protestants, rejecting the tenet concerning the saviour role of the church, destroyed the collective/single understanding of human nature revelation and concentrated all their efforts on an individual's personality. They directed all the energy towards individual, creative self-realization in economic, social, scientific, political and other spheres during earthly life, thus opening the way for an individual's "intrusion" into the geopolitical space of contemporary history (Mojarovskiy, 2002, pp. 167-191). Meanwhile, the coalescence of absolute dogmatism, on the one hand, and unconditional rejection of personality, on the other hand, in the monotheism of Islam resulted in a situation where the idea of an individual's historical role has not developed and isn't valued in Islamic mentality (Mojarovskiy, 2002). G. Mirsky (2008) also develops this point of view. Speaking about Islam and the contemporaneity of Islam, he keeps highlighting the idea that, unlike a bourgeois imbued with European personality, a Muslim can see himself/herself solely in a collective, among the world Islamic community – ummah, which is why *Islam is more than a reli-*

gion; it is a powerful factor to protect political-civilizational solidarity (Mirskiy, 2008).

Research on the political importance of Islam involves a presumption that the Islamist community is rather insensate to outer influence as it actually remains loyal to outdated, traditional values; it is a mechanical unanimity of fellow believers, where individuals have no role; they are like each other, have collective ties and similar feelings. Political perspective and participation activeness can be heavily influenced also by kinship, neighbourly, confessional, clan, ethnic-tribal, compatriotic, and social commonness ties so characteristic of eastern societies. This conjuncture makes an Islamist avoid alien influences and alien social-cultural values and *reject alien political culture*. Implicit faith in the predestination of fate by the Lord (fanatism), which makes an individual's activeness significantly passive, should be highlighted. L Vasilyev (2005) believes Muslims prefer to live and act under principles based on Islamic dogmas without even trying to seek an individual's creative capabilities. Indeed, this is the reason why Islam ignores the individual, unlike other monotheistic outlooks. It lacks the mental-dogmatic bases necessary to encourage one's technical, creative-informational, financial, cultural, and other types of subjectivity activeness. Another crucial role is played by the approach existing in the Islamic educational system where passive perception and obedient imbibition are of primary importance, albeit development of individual thinking and responsible participation. Russian researchers have constantly emphasized that the mental-dogmatic statement "Allah knows everything and has already decided everything" oppresses the individual critical thinking of a religious Muslim.

In Islam, the most significant mental-psychological characteristics of Muslims are essentially defined also by value systems formed through religious dogmas. The world doesn't know many prominent mathematicians, physicists, biologists, philosophers, financiers, artists, and scientists from the Islamic community. This is witnessed by the factual data resulting from the studies of research centres and individual researchers, according to which Muslims constitute only 1% of famous scientists in the world. Israel alone has more scientists than the whole Muslim world. On average, 300 books by foreign academicians are annually translated in Arab countries, which is five times less than, for example, in small Greece. In Islamic countries, spendings on science constitute 0.3% of the gross domestic product, which is eight times less than the average world level (Lewis, 2003). World Bank data reveal that the volume of goods exported from Arab countries, not considering oil and gas, is less than the export of Finland. Syrian and Lebanese Christians have a leading role in various fields of science and culture in Arab countries (Mirskiy, 2010). Taking this into account, some researchers think the global leadership of the West will retain its supremacy in scientific-technical, information-political, economic, and military spheres, at least for the time being.

There is one more important thing connected to the topic of the present study and Islamic mental-political issues. Compared to Christianity, it becomes evident that Islam doesn't have a single hierarchic structure and strict religious-strategic provisions. In Islamic states, there are various religious centres, groups, and directions with their own leaders. According to A. Ignatenko's (1997) data, there are more than forty Muslim spiritual councils only in the autonomous republics constituting the Russian Federation. All efforts of researchers trying to find connecting links between the structures of the Islamic world and factual criteria for the comparative definition of sectarian schools (Khvylya-Olinter, 2007). However, despite the lack of a single hierarchic structure and strict religious-strategic provisions deriving from one single centre, Islam is considered one of the most powerful religions due to being deeply rooted in human spirits and mentality. Mental-dogmatic unity and civilizational consolidation of the Islamic world constitute zealous

refusal/denial of western liberalism, rationalism, and individuality values. "Islam is intolerant," writes L. Vasilyev (2001), "Orthodox believers always feel their superiority over infidels… This order – imbued with and based on religious-cultural tradition, set up by pompous intolerance and supremacy towards infidels and with all its weight – has been one of the most crucial and significant features of Islam for centuries" (p. 185). Religious creed in Islam, in comparison with other religions, is presented in a rather emphatic way as a supreme and unsurpassed value. A. Rakityanskiy (2010) notes that the Anglo-American mentality is challenged by the Islamic one because a Muslim believer's creed consists of dogmatic concepts that have persisted intact for centuries and concern human existence and the universe.

Conclusion

We believe the mode of thinking – mentality and value-system, civilizational-political orientations interconnected with it and characteristics of people professing Islam to be the main *internal impetus* influencing their integration and political behaviour in European countries. Islamic mentality has its unique place, especially in the process of forming political culture. It proves to be imperative when it offers individuals, nations, and governments their own value system and political-civilizational guidelines. It has managed to impose on a huge number of people its own value provisions. It has presented its monotheistic dogmas in a form that makes it easier to understand, perceive, propagate and hold that mentality. Estrangement from liberal values has found its specific demonstrations in various regions of the world. Rejection of an individual's values and permissiveness towards secularity are particularly characteristic of followers of Islam. They demonstrate an aggressive mode of action in political, economic, and cultural spheres rather.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that Islam comprises a dogmatic rejection of person-

ality and subjectivity, thus the differences in mentality and fundamental values from Christianity and Judaism. This factor becomes vital in integration and political participation issues.

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