Analysis of the Role of the Religious Factor as Cause of Acute Social Conflicts

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This article analyses the religious causes of social conflict. The author demonstrates that modern religious studies have enough methodological tools to analyse complex social phenomena which accrue because of increased migration in Europe. The article shows that the formation of cultural identity via religion provides consolidating and preserving function. This ensures the formation of closed social systems in which religion can be understood as a “preventer” for dispersal of integration models. This inhibits the process of integration as new migrants join the social life of the "new homeland".

Key words: Religion, culture, emigration, refugees.

Introduction

The appeal to the issue of political “legitimating” and the associated violence in contemporary philosophical discourse, is closely linked to the problem of defining and understanding the causes of social conflict, extremism and radicalism in society. The conviction of national researchers such as S. Proleyev, E. Golovakha, Vladimir Malakhov, Vladimir Kozlovsky and others, suggest discussions in this area should be based on cultural, historical, religious and legal factors influencing the social and political modernity. M. Weber proposed the scientific use of the notion of “legitimating”, which refers to several key characteristics, beyond which it loses its own relevance and legitimacy. Here we share these properties, according to S. Proleyev, which include: Relation to power, taking into account the context of the social reality, and the “effect of subjective recognition”. In other words, “legitimating” becomes a key factor in understanding forms of social existence, which are expressed in a political and legal reality.

In the interpretation of legitimating, Weber understood it as an “institutional regulator of coercion” with the emphasis on the fact that legitimating appears as “socially accepted
methods of governance and laws of the ruling regime, political power, and the basis for the adoption and strengthening legitimate rights of enterprises of political domination, based on rationally organised violence” (Lehitymatsiya i nasylstvo, 2013). However, the effectiveness of the exercise of regulatory functions of the state by means of appropriate institutions, provides formal legitimacy, which in turn promotes physical substantiation of legitimacy embodied in the spread of “publicly sanctioned values” (O. Bilyy). We are aware that in understanding the phenomenon of “multiculturalism” in the context of its legal interpretation, we must take into account the traditions legitimating state institutions designed to ensure the stability of its own operation, through its recognition of the value of its legal support. On this occasion, Jonathan Berliner, in his lecture “Metaphors of the Election Rhetoric of Barack Obama” (2014) particularly stressed that the understanding of legal provisions and the legitimising authorities should pay attention to the fact that, in the process of deploying political practices, they must have the right attitude towards law. Being of “genuine value” will protect the rights and freedoms of citizens, regardless of ethnic nationality, social and economic status, or political or religious preference. In this context, it must be considered that the situation is related to the law as a separate social institution, and is a property of democratic societies, that on the level of ideology, focus on fostering democratic principles and fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of speech, an independent judiciary and others.

A specific feature of multiculturalism is the public recognition of a separate ethnic, or a cultural or religious group’s right to a “collective entity” (Wirawana, Widanab, 2020). Expressions of this right can be protected by law, which will ensure the preservation of the authentic characteristics of a collective entity, through education or educational activities, which does not provide for cultural and social integration (Mujiburrahmana et al., 2020). It is equally important that the policy of recognition (C. Taylor) ensures the right to collective entity formation, and the expression of “consolidated political positions”, realised in the election process. In this context, segregation tendencies expressed in the cultural background do not affect, or even impede, the integration process of a political nation. In these circumstances, the public display of religious identity can be perceived as political action, the purpose of which may not always be immediately identified. In this regard, we note that in scientific literature, we can find enough specific interpretations of this so-called “actionism”. It is interpreted as a tactic of a protest movement that may be extremist in nature. Therefore, the current heated debates around the concept of “dominant culture” (German- Leitkultur, Thilo Sarrazin) are conducted within the context of Political Studies. The policy of multiculturalism can also provoke their opponents to drastic actions that will be of an extreme nature (for example the action of Norwegian terrorist Anders Breivik). This event is discussed by Professor Arnulf Martin Baring. He said the policy of multiculturalism includes a number of threats that should be considered when planning economic and social policy. The dynamic link between language skills, education and economic integration of migrants into the “social organism” of the country of arrival, should be based on certain political and legal
conditions that will prevent ethno-cultural and religious conflicts (Roestamya, Fauzialhb, Ruslic, 2020). Thus, the system of differences that are found through the concept of “society”, “social structure”, “religion”, “culture”, “identity”, etc., represent socially important factors which must be taken into account when analysing the causes of the spread of protest movements. The phenomena, outlined above, affecting the study of the processes of political legitimating of the social order, is its dynamic manifestation in the present. For detailed analysis of the role of other-culture impact, arising through the migration process, it is appropriate to apply the theory of “Preliminary dependence” (path-dependence problem). Among the supporters of this theory are currently known economists, political scientists, philosophers, sociologists, culture experts and lawyers, which are taking into account the results of recorded expressions of “path-dependence problem” in theoretical constructions of predictive models of modern society.

Among the important elements of this analysis they distinguish specific social institutions, cultural types and their reproducibility or restoration. The assumption of Douglas North and Paul David, that a once accepted standard or institutional choice, that touched one of the structural elements of this phenomenon, eventually spreads its effect on the whole system, and thus, creates a “Network Effect”, which is almost impossible to correct through the rejection of the accepted standard or abolition of institutional choice. We agree with the conclusions of P. Berger and T.Luckmann, which are grounded in their work “Social Construction of Reality”, as to the legitimacy symbolised in the culture of identity. Functional qualities of identity, in the opinion of sociologists, can be described in two aspects. First, the formation of the identity in the context of social processes, and secondly, the impact of the identity on social structures and processes. Taking this into consideration, we conclude that a change in social structures, associated with increasing migration, can contribute to the psychological transformation of reality, types of identities, and cause competition between identities. At the individual level, it can become a cause of injury to a person, caused by stresses of high intensity, such as social, political or psychological situations.

In contrast to this approach, humanitarian studies distinguish so-called “aggressive” ideologies, in which are detected parasitical qualities which have an ability to attach themselves to democratic institutions, and create an “institutional incubus” hybrid integrated state, economy and law. Argued on this occasion, Professor Sergey Makeev stated in the article “Institutional Violence Generation”, proving that this symbiosis potentially includes the ability to modify but also provides stability, due to the very nature of this combination, supported by the repressive functions of the state (Lehitymatsiya i nasylstvo..., 2013).

The above argument creates a basis for determining the characteristics of policy in the integration of social agents, with different meanings of identity, into a consolidated
community. The practice of such agents is directed not by specific purpose, but by “habitus”,
as defined by the interpretation of Pierre Bourdieu, which defines systems of acquired
dispositions, “which contribute to the emergence and structuring of an agent and the practice
of his ideas (Nort et al., 2011)”. Habitus is the basis for orientation in his life, and the world’s
reaction to the events taking place in social space, and he makes use of rating systems,
modeling behavior and strategy of action, in accordance within the context of the experience
gained in the past. The specifics of this experience are caused by the conditions and
characteristics of the family, national, religious and social life. Thus “habitus”, as discussed
in the writings of Bourdieu, is protected from the threat of change from structural elements of
disposition, acquired prior to the systemic socialisation of the social actor. In our
presentation, we differentiate between the concept of social ‘agent’ and social ‘actor’. In the
first case, we define the individual whose activities are determined and subdued by external
factors, and in the second, the individual is able to act freely, allowing him to formally define
autonomy as freedom. At the same time, we must take into account the characteristics of
social and religious “habitus” which are based on specific practices. Such practices may
include the control of sexual relationships, control of social behavior, control over the
adaptation process to the new environment, control of information, and the creation of so-
called mental ghettoes for newcomers (such as refugees from Cuba to the United States or
refugees from the African Continent in Europe). You can also talk about the formation of a
religious habit that is acquired commonly through a practice called worship of a deity, which
generates awareness of an indissoluble spiritual connection.

Thus, treating the phenomenon of multiculturalism in its accepted value. We conclude that
the objects of “politics of recognition”, are social “agents”, while implementing this policy in
their own social experiences, through perception and activity, are social “actors”. From the
above stated, it follows to logically conclude that incorporated historical events of social and
cultural features of the society and its legal standards and economic characteristics, define the
qualitative features of political institutions and legal systems. Our conclusion is based on the
arguments presented in the study Douglass North, John Wallis and Barry Vaynhesta proposed
in “Violence and Social Order”. The fundamental thesis proposed is: There are two types of
social order - the order of Restricted Access, inherent to the “Natural State”, and the social
order for Open Access. Next, each has its peculiarities in the interpretation of the legal
systems, the role and function of the elites, and attitudes to the instruments of violence. This
difference can be specified by a number of points.

The social order of Restricted Access includes creating various institutions around specific
individuals and elites, dividing control over the instruments of violence, and enacting laws
for others which they, the elites, themselves don’t follow.
The social order of Open Access is characterised by the fact that, when it creates institutions and organisations, which last longer than their creators and laws are created not just for the elites, but are also shared by the entire society, and they institute joint control over the instruments of violence. When analysing the reasons for the change in social order, lately we have begun to pay greater attention to factors that have no economic or legal nature, but rather, belong to the sphere of cultural patterns, value attitudes, behaviour, and certain practices. Thus, a change in culture can be thought of as the trajectory of change in the social system, and the idea of incorporation or preservation of unique culture-specific ethno-religious communities, that can serve groups of migrants and refugees, is no longer just a theoretical question in humanitarian studies, but also a practical issue (for example, in 2015 a group of refugees from Syria and Iraq in Greece and Italy, Kurds and Yezidis in Bulgaria in 2013, Copts from Egypt to Italy, and since 2005, Muslims and Christians from Eritrea and Sudan in Israel). Often such people are called infiltrators, which determines their appropriate treatment. Political sources in this concept are polysemantic in character. Its meaning and place in the conceptual-categorical system will be studied by us in a separate work.

The examples mentioned above express the role of religion as a realised and embodied experience, which, as part of the ethno-identity, was influenced in the communities of their countries of origin. However, also equally important is the fact that when the unique features of national religiosity are defined as “otherness” and certain “exclusiveness”, they are providing constitutional guarantees that insist on expanding social, economic, and legal privileges for members of the designated minority groups. Thus, minority status, fixed by regulations, promotes social discontent among sections of the citizenry, which lacks this preferential position because of belonging to the majority. Minority status (or parameters of minority) is the basis for determining the content, pace, and form of social transformations, which may be used by relevant communities. The leaders of such associations, in order to obtain “charismatic capital”, try to consolidate their influence in the community. Therefore they use different tools and forms of influence, and control punishment. These conditions influence ‘leader allowed’ forms of disciplinary adaptation, the definition of civil, social, and religious identity, and the formation and extent of the use of social interaction skills. On the other hand, the protection of disciplinary adaptation is executed by institutions that deal with the protection of minority rights, and organisations that advocate the preservation of cultural and national identity, providing symbolic capital (prestige, power) of a culturally determined character. At the same time, in the case of the creation of an immigrant community (the factor of consolidation of which is land, religious identity etc.), we are not talking only about the relationship between ethnicity and religion, as the union of these identities precisely provides the unique community that is supported by a common language and traditions that shape identity. If social adaptation requires “intercultural conversion” (Dragan Todorovich), then in such circumstances, the changes may affect cognitive and emotional value aspects of the
individual. Cultural differences in a multicultural society influence the fastening of symbolic boundaries between ethnic or religious identities.

As we know, the change of identity occurs when new cultural models are assimilated, which are not conducive to the retention of original ethno-cultural contents and unique patterns of the native community are incorporated into the country of arrival, or socio-cultural environment of the dominant nation, the national majority, or titular nation. These current challenges raise the question of unique constructions of identity (called I-technology by Marcel Moss). In terms of late modernity we are redefining the trend of unconditional admiration of multiculturalism to a more balanced and moderate attitude towards the conservation of cultural patterns of other-culture systems in the context of state-building. After all, an exclusive minority status may give rise to tendencies that determine the characteristics of the national ideology, self-identity and the religious feelings and authoritative guidance, as to prevent or impede the integration of national minorities (which often are representatives of separate, but quite different cultures) into the social organism of a political nation. However, socio-cultural characteristics of such a nation contain a number of qualities that depend on the values and behavioural guidelines, and determine the directions and transformations that characterise the social organism. Consolidated ethno-religious minorities are the informal institutions that affect the functioning of the features and content of formal institutions of state and legal regulations that govern the dynamics of the transition to secular-rational values, increasing (or leveling) value, etc. That is how we change the “socio-cultural profile of the country”, and the decisive role is played by education and training. As noted by Robert Inglhart, changes in the perception of the world are closely associated with deep transformations in political and economic aims, and religious norms and values. At the present stage of social development, an important role is played by “interpersonal trust, tolerance of minority groups (Italics ours. - Z.SH.), and freedom of speech (Ynhlkhart, 1997)”. This implies that the value systems are also relatively dynamic, due to globalisation and integration. However, studies conducted within the project “World Values Survey”, showed no intentions to secularise the relationship between politics and religion. Moreover, traditional societies maintain a high rate of positive attitude toward the influence of religion on politics, and the criteria for involvement in religious life is a new sign of membership in a particular social group with established value norms. Thus, Inglhart is correct in his logical conclusion of a symbiotic connection between belief systems or “post material values” and global changes in politics, economics and society. According to the author, cultural differentiation patterns of modern societies are indirectly related to the dynamics of overcoming the so-called existential dangers, which will promote the values of postmodernism. A cultural environment is developed in post-industrial societies, where the guarantee of a proper level of satisfaction takes the forefront when compared with the value of survival. Therefore, “if a person has a belief system that provides some sense of predictability and control, it reduces the stress to a level that provides the type of behaviour
that meets the challenges and allows for overcoming barriers” (Ynhlkhart, 1997). The process of modernisation, embodied in industrialisation and bureaucracy, also contributes to the transition from traditional values to the “rational-legal”, and it affects the worldview of generations formed during the period of modernisation.

Emigrants who are representatives of pre-industrial (traditional) societies, in their worldview, are oriented towards a system of beliefs, which are supported by their belief system. Thus, in terms of economic or political crisis, alien ethnic or other-religious groups, may be a catalyst for the emergence of dissent in the local population (as in Greece, Hungary, Serbia, Russia), which could generate distribute chauvinistic, racist, xenophobic sentiments, and “ultranationalistic” or “fascist” slogans. This interpretation, or connection between the dynamics of socio-economic development and cultural integration of the post-industrial societies leads to the conclusion that the content of cultural change in these conditions is focused on acquiring and distributing existential security and the dissemination of non-material values.

The question of the causes of conflicts in multicultural communities, in our estimation, should take into account a number of factors, among which the most important are religious and geopolitical activities of organisations that represent the interests of the parties, and the specificity of the object of the conflict. As is accepted in political conflictology, conflicts are categorised by a number of stages, such as: The latent stage of the conflict, the escalation phase of the crisis, de-escalation, and completion of the conflict. If they say the conflict is on an inter-religious or inter-ethnic basis, it may be open to a political solution, where it might be the division of the object of conflict, or postponing the decision regarding the said object of conflict, except when under the conditions of escalation of crisis. A good example here might be the opening, in November 2015, of monuments to Honta and Zaliznyak (2 historic figures), in Uman, which is a religious centre of pilgrimage for Bratislavian Hassidum. Also, we can talk about the transformation of conflicts by providing identity transformation to “non-violence”, and controllable processes of ethnic / religious mobilisation.

Thus, in the interdependence of reconstructing religious and social factors of society, we can assume that in “historical dislocation”, when people leave their traditional communities with their cultural patterns, but do not integrate into another culture, this creates an emotional vacuum. This void can lead to the creation of “neo-ghettos”, or recruitment centres for terrorist groups, which cause discontent with one’s own destiny and transfers the discontent to “the enemy”. An answer to this situation can be protest movements of different forms, social structures and orientation, and the activities of which may be connected to them may start with the protection for traditionally established norms, and culminating with the change of the political elite.
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