

## RELIGION IN SOCIETY

THE RELIGIOUS AXIOLOGICAL SPHERE  
IN THE SOUTH OF RUSSIA

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## ABSTRACT

**T**he author has studied the religious milieu in the South of Russia and analyzed the development of the religious axiological sphere as a complicated systemic entity, in which the secular and religious identities are intertwined. Reliance on an extensive set of social, philosophical, general scientific and specific methods of studies allowed to conduct a sociocultural analysis of the sphere of religious values in the South of Russia, interpreted as a sum-total of religious testimony to the existence of the domain of values, subjective reality of axiological conscience and results of creative activities. The sphere of religious values is transformed in both spatial and temporal dimensions of the social environment, in which

different religious values co-exist in a multitude of very different configurations. The religious situation in Russia as a whole, and in the South of Russia in particular, is fairly complicated: it demonstrates the pluralism in religious opinions, religiosity as a "current fashion" and interference of religious organizations in secular life and education. The region, however, stands apart from the rest of the country where the sphere of religious values is concerned: a higher declared level of religiosity (formal religiosity) than the countrywide average; very specific separation and cooperation models in the state-religion relations; domination of secular rather than religious identity; impact of religious values on personal axiological identities; the

*I want to express my gratitude to my tutor Prof. Victoria Kotlyarova, Dr. of Philosophy for her valuable advice when this article was planned and recommendations when the article was being written.*

*role of interreligious dialog and the principle of non-violence in settling political conflicts* | *that help stabilize the region's social and political context.*

**KEYWORDS:** *axiological sphere, values, religious values, religious identity.*

## *Introduction*

In Russia, studies of axiological priorities are gradually moving to the fore as highly topical and, therefore, highly important, partly because in the 20th century, the country and its traditional social and cultural identities were subjected to an unprecedentedly wide, and even crippling destruction caused by a shift in key values. The resultant transformation of social conscience is manifested in changed axiological attitudes and social behavior.

Religious values, the most important of human values, form the core of a very special type, viz. the axiological sphere. At all historical stages, the religious world outlook, religious values and religious ethics defined and are still defining an inalienable element of culture. Religion plays an important role in all spheres of social life: it is a regulator of social relationships that adjusts all sorts of situations to the changing social (integrating and disintegrating) functions.

At all times, the South of Russia responded with difficulty to the changes in axiological priorities. The contemporary religious situation (which has taken several centuries to develop under the pressure of various material, canonical, cultural, geopolitical and other factors) is related to the very complicated system of different confessions' religious organizations.

Confrontation between axiological systems that may tip the balance between them, replacement of the traditional with the alien, up to and including religious values, and disregard for the spiritual and moral norms may greatly upset the seamless functioning of social and cultural institutions. Moreover, under certain conditions these processes may aggravate social conflicts and destabilize Russia's statehood, which makes the studies of the religious values sphere in the South of Russia, the spiritual foundation of social harmony, twice as important.

## **Methods and Materials**

Studies and correct interpretations of regional specifics of the religious values sphere at the conceptual sociological level are based on theoretical and methodological approaches. Systemic analysis methods were used, in particular, to conceptualize and identify the definitions of certain basic concepts. The essential methodological points were created by the ideas retrieved from the works of foreign and Russian authors dealing with the problems of religiosity and religious values.

General scientific methods—analysis, abstraction, synthesis, deduction, generalization, analogy and classification—were used at all stages of research as indispensable instruments of scholarly thinking.

Studies of the typical features of the religious axiological sphere rest on the basic provisions of sociocultural approaches as the fundamental methodological instrument of contemporary sociological studies.

The specific sociological method as an empirical research foundation stands apart among other special methods. It was used as a sum-total of methods of qualitative analysis of documentary sources or as secondary analysis of the results of sociological polls and sociological monitoring. The method of induction played a significant role in this study: all patterns of development of the religious axiological sphere in the South of Russia were identified through generalized empirical material (sociological studies of the religious values sphere).

The present study was initiated to verify the hypothesis stating that the sphere of religious values is a complicated systemic entity in which secular and religious identities are blended.

## Discussion and Results

Civilizational vectors were and remain strongly affected by sets of religious values even if their structure and meaning have been transformed. By values we mean “individual, group or social assessment of objects, ideas or situations. Values emerge in practical activities and as assessments of certain phenomena.”<sup>1</sup>

Religious values are present and function even in highly secularized societies, and even purely secular forms of life often implicitly rely on deeply rooted, albeit greatly transformed, religious motivations.

Religiosity is one of the universal forms of people’s motivated axiological choices. Even the thinkers critically disposed towards religion admit that the archetypes of faith and of the sacral have always been immanently present in everyday life, culture and communications. Ludwig Feuerbach, for example, looked at a man’s religious needs as compensation for his existential loneliness, and at religion as a vector of solidarity with the universe as the natural, social and frequently existential reality.<sup>2</sup>

The system of religious values is present in the core of any individual as a philosophical basis of all spheres and aspects of life activities: the axiological dimension reflects the ongoing sociocultural processes. By axiological sphere we mean any system, the essence of which is interpreted as a reflection of being, the eternal process of cognition and renovation of axiological ideas of a social actor in the dynamically developing social milieu.<sup>3</sup> The religious axiological sphere can be interpreted as a sum-total of religious evidence of the existence of the axiological domain, the subjective reality of axiological cognition, and the result of creative activity.

Values, including religious values, traditionally constitute the object of research of social sciences and humanities —sociology, political science, philosophy, psychology and axiology (the science of values).

It was in the first half of the 20th century that axiology came to the fore thanks to the efforts of the Neo-Kantian Schools—Baden, or Freiburg (W. Windelband and H. Rickert) and Marburg (H. Kohn, P. Natorp, E. Cassirer). A. Maslow, V. Frankl, E. Fromm, M. Rokeach, A. Toffler and others contributed much to the creation of applied axiological studies. Many other authors, including F. Znaniecki, W. Thomas, H. Spencer, and M. Weber, studied the importance of values in social sciences.

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<sup>1</sup> V.V. Kotliarova, *Paradigmy aksiologii*, SKNTs VSh IuFU, Rostov-on-Don, 2014, p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> See: L. Feuerbach, *Lectures on the Essence of Religion*, Harper & Row, 1967.

<sup>3</sup> See: M.S. Kagan, *Filosofskaia teoria tsennosti*, St. Petersburg, 1997, pp. 132-133.

Emile Durkheim<sup>4</sup> and Talcott Parsons laid the foundation for the studies of the religious values problem in social sciences; they, however, never discussed religious values per se, but treated them as a component of religious systems. Parsons' systemic approach presupposes that any religion is an axiological system, a very specific matrix of values superimposed, so to speak, on the individual multilayered psychological structure of man, while filling it with corresponding content.<sup>5</sup>

Max Weber proceeded from the assumption that the most important factors of social changes are rooted in cultural systems, religion being one of them. He demonstrated, more clearly than any of his colleagues, that the world religious movements were critically important both for the differentiation of the main types of societies and for the creation of the new types (through the institutionalization of values used as an important stimulus of certain types of changes in many spheres, including economy).<sup>6</sup>

The body of contemporary studies of religious values is fairly extensive. Contemporary theologians and Orientalists Jacques Waardenburg<sup>7</sup> and Louis Massignon<sup>8</sup> have analyzed the possibility of interreligious dialog; Jean-Paul Willaime has analyzed the degree of religiosity in Europe and the prospects of Christianity.<sup>9</sup> Many journals, *The Caucasus & Globalization* among them, dedicated at least one of their issues to the problem of religious values in the Caucasus.<sup>10</sup>

In the Soviet Union, axiological studies that began in the 1960s relied on the method of binary oppositions or dichotomies that discussed the subject-object (O. Drobnitsky) or subject-subject (V. Tugarinov) nature of axiological relationships. It was at that time that the discussion of values from the viewpoints of ethics, aesthetics, pedagogy and social psychology was unfolding (M. Mamardashvili, L. Stolovich, N. Chavchavadze, S. Rubinstein, M. Bakhtin and others).

Today, various aspects of an analysis of religious values attract a lot of attention. A. Agajanian and K. Russele edited a fundamental study of various forms of religious practices at the micro-level, in the context of everyday existence of religion.<sup>11</sup> Konstantin Kostiuik has analyzed the Russian World concept and the phenomenon of contemporary Orthodox fundamentalism.<sup>12</sup> Elena Zolotukhina-Abolina has analyzed the probability of combining the values of the everyday empirical world and the religious spiritual ideal.<sup>13</sup> V. Kotlyarova, P. Ponomarev, and A. Rudenko discussed traditional values as a national security factor in the South of Russia.<sup>14</sup>

The results of empirical studies of religious preferences in the Northern Caucasus carried out by H. Dzutsev and A. Dibirova<sup>15</sup> are highly relevant for the present article. The same fully applies to

<sup>4</sup> See: É. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Oxford World's Classics, Oxford University Press, New York, 2001.

<sup>5</sup> See: T. Parsons, "Sovremenny vzgliad na durgeimovu teorii religii," in: *Religia i obshchestvo: Khrestomatia po sotsiologii religii*, Aspekt-Press, Moscow, 1996, pp. 170-190.

<sup>6</sup> See: M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Courier Corporation, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> See: J. Waardenburg, *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions. A Historical Survey*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1999; *Muslim-Christian Perceptions of Dialogue Today. Experiences and Expectations*, Peeters, Leuven, Sterling (Virginia), 2000.

<sup>8</sup> See: L. Massignon, *Les trois prières d'Abraham*, Cerf, 1997.

<sup>9</sup> See: J.-P. Willaime, *Europe et religions. Les enjeux du XXIe siècle*, Fayard, Paris, 2004.

<sup>10</sup> See: *The Caucasus & Globalization*, Volume 2, Issue 3, 2008, available at [[https://www.ca-c.org/c-g/2008/journal\\_eng/c-g-3/k&gE-03-2008.pdf](https://www.ca-c.org/c-g/2008/journal_eng/c-g-3/k&gE-03-2008.pdf)], 22 March 2018.

<sup>11</sup> See: *Prihod i obshchina v sovremennom pravoslavii: kornevaia sistema rossiyskoy religioznosti*, ed. by A. Agajanian, K. Russele, Ves mir, Moscow, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> See: K.N. Kostiuik, "'Russkiy mir': bogoslovskiy mysl i politicheskie eksplikatsii," *Vestnik PSTGU I: Bogoslovie. Filosofia*, Issue 3 (59), 2015, pp. 137-151.

<sup>13</sup> See: E.V. Zolotukhina-Abolina, *Filosofia obydennoy zhizni. Ekzistentsialnye problemy*, Fenix, LRNTs Fenix, Rostov-on-Don, 1994.

<sup>14</sup> See: V. Kotlyarova, A. Rudenko, P. Ponomarev, "Traditional Values as a National Security Factor in the Age of Globalization," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 18, Issue 2, 2017, pp. 87-95.

<sup>15</sup> See: H.V. Dzutsev, A.P. Dibirova, *Religia v strukture tsennostey naselenia respublik Severo-Kavkazskogo federalnogo okruga Rossiyskoy Federatsii*, ISPI RAS, Moscow; IPTsSOGU, Vladikavkaz, 2017.

the studies and projects carried out by S. Apajeva, A. Mamsirov and T. Tsoloev,<sup>16</sup> by M. Bilalov,<sup>17</sup> the All-Russia Center for the Public Opinion Studies (VCIOM), and Levada-Center.

The axiological-cultural approach of Moisey Kagan, who has analyzed the phenomenon of axiological sphere is also highly poignant: here I proceeded from the results of his analysis of the sphere of religious values as a structural-functional system of religious preferences, attitudes, identities, etc. presented in an abstract form; they crop up in different combinations and configurations in the social space's spatial and temporal dimensions.<sup>18</sup>

Russia is a poly-confessional country; its religious landscape consists of over 70 confessions and faiths, which is a positive phenomenon. The religious situation in the South of Russia, which has been unfolding for several centuries under the pressure of material, canonical, cultural, geopolitical and other factors, is a component part of the complex system of religious organizations of different confessions and faiths.

Today, the situation in the South of Russia and the North Caucasian region is unfolding amid a great number of economic, social and cultural factors. The South of Russia, an internal territory during Soviet times, became a borderline region in post-Soviet Russia, and was divided into the Southern and North Caucasian Federal Districts with 13 subjects (8 of which are republics) of the Russian Federation, living in highly complicated ethnic, cultural, political, legal and religious realities. Its population belongs to two world religions, Christianity and Islam, with their religious organizations occupying more or less equal shares of the region's confessional space.<sup>19</sup>

Religion plays an important role in the lives of the absolute majority of the region's population. According to the 2016 public opinion poll, 83.3% of the population of Chechnia and 82.3% of the respondents in Ingushetia agree with the above statement. The same fully applies to 63.6% of the Karachays and Circussians; 43.7% of Kabardians and Balkars, 41.9% of the population of Dagestan, 37.4% of the region's Russians and Russian-speakers, and only 19.5% of Ossets.<sup>20</sup> On the whole, the region's population is much more religious than the population of any other Russian region: according to VCIOM, the average level of religiosity in Russia is 55% (against 23% in 1990), that is, it has more than doubled.<sup>21</sup> The relatively higher level of religious feelings in the South of Russia as compared with the rest of the country is the most obvious feature of the religious values sphere.

It seems that the weight of religion in the public consciousness is explained by the fact that Russian authorities have created conditions conducive to the development and activities of religious organizations, propaganda of religious cults and rites and gradual penetration of religious feelings into all spheres of everyday life, as well as by the fact that Communist ideology has been finally pushed aside and by the desire to find religious foundations for Russia's further consolidation. This is gradually being realized: according to Levada-Center, in 2017, religious organizations were completely trusted by 48% of Russian citizens, a much higher share than the share of those who trusted the judiciary system. According to the same source, in 2013, the public prosecutor office had 26% of the respondents on its side; 21% trusted the judiciary system; four years later, in 2017, the figures

<sup>16</sup> See: S.S. Apajeva, A.Kh. Mamsirov, T.S. Tsoloev, "Severny Kavkaz: sovremennaya etnopoliticheskaia situatsia i perspektivy ee stabilizatsii," *Istoria: fakty i simvol'y*, No. 4 (13), 2017, pp. 101-111.

<sup>17</sup> See: M.I. Bilalov, "Dukhovnye determinanty ustoychivogo razvitiya," *Iug Rossii: ekologiya, razvitiye*, Vol. 11, No. 4, 2016, pp. 201-208. DOI: 10.18470/1992-1098-2016-4-201-208.

<sup>18</sup> See: M.S. Kagan, op. cit.

<sup>19</sup> See: K.M. Khanbabaev, "Etnokonfessionalnaya tolerantnost na Iuge Rossii," *Izvestia Dagestanskogo gosudarstvennogo pedagogicheskogo universiteta. Obshchetsvennye i gumanitarnye nauki*, No. 1, 2007, p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> See: H.V. Dzutsev, A.P. Dibirova, op. cit., pp. 31-32.

<sup>21</sup> See: Dannye VCIOM. Press release No. 2888 "Religia: za i protiv," available at [<https://wciom.ru/index.php?id=236&uid=115329>], 23 March, 2018.

were 33% and 26%, respectively.<sup>22</sup> No wonder that the authorities support religious organizations, a trend that allowed Iusup Jabrailov to write that “in the Northern Caucasus, in Chechnia and Daghستان in particular, the relationships between the authorities and religious organizations dominated by cooperation and separation models are gradually taking shape.”<sup>23</sup>

This statement seems feasible, since the following models of the state-religious relationship figure prominently in a secular state:

- Segregation, a model where authorities consider religion a negative social phenomenon, whose role in society should be maximally limited;
- Separation, a model where states and religious organizations lead their own lives and avoid interference in their respective spheres of activity;
- Cooperation, the most productive model where religious organizations and the state jointly address social issues.

There are reasons to believe that in the South of Russia the domination of the separation and cooperation models is the second most important feature of the religious values sphere.

Formal or nominal belonging to a certain religion and formal performance of rituals without a clear understanding of their meaning is the result of the high level of religiosity declared in the South of Russia: people try to fit into the regional context with no real spiritual unity with the religious teaching, thus, essentially, with no faith. I will reveal no secret by saying that this category is dominant among the self-proclaimed believers, which is confirmed by public opinion polls. In 2014, the public opinion poll carried out in Rostov-on-Don revealed that “2% of the Orthodox and 8.5% of the Muslim students regularly attend religious services; 1.5% of the former and 23.9% of the latter regularly observe religious rituals; 15.7% of Orthodox believers and 40.4% of Muslims pray every day.”<sup>24</sup> These people may be entirely ignorant of even the basic provisions of their religions.

There is a vast difference between what was said by the religious traditions about religious values in the past and what is being said today. It remains to be seen, therefore, whether religious ethics dominate the religious revival. I tend to agree with Irina Babich, one of the best experts in ethnology and anthropology, that “the process of acquiring religious identity is very slow: few local people describe themselves *as followers of any religion*.”<sup>25</sup> Identity is an attribute that speaks of an individual as belonging to a certain social entity, a certain religious community in our case. As a distinct form of social identity, religious identity perceives social reality as an image of a social world.

By this I mean that religious identity helps systematize information about the world to arrive at a clear understanding of its meaning. This creates a homogenous ontological image of the world that assumes a form of social, or, in our case, religious reality. Religious identity is, on the one hand, a derivative engendered by the social-cultural context and, on the other, it is a category that actively affects the process of an individual’s personal development, his adaptation to the cultural context of a religious system and the society as a whole. This means that in the context of studies of the religious values sphere, religious identity should be regarded as a subspecies of social identity.

In the context of growing religiosity, we should bear in mind that the Constitution of the Russian Federation “guarantees the freedom of conscience, the freedom of religion.” In the academic com-

<sup>22</sup> See: Dannye oprosa Levada Tsentra “Institutsionalnoe Doverie,” available at [<https://www.levada.ru/2017/10/12/institutsionalnoe-doverie-3>], 2 February, 2018.

<sup>23</sup> Iu.D. Jabrailov, “Islam i vlast na Severnom Kavkaze: putu sotrudnichestva,” *Islam v sovremennom mire*, Vol. 11, No. 4, 2015, p. 182.

<sup>24</sup> T. T. Tarasova, “Religioznost studencheskoy molodezhi krupnogo polikontsionalnogo goroda,” *Vestnik Iuzhnogo nauchnogo tsentra*, Vol. 10, No. 4, 2014, p. 82.

<sup>25</sup> I. Babich, “The Russian State and Civil Society: A Dialog of Religions in the Northern Caucasus,” *The Caucasus & Globalization*, Volume 4, No. 1-2, 2010, p. 140.

munity there is a relatively popular opinion that the rights of atheists are violated by sacralization and clericalization spreading far and wide. Indeed, religion has found its way into education in the form of religious ethics courses as part of the school curriculum, into politics (direct or indirect agitation during election campaigns), etc. These trends are apparent in the South of Russia where religious rhetoric is used in numerous, sometimes mutually contradictory, contexts. On the one hand, Orthodox identity is used within the Russian ideological system; on the other, the Russian society is trying to adapt Islam to state ideology.

This means that the religious situation in Russia, and in the South specifically, is fairly complicated: there is pluralism of religious opinions, there is “religiosity as a current fashion” and interference of religious organizations in secular life and education. According to VCIOM, “many more people today than in the past mention the pernicious effect of promoting religious convictions—from 5% in 1990 to 23% in 2015—on society and from 3% to 18%, respectively—on their personal lives.”<sup>26</sup> This adds special importance to information about the course of religious (Islamic or Christian, depending on religious preferences) ethics as part of the school curriculum in the North Caucasian republics: “An average of about 15% of the respondents do not believe that this course is needed in the schools of their republics.”<sup>27</sup> This means that there are diverse religious views and that people in the South of Russia are not ready to perceive the social institute of education through the prism of religious values.

Today there is a certain tendency in Russia to reduce spirituality and morality to religion. It is often said that morality is impossible without religious sentiment, and that a morally educated person is inconceivable without a religious education. This brings to mind Voltaire’s “If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him.” Those who refuse to support religious organizations as a social institution and religion as a form of social consciousness are viewed as immoral and dissolute persons.

I am convinced that post-secularism does not imply that religion has triumphantly returned to all spheres of social life: rather, it is a new form of religious experience very much needed in the current entanglements of circumstances, conditions, emotional experience and reflections that call for certain decisions that, in their turn, require an axiological platform. In their classical forms traditional religions teach love, harmony, tolerance, mutual respect, which are common to all mankind irrespective of faith and, as such, they consolidate the Russian society.

Religion may help create a hierarchy of values which, in turn, will help separate the important from the unimportant in the life of man; will stabilize the trends in needs and interests, with the help of which a man confirms himself as an individual and a citizen; attains self-realization in various forms of activities and thus expresses his “axiological Self”.

Religious values are bipolar, which means that each positive value has an anti-value: good-evil, nobleness-baseness, sanctity-sin, sacralization-secularization, etc. Emerging value-oriented attitudes subsequently remain in people’s minds to adjust behavior and shape ideas about the world. This is fully applicable to personal assessments, which are rather telling in regard to an individual’s position in the social relations system, the nature of his needs, interests, ideals and their outcrops in the form of wishes.

Cultural dialog, which has been discussed repeatedly in numerous publications, may begin as a dialog between religions and religious organizations and is very much needed to overcome mutual incomprehension as a frequent cause of confrontations. This will promote tolerance between followers of different confessions, religious movements and organizations. The Russian society is growing

<sup>26</sup> Danye VCIOM. Press release No. 2888 “Religia: za i protiv,” available at [<https://wciom.ru/index.php?id=236&uid=115329>], 25 March 2018.

<sup>27</sup> H.V. Dutsev, A.P. Dibirova, op. cit., p. 79.

more and more aware of the fact that the state and the religious organizations should start talking to each other. According to VCIOM, in the last twenty-five years the society has radically changed its attitude to members of different religious teachings and sects: 40% of Russian citizens wanted to see them isolated in late 2014; in 1989, the share was a meager 7%.<sup>28</sup>

Members of the clergy are also involved in the dialog. Jacques Waardenburg has offered an example of Christian ecumenical theology that is open to Islam: his concept does not treat the Abrahamic religions as systems in their own right.<sup>29</sup> Judaism, Christianity and Islam are the three sub-systems of a homogenous system or, three partially intertwined systems. He is convinced that their main structural elements, namely, components, symbols and values, are the same or coherent.

Louis Massignon, an outstanding Catholic Orientalist, was the first to formulate ecumenical hermeneutics, within which Roman theology acquired Islamic theology as a partner in dialog.<sup>30</sup> He argued that true believers, and those with a prophetic gift in the first place, wish for salvation for everyone, which is accessible for all believers. He is convinced that God accepts the faiths of all followers of the Abrahamic religions—which include Judaists and Muslims along with Christians. They share very similar doctrinal foundations and are very close historically and culturally; they teach people to be tolerant, moderate, fair and virtuous and accept personal dignity, freedom of conscience and religion as basic values.

The so-called Islamic extremism challenges the interreligious dialog. In fact, this term is hardly correct (it is far more appropriate to discuss extremism in the Muslim milieu); it is used to describe the terrorist activities of all sorts of Islamist groups, which push aside the norms of international law in their fight for power. Muslims define terrorism as an extreme manifestation, or generalization, of extremism and as criminal activity spearheaded against human lives and the foundations of any constitutional order.

It should be said here that in both planetary-scale and local conflicts the destructive potential of religious impulses sometimes crops up to sanction intolerance, confrontation, isolationism or expansion and promote totalitarian or authoritarian relationships between the authorities and people. Some members of the expert community prefer to shift part of the blame onto the collisions of secularization. Jean-Paul Willaime, for example, has written: “Secularization of society is paradoxically responsible for these militant and cruel forms of religiosity.”<sup>31</sup> He is convinced that contemporary religiosity, nonclerical in nature, may sometimes push highly religious individuals (or closely knit groups of such individuals) to act autonomously without external pressure of any religious structure and select an extreme and highly rigid format of religious self-determination.

Russia’s political leaders have attained positive results and continue moving in the same direction in the South of Russia to prevent Islamic radicalization and overcome the already existing opinions about Islam as an inherently extremist religion<sup>32</sup>. According to VCIOM, in 2016, only 2% of Russian citizens looked at the Caucasus as the source of terrorism.<sup>33</sup>

Politicization of religious consciousness is clearly seen in the positive and negative aspects of a more active social role of religion. Mythologization of public conscience is one of the results of the

<sup>28</sup> See: Dannye VCIOM. Press release No. 2725 “Uroven tolerantnosti v Rossii: rastet ili padaet?” available at [<http://wciom.ru/index.php?id=236&uid=115070>], 15 February, 2018.

<sup>29</sup> See: J. Waardenburg, op. cit.

<sup>30</sup> See: L. Massignon, op. cit., pp. 171-193.

<sup>31</sup> J.-P. Willaime, op. cit., p. 126.

<sup>32</sup> See: A. Rudenko, V. Kotliarova, E. Polozhenkova, M. Shubina, Yu. Shestakov, G. Mogilevskaya, O. Sysoeva, “Religious Tolerance as a Factor of Spiritual Security in the South of Russia,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 17, Issue 2, 2016, pp. 37-46.

<sup>33</sup> See: Dannye VCIOM. Press release No. 3167 “Terroristicheskaia ugroza: monitoring,” available at [<https://wciom.ru/index.php?id=236&uid=115800>], 20 March 2018.



above. It should be said that in the near future this factor should come to the fore in the dialog between religions in the South of Russia. Coupled with the historically determined religious context, the current processes of politicization of religion accelerate the growth of outward signs of religiosity. By this I mean church/mosque attendance and participation in all sorts of religious rites as well as a more active religious awareness, primarily in the ethnocultural and political spheres. Defense of the traditional (up to and including religious) values can be described as an important trend that helps suppress radical and highly politicized religious sentiments in the South of Russia. In recent years, the share of those who support traditional values rose from 72% in 2004 to 86% in 2016.<sup>34</sup>

According to the Russian expert Konstantin Kostiuk, religious (Christian and Islamic alike) fundamentalism is building up an ideological program of its own based on the rigid anti-Western rhetoric; it criticizes everything, from Western forms of Christianity to the human rights concept, market economy, supremacy of the law and democracy.<sup>35</sup> Fundamentalists have created their own programs of political action; they acquired their own rhetoric on which they rely to condemn Westernized values as opposed to traditional religious values. This is one of the elements of their program of political action, in which religious traditions are pushed aside (to a certain extent) to give space to political slogans. The highly balanced national politics of the Russian Federation in the Northern Caucasus has changed the region's general sentiments: according to public opinion polls, over 80% of the polled population in the republics of the North Caucasian Federal District (60% among them are Chechens) believe that the use of force in political disagreements is unacceptable.<sup>36</sup>

In the open information space, the steadily growing influence of sociocultural exogenous factors, better described as challenges of all sorts and tempting examples of high living standards, consumer psychology, hedonistic lifestyle, etc. actualizes moral, first and foremost religious, determinants rather than the use of force, as well as the need to readjust social and economic behavior and to teach people to resist the tide of alien values both mentally and philosophically.

To a certain extent, faith mitigates the evaluation of the level of social tension when defending one's own rights and interests. In this context, Muslims demonstrate a more positive attitude, which points to Islam's huge potential of social adaptation.<sup>37</sup>

Historical experience has taught us that Christianity and Islam are organic parts of contemporary civilization. It should be said that novelties are invariably rooted in the past; this means that people should rely on religious values to adjust their lifestyle to the rapidly unfolding changes.

## *Conclusion*

The sphere of values is an inalienable part of human culture; it reflects the social actor's value-based attitude towards the world and vice versa. The sphere of religious values consists of an abstract image of the structured functional system of religious preferences, attitudes, identities, etc. Any transformations in this sphere affect both the dimensions of the social space—the spatial and the temporal—in which different religious values are arranged in a multitude of very different configurations.

The present stage of this sphere's development in the South of Russia has not only increased the quantitative indices, but also improved the quality of the religious milieu. Extensive forms of religious identity are emerging and gradually developing.

<sup>34</sup> See: V. Kotlyarova, A. Rudenko, P. Ponomarev, op. cit.

<sup>35</sup> See: K.N. Kostiuk, op. cit.

<sup>36</sup> See: H.V. Dutsev, A.P. Dibirova, op. cit., p. 62.

<sup>37</sup> See: M.M. Mchedlova, "Religia, obshchestvo, gosudarstvo: vyzovy i ugrozy sovremennosti," *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya*, No. 10, 2016, pp. 110-118.

The sphere of religious values in the South of Russia demonstrates certain specifics:

- Higher level of religiosity as compared with the average level of religiosity across Russia;
- Manifestations of separation and cooperation models of the state-religion relationships;
- The declared high level of religiosity is responsible for formal or nominal religiosity;
- Social identity seen in the context of studies of the sphere of religious values determines religious identity;
- The social institute of education is not perceived through the prism of religious values;
- Post-secularism does not mean the triumphant return of religion into the social sphere but, rather the re-configuration of religious experience in an intertwining of circumstances, conditions, feelings and reflections about human life that call for decisions that require, in their turn, an axiological platform;
- Bipolarity of religious values helps create the axiological structure of a personality;
- A considerable part of those living in the South of Russia prefers interreligious dialog and supports the principle of non-violence as a method of settling political conflicts to preserve social and political stability in the region.

I believe that comparative analysis should be continued to identify the mutual influence within the traditional triumvirate of the religious, political-legal and moral values that, on the one hand, belong to their own axiological spheres and, on the other, are parts of the homogenous unit that we call the axiological sphere of society.

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