

**ON THE MULTICULTURALISM
PROJECT AND
THE SOCIOPOLITICAL STATUS OF
ISLAM IN UKRAINE**

*Preliminary Theses for a Case Study of
Ethnocultural, Confessional, and Personal Self-Identity
in a Multicultural Environment*

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I n t r o d u c t i o n

The subject of my article is relatively novel for Ukraine, a country that has been drawn into the worldwide development of multiculturalism. This means that the academic community should identify the parameters, fundamental features, and characteristics of the related changes.

In the course of our project we posed ourselves the task of identifying, on the one hand, the basic features of the Ukrainian society conducive to its multicultural format; on the other, the state of diverse ethnocultural groups living in Ukraine and their religious and cultural parameters that make it easier/harder to build up a

multicultural society in the republic's very specific conditions.

This article is an attempt at describing the contemporary state of Islam and the specifics of its traditions in Ukraine which should be taken into account when developing multiculturalism. We will clarify the ideology of our project and outline several main specifics and problems of contemporary Muslim identity which serve as the background against which multiculturalism will (or will not, which will entail dangerous repercussions) be formed in Ukraine and which call for profound and detailed analysis.

Throughout its history, Ukraine, as part of an associated state structure, has maintained close relations with other countries. Throughout the longest stretch of its history, however, with the exception of short episodes, it remained deprived of the legal rights to be independently and directly involved in international relations. This status, which "truncated" its rights to independent international relations, did not allow Ukraine to regard itself as a *de facto/de jure* entity of world politics.

At the new stage, Ukraine's recent sovereignty gives it, for the first time in its history, the legitimate right to be involved in international institutions as an independent and fully-fledged entity of international policy. However, the country and its government bodies have to cope with numerous problems, the scope of which has be-

come much wider and calls for well-justified motivations. This constitutes the main specific feature of the new stage.

Today, the country's government bodies are facing the task of working on an algorithm of its own to be applied to systemic problems.

The fact that Ukraine is situated at the crossroads of the transport and communication mainlines of the Eurasian geopolitical space has made this stage doubly important and created several economic advantages. At the same time, the transit nature of its geopolitical location creates problems in its domestic policy, which call for constructive solutions in order to achieve the best possible social order in line with the responsibilities imposed on the country by the international legal regulations and membership in international organizations.

A new model of ethnogenesis should be treated as a priority; the country must reach an objective comprehension of the main stages of community-building in order to consolidate all the sub-ethnic groups which form the cornerstone of the contemporary Ukrainian nation. It is equally important to structuralize the inner political and demographic structures of the country's population.

This is not an easy task: Ukraine is a multi-confessional country, the citizens of which identify themselves with different historical and cultural values.

The Muslims of Ukraine

Leaving the details of the relations inside the Christian community to be discussed by those who are better equipped to analyze them, I will try to reconstruct the phenomenon of political Islam and its place in the country's political life.

The Crimean Tatars, the autochthonous population of the peninsula, and migrants from the Volga area and the Caucasus who have been living in Ukraine for several generations and have not lost their historical, cultural, and national traditions and religion form part of the Ukrainian population.

According to the latest census, there are two million Muslims (about 4% of the total population) in Ukraine. Today, there are over 280 thousand Crimean Tatars-Muslims in the country; the majority of them live in the Crimea and comprise about 13% of its total population. There are several thousand Volga Tatars and Bashkirs, as well as Azeris and people from the Northern Caucasus. The constantly growing number of immigrants from the Arab East, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Palestine, and the new-

ly independent states of Central Asia with Ukrainian passports identify themselves culturally and religiously with Islam.

I have paid particular attention to the fact that as distinct from the countries of the Arab East, where Islam exists in a monoethnic milieu, in Central Asia, ethnic, sub-ethnic, kinship, clan, and sometimes patron/client relations consolidate confessional self-identity. In Uzbekistan, for example, which supplies the largest number of Crimean Tatar repatriates, the mahallya (quarter) in towns and cities and kishlak in the countryside play a consolidating role and perform the functions of self-administrations. In Kazakhstan, the Kazakhs are consolidated by belonging to the same zhuz; in Kyrgyzstan, this role belongs to the kanat (a group of densely settled tribes). There were sub-levels—the tribe and the clan. The Tajiks, Uyghurs, and Dungans relied on the place where they lived and kinship relations for ethnic, confessional, and cultural self-identification.

When looking into the process of rebirth of the traditional hierarchical structures in Central Asia and the Caucasus from which Islam is spreading across the post-Soviet territory, and Ukraine as its part, I have concentrated on a factor that appears paradoxical at first glance: it was Soviet power, which deliberately limited Islam, that was the main catalyst of clan self-identity in its quasi-traditional forms and outcrops.

The typology of the resultant social structures suggests that the Soviet Communist Party and administrative nomenklatura in the national republics and the authoritarian hierarchical system blended with the traditional model of social relations based on collective solidarity and obedience to the elders. The resultant sustainable symbiosis within the framework of the “socialist system of government” was conducive to the appearance and strengthening of extremely viable structures ruled by clan elites camouflaged as the Soviet party and economic nomenklatura.

To maintain legitimacy, the local rulers continued with the Marxist-Leninist rhetoric, especially when it came to unsuccessful attempts to impose atheism and internationalism on local societies: when used by the party nomenklatura these words sounded like incantations.

In the current demographic situation connected, in many ways, with the power and political structures in the Central Asian states and Azerbaijan, Islam remains the main symbol of national specifics and a factor of cultural and historical self-identity. A wider context of the same problem makes it abundantly clear that traditional clan and tribal relations and belonging to a particular clan serve as the main indicator of political and social identity in the area of Islam rather than the Muslim religion and its institutions per se. The specifics of the new national-state identity and the axiology of relations at the national and individual level are developing along these lines.

When talking about the traditional social hierarchy, which demonstrates viability, we should always bear in mind that the Soviet Union and the Bolshevik ideology left an ideological vacuum behind them that is obvious across the entire post-Soviet space. In these conditions, the struggle against denationalization and acculturation rehabilitated the traditional ideological and cultural values as an inalienable part of national cultures. In other words, historical and national cultural values have been revived.

Today, the Muslim renaissance is becoming more obvious and more active in the entire area of Islam. The figures of demographic growth and the unmistakable trend toward migration show that Islam is spreading across the entire post-Soviet space (Ukraine being no exception). Domestic political situation in the newly independent countries is conducive to this. The national and state sovereignties of the newly independent states have exposed them to the entire range of negative repercussions of a systemic economic, financial, demographic, social, and cultural crisis and to the voluntarism of the powers that be and omnipresent corruption in the newly independent states that is obvious at practically all levels.

As soon as they acquired their sovereignty, these countries lost their national intelligentsia: part of it was routed and repressed or forced into emigration; the pauperized majority left to cope

with their leaders are still haphazardly looking for social and political alternatives to what is going today and turn to the “true” Islam, which has nothing to do with the people in power, as practically the only means of dealing with the current social and political situation at the group and existential levels.

There is another, and probably the only, alternative: massive emigration from their ethnic territories. This option, however, does not exclude returning to the “true” Islam. This is extremely important for the political processes underway in all the countries in which Muslim migrants from the post-Soviet states arrive, Ukraine, where these processes remain latent, being no exception.

World history has taught us that those who preach the ideas of a fair and just society stand the best chance in conditions where the ruling elite has exhausted its resources and the interests of which contradict, in the most obvious and uncompromising way, the social and economic expectations of the basic population groups. In this situation, political Islam, which appeals to the traditional spiritual values, can offer a more puritanical and much more demanding alternative, which the populists who have mastered the “language of the street” present as much fairer.

A more detailed analysis relates the new type of relations not to those formed inside states but to those between the financial-industrial corporations that share the spheres of influence on the world markets and the global marginalized masses.

Attitude toward Radical Forms of Islam

The results of numerous recent studies have clearly demonstrated that only liberal Islam based on universal humanist values and the mechanisms of their realization in the sociocultural space can be successfully used to fight the radical forms of Islam.

Early in the 20th century, Jadidism, a movement of enlightenment in Islam, began to form in Ukraine. It was associated with the names of Sh. Marjani, I. Gasprinski, Yu. Akchur, and others who cultivated Islam adapted to contemporary civilizational conditions, universal humanitarian values, and ideas of social justice and liberalism.

To proceed further with our studies, we should re-actualize the philosophical and culturological heritage of the founders of Jadidism and their followers stored in Ukrainian archives and libraries (in the I. Gasprinski Library in Simferopol, among other places). The personal library of Professor of Kazan University Nikolai Katanov taken out of Soviet Russia in the 1920s landed at the Institute of Geography in Istanbul where for want of specialists with good command of Russian it remained piled on the floor.

Zeki Velidi Togan’s attempts to bring together the liberal-democratic ideas of European socialists of the early 20th century and the cultural and social-legal traditions of Islam can serve as a theoretical and methodological basis for our studies.

The attempts at Islamic renovation made in the late 19th century by the Jadids have become even more pertinent today. In the context of Russia’s colonial policy, the enlightened Islamic community of the early 20th century (headed by the Volga and Crimean Tatars) could not set up secular educational establishments, higher schools, or political parties; it was limited in property rights and economic activities. This explains why the secondary educational establishments—the madrasahs, which accumulated the Muslim traditions—remained the only vehicle of national-cultural self-identity of the enlightened Islamic community.

In the pinching context of the political and religious pressure of czarist Russia, the Jadids performed an intellectual feat: they tore themselves away from the conservative forms of Islam to move closer to the culture of enlightened Europe.

This was when the best representatives of Islamic culture in Russia embraced the Jadidist ideas of renovation that inspired the enlightened part of society. In fact, Jadidism was not limited to the idea of reforms in education and modernization of Islam; it believed that many systemic cultural parameters as a dynamically developing whole should also be changed.

Modernization of religion and culture guarantees that the nation and the state will survive and develop. The globalized world has made it impossible to remain isolated from the world cultural trends; since integration of local cultures into the world processes is inevitable, it is doubly important to revive Jadidism and its ideas.

Zeki Velidi Togan, who reconstructed the main ideas of Jadidism, deemed it necessary to stress that the movement has not created a new form of Islam; it merely tried to remove the later historical and ethnic layers which, in the course of time, had developed into taqlid (unquestioned truths). Jadidism should not be understood as reform in the European sense of the term: it purifies Islam, shows a way out of the spiritual and intellectual impasse, and rejects alien regulations imposed from the outside.

It rejected religious xenophobia; it relied on the basic Koranic principles to critically analyze all sorts of scholastic ideas preached by orthodox Muslim theologians.

An objective analysis of the ideas of Jadidism reveals that this religious and educational movement was not a version of Russian Islam but, rather, the core freed from medieval prejudices, which, in one way or another, could emerge in any Muslim region. For some objective reasons, however, it emerged in the Russian Empire. This means that the appearance of Jadidism was dictated by the objective conditions and the logic of historical evolution of Islam; hence we can talk about the universality of Jadidism.

The first Muslim leaders respected the mind as a great Divine gift; their type of critical reasoning (ijtihad) rested on a creative approach. It was ijtihad that helped the young religion to spread far and wide across the world; those societies which abandoned it inevitably ossified their backwardness.

The Jadids restored the freedom of thinking in Islam based on the principle that neither the community, nor the imam or mufti should stand between man and God. This meant that man should be aware of his personal responsibility for what he is doing and should be able to distinguish between good and evil. This also meant that people need comprehensive education to acquire adequate knowledge.

This brings Islam close to the values of Euro-Atlantic civilization: Western culture is rooted in self-reflection, in which creative thinking (later developed into liberal ideas) dominated.

They looked at the world differently; for them Islam as a historical-cultural phenomenon was not limited to contemplation of its information heritage; it was expected to address the most urgent needs created by dynamically developed life. Faith should answer the questions created by life, which is impossible without scientific knowledge and a good education. Any imam worthy of his position should be universally educated to be able to lead others.

At the same time we should bear in mind that today the interests of the world are very different from what they were centuries ago. This means that to preserve its position in society Islam must be able to cope with contemporary challenges; the time has come to abandon the outdated religious opinions to which many of the Eastern countries are still clinging. We all know that the tradition of treating women as second-rate beings crept into Islam from Judaism and Christianity and that, as distinct from Europe, Muslim countries have not yet abandoned it.

Musa Bigiev, a Russian student of Islam, created a theory called Evidence of the Mercy of God, according to which Divine mercy envelops all of God's creatures irrespective of their religious beliefs in life. Surah 2 (62) says, for example: "Those who believe (in the Qur'an), and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians and Sabians, and who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousnes, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve."

Islam is a religion of peace, which is confirmed by the everyday relations between Muslims and Orthodox Christians and between Muslims and Jews in the traditionally Muslim countries of the Middle East and in Ukraine. Peaceful Islam stands a good chance of becoming one of the Ukrainian brands because it, together with Christianity (Orthodoxy, Greco-Roman, and Catholic) and Judaism, shaped the historical and cultural heritage of Ukraine.

Historical experience and the spiritual-intellectual legacy of Jadidism born in the Volga area and Ukraine have acquired worldwide historical importance because today Islam is developing according to the needs of society and the challenges of the times.

The postulates of Jadidism are very close to the conception of civilizational Islam postulated by former Premier of Malaysia Ahmad Badawi and also to what prominent Muslim thinkers and public figures of Asia and Europe say. The new stage in Islamic civilizational revival stems from the desire to restore a creative attitude toward life in Islam.

In Shi'a Iran, the interpretation of the basic canons of Islam is moving in the same direction; Iranian philosophers believe that Islam and the West should start a dialog to achieve reconciliation.

Speaking at a press conference at RIA Novosti, Professor of Islamic law and philosophy M. Damad said that mutual understanding would lead to reconciliation between Islam and the West. When asked whether the time of reconciliation had been lost and whether the threats to Iran had made reconciliation hardly possible, Prof. Reza Davari Ardakani, President of the Iranian Academy of Sciences, said that "it is never late to start a dialog."

The Iranian academics deemed it necessary to stress that they did not succumb to any government pressure imposed on the study of Western philosophy.

The Muslims of Ukraine should serve as a link between the Islamic world and the West—this is their historic mission in a world divided into Christians, Jews, and Muslims separated by an abyss that might become an ultimate obstacle. This split runs through human souls and fills them with anxiety, fear, and mutual mistrust. We need new values, neither liberal nor traditionally Islamic, and therefore acceptable to one and all.

To clarify the role of the Islamic factor in the development of civil society in the multicultural context, we should rely on as wide an academic circle as possible. We should offer weighty arguments to prove that this task is highly topical and that we must act promptly to optimize economic, social, political and cultural, conditions for the part of society that professes Islamic values.

It is no less important to explain to Muslims that they are living in a society prepared to seek constructive compromises; that it does not isolate them and is not hostile to them. Civilized discussions of the Islam-related problems would have been useful; we should address many potentially destructive problems which, if left pending, might erupt into confessional confrontation.

In Ukraine, negative ideas about Islam and its followers are fairly widespread and are actively promoted by the media. This explains why Islam is seen as an aggressive confession (and civilization) hostile to Christianity. This means that the studies of the Islamic factor and its role should concentrate on overcoming these negative attitudes.

In the Soviet Union, official atheism lumped all Islamic societies together and pushed them beyond the limits of rational analysis, which should rely on practical studies of religious rites in their diversity.

In recent decades, we have been watching wide-scale restoration of the old and establishment of a multitude of new Islamic centers. The new reality insistently calls for a new idea of Islam.

The “new wave” of academics who identify themselves with the cultural and historical legacy of Islam believe that Muslims should live in everyday reality rather than be forced to follow the injunctions of their spiritual teaching. It should be said that societies with prevailing Muslim populations are demonstrating a growing number of different approaches to Islam. There is an even greater number of “interpretations” of Islam in the countries with Muslim minorities.

Academic and non-academic circles still rely on the traditional and undifferentiating terms “Muslims” and “Islamic countries”; however, many members of the academic community who have moved away from the inadequate conception of a one “Islamic world” concentrate on the variety of Islamic trends.

“Aliens” in Islam. Faith or Religion in the Contact Zone in the Context of a Dialog of Civilizations

The problem of self-identification of those who do not regard themselves as Muslims in the traditional meaning of the word has come to the fore. They either do not follow many of the required Muslim rules or do not profess any religion. These people, however, identify themselves with the cultural Islamic tradition into which they were born.

A generalized approach to this stratum suggests that traditional Islam is a norm while all other versions constitute deviations from the norm. In other words, those who have no habit of following the fairly strict traditional Muslim rules are excluded from the Islamic cultural discourse. These people are aliens in prayer houses and mosques; society treats them in the same way. On the other hand, Islamic undertones in the existential attitudes of the “aliens” (if discussed in the categories of Carl Jung) at the genetic and historical-cultural levels stir up inner conflicts in them and affect their self-perception.

On the one hand, these people spend their lives in an effort to “escape the shadow of Islam;” adapt themselves to Western values; reassess social and cultural values; and become, in the final analysis, entities of an “open society.” On the other hand, they are constantly aware of the obvious hostility of the followers of traditional Islam, which complicates, at least at the existential level, their historical and cultural self-identification.

It should be said that from the point of view of the “aliens,” the Islamic culture and Islamic politics differ considerably from the orientalist or any other approach to these problems. They look at Islam as a phenomenon of history and culture and at Islamic politics as a component of political culture.

This approach is confirmed by the fact that most conceptions devised to “protect” the Islamic culture stem from extra-confessional characteristics such as ethnic affiliation; this means that Islam is going beyond its religious limits. All national movements treat defense of Islam as their priority, yet nationalism can hardly be equated with Muslim extremism. The events stirred up by the opposition, which protested against the severe persecution of those who failed to agree with the clergy in culture and politics that followed the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, serve as an ample example of the shift in interpretations.

In the Islamic context, the “aliens” are noticed but ignored; they are heard but not listened to since they are ignorant of the correct Islamic terms and vocabulary and cannot formulate their arguments in favor of social and cultural diversity they advocate.

According to the rules of religious piety, everything the Muslim does should be regarded in the context of Islam; the following has gained wide currency: “If you have taken the path of Islam then, no matter how different the end might be, the path will be invariably true.” In the political context, this means that only the Muslim East (and not other historical, cultural, and confessional areas of the world) can seek diversity within Islam (only) with the aim to develop cultural individuality among its followers.

Those who insist, without adequate arguments, that “there is no alternative to Islam in the East” contradict historical facts and the reality of peaceful coexistence among different confessions.

This context suggests several so far unanswered questions: What happens to the non-Muslims in Eastern countries who are seeking their cultural identity within Islam? How does a person “born Muslim” feel in a non-Muslim environment? These questions and the specifics of the “Islamic discourse” inevitably push us into the entanglements of Muslim laws and regulations.

The lexical and terminological labyrinth makes intellectual efforts even harder: we have to identify the “best Islam” in the randomly oriented set of contradictory interpretations of analyzed events and facts. The road is paved with word combinations like “regressive Islam,” “progressive Islam,” “quasi-Islam,” “true Islam,” etc., the real content of which defies rational interpretation.

This means that intellectual energy is wasted on producing banalities such as “this version differs from the others” or “this interpretation has produced amazing results.” This is best illustrated by the interpretations of the fairly shopworn cliché “Islamic feminism.” Its interpretation is not equally authentic to the original because the Koran contains many more ideas of equality than the Islamic feminist interpretations of the Islamic canons can produce.

For example, what do we mean when we talk about more equality for women? Why should their rights stem from the fatwas adopted on the strength of special investigations conducted by influential muftis and fakihs and which do nothing at all except slightly raising the status of women? Which legal norms currently accepted by the countries found outside the traditional Islamic areas serve as the foundation of this “uncontestable” decree?

There are attempts, very much in line with official instructions, to reveal the meaning of those Koranic verses that speak of limited freedom for women. Meanwhile, we all know that any word can be interpreted in several different ways, which provides interpreters with a certain leeway: they are free to select less obviously limiting synonyms to convince the world of the liberal nature of the Koranic canons.

This should not be taken to mean that Islamic law is untouchable; future generations, likewise, will probably change some of the rules to adjust them to reality.

However, there are bones to pick with those “aliens” who see rejection of the Islamic discourse as movement toward the truth and the only alternative to existential and social-cultural existence, since this choice is fraught with a loss of their genetic, cultural, and historical self-identity. The “aliens” born into the values based on the cultural and historical discourse of Islam are free to look for an alternative only in Islam. In line with the traditional Islamic interpretation, however, they are forced to treat human rights and freedoms as a postulate (in disregard of cultural relativism) based on the assertion that “there is any number of objections to our decisions outside the Muslim world, but our decisions correspond to our way of life.” The “aliens” have no ethical rights to refute the above because the followers of “true” Islam are suspicious of and hostile to all attempts at new interpretations of the canonical postulates: they regard such attempts as precedents after which manipulation of the basic values of Islam will be possible.

Liberal students from the “non-Muslim world” should realize that the “aliens” in Islam have long been trying to overcome objective intellectual and ethical barriers in an effort to insist on their cultural and historical identity. For a long time they have remained dedicated to a different, neither “non-Western” nor “true” Islamic point of view. “Silent” pluralism (at best) or humiliating condescension (at worst) on the part of those who defend the “Western” point of view deprive the “aliens” of a chance to join the discussions in order to address and resolve their intellectual and moral and ethical dilemmas. In the absence of a dialog with “true” Islam, the “aliens” cannot constructively correct and readjust their ideas.

The intellectual vacuum provokes “cultural racism” of sorts because, ignored by one side (even if at the subconscious level), problems usually crop up in negative contexts. It seems that the extreme answers provided by the marginalized “aliens” (intellectuals seemingly perfectly integrated into Western society who perform irrational terrorist acts) are caused by the consistently ignored, yet very real problem of overcoming the visually not quite discernable intellectual and ethical barriers.

So far, contemporary terrorism as a social and psychological phenomenon has not been fully studied either from the criminological or the psychopathological point of view. We have merely arrived at a preliminary conclusion that intellectual bifurcation and alienation, which stir up psychopathic stereotypes of potential and real terrorists, form one of the links in the chain of causes of unmotivated aggression. The situation, however, is much more complicated.

The “aliens” in Islam do not expect Western liberals to join the discussion about the place and role of Islam in the contemporary world; these “aliens” have much more in common with people in other countries than with the citizens of their own country. This means that an equal discussion of any of the burning issues should have excluded condescension toward the “aliens.”

It seems that the political or cultural barriers can be overcome if Islam formulates its official credo in terms and concepts that correlate with the categories understandable to the academic and political communities outside Islam.

The problem of the role of religion in a state and of the relationship between the state and religious institutions is signally important: even if the gap between them is fairly wide, in the face of large-scale social crises they act together. Society, however, is billed for their mutual services.

Our studies of the problems of ethnocultural, confessional, and individual self-identity have shown that we should create a “safe space” in which people will be able to freely discuss government actions and religious postulates without running the risk of being accused of high treason or heresy.

So far, any attempt to look for the truth outside the confines of the Islamic discourse runs across “we have an Islamic society within which we should look for our cultural identity.” This invites the following answer: “in the context of other factors (economic, historical, political, and cultural), religion cannot remain the only reference point”; in post-modernist parlance, this sounds like “the sphere of problems has shifted from the object to its interpretation.” This demands the assumption that Islam and its interpretations are found at different taxonomical levels: will supporters of “true” Islam accept this?

This brings us to the main (and insoluble) contradiction created by an inadequate understanding of the conceptual and legal limits of Islamic law by those who do not identify themselves with the Muslim world. If Islamic law is universal and can adequately resolve all collisions in the life of society, it should not be ignored only because it allows numerous interpretations; if the Islamic law is not universal, its vague and shapeless definitions (from the point of view of the non-Islamic legal and regulatory traditions) may be used by the regulatory legal systems outside the jurisdiction of the Islamic world only for fairly limited analytical purposes without further application.

It is common knowledge that there is any number of people in the Muslim world who crave for positive changes; they know that only one religious confession cannot be held responsible for

all the multitude of social ills and that injustice exists outside Islamic law as well. This means that instead of reforms within Islamic law we should act in conformity with the processes unfolding in the wider world.

Many people, irrespective of their faith, oppose all forms of subjugation, including those implied by Islamic law. At the same time, the Muslims are held responsible for the fact that Islamic societies were not determined enough in their protest against exploitation and violations of human rights.

We must admit that today Islamic law is the main factor interfering with social reform. Not infrequently, the law, which does not directly oppose modernization of a social and legal system, limits any necessary efforts. This means that to achieve justice, democracy, and civil rights, we must remove the regulatory legal obstacles and overcome the resistance of the state and religious canons supporting it.

I am not talking about a moratorium on the use of Islamic law and do not suggest that its ideologists should be isolated: the law should be analyzed in an impartial and comprehensive manner.

The aim is to establish a consensus among the faithful without relying on Islamist principles, otherwise a liberal democratic society will remain unattainable.

We should admit that Islamic law in its present state can hardly be used to resolve the multitude of problems the world is facing today. To adjust it to the contemporary world, it is not enough to rephrase its provisions using new wording, rather the entire conceptual system born by Islam must be changed. The above suggests that to achieve social justice, civil freedoms, equality of the sexes, etc., we must go beyond the regulatory legal field of Islam and beyond the framework of its political interpretations in particular.

In other words, full-scale reform of the Islamic legal system, which must be brought into conformity with contemporary reality, demands a lot of political will and determination from the leaders of the Muslim world.

Islam in the Crimea

We all know that Islam was planted in the homogenous Turkic ethno-cultural community in several stages.

There is no written and absolutely reliable evidence about the first Islamic missionaries in the Turkic world. According to legend, Arystan Baba, a contemporary and companion of the Prophet Muhammad, was the first Muslim in Central Asia. The mystic Hoja Akhmet Yassawi, his spiritual disciple, born four centuries later (in 1093) in the city of Sayram (present day Kazakhstan) adapted the Islamic canons to the traditional beliefs of the local Turkic nomads by preserving the cult of ancestors, secularized interpretation of the canons, reducing the role of the institution of intermediaries and the role of the mullahs, etc. Adapted and flexible Islam spread far and wide in the region.

Several centuries later, at the turn of the 20th century, this version of Islam was used as the starting point of Jadidism, which demanded secular education and reforms in several other aspects of life.

It seems that the Crimean Tatars as an ethnicity that has preserved Islam as part of its historical and cultural traditions and collective consciousness should have been more actively involved in implementing the Muslim values of the Jadid social and political legacy, particularly the ideas of Ismail Gasprinski, an enlightener and active political figure, and his comrades-in-arms.

Revived traditions and the promotion of liberal Islam will help to overcome the so far widespread mistrust and fear of the Muslims obvious in the much larger non-Muslim population of the Crimea. It

should be said that the media have been very instrumental in demonizing the followers of Islam. It is also necessary for lifting the threat of social outbursts by the Crimean Tatar community.

Conclusion

The problem of the Islamic factor in Ukrainian politics exceeds the limits of academic studies. The country, caught in social-political and geopolitical transit, will have to probe deeper into Islam as one of the key components of the changing social and political reality. An integrated approach to the problem presupposes a set of applied studies and due attention to the changing demographic situation. Inattention might divide society into separate confessional communities and might breed and encourage mistrust among the main population groups and other negative phenomena.
