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Specifics of Integration of Islamic Population in Russian Society:

Immigration and Separatism

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Conference
“Europe and the Muslim World”

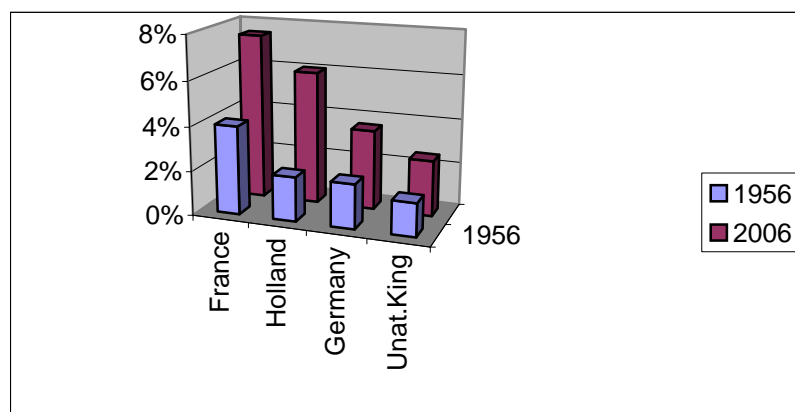
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1. Muslim World inside of Europe

As far as 50 years back the Muslim World notion was perceived as something external to the Christian Europe. However nowadays Muslim World is inside of Europe. What is meant here is not just increase of European countries with predominantly Muslim population (in this group Bosnia has joined Turkey and Albania recently and it is quite probable that one more independent country, Kosovo will be added to the group) but also a dramatic increase of the Muslim minority's share in population of the biggest European countries. In the last 50 years this share rose by more than threefold and by the beginning of the 21st century comprised 7.5% in France, 6.2% in Holland, 3.6% in Germany and 2.5% in United Kingdom (see fig.1).

Fig. 1. Growth of Muslim minorities' share in population of European countries.



In Russia numbers of Muslims and their share in the total population are the highest among Christian countries. According to various estimates, Muslims comprise from 10% to 14% in the total Russia's population. Their number is from 15 to 20 million people. At the first gaze these indicators are not very impressive. However one has to take into account the fact that number of Muslim in all countries mentioned above grows at a faster pace that the number of members of religions that are traditional for the states. It should be emphasized that in Russia growth of Muslim population occurs against background of the Christian population number decrease. By the end of the century Muslims may comprise up to 40% of Russia's population. The final result will depend on the pace of ethnic Russians decrease and so far this pace is increasing.

In all mentioned countries tension between Muslim minorities and majority of population persists or even increases. For example, in Holland which as late as in 1980s could be called a model of tolerant attitude of the society to minorities of all kinds a significant deterioration of relations between immigrants from Muslim countries and majority of population is observed at the present time. That led to the fact that in early 2000s political forces that give expression to the active anti-immigrant feelings began to get up to 20% of votes at elections and to lay claims

to the leading positions in parliaments. In France the street riots of November, 2005, with participation of descendants of immigrants from Muslim countries demonstrated that so called 'unitarian' model of various cultures' representatives integration which actually denied existence of minorities failed in more than a single instance. Participation of Muslims, citizens of Spain and United Kingdom in terrorist actions undertaken in the territory of these countries also highlights obvious problems of the Muslim minority integration into the existing society. The same problem manifests itself in Russia too. And it is the high time to put a question: *what is the Russian specific character of this all-European problem?*

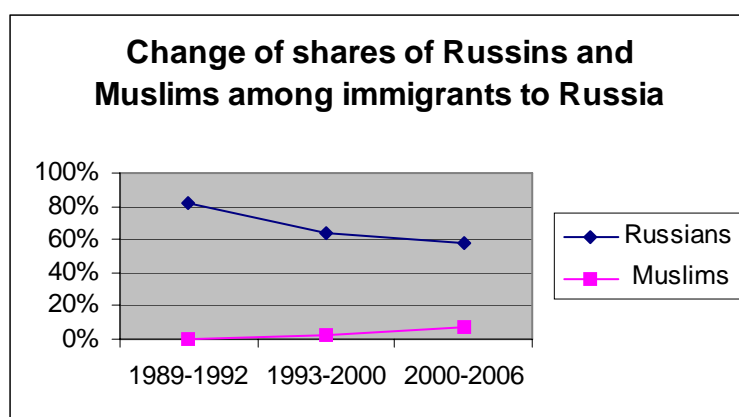
All my presentation is an attempt to answer the question. However I'll begin from peculiarities of Russia's Muslim population formation.

Unlike West European countries mentioned above the Muslim population of my country has not been formed due to influx of immigrants. ***More than 99% of Russia's Muslims are representatives of indigenous population***, descendants of nations that were embraced by the Russian Empire in the period from the 16th to the 19th century. This fact determines specific character of demands put forward by national movements in Russia. From time to time some of these movements strive for not just equal rights within the country but for the complete secession. Permanent Muslim population to a degree exerts influence on the Muslim immigrants' moods too.

2. Peculiarity of Muslim immigration to Russia.

By the total numbers of immigrants Russia is among the world leaders. However this immigration is largely a return of ethnic Russians to Russia. In early 1990s they comprised more than 80% of immigrants coming to Russia. Although their share has reduced they still comprise over two thirds of all immigrants at the present time (see fig.2).

Fig.2 Change of shares of Russians and of nations that have been traditionally connected with Islam in composition of immigrants to Russia.

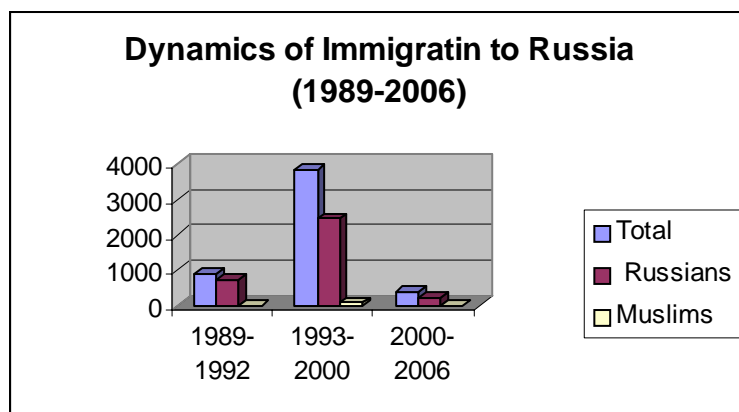


If Russian immigrants are included in a greater group of nations that have historical connections with Christianity as, for example, Armenians, Georgians, Byelorussians and Moldavians then this group accounts for over 90% of all immigrants in the course of the whole post-Soviet period. Let us imagine similar immigration flows in West Europe. For example, predominantly the ethnic Dutch would come to Holland while the French and groups that are affined to the French by their ethnic and religious characteristics would come to France. Can one have any doubt that in this case there would be no outburst of anti-immigrant attitudes in West European countries? In

Russia such attitudes are gaining momentum in spite of considerable preponderance of the Russian, Christian component in the immigration flow.

Another peculiarity of immigration flows into Russia is that their intensity is decreasing. In the beginning of 2000s immigration influx intensity went down nearly tenfold in comparison with its intensity at the peak of immigrant influx which happened in 1993-1994 (see fig 34).

Fig.3 Dynamics of Immigration to Russia (Russians and nations that have been traditionally connected with Islam 1989- 2006, thou. persons)



However in Russia the real boom of anti-immigrant moods is observed precisely under circumstances of migration decline.

The most important peculiarity of Muslim immigration into Russia consists in the fact that cultural differences among migrants and Russians are by considerably less than differences that can be observed in West Europe (e.g. between Arabs and the French in France, between natives of Indonesia and the bulk of the Dutch in the Netherlands etc.).

The overwhelming majority of immigrants (over 90%) entering Russia are predominantly natives of the former Soviet republics. Actually all of them have a command of the Russian language which is sufficient for everyday communication and retain mentality which used to be common for citizens of the former USSR. Anyway democratic values are approximately equally alien to the Russian majority as well as to immigrant minorities.

Azerbaijanis comprise the most numerous group of Muslim immigrants to Russia. Since early 2000s their share did not fall below 27% of the total number of immigrants. Azerbaijani immigrants are followed by Tadjiks, Kazakhs, Uzbeks and other nations.

Azerbaijanis were subjects of the Russian and Soviet Empire for about two centuries. Representatives of Azerbaijanis have always been members of the imperial elite. The majority of Azerbaijanis for a long time tends to follow the European rather than the Asiatic way of life. Besides that, Azerbaijanis have been always distinguished by a relatively low religious devoutness, to say nothing of zealotry. Cultural differences between Azerbaijanis and Russians are by far smaller than differences between Turks (which are ethnically related to Azerbaijanis) and Germans in Germany.

At the same time it should be noted that the younger generation of immigrants, people of 18 to 20 years old know the Russian worse than representatives of the older generation who had to learn Russian in the Soviet schools. And younger Azerbaijanis are no exception to the rule. That

impairs possibilities of their adaptation to the Russian conditions. Natives of the countryside that comprise the greatest part of immigrants from Caucasian states and states of Central Asia encounter the peculiar difficulties in adaptation.

Yet the principal obstacle in the way of Muslim immigrant integration in the Russian society consists not so much in adaptive capacities of incoming migrants as in unfavorable conditions created by the recipient population.

It is unknown what share illegal immigrants comprise in the total number of Muslim immigrants but, according to experts, their share is comparable with the share of legal immigrants and even exceeds the latter in some regions. Lack of legal grounds for other CIS countries' citizens staying and work in a region's territory by itself closes down their access to employment not only in the government machine but in a wide range of the most prestigious and well paid jobs. Illegal migrants are helpless. Very often illegal immigrants are performers of the forced labor. They are subject to nearly slavery conditions imposed by their masters. The forced labor is used not only in the illegal, shadow businesses (for example, in the sphere of sexual services) but also by the biggest legal corporations, first of all, construction companies. Restriction of spheres of employment, their reduction to the less profitable and most hard spheres of labor affect the overwhelming majority of legal migrants too. Acute problems at the labor market prompt legal migrants to look for criminal incomes, let alone illegal migrants.

Criminalization of immigrant community exaggerated by the public opinion increases the negative attitude of the local population to immigrants.

In the everyday life sphere (for example, in housing renting or purchasing) immigrants experience no lesser problems. Staff members of CERPS (the centre I preside over) have analyzed more than 8 thousand advertisements in Russian newspapers. As it has been found out, every tenth such advertisement contains notes that housing is leased or sold 'only to Russians'. In some regions of Russia's South share of such advertisements exceeds 30%. Analysis of advertisements placed at the streets, not in newspapers demonstrates that such advertisements contain even a greater share of offers with ethnic restrictions.

The less possibilities representatives of immigrant minorities have for integration into the everyday life sphere due to discrimination at housing leasing the greater is these minorities' insularity. The insularity, in its turn, considerably increases growth of the ethnic majority's xenophobic attitudes towards migrants. Nowadays insulated enclaves settled by migrant minorities are being formed in many regions. Archaic traditions of social organizations are not only preserved in these communities but sometimes reappear and re-arise. For example, during interviews I held with representatives of various regional groups of Tadjiks in Moscow my interlocutors reported that necessity of the group rallying inspired revival of such regional and clan subgroups that seemed to be forgotten in Tadjikistan itself. Traditional structures of this kind cause a very strong negative reaction of the social environment in traditionally Russian parts of Russia. The mutual alienation between the indigenous population and immigrant groups rises. The most dangerous thing is the increase of violent actions against Muslim immigrants.

Probability that immigrants will react to these assaults with actions similar to those that were practiced in Paris during the riots of November, 2005, is still low. Instead, probability of such

forms or Muslim immigrants' resistance that do not exist in a greater part of West European countries is quite high in Russia. In particular, immigrant groups might be involved in the existing structures of armed resistance to authorities that have formed in regions of traditional Muslim settlement in Russia. First of all, I refer to republics of Northern Caucasus.

3. The Muslim separatism in Russia

Separatist movements in Russia for a long time developed within framework of separate ethnic groups that put forward demands of national independence. From late 1990s the situation started to change. At this time Islam or, rather, new, unconventional for Northern Caucasus varieties of Wahhabi Islam imported from Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan became the basis for concerted resistance to the authorities. New religious leaders who oppose the traditional muftis succeeded in gaining a considerable popularity. These new leaders rallied representatives of various ethnic groups including those that had a long history of mutual unfriendliness (as, for example, Chechens and Avarians) or even of mutual hostility (as, for example, the Karachay and the Circassians, the Kabardinians and the Balkarians).

Success of this unification, to a considerable extent, was determined by the Chechen war during which the role of Islam as a tool used for consolidation of the Chechens fighting against the central power and sympathizers of insurgents in the adjoining Muslim republics and all over the Muslim world. The erroneous politics the Kremlin pursued upon completion of large-scale fighting in Chechnya, when the Chechens' resistance took forms of terrorist attacks and sabotage contributed a lot to enhancement of the Islamic opposition grip. When I speak of the erroneous politics I mean, in the first place, the administrative reform initiated by Putin. The principal purport of this reform consists in imposition of the state will on regions and in suppression of the national elites instead of quest of agreement with them.

The most important element of the mentioned reform is replacement of governors' election with their appointment. Meanwhile for the indigenous nations of the North Caucasus elections are the customary institution and the integral part of their ordinary life. Nearly everybody (from a toast-master to a settlement syndic, from mufti to a head of a local religious community, jamaat) is elected in the North Caucasus. Here in all times an appointed vice-regent of the Russian czar represented just the visible authority. The real and effective power was exercised by informal leaders who were elected in communities. The greater was the gap between the formal and informal power the greater was probability of governance collapse in some territories. The same is true today. The Kremlin put aside refractory, stubborn but popular leaders, such as Rouslan Aushev, ex-President of Ingushetia, and banked on obedient but unpopular figures. The net result of this policy is the increasing alienation of the local people from all authorities, be they local or the central ones.

Ingushetia is the most vivid example of this development. Murat Zyzikov, the security forces general and the new President of the republic, was put at the helm predominantly with the purpose to prevent proliferation of the Chechen terrorism in Ingushetia. During his term of the office the Federal troops and security forces were garrisoned in the Republic for the first time. So called preventive mopping up operations against all suspect persons were launched. There is no surprise that with arrival of Zyzikov Ingushetia has become the second (after Chechnya) theater of permanent hostilities. Not only Chechens but also Ingush people are getting to be involved in the armed resistance to the Russian authorities. On June 21-22, 2004 virtually all territory of Ingushetia was seized by the gunmen for several hours.

One more republic Dagestan nowadays may compete with Chechnya by number of terrorist and sabotage acts. According to experts, about 70-90 such acts occur in Dagestan annually. The most visible forms of resistance to the local and Federal authorities are actions in religious form. These actions are carried on by representatives of non-traditional Islam. The authorities and media call them the Wahhabis. Dagestanian Wahhabis declared the holy war (jihad) to Russia as early as in 1999. Rappani Khalilov, “the amir of Dagestanian mojaheds”, and Rasoul Makasharipov, “the amir of jamaat ‘Shariat’”, were the leaders of Dagestanian jihad. Today all in all, approximately ten different jamaats are involved in the Dagestanian jihad network. There are about 3 thousand fighters in it. For several years the jihad network have waged a sabotage and terrorist warfare against the local and Federal law enforcement authorities.

The Wahhabi movement is exceptionally strong in the Karachaevo-Circassian Republic. According to the official Russian statistics provided by the Ministry of Interior, there are 219 Wahhabis in the republic. According to the informed experts, the real number of religious fundamentalists is about 1.5 to 2.0 thousand people and is increasing unabated due to influx of young people who prefer join so called new jamaats in the absence of other social prospects.

Kabardino-Balkaria was one of the most stable republics of the region in the recent past. Nowadays news from the republic resembles summary information from the war theaters. Special military operations are carried on in the capital of the republic Nalchik on a regular basis. In the course of such operations even tanks are employed to beat groups of armed Wahhabis out of multi-storey dwelling houses. According to the official statistics of Kabardino-Balkarian Ministry of Interior, there are about 400 Wahhabis and their aiders in the republic. In fact, adherents of “non-traditional Islam” are present in every district and in many settlements. Only Prokhladnenski and Maiski districts inhabited predominantly by ethnic Russians can be considered to be unaffected by Wahhabism.

Emergence of three fronts (Chechen, Ingushian and Dagestanian) of armed resistance to the Federal power and occasional armed attacks of Moslem radicals against the Federal authorities in some other republic of the North Caucasus create in the region a new situation which is different from what it used to be just 2-3 years ago when Chechnya was the only focal point of the armed resistance to the Federal power.

In the North Caucasus republics Federal powers pass through the unprecedented crisis of trust among the local people. Parallel structures of power in form of Islamic jamaats are rapidly developing against this background. It should be said that these parallel structures are not necessarily prone to terrorist methods or radical fundamentalism. However they create the social space within which the Russian legal norms are virtually ineffective.

Inability of the state to ensure effectiveness of its own laws is the loss of control over the territory even if nobody in the territory (or nearly nobody) speaks of necessity of secession aloud.

In all times increase of national elites’ loyalty could be achieved at the expense of extension of these elites’ participation in the state affairs. In 1990s the Russian power pursued the same policy and succeeded. National elites’ political activity in a greater part of regions declined, with the important exception of Chechnya where the war raged. Today we witness a new revival of national elites’ political activity. That occurs on the rising tide of popular dissatisfaction with the authoritarian policies of the Kremlin. A national elite estranged from the power is able to use such discontent of population and to invest it in ethnic or religious terms. By doing that the national elite will be able to ensure such intensity of the popular resistance that no army can overcome.

Conclusion

Thus, Muslim minorities in Russia by and large emerged long ago, historically, in result of Muslim territories colonization by the Russian Empire. This process is very different from the process of Muslim minorities' formation in West Europe where they emerged in result of voluntary migrations. This difference dictates specific character of demands put forward by Islamic resistance in Russia, particularly in Northern Caucasus. It also has a bearing on possible behavior of Muslim immigrants to Russia. Anyway, radical Islamic organizations in Russia connect their hopes with influx of immigrants which, as Islamic radicals expect, will help them to expand their strength.

In West Europe Muslim immigrants' problems are mainly connected with immense cultural differences between them and indigenous population as well as the slim willingness of immigrants to adapt to cultural, social and political conditions of the recipient countries. It is my opinion that the opposite problem prevails in Russia. The recipient society is neither ready nor willing to integrate immigrants. In a country where neither representatives of majority nor representatives of minorities have sufficient chances for their self-fulfillment in economic, civil and political spheres both parties assert themselves in antagonism to each other.