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CONCEPT OF THE STATE POLICY OF UZBEKISTAN IN THE RELIGIOUS SPHERE

КОНЦЕПЦИЯ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОЙ ПОЛИТИКИ УЗБЕКИСТАНА В РЕЛИГИОЗНОЙ СФЕРЕ

ЎЗБЕКИСТОННИНГ ДИНИЙ СОҲАДАГИ ДАВЛАТ СИЁСАТИ КОНЦЕПЦИЯСИ

Аннотация. *Статья анализирует концепцию государственной политики Узбекистана в религиозной сфере. Рассмотрены принципы: светскость, равенство конфессий, невмешательство, свобода совести. Освещены цели: гармонизация межконфессиональных отношений, профилактика экстремизма, обеспечение стабильности. Описаны механизмы реализации: законодательство, госорганы, взаимодействие с религиозными организациями, образование. Даётся обзор подходов Узбекистана к государственно-конфессиональным отношениям.*

Ключевые слова: *Государственная политика, религиозная сфера, Узбекистан, регулирование, светскость, конфессии, экстремизм, законодательство, безопасность.*

Аннотация. *Мақолада Ўзбекистоннинг диний соҳадаги давлат сиёсати концепцияси таҳлил қилинади. Давлатнинг дунёвийлиги, конфессиялар тенглиги, аралашмаслик, виждон эркинлиги каби тамойиллар кўриб чиқилади. Конфессияларарo муносабатларни уйғунлаштириш, экстремизмнинг олдини олиш, барқарорликни таъминлаш каби мақсадлар ёритилади. Қонунчилик, давлат органлари, диний ташкилотлар билан ўзаро ҳамкорлик, таълим каби амалга ошириш механизмлари тавсифланади. Ўзбекистоннинг давлат ва дин муносабатларига бўлган ёндашувларига умумий назар ташланади.*

Калит сўзлар: *Давлат сиёсати, диний соҳа, Ўзбекистон, тартибга солиш, дунёвийлик, конфессиялар, экстремизм, қонунчилик, хавфсизлик.*

Abstract: *The article analyzes the concept of the state policy of Uzbekistan in the religious sphere. The following principles are considered: secularism, equality of religious denominations, non-interference (of the state in the internal affairs of religious organizations), freedom of conscience. The goals are highlighted: harmonization of interfaith relations, prevention of extremism, and ensuring stability. The mechanisms of implementation are described: legislation, state bodies, interaction with religious organizations, and education. An overview of Uzbekistan's approaches to state-confessional relations is provided.*

Keywords: *State policy, religious sphere, Uzbekistan, regulation, secularism, religious denominations, extremism,legislation, security.*

INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Uzbekistan, located in the strategically important region of Central Asia, is a secular state characterized by a rich and diverse religious landscape. The historically established coexistence of various faiths, the predominance of Hanafi Islam, as well as modern challenges associated with the growth of religious identity, the influence of external factors, the activation of radical religious movements, and the need to maintain interfaith harmony, determine the particular relevance of state policy in the religious sphere. Since gaining independence, Uzbekistan has come a long way in forming its own model of state-confessional relations, evolving from the rigid control characteristic of the Soviet period to a more liberal, but regulated system.

The Concept of State Policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the religious sphere is a fundamental document that defines the principles of interaction between the state and religious organizations. This Concept, which has undergone a number of changes and additions, serves as a key tool for ensuring national security and stability, as well as achieving a balance between freedom of religion and the interests of society.

MAIN PART

During the Soviet period, religious life in Uzbekistan, as throughout the USSR, was subjected to severe restrictions and control by the state. The activities of religious organizations were strictly regulated, many of them were closed, and the

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clergy were persecuted. The interaction of the state with religious communities was mainly reduced to ideological confrontation and administrative pressure. This was due to the official atheistic ideology of the Soviet Union, which viewed religion as a relic of the past and an obstacle to the construction of communism. In Uzbekistan, as in other Central Asian republics, this manifested itself in the closure of mosques and madrasahs, the prohibition of religious education, the persecution of believers and clergy, and attempts to replace religious traditions and rituals with Soviet ones. [10, 8]

With Uzbekistan's attainment of independence on August 31, 1991, the situation fundamentally changed. The process of reviving religious consciousness began, mosques, churches, synagogues, and other houses of prayer were opened, and new religious movements and organizations emerged. Simultaneously, the first legislative acts guaranteeing freedom of conscience and religion were adopted. Thus, the Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Republic of Uzbekistan, adopted on June 20, 1990, proclaimed freedom of conscience as one of the principles of state structure [3]. The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, adopted on December 8, 1992, enshrined the right of everyone to freedom of thought, speech, and belief, as well as the right to profess any religion or not to profess any [2, Art. 31]. The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan 'On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations' was adopted (first edition - 1991, new edition - 1998), which regulates the activities of religious organizations in the country [3, Art. 5]. It develops and specifies constitutional norms, establishing the equality of all faiths before the law and preventing discrimination on religious grounds. Incitement to religious hatred and intolerance is prohibited, and any actions aimed at this are prosecuted by law.

The formation of the Concept was significantly influenced by both internal and external factors. Within the country, this was primarily the growth of religious consciousness of the population after gaining independence, the desire to revive spiritual traditions, as well as the need to develop mechanisms for interaction between the state and numerous and diverse religious communities in the context of the democratization of society. This process was accompanied, on the one hand, by an increase in the number of registered religious organizations, and on the other, by the need to counter religious extremism.

External factors included the intensification of the activities of international religious organizations, the spread of ideas of religious extremism and terrorism in the Central Asian region, as well as the need to bring the legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan into compliance with international standards in the field of human rights and freedom of religion. Uzbekistan, as a participant in international covenants and conventions, has undertaken to comply with the basic principles of freedom of conscience and religion.

All these factors combined necessitated the formation of a clear and consistent state policy in the religious sphere, aimed at ensuring a balance between freedom of religion and national security, interfaith peace and stability in society. This policy is based on the principles of respect for the rights of believers, preventing discrimination on religious grounds, and at the same time - on countering the use of religion for political purposes and the spread of extremist ideas.

The central place in the Concept of State Policy of Uzbekistan in the Religious Sphere is occupied by its key principles and goals, which determine the vector of interaction between the state and religious institutions. The fundamental principle is the secular nature of the state, which implies a clear separation of the functions of state bodies and religious organizations. In the Uzbek context, this means that the state does not interfere in the internal canonical affairs of religious associations, but reserves the right to control compliance with legislation, including in matters relating to national security.

The concept enshrines freedom of conscience and belief as an inalienable right of every citizen. This means that every person has the right to independently choose whether to profess any religion or adhere to atheistic beliefs, as well as to change their religious views [1, Article 31; 4, Article 4]. However, as in most countries, this freedom is not absolute and may be restricted in cases expressly provided for by law – for example, to protect the foundations of the constitutional order, morality, health, rights and legitimate

interests of others, ensure 1 security and public order [4, Article 23].

An important principle is the partnership between the state and religious organizations, which manifests itself in cooperation in various areas, including education, culture, charity, and social service. The state can support socially significant initiatives of religious organizations, and they, in turn, contribute to the development of society. This cooperation is carried out within the framework of legislation and in compliance with the principle of secularism. An example is the activities of religious organizations in the field of social support for vulnerable populations, as well as their participation in cultural heritage preservation programs.

One of the priorities reflected in the Concept [1] is ensuring national security and countering religious extremism and radicalism. The state takes measures to prevent the spread of extremist ideas, suppress the activities of banned organizations, and prevent the involvement of citizens in illegal activities under the guise of religion.

In general, the goals of the Concept can be divided into short-term and long-term. Short-term goals include rapid response to emerging threats related to religious extremism, and maintaining stability in the religious sphere. This is achieved, in particular, through the activities of law enforcement and special services to identify and suppress extremist activities.

Long-term goals include strengthening interfaith harmony and understanding, ensuring genuine religious freedom within the law, preventing extremism and radicalism through education and enlightenment, and creating conditions for the harmonious development of all traditional faiths in Uzbekistan. Here, the interaction of the state with religious organizations, as well as the support of educational and cultural initiatives aimed at fostering tolerance and mutual respect, plays an important role.

Institutional mechanisms play a crucial role. The Committee on Religious Affairs under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan is the main coordinating body responsible for implementing state policy in the religious sphere. It interacts with religious organizations, conducts religious expertise of literature and materials of religious content, and also monitors compliance with legislation on freedom of conscience and religious organizations.

Particular attention is paid to educational and outreach activities. State educational institutions (schools, universities), as well as officially registered religious educational institutions (madrasas, Islamic institutes) play an important role in fostering interfaith harmony, religious tolerance, and the prevention of religious extremism. Regular analysis of curricula, the content of educational materials, and media publications is essential to evaluate the effectiveness of this work and make necessary adjustments in a timely manner.

However, Uzbekistan, like many other states, faces a number of challenges and complexities in the religious sphere.One of them is the spread of religious movements and teachings that are non-traditional for the country, often of a destructive nature and posing a potential threat to public safety (it is recommended to provide examples of such movements banned in Uzbekistan, with references to court decisions or other official documents). The influence of foreign preachers, including those who hold radical views, also represents a serious problem requiring an adequate response from the state and society. Despite the declared freedom of religion, cases of violations of the rights of believers are periodically recorded, for example, related to unjustified refusals to register religious organizations, interference in their internal activities, or discrimination on religious grounds. Manifestations of religious extremism and radicalism, although not widespread, remain a pressing threat requiring constant attention and preventive measures.

The issue of the effectiveness of measures to counter extremism and radicalism deserves special attention. However, given the dynamism and adaptability of extremist groups, as well as their use of modern information technologies (including social networks and messengers [6, 138-149.]), it is necessary to constantly improve counteraction mechanisms.

This improvement should proceed in several key, interconnected directions. First of all, it is necessary to strengthen the analytical component: to monitor and analyze extremist manifestations both online and offline, identify new trends and tactics used by extremists, and forecast the development of the situation. This requires the use

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of modern big data analysis methods and artificial intelligence [7]. In parallel, it is crucial to improve the qualifications of law enforcement officers and religious figures. Law enforcement officers must have in-depth knowledge in the fields of religious studies, conflictology, psychology, and information technology to effectively identify and suppress extremist activities.

Furthermore, effective counteraction to extremism is impossible without the development of international cooperation. Sharing experience and best practices with other countries, as well as coordinating efforts in the fight against transnational extremist organizations, are essential elements [9].

In conclusion, it is crucial to emphasize the importance of finding a balance between ensuring security and respecting human rights. Measures to combat extremism should not lead to the infringement of the rights of law-abiding citizens, including believers, and should not contribute to the radicalization of certain population groups. It is necessary to avoid excessively broad interpretations of the concept of «extremism» and to ensure procedural guarantees when prosecuting extremist activities. Ill-conceived prohibitive measures can lead to the opposite effect, increasing discontent and protest sentiments.

CONCLUSION

The prospects for the development of Uzbekistan's Concept of State Policy in the religious sphere require its constant adaptation to changing conditions. Key directions include: improving legislation to account for modern challenges (the spread of non-traditional movements, online extremism) while strictly adhering to international human rights standards; strengthening the role of civil society through the establishment of public councils, conducting open discussions, and supporting independent research; and a systematic approach including monitoring the religious situation, analyzing trends, and implementing preventive measures (improving religious education, fostering interfaith dialogue, and engaging in international cooperation). The flexibility and adaptability of the Concept are key to ensuring long-term stability and security for Uzbekistan.

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