

## *RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES IN A MULTICULTURAL RUSSIAN SOCIETY*

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**ABSTRACT:** The article discusses the peculiarities of religious identity, the level of religiosity and religious involvement (church going) of Russians and the ethnoconfessional relations and religious practice with the example of a bicultural Republic of Russia–Tatarstan. The authors consider the outcome of the sociological research carried out in the framework of the project from the Federal University of Kazan, in 2012: "The conditions and dynamics of interethnic and interconfessional relations in the Republic of Tatarstan", together with secondary data analysis from the Russian research centre VCIOM. The authors conclude that in the polyethnic Russian society there is domination in numbers and as a consequence the cultural domination of some ethnoconfessional communities. In the bicultural republics of the Russian Federation religion functions as a preservation of ethnic identity, and the family plays a crucial role in the formation of religious identity.

**KEYWORDS:** religious identity, multiculturalism, interfaith relations, Tatarstan.

The concept of religious identity is multidimensional and complex; it reflects many deep internal characteristics of a person and is inseparably linked with religious consciousness. Religious identity, along with ethnic, national and cultural identities, make up the complete picture of one's identity. Understanding the study of religious identity is not the study of external assaults on an unchanging religious core. Rather, it is the study of religious narratives that are themselves the product of ongoing interaction, both among the diverse human participants in the drama and between them and whatever unpredictable sacred experience they recognise in their midst (Ammerman 2003).

The formation of the ethnic and cultural constructs of the human consciousness in post-Soviet society are a result of processes of globalisation, of the implementation of the concept of multiculturalism in the Russian state and of the legal features and of traditions of the region (Beyer 2011; Ališauskienė & Schröder 2012). The polyconfessional, globalised and legal society provides the individual with a choice of several religious confession models and relationships to the supernatural. Hence, religious pluralism and tolerance are two important contexts in which the choice of religion becomes possible. Tolerance becomes a social and moral value and a necessary condition for selection. There can be different understandings of tolerance

in contemporary academic discourse. Thus, tolerance for Grace Davie, like pluralism, means different things to different people – along a continuum which runs from a tacit acceptance of a restricted list of religious activities to a positive affirmation of forms of religion different from the norm (Davie 2003).

In the Russian language Russians usually use the word tolerance (*tolerantnost'*) although the closest to tolerance in the Russian language is the word patience (*terpimost'*). It is defined by Russian dictionaries first as the ability to be reconciled with someone or something and secondly as the patient relation. But semantically the two concepts are not very close. In the Russian language being patient with someone is connected with forgiveness, in the sense that you are forgiving a bad person or a bad deed. Tolerance, unlike patience, doesn't operate with categories of "good" and "bad"; it is based on opposition: "us – the stranger". It is having a tolerant attitude towards "another", to "the other" in the absence of hostility and a "readiness to accept 'others' such as they are, and to interact with them on the basis of understanding and consent (Drobiszheva 2006).

In the social sciences there are at least three levels of understanding of multiculturalism:

1) *Demographic and descriptive*: the essence of which consists of a description of the changes in the demographic and ethno-cultural parameters of national societies, occurring as a result of internal and external reasons. The most important of them is migration, resulting in multiculturalism, both at an institutional level and higher levels, sometimes understood as a policy of integration of migrants into the host society (Deger 1997).

2) *Ideological and normative*: Where certain concepts and norms like 'cultural communication', 'intercultural understanding', as well as compliance with differences between values, norms and morality are employed by groups or states. E.g. multi-ethnic nationalism in Australia, where these concepts are used to interact between the ethnic and cultural communities and between the national minorities and the national majority..

3) *Political*: involving practical solutions to issues of political and cultural equality of national minorities as well as to the implementation of programmes of support for and social protection of minorities (Wieviorka 1998; Habermas 1994).

Multicultural society risks to become conflict ridden if it within its boundaries faces different cultural groups, whose situation is aggravated by social inequality (Oberndorfer 1994). Therefore, the idea of national unity is in a central position in the social policy of the state, which provides a complex of special measures, political decisions and social technologies of development and implementation of programmes of support for national and cultural minorities. Ensuring social the equality of national minorities and of the majority allows us to define multiculturalism as a policy of recognition. This is especially important for countries such as the US and Canada. In the framework of multiculturalism also touched upon are more general questions that are relevant for almost all modern democracies (Gutmann 1994).

Russian society has always been multicultural and nowadays is even more so than ever. There are more than 180 different groups in Russia. Neither the Russian Federation nor the Soviet Union government thought deeply about the doctrine of civic nation-building in terms of multiculturalism. In the USSR the terms "multinationalism" and "friendship of people" were political buzzwords, and in real politics it used to be a "national form of socialistic culture" which, in our understanding, was pretty close to what we call multiculturalism. Despite the fact that the Soviet Union had tragic events in its history, we would suggest that the 60s, 70s and 80s were more or less successful periods for multicultural nation-building. This can be explained first by the development of the socialistic system within society with the core principal of social equality. As a result of the cardinal restructuring of Russia in all spheres of

life over the last 30 years, and of spiritual life, the religious worldview of citizens is constantly being modified and transformed. In the Soviet period the majority of respondents to surveys defined themselves as non-believers (Drobiszheva 2006). Sociological data from the *Russian Centre for Public Opinion* back in the 90s showed that the share of “church going” believers in Russia amounted to between 10 and 15%, while religious people were fixed at the level of 65% (VCIOM–Public Opinion Research Centre 1995)

Historically, the interconnection between national and religious factors often prompted respondents who were not practicing Muslims/Orthodox Christians to call himself (herself) a Muslim if a Tatar or an Orthodox if a Russian. But the palette of modern peculiarities of religious self-consciousness is coloured with different shades. Thus the results of Russian sociological research of 14 June 2013 under the supervision of the foundation “Public Opinion Research Centre” (Moscow) show that the majority of men and women consider themselves Orthodox (53% and 73%, respectively), whereas 34% of men and 17% of women do not consider themselves to be believers at all.

	Men (%)	Women (%)
Not a believer at all	34	17
Orthodox	53	73
Other Christian confessions (Catholics, Protestants, Uniate Church, Baptists and other)	1	1
Islam	6	6
Other religions	1	1
Hesitate to answer, cannot name any certain confession	5	3

**TABLE 1:** Do you consider yourself to be a believer? If yes, what confession do you identify yourself with?

According to the survey, religion helps a person to find happiness and peace (as 25% of the female believers and 13% of the male believers pointed out), religion gives life significance (23% of female and 18% of male believers) and religion helps one to become a better person and to live a more moral life (22% of female and 15% of male believers).

When analysing sociological data and characterising the correlation of the level and degree of religiosity of the population of regions of the Russian Federation it is necessary to consider the following: In contemporary society ethnicity and confessional affiliation has acquired a special significance, where confessional affiliation becomes one of the major ethnic markers. Religion also performs a compensatory function of social and psychological adaptation to the complex realities of life. The religious community is in many regards the place of generational transformation of religious identity (Stefanenko,1999). The religious community often combines compensatory, expressive and instrumental functions. Religious activity is valuable in the community and has different goals, such as meeting with friends, maintaining social networking with friends and religious holiday celebrations. The religious community creates the conditions for successful life activities of ethnic groups as well. Religious organisations state to have goals to teach native languages and to conduct cultural events to learn more about ethnic cultures. Through worship and improving native languages and cultures religious identity is reproduced. Religion as a social institute and also plays an important role in the process of a person’s sense of self-identification.

The peculiarity of “Russia is that the processes of multicultural integration, the formation of a Russian state identity and the revival of a Russian national identity are parallel. As a result,

the Russian population is divided concerning questions of national identity: Considering the latest census of the population (VCIOM – Public Opinion Centre 2006) in 80% of the Russian population there is a strong belief that the Russian ('rus') ethnic identity should merge with the Russian state ('rossiiskiy') identity, which consequently will leave little room for other ethnicities identifying with "Russian-ness". A confirmation of this belief is the growing support for the slogan "Russia for Russians", which started with some politicians at the beginning of the 90s. According to VCIOM data from the autumn of 2001 the slogan was supported by 58% of the population. VCIOM data from 2006 shows that a relative majority of Russian citizens, 44%, believe that "Russia – is a house of many people" in which all should possess the equal rights. However supporters of this point of view decreased (from 2003 to 2005 there were 49-53%). And on the contrary, the share of the respondents believing that "Russians have to have more rights since they make the majority of the population" has increased from 31% in 2003 to 36% in 2006.

Inhabitants of Moscow and St. Petersburg are oriented more radically, among them 22% consider that it is right the time to carry out the slogan "Russia for Russians". Thirty-nine per cent of respondents in Moscow and St. Petersburg think that Russians are those who grew up in Russian traditions; 23% think that Russians are those who work for the benefit of Russia. Another 15% of respondents consider that only Russians by birth can be called Russians – such opinion is especially popular in Moscow and St. Petersburg (21%). That the rights of Russians in modern Russia are discriminated more often than the rights of citizens of other nationalities is supported by 41% of respondents. The results of the research show the increasing level of Russian identity revival, especially in the big cities. It is also of importance that the formation of Russian ethnic identity can be correlated with the active participation of the Russian Orthodox Church and on the basis of the values of Orthodoxy. This can significantly reduce the integration opportunities of the emerging Russian identity (VCIOM – Public Opinion Centre, 2006).

Russia is a multiethnic society, but as a consequence there are a number of ethnoconfessional communities. In recent years the processes of globalisation have intensified migration flows and considerably extended the ethnic, cultural and religious mosaic of the country. The Republic of Tatarstan is the national republic, which occupies the territory of the Povolzie region, almost in the centre of Russia at the shores of the Volga River. The Republic of Tatarstan, as most regions of Russia, is a complex socio-cultural organisation, in which each community according to the Constitution has equal rights. Tatarstan is one of the 83 subjects of the Russian Federation. In the Republic, according to the 2010 census the most numerous ethnic groups are Tatars (53,2%) and Russians (39,7%). Also in the territory of the Republic live Udmurts, Chuvash, Mordvins, Mari and other national groups (7,1%).

In the Republic of Tatarstan a wide confessional palette is presented. On the 1 January 2013 in Tatarstan, according to the Department of the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation 1,594 religious communities were registered. In the region there are more than 1,750 religious buildings, of which 1382 were mosques, 320 were Orthodox churches and a little more than 60 religious buildings of other confessions (Official portal of the Republic of Tatarstan 2014).

In the Russian Republic of Tatarstan, during the last 10 years there has been a growing number of Muslims who practice "Orthodox Islam" of Middle Eastern origin. This development is caused by the increasing number of migrants and missionaries of Islam from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. Therefore it has become relevant for the Tatarstan state to strive for an optimal relationship with immigrants of different ethnicities. Not only to help

the newcomers adapt to local norms of everyday behaviour but also to lead the host population toward tolerant interaction with the immigrants.

However, it would be wrong not to take into account the existing preconditions for the multicultural model in the Republic of Tatarstan and in Russia overall. In Russia one can already note the elements of multiculturalism and multicultural social practices. Hence, one should refer to the very existence of a multinational Federation, in which some of these entities due to historical traditions are segregated by ethnicity. The Constitution of the Russian Federation of 1993 guarantees “to all of its peoples the right to preserve their native languages” (Art. 68, 3). Article 26 establishes the free choice of language of communication, upbringing, education and creative work; article 29 prohibits propaganda of social, racial, national or linguistic superiority (The Constitution of the Russian Federation). The same articles appear in the Federal Law adopted in 2002 “On counteraction to extremism”. However, the most obvious features of multicultural policy are the national-cultural autonomies acting in accordance with the law “On national-cultural autonomy”, adopted in 1996.

The purpose of the creation of national-cultural autonomy was the voluntary self-organisation of ethnic groups to preserve their identity, language, education and national culture. By 2002, 14 national-cultural autonomies at the Federal level, including Ukrainian, German, Korean, Belarus, Tatar, Serbian, Lezghin etc., were created and registered, as well as more than 100 national-cultural autonomies at the regional level and more than 200 at the local level. In 1998, within the framework of the law on national-cultural autonomies, the Assembly of the Peoples of Russia was created. The activities of its regional bodies also represent an example of multicultural social practices carrying out active cooperation with public authorities. An example of such cooperation in Tatarstan is the collective body of the *Assembly of the Peoples of Russia* – an association of national-cultural organisations of the Republic of Tatarstan jointly with the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation which opened multinational schools that were to be financed from the budget of the city of Kazan. The school established an agreement with a newly created *Coordination Council of Employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs* and the leaders of the national-cultural communities of Tatarstan for the solution of conflict issues including issues of registration. In terms of socio-political discourse the Republic of Tatarstan is considered a unique place, since two ethnicities peacefully co-exist.

## **THE RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE OF TATARSTAN**

The Republic of Tatarstan is an interesting subject to study, representing a historically multicultural space. As mentioned above, the vast majority of people relate to two ethnic groups – Russians and Tatars. In the framework of a scientific research project by Kazan University, “Status and dynamics of inter-ethnic and inter-confessional relations in the Republic of Tatarstan”, a sociological survey was conducted with a sample of 1,590 respondents surveyed for the Republic of Tatarstan in February 2012. Later investigations of religious identity were conducted by means of 30 in-depth interviews with representatives of various ethno-religious groups which reside in the territory of the republic of Tatarstan. According to the research, religious identity is inextricably linked with the ethnic identity. More than a third of the respondents (37,7%) believed that it is impossible not to combine a certain nationality with a particular traditional religion. For example, a Russian person must profess Orthodoxy, and the Tatar, Islam. However, almost half of the respondents (48,4%) believed that ethnicity does not predetermine the choice of denomination.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Yes	770	48,4	49,5	49,5
No	600	37,7	38,6	88,0
Difficult to answer	186	11,7	12,0	100,0
Total	1556	97,9	100,0	
No answer	34	2,1		
Total	1590	100,0		

**TABLE 2:** Is it possible to be a person of your nationality and not follow the traditional religion of your nationality?

The religious identity of a person is inextricably linked with the religious identity of the family. From early childhood the child is included in the family's religious practice. In traditional societies, such as the Republic of Tatarstan, religious identity has a social and cultural nature, rather than it being the result of individual choice. The family is the carrier of cultural patterns passed down from generation to generation. According to the quantitative survey, in the majority of cases (72,6%) members of the family supported the religious choice of the person, in (9%) of the responses not all family members supported the believer in his/her choice and in 8.9% of the responses the individual didn't find support from the family at all. It can be noted that in most families there is tolerance towards divergent religious beliefs, but the vast number of citizens of Tatarstan (89,8%) choose the traditional religions of the region – Sunni Islam and Orthodox Christianity. It is worth noting that the question of choosing is very conventional. In most cases, the confessional affiliation is predetermined by parental preferences and ethnicity. It is also worth noting that in mixed marriages – Tatar and Russian – the eventual religious upbringing of a child is a choice between faith and non-belief more than it is a choice between confessions.

However, it is interesting to note that for the largest part of the population of the Republic (79,4%) it is important to observe religious ceremonies in marriage, and 67% of the respondents consider it necessary to observe the ritual of baptism as an important first-step initiation of a child into the faith and traditions of the family. Only 3.5% of the respondents believed that this ritual is not required.

	Very important	Not very important	Absolutely unimportant	Difficult to answer	Total	No answer
Is your spouse's religious affiliation important to you?	40,1	35,2	16,0	4,9	96,2	3,8
Is it important for you to go through a religious marriage ceremony?	50,8	28,6	11,9	4,8	96,0	4,0

**TABLE 3:** Importance of rituals

Despite the fact that the majority of the children of the republic of Tatarstan is immersed in the faith (be it Islam or Orthodox Christianity) of his or her family from birth,, a third (30,7%) argues that modern man has the right of personal choice in terms of faith and religion, and even 34,8% say that modern man has the right to freedom of religion. Only 29.6% of the respondents pointed to a lack of choice of religion in connection with the fact that it is

transmitted from the elder generation to the younger. As for personal experience more than half of the respondents (69,4%) obtained religion through family upbringing and the 20% of respondents were influenced by their relatives. Thus, formally, most respondents acknowledge freedom of choice in the religious sphere, but they prefer to baptise their children into a specific religious tradition related to family traditions.

	Answers		Percent of observations
	Number of answers	Percent	
Thanks to family upbringing	1018	50,7%	69,4%
Thanks to relatives	325	16,2%	22,2%
Thanks to friends and acquaintances	90	4,5%	6,1%
Thanks to a church, mosque, temple and the religious community	118	5,9%	8,0%
Thanks to secondary education	32	1,6%	2,2%
Thanks to Sunday schools / madressa	17	1,8%	1,2%
Became a believer independently	211	10,5%	14,4%
Other	21	1,0%	1,4%
Difficult to answer	174	8,7%	11,9%
Total	2006	100,0%	136,8%

**TABLE 4:** If you consider yourself to be a believer, how did you obtain your belief?

It is also important to note the diversified level of tolerance the people of Tatarstan have toward traditional religions and toward new religious movements. Tolerance, respect for representatives of different confessions, is a necessary condition of co-existence in a secular society. According to Article 11 of the Constitution of Tatarstan, “the Republic of Tatarstan is a secular state. Religious associations are separated from the state and equal in front of the law” (Constitution of the Republic of Tatarstan). Article 28 notes that “the state guarantees equality of rights and freedoms of men and citizens regardless of origin, social and property status, racial and national belonging, sex, education, language, political views, religion, convictions, type and nature of occupation, place of residence and other circumstances” (Constitution of the Republic of Tatarstan). In addition, Article 38 stresses that “everyone is guaranteed freedom of conscience, freedom of religion, including the right to profess, individually or together with others, any religion or no religion, to freely choose, possess and disseminate religious and other convictions and to act in accordance with them. Incitement of hostility, hatred and ethnic strife in connection with religious beliefs is prohibited” (Constitution of the Republic of Tatarstan). Thus, at the institutional level, the government laid down the foundation for tolerance between representatives of different religions. In 1999 in Tajikistan came the law “on freedom of conscience and religious associations”, which guarantees security and the realisation of the rights enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Tatarstan: rights of man and citizen to freely practice any religion or not to profess any, and to religious activities.

The preamble to the law underscores the special role of Islam and Orthodox Christianity in the origination and development of spirituality and culture of the multinational people of Tatarstan.

### **INTERETHNIC AND INTERRELIGIOUS ATTITUDES**

As with any attitudes, interethnic and interreligious attitudes have a three-component structure. They consist of two concepts: *cognitions* – the idea of what represents other nationalities as well as emotions toward representatives of other nationalities/religious affiliations and a *behavioural component* – a readiness to perform any actions towards persons of other nationalities/religious affiliation (Arutyunian, Drobizheva, Susokolov, 1999). The behavioural component of inter-ethnic attitudes is formed in a person in accordance with his experiences with and feelings toward representatives of other nationalities and religions and builds on existing knowledge and information about them. The spectrum of perceptions of people of other cultures is quite wide, and the perception of intercultural tolerance is quite selective. A person may develop positive attitudes in relation to, for example, Muslims and negative attitudes, for example, toward Catholics.

According to our study in general 69% of Tatars consider themselves to be believers, 16% of respondents doubt and can't give a definite answer to the question about religious faith. Of the total number of interviewed people in Tatarstan 39% profess Orthodoxy, 50% profess Islam and a tenth (11%) are affiliated with other religions. These numbers largely reflect the ethnic composition of the population (Official portal of the Republic of Tatarstan). Respondents who did not choose either Islam or Orthodox Christianity noted that they consider themselves to be affiliated with Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestant Confessions or stated that they believe in themselves, philosophical idealism, energy or matter, as well as some did not specify the object of their faith.

The most common model of the formation of religious identity is the one in which ethnicity predetermines religiosity: the majority of Tatars choose Islam, the overwhelming share of Russians choose Orthodox Christianity. According to the survey, the majority of the ethnic Russian population is Orthodox Russians (88%), whereas Islam is professed mainly by Tatars (95%). However, in a secular society changes of religious faith happen in some cases: for example, where Tatars choose Orthodoxy and Russians choose Islam.

In the overall number of respondents a significant part of the Confessors of Orthodox Christianity (71%) believes that religion is the private affair of a person, whereas 15% would not approve of an Orthodox who changed his or her religion. In the quantitative study Muslims are less tolerant in relation to a change from either the traditional Russian or Tatar religion to another although many allow a greater degree of religious freedom. Half of those professing Islam (53%) believe that the choice of religion is the private affair of each person. A fifth of the Muslims (21%) would not like it if their relative changed his (her) faith, and 18% have openly expressed their dissatisfaction.

		What religion do you belong to?		
		Orthodox Christianity	Islam	Other, no religion
The choice of religion is a personal issue	Frequency	437	422	132
	%	71,2	53,0	77,2
I wouldn't like it but I wouldn't state my dissatisfaction	Frequency	94	168	11
	%	15,3	21,1	6,4
I would state my dissatisfaction and I would try to dissuade the person	Frequency	48	142	5
	%	7,8	17,8	2,9
I would forbid the person to visit religious organisation	Frequency	8	23	2
	%	1,3	2,9	1,2
Difficult to answer	Frequency	27	41	21
	%	4,4	5,2	12,3
Total	%	100	100	100

**TABLE 5:** Attitudes of believers regarding changing from traditional religions (For example, an ethnic Russian converts to Islam or an ethnic Tatar converts to Orthodox Christianity)

Individuals selecting non-traditional religions or new religious movements cause the greatest number of negative and conflicting judgments of Tatars and cause the highest intolerant attitude of the believers of the traditional religions. In this case, only 14% of Orthodox Christians and 11% of Muslims believe that the selection of religion is a personal choice. 9% of Orthodox and Muslims would openly express their dissatisfaction with the choice of a new religious movement. 37% and 38% of Orthodox and Muslims, respectively, accordingly would try to stop a person from such a step, another 33% of Orthodox and 36% of Muslims would forbid the person to attend the religious community. The opinions of the representatives of the two traditional religions of the region testify about the same level of intolerance against the possible selection of a new religious movement by a member of the family or loved one.

The respondents were more tolerant of the choice of a Tatar if he or she chooses Orthodoxy and to the choice of a Russian in favour of Islam rather than to the decision of an individual to become a member of a new religious movement. Thus, intolerant attitudes to new religious movements and non-traditional denominations are widely disseminated in the region, and traditionalism is preferred as the choice of models of religious behaviour. Family members largely influence the formation of religious identity.

Everyday religious activity plays an important role in the formation of one's religious identity. However, only one-fifth of the people (21,7%) who identify themselves with Orthodoxy read morning and evening prayers and only 7% of the respondents know the prayer

of the Symbol of Faith. In the analysis of respondents' answers it can be noted that in defining yourself as a believer and an Orthodox or Muslim, each respondent puts his own meaning in his or her self-determination. About 20-25% of the Orthodox respondents participate regularly in the sacraments and rituals of the Russian Orthodox Church. In general, issues of religion are complex for both objective and subjective evaluation. Comparing the results of Russian research (VCIOM – Public Opinion Centre) with our data (the 2012 project from the Federal University of Kazan, "The conditions and dynamics of interethnic and interconfessional relations in the Republic of Tatarstan") in the Republic of Tatarstan, one can note a lower share of Orthodox respondents, which can be explained by the corresponding numbers of ethnic composition but also by less activity in the performance of formal religious duties. The religious status of believers for the most part is rather an ethnic marker than an institutionalized practice.

In conclusion, we understand that a multicultural integration model has started to develop. It is necessary to realise that integration is a very long process, lasting sometimes for generations. First, this means that in the period of transition from one identity-structure to another, migrants may require special conditions – for example, assistance in learning the native language. Second, specific changes of the institutions of the host society in order for them to provide a tolerant attitude towards ethnic migrants and recognition of their identities, social and cultural practices are needed. The adoption of a multicultural integration model state means that it is open to immigrants and undertakes the task of creating conditions for their integration. However, in Russia in the polyethnic structure of the native population, the government must think not only of immigrants but also of the people who have for a long time lived in the territory of the country.

In the European Union the interaction of executive power and civil society institutions serves as an important mechanism in ethno-cultural and immigration policy. In Russia and Tatarstan civil society institutions are still weak, despite the fact that they already have a certain value. In this regard, an important factor in the implementation of the policy of multiculturalism depends on the authority of the government. Religion in the Republic of Tatarstan in the public space is defined by political leaders. For example, during the period of Perestroika in 1996, former President of the Republic of Tatarstan Mintimer Shaimiev held a congress of Muslims and created the Spiritual Administration of Muslims, and Muslims for decades in different areas of the country quite peacefully coexisted. In 2005, the Kazan Kremlin Mintimer Shaimiev built a mosque and restored the Cathedral of the Annunciation. It was an important cultural and political gesture in terms of multicultural societal development of the Republic of Tatarstan.

To sum up we would like to state that the Government of Tatarstan in relation to traditional religions tries to support a balanced multicultural policy. Thus the Tatarstan government employs multiculturalism in an ideological mode. The role of the state in the processes of the formation of the inter-confessional attitudes of the citizens is extremely strong. The symbol of the capital of Tatarstan is the Kremlin. On the territory of the Kremlin of Kazan rise both the Cathedral of the Annunciation and the Kul Sharif Mosque – symbols of both Orthodox Christianity and Islam. The media cover Orthodox and Muslim holidays and state policy is focused on the preservation of friendly, mutually beneficial and peaceful relations among the entire population, however it primarily manages the balance of interests between the Orthodox and Muslims.

As in Russia as a whole and in the regions of the Russian Federation in the majority of cases, religiosity is one of the markers of ethnicity, and hence belonging to an ethnic group largely determines the chosen denomination. Moreover, in bicultural republics religion plays an additional role in preserving ethnic identity. The family plays a crucial role in the formation of religiosity. Orthodoxy was and remains the traditional confession of the majority of Russians

which, in many respects, defines the tendencies of development of the Russian society and within the paradigm of multiculturalism.

The group of believers of Muslims and Orthodox who observe all the requirements of the faith are few in number. A significant part of the population of Russians and residents of the national Republic, both Orthodox and Muslims, have no religious reference points: many do not follow the prescribed religious canons and rules. The Muslims demonstrated greater commitment to the canons of their religion than the Orthodox. The structure of the religious context becomes more and more complex. And whereas the Russian society in legislation supports religious pluralism, at the individual level there is a widespread distrust towards the selection of non-traditional religions

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