

EDUCATION, RELIGIOUS OPPOSITION AND INTERNATIONAL CONFLICTS

Abstract: *The article analyzes the interrelationship between the influence of various factors of people's socialization /including their religiosity/ and their attitude towards international conflicts and their participation in them. More specifically, the influence of the Bulgarian legislation, the holiday system in the country, and actual discrimination is examined. One of the conclusions is that the stimulation of religiosity, discrimination against people of Muslim religion helps to stimulate social conflicts. Cultivating respect for other religious systems is a means of softening people's negative attitude towards using violence against such religious minority groups, towards maintaining or initiating military conflicts.*

Key words: *Education, religion, discrimination, hatred, international conflicts*

ОБРАЗОВАЊЕ, ВЕРСКА ОПОЗИЦИЈА И МЕЂУНАРОДНИ СУКОБИ

Резиме: *У чланку се анализира однос између утицаја различитих фактора социјализације људи /укључујући њихову религиозност/ и њиховог односа према међународним сукобима и учешћа у њима. Тачније, испитује се утицај бугарског законодавства, прописаног начина обележавања и прослављања празника у земљи и стварне дискриминације. Један од закључака је да подстицање религиозности и дискриминација људи муслиманске вероисповести помажу подстицању друштвених сукоба. Неговање поштовања према другим верским системима, средство је ублажавања негативног става људи према примени насиља према таквим верским мањинским групама, према одржавању или покретању војних сукоба.*

Кључне речи: *образовање, религија, дискриминација, мржња, међународни сукоби.*

Stimulating religiosity, discrimination against people of Muslim religion helps to stimulate social conflicts. The cultivation of disrespect for different religious systems, of hatred for the people who profess them, is a means of softening people's negative attitude towards violence against such religious minority groups. It is also a favourable condition for the approval and assistance of military conflicts.

In Bulgaria, the socio-economic division between the individual strata after 1989 was supplemented by a deepening of their religious identifications. Chris-

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tians are increasingly suspicious of Muslims /especially if they are also Roma/ and think of them all as terrorists; the religious people view the non-religious with suspicion. Depending on their religious colour, they interpret many events - wars, terrorist acts, murders.

Some authors consider that religion is generally intolerant. Once you believe that divine truths are the only true ones, then you automatically deny the correctness, etc. of other religions. In this sense, atheism is the best basis for tolerance and unity.

Using religiosity as a means of controlling the masses has been a common behaviour of the ruling classes and their elites throughout human history. This continues under capitalism, when the secularity of the state and social relations is declared as a principle. Religion is declared a personal right and an element of the personal life of every citizen, it is separated from secular education. But this principle in different periods of the development of nations is observed more or less depending on the needs of the different ruling classes and their elites. Religious differences are most exploited during domestic and international tensions and military conflicts.

“Religious intolerance in societies is a serious resource in the hands of warring states in terms of causing division in those countries and societies. Based on these considerations, all kinds of missionary missions have been and continue to be carried out, pursuing in addition to religious (propaganda and distribution of one’s own religion and values) and covert political goals (Симаворян, 2013: 82).

“The issue of religious tolerance is extremely important for ensuring the security of modern societies. Religious tolerance is the basis for ensuring the internal stability and integration of societies, protecting them from upheavals, preventing the division of nations and states, and finally, neutralizing the political goals of external religious influence (missionary work, introduction and spread of sectarian movements). In the absence of religious tolerance, the religious and confessional diversity of society can lead to internal division and weakening and cause bloody wars” (Симаворян, 2013: 85).

“The results of polls conducted in 2001 in Russia show that, although with a slight advantage, those who do not believe in God are more tolerant of non-believers and are more open to them in terms of contacts than the believers” (Симаворян, 2013: 86).

The basic rule is this: the worse the masses live, the more the elites use this tool to rule them, to ensure their political tranquility by redirecting social tensions and struggles. Expectations are redirected from the state to God, and responsibility is sought more from strata who are also victims of social relations, and not from those who are the cause of the unfavourable social situation of people dissatisfied with their social status. Dissatisfactions are directed instead at the ruling elite and the capitalist class, which govern social development, to other

strata affected by the particularities of development. For example, to refugees, to religious minorities. This has been evident in recent decades due to the negative consequences for many people of the development of globalization as a stage in the development of the capitalist social formation.

Hatreds between Christians and Muslims in Europe are growing due to the impoverishment of large groups of people of Christian orientation. The ruling elites direct their hatred towards refugees and immigrants, many of whom are Muslim and willing to work under less favourable conditions.

European elites quite consciously and consistently stimulate hatred towards Muslims, tolerate racist, neo-fascist attitudes and behaviours (Пачкова, 2016). They refer the hatred not to employers who do not respect labour rights, do not pay adequately for the labour of large masses of people, replace human labour with machines, but to other victims of economic relations. The other object of hatred, which is quite consciously maintained in the public consciousness precisely as an object of hatred, are the refugees. Especially when they are from a different religious denomination than the one dominant in Europe. Thus, the European elites cover up their guilt for the development of the refugee flows in question due to the aggression of the USA and European countries in many countries around the world.

The use of religion as a management tool was also present in the period from the end of the Second World War to 1989 in the so-called “socialist” countries, which are actually countries with state capitalism (Пачкова, 2010). The ruling nomenclature class developed the second stage of Bulgarian capitalist development, the stage of accelerated industrialization, since the pre-1944 Bulgarian bourgeoisie failed to industrialize the country to a degree that would be sufficiently competitive with the more developed capitalist countries. Since the backlog had to be caught up in a short period of time, it was done with the help of an undemocratic political regime and a large percentage of state ownership and planning. By the way, state ownership and the planning of economic activity do not fundamentally contradict the market economy, as the manipulators of public opinion try to convince us. In the most developed capitalist countries today, there is a huge percentage of state ownership, the development of which is planned, but no one questions the capitalist character of their system. Planning is an element of the development of any serious company. But for ideological reasons, planning is presented as some specific socialist phenomenon.

In this stage, the ruling nomenclature used religiosity as a governing tool, but by reducing it, not by stimulating it, as the ruling elite does today. Then, the welfare of the masses gradually increased. This was an important condition for reducing tensions and hatred. The nomenclature needs the workforce of the entire population to carry out its historical mission and is interested in a greater degree of unity of the various strata of the non-elite. Atheism and the lack of religious education in school give them a greater opportunity to increase this unity. Through this

policy, differences, in this case, religious differences, are minimized. To the extent that different religious denominations still exist, the nomenclature tries to minimize the differences between them, not deepen them. One of the means for this is the lesser importance of religious holidays in the country's official holiday system.

According to Simavoryan, "the strengthening of tolerance in the conditions of atheism can also be seen in the example of Armenian realities. Before the establishment of the Soviet system, there was a huge psychological barrier between the followers of the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Armenian Catholics. They are isolated from each other, and communication between them is very limited. There is an atmosphere of mutual intolerance. During the Soviet years, however, this psychological barrier was almost completely erased, and normal relations, not constrained by religious differences, were imposed. A significant role for this may be played by the policy of atheistic education conducted at the state level during the Soviet period, which erased the psychological barrier between the two religious layers of the Armenian people. Thus, despite all the negative aspects, the atmosphere of atheism prevailing during the Soviet period played a positive role from the point of view of the national consolidation of the Armenian community, removing the psychological barrier in the mutual perception of Catholic Armenians and supporters of the ААС" (Симаворян, 2013: 86).

As a result of the relatively more secular policies of the "socialist" nomenclature between 1944 and 1989, under so-called "socialism," the holiday system is more secular. Christian holidays are still present among the main state holidays, but their celebration does not dominate and does not emphasize the absence of Muslim holidays as it is today. Greater attention is paid to the celebration of secular holidays, which are, to a greater extent, common to all citizens. This affects the education system, it is a condition for increasing the tolerance of children and young people to the different religious attachments of those living in the country, as well as to people outside the country. Before 1989, there was no religious education in secular schools and the secular higher education institutions. Religious education is separated into specialized educational institutions.

In general, in economic and social ways, the standard of living of Muslims is raised, their discrimination as an ethnic and religious minority is reduced, and the absence of Muslim holidays in the official holiday system is experienced to a lesser extent as discrimination.

Educating children and inculcating elders in a tolerant and non-discriminatory attitude towards other religions, especially towards Muslims, is a favourable basis for disapproving aggressive policy of the elites on the part of the masses. This stimulated mass support for the peace-loving policies of the nomenclatura throughout the period incorrectly called "socialist".

After 1989, when the standard of living of huge masses of people degraded, it became necessary for the elite to stimulate religiosity (Пачкова, 2010) and

superstition to redirect passions in a safer direction. It directs the expectations of help of suffering people to God and turns them away from itself. He directs their sympathies and hopes to zodiac signs and soothsayers. A famous Bulgarian scientist says that in Bulgaria today, there are probably more fortune tellers than scientists. People's misfortunes are explained by the placement of the stars, their belonging to one or another zodiac sign, etc. The peak in this regard was reached when, during the last presidential elections, one of the most widely read Bulgarian newspapers published information on the zodiac affiliation of the main candidates on two whole pages of the publication. Apparently, they are urging us to vote according to the zodiac sign of the candidates and not according to their political programs.

After 1989, the rulers in the Western countries lost their previous enemy in the face of the countries of the so-called "socialist" camp, and in turn looked for new variants of enemies in Islam, in refugees and terrorism. They formulated the struggle against them as vitally important and thus more easily manipulated their own peoples. The manipulation is extremely effective; hatred grows and prevents the masses from seeing the real causes of the problems in their being. The number of groups persecuting refugees and Muslims on the streets, of individual crimes, is increasing. Radicalized Muslims respond with acts of terrorism. The authorities often cover up the former and are very precise in pursuing the latter and spreading negative information about them.

"In fact, Europeans' fear of the 'green menace' is a mirror image of Muslim fantasies of a Western conspiracy against Islam, both part of an endless spiral of false notions fueled by the media, by the ever-inflicted television stereotypes and by radical sermons distributed via the Internet (geopolitics).

Islamophobia effectively challenges the social and civil status of people who practice Islam and introduces various forms of discrimination, violence, stigmatization and attempts at exclusion, both at the everyday and at the institutional level, centering on attempts to suggest that their religion is incompatible with liberal democratic principles" (Неделчева, 2020: 25-26).

"A report from the University of California, Berkeley and the Council on American - Islamic Relations estimated that \$206 million was funded by 33 groups whose primary goal was to 'promote prejudice against Islam and Muslims' in the United States between 2008 and 2013, with a total of 74 groups contributing to Islamophobia in the United States during this period.

Newspaper articles, television shows, books, popular movies, political debates in the US, parts of Europe and around the world vilify Islam in the dominant culture" (Неделчева, 2020: 27-28).

"Modern American national security and state structures are built on the premise that Muslims are a threat. Structural Islamophobia is not unique to the federal government, it is also in individual states and cities because state and city

governments are following in the footsteps of the federal government, motivated by the strategy to fight terrorism” (Неделчева, 2020: 36).

“President Trump’s US inauguration was attended by six religious leaders – more than any other presidential inauguration in American history. Then Trump signed an order allowing American churches to get involved in politics - something that was completely at odds with the secular nature of politics at the time... In the US, a Pew Research Center survey showed that 58% of Republican Party supporters think that US universities have negative consequences for the country, i.e. institutions symbolizing knowledge and science are seen as something harmful. At the same time, 73% of them believe that churches and religious organizations play a positive role in American society. In the country that has been a leader in science and technology in recent decades, religion is believed to be more useful than science and education” (Проданов, 2018: 289).

“Social Work and Minorities: European Perspectives” describes Islamophobia as the new form of racism in Europe: “islamophobia is as much a form of racism as anti-Semitism, a term more commonly found in Europe as a relative of racism, xenophobia and intolerance. Fundamentalism is almost automatically massively associated with Islam, despite its close and usually unspoken connection with Christianity, Judaism, and Hinduism. The deliberately created associations between Islam and fundamentalism ensure that the average reader will perceive Islam and fundamentalism as the same thing. Islam is reduced to a handful of rules, stereotypes and generalizations about the faith, reinforcing the negative image of this religion and missing the fact that only some group of Islamists share radical sentiments” (Неделчева, 2020: 31-32).

“Islamophobia is deeply rooted, fluidly crafted, reproduced and deployed by certain state policies that target certain geopolitical, economic and political dominances” (Неделчева, 2020: 33).

Ethnophobia towards the Bulgarian Turks and Roma, as well as Islamophobia, are expressed in the fact that people from these strata have difficulties in rising to management positions, in their inclusion in the activities of law enforcement agencies and other professional strata, in their participation in various civic activities.

After 1989, the holiday system in Bulgaria and other former “socialist” countries (with the exception of China) supported the discrimination of Muslims. The main holidays are again the Christian religious holidays - Easter, St. George’s Day, Christmas - despite the large percentage of Muslims among the population and the secular nature of the state. Unlike the time of “socialism,” these Christian religious holidays are celebrated much more actively, with the most holidays and with the greatest respect from the media and the state. Muslim religious holidays are not in the general state holiday system. Muslim students cannot go on their religious holiday to avoid missing classes etc.

In other words, the holiday system respects religious holidays and those of the majority more. The privileged position of Christianity is firmly established in the constitution. The Christian religion is declared traditional and is provided with a number of serious privileges compared to other religious denominations.

All this is a very serious line of discrimination against minority religious groups. They feel like second-hand people. This breeds feelings of inferiority and hatred towards non-Muslims and the state.

In the countries of the former “socialist” camp, by their holiday system, one can understand what the relations are between religious communities and which layer is discriminated against. Where the Christian community is in a clear majority, there are no official Muslim holidays at all in the holiday system. For example, in Bulgaria, Russia, Romania, Serbia, Poland, Greece.

In some of these countries, religious holidays are proportionally and in terms of importance more important than secular holidays, for example, in Poland and Greece. In Russia, they are the least as a percentage. Non-religious holidays clearly dominate there.

Where the Muslim community is more equal in number, there is greater self-confidence and demands for equality are allowed among the many Christian holidays and some Muslim holidays. For example, in Macedonia and Albania.

And everywhere, in order to further justify the dominance of the Christian religion and church, unbelieving people are almost automatically and illegitimately joined to the Christian majority by the logic that Christianity is declared to be traditional, defining, etc. religion in the respective country. Patriotism is wrongly equated with attachment and belonging to Christianity. Their desire to be legitimized as unbelievers, no matter how patriotic they are, is not respected. And although in the respective countries there are usually several tens of percent according to official data, and according to the unofficial situation they are much more, they are forced to celebrate religious holidays.

“It should be emphasized that religion, by sacralisation of basic values, becomes one of the factors influencing the patriotic positions of religious citizens, but it is not a source of patriotism. In its concern to strengthen the spirit of patriotism among the population, the state should not underestimate the importance of religious and ideological convictions for the believing laity. But it should also be avoided equating religiosity with the feeling of patriotism, which will inevitably lead to the division of society into believers and non-believers, patriots and non-patriots” (Борецкая, 2016: 95).

Another mechanism for stimulating religiosity and belief in the god dominant in Bulgaria and other former “socialist” countries is the return of religious education.

In Bulgaria, religious education became necessary in the secular schools, albeit on a voluntary basis. This would not be dangerous to the unity of the nation if

the principle of secularism is respected, if it involves teaching material about all religions, about their basic postulates, about their history and role in public life, and the teaching of the respective religions is left out the secular school.

Religion in Bulgaria is optional. Where it exists, it does not dispassionately teach children about the essence and historical role of religion but educates them in the values of one religious system or another. In Bulgaria, it is usually the Christian one.

If the goal is to raise the level of knowledge of adolescents about religion and its various variants as a social phenomenon, the principle of equality between them should be respected. "These courses will give a general understanding of religious diversity, form religious literacy. It is also necessary to teach religious disciplines in higher education institutions to form tolerance towards representatives of different religions. It is also worth paying attention to different forms of worldview concerning religion - atheism, agnosticism, and others. In this case, secularism will be applied as a principle of education - a variety of approaches from which the individual has the right to choose" (Сосновских, 2020).

And in today's religion textbooks in Bulgaria, the material about the Christian religion and its Orthodox wing definitely predominates. The content is not focused on her role in public life or the history of Bulgaria but aims at attachment to her basic religious postulates, to her god (Денев, 1998). There is disproportionately little knowledge of some other major religions.

"In ethnically homogeneous settlements, the probability of teaching religious modules is higher than in ethnically mixed ones. This proves the influence of the ethnic factor on the choice of religious modules. However, it does not always play a decisive role.

The choice of modules is influenced by the settlement factor. An analysis of the choice of modules allows us to confirm that in the city, ethnic and religious identity is less pronounced. Using the example of choosing modules for the ORKSE course, it is clear that in the city, parents are less inclined to choose religious modules" (Надыршин, 2019: 91).

In addition, if the principle of secularism is respected, the material in religious studies should be taught by independent teachers and professors and not by representatives of one or another denomination.

According to Nadyryshyn, "based on the obtained observations, three discourses are distinguished: spiritual-moral, cultural, and missionary.

Under the conditions of the first discourse, the teacher avoids applying any information about religion and talks about virtues from the standpoint of universal human values.

In the second approach, religion is presented from an academic point of view. In this case, religion is seen exclusively as part of the society's culture.

In the third approach, one of the religions is considered true. In this case, an indoctrination effect is quite possible.

Second, the discourse is formed on the basis of the ethno-confessional composition of the settlement where the educational institution is located. If the population is monoethnic, the likelihood of a missionary discourse increases significantly.

Third, the discourse is formed based on the ethos of the educational institution.

Interaction within the school is embedded in a certain cultural context that is formed based on traditions, hierarchy, rules and values of the organizations” (Надыршин, 2019: 92-93).

In fact, “the low choice of denominational modules ensures a lower religious socialization of students in the ORCSE classes, as the module reflects the discourse of the subject. The history lesson focuses more on religion as a tool for political, international and integration influence. The value basis of religion in history lessons gives way to the mentioned aspects” (Надыршин, 2019: 98).

“The recognition of the historically determined role of different religions in the formation of the history of a given country should not become a reason for discriminating against representatives of other religious organizations and citizens who adhere to an atheist worldview. It would be logical to offer as an alternative elective discipline ‘Secular Ethics’ or ‘Religious Studies’, depending on what competences the students are required to acquire” (Борецкая, 2016: 95).

“Within the framework of theological thought, where the synonym of the term ‘spirituality’ is ‘religiosity’, ‘relationship with God’, spiritual and moral education is interpreted as religious. In humanistic philosophy, whose anthropocentric tendencies are inherited by the modern secular education system, “spirituality” is understood as the level of knowledge, skills and education of a person, thanks to which he is realized in the interpersonal space and professional activity. Human intellectual activity, the result of which are intangible values that have sociocultural significance, is called spiritual activity” (Борецкая, 2016: 97).

The reality is quite far from these principles, which derive from the secularity of education in our countries. Both in terms of the educational material and in the terms of the characteristics of the teaching staff, after all, in terms of the goals of this education.

It hardly corresponds to the secularity of our educational system and the presence of Christian chapels in higher education institutions, as there are, for example, in Bulgaria. In addition, representatives of other religious denominations, for example, the Muslim religion, follow in these educational institutions.

In the largest university in our country, SU “St. Kl. Ohridski” also has a Faculty of Theology. To me, the appropriateness of this is questionable due to the fact that the primary purpose of one of the two major undergraduate majors, Theology, is directly aimed at training specialists in the Christian religion. The other bachelor’s program “Religion in Europe” also aims to defend Christianity

from other religions. Religious education should be outside secular educational institutions, namely in Christian, Muslim, etc. educational religious institutions. The other is a violation of the principle of the secularity of the state education system and a condition for creating inter-confessional conflicts.

The Christian Church views religious education as a means of instilling Christian faith, not simply an educational tool in a secular education system. That's why she doesn't really like studying religion at school. It will be a profanation of the Orthodox teaching, it will begin to resemble more and more some 'universal Christian' or 'universal religious' teaching, which is one of the reasons for today's movement towards apostasy.

Supporters of true religious education in the secular school suffer from the fact that in Bulgaria it is not so well organized as to attract true believers to the Christian church. But from the point of view of the problems explored in this text, this poor quality of religious education is beneficial for the relations between people of different faiths.

According to Vataшки, "a lot of emphasis is placed on the subject 'Religion' as a means of forming moral values. Surely he would have such a role. But it must be clarified that Christianity is not an ethical doctrine or system, even though it attaches great importance to a pure, moral life. Christianity is a union with God, and this union is connected with an unceasing likeness to God, who is Perfect and Absolutely Good. But since the public schools are secular, in them the teacher of 'Religion' will not have the full freedom and the necessary time to present things as Christianity sees them (if he is a believer), or the desire to do so (if he is a non-believer). The fact is that the Church in Bulgaria cannot provide the necessary number of teachers for the subject with an Orthodox-theological education, which is why, if it is introduced as mandatory, a large part of the teachers will be those who have a secular, non-theological education: historians, philosophers, culturologists, etc. Inevitably, as a result of these factors, the presentation of moral values will have a rather informative character, which will take them out of their spiritual context. So students are very likely to think that Christianity is some kind of ethical teaching, albeit a lofty one. It might be argued that this is 'better than nothing', but there is also reason to think that 'no training is better than bad, wrong training'." (Ваташки, 2019).

"The teaching of Religion (note: religion, not creed) in the public school today is placed on a completely different, I would say opposite basis: modern compulsory school education is based on the critical thinking of students and is primarily cognitive in nature.

In the textbooks for the upper grades (from the fifth grade up), Islam, Buddhism and Judaism were already discussed, too abstract thoughts were presented about Christian morality and ethics, advice was given on marriage, friendship, people from other religions, etc. from the position of 'universal Christian' morality

(does anyone know what universal Christian means when we talk about religion as a subject of study?). Even the lessons with content from the Old and New Testaments, from Orthodox theology (sacraments, symbols of faith, icons, etc.), from the history of the BOC, from the lives of the saints, etc. similar - even there the content bears a faint resemblance to what is taught in Sunday school and what the church has always taught. It cannot be otherwise, and we are well aware of this: it is one thing to teach in the secular environment of the public school, it is quite another in the church environment, where most often the lessons are accompanied by participation in the worship service” (Кожухаров, 2006).

Similar are the problems of religious education in France. “Muslim school actors face unparalleled challenges to equal treatment. Moreover, PE has historically been, and remains today, Catholic-centric, meaning that Catholic culture and religion in the realm of private education operate with a certain power and privilege that remains unavailable to their religious counterparts. I illustrate how Catholic school actors and supposedly ‘secular’ school actors teaching Christian culture can operate with considerably more freedom than their Muslim school counterparts. Actors in a Muslim school, on the contrary, face constant scrutiny, suspicion and discrimination, facilitated by the complexities, ambiguities and politicization of PE in France” (Ferrara, 2023: 89).

As an argument for mistrust of Muslim schools, the suspicion that they are linked to the Muslim Brotherhood through funding is used, which complicates the relationship between Muslim schools and the state and hinders “respect” towards such schools. Their creation and functioning are hindered.

Just as Muslim youth often face inequality and discrimination in public schools, similar discrimination is perpetrated against Muslim schools and their participants in the private system - especially against the backdrop of Catholic privilege - signaling the undermining of French Republican values of equality and secular neutrality (Ferrara, 2023: 96).

“The polemic surrounding Muslim schools is much more about the transmission of Muslim culture and fears of radicalization than a genuine concern for PE content” (Ferrara, 2023: 90). In contrast, Jewish and Catholic schools receive much less attention from the state, except in cases of student or parent complaints, and are very rarely closed by the authorities, regardless of the violations committed.

These facts show that in this severe inter-ethnic situation in Europe and France, the promotion of religious discrimination has serious social and political effects. It encourages insult and aggression among minorities.

Peculiarities in religious education further impose a feeling of marginalization, and this becomes the basis for aggressiveness in all forms. Practices of dominance can often be hidden by progressive talk or patronizing talk.

Under “socialism”, discrimination along religious and ethnic minority groups was reduced. Today, in Bulgaria, it has been increased many times over. It goes,

for example, to segregated schools - for Bulgarians and Roma, for Christians and Muslims.

Today, with the religious holidays and the changes in the educational system, with the texts in the constitution, with the practices to ensure a privileged position of the Christian religion, a feeling of superiority, of appropriation of the state, is being implanted in the ethnic and religious majority. The unequal position of religions in the constitution, in the holiday system, and education, as well as the selective behaviour of the law enforcement agencies towards criminals with different ethnic and religious characteristics, stimulates the discriminatory attitude towards Muslims and people of other religious denominations. We teach children that Muslims are second-hand people, more backward, even hostile, separatists.

More and more widespread in Europe, including in Bulgaria, is the thinking that Muslim refugees are necessarily terrorists. Instead of being thanked for doing to a great extent jobs that sophisticated Europeans do not want to do, they are increasingly stigmatized, despised, hated, and killed. In fact, they are victims in the mass case of the aggressive, inhumane, largely approved by the Christian churches worldwide policy of the European countries and the USA.

In other words, on the one hand, the holiday system and the return of religion to school educates children in religiosity. This helps to redirect the negative energy of the large number of disaffected and distressed people, not to the ruling class, but to foreign gods and their sympathizers. With the declining standard of living of vast masses of the population, with growing frustration and tension among them, controlled religious conflicts are welcome for the ruling elites.

On the other hand, the stimulation of religiosity, including through the holiday system, leads to a disrespectful attitude towards those who do not believe in gods. Non-religious people are subjected to disrespect, even contempt, along the lines of the claims that they are less spiritual than believers, especially Christian believers. In other words, believers oppose unbelievers.

The desecularization of public relations and Islamophobia lead to the fact that some of the non-Muslims in Bulgaria, who do not find real protection in the Christian church, nor in the pro-Christian political entities, become Muslims. Such are, for example, part of the Bulgarian Roma. Some Christians become Christian fundamentalists.

In Bulgaria, the positive fact is that the percentage of true believers, of non-conformist believers, is low. For this reason, it is comparatively more difficult for the ruling elites to use religion as a means of opposition and control. Vatashki claims that the Bulgarian people are not truly Orthodox. According to the statistics from the last census, 76% of those who declared their religion (and not of the population) are defined as Orthodox, but this is only the general situation. If we look at what various surveys tell us specifically, we see that a much smaller proportion believe in God, and even less in specific Christian beliefs (such as immor-

tality or miracles). Our 'Orthodoxy' is expressed in going to church on Christmas and Easter, in 'Christ is risen' after the Resurrection, and saying 'God forgive' when a loved one dies. People leave this world only with baptism and funeral (sometimes without it), but without the being of the Church becoming a part of their life. Being a 'godfather' has become an honorary role given as a sign of respect rather than actual spiritual guidance over the baptized person and initiations into Christianity. It is a practice even to choose as godparents people who are non-believers or formal believers, sometimes not even baptized (and accordingly baptized hastily before the 'ritual' to which they are invited). As a natural result come the phenomena of 'nominal Orthodox' or even 'Orthodox atheist'. And in this regard, the data according to which only less than 1% of the population studies religion, and the trend in the last 10 years is to reduce the number of those studying religion by three times, are completely understandable (Ваташки, 2019).

According to him, the weak interest in the subject 'Religion' as a freely chosen subject is one measure of the interest of the Bulgarian people in Orthodoxy itself.

In this connection, there is an interesting political phenomenon. Since the Bulgarian political parties have led the Roma to a great marginalization, to a repeated setback in their social development, which was achieved during 'socialism', they are increasingly oriented towards voting for the party that throughout the transition period protects the Bulgarian Muslims - MPR. From there came the reorientation of a part of them to Islam because they did not feel protected by the Christian Bulgarian state and the Bulgarian parties that primarily cared about Christianity.

After all, Islamophobia is inculcated from school, from the media through information about terrorism and the subject of refugees. It has now become commonplace to associate terrorism with Muslim terrorism. It covers Christian and other types of terrorism. This is structural Islamophobia. It is a favourable condition for the growth of individual violence and of individual Islamophobia - crimes against refugees, for example, are increasing. Worsened inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations lead to an increase in crime. "Taking into account the conflicting results of research on the influence of religiosity on crime, R. Stark suggested abandoning the premise that religiosity is primarily an individual characteristic and replacing it with the premise that religion is primarily a social phenomenon [Stark, 1996]. In fact, according to the results of his research, religiosity only has an effect in a supportive socio-religious context" (Пруцкова, 2023: 107).

Islamophobia is also suggested through the attitude towards MPR as a harmful non-Christian, non-Bulgarian party and the demagogic statements of politicians and parties that they do not want to govern with this party /in fact they have always governed together with it/.

Islamophobia is also maintained among emancipated women, who are told that Islam is not developing and that emancipation is fundamentally unacceptable under the domination of Islam. The fact that even in countries with a dominant Islam, the

emancipation of women is developing is being concealed. It also hides the fact that in countries with a dominant Christian religion, there was no emancipation of women until not too long ago and that the degree of emancipation of women depends on many other more important social factors, not only and so much on religion.

Another source of fear among the Christian population, which is stimulated by the rulers, is the trend towards a change in the ratio between Christians and Muslims. Instead of Christians critically examining the reasons why they are not giving birth and doing what is necessary in this direction, it is easier for them to fear the higher birth rate of Muslims.

“Regardless of individual faith, the dominant religion and level of religiosity in a country can be a powerful cultural force that shapes individual attitudes and behavior in the area of fertility [Skirbekk, 2022]” (Пруцкова, 2023: 107).

When there are social tensions and conflicts, also supported by religious differences, sometimes groups in a disadvantaged position orient themselves towards increasing birth rates in order to use the changes in population proportions to their advantage, to protect themselves. And the majority responds to this fact with fear and hatred.

There are “three scenarios for how the Muslim population of Europe will grow, prepared by the American non-governmental sociological institute Pew (Pew Research Center), quoted by ‘Dnevnik’.

The data was released at the end of November and attracted attention with the prediction that the current 26 million Muslims in the EU, Norway, and Switzerland could increase by the middle of the century by between 10 and 49 million people and could reach between 36 and 75.6 million.

At the same time, in all three scenarios, the non-Muslim population in the analyzed 30 countries will decrease - to 463-445 million people, although over 40% of migrants are Christians” (През 2050, 2017).

“Muslims will make up a quarter of the world’s population in 2030, the independent ‘Pew’ Research Center reported. Over the next 20 years, the Muslim population will grow faster than any other religious group, said lead researcher Alan Cooperman.

The number of Muslims will increase by 35 percent over the next two decades, rising from 1.6 billion people to 2.2 billion in 2030. By comparison, the rest of the world’s non-Muslim population will increase by only 16 percent, or twice as much, Kuperman said.

The share of Muslims in Europe is expected to increase by over 30 percent. From 44.1 million in 2010 to over 58 million in 2030, or over 8 percent of the entire European population, says Brian Grimm.

In 10 European countries, in 2030, Muslims will be over 10 percent. According to the American studio, this trend will change the status of Muslims in society. They will gain greater political and cultural influence, especially in the cities.

Among the ten European countries with the highest percentage of Muslim population is Bulgaria. It will be sixth, with 15.7 percent Muslims in 2030. Kosovo (93.5), Albania (83.2), Bosnia (42.7), Macedonia (40.3), Montenegro (21.5) will have a higher percentage than Bulgaria. After Bulgaria are Russia (14.4), Georgia (11.5), France (10.3) and Belgium (10.2). The largest, both now and in the future, will be the number of Muslims in Russia (increasing from 16.4 million people in 2010 to 18.6 million in 2030), where, above all, the balance of the population will change most sharply due to the rapidly decreasing non-Muslim population, the study also points out.

The reason for this large increase, according to the studies, is the significantly higher birth rate among Muslim women. No other religious group in the world has such a high fertility rate, researchers say.

However, demographers believe that, at least in Europe, these differences will gradually melt away. The Muslim population is growing, but the pace is slowing, says Alan Cooperman” (Каникова, 2011).

These sentiments between people of different religious denominations carry over from domestic relationships to international processes and situations.

As an example, I can give the current situation in Israel. Along the lines of the confrontation between Jews and Palestinians, between non-Muslims and Muslims, the attitude towards the conflict is largely determined by religious sympathies and antipathies. The hatred between Muslims and Christians, which is stimulated in European countries, leads to lawful assessments of the conflict in Israel. The Muslim haters are on Israel's side regardless of its aggressive and inhumane behaviour. The bad attitude of many Bulgarians towards Islam today semi-automatically makes them hate the Palestinians and their struggle for independence in the situation of the conflict with Israel today. They do not try to understand the justice of their struggles. Muslims are more inclined to look for positives in the behaviour of the Palestinians and the Muslim states that support them. The opinion of non-believers is determined not so much by the religious factor, but by other, more important factors.

The fact that the Bulgarian people are not so religious, that the religiosity of a large part of those who claim to be religious is formal, inferior, conformist, contributes to the fact that their religiosity plays a smaller role in the evaluation of events and people, of military conflicts. But here, too, there are quite a few conditions for using religious attachments as a means of separation and predetermination of attitude.

In countries and situations, when it comes to much more mass and sincere religiosity, religious differences can more easily be used by the elites as a factor for division and hatred between different parts of the population than in Bulgaria.

Religion in Germany today plays a much stronger divisive role than in the days of the welfare state before globalization, when the social environment was much more conducive to unity between Christians and Muslims. Today, inter-ethnic and inter-religious hatreds and crimes have increased manifold. There, too, the attitude towards international conflicts is to a greater extent predetermined by the religious colour of the person. It is no accident that the majority of the German people tolerate, even approve, when their governments involve the country in military conflicts with countries with predominantly Muslim populations. But it feels more affected when a Christian country like Ukraine is attacked.

During globalization, the second and third generation of guest workers have much more problems, they suffer much more discrimination and hatred from German Christians and naturally become more aggressive towards them. It is not their reluctance to integrate that is the reason for their lower degree of integration, as the manipulators usually claim. The main reason is their inability to integrate as their fathers and mothers, who are also Muslims, were integrated. The different generations of guest workers are placed in the German state under radically different socio-economic conditions. And this predetermines the differences in their degree of integration and in their attitude towards religions.

In Europe, including the former “socialist” countries, during the last decades of the so-called globalization, religiosity has increased; at the same time, racism, intolerance of foreign religions, crimes against their representatives, and voting for racist or fundamentalist parties have also increased. This is more proof that religiosity is no guarantee for the observance of the so-called general human norms, which religions usually appropriate as their main characteristic (Pachkova, 2018). The observance or non-observance of basic moral norms is not responsible so much for religiosity as other more important social phenomena. But it plays an additional warming role in one direction or another.

After all, it is safe to say that religions further divide people around the world. They oppose them and create problems for them, they justify many types of violence. A typical example is contemporary religiously based terrorism. The Israelis respond to Islamic fundamentalism with the flourishing of extreme Judaic currents and their political factions. The Bulgarian Turks built mosques, and the Christians built chapels and churches and erected crosses over towns and villages. The former put on burqas, the latter adorn themselves with crosses. In France, they banned the wearing of burqas, but they did not ban the wearing of crosses, which is a pure form of discrimination in one of the most democratic countries. One form of response by Muslim women was to increase the wearing of clothing that identified them as such.

The negative attitude toward the Muslim religion in our country is developing. It is growing in connection with the actual activation of the Muslim church in our country, with the activity of several non-governmental organizations - ours

and foreign ones. It grows with the growth of fear among ethnic Bulgarians of some separatist sentiments among the Bulgarian Turks. This, in turn, stimulated part of the Bulgarians, as an attempt to defend their national identity, to develop their religious consciousness and practices anew, to develop Christian fundamentalism. For example, around the village of Momchilovtsi in the Rhodopes, more than 20 chapels were built with the joint efforts of the population of the village. The population of this village is not actively fighting for more jobs, for business development, or for solving their main problems. Their civil activity is concentrated in this direction.

“Religious differences are linked to revived ethnic differences. Ultimately, this is reflected in the concentration of representatives of some ethnic and religious groups in some political parties and of others in others. Political pluralism has played a somewhat negative role in this regard. Sometimes, identifying with some political subjects for ethnic or religious reasons, these subjects alienates citizens from social and party subjects with whom they could fight together for their rights.

Religious antagonisms have increased, especially along the lines of separatist dangers, discouraging the joint civil activity of Christians and Muslims. During the protests in Bulgaria, there was a lack of cooperation between the different ethnic groups, there was even a tendency to deepen the ethnophobic nature of the civil protests in Bulgaria. The growing racism of the Bulgarians prevents the Roma population from being more seriously involved in civil activities. Only the monopolies and their protectors profit from all this” (Pachkova, 2015).

In connection with the danger of Islamization of Europe, supporters of dialogue between different religions and churches are increasingly accused of supporting Islamic fundamentalism. The fears of religious majorities increase the conditions for discrimination against religious minorities.

In fact, “the paradigm of secularization, which was fundamental in the scientific approach to religion during most of the 20th century, today, in the era of globalization, is undergoing a serious revision” (Богомилова, 2010). Proof of this is the consistent and somewhat effective policy of developing people’s religiosity during this period.

On the other hand, as a result of the awareness of the dangers of religious divisions in Europe, in connection with the failure of multiculturalism in Europe, more and more voices are being raised in defence of increasing the secularity of society, in defence of a new stage of secularization. European elites sometimes realize that the deepening of conflicts between different denominations leads to excessive contradictions between large parts of the population, to increasing political tensions, to increasing conditions for terrorist activity, etc. They realize that maintaining the religiosity of the population sometimes does less good than harm from the point of view of governing the masses. More and more often, they realize that the majority of the population of the Western European countries is

non-religious or only formally religious and that they must protect its interests as well. “Today, only 21% of Europeans say that religion plays a primary role in their lives - according to a survey conducted by Gallup in 32 European countries” (Тодорова, 2006). There is a variable trend towards a decrease in the number of believers (Богомилова, 2005).

In some European countries, elites are questioning whether and to what extent ethnic and religious contradictions should be fueled. According to Bogdana Todorova, “today, two of the monotheistic religions - Christianity and Islam, force Europeans to fight for the secular like never before” (Тодорова, 2006).

The West is currently experiencing both secularization and sacralization (Heelas, 2005).

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