



Civic Identity as a Factor of Spiritual Security in South Russia: Methodology of Research, Complexities and Conditions of Formation

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Abstract

The article is aimed at identifying the problem and the conditions of the construction of civic identity as a factor of provision of spiritual security in the south of Russia. The subject of research consists in the civic identity as a factor of spiritual security of the South of Russia. The paper presents the analysis of academic literature dealing with various aspects of the study of civic identity and spiritual security of multicultural society which made it possible to determine the basic concepts of research and identify theoretic gaps in the study of this problem. Research methodology which allows defining the authors' perspective of the study of civic identity as a factor of spiritual security in the south of Russia has been identified. The article deals with factors which prevent civil identification and consolidation of the multicultural region (cultural, socioeconomic, and geopolitical), the conditions for the construction of civic identity as a factor of spiritual security of the region have been analyzed.

Keywords: Civic identity, Spiritual security, Region, South of Russia, Culture, Society

1 Introduction

The sociocultural peculiarity of the South of Russia consists in its unique ethnocultural composition, which, on the one hand, appears to be its advantage which imparts a tint of originality to it, and on the other hand, it entails grave risks in the sphere of interethnic and interreligious relations.

The region has traditionally been the center and the mixture of various civilization models, mainly Christian and Islamic. This situation is fraught with potential threats, associated with the use of ethnic and faith-based contradictions for political purposes, which significantly increases the risks of regional security. In this regard, the study of civic identity as a factor of spiritual security of the multicultural region is of great social significance, since it makes it possible to comprehend the main difficulties in its construction, and potential in the harmonization of interethnic relations (12).

In our opinion, currently the problem of the construction of civic identity is not only a subject of research, but also a category of social practice, particularly in the spheres of social cultural policy of the state.

2 Materials and methods

An in-depth analysis of civic identity is presented in papers of such domestic authors as N.A. Galaktionova, (11), L.M. Drobizheva (8), M.A. Mchedlova, Y.A. Gavrilov and A.G. Shevchenko (17), V.A. Tishkov (23). The authors rightly point out that the actualization topics of civic identity are associated with macrosocial transformational processes taking place in Russian multiethnic and multi-religious society. In the context of dynamic social processes that are characterized by uncertainty, unpredictability, distribution of mass culture, ethnic groups have faced the difficulties of identification, particularly with respect to correlation of ethnic, faith-based and civic identities.

Defining civic identity as "identifying oneself with the citizens of the country, its state and territorial space, concepts of the state, society, country, "image of us", sense of community, solidarity, responsibility for the state of things in the state" (8), a number of researchers have identified the

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presence of loyalty to the state and recognition of it as “own” as its key signs. In turn, several authors lay special emphasis on the axiological basis of civic identity, claiming that it is based on the idea of commonwealth, the correlation of the collective past, present and future with a particular system of values which actually serve as the basis for the political unity” (17).

Rostov researchers turn to the study of the potential of civic identity in multicultural society as well; they are, in particular, A.K. Degtiarev (6), Y.G. Volkov et al. (30). The researchers agree with the fact that the construction of general civic identity is vital, since its absence is fraught with further destabilization of mutual relations of various ethnic groups, formation of enclaves of separatism and isolationism in the national republics. Furthermore, the authors point out that under the conditions of polyethnicity of the region, it is the construction of civic identity that can become a powerful method of social control over the processes of politicization and radicalization of ethnic factor (30). At the same time, the researchers draw attention to the fact that in the social consciousness “the image of civic consciousness is associated with the value of the state, with a dream of the better state, with the fact that a Russian feels pride not only in the great historical and cultural heritage of the country, but also in the powerful state which can protect their interests both at individual and collective levels” (6). Thus, civic identity of multicultural society is closely related to the expectations of resolution of urgent social problems of citizens of the region from the government institutions.

In our opinion, the problem of construction of civic identity is directly associated with the matters of provision of spiritual security of society. The actualization of the problem of spiritual security is stipulated by the need for the stabilization of interethnic and interreligious situation in the south of Russia which in the absence of common spiritual integrators which are of value for the representatives of local cultures, is potentially conflictogenic.

In this regard, it is difficult to overestimate the significance of spiritual sphere, within which the values which are able to become the basis for the construction of civic identity are formed and conveyed. Representing a space of symbols and meanings, spiritual sphere forms axiological and ideological basis for the society, effectively ensuring its stability and protection against external and internal threats.

The problems of spiritual security are considered in academic literature in papers of A.V. Vereshchagina, N.K. Gafiatulina and S.I. Samygin (26), V.I. Kurbatov (13), A.V. Tonkonogov (24). Spiritual security is mainly thought of by researchers as “the state of a sense of protection of spiritual sphere of society, which includes cultural, ideological, informational and psychological, scientific, educational and faith-based securities as its subtypes and is characterized by respect for interests of individual, society and state...” (24, 27).

The hazards that are stipulated by the processes of deideologization of Russian society, as well as the crisis of national and civic identity in Russian society, are described in the studies of N. Baranets and I. Kalantarian, V.N. Kuznetsov (14), A. Marshak(16), Zh.T. Toshchenko (25).

According to researchers, “the absence of ideological reference points leads to the disruption of nationwide values, disorientation of a person in society” (2). Such a perception of the role of ideology in society makes researchers pay special attention to its protective function. According to V.N. Kuznetsov (14), the protective nature of ideology is expressed in “a set of values which confronts anticivic ideology and all of its statised forms – whether they are ideology of the state, imperial ideology, or any other ideology” (13). This attitude appears to be quite conceptual since the conditions of ideological vacuum and spiritual crisis lead to the actualization of local identities (ethnic, faith-based, etc.), politicization of which can heavily destabilize multicultural Russian society.

The propagation of faith-based fundamentalism as a threat to spiritual security of the South of Russia are analyzed in papers of I.P. Dobaev & A.I. Dobaev (7), V.V. Chernous (5). The experts place special emphasis on the role of geopolitical actors in the propaganda of the ideology of radical Islamism in the south of Russia. It is obvious that under the conditions of the growing geopolitical competition for the influence in the region, various radical organizations, the activities of which are aimed at involving young people in its network structures and destabilization of interethnic relations in the region, are becoming increasingly active.

All of this testifies that spiritual security of a multiethnic region can only be ensured under the conditions of consolidation of society based on the unified system of spiritual values which can integrate the representatives of various cultures into common political and cultural space. In our opinion, it is the reason due to which civic identity can become the factor which is able to overcome the sociocultural split in multicultural society. The perception of this fact allows us to formulate the goal of research (15).

Theoretic and methodological basis of paper is presented by the studies which were conducted in line with interdisciplinary methodology which makes it possible to make integrative use of the accumulated scientific potential of various disciplines: philosophy, political science, social science, and conflictology.

In his research, the author draws upon the methodology of constructive realism, the basic principles of which were developed by Western sociologists P.L. Berger and T. Luckmann (3). According to their approach, social reality is constructed in the process of socialization, during which a person correlates their individuality with the collective system of values and norms. It allows them to comprehend their lives in a stream of many generations and to perceive the continuity of historical process.

In the study of the problems of spiritual security we relied on the concept of “social anomie” (9, 18), “social (cultural) trauma” (22) and “sociocultural crisis” (10). These concepts make it possible to comprehend the difficulties of the process of construction of civic identity in Russian society which are coming from severe disorganization of society, spiritual and moral crisis, absence of social cohesion and civil solidarity, actualization of ethnic and faith-based identity.

A multifactorial approach to the study of problems and perspectives in the construction of civic identity in the south of Russia is used in the research.

3 Results

Using the chosen research methodology, we consider civic identity as a complicated system which is constructed on the basis of affiliation of an individual with the national state presenting common political and cultural space. Thus, it entitles us to identify two key components in the structure of civic identity: political and axiological.

The political component of civic identity includes the comprehension of one's own state affiliation which forms a collective image of "us". A number of researchers define civic identity as "a result of construction" of sociopolitical senses and their internalization into social consciousness" (4). In such a sense, civic identity is solely constructed within the scope of the state as a political institution which in fact controls the mechanism of national consolidation of society based on common goals, interests or values.

As can be seen from the above, civic identity results from the comprehension of affiliation of a person with a particular political community; moreover, the choice of citizenship is made exceptionally rationally, based on economic, political and sociocultural preferences of an individual (20, 28, 29).

The cultural component of civic identity is based on the system of spiritual values which are able to consolidate the split multicultural society.

Spiritual values are considered in various aspects in the academic literature - both as a set of moral norms which serve as a basis for the formation of behavior strategies of a personality and as an expression of axiological attitude of a person towards themselves and the world (19).

In Russian cultural tradition, the concept of spiritual values is intimately associated with moral standards, the essence of which is largely presented in orthodox dogma. At a certain stage of Russian history, it is Orthodoxy with its system of values, traditions and symbols that exercised the identification function and united people on a common spiritual basis.

The socialist ideology, myths and symbols of which were the basis of "social relations, political actions, and, eventually, presentation of self-identification of Soviet society" served as a basis for civic identity under Soviet Union (20).

The blank space of the lost Soviet identity is mainly filled in with ethnic and faith based forms of identities. The absence of unified system of spiritual values is accompanied with the development and reproduction of the state of social anomie, the presence of which is in actual fact equal to the latent collapse of society. Such a state of society is potentially hazardous, since it prevents the construction of all-Russian civic identity, both at the level of personality and at the level of society. The comprehension of this fact forces us to turn to the search for integrators which are able to consolidate modern Russian society and become the basis for the construction of civic identity.

It has been established that the periods of social transit are accompanied by clash of values, or, according to the figurative expression of Max Weber, "axiological

polytheism", frequently leading to clashes of identities. If the balance of identities is preserved through the use of regulatory order in stable society, the situation of prolonged crisis causes their conflict.

The difficulties in the construction of civic identity in the south of Russia are stipulated, firstly, by sociocultural inhomogeneity of the region, associated with cultural and civilizational peculiarities of its development, the presence of a variety of local cultural communities mainly identifying themselves by ethnic and/or faith-based attributes; secondly, by socioeconomic problems associated with high unemployment in certain republics of the region, aggravated through social inequality and labor migration processes; thirdly, the geopolitical confrontation of international actors (individual countries, as well as terrorist organizations) for the influence in the region. Assessing the conflictogenic potential of the region, researchers point out that it is primarily associated with the fact that the South of Russia turned out to be in the zone of geopolitical struggle between Russian, Western and Islamic civilizations (1).

4 Discussion

The growth of socioeconomic instability and the absence of common spiritual values able to integrate people for solving socially important problems of the region as well as uncertain prospects for the development of society is accompanied with the growing sense of mutual strangeness in society. In this situation, the need for the construction of civic identity which is based on common spiritual values for the representatives of various cultures of the South of Russia, presents a problem consisting in the provision of spiritual security of the region.

Today, one of the vectors along which there is an ongoing process of search for spiritual integrators of Russian society, is the appeal to some "supreme" values, which are frequently perceived as something non-figurative. These values are mainly associated with the "heroic" past of people, which in the absence of other integrators becomes the only form of self-identification comprehensible by the mass consciousness. Under the conditions of prolonged spiritual crisis and the absence of distinct reference points for living, it is history that "becomes that existential space in which a personality can find their identity, the reason for their existence, the basis for the unification with community" (10). The images of the past are used to construct the image of the future which is intended to elucidate the essence of processes taking place in society. Such a situation is caused by the fact that the heroic past of the country seems to be more attractive than its present, which makes people search for spiritual support in chapters of Russian history alone.

The second vector is associated with the search for national idea which can become an integrator for people and become the basis for the construction of all-Russian civic identity. Assessing the modern ideological state of Russian society, researchers point out that it is tessellated and fragmented. This state of things results from a deep split in society, the presence of inconsistent and conflicting axiological systems in it.

It should be emphasized that the present attempts to construct civic identity on the basis of elaboration of a

general ideology are frequently strictly utilitarian and are aimed either at legitimization of the current political regime, or at substantiation of their political claims by a personality or a group. In addition, in the process of construction of new ideology, political actors also appeal to historical events from national history, highlighting the relevant key points and assessing particular historical events.

The purposeful activities of institutions which are responsible for the processes of socialization of the younger generation, aimed at "restitution" of historical images and symbols which make it possible to create a comprehensive concept of national history as both heroic and dramatic process, in which a modern person can find substantiation and justification for their own existence both as a personality and as a citizen, into the consciousness of young people, appear to be the most constructive in the construction of a unified system of spiritual values which are able to consolidate Russian society. We are primarily referring to the institution of education, one of the most important functions of which consists in the socialization of an individual, their inclusion in the system of norms and values which are generally valid for society they live in (31,33).

The implementation of this vector is only possible on the basis of joint efforts of academic community and political leadership of the country. The construction of civic identity must become the primary goal of the state cultural policy which must be implemented in close relation to the state youth policy.

Moreover, it is necessary to bring back to life such value of Russian culture as justice, not only in theory, but also in the real world. Moreover, "justice as a reference point of politics and life implies not only equality in a number of economic and legal matters, but also a worthy reward for feats, and punishment for crimes. Honesty of the judicial system, elaborated and adequate law, the presence of means of social mobility for the hard-working and talented. If justice serves as a real value which is followed by power, then everyone will consider it their duty to display this quality in situations which they must estimate" (32).

The quality of living or human wellbeing, both material and social, can become yet another value which is able to consolidate multiethnic society of the South of Russia.

Recently, there has been a growing comprehension of the fact that the idea of social well-being is a universal value, since it is natural for a person to strive for life with peace, prosperity and happiness. The practical implementation of this idea is solely ensured due to the social orientation of the economic and political institutions of the state, the observance of rights and freedoms of citizens, a dramatic change in the attitude towards social sphere of society, all of social structures, material and spiritual well-being of most people (21).

5 Conclusion

In general, it should be noted that the construction of civic identity in the south of Russia is a social resource which is able to provide spiritual security of multicultural society. However, the process of construction of civic identity is associated with a variety of problems, in particular: cultural inhomogeneity of the region; a variety of unresolved

socioeconomic problems; the influence of geopolitical actors on the destabilization of the situation in the region. It is evident that the state of the South of Russia should be considered as hazardous due to the presence of the above factors.

Despite the above fact, we can identify spiritual reference points which are able to consolidate society on the basis of civic markers. We believe that the modern system of spiritual values which are able to consolidate Russian society should be primarily based on the national history, common cultural values, justice and well-being of the population of the country. Moreover, not only an appeal to the heroic past of the country, but also a pride in its present, and a distinct vision of the future should become the basis for the construction of civic identity in the region.

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