

# RELIGION-STATE RELATIONS AS A SOURCE OF MODERN TERRORISM

## AUTHORSHIP

Mikhail Yuryevich Zelenkov 

Department of «Information Analytics and Political Technologies», Moscow State Technical University named after N.E. Bauman, Moscow, Russia.

**ORCID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1005-5721>

**E-mail:** [mzelenkov@internet.ru](mailto:mzelenkov@internet.ru)

Ivan Vladimirovich Fedyakin 

Department "Service and Tourism", Institute of Economics and Finance, Russian University of Transport, Moscow, Russia.

**ORCID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9842-5987>

**E-mail:** [Fedyakin\\_IV@mail.ru](mailto:Fedyakin_IV@mail.ru)

Sergey Borisovich Zinkovskiy 

Department of Theory of Law and State, Law Institute, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), Moscow, Russia.

**ORCID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6494-0542>

**E-mail:** [zinkovskiy-sb@rudn.ru](mailto:zinkovskiy-sb@rudn.ru)

Valentina Sergeevna Nikitina 

Department of Theory of Law and State, Law Institute, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), Moscow, Russia.

**ORCID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6211-9483>

**E-mail:** [nikitina-vs@rudn.ru](mailto:nikitina-vs@rudn.ru)

Mikhail Yrievich Bikov 

Russian University of Transport, Moscow, Russia.

**ORCID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3741-3154>

**E-mail:** [bicmy@mail.ru](mailto:bicmy@mail.ru)

**Received in:**  
2021-01-10

**Approved in:**  
2021-01-30

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.24115/S2446-6220202172769p.463-472>

## INTRODUCTION

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, state bodies in many countries of the world put much pressure on religious confessions. The relevant information analytics demonstrates that in this troubled time 75% of the world's population lives in countries where their religious freedom is under threat. In 2015, the governments of 38 European countries (84%) persecuted religious groups in limited or widespread forms. The governments of 24 European countries (53%) even used some forms of violence. Conflicts between state bodies and religious confessions intensified after about 1.3 million migrants applied for asylum in Europe in 2015. Over 50% of such refugees came from Muslim countries (Syria, Libya, Afghanistan, and Iraq).

A consensus between religions and countries in Europe is often violated due to the main principle governing the relationship between religion and state in Islam, i.e. the political sovereignty of Allah as a whole (WAINES, 1995). The Qur'anic principle (Qur'an 24:55) is that Allah appointed humanity as his vicegerents to rule the earth and that human government is answerable to Allah (WAINES, 1995). However, the main problem of this principle reflected in Sharia law is that it aims at regulating the entire spectrum of human and social activity but has never been fully codified

under modern laws (NAGATA, 1994). Religion plays an important and socially useful role in state and society, providing the basis for common morality. However, the role of religion concerning morality is becoming more and more contradictory in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We agree with Van Aarde (VAN AARDE, 2018) who believed that religion-state relations in the Western civilization developed historically. They moved from the rule of state to the coexistence of state and church and end up in the drastic separation of state and church. However, religious diversity promotes a coherent rather than indiscriminate combination of relations. An alternative to this approach is the complete separation of state and church (secularization).

The above-mentioned facts are also confirmed by the analysis of sociological reports (2007-2017). They prove that religion-state relations in the world have a trend towards an increase in the number of restrictions in the sphere of religion. Fifty-two countries introduced significant restrictions on the freedom of religion; the number of countries where people experience much social or religious enmity increased from 39 to 56 in ten years. The highest level of restrictions is common to Muslim areas of the Middle East and North Africa, where 95% of countries persecute one or another religious community. In Christian Europe, an increasing number of governments place restrictions on the dress of Muslim women (A CLOSER LOOK AT HOW RELIGIOUS RESTRICTIONS HAVE RISEN AROUND THE WORLD, 2019). At the same time, Sub-Saharan Africa, North and South America, countries of the Asia-Pacific Region have low levels of government harassment or use of force against religious groups. However, seven out of ten countries in each of these regions put restrictions on religious life (GOVERNMENT HARASSMENT, USE OF FORCE AGAINST RELIGIOUS GROUPS INCREASED SHARPLY IN EUROPE IN, 2015). The synthesis of analytical results suggests that the largest political heat in religion-state relations can be observed in such countries as China, India, Egypt, Uzbekistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Vietnam, Singapore, Morocco, Algeria, Iraq, Eritrea, Brunei, and Mauritania.

Within the context of this study, the Middle East is of particular scientific interest since 19 out of 20 countries (except for multi-confessional Lebanon) have an official state religion (17) or a preferred religion (2). In all these countries (besides Israel), Islam is a traditional religion. Besides, all countries in the region are in one way or another subordinate to religious authorities or their legal doctrines. For example, when spouses are of the same religion, courts apply canonical (i.e. traditional religious) laws of that religious group in conformity with the family law of Egypt. When one of the spouses is Muslim and the other is of a different religion (for instance, Coptic Christianity), or if spouses are members of different Christian denominations, courts rely on the Islamic Family Law (A CLOSER LOOK AT HOW RELIGIOUS RESTRICTIONS HAVE RISEN AROUND THE WORLD, 2019). M. Pence, the 48<sup>th</sup> and current Vice President of the United States emphasizes other statistics and facts: "no people of faith today face greater hostility or hatred than the followers of Christ". In 2015, Christians were persecuted by governments or large social groups in a total of 128 countries, namely, more than any other faith (78% of Christians lived in places where they were oppressed).

Indeed, many of such incidents are related to long-standing tensions between religious communities and governments but some of them did not emerge until the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. In combination with certain political and social circumstances, religion-state relations provide powerful resources for justifying and encouraging terrorist acts against civilians. In this regard, the study hypothesis is that one of the main sources of modern religious terrorism is a violated consensus in religion-state relations, both in a particular society and on a global scale.

## METHODS

The methodological basis of the article was a systemic complex analysis aimed at determining and describing the role of religion-state relations in the system of modern terrorism. The epistemological potential of statistical and sociological methods of quantitative and qualitative research helps to adequately designate religion-state relations as the main source of modern terrorism. The novelty of the article and its results are determined by the original approach to identifying manifestations of state violence against religious groups, causing and encouraging terrorism in an individual state and on a global scale.

## RESULTS

The study of confrontational religion-state relations allows identifying the following tendencies making representatives of various religious confessions resort to terrorism for the freedom of religion:

*Restrictions on interreligious communication:* India (Hindus vs Muslims), Ukraine (church schism between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Kyivan Patriarchate), Northern Ireland (Protestants vs Catholics), Israel (Muslims vs Jews);

*The use of the traditions typical of one religion to the detriment of another religious group:* India (ban on killing a sacred animal (a cow));

*Public insults by representatives of the authorities of a particular religious group:* the USA, Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Finland (attitude towards Muslims expressed by the top officials of state);

*The inability of public authorities to protect representatives of one religious group from attacks from another religious group:* Egypt (Christians of the Coptic Orthodox Church), Ukraine (the Orthodox Church of Ukraine of the Moscow Patriarchate), Sudan (pagans);

*The discrimination of denominations with a minority in the country (region):* Nigeria (Christians, Muslims), Myanmar (Muslims), China (Buddhists, Taoists, Muslims, Catholics, Protestants), Iran (Bahá'ís, Evangelical Christians), Eritrea (Jehovah's Witnesses), Saudi Arabia (Shia Muslims);

*State religious favoritism:* Eritrea (the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church, Sunni Islam, the Roman Catholic Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Eritrea), Saudi Arabia (Sunni Muslims), Malaysia (Muslims), Indonesia (Muslims), Israel (Judaism), the Comoros (Islam, Catholicism), Thailand (Theravada Buddhism), Samoa (Christianity), Turkey (Islam), Greece (Orthodoxy), Iceland (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland), Great Britain (Anglicanism), Argentina and

Bolivia (the Catholic Apostolic Church), Denmark and Norway (the Evangelical Lutheran Church);

*Political control over a religious cult:* Jordan (sermons at mosques).

Having considered the study results, we believe that the main manifestations of state violence against religious groups, causing and escalating terrorism, are as follows: *physical coercion, the separation of representatives of some religion from general society to complicate their life or religious practice, derogatory public comments or characteristics by the government or state bodies concerning certain religious groups, a failure to protect (or deliberate denial to protect) from attacks of religious terrorists* (Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Manifestations of state violence against religious groups



**Source:** Search data.

We can also highlight that the abuse of state power (or denial to provide protection) is the most common cause of a damaged religious identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Its manifestations are as follows:

1. The relationship between titular religions and the Islamic denomination built on the humiliation of religious communities through public insults of state bodies;
2. The use of anti-Muslim sentiments for winning votes of the electorate;
3. The illegal use of force against members of religious minorities.

## DISCUSSION

Religion is a powerful tool for capturing minds and justifying terrorism. Human civilization meets religion at every great moment in its history. For example, the Roman Empire failed to unite Europe beyond the Rhine and the Danube (FOURQUET, 2018). Modern analysts emphasize that the interaction between religion, state, and terrorism cannot be ignored and requires comprehensive studies. A team of scholars from Belgian and Canadian universities headed by N. Bonbled (BONBLED, ROMAINVILLE, VERDUSSEN & WATTIER, 2018) believed that religion-state relations should be considered through three axes of analysis: relations between states and religions based on constitutional provisions; universal rights and privileges of an individual; religious discrimination.

There is another comprehensive approach, under which the relationship between state and religion means the discussion of a special and important area which is diverse relations between an individual and society. In this case, there is a need for studying intimate issues concerning personal beliefs, views, and conscience: gay rights (CARLO-GONZALEZ, KALLAGAT & WHITTEN-WOODRING, 2017), rights of ethnic minorities (DELANTY, 1996; MIŁOSZ, 1993), women's rights (BEN-NUN BLOOM, 2015; HTUN & WELDON, 2015; SWEENEY, 2014), etc. It is also necessary to consider the activities of the society, state and a certain political system to ensure democratic rights and freedoms of citizens and exclude any legal and physical violence infringing the interests of an individual and society: relations between church and state (GRZYMALA-BUSSE, 2015), the integration and disintegration of

society (NURULLAEV, 1993), repression (DELANTY, 1996; SARKISSIAN, 2015), conflict (FURMAN, 1981; BASEDAU, STRÜVER, VÜLLERS & WEGENAST, 2011; BROWN, 2017; HENNE, 2012), terrorism (SAIYA, 2016), globalization (MIŁOSZ, 1993; BEN-NUN BLOOM, ARKIAN & SOMMER, 2013), corruption (SOMMER, BEN-NUN BLOOM & ARKIAN 2013), a civilizational divide (HUNTINGTON, 1994), etc.

Despite a wide range of relevant studies, religion-state relations mostly form in the process of their activities following the secular and religious (or atheistic) consciousness of society and are regulated by the following factors:

1. *Legal framework* (the Constitution and other regulatory legal acts). State can have one or more official or preferred religions or take a neutral position due to secularization. Some countries with a state religion show greater religious tolerance, while secular states give preference to some religions, persecute others, or even prohibit them. Besides, state constitutions provide different approaches (NIEUWENHUIS, 2012), from the establishment of a state religion (theocratic state) to the complete separation of religion and state (secular state).

In particular, Article 1 of the French Constitution states that France is a secular republic. The First Amendment to the US Constitution prohibits the government from establishing any religion. Article 3 of the Constitution of the Italian Republic establishes the principle of equality and non-discrimination based on religion. It is supplemented by Clause 8.1 that extends a personal level to a collective one and confirms that all religious denominations are equally free before the law. Article 140 of the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany mentions some provisions of the Weimar Constitution, prohibiting the existence of a unified state church but allowing religious confessions to be recognized by the state. In the Netherlands, the separation of church and state is considered an unwritten principle of constitutional law since this issue is not mentioned in the Basic Law. The general principle of equality before the law, set out in Article 13 of the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic, reflects all cases of discrimination based on religion and prohibits both favored and prejudiced differences in communication between citizens on this basis. Article 16 of the Spanish Constitution guarantees the ideological and religious freedom of individuals and communities without any limitation in their demonstrations other than that which is necessary for the maintenance of public order protected by law.

In Scandinavia (Denmark, Norway, Iceland), the Evangelical Lutheran Church traditionally enjoys the support and protection of the state. Article 4 of the Constitutional Act of Denmark states, "The Evangelical Lutheran Church shall be the Established Church of Denmark, and as such, it shall be supported by the State". The Finnish law also grants special status to the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Until December 31, 1999, the Evangelical Lutheran Church had been an official religion in Sweden and the monarch had to be its adherent (the same applies for Norway). However, the Constitution of Sweden was amended and the Swedish Church became a legal entity, independent from state and equal with other religious communities. In England, the Anglican Church is an official religion and its leader is the monarch. Islam is an official religion in 26 countries of the Middle East and North Africa (Iran, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Libya, etc.).

2. *Interaction between society and religion* (devout religiosity or secularization, genuine religious tolerance or confrontation). Some countries have stronger ties between society, and, consequently, state and religion, while others weaken these relations. Moreover, such relations can differ in various states. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is especially alarming that each society and state (more precisely, government) understands this relationship in their way and, most importantly, carries out actions in the sphere of religion-state relations in different directions. We cannot but agree with J. Fox (FOX, 2018), who believed that only a thorough and objective study helps understand what caused these interpretations and actions, whether they are democratic and humane, and, finally, in whose interests they are carried out.

Thus, the analysis of world experience in the field of religion-state relations shows that the religious factor can be overestimated in some cases. In countries that do not have a state ideology, a part of society influenced by mass media decides that an ideological gap can be filled with a religious confession. According to M. Weingardt, religious conflicts are based not only on values but also on identity and transcendence. This gives a believer a completely different status. "If I am convinced that my religion is sacred, this is a small step towards demonizing the enemy. This is also a small step towards understanding it as a sacred duty and a form of opposition towards the enemy. Therefore, it is a fight at all costs" (HENNIES, n. d.). While causing differences within and outside a particular group, religious identity can influence foreign policy and even interfere with the policies of other states on behalf of adherents (BROWN, 2017). Furthermore, this impact can trigger the formation and development of terrorism since repressive measures often have the opposite effect (France, Myanmar, Germany, Israel, etc.). The best way to curb religious terrorism is through religious freedom (HENNE, 2012).

Under these conditions, a certain religious ideology can encourage people to do terrible things. If adepts truly believe that their God wants to see them as martyrs who blow up people, then they will do it and will be convinced that it is the right thing done for righteous reasons (DAWKINS, 2017). However, E. Woland warned, "Just think about the ability of religion to unite communities. Therefore, people who have common political or ideological interests are supported by their faith. Human groups define themselves through their beliefs. The current events in the world show how dangerous it is" (KONIGORSKI, n. d.). For example, fundamentalists claim that religion, social life, and state policy are necessarily intertwined in a full-fledged lifestyle. H. Ajami (سوبر تفكيك الأصولية و الإرهاب) noted that democracy is a process of multiplying correct information, dictatorship is a process of transmitting information, and religious fundamentalism is a mechanism for reducing information. By providing comprehensive information, democracy guarantees an individual the freedom to choose the appropriate information and action. By reducing and concealing information, dictatorship ensures that people are restricted and repressed. Religious fundamentalism reduces information to the information inherent in the mind of God who cannot be accessed. By these means, fundamentalism participates in ideological terrorism. Even M. Gandhi, an ideologist of the philosophy of non-violence, who was classified by the British Raj as an extremist, said, "Those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means" (INFORMATSIONNYI SAIT "PRAVDA"). The spiritual leader of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, Khomeini, believed that "Islam is politics and only politics. Everything else is secondary" (PLASTUN, 2002).

Indeed, most countries in the world restrict state recognition of one or more religions. Types of recognition can also be informal as with Christianity in Canada and the United States. Supporters of humanism and secularism emphasize that "the freedom of religion" can be easily compromised, instead of being understood as the freedom of everyone to adhere to the religion or faith of their choice. In most democratic countries, the system of human rights provides relative protection for other religious and non-religious associations, but major religions can still receive privileged treatment from public authorities. It is worth mentioning the opinion of A. Gray, a German Ph.D. (GRAY, 2015) who believed that religion that takes itself seriously should not tolerate any other religion or worldview because there can be no two truths. Anything else would be relativism. Therefore, it is important to help one truth rule and eliminate evil. Speaking in the words of Bernard of Clairvaux, a great mystic and inspirer of the Crusades and Cistercian, "to destroy or convert forever".

3. No clear state concept that defines the priorities, goals, and objectives of religion-state relations. In this case, contacts between states and religious organizations are often spontaneous, formed under the influence of immediate political interests, determined by the desire of politicians to use religion and the authority of its leaders to solve specific problems. Religious discrimination is associated with theological conflicts and requires a special scientific approach (BASEDAU, 2017). Religious discrimination is often part of broader problematic relations between state and religion, which can contribute to the growth of religious terrorists. The most common problematic relationships are as follows: causes for religious conversion (BARRO, HWANG &

RACHEL, 2010), national relations (NURULLAEV, 1996), individual religiosity (FOX & TABORY, 2008; SMITH & SILVA, 2011; MULLER, 2009; MULLER & NEUNDORF, 2012), Western attitudes towards Islam (HELBERG, 2014), social security preferences (SCHEVE & STASAVAGE, 2006), religious confrontation (HUNTINGTON, 1994; BASEDAU, 2017; BROWN, 2017; GRAY, 2015), social capital (TRAUNMULLER & FRIETAG, 2011), nationality (TRITTLER, 2017), etc.

4. *Secularization.* In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, secularization flourishing in many European countries and the United States and suppressed in the Muslim World requires a separate discussion in the sphere of religion-state relations. In this context, the concept of secularism is not about ridding the world of religion but about separating the state from religious politics and allowing it to use the principles taken "from this world". However, secularization has a double effect on religion-state relations and terrorism. As a rule, those who cling to religion and do not reject it, gradually accumulate a set of fundamentalist ideas in their minds and resort to terrorism. In the end, there are fewer moderates in terrorist organizations. By reducing the number and authority of moderates, secularization gives terrorists more power in their religion. Thus, average Europeans somehow divide themselves into two persons: the first holds to secular laws and ways of life, the second is guided by religion. The latter smaller part awakens either on religious holidays or in critical situations, i.e. when there is no one to provide help and spiritual comfort, except for God. P. Berger (BERGER, 1999) explained this situation in the following way: "modernity, for fully understandable reasons, undermines all the old certainties; uncertainty is a condition that many people find very hard to bear; therefore any movement (not only a religious one) that promises to provide or to renew certainty has a ready market".

A comparative study conducted in nine EU countries (L'ÉTAT ET LES CULTES, 2020) noted that the integration of Muslim communities into European societies, often divided along religious "fault lines" (Sunnis, Shiites, Twelver, Ismailis, Ahmadis), more political or identity-based (Moroccans, Turks), occurs in different ways and tempos depending on a certain country. The stumbling block is not only official recognition or internal structure but also the issues of training preachers and granting access to public funding, as shall be permitted. Today, European Islam is highly dependent on the reception of foreign imams and funding from abroad. Several non-EU countries develop their strategies to influence Muslim communities. The growing concern of European countries is manifested in parliamentary inquiries and legislative projects aimed at increasing the transparency of religious associations, overseeing the activities of foreign preachers, and limiting the opportunities for donations from abroad. This is especially the case for Austria, Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands.

Thus, the foregoing facts stress the important role of religion-state relations in the formation and development of terrorism in a single state (France, Belgium, Myanmar, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc.), on a regional level (the Arab World of the Middle East and North Africa) or a global scale (Islamic fundamentalism).

## CONCLUSION

Religion is not the only but the main cause of such an inhuman phenomenon as terrorism. Violence in the name of God is not an inevitable and natural event but rather a response to the current and human-induced circumstances. It thrives under democratic and authoritarian governments or in their absence, during civil wars or external military interventions. Religion-related violence grows in the conditions of extreme poverty and corruption when public authorities incite the hatred of religious and ethnic minorities and encourage them to strengthen their own identity. The same reaction is received if state bodies cannot protect religious minorities and ignore any attacks on them. Under these conditions, people no longer trust public authorities and interpret sacred religious texts in such a way to find salvation, destroy their oppressors, and put mercy and justice in their subjective understanding at the center of their consciousness. The study results let us assert that the above-mentioned hypothesis has the right to exist.

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### Religion-state relations as a source of modern terrorism

Relações religião-estado como fonte do terrorismo moderno

Las relaciones religión-estado como fuente del terrorismo moderno

#### Resumo

O artigo se preocupa com o impacto das relações religião-estado na formação e desenvolvimento do terrorismo. Os autores revelaram tendências que levam representantes de diversas confissões religiosas a recorrer ao terrorismo para a liberdade de religião e a sua proteção contra ameaças externas, bem como manifestações de violência do Estado contra diferentes grupos religiosos que prejudicam a sua identidade religiosa no século XXI.

**Palavras-chave:** Relações religião-estado. Religião. Secularização. Terrorismo. Violência.

#### Abstract

The article is concerned with the impact of religion-state relations on the formation and development of terrorism. The authors have revealed tendencies making representatives of various religious confessions resort to terrorism for the freedom of religion and its protection from external threats, as well manifestations of state violence against different religious groups that damage their religious identity in the 21st century.

**Keywords:** Religion-state relations. Religion. Secularization. Terrorism. Violence.

#### Resumen

El artículo se ocupa del impacto de las relaciones religión-estado en la formación y desarrollo del terrorismo. Los autores han revelado tendencias que hacen que representantes de diversas confesiones religiosas recurran al terrorismo por la libertad de religión y su protección frente a amenazas externas, así como manifestaciones de violencia estatal contra diferentes grupos religiosos que dañan su identidad religiosa en el siglo XXI.

**Palabras-clave:** Relaciones religión-estado. Religi3n. Secularizaci3n. Terrorismo. Violencia.