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The State of Russian Islam – Politicization and Religiosity

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Abstract

The article investigates the current state of Russian Islam. The analysis is based on the semantic interview analysis from the book "Pioneers of liberal Islam – Impressions from Moscow and St. Petersburg" and the evaluation of two street surveys of 500 respondents from Moscow and Makhachkala. The interview analysis of Muslim scholars in Moscow and St. Petersburg describes a strongly politicized Muslim establishment. Muslim scholars refer to the religious values as a form of structural couplings with the political system and express themselves as highly tolerant towards the non-Muslim majority population in Russia. The quantitative survey analysis reveals that ordinary Muslims, which were approached on the street, next to mosques or on food markets, share a similar understanding of the mentioned questions. However, when it came to religious topics, ordinary Muslims in Moscow and Makhachkala made the impression of being more Quran oriented than the interviewed Muslim scholars. In conclusion, it can be stated that even though politicization and tolerance towards non-believers are reported in the qualitative interview analysis, as well as in the quantitative data analysis, the articulation of Quran-related topics differs between the Muslim establishment and the ordinary Muslim population.

Introduction

In 2015, at the opening of Moscow's rebuilt Cathedral Mosque, Vladimir Putin called traditional Islam an integral part of Russia's spiritual life. In fact, 18 to 20 million Muslims from different ethnic backgrounds reside in Russia and contribute to all spheres of society. Even though a part of the Muslim population has migrated to the Russian Federation only recently, the spread of Islam in Russia traces back to the 7th century AD. Therefore, the Russian Muslim population is one of the oldest Muslim minorities in Europe. Not only in regards to Vladimir Putin's words in 2015, but as a result of the eventful common history and documented coexistence, Muslims in Russia can be seen as a promising topic in minority research. In Europe, many Christian majority societies are changing demographically, while at the same time large Muslim minorities are emerging. In response to these changes, European governments introduce integration measures and action plans to maintain successful and peaceful coexistence. In academia, upcoming Islam scientists and established public intellectuals enrich the discourse and introduce new concepts and points of view. However, the position of Muslims in Russia has not been yet recognized as a comparison model to the newly established multicultural societies in Europe. In the field of sociology, neither Russian nor international contributor sufficiently cover the position of Muslims in Russia as such topics as terrorism and fundamentalism prevail (Benedek, 2016: 3). The book "Pioneers of liberal Islam – Impressions from Moscow and St. Petersburg" can be seen as the first step to frame the characteristics of the societal inclusion of Muslims in Russia. On the one hand, the book summarizes the main historical events and describes the embeddedness of Russian Islam in the country's system of politics. On the other hand, one-to-one interviews with religious scholars and sociologists reveal opinions on several questions related to Russian Islam and the Muslim community. Nevertheless, the book mainly reflects the perspective of the community's leadership in Moscow and St. Petersburg. To record and compare the perceptions of the general Muslim population with the perceptions of the Muslim clergy, 250 Muslims in Moscow and 250 Muslims in Makhachkala were interviewed just like the Muslim scholars were. The number of people interviewed and different survey locations enrich the general scope of the research. The book primarily analyzes the level of tolerance for other religious identities and ethnicities, religiosity and politicization. These three core topics prevailed in the one-to-one interviews and are, therefore, worthy of quantitative testing. The analysis of the three core topics is assessed through the research question: How do the responses of the 500 Muslims taking part in the street survey correlate with the responses of the Muslim scholars in their individual interviews? The correlations between the qualitative data from the book and the quantitative data from the street survey or a lack of thereof provide a foundation for any future research on this topic, as previous analysis targeting the Russian Muslim establishment and the Russian Muslim community has not assessed this topic yet.

Politics and religion

In order to analyze this research in comparison with research on Muslim minorities in Europe, it is necessary to give a brief overview of the theoretical framework of this work. Politics and religion can be analyzed from different perspectives. In this article, politics and religion are treated as social systems, communicating their identity through self-thematization. Moreover, social systems employ self-thematization or self-reference not only as "self-generators" but as founders of this self. (Hahn, 1987: 9-24). The advantage of this approach is that the semantic analysis of the book "Pioneers of liberal Islam – Impressions from Moscow and St. Petersburg" and the book-inspired street survey do not only utilize self-thematization as separated communicational units. The analysis also considers structural characteristics of the social systems of Russian politics and Russian Islam. These holistic descriptions of political and religious structures are complemented with the system theory-based concept of inclusion. Therefore, Russian Muslims, as Russian citizens, have the opportunity to be formally addressed by the Russian political system and be consequently included in it. The opposite of inclusion would be the ignoring of Russian Muslims or even a communicational exclusion (Stichweh, 2016: 73-74). Hence, inclusion and exclusion or rather the conditions for participation in society can be determined by Russian politics. Such conditions can be approached through semantic patterns in communication and give Russian Muslims a choice to either accept or refuse such political communication (Bommes, 1999: 44-45, 48). However, Russian Islam as a social system includes different self-descriptions and, therefore, types of communication from Russian politics. Self-thematization requires one's own perception of the environment, which serves as a reference point for the demarcation from this environment (Luhmann, 1977: 13-16). Regarding Russian Islam, it can be noted, that this religion continuously transforms undefinable complexity into definable complexity through the code of immanence and transcendence. In other words, religious communications redefine mundane realities from a transcendent perspective and create religious sense (Luhmann, 2000a: 77). Islam in Russia would therefore consequently refer to the Quran and other religious texts like the Ijtihad to define and process its environment. As Muslim inclusion in the Russian society is unambiguously connected to Russian politics, it is necessary to describe how religion and politics interact with one another. In this context, structural couplings represent opportunities of the social systems to interact with their environment. The environment of Russian Islam consists of different social systems. Therefore, the communications of Russian politics as one major social system can be processed by Russian Islam through structural couplings. However, the perspective or code of Russian Islam would not change in this context. Russian Islam merely selects and processes political communications that strengthen its identity, in the figurative sense (Luhmann, 2000: 373, 374). For a better understanding of religious and political communications in the interview analysis, this article contextualizes memory, as memory contributes to all operations of a social system as a reference point (Luhmann, 2000b: 173). In this way, memory can represent important events in the past or in other words the historical context of communications.

In order to evaluate the state of Russian Islam, three thematic blocks can be identified. First the role of Islam in everyday life is evaluated in both the individual interviews and in the street survey. In this context, the questionnaire includes questions regarding mosque attendance, religious caricatures, the Shariah and the support of Muslim organizations. Moreover, a second thematic block is meant to measure the tolerance level towards other religious denominations, ethnicities and even other fellow believers. This thematic block is partly inspired by the fact, that tolerance towards other ethnicities has a long tradition in Russia. The Soviet Union established a multiethnic ideology, which allowed Muslim minorities to maintain their cultural symbols and traditions in a folkloric manner (Putz, 2003). The third thematic block relates to politicization and political communications. The respondents were asked about their opinion on the government support for Islam in Russia. Next, the topics from the third block were connected with topics from the first thematic block. For example, the respondents were asked whether the people who drew caricatures of the Muslim prophet Mohammad should be punished by law and whether elements of the Shariah would improve the Russian constitution. Such connected questions aimed to measure the degree of politicization in the responses. The hypothesis of a strong impact of Russian politics on the interviewees' responses derives from the fact that until the 1990's Russia was consistently ruled by autocratic societal systems. While in other modern societies strong political hierarchies collapsed after the Second World War, the Communist party controlled not only politics but also other social systems (Moser, 2016: 19). Regarding the current Russian politics it can be said, that a transformation of the pluralistic democratic system in the 1990's and years of instability, led to the re-emphasizing of law enforcement and restructuring of the political system with the aim of gaining control in society (Stykow, 2014: 316).

In the next part, the semantic patterns from the individual interviews of the book "Pioneers of liberal Islam – Impressions from Moscow and St. Petersburg" are described and explained. The semantic patterns illustrate the previously described thematic blocks. They serve as an inspiration for the questionnaire of the street survey. In addition, frequently used semantic patterns contribute to the description of the state of Russian Islam or in other words to the description of Russian Islam's systemic reality. Consequently, the results of the individual interview analysis serve as a basis for the quantitative survey analysis, whereat the results of the individual interviews and the survey will be compared separately at the very end of this article.

Semantic interview analysis

The basis for the summary of the interview analysis from the book "Pioneers of liberal Islam – Impressions from Moscow and St. Petersburg" published in 2016 is the interviews held with three Muslim dignitaries in 2015. Damir Khayretdinov is the vice-chancellor of the Moscow Islamic University. Rais Ismaylov is an Imam-Khatib in Balashikha and the head of the Department for Education and Sciences of DUMER (Spiritual Board of Muslims of the European Region of

Russia). Rushan Abbyasov is the first deputy chairman of the Russian Council of Muftis under the supervision of the Spiritual Board of Muslims of the European Region of Russia (DUMER).

"For the analysis of the interviews, semantics are a helpful resource. According to Luhmann, semantics are the structures, offering forms of meaning that communication systems retain. Furthermore, semantics do not have their own structure constitutive form. They are employed by systems or, in the context of established Islam, reproduced in its selection process of communications (Benedek, 2016: 20)." Regarding the interview analysis, different dimensions of semantics were analyzed. Recurring semantics or similar statements by all three interviewees are worth testing in the street survey as a bigger population sample in different locations might bring different results. The three thematic blocks described earlier facilitate the use of semantic analysis for a later comparison with the results of the street survey.

Within the first thematic block referring to the meaning of Islam in everyday life, the social dimension in semantics identifies the communicator and his relations with others. (Akerstrom-Andersen, 2003: 86). Damir Khayretdinov's understanding of the Non-Muslims' fear of public prayers and cityscape dominating minarets aligns with the impression of passive Russian Islam. Regarding public prayers, Khayretdinov states: "There are some pictures of thousands of believers around our main mosque. This is for sure terrible for people in Moscow. We should find a decision (Benedek, 2016: 42)." However, even though a restraint is retraceable in all the interviews, Rais Izmaylov expresses the wish to have a more active Muslim lobby, supporting Muslim interests in the existing party landscape. This statement might be related to another notion of Izmaylov complaining that in his own Muslim community in Balashikha only 5000 out of 20.000 believers visit the Mosque (Benedek, 2016: 48). Izmaylov is the only interviewee thematizing the scope of Muslim institutions in the society. In reference to the aforementioned social dimension it is to say, that all interviewees denounce religious fundamentalism. The interviewees use the term Wahhabism as a strong demarcation point, representing an imported radical ideology, which is incompatible with the Russian society and law (Benedek, 2016: 80-81). This view of Wahhabism matches the official government position, which fought against Wahhabist movements in the Caucasus and recently in the Syrian Civil War (Preston, 2017: 54-56, 89-90).

The second thematic block refers to the tolerance of other denominations and ethnicities. Damir Khayretdinov and Rais Ismaylov express general tolerance towards other confessions. Rais Ismaylov provides an example for interdenominational exchange by discussing seminars and meetings of representatives from different religions for educational purposes (Benedek, 2016: 38). Rushan Abbyasov relates this positive attitude towards other religions to the positive multi-ethnic relations in the country by explaining that "We have really good relations with each religion within the country. People lived together in housing blocks. We lived all together. Different nationalities. Different people. Lots of mixed marriages (Benedek, 2016: 54)." Rushan Abbyasov clearly refers in the past tense to the time of the Soviet Union, which shows how strongly his understanding of tolerance is connected to the multiethnic Soviet ideology. The

fact dimension in semantics describes the selection of topics in communication (Akerstrom-Andersen, 2003: 88). The selection of tolerance towards other confessions and ethnicities gains importance, considering that none of the interviewees had been asked directly about this matter.

In regards with the third thematic block, which refers to politicization and political communications, Damir Khayretdinov's statement on patriotism supports the hypothesis that formerly successful political communications could be processed by Islam in Russia by saying that: "In this life we are citizens of this state. We are patriots of our country (Benedek, 2016: 40)." Moreover, the statements of Damir Khayretdinov and Rushan Abbyasov reveal how the Soviet Union is perceived by these two scholars. In context with semantics, references to the past, which were also called "memory" earlier in this work, belong to the temporal dimension, which allow the construction of time in the communication (Akerstrom-Andersen, 2003: 88). Speaking about the role of Islam in Russia for the Ummah, Damir Khayretdinov highlights the role of the Soviet delegation at the congress in 1926, when Muslim representatives from all over the world discussed the dissolution of the Caliphate. Then he describes the role of the Soviet delegation as a mediator between different schools of Islam (Benedek, 2016: 38). Even though these statements do not glorify the Soviet Union or its ideology, it is remarkable that Khayretdinov mentions a Muslim event, which took place during the socialism rule. Rushan Abbyasov answers the same question by stating that Muslims celebrate the Victory against fascism day together with the other citizens (Benedek, 2016: 53). Both Muslim representatives refer to the time in the Soviet Union when answering the question about the general role of Russian Islam for the Ummah. Next, statements on homosexuality and Mohammad caricatures show a strong link to the current political communications. All three interviewees criticize LGBT rights such as gay pride parades and gay marriages. In the same manner, they reject the right of journalists to draw the prophet Mohammad. In this context, it has to be determined, that all the three Muslim representatives rely on Russian law, namely the LGBT propaganda law from 2013 and the constitution protecting religious feelings, as their main argument (Benedek, 2016: 43-44, 51-55, 59). Hence, it can be stated that under certain conditions, structural couplings with the political system are more beneficial to Russian Islam than references to the surah. Such strong references to the political system regarding the topics, which could be alternatively easily explained by Quran passages create the impression of passive Russian Islam. The description of Russian Islam as passive would therefore question a strong role of Russian Islam in the spirit of the first thematic block or rather in everyday life.

Merging qualitative and quantitative methods

The results of the semantic analysis are contextualized in the book "Pioneers of liberal Islam – Impressions from Moscow and St. Petersburg". The relevance of the answers from Damir Khayretdinov, Rais Izmaylov and Rushan Abbyasov is based on a detailed definition of religious and political structures that match the statements of the interviewees. In this sense, connections are made between important events for Russian Islam throughout history. Moreover, in the book the analysis of three interviews with Russian sociologists confirm the possibility of the

generalization of the Muslim interviewees statements, as they report a similar image of politicization and passive Muslim establishment (Benedek, 2016: 79-84). Nevertheless, it was said in the very beginning of this work, that this article describes the self-thematizations of Russian Islam, or in other words, this article shows how Russian Islam perceives and processes its environment and communicates with it. In this manner, the interview analysis with the three Muslim representatives is so far the only clear reference point. However, the three representatives of the Russian Muslim establishment do not represent the opinions of the whole Muslim community. A street survey of 500 respondents (250 respondents from Moscow and 250 respondents from Makhachkala) enables a profound evaluation of the results. On the one hand, the street survey's questions are inspired by the results of the semantic analysis. On the other hand, the street survey uses standardized close-ended questions, because of time and comparability constrains (Descombe, 2007: 175).

Firstly, the quantitative data from Moscow and Makhachkala validates the communications from the semantic analysis from the book "Pioneers of liberal Islam – Impressions from Moscow and St. Petersburg". Secondly, the data allows comparing the results in Moscow with the results in Makhachkala and adds new opportunities for comparison based on gender and age of the respondents. The three thematic blocks define the thematic scope of the comparison. Among Russian public, the Caucasus is often used as a model for conservative, almost exotic Muslim minorities that are different from other Muslim minorities (Service, 2017: 15-22). Therefore, conducting research in Makhachkala, the capital of the Russian Republic of Dagestan, is another important step to expand the scope of the research on contemporary Russian Islam. To achieve the aforementioned goals, the results from the semantic analysis were quantified according to the thematic blocks mentioned in the introduction. Recurring semantic patterns and topics were converted into ten close-ended questions, which meant for the street survey (Driscoll, 2007: 20). The questionnaire started with the introductory question about the most frequent place of prayer of the respondents in reference to Rais Izmaylov's notions on mosque attendances. Then, the respondents were asked how they valued contacts with people from different religious denominations and ethnicities in reference to multiethnic semantics in the qualitative interviews. Moreover, the respondents were asked about the Russian state support for Muslims in general and more precisely whether the government treats the topics of blasphemy and homosexuality adequately, and if caricaturists of Mohammad should be punished by law. To prove how connected the respondents feel to the state, they were asked questions about the constitution and Shariah law. The impression that the Muslim scholars were rather reluctant to touch upon religious topics was addressed further by the question, whether people desire a stronger role of Muslim organizations and society and whether they wished that people would care more about Islam in their everyday life. Moreover, all 500 respondents were asked whether they think that Wahhabism is dangerous to identify whether they were as negative towards this topic as the interviewees in the qualitative interviews. The first part of the questions is more general and does not necessarily assess religious or political sentiments, which is why they were chosen as "warm-up" questions in the beginning of the interview. The questionnaire itself contains the regular scale from "strongly agree", "agree",

"neutral" to "disagree" and "strongly disagree". (Descombe, 2007: 255). Moreover, the answer choices were encoded from 1 to 5 to facilitate the following data analysis. Regarding the data analysis, the so-called mean was calculated to show a general average of the respondents throughout the different answer choices. The mode represents the most frequently occurring figure among the answer choices and shows which answer was the most popular one. The median calculates the 50 percent sample distribution regarding the variable of study. Moreover, the standard deviation is used as an indicator for the degree of dispersal among the answers (Babbie, 2011: 55). The first part of the analysis was calculating the aforementioned indicators with the statistical software SPSS. The second part of the analysis consisted of the contextualization of the quantitative data with the qualitative data from the individual interviews.

Pic. 1. A mosque in an apartment building in Balashikha

Quota sampling was applied in Moscow and in Makhachkala, whereat both populations stand for the average Muslim population in both cities (Babbie, 2011: 208, 209). In order to reach the total number of 500 respondents, support was required both in Moscow and Makhachkala. In Moscow, Rais Izmaylov a former interviewee and Imam-Khatib in Balashikha allowed conducting the survey in his mosque on the outskirts of Moscow. Moreover, he recommended other mosques like the Moscow Cathedral Mosque, the Old Mosque and the Memorial Mosque. In addition, he recommended markets as public places, where Muslims gather and a survey could be conducted. The aforementioned mosques including the Bolshoi and Dubrovka market were visited. As a matter of respect for the believers and because of safety concerns, the mosques were not entered and the survey was conducted in front of the mosques (Descombe, 2007: 43). Safety considerations justified the way the survey was conducted. On the one hand, the local security pronounced a ban for the Bolshoi market as the research questions could be considered a provocation and violate Russian law. On the other hand,

respondents from the Dubrovka market reported earlier raids by the Russian secret service and the general unease towards Islam related issues addressed by Non-Muslims. There was general mistrust towards the aims of my research demonstrated by several respondents. However, by word of mouth and networking at the locations, the completion of 250 questionnaires was achieved. In Makhachkala, Albina Kasimova, a PhD student in education supported the research project with her connections in the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Youth of the Dagestan Republic. The respondents were invited online to meet at the Lenin square and the Radovski Boulevard. People in Makhachkala were generally more open to answer the questions than those in Moscow. This way, word of mouth and networking were also more efficient than in Moscow. Even though there were criticizing questions regarding the aim of the research, visiting mosques to recruit respondents was not necessary. In comparison, conducting the survey in Makhachkala was less challenging than in Moscow. While in Moscow the critical questions included the assumption that I worked for the Russian authorities, in Makhachkala the main points of criticism had a theological background. In both cities, it was difficult to survey people working for state institutions as they argued that answering the questions would contradict their employment contract.

Street survey in Moscow and Makhachkala

The first street survey in Moscow respondents were 79 percent males and 21 percent females aged 15 to 65 of eight different nationalities. For the first question, whether the respondents practiced Muslim ceremonies at home more than in the mosque, the mean shows 1,93. The answer reveals that on average the respondents agree on practicing Muslim ceremonies at home. The mode and median of 1 supports this hypothesis. The standard deviation within 1,227 can be compared to the other standard deviations from the sample that is not significantly high. Therefore, the general degree of dispersal was low. In context with male respondents, the mean was 1,97 and regarding female respondents - 1,76. This already showed that the difference between the answers of males and females was not significant. To prove whether the age had an impact on the answers of the respondents, three different age groups were considered (15-25, 26-40 and 41-65 years old). However, the mean of 1,76 for the first age group, 2,08 for the second age group and 1,84 for the third age group did not differ significantly from the mean of the whole population. The answers from the first question corresponded with Rais Izmaylov's estimate of a low mosque attendance. However, the question whether the respondents wished that people would care more about Islam in their everyday life was generally answered positively. With a mean of 1,27, 82 percent of the respondents completely agreed that people should care more about Islam. This answer resulted in the second lowest standard deviation (0,786) in the sample, which means that the dispersion of the answers was low. Still, 72 percent completely agreed that Muslim organizations should be more represented in society (mean of 1,54). These responses showed that many of the interviewees sought active religious life not only for themselves, but for others as well. This result can be rated as the first sign contradicting the impression of passivity regarding Russian Islam. In a similar manner, the majority

of the respondents agreed that the Quran had a higher meaning than Russian laws (the mean of 1,30 and the lowest standard deviation of 0,709). However, by comparison, a Shariah consideration in the Russian constitution was only supported by an average of 1,91. In general, it can be said that even though mosque attendances are not high, Islam and the Quran had an important meaning for the respondents. An interesting side-note was that the female respondents agreed more with the importance of the Quran in comparison to men (mean of 1,67), but supported the consideration of the Shariah in the Russian constitution only with a mean of 2,37. Further, the majority of the respondents were consistent with the answers of the individual interviews and the state doctrine that Wahhabism was dangerous for society (mean of 2,00). Regarding the conducting of the survey, several respondents criticized the question as Wahhabism itself represents just a school of Islam and is not equal to terrorism. These reactions explained, why 30,4 percent of the respondents decided to choose "hard to say if agree or disagree" as an answer. To prove the state compliance of the respondents, they were asked whether they thought that the Russian government supported Islam in Russia. The result shows with a mean of 1,54 that almost the same proportion of the respondents who wished to have more social activities of Russian organizations trusted the Russian government in its support for Islam. Even though the two questions were statistically not correlated, it can be concluded that although the population from the sample seemed to desire more Muslim activities, the majority was still loyal to the state. In account with the structural couplings of LGBT rights and religious caricatures, the respondents were asked whether they supported politics in handling such topics. The question was designed to measure the support of the population for the Russian government's standpoint on LGBT rights. However, during the survey, it turned out that this question was not clear to many respondents and has the highest dispersion among the questions (standard deviation of 1,543). Therefore, another question concerning legal action against caricaturists who drew Mohammad, served as a better reference point. The mean of 1,52 indicates not only that the sample population trusts the legal system in dealing with caricatures of Mohammad, but also that caricaturists should face legal consequences if they drew the Muslim prophet. In the age group of 41 to 65 years old, the mean of 1,18 showed that 92,1 percent completely agreed on this matter. After revealing that state compliance matched with the responses of the survey, multiethnicity as a pillar of the Soviet ideology was generally supported by the survey participants. In this context, the respondents were asked whether they like to have contact with people from different ethnicities and religious confessions. The mean for this response is 1,41 and for females 1,23. This way, it can be stated that the majority of the population supports multiethnicity in line with the results of the interviews with Muslim representatives. Moreover, the results can be compared with state compliance of people trusting the Russian government in the support for Islam. With a Pearson correlation of 0,194 (significance at the 0,01 level) it turned out that people who appreciated contacts with other ethnicities generally believed in government support of Islam. Therefore, state compliance and multiethnicity might be related to each other as they were related in socialism.

Pic. 2. A bus stop in the mountains of Dagestan

In the second street survey in Makhachkala 55,2 percent males and 44,8 percent females took part aged 12 to 68, belonging to more than twenty different nationalities. For the first question, whether the respondents practice Muslim ceremonies more at home than in the mosque, the mean showed 2,01 and was therefore not much higher than the mean in the survey for Moscow (1,93). Even when separated into male and female, the results were similar. In Moscow, the mean for male respondents was 1,97, while in Makhachkala it reached 2,23. For female respondents, the mean in Moscow was 1,76 and 1,74 in Makhachkala. The difference between the two samples, was the fact that the median in Makhachkala was 2 (I agree), which might be interpreted as the respondents visit the mosque more often than the population in Moscow. However, the standard deviation of 1,230 is similar to the standard deviation of the measures in Moscow. Therefore, the general trend inspired by Rais Izmaylov's statements on low mosque attendances applied to the population in Makhachkala as well. Next, the mean for the question whether the respondents wished that people would care more in their everyday life was 1,67 in Makhachkala. The 0,4 difference from the population in Moscow can be explained by the responses of the older survey participants in Makhachkala (41 to 68 years old). With a mean of 2,38 and a median of 2,00, there was a significant difference compared to the other age groups. This difference for the oldest age group did not appear in Moscow. However, it could be explained by the caution of imposing religious expectations on others. A further argument for this hypothesis is the mean of 2,00 indicating the support for a stronger representation of Muslim organizations in society. Even though the responses of the population in Makhachkala gave a similar impression of generally seeking more Muslim activities in society, the older age group again was a lot more cautious with a mean of 2,36. For the responses about the meaning of Quran in society (mean of 1,75) and the consideration of the Shariah

in the constitution (mean of 2,42), the differences between the age groups were not very significant. However, female responses even reached a median of 3 (mean of 2,79). This cautiousness towards Shariah-inspired laws could be explained by the negative experiences with different separatism movements. Armed conflicts related to implementing the Shariah in Dagestan cost several families in the last decades to lose their children. However, this train of thought needs to be further investigated and cannot be substantiated in this piece of work. Nevertheless, the rejection of Wahhabism in Makhachkala would comport with the rejection of separatism movements which were often attached to Wahhabist ideology. In Makhachkala, the mean for considering Wahhabism as dangerous is 1,46. Therefore, the rejection of Wahhabism is 0,54 higher than in Moscow. As in the previous cases, the responses of older survey participants differed from the main population (mean of 1,21). In context of state compliance, the mean of 2,13 and a median of 2 the majority of the population in Makhachkala agrees that the Russian government supports Islam in Russia. However, the median of 2, regarding the state support of Islam shows, that the population in Makhachkala did not completely agree on the Russian state support for Islam. In reference to the structural couplings of LGBT rights and religious caricatures, the respondents showed a reaction similar to the population in Moscow. The standard deviation of 1,495 is significantly higher than the other responses. Moreover, the respondents frequently articulated that they did not correctly understand the question. Nonetheless, the majority of the survey participants in Makhachkala expressed their trust for the legal system concerning legal implications for Mohammad caricaturists. The mean of 1,53 was almost the same to the mean from Moscow (1,52). The largest difference was the age group of people from 26 to 40 years old from Moscow at a mean of 1,31. The surveys in Moscow and in Makhachkala showed that both populations support the legal system in its response to Mohammad caricatures, whereas in both populations, the age groups up to 25 years old expressed less consent. This does not necessarily mean that Mohammad caricatures are generally more accepted by young people, as some of the respondents argued that the legal system should be more active in punishing such phenomena. Concerning the question about multiethnicity, the population in Makhachkala had an average of 1,61, which was is very similar to the average of 1,41 in Moscow. In both cities, women were more supportive towards contacts with different ethnicities and religions. The 0,20 difference with Makhachkala might be derived from the phrasing of the question. In Makhachkala, several respondents criticized the lack of clarity of the term ethnicity. They argued that they would have preferred the term nationalities as they have no experience meeting people from Africa or Eastern Asia. Nevertheless, the results in Makhachkala, like the results in Moscow, showed a correlation between trust for the Russian government for the support of Islam and positivity towards multiethnic relations (Pearson correlation of 0,212 at the significance level 0,01).

Conclusion

The surveys in Moscow and Makhachkala revealed that the Muslim population at large is more proactive towards religious topics than the Muslim representatives, who frequently referenced Russian law and politics regarding religious topics. Nevertheless, the results of the individual interviews regarding state compliance and structural couplings with the political system can be confirmed by the street survey. Overall, the standard deviations for questions were very low and rendered the consideration of the median and mode unnecessary. Moreover, the low standard deviations in Moscow and Makhachkala showed that the averages in the analysis were widespread among the survey participants. The similarity among the results between the two cities confirm that the results from the book "Pioneers of liberal Islam – Impressions from Moscow and St. Petersburg" are not only valid for cities where Muslims are the minority, but also in Muslim majority territories of the Russian Federation. On the other hand, the low dispersion also represents a high degree of inclusion. As the responses of the interviewees in Moscow and Makhachkala were similar, both religion and politics seem to have addressed the individuals in the past. In reference with the first thematic block or rather regarding the role of Islam in everyday life, the survey participants emphasized in their responses the importance of the Quran and the Shariah. Moreover, the overall desire for more Muslim activities in society shows that religion plays a bigger role in the everyday life of the respondents than it could have been expected from the individual interviews. By comparison, religious references were rare in the individual interviews. The low attendance of mosques alone implied passivity in religiosity and fits Rais Ismaylov's statements on low mosque attendances. Regarding the second thematic block, the general affirmation of contact with other religious denominations and ethnicities in the street survey implies, as in the individual interviews, general tolerance towards other believers. The strong references to the multiethnic ideology of the Soviet Union in the individual interviews were not tested separately. In regards to the third thematic block, a strong impact of Russian politics, which was described in the semantic analysis, could be substantiated from the results of the street surveys as well. While the Muslim representatives chose political communications in the individual interviews, the respondents in the street survey mostly affirmed Russian state support for Islam. The responses to state and law compliance and structural couplings like multiethnicity imply that the individuals in the individual interviews and in the survey were addressed by Russian politics in the past. Even though the respondents gave very similar answers to the questions, it needs to be highlighted that there have been long discussions with the participants of the survey. During these discussions, it was revealed that due to the choice of words and language skills of the respondents, the questions about LGBT rights and blasphemy were not understood by several survey participants. As there have been similar reactions towards the wording and in some cases even the content of the questions, it was possible that some opinions are not represented in the survey results. Albeit, this article proved that the conclusions from the book "Pioneers of liberal Islam – Impressions from Moscow and St. Petersburg" correlate with the opinion of the general Muslim population. The consent towards political communications in the surveys implies that Russian

politics have high impact on Russian Islam. The fact that the majority of Russian Muslims is addressed by Russian politics shows a high level of societal inclusion. It is up to sociologists and policy makers to discuss this phenomenon further and to analyze the described tendencies in more detail.

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Appendix 1.

Questionnaire - Islam experts on Russian Islam

What is the role of Muslim organizations in the Russian society?

How do you assess the role of Russian Muslim organizations in the Ummah?

What kind of difference is made between Muslims who practice their belief in Muslim institutions and those who don't?

How is membership treated in Muslim institutions?

How is withdrawal perceived in Muslim institutions?

Could you explain in detail the hierarchy within Muslim organizations?

What are the main values for Islam in Russia nowadays?

How is fanaticism defined by the Muslim majority?

What role plays charity in Russian Muslim organizations?

How are Non-Muslims supported with charity/Zakat?

How is blasphemy or the violation of religious sentiments treated in Russia?

Do you think the idea of implementing Sharia would be popular among Russian Muslims?

How would you rate the cultural role of Muslim organizations?

Is culture maintenance as important as the religious function of Muslim organizations?

How would you differentiate the links of Russian Muslim communities to the Russian society and the links to the Muslim world?

How do Muslim organizations understand tolerance with Non-Muslims?

What do you think, which role has the constitution for Muslim believers in Russia?

What do Russian Muslims think about the Arab spring?

How are the Danish caricatures seen in context with freedom of speech?

How are the killings in the editorial office of Charlie Hebdo seen by the Russian Muslim community?

How do you see the reaction of Muslim communities, if you compare the Charlie Hebdo caricatures on Mohammad with the caricatures from Jyllands-Posten in Denmark?

How do Muslim organizations participate in political discussions in Russia?

Do Muslim organizations feel responsible for reconciliation in conflict regions like Chechnya?

Do you think it is possible to find a connection between Russian Islam and democracy?

Where do you see a connection between the 2002 founded party Evrasija and Islam?

What do Russian Muslims think about Moscow Pride?

Questionnaire – Street survey in Moscow and Makhachkala

1. I practice Muslim ceremonies more at home than in the mosque.

2. I like to be with people from different ethnical and religious backgrounds.

3. I think that the government supports Muslims in Russia.

4. I want Russian Muslim organizations to be stronger represented in Russian society.

5. To me the Quran is more important than the Russian constitution and Russian law.

6. I trust the Russian government in dealing with blasphemy and non-traditional behavior.

7. I think that Wahabi Islam is dangerous.

8. I think people who draw caricatures on Mohammad should have legal consequences.

9. I think Russia would be a better country, if Shariah would be considered in the Russian constitution.

10. I think people should care more about Islam in their everyday life.

Answer opportunities: I strongly agree, I Agree, I am Neutral, I Disagree, I strongly disagree

Additional information:
Gender, Age, Place of residence, Origin/Nation, Affiliation in a religious institution (Yes/No)

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