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Title: State Policies toward Islam in Russia, 1991-2012

Abstract

The phenomenon of post-Soviet Islamic revival in Russia has sparked great interest and become a topic of considerable debate in academic and policy communities alike. The state reaction to the reawakening of religious fervor, however, still is not completely comprehended by scholarly audiences and a wider public. Two decades of state policies toward Islam resulted in nation-wide controversies over the nature and the level of state involvement in religious affairs.

This research aims to explain the development of Russia’s policies toward Islam over the course of 1990s and 2000s. What has been the relationship between Islam and the Russian state in the first two decades after the collapse of an atheistic regime? Why has post-communist Russia been changing its religious policies over time and how have these policies affected social, economic, and political conditions for Russia’s Muslim minorities? Students of religion and politics offer many propositions about state-religion relations in secular societies and nations with an established state-religion. Few theorists, however, explain the changing dynamics of religious policies in such policies. Even fewer scholars have attempted to test the existing hypotheses on former atheist states.

The explanatory power of well-established theories of religion and politics is particularly limited in dealing with countries of the former Soviet Union and their legacy of state-enforced atheism. This research begins to fill this gap. I use systematic historical analysis and techniques of process tracing to analyze the dynamics of Russia’s state policies toward Islam between 1991 and 2012 in nine major policy domains. The research aims to contribute to the literature on the relationship between religion and the state, propose new solutions to problems of religious intolerance, widen perspectives of policymakers, and help them translate good intentions into proper policies.