RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE AMONG ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS IN RUSSIA

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Executive Summary

Data from our 2005 national survey (2,972 interviews) show a widespread religious intolerance (the unwillingness to grant religious liberties to other faiths) among Russia's Orthodox Christians and Muslims. The intolerance is strongest among the Orthodox in the largely non-Muslim Russian areas and among both groups in the conflict-torn Caucasus. Mutual tolerance is highest in Tatarstan and Baskortostan. The intolerance has more to do with reactionary ideological influences and regional socio-political conditions than with Orthodox and Muslim religiosities themselves. Orthodox-Muslim intolerance is surpassed by both groups' unwillingness to put up with the Jews and Western churches, which reflects a broader popular hostility to religious freedom in Russia. Fueled by Russia's current undemocratic tendencies, this hostility poses a threat to Eurasian stability and calls for policy efforts to lessen ethno-religious tensions. Such efforts need to include systematic sociological monitoring of religious intolerance, and our study is a first step in this direction.

PROBLEM

Recently there have been numerous reports about incidents of Orthodox-Muslim intolerance in various parts of Russia. In some cities, groups acting in the name of Orthodox Christianity initiated bans on building mosques. In other places (most recently in Yaroslavl on September 24, 2006), mosques were attacked. On the other hand, Islamic radicals in the North Caucasus see Orthodox Christians as enemies of Chechens and other Muslim peoples. Symptomatically, on October 20, 2005, in a statement on the website *Kavkaz-Center*, the Chechen separatist leaders accused the Russian Orthodox Church of participation in a "genocidal war against Muslims" and declared a ban on all of the Church's activities in the Caucasus.

The spread and intensity of such incidents point to the importance and timeliness of research on religious intolerance among Muslims and Christians in Russia and its regions. In particular, survey research could show how widespread and strong the Christian-Muslim intolerance is, and to what extent it reflects the nature of Christian and Islamic religiosity rather than ethnic, social and political influences. This would clarify, with obvious foreign-policy implications, the prospects for reducing religious tensions.

Yet, systematic sociological research on Muslim-Christian religious intolerance is remarkably rare worldwide. Researchers know little about the extent to which Christians and Muslims in various parts of the world are unwilling to put up with each other and why.

Seeking to address these timely but understudied issues, we explore religious intolerance among Christians and Muslims in Russia. Based on a representative national

sociological survey, this research project is the first such study focusing on Russia, and a pioneering study on Muslim-Christian intolerance elsewhere in the world.

Our paper addresses this topic using the data from our 2005 representative national survey and earlier studies we conducted in Russia. We begin with a discussion of the importance and policy relevance of this understudied problem in the Russian as well as global contexts. Then we briefly outline our main argument and explain how evidence was collected. This is followed by the presentation of findings and conclusions.

RELEVANCE TO POLICY ISSUES

This study is policy relevant for *three reasons*—the first two of which deal with issues of global and national security, and the third of which deals with the U.S. policy of support for international religious freedom. *First*, Russia is one of the largest lands where Muslim and Christian civilizations have coexisted in peace and conflict for over a thousand years. Russia's experience is, therefore, an excellent case for understanding the dynamics of Muslim-Christian relations and for finding ways for resolving conflicts in other parts of the world where tensions among traditionally Christian and Muslim groups are present. *Second*, as can be seen from the ongoing conflicts in Chechnya and Russia's other predominantly Muslim areas, understanding and predicting the developments in Russia are crucial for assessing security risks in the entire Eurasian and global contexts. *Third*, as shown below, our study defines religious intolerance as people's opposition to *religious freedom* (e.g., for Muslim minorities in non-Muslim areas or Christian minorities in Muslim areas). Thus, it shows to what extent limitations and violations of religious freedom in Russia come not only "from above" (i.e., from laws and state

policies) but also "from below," from people's deep-seeded hostility to religious diversity. This adds an important dimension to methods presently used to monitor religious freedom and impediments to it in Russia and other countries.

MAIN ARGUMENT

The main argument of this paper is fourfold. *First*, we show that Orthodox-Muslim intolerance is widespread in Russia. There is a strong opposition among Orthodox Christians to granting religious liberties to Muslims. Similarly, in some Muslim areas there is a strong intolerance of the Orthodox. Thus, popular support for religious freedom in Russia is very weak even for its traditional and historically prevalent faiths.

Second, Christian-Muslim tensions are only a fragment of a more general and intense environment of religious intolerance in Russia. Christian-Muslim intolerance is strong in itself, but it pales in comparison with both groups' intolerance towards the Jews and non-traditional, mostly Western religions.

Third, the intolerance among Russia's Christians and Muslims varies greatly by region, and regional differences shed light on its causes. Mutual tolerance is much greater in Tatarstan and Bashkortoston, the two regions where large Orthodox and Muslim populations have long co-existed peacefully. The war-torn North Caucasus shows strong Christian-Muslim intolerance. Importantly, some of the highest intolerance levels are found among Russian Christians who live in the areas with negligibly small Muslim populations. Regional comparisons show the importance of such factors as the experience of peaceful interfaith co-existence, economic stability, and effective policies aimed at dealing with ethnic separatism and radical Islam.

Fourth, mutual intolerance has relatively little to do with Orthodox and Muslim religiosity. In fact, those whose religious beliefs are more consistent are slightly more tolerant. Religious practices are to a small extent linked to intolerance, mostly among Muslims. Religious intolerance is more closely related to people's *ideological beliefs about religions* than to religious beliefs as such. Ethnocentric views of one's own and other faiths, opposition to granting religions equal rights, and negative stereotypes about Christianity and Islam increase mutual intolerance. The intolerance is further aggravated by secular influences, including ethnic prejudice, reactionary political orientations and the unwillingness to put up with dissent and non-conformity.

Thus, we show that mutual intolerance does not come directly from Orthodox and Muslim religiosity, but largely from the political, ideological, and psychological environment in which Christians and Muslims currently practice their faiths in Russia. Accordingly, it is this environment that requires consistent policy efforts in order to advance the cause of stability, security, and religious freedom in Eurasia. We conclude with a discussion of possible policy efforts in this direction.

HOW WAS RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE DEFINED IN THIS STUDY?

Although the term of religious tolerance is broadly used, there has been little effort to clarify what it means. Existing interpretations are often vague and hard to implement in policy and research practice. Against this background, we define religious intolerance in a way that is consistent with the notion of religious freedom as a fundamental human right, as well as in a way that allows it to be applicable for research and policy analysis.

Specifically, religious tolerance and intolerance can be seen, respectively, as *support for and opposition to the norms of religious freedom*. From this perspective, *religious intolerance* can be defined as *the unwillingness to grant religious freedom to people and groups of other faiths***.**

The proposed focus on religious freedom distinguishes between religious intolerance and prejudice. For example, negative attitudes towards Islam may or may not translate into the unwillingness to grant Muslims the right to build a mosque. On the other hand, those supporting Muslims' rights do not necessarily view Islam positively. Thus, we look at whether or not, and how strongly, Christians and Muslims oppose each other's specific religious freedoms, i.e., building places of worship, teaching, establishing religious schools, distributing of religious texts, publishing, etc.

HOW WAS RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE MEASURED IN OUR SURVEY?

We asked Orthodox Christians if, in their hometowns, they would allow Muslims to engage in specific religious activities. Similarly, we asked Muslims if they would support the same activities by Christians. In particular, the following questions were included in the survey:

Questions to Orthodox Christians	Questions to Muslims
"In Russia, there are followers of various religions, including Muslims (the followers of Islam): • Suppose Muslims wanted to build a new mosque in our town. Do you think they should be allowed or prohibited to do so? • And now suppose Muslims started to publicly preach Islam in our town. Should they be allowed or prohibited to do so? • What if Muslims wanted to publish and distribute Islamic newspapers and magazines in our town? • And if Muslims wanted to open an Islamic school in our town? • Now suppose Muslims wanted to teach the foundations of Islam in public schools of our town. Should this be allowed or prohibited to them? • And if Muslims wanted to preach their religious views on television? • If Muslims wanted to engage in charitable work in our town? • And if Muslims in our town started collecting money and donations for their religious needs, should they be allowed or prohibited to do so?"	"I will read to you some statements about the Orthodox. Would you say that the Orthodox should be allowed or prohibited to do the following: • Suppose Orthodox wanted to build a new church in our town. Do you think they should be allowed or prohibited to do so? • And now suppose Orthodox started to publicly preach their faith in our town. Should they be allowed or prohibited to do so? • What if Orthodox wanted to publish and distribute their religious newspapers and magazines in our town? • And if Orthodox wanted to open an Orthodox school in our town? • Now suppose Orthodox wanted to teach the foundations of the Orthodox faith in public schools of our town. Should this be allowed or prohibited to them? • And if Orthodox wanted to preach their religious views on television? • If Orthodox wanted to engage in charitable work in our town? • And if Orthodox in our town started collecting money and donations for their religious needs, should they be allowed or prohibited to do so?"

These questions provide a multifaceted measure of support for religious freedom in specific, practical terms. These questions also allow the measurement of mutual religious intolerance among Orthodox Christians and Muslims.

HOW WAS THE EVIDENCE COLLECTED?

This paper is based primarily on evidence from our international collaborative study, "Religious Intolerance among Orthodox Christians and Muslims in Russia: How Strong is it and why?," funded by the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research (NCEEER) in 2004-2006. The study involved a representative national survey conducted in Russia in June 2005 using a national probability area sample of the adult household population. In order to better represent Russia's Muslims, the survey included four oversamples from the predominantly Muslim regions of Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Dagestan. Overall, 2,972 in-person interviews were conducted. Utilizing a questionnaire we designed for this project, each interview took on average slightly more than one hour. They were conducted by trained interviewers from our sub-contractor, the Moscow-based Institute for Comparative Social Research. The Institute was selected for its strong record of high-quality research in Russia and other post-Soviet states, including projects commissioned by American and other Western agencies.

Of 2,972 interviews, 1,651 were part of Russia's national sample, and 1,321 more were from oversamples in Muslim regions. The response rate (measured as the ratio of completed interviews to the total number of contacts) was 64%.

Additionally, our interpretations are informed by studies we previously conducted in Russia, including an exploratory 2002 study of religious intolerance (with over 2,800 interviews) and field research funded by Western Michigan University in 1998, 1999, and 2004. We also use census data from Russia.

FINDINGS

1. Orthodox Christians and Muslims in Russia: basic facts.

Orthodoxy and Islam are by law considered Russia's traditional religions with formally equal rights. Together they account for a vast majority of religious affiliations in the country. According to our surveys, presently over 80% of all Russians (i.e., nearly 116 out of 143 million) and over 85% of ethnic Russians identify themselves as Orthodox Christians. The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) enjoys a remarkable public trust which in our surveys was surpassed only by Russians' confidence in their current president. According to the Moscow Patriarchate of the ROC, in 2005 there were 12,665 Orthodox parishes and 433 monasteries in Russia.

Using the 2002 Russian census data, we calculated that the traditionally Islamic ethnic groups account for 9.4% of Russia's population (e.g., roughly 14 million people). However, in our survey, 3.1% of Russian citizens identified themselves as Muslims, and this is consistent with reliable surveys conducted in Russia in the last fifteen years. However, some surveys estimate the Muslim population at five percent. Thus, among the 9.4% of all Russians whose ethnic identification is with traditionally Islamic groups, one third to a half consider themselves Muslims, which is unsurprising given cultural assimilation and Islam's status of a minority religion.

Several regions have an especially high concentration of Muslims. Among them, Tatarstan and Bashkortostan also have large Orthodox populations. By contrast, in the North Caucasus, recent hostilities resulted in out-migration of non-Muslims leaving Muslim populations in overwhelming majorities (e.g., 92% in Dagestan). According to Russia's Justice Ministry, in 2004 there were nearly 3,500 officially registered Islamic

organizations in Russia. However, the actual number may be much greater because many Muslim groups (e.g., radical *jamaats* in the Caucasus) are opposed to the "spiritual directorates" (official regional governing bodies) and avoid registration.

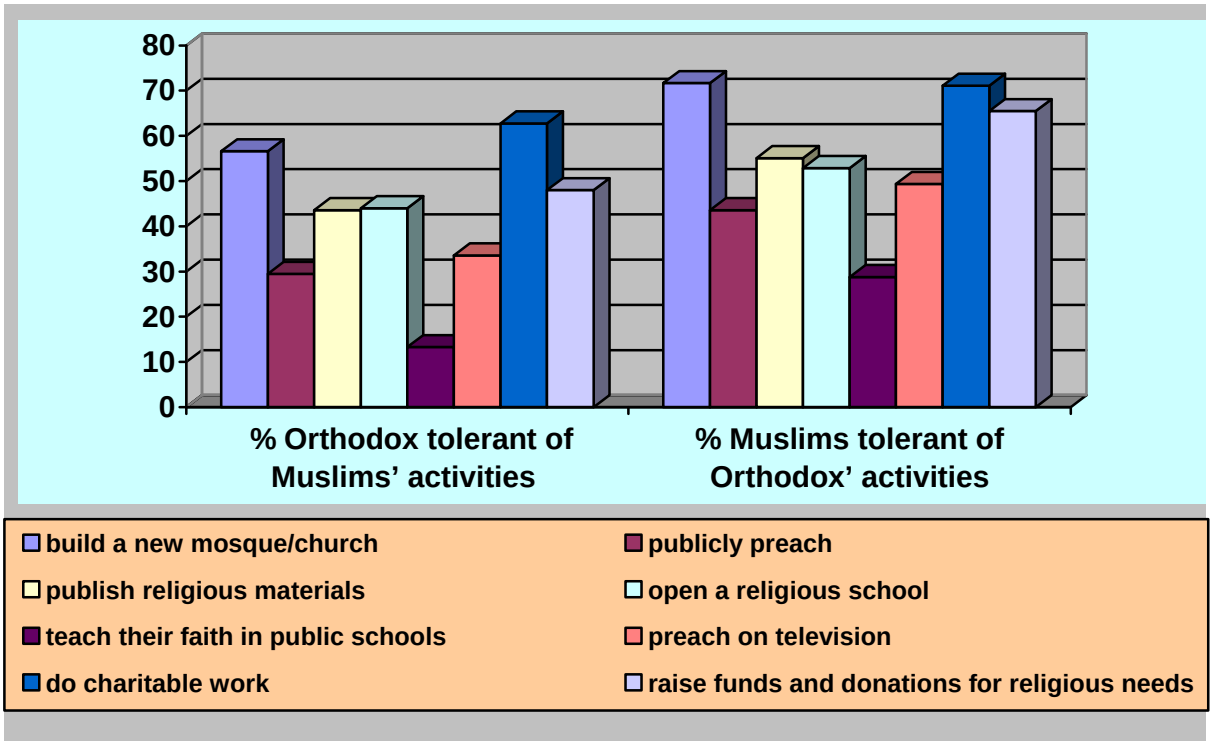
While most Russians affiliate themselves with Orthodoxy or Islam, traditional religious beliefs and practices are not so common. Overall, attendance of religious services in post-atheist Russia has been among the lowest in Europe. Even using rather soft criteria of religiosity (including relatively consistent core beliefs and relatively active practice), in our study we estimated that only 10% of self-identified Orthodox and 20% of Muslims could be considered religious in a traditional sense. When stricter criteria are applied, proportions of traditional believers drop to single digits. Yet, we show below that this relatively low religiosity does not preclude widespread religious intolerance.

2. How widespread is Orthodox-Muslim religious intolerance?

Orthodox-Muslim intolerance is widespread, and Russia's Orthodox are overall less tolerant of Muslims than the latter are of the former. Only 57% of the Orthodox would allow Muslims to build a mosque in their hometown, while 72% of Muslims would permit building an Orthodox church. Less than 30% of the Orthodox would allow the public preaching of Islam, compared to 44% of Muslims who would allow the public preaching of Orthodoxy. Both Orthodox and Muslims are especially opposed to teaching their neighbors' faith in public schools. Only 13% of the Orthodox and 29% of Muslims would tolerate such activity. This is a divisive and potentially explosive issue considering the recent introduction of courses on Orthodoxy in some regions' public schools.

Generally, with the exception of building mosques and doing charitable work, less than half of the Orthodox would grant Muslims religious liberties. Meanwhile, five out of eight religious activities of the Orthodox would be allowed by more than half of all Muslims. Levels of mutual tolerance by specific religious activity are shown in Chart 1. (see also Table 1 in Appendix).

Chart 1. Orthodox-Muslim tolerance levels by religious activity



Muslims' greater tolerance of the Orthodox does not by itself suggest that they are generally more willing to put up with other faiths. The Orthodox are Russia's dominant majority, and it would be unpractical for its Muslim or other minorities to question the majority's right to practice its faith. This paper will show that in regions where Islam is prevalent, differences in tolerance among Orthodox Christians and Muslims are much

smaller. Furthermore, as demonstrated below, while Muslims are relatively tolerant of the Orthodox majority, their intolerance towards other religious minorities is somewhat stronger than among the Orthodox.

3. Both Orthodox and Muslims are even more intolerant of other religions.

Although Orthodox-Muslim intolerance is widespread, it is by far surpassed by both groups' unwillingness to put up with such religious minorities as the Jews and Western churches. The data below clearly demonstrate the consistency of this pattern among both Orthodox Christians and Muslims. As shown in Chart 2, the Orthodox are considerably less tolerant of the Jews than of Muslims, and even less tolerant of Western churches. Chart 3 shows exactly the same pattern among Muslims: they are much more tolerant of the Orthodox than of the Jews, and are especially unwilling to put up with Western groups.

While patterns are similar, there is less tolerance towards the Jews and Western churches among Muslims than among Orthodox Christians. For instance, nearly 48% of the Orthodox compared to 40% of Muslims would allow Jews to build synagogues in their hometowns. Among the Orthodox, 38% would allow Jews to open a religious school. Among Muslims, 29% would grant the Jews this right. Similarly, 29% of the Orthodox compared to 22% of Muslims would allow Jewish groups to open religious schools. Overall, six out of our eight measures of support for religious liberties show less tolerance among Muslims towards both minority groups, and on two other measures attitudes of the Orthodox and Muslims are nearly equally intolerant (see Table 2).

Chart 2. Tolerance of Muslims, Jews, and Western churches by Orthodox Christians

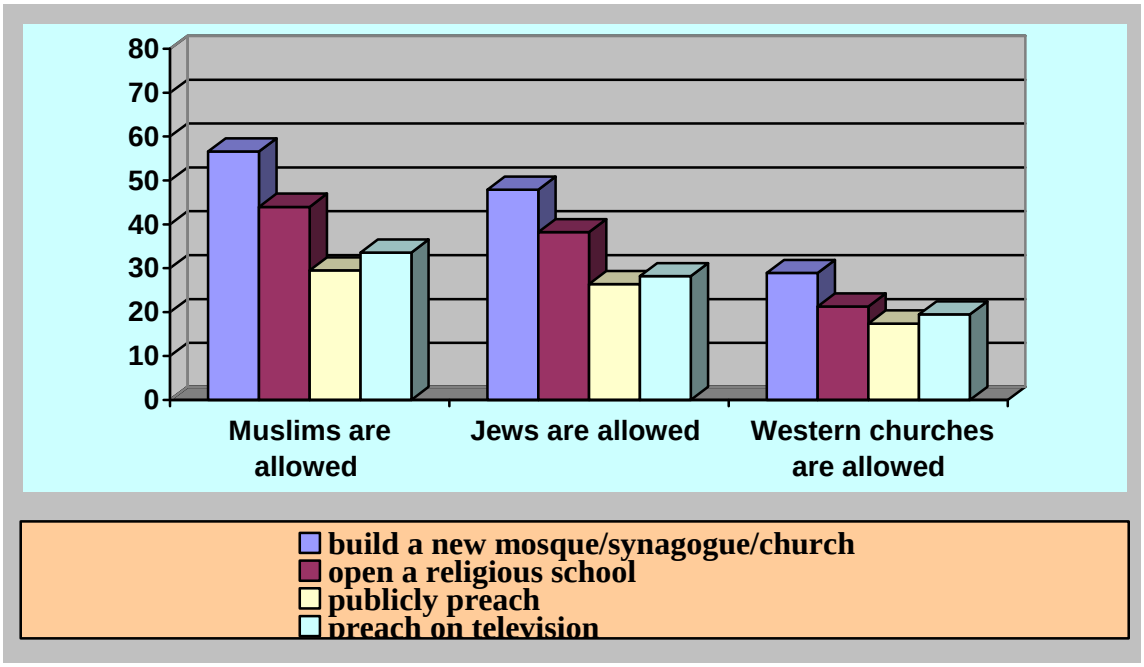
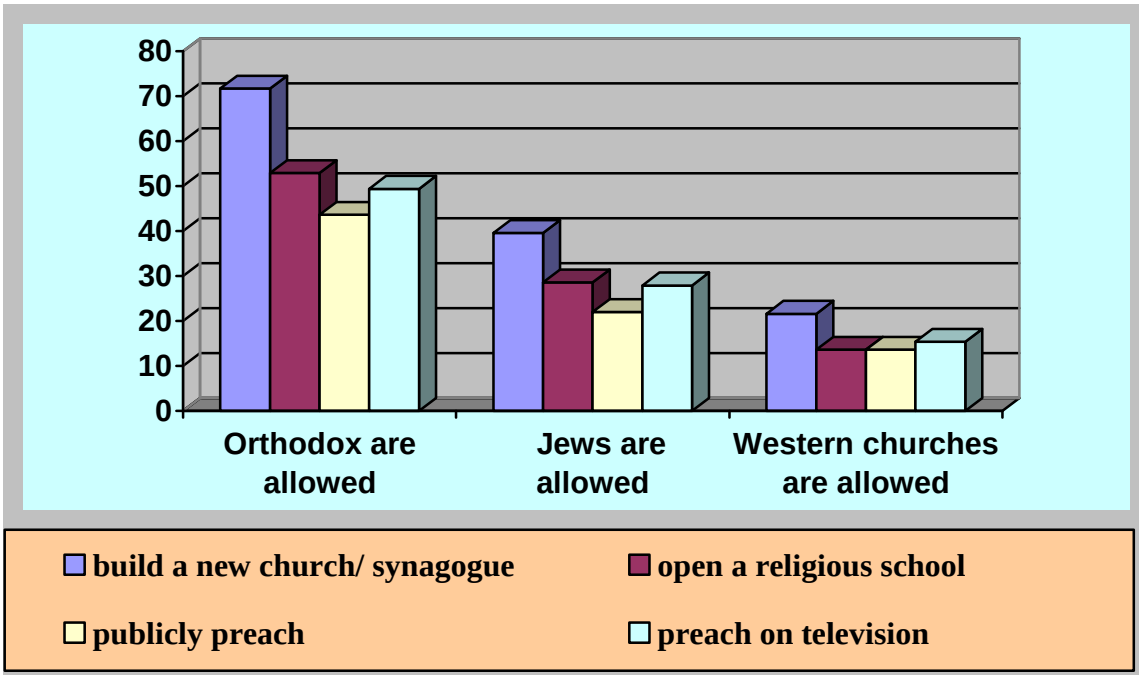


Chart 3. Tolerance of Orthodox Christians, Jews, and Western churches by Muslims



Attitudes towards the Jews and Western churches (the groups by far outnumbered in Russia by the adherents of Islam) show that the intolerance towards religious minorities is in fact somewhat stronger among Muslims than among the Orthodox. While international observers' predominant focus has understandably been on religious intolerance among Russia's majority (i.e., Orthodox Christians), our data show that the Islamic minority's intolerance towards smaller groups is remarkably strong and merits serious attention. Overall, these findings suggest that while Christian-Muslim intolerance in Russia is widespread, it does not express a particular preoccupation of the two groups with each other. Rather, it reflects a broader atmosphere of intolerance towards religious minorities which is common among both the Orthodox and Muslims.

4. The importance of regional and local differences

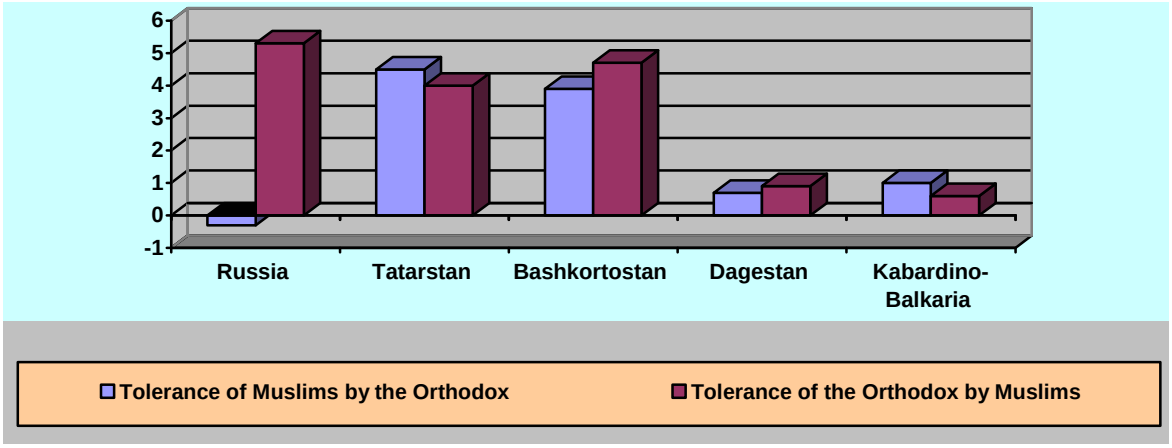
Russia is known for a tremendous ethno-cultural and religious diversity of its regions. Regional differences prove crucial for understanding the state and origins of tolerance among Orthodox Christians and Muslims in Russia. We compared levels of Orthodox-Muslim tolerance in four traditionally Islamic regions. We also compared tolerance in these regions with Russia in general. In addition, we looked at the variation of tolerance in some of Russia's other regions and in selected cities.

To provide a salient illustration of regional differences, we computed average levels (also known as mean values) of tolerance by area. These averages reflect regional populations' tolerance of all eight religious activities we asked about, from mosque or church building to fundraising. The higher the numbers, the more tolerance they show (an

eight-point level would indicate a full tolerance of all religious activities, which is hard to find in Russia). The lower the averages, the less tolerance they reflect. When numbers drop to near or below zero, they mean strong intolerance.

Chart 4 compares tolerance averages in the four traditionally Islamic regions with the general Russian sample (see Table 3 for a detailed comparison). The comparison yields three facts reflecting a consistent pattern. First, the strongest religious intolerance is among the Orthodox in Russia outside the traditionally Islamic regions, which accounts for a vast majority of the country's Christians. Mutual intolerance is strong in two majority Muslim, conflict-torn regions of the North Caucasus (Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkaria). Yet it is less than the intolerance shown by the Orthodox majority outside Islamic regions. Finally mutual tolerance is greatest in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan where sizable Orthodox and Muslim populations have coexisted in peace and relative stability since the Soviet collapse.

Chart 4. Average levels of Orthodox-Muslim tolerance by region



Russia (excluding Islamic-regions over-samples) is 80% Orthodox and has only 3% of Muslims. Thus, most Russian Christians have few if any Muslim neighbors. Yet,

precisely in this population we see the strongest intolerance towards Muslims. As shown in Chart 4, tolerance of Muslims drops there to a sub-zero level. Remarkably, within Russia, the intolerance of Muslims is strongest in some areas with very small Islamic minorities. Indeed, the tolerance average is at Russia's absolute low of -2.4 in the *Central-Chernozemnyi* region not known for a sizable Islamic presence. In this heartland region, Russian Christians are even less tolerant of Muslims than they are in the North-Caucasus areas neighboring with traditionally Islamic lands (-2.1). In Western nations, the largest and most cosmopolitan cities usually show more tolerance. This is not the case in Russia. In Moscow and St. Petersburg, the country's wealthiest and best educated cities, there is less tolerance of Muslims (-1.1) than in Russia generally (-.3).

Tatarstan has 48% Muslims to 42% Orthodox Christians in its population, while in ***Bashkortostan*** the ratio is inverse: 50% Orthodox to 40% Muslim. As shown above in Chart 4, both republics have relatively high levels of Orthodox-Muslim tolerance (four to almost five points out of eight possible). According to sociologists of religion, this may be typical when two nearly equally strong religious groups co-exist and both prefer civility to a mutually threatening conflict. In addition, both regions have sustained political stability since the Soviet collapse, and ethno-religious tensions never escalated there into large-scale violence. This relatively peaceful atmosphere was reinforced by the regional authorities' suppression of separatism and their policies of balancing Tatar and Bashkir ethno-nationalism with loyalty to the Russian state. Similarly, authorities of both regions have been known for their efforts to curb the spread of radical Islam in collaboration with established and politically loyal Muslim leaders.

The situation is dramatically different in ***Dagestan*** which is 92% Muslim and only 7% Orthodox, and in ***Kabardino-Balkaria*** where Muslims constitute 75% and Orthodox 22%. As shown in Chart 4 above, both regions have some of the lowest levels of interfaith tolerance. Tolerance does not rise in either region above a one-point mark on our eight-point scale. Perhaps to some extent, the overwhelming Islamic majorities account for a strong intolerance towards Orthodox minorities. This appears similar to the predominant sentiment in non-Muslim Russia towards its small Islamic minority. Even so, tolerance towards the Orthodox in both regions is considerably higher than tolerance towards Muslims in heartland Russia. However, the logic of numbers does not explain why Orthodox minorities in the two regions show so little tolerance to their Muslim majorities (by contrast, we have seen that in non-Islamic Russia the Muslim minority was remarkably tolerant towards the Orthodox). More plausible explanations of mutual intolerance may deal with the political, socio-economic, and demographic environment of the regions.

Mutual negativity has multiple causes. Let us consider some of them. The spread of radical Islam in the North Caucasus was likely to result in greater intolerance towards non-Muslims. In turn, reactions of Moscow and local authorities to Islamist and separatist movements were marked by intolerance towards free expression of Islamic religiosity. In recent years, authorities in the Caucasus often portrayed any opposition they encountered as a "Wahhabi underground," thus feeding suspicion and intolerance, which only exacerbate Muslim radicalism. The vicious cycle of hostility has peaked in armed conflicts. In Dagestan, fierce battles with Islamist groups took place in 1999. Since then, small scale clashes and terrorist attacks have been routine in the republic. In Nalchik,

Kabardino-Balkaria's capital, over 130 people were killed in street battles with Muslim rebels (reportedly affiliated with the *jamaat* Yarmuk) in October, 2005. In addition, by contrast with the relatively wealthy Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, these conflicts take place amidst socio-economic hardships that can only worsen inter-group tensions. Rising ethnic tensions drove many ethnic Russians, most of whom are Orthodox by tradition, away from the Caucasus (in Dagestan there presently remain no more than 6% Russians). In this atmosphere of conflicts, hardships, and tensions mutual religious intolerance appears a natural outcome.

Overall, there seems to be no single explanation of regional variation in tolerance. The ethno-religious makeup, economic conditions, radical Islam and reactions to it, the history of violence and instability along with the quality of policies meant to deal with them, all appear important. The relative importance of each factor varies by region. At the same time, we show below that some factors are universal.

5. What makes Orthodox and Muslims intolerant of each other?

We have seen above that, with the remarkable exceptions of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, Orthodox-Muslim intolerance is widespread in Russia. A crucial question of this study is if and to what extent this widespread mutual intolerance is a product of Orthodox and Muslim religiosity. Do religious commitment and devotion to Orthodoxy and Islam make their adherents more intolerant of each other? If so, we may be dealing with a clash between two incompatible religious civilizations. This would mean a grim outlook for the future of Russian and Eurasian stability. If, on the other hand, the main causes of intolerance are not religious in nature, if they rather reflect the circumstances in which Orthodoxy and Islam are currently practiced, then there may be policies to remedy such

circumstances. Thus, the question of religious roots of Christian-Muslim intolerance is of crucial importance.

In order to address this question, we looked at how Orthodox-Muslim intolerance is related to: (a) *religiosity* as such, including beliefs and practices; (b) *near-religious ideology*, i.e., people's beliefs about their own and other religions; and (c) *non-religious ideology* (secular beliefs and attitudes). The influence of these factors on intolerance is reviewed below. Statistical details are in Table 4.

5.1. Religiosity. We looked at the degree to which Orthodox and Muslims share basic monotheistic beliefs common to both faiths (e.g., in God, the devil, life after death, heaven and hell), and, for the Orthodox, specific Christian beliefs (e.g., in Jesus Christ and his resurrection). We also took into account how often they attend churches or mosques, pray, and read the Bible or the Koran.

First, we found that religious beliefs per se do not make Russians more intolerant. On the contrary, among the Orthodox, those who more fully share monotheistic and Christian beliefs tend to be slightly more tolerant of Muslims than those who do not.

Next, religious practices are differently associated with intolerance among the two groups. Among Muslims, those who more often go to mosque, pray, and read the Koran appear more intolerant towards the Orthodox. Among the Orthodox, only church attendance is slightly associated with intolerance towards Muslims. In other words, praying, and reading the Bible more often does not make the Orthodox more intolerant, while mosque attendance, praying, and reading the Koran more often make Muslims somewhat more intolerant of the Orthodox.

5.2. Near-religious ideology. While *religious beliefs* do not make Orthodox and Muslims more intolerant of each other, their *beliefs about religions* do. In particular, a negative view of Islam (as militant, reactionary, inhumane, anti-democratic, etc.) makes Orthodox strongly intolerant of Muslims. Similarly, a negative view of Orthodoxy predisposes Muslims to intolerance. An important predictor of tolerance is the acceptance of the view that all religions should have equal rights in Russia: those who do not share it are more intolerant. Among the Orthodox, opposition to religions' equal rights predicts intolerance more strongly.

Another predictor of intolerance is *religious ethnocentrism* – a belief system that rigidly links people's ethnic identity to their dominant religion and that views other faiths as alien. Such beliefs are very common in Russia. For instance, 85% of ethnic Russians believe that they are Orthodox in their heart even if they were not baptized and do not go to church. Nearly half believe that only ethnic Russians can be true Orthodox, and more than one third see converts to non-Orthodox faiths as no longer truly Russian. This ideology noticeably increases the intolerance towards Muslims. Although religious ethnocentrism is also common among Muslims (85% of Tatars, Bashkirs, Avars, and other historically Islamic peoples say they are Muslims in heart regardless of actual religiosity), it is weakly associated with their intolerance towards the Orthodox.

5.3. Non-religious ideology. We found that religious intolerance is linked to beliefs and attitudes that have nothing to do with religion. Particularly important is the link between religious intolerance and ethnic prejudice. Those Russian Orthodox who have negative attitudes to ethnic non-Russians from the Caucasus and Asia, are markedly

more intolerant towards Muslims. Similarly, prejudice against ethnic Russians makes Muslims markedly more intolerant of the Orthodox.

Pro-democratic and pro-Western views make both Muslims and Orthodox more tolerant of each other. Interfaith tolerance is also linked to support for civil liberties for political and social out-groups (e.g., fascists, atheists, and homosexuals). Those more willing to put up with such groups, are also more tolerant of Muslims or the Orthodox.

Overall, religious intolerance in Russia appears more closely linked to near-religious and non-religious ideologies than to religiosity as such. Thus, paradoxically, religious intolerance in Russia is a mostly non-religious phenomenon in its origins.

CONCLUSION

Although most Russians calling themselves Orthodox Christians or Muslims do not actively practice or fully share the tenets of their faiths, religious intolerance among them is widespread and strong. Most self-identified Orthodox would curtail Muslims' basic religious freedom. The intolerance towards Muslims is especially strong in regions with very small Islamic minorities, where Orthodox Russians have little if any direct contact with Islam. Alarmingly, in Moscow and St. Petersburg, Russia's two wealthiest, most cosmopolitan cities with highly educated populations, the intolerance of Muslims is stronger than the country's average.

Russia's Muslim minority appears on average more willing to grant religious liberties to the Orthodox majority. Yet, in strategically important areas, such as the North Caucasus, Muslims' intolerance of Christian minorities is remarkably strong. Furthermore, most Muslims' acceptance of majority rights is contrasted by their

intolerance of religious minorities, the Jews and Western churches, which is slightly stronger than among the Orthodox.

In this atmosphere, reports about religious hate crime and violations of religious freedom in Russia reflect more than isolated incidents. Acts of hate and intolerance seem to have deep roots in popular hostility to religious freedom. The problem of Christian-Muslim intolerance in Russia is not confined to actions of extremists and illiberal officials. It is a societal problem that reflects ordinary Russians' unwillingness to put up with minorities.

Orthodox-Muslim intolerance is not an isolated interfaith issue in Russia. Both groups' unwillingness to put up with the Jews and Western churches is much stronger than their mutual intolerance. Thus, Orthodox-Muslim intolerance is only a part of a much broader culture of religious intolerance that has taken root in Russia in just fifteen years since the collapse of the official Soviet atheism.

Ironically, this widespread culture of religious intolerance has relatively little to do with Orthodox and Muslim religiosity as such. Those who more fully share monotheistic and Christian beliefs may be slightly more, not less tolerant. Active practice of one's religion is weakly linked to intolerance mostly among Muslims, and more so in the Caucasus than elsewhere (which suggests that the region has been exposed to more radical Islamic influences).

The culture of religious intolerance is shaped not as much by *religious beliefs*, as by ideological *beliefs about religions.* Such are popular Russian beliefs that Islam is by nature militant, reactionary and inhumane. Such are also beliefs that ethnic Russians are Orthodox as if by birth or definition, just as Tatars and Chechens are Muslims, and that

any other religion is alien and harmful to these peoples. Conflating religious and ethnic animosities, this popular ideology is a threat to the unity and stability of the multi-ethnic and multi-religious Russia.

The climate of intolerance is further worsened by secular ideological influences. Racial prejudice against the ethnicities of the Caucasus and Asia (pejoratively referred to in Russian street slang as *chornye*, meaning "blacks") increases the intolerance towards Muslims, just as prejudice against ethnic Russians augments the intolerance towards the Orthodox. Not surprisingly, people who hold anti-democratic and anti-Western views and oppose granting liberties to dissidents are also more intolerant of their neighbors' religion.

Yet, our study also shows that even in this societal atmosphere, a much greater mutual tolerance among Russia's Orthodox and Muslims can be achieved and does exist in some places. Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, where nearly equal populations of Muslims and Christians live side by side, and peace among them is supported by local authorities' resistance to radicalism and separatism and encouragement of interfaith contacts, show tolerance levels markedly higher than elsewhere in the country. This is sharply contrasted by the situation in Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkaria, republics of the war-torn North Caucasus, where ethno-religious tensions are worsened by economic hardship, the emergence of radical Islam, and failed attempts to eradicate it through violence and suppression of religious freedom.

Regional differences suggest what should and should not be tried if Russia's authorities were willing to lessen ethno-religious intolerance. Most Russians do not have direct contacts with Islam, and their opinions about its adherents are shaped by the media,

education, and ethnic stereotypes. Symptomatically, these opinions are very commonly negative. Similarly, due to demographic shifts, fewer and fewer Muslims in the Caucasus have direct contact with Orthodox Russians. This calls for education efforts aimed at building more objective and unbiased mutual perceptions. Russia's state-run schools as well as its overwhelmingly state controlled media could contribute to such efforts. Unfortunately, the media are often part of the problem more than of the solution. Making things worse, the Putin regime has nearly eradicated more liberal and pro-democratic media sources, exactly the ones that are more often concerned about minority rights. Thus, greater press freedom combined with the Russian state's unambiguous policy stance against religious and ethnic intolerance could greatly improve the situation. Unfortunately, while purporting to fight religious extremism, Russian leaders have actually strengthened it by curtailing minorities' religious freedom since 1997, neglecting the spread of majority chauvinism and bigotry, and often encouraging it by their own treatment of minorities. The painful example of the Caucasus shows that limitations on religious expression can only worsen Christian-Muslim intolerance.

The Untied States and other international partners can advise Russia regarding democracies' proven ways to reduce ethno-religious tensions. They also need to support Russia's sincere policy efforts in this direction should there be any. However, given the spread of Orthodox-Muslim intolerance and its roots in a more general popular hostility to religious freedom and minority rights, this problem will not be resolved any time soon. If anything, it is likely to worsen amidst Russia's current undemocratic tendencies. This can create instability with ramifications for Eurasian security and the global conflict with radical Islam (just as the conflict in Chechnya already did). In this context, Orthodox-

Muslim intolerance in Russia needs to be regularly monitored by those concerned with international religious freedom and global security. We see our study as a first step in such a monitoring.

APPENDIX

Table 1. Religious tolerance among the Orthodox (N=1,331) and Muslims (N=833) in Russia

Religious activities	**% Orthodox allowing Muslims to**	**% Muslims allowing Orthodox to**
build a new church/mosque	56.6	71.7
publicly preach their religion	29.5	43.6
publish religious materials	43.6	55.1
open a religious school	44.0	52.9
teach their faith in public schools	13.3	28.8
preach their religious views on television	33.6	49.4
do charitable work	62.8	71.1
raise funds and donations for religious needs	48.0	65.5

Table 2. Religious tolerance towards the Jews and Western churches among the Orthodox (N=1331) and Muslims (N=833) in Russia

Religious activities	**% Orthodox**	**% Muslims allowing Jews To**	**% Orthodox**	**% Muslims allowing Western churches to**
build a new synagogue/church	47.9	39.6	28.9	21.6
publicly preach their religion	26.4	22.0	17.4	13.6
publish religious materials	36.4	33.5	24.0	18.6
open a religious school	38.2	28.6	21.3	13.6
teach their faith in public schools	12.6	13.5	8.2	8.2
preach their religious views on television	28.2	27.9	19.5	15.4
do charitable work	55.8	50.2	40.1	29.4
raise funds and donations for religious	42.9	41.9	28.2	23.0

Table 3. Orthodox-Muslim intolerance by region.

	Build a mosque/ church	Publish religious materials	Open religious school	Teach their faith in public school	tel	Charitable work	Funding

	r c h			h o o l				
RUSSIA:								
% Orthodox allowing	5	3	44	4	13	34	63	48
Muslims to	7	0	80	4	41	74	87	80
% Muslims allowing	9	7		8				
Orthodox to	4	2		0				
TATARSTAN:								
% Orthodox allowing	9	6	87	8	25	6	95	81
Muslims to	4	4	76	6	27	2	92	78
% Muslims allowing	8	5		7		6		
Orthodox to	8	6		5		2		
BASHKORTOSTAN:								
% Orthodox allowing	8	6	78	8	34	6	79	74
Muslims to	8	7	75	0	41	2	78	71
% Muslims allowing	8	6		6		6		
Orthodox to	5	9		6		2		
DAGESTAN:								
% Orthodox allowing	6	3	52	5	19	3	76	48

Muslims to	7	3	48	2	24	3	63	52
% Muslims allowing	6	3		4		4		
Orthodox to	1	7		7		4		
KABARDINO-								
BALKARIA:	7	3	44	4	25	3	70	70
% Orthodox allowing	4	2	35	7	27	5	60	68
Muslims to	6	2		3		3		
% Muslims allowing	4	6		4		6		
Orthodox to								

Table 4. Religious, near-religious, and secular determinants of Orthodox-Muslim tolerance (partial correlations, controlling for the influence of age, education, and city size)

	Tolerance among Orthodox towards Muslims	Tolerance among Muslims towards Orthodox
Religiosity (beliefs and practices):		
Monotheistic beliefs	.09**	–
Christian beliefs	.08**	N/A
Church/mosque attendance	-.07*	-.18***
Prayer frequency	–	-.16***
Frequency of reading Bible/Koran	–	-.11**
Near-religious ideology (beliefs about and attitudes to one's own and other religions):		
Belief that all religions should have equal rights	.30***	.12**
Positive views of Islam/Orthodoxy	.41***	.23***
Religious ethnocentrism	-.20***	-.08*
Non-religious ideology (secular beliefs and attitudes):		
Pro-democratic and pro-Western views	.13**	.11**
Political tolerance	.12***	.30***
Prejudice against ethnic non-Russians/Russians	-.28***	-.26***

– no significant association
* significant at p< .05
** significant at p< .001
*** significant at p< .0001, tow-tailed test