

AZERBAIJANI MODEL OF MULTICULTURALISM

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Cultural diversity and pluralism represent one of the most important factors of culture. Azerbaijan has since ancient times been known as the homeland of diverse peoples and cultures. This land served as some kind of bridge between Eastern culture, on the one hand, and the world, European culture – on the other hand. For the multinational, poly-confessional, multilingual Azerbaijan, this ideology is put forward by the historical reality itself. Indeed, Azerbaijan is a unique geographical, geopolitical and cultural space where the representatives of numerous national-ethnic groups live.

If we cannot now end our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity.

John K. Kennedy

Today we are talking more and more about the crisis of multiculturalism, paying attention to the role which played the migration policy of European countries. The attitude towards migrants as a threat (the threat of their own system of values, their future) is formed.

They put forward ideas that Christian and Islamic cultures cannot coexist. But the point is, that without a tolerant attitude there will be no peace. The European model of multiculturalism is built on the idea of imposing its own values and sense of morality. In Europe, for example, the multiculturalism model is aimed not at the integration of migrants and their next generations, but at isolation. In countries, where the population is represented by different cultures and nationalities, this is a real danger to the future of multiculturalism. Put simply, it's a ticking time bomb.

Thus, the exact opposite is the Azerbaijani model of multiculturalism. This is the only way out of the crisis and to avoid violence. From ancient times, representatives of different nationalities lived in Azerbaijan, turning Azerbaijan into a multicultural country. It is possible to say that the Azerbaijani model is unique. The model is based on the principles of humanism and does not contradict any of the religions. In Azerbaijan, where multiculturalism is perceived as a way of life, it does not survive the crisis.

Only in a tolerant society does multiculturalism promote the mutual enrichment of cultures, the formation of universal human values, and the unification of different people. In Azerbaijan representatives of different religions, nations live like one tight-knit family. The main condition for success is the coexistence of universal and national values, the protection of national identity. The successful example of Azerbaijan clearly confirms that representatives of other nations and people, religions cultures are able to develop, while maintaining their identity and respectful attitude towards each other.

The Azerbaijani people consist of the Azerbaijanis constituting the main part of the public of the country, and 30 nations and ethnic groups, which compactly live in various regions of the country. All these people, regardless of their number, language and religion, are equal citizens of Azerbaijan.

The Azerbaijani state guarantees to all ethnic minorities living in the territory of the country the opportunity to create any organizations provided by the law. The Constitution and laws of the Republic of Azerbaijan regulate the legal status of similar organizations. Diversity of the organizations of ethnic minorities is connected with their traditions. The most part of ethnic associations is created on the basis of religious belonging.

It is possible to claim that Azerbaijan is one of the most secular Muslim societies. Apart from that, it was the first Muslim country to introduce theatre and cinema. This secularism has not prevented Islam from increasingly returning to Azerbaijan. From the authorities' perspective, the most important thing is to maintain the freedom of belief. All religious institutions in Azerbaijan have embraced a strict policy to prevent the influence of so-called "radical groups".

The unity of diversity does not mean elimination of ethnic, national or religious differences at all. At present, representatives of tens of ethnic minorities live in Azerbaijan: Russians, Ukrainians, Tats, Kurds, Belarusians, Talyshees, Jews, Turks, Germans, Lezgins, Tatars, Avars, Georgians, Tsakhurs, Udis and others. They use their languages, carefully preserve objects of the material-spiritual values, and create ethnic-cultural associations, societies.

The government of Azerbaijan has repeatedly provided financial aid to the structures of ethnic minorities. Besides, they do not pay for rent of the occupied buildings and premises. The state in various forms renders protection to them.

Azerbaijani officials insist on talking about the country as one of peaceful coexistence between representatives of all religions, in addition to national and ethnic minorities, and that model of tolerance should be encouraged in Europe and throughout the world. The religious diversity of Azerbaijan is actually a thing of beauty, which is something they are extremely proud of. It adds richness to a society.

Azerbaijan, located at the intersection of East and West, North and South, Christianity and Islam, different civilizations and cultures, confirms the eternal truth: "A multiethnic state is a unified society". This is the main principle and the reason for the success of the multiculturalism model in Azerbaijan.