

# Mass Religious Ritual and Intergroup Tolerance

The Muslim Pilgrims' Paradox

MIKHAIL A. ALEXSEEV  
SUFIAN N. ZHEMUKHOV





## Cambridge Studies in Social Theory, Religion, and Politics

"In this unusual book, two coauthors with different academic, cultural, and religious backgrounds set out to directly explore the Islamic Hajj pilgrimage, a major collective ritual practiced by humans. They go beyond the classical Durkheimian insight that rituals generate social solidarity and demonstrate, empirically as well as theoretically, that such solidarity could even transcend the boundaries of religion itself."

*Georgi Derluguian, New York University, Abu Dhabi*

"The standard narrative about 'radicalization' draws a straight line between religious fervor and political action. But in this truly pathbreaking study, two prominent experts demonstrate the opposite: that the experience of going on a pilgrimage to Muslim holy sites can lead to more tolerant attitudes when pilgrims return home. I hope that every student of religion, sociology, and political science reads this book, and that journalists and global policymakers take note of these vital findings about how many Muslims actually practice their faith."

*Charles King, Georgetown University, Washington DC*

"Combining political science's trademark rigor with the depth of insight characteristic of historical ethnography, the authors document how a ritual that exposes someone intensely to the diversity of their own large group can also generate pro-social attitudes toward members of other groups, even in sites of ongoing conflict. Filled with fascinating personal stories and insight about Russia's North Caucasus and Islam, the book gives cause for optimism regarding the human condition more generally."

*Henry E. Hale, George Washington University, Washington DC*

Cover image: Muslims gather atop Mount Arafat during the Day of Arafat as part of the rites of the Hajj Pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia near Mecca. Omar Chatriwala via Getty Images.

Cover designed by Hart McLeod Ltd

**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS  
[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

ISBN 978-1-107-19185-3



9 781107 191853 >

ALEXSEEV AND ZHEMUKHOV  
**Mass Religious Ritual and Tolerance**  
CAMBRIDGE

# Mass Religious Ritual and Intergroup Tolerance

*The Muslim Pilgrims' Paradox*

MIKHAIL A. ALEXSEEV

*San Diego State University*

SUFIAN N. ZHEMUKHOV

*George Washington University, Washington, DC*



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

# CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom  
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
4843/24, 2nd Floor, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, Delhi – 110002, India  
79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.  
It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of  
education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org  
Information on this title: <http://www.cambridge.org/9781107191853>  
DOI: 10.1017/9781108123716

© Mikhail A. Alexseev and Sufian N. Zhemukhov 2017

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception  
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,  
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written  
permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2017

Printed in the United States of America by Sheridan Books, Inc.

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

## *Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

NAMES: Alexseev, Mikhail A., 1963– author.

TITLE: Mass religious ritual and intergroup tolerance : the Muslim pilgrims'  
paradox / Mikhail A. Alexseev, San Diego State University, Sufian N. Zhemukhov,  
George Washington University, Washington DC.

DESCRIPTION: New York : Cambridge University Press, 2017. | Series: Cambridge studies  
in social theory, religion, and politics | Includes bibliographical references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2017012132 | ISBN 9781107191853 (alk. paper)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Muslim pilgrims and pilgrimages – Saudi Arabia – Mecca. | Pilgrims  
and pilgrimages – Psychology. | Psychology, Religious. | Rites and  
ceremonies – Psychological aspects.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC BP187.3 .A397 2017 | DDC 297.3/524–DC23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2017012132>

ISBN 978-1-107-19185-3 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of  
URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication  
and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain,  
accurate or appropriate.



## Mass Religious Ritual and Intergroup Tolerance

Under what conditions does in-group pride facilitate out-group tolerance? And what are the causal linkages between intergroup tolerance and socialization in religious rituals? This book examines how Muslims from Russia's North Caucasus returned from the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca both more devout as Muslims and more tolerant of outgroups. Drawing on prominent theories of identity and social capital, the authors resolve seeming contradictions between the two literatures by showing the effects of religious rituals that highlight within-group diversity at the same time that they affirm the group's common identity. This theory is then applied to explain why social integration of Muslim immigrants has been more successful in the United States than in Europe and how the largest Hispanic association in the United States defied the clash of civilizations theory by promoting immigrants' integration into America's social mainstream. This book offers insights into Islam's role in society and politics and the interrelationships between religious faith, immigration and ethnic identity, and tolerance that will be relevant to both scholars and practitioners.

Mikhail A. Alexseev is a professor of political science at San Diego State University. He is the author of *Immigration Phobia and the Security Dilemma* (2006), *Center-Periphery Conflict in Post-Soviet Russia* (1999), and *Threat Assessment, Intelligence, and Global Struggle* (1997).

Sufian N. Zhemukhov is a senior research associate at George Washington University. He is the coauthor of *Putin's Olympics: The Sochi Games and the Evolution of Twenty-First Century Russia* (2017, with Robert Ortung).



# Cambridge Studies in Social Theory, Religion, and Politics

## Editors

David C. Leege, *University of Notre Dame*  
Kenneth D. Wald, *University of Florida, Gainesville*  
Richard L. Wood, *University of New Mexico*

The most enduring and illuminating bodies of late nineteenth-century social theory – by Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and others – emphasized the integration of religion, polity, and economy through time and place. Once a staple of classic social theory, however, religion gradually lost the interest of many social scientists during the twentieth century. The recent emergence of phenomena such as Solidarity in Poland, the dissolution of the Soviet empire, various South American, southern African, and South Asian liberation movements, the Christian right in the United States, and Al Qaeda have reawakened scholarly interest in religiously based political conflict. At the same time, fundamental questions are once again being asked about the role of religion in stable political regimes, public policies, and constitutional orders. The series *Cambridge Studies in Social Theory, Religion, and Politics* will produce volumes that study religion and politics by drawing on classic social theory and more recent social scientific research traditions. Books in the series offer theoretically grounded, comparative, empirical studies that raise “big” questions about a timely subject that has long engaged the best minds in social science.

## Titles in the Series

- Mikhail A. Alexseev and Sufian N. Zhemukhov, *Mass Religious Ritual and Intergroup Tolerance: The Muslim Pilgrims' Paradox*
- Luke Bretherton, *Resurrecting Democracy: Faith, Citizenship, and the Politics of a Common Life*
- David E. Campbell, John C. Green, and J. Quin Monson, *Seeking the Promised Land: Mormons and American Politics*
- Ryan L. Claassen, *Godless Democrats and Pious Republicans? Party Activists, Party Capture, and the “God Gap”*
- Paul A. Djupe and Christopher P. Gilbert, *The Political Influence of Churches*
- Joel S. Fetzer and J. Christopher Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany*
- François Foret, *Religion and Politics in the European Union: The Secular Canopy*
- Jonathan Fox, *A World Survey of Religion and the State*
- Jonathan Fox, *Political Secularism, Religion, and the State: A Time Series Analysis of Worldwide Data*
- Anthony Gill, *The Political Origins of Religious Liberty*
- Brian J. Grim and Roger Finke, *The Price of Freedom Denied: Religious Persecution and Conflict in the 21st Century*
- Kees van Kersbergen and Philip Manow, editors, *Religion, Class Coalitions, and Welfare States*
- Karrie J. Koeseel, *Religion and Authoritarianism: Cooperation, Conflict, and the Consequences*
- Ahmet T. Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion: The United States, France, and Turkey*



Damon Maryl, *Secular Conversions: Political Institutions and Religious Education in the United States and Australia, 1800–2000*

Jeremy Menchik, *Islam and Democracy in Indonesia: Tolerance without Liberalism*

Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*

Amy Reynolds, *Free Trade and Faithful Globalization: Saving the Market*

Sadia Saeed, *Politics of Desecularization: Law and the Minority Question in Pakistan*

David T. Smith, *Religious Persecution and Political Order in the United States*

Peter Stamatov, *The Origins of Global Humanitarianism: Religion, Empires, and Advocacy*

*For our parents,  
Anatoly & Lyudmila  
and  
Nasabi & Fatima*





## Acknowledgments

We owe incalculable debts to many individuals and organizations for making this book happen. Our collaboration would not be possible without the Program on New Approaches to Research and Security in Eurasia (PONARS Eurasia) funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and its founding director, Celeste Wallander, who brought the authors together at the PONARS workshop in Tbilisi, Georgia, in 2008. As we conducted our research, we benefited significantly from the PONARS conferences – notably the first extensive report on our focus group findings at the 2010 PONARS workshop in Odessa, Ukraine, and policy conferences in Washington, DC in 2009 and 2011. We thank the organizers and discussants at these conferences and the Tbilisi workshop – Georgi Derluguian, Henry Hale, Yoshiko Herrera, Mark Kramer, Olga Novikova, Scott Radnitz, Sasha Schmemmann, Nona Shahnazarian, Vadim Volkov, Cory Welt, and Ayşe Zarakol.

Above all, we extend gratitude to all the wonderful people in the North Caucasus who made our fieldwork possible – Nazir-hajji Akhmatov and Atmir-hajji Khamurzov, the leader and the doctor of the 2009 pilgrimage group where we conducted participant observation, and pilgrims Zamir-hajji Khatsukov and Batyr-hajji Berov for helping set up most of our in-depth interviews; all the hajjis and hajjiahs in that group for being generous and cooperative; the late Nina-hajjiah Shibzukhova for sharing with us her pilgrimage diaries and photos; Zarina Goplacheva, Safudin-hajji Kazharov, Zeynab-hajjiah Pagova, and Chamal-hajji Zhemukhov for organizing our four focus groups in Nalchik; Marianna Kerimova for transcribing our focus group discussions and inspiring us with her faith;

Alim Eleev for filming and photographing our events, fieldwork, and side tours, including the ascent along the slopes of Europe's tallest mountain, the twin-peaked Mt. Elbrus; Fatima-hajjiah, Samirat-hajjiah, Bitsa, Nafisat-hajjiah, Mukhamed-hajji, Marina, Madina, Salikh-hajji, Nokh-hajji, Ismail-hajji, Khizir-hajji, Ruslan, Zaur-hajji, Bolya-hajji, Khasan-hajji; Al'bina, Madina, Zamira, Zarema, Marina, both Mukhameds, both Zalims, Said, Alim, Osman, Mukhtar, and Anzor for taking part in our focus groups; and Igor Kuznetsov for setting up exploratory interviews with local Muslims in Russia's Republic of Adygea. We also would like to thank Zhilyabi Kalmykov and Barasbi Karamurзов for providing us with an opportunity to make our presentation "The Impact of Hajj on Development of Tolerance in Contemporary Society in Kabardino-Balkaria" at the 2010 policy conference organized by Kabardino-Balkaria State University and the Civic Chamber of Kabardino-Balkaria, Russia, and for inviting us to a private dinner after the conference where important issues relevant to our research were discussed.

The College of Arts and Letters and the Department of Political Science at the San Diego State University deserve credit for maintaining travel funding that partly covered Mikhail Alexseev's expenses during fieldwork in the North Caucasus. The Institute of International Education's Scholar Rescue Fund and the George Washington University's Institute for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies at the Elliott School of International Affairs provided financial and institutional support for Sufian Zhemukhov's research.

We thank Farid Abdel-Nour, Iurii Anchabadze, Marjorie and Harley Balzer, Alexei Bekshokov, Martha Bloem, Kate Brown, Henry Hale, Stephen Hanson, Hope Harrison, Michael Khodarkovsky, Charles King, Ahmet Kuru, Igor Kuznetsov, Ian Lanzillotti, Marlene Laruelle, Cindy Machen, James Meyer, Harris Mylonas, Ahmed Farid Moustafa, Andrew Nolan, Robert Orttung, Margaret Paxson, Jean-François Ratelle, Sasha Schmemann, Richard Sharp, Nart Shekim, Regina Smyth, Ronald Grigor Suny, Cory Welt, Sarah Willcox, Jonty Yamisha, and Sajjad Ali Zahir for helpful conversations, friendly support, and insightful feedback on our ideas and various drafts of what eventually became this manuscript, and particularly Amy Beth Kay for straightening out some of our rough writing and Cindy Dobler Davis for inspiring the analysis that culminated in Chapter 8. Our special thanks also go to the anonymous reviewers of the manuscript for the Cambridge University Press whose comments were crucial in helping us position our study with respect to broader

comparative research on Islam, intergroup relations, and politics. Portions of Chapters 2 and 6 were derived, in part, from our article “From Mecca with Tolerance: Religion, Social Re-categorization, and Social Capital” published in *Religion, State and Society* online in January 2016 ([www.tandfonline.com](http://www.tandfonline.com)) – we are grateful to the editor and anonymous reviewers for suggestions and to the publisher for granting use without seeking permission.

Ultimately, this book would not happen without enthusiastic initial interest in our proposal as well as the invaluable intellectual and organizational stewardship on the part of Lewis Bateman of the Cambridge University Press who also steered the manuscript through a rigorous peer-review process and improving manuscript revisions. We deeply appreciate his contribution. We are also thankful to Sara Duskow, who seamlessly took over from Lewis after his retirement and expeditiously saw the manuscript through to publication. We also thank Shaun Vigil and Claudia Bona-Cohen who assisted Lewis and Sara, respectively, and Ami Naramor and Srilakshmi Gobidass, editors, and Thomas Haynes for managing the cover design.



# Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	page x
<i>List of Tables</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xii
Introduction	I
PART I THE PILGRIMS' PARADOX	II
1 Russia's North Caucasus: The State, the Hajj, and the Revival of the Sacred	13
2 The Paths of the Paradox: From Passion to Tolerance	34
3 The Hajj as Social Identity and Social Capital	74
PART II THE HAJJ MODEL OF SOCIAL TOLERANCE	93
4 Repositioning or the <i>Axis Mundi</i> Effect	95
5 Recategorization	110
6 Repersonalization	126
PART III BEYOND THE HAJJ	145
7 Islam's Social Spaces: Europe versus the United States	147
8 The <i>La Raza</i> Axis: Hispanic Integration in North America	172
Conclusion	184
Notes	190
Bibliography	209
Index	223

## Figures

Photos 1a and 1b Hajji Focus Groups	<i>page</i> 67
2.1 The Pilgrims' Paradox: Top Themes in Kabardino-Balkaria Focus Groups	72
4.1 The Hajj Model of Tolerance Improvement	94
4.2 Common Group Repositioning Models	96
5.1 The Hajj Model of Common Group Recategorization	112
6.1 Principal Themes in Kabardino-Balkaria Focus Groups	140
6.2 Age and Gender Effects Not Decisive in Focus Groups	142

## Tables

4.1 Pilgrims in Kabardino-Balkaria Focus Groups Devoted Significantly More Time than Non-Pilgrims to the Importance of the Hajj Pilgrimage	<i>page</i> 104
5.1 Non-Pilgrims in Kabardino-Balkaria Focus Groups Devoted Significantly More Time than Pilgrims to the Importance of Uniformity of Behavior and Beliefs in Islam	123
6.1 The Pilgrims in Kabardino-Balkaria Focus Groups Were Significantly More Open to Discussing Secular Issues and Engagement in Public Life	135
6.2 Frequency of References to the Primary Sources of Islamic Faith (Allah, Prophet, Qur'an, Sunnah, and Hadith) Proportionate to Total Discussion Time in Each Focus Group	136
7.1 Racial Composition of Muslim Population in the United States	154
7.2 Muslims Were More Socially Mainstream in the United States than in Europe	168
7.3 Income Disparities between Muslims and General Public in Advanced Democracies	170