

ETHNOCULTURAL AND ETHNORELIGIOUS PROBLEMS AS INSTRUMENTS OF GEOPOLITICS*

V. Avksentyev

*Institute of socio-economic and humanities research of Southern scientific center RAS
Rostov-on-Don, Russian Federation
science-almanac@mail.ru*

In the last quarter of century, ethno-cultural and ethno-religious problems and conflicts are widely used in international politics as an instrument of conflict and mobilize the basis for interference in the internal affairs of different States. This resource is used by all the players, beginning from small ethnic groups that appeal to major geopolitical players to get support to the leading world and regional powers.

Azov-Caspian-Black Sea region, with its complex ethnic and confessional structure falls under the concept of "geopolitical axis" (Zbigniew Brzezinski), and this gives grounds for predicting long-term instability in the region in terms of the geopolitical reconfiguration of the world began. The main emphasis is on prevention in the Azov-Black Sea Region, Caspian integrative project under the aegis of Russia. Tracks the performance in the ethno-political and religious sphere, this is the target, which will aim at Russia's geopolitical opponents.

As a result of active management actions after the creation of the North Caucasus Federal District of the situation in southern Russia has stabilized. However, it was not possible to reverse the economic situation in the North Caucasus, although official figures show a slight improvement in employment. The economic picture in the republics of the North Caucasus although complicated, but in many ways not the worst in the country, however, this region is a resource for the underground bands in Russia and the Middle East. The solution of this problem should be reducing tension, re-industrialization and modernization. The problem is not only poverty and unemployment, but also difficulties in realization of life strategies. Despite numerous attempts to develop small and medium businesses, also it's still difficult to open and maintain its productivity. As a result, people feel deprivation, a sense of injustice. Especially young people tend to experience such kind of emotions. Young people trying to build a life strategies, understand how it's difficult or almost impossible to make legally using socially acceptable methods in conditions of corruption, the inefficiency of the authorities and the sprawling atnolinguist. People feel disbelief in government's ability to counter the negative trends.

Radical Islam offers an alternative living arrangement. Today the great problem – is a social layer militants sympathizers, many of whom are educated in the new religiosity of young people. Social network analysis shows how Islamic religious rhetoric captivated young people. This passion religion skillfully used recruiters, promising a fair society based on Islamic principles.

In the south of Russia there was a significant socio-cultural split between "ethnic Russian" and "ethnically non-Russian" territories. "Russian" territory is a modernized territory and non-Russians – is the territory of archaism. South of Russia has become a regional manifestation of the clash of civilizations through the "modernity – tradition." Unresolved problems accumulate and in interethnic and interconfessional relations serve as an internal basis for the instability in the Russian Azov-Black Sea region and the Caspian region, "bait" for geopolitical players. Ethnicity and religion in the XXI century, are the main factors of the conflict and the mobilization of the most important geopolitical tool in the southern macro-region.

Key words: territory, ethno-cultural, ethno-religious, the Azov-Black Sea region, the Caspian Sea region, young people, clan, geopolitics.

The opinion about that ethnocultural and ethnoreligious processes, problems and conflicts are considered to be an internal case of governments went out of date. In the last quarter of the century these problems and conflicts are used in international policy as an instrument of conflict mobilization, as a ground for an intervention into internal cases of governments and "humanitarian interventions". If till the end of "cold war" these conflicts were interpreted as "communal", intercommunal, as conflicts, which are neglected in the international policy, then nowadays using of ethnocultural and ethnoreligious factors in the international policy becomes the most significant method as in "soft", so in "tough" power. The bright example of this is a geopolitical reconstruction of the Balkan region under the control of the USA and NATO, the matter of which served ethnical and ethno-

* Publication is prepared within the program of fundamental researchers of presidium RAS №13 "Russia extensional development in XXI century: nature, society and their interaction. Problems of polyethnic macroregion development in conditions of Caspian-Black sea foreign destabilization"

religious conflicts with human losses in the course of Yugoslavia disintegration. Since an ethno-confessional factor became actively used for establishment or maintaining of geopolitical control over the certain territories, but ethnicity and religious factor – as a resource in geopolitical fight and international conflicts. Besides this resource is used by all players: from small ethnical groups, appealing to the large geopolitical players for support, to the leading world and religious geopolitical powers, using ethnical and religious factors in the grounding of their actions.

Azov-Caspian-Black Sea region appears to be from one side the important geopolitical centre, and from the other – the region with exceptionally complex ethnical and confessional population structure. Resonance effect, inducing constant increased conflict level appears from the combination of these factors. It is no coincidence that there were no settled peace periods, and people for centuries produced principles of good neighbourhood maintenance. Z. Bzhezinski emphasized “geopolitical pivots” along with the basic geopolitical players. Z. Bzhezinski referred Azerbaidjan, South Korea, Turkey, Iran and Ukraine to these pivots, or *rotation points*. Geopolitical pivots, according to Bzhezinski, – are states, whose significance results not from their power and motivation, but most probably from their important location and consequences of their potential targetability for actions from the geostrategic players side [8, p.41]. Azov-Black sea-Caspian Sea region is under the notion of “geopolitical pivots”, and this gives a ground for forecasting of long-term instability in the region under the conditions of the world initiated geopolitical reconfiguration.

The USA, appearing after USSR disintegration to be the global player, was aware of the fact that such situation is not perpetual and considered China as potential global geopolitical competitor. Material, military and intellectual resources of the USA were concentrated for opposition to this global player. Russia geopolitical activation made undesirable allowances for American geopolitics into the new geopolitical world view. Practically wrote in 1990-s by American strategists as a real geopolitical power Russia brought significant discordance in the USA geopolitical construction forming of the epoch after the “cold war” completion.

The most significant stake is placed on prevention of integrative project under Russia aegis in Azov-Black sea-Caspian Sea region. Ukraine became the key link in this policy, however all foreign republics of USSR in the region are in the scope of the USA and NATO active geopolitics. Along with Georgia the significant role in geopolitics belongs to Moldova. According to NATO geostrategists intention, three countries – Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova – provide some kind of a buffer zone between Europe and Russia.

Position of Russia in the geopolitics sphere in the south direction only recently became more certain. It would be incorrectly to accuse Russia in geopolitical strategy absence. To form active geopolitics, Russia needs to obtain own identity as a country and as a civilization. After USSR disintegration many years were spent for this, and only in the second decade of XXI century it can be acknowledged that Russia obtained “selfness” and self-sustainability and it is ready to appear as a great geopolitical player. This immediately induced “geopolitical attack” to Russia on the whole south flank. Ethnocultural and ethnoreligious processes, problems and conflicts are appeared to be the important instrument of “soft power” in the geopolitical fight. Russia geopolitical opponents attentively control the dynamics in this sphere. In this regard the conclusion, published in the electronic edition of the private American analytical company Stratfor, which is sometimes called as “shady CIA, is considered to be remarkable”: “The most attackable sides of Russia are concentrated in Islamic population of the North Caucasus” [9]. This is a target, where Russia geopolitical opponents will cover.

Mainly ethnopolitical and ethnoreligious problems are the base for conflict mobilization in the North Caucasian region, extremism and terrorism formation, though deep reasons have complex character and are not necessarily genetically connected with ethnicity or population religious structure. All tension factors in the sphere of interethnic and inter-confessional relations in the North Caucasus, extremism and terrorism producing, which were defined in 2009 by then Russian president D.A.Medvedev as tension aggravation reasons in the south macroregion, preserve their deconstructive activity [5].

In the consequence of active administrative actions intensity of influence and hierarchy of these factors was changed. Despite of failing to overcome economic situation in the North Caucasus, official indexes testify about some improvement in the employment sphere that always was considered at the official level as an important factor of instability. One repeatedly emphasized that being an indisputable factor of social well-being improvement, employment growth is not appeared to be the key fact for tension decrease. The North Caucasus needs not just economic development, but reindustrialisation and remodernization of the whole region, which should be considered as an instrument of cardinal atmosphere alteration. Besides region modernization is critically important for the North Caucasus preservation in Russian civilizational space [1, p.150-159]. Significant sociocultural split between “ethnically Russian” and “ethnically non-russian” territories emerged in the south of Russia. “Russian” territories – are preserved modernization centers, but non-russian – are an archaism territory. Even under conditions of initiated financially-economic crisis Krasnodar region, Rostov region are oriented to investment projects, development of modern productions.

Not just hypertrophic ethnical rebirth, but also religious rebirth initiated from the middle of 1990-s became an important component of archaism. Religion became playing disproportionate role for the modern society, and religious leaders became important social figures. Emergence and spread of non-conventional for the region movements in Islam in the North Caucasus – Wahhabism, Salafism, which directed their strike, first of all, against “traditional” or “national” Islam in the North Caucasus added complexity to this picture. The south of Russia became regional civilizations conflict manifestation in the line of “modernity – conventionalism”.

Mainly this conflict, appearing to be global conflict of identities, acts as an significant factor of extremism and terrorism reproduction in the south and explains the fact that by no means among those “who went from the forest to mountains” poor people prevail, often from trouble-free families, students or young people, who already have a higher education. This “regional splash” of civilizations conflict also explains the fact that economic state in the North Caucasian republics is complicated, but is not the worst in the country; nevertheless, mainly this region appears to be a resource for bandunderground fulfillment in Russia and the Middle East.

The problem is not only in poverty and unemployment (some “Russian” regions in Russia “do not fall behind” according to these indexes from republics of the North Caucasus), as it is in exceptional difficulty to realize life strategies. Despite of numerous appeals to develop small and medium business, it is extremely difficult to open and run production. N.Zubarevich, speaking of Dagestan, noted that there are extremely difficult conditions of business conduct for small business in this region [3]. This is probably can be softer said, about the other republics of the North Caucasus. The reason stays the same: corruption, power low efficiency, preservation of ethnic clan relations, economic antiquity.

Some experts even consider that “notorious family-clannish structure of the Caucasian economy –it is not always bad, if consider that mainly within the clan structure one can reckon on accelerated emergence of the new businesses, as clans accumulate capital, irrespective of banking system, which should be further invested somewhere. Just imagine a first-time entrepreneur in the other regions, here he is all alone in the world – and where should he go with his idea? Not to the bank, under the present level of credit rates” [2].

It is appeared that such point of view is totally wrong. Moreover, the fight among authoritative clans is well-known, besides not only for economic resources, but also for power, the fight, which took a lot of lives in the North Caucasus. The problem lies in some other view: what other people, who do not belong to these dominate clans, should do? The same can be said about education obtainment, about the other resources, allowing a person legally build successful life strategy. Clan system in the North Caucasus does not allow growing of honest creative labor culture, fair competition. In the result a person experiences deprivation, undergoes deep feelings of existing arrangement injustice. These feelings are mainly strained in young people in virtue of peculiarities of this socially-demographic group. At the same time mainly young people, trying to build life strategies, detect how it is difficult or practically impossible to make these methods to be lawful or so-

cially acceptable under the corruption conditions, regulatory bodies inefficiency and proliferous ethno clans. People form unbelief in state possibilities to resist to negative trends.

Radical Islam offers alternative variant of living arrangement. Today the most big problem – is not even 600-900 gunmen, sitting in the forests and mountains of the North Caucasus, but a large social layer of sympathizers, among whose there are many young people raised in the new religiosity. Not possessing enough experience, having romanticized opinions about social justice, young people become the victim of the “soul catchers” in the recent past for “Imarat Caucasus”, and for the last two years – for “Islamic state”. Both organizations are prohibited by law in Russia.

We reap the policy results on encouragement, if not to say growing of religiosity, conducted in the post-Soviet period. Two strategic miscalculations were allowed. The first – it was considered that demonstrative encouragement of Orthodoxy would constrain radical Islam spread. The second – that people would go to mainly those religions, which were prescribed. It occurred practically quite the opposite. People went to religion, but often not to that, which is customary to call traditional. And this considers not only Islam, but also the Orthodox part of population.

Resorting to the religious rhetoric allows radicals to proclaim any Muslim, working in Russian state structures or just loyal Russian citizen as disbeliever. For instance, according to their logic, a Muslim, obeying to the Russia legislation – is a polytheism man, as Allah sent the only one law – sharia, obeying to the other law – means to admit that there is somebody or something, which is equal to Allah. The social network analysis shows, how Islamic religious rhetoric involved young people, acquaintance with the content of many sites amazes, what details of beliefs young people can discuss. This religion dedication is skilfully used by enlists, promising fair society, built on the Islamic principles.

State support of so called “traditional Islam” also far from working against radicals. “Islamic semi-official organ closely connected with the state is poor, as it is connected with the authorities. There is a small number of charismatic people, these people are uneducated, they often feel lack of qualitative theological training, as any literate religious elite was broken, also including Islamic, during all soviet period. There also were Sufis, got into a deep underground, who do not inspire a modern young man”, – as E. Satanovsky considers [4]. These ideas can be an explanation of the fact, why “ethnically orthodox” part of population of the North Caucasus and again first of all young people are absorbed into the “new religious movements”. Young people entered into “native believers” Jehovah's Witnesses and many others movements activated.

But also state power not always expresses efficiency and far-sightedness in work with confessional problems. For instance, in Stavropol a question about place separation for cathedral mosque building is not being solved for a long time, prolonged judicial examination with regard to the case of Kislovodsk imam K.A. Baichorov, who was convicted in January 2015 as a guilty in drug offense and who did not admit fault for the murder of imam Z. Makhmutov, excites Islamic community of the region. Insufficient expository work led to the fact that informative vacuum is filled up with numerous conclusions and commentaries in relation to the situation with Islamic Uma in Stavropol, about high level of Islamophobia in the region and anti-Islamic position of the periphery power. Experts often talk about this. Particularly, senior research assistance of the Institute of Orientalism RAS, politologist R. Kurbanov noticed: “It is not a secret for most part of experts that Islamophobic and nationalistic moods are strong in the region. They are strong among population and among civil servants. And this is not just an epidemic, this is rather deep situated, and rather deep ideologic grounding, also on the part of Moscow nationalists is brought to it” [7]. Estimations similar by implication are contained in the other numerous expert estimations and commentaries in the Internet publications and forums.

Stavropol region appeared to be on the peak of the problems in state-confessional relations in Russia. Stavropol authorities possessed methods of anticonfessional management in interethnic, but not in inter-confessional relations. This is broadly explained by the absence of the conceptual document, determining principles of state-confessional relations by analogy with Russian Federation state national policy strategy till 2025. State urbanity principle and regulatory bodies role of various level in its supplying are not clear up to date; foundations and traditional confessions enabl-

ing mechanisms; interaction of secular and religious representatives; relation to the new religious movements.

Unsettled and accumulated problems in the interethnic and inter-confessional relations serve as an internal basis for instability in Russian Azov-Black Sea-Caspian Sea region. They serve as a good “bait” for geopolitical competitors in Russia, striving to “shake” the situation in the country. During the “hot line” with V.V. Putin on 14th of April 2016 in response to a jocoserious question of the first grade pupil from the Orenburg Region about that “father says that only Putin can manage with America” President said: “We need to think not about how manage with America. We should think about, how manage with our internal questions and problems. With roads, with education problems solving, public health service, with development of our economy, with its regeneration, with affiliation of necessary expansion rates to it, and if we do all of this, then we do not need to manage with anybody” [6].

In the course of researches one came to a conclusion that protracted systemic crisis in the region – is a specific regional implementation of modern Russian national identity accumulative problems. This appears to be a methodical key for understanding of a modern situation in the region, and in the scripts preparation of the South Russia development. All-Russian problems, conflicts and crises are overlapped to the real and supposed, durably maturated and artificially created problems in interethnic and inter-confessional relations to historical traumas and offences. There an original resonance effect appears, when the majority of problems, more or less peculiar for all Russia, are manifested in the North Caucasus as ethnopolitical and confessional. In consequence of this ethnicity and in XXI century religiosity stay as the main factors of conflict mobilization and important geopolitical tools in the south macro-region.

References

1. *Avksentyev V.A.* Ethnopolitical choice of Russia and problems of the North Caucasus // Where does Russia go: the new possibilities and modern development restrictions: collected works. M., 2013.
2. What is the potential for small and medium business development in the North Caucasus? // Federal Lezgin nationally–cultural autonomy. Official site. URL: <http://fnka.ru/digest-analytics/9809-kakov-potencial-dlya-razvitiya-malogo-i-srednego-biznesa-na-severnom-kavkaze.html>.
3. Natalia Zubarevich: “Problems of the region cannot be solved without compromises” // Caucasian bend. Electronic resource. URL: <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/208765/>.
4. Why do young people go to radical Islam? // Orthodoxy.ru. Electronic resource. URL: <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/92389.html>.
5. The president of Russia. Official site. URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/transcripts/4384>.
6. Hot line with Vladimir Putin – 2016. You Tube. Electronic resource. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kv3tcDiHMWI>.
7. The murder of Makhmutov aggravated tension in Stavropol // Caucasian bend: Electronic resource. URL: <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/267586/>.
8. *Brzezinski Z.* The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives. – New York: Basic Books, 1997. 223 p. P. 41.
9. *Goujon R.* Ruthless and Sober in Syria // Geopolitical Weekly, February 16, 2016. Electronic resource. URL: <https://www.stratfor.org/weekly/ruthless-and-sober-syria>.

Литература

1. *Авксентьев В.А.* Этнополитический выбор России и проблемы Северного Кавказа // Куда пойдет Россия: новые возможности и ограничения современного развития: сборник статей. М., 2013.

2. Каков потенциал для развития малого и среднего бизнеса на Северном Кавказе? // Федеральная лезгинская национально-культурная автономия. Официальный сайт. URL: <http://flnka.ru/digest-analytics/9809-kakov-potencial-dlya-razvitiya-malogo-i-srednego-biznesa-na-severnom-kavkaze.html>. Дата обращения 04.07.2016.
3. Наталья Зубаревич: «Проблемы региона без компромиссов решить невозможно» // Кавказский Узел. Электронный ресурс. URL: <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/208765/>. Дата обращения 13.10.2012.
4. Почему молодежь уходит в радикальный ислам? // Православие.ру. Электронный ресурс. URL: <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/92389.html>. Дата обращения 04.07.2016.
5. Президент России. Официальный сайт. URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/transcripts/4384>. Дата обращения 17.09.2009.
6. Прямая линия с Владимиром Путиным – 2016. You Tube. Электронный ресурс. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kv3tcDiHMWI>. Дата обращения 14.04.2014.
7. Убийство Махмудова обострило напряженность на Ставрополье // Кавказский Узел: электронный ресурс. URL: <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/267586/>. Дата обращения 24.09.2015.
8. *Brzezinski Z.* The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives. – New York: Basic Books, 1997. 223 p. P. 41.
9. *Goujon R.* Ruthless and Sober in Syria // Geopolitical Weekly, February 16, 2016. Электронный ресурс. URL: <https://www.stratfor.org/weekly/ruthless-and-sober-syria>. Дата обращения 20.03.2016.

September, 10, 2016