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Nikolay P. MEDVEDEV,

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and Social Sciences, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia
(RUDN University) (Russia, Moscow)

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E-mail: voprospolitolog@yandex.ru,
souzpolitolog@yandex.ru

Executive Secretary
Shkurina S.S.

Computer-aided makeup by
Antsiferova A.S.

Translated by
Chernyshova E.V.

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ETHNOPOLITICAL NOTES FROM THE DIARY OF THE NORTH CAUCASUS FEDERAL DISTRICT¹

The article is devoted to the typical trends of the modern ethno-political situation in the North Caucasus Federal district (NCFD). The aim of the research is scientific understanding and identification of determinants, complex positive and negative factors of interethnic relations, as well as the specific content and forms of policy and management with the account of the ethnicity factor and the current ethnocratic system preserved in the republics of the Russian Federation NCFD. The article focuses on the problem of rotation of power personalities and change of elites as the global problem of relations between the power and civil society, as a problem of restrictions of public policy and public administration. The article emphasizes as an independent risk the current state and crisis manifestations of federal relations in the NCFD, both vertically and horizontally, which have a “precedent effect” and a “Domino effect.” The analysis that has been carried out permits the development of the resulting idea of the next (second) ethno-political timeout in the NCFD. The article demonstrates the necessity to search and realize new political-administrative and organizational efforts for the optimization of the register of national questions taking into account their modern multiplication in a context and in submission to the civil question. The author proposes considerations on the formulation of the main directions of strengthening the modern ethno-political timeout of the NCFD for the optimization of national issues in the context of the general civil issue in the context of the main goal of the state national policy.

Key words: *ethnicity, risks of ethnic identification, ethnocratic regimes, interethnic competition, ethno-political timeout, ethnic conflicts, state national policy, ethno-cultural model of civil society.*

¹ The article was prepared under the project “Monitoring of ethnic - religious and migration situation on the basis of the model of the Distributed scientific center of inter-ethnic and religious problems on the eve of the all-Russian population census in the regions of the North Caucasus Federal District” within the framework of the State assignment of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation for 2019.

The current ethno-political situation in the North Caucasus, in this case in the North Caucasus Federal district (hereinafter, NCFD), is characterized by typical trends, which are caused by a variety of well-known objective circumstances, recorded in scientific, monographic and journalistic literature, in numerous multi-departmental monitoring, as well as in many expert and forecast scenarios of well-known experts [12. P. 90; 13. P. 600].

Among these circumstances, it is necessary to note again the weakness of the economy and social infrastructure of the RF NCFD subjects. They include: a low standard of living and low average wages in the regions, a high proportion of unemployed, especially among the young people, the weakness of social and career lifts, low level of educational and medical services, the inability to equip the interests of young and large families in accordance with the legislation of the Russian Federation, the limited social life in rural areas, etc. [10. P. 222].

However, as the most important and actively replenished resource of the North Caucasus region, it is necessary to name its population, who, despite the challenges and risks of the political transition and the present situation, retain high socio-demographic indicators. Residents of the region traditionally show a high ability to social adaptation, as well as ability to combine traditional and innovative elements of life, both personal and social. Residents of the NCFD, regardless of ethnicity, overwhelmingly emphasize in their strategies and “I-concepts” high and prestigious goals: education, employment, decent work, career, material prosperity, the ability to provide for the family.

Taking into account the objective factors, as well as the consequences of ethno-political conflicts that took place in the region in the 90s and early 2000s, including those in manifest destructive forms (elements of civil disobedience and civil war, manifestations of terrorism, extremism, mass death of civilians), it was difficult to restore the constitutional order and eliminate terrorist structures and illegal armed group [7. P. 164; 1. P. 264].

A certain level of national security was achieved after implementation of political and administrative course of V. V. Putin as Prime Minister and then as President of the Russian Federation, which allowed us since 1999 to start bringing the legislation of constituent entities of the North Caucasus in accordance with the legislation of the Russian. The most important factor in this process was the formation of federal districts by the Decree of President Vladimir Putin and the further separation of the North Caucasus Federal district from the Southern Federal district by Decree of President Dmitry Medvedev. Through the efforts of the country's leadership, the Russian political and legal space on the territory of the NCFD was restored and strengthened, which made it possible to carry out administrative reforms and reform of LSG in the subjects of the RF NCFD, but in special-pilot and restrictive forms. Conflict incidents connected with the reform are largely due to the objective competition of ethnic communities in extremely confined space: territorial - land, production, infrastructure and social space [15.

P. 278; 14. P. 193]. There is a problem of land scarcity, disputed territories, inter-settlement lands, pastures, and the formation of new municipal districts. It is symbolized by the rights of the people to historical ethnic territorial locations (“this is our land,” “this is the land of our ancestors,” “here are our graves”), exacerbated by the restoration of administrative and territorial units lost during the ethno-administrative and ethno-political transformations of the Imperial period, the Soviet stage and modern times [5. P. 584].

The conflict phenomena are evident in the continuing ethnocratic system of the North Caucasus Federal district, a tacit system of ethnic quota to the posts in government and management. This system is a symbiosis of traditional forms of feudal technocratic, military-cratic people’s cratic, ethnocratic and also confessional-cratic control and is a rudiment of the Soviet party and economic nomenclatura management in the region [4. P. 206; 3. P. 210]. The ethnocratic system suffers a crisis, fails and causes protests in case of the slightest deviations from the “fair ethnic distribution,” it was manifested in Dagestan and Karachay-Cherkessia at the regional and municipal levels in 2018. However, this system is maintained “from above” and “from below,” probably as beneficial and stationary to both the federal center and regional elites, which is confirmed by the new appointments of the heads of Kabardino-Balkaria and Ingushetia in 2018-2019. At the same time, it is obvious that the legislation of the Russian Federation in no way connects competition, appointment or rotation of political and civil service personnel with their ethnic and religious affiliation. It is also obvious that ethnicity and confessionality cannot guarantee professionalism, state thinking, patriotism, creativity or creative initiatives [6. P. 215; 2. Pp. 295-311].

Today we witness in the district a trend of stabilization of ethno-political processes. Expert opinions boil down to the fact that inter-ethnic relations are in a controlled, inertial state, but with a hidden conflict potential [9. P. 154]. It can be safely said that there is another ethno-political timeout in the NCFD (the second one, in our opinion, the first one was in 2005-2009 and it was not effectively used). It is taking place due to many objective circumstances, subjective management efforts, as well as the sanity of the inhabitants. It is characterized by the canalization of the conflict incidents, localization of the terrorist attacks, the general mood in the North Caucasian community aimed at stability, development and security. This is largely due to such factors as the strong foreign policy of the Russian Federation, the role of the Russian Federation in the liquidation of the international terrorist syndicates, V. V. Putin’s authority (which remains even in the conditions of economic and financial crisis, falling living standards, as well as pension reform), the entry of Crimea (“Crimean consensus,” the possibilities of which are of course limited), the holding of the 2014 Olympics and the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia. It is also largely the result of the implementation of the “Strategy of the state national policy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025” in its regional expression [17. P. 57].

However, even today any political, administrative or organizational transformations in the sphere of territories, land ownership, borders, settlements, as well as objects of industrial and social infrastructure, natural, historical and cultural relic and even mythological objects are projected into the sphere of interethnic and interfaith relations. At the same time, ethnicity as a significant social factor and marker penetrates into political and administrative relations, as well as into the content and forms of regional political regimes, which are problematized in their own context and in the context of all-Russian questions about the choice of the path and model of development [8].

In this regard, as has been repeatedly noted, it is necessary to abandon hopes for a complete depoliticization of ethnicity, as well as for de-ethnization of politics in the NCFD, although the optimization of national (ethnic) issues in the space of the civil issue (all-Russian and all-national) takes place in accordance with the understanding of the national issue by the country's leadership [11].

The year 2018 is considered one of the most peaceful and prosperous in the NCFD. However, even in that year there were terrorist attacks (including with the participation of young people, adolescents and women), self-explosions, and attacks on law enforcement agencies, on believers during services (Dagestan, Stavropol, Chechnya). There were interethnic confrontation and conflicts in Kabardino-Balkaria, confrontation and conflicts between the authorities and ethnic organizations in Karachay-Cherkessia.

In addition, in 2018, the problems of Federal relations were identified at a new level – vertically and horizontally in connection with the establishment of the border between Ingushetia and Chechnya. This precedent, in our view, is extraordinary. It dictates the need for transparency and reliability of power decisions, efficiency of technological and informational support of political “top” will, trust of citizens in the federal and regional authorities, a dialogue with the civil society and a growing civil and legal competence of public leaders. The conclusion of the agreement between the leaders of Ingushetia and Chechnya over the borders with the assistance and approval of the presidential envoy in the NCFD has led to the indignation of the regional ethno-political system in Ingushetia. The weakness of the political and legal support of the procedure destabilized the ethno-political timeout, had a negative impact on public opinion, and damaged the authority of both regional and federal authorities. The immediate consequence of this situation, in our opinion, was the change of the head of Ingushetia in 2019, as previously, a direct result of the ethnic conflict was the change of the head of Kabardino-Balkaria in 2018. Another consequence was the appearance of opposition and radical real and virtual-blogging platforms, apprehension and anxiety among residents of the neighboring regions: Stavropol territory, Dagestan, and North Ossetia-Alania Republic. The “Border situation” and “conflict-prone ethno-political prominences” have a risky “precedent effect” and “Domino effect,” which is far from being exhausted in 2019.

Modern ethnopolitical timeout in NCFD is filled with composite trends, the axiology of which is ambiguous, namely:

– implementation by the federal center and the office of the Plenipotentiary representative of the President of the Russian Federation of those political decisions that seem appropriate to the Central government or that are lobbied by regional leaders and receive the support of the Central government;

– persuasion of the population in the effectiveness of conservative and protective doctrine of politics and the need for “manual control” and “dirigiste methods” with a broad social control by the “seniors”: the heads of the regions, the legislative and executive authorities, heads of municipalities, heads of clans, surnames, tapes, diasporas;

– rotation of the senior level managers appointed by the federal center through indirect vote with personal trust of the President of the Russian Federation as the decisive factor and with the tacit compliance of the ethnicity of the heads of regions with the titular ethnicity of the people (or “prevailing ethnicity” in the bi-ethnic republics);

– the invasion of the religious factor in the political and administrative processes in an effort to replace the Russian secular law with the norms of religion, to use religious dogmas for the resolution of disputes and formation of political parties on the basis of religious ideas;

– interaction of authorities and management with civil society institutions in its ethno-cultural model in the implementation of the state national policy and national-cultural self-determination (determinants, principles, forms), as well as in the prevention of interethnic contradictions and conflicts and in practical peacemaking in the form of “two-track anti-conflict management”;

– repoliticization (“new politicization”) of the activities of individual national and cultural organizations, associations, congresses and forums, family and tribal organizations of peoples who oppose the official decisions of the authorities and involve in such confrontations the interests of other regions, countries and international organizations;

– development of geopolitical inter-ethnic relations because events in Ukraine, Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Georgia etc. stress the problems of compatriots abroad and migration, primarily between entities in the region;

– concentration (quantitative and qualitative) of titular ethnic communities in the respective national-state formations with a high birth rate among certain peoples and ethnic groups of Dagestan, Ingushetia and Chechnya, and the continuing migration of Russian and other non-titular population to other regions of the Russian Federation.

The following considerations are particularly worth highlighting:

– the social situation of the NCFD is negatively affected by the lack of large-scale production and infrastructure and general civil projects, as well as the weakness of the integrative role and low authority of the ruling party – United Russia, and, consequently, the bearers of its ideology, who head by the NCFD;

– destabilizing factors are alteration (or threat of alteration) of borders and re-subordination of territories and settlements without appropriate professional expert, information and PR-support, without coordination with civil society;

– unbalanced are national issues, which multiply due to new aspects and new actors and cannot be solved in primitive administrative-willed style, among them are: “the Circassian issue,” “the Nogai issue,” “uhovski issue,” “Cossack issue,” “the issue of the Prigorodny district,” “the issue of the Ingush-Chechen border,” “the issue of the Daghestani-Chechen border,” the issue of the “Alanian heritage.” It is also a question of departmental affiliation of objects of worship and construction of new temples, the question of preservation of native languages of ethnic diasporas and indigenous peoples, the question of indigenous minorities, the question of migration and settlement of compatriots, the issue of “full rehabilitation of repressed peoples,” and the question of possible ethnological expertise;

– the retention of the Russian population and the preservation of the Russian language and culture not only as a space for interethnic communication, but as language and culture, public life, civil society, public policy, patogeneza, language and environment of the state holidays of the Russian Federation, its laws and political doctrines, as well as decisions of Russian leaders have an independent political significance.

In view of the above, we consider the following directions as the most expedient in strengthening the ethno-political timeout in the NCFD:

– expansion of public policy, maximum involvement of citizens and civil society in justification, development of significant political and administrative decisions (spatial development programs, ethno-cultural and ethno-linguistic programs, projects on national and cultural self-determination, territorial transformations, national and territorial transformations, alteration of borders) with public control over their implementation;

– introduction of a moratorium on the alteration of the boundaries of subjects, on the formation of mono-ethnic territories and new municipal districts with ethnonymic titles;

– neutralization of the ethnocratic system of politics and management and tacit “ethnic quotas” or “ethnic hierarchy” of positions in government and administration and internationalization of the political and administrative corps;

– support of the inertial state of the “deferred conflicts” in a manageable state with the use of “two-track diplomacy” along with the humanization of national issues and their subordination to the civil issue on the basis of the principles, categories and concepts of the “Strategy of the state national policy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025” in its new version;

– consideration for not only the territorial, industrial and social, but also the ethno-cultural capacity of the regions in the development of regional programs of migration, reception of compatriots from abroad and interregional migration;

– modernization of ethno-cultural model of civil society in order to increase the social responsibility of national-cultural organizations and autonomies and strengthen

their contribution to the provision of public services, implementation of social projects, and distribution of municipal grants and state orders of civil patriotic content;

– strengthening of Russian identity, civil supra-ethnic and supra-confessional patriotism while preserving and restoring the multi-ethnic composition of the population of certain regions by returning Russian and Russian-speaking non-titular population.

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