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CONTENTS

SOCIETY, POLICY AND RELIGION

- Osipova N.G.** Religion and Society:
Differentiation and Diversification of Protestant Movements 165

THE POLITICAL PROCESS IN RUSSIA

- Astvatsaturova M.A.** 2020 Address: The Power-Meaningful
Message of Extrapolating the Vertical of Power..... 182
- Dubrovina O.V., Dubrovina O.Yu.** Global and Regional
in the Conditions of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Impact on Education..... 195

PROBLEMS OF EURASIAN AND POST-SOVIET COOPERATION

- Lukin A.D.** Northern Sea Route – Bridge Between the East
and the West: Prospects and Realities Development of the Trans-Arctic 202
- Marabyan K.P.** Russia’s Factor in Georgia’s Foreign Policy 207

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND WORLD POLITICS

- Rodionova M.E.** Gender Dimension of Political
Representation in Western Countries and Russia..... 216
- Jiachu Lian.** Space Exploration as a Factor of China’s Foreign Policy 225
- Lei Shuang.** White Paper: China’s Arctic Policy –
Present Strategy of the PRC in the Arctic 230
- Ndayisaba Augustine.** Great Lakes Region of Africa (GLR):
Collective Defence as an Appropriate Solution to the Problems
of the Non-Combat Capability of the Congolese Armed Forces 239

REFLECTIONS ON THE READ

- Medvedev N.P.** Afterword to the Article by M. L. Lebedeva
“French Regional Political Space: Conceptual and Theoretical Characteristics” 247

OUR AUTHORS..... 253

AUTHORS’ GUIDELINES 254

GREAT LAKES REGION OF AFRICA (GLR): COLLECTIVE DEFENCE AS AN APPROPRIATE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEMS OF THE NON-COMBAT CAPABILITY OF THE CONGOLESE ARMED FORCES

The article is devoted to the analysis of the problem of unfitness of the Congolese Armed Forces for action, as well as to finding out the reasons for this. Particular attention is paid to the importance of the regional dimension in terms of security. Thus, collective defense is proposed as the appropriate response to the defense challenges faced by the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). It is concluded that solving the problems of the armed forces and security in the DRC requires coordination of the efforts of the countries by creating a regional security complex, a mechanism according to which the harmonization of diplomatic relations between the countries of the GLR of Africa should become a priority.

Key words: *Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, non-fitness for action, collective defense, regional security complex.*

Introduction. Since 1996, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), a country in the Great Lakes Region, has remained weakened especially in the East by an armed conflict. One of the reasons for the ongoing conflict is the weakness of the Congolese national army. The fragility of the Congolese state and its defense agencies contributes to the spread of the influence of rebel groups. The number of armed groups in the Eastern part of the DRC increased from 70 to 120 in 2018 [15. Pp. 108-109]. The top ten rating of the Peace Foundation for 2006 shows that the DRC is one of the most failed states [16. P. 207]. According to the same rating, this country is one of the most “fragile states” in the world (8th place) [15. P. 108]. With regard to the defence authorities, it should be emphasized that the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (AF DRC) are unable to provide security throughout the territory, which is why, as a rule, armed conflicts continue in the East. Ka Mana emphasizes that the country “does not have a strong army capable of defending the territory and defending nation-

al interests” [17. P. 33]. It should be noted that this state of incapacity does not correspond to Weber’s approach, according to which “*the state is a human community that within a certain area claims, with success and at its own expense, the monopoly of legitimate physical violence*” [13. Pp. 96-97]. Armed groups in the DRC are exploiting this weakness of the Congolese armed forces to create a situation of instability in the East of the country, and they are also the source of a humanitarian tragedy and an upsurge in violence in this geographical area. From June 1, 2017 to June 26, 2019, an investigation conducted by the Kivu security barometer (“KBC,” *Kivu Security Tracker* – KST) found that in 2018, 8.38 local people were killed per 100,000 Kivus [6. P. 5]. It was also shown that in 2019, about 12.8 million people needed humanitarian assistance and protection from the state, which is 10% of the total number of cases in the world [6. P. 3]. All this is due to the incapacity of the armed forces, which cannot cope with the threats to security in the country. Despite the fact that the government of the Congo has always pursued a policy aimed at reforming the army through military cooperation with some major powers, there are no visible improvements. It should also be noted that the presence of UN forces in the DRC (United Nations stabilization mission in the DRC (MONUSCO)) does significantly impact the security. Efforts made by the supra-regional institutions, such as the International conference on the Great Lakes Region (IC/GLR), have so far failed.

So, what are the reasons for the dysfunction of the Congolese armed forces? What are the alternatives to overcome them? This article aims to identify the reasons for the weakness of the Congolese armed forces, as well as to identify opportunities for overcoming them. For this reason, it is extremely important that the region be more involved in the resolution of the inter-state problems in order to restore stability in the DRC. Thus, the creation of a system of collective protection is, at the moment, an important necessity.

Reasons for the dysfunctions of the Congolese national army. We note that there are many reasons for the dysfunction of the Congolese armed forces, including clientelism, lack of real political will and inefficiency in the sphere of military cooperation.

Speaking of clientelism in the Congolese army, it should be emphasized that during his rule, dictator Mobutu wanted to maintain a weak, divided, loyal army “that does not interfere in politics.” Officers were mostly appointed for “their loyalty, client relationships and not their skills” [5]. Mobutu supported his clan by offering promotions to officers from his ethnic group, Bangala, and his home province, Ecuador. The government of Joseph Kabila was also characterized by the militarization of politics and the economy. Thus, the RVI study shows that clientelism is the first dysfunction. According to this study, subordinate soldiers are forced to regularly pay money to their superiors. In return, senior officers provide their subordinates with protection, preferential taxation, promotion, leave or training. All these elements prove that the militarization of politics for the

purpose of gaining power has become a reality in the DRC. There is also the problem of militarization of the economy, which allows officials, politicians and businessmen to benefit from the country's profits from the sale of minerals, timber, fish and weapons. This is why, according to RVI, officers often spend a lot of resources on various commercial projects [5]. In addition, as noted by Jason Stearns and Christoph Vogel of the New York University Congo Research Group (GEC), more than two decades of conflict have produced a military bourgeoisie: people belonging to the economic, political, and military elite who have used the conflict to advance their careers and are therefore interested in the continuation of violence [6. P. 12].

The Congolese problem requires a military solution, since most of the growing rebel groups in the East of the country are fighting not for power, but for the interests of multinational corporations and small companies. Thus, M. Waka points out that "Canadian companies in the DRC have financed or supplied weapons to military forces and rebel movements and also escalated already high tensions, provoking conflicts and causing division in order to constantly control resources." The author also adds that "the fact that companies and states commit mining resources with the assistance of rebel movements is a proof of the interest and determination of the external lobbies for purely economic purposes in opening up world markets, which leads to the globalization of the economy" [18. P. 88]. "In 2006, the UN special representative on human rights and transnational corporations described the mining industry as a special case of large and equally widespread social and environmental impact, and noted that 2/3 of the abuse by transnational corporations comes from the extractive sector" [18. P. 81]. This war economy, which we see in the East of the DRC, can be explained by Morgenthau's realistic approach, according to which politicians act in the international arena in order to increase their power, which is determined by national interests [18. P. 32-33]. So the DRC is a victim of its own resources. Due to the lack of political will this has led to the dysfunction of the DRC armed forces.

As for the lack of real political will on the part of the Congolese leaders, it can be emphasized that the unresolved security sector problems are directly related to the political will of the Congolese authorities. DRC researcher Thierry Virculon, head of the NGO International crisis group, believes that the crisis that is shaking the East of the country is not only military, but also political. The problem is that the army issues are resolved very slowly [5. P. 171]. This dysfunction of the DRC's security agencies deserves special attention from the country's political elites. So what can we hope for with the new Congolese President? To this question, Jäger L. and Zogg B. respond that under the new President, Felix Tshisekedi, there will most likely be realignments within the fragmented political and military elite [8. P. 4]. In relation to former President Joseph Kabila, current President Felix Tshisekedi is already demonstrating his efforts to neutralize armed groups that are destabilizing the Eastern part of the country.

Speaking of the military cooperation, this approach is appropriate from the point of view of reforming the Congolese army. But despite the fact that DRC has not stopped signing military-technical agreements with some major powers, the situation remains unchanged. Here we are talking about agreements with the EU under the EUROSEC program and the United States on joint command in the African zone AFRICOM (*United States Africa Command*). Despite all the initiatives taken in terms of military cooperation and reform of the Congolese army, the situation remains the same. In the same context, the reforms of the national army between the government of the Congo and the Russian Federation continue. In June 2018, an agreement on military-technical cooperation was signed. This agreement is an important step towards resolving the problems in the Congo [14. P. 131] in the sense that, as stated by the DRC defense Minister, Mr. Crispin Atama Tabe, “it will allow the national army to stock up with high-quality weapons to better protect the national territory” [20]. The problem is the implementation of this agreement. All the measures taken to reform the Congolese security structures have not led to positive results. The Congolese defense forces are still not fully operational and cannot provide security in the East of the country. The ineffectiveness of the military cooperation makes us emphasize the need for regional efforts aimed at creating a system of collective defense.

The need for collective defense. The need to create a system of collective defense in the GLR can be explained by two aspects: globalization and pan-Africanism. The impact of globalization can be explained by the fact that the trend towards regional integration is driven by the willingness of African leaders to counteract the challenges and risks of economic marginalization of Africa. Thus, regional blocs were built to cope with the economic, political and cultural challenges that globalization has brought with it. It was also about strengthening ties between the states to meet the needs of the population [3. P. 3]. The process of regional integration, in which the states of the GLR are located, is an advantage for creating a system of collective defense. Regional integration is seen as an adequate response to the security deficit in the DRC. In this case, regional integration is explained as the process of uniting several states by gradually renouncing their sovereignty in order to form a new collective participant in the international order [1. P. 262-263]. Regional integration is the result of bringing together states, more or less formalized at the institutional level, belonging to a certain geographical area for the purpose of a long-term economic and/or political cooperation [3. P. 2]. In the case of GLR, it should be emphasized that the economy remains the most important aspect in the process of regional integration, but security issues must also be taken into account.

The need for solidarity among the States of the subregion arises from the incapacity of the Congolese armed forces. In this regard, the concept of David Mitrani states that as a result of the progress made in communications, transport infrastructure and in the military field (the development of nuclear weapons and

long-range weapons), the states are less able to protect their citizens from hostile attacks. According to the author, it would be much more successful to create opportunities for cooperation [11. P. 274]. The concept of functionalism helps to realize that states need regional support not only in times of war, because nowadays any state has limited capabilities in terms of defense.

From a pan-African perspective, it is important to emphasize that a degree of self-determination in addressing security issues is also necessary. The inaction of international forces in establishing possible ways out of the current crisis in the DRC should encourage regional leaders to address security issues themselves. Despite the presence of MONUSCO on Congolese soil, rebel groups continue to destabilize the situation, which causes resentment among Congolese against the inaction of MONUSCO. MONUSCO's weak involvement is justified by the fact that its mandate does not allow it to take any offensive actions. In the DRC, as in Mali, the presence of the Blue Helmets does not produce positive results in terms of security, peace and stability. In this regard, it should also be emphasized that the inaction of the UN forces causes resentment on the part of many Africans, which is why the UN is seen as an organization that protects the interests of exclusively rich countries. This is why pan-Africanism should be a driving force for regional cooperation in the interests of security. A common defense system is part of what Kwame Nkrumah considered the only future for Africa [12. P. 17].

It is important for the African states to go beyond the nation-states inherited from the colonial era and form a security community. We support David Mit-rani's idea that an adequate level of security can be reached through deepening opportunities for cooperation and collaboration [11. P. 274]. As the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, rightly points out, it is up to the Africans themselves to solve African problems, since assistance "from outside the continent (...) can sometimes make them even more difficult." According to B. Buzan, at the present stage, individual regional security subsystems as components of the international system have significant autonomy, in contrast to the comprehensive rigid Cold War structures [21. P. 190]. At the moment, the GLR countries have no sense of a pan-African awakening that can consolidate African leaders for cooperation. To do this, it would be more appropriate for the Africans themselves to find solutions to their problems. It should be noted that the solidarity of the GLR states is a suitable solution to the problem of insecurity in the DRC, but there are still no improvements, although the idea of forming a security community has been around for several years. This idea was reflected in the Dar es Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the GLR of November 20, 2004. This Declaration proclaims the will of the heads of states and governments: *"Our collective determination to make the Great Lakes Region an area of peace and security for the states and peoples, an area of political and social stability, shared growth and development, and a space for cooperation based on a policy of convergence as part of a common destiny that we are determined to achieve in*

accordance with the aspirations of our peoples and with the full participation of our people..." [3. P. 1].

Initiatives aimed at coordinating efforts are being implemented, but the lack of self-improvement is a serious obstacle for the African states. As different from the former presidents of Congo, current President Felix Tshisekedi, understands the importance of regional cooperation in stabilizing the country. He constantly takes the initiative to coordinate actions with neighboring countries in the fight against armed groups in the East of the country. In June 2019, a meeting was scheduled in Kinshasa with representatives of the intelligence services of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania and Burundi, the main purpose of which was to coordinate efforts, especially on security issues. In addition, the leaders of the RVO armies, along with MONUSCO troops and the US Armed Forces Africa Command met in Goma (North Kivu) under the leadership of the heads of staff of DRC armed forces. The purpose of that meeting, according to AF DRC spokesman General Leon Richard Kasonga, was to discuss collective security in the sub-region and find solutions [9]. Despite all these efforts, implementation remains problematic.

The necessity to coordinate actions finds its meaning in the theory of the regional security complex, developed by Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver of the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute (COPRI). According to B. Buzan, the regional security complex means a number of states whose main security problems and concerns are so interdependent that their national security problems cannot be reasonably analyzed or resolved separately from each other. The dynamics of the formation and structure of the security complex are generated by the states within the complex through their mutual perception of security [2. P. 17]. According to this theory, the international system can be divided into regional units within which security interaction can be confrontational or cooperative [19. Pp. 28-29]. Based on these definitions, it should be pointed out that there is no real collective military structure in the GLR capable of countering the security threats. In addition, the regional or international dimension of security follows from the fact that a conflict within one country can easily extend beyond its borders and have consequences for another. The trans-national trend of conflicts is a reality in the GLR. An example is the case of hundreds of thousands of refugees, including the Interahamwe militia, the Rwandan armed forces, who fled to the DRC after the 1994 genocide. There they founded the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), an armed group considered one of the main sources of destabilization in the Eastern part of the DRC. The creation of a collective security system in the GLR is a necessity, given the ongoing armed conflicts in the East of the DRC. This deserves special attention, since joint actions can also have an impact in the economic spheres of these countries. In this regard, M. Bucharimue speaks about the problem of strong militarization in the Eastern part of the DRC, caused by the presence of MONUSCO and AFRICOM. The author mentions cas-

es of regular interventions by the Ugandan and Rwandan armies on their own initiative or under an agreement with the regime of Joseph Kabila without notifying the Congolese Parliament (for example, operation Our Union (“Umoja Wetu” in Swahili) and operation Kimina II in North and South Kivu in 2009). Such military intervention, exploitation and looting of local wealth, primarily, oil and timber is officially justified by Washington by invisible terrorism [4. P. 13]. We should also note that the deterioration of diplomatic relations between the states is a serious obstacle from the point of view of collective defense in the GLR. Despite the fact that the states are trying to coordinate their efforts, it is difficult to believe in real cooperation at a time when there are strained diplomatic relations between Rwanda and its neighbors, especially Burundi and Uganda. Moreover, political dialogue is a prerequisite for the states to start the process of collective defense. All this leads to the idea that the harmonization of diplomatic relations between the states is a prerequisite for creating a real complex of regional security.

Conclusions. The creation of a collective defense system in the GLR is an appropriate mechanism in the fight against the security deficit. This mechanism requires implementation of preconditions, including the harmonization of diplomatic relations between the states. Despite the desire to coordinate efforts in the DRC, it should not be assumed that it will be easy for the countries of the GLR to consolidate and form an effective regional security complex, since there are currently diplomatic tensions between some of them.

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