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**DYNAMICS OF ETHNOPOLITICAL PROCESS OF NORTH
CAUCASIAN DISTRICT IN CONSOLIDATING OF NATION**

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the study of modern ethno-political process of the North Caucasian Federal District (NCFD) in its determination and essential functional manifestations. External and internal factors of the dynamics of ethno-political process are identified with an emphasis on risk factors. Contradictory trends of ethno-political process based on the contradictions of ethnic and civil identities are also revealed. The dialectics of the main dual goal of the state national policy of the Russian Federation is emphasized: a) strengthening the unity of the Russian civil nation; b) preservation of ethnocultural diversity of Russian society as multi-ethnic society. The managerial, technological, self-organizing aspects of modern ethno-political process of the North Caucasian Federal District stand out. Special attention is paid to the functioning in the North Caucasian Federal District of an ethnocultural model of civil society with specific levels and systemic connections. This model is a result of national and cultural self-determination, which all ethnic communities in the region actively refer to, both indigenous and diaspora, as well as the Russian population. Practical recommendations are proposed for optimizing the ethno-political process of the North Caucasian Federal District in the context of strengthening the unity of the Russian civil nation, taking into account both internal political and foreign political risks that keep current the consolidation of Russian citizens regardless of their ethnic and religious affiliation.

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1. Introduction

The global political process is characterized by a significant differentiation of the internal content and a variety of internal components. One of such components is the ethnopolitical process, which is the result of the convergence of ethnic and political identities, as well as ethnic and political interests. The behavior of peoples and ethnic communities in politics is an essential scientific problem in the system of political knowledge, which responds to political goals and political tasks that are of great value to ethnic groups. The ethnopolitical process is directly connected with the successes and failures of interstate relations, as well as with revolutions, civil and interstate wars, conflicts, ethnicides, genocides (Little, 2015). The ethnopolitical process includes numerous *national issues* the list of which is very diverse and situational (Asal, Conrad, & White, 2014).

The ethnopolitical process, when employs unlawful left-wing and extremist methods, may become a source of ethnic (territorial, political-imperious, religious, economic, domestic) conflicts, which, due to their multifactorial nature and multiplication in all spheres of society's life are treated as multi-component. Therefore, optimization of the dynamics of the ethnopolitical process cannot be presented as a final decision, but is seen as a system of activity, the subjects of which are the state and civil society (Curtis, 2014). The diversity of historical-ethnogenic, cultural-forming and formal-status features of ethnic communities is typical for political and ethnic states, in this case, for the Russian Federation (RF).

The development of democratic principles of national-state, national-territorial, national-cultural building determines the essential and formal dynamics of the ethnopolitical process at the federal and regional levels. It is clearly manifested in the North Caucasian Federal District (NCFD), which includes 7 constituent entities of the Russian Federation: the Republic of Dagestan, the Republic of Ingushetia, the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic, the Karachay-Cherkess Republic, the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania, the Stavropol Krai, the Chechen Republic) and is significant in the conditions of strengthening the unity of the Russian nation (Astvatsurova, & Chekmenev, 2012)

2. Problem Statement

The problematization of the dynamics of the ethnopolitical process in the context of the overall political process does not lose its relevance, especially considering the innovations of modern geopolitical architecture and the actualization of international subjects (Syria, Ukraine, Spain, Myanmar, etc.). The ethnopolitical process of the North Caucasian Federal District in its determination, evolution, turbulence, attribution, axiology, and modeling is a knowledge-intensive object for research, monitoring, summarizing and forecasting. The problematization and identification of the concept and basis, as well as clarification of categorical and conceptual nominations of ethnopolitical plots makes it possible to increase ethnopolitological knowledge in its interdisciplinary expression (Bochsler, & Schlapfer, 2016).

3. Research Questions

The subject of the article is the ethnopolitical process of the North Caucasian Federal District in its determination, objective and subjective factors, as well as in its essential functional dynamics. At the same time, the substantive and functional dynamics of this process are considered in relation to the general civil

process of strengthening the unity of the Russian nation as an institutionalized polyethnic and multicultural political community, a subject of international law.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study involves understanding the essential functional and structural activity dynamics of the ethnopolitical process in the North Caucasian Federal District to optimize it in the context of strengthening the Russian civic nation through the development of recommendatory practice-transforming techniques and technologies to contain the hidden conflict-generating potential of interethnic relations and achieve mutual ethnopolitical security of ethnic communities of the North Caucasus.

5. Research Methods

The research method is interdisciplinary in accordance with the dynamics of the ethnopolitical process and its multidimensionality, including the reserves of political science and ethnology (Salehyan, 2017). It provides a selection of the dynamics of ethnopolitical process of the North Caucasian Federal District in its objective and subjective expression, taking into account ethnic and political identities and the interrelationship of ethnic and political, as well as taking into account the risks of ethnic and political nationalism. Institutional and neoinstitutional approaches to the political process make it possible to determine the algorithm of the ethnopolitical process in the North Caucasian Federal District, overcoming the pitfalls of political analysis and basing on the theory of rational choice (Gurr, 2015). Comprehension of ethnic component of the political process is based on the strengths of the established methodological approaches – primordialist, instrumentalist and constructivist, using hard and soft models of social and social and cultural determinism (Han, O'Mahoney, & Paik, 2014). The method of monitoring the inter-ethnic relations and ethnopolitical processes was used. This method was developed by the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology named after N.N. Miklukho-Maclay of the Russian Academy of Sciences and POO *Promoting ethnological monitoring and early warning of conflicts* (Tishkov, 2011), as well as the method for studying and interpreting ethnic conflicts in general and ethnic conflicts in the North Caucasus region (Gurr, 2017).

6. Findings

The ethnopolitical process in general and in the North Caucasian Federal District in particular, is understood in this study in a dualistic sense: first, as a socially and economically determined correlation of political and ethnic interests; secondly, as a combination of managerial and self-governing methods in the field of ethnopolitics in accordance with the needs of ethnopolitical and ethnic conflict knowledge (Abdulatipov & Mikhailov, 2013). The dynamics of the ethnopolitical process of the NCFD is a component of the overall social dynamics of the regional community. It develops in the legal and political field, as it provides the regulatory and political and doctrinal base of the Russian Federation and the relevant subjects of the North Caucasian Federal District of the Russian Federation. The dynamics of the ethnopolitical process of the North Caucasian Federal District are determined by many contradictory historical and political situations.

At the present stage, in the ethno-political process of the NCFD, special *unifying plots* are distinguished. Among which are as follows: a single history of statehood and citizenship; joint military exploits and losses, as well as mutual assistance in wars and conflicts; common efforts to organize a peaceful life; joint interest in democratic reforms. It is also a common desire to strengthen the rule of law and order, to strengthen the vertical of power, to restore order, and to fight corruption. There is also a joint interest in security, stability, well-being, a common interest in raising Russia's prestige in the international arena, as well as general support for the policy of the country's leadership. The dynamics of the ethno-political process of the North Caucasian Federal District reflect, first, the internal ethnic homogenization of regional communities, and second, the civil consolidation of regional communities. The essential contradiction of ethnic identity and civil identity is in the center of scientific discussion of many Russian political scientists, sociologists, who interpret the priorities of each of the identities in different ways (Avksent'ev & Gritsenko, 2016).

In the essential and functional representations of the dynamics of the ethno-political process of the North Caucasian Federal District, there is a contradiction that has a universal nature and is manifested in the social life of modern polyethnic nations. This contradiction often forms the sources of interethnic contradictions and confrontation. In the NCFD, it is expressed in two opposite trends. *The first is the preservation and innovative development of ethnic and religious identities. The second is the consolidation of Russian identity as the identity of a modern civil nation — the Russians.* Both of these trends are demanded on the basis of such resources as: a) citizenship and democratic patriotism (civil); b) conservative and protective traditionalism (ethnic); c) national-state, national-territorial, national-cultural affiliation; d) political and managerial actions of authorities (regulatory, organizational). The desired interpretation of these trends in expert discourse involves not only their parallel processing, but also convergence, addition and interpenetration. At the present stage, it is important not only to determine the main trends in the dynamics of the ethno-political process of the North Caucasian Federal District, but also to find ways to optimize and *reconcile* them. It is natural that both trends are grouped around the general categories of ethnopolitics, which are determined by the federal center – inter-ethnic accord, Russian patriotism, Russian civil identity. However, these general categories have a *differentiated response* among different subjects of the ethno-political process of the North Caucasian Federal District, such as:

- Russian population, the Cossacks: registered and not registered;
- peoples and ethnic groups of the North Caucasian origin: autochthonous, aboriginal, titular, purged, separated;
- ethnic groups of the Russians with non-North Caucasian ethnicity;
- diasporic groups of near and far, the RF citizens;
- religious group and atheists;
- radical and extremists groups;
- migrants (from abroad) and Russian citizens, moving within the RF, etc.

Multidirectional vectors of ethnogenesis, ethno-linguistic turns, ethno-confessional worldview and practice, as well as the code of ethics and common law of peoples (relevant at present stage) determine different directions of interests of these subjects of the region's ethno-political process.

Monitoring of the ethno-political process of the NCFD makes it possible to identify risks that significantly impede its dynamics, in general, and the optimization of this dynamics, in particular. This is, above all, the activities of illegal terrorist structures, extremist religious cells, rotation and recruitment of new members based on radical creeds. It is also important to name local aggravations of interethnic relations, high-profile crimes and offenses in ethnic interpretations, transformation of domestic and other conflicts into *ethnic blocs*, which is widely discussed in the expert community of the region (Avksent'ev & Gritsenko, 2016). Popular nationalism, xenophobia, *hate speech* in the blogosphere and the Internet, migrant phobia, mutual mistrust, as well as low level of political and civil culture and *ethno-political ignorance* are also of considerable danger.

The weakness of the economic development and economic infrastructure, the lack of a regional institutional environment, low investment attractiveness, subsidies to regions, zones and territories, and dirigistic (manual) management methods are observed (Sadovaja, 2016). The formation of ethnocracy and ethnic elites took place in the NCFD, which is discussed by many researchers in the context of the dynamics of the ethno-political process of the NCFD (Astvatsaturova, 2018). There is also a lack of professional training of managers in the field of management of inter-ethnic relations (Pain, 2013). Also, the sensitive aspects of the ethno-political process of the North Caucasian Federal District can be attributed to the lack of understanding of the priorities of the Russian civil nation as a political, legal, and social institution by the majority of population.

Along with these risks, it is necessary to note positive outline in the ethno-political dynamics of the North Caucasian Federal District. This is the development of a unique environment of peaceful interaction between North Caucasians, Russians, Cossacks, and diaspora. The modern dynamics of the ethno-political process of the NCFD include group strategies of the inhabitants of the region, who are striving to be fully recognized as the citizens of Russia.

The most important positive factor in the ethno-political process of the North Caucasian Federal District is the absence of mass ethnic conflicts, the disavowal in public opinion of the ideas of sovereignty and secession, the population's focus on stability, security, social progress, as well as strengthening of Russia's authority as an indivisible sovereign state.

Also, the residents of the subjects of the Russian Federation in the North Caucasian Federal District demonstrate a high level of loyalty to ethnic and (to a lesser extent) religious differences, as well as loyalty to migrants and others, which is recorded by mass polls of the respondents. This is largely facilitated by the conservative-protective doctrine of public administration in the field of ethnopolitics (Vorontsov, Zorin, & Ponedelkov, 2018).

The following tactics are being implemented: dissemination of attractive plots of Russian history and statehood; emphasis on the unifying symbols of the Russian unity; development of attractive North Caucasian brands – *Made in the North Caucasus*; promotion of the image of the North Caucasus as a unique and safe region of Russia. Optimization of the dynamics of the ethno-political process of the NCFD is included in the program of activities of the Public Council of the North Caucasian Federal District, the Council of Elders of the North Caucasus Federal District, the Expert Council of the North Caucasian Federal District. Besides, the following civil, information and expert platforms support the above-mentioned actions: the North Caucasian Federal District Media Forum, the Stavropol Forum of the World Russian

People's Council, the Russian Caucasus Forum, the Arkhyz-21 Civic Forum, the North Caucasian Youth Camp Mashuk, the Moscow Caucasus Club, a television program North Caucasus, festivals of sports, culture, art of the peoples of the North Caucasus, the Caucasus Games, and Cossack games. There is an increase in the informational, educational, sociocultural, and peacemaking role of educational and cultural institutions (North Caucasus Federal University, Pyatigorsk State University, Council of Rectors of Higher Educational Institutions of the North Caucasus Federal District, etc.).

7. Conclusion

Optimization of the dynamics of the ethno-political process of the North Caucasian Federal District, as well as other regions and macroregions of the Russian Federation, is one of the important tasks of the Strategy of the State National Policy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025. It includes the achievement of the internal regional unity and consolidation of civil unity while maintaining the ethnic and cultural identity of all peoples and all citizens of the region (Zorin, 2014).

The study of the dynamics of the ethno-political process in the NCFD makes it possible to suggest a number of recommendations and methods that will ensure its optimization in the context of strengthening the unity of the Russian nation, among which are the following:

- to ensure consolidation in the social and political, political and managerial, as well as informational discourses and practices of the idea of Russian identity, Russian patriotism as the basis for successful ethnic and cultural, ethnic and political self-determination of citizens;
- to support the implementation of the reform of federative relations (in particular, the consolidation of subjects and the change of their borders and territories) only within the framework of the legislation of the Russian Federation and the legislation of the subjects of the Russian Federation of the North Caucasian Federal District, during referendums and clarification of the population's opinion;
- to overcome differences in the level of social and economic development of the subjects of the Russian Federation in the North Caucasian Federal District, as well as contradictions between regional and local ethnic and political sovereignization and ethnic and cultural archaization;
- to preserve the secular nature of statehood, political and administrative, and local governance in the prevention of contradictions between confessions, within confessions, as well as between secular (atheistic) and clerical (sacred) parts of society;
- to ensure the admission to power in the republics of the Russian and other non-titular population while preventing ethnic confrontation during elections in order to achieve ethnic and political and ethnic and social parity and prevent interethnic and confessional contradictions;
- to strengthen ideological, political and moral doctrines of the *North Caucasian positive*; promotion of the idea of the North Caucasian Federal District as a safe, unique region of Russia and an attractive North Caucasian brand;
- to preserve the space of the Russian language and Russian culture as abstract and integrative while preserving the national (native) languages and cultures of peoples and ethnic groups;
- to desobjectivate the idea of unity of the Russian nation as reliable and politically significant slogans.

Further study of the ethnopolitical process in the North Caucasian Federal District seems promising and necessary not as local and isolated, but in the context of strengthening the unity of the Russian civil nation.

In particular, theoretical and, to a greater extent, practical interests are represented by such research niches as: the inclusion of ethnic communities of the North Caucasian Federal District in the geopolitical process and hepolutization of regional inter-ethnic relations; interaction of ethnic communities with compatriots abroad; development of targeted innovative methods of educational and information impact on young people of ethnic communities; improvement of methods for monitoring inter-ethnic relations and ethnic and political processes.

A significant area of political and ethnopolitical knowledge is the development of federative relations (the implementation of federal reform), which in the North Caucasian Federal District have their own content. A promising area of research for the ethnopolitical process of the North Caucasian Federal District is the possibility of expanding within this segment of public policy with the maximum participation of national and cultural organizations as subjects of civil society. The essential niche of research and expert initiatives is the information support of the ethnopolitical process of the North Caucasian Federal District in its development, plots and events.

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