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#### TO THE QUESTION OF CIVILIZATIONAL IDENTITY THE NORTH CAUCASUS

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#### *Abstract*

In terms of civilization "turn" of Russia to the East, the problem of identity in the North Caucasus is particular importance, in this regard, the article based on the analysis of the socio-cultural specificity and common features of local peoples, communities, justifies the conclusion that the North Caucasus region, objectively, is neither an independent civilizational education, no distinctive local civilization. Today the North Caucasus remains a unique state of the Russian civilization with its cultural specificity, which determines its economic diversity, the socio-political diversity and pluralism, multi-ethnicity and multiculturalism. The originality of the North Caucasus region is a secondary identity, subordinate to the social body as part of a larger civilization, which is the result of mutual influence of regional socio-historical uniqueness and national circumstances. The fact that the North Caucasus has never in its history has not been a single political or economic territorial education greatly complicated and continues to complicate the search for new models of identity and integration into the Russian civilization. Our vision of the civilizational character of the North Caucasus is a unique regional system of socio-historic organisms, defined according to the criteria of the unity of the population, boundaries, and public authorities. Each of the modern North Caucasian republics have as a common settings, so specific, emphasizing their relative independence, and are therefore isolated societies that represent distinctive socio-historical body (sociorum). All the national republics of the region, forming together the North Caucasian color closely integrated into the Russian civilization.

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## **1. Introduction**

Modern processes of globalization and universalization actualize the need for sustained enhancement of personal responsibility before the world community and the national government. For the Russian society as a multinational and multi-confessional socio-cultural education is increasingly positioning itself as a distinctive Eurasian civilization is based on the ideology of Russian conservatism, traditional norms and values, religious Orthodox spirituality increasingly important problem of civilizational identity of a particular region, which differ in their historical, social and ethnic identity from other Russian regions with a predominantly Russian cultural identity. Heightened profile of the problem in recent years provoked more obvious civilizational "reversal of Russia" to the East, which is not least determined by the isolationist policies of the United States and its Western partners against Russia.

The problem of choosing a civilizational identity is of particular importance for the North Caucasian region of the Russian Federation. The question arises as to the North Caucasus to Express and preserve their socio-cultural uniqueness, their own special parameters, in conditions when the Russian government, declaring a special relationship to the peoples and cultures with common roots and history, in fact, exhibits exceptional commitment to the ideals of Slavophilism, and the Orthodox Church? The practical aspect of the problem is whether civilizational identity of the region to further strengthen the unity and integrity of Russian civilization or the deepening of its socio-cultural identity will trigger disintegration processes in the Russian society that can and does lead to rejection of the North Caucasus from the Russian state?

So, the search for the factors enhancing regional and Federal conditions of social and cultural life of the peoples of Russia – the most important task of development of the country and its people.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The identification of civilizational status of the North Caucasus is an important scientific-theoretical problem, the solution of which involves consideration of the inconsistencies of the administrative and geographical division of the region, as well as real socio-cultural differentiation. Abstracting from local social and cultural characteristics of its people, you can recognize that in terms of civilization, the region is a variety of distinctive local communities, integrated into the Russian socio-cultural space of reality, civilization.

## **3. Research Questions**

Revealing the real tendencies of transformation of civilizational specifics of the North Caucasus region is a necessary basis of the decision and the question as to whether socio-cultural process in Russia, the Erasure of regional civilizational differences, which can be a homogenization or convergence of less developed local culture will be absorbed by other, more developed. And it is possible that the deepening regionalization will lead to the clash differentiated parts already within the Russian civilization. It excluded a third model of development of the North Caucasus on the path of cultural hybridization or constant blending, syncretism, creolization, mechanisation, etc., that will face the erosion of cross-cultural boundaries, and may result in a potential loss of ethnicity and identity in the region.

All the above determines the urgency of the required approval of civilizational identity in the North Caucasus region, establish its actual and potential place in the Russian civilization, its geopolitical orientation in the new century. The solution of these, not a rhetorical aspects of the problem is based on the understanding of the category of "identity" has many meanings. In etymological terms, the identity is an expression of identity, permanence and continuity (from the English. identity – identity). In the context we analyze is the problem of identity is a result of the establishment of the social entity of its own civilizational status in the course of which the subject must find a reasonable balance between actual and desired social status. Civilizational identity of the social subject involves the mastery of specific social roles and targets, including through initiation to cultural traditions and values, identification with which allows him to successfully socialize in a certain ideological or social community.

In the modern era of civilizational identity in the North Caucasus is a genuine research interest. It is well known that once United Soviet socialist civilizational identity and integration of the region into Soviet society was destroyed as a result of the shock of market reforms of the 90-ies of the last century. It was at that time in the Caucasus plunged into the crisis, intensified the centrifugal forces provoked regional separatism, religious Renaissance, a dense cultural archaic and other regressive social processes. Withdrawal from the Soviet sociocultural identity launched not only the auditing processes of political and cultural identity of local communities, but it is simultaneously actualized and the search for a new ideology of civilizational identity of the region, a modern model of its integration in the Russian civilizational space.

The North Caucasus region is a complex socio-economic, ethnocultural, spiritual-cultural system, between elements of which local communities, there are not only significant differences but also similarities. The individual elements of local identity and culture is intricately intertwined and reproduced with elements of Russian, Islamic, Western cultures and civilizations. But not only that. Regional specificity is also due to a socio-cultural impact of the elements of several, manifested here, socio-economic orders of life, such as the Patriarchal-tribal, agricultural, industrial, postindustrial. The region has preserved remnants of the former Soviet way of life, ideological components, approved by the modern Russian market economy that significantly affects the region, causing the crisis. The ambiguity and complexity of civilization and the identification of the North Caucasus, the presence of several competing theoretical visions, this specificity is determined by all these unique features of the region.

Attempts to define the civilizational status of the North Caucasus is hampered by the mismatch of the administrative and geographical division of the region, its real socio-cultural differentiation. Nevertheless, apart from several important social and cultural characteristics of local communities, we can say that in terms of civilization, the region is a collection of distinctive local communities, is closely integrated into the socio-cultural space of the Russian civilization. They can and should be characterized by several criteria, including: degree of integration of the socio-historic organisms, cultural characteristics, geographical environment, ethnic composition of the population, geopolitical location (Gurbanov, 2012). To those distinctive socio-historical organisms, forming the phenomenon of the North Caucasus are Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, North Ossetia-Alania, Karachay-Cherkessia, Kabardino-Balkaria and Adygea.

Consideration of the North Caucasus in the political and geographical aspect shows that he has long is the southern underbelly of Russia, which includes 10 subjects of the Russian Federation, scattered in the

mountains and foothills of the Caucasus. This Krasnodar Krai, Republic of Adygeya and Rostov oblast that are included in southern Federal district. Plus, such administrative-territorial units such as Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, North Ossetia-Alania, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia and Stavropol Krai included into formed in 2010 the North Caucasian Federal district. citing this list, we do not forget that geographical and territorial-administrative division of the region does not reflect the historically formed socio-cultural differentiation of North Caucasian society. That is why we are building a model of civilization the Northern Caucasus differs from the geographic model, but, nevertheless, it can be an acceptable solution to the problem of civilizational identity of the region.

We offer civilizational model of the North Caucasus as a unique regional system of socio-historic organisms, derived according to the criteria of the unity of the population, boundaries, and public authorities (Ahaev, Polomoshnova, & Gurbanov, 2013). Being authentic, relatively independent unit of society, each of the North Caucasian republics appear to be distinctive socio-historical body (sociorum). Our model of civilization, therefore, covers all the national republics of the region, forming together the North Caucasian color closely integrated into the Russian civilization.

In the context of the natural and geographical characteristics, the North Caucasus is divided into a number of areas, relatively isolated from each other, varying in climate, vegetation and topography, where researchers identify three significant environmental and economic and historical-geographical zones: mountain, foothills and plane (including the Nogai steppe subzone). Geographical location of the region in the mountains and foothills of the Caucasus includes the Caucasus, the Northern slopes of the greater Caucasus mountain range (excluding its Eastern part belonging to Azerbaijan) and the Western part of the southern slope to the river Psou (which forms the border between Russia and Abkhazia). Relief areas formed as the identity and uniqueness of local communities and their relative isolation contributed to their autonomy and separation, and, consequently, the features of the economic way of activities, the ethnic composition of the local population, etc. the same factor was identified and the key role of transport routes and passes, valleys and rivers as the main communication arteries.

The geography of the region affected and on the fact that all of the North Caucasus salary differ, although to a different extent, multi-ethnicity or ethnic heterogeneity. The results of the last national census from 2010 shows the following complex ethnic picture, a kind of ethnic asymmetry. Dagestan stands out among the other national republics not only populous, but also the diversity of the ethnic composition. Chechnya, the second populous Republic of the North Caucasus region, is characterized by the dominance of members of one of the Chechen ethn (95.3 per cent). Ingushetia, with a prevailing representation of the Ingush ethnic group (94.1 per cent). In this kind of ethnic hierarchy is structured by the principle of bigger/smaller multi-ethnicity, is a special case of Adygea, where the majority of Russian (61,5%). Note that in other republics of the North Caucasus is not such a clear numerical dominance of one particular ethnic group.

From the point of view of the geopolitical factor, the North Caucasus is in the center of Eurasia, wedged at the intersection of historic trade and transport communications, is a kind of "gateway to continuous movement of peoples from South to North, from North to South" (Unezhev, 1997, p. 11). This is indicated by Chernous (1999), noting the unique geopolitical position of the region: "This region, where denote the barrier and at the same time, centuries of interaction between Christianity, first and foremost,

Orthodoxy, Islam and Buddhism" (p. 23). Indeed, the region is a unique civilizational crossroads at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, a kind of cross-cultural space, formed through a long, complex and contradictory history and distinctive local communities included in the North Caucasus socio-historical body. Throughout its history, the region remained a center for civilizational communication, the transitive movement of peoples and cultures, a buffer area, a point of contact between the West and the East.

Historical view of the North Caucasus reveals two important factors, which determined its current geopolitical status. First, it is already above the designated geographical location of the region, as well as a long history of interaction between different ethnic groups who from ancient times in a continuous flow moving through him, as from North to South and from South to North. In modern times the North Caucasian region has become the scene of sharp clashes and competition between the Russian and Islamic civilizations. The final joining of Transnistria to the Russian Empire in the NINETEENTH century and the ensuing its geo-cultural and political-legal takeover of the Russian state determined the status of the North Caucasus as a kind of border of the field, "cramped" in the geographical gap between the southern Russia and Transcaucasian possessions. In the Soviet period the North Caucasus has retained its status of a border region, a "bridge" between the southern part of the RSFSR and the Transcaucasian Soviet socialist republics.

In the modern period the geopolitical status of the region is derived from the whole preceding Millennium of history.

*The position of the Caucasus in the contemporary geopolitical structure is defined by the fact that the region was originally part of the Russian Empire and then the Soviet Union, after the collapse of the latter was divided by borders into two parts – the Northern Caucasus as an integral part of the Russian Federation and new independent States (Hajiyev, 2010, Conclusion, par. 2).*

The current status of the North Caucasus region can be reformatted in a historical perspective under the influence of various factors. In this regard, special attention should be paid to the pronounced separatist tendencies, observed by several scholars in the late twentieth century. The North Caucasus still remains the arena of collision of interests of major world powers, and a separate Islamic countries of the near and Middle East, supporting separatist sentiments and Islamic extremism.

And today, in the conditions of globalization processes and the Caucasus in geopolitical terms, remains under cross-socio-cultural pressure of three civilizations: Russian, Western and Islamic. Its ethnic and cultural diversity forms a horizontal slice of multiculturalism. "Vertical slice of multiculturalism forms a kind of combination of cultures that has developed in North Caucasian societies. This combination is a specific combination of local, indigenous culture as well as Russian, Islamic and Western cultures" (Yahyayev, 2015).

The culture of the North Caucasus today appears to us in the form of a combination of cultural complexes, existing and functioning under the laws and regulations. We emphasize that between these regional cultures is not cultural integrated synthesis that gives a new systemic quality culture, because there is no constructive interaction and interpenetration. We have to state with regret. And the few transformations that can be detected by culture, affect weaker local authentic culture, under the cultural

influence of advanced civilizations, which in this interaction either adapt to local conditions, or to displace this local ethnic culture.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

To reveal the peculiarities of civilizational identity of the peoples of the North Caucasus, posing a subregion of the Russian civilization, actively influenced contemporary globalization.

#### **5. Research Methods**

During the execution of the study used a system-structural method allows you to correlate, special and community social processes, civilizational approach in order to illuminate different sides of the civilizational structure of society, to map a particular cultural-historical components.

#### **6. Findings**

Thus, in the North Caucasus today is seen a kind of refraction of the influence of Western and Eastern civilizations, and especially Russian civilization, but in this respect no direct borrowing of foreign culture, no obvious absorption of local native culture foreign culture. All these cultural metamorphoses in the North Caucasus, which affect the socio-cultural identity of the region, occur under the dynamic influence of two dominant trends (Yahyaev, 2015): disintegration and integration.

Summing up the above, one involuntarily asks the question of the degree of unity of its individual components, can we confidently assert a certain civilizational kinship or unity of local cultures and peoples, on the basis of which we could state the existence of such a phenomenon as the "North Caucasian civilization"? Is it possible that the civilizational identity of the North Caucasus is limited by its status as a "local civilization"?

However, an attempt to impartially identify a set of specific integral criteria for determining the civilizational status, which allows us to correlate them (criteria) with the socio-cultural identity of local communities, inevitably leads us to the conclusion that "what to talk about the North Caucasus as an independent civilization or even a distinctive local civilization, is a gross artificial stretch due to the fact that the region does not yet have a clearly expressed integrative beginning, unity or synthesis of North Caucasian socio-historical organisms" (Yahyaev, 2015, p. 371). Much of this is because the North Caucasus has always retained the status of a "border region" and not an independent geographical socio-historical organism. This does not allow us to speak with confidence about the "complex of its specific features in all spheres of social life and the adequacy of these features and the status of the state of social psychology and state consciousness (state ideology)" (Yahyaev, 2015, p. 442).

#### **7. Conclusion**

The civilizational identity of the North Caucasus remains subordinate and secondary to the larger Russian civilization. This is largely determined by the fact that the North Caucasus is now only a geopolitical subregion of Russian civilization, which has its own historical, socio-cultural specificity,

determined by economic diversity, social diversity, political pluralism, spiritual and cultural diversity and ethnic diversity. The uniqueness of this subregion is largely associated with the bizarre intertwining of the characteristics of local communities with the all-Russian civilizational identity, which itself is undergoing transformation under the influence of modern globalization processes. Meanwhile – this is a natural result of the historically formed interaction of Russian civilization with the original North Caucasian regional cultures, and its preservation and further development is extremely important in the conditions of crisis processes taking place in the modern world.

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