

FaR 2021**International Forum “Freedom and responsibility in pivotal times”****PROBLEMS OF CIVIL IDENTITY IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS**

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Abstract

The North Caucasus is a region with various nationalities, ethnic groups, world religions. Besides, it is the most densely populated region of Russia – about 10 million people. It is represented by a wide national composition of various anthropological types. The region is very tribal, the social structure is heterogeneous with the elements of archaic and traditionalism. This coordinate system fosters the problem of forming a civil identity, national attitudes built on a common plane of value settings, a sense of a single country and the future. The authors study the general socio-political situation in the region, analyze centrifugal and centripetal forces that determine the very nature of politics in the Russian North Caucasus through the prism of national and civil identity. The importance and place is given to regional political elites, which are able to relay the opinion of ordinary citizens, have ethnomobilization resources in managing interactions. It is concluded that ethnoelites do not always use economic, administrative, information resources of influence to stabilize the political and legal situation in the territories. Fringe politicians that came to power, provocateurs consisting of ethnic clans and groups contributed to various points of ethno-political tension in the region in the 1990s of the 20th century. Under the claim of the struggle for historical justice (territorial claims) they pursued their own particular interests, which created a stable base for extremism and terrorism. The authors give recommendations aimed at solving the problems of forming the civic identity of the peoples of the North Caucasus.

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Keywords: Russia, North Caucasus, political elites, civic identity, national identity, governance



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1. Introduction

The analysis of the mechanisms of the formation and transformation of civic identity in multi-ethnic societies is an urgent scientific task. The North Caucasus was formed from a very complex heterogenic, traditional setting with the elements of persistence in the region. The identity in various aspects, the identity of the peoples of the North Caucasus was studied by such scientists as V.A. Tishkov, V.V. Chernus, K.S. Gadzhieva, Z.A. Zhade, Yu.G. Volkov and others (Gorshkov, 2015, 2020; Lubsky, 2003; Tishkov & Novikova, 2015; Volkov, 2004).

The problems of regional identity, the analysis of integration processes at the subnational level are covered in the studies of V.A. Yadov, L.M. Drobizheva, V.A. Avksentyev, G.D. Gritsenko, A.V. Dmitriev, I.A. Savchenko, V.A. Achkasov, A.A. Vartumyan, V.Kh. Akaev (Avksentiev et al., 2008; Akaev, 2014; Arutyunyan et al., 1999; Drobizheva, 2017; Gorshkov et al., 2017; Magomedov, 2012; Matishov et al., 2009; Vartumyan, 2014; Yadov, 1998).

Table 1. Estimate Of The Permanent Population As Of January 1, 2021 And On Average For 2020 (People)

	As Of January 1, 2021			On Average For 2020		
	Population At Large	Urban Population	Rural Population	Population At Large	Urban Population	Rural Population
Russian Federation	146171015	109251646	36919369	146459803	109407058	37052745
North Caucasus Federal District	9967301	5026905	4940396	9949117	5009738	4939379
Republic Of Dagestan	3133303	1419922	1713381	3122080	1414676	1707404
Republic Of Ingushetia	515564	287222	228342	511313	284685	226628
Kabardino-Balkarian Republic	869191	452074	417117	868771	452084	416687
Karachay-Cherkess Republic	465357	199645	265712	465443	199638	265805
Republic Of North Ossetia-Alania	693098	445605	247493	694967	446953	248014
Chechen Republic	1497992	569730	928262	1488359	557569	930790
Stavropol Territory	2792796	1652707	1140089	2798184	1654133	1144051

Source: Official website of the Federal State Statistics Service (2021a)

The collapse of the Soviet Union, economic difficulties, sharp differentiation, political polarization of society in the early 1990s provoked the emergence of the civil identity “I am the citizen of Russia”, “I am the citizen of my republic”. The transit of Soviet ideological attitudes is still ongoing. In the context of the weakening of the federal center, the peoples of the North Caucasus began to independently look for and give meaning to the concept of civil, national identity (Table 01).

The structure of national identity in the region is very complex, different in historical, cultural, mental and psychological sense, since national, confessional patterns and the frontier position of the region

narrow the boundaries of the object of scientific research. The Caucasus consists of a complex set of traditionalism, archaic, political fluctuations, and the federal, national features of governance give the problem of identity an interdisciplinary and complex nature.

2. Problem Statement

The North Caucasus has historically developed as a very depressed region with a high degree of conflict against the background of a weak economy, unemployment, social differentiation as a result of the strong political polarization of society (Table 02). Population with monetary incomes below the cost of living in Russia and in the constituent entities of the Russian Federation.

Table 2. Russian Federation (mln people), constituent entities of the Russian Federation (K people)

	2013 ¹⁾	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
North Caucasus Federal District								
Republic of Dagestan	301.6	302.3	329.0	392.1	441.1	448.9	449.2	460.5
Republic of Ingushetia	89.8	108.2	138.7	138.6	142.0	148.5	151.9	151.9
Kabardino-Balkarian Republic	163.1	160.9	181.9	222.5	213.3	209.5	209.9	210.1
Karachay-Cherkess Republic	96.0	90.0	106.9	111.1	108.1	106.8	109.6	109.9
Republic of North Ossetia-Alania	88.7	87.7	100.3	100.6	101.3	98.5	96.4	96.9
Chechen Republic	235.4	191.2	219.9	241.2	292.9	294.6	302.3	301.7
Stavropol Territory	346.3	340.8	408.6	419.8	401.0	389.2	392.3	392.5

Source: (Official website of the Federal State Statistics Service, 2021b)

Regional political elites play an important role in this process, it is they who set the political agenda, can provoke, or localize conflict behavior in society. For good reason, the federal administrative-political elites in the past 20 years have begun to rely on local authorities, to delegate large powers to ethnoelites. The federal center gradually refuses the practice of “integrating” the North Caucasus into the all-Russian cultural, political and economic space, or this process has passed into a symbolic space following the principle of “purpose is nothing, the main thing is the process”.

The present stage of the political process in the studied region is characterized by the segregation of regional elites from the society. Any attempts to influence local authorities with the help of civil, democratic institutions receive an uncompromising response. Particular interests of elites are placed above through repression, criminal cases, discrimination, etc. These signals are clearly and unequivocally are interpreted by the authorities. In this regard, conflict potential is determined, institutional trust is reduced.

3. Research Questions

The role of regional ethnopolitical elites in the formation of civic identity in the North Caucasus is fostered during the period of increasing international risks, restriction, conflicts. This problem becomes more noticeable taking into account the geopolitical significance of the studied region. We observe a narrowing of the field of civil liberties, democratic institutions and freedoms, which is an additional factor that limits the formation of the prerequisites of the Russian civil identity.

National elites in the 1990s began to pursue a policy aimed at secession, leaving the jurisdiction of Russia: Tatarstan, Chechnya, etc. Thousands of rallies demanding to separate from Russia were held in a number of republics of the North Caucasus. Especially these processes were greatly intensified on the territory of the Chechen Republic, which ended with the beginning of a difficult and long-term internal Russian-Chechen conflict in 1994-1999. It is important to understand that the national “map” of local ethnoelites is used exclusively for bargaining with Moscow in order to keep power and resources in their hands. Their actions are not filled with ideological, patriotic meanings.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to identify and study the main problems of the formation of civic identity of the peoples of the North Caucasus taking into account internal and external factors.

5. Research Methods

Based on the non-institutional approach, it is planned to analyze the normative legal framework, the subjectivity of political elites that ensure regional information security in the North Caucasus taking into account its ethno-confessional and multicultural structure. In addressing the objectives of the study it will be important to adopt a systematic approach that allows analyzing the subject of the study as a complex system taking into account its structure, functions and goals.

6. Findings

The weakness and inefficiency of state national policy, economic backwardness, social differentiation, strong traditional practices, archaization hinder the process of integrating the peoples of the North Caucasus into the all-Russian cultural space. A committed assessment of the negative practices of nationalities in the regions of Russia by the federal media has already become a tradition. There is a need to transform the state national policy, to finance public organizations that work in this direction.

7. Conclusion

To form a common civil identity, it is necessary to move away from strengthening ethnic identity, erase status positions and differences, and move away from the practice of exalting ethnic groups alone, from the process of depressing the national history (Alan themes). Any cultural attitudes should go into the mental field, and not into the state. It is necessary to form a supranational identity.

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