North Caucasus:
Promoting Conflict Resolution Strategy
In An Unstable Region

Maxim POPOV

Abstract: The article is devoted to comparative analysis of contemporary political theories of socio-cultural integration policy as a way of constructive conflict resolution in the North Caucasus. Latent ethno-political conflicts remain the most noticeable of contemporary challenges and threats to civil solidarity and ethnic peace in this unstable region. The fundamental issue that requires a constructive solution in order to ensure political stability in the North Caucasus region is the promotion of multi-level and inclusive sociocultural integration. This study claims that the escalation of protracted, deep-rooted conflicts is the result of large-scale social disintegration as a fundamental threat to the North Caucasus stability. Socio-cultural disintegration is superimposed on ethno-territorial and social polarization: ethno-political particularism, religious traditionalism and large-scale demodernization of the North Caucasus archaize regional identities, hindering the formation of civil society.

Keywords: sociocultural integration policy, conflict resolution strategy, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, the North Caucasus.

Maxim POPOV

Department of Social Philosophy and Ethnology,
North Caucasus Federal University, Russia
E-mail: maximus.popov@gmail.com

Introduction

Today, the aggravation of cultural conflicts necessitates an integration policy that excludes assimilation and isolationist strategies, reduces ethnic and religious violence, and ensures a high level of civil solidarity. The dramatic events of recent years have demonstrated that destructive cultural conflicts go beyond domestic and regional ones. Peacekeeping becomes an attribute of democracy and global security: regions of ethnic and confessional instability are asso-

ciated with potential actors of international terrorism, which increases political desire to find constructive ways to resolve cultural contradictions. The clash of civilizations is simply a weak retouch on social Darwinism, which driven by interests and prevails in global politics as a result of the unequal global distribution of wealth and power. The image of a culturally divided and, therefore, not fully integrated world obscures the fact that ethnic conflicts at the level of cultural identity cannot be separated from socio-political contradictions.

Protracted ethnic conflict in the North Caucasus is the most destructive in contemporary Russia, and it does not seem that the confrontation is nearing completion. The state fights armed attacks, for which the Chechen separatists initially took responsibility, and nowadays, militants inspired by the ideas of jihad, striking in Moscow, other large cities and many settlements of the North Caucasus. Russia's counterterrorism strategy, based primarily on coercive measures, is not able to eliminate the many causes of the conflict, fueled by ethnic, religious, political and economic contradictions, the overcoming of which requires a flexible and comprehensive solution. Moscow is increasingly aware of the problem and will try new approaches for more effective integration policy of the region, which finally became part of the Russian Empire only in the 19th century and since then has been a serious challenge for Russia. Diversity of ethnic groups and religious movements, different historical experiences and political preferences complicate the task of reducing tension in the region and its integration with the rest of the country. Understanding this diversity is crucial for the political steps and new legislative initiatives that contribute to conflict resolution, rather than further deepening the contradictions.

Contemporary ethnic conflict in the North Caucasus includes a wide range of phenomena and often disguises the unequal distribution of economic or political power, cultural and religious identification, territorial tensions, and historical memory. Historically, ethno-political and ethno-territorial conflicts in the North Caucasus region can be divided into two main categories that "flow" into each other: the first type of deep-rooted conflicts are intra-regional ethno-political and cultural conflicts; the second type is secessionist conflicts between ethnic communities and the federal government. Five fundamentally unresolved ethnic contradictions in the North Caucasus remain potential security threats: 1) latent separatism in Chechnya; 2) Ossetian-Ingush territorial contradictions; 3) the problem of the unity of the Lezgi people in Dagestan and Azerbaijan; 4) the hidden problem of the Karachai and Circassian peoples in the republics of Karachay-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkaria; 5) ethno-territorial tensions in Dagestan.

The rapidly expanding boundaries of social, economic and cultural ties in the process of globalization improve the life chances of some groups and turn out to be destructive for others. Contemporary models of regional integration into global democratic politics are controversial: in the situation of structural demodernization and neo-traditionalization

of regional communities, assimilation models can increase ethno-social instability, creating conditions for the escalation of ethno-religious conflicts. A large-scale tension between ethnic and religious communities within contemporary nation states is today a deep obstacle to civil solidarity and internationalism. Today, the implementation of socio-cultural integration policy is aimed at ensuring political consolidation of multicultural communities. Social stability and modernization activity of such communities directly depend on the high level of an inclusive integration policy. Structural factors determine the permanent turbulence of international politics and the fundamental impossibility of solving the problem of ensuring territorial consolidation – maintaining the latter requires macro-political efforts. Ethno-cultural diversity of contemporary nation states predetermine the fact that the territorial and political consolidation presents a serious challenge to the subject of management. In this regard, the study of the anti-conflict, normative-societal potential of the integration policy and the analysis of the adaptation mechanisms of ethnic communities to democratization and modernization are the most relevant in the long-term conflict resolution strategy.

This research aims to analyze how the consolidating potential of socio-cultural integration can affect the strategy for resolving deep-rooted ethnic conflicts in an unstable region. The North Caucasus experience shows that conflict mobilization was due to separatist and secessionist movements in the post-Soviet decades. In a situation of ongoing structural deformation of civil society and the growth of socio-cultural dis-integration, regional ethno-political contradictions can initiate new conflicts: social inequalities, anomie, economic polarization, strengthening ideologies of fundamentalism and ethno-nationalism remain the main reasons for the escalation of violence in the North Caucasus. The paper attempts to answer a key research question that unresolved ethnic conflicts and latent tensions have fundamental consequences for the North Caucasus political stability. The study argues that the potential escalation of deep-rooted conflicts, determined by unresolved ethno-cultural and ethno-political contradictions, is the result of large-scale social disintegration as a fundamental threat to the security of multi-ethnic North Caucasus.

Theoretical debates and conceptual models

The theoretical tradition of socio-cultural integration policy analysis is associated with the conceptual confrontation of ethnic conflict theory, citizenship theory, multiculturalism, neo-functionalism, normative concepts of political integration. The conceptual contradictions lie in the interpretation of socio-cultural integration as a way of resolving ethno-cultural conflicts in pluralistic societies. Conflict resolution theorists rely on the analysis of the conflictogenic nature of mobilized ethnicity; multiculturalists proceed from the normativity of cultural pluralism and hyper-ethnic identification; representatives of the neo-functional paradigm, the theory of citizenship, and normative

concepts of political integration interpret the status of ethnic and cultural groups from the standpoint of political participation, equality of opportunity, and imperative socio-cultural integration. According to J. Fearon and D. Laitin (1996), a full-fledged theory of ethnic conflict should explain why, despite serious tensions, ethnic relations based on peace and integration are more typical than large-scale violence. The North Caucasus ethnic conflicts can be described as intrastate and ethno-political conflicts, based on the desire of one side to separate from the existing state and build a new nation state. Regional separatism is mobilized on the basis of the doctrine and political practice of ethnic nationalism and cultural isolationism. Independence wars or ethno-nationalist conflicts are the most common form of violent conflict and represent the main challenge to socio-cultural integration and ethnic peace in the North Caucasus.

The comprehensive theory of socio-cultural integration seeks to combine the concepts of individual freedom and group loyalty as counter-narratives to forced assimilation. This combination can be seen as a movement towards pluralism and respect for cultural differences at the individual and collective levels. Socio-cultural integration forms communicative mechanisms of civil consolidation based on the principles of equality and justice. Social justice, the creation of a "society for all" is the overarching goal of integration. Justice refers to societal principles and values that allow social actors to receive a fair share of the benefits for a fair share of responsibility in the framework of life together in society. The concepts of social justice define civil society as the most desirable and attainable, provided that rights and obligations are distributed in accordance with the agreed principles of equality. It is an integrated society in which social actors can participate in social, economic and political life on the basis of equal rights and opportunities, justice and dignity (Kymlicka, 2007).

The concept of socio-cultural integration policy refers to constructivist categories that are currently widely used in the contemporary politics to describe the idea, the purpose of which is to facilitate the development of a socio-cultural system in which stability, security, tolerance, respect for diversity, equal opportunities, social inclusion are necessary and attributive principles. Socio-cultural integration is defined as the process of creating a stable, safe, fair society based on the principles of social inclusion and protecting human rights, anti-discrimination, tolerance, social equality, cohesion and solidarity (Chapman, 2002). Citizens who participate in political decision-making and feel inclusion in the cultural life of society will be an effective result of the policy of socio-cultural integration. Similarly, the legitimacy of political institutions and structures of democratic society is due to the high degree of cohesion and political participation of individuals and groups in the life of society. According to J. Jenson (1998) and P. Bernard (1999), social cohesion as a normative result of sociocultural integration is based on the conscious and voluntary willingness of people to cooperate and work together at all levels of society to achieve common goals.

The need to stimulate and promote integration policy in multicultural community is determined by normative and instrumental reasons: from an ethical point of view, creating an integrated "society for all" is a self-evident societal goal; structural factors of sociocultural integration policy are associated with the need to reduce cultural and social inequalities that lead to political fragmentation and have a negative impact on conflict prevention. The development of common civil values requires the institutional coordination of antagonistic interests and cultural identities. According to J. Tillie and B. Slijper (2007), there are two fundamental normative concepts of political philosophy that underlie sociocultural integration theory: "democracy" and "statehood". Within the "concept of democracy", the fundamental problem of sociocultural integration policy is related to the discussion of social inequality: the cultural and ethnic minorities are defined as foreigners who must become citizens with the preservation of a unique cultural identity. Within the "concept of statehood", the issue of socio-cultural integration policy is solved from the point of view of constructing the civic identity of migrants, who ultimately should become compatriots, members of the political community.

These basic dimensions of socio-cultural integration policy can be divided into "minimalist" and "maximalist" concepts of democracy and statehood. In the minimalist concept of democracy, the main result of an effective integration policy is the existence of equal civil, social and political rights. This concept is associated with the political philosophy of classical liberalism with the idea that the role of the state in the realization of social equality is limited to the realization of equality of opportunity. The maximalist concept of democracy refers to the political discourse of the "new left" and the theory of social liberalism, according to which equality of opportunity is too limited: "real" equality for cultural and ethnic minorities means that their values, interests and identities are equally taken into account in the political arena. The difference between the minimalist and maximalist concepts of statehood is based on different concepts of the nation. In the minimalist concept of statehood, a nation is perceived as a "moral community". The main result of socio-cultural integration policy is the minimization of social differences between the majority and ethnic minorities, which must adopt the procedures and norms of constitutional democracy, basic civil identity, specific to a particular political community and incorporating the values of "societal culture". This concept is associated with the political philosophy of communitarianism. In the maximalist concept of statehood, the nation is interpreted in the perspective of republicanism, where cultural differences and ethnic identities are leveled based on the priority of "political loyalty". This concept is associated with the political philosophy of neo-republicanism (Vermeulen & Slijper, 2002). According to Tillie and Slijper (2007, p. 39), these theoretical differences lead to four concepts of the sociocultural integration policy: 1) social inclusion; 2) political participation; 3) acculturation; 4) assimilation. Although at the normative level there are "tensions" between these four concepts, they emphasize that "they are not empirically mutually

exclusive": for example, "formal integration" is not an opposition to "participatory integration", but rather its prerequisite.

Socio-cultural integration policy has a normative goal of social cohesion and inclusion, implying equal opportunities and rights for all social actors. Social system becomes more integrated, which implies equality and improved life strategies. The civil identity, social and cultural capital that underlie social cohesion are components of socio-cultural integration, as are the democratic institutions and pluralistic values that modern society is based on. Critics of socio-cultural integration draw attention to its potential negative consequences, which conjure up a repressive image of assimilation policy and imposed cultural uniformity. Integration problems belong to the class of policy tasks that Chapman (2002) described as a "disorder policy," characterized by the absence of a clear agreement on how to solve the problems of cultural consolidation, uncertainty as to what methods sociocultural integration can be effectively implemented without time and resource constraints.

The contradictory combination of integration and disintegration trends of regional development marks the beginning of the 21st century. Taken together, these trends provide the foundation for system integration. The definition of socio-cultural integration in the categories of system integration is associated with the works of Lockwood (1956), who drew attention to the need for a theoretical synthesis of alternative paradigms – normative theories of neo-functionalism of the 1950s and the theory of conflict of Coser and Dahrendorf. According to Rex (1995), the problems of resolving ethnic conflicts and the political integration of cultural minorities generate state responses in the form of ideology and practice of multiculturalism. Rex reveals neoconservative and neoliberal responses to the "demographic presence" of cultural minorities: 1) Complete exclusion of cultural minorities from the social and political sphere, the refusal to grant citizenship and the return of minorities to their countries of origin. 2) Isolation of minorities and non-recognition of the cultural differentness, when citizenship is granted in the process of naturalization. 3) Massive support for labor migrants and their children as temporary residents who are not eligible for citizenship. 4) Promotion of various forms of multiculturalism policy: a) recognition of cultural minorities at the state level as part of the institutional structure; b) the creation of a new "hybrid culture" with autonomy for minorities based on the priority of individual rights, while no ethnic group is privileged over another (Rex, 1995).

The political participation of ethnic and cultural groups belongs to one of four basic dimensions of integration policy, along with: 1) The rights granted to migrants by the host community; 2) Personal and group identification with the host community; 3) Social inclusion, the adoption of democratic norms and civil values as a necessary condition for positive integration (Martiniello 2005; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). According to Zapata-Barrero and Gropas (2012), integration policy involves the imperative par-

ticipation of citizens in political life, which is central to democratic governance for the following reasons: firstly, participation in political life offers people the opportunity to influence the outcomes of decision-making processes (they can protect their interests or the interests of the cultural groups to which they belong); secondly, political participation has a systemic function of "political socialization" in terms of enhancing a sense of citizenship and the formation of a common identity. Both of these aspects are crucial for resolving regional conflicts, socio-cultural cohesion and the dynamic development of democracies characterized by cultural and ethnic diversity.

In macro sociological theory, the main source of integration/disintegration of developed capitalist societies is the class system. In accordance with M. Weber's ideas about social stratification, the development of status systems is likely to lead to political solidarity and harmonious forms of integration, while class societies generate conflicting forms of disintegration. The modern theory of transformations tries to consider socio-cultural integration through a systemic prism: Lockwood (1956) notes that conflict theorists emphasize political conflict as the main engine of social change, while normative functionalists downplay the role of political actors and seek to emphasize functional or dysfunctional relationships between social institutes. For Lockwood, the task of integration theory is to overcome this theoretical dualism.

The basis of research discussion on the problems of contemporary integration policy is the question of the nature of the relationship between the level of migrant participation in the political life of host communities and their homeland. According to Huntington (2004), the maintenance by migrants of relations with countries of origin and the particular identities of ethnic enclaves prevents full assimilation and political integration into the mainstream community. Morawska (2003) casts doubt on the idea that transnational practices and integration are opposite and mutually exclusive processes. According to Kivisto and Feist (2010), the policy of socio-cultural integration is characterized by a relationship between assimilation and transnationalism. Portes and Rumbaut (2006) note how transnationalism provides an alternative resource for promoting integration and social mobility in host communities, as transnational practices create skills that migrants can use in destination countries. Levitt and Jaworsky (2007) talk about the false dichotomy between assimilation and transnationalism in modern integration policy and believes that transnational practices contribute to de-escalation of ethical tension and strengthen sociocultural integration, as they generate professional skills that can be useful for the political participation of migrants (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007).

A key issue of contemporary integration theories concerns the relationship between the political participation of migrants and political consolidation. Socio-cultural integration of migrants is related to the macro-political factors: firstly, group identification with the political system; secondly, active migrant participation in political life through

voting or participation in the public sphere; thirdly, the realization that the authorities hear them. The effectiveness of integration and participation in the political process depends on the country of origin and the host country, the personal qualities of migrants, changes in the structure of political opportunities that arise in the host community (Zapata-Barrero & Gropas, 2012). Within the concept of cultural citizenship, civil integration is an "inventory of opportunities" and a "tool for regulating everyday life". Socio-cultural integration policy becomes an instrument of cultural liberalization and a path of promoting civil unity and cultural diversity in a pluralistic society in a way that does not concentrate personal and group self-awareness on their own "otherness", but position the "other" as a full-fledged a bearer of civil identity, politically motivated and socially inclusive, making an individual contribution to the cultural and political life of society (Stone, Destrempes, Foote, & Jeannotte, 2008, p. 106).

Paris (2004) conducted a political analysis of the consequences of peacekeeping missions launched between 1989 and 1998 and noted that peacekeepers in the 1990s underestimated the destabilizing effects of democratization and liberalization in post-conflict countries that recently completed ethno-religious and civil wars. Despite support for the transformation of crisis and unstable states into liberal market democracies, Paris proposes a new integration model "institutionalization before liberalization" based on the following principles: 1) delay in the large-scale implementation of democratic and market reforms until a rudimentary network of national institutions capable of effectively managing liberalization processes is created; 2) rationalization of liberalization processes in combination with the implementation of democratic values, the construction of civil identities, the construction of social and government institutions that manage political and economic reforms (Paris, 2004, p. 8).

Kymlicka suggests that the accelerated and revolutionary introduction of neoliberal politics and the integration model of multiculturalism ("interculturalism", "diversity policy") in a non-democratic society can carry conflicting risks and threats of destabilization. He notes that liberal multiculturalism is easier to accept where liberal democracy is already well known and where the rule of law and human rights are protected. In countries where the basic values and principles of liberal democracy are not yet integrated into the social system and collective identification, it becomes necessary to slow down the process of democratization until the integration model of liberal multiculturalism is fully implemented. Despite the fact that the integration policy of multiculturalism brings political freedom, social equality and democracy, Kymlicka (2007) encourages to understand the socio-cultural context of integration – minority rights, cultural values, and self-identity of ethnic groups.

Morales and Morariu (2011) point out that not only the political structures, but also the structures of discursive opportunities in the host countries are a decisive factor in an effective integration policy: this is a regional policy regarding migrant associations;

openness of government bodies and formal institutions; local government configuration; the predominant migratory discourse. According to Fennema and Tillie (1999), access to naturalization makes it possible to vote and stand for election: citizenship has been repeatedly defined as a fundamental indicator of sociocultural integration in democratic societies. After naturalization, citizens can expand their political inclusion by voting, through which groups of migrants become a political community and, thus, can change the political system with elected representatives.

In multi-ethnic North Caucasus, the formation of civil identity that consolidates a divided society and forms stable ties between autonomous sociocultural groups is of paramount importance for overcoming ethnic conflicts: socio-cultural integration creates conditions for the reduction of "unrealistic" identity-based conflicts and their transformation into institutional "realistic" conflicts of interest. The likelihood of overcoming ethnic conflicts in the North Caucasus depends on a conscious civil position voluntarily accepted by the majority of the regional community, and not only the legal status of a person in civil society is significant, but also on the ability to consolidate by means of ethnic cooperation and cultural dialogue. Sustainable development of the North Caucasus region occurs in the context of traditionalist resistance to Russian modernization processes, permanent ethno-social and ethno-political tensions that flow into protracted conflicts and ethnic wars. Regional conflicts, determined by confrontations between traditionalization and modernization, destroy the integrative basis of large-scale civil identity. Ethno-political processes in the North Caucasus in the first decade of the 21st century changed the nature of threats compared to the beginning and mid-1990s. At the beginning of the 21st century, there was a de-escalation of armed ethno-political conflicts, however, radical ethno-nationalism, which intensifies terrorist activity, testifies to the institutional degradation of civil culture and the destabilization of democratic processes in this region.

Socio-cultural integration policy
as conflict resolution strategy in multi-ethnic region

Ethnic conflicts in the North Caucasus are conflicts caused by a long history of hatred and resentment. Historical memory and cultural background in regional conflicts do not work automatically. They are updated as a result of errors by the federal center and local authorities in the implementation of integration policy in the South of Russia since 1991, as well as unprofessional management in the field of interethnic relations, and nation-building. The protracted ethnic conflicts are clearly complex in their historical nature, and the elites into ethnic intolerance transform everything related to cultural-historical causes. Of all the possible options for federalization by the political elite of modern Russia, the most conflicting principle of "national-territorial construction" was chosen. The historical experience of the collapse of the USSR and Yugoslavia allows to characterize this principle as the leading factor in ethnic conflicts in the North

Caucasus. When implementing the model of the national-territorial federation, ethnic groups and their identities are artificially opposed to each other. The consequence of ethno-territorial federalism is the problem of ethno-social inequality. In the North Caucasus, ethnic hierarchy is assessed as the defining ethno-political attribute of inequality and exclusion of "others". The principle of ethno-national federalism produced by the elite hinders the modernization of the North Caucasus, mythologizes the mass consciousness, and forms a hierarchical inequality of ethnic groups.

Historically, the North Caucasus is the most important geo-strategic macro-region that forms the southern geopolitical border of Russia. In the macro-social perspective, the North Caucasus region becomes a key factor in the macro-social stability and political integration of all of Russia. Russia's connection with Transcaucasia and, as a result, its ability to exert geopolitical influence on the three independent republics of the region largely depend on stability in the North Caucasus. The bloody war in Chechnya showed the vulnerability of the North Caucasus in the issues of effective counteraction to ethnic separatism and fundamentalism. In addition, numerous ethno-political conflicts in the region highlighted the fundamental problem of maintaining the territorial integrity of modern Russia. Latent and potential ethno-political conflicts are the most noticeable of the modern challenges and threats to civil and ethnic peace in the North Caucasus region. Today, the fundamental problem that requires a constructive solution in order to ensure political stability in the region is the promotion of multi-level socio-cultural integration. The prospects for sustainable peace in the North Caucasus seem vague if the integration potential of democratic institutions and constructive approaches to resolving deep-rooted ethnic contradictions are not used.

By the mid-2000s, the resistance movement in the North Caucasus became religiously motivated and acquired the scale of a regional branch of the global militant Islamist movement. Today, North Caucasian rebels identify with the global Ummah, the global community of Muslims, and the most important element of their current ideology is radical Islamism. It is clear that supporters of international jihad would not have had support in Russia if they had not received financial assistance from abroad. The issue of financing is a key one in the framework of the development of Islamic fundamentalism in Russia, since people who preach this idea on their own are often limited in financial capabilities and are outlawed. To support them, international Islamic foundations and organizations allocate colossal amounts. The contemporary North Caucasus is different from the ethnic resistance movement of the "Dudaev era." Ethnic separatism was replaced by religious fundamentalism, the support of radical Islamism and the so-called "defensive jihad," which seeks to expel the "infidels" from the "Muslim lands". Social disintegration, large-scale escalation of ethno-religious violence and the collapse of civil society in the North Caucasus region are becoming a serious problem for Russia, which is experiencing a new era of political transit.

The implementation of the integration policy at the regional level is aimed at ensuring civil meta-ethnic consolidation of multi-ethnic and multicultural communities. The stability and modernization activity of the Russian regions directly depends on the scale of integration policy. The North Caucasus, as one of the most unstable Russian regions, becomes one of the main objects of integration processes. In this regard, the study of the anti-conflict, normative-societal, and inclusive potential of the integration policy as well as political analysis of the adaptation mechanisms of ethno-regional communities to the conditions of democratic modernization are the most relevant in the long-term national policy strategy.

Socio-cultural integration policy as constructive conflict resolution strategy in multicultural North Caucasus requires not only special sensitivity to the cultural context and ethnicity, but also requires a high degree of rationalization and confidence in the need to intervene in the ethnic sphere in order to transform it and post-conflict transformation. The motives for the participation of ethnic groups in identity conflicts will largely affect the prospects for their outcome; in order to satisfy their material interests, people are unlikely to consciously risk their lives. In conflicts of identities, the participation of the parties has a pronounced character of sacrifice, and not an inevitable risk: the willingness to make sacrifices for the sake of identification and value ideals is emotionally experienced, realized and verbalized by the parties to the conflicts. Ethnic tension escalates when an ethnocultural group tends to perceive itself as a "victim" of value claims from "other" groups. According to Rothman and Alberstein (2013), if we want to succeed in researching the causes of identity-based conflicts, we must start with a definition that will lead to constructive conflict resolution methods. We consider identity as a self-perception filled with a cultural formula. Cultural formula is based on internal needs and preferences, group characteristics and collective values".

Cultural identity can be personal, group, or intergroup, but it is always a source of perception of a contradiction and a catalyst for conflict. Parties can perceive themselves as "personal maximizers" (J. Rothman), protecting individual values, pursuing their own interests and expressing individualistic needs; they can be socio-cultural groups and feel part of a collective whole; they may feel themselves to be carriers of multiple identities and enter into conflict at the intergroup level, but all these perceptions are generated by the "cultural formula", identity. Cultural identity becomes the "ideological base" of the parties to the conflict, filled with personal, group and intergroup emotions, values and meanings (Rothman & Alberstein, 2013). Cultural conflict has its own unique characteristics, and in different contexts, some of these elements will be more visible than others, but they are all common denominators of conflict genesis. The primordialist approach helps explain the conflictogenic nature of ethnic identity. The concept of political entrepreneurs explains how institutional factors and ethnic stereotypes interact. Ethnicity embodies an element of powerful emotional tension that can be re-politicized

and reactivated if groups recognize the threat to cultural identity, values, and security, which leads to ethnification, escalation of ethnic intolerance, and ultimately violent ethnic conflict (Blagojevic, 2009; Horowitz, 1985). The specificity of cultural conflicts lies in the fact that they proceed against the backdrop of a clash of competing collective values and cultural identities. The concept of "value contradictions" clarifies the concept of cultural conflict as a conflict of identities, emphasizing the systemic and genetic nature of this explanatory model. According to J. Esteban, L. Mayoral, and D. Rey (2012), intra-state conflicts acquire a pronounced ethnic character. More than half of civil conflicts after World War II are classified as ethnic or religious. One of the grounds for classifying a regional ethnic conflict is its identification as an anti-state rebellion on behalf of an ethnic group. Brubaker and Laitin (1998), examining the history of intra-state conflicts of the second half of the 20th century, concluded that the bipolar ideological axis disappeared against the backdrop of large-scale ethnicization of violent clashes.

For the first time, the term "identity-based conflict" appears in the works of J. Burton and J. Rothman in the 1990s. Burton (1996) considers cultural identity as one of the basic human needs, while the threat of identity is perceived by the group as one of the main threats to their security. J. Burton identifies two needs as key: the need for identity and the need for security. According to Rothman (1997), the most important attributes of identity-based conflicts are their irrationality, subjectivity and uncontrollability. Analyzing the status of ethnicity in the dynamics of cultural conflicts, it is necessary to point out the connection of group identities with the primordial values of traditional societies, in which civil identity and individualism do not play a significant role. According to Rothman and Alberstein (2013), when conflict mediators deal with ethno-religious clashes, appeal to individual interests is not able to smooth out the crack that arose as a result of the conflict; attempts to manipulate groups can lead to an intensification of the conflict of identities.

The specificity of identity-based conflicts in the North Caucasus is caused by the deep contradiction between static (ethno-religious traditionalization) and dynamic (rational-secular modernization) processes and lies in the mobilization of radical identities. Ethnic hierarchy as a factor in identity-based conflicts in the North Caucasus becomes the source of the formation of neotraditionalist projects of religious fundamentalism and ethno-nationalism. Transformation and modernization processes in the region are developing asymmetrically, which strengthens ethnic conflicts. The following determinants of the conflict potential of interethnic relations of the North Caucasus region and the dynamics of regional conflicts can be distinguished: 1. High level of ethnic mosaic of the population. 2. External migration. Significant differences in the culture (including the value system) of new migrants and the local population lead to tensions. There are known cases of "encapsulation" of migrant Diasporas, when a group of migrants closes in themselves, perceiving the old-timed population as hostile. 3. Intraregional migration. Intensive migration processes are taking place in the region itself. The out-

flow of Russians from the republics of the North Caucasus continues. Those Russians who remained in their former places of residence are under intense pressure from both objective circumstances and local radicals. Migrants of a different ethnicity cause concern of the local population, which increases sharply in case of the arrival of large groups of foreign ethnic migrants. 4. The difficulties of modernization. Socio-economic development, the development of new technologies and cultural changes are not balanced in different spheres of life and among different peoples. 5. Negative historical memory. The wars between the Caucasian peoples, the memory of the Caucasian War and relatively recent recollections of the deportations of peoples serve as a psychological justification for aggression. 6. Revitalization of religious fundamentalism. It is in the south of Russia that the main centers of Salafism (Wahhabism) are located. Salafism is politicized form of Islam, which is used for its own purposes by terrorists and ethno-national radicals. Religious and ethno-political identities perform various functions in the course of an ethnic conflict. Ethno-political identity is intended to unite "their own" in the interests of the ethnic elite, which decided to expand its influence and capabilities. Islamic fundamentalism provides support to radical movements from other ethnic groups in Russia and abroad. 7. The lack of a developed civil society and traditions of partnerships between the government and public associations. The conservatism of the region's population is manifested in the conservatism of deputies and officials. The "third sector", which can play an important role, especially at the stage of conflict prevention and post-conflict settlement, is poorly included in peacekeeping.

All of these issues would merit further analysis though complementary methodologies offering a more independent perspective on ethno-regional conflict dynamics. In particular, the findings gathered here call for more in-depth research on the boundaries between sociocultural integration policy – conflict resolution strategies and different forms of ethnic conflicts; on the internal dynamics and decision-making involved in shifting goals and strategies; and on their various implications for the processes of ethno-religious radicalization and political instability. There also needs to be more interdisciplinary investigation on the linkages between conflict management strategy, social cohesion, political integration, negotiations, democratic transitions, and post-conflict institutionalization. Finally, such analysis might offer useful lessons for constructive international engagement to support the conversion of state challengers into active peace-builders, as long as these actors are politically motivated movements, which enjoy strong social legitimacy and aspire to take part in democratic politics. Indeed, the findings call for a rethinking of conventional intervention in cultural conflicts, promoting the social cohesion and sociocultural integration policy during negotiations; offering assistance to support democratic transitions in multicultural communities that possess a future role within a peaceful environment, in contrast to criminalization strategies (e.g. through anti-terrorist measures such as proscription and counter-insurgency) which prevent ethnic groups from expanding their civil capacities.

Conclusions

Today, apolitical strategy for resolving deep-rooted ethnic conflicts, based on sociocultural integration, is a highly effective resource for peacebuilding and peacekeeping in the North Caucasus. Multi-level model of sociocultural integration must serve as the main preventive method for managing and resolving ethnic conflicts in an unstable region. Socio-cultural integration policy as conflict resolution strategy in a multi-ethnic region creates constructive conditions for social balance between competing and conflicting cultural, religious and ethnic groups. The North Caucasus conflict resolution strategy must not be based on assimilation policy and the suppression of ethnic identities and cultural differences, but on the principles of peacekeeping, peacebuilding, constructive pacifism, political participation, social inclusion, ethnic tolerance, and civil peace. Promotion of peacebuilding and peacekeeping measures for constructive conflict resolution in the North Caucasus is closely linked with an inclusive integration policy and the elimination of large-scale ethno-social inequalities.

When discussing the anti-conflict mechanisms of the socio-cultural integration policy in the North Caucasus, the following should be taken into account: firstly, integration is a macro-political project, the content of which is largely determined by the problems of ensuring regional and national security of Russia; secondly, the development of the North Caucasus macro-region after the end of armed conflicts shows the inadmissibility of an orientation toward ethno-nationalism, religious fundamentalism, cultural isolationism and political autarchy of ethnic communities within nation states. The main factor determining the severity of ethnic conflicts in the North Caucasus is social fragmentation and sociocultural disintegration. If there is a single economic center of the country, where most of the finance is pumped, internal integration functions are violated in the "center-periphery" relationship. Socio-cultural disintegration is superimposed on territorial polarization: ethnic particularism (privatism), religious traditionalism and large-scale demodernization of the North Caucasus archaize regional identities, hindering the formation of civil society.

Socio-cultural integration policy has a normative goal of social cohesion and inclusion, implying equal opportunities and rights for all social actors. The civil identity, social and cultural capital that underlie social cohesion are components of socio-cultural integration policy, as are the democratic institutions and pluralistic values that modern society is based on. The need to stimulate and promote integration policy in multicultural community is determined by normative ethical and instrumental reasons: from an ethical point of view, creating an integrated "society for all" is a self-evident societal goal; structural factors of sociocultural integration policy are associated with the need to reduce ethnic tensions and social inequalities that lead to political fragmentation and have a negative impact on conflict management. Cultural conflicts are the consequences of the radicalization of social inequalities and politicized hyper-ethnicity. Socio-cultural

integration, which is associated with a high level of civil and political solidarity, a weakening of ethnic mobilization, and a reduction in the negative stereotyping of "others" as "cultural enemies", can substantially reduce ethnic tensions.

Comparative conceptual analysis allows to explicate the basic determinants of an inclusive model of socio-cultural integration: 1) The higher the degree of integration and solidarity in society, the higher will be the state support in such areas as education, health insurance, social programs. 2) The higher the degree of cohesion and solidarity, the more stringent will be the observance of social norms, social loyalty, support for civic institutions and democratic values such as social trust, moral responsibility, political consolidation, human rights, tolerance, and compromise. 3) Social institutions based on inclusive civic values make group collaboration reflective, rational, politically and ethically necessary. 4) A higher level of political participation increases the level of consolidation, which not only promotes integration, but also increases social capital. Socio-cultural integration policy seeks to create optimal conditions for conflict-free interaction, the balance between ethnic groups. Socio-cultural integration policy acts as a form of organization of a multi-ethnic society in the field of plural civil identity, aimed at the achievement of social justice and providing types and methods of political activity aimed at overcoming and resolving cultural conflicts. Therefore, socio-cultural integration policy in the conceptual plan is the desire to include opponent parties of identity-based conflicts in a certain logic of relationships and to combine their efforts to solve common problems and achieve a common goal.

The anti-conflict potential of sociocultural integration policy in the North Caucasus contributes to the "civilizing of ethnic conflicts" through the implementation of new conceptual approaches to the transformation of these conflicts based on "constructive pacifism" (Senghaas, 2004). While anti-militarism and pacifism seek to destroy the structures and mentality that are the causes of aggression, violence and war, sociocultural integration is aimed at creating structures of mentality that contribute to lasting peace. Socio-cultural integration policy can be called "constructive pacifism," that is, linked with the construction and architecture of a multi-ethnic society. Civilization of conflict is the exclusion of the means of violence in the course of resolving ethnic conflicts, the development of a wide range of non-violent ways to conflict resolution. In contemporary conflict theory, the term "civilization of conflict" refers to the process of transformation of the nature of cultural conflict, that is, the replacement of violent means of solving problems with non-violent ones. The development of pacifist opportunities for conflict resolution strategy in the North Caucasus is closely linked with socio-cultural integration policy and the elimination of social inequality between ethnic groups.

Successful integration of the North Caucasus into the Russian state is of key importance for security and healthy international relations in the country. The spread of the conflict from Chechnya to neighboring regions, a large number of victims among the

civilian population, military personnel and militants, as well as a sharp aggravation of interethnic relations throughout the country, all this indicates that Moscow needs to find new, more effective approaches to addressing the main causes of armed conflict. In Chechnya, despite impressive successes in the post-war reconstruction, the problems of creating a transparent system of public administration, political pluralism, ensuring the rule of law and respect for women's rights are still very acute. Monitoring the spending of funds allocated for the restoration of cities, infrastructure and the economy of the republic as a whole is crucial to prevent further growth of tension between the North Caucasians and Russian nationalists.

Across the North Caucasus, unresolved interethnic conflicts and frictions, territorial and land disputes, unanswered old and new demands articulated by ethno-national movements create fertile ground for religious radicalism and fuel the underground. This paper provides a brief analysis of the main issues related to an integration policy and multi-ethnicity. Their solution will eliminate many of the deep-rooted causes of potential armed conflicts. To form a new integration policy in the North Caucasus, it is necessary to conduct a thorough study of the existing interethnic contradictions based on fieldwork in the region. The state should constantly monitor hotbeds of tension and ensure equal access to power and employment, including in local law enforcement agencies, especially in unstable, ethnically mixed regions.

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