

Forms, Bases of Ethnopolitical Conflicts and their Role in Geopolitics of Georgia

Petre Gelashvili

LEPL Scientific Technical Center (STC) "Delta", Tbilisi, Georgia

(Presented by Academy Member Revaz Gachechiladze)

ABSTRACT. Ethnopolitical conflicts undoubtedly occupy a special position in a diverse palette of conflicts caused by different reasons and being carriers of different character, as the most long-standing and nagging problems. Conflicts taking place in the post-Soviet space, including the South Caucasus, can be regarded as a definite echo of global changes in the geopolitical situation within the former Soviet Union (FSU) and throughout the world. As regards the conflicts going in the South Caucasus, it can also be said that since the region is in the sphere of geopolitical and economic interests of global actors of international relations, such as the USA, Russia, European Union, and also of the influential regional actors – Turkey and Iran, the final settlement of said conflicts is hardly imaginable without taking into account the interests of these states. The erroneous national policy and many other factors gave rise to open conflicts in Abkhazia and Shida Kartli, against the background of which the relaxation of attention from the central government to the regions representing potential sources of new enthrone is observable. The latent ethno-conflicting areas include the border regions of Georgia and are distinguished by a small number of population; at that, the dominating ethnic minorities create the so-called “ethnic micro-territories” and live in the territory of Georgia that border the motherland of these ethnic groups. © 2019 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.

Key words: ethnopolitical conflicts, territorial claims, territorial separatism, ethnic stereotypes, socio-economic factors

At every stage of the history of mankind, the problems of ethnopolitical conflicts, regional or global security and geopolitical stability were an object of special focusing. On the assumption of the issue complexity, the final collation with a respective unequivocal and effective concept has not been achieved yet. A clear-cut evidence of it is also the fact that the operating in the Soviet Union a policy directed at democratic reforms, the so-called

restructuring (*perestroika*), the improvement of relations and the beginning of productive collaboration with the West was perceived in the world as the final triumph of democracy, which found its reflection in the works of Francis Fukuyama [1]. Very soon, a forecast made in the “The End of History and the Last Man” collapsed, causing, in its turns, mainstreaming of the Samuel Huntington’s concept expressed in his work “The

Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order” [2]. It should, however, be mentioned here that the latter concept caused in due course rather ambiguous response in a major part of world ideologists, the supporters of both the multipolar and homogenous models. For example, William McBride, the Immediate Past President of the International Federation of Philosophical Societies (FISP), saw in the Huntingtonian approach a rather unfavorable future of mankind [3], while the German scientist Dieter Senghaas considered that a religious factor had been hyper actualized [4]. In relation to the conflicts going in the South Caucasus, the Huntingtonian views, as an attempt to simplify analysis through stereotype approaches, as well as for giving preference to the religious-civilizing opposition as compared with a combination of nationalism and national interests, were criticized by Svante E. Cornell, a Swedish scholar specializing on politics and security issues in Eurasia, especially the South Caucasus, Turkey and Central Asia [5], while Neil MacFarlane, Professor of International Relations, underlined a danger for sub-regional collaboration in such views [6].

Based on the works of a Georgian scholar V. Nozadze, it can be said that the uncertainty of state borders frequently stood in the way of the strategic interests of Georgia [7].

Boundary disputes has never ceased in the South Caucasus. The border delimitation issue is still topical throughout the region, including in relation to Georgia, and frequently is a prerequisite for escalation of conflicts.

According to some experts, ethnopolitical conflicts are based on the classical markers of struggle, between the central authorities and a national minority with separatist aspirations, on the one hand, and with the right of a national minority to fight for self-determination and making a sovereign state, on the other hand. In the case of the South Caucasus, however, the covert or open intervention of the third states, which is conditioned by their geopolitical interests, is characteristic [8].

Ethnopolitical conflicts generally manifest themselves in polyethnic states, among which is Georgia.

Polyethnicity creates a number of problems in the political sphere, such as the formation of a definite political model of coexistence of different ethnic groups in a unified state, achieving a balance in the division of political power, considering specific ethnic interests in the public policy of the state, etc. As a result, a space for ethnic politics and, correspondingly, a probability of manifestation of ethnopolitical conflicts are created [9].

It should also be mentioned that together with the impossibility of final liberation from negative nationalistic stereotypes the socio-economic differentiation characteristic of any dynamically developing society conditions inevitability of the development of ethnopolitical conflicts in polyethnic states.

Based on the above, ethnopolitical conflicts do not represent an exception either for Europe or for the world in general. In the states with developed democratic system too, a final settlement among the ethnoses living in their territory around the conflicting interests is extremely difficult. An example of this is the situation in Canada (Quebec problem), in Spain, in particular in Catalonia and the Basque Country, in the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland, Scotland) and in relatively less democratic Turkey (the Kurdish problem), where the ethnic-based conflicts turned most radical [9].

Among the causes of ethnopolitical conflicts, **territorial claims** should be marked out as the pivotal, for proving of which the contending parties refer to historical facts. An epoch, from which the counting out of the ethnical affiliation starts, the parties, as a rule, select at will, reasoning from the dispute objectives [10].

Another group of ethno-territorial problems is associated with an issue of formation of new independent states. Aspiration of an ethnic minority for realizing the self-determination right, expressed in the formation of an independent state, can be

qualified, on the other hand, as territorial separatism [11].

As is well known, **territorial separatism** has three basic types: **secession**, **irredentism** and **enosis**. It is noteworthy that a clear-cut qualification of the separatist movements in the territory of Georgia is rather difficult, which is conditioned by the Russia's factor. The separatism evolution here is evidently of a transitional, multistage and somewhat of a synthetic character. At the initial stage in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region allegedly evident secession processes could be observed; however, in the course of time prediction of their development in irredentist form is becoming more probable. This is also evidenced by an "analysis" of a well-known Russian political analyst and strategist Alexandr Dugin, communicated on 22 May, 2019 in the Internet space, where he practically excludes independent existence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and sees their future in the bosom of Russia or Georgia. As regards the existing expectations in relation to Tskhinvali region, one has to deal with a synthesis of all the three types of separatism here, since in the long run there too all is developed toward irredentism (via enosis), since the historical motherland of ethnic Ossetians is the North Caucasus, which borders Georgia, but is a constituent part of the Russian Federation.

A different situation is observed in relation to potential ethno-crisis areas, where the danger of enosis mostly could exist.

In addition to the above-listed causes, there are also psychological features/peculiarities of the origin of ethno-political conflicts, among which special attention deserve such factors, as education, social categorization, and ethnic stereotypes [12].

No less important are socio-economic factors of conflicts. Here the struggle of ethnic groups for material resources, division of labor, ideology and power problems, etc. should be implied [12].

Finally it should be generally mentioned that the principal basis for ethno-political conflicts should certainly be sought in discontent of the growing elite groups with the existing situation, and the resultant aspiration for rising in society and separation of powers, while the striving for changing the statehood is the most prevalent cause of ethno-political conflicts. However, in Georgian reality the priority of the bases of ethno-conflicts' development and regulation should be obviously ascribed to the geopolitical aspirations of most influential global and regional subjects of international relations. At that, the fact that our region has always remained a proscenium of great political games should also be taken into account [13-15].

საერთაშორისო ურთიერთობები

ეთნოპოლიტიკური კონფლიქტების ფორმები, საფუძვლები და მათი როლი საქართველოს გეოპოლიტიკაში

პ. გელაშვილი

სსიპ სამხედრო სამეცნიერო ტექნიკური ცენტრი (სსტც) „დელტა“, თბილისი, საქართველო

(წარმოდგენილია აკადემიის წევრის რ. გაჩეჩილაძის მიერ)

სხვადასხვა მიზეზით გამოწვეული და სხვადასხვა ხასიათის მატარებელი კონფლიქტების მრავალფეროვან პალიტრაში განსაკუთრებული ადგილი უდავოდ ეთნოპოლიტიკურ კონფლიქტებს უკავია, როგორც ყველაზე გრძელვადიან და რთულად მოგვარებად პრობლემას. პოსტსაბჭოთა სივრცეში, მათ შორის, სამხრეთ კავკასიაში მიმდინარე კონფლიქტები შეიძლება განვიხილოთ როგორც ყოფილი საბჭოთა კავშირის ტერიტორიაზე და მთლიანად მსოფლიოში, გეოპოლიტიკური მდგომარეობის გლობალური ცვლილების ერთგვარი გამოძახილი. ამიერკავკასიაში არსებულ კონფლიქტებზე შეიძლება ითქვას ისიც, რომ ვინაიდან ეს რეგიონი საერთაშორისო ურთიერთობების გლობალური აქტორების – აშშ-ის, რუსეთის, ევროკავშირის, აგრეთვე გავლენიანი რეგიონული მოთამაშეების – თურქეთისა და ირანის გეოპოლიტიკური და ეკონომიკური ინტერესების სფეროში შედის, ჩამოთვლილი სახელმწიფოების ინტერესების გათვალისწინების გარეშე, მათი საბოლოო დარეგულირება ძნელი წარმოსადგენია. მცდარმა ეროვნულმა პოლიტიკამ და მრავალმა სხვა ფაქტორმა აფხაზეთსა და შიდა ქართლში ღია კონფლიქტები გამოიწვია, რომელთა ფონზეც შეინიშნება ჩვენი ქვეყნის ცენტრალური ხელისუფლების მხრიდან ყურადღების მოდუნება იმ რეგიონებისადმი, რომლებიც პოტენციურად ახალი ეთნოკრიზისების კერებს წარმოადგენს. ლატენტური ეთნოკონფლიქტური ზონები საქართველოს სახელმწიფო საზღვრისპირა რაიონებს მოიცავს და ქართველი მოსახლეობის სიმცირით გამოირჩევა. ამასთან, დომინირებული ეთნიკური უმცირესობები ქმნიან ერთგვარ „ეთნიკურ მიკროტერიტორიებს“ და ცხოვრობენ საქართველოს იმ ტერიტორიებზე, რომლებიც ამ ეთნიკური ჯგუფის სამშობლოს ესაზღვრება. ამ თვალსაზრისით განსაკუთრებულ ყურადღებას იმსახურებს სამცხე-ჯავახეთის მხარე, ვინაიდან ამ რეგიონში კონფლიქტის გაღვივება გამოიწვევს კავკასიაში გეოპოლიტიკური სტაბილურობის დარღვევას და კრიზისში თითქმის ყველა მეზობელი ქვეყნის ჩათრევას.

REFERENCES

1. Fukuyama F. (2004) Konets istorii i poslednii chelovek, 588 s. M. (in Russian).
2. Huntington S. (2003) Stolknovenie tsivilizatsii i preobrazovanie mirovogo poriadka, 603. M. (in Russian).
3. MacBride W. (2003) Globalizatsiia i mezhkul'turnyi dialog. Voprosy filosofii, 1:82. M. (in Russian).
4. Senghaas D. (2002) The clash within civilizations: coming to terms with cultural conflicts, 74, 138 : 75. Routledge. London-N. Y.
5. Cornell S. (2003) Religion as a factor in Caucasian conflicts. *J. Civilized Searches*, 60-74.
6. MacFarlane N. (1999) The clash of civilizations: critical view. *Bulletin of the Foreign Policy Research and Analysis Centre of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia*, 11(20): 11-14.
7. Nozadze V. (1989) Fight for restoration of Georgia because of Meskheti, Tbilisi: union of theatre workers of Georgia, 114 (in Georgian).
8. Dmitriev A. (2002) Social'nyi konflikt: obshchee i osobennoe, 219, M. (in Russian).
9. Landbaso Angulo A., Kononov A. (2004) Terrorism i etnopoliticheskie konflikty, kniga vtoraiia. *Terrorizm segodnia*, s. 17, M. (in Russian).
10. Kolesova E. (1999) Prichiny sovremennykh mezhetnicheskikh, mezhekfessional'nykh konfliktov. *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost'*. 4:117-120 (in Russian).
11. Chugrov S. (1993) Etnicheskie stereotypy i ikh vliianie na formirovanie obshchestvennogo mneniia. *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia*, 1:43-45 (in Russian).
12. Tishkov V.A. (1993) O prirode etnicheskogo konflikta. *Svobodnaia mysl'*, 4:8. M. (in Russian).
13. Khundadze D. (2015) The Georgians on the brink of bankruptcy – in captivity of tragic fate: *all the truth about Georgia*, 584, Tbilisi.
14. Gajiev K. (2010) Bol'shaia igra na Kavkaze. Vchera, segodnia, zavtra. *Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia*, 344, M. (in Russian).
15. Degoev V. (2003) Bol'shaia igra na Kavkaze. Istoriia i sovremennost'. *Russkaiia panorama*, ISBN 5-93165-105-5: 514, M. (in Russian).

Received September, 2019