

Sociology

Impact of Cultural Civilization Component on National Security and Geopolitical Stability Exemplified by Ethnic Minorities of Georgia

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One of the foremost challenges encountered by a majority of nations globally, including Georgia, is the ensurance national security and geopolitical stability. In this context, cultural civilization components play a grate role alongside political, economic and other factors. According to the data of the State Agency for Religious Issues of Georgia, there are a total of 2,518 functioning religious cult buildings in Georgia of which 540 are located in the regions densely populated by ethnic and religious minorities. As for the distribution of the population according to the regions and religious confession, the population in Samtskhe-Javakheti is predominantly Orthodox (45.25%), Armenian Apostolic (39.96%), Catholic (9.36%) and Muslim (3.78%), while in Kvemo Kartli population is Orthodox (51.36%), Muslim (42.99%) and Armenian Apostolic (3.28%). In Kakheti the Orthodox and Muslims prevail over the representatives of other denominations. Despite the fact that the majority of the population of the target regions of our study are ethnically Georgian and Orthodox, the majority of residents in the immediate vicinity of the state border exhibit different ethnic or religious characteristics. Establishing precedence between the two aforementioned factors (ethnic and religious), both in historical and cultural civilization contexts is quite challenging in numerous instances. Overviewing cultural and civilizational aspects, especially in regions of Georgia densely inhabited by ethnic minorities pose a threat to geopolitical stability in the South Caucasus. © 2024 *Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.*

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One of the cardinal problems of modern thought and international relations is the formation of the noospheric worldview as a system of generalized views and ideas concerning the world and humanity's place within it. Some scientists justify its relevance with the arrival of a new era in the development of civilization, when humanity, in

confrontation with the Earth's biosphere, may disappear not only as a social being, but also as "Homo sapiens". The challenge of developing a worldwide awareness is connected to exploring avenues for intercultural dialogue in the current third millennium. The president of the International Federation of Philosophical Societies, William

McBride, in the article “Globalization and Intercultural Dialogue”, notes that the search for ways of dialogue faces complexity due to the increasing hegemony of transnational culture, primarily dominated by American and, to a lesser extent, Western European elements [1].

Among the frequently proposed alternatives to cultural hegemony are norms and ideals linked to religions, since among all cultural phenomena, they are regarded as the least accessible to comprehensive dialogue. Deep religious elements such as the creation of the world (cosmogony), the Christian deity's trinity characterized by coexistence and indivisibility, the naturalness of the Savior's hypostasis (monophysitism and diphytism), the Immaculate Conception, etc. contingent on a specific faith, are viewed as objective and indisputable truths by the adherents of that religion, while simultaneously being perceived as radically incomprehensible by representatives of other religions and atheists. This circumstance may lead to the estrangement of dialogue participants or their refusal to engage in the conversation. Therefore, as McBride suggests, it is crucial to regard religions as potential dead ends, ultimate, insurmountable barriers that persist even after overcoming all other obstacles to intercultural dialogue [1].

Regarding the priority of ethnicity in intercultural communication, it should be said that Svante Cornell, a researcher of inter-ethnic relations and regional politics of South-West Asia, in the process of analyzing the conflicts developed in the post soviet space, including the Caucasus, concludes that religion was not a determining factor in any of the mentioned crises. According to his viewpoint, the aggravation of the situation is due to the politicization of ethnicity and religion is one of the other factors determining ethnic identity [2].

Regardless, the significance of ethnic and religious constituents in ensuring the secure and stable development of countries and societies is universally acknowledged.

According to the data posted on the website of the State Agency for Religious Issues of Georgia, there are a total of 2,518 functioning religious cult buildings in Georgia, among which 540 are located in regions densely populated by ethnic and religious minorities. Of these, 205 in Samtskhe-Javakheti, 247 in Kvemo Kartli, and in the multi-ethnic and multi-religious administrative units of Kakheti: 33 in Akhmeta Municipality, 29 in Kvareli Municipality, and 26 in Lagodekhi Municipality [3].

The distribution of active religious buildings in the relevant areas for our work according to religious denominations, in percentage terms, is as follows:

Samtskhe-Javakheti: Orthodox – 60%, Armenian Apostolic – 22%, Catholic – 9%, Muslim 6%, Jehovah's Witnesses – 2%, Jewish – 1%.

Kvemo Kartli: Orthodox – 62%, Muslim 30%, Armenian Apostolic – 3%, Jehovah's Witnesses – 3%, Evangelical-Lutheran – 0.9%, Gospel-faith – 0.9%, Catholic – 0.1%, Evangelical-Protestant – 0.1%.

Kakheti (Akhmeta, Kvareli, Lagodekhi municipalities):

Akhmeta municipality: Orthodox – 70%, Muslim – 24%, Jehovah's Witnesses – 3%, Gospel-faith – 3%.

Kvareli Municipality: Orthodox – 70%, Muslim – 10%, Catholic – 7%, Christian Baptist – 10%, Jehovah's Witnesses – 3%.

Lagodekhi Municipality: Orthodox – 73%, Muslim – 15%, Jehovah's Witnesses – 8%, Gospel faith – 4% [3].

As for the distribution of the population according to regions and religious confession, the population in Samtskhe-Javakheti is predominantly Orthodox (72,605 confessors, 45.25%), Armenian Apostolic (64,115 confessors, 39.96%), Catholic (15,024 confessors, 9.36%), and Muslim (6060 confessors, 3.78%), while in Kvemo Kartli population is Orthodox (217724 confessors, 51.36%), Muslim (182216 confessors, 42.99%) and Armenian Apostolic (13917 confessors, 3.28%). In

Kakheti, the Orthodox and Muslims prevail over the representatives of other denominations (respectively: 85.79%, 12.15% and 2% of the rest) [4].

Despite the fact that the majority of the population of the target regions of our study are ethnically Georgian and Orthodox, the majority of residents in the immediate vicinity of the state border exhibit different ethnic or religious characteristics. As an illustration, primarily Muslim Azerbaijanis reside near the Georgia-Azerbaijan state border, while Catholic and Gregorian Armenians (in Ninotsminda district) and muslim Azerbaijanis (in Sadakhlo territory) inhabit the vicinity of the Georgia-Armenia border, regarding the state border with Turkey, its surrounding area is inhabited by ethnic Armenians (with Grigorians in Akhalkalaki district, and in the Akhaltsikhe region, with Gregorians – Administrative unit Sadzeli settlements: village Sadzeli, village Khaki and Catholics – Administrative unit Tklatbila settlements: village Abatkhevi, village Naokhrebi, village Tsinubani, village Tskaltbila, village Djulgha. The population in the administrative region of Pamaja encompasses individuals with a diverse mix of religious beliefs, including both Gregorian and Catholic faiths settlements: village Orali, village Patara Pamaji, village Kulalisi, also with ethnic Georgians (in Aspindza, Akhaltsikhe, Adigeni regions), a significant part of which is Muslim or Catholic [5].

The analysis of the above information shows that in determining the identity of the population of the target areas of our research, two components – religious and ethnic are intersected along with citizenship. The establishing precedence between the two aforementioned factors, both in historical and cultural civilization contexts, is quit challenging in numerous instances. This is also evidenced by the fact that the residents of Samtskhe-Javakheti (both Georgians and Armenians) during their everyday communication still refer to the Gregorians (both Georgians and Armenians) traditionally as Armenians, Catholics as French, and followers

of Islam as Tatars (Armenians as Turks). On the other hand, as it is clear from the scientific studies of Tinatin Ivelashvili, some of the converted Georgians, despite losing their native language and adopting Turkish, still preserved their Georgian national identity. They frequently defended their Christian brethren from aggressive co-religionists, using weapons (including from ethnic Georgians, the so-called Khujans gangs composed of converted Georgians from the neighboring Akhaltsikhe and Adigeni regions). At the same time, T. Ivelashvili cited examples when a part of the Muslim Georgians connected their identity with their religion and refused their ethnic origin (despite the Georgian surname), among them, even in exchange for avoiding exile [6].

In contrast to the existing situation in relation to Abkhazia and Shida Kartli, largescale armed confrontations between local residents in potential conflict zones of Georgia have not yet taken place. However, occasional incidents on ethnic or religious grounds have been occurred intermittently. Prominent instances of this are: on March 5, 1834, in Rabata, one of the districts of Akhaltsikhe, an aggressive action taken by Armenian craftsmen displaced from Turkey against local craftsmen of diverse ethnic and religious groups (including Catholic Armenians) [6]; aggressive incidents arose at different times in connection with the church of Kumurdo village in Akhalkalaki district (On April 10-11, 2004, the aggression shown towards the representatives of the Orthodox Church, which may have been intended to disrupt the Easter ceremony, which was to be attended by the Patriarch of Catholicos and representatives of the central government: Chairman of the Parliament – Nino Burjanadze, Prime Minister – Zurab Zhvania and Minister of Internal Affairs Giorgi Baramidze, also, the confrontation with the police on October 1, 2017); conflict situations related to the cult buildings between Orthodox and Muslims in the village of Mokha, between Catholics and Orthodox Georgians in the village of Ivilita (in

Akhaltsikhe), Vale, as well as in the village of Ude, between Gregorian Armenians and Orthodox Georgians in Marda, Akhaltsikhe district, etc.

In the 30s of the 19th century, before the settlement of Armenians from Turkey by the Russian authorities, the largest part of the ethnic minorities who moved to Samtskhe-Javakheti never had any kind of serious conflict with the local Georgian population [6].

It is important to highlight that Russia's presence in the Caucasus led to managed migration processes aimed to alter the demographic landscape that would give it the leverage of exclusive and efficient control over the region in the long term. Both ethnic and religious factors were considered in this direction. The imperialistic approach of Russia persisted in shaping the regional structure, extending into the era of the Soviet Union. As noted by A. Songhulashvili in the book *Soviet Policy and the National Minority of Georgia*, a strategy resembling the planting of slow-acting mines was implemented during the establishment of autonomies [7]. The fact that Russia used these mines quite effectively to pursue its interests in the region indicates that geopolitical aspects are gaining relevance in the background of classical foundations of ethno-political conflicts.

In the aforementioned context, it is noteworthy that, in contrast to the Soviet Union, the religious factor occupies an important place in the ideological support of modern Russian imperialism. The prevailing idea in the Russian media regarding the establishment of a powerful Orthodox empire that will eventually conquer the entire East and bring it under a unified leadership has some basis in biblical and nonbiblical prophecies [8]. It is important to highlight that the discussion of these

prophecies by some ideologues of the Russian Empire is distinguished by certain features and utilized to rationalize the aggressive policy of Russia [9]. In the same direction, the book *Sviataiia Rus' protiv nevidimoi Khazarii*, deserves special interest, where the Russian imperialist vision is clearly formulated [10]. The author of the letter is Colonel Tatyana Gracheva, head of the Russian and Foreign Languages Department of Military Academy of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Russia, who wrote numerous books and articles of similar spirit (*Pamiat Russkoi Dushi, Kogda Vlast' Ne Ot Boga, Poslednee Iskushenie Rossii*) [11-13].

It is significant that the presence of an imperialist mindset has always characterized even distinguished representatives of different social classes of Russian society. Simultaneously, the association of an evil power allowed by God with Russia was always used for political motives in the West [8].

Considering the above mentioned, the intense emotions surround the issue of the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the recent developments within the Georgian Orthodox Church are unsurprising, which poses a serious threat to the ideological foundations of Russian imperialism, moreover certain forces (e.g. Archbishop Sviatoslav) show their desire for autocephaly in Belarus as well.

In conclusion, overlooking cultural and civilizational aspects, especially in regions of Georgia densely inhabited by ethnic minorities, whose ethnic and religious diversity renders them potential flashpoints, could result in the escalation of conflicts, that may draw neighboring countries into crisis, posing a threat to geopolitical stability in the South Caucasus.

სოციოლოგია

კულტურულ-ცივილიზაციური მდგენელის გავლენა ეროვნულ უშიშროებასა და გეოპოლიტიკურ სტაბილურობაზე საქართველოს ეთნიკური უმცირესობებით დასახლებული რეგიონების მაგალითზე

პ. გელაშვილი

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(წარმოდგენილია აკადემიის წევრის ო. გოგიაშვილის მიერ)

დღესდღეობით მსოფლიო მასშტაბით სახელმწიფოების უმრავლესობის, მათ შორის, ჩვენი ქვეყნის წინაშე მდგარი გამოწვევებიდან უმნიშვნელოვანესია ეროვნული უშიშროებისა და გეოპოლიტიკური სტაბილურობის უზრუნველყოფა, რაშიც პოლიტიკური, ეკონომიკური და სხვა ფაქტორების პარალელურად გარკვეულ როლს კულტურულ-ცივილიზაციური მდგენელები თამაშობენ. საქართველოს რელიგიის საკითხთა სახელმწიფოს სააგენტოს ვებგვერდზე განთავსებული მონაცემებით საქართველოში სულ 2518 მოქმედი საკულტო ნაგებობაა, მათ შორის, ეთნიკური და რელიგიური უმცირესობებით კომპაქტურად დასახლებულ რეგიონებში 540. აქედან, სამცხე-ჯავახეთში – 205, ქვემო ქართლში – 247, ხოლო კახეთის (მეზობელ ქვეყნებთან მოსაზღვრე) მულტიეთნიკურ და მულტირელიგიურ ადმინისტრაციულ ერთეულებში: ახმეტის მუნიციპალიტეტში – 33, ყვარელის მუნიციპალიტეტში – 29, ლაგოდეხის მუნიციპალიტეტში – 26. რაც შეეხება მოსახლეობის განაწილებას მხარეებისა და რელიგიური კუთვნილების მიხედვით, სამცხე-ჯავახეთში უპირატესად მართლმადიდებლური (72605 აღმსარებელი, 45,25%), სომეხთა სამოციქულო (64115 აღმსარებელი, 39,96%), კათოლიკური (15024 აღმსარებელი, 9,36%) და მუსლიმური (6060 აღმსარებელი, 3,78%), ხოლო ქვემო ქართლში მართლმადიდებლური (217724 აღმსარებელი, 51,36%), მუსლიმური (182216 აღმსარებელი, 42,99%) და სომეხთა სამოციქულო (13917 აღმსარებელი, 3,28%) აღმსარებლობის მოსახლეობაა. კახეთში კი მართლმადიდებლები და მუსლიმები სჭარბობენ დანარჩენი კონფესიების წარმომადგენლებს (შესაბამისად: 85,79%, 12,15% და 2% სხვა დანარჩენი). მიუხედავად იმისა, რომ სამხარეო ჭრილში ჩვენი შესწავლის სამიზნე რეგიონების მოსახლეობის უმრავლესობა ეთნიკურად ქართველი და მართლმადიდებლობის აღმსარებელია, სახელმწიფო სასაზღვრო ზოლთან უშუალო სიახლოვეს მცხოვრებთა უმრავლესობა განსხვავებული ეთნიკური ან რელიგიური ნიშნის მატარებელია. ზემოთ მოყვანილი ინფორმაციის ანალიზი გვიჩვენებს, რომ ჩვენი კვლევის სამიზნე ზონების მოსახლეობის ინტენსიურობის განსაზღვრაში მოქალაქეობის პარალელურად ორი მდგენელი – რელიგიური და ეთნიკური იკვეთება.

ნიშანდობლივია ისიც, რომ ხსენებულ ორ პარამეტრს შორის პრიორიტეტის დადგენა როგორც ისტორიულ, ისე კულტურულ-ცივილიზაციურ ჭრილში, ხშირ შემთხვევაში საკმაოდ რთულია. საბოლოოდ უნდა ითქვას, რომ კულტურულ-ცივილიზაციური ასპექტების გაუთვალისწინებლობამ, განსაკუთრებით საქართველოს ეთნიკური უმცირესობებით კომპაქტურად დასახლებულ რეგიონებში, რომელთა ეთნიკურ-რელიგიური შემადგენლობა მათ ფეთქებად-საშიშ კერებად აქცევს, შესაძლოა გამოიწვიოს კონფლიქტების გაღვივება, კრიზისში მეზობელი ქვეყნების ჩათრევა და სამხრეთ კავკასიაში გეოპოლიტიკური სტაბილურობის დარღვევა.

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