

პოლიტიკა
კავკასიის
ბარშემო

პოლიტიკა კავკასიის გარშემო

V საერთაშორისო სამეცნიერო კონფერენცია

შრომათა კრებული



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გამომცემლობა

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Deformation of perception of geography of the complex system of the Abkhazian conflict

Abstract

The article describes the problem of perceiving the geography of the Abkhazian conflict, as a fundamental factor in the incorrect perception of the structure of the conflict and, as a consequence, a complication of the process of positive transformation of the conflict. Different ways of using the term “geography of conflict” are described in scientific and political discourse. The problem is presented in the context of political psychology. Particular attention is paid to the cognitive aspects related to the predominance of the reductionist style of thinking.

Keywords: reductionism, mixed conflict, apsuology (Apsua Studies), abkhazology (Abkhaz Studies), abkhaziology (Abkhazian Studies).

The problem of non-resolution of military-political conflicts in society is associated with the problem of incorrect diagnosis, which, in turn, is associated with deformation of the perception of the structure of the conflict. This deformation of perception may have cognitive causes, in particular, the dominance of reductionist way of thinking. Meaning, if we do not see the general structure of the conflict, namely, by whom and how it is presented, then we either seek to redefine it by ourselves, or are satisfied with a fragment and call it the whole picture of the conflict.

One of the most important subsystems of the conflict structure is the parties to the conflict. Parties to the conflict – direct or indirect participants of the process, which have their own specific interests. Parties to the conflict can be represented by various actors (subsystems of a lower level), among which there can also be conflict relations.

There are several types of determination of conflict-definition by object, by parties to the conflict, as well as conditional definition. For example, if the object of the conflict is a territory, then we call it a territorial conflict. Of course, the territory of Abkhazia is the object of a clash both at the local and international levels.

However, the participants of this clash cannot be limited to only two parties to the conflict. Although, reductionist-minded experts and scientists are stubbornly trying to reduce it to one of the conflicting pairs.

That is why it is not correct to call this conflict, for example, “the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict”. It is also incorrect to call this conflict the “Georgian-Russian conflict”, because, despite the fact that this component is present in the conflict system, it is not the only one. There also exists a conflict between the Abkhaz separatists and the Russian Federation, despite the fact that today the Russian Federation positions itself as an ally of Abkhazia. However, the concept of “conflict between Abkhazia and Russia” is not presented neither in scientific nor in political discourse.

For propaganda purposes, some call the conflict local, others – international. A similar problem exists also in relation to other post-Soviet conflicts. However, this is just a manipulation that sets a goal – the promotion of their interests. In fact, this is a conflict of a mixed-type that has local and international components.

Thus, the Abkhazian conflict represents a complex conflict and in the context of the theory of complex systems can be called – “The complex system of the Abkhazian conflict.” In practice, this name consisting of 4 words is difficult to use, therefore, we propose to agree on the use of a conditional name – “Abkhazian conflict”.

The term “geography of conflict” can be used by us in the following dimensions.

1. Under “geography of the conflict”, here we mean the level of integration of local and international participants into the conflict. The geography of international participants of the process has regional (Caucasian), regional (Black Sea), continental and transcontinental character. An active regional participant in this conflict is Turkey. An active participant in the continental dimension is the EU and other European organizations or individual countries. One of the participants in the transcontinental dimension is the strategic ally of Georgia – the United States of America. On the other hand, we can represent the United States of America not as a strategic ally of Georgia, but as a party to the geopolitical conflict with Russia in the struggle for influence in the Caspian-Black Sea area. In this case, the Georgian authorities are supporters of the USA, and the de facto authorities of Abkhazia are supporters of the Russian Federation. In the process of modeling, it is necessary to introduce also the other side of the internal (local) conflict in Abkhazia, this is the Supreme Council of Abkhazia in exile.
2. The second dimension of the geography of the conflict is related to the fact that complex conflicts are represented by several types of conflicts at the same time and the geographical boundaries of these conflicts do not always coincide. For example, such terms as:
 - • Zone of ethnic conflict
 - • Zone of political conflict
 - • Zone of armed conflict

These terms are not identical. The zone of armed conflict may be local, and the zone of political conflict may be international. Or the zone of ethnic conflict (as in the case of the Georgian-Ossetian ethnic confrontation) does not coincide with the zone of armed conflict. Therefore, using the term “conflict zone” or “geography of the conflict”, it is desirable to clarify which component of the conflict we have in mind.

3. The third dimension of the use of the term “geography of conflict” can be defined in relation to the geography of Abkhazia itself. The borders of Abkhazia itself during the IXX-XXI centuries, have changed significantly. On this map, indicated in brown, is part of the territory of Western Abkhazia, which was annexed in 1918-1921, first by the Volunteer Army of General Denikin, and then by the Red Army. These territories today are part of the Krasnodar Krai of the Russian Federation.

Map of the Democratic Republic of Georgia 1918-1921

An interesting fact is that the Russian Federation today claims a part of the Gagra region. This issue has become the core of the conflict between the Russian Federation and the Secessionists of Abkhazia, who, in the opinion of Russian academician Andrei Piontkovskiy, really believe that they are independent, including from the Russian Federation.

In 2011, in the process of negotiations on the issue of delimitation and demarcation of the so-called border between Abkhazia and the Russian Federation, they were able to partially protect 160 square kilometers of the Gagra region. However, the claims of the Russian Federation to these territories are traditional. It must be remembered that after the occupation of Abkhazia by the Red Army of Abkhazia on March 4, 1921, the Gagra region was transferred to the Russian Federation and only in 1929 was returned to Abkhazia, Georgia as a result of lobbying for this issue by Tbilisi. Based on the foregoing, the agenda includes not only the issue of territorial integrity of Georgia, but also the territorial integrity of Abkhazia.

The territory of modern Abkhazia can be divided into several zones.

- • Territories that became part of Russia as a result of the annexation of 1921 (Sochi region).
- • Territories that the Russian Federation wants to annex at this stage (Gagra district).
- • Territories of Central Abkhazia in which secessionists feel more or less calm.
- • The territories of Eastern Abkhazia, which, despite ethnic cleansing, political, economic and cultural discrimination, are still inhabited by Georgian ethnic groups.
- • The territory of the Kodori (Dali) Gorge, which until 2008 was under the control of the central authorities of Georgia.

Another interesting issue is the expulsion of local residents from Abkhazia. They have been expelled over the



past 200 years and today inhabit not only Georgia, but also other countries of the world.

4. The fourth dimension shows the problem of the perception of the geography of Abkhazia by different groups of the population. One of the most important issues of Abkhazian studies is the problem of perceiving the geographical borders of Abkhazia. Based on this, ambiguities and scientifically unfounded interpretations of the geography of Abkhazia arise. For the Abkhazian separatists, Abkhazia, it is Apsny (and this is affixed in the constitution). For Abkhazian pro-Russian irredentists, it is most likely part of the Krasnodar Krai. For Abkhazian pro-Turkish irredentists, Abkhazia is part of the pan-Ottoman area, and Sukhum/i is the capital of the Confederation of Mountain Peoples. For Abkhazian Armenians – Abkhazia is part of the Pan-Armenian Black Sea area. For many Abkhazian Georgians, it is the integral part of the Georgian political area...

The western borders of Abkhazia determine the western borders of the Caucasus in the geographical and political sense of the word. Consequently, its movement to the east also changes the borders of the Caucasus, in particular, the South Caucasus. The earlier occupied territories of Western Abkhazia (including Adler, Sochi, etc.) today are not considered as South Caucasian. In the strategic future, in the event of the current accession of Abkhazia to the Russian Federation, this can shift the borders of the Caucasus to the East to the Enguri (Inguri) River. Moreover, further advance to the East may include the entire territory of Western Georgia. As actual experience shows, such “advancements” are accompanied by total squeezing of the local population, which represents a threat of strategic character.

Methodological problems and issues of the studies of Abkhazian conflict – apsuology, abkhazology and abkhaziology:

Abkhaziology (Studies of Abkhazia), a science that studies everything around Abkhazia – is a subsystem of the Caucasian studies (Studies of Caucasus). Consequently, the “Abkhazian conflict” is an object of Caucasian studies. For Georgian scholars, Abkhazian studies are a subsystem of “Georgian Studies” (Studies of Georgia). It would also be true to consider these studies as a subsystem of the Black Sea Studies, since Abkhazia is an important part of the Black Sea coast and the area as a whole.

In scientific discourse, “Abkhazology” is reduced to “Apsuology”, which studies only the “Apsua” culture.

This discrepancy is determined by the reductionist approach and has its historical roots. The multi-ethnic society of Abkhazia, through various political technologies, boils down to one ethnos – “Apsua”. This artificially

legitimizes the special rights of this one group and provokes conflicts with other groups.

“Apsualogy,” as a term in scientific discourse, is not yet present. However, besides Apsua, many ethnographic groups live on the territory of Abkhazia. Therefore, from a civil and scientific point of view, the study of the specifics of ethno-social groups of Abkhazia should be defined by the term “Abkhazology”. Thus, Apsualogy is a subsystem of Abkhazology, and Abkhazology, in turn, is a subsystem of Abkhaziology.

The confusion in methodological research that exists at this point comes mainly from the work of the famous scientist Nicholas Marr, who set the erroneous pseudoscientific cognitive paradigm, which is in effect till today. An example of his research can be the work “Abkhazs and Abkhazology.”

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