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**POLITICAL AND MANAGERIAL OPTIMIZATION OF
INTERETHNIC RELATIONS IN THE STAVROPOL TERRITORY**

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Abstract

The paper deals with the principles compiling the concept proposed for political and managerial optimization of interethnic relations in the Stavropol Territory, which is interpreted by the authors as conservative and protective, formed around historical, cultural, and ethnocultural traditionalism. The authors highlight some purposeful efforts of the authorities to implement RF national policies in cooperation with the ethnocultural institutions of civil society. A defining attribute of interethnic relations in the region is regarded as a stable and positive trend. However, this trend is thought to call for constant systemic political and managerial optimization, as well as ideological, substantive, organizational and informational support. The authors provide recommendations to the authorities to maintain the stability of interethnic relations, to strengthen the Russian civil identity. The authors generalize that a substantive core under the idea for political and managerial optimization of interethnic relations in the Stavropol Territory is some conservative-protective beliefs composed of patriotism, traditionalism, humanism and adherence to common Russian moral and ethical values. The targeted comprehensive political and managerial optimization of interethnic relations, which can be considered successful, although not yet irreversible, determines the preservation of general stability and social harmony in the region. A conflict potential of interethnic relations in the region persists and is occasionally aggravated by local social, economic, and criminal incidents. The paper offers recommendations, in particular, to update the tools enabling political and managerial optimization of interethnic relations in order to neutralize the “ethnic leftism” in the political struggle.

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1. Introduction

Analytical comprehension of doctrinal political and administrative endeavors of the state to streamline and facilitate interethnic relations is of enduring relevance for post-Soviet political and ethnopolitical knowledge (Tishkov, 1997). Ad hoc actions taken to structure the interests of ethnically identical populations remain prominent, despite the unification, stereotyping, and modernization (Astvatsaturova, 2020). Ethno-identification positioning of individuals, ethnic communities, peoples is a resource for social and political practices, which is confirmed by many plots of today's intra- and interstate, interregional contradictions and conflicts (Asal et al., 2014). A special niche of political and ethnopolitical knowledge is political and managerial optimization of interethnic relations based on adequate and transparent political doctrines (Han et al., 2014).

2. Problem Statement

The significance of political and managerial optimization of interethnic relations, included in the problem field of political doctrine and managerial functionality in multi-ethnic states, is attributed to:

- intensified polyethnicity of modern society (migration, population displacement, growth of metropolitan cities) (Curtis, 2014);
- persisting interethnic contradictions (territorial, economic, political, status, cultural) (Gurr, 2015);
- systematic transformations of ethnic conflicts into military-political clashes and regional wars (xenophobia, discrimination, persecution, death of the population) (Gurr, 2017);
- growing confrontation between ethno-traditional and ethno-modernization trends (Bochsler & Schlapfer, 2016);
- steadily expanding assimilation of ethnic and confessional interests in everyday social practices and in targeted policies.

Political and managerial optimization of interethnic relations has its doctrinal content in the Russian state-civil scope (Avksent'ev & Gritsenko, 2016). The effectiveness of political and managerial interethnic optimization is directly projected into the stability and sovereignty of Russian statehood, which is fully appreciated by the federal elite (Putin, 2012). There is an obvious need for a systemic (reactive, projective, proactive) awareness risen for political and managerial interethnic optimization at the regional level, since Russia is a country of regions whose characteristics are significantly differentiated (Capitals and Regions in Modern Russia, 2018). The fundamental idea to trigger political and managerial optimization of interethnic relations generally and particularly is implemented in the context of historically established ethnic diversity and nation-building involving many peoples, as well as in the context of Russian state sovereignty and Russian civil self-determination.

Therefore, a doctrinal and technical insight into political and managerial interethnic optimization in the constituent entities of the North Caucasian Federal District (NCFD), particularly in the Stavropol Territory, is a valuable political study that can be extrapolated to some other regions of the Russian Federation.

3. Research Questions

The subject of research is political and administrative optimization of interethnic relations in the Stavropol Territory in the doctrinal and technical and technological terms, with respect to the special geo-territorial, ethnocultural, ethnopolitical characteristics of the region. The subject of research is addressed in the light of full-fledged integration of regional interethnic relations in the North Caucasian cultural and political agendas and their susceptibility to the ongoing North Caucasian risks. In this regard, particular aspects of the general subject of research are highlighted, namely: a) the ideological principles compiling the Stavropol political and managerial doctrine; b) target functionality of authorities and local self-government; c) effective instruments.

4. Purpose of the Study

The paper is aimed at the expert and analytical comprehension of political and managerial interethnic optimization in the Stavropol Territory in the conditions of the next North Caucasian ethnopolitical timeout, followed by the identification of symptomatic doctrinal ideas and technical and technological managerial projections. The study is practically oriented, since it provides not only analytics, but also some recommendations for the authorities and ethnocultural institutions of civil society.

5. Research Methods

Research methods are consistent with the principles of political analysis. This includes expert observation based on indicative monitoring (model of the Distributed Scientific Center for Interethnic and Religious Problems of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation). Content analysis of documents, legal and political doctrinal materials is also widely used.

6. Findings

General environment and public order. The core of today's interethnic relations in the Stavropol Territory has continued a stable stabilization trend since 2018–2019. Bodies of power and administration to a large extent manage to apply effective instruments for political and managerial optimization of interethnic relations jointly with civil society institutions, national-cultural and religious organizations, and ethnic councils. According to 2020 research, the share of the population in the Stavropol Territory who positively assesses the status of interethnic relations is over 94.6 %. However, there is a hidden constant conflict potential that under certain conditions may be put into practice.

An additional significant factor in the general economic, political and social context was the spread of COVID-19 that entailed some consequences in the socio-economic and political spheres of the region, but did not affect the sphere of interethnic relations. On the contrary, in conditions of epidemiological risk, ethnic groups have become increasingly consolidated in their endeavors for mutual assistance and volunteering that rest on traditional Russian collectivism.

Power, state and politics. In 2020, the President of the Russian Federation Putin appointed Yury Chaika, the former Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation, Presidential Envoy to the North Caucasus Federal District (RF Presidential Plenipotentiary Envoy, 2020). The public motivation behind the personnel decision is not entirely convincing. Many experts and public activists have an ambiguous attitude to a rapid reshuffle of presidential envoys in the North Caucasian Federal District – 5 in 10 years, pointing out that high-level officials do not have time to get involved in the problems of the district and the Stavropol Territory. Taking up his duties, Yury Chaika (2020) outlined a number of long-standing but pressing problems of the North Caucasian Federal District including high unemployment, significant wage arrears, a difficult situation in the housing sector, and a growing rate of crime and corruption. Accordingly, he called for actions towards counter-terrorism and control of extremism; strict control over the implementation of national projects; introduction of state-of-the-art online platforms; updating economic policy (reducing the unemployment rate, creating new business models and ensuring the stable functioning of all business segments).

Strategy and regime of power in the field of interethnic relations. A specialized body in this area – the Stavropol Committee for Nationalities and Cossacks – has been implementing a conservative-protective ideological strategy for a number of years geared to optimize interethnic relations and a well-tailored system of instruments for responding to conflict situations. This strategy is inherent in the ruling elite of the Stavropol Territory and finds responses from the inhabitants of the region. Its provision can be stated as follows:

- peace and harmony among the peoples of Stavropol is conceived as a valuable historical, cultural and spiritual heritage, the preservation and enhancement of which is of pivotal importance for the authorities;
- economic, political and social stability achieved in the region is grounded on the strength of interethnic relations that constitute an important segment of public relations;
- a stable situation is provided by the program-targeted political and managerial optimization of interethnic relations within the state programs of the Stavropol Territory **“Interethnic Relations, Prevention of Terrorism and Support of the Cossacks” and “Crime Prevention and Public Security”**

The region is constantly monitoring the causes and consequences of ethnic violations. A current political and managerial format provides for a vertical and horizontal response to all conflict situations to neutralize them and minimize the impacts. It has many important, mutually complementary technological links, a framework of coordinating and advisory bodies typical of the subjects of the Russian Federation of the North Caucasian Federal District (Astvatsaturova et al., 2020).

Public order, counter-terrorism. Terrorist and extremist threats are dangerous, including the fact that they destabilize interethnic relations and damage the civil unity of the residents of the Stavropol Territory. They have local, but symptomatic display like attempts to establish links with terrorist organizations, direct preparation for the implementation of terrorist acts, public justification of terrorism and extremism, and the involvement of citizens in terrorist organizations.

In this regard, in 2020–2021 targeted counter-terrorism operations, investigative actions, court decisions and law enforcement were initiated to strengthen national and human security. Moreover, the

authorities, together with higher and secondary education institutions, cultural organizations, carry out systematic preventive activities with young people.

Cultural dominance. Self-determination of the Cossacks. A target object of the political and managerial interethnic optimization in the Stavropol Territory is the Cossacks as a special historical and cultural group actively involved in self-determination. Yury Chaika emphasized the systemic importance of the Cossacks at a meeting of the Council under the President of the Russian Federation for Cossack Affairs. The Council discussed the execution of the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation “On the Approval of the Strategy of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in Relation to the Russian Cossacks for 2021–2030” and the tasks of the All-Russian Cossack Society. Chaika noted the most important priorities, namely: the integration of the Cossacks into the system of public administration; interaction of Cossack societies with military units of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, with the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia, the Border Service of the FSB of Russia and the EMERCOM of Russia, with the bodies and military units of the Federal Service of the National Guard of the Russian Federation (Chaika, 2020).

The presence and influence of diasporas. National and cultural self-determination. National and cultural self-determination is intensively going on in the general cultural multi-ethnic context. The Stavropol House of Friendship, the Pyatigorsk House of National Cultures, the Public Council under the Committee of the Stavropol Territory for Nationalities and Cossacks, the Advisory Council on Ethnic Relations under the Administration of Stavropol, ethnic and confessional councils, national cultural organizations and autonomies (Abaza, Azeri, Armenian, Adygo-Circassian, Greek, Ingush, Karachai-Balkar, Nogai, Meskhetian Turks, etc.) are operating in the region.

Popular ways of ethnocultural positioning involve dictations for students in the national languages, documentaries about the ethnogenesis and history of the peoples of Stavropol, the days of national cultures and cuisines. What is more, the conservative-protective idea for political and managerial interethnic optimization mandates fostering the civil unity of the inhabitants on the basis of traditional Russian and Stavropol values. In 2000, the Day of National Unity, organized on November 4 with the support of the authorities, was held online including a series of creative mass events within the framework of the #WeAreTogether project.

Contacts and stereotypes. Group demands, conflicts. In 2020, in the Stavropol Territory, a Roma-related scenario was escalated following the incident in Kochubeevsky village when an ethnic gypsy driver hit a 15-year-old girl who died. In the aftermath of the tragic event, the residents of the village gathered and demanded to evict the Gypsy families. The Governor of the Stavropol Territory Vladimirov took the criminal case under his personal control (Caucasian Knot, 2020). Subsequently, the social adaptation of the Roma population was discussed at a meeting of the Council under the Governor of the Stavropol Territory on interethnic relations. Besides, other political and managerial efforts were made to resolve the situation and to put the Roma issue on the interethnic agenda.

The projection of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh onto the communities of the Stavropol Territory required significant political and managerial attention. The military-political conflict in Transcaucasia brought about the need for public positioning of Armenian and Azerbaijani organizations, both in ethnic and Russian-civil dimensions. The heads of the Azerbaijani and Armenian diasporas in the

regions of the South and North Caucasian federal districts called on their ethnic relatives not to incite hostility and prevent incidents between Azerbaijanis and Armenians of Russia against the background of the aggravation of the Karabakh conflict. The Governor of the Stavropol Territory Vladimirov praised the efforts of the leaders of both diasporas to maintain stability in the region.

7. Conclusion

The conservative-protective idea for political and managerial interethnic optimization in the Stavropol Territory harmoniously stems from a common awareness: firstly, the relationship between the state and the Russian peoples; secondly, the relations of the Russian peoples among themselves; thirdly, relations between ethnic groups and peoples of Stavropol region. This awareness was repeatedly broadcast by the federal elite and put in the amendments introduced in 2020 to the Constitution of the Russian Federation.

The conservative-protective idea for political and managerial interethnic optimization embodied in the Stavropol Territory declares the priority of universal human values, conditionality of mutual interests and beneficial coexistence of ethnic communities in the regional environment. In a practical political and managerial format, this idea is guided by the supra-ethnic traditions of collectivism, mutual assistance, popular peacemaking and peacebuilding as practices of sanity and democracy of consent, which are traditional for the Stavropol Territory and the North Caucasus.

The instruments for enabling the above idea involve strengthening the affiliation of the inhabitants of the region to Russian citizenship as to a reliable national-state legal and political complex of global significance. Patriotism is viewed not only as love for the Fatherland, but also as a conscious awareness of the interests of the Russian Federation and the Stavropol Territory and readiness for certain restrictions to achieve them. The integrity of the multi-ethnic and multicultural regional environment is organized and kept through the full-blooded development of ethnic groups and ethnic groups as subjects of a common progressive cultural and civilization process.

The analytical observations are summarized as follows:

The substantive core under the idea for political and managerial optimization of interethnic relations in the Stavropol Territory is some conservative-protective beliefs composed of patriotism, traditionalism, humanism and adherence to common Russian moral and ethical values.

The targeted comprehensive political and managerial optimization of interethnic relations, which can be considered successful, although not yet irreversible, determines the preservation of general stability and social harmony in the region.

Political and managerial optimization of interethnic relations in the region is implemented under the updated “Strategy of the National Policy of the Russian Federation for the Period until 2025” by program-targeted technologies to maintain the ethnocultural diversity of the region and the strengthening of Russian identity (RF President, 2018).

Systemic determinants indicating local interethnic tension involve some targeted problems that affect specific ethnic groups (status, political, territorial, linguistic, rehabilitation, unresolved national issues).

A conflict potential of interethnic relations in the region persists and is occasionally aggravated by local social, economic, and criminal incidents.

Recommendations. Subject to the highlighted realities, processes and trends, it is advisable:

1. Update the instruments for political and administrative interethnic optimization in order to neutralize the “ethnic leftism” in the political struggle, in the redistribution of property and spheres of influence.

2. Coordinate constant monitoring of the status, moods and expectations of ethnic communities, as well as network, blog Internet content having ethnocultural, ethnopolitical focus.

3. Streamline the process of holding actions of all-Russian significance (population censuses, elections, celebrating memorable dates, national and religious holidays).

4. Use socio-political milestones and public holidays for civic rallying of the population.

5. Create, in case of problematic situations, international public-deputy-expert commissions, as well as situational information centers, media platforms for prompt, reliable dissemination in the Internet space.

6. Arrange international civil congresses and forums of peoples with an all-Russian agenda and restart existing public councils, forums, camps to update their composition and agenda.

7. Prevent the competition of ethnic symbols, “the war of stories and historical heroes” while creating conditions for the preservation of the ethno-cultural identity of regional communities, native languages and religious interests.

8. Improve the qualifications of politicians and managers in the field of interethnic and ethno-confessional relations, as well as the general social, civic competence of ethnic and religious leaders.

9. Neutralize the geopolitization of interethnic and ethno-confessional relations and interference in regional interethnic relations and ethnopolitical processes of foreign stakeholders.

They retain their significance, especially in the context of geopolitical, socio-economic and epidemiological risks, increased ideological-political and moral-moral vision of the “Stavropol and North Caucasian positive”, popularization of the idea of Stavropol and the North regional brands (tourism, resort, recreation, leisure, treatment, health improvement) with a further consolidation of Russian civic identity and Russian patriotism in the region.

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