

ISCKMC 2022**International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»****TERRITORIES WITH A COMPLEX ETHNO-POLITICAL
STRUCTURE OF THE POPULATION: CONFLICT
FORECASTING APPROACHES**

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Abstract

The complex composition of the population of the South of Russia is one of the significant factors that cause additional risks of growing social tension and the danger of various conflicts, in particular, an identity crisis. The process of formation of a general civil Russian superethnos and the functioning of an integral state system of territorial-political, administrative-economic and legal control in a multi-component, multicultural, multi-structural, multi-ethnic, poly-confessional society is a super-complex problem. However, since historically the unity of ethnic groups and territories of the Russian state was primarily reasoned by natural causes, as a rule, it provided a fairly high level of integration potential of society. The structure of the Russian political space contains a center, a periphery, and various socio-economic and communicative mechanisms of interaction between them. That is, the political space is organized as a hierarchy of structures of political control, managerial, legal and administrative practices created in the center. Since in modern conditions any territorial space, especially a sufficiently large one, can not be absolutely homogeneous, therefore, in conditions of heterogeneity, conflict potential and even aspirations for autonomization and sovereignization may arise. Center-periphery relations have a significant impact on the political structure of regional communities and conflicts in them. Thus, the study of the current sub-regional ethno-political situation in the South of Russia is an important aspect of the scientific support of the current regional policy in order to improve the spatial, socio-cultural and political-economic development of the country.

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Keywords: Center, ethnoses, forecasting, identity, periphery, regional situation



1. Introduction

The study of the current subregional ethnopolitical situation in the South of Russia is a process of search and analysis of big data and operation with logical and semantic algorithms that organize the semantic fabric of information flows (Kurnosov, 2020). As for the problems of social forecasting, the scientific literature usually focuses on economic aspects (Bedanukov, 2005; Nazarenko & Babkina, 2013). However, in these works we can also find general interdisciplinary approaches to forecasting, for example, the substantiation of the main stages in the development of forecast scenarios (Nazarenko & Babkina, 2013). Professor Akhremenko writes about the limitations of the application of forecasting methods in social and political sciences and about their inability to precisely predict the possible changes of studied political processes. He notes that the high level of complexity in predicting political processes is due to a number of reasons. First, many factors interact in political life and this diversity is extremely difficult to reduce to a small number of fundamental variables. Secondly, political systems are reflective - their actors are capable of goal-oriented behavior, creating their own models of reality. We are forced to take into account not only the actual state of affairs, but also its reflection in the minds of individuals and groups, which may differ significantly. As a rule, this leads to a sharp increase in the level of uncertainty and a significant complication of models (Akhremenko, 2012). In this regard, he gives the examples of the so-called “paradoxes of self-fulfillment and self-refutation”, when in politics the very creation of a forecast, its articulation and voicing becomes a new event fact that directly affects the object of scientific forecasting. Socio-political forecasts can have a certain impact on the development of political processes and behavior of social groups and individuals. They can increase or decrease the civic activity of the population and thus perform the function of constructing social reality. In this context, it seems appropriate to refer to the theory of the famous Norwegian political scientist Galtung, who proposed a “critical-empirical-constructivist” approach to the study of society in order to comprehend the relationship between empirical data and the corresponding values obtained on the basis of critical analysis. “The researcher tries to *understand* why the empirical world is the way it is and to *foresee*, ceteris paribus, its possible future development” (Shestopal, 1999, p. 96). In theoretical and methodological terms, for the study of the regional and subregional situation, the collective monograph prepared and published in 2021 by the Department of Political Science of Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University on the topic “Ethnic Aspects of Political Institutions and Processes” is of great importance (Lindgren & Bandhold, 2021). In particular, this paper presents the idea that the regional situation in territories with a complex ethno-confessional structure of the population is largely explained by the scientific principles of economic determinism in the context of the latest trends. Since the processes characteristic of modern society do not correspond to the idea of the emergence of separatism according to reasons for striving for a cultural or historical identity as well as the problem of discrimination of regional communities is losing its relevance, since most often separatist sentiments arise precisely in more economically successful regions. That is, the reasons for the desire for regional-ethnic self-determination should be sought not so much in ethno-cultural problems, but in political and economic models of center-periphery relations. A conceptual toolkit for the study of ethno-territorial processes is proposed by the famous Norwegian political scientist Rokkan, who emphasizes the importance of the analysis of spatial development

and territorial policy in order to identify the qualitative characteristics of a region with a complex ethno-confessional population structure (Rokkan, 1999). The use of event analysis methods is based on the so-called “stream analytics” since the study involves the inclusion of analytics in recorded events, which are presented in the information field as “event streams” that are constantly analyzed in dynamics. Based on this, a certain theoretical model is being built, which can allow identifying new trends in the development of the studied object and further use of the scenario modeling method.

2. Problem Statement

The authors puts forward the idea of the approaches to conflictological forecasting of the development of territories with a complex ethnic structure of the population, which, in addition to the usual assessments of the determination of the causes of tension along the line of center-periphery relations, due solely to the identity of ethnic and confessional communities, also assume more deep scientific analysis of the socio-economic sphere of a particular region with its own specifics of regional and ethnic identity, ethno-cultural and religious differences from other population groups in a multi-ethnic society. In order to prevent and predict conflicts with an ethnic component in the research, it is necessary to analyze the motivation of possible, separatist tendencies, dangerous for a single state due not only to sociocultural, but also political and economic factors.

3. Research Questions

The issues of a political and economic nature are increasingly gaining importance, and not just ethno-cultural discrimination as such (Munoz & Tormos, 2015). Among the theorists of ethno-political and ethno-confessional conflicts there is no consensus on the criteria analysis of the separatism factors. Ayres, Saideman and Laitin believe that ethnic determinism in separatist tendencies is not an absolute explanation for the desire for ethno-regional self-determination, although it can be its additional catalyst (Laitin, 2001; Saideman & Ayres, 2000). In order to understand the dynamics of Russian regionalization and the functioning of the region as a complex socio-economic, ethno-confessional and socio-political system, it is necessary to theoretically and methodologically comprehend and determine the ways of empirical study of various manifestations of regional identity. The structural levels of the regional identity of modern society are determined depending on the degree of awareness and politicization of regional features, including the complex nature of the ethno-confessional communities inhabiting the region. In the most general form, regional identity is considered at two levels: cultural and strategic. The first one includes a set of characteristics of the regional community that were formed in the process of interaction within the region, starting from the cultural and historical heritage and ending with the formation of a special regional community, expressed in the typical characteristics of the regional mentality, values and symbols. The strategic level is associated with the conscious “invention” and use of the so-called “regional uniqueness” and the targeted promotion of one's positive image (Nazukina, 2011). As a part of the study of the phenomenon of the influence of the region on the formation of identity, a significant contribution was made by the Finnish scientist Paasi, who proposed the concept of the dynamic formation of regional identity. According to him, the interpretations of regions and regional identities are highly

political categories and a comprehensive characterization of ethno-confessional identity in each case should be the result of the conceptualization of this phenomenon. Paasi (2009) notes that “the key issue in understanding of regional identity is not how the individual and the social are united in space, but how the social and the spatial can be understood in the production of the individual and the collective” (p. 125). The theoretical and methodological foundations for the analysis and forecasting of the regional and subregional situation in territories with a complex ethno-confessional structure of the population are laid down within the framework of the paradigm of geographical determinism, which, in particular, is substantiated in the concept of geo-ethno-cultural systems. The authors of this paradigm prove that the most stable geocultural structures are systems of natural territorial development (Existing & Druzhinin, 1994). Since any ethnic community is “cultural”, it acts as a bearer of certain patterns of behavior, spiritual values, peculiar mentality, traditions, customs, stereotypes, methods of interaction with the natural environment. Culture is always naturally associated with an ethnos and develops in the context of ethnogenesis in certain territorial conditions. Therefore, both culture and ethnicity are geographically determined, and the geocultural space is formed under the influence of interpersonal interactions between the representatives of various ethnic groups and the specifics of communicative ethnocontact processes developing in the corresponding geocultural space (Yurchenko & Yurchenko 2021).

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine what scientific tools and to what extent are necessary to use forecasting methods in the course of the analysis of the subregional ethnopolitical situation. Moreover, the authors try to set the meaning of both ethno-cultural and socio-political and economic issues, case studies of regional political-economic, media and ethno-political discourse.

5. Research Methods

The theoretical and methodological foundations and forecasting methods are used in order to ensure a high degree of accuracy, adequacy and interdependence between observation, interpretations, attempts to anticipate and identify patterns and also determine bifurcation (or polyfuration) points. The implementation of social modeling is based on the use of scenario techniques and the choice of the most preferred direction for the development of social communities in regions with a complex ethno-confessional structure of the population (Yurchenko et al., 2021). During the study, the monitoring based on event analysis, the scenario design taking into account conflictological expertise, the analysis of political texts and media discourse that affect the spatial development of territories with a complex ethno-confessional population structure were used.

6. Findings

The south of Russia must be considered as a territory of residence of various ethnic groups, where the ethnic groups interlocking with each other coexist. Emerging situations of interethnic and interfaith conflicts are explained by the differences the prevailing life picture of the world in one or another ethnic group, including the natural-geographical and historical factors of the formation of socio-political

interactions in the zones of socio-cultural ties of various communities and social groups. Forecasting the regional and subregional situation in territories with a complex ethno-confessional structure of the population may include the consideration of the following development options: 1. The inertial scenario that assumes the preservation of the existing structural components of ethnic communities, vectors and the rate of change in their development; 2. The innovation-target scenario, which is associated with the active position of the subject of the management of socio-political processes and implies qualitative changes and their accelerated pace to create a new supra-ethnic/poly-ethnic community - an all-Russian civic identity. Forecasts are usually quantitative in form, but they are also presented in the format of scenarios and are more or less vivid descriptions of what should happen, the presentation of some plausible futures (Lindgren, Bandhold, electronic resource). The scenario-technique method is an effective tool for the analysis and interpretation of information in the process of developing and making political decisions by authorities and governments, as well as large campaigns and corporations (Gueroui, 2016). According to Gueroui (2016):

the development of new scenarios takes a lot of time, but they have the advantage that they allow comprehensive solution of all the necessary research questions (or most of them) ... the scenario is a snapshot of this situation, and therefore it is automatically limited in its ability to discover and reflect the whole reality of decision-making. (p. 23).

However, without these research practices, modern project management is no longer possible. The innovation-target scenario, as a rule, presupposes the long-term nature of the state ethnic policy, which is oriented towards the intensification of social reforms in order to reduce interethnic distances and strengthen ethno-contact interdependencies. The conciliar, supra-ethnic consciousness and the development of a heterogeneous multi-ethnic community is considered in the context of forecasting as a process aimed at the optimization of the regional socio-political situation, reduction of the negative and possible unforeseen consequences of managerial functions. Therefore, for the development of decisions, forecast data are required in order to reduce the level of uncertainty in the process of the implementation of the tasks of political management in regions with a complex ethno-confessional structure of the population. The important direction in forecasting the regional and subregional situation in territories with a complex ethno-confessional structure of the population is conflictological expert diagnostics. This area requires a systematic interdisciplinary approach (Gobet, 2016) and the simultaneous possession of an expert with deep, highly specialized knowledge in the studied area. The latest factors influencing the regional situation in the South of Russia are revealed as a result of focusing on the risks of ethnopolitical stability in the context of individual geopolitical and geo-economic projects of the states of the Black Sea region, such as the Turkish project for the construction of the Istanbul Canal, which should be fixed in a certain way as one of the foreign policy aspects in approaches to the methodology of forecasting the regional situation. The external geopolitical factors in modern conditions cause the increase in the importance of anti-crisis project management in the internal and external spheres of interaction between the subjects of the ethnopolitical process in the transboundary space. This suggests the need to study the activities of the subjects of ethnopolitics in the development of comprehensive regional development

programs based on preliminary forecasting and conflictological study of the regional international and Russian political situation in the context of the identification of threats and risks to the sustainable development of social communities living in the study area. The methodology for forecasting the regional ethno-political situation includes a functional analysis of the structural elements of the studied regional communities and subjects of the socio-political process, the definition of methods for diagnosing the state of the foreign policy environment that affects the development trends of interethnic interactions and the internal dynamics of ethno-confessional relations. The creative process of the development of a model, an image of the preferred development of a complex society, is aimed at the determination of the potential possibility of its achievement through system analysis and the development of socio-political mechanisms for making changes, “correcting reality” or “creating a new reality”. Naturally, the forecasting process is aimed at the optimization of the regional socio-political situation, reduction of the negative and possible unforeseen consequences of managerial functions. Therefore, for the development of decisions, forecast data are required in order to reduce the level of uncertainty in the process of the implementation of the tasks of political management in regions with a complex ethno-confessional structure of the population. The scenarios are not predictions of the future. These are some hypothetical situations articulated by expert analysts, in particular specialists in the field of regional studies, similar to modeling some possible scenarios for the development of events in the studied region. The scenarios are used as a research method, as well as the development and decision-making tool, in order to most adequately determine the differences between the current situation at the moment, identify realistic options for their optimization and assess the potential consequences. At the same time, not only the most probable, but the most realistic scenarios, and, in some cases, unlikely or even improbable scenarios can also be played out. However, in general, as a rule, the most probable, perhaps even obvious scenarios are selected, and then their analysis is undertaken, the aspects are played out that represent various possible scenarios for the development of events, the formation of situations and the behavior of objects in the future. However, in principle, not a single tool is able to truly reflect real life experience in its entirety of manifestations. Social or managerial processes are so complex and numerous that scenarios give researchers the ability to control this complexity isolating the issue of territoriality.

7. Conclusion

Thus, in order to analyze the sub-regional ethno-political situation in the South of Russia, various features of the ethno-confessional identity of diaspora minorities are identified and taken into account, in particular, in conditions of territorial remoteness from the main ethnic core and “historical homeland”, since ethno-social and confessional distances are the most dangerous factors for the emergence and development regional conflicts (Bedrik et al., 2018). In this regard, the authors emphasize the need for a comprehensive study and forecasting of the regional and sub-regional situation in the territories with a complex population structure, since ethno-confessional differentiation can be the cause of a crisis of common civic identity if there is no state-national policy, which should be based on conflictological diagnostics, or is not effectively implemented.

Acknowledgments

The study was prepared within the framework of the State Assignment of the SSC RAS No. g.s. 122020100306-9.

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