MAJOR THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS

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This article explores the major approaches to the study of conflict resolution strategy from a variety of interdisciplinary perspectives. It argues that conflict resolution strategy, as a civil integration resource, is a necessary tool for overcoming the deep-rooted ethnic conflicts in the unstable North Caucasus. This research analyzes how the strength of civil integration can affect conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The author considers the essential factors of protracted ethnic conflicts and emphasizes the destabilizing role of the repoliticization of ethnicity in a crisis society. The concept of ethnic, "identity-based" conflicts is the heuristic theoretical model of exploring causes for increased ethnoreligious tensions in the North Caucasus. This article focuses on the ability of conflict resolution strategy to de-escalate growing tensions and transform protracted identity-based conflicts. The need to stimulate civil integration is caused by moral and structural causes: from the ethical point of view, the creation of an inclusive society is the fundamental societal goal; structural factors are related to the need to reduce inequalities and differences leading to social fragmentation and an escalation of ethnic conflicts. Among the structural conditions of regional conflicts, the author names ethnosocial inequalities, a civil identity crisis, ethnopolitical neo-authoritarianism, a large-scale socioeconomic polarization and an "ideological combat" between secular modernization and religious fundamentalism.

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Introduction

This article reviews the present state of analysis of ethno-regional conflict resolution in political science. The goal of the research is to analyse the constructive methods and peace-building strategies for resolving ethnic tensions in the North Caucasus region. The collapse of the USSR, the "sovereignization" of the ethnopolitical subjects of the Russian Federation, the destruction of inter-regional social and economic relations, the strengthening of ethnonationalistic tendencies have all been significant factors of imbalances in the position of the Russian regions, their disintegration of an all-Russian space. It is necessary to agree with the opinion of a number of Russian political scientists, who believe that ethnic societies and ethnopolitical elites find it more profitable to quit the way of legal, administrative and political leveling between regional and national components of their identity, which was typical for imperial and especially the Soviet period of Russian history, and to wend the way of accentuation of these differences.[1] The Russian ethnopolitical experience of the 1990s shows that the conflict mobilization of an ethnoregional identity can be used by political forces in different interests. In the situation of a civil identity crisis and the lack of democratic ideas, the consolidation of civil society, updated and focused on the region forms of ethnoreligious identity, may be accompanied by a conflict identification with the "big" Russian society.

A number of explanations have been suggested for the recent surge of violence in the North Caucasus. The dire economic situation in the region, the spread of separatist ideology and radical Islam, as well as corruption have been cited among the main reasons behind the escalation of violence in the North Caucasus.[2] This research does

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[1]   Nemirovsky V., "Characteristics of Social and Cultural Self-Identity of the Population of Eastern Siberia," *Sociological Studies* 8, 2011, pp. 88–94.

[2]   Shlapentokh D., "The Rise of the Chechen Emirate?" *Middle East Quarterly* 15 (3), 2008, pp. 49–56.

not altogether reject the abovementioned factors: instead its purpose is to suggest a yet another reason for the increase of conflict-related violence in recent years. The aforementioned hypothesis linking the decline of civil integration and civil society with the growth of ethnoreligious violence in the North Caucasus can be a contribution to the research of regional conflict resolution. Civil integration in the North Caucasus is a poorly researched topic. Only a handful of research works have ever been published on the issue[3] with a few reports by international organizations (Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Nonviolence International).[4]

Today, the North Caucasus remains a crucially strategic and geopolitical macroregion, as it forms the southern volatile frontier of Russia. In the wider perspective, the North Caucasus is a key factor for the social stability and political integration of the whole Russia. Russia's communications with the Transcaucasia and, by extension, its ability to exert influence on the three independent republics of the region are dependent on stability in the North Caucasus. The war in Chechnya has shown the vulnerability of Russia to ethnic separatism and Islamic fundamentalism in the North Caucasus. Furthermore, it has highlighted the question of Russia's survival in its present territorial structure. The latent and potential Chechen conflict is only the most prominent among the contemporary challenges to civil and ethnic peace in the region. There are several serious problems that need to be addressed promptly to secure the fragile, newly-achieved semblance of stability in the North Caucasus. First, it is the promoting

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[3]   Hansen G., *Humanitarian Action in the Caucasus: A Guide for Practitioners, Humanitarian and War Project & Local Capacities for Peace Project,* Brown University: The Institute for International Studies, 1998, 200 p.

[4]   Amnesty International, *Russian Federation: Rule without Law: Human Rights Violations in the North Caucasus*, July 2009; Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2010: Events of 2009, 2010*; Nonviolence International, *North Caucasus Regional Peacebuilding Program of Civil Organizations Based on Subregional Peacebuilding Action Agenda of North Caucasus NGOs*, Moscow 2005; Nonviolence International, *Operational and Methodological Implementation of Multi-Sector Peacebuilding Programs*, Moscow 2010.

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of multilevel and functional civil integration. As Russia has not yet matured to the point of being able to handle ethnic grievances in an effective way, the prospects for stable peace seem dim – unless open, democratic institutions and conflict resolution approaches are begun to be used to further this purpose.[5]

This article will try to answer the research question that is based on the hypothesis that numerous unresolved ethnic conflicts hold implications for stability and complicate regional security. It will argue that ethnic, "identity-based" conflicts, based on deep social disintegration, bring security risks for the multiethnic Russian region of North Caucasus. The purpose is to draw conclusions based on an interdisciplinary analysis of conflict resolution strategy in the North Caucasus and try to determine how protracted ethnic conflicts can be resolved and transformed as a functional component, conducive to the region's civil integration.

The hypothesis is that conflict resolution strategy, based on inclusive civil integration, is a highly effective North Caucasus peace-building resource. Regional conflict resolution must serve as an integrational and preventive tool for the conflict environment by way of providing structural solutions for deep-rooted, sociocultural antagonisms as well as by transforming and rationalizing ethnoregional contradictions. The objective is to establish how certain elements within protracted, identify-based ethnic conflicts add to the growing complexity of the region's security and its potential destabilization. The methodological framework is based on two complementary methods: a detailed analysis of the main theoretical sources, literature and an analysis of empirical data. By reviewing the ethnopolitical processes and issues, we will also look at the North Caucasus region's sociocultural background for an insight into the past causal connections of deep-rooted, identity-based conflicts.

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[5]   Cornell S., "Conflicts in the North Caucasus," *Central Asian Survey* 17 (3), 1998, pp. 409–441.

1. Conflict Resolution as Methodological Paradigm: Theoretical Background, Methodology and Data Sources

According to D. Sandole,

> There are those in conflict analysis and resolution who deal with startup conditions and those who deal with process. Practitioners intervening into conflicts-as-process may deal not only initially but only with process. The problem is, once the fire has been put out, unless the underlying startup conditions – the incendiary materials – are dealt with, the fire may reoccur.[6]

Although the conflicts that have attracted most international attention in the post-Cold War era have been those of the Transcaucasus, another area of both potential and actual turmoil is the North Caucasus. The first example of serious ethnic conflicts in the area is the war in Chechnya. However, the existence of this war, and its astonishing cruelty and devastation, has been instrumental in obscuring the other grievances that exist in the North Caucasus and that have the potential to escalate into open ethnic conflict. Ethnic conflict in the North Caucasus includes a wide range of phenomena and often masks the unequal distribution of economic or political power, the religious identification of the parties, the language conflict, control over land and territory. Historically, ethnopolitical and ethnoterritorial conflicts can be divided into two main categories, which spill over into one another. The first kind of destructive ethnic conflicts are those among the ethnopolitical groups of the region; the second kind are conflicts between ethnic communities and Russia. The main example of the unrest in the North Caucasus has been the short but bloody war between the Ingush and the Ossetians. However, this war distinguishes itself only by being the only one of ethnoterritorial conflicts in the region that has escalated into war.

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6   Sandole D., "A Comprehensive Mapping of Conflict and Conflict Resolution: A Three Pillar Approach," *Peace and Conflict Research* 5 (2), 1998, pp. 34–65.

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As S. Cornell notes, among the fundamental problems, three issues call for special attention: "First and perhaps most pressingly, the bid for unity of the Lezgian people in Dagestan and Azerbaijan; second, the latent problem between the Turkic Karachai and the Circasssian peoples in the two neighbor republics of Karachaevo-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkaria; and thirdly the condition of the most complex of all the North Caucasian republics: Dagestan."[7]

In 2014, the North Caucasus was estimated to contain between close to one thousand and several thousand militants.[8] Estimates of the number of insurgents in Chechnya vary between as few as a dozen or so and just over one hundred. Some experts believe that they are mostly found in the border regions of Dagestan and Ingushetia, mostly operating in these neighboring republics. The insurgents are mainly active in Dagestan, and in previous years they have also been active in Ingushetia.[9] By the mid-2010s, the North Caucasus resistance movement has become religiously motivated and evolved from a local militant organization into a branch of the worldwide militant Islamist movement.[10] According to M. Falkowski, the insurgents identify with the global umma – the worldwide community of Muslims – and the most essential element of their present ideology is "Islamicness."[11]

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[7] Cornell S., "Conflicts in the North Caucasus," *Central Asian Survey* 17 (3), 1998, p. 410.

[8] Górecki W., "No Change in the Russian Caucasus: The Winter Olympics amid a Local War," *OSW – Center for Eastern Studies. Point of View* 47 (1), 2014, p. 46.

[9] Danish Immigration Service, "Security and Human Rights in Chechnya and the Situation of Chechens in the Russian Federation – Residence Registration, Racism and False Accusations," *Report from the Danish Immigration Service's Fact-finding Mission to Moscow, Grozny and Volgograd, the Russian Federation* 1, 2015, pp. 20–34.

[10] Górecki W., "No Change in the Russian Caucasus: The Winter Olympics amid a Local War," *OSW – Center for Eastern Studies. Point of View* 47 (1), 2014, p. 51.

[11] Falkowski M., "On the Periphery of Global Jihad. The North Caucasus: The Illusion of Stabilization," *OSW – Center for Eastern Studies. Point of View* 45 (11), 2014, p. 98.

Today the North Caucasus differs fundamentally from the resistance movement of the "Dudayev era." Ethnic separatism has been replaced by religious fundamentalism, the founding of an Islamic state and so-called defensive jihad, which strives to expel infidels from "Muslim land." Sociocultural disintegration, large-scale escalation of ethnoreligious violence and the collapse of civil society in the North Caucasus are becoming a serious problem in Russia, experiencing a new era of deep political transit.

The role of civil integration in conflict resolution and peacebuilding is not a new topic for research. However, no studies have been done so far to analyze the role of civil integration in ethnic conflict resolution in the North Caucasus. The spillover of ethnopolitical conflict from the Chechen Republic to the rest of the region is a recent phenomenon and the escalation of ethnoreligious violence, which engulfed the region in the last years, has hardly ever been noticed by the international community. The most comprehensive analysis of recent violence in the North Caucasus to date has been conducted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), which has compiled a series of comprehensive reports on the situation in the North Caucasus in its Human Rights and Security Initiative Project.[12] The possibility of community dialogue via alternative conflict resolution is mentioned by R. Gendron[13] and advanced onto the reconciliation level by K. Bakke.[14] However, no studies have been done so far on the possibility of applying an integrational peacebuilding and conflict resolution approach in the North Caucasus. Therefore, the

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[12]   Aliyev H. Aid, "Efficiency in an Armed Conflict. The Role of Civil Society in the Escalation of Violence in the North Caucasus," *IFHV Working Paper* 1 (1), 2011, pp. 40–54.

[13]   Gendron R. "Alternative Dispute Resolution in the North Caucasus," *Caucasian Review of International Affairs* 3 (4), 2009, p. 77.

[14]   Bakke K., "Reconciliation in Conflict-Affected Societies: Multilevel Modeling of Individual and Contextual Factors in the North Caucasus of Russia," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 99 (5), 2009, p. 45.

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research, conducted in this article, can serve as an analytical contribution to this field of study. J. Senehi notes:

> To recognize the complexity of intercommunal conflicts is not only analytically sound, but has practical implications. Conflicts' complexity is double-edged. Complexity contributes to conflict perpetuation and intractability. But simultaneously, this suggests multiple arenas for intervention, multiple agents of intervention, and multiple intervention tasks in a dynamic process of social change.[15]

This research intends to apply a twofold methodological approach:
1) Comprehensive analysis aimed at scrutinizing qualitative sets of data derived from media sources as well as scholarly publications and academic research in the field;
2) Conflict process tracing as a summary of social developments leading to the current situation. By tracing the events that have played a significant role in the generation and escalation of ethnic conflicts in the North Caucasus, this study attempts to explain peacebuilding patterns and conflict resolution strategy.

The article pursues the goal of analyzing how the strength or collapse of civil integration can affect conflict resolution and peacebuilding in an instable, multiethnic region. It suggests that the lack of bottom-up peace efforts emanating from within the community and civil society levels (rather than state initiatives from top-down) is one of the main causes for the failure of conflict resolution, which, in conjunction with increased state interventionism, leads to the dramatic escalation of violence in the case under study. The main argument of this study suggests that the key to the growth/reduction of ethnic violence in the context of the North Caucasus lies at the community level. In A. Curle's opinion: "Since conflict resolution by outside bodies and individuals has so far proved ineffective (in the chaotic conditions of contemporary ethnic conflict – particularly, but not exclusively, in Somalia, Eastern Europe and the former USSR),

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[15]   Senehi J., "Constructive Storytelling: A Peace Process," *Peace and Conflict Studies* 9 (2), 2002, pp. 41–63.

it is necessary to consider the peacemaking potential within the conflicting communities themselves."[16] For that purpose, the concept of indigenous empowerment[17] is adopted here as part of the conflict resolution strategy – bottom-up peacebuilding, i.e., peace processes starting at the civil-integrational level. The innovative conflict resolution approach of bottom-up peacebuilding, suggested by A. Curle and J. Lederach, assumes that peace processes should originate at the grassroots and, consequently, develop into higher levels of integration and political dialog. As stated by J. Lederach, "the principle of indigenous empowerment suggests that conflict transformation must actively envision, include, respect, integrate and promote the human and cultural resources from within a given setting."[18] "Bottom-up peacebuilding" is aimed at the conflict resolution strategy from the grassroots rather than top-down and its goal is to create human security and strengthen the rule of law by enhancing local civil structures. Sometimes there is no opportunity for a formal, higher, macropolitical level conflict resolution due to the dispersed nature of the insurgency and a lack of credible leadership, coupled with the unwillingness of the federal government to accept the very existence of the conflict.[19] Another new concept in the theory of conflict resolution may be the concept of cultural diplomacy, which "is based on such scientific concepts as soft power and mutual cultural interaction. It is important to note that in accordance with the national cultural characteristics of countries, there are different practices of interpreting the term cultural diplomacy."[20]

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[16]   Curle A., "New Challenges for Citizen Peacemaking," *Medicine and War* 10 (2), 1994, pp. 96–105.

[17]   Lederach J., *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies,* Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997, p. 75.

[18]   Ibid., p. 89.

[19]   Aliyev H. Aid, "Efficiency in an Armed Conflict. The Role of Civil Society in the Escalation of Violence in the North Caucasus," *IFHV Working Paper* 1 (1), 2011, p. 77.

[20]   Pipchenko N., Moskalenko T., "Promotion of Ukraine's Cultural Diplomacy in the EU," *Politologija* 2 (86), 2017, p. 125.

The theoretical tradition of analyzing conflict resolution strategy as a civil integration resource is associated with a "conceptual antagonism" of conflict theories, multiculturalism and neofunctionalism, i.e., the contradiction is in interpreting the essence of integration as a way of de-escalating certain deep-rooted, ethnic conflicts in pluralistic societies. Conflict theorists refer to the analysis of conflict specifics of ethnicity, multiculturalists rely on the normative essence of ascriptive ethnic identification, and neofunctionalists interpret the status and civil rights of ethnic groups from the point of equal opportunities and integration imperativeness. The comprehensive theory of ethnic conflict must explain why ethnic relations, which are based on peace and integration, are more typical than widespread violence, despite serious tensions.[21] According to J. Burton,

> Conflict resolution has been a neglected subject. It is a challenge to all existing capitalist, communist, or other systems. It is a process that can deal with complex situations, both national and international. Its interactive analytical problem-solving processes have been tested and show enormous promise. But the resolution of particular conflicts is just a small beginning. While it helps to provide insights into the nature of conflict and conditions that stimulate conflict, by itself it does not deal with the problem of conflict. Conflict provention is the goal. Both are part of a process of system change, and their theoretical framework points political systems in the directions required.[22]

More recently, scholars have tried to better understand the negotiation and conflict resolution dynamics in civil, ethnic, religious and regional conflicts, where parties have turned to negotiated approaches to resolve their differences even after prolonged fighting. Unlike those in the past, the majority of conflicts during the last decade of the 20th century ended in negotiated settlements, usually with the

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[21]   Rothman J., *Resolving Identity-Based Conflict: In Nations, Organizations, and Communities,* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997, 267 p.

[22]   Burton J., *Resolving Deep-Rooted Conflict. A Handbook*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987, p. 40.

assistance of a third party.[23] Various explanations have been offered
to explain this recent trend. According to R. Licklider, "We have
some evidence that long civil wars are disproportionately likely to be
ended with negotiated settlements rather than military victory. This
is plausible since a long civil war means that neither side has been
able to achieve a military victory."[24] Many of the civil and regional
disputes that ended in the late 1980s and early 1990s were relatively
prolonged affairs, having been aided and propelled by the two super-
powers. The desire to end these so-called "proxy wars" as the Cold
War wound down encouraged the superpowers to pursue negotiated
solutions so that they could exit, because continuation had become
increasingly costly.[25]

In conflict resolution theory, an important assumption is that al-
though parties may identify specific issues as the causes of conflict,
conflict also reflects subjective, phenomenological and social frac-
tures. Consequently, analyzing "interests" may be less useful than
identifying the underlying needs that govern each identity group's
perception of the conflict.[26] The seminal research on intergroup rela-
tions is decades old, but its insights were "discovered" for the first

[23]   Babbitt E., "The Evolution of International Conflict Resolution: From Cold War to
       Peacebuilding," *Negotiation Journal* 25 (4), 2009, p. 539.

[24]   Licklider R., *Comparative Studies of Long Wars. In Grasping the Nettle: Analyzing
       Cases of Intractability*, Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press,
       2005, p. 47.

[25]   Crocker C., *High Noon in Southern Africa: Making Peace in a Rough Neighborhood,*
       New York: W.W. Norton, 1992, 280 p.; Crocker C., Hampson F., Aall P*., Taming
       Intractable Conflicts: Mediation in the Hardest Cases,* Washington, D.C.: United
       States Institute of Peace Press, 2004, 316 p.; Weiss T., *The United Nations and Civil
       Wars,* Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner, 1996, 347 p.

[26]   Burton J., Dukes F., *Conflict: Readings in Management and Resolution*, New York: St.
       Martin's Press, 1990, 470 p.; Lederach J., *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation
       in Divided Societies,* Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997,
       238 p.; Kelman H., *The Interactive Problem-Solving Approach. In Managing Global
       Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict,* Washington, D.C.: United
       States Institute of Peace Press, 1996, 279 p.

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time by political analysts grappling with internal ethnic wars. This included a new look at prejudice reduction and social categorization studies[27] as well as research on identity formation – ethnic, religious, racial, tribal.[28] In an identity-based conflict's approach, the ethnic identity is considered as one of the basic human needs, while the group identity's threat is represented as one of the group safety risks.[29] Moreover, two key needs are distinguished: the need for identity and need for safety. According to J. Rothman, irrationality, deep subjectivity and uncontrollability of identity-based conflicts are the crucial attributes of such conflicts.[30] The motives for ethnoconfessional groups to be involved in deep-rooted, identity-based conflicts will affect the solution perspectives of such conflicts; for the sake of satisfying their material interests, people would hardly risk their lives consciously. In ethnosecessionist conflicts, at least one side could be identified as belonging to a culturally distinct (ethnic/religious) group or at least mobilized on behalf of this group. The North Caucasian conflicts belong to this category. Cases of ethnic conflicts in their "pure form" – with one group acting against another because of some "natural" hostility – are rarely encountered, although as violence es-

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[27] Brewer M., Gaertner S., "Toward Reduction of Prejudice: Intergroup Contact and Social Categorization," Brewer M., Hewstone M. (eds.), *Self and Social Identity*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, 410 p.; Pettigrew T., Tropp L., "A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90 (5), 2006, pp. 751–783.

[28] Laitin D., *Identity in Formation: The Russian-speaking Populations in the Near Abroad,* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998, 430 p.; Appleby R.., *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation*, Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000, 321 p.; Marshall M., Gurr T., *Peace and Conflict,* College Park, MD.: Center for International Development and Conflict Management, University of Maryland, 2005, 460 p.

[29] Rothman J., Alberstein M., "Individuals, Groups and Intergroups: Understanding the Role of Identity in Conflict and Its Creative Engagement," *Ohio State Journal on Dispute Resolution* 28 (3), 2013, pp. 631–659.

[30] Rothman J., *Resolving Identity-Based Conflict: In Nations, Organizations, and Communities,* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997, 267 p.

calates, ethnic or religious affiliation can emerge as the sole elective principle in the choice of victims.[31]

As J. Bercovitch, V. Kremenyuk, and I. Zartman explain, conflict resolution is a "vibrant, interdisciplinary field where theory and practice pace real-world events."[32] They note further:

> Scholars working on CR study the phenomenon of conflict and analyze ways to bring it under control, bringing their insights and concepts to bear on actual conflicts, be they domestic or international, so as to foster better and more effective relations between states and people. Conflict Resolution is about ideas, theories, and methods that can improve our understanding of conflict and our collective practice of reduction in violence and enhancement of political processes for harmonizing interests.[33]

Interdisciplinary methodology allows for analyzing the ethnic conflict/civil integration dialectics as a complex phenomenon, conditioned by a diversity of social, ethnic, cultural and political factors. At the stage of studying the structural causes of ethnic tension escalation in the North Caucasus, an important methodological basis is the concept of "identity-based conflicts" by J. Burton and J. Rothman. It allows to determine identity-based conflicts as social ones by their form (occurring between social subjects of various levels) and as value-ideological conflicts by their content, relying on cultural distinctions.[34] Conflict resolution theory focuses its attention on the capacity of civil integration to transform the destructive "identity-

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[31]   Tishkov V., *Understanding Violence for Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Chechnya,* Geneva: Center for Applied Studies in International Negotiations (CASIN), 2009, 340 p.

[32]   Bercovitch J., Kremenyuk V., Zartman I., "Introduction: The Nature of Conflict and Conflict Resolution," Bercovitch J., Kremenyuk V., Zartman I. W. (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Conflict Resolution*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishers, 2009, p. 100.

[33]   Ibid., p. 3.

[34]   Rothman J., Alberstein M., "Individuals, Groups and Intergroups: Understanding the Role of Identity in Conflict and Its Creative Engagement," *Ohio State Journal on Dispute Resolution* 28 (3), 2013, pp. 631–659.

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based conflicts" into constructive conflicts of interests. According
J. Burton,

> Resolving one conflict, however, does not prevent the next one.
> Conflict resolution, unlike dispute settlement, is not primarily or even
> mainly concerned with particular cases. Its processes are analytical and
> problem-solving, and its approach is within a theoretical framework
> or explanation of conflict. Its main thrust is, therefore, not merely in
> conflict prevention, in isolating and removing the sources of conflict,
> but also in conflict 'provention': promoting the conditions that create
> cooperative relationships.[35]

If policy makers want to get successful in discovering causes of
ethnic "identity-based" conflicts, they have to start with a definition
that will lead to constructive methods of conflict resolution. As
J. Rothman notes, "we consider the ethnic identity to be a self-
perception that is filled with "cultural formula": it is based on cultural
needs and preferences, group characteristics and collective values.[36]
In the North Caucasus, cultural "hyper-identity" may be of a group
or an inter-group; however, it is always the source of negative
cultural stereotypes and ethnic conflict catalyst. The conflict parties
may perceive themselves as personal maximizers, while protecting
individual values, pursuing their own interests and expressing
individualistic needs; they may be ethnic groups and feel like they
are a part of collective whole; they may feel like they are carriers
of multiple cultural identities and get involved in the conflict at
the inter-group level. In the North Caucasus, these perceptions are
generated by the "cultural formula" and ethnic "hyper-identities,"
which become ideological, religious, ethnopolitical bases of conflict
parties with personal, group and inter-group emotions and meanings.

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[35] Burton J., Dukes F., *Conflict: Readings in Management and Resolution*, New York:
St. Martin's Press, 1990, p. 93.

[36] Rothman J., Alberstein M., "Individuals, Groups and Intergroups: Understanding the
Role of Identity in Conflict and Its Creative Engagement," *Ohio State Journal on
Dispute Resolution* 28 (3), 2013, p. 647.

2. Between Ethnoreligious Conflicts and Social Disintegration: The Role of Islamic Revival in the North Caucasus

By the end of the Soviet Union, Caucasian Muslims were rediscovering their previously suppressed religious identity, an identity that was completely denied by Soviet social engineering. Folk Islam was legitimized as "traditional," an integral part of their ethnocultural identity, but also vital for self-identification. During the 1990s, Caucasus witnessed a growing number of young Muslims attending mosques regularly, observing fasts and performing daily prayers, travelling and studying Islam abroad, thus expanding their individual knowledge and understanding of Islam. Notwithstanding, the social and political impact has been different in each region of the Caucasus. It was more intensive in the North-East (Dagestan-Chechnya-Ingushetia), due to the strong Sufi presence, which withstood the decades of Soviet atheism, and less intensive in the North-West (Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Circassia and Adygea), where the mosque-centered Islamic tradition had been suppressed. However, the First Chechen War triggered an Islamization of politics throughout the Caucasus, sparking memories of Islamic resistance to Russia and attracting Muslim volunteers from abroad. Nowadays, not only are people more conscious of their Muslim identity, but religiosity is also increasing. 77 percent of the youth of Dagestan identified themselves as "strict believers" in 2010, whereas in 2000 only 53 per cent did so.[37]

However, the Islamic revival in the North Caucasus included the encounter with other, non-traditional strains of Islam, such as Wahhabism, which was becoming popular among the Caucasian youth. Organized in their own largely non-violent congregations (*jamaat*),

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[37] Halbach U., Isaeva M., "Dagestan: Russia's Most Troublesome Republic," *SWP Research Paper, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik German Institute for International and Security Affairs* (August 2015) 16, 2016, p. 10.

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Wahhabis were eager to purify Islam and restore the *tawhid* (mono-theism) in Caucasus; therefore, they criticized rites of non-Islamic origin and the worship of saints and sheikhs, prominent in the Sufi tradition. In response, Muslim elders branded critical younger Muslims as extremists; this created a dichotomy between "official," traditional Sufi Islam and the "untraditional," "imported" Wahhabi-Salafi Islam, which characterizes Caucasus up to today.[38]

In the last decade, the jihadi insurgency spread across the North Caucasus, while the focus gradually shifted from Chechnya to the republics of Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria. This originated from the clashes between state authorities and Wahhabis, where all forms of Islamic dissent were cracked down; identification of such dissidents often relied on religious garment, untrimmed beards or frequent mosque attendance. The brutality of the state authorities toward these suspects, coupled with the popular disillusionment of the judicial process, led to the escalation of Islamist-inspired violence, as new, more radical *jamaats* emerged or moderate ones were radicalized. As Islamist groups are viewed with suspicion by all local governments in the North Caucasus, and as the authorities are still repressing any form of opposition, more and more young Muslims are drawn to fundamentalist, Islamic resistance groups in order to elude repression.[39]

The unsatisfactory social conditions in the North Caucasus, mainly high unemployment and widespread corruption, are another explanation that lead young people to believe that an Islamic state will restore social justice and equality. Many *jamaats* promise to reduce criminal violence, impose law and order and end corruption, while in Karachay-Circassia, *jama'ats* provided assistance and employment

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[38] Petrodaskalaki C., "Aspects of Political Islam in the North Caucasus, Middle East Flashpoint," *Centre for Mediterranean, Middle East & Islamic Studies* 74, 2016, p. 74.

[39] Russell J., "Chechnya: The Monster in the Mountain," *The World Today* 66 (5), 2010, p. 13.

to those losing their jobs.[40] However, it is important to note that, despite the widespread militancy, radicalization came primarily in the form of peaceful and non-violent enclaves that emphasized on education, and only a small, yet extremely active part of the youth is finding its way to the forests among the fighters.

The growing ethnoreligious factor produces various sociocultural tensions and creates psychological pressure on individuals. At present, there is no coherent discourse or political movement toward secular independence in the North Caucasus, implying weak links between security problems and ethnonationalist sentiment. Rather, ideological elements prevail in the still ongoing attacks. Radicalization, which had happened as a result of the wars in Chechnya, weakened the connection to the original cause, but created linkages between groups developed during the fighting. Regarding the Dagestan Republic, it is characterized by a religious patchwork. The two main tendencies remain the Wahhabis and the Sufis. One of the major problem is that in the last 20 years, Wahhabis lost intellectuals who had a political platform and who could cooperate and debate with the Republic's authorities. This leads to the rise of unsystematic violence from them, and the simplification of their battle to the level of terror against security and power structures. Nowadays, Dagestan is the Republic with more clashes in the region; however, they still haven't reached a level that would justify the application of the term "war."[41] Spaces for dialogues exist, such as the Congress of Nationalities, convened recently, and the media remains relatively free. Dagestanis are highly religious and this is reflected in the sociopolitical life of the Republic that appreciates the constructive role religion can have.

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[40]   Sagramoso D., "Violence and Conflict in the Russian North Caucasus," *International Affairs* 83 (4), 2010, pp. 689–690.
[41]   Yarlykapov A., *The Radicalization of North Caucasian Muslims, Russia and Islam: State, Society and Radicalism,* London & New York: Routledge, 2009, 321 p.

The risk situation in the North Caucasus is currently characte-
rized as a protracted insurgency. Some of the newly-radicalized
groups, having espoused the Global Jihadi ideology, resolve in ter-
rorist and guerilla tactics, although anti-Western sentiments were
not as intense.[42] It is believed that recruitment is the primary focus
of ISIS in the North Caucasus. It is estimated that there are already
15 000 combatants of "Wilayat Qawqaz," in addition to around 2 400
fighters from Caucasus, especially Chechens, who have joined ISIS
ranks in Syria and Iraq. ISIS-affiliated groups have carried out their
first attacks in the North Caucasus, such as the attack in southern
Dagestan in December 2015.[43]

It seems that the Caucasus Emirate is becoming irrelevant to those
combatant radicals who want to be part of a transnational Islamic
project. However, many local commanders still refuse to join ISIS
and submit to foreign leadership. While some believe it is unlikely
that the ISIS will fully supplant the homegrown Emirate, the swi-
tching of allegiance by many fighters may entail employing ISIS
methods. Arguably, in the next years, it is possible for a different
type of Caucasian Jihad to develop.[44] On the other hand, in Che-
chnya, there is a different form of political Islam in place that might
be called pro-state. Sharia norms are applied, such as dress code and
ban on alcohol consumption, while issues like polygamy or honor
killings are officially endorsed, in violation to the Russian Federa-
tion's Constitution. In 2008, the largest mosque in Europe was built
in Grozny, the capital of Chechnya, and the Republic has generously
invested on restoring Sufi holy sites and the creation of new ones.[45]

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[42] Matveeva A., Oliphant C., Russell J., Sagramoso D., *The North Caucasus: Islam, Se-
curity, Politics, REP Meeting Summary: The North Caucasus*, Chatham House, 2012,
128 p.

[43] Malashenko A., *Islamic State Menaces Dagestan*, Carnegie Moscow Center, 2016, 50 p.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Yemelianova G., "Islam, Nationalism and State in the Muslim Caucasus," *Caucasus
Survey* 1 (2), 2014, p. 11.

Thus, by allegedly creating an Islamic order, R. Kadyrov projects a moral dilemma, which makes many non-belligerent, potential supporters of the insurgents complacent.[46] In terms of armed conflicts and insurgency, Chechnya is going through a period of relative calmness; however, one cannot talk of genuine pacification in Chechnya, first due to the repressive character of the regime, and second because local ethnoreligious conflicts and terrorist attacks continue to take place.

In analyzing the role and status of civil organizations in conflict resolution processes in Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria, H. Aliyev notes,

> While civil society's function of ensuring transparency within state institutions is decreasing, large circles of the population become disaffected with the state and opt to support the insurgency. In conjunction, pressed by the state and driven by donor priorities, the majority of NGOs operating in the region do not heavily involve in development and human rights issues in Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria, instead focusing on humanitarian aid and other service delivery functions. In the absence of a functional civil society, local surrogates of NGOs are prone to act as their substitutes. Although the latter are failing to ensure democracy and civil freedoms, instead further exacerbating inter-confessional and clan cleavages. Often presented as grass-root civil society, jamaats of Dagestan and teips of Ingushetia, due to their limited capabilities, cannot implement conflict resolution without a third party intervention. Regardless of whether the escalation of violence can be linked to the decline of civil society, conflict resolution still requires civil participation and is unlikely to be successful if only implemented from the top-down. Thus, in spite of the actual causes of the current escalation of violence third party involvement is needed from the bottom-up. This can only be done by non-governmental organizations, needed to reach out to the masses and connect them to those on the top.[47]

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[46]   Münster A., *The Rise of Islamic Extremism in Central Asia and the Caucasus,* World Watch Monitor, 2013, 126 p.

[47]   Aliyev H. Aid, "Efficiency in an Armed Conflict. The Role of Civil Society in the Escalation of Violence in the North Caucasus," *IFHV Working Paper* 1 (1), 2011, pp. 40–54.

3. Conflict Resolution Strategy as a North Caucasus Integration and Peacebuilding Resource

The current conflict in the North Caucasus is distinctly different from both Chechen Wars not only due to the fact that most conflict-related violence is now taking place outside of Chechnya, but also in terms of the goals and objectives of its participants as well as the political environment. In comparison to the Chechen issue, the current conflict is no longer ethnic and is no longer a nationalist one. A simple glance at Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria suggests that they do not even share common geographical borders, and their population is different linguistically, culturally, and with distinct structures of societal organization. Nationals of these seemingly different republics are parts of the same conflict and pursue the same common goal, that of independence from Russia. In spite of assumptions suggested by a number of scholars,[48] the conflict in the North Caucasus is far from being a case of religious fundamentalism, fueled by global jihadism. Although religion plays the role of an ideological driving force for insurgency, it cannot be considered as the main cause of the conflict. Nations inhabiting the North Caucasus, in spite of their strict religious adherence, have never been known to follow the radical tenets of Islam and were not known for religious fundamentalism. V. Tishkov in his discussion on the causes of Chechen conflicts describes the Chechen motivations as separatism that "is born and its protagonists (both the leaders and the rank-and-file participants) are mobilized on the basis of the doctrine and political practice of ethnic nationalism. This holds that each people – understood not as

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[48]   Dannreuther R., "Islamic Radicalization in Russia: An Assessment," *International Affairs* 1 (86), 2010, pp. 109–126; Ferris-Rotman A., "Global Jihad Creeping into Russians Insurgency," *Reuters Analysis,* March 4, 2010, p. 23; McGregor A., *Military Jamaats in the North Caucasus: A Continuing Threat,* Jamestown Foundation, 2006, 249 p.; Shlapentokh D., "The Rise of the Chechen Emirate? *Middle East Quarterly* 15 (3), 2008, pp. 49–56.

a territorial association (demos) but as an ethnic community (ethnos) or ethno-nation – has the right to self-determination, to – its own‖ state."[49]

The North Caucasus escalation of social anomie and disintegration amplifies radical ethnic nationalism, xenophobia, intolerance, isolationist tendencies, ethnic regionalization, and religious extremism. Xenophobic and ethnonationalist ideas are widely spread in the post-Soviet Russian society. The slogan "Russia for Russians" is to some degree or another supported by the majority of interviewees since the beginning of 2000s; in 2011, it was supported by 58% of interviewees.[50] The actualization of anti-conflict and the inclusive mechanisms of civil integration are associated with the necessity to develop a secular and supraethnic model of macrosocial consolidation that supports cross-ethnic cooperation and cross-cultural dialog. Civil integration, as a social process of supporting and promoting human rights and civil institutions in the traditionalist North Caucasus society, becomes the primary method of resolving ethnic and religious conflicts.[51] According to J. O'Loughlin and F. Witmer,

> The conflicts in the North Caucasus have evolved from a frontline in Grozny, the Chechen republic, in the early stages of the war in 1999–2000 to a scattered pattern of guerrilla warfare on Russian forces and local allies by a myriad of locally-based rebels as this pattern of fragmentation is evident in the local violence density scores and maps after 2006. What remains uncertain though is why this fragmented pattern has developed and is intensifying? What accounts for the fact that one community has produced a mobilized anti-Russian population while adjoining and similar communities remain quiescent? In these differences lie a real aim

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[49]   Tishkov V., *Understanding Violence for Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Chechnya,* Geneva: Center for Applied Studies in International Negotiations (CASIN), 2009, p. 14.

[50]   Levada-Tsentr, *Nationalism in Contemporary Russia*, press release of February 4, 2011.

[51]   Popov M., "Sociocultural Integration and Resolving Identity Based Conflicts in the North Caucasus," *Indian Journal of Science and Technology* 9 (29), 2016, pp. 70–77.

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of disaggregated study of civil war, one that must take the local context of such activity much more seriously.[52]

One of the first Russian concepts of conflict resolution strategy in the North Caucasus was V. Tishkov's ethnological analysis, dedicated to the Chechen conflict settlement. According to V. Tishkov,

> The instability in Chechnya and the adjacent North Caucasian lands, as well as the crisis of Russia's statehood in the period of its deep transformation, generate large-scale violence on a routine everyday basis with poor prospects for stability and reconstruction. Before starting major reconstruction programs something should be done to bring into political and public discourse the attitudes which clean the road of the conflict and do not close the door for the Chechens to exercise these shared identities. There is no Russia-Chechnya identity disposition. Otherwise, Chechens are excluded from the country's populace justifying not only atrocities on the part of the military but also a politics of caging representatives of the whole group into a category of no-citizens or enemy citizens without rights and privileges. This is an impossible start for post-conflict reconstruction.[53]

M. Kramer described the most destructive North Caucasus conflict in Chechnya as a stalemate since the rebels "continued to inflict enough damage on Russian soldiers to erode their morale and create the appearance of an endless, unwinnable war,"[54] but in 2006, the Russian government claimed that the war was won and that the rebels had routed.[55] However, as the war was winding down in Chechnya after 2004, the conflict intensified in the region as a

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[52] O'Loughlin J., Witmer F., "The Diffusion of Violence in the North Caucasus of Russia, 1999–2010," *Environment and Planning A* 44, 2012, pp. 178–201.

[53] Tishkov V., *Understanding Violence for Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Chechnya,* Geneva: Center for Applied Studies in International Negotiations (CASIN), 2009, p. 26.

[54] Kramer M., "The Perils of Counterinsurgency: Russia's War in Chechnya," *International Security* 29, 2004, pp. 5–63.

[55] Baev P., *Has Russia Achieved a Victory in Its War against Terror?* PONARS Memo 415 Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), 1800 K Street, NW, Washington, DC, 2006, 209 p.

whole.[56] By 2009, significantly more violent events were occurring in Ingushetia and Dagestan, the republics adjoining Chechnya to the west and to the east.[57] In a region where the biggest concern of ordinary people is economic insecurity and where corruption is rife and barely concealed, many young men have turned to radical Islam. The attacks by the state forces on Islamists has furthered radicalized many and produced a tit-for-tat upsurge in violence by local military *jama'ats* (militant Islamic communities) who have increasingly attacked the organs of the Russian state and its local representatives (police, military and political figures).[58] By 2008, the Chechen rebel leadership was integrating their separate military campaign with the wider opposition to Russian presence in the region under the aegis of the "Caucasian Front." This latest chapter of the North Caucasian conflicts has not yet reached its dénouement, though predictions of wider and deeper conflicts are common despite the President's declaration of the end of "counter-terrorism actions" in Chechnya in 2009.[59]

The specifics of identity-based conflicts as threats and challenges of integration of the North Caucasus is that they are a collision of competing values and ethnic identities. The idea of value-oriented collision clarifies the concept of regional conflict as identity-based conflict, emphasizing the essence of this explanatory model.[60] From the structural point of view, regional conflicts appear as an effect of escalation of ethnoconfessional contradictions between Islam and

[56]   Markedonov S., "The Caucasian Cauldron," *Journal of International Security Affairs* 19, 2010, pp. 123–128.

[57]   Kuchins A., Malarkey M., Markedonov S*., The North Caucasus: Russia's Volatile Frontier,* Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), 1800 K Street, NW, Washington DC., 2011, 370 p.

[58]   Markedonov S., "The Caucasian Cauldron," *Journal of International Security Affairs* 19, 2010, pp. 123–128.

[59]   Zhukov Y., "Roads and the Diffusion of Insurgent Violence: The Logistics of Conflict in Russia's North Caucasus," *Political Geography,* No. 31, 2012, pp. 144–156.

[60]   Popov M., "Sociocultural Integration and Resolving Identity Based Conflicts in the North Caucasus," *Indian Journal of Science and Technology* 9 (29), 2016, pp. 70–77.

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Christianity, social inequalities and ethnic mobilization, threatening
civil integration in the polyethnic society. In contemporary Russia,
internal conflicts have become obviously ethnoreligious. Over a
half of civil conflicts after the Second World War are classified as
ethnic or religious. The identification of the ethnic conflict as an
antigovernmental rebellion on behalf of an ethnic group is a ground
for classifying the ethnoregional internal conflict.[61] Fearon and Laitin
argue further:

> With the spike in internal wars after the collapse of the Soviet Union in
> 1991, the then-UN Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, issued the
> UN Agenda for Peace in 1992. The report identified four overarching
> tasks for the UN and others to undertake preventive diplomacy, peace-
> making, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding. These proposed goals intro-
> duced a broader conflict resolution research and policy agenda, beyond
> the emphasis on strategic bargaining and deal making. It effectively ex-
> tended conflict resolution concerns to both latent and active conflicts
> and to the increasingly difficult challenge of rebuilding so-called failed
> or failing states. In doing so, it called for understanding conflict dyna-
> mics within and between identity groups as well as governments and for
> exploring how relationships between such groups could be sustainably
> transformed – beyond negotiated settlements – such that violence would
> not recur.[62]

Even if ethnoregional society has not experienced recent conflict,
W. Kymlicka has suggested that a too-rapid introduction of liberal
multiculturalism policies (or "interculturalism" or "diversity policies"
as others prefer to call them) may carry the risk of destabilization. He
notes:

> Liberal multiculturalism is easier to adopt where liberal democracy is
> already well established, and where the rule of law and human rights
> are well protected. In countries where these basic foundations of

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61   Fearon J., Laitin D., "Explaining Interethnic Cooperation," *The American Political
Science Review* 90 (4), 1996, pp. 715–753.

62   Babbitt E., Hampson F., "Conflict Resolution as a Field of Inquiry: Practice Informing
Theory," *International Studies Review*, No 13, 2011, p. 46.

liberal democracy are not yet present or consolidated, some level of democratization and liberalization may be needed before it makes sense to push for the full implementation of liberal multiculturalism.[63]

He points out that international organizations must sometimes strike a delicate balance between justice for ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples and security fears about the destabilizing effects of ethnic politics on democracy and development.[64] While W. Kymlicka believes that liberal multiculturalism policies can contribute to freedom, equality, democracy and civil integration, he urges policy makers to understand the context where they are being introduced: "The underlying conditions, the nature of the ethnic groups involved, and the types of policies being considered."[65]

Civil integration falls into a class of policy problems that J. Chapman has described as "messes." J. Chapman characterizes policy "messes" this way: messes are characterized by no clear agreement about exactly what the problem is and by uncertainty and ambiguity as to how improvements might be made, and they are unbounded in terms of the time and resources they could absorb, the scope of enquiry needed to understand and resolve them and the number of people that may need to be involved.[66] Policy "messes" founded on complex systems are also distinguished by a variety of perspectives on the problem, based on the different mental frameworks used by the various stakeholders. These perspectives are not limited to differences in academic disciplines, but may also arise from "different contexts, different cultures, different histories, different aspirations and different allegiances."[67] As a result, stakeholders may

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[63] Kymlicka W., *Multicultural Odysseys: Navigating the New International Politics of Diversity,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 32.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid., p. 19.

[66] Chapman J., *System Failure: Why Governments Must Learn to Think Differently,* London: Demos, 2002, 236 p.

[67] Ibid., p. 31.

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not agree on the nature of the problem or may dismiss as irrelevant the differing perspectives on it, which do not fit within their frame of reference. For this reason, it is seldom possible to approach a policy "mess" using a linear or rational model of policy or decision making, since there is never a single, correct way to address it.

Civil integration reduces ethnic tension, which is associated with a high level of solidarity and safety, an attenuation of ethnic mobilization and a reduction of a negative stereotypization of "others" as "cultural enemies."[68] While analyzing the role and status of religion and ethnicity in the dynamics of regional sociocultural conflicts, one should point out a relation between group identities and primordial values of closed traditional societies, where civic self-awareness and individualism do not play any evident ideological role. Currently, such societies may function in the globalized world by means of preserving their own culture, based on collective values; group identification is correlated within such collectives with ethnic values and religious traditions. According to J. Rothman, an appeal to individual interests cannot patch a crack as a result of ethnic contradictions, if we are dealing with an ethnic group-wide collision in the process of conflict mediation; attempts to manipulate groups may lead to identity-based conflict.[69]

International cooperation, based on solid legal and operational measures, and the exchange of information in the external dimension of counter-terrorism are crucial in the fight against foreign terrorist fighters, the financing of terrorism, the combat and prevention of radicalization, reinforced border checks and illegal trafficking of firearms (Skocajic Juvan, Grizold 2017: 260). According to E. Babbitt,

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[68]   Popov M., "Sociocultural Integration and Resolving Identity Based Conflicts in the North Caucasus," *Indian Journal of Science and Technology* 9 (29), 2016, pp. 70–77.

[69]   Rothman J., Alberstein M., "Individuals, Groups and Intergroups: Understanding the Role of Identity in Conflict and Its Creative Engagement," *Ohio State Journal on Dispute Resolution* 28 (3), 2013, p. 647.

Negotiation and conflict resolution concepts provide powerful lenses through which to assess conflict dynamics and design appropriate strategies for moving these dynamics in a constructive direction. The biggest challenge in building bridges to policy is in transferring not only the checklist of 'best practices' but also the essence of analyzing international relationships through the conflict resolution lens. We have made good progress in this direction to date, and the signs are promising for the collaboration between theory and practice to deepen in the next decade. The prerequisites of such collaboration include the ability of governments to admit that they do not have all the answers and can learn better ways of dealing with conflict and for scholars to fully appreciate the constraints under which policy makers are operating and gear their analysis to these realities.[70]

According to H. Aliyev, in the North Caucasus,

good governance, capacity, and civil society building efforts conducted by both local and international aid groups are continuously encountering corrupt and uncooperative authorities. In most cases, these authorities are not interested in changing the existing situation and due to their loyalty to the federal government, are considerably immune to criticism. As a result, development, human rights and democratization efforts are bogged down in bureaucracy and corruption. The aid organizations do not prioritize the conflict resolution: only a handful of peace-building efforts have been ever implemented in the region and mostly of a low scale and capacity. Therefore, growing violence is continuing to serve as a major factor affecting the efficacy of development and human rights efforts.[71]

Identity-based conflict has its own unique latent and complex traits and some of these elements will be more evident than the other; nevertheless, they all are common denominators of the genesis of such deep-rooted and destructive conflict. The primordialist approach

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[70]   Babbitt E., Hampson F., "Conflict Resolution as a Field of Inquiry: Practice Informing Theory," *International Studies Review*, No. 13, 2011, p. 46.

[71]   Aliyev H. Aid, "Efficiency in an Armed Conflict. The Role of Civil Society in the Escalation of Violence in the North Caucasus," *IFHV Working Paper* 1 (1), 2011, p. 54.

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helps to explain the potentially conflictogenic nature of radical ethnicity and cultural intolerance; the concept of ethnic entrepreneurs explains how institutional factors and ethnic stereotypes interact each other. Ethnicity and religion are the embodiment of a powerful emotional stress that may be re-activated, provided the groups are aware of a threat to the ethnicity, religious values and group interests, which leads to ethnification, ethnic intolerance and, ultimately, violent ethnic conflict.[72]

As violence increases, the "security dilemma" will become more acute and the desire for peaceful and cooperative strategies of conflict management will weaken.[73] This will tend to thwart the prospects for successful negotiations unless instruments of outright strategic leverage and coercive diplomacy can be found.[74] Once violence has reached a threshold where no further escalation is possible without major costs, the disputants may be willing to consider other alternatives than the use of force. However, ethnoreligious conflicts get stuck in the middle range of the escalation curve, i.e., violence is ongoing and episodic but not sufficient to make the idea of a political solution an attractive alternative. Such conflicts are sometimes referred to as protracted or intractable conflicts, because they are marked by self-sustaining patterns of hostility and violence; they have multiple sources or causes – identities, values, self-interest, security dilemmas, inequalities – and there is no apparent end in sight to large-scale ethnic violence. "Lacking any apparent deadline, impending disaster, or sense of time shifting to the other side's advantage, these conflicts can be sustained for years unless others intervene and encourage the

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[72] Blagojevic B., "Causes of Ethnic Conflict: A Conceptual Framework," *Journal of Global Change and Governance,* No. 3, 2009, pp. 3–18.

[73] Lake D., Rothchild D., "Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict," *International Security* 21 (2), 1996, pp. 41–75.

[74] Corbin J., *The Norway Channel: The Secret Talks That Led to the Middle East Peace Accord,* New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1994, 150 p.; Hampson F., *Nurturing Peace: Why Peace Settlements Succeed or Fail,* Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1996, 328 p.

parties to change their strategic calculus and consider their negotiation options."[75]

Essential risk factors in the North Caucasus and Chechen Republic are called by V. Tishkov as the absence of consistent and well-funded Russian state policy of post-conflict reconstruction; political disintegration, alienation and social disorientation of the civilian population; widespread human rights abuses; the internationalization of ethnic conflicts and external support for separatists.[76] Protracted conflicts are a consequence of the re-actualization and radicalization of politicized ethnicities. Social inequalities, fragmentations and polarizations serve as systemic factors that determine the acuity of ethnic tension and escalation of identity-based conflicts in the North Caucasus. The analysis of social tension escalation and cultural identity mobilization suggests a destructive action of factors of ethnoreligious intolerance and political disintegration in a region. Identity-based conflicts are not only armed or political and legal standoffs, but also the conflicts of different historiosophies, historical and cultural values and symbols. This gives rise of a phenomenon of competing cultural and historical traditions, most often such antagonism of religious or ethnic traditions within a multinational society, a fight for the historical heritage (constructionists write, not without a reason, that there are not any objective historical facts, they are actually a product of interpretation of those with more or less rights to legitimate nomination of such facts) or conflicts between traditions of representatives of different social groups. A bitter rivalry of religious as well as ethnic traditions is possible in a multiconfessional and multiethnic society; an opposition of regional traditions, a fight for determining the essence of the conflict and an establishing of the causes of a such

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[75]   Crocker C., Hampson F., Aall P*., Taming Intractable Conflicts: Mediation in the Hardest Cases,* Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2004, p. 31.

[76]   Tishkov V., *Understanding Violence for Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Chechnya,* Geneva: Center for Applied Studies in International Negotiations (CASIN), 2009, 140 p.

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conflict etc. Such a "war of interpretations," a fight with the help of one selected subset of historical facts or another becomes a prologue of acute North Caucasus conflicts.[77]

According to the Saferworld 2012 report, people across the region recognize the need to combat violent extremism, but a majority disagrees with the way this is pursued by security authorities, or finds it ineffective. In fact, the methods used by security agencies are perceived not only as unlawful, but also cruel, including shooting and tortures, leaving local society suspicious of their fairness and making it hard to solicit community cooperation. Moreover, since some extremists lead a normal life, it is difficult for the authorities to identify them, so the whole population, especially young men, come under suspicion. This does not help to create an environment of transparency and trust. The climate in Dagestan and Chechnya is still tense and violence can develop in several directions. In Dagestan, the religious factor is undoubtedly the leader in destabilizing the republics as it functions as the main ideological banner to unite different dissatisfied groups under one wing. In Chechnya, even if the security situation has highly improved since 2008, the discontent with the social situation, which carries tensions between the population and the authorities, is still very high. In both cases, the ones who are more dissatisfied and willing to change are the youth, especially the educated ones, who do not see how they can realize themselves in a rigid and corrupted society.[78]

The analysis of relation between the ethnic tension and sociocultural identity at the North Caucasus regional level leads us to the idea of the destructive effect of ethnocultural controversies, conditioned by

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[77] Popov M., "Sociocultural Integration and Resolving Identity Based Conflicts in the North Caucasus," *Indian Journal of Science and Technology* 9 (29), 2016, pp. 70–77.

[78] Yarlykapov A., *The Radicalization of North Caucasian Muslims, Russia and Islam: State, Society and Radicalism,* London & New York: Routledge, 2009, 321 p.; Yusupov M., "The Social Situation in the Chechen Republic: Problems and Trends," Saferworld, March 2012, <www.saferworld.org.uk/PPP/chechnya>.

social fragmentation and disintegration, dissatisfaction in the basic
needs of equality, justice and security. In the empirical study of the
ethnoconfessional relationships and the development prospects in
the North Caucasus, it is pointed out that interethnic relationships
in the region can be characterized as stably tense ones. Alongside
with that, neither the former, nor the latter are viewed as the acutest
problems and rank 11 and 15, respectively, out of the 16 suggested
in the social problems topicality rating. This result proved to be
slightly unexpected, given the character of the place occupied by the
ethnonational problems range in the social and political discourse
in the region. According to the respondents, the problems which
are common for the entire country are the most relevant: corruption
and bribery (48.5%), prices and taxes growth and inflation (46.5%),
unemployment (38.6%), the rise in crime (34.9%); the housing
problem and the communal service problems (32.8%). Although the
respondents have estimated the probability of interethnic conflicts
as average, in conditions of a stable tension, any conflict, regardless
of its true causes, can quickly turn into an interethnic one. For such
circumstances, perceiving the actions of people of other nationalities
as a potential threat to one's own nationality security is characteristic.
The situation that has formed creates favorable conditions for
ethnoconflict mobilization – a quick uniting of people in accordance
with their national sign for participating in the conflict actions. The
high tension in interethnic relationships is the main reason in why
regional conflicts, having an interethnic component, keep breaking
out within the North Caucasus.[79]

Regional identity-based conflicts are dangerous in the way their
genesis and dynamics present social dissatisfaction that is highly
politicized; and the action of extremism and violence sets implies
concentrating an aggressive potential in the point of ethnic intolerance

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[79]   Avksentiev V., Shulga M., "The Multinational Stavropol Territory: A Stronghold of
Stability or Crossroads of Problems?" *Sociological Studies* 12 (3), 2013, pp. 34–42.

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and confessional irreconcilability. The degree of violence in identity-based conflicts is determined by the intensity of inter-ethnic tension and social dissatisfaction, and the scope of institutional support and political mobilization being the conditions of armed confrontation.[80] According to V. Dudouet,

> Although non-state armed groups represent primary stake-holders in contemporary political conflicts, there is still little understanding among policy-makers or scholars of the internal drivers and dynamics which shape their radicalization and de-radicalization processes. For instance, one often hears the assertion that bringing rebel leaders and so-called "spoilers" to the negotiation table or converting them into peaceful politicians requires weakening, splintering, or completely dismantling their militant structures.[81]

In analyzing current peacebuilding and conflict resolution practice in the North Caucasus, H. Aliyev notes:

> It is possible to identify a number of priority areas for peace-builders. First, peace-building has to target wide circles of the population possibly, starting with grass-roots, such as current and potential rebel recruits, supporters, sympathizers, as well as the local population in areas of insurgent activity. It is necessary to ensure that peace-building efforts are targeting the most affected by the conflict segments of population. Second, peacebuilding has to include not only rebel force but most importantly security and military of North Caucasian republics, as well as similar structures at the federal level. The growth of authoritarianism and its onslaught on civil society, accompanied by centralization and militarism, are one of the main reasons for the current escalation of violence. Decentralization and demilitarization of local and federal governments might be considered as one of the main long-term objectives to de-escalate the conflict.[82]

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[80] Popov M., "Sociocultural Integration and Resolving Identity Based Conflicts in the North Caucasus," *Indian Journal of Science and Technology* 9 (29), 2016, pp. 70–77.

[81] Dudouet V., "Intra-Party Dynamics and Political Transformation," *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 6 (1), 2012, p. 34.

[82] Aliyev H. Aid, "Efficiency in an Armed Conflict. The Role of Civil Society in the Escalation of Violence in the North Caucasus," *IFHV Working Paper* 1 (1), 2011, p. 54.

Non-Violence International in CIS (NIS) began its peacebuilding efforts in the Republic of Karachay-Cherkessia and the border regions between Chechnya and Dagestan. Its main goal is conflict prevention and de-escalation as well as reconciliation and rehabilitation in conflict-affected societies. The NIS peacebuilding program focused on conducting peace trainings to youth in the remote regions of Dagestan and Ingushetia. In 2001 and 2002, the NIS launched a number of programs designed to increase interethnic reconciliation and peacebuilding in the border regions of Chechnya and Dagestan. Programs aimed to reduce tensions between Dagestani and Chechen villagers in border regions after the invasion of border districts of Dagestan by the Chechen-led Islamist brigade in 1999 (which was the start of the Second Chechen Campaign). Two separate programs have been also implemented in Karachay-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkaria. Both had goals of increasing interethnic tolerance and conflict prevention in multiethnic settings (Non-Violence International, Projects 2009). According to the data provided by the Non-Violence International group, most of its funding, used to implement peacebuilding programs in the North Caucasus, is from private sources.[83] In 2005, the NIS launched the North Caucasus Regional Peacebuilding Program.[84] The program intends to cover almost all of the Russian North Caucasus (except Stavropol) and its primary goals are peacebuilding, regional development, interethnic and interconfessional tolerance.

The problem-solving workshop is one type of third-party assisted dialogue, undertaken by both official and non-governmental actors in the North Caucasus. This activity is directed at ethnic, racial or religious groups who are in a hostile relationship. Like "circum-negotia-

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[83] Non-Violence International, *Operational and Methodological Implementation of Multi-Sector Peace-building Programs*, Moscow 2010.

[84] Non-Violence International, *North Caucasus Regional Peace-building Program of Civil Organizations Based on Sub-Regional Peace-building Action Agenda of North Caucasus NGOs*, Moscow 2005.

tion," this dialogue occurs at a quasi-official level around or prior to the formal peace process.[85] Dialogue is directed at officials and civic leaders, including heads of local non-governmental organizations, community developers, health officials, refugee camp leaders, ethnic/religious leaders, intellectuals and academics. This dialogue process can be assisted by specialized training programs that are directed at exploring ways of establishing and building relationships, furthering proficiency in facilitation, mediation and brokering, data collection, fact-finding and other kinds of cooperative decision-making. As L. Kriesberg notes, much of this activity is directed at developing "constituency support for peace efforts."[86]

Conclusions

The North Caucasus conflict, studied in this article, is often called a separatist insurgency struggling to establish a sovereign Islamic state on the territory of the Russian North Caucasus, i.e., in Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, North Ossetia and Karachay-Cherkessia. However, this study makes an assumption that the current ethnoreligious conflict is an outcome of poor governance and conflict management, political disintegration and abuses of basic civil rights and freedoms.

This research pursues the goal of analyzing how the strength of civil-political integration can affect conflict resolution and peacebuilding. It suggests that the lack of bottom-up peace efforts emanating at the community and civil society levels (rather than state initiatives from top-down) is one of the main causes for the failure of

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[85]   Saunders H., "Prenegotiation and Circumnegotiation: Arenas of Peace Processes," *Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict*, Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996, 358 p.

[86]   Kriesberg L., "Varieties of Mediating Activities and Mediators in International Relations," Bercovitch J. (ed.), *Resolving International Conflicts: The Theory and Practice of Mediation*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner, 1996, p. 30.

conflict resolution, which, in conjunction with increased state inter-
ventionism, leads to the dramatic escalation of violence in the case
under study. The fundamental obstacles to resolve ethnoregional con-
flicts – and major contributing factors to insurgency – remain civil
disintegration, anomie, ethnic intolerance, social inequalities and
large-scale corruption at all levels of regional and federal administra-
tion. This increases citizens' alienation from the state and promotes
the search for radical alternatives, including the Islamic State (ISIS)
and jihad. In recent years, deep social frustration is a major conflict
driver. The authorities are perceived as unable to solve either struc-
tural concerns or daily problems. Many feel that local elites have
privatized the state. Those who want better services try to leave, in-
creasing pressure on neighboring regions and Russia's big cities. The
situation is further complicated by alternative concepts of ethnopoli-
tics and statehood. Islamists instrumentalize social problems and of-
fer a non-democratic state based on Sharia (Islamic law) that they say
will be better equipped to deliver social justice. Growing civil dis-
integration, unresolved social problems and ineffective institutions
contribute significantly to the appeal of radical ethnonationalism and
Islamist ideology, erode trust in the state and are a major reason why
the North Caucasian conflicts are so difficult to solve.

Realistic and achievable goals of conflict resolution as civil inte-
gration resource in the North Caucasus are:

1) Strengthening the rule of law and the protection of human
   rights;
2) Democratization and meeting the basic needs of the popula-
   tions;
3) Ensuring personal security for the North Caucasus people;
4) Civil society building and socioeconomic development;
5) Improving cultural relations between North Caucasus ethnici-
   ties and the larger Russian society.

The need to stimulate civil-political integration is caused by mor-
al and structural causes: from the ethical point of view, the creation

of an inclusive society is the fundamental societal goal; structural factors are related to the need to reduce inequalities and differences leading to social fragmentation and escalation of destructive ethnic conflicts. In discussing conflict resolution strategies, it is necessary to consider the following: 1) The peace and integration of North Caucasus is a macropolitical project, the content of which is determined by issues of social cohesion and civil solidarity; 2) The development of the North Caucasus after the end of armed ethnic conflicts shows the inadmissibility of political demodernization, fundamentalism and isolationism. Today, the North Caucasus remains a crucially geopolitical macroregion, as it forms the southern volatile frontier of Russia. In this case, conflict resolution strategy must serve as an integrational and preventive tool on the conflict environment by way of providing structural solutions for deep-rooted sociocultural antagonisms, transforming and rationalizing ethnoregional contradictions.

All of these issues would merit further analysis though complementary methodologies offering a more independent perspective on ethnoregional conflict dynamics. In particular, the findings gathered here call for more in-depth research on the boundaries between political integration/conflict resolution strategies and different forms of ethnic conflicts in the North Caucasus, on the internal dynamics and decision-making involved in shifting goals and strategies and on their various implications for the processes of ethnoreligious radicalization and political integration. There also needs to be a more interdisciplinary investigation on the linkages between conflict resolution strategy, social cohesion, political integration, negotiations, democratic transitions and post-conflict institutionalization. Finally, such analysis might offer useful lessons for constructive international engagement to support the conversion of state challengers into active peacebuilders, as long as these actors are politically motivated movements, which enjoy strong social legitimacy and aspire to take part in democratic politics. Indeed, our findings call for a rethinking of conventional intervention in ethnopolitical conflicts, promoting the

social cohesion and civil integration during negotiations, offering assistance to support democratic transitions in the North Caucasus that possess a future role within a peaceful environment, all in contrast to criminalization strategies (e.g., through anti-terrorist measures, such as proscription and counter-insurgency), which prevent ethnic groups from expanding their civil capacities.

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SUMMARY

MAJOR THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS

This article explores the major approaches to the study of conflict resolution strategy from a variety of interdisciplinary perspectives. It argues that conflict resolution strategy, as a civil integration resource, is a necessary tool for overcoming deep-rooted ethnic conflicts in the unstable North Caucasus. This research pursues the goal of analyzing how the strength of civil integration can affect conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The author considers the essential factors of protracted ethnic

conflicts and emphasizes the destabilizing role of the repoliticization of ethnicity in a crisis society. The concept of ethnic, "identity-based" conflicts is the heuristic theoretical model of exploring causes for increased ethnoreligious tensions in the North Caucasus. This article focuses on the ability of conflict resolution strategy to de-escalate growing tensions and transform protracted identity-based conflicts. The need to stimulate civil integration is caused by moral and structural causes: from the ethical point of view, the creation of an inclusive society is the fundamental societal goal; structural factors are related to the need to reduce inequalities and differences leading to social fragmentation and an escalation of ethnic conflicts. Among the structural conditions of regional conflicts, the author names ethnosocial inequalities, a civil identity crisis, ethnopolitical neo-authoritarianism, large-scale socioeconomic polarization and an "ideological combat" between secular modernization and religious fundamentalism. While discussing conflict resolution strategies, it is necessary to consider the following: 1) Peace and integration within the North Caucasus is a macropolitical project, the content of which is determined by issues of social cohesion and civil solidarity; 2) The development of the North Caucasus after the end of armed ethnic conflicts shows the inadmissibility of political demodernization, fundamentalism and isolationism. Today, the North Caucasus remains a crucially geopolitical macroregion, as it forms the southern volatile frontier of Russia. In this case, conflict resolution strategy must serve as an integrational and preventive tool on the conflict environment by way of providing structural solutions for deep-rooted cultural antagonisms, transforming and rationalizing ethnoregional contradictions.