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Ирредентизм как элемент современной внешнеполитической стратегии республики Южная Осетия

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Аннотация. Статья посвящена исследованию проблем ирредентизма. Автор в своем исследовании делает акцент на феномене ирредентизма как составляющей внешнеполитической стратегии государства, прослеживает динамику становления и проявления феномена. Автор в своей работе опирается на синтез двух теоретико-методологических подходов: примордиализма и конструктивизма. Согласно мнению автора на выбор внешнеполитической стратегии государства как правило влияют два фактора: традиция и конъюнктурные обстоятельства, влияющие на его современную специфику. По итогам проведенного исследования можно сделать вывод о том, что на сегодняшний день ирредентизм остается одним из важнейших элементов, хотя и не доминирующим, внешнеполитической стратегии Республики Южная Осетия.

Ключевые слова: ирредентизм, этническая разделенность, национальные движения, политика государства, этнонациональное самосознание, этнонациональная идентичность, проблема безопасности

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Research article

Irredentism as an element of the modern Foreign Policy Strategy of the Republic of South Ossetia

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the study of the problems of irredentism. The author in his research focuses on the phenomenon of irredentism as a component of the foreign policy strategy of the state, traces the dynamics of the formation and manifestation of the phenomenon. The author's work is based on the synthesis of two theoretical and methodological approaches: primordialism and constructivism. According to the author, the choice of a state's foreign policy strategy is usually influenced by two factors: tradition and opportunistic circumstances affecting its modern specifics. Based on the results of the conducted research, it can be concluded that today irredentism remains one of the most important elements, although not the dominant one, of the foreign policy strategy of the Republic of South Ossetia.

Keywords: irredentism, ethnic division, national movements, state policy, ethno-national self-awareness, ethno-national identity, security problem

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Introduction. After gaining independence, the Republic of South Ossetia faced the need to choose a foreign policy strategy that could ensure the republic both stabilization of the country's foreign policy position and the definition of its place and role in the overall balance of power in the region, as well as the preservation of its independence and identity as a whole.

It is obvious that the development of such a strategy in the external arena is always determined by at least two factors. On the one hand, these are traditional foreign policy preferences and guidelines that have developed in the region over a more or less long period of time. On the other hand, of course, the choice of one or another foreign policy strategy will be influenced by the specifics of the political situation in the location of the state and related circumstances of various kinds, such as: the military-political and economic resources of the country, the nature of relations with neighbors, determined along the friend/foe line, the degree of penetration of extra-regional but stronger players into the region, etc. In this regard, the choice of the foreign policy strategy of the Republic of South Ossetia is largely determined by the two circumstances indicated: tradition and the situation.

In traditional terms, the choice of foreign policy strategy of the South Ossetians was determined by the factor of division of the united Ossetian people, which created a direct threat to the ethnonational identity and physical survival of the ethnic group. And this factor led to the formation of irredentist orientations aimed at reunification with the North Ossetians. In terms of the situation, the foreign policy strategy of South Ossetia was formed under the influence of its immediate proximity to Georgia, relations with which were permanently balancing on the brink of peace/war, with the exception of periods of cohabitation as part of Russia/USSR. In the conditions of asymmetric relations with Georgia, the South Ossetians were forced to look for a stronger and more reliable military-political ally in their immediate environment in the person of Russia, which formed the pro-Russian vector of their foreign policy orientation.

Therefore, tradition and conjuncture actually formed two vectors of South Ossetia's foreign policy strategy: irredentism and unionism. At the same time, both of these vectors not only did not contradict each other, but also overlapped very successfully.

In this article, the author seeks to identify the specifics of South Ossetian irredentism, the features of its formation and functioning in practical terms, and to determine the practical relationship between irredentism and unionism in the general spectrum of South Ossetian foreign policy strategy.

Materials and research methods. In theoretical and methodological terms, the author tries to rely on the synthesis of two approaches when analyzing the subject under study.

On the one hand, this is a primordialist approach, taking into account the specifics of traditional institutions and values, as well as traditional norms and rules of behavior of ethnic groups and communities in general. On the other hand, this is a constructivist approach, which seems productive in terms of studying the features of state policy and the role of political elites in the process of designing and implementing ethno-national projects of various natures. According to the author, such a comprehensive approach will allow us to study the features of irredentist ideology and practical policy, and ultimately identify the specifics of political behavior of ethnic groups and communities in conditions of division.

Research results and their discussion. The Phenomenon of Irredentism. The problem of irredentism has received some coverage in domestic and foreign scientific literature. Thus, this problem has been addressed at various times by E. I. Moskalchuk, M. S. Kasabutskaya, A. S. Semchenokov, R. E. Barash, Yu. A. Balashov, Connor, W. , Boehm , M. H. and others. The problem of Ossetian irredentism was covered in the works of K. G. Dzugaev, I. B. Sanakoev, M. A. Tsagaraev. According to researchers, to date there is no single definition of irredentism in scientific literature, despite the long history of its emergence and manifestation. At the same time, the authors of publications on this problem emphasize various aspects of the phenomenon.

So, on the one hand, irredentism is understood as a special socio-political movement whose programmatic goal is the reunification of divided parts of an ethnic group within the borders of a single state, or "a special type of nationalism, the desire of a national minority living

in a certain territory to reunite with the state that it considers its homeland" [2, p. 153]. At the same time, according to Russian researchers, irredentism should not be considered as a kind of separatism. Separatism is primarily characterized by the desire to separate from the state in order to achieve national-state self-determination. Irredentism is characterized by the desire to unite with another part of one's people, and here, as a rule, relations with the state of one's residence have little influence on this process. According to M.E. Moskalchuk and M.S. Kasabutskaya, "we consider it important to emphasize the independent specificity of this phenomenon, since, unlike simple secession, for irredentism the form of national-state self-determination of the people is not important in itself, but the unification with compatriots / one's ethnic group under a single national-territorial entity is important" [3].

On the other hand, irredentism can also be interpreted as a targeted policy of the state, oriented towards territorial expansion under the pretext of the struggle for the reunification of divided ethnic communities or "an attempt by some state to 'return' the territory and population, which, in the opinion of the former, is its integral part" [2, p. 160].

In this paper, irredentism is understood as the desire of ethnic groups to unite with a blood-related part of their ethnic group living within the borders of another state. In practice, such a desire can be expressed in various forms of socio-political movements, as well as in certain state policies.

History of Ossetian division. Ossetian irredentism is a natural consequence of the division of the Ossetian people, which has a fairly long history of formation and roots deep in the Middle Ages. In this regard, it should be noted that the processes of Ossetian division began with the Tatar-Mongol invasions, which led to large-scale population movements and contributed to the radical redrawing of the ethnic map of the Caucasus. From this period, we can talk about different periods of Ossetian division: post-Alanian, Russian-imperial, Soviet and post-Soviet.

In the post-Stalin period, as a result of the Tatar-Mongol conquests, the bulk of the Alan-Ossetian population was scattered throughout the entire territory of the foothills and mountainous North Caucasus and found themselves under the influence of various military-political and socio-cultural systems: Kabardian (North Ossetians) and Georgian (South Ossetians). This situation actually marked the beginning of the formation of different, diverging vectors of socio-political development in the Ossetian ethno-political and ethnocultural environment. In the Russian-imperial period, the administrative-territorial division of the Ossetians took shape: the northern part of the Ossetian ethnos became part of the Terek region, and the southern part became part of the Tiflis province. Under these conditions, being in different Russian provinces continued to form various vectors of ethno-political attraction and repulsion in the Ossetian environment.

During the Soviet period, the Ossetian division took place along the dividing lines of the administrative-territorial structure of the USSR. The North Ossetians became part of the Russian Federation, the South Ossetians - part of the Georgian SSR. In the post-Soviet period, with the formation of the independent Republic of South Ossetia, the division of the Ossetian ethnic group now acquires state-legal features and the situation of relative division (administrative-territorial within one state) is transformed into absolute division (interstate).

Consequences of separation. The long-term division of the Ossetian ethnic group formed a certain "disunity" of the Ossetian ethnic space, when two parts of a single ethnic group "began to acquire more or less clearly expressed differentiating features in various spheres of socio-political life: political, cultural, religious, and even economic" [2, p. 160]. Thus, in the political sphere, division contributed to the formation of various forms of political self-organization among the Ossetians, and over time, various political elites. In ethnocultural terms, differentiating features began to manifest themselves in the linguistic, religious spheres, and partly in behavioral stereotypes. In the economic sphere, ethnic division led to the emergence of different forms of economic management, work ethics, etc. among the North and South Ossetians. In general, the long period of division contributed to the formation of diverging

vectors of ethnic development among the North and South Ossetians, which objectively creates the preconditions for the disintegration of a previously single ethnic group and the emergence of two different, albeit fraternal peoples.

However, it should be noted that the divergent vectors of ethnic development at a certain stage inevitably contributed to the awakening of the instinct of self-preservation in the Ossetian ethnic self-awareness, which gave rise to a mutual desire for reunification, or irredentism, of the separated parts of the ethnic group. Ossetian irredentism formed both in the north and in the south of Ossetia, divergent but counter vectors of political and ethnocultural attraction, stronger in the south and weaker in the north, when "the desire of the Ossetians for self-determination through reunification and the creation of a single state within the Russian Federation is associated with the solution of a complex issue: the Ossetian question is one ethnic group and two state entities" [5]. The indicated vectors testified to the emergence of Ossetian ethnic irredentism, which, by analogy with the genesis of the irredentist ideology of the divided ethnic groups of Europe, "came 'from within' and was determined by the needs of the ethnic groups themselves" [1].

In addition to irredentism, another important vector of the South Ossetian foreign policy strategy was pro-Russian unionism, as an ideology and practical policy, oriented toward joining Russia as a large state, within which it is easier to survive and which is more favorable to the fate of minorities, compared to the neighboring state in the south. Since the other part of the Ossetian people has always been part of Russia, joining it meant automatic reunification with the other part of Ossetia. Therefore, both vectors overlapped and constituted a single, fairly powerful and Russian-oriented foreign policy strategy.

Dynamics of Ossetian irredentism. The ideas of irredentism are most relevant in times of crisis. In such situations, the feelings of division among ethnic groups begin to become especially acute due to increased threats to group identity and security. Divided parts of ethnic groups, faced with such threats, begin to actively seek any connections with their ethnic relatives, wherever they live. If such relatives live in close proximity, across the state border, then this usually leads to rather strict demands for reunification with them.

For these reasons, Ossetian irredentism was most clearly manifested during the crisis periods of the collapse of the Russian Empire, and then the USSR, which created real threats to the national identity of small peoples (identity crisis). As a result of the emergence and growth of such threats, irredentist sentiments aimed at reunification with North Ossetia began to strengthen in the ethnic self-awareness of South Ossetians. Such reunification in the South Ossetian mass ethnic consciousness began to be viewed and understood as the only way and practical opportunity to protect and preserve their group identity, as well as to ensure physical security.

The first fundamental formulation of the Ossetian irredentist project took place in the rather critical circumstances of the collapse of the Russian Empire. In 1917, a congress of the Ossetian people was held in Vladikavkaz, at which the South Ossetian delegation publicly voiced the need for the reunification of the united Ossetian people. The congress supported the proposal of the South Ossetian delegates and adopted a special resolution approving the idea of reunification.

The idea of unification was further developed during the Soviet period, when in 1925-1926 the question of unification of the two Ossetias was raised. During this period, various projects for the unification of Ossetia were put forward, both as part of the Russian Federation and as part of Georgia. However, these projects were never implemented for various reasons: the unification of Ossetia as part of the Russian Federation did not suit the Georgian authorities, and the Bolshevik leadership of the USSR did not want to aggravate relations with Georgia. The unification of Ossetia within Georgia also did not find final support in the power structures of the USSR, since it significantly complicated the ethnopolitical picture of the North Caucasus. In addition, maintaining the division of Ossetia in a certain sense suited the Bolsheviks, who sought to exercise control in the Caucasus through the old and fairly effective mechanism of divide and rule.

The Georgian-Ossetian conflict gave a special impetus to South Ossetian irredentism, as well as to Ossetian irredentism in general. This conflict was perceived in the South Ossetian ethno-national consciousness as a real and immediate threat to the ethnic identity, as well as the physical security of the South Ossetians. The attempts of the Georgian side to introduce the Georgian language of office work and education in South Ossetia, the demands for the abolition of the South Ossetian autonomy and the actual war on its territory made such threats quite real.

The second public declaration of the Ossetian irredentist program also coincided with the crisis period of the collapse of the USSR, when there was a growth of national self-awareness and an intensification of the processes of national-state consolidation in Ossetian society. The situation of the collapse of the USSR, of course, actualized the Ossetian irredentist vectors, especially in South Ossetia, while having a significant impact on both the formation of the idea of South Ossetian self-determination, as well as on the socio-political situation in South Ossetia as a whole. At the 1st Congress of the Ossetian People held on December 13, 1991, the Ossetian irredentist declaration was adopted. It stated: "Considering the fact of the termination of the Union Treaty of 1922 and other legislative acts of the USSR and expressing the will of the Ossetian people to restore the unity of their homeland, the extraordinary congress of the Ossetian people proclaims: 1. Restoration of the territorial integrity and national-political unity of the Ossetian people as the main goal, the achievement of which alone allows the Ossetians to preserve themselves as a people. The Ossetian people are determined to achieve this goal using exclusively civilized means. 2. The only form of realization of the right of the Ossetian people to national self-determination is considered to be the restoration of the integrity of Ossetia within the framework of a single state, which is in a voluntary union with the Russian Federation and the Commonwealth of Independent States" [6].

The decline of irredentist sentiment. Some decline in irredentist sentiment in South Ossetia after Russia's recognition of South Ossetian independence in August 2008. Russian recognition contributed to the emergence in the South Ossetian ethno-national consciousness of sentiments that formulate certain chances and plans for building an independent state. Such sentiments to some extent began to displace irredentist projects and even unionism as a project for joining the Russian Federation.

A significant influence on the decline of South Ossetian irredentism, as well as unionism in general, is undoubtedly exerted by the awareness of the impossibility of joining the Russian Federation and thus reuniting the divided Ossetian people in the near future. The problem of joining the Russian Federation is perceived as practically unrealistic, unrealistic and unrealizable in the coming decades, despite repeated expressions of the will of the people of South Ossetia in referendums. Therefore, the problematic nature of joining Russia significantly slows down and suppresses irredentist and unionist sentiments in the South Ossetian socio-political discourse.

However, it should be borne in mind that, be that as it may, the topic of irredentism, as well as unionism, despite all the above circumstances, still does not disappear from both the political and public agenda. Irredentist sentiments are periodically voiced at various local scientific and public venues. In the republic, the irredentist political party "United Ossetia" is actively operating, enjoying mass support from the population and controlling the parliament, and until recently, the executive power. Such vitality of ideas and, in general, the paradigm of irredentism in the South Ossetian socio-political consciousness is due to the fact that the Ossetian ethnic group remains divided with all the ensuing consequences. At present, irredentism/unionism and independence have become two of the most important competing elements of the South Ossetian foreign policy strategy.

Prospects of South Ossetian Irredentism. It should be noted that the prospects of South Ossetian irredentism and unionism in general will largely depend on a number of factors. The most important factor in this regard should be recognized, of course, as the position of the leadership of the Russian Federation on the issue of including South Ossetia in its composition. A positive solution to this issue for South Ossetia will, of course, depend on the specifics of both the regional and global conjuncture.

Another factor that also actively influences the solution of the problem is, of course, the degree and level of articulation of irredentism by the Ossetian intellectual and political elites, both in the north and in the south of Ossetia. Any attempts to implement the irredentist project must be accompanied by its mass support, both at the level of the elites and the population. Such support will undoubtedly give a powerful impetus to the process of Ossetian reunification, and will also serve as an important argument for the position of the Russian leadership on the issue of South Ossetia joining the Russian Federation. The absence of such mass support will certainly slow down the irredentist process, perhaps even to the point of its failure.

The practical implementation of the Ossetian irredentist project will certainly be influenced by neighboring Georgia, which will do everything it can to hinder Ossetian reunification. Georgian elites continue to view South Ossetia as part of their territory, temporarily "occupied" by Russia. Since 2008, the country has had the so-called "Law on Occupied Territories" in force, which provides for the "return" of South Ossetia to Georgia. Such sentiments in the Georgian socio-political discourse are actively fueled by Georgia's Western partners, who demand that it restore its territorial integrity as a condition for joining Western military-political structures, primarily NATO.

Conclusion. The conducted analysis of Ossetian irredentism and its role in the formation of the modern foreign policy strategy of South Ossetia allows us to draw the following conclusions:

- today, irredentism as a socio-political project aimed at resolving the problem of the centuries-old division of the Ossetian people remains the most important element of the foreign policy strategy of the Republic of South Ossetia;
- due to the recent strengthening of sentiments of independence in the South Ossetian socio-political discourse, irredentism is not the dominant idea of the country's foreign policy strategy;
- the socio-political status of South Ossetian irredentism is of a very fluid nature and can change dramatically due to serious fluctuations in the military-political situation in the region.

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