

SPECIFIC FEATURES OF THE POLITICAL CULTURE IN THE INNER ASIAN REGIONS

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Abstract: The last decade of the 20th – the beginning of the 21st century is the period of constant changes in the global political environment. Evidently, these changes are related to globalization and regionalization processes. The alliance of countries with a purpose to achieve common interests is, presumably, an objective process, though, at the same time, it leads to certain problems. One of them is apparent. It is the protection of national security and preservation of the society's identity elements. National security seems to be composed of the security of each individual region within a country. Regional security is a multifactorial concept, with one of its markers being the social and political process in the region. In its turn, one of the underlying factors that exerts direct influence on the social and political process of any country is the type of the society's political culture.

Keywords: Political culture, Asia, national security, Asian-Pacific region, Inner Asia.

INTRODUCTION

The last decade of the 20th – the beginning of the 21st century is the period of constant changes in the global political environment. Evidently, these changes are related to globalization and regionalization processes. The alliance of countries with a purpose to achieve common interests is, presumably, an objective process, though, at the same time, it leads to certain problems. One of them is apparent. It is the protection of national security and preservation of the society's identity elements.

National security seems to be composed of the security of each individual region within a country. Regional security is a multifactorial concept, with one of its markers being the social and political process in the region. In its turn, one of the underlying factors that exerts direct influence on the social and political process of any country is the type of the society's political culture.

Based on the above, the problem of formation and transformation of the political culture in individual regions, accompanied by highlighting of the specific features of each individual territory, arouses genuine interest. We believe that the border areas of the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China and Mongolia occupy a special place here. It is connected to the fact that the first two states are currently

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playing or trying to play the role of centers that largely determine the international relations. Globalization, as a process of multilateral integration of states, led to a more intensive regionalization, when the countries create regional centers of power. For the Asian-Pacific region, China is or may be such center, while for the Euro-Asian region it is Russia.

Mongolia, which for a long time was under the influence of its neighbors Russia (USSR) and China, is, in its turn, now trying to advance an independent political agenda. The question “Where will it go in the end?” remains unanswered so far.

Another factor, which determines the interest to the issues at hand, is the affinity of the process of historic development (with evident individual features) of the Russia’s neighboring areas, China and Mongolia.

Researchers sometimes in general refer to the border areas of Russia, China and Mongolia as “Transborderland.” This implies that the processes in these territories are not confined to their individual geographical borders. They “resonate” with each other. Sometimes, the territory under consideration is called “the Inner Asia” (Mitupov, 2007: 7).

The geographical and historical affinity of the mentioned territories determined the scientific political interest to their development. And the problem of political culture is high on the list here.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Having determined the geographical constraints of the research, let us now take a closer look at the problem’s timeline. Where there are no questions with determination of the latest time boundary, it corresponds to the present day; it is hard to clearly identify the first time boundary. This is related to the problem of the reference point of the individual person’s and the society’s political culture. If we take as a basis the idea that the political culture appears simultaneously with the political processes, i.e. interaction of the authority and the community, political decision-making, it means that the political culture can be reconstructed from the moment when the proto-state associations form. In the territory under consideration it is, probably, the nomadic tribe unions. However, a different problem arises. Information concerning the initial period of development of the macroregion called the Inner Asia does not provide us with an opportunity to get an idea about specific features of the political culture of individuals and communities of those times. Based on the characteristics of the political culture, suggested by reputable researchers G. Almond and S. Verba, the initial stage of formation and existence of political relations incorporates the features of the patriarchal or traditional type of the political culture that, in turn, incorporates the features of the almost absolute power of the leader – the chief, which may be limited only by the power of God and absence of any participation of other people in the political process (maybe, for the exception

of the shaman). As can be seen from the above, according to the classical approach to classification of the political culture, it may be assumed that in the initial period of history of the region under consideration, the political culture had a traditional, patriarchal character and was represented by the nomadic tribes.

As can be seen from the above, it is rather difficult to determine the first chronological boundary of this work. More specific characteristics of the political culture in the territories under consideration may be provided in relation to the later periods.

There are many types of the political culture. In fact, there are as many classifications of the political culture as there are serious researchers of this phenomenon.

As far as the analysis of the political culture is concerned, the fundamental theory, beyond any doubt, is the political culture theory proposed by Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba. Widely known are the three main types of the political culture that they proposed: patriarchal (traditional, parochial) where political roles are not specified; subject, where the attitude to the political system is passive in general; the third type – the participant or the activist culture, where the members of the society are clearly oriented at the system in general. The derivative one from the three listed types of culture is the civic culture. During the analysis of the social component, the evaluation of the level of development of the civic culture allows to define the limits of comparison. According to G. Almond and S. Verba, the civic culture is the mixed political culture. Within this type of culture, many citizens may be active in politics but many others play a more passive role of subjects. The citizen, who exists within the confines of the civic culture, has a certain reserve of influence. He is not permanently included in the politics, nor does he observe it in an active way (Mitupov, 2007).

Along with the national political culture, researchers also outline the regional one, i.e. they characterize the value system of individuals or communities, their political tastes in a specific territory. It should be noted that the national political culture is a certain quintessence of the regions' political cultures. In view of the above, when we speak about the border areas, we largely rely on statewide characteristics; however, we attempt to highlight specific regional features.

Without any doubt, there is a difference in the style of social and political behavior of three countries of the Inner Asia's Transborderland: the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China and Mongolia. These styles are based on the civilizational fundamentals (division between the Eastern and the Western civilizations in the scientific and publicist literature), historical background (for instance, the fact that Outer Mongolia for a long time was a part of China or under the influence of the USSR), and political regimes.

The civilizational fundamentals are involved in the division between the Eastern and the Western civilizations. Beyond any doubt, the Western civilization is reflected in the social and political processes of China and Mongolia, while the Western one, largely, – in Russia. Let us also outline an approach that says that Russia has other, individual civilizational evaluations. These are Eurasia and Asiopa.

According to the opinion of many publicists, the Russian political culture was influenced by a long-lasting “imperial idea.” We have considered and continue to consider ourselves as the greatest nation, despite any shocks. At the same time, other states have seen and continue to see Russia as a lower-level state. We would rather refer to “imperial idea” as a civilizational feature of the country. The developing countries that surround us (and those further away) are seen as younger brothers. The reason for this is explained by objective factors – the size of the country, the size of its population; and by the subjective factors – victories in wars, influence on the global processes. The “imperial consciousness” may have an impact on the support of authorities by the society, especially in the foreign policy. Arguably, this component may determine to some extent the type of political culture in the country; however, still, the level of social and political development of the country, its national and regional specificity will be the underlying factor.

Relying on the classical typology by G. Almond and S. Verba, an attempt may be made to provide a general description of the political culture in Russia that, in varying degrees, is reflected in the regions, in particular, in the territories of the country that pertain to the region of the Inner Asia. The political culture in Russia may be classified as a mixed type, a subject-activist culture with patriarchal elements. It reflects civic non-participation or insignificant participation in dealing with important national issues while participating in the power legitimization procedures and decision-making (elections and referendums). Certainly, there are certain differences within the territory of the country. In large cities, with a bigger IT penetration in the society, and more people with higher education, the political participation culture may be expressed in a larger scale. Other territories are largely characteristic of the subject type. It is possible that a certain part of population residing in remote locations where communications are underdeveloped incorporate the features of the patriarchal type when people do not participate in the political process at all. The mixed type that we suggest for Russia is, in our opinion, inherent in all Russia, though it is indeed more explicitly manifested in the periphery.

The predominance of the subject-type political culture is, in our opinion, based on the historical tradition. Largely, based on another characteristic feature – the paternalism. With the most general approach to interpretation of paternalism, there is a difference in its understanding. As N.V. Shushkova writes in her doctoral thesis, the Western researchers, when they refer to paternalism, sometimes mean the managerial strategy or form that contradicts the democracy and the civil society (Political Systems and Political Culture of the Orient, 2007: 8). In the Russian

tradition, the authority, represented by the head of the state, is perceived by the society as a father of the large family. This is observed in the imperial period. It is clearly seen in the expression “Czar-batyushka” (Russian for “Father King”). It is seen in the Soviet times, when all the decisions in the state are made on top and the society is removed from the political process. We can say that the Soviet times incorporate the features of authoritarian rule (and, briefly, totalitarian rule) and hence “non-participation” of the society in the politics. Yet again, the head of the state is seen not as a political leader but as a father of the nation. The most important thing is to delegate the authority to someone, someone (the father) deals with all the issues, and the individual (vast majority) does not participate in the political process between the elections.

Sometimes Russia is characterized as a country with a mobilization type of development. Too many shocks, wars, social cataclysms, changes in the form of government. All the time, the country has to “mobilize” in this or that way to build a new style of civic behavior. As the succession of events is inherent in almost all the Russian history, it is possible that it left a certain imprint on the civilizational grounds of the Russian political culture as well.

The formation of cultural communities in the territories of Transbaikal, the Northern China and Mongolia was uniquely influenced by the phenomenon of “nomadic civilization.” In contrast to Russian and China, Mongolia preserved the fundamental principles of the said civilization. In Transbaikal, the “nomadic civilization”, having transformed under the influence of the Russian “imperial idea”, remained with a part of the Buryat people, those Buryats that have not settled down. In the Northeastern China, the “nomadic civilization” has largely transformed under the influence of the more settled Han people.

Speaking about the Russian political culture, probably it is worth to mention the “overtaking development” concept that, since it appeared in the 19th century, has retained its supporters until the present moment. The idea is simple – Russia is always lagging behind the developed countries and is always trying to overtake them. We think that this idea is more of a subject of a theoretical discussion in the theorists’ attempt to understand why the country cannot start prospering. At the same time, this theory allows to explain why the activist type of the political culture has not formed in the society. It is just that the Russians have not caught up with the West with its level of development of liberal values and democracy.

We believe that the type of behavior in Transbaikal, which, territorially speaking, is a part of the Inner Asia, is largely determined by the specific features mentioned above.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The civilizational grounds of the Chinese political culture are determined by the peculiarities of social relations in the country, in general. Widely spread is the

opinion that the idea of Confucianism is fundamental for the social relations in China. Until the mid-19th century, Confucianism had been the dominating doctrine; it had determined the values of life and the worldview of the Chinese people. Later, in general, it retained its fundamental status but the country was gradually growing more perceptive of the ideas of Christianity and social/political doctrines of the West (Vasilyev, 2013: 317). Beyond any doubt, Confucianism, as the basis of all social processes, laid the foundation for the political culture as well. Despite the permanently increasing influence of the Western values on the process of active reformation of the economic, social, and political spheres, the last twenty-odd years in modern China have exhibited the existence and continuous development of the ideas of Confucianism. It is possible to outline the following axiological characteristics that underlie the social and political processes in China:

- emphasis on duty and obligations, and not on the human rights;
- presence of a set of interrelated traditions that sustain the roles in the society;
- in management, preference is given not to the laws but to the human factor;
- feeling of connection between the past and the present that helps in dealing with long-term issues;
- the feeling of belonging in the society rather than possession of property;
- aspiration to avoid Westernization, i.e. the influence of the West (Burov, 2011: 9).

The Chinese society for a long time has been the paternalist society, i.e. when the head of the state acts as the nation's father. The grounds for that may be found in the doctrine of Confucianism, the one component of which is the cult of the father and the senior members of the family. The Chinese tradition, primarily, demonstrates veneration of the father.

The political culture of Mongolia has its own peculiarities. Some researchers even propose the division of the country's political culture into the periods. They see five stages there: They all have peculiarities in most versatile components of the social and political process: geopolitical factor, demography, economics etc.:

- 12th – 13th century: the Great Empire of Genghis Khan;
- 14th – 17th century: the period of the Great Empire's collapse and segmentation;
- 17th century – 1921: the rule of the Qing dynasty over the Mongolian people, development of Mongolia within the confines of the Chinese political tradition;
- 1921 – 1990: the period of the USSR's influence, the Soviet political system;
- 1990 – our time: the period of post-Soviet Mongolia (Ivin, 2014: 730).

As Mongolia has extensive nomadic traditions, other civilizational grounds left only a slight imprint on the country's culture. Arnold J. Toynbee, in his theory

of local civilizations, initially assigned it in his classification to the category of “arrested civilizations.” Though, later on, he moves on to characterize it as a “full-blown” civilization (Ivin, 2014). In spite of this, the main civilizational factor that determines the development of Mongolia, as well as its political culture, is the nomadic lifestyle, the so-called “Mongolian nomadism” which is based on the recurrent cycles of nomadic animal husbandry, and dependence on the natural environment. However, it is also possible to outline a range of other factors that have influenced and continue to influence the economic, social, political processes in Mongolia. Some of them, in the historical development, may be seen in the border areas of the neighboring countries, and some are country-specific:

- absence of a large number of ethnic groups that form the cultural environment;
- certain influence of shamanism, up until the 16th century;
- presence of rigid, despotic authority during the period of prosperity of the Mongolian civilization;
- influence of Buddhism, in its Northern branch – Lamaism, starting from the 16th century;
- presence of a certain conglomerate of different religious beliefs, cultural and civilizational grounds;
- strong Chinese influence, especially during the period of dominion of the Qing dynasty, meaning the influence of Chinese civilizational framework, Confucianism;
- strong Soviet influence, with a respective influence of the Soviet (Russian) imperial civilizational model;
- strong influence of the development tendencies of the Western society on the last, modern stage (Political Systems and Political Culture of the Orient, 2007: 733).

The said factors allow to outline special features in the development of the social and political system of Mongolia. Initially, the global rule of Mongolia, eventual withdrawal from the idea of external expansion, focus on internal problems.

In the East, in particular, in China and Mongolia, the political culture was expressed in the struggle of different powers that were on the top of the social and political structure. In history, it is manifested in secret behind-the-scene palace intrigues and coups. In the later time, the Orient was introduced to the idea of multiplicity of parties and explicit political competition, including the parliamentary elections, free press and transparency that inevitably influenced the political culture of the society. However, the traditionally strong central authority allowed not so many institutes, which reflect the European political culture, to realize themselves in the Orient.

The People’s Republic of China, currently, the authoritarian state, the Russian Federation and Mongolia – the democratic states. Hence the difference in country

management styles, and in civic behavior styles. Formally, the political cultures in Russia and Mongolia, which are based on liberal values, unlike its counterpart in China, have more features of the participant culture. The political culture in the People's Republic of China is, beyond any doubt, a subject one.

The specific nature of the culture, any culture, be it the culture in general or any component thereof, lies in the specific character of the worldview. We find interesting the reflections of A.V. Zhukov about the worldview of the population of the border areas of Russia, China and Mongolia. They are based on the idea that the worldview of this region is based on a single framework. The values of the neighboring regions have the same sources. In the nomadic perception of the world, the Chinese religious, mythological tradition plays a significant role (Zhukov, 2009: 19). Hence obvious is the symmetry in formation of the cultural foundations of the world outlook. However, the situation will not remain static. The perception of the Buddhist values changes to some extent the axiological component in the bigger picture.

CONCLUSION

From our point of view, we cannot speak with a 100 percent guarantee about the persistent trends of development of the political culture in the territories under consideration, though it is possible to come across such an opinion in relation to China, for instance. With the serious civilizational background, formed by the political orientations that are stable in time, Russian, China and Mongolia, unlike many countries, have experienced and continue to experience too many profound changes in their history.

It seems that the gradual, slow liberalization of the policy realized by the Chinese authorities, the development of democratic institutes in Mongolia, the further development of democracy in Russia will gradually change the map of the society's political tastes in general, and the individual in particular. Electoral behaviors will change, by transforming the political culture into the culture with more intensive participation.

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