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**N. Suhanova,**

PhD student, Department of International Relations and  
Political Science, Nizhny Novgorod State Linguistic  
University named after N.A. Dobrolyubov

**“SOFT POWER” IN FOREIGN POLICY  
OF MODERN RUSSIA**

The growing role of flexible factors, and the increasing impact of “soft” tools of influence on the system of international relations, in contrast to political situation of “hard power”, took place in the late 20th century.

The concept of “soft power” (some sources give a translation of “flexible power”) was formulated by well-known American political scientist J. Hering [Nye 2002; Nye 2004]. He identified three basic resources of “soft power”: culture, ideology and foreign policy, having a moral authority [Nye 1990: 167]. Therefore, attractiveness, mutual understanding and exposure are critical elements of behavioral motivation of “soft power” i.e. attractive force.

The perception of the nature of “soft power” in the historical and cultural aspect is associated with cultural, non-violent, democratic, emotionally attractive values. These values are used to establish and support authority by methods of setup implementing: to persuade (to force) others “to want what you want.”

The phenomenon of “soft power” is not an unambiguous phenomenon of modern foreign policy, public diplomacy, utilizing the diversity of approaches and technologies of foreign policy activity to influence the public, business and political circles of foreign countries. Nye introduced a new concept of “smart power” i.e. «the ability to coordinate and combine capabilities and resources of “soft power” and “hard power”»<sup>1</sup>.

The role of “soft power” in modern geopolitics is increasing against the background of the invention of new methods and technologies of information-psychological influence on the international community, the world power elites and national governments. “Soft power” has had a significant influence on the formation the U.S. foreign policy, emerged as the core concept of the school of American political liberalism, including Eastern Europe, Central Asia (Afghanistan, Iraq) and Africa. Thus the concepts of “democratic intervention”, “responsibility to protect” and “human security” were created and became the core of the script in the “Arab Spring” both in the Middle East and the former Soviet Union. All this requires a careful study of the various doctrines and tools of “soft power”, their effectiveness and the degree of responsibility, that a modern state should bear if it uses “soft power” in the interests of foreign expansion and translate their values to other actors of international relations.

Measurability of efficiency in the use of tools of “soft” and “hard” power requires a specific approach always, as it depends on many internal and external factors, determining the possibility of using those or other forces. Thus, the rigidity of the economic penalties can vary within wide limits, and they can be very severe means of influence.

Informational influence can be characterized by different degrees of rigidity; various forms of international politics may be stricter or softer. Even such a resource, as nuclear weapons, can be considered an element of “soft” and not “hard” power. The military parade on May 9, 2015 in honor of the 70th anniversary of Soviet victory in the Great Patriotic War was the evidence of this. One can assume that the nuclear weapon is an instrument for not a military force, but a rigid political one. This is a warning about the real death threat by using the nuclear weapon, which is often done as a condition of peace.

A similar example is the news that the Russian ballistic missile submarine “Vladimir Monomakh” made a successful firing by two intercontinental ballistic missile “Bulava” during the Antalya G20 summit on November 15, 2015, which passed almost 6 000 km and hit the training target at the site “Kura”<sup>2</sup>.

“Soft power” as a technology is a «set of instruments and established practices that are regarded as “soft” in the sense, that one can expect relatively less damage» when used than in the case of “application other instruments to achieve the goals” [Parshin 2014: 14].

The term “soft power” has been introduced in an official state turnover since February 2012, adding to the arsenal of Russian diplomacy tools. For the first time this term was used by Vladimir Putin in his election article “Russia and the Changing World”, where this concept was defined as «a set of tools and methods to achieve foreign policy goals without the use of weapons, but at the expense of information and other levers of influence»<sup>3</sup>.

However, the nature and content of the “soft power” is not fully disclosed in the Russian concept, that suggests a direct borrowing of the different meanings of interpretation of the term. This situation requires clarification, concretization and expanded definition of the term “soft power” in its Russian understanding, as copying Western patterns and

transference them to another culture are fraught with the opposite result. This objective is particularly relevant in the context of the various formats of international relations, which Russia builds with its strategic partners in global politics.

Russian President drew the attention of Russian diplomacy on the need to use the “soft power” at the meeting of ambassadors and permanent representatives on July 9, 2012. This includes «the promotion of the interests and approaches through persuasion and attraction of sympathy for their country, based on achievements, not only in material, but also in the spiritual culture and intellectual sphere».

Vladimir Putin declared that «the image of Russia abroad is formed not by us, so it is often distorted and does not reflect the real situation in our country, nor its contribution to world civilization, science, culture, and our country's position in international affairs is presented by them unilaterally»<sup>4</sup>. Obviously, the “soft power” has become one of the pillars of the Russian foreign policy in modern conditions.

Nowadays no single event in the world politics occurs without the use of instruments of “soft power”, enhanced with the latest information technology. It is extremely important that “soft power” is often provides information preparing for direct military intervention in the current conditions. The situation of “Russian presence” in Syria could be a prime example. It was reported on September 30, 2015, that Syrian President Bashar Assad has asked Russia for military assistance in the fight against ISIS militants and Russian Federation Council has approved the use of the Russian Air Force in Syria. The same day, Russian Air Force began bombing the positions of militants in Syria<sup>5</sup>.

Russia provides military assistance to the legitimate army of President Assad in Syria only in accordance with the UN Charter.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said this in his interview with US journalist Charlie Rose for the American television channel CBS<sup>6</sup>.

Development of “soft power” format in Russia is an objective indicator to achieve a level of the country on which to build a relationship with it as with the world leader, even if this fact is not recognized by great powers, such as the United States.

There are other channels of cooperation in addition to the official ways to transfer Russia's “soft power” and cultural influence on the international community and the political elite, including the prominent role, played by sport, tourism, education, acting as agents of “soft power”. Therefore, in our view, November 9, 2015 WADA Commission has taken an unprecedented pressure for the destruction of a positive image of Russian sport – a charge of Russia athletics team in the use of performance-enhancing drugs, recommending to remove all Russian athletes from participating in all competitions, including the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro in 2016. Russian President Vladimir Putin said at a forum of the World Olympians Association, that Russia strictly adheres to the Olympic Charter, which explicitly stated on the inadmissibility of the use of athletes for political purposes. Russia has consistently advocated the idea that sport is outside politics<sup>7</sup>.

It should be recognized, that the historical experience of the West and the U.S. in the use of “soft power” was quite successful. The results of the application of instruments of “soft power” have left an imprint on the development of programs of information influence on the mass consciousness of the population of European countries. Public diplomacy reached its peak during the “cold war”. At this time, the rivalry between the USSR and the U.S., as well as their allies for dominance in space, manifested most clearly. Many experts point out the U.S. leadership in the application of instruments of “soft power”;

China is trying to catch up on its backlog; in recent years, Russia has become a major activity in this direction.

Attractive image of “soft power” in public diplomacy for the regulation of international processes has begun to occupy a dominant position, pushing the “hard power” to the second plan, according to the new strategic doctrine of the leading countries in the difficult period of political and economic crisis. Influence of public opinion on domestic and foreign policy of countries has steadily increased, the possibility of communication influence on international processes are expanding in the emerging global information space and new information and communication technologies.

Maximum efficiency is achieved while respecting the individual approach to the process of creating an attractive image of the country (i.e. the use of the model of “smart power”, connecting the attractiveness of softness, and abilities of hardness) in the choice of methods and means of foreign and domestic activities of the state. The most important condition for achieving efficiency in the use of mechanisms of “soft power” is its information support with all possibilities of Internet technologies.

A key role is assigned to public diplomacy in promoting a positive image of the state in the channels of mass communication. Non-governmental actors in public diplomacy are able to cover the whole spectrum of the political life of the country, transferring not only official, but also oppositional mood. In recent years, our government began to pay more attention to this issue. The share of financing of Rossotrudnichestvo line projects has been increased. Also, several funds appeared allocating grants to Russian NGOs in the development activities of public diplomacy. The main priority was, is and will be the CIS space<sup>8</sup>.

It should be recognized that education is a powerful instrument of “soft power”, assuming the character of a mechanism or channel of public diplomacy. Analysis of the practical use of this phenomenon shows, that usage of “soft power” as a mechanism of educational system opportunities is implemented inefficiently enough in the information progress, in the achievements of Russian education system, and in a weak information and communication, promoting the image of the Russian education in opinion of foreign and Russian public. Note that one can count on the effect of higher education as a “soft power” tool only in the long term. Culture and values spread and take root slowly but deeply and permanently. Therefore, “there is an increase in the role of universities as the centers of science and culture” in the modern world, and, as a result, the construction of images of social reality made “in order to enhance the positive effect of innovative transformations in science, business, education” [Education ... 2014: 60]. In this context, the Russian system of education can be an effective instrument of foreign policy of our country with the appropriate information support.

The country's perception in the public mind is shaping up as the direct interaction with reality, and under the influence of targeted information and communication – by means of the image. Currently, a comprehensive approach to the formation of the modern image of Russia is required: identification of problems, definition of new targets and prospects, ideas of a new brand, its socio-cultural foundations, leading communicators, toolbox of national and regional branding.

“Soft power” has to be supported by “hard power” without the use of its instruments, but as a shield, as the foundation for the protection of the state’s independence and sovereignty from the encroachments of “others”, basing on the analysis of mechanisms for the use of “soft power” in the practice of settlement of international

relations. This approach allows consideration of the problem of “soft power” from the angle of the tool, or value criteria of softness, stiffness, and extends the solution of many foreign policy problems for any country.

Summarizing, we can conclude that all the technologies, that have been discussed above, work on the main thing – the preservation of the state. Russian foreign policy success today depends on the skillful use of instruments of “soft power”: information support, mechanisms of formation of the image of Russia, public diplomacy, development of tourism, sports, attraction of foreign students to study in Russia and expanding the network of Russia's education and training centers of the Russian language and culture abroad, maintaining the authority of the “Russian world”.

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*“Vlast”, Moscow, 2015, №12, pp. 79–84.*

### **D. Popov,**

Ph.D. (Law), Head of the Ural regional  
information-analytical center RISS

### **A. Starostin,**

Deputy Head of the Department of Theology,  
Ural State Mining University, (Ekaterinburg)

## **RADICAL ISLAMISM IN THE URAL REGION**

The gradual growth of radical sentiment is fixed on the post-Soviet space in the Muslim community of the Ural Federal District despite its distance from the centers of conflict. This is facilitated by the

following factors. The authority of the "official" Muslim structures in the opinion of believers and youth, decreases as a result of their organizational disunity and personal contradictions of the clergy. Number of muftiates varies from 2 to 6 on the regions of the Urals Federal District. The most intense competition exists between the Central Spiritual Board of Muslims (166 local organizations) and the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Asiatic Russia (46 local organizations) from the end of the 1990s. Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims gradually strengthening its position in the area, because it is supported by the authorities in the majority of subjects (Kurgan and Chelyabinsk regions, Khanty-Mansiysk District, Yamalo-Nenets District), while the regional administration of Sverdlovsk and Tyumen regions still claim to equal treatment of all Muslim organizations.

Active migration of people from around Central Asia (Sverdlovsk and Chelyabinsk regions) and the Caucasus (Yamal, Yugra) creates favorable conditions for Islamism. Now, these people constitute the majority of worshipers in mosques in medium and large cities. This problem is particularly acute in the north of the Ural Federal District: according to the census, the number of people, practicing Islam for 20 years grew in 1,5 times up to 13.35% of the population in the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous District, and 1.6 times, up to 16% in Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Region.

The emissaries of extremist organizations traditionally have been working among the religious-minded workers and among isolated from the society. In parallel, the share of the imams of the Central Asian and Caucasian nationalities increases (mostly Tatar-Bashkir), who are more susceptible to radical views.

Migration is accompanied by a progressive increase in interethnic tensions in the area, which is also the most noticeable in the

north of the Urals Federal District due to mass relocation of migrants from the North Caucasus (Dagestanis Chechens). The number of crimes in the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous District with the participation of migrants was increased by 40% in 2013 only. At the same time, the Caucasian organized crime groups are often associated with the local terrorist cells of Islamist organizations, according to reports of law enforcement agencies.

All provokes hostility toward Islam in society at large this in conjunction with the information policy of the media (highlighting the negative aspects of Muslim life). The growing dissatisfaction with the migration situation among local residents was revealed by sociological surveys in all regions of the Urals Federal District with the exception of the Kurgan region.

These factors became a favorable environment for spread of radical Islamic movements in the Ural Federal District: Salafism, Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami (HT), Nurdzhalar, Tablighi Jamaat and the Islamic Party of Turkestan (IPT).

Since the late 1990s, the Salafis (Wahhabis) have been active in the northern regions of the Urals, which were originally used as “recreation centers” of militants. The total number of Salafis in the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous District is estimated at 2–3 thousand people (large cells – “Jamaat” – exist in Nizhnevartovsk, Surgut, Rainbow, Nefteyugansk, Megion). Communities of Salafis made attempts to capture the local Muslim congregations in some localities. As a rule, they have close links with the criminal world (arms and drugs seized during searches, confirm this), seeking to get patrons in government structures. Recruiting work is focused on such categories of persons, as local residents, trapped in difficult circumstances; migrants; ex-prisoners; slavonic girls that marry people from the North Caucasus.

In some cases imams-Salafis preach under the cover of the official Muslim organizations. Salafis, studying in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East, look more convincing in the debate with the clergy of the traditional Hanafi, 49% of whom have no formal religious education even. At the same time, authorities often experience difficulties in closing the “Salafi” mosques due to limited legal instruments, in spite of the fact that the prohibited literature is confiscated there periodically, and their parishioners become members of the bandit underground in the North Caucasus and other regions.

Hizbut-Tahrir has cells in both the north and south of the Ural Federal District. They are characterized by high cohesion and coordination of activities with the structures in other regions (in particular, in Bashkiria). The main work of the members of Hizbut-Tahrir is focused on the promotion of the ideas, but the weapons, psychotropic drugs and diagrams of potential targets for attacks (building of law enforcement agencies, infrastructure facilities) are confiscated during searches at them as well. Recruitment of supporters (in addition to the same categories of persons, that of Salafis) is held among the Tatar and Bashkir shift workers, as well as students and young professionals who are dissatisfied with their social position.

Thus, there is an expansion of social composition of the organization in recent years: if migrants from Central Asia dominated initially, then the proportion of representatives of Muslim nations has declined to 50%, while the share of Russian and Ukrainians increased to 40%, the average age dropped to 18–30 years, and the number of people with higher education and the children of wealthy parents – increased. Hizbut-Tahrir has changed its tactics: in 2013 its supporters in the Urals switched from secret training in apartments and careful recruitment of followers to the demonstrative actions on the example of their Tatarstan colleagues. Earlier, they attempted to go into the public

political sphere (in 2012, one of the activists of Hizbut-Tahrir was a participant of non-systemic opposition in Chelyabinsk).

The Ural cells of Hizbut-Tahrir, Salafis and the Islamic Party of Turkestan conclude tactical alliances with each other in order to convert Muslims in organized opposition to the system of government in Russia, abandoning the mutual accusations of theological persuasion and coordinating actions including sending neophytes into the ranks of the militants in Central Asia, the Caucasus and other “hot spots”, such as the Kiev “Maidan” in the beginning of 2014. The participation of people from the Urals as a militant “Islamic state” in the hostilities in Syria and Iraq has become a real threat.

In general, there has been a steady increase in the number of supporters of radical Islamic organizations in the Urals Federal District, which requires a response from the state. Experts discuss the need for legislation to prohibit the ideology of Salafism (Wahhabism) in Russia, establishing criminal responsibility for its dissemination, using the accumulated international experience from the far (Syria and Turkey) and neighboring countries (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan) abroad.

It is necessary to organize courses for Imams according to Russia's traditional sense of Islam (maturidi); overseas-trained imams are required to undergo re-certification in Russia, mandatory for the continuation of religious activities; Persons involved in extremist activities should be prohibited to hold religious positions (Akhund Imam, Imam-Khatib, rais-Imam, Imam, the muezzin, etc.), and to conduct religious sermon. It is advisable to take into account the experience of the Chelyabinsk region, where permission to build mosques is issued only after agreement with the mufti of the Central Spiritual Board of Muslims of Russia Rinat Raev “in order to prevent activities of the radical wing of Commons” from 2013.

It is also important to strengthen the control over the funding of religious organizations from abroad. It is necessary to allocate space for publications or broadcast time in the state media for the spiritual and moral materials with participation of authoritative religious leaders, focused on the assertion of traditional Islam among Muslims (now such a program comes only in the Chelyabinsk region).

Multiple violations of the law by the Islamists have been subjected to criminal punishments dictate the need to strengthen the criminal liability (increase in the real terms of imprisonment) for offenses connected with participation in the prohibited organizations. In this case it is advisable to insulate the contingent from other prisoners during sentence serving, preventing promotion of radical ideas among them.

Undertake other necessary measures, produced in collaboration with the Muslim Ummah and the expert community.

*“Geopolitika. Informatsionno-Analiticheskoe Izdanie”, Moscow, 2014, Issue 25, pp. 51–54.*

**A. Tetuev,**

Dr. Sc. (hist.), Chief Researcher of Kabardino-Balkarian Institute of Humanitarian Studies

**ETHNO-POLITICAL PROCESSES IN KABARDINO-BALKARIA IN THE EARLY 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

Demographic and migration factors, among others, have a significant impact on the ethno-political processes. High natural population growth with insufficient rate of economic development leads to high labor surplus and migration. The biggest concern is the trend of outflow of the Russian population out of the republic, which is the cementing foundation of inter-ethnic harmony.

In this context, it seems reasonable to use the monitoring of political and socio-economic condition of the society. However, the prevailing ethno-political situation in Kabardino-Balkaria, dictates the need to focus the executive bodies of state power and local self-government bodies to conduct a comprehensive and systematic work, aimed at improving the economic, social and cultural development of the republic. It is necessary to ensure the development of the regional labor market, creation new jobs as a result of the deployment of new production facilities, increasing demand of enterprises in personnel, raising the level of wages and intensifying housing construction.

Ethno-political processes in the North Caucasus have a significant impact on the general nature and dynamics of ethnic relations in the Russian Federation. Their impact on the socio-political life of the region is of particular relevance today, and has not only scientific but also practical significance.

In the early 21st century, the situation in Kabardino-Balkaria may be characterized as the acute ethno-political crisis, continuing over a long period and converted to a latent state. Factors of ethno-political tension are socio-economic, first and foremost. There is no doubt that problems of interethnic relations can be successfully resolved only systemically, in conjunction with economic, social, cultural and political problems. Currently, the federal target program “South of Russia (2014–2020)” is performed in the region in order to solve these problems. The Ministry of Northern Caucasus and the government commission on the development of the North Caucasus [Resolution 2013] have been created for the same purpose. However, the pace of socio-economic development of the North Caucasus republics, including Kabardino-Balkaria, remains substantially lower still than in other regions of Russia.

First President of the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria, Valery Kokov (1992–2005), proved himself a consistent supporter of preserving the unity of the Republic, and a close alliance with the Russian people during the manifestation of the centrifugal tendencies in the country and the republic. V. Kokov has won recognition among the citizens of the republic, repeatedly thwarting any attempts of destabilization and ethnic partition of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic into two independent parts. However, he was unable to overcome a range of problems: economic crisis (subsidized republic was more than 80%), mass unemployment, low standard of living, terrorism [Tetuev, 2008: 82].

These problems have not been resolved during the presidency of A. Kanokov (2005–2013), as evidenced by the results of the monitoring of social and economic state of the Russian Federation subjects, conducted by the Ministry of Regional Development of the Russian Federation. The Republic was at 80 place out of 83 subjects of the Russian Federation for the composite index of socio-economic development for 11 months in 2013. Republic is characterized by a low level of economic development, and the values of most macroeconomic indicators were worse than the national average in 2013, on the conclusion of Ministry of Regional Development of Russia [Khramov].

Also, there is the unstable situation in the social sphere of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic. The republican target programs are funded only by 15–20% from the planned volumes due to the shortage of budgetary funds. In 2013, the overall unemployment rate for the republic is estimated at 40 thousand people, representing 9.8% of the economically active population of the republic. [Slyunyaev].

Territorial problems still remain as a factor of instability. They are intertwined with the historical causes of conflict, long-standing commercial dispute, the problems of redistribution and illegal

occupation of land, real or perceived inequalities in the possession of the peoples of the earth. The land question, especially in the mountain areas, is the most complex, intractable and has a long history in the North Caucasus, due to the special importance of this resource management.

A number of laws of the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria has been adopted, including the law “On the status and boundaries of municipalities” from 27.02.2005, that changed the boundaries and status of the territories of municipalities for the implementation of the Federal Law № 131 “On general principles of local self-government Russian Federation”, dated 06.10.2003. However, positive results have not been received yet in the discussion of the state bodies, local authorities and representatives of civil society, there are still outstanding issues to establish the boundaries of municipalities. There is a long, painstaking work to find a compromise solution that would satisfy all the parties concerned.

However, the land reform has not been carried so far in the Kabardino-Balkaria, in accordance with the requirements of the Land Code of the Russian Federation. The main reason for this failure to resolve pressing problems is the lack of agreement in the society. It is now clear that it is impossible to create an effective agriculture without privatization. Kabardino-Balkaria is a region where the rural population is 45.5% according to the census of 2010. [The results of census 2013: 6].

The demographic and migration factors have a significant influence on the ethno-political processes as well. According to the 2010 census, 859,900 people lived in the country at that time, including: Kabardians – 57%, Russians – 22,5%, Balkars – 12,6%, other nationalities – 7,9%. The number of: Kabardians increased by 1.7%, Balkars – 1%, Turks – by 1.4%, the number of Russians

decreased by 2.7%, Chechens – by 0.25% in the period between censuses from 2002 to 2010. [Results of National population census 2013: 6].

Kabardino-Balkaria is one of the regions with favorable demographic situation since 2007. High natural population growth with insufficient rate of economic development leads to high labor surplus and migration. Most of the population leaving the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic is not removed from the register, and therefore it remains unrecorded. It should be noted that the constant (irretrievable) migration has specific reasons: the limitations in resources for development, poverty of a large part of the population, lack of jobs, the enormous scale of unemployment (especially in the agricultural sector), and competition for jobs, growth of the shadow economy, criminalization of society. Most of the population leaves the rural areas due to the high level of unemployment. A large number of young people leave the republic, realizing the opportunity to receive higher education in Russian universities. Significant negative of such mobility is that the majority does not return to the country.

Migration flows is directed to the “Russian” subjects of the federation in the first place, that can not “digest” such a large number of forced migrants due to similar problems. Migration phobia and xenophobia against migrants of all nationalities, including Russian, is amplified among the local population. This fact reinforces the social tension in the region and paves the way for ethnic and ethno-political conflicts.

The trend of outflow of the Russian population from Kabardino-Balkaria, which is the basis for the fastening of interethnic consent, causes the greatest concern. However, there is a tendency to reduce the external migration of the Russian population from the republic, due to

the relative stabilization of the socio-economic situation in Kabardino-Balkaria.

Migration has both negative and positive consequences in the life of the republic. As for the economic sphere, the influx of migrants contributes to increased competition in the labor and housing markets. The integration of migrants into the host community causes some problems in the socio-political and socio-cultural plane. They are associated with the aspiration to implement their installations in the legal sphere and the cultural environment. The difference in the socio-cultural settings of migrants and local populations leads to conflicts.

A. Kanokov has failed to organize the work on attraction of the investments for the development of new technologies and small and medium-sized businesses, to ensure transparency of the authorities, to update the staff that led to a certain decrease in the authority and effectiveness of the system of state power in the republic. According to the proposal of the Russian President Vladimir Putin, the Parliament of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic approved Yu. Kokov to the position of the Head of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic, October 9, 2014 [meeting of Parliament].

The new leadership aims to solve the accumulated social and economic problems in the country. That gives hope for positive changes and creating conditions for stabilization of the ethno-political situation. The personnel policy of public authorities of Kabardino-Balkarian Republic aims to ensure the necessary representation of the three main ethnic groups living in the country, in the higher structures of power. The work of civil society is especially important for stabilization of the ethno-political situation in the country. An important element of civil society is the activity of public associations. National and youth associations have a major impact on the ethno-political processes.

Thus, the main factors forming the ethno-political tensions in the Kabardino-Balkaria, are: the low level of socio-economic development, the unresolved land question, the lack of public confidence in the state and municipal authorities. However, it should be noted that the reasons for the emergence and escalation of modern ethno-political conflicts are varied, but at the same time closely intertwined. It seems reasonable to use the monitoring of the political and socio-economic condition of the society to establish an effective policy of prevention of ethnic conflicts and to develop effective methods for conflict regulation.

At the same time, the current ethno-political situation in Kabardino-Balkaria dictates the need to concentrate efforts of the executive bodies of state power and local government bodies on carrying out a comprehensive and systematic work aimed at improving the economic, social and cultural development of the republic. This should ensure the development of the regional labor market, creation of new jobs as a result of the deployment of new production facilities, increase enterprise demand for personnel, increase wages and intensifying housing construction.

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**R. F-oglu Safarov,**

Dr. Sc. (Philosophy), the Institute of Archeology  
and Ethnography, National Academy  
of Sciences of Azerbaijan

**THE AZERBAIJANI PEOPLE ARE BETWEEN  
THE MUSLIM UMMAH  
AND THEIR NATIONAL IDENTITY**

The ideology of nationalism was alien to Muslim thinking. It originated in Europe and was imported into Russia and Dar-ul-Islam. It is necessary to define the fundamental difference between the concepts of “ethnicity” and “nation”, which is quite confusing and outdated, and between which the equality sign is put frequently. Modern researches clearly formulate the difference between a nation and an ethnic group, pointing to the different nature of the origin of these concepts. Ethnicity as a phenomenon is a collective form of existence of human individuals. We regard the nation as a political community of citizens of a particular state. Today there are about two thousand peoples, but only a little more than two hundred countries and dependent territories.

Extensive contacts with Europe and Russia were established in the colonial era, and various scientific concepts (racial and linguistic), political doctrines and ideologies penetrated into Dar al-Islam from them. All these teachings were ideologically inspired by European nationalism. The concepts of “race” / “ethnicity“ and “nation” were unknown to the inhabitants of the Middle East until such time as the European influence has become more perceptible there. Even then, ideas of determining a nation as a race were openly proclaimed by intellectuals and political leaders mostly. Ordinary people still identify themselves by religion as Muslims.

Azerbaijan and Iran were connected by a common geography and historical destiny. Centennial struggle for the central power, between the Azerbaijani factions was completed by the victory of Shiite Azerbaijanis in the early 16th century. By the middle of the 16th century the significant Azerbaijani lands in Asia Minor and Iraq, and the Azerbaijanis living there (known as turkimen), came under Ottoman rule. The next division of the territory of Azerbaijan was in the 19th century, when Northern Azerbaijan got under colonial rule of the Christian states of Russia, which was subjected to the Europeanization since the 18th century. Northern Azerbaijanis fell under the influence of European culture earlier than many other Muslim community, but through Russia.

The Azerbaijanis with Turks were the basis of the Ottoman Empire. However, the Ottomans did not consider the Ottoman Empire Turkish only – it was an Islamic state for them, which based on Islamic canons under the rules of the Sultan. The Ottoman Empire was not a national empire: there was no official separation by ethnic group<sup>1</sup>.

As in Turkey, the Muslim population of Northern Azerbaijan consisted of Shiites and Sunnis. Interaction of the two centers – the Ottoman and Iranian – was manifested in the birth and formation of national identity.

But the colonial era for Azerbaijan meant partition of the country and its people above all. Two parts of Azerbaijan, were in different areas of the historical development, where one was under European influence, perceived mainly through the prism of Russia. Social transformation has been slow and limited after the seizure of Azerbaijan, but the economic and social character of the land to the north of the Aras River became greatly differ from similar characteristics in the south, at the end.

Contact of the two civilizations – European, provided by Russia, and traditional Islamic – has created local intellectuals. In the second half of the century graduates of Russian and European universities, seminaries of the Caucasus, began to dominate in Azerbaijan's intellectual environment, and become agents of modernization ideas, and in the future – a major factor in the current changes in the local community.

The first and most important was the spread of education, which has been linked to secularism, not so much because of hostility to Islam, but as a means of gradual suggestion sense of community of the Caucasus Muslims overcoming division between Shiites and Sunnis. An important area of activity of the Azerbaijani intellectuals was also a literary revival.

Since literary revival came from the need to spread the ideas of education among the greatest possible number of people in their own language, this movement inevitably led to the creation of a new group identity. The process of weakening the influence of Iran on the Azerbaijanis in the Russian Empire has led to their liberation from the centuries-long Iranian cultural domination<sup>2</sup>. It found some support from the Russian authorities, seeking to ease the identification of the Azerbaijanis from Iran and strengthen the linguistic Russification. The Azerbaijani press appeared almost simultaneously with the emergence of the theater.

The views of pan-Islamism were dominant among the Azerbaijani intellectuals in the late 19th century<sup>3</sup>. Pan-Islamism appealed to the collective consciousness of the Ummah – the worldwide community of all believers, regardless of their ethnic differences, with calling for the unity of Muslims around the world in response to the invasion of the West, but it was not able to develop into a well-defined doctrine as a defensive reaction to external pressure.

There were several versions of pan-Islamism. The liberal one propagated the compatibility of Islam with the mind, science, technology, and encouraged to accept (albeit selectively) Western techniques and methods. This version of pan-Islamism attracted especially young Azerbaijanis, with the prospect of reconciliation between Sunnis and Shiites in the spirit of a modernized Islam.

In addition, it facilitates the cultivation of historical ties with Iran for them<sup>4</sup>. New Pan-Turkism movement in the Russian Empire began to spread. Basically in order to oppose Russification, which was inspired by pan-Slavism a protective union program of the Turkic-speaking peoples in the framework of the Russian Empire – Turkism and Pan-Turkic – was developed.

The first term meant the desire for the ethnic identity of the Turkic peoples, the second – for their cooperation and solidarity. At the same time, Pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism did not exclude one another, as Islam is a common religion for almost all the Turkic peoples. Pan-Turkism roots were in the ethnic and linguistic identity of the group of peoples while the pan-Islamism expressed their religious identity.

The preached unity was spiritual, linguistic and cultural. The first step towards this goal was the creation of a literary language, which was the basis of the Istanbul dialect of Turkish language, i.e. the language of the Ottoman Empire<sup>5</sup>. Such an attempt exposed to criticism because of its artificiality, but this tendency was held nevertheless.

Nevertheless, the rise of Turkism stimulated the search for identity by Azerbaijanis. A distinction was made between the concepts of the local religious community and nationality, still denoted by single word “millet”, the term “Azerbaijani Turks” was proposed to describe the people living on both sides of the Iran-Russian border<sup>6</sup>.

This approach to the problem of forming identity linking the Turkic identity<sup>7</sup> and the actual identity of the Azerbaijani meant that

intellectuals of the last decade of the 19th century differed from their predecessors radically: their work has been inspired by political ideas. Later the slogan “Turkization, Islamization, Europeanization” has been formulated; subsequently it became famous, it was a battle cry of Turkists in the Ottoman state, and these three words have received symbolic expression in the three colors of the flag of an independent Republic of Azerbaijan after a while<sup>8</sup>.

Group identity changed much more slowly. In the early 20th century, Iranians visiting Baku still felt at home. In 1908, the Young Turks seized power in Turkey, which had a dynamic and profound impact on Azerbaijanis<sup>9</sup>. Turkism propaganda movement was headed by intellectuals of Azerbaijan environment, including the local Azerbaijanis and the Turkis invited from Russia – Tatars and Azerbaijanis. Recognized in Turkey at last, Pan-Turkism (previously amorphous cultural movement) gained politically organized form.

Migrants from eastern Trans-Caucasus brought home the idea of Turkism, and it has become a dominant trend in the Azerbaijani political thought after 1908. Even conservatives were covered with a spirit of solidarity with the Ottomans, although treated nationalism with suspicion, and were prone to Shiite prejudices against Turkey.

Since the last quarter of the 19th century, the debate on national issues unfolded among the educated stratum of the Transcaucasian Muslims under the influence of European concepts of “race” and “nation”, including the self-name. The names of “Azeris”, “Azerbaijanis” and “Azerbaijani Turks / Ottomans' were offered for the identity<sup>10</sup>. A long discussion was politicized. Starting from 1905–1907, the supporters of romantic ideas of Pan-Turkism imposed a linguistic term “Turk”, which previously was not used in any national sense, using the indifference of the people<sup>11</sup>.

The active political life started in Azerbaijan immediately after the February 1917 revolution. Azerbaijani national political parties have emerged and adhered to each one of the ideological orientations that shaped the political process in Azerbaijan: nationalism pan-Islamism, socialism. At that time nationalism meant a Turkism with a growing component of the Azerbaijani identity. Two main ideas were: the first was the secular Turkic nationalism, when the nation meant a common language, religion, traditions, culture, literature and law. The religious community did not form the nation by itself<sup>12</sup>. Another idea was a project of the Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan as a part of Russia, which became the federation of free and equal states. It was evidence of a new stage of historical evolution of Azerbaijanis – a stage of transition to a national state. Striving for federalism was a constant, not a transient feature, connected with the doubts about the viability of a fully independent Azerbaijan.

The culmination of the formation of national identity was a declaration of independence and the formation of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic on May 28, 1918. Now the value of nationalism was in recognition of the Azerbaijani as an independent nation, even though a member of the family of Turkic peoples. Turkic (Azerbaijani) language was declared the official language of the republic.

Lasted for a short time, the independent Azerbaijani statehood has become a historical fact of enormous value. Republic was viable enough to force the Bolsheviks recognize the Azerbaijanis as a nation having the right to their own state, no longer independent, but having autonomy of the Soviet type. That autonomy was the most prominent tendency in the national movement until 1918<sup>13</sup>.

Like any form of colonialism, the Russian governance had dark and light sides, but one thing was particularly important: the identity of the Azerbaijani-Turkic nation arose gradually, to the north of the Araks;

The growth of the intelligentsia, modern means of communication, the development of education contributed to this process. Nascent nationalism, even more Turkic than Azerbaijan, was forced to establish an independent national state in 1918.

Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was the highest point of the national aspirations of Azerbaijanis before the collapse of the USSR, although independence was not included in the number of tasks in 1918. Soviet authorities continued the transformation of Azerbaijanis in the nation in 1920 (national agreement on indigenization, alphabet reform, secularization). Azerbaijanism, particularistic component of group identification of Azerbaijanis, was cleared of the Turkic and Islamic heritage and imposed cruel as it was inherent in the period of Stalin era.

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**I. Ryzhov,**

Dr. Sc. (hist.)

**M. Borodina,**

PhD student, Nizhny Novgorod,

State University named after N.I. Lobachevsky

**ETHNIC PROBLEMS OF MODERN IRAN**

About 15 different ethnic minorities live on the territory of the Islamic Republic of Iran today. The ethnic factor influences all spheres of life – political, economic and social processes. The complex ethnic diversity complicates the solution of many social and political issues and ethnic conflicts, and numerous ethnic minorities experience serious problems of integration in the political space of Iran. Thus, the ethnic problems are one of the most relevant for Iran as they are accompanied by the desire of a number of ethnic minorities for autonomy, the growth of terrorism and extremism, as well as a very high interest in this question of some regional and extra-regional actors.

Islamic Republic of Iran, one of the regional Middle East leaders, is a country of “imperial” type with a complex ethnic structure. That is why the ethnic problems are extremely important for the modern Iran. The existence of numerous ethnic minorities, separated peoples seeking

autonomy and segregation in varying degrees, exacerbate the problem only. The situation is complicated by the fact, that the citizens of Iran, related to any ethnic group or tribe, have equal rights; the freedom of parties, political organizations and religious minorities act according to the Iranian Constitution<sup>12</sup>. It often does not work in practice, and there are cases of discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities and their organizations by the Iranian authorities.

Kurds. The Kurdish population in Iran resides in the territory of Iranian Kurdistan, which covers four Iranian provinces – Kurdistan, Kermanshah, West Azerbaijan, and Elam, and is approximately 5.5 million people. Also, the Kurdish population is concentrated in the Northern Khorasan in northeastern Iran, and in the cities of Tehran and Sanandaj<sup>13</sup>. Most of the Kurds there adhere to the covenants of Sunni Islam, and only part of them professed Shia. In addition, there are religious minorities among the Iranian Kurds.

The Kurdish problem as an ethno-political one emerged in Iran in the 19th century, but its development occurred only in the early 20th century in conditions of maximum attenuation of the Iranian state, its dependence on the United Kingdom and Russia, and the profound crisis of authority<sup>14</sup>. However, the Kurdish problem could be attributed to the beginning of the 16th century, when Kurdistan was divided into Turkish and Iranian parts for Qasr-Shira peace treaty in 1639 during the wars. Then, the Entente Powers made a redistribution of the Asian possessions of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, and have divided Kurdistan into 4 parts, which significantly strengthened the struggle of the Kurds for self-determination.

The struggle for independence of the Iranian Kurds was mostly developed at the end of the Second World War, when Great Britain and the Soviet Union used the Kurdish movement for political purposes. In 1979 the Kurds actively participated in the Islamic Revolution in

Iran. Power in Iranian Kurdistan was in the hands of the Kurdish population before the armed clashes between troops of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan and the "Guardians of the Islamic Revolution", sent from Tehran. After that, the situation of the Kurds in Iran has deteriorated in comparison with the Shah's times<sup>15</sup>.

Currently, the Iranian Kurds have almost no autonomous rights still. The problem is compounded by the fact that "the Islamic community is a united nation" according to the Islamic concepts, and national differences can not be in the Muslim community, so the Kurds are not considered a separate nation. This practically reduces the implementation of the political rights of the Kurdish people in Iran to zero. The Iranian authorities are trying to maintain a certain balance of forces in the region, so neither side was able to achieve the benefits. Iran opposes any changes in the political geography of the region<sup>16</sup>.

Iran is actively cooperating with Turkey for the coordination and harmonization of positions regarding the Kurdish question. The fundamental principle of the Iranian authorities to counter Kurdish separatism is a tough fight with it until the death penalty for the Kurdish terrorists. However, in parallel with this, the Iranian authorities are trying to involve the Kurds in the political life of the country. The participation of the Kurds in the political life of Iran is aimed mainly at changing the existing situation of the Kurdish population.

Most of the opposition parties of the Iranian Kurds boycotted the presidential elections in Iran on June 14, 2013 because none of the candidates included in the electoral program the question of the rights of ethnic minorities. 10. However, the Kurds were not able to achieve any significant results on this issue, mainly because of the lack of a unified position among the parties of the Kurdish opposition.

Recently there has been a tendency to unite the Kurdish parties in the national united front. However, the Kurdish movement in Iran is

still divided and is not a consolidated social and political power<sup>17</sup>. In addition to the political problems in Iranian Kurdistan, there are problems of socio-economic nature. Kurdish areas of Iran were the most economically backward areas up to the Islamic Revolution. Then life in these areas has been improved a few, but overall the place of residence of the Kurds in Iran are considered to be deep periphery. Also, there is a very acute problem of shortage of drinking water, electricity, backlog in housing construction, felt difficulties with employment, higher education and qualified medical care. The Iranian authorities have attempted to improve the socio-economic situation of the Kurdish population, developing infrastructure and economy of the Kurdish region, which basis is the agriculture. One way of raising funds was the establishment of a special economic zone in the province of Kurdistan and the preferential treatment of investment throughout Iranian Kurdistan.

Despite a number of attempts, taken by the Iranian leadership to improve the lives of the Kurdish population in Iran, it is still adversely affected by the economic and political rights: there is a ban on the Kurdish cultural and human rights organizations, women's associations and trade unions, there are practically no newspapers in the Kurdish language. Furthermore, the Iranian authorities do not allow cover the situation in Kurdistan, do not allow journalists and public figures to arrive in the Kurdish region. Separatist sentiment is quite strong in modern Iran in areas traditionally populated by the Kurds, they state that only freedom and equality can put an end to separatist movements.

Azerbaijani Turks are the largest ethnic minority in Iran, their number ranges from 9 to 28 million people, accounting for nearly one-third of the total population of Iran<sup>18</sup>. The Iranian authorities have not recognized the presence of this ethnic group in the country for a long time, considering them as ethnic Iranians speaking the Turkic language.

Iranian Azerbaijanis are concentrated in four provinces: West and East Azerbaijan, Zanzan and Ardabil, they profess Shia Islam, but there are also representatives of the Sufi and Sunni Muslims<sup>19</sup>. Nationalist moods began to spread among Iranian Azerbaijanis in the 20th century, as a result of an official policy of “Iranian nationalism” held of the shah Pahlavi dynasty. All ethnic minorities in Iran were subjected to cultural and then economic discrimination, which led to the formation of the protest of the Azerbaijani elite in Iran.

A powerful impetus to the national liberation struggle was given in 1941 in connection with the Soviet occupation of Iranian Azerbaijan. It was created by the Democratic Party of Azerbaijan in 1945. November 26, 1945, there were elections to the National Majlis of South Azerbaijan under the control of the Soviet troops, won by the Democratic Party of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was proclaimed on December 12, and then its own army and own money appeared, and the Azerbaijani language was declared the state<sup>20</sup>.

Iranian Azerbaijanis have a high level of political activity at all times. They are well represented in the government, the parliament and the Iranian army. Over the past 60 years, four of the Prime Minister and a President of Iran and Ayatollah Ali Khamenei came from Iranian Azerbaijanis. Separatist tendencies of Iranian Azerbaijanis are supported by some regional and extra-regional actors behind the scenes – Azerbaijan, Turkey, Israel, the U.S. Secret services of the U.S., Turkey and Israel are developing projects and initiate activation of the separatist movement in Iranian Azerbaijan<sup>25</sup>. It should be noted that Iranian Azerbaijanis are the most loyal ethnic group of Iran. Despite the fact that the ethnic clashes occur from time to time, and separatist movements exist, the preconditions for a serious ethnic conflict are absent due to the strong position of this ethnic group in the economic

and political life of the country, in contrast to Iran's Kurdish population, for example.

The Arabs are the other major ethnic minority in Iran. They live in the southwestern province of Khuzestan (Al-Ahwaz). According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies, the number of Iranian Arabs is more than 2 million people<sup>28</sup>. Like the Persians, the Arabs are Muslim Shiite mostly. Previous to 1925, Al Ahwaz was an autonomous territory under the British protectorate, but autonomy was abolished in the same year, and came under the direct control of Tehran.

The first nationalist tendencies among the Arab population of Iran were born as early as 1958. A year later (1959), all political organizations in the province, held the National Congress of Arabistan for the liberation from the Iranian domination<sup>29</sup>. Apogee of the armed struggle of the Arab population against the central government was in the summer 1979, when the new government rejected the demands of the Arab population to preserve their self-government and traditional way of life.

Currently, the main discontent of the Arab population is reduced to the economic component. Khuzestan is the “engine” of the economy of the south-western Iran, where there are the largest petrochemical refineries and terminals, but high unemployment and a high contrast between the level of the Arabs living in Iran and the Arab countries, which also causes the emergence of nationalist movements<sup>32</sup>.

Also, the Arab population of Iran protests against the policy of Government on resettlement of ethnic Persians in Khuzestan, and increasing the number of organizations and institutions of national importance. The result of the struggle of the Arabs to the Iranian central authority can be considered a certain legalization of their national and cultural life in the territory of their compact living. Moreover, Arabic is legalized throughout the territory of Iran and is considered the language

of the state religion. In recent years, the Arabs have become increasingly involved in the civil service and the army.

The Baluchis are other ethnic minorities, the movement of which has a significant impact on the political climate in Iran. Their population is about 1.5 million people, and is concentrated in the Sistan and Baluchistan. The first protest actions of the Baluchis have begun during the Islamic Revolution in Iran and resulted in an internecine struggle between the supporters of the revolution and the supporters of the deposed regime, representing the top of tribes that cooperated with the shah's government. The political situation has been aggravated by a new round of Iran-Iraq confrontation over Iraq's concealment of the Baluchi nationalists in the early 1970s<sup>39</sup>.

The Baluchis are Sunni, and do not take the rules of Shiite Islam, which was proclaimed the state religion of Iran. This created serious contradictions between this ethnic group and the Iranian government. In addition, the Baluchis were extremely against interference in their internal affairs on the part of the revolutionary committees and members of the Revolutionary Guards, who were trying to establish centralized management.

The Baluchi nationalists in Iran use the Sunni religious rhetoric to emphasize their identity and accuse the Iranian authorities in the persecution on religious grounds.

The Baluchi National Movement develops under strong influence from abroad, particularly from Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan provides safe havens for the Baluchis, including monarchists, fleeing the Islamic revolution, and forms groups for subversive activities of them in the territory of Iran. As for Afghanistan, the Taliban and "Al Qaeda" can assist the Baluchi nationalists, for whom it is profitable – to keep the "zone of instability" along the Afghan-Pakistani border, to create training camps, to carry out the transfer of militants and to

engage smuggled weapons. The Baluchis are characterized by extreme disloyalty to Iran and never considered themselves an integral part of the Iranian people. This causes interest of the U.S. intelligence with the aim of using the Baluchi separatism against Iran. In addition to the religious component; the conflict of the Baluchis and the central Iranian government has warmed up by a number of economic problems since the Baluchi province of residence is one of the most economically backward regions of Iran.

The Turkmen. This ethnic group, living in the north-eastern Iran especially in the provinces of Khorasan and Golestan, is accounted for a population of 1.5 million people. The National Movement of the Iranian Turkmens originates from the fall of the Shah's regime and the requirements associated with the return of their land from the Shah's Fund and non-Turkmen land-settlers, moved to the Turkmen regions of Iran during the 1950s, during the rise of commodity production in the country's agriculture. The Turkmen ethnic group in Iran has a strong isolation, little affected by the process of national integration, which started in the Turkmen society only in the mid-20th century.

However, they are now almost abandoned the struggle for their rights. The Iranian Turkmens (the majority of which have not roam) are assimilated by the Persians more and more. The voluntary assimilation is most pronounced among young people. Many families began to use Farsi over the past 10–15 years. The situation in the province is heating up with the struggle of political and religious groups, based on tribal and sub-ethnic differences, and is funded by other states. Gangs, fueled from Afghanistan, create difficulties.

Moreover, the Turkmen living in Iran, like other minorities, are dissatisfied with the fact that the authorities are cutting their political, social and cultural rights. There are examples of the ban on the training of Turkmen children in their native language.

The Lurs is another ethnic group living in the south-western part of Iran, namely in the provinces of Fars and Lorestan. The number of this ethnic group in Iran is about 5 million people. The Lurs profess the Shia branch of Islam, but also among them are adherents of different sects. The Lurs is a fairly close-knit ethnic group with a strongly pronounced tribal authority. They are divided into several large tribes.

The government forcibly converted the Lurs to sedentary life from 1928, declaring the tribal lands as the state property. The Lurs were settled around special military forts along the line Tehran – Horemshehr and their tents were taken, so that they could not get away with the coming of spring to roam. However, after the abdication of Reza Shah of the throne and weakening the power of the central government, many families of the Lurs again moved to the nomadic way of life. As a result, khans of the Lurs with the support of the British, who have repeatedly tried to use the Lurs tribes to fight against the democratic movement in Iran, once again felt independent rulers.

Until now Shahristans in the southwest of Iran are the largest fiefdoms of khans with their troops, introducing their taxes, and so on. Khans of the Lurs use cultural backwardness of the nomadic population in order to preserve their feudal power.

Currently, this ethnic group almost does not manifest itself in the political life of Iran, nothing is known of the national requirements of the Lurs.

The situation in areas of traditional residing of the ethnic minorities in Iran has stabilized somewhat in recent years. There is an impression, that the central government has adopted the unauthorized changes to the local authorities, as well as recognized their own failure to provide rapid linguistic assimilation of minorities<sup>53</sup>. There are some positive developments and new trends that emerged with the coming to

power of Hassan Rohani, who put the idea of recognition of Iran's population of cultural diversity in the framework of national policies<sup>54</sup>.

However, the basic requirement of the ethnic groups of Iran – to provide autonomous rights, as well as official recognition of Sunni Islam and Islamic sects – remains unsatisfied, that creates a situation fraught with updating the existing ethnic conflicts. Of course, the current situation can not, but provoke external actors such as the U.S., Israel, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iraq and the other on the unwinding of nationalist and separatist movements in Iran.

Preserving unity is a paramount task for the Iranian government, which means that any national movement – Kurdish, Baluchi, or any other – aimed at changing Iran's territorial integrity, will continue to meet the most stringent manner.

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