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INTEGRATION, DISINTEGRATION, CHAIN OF CONFRONTATION (MONITORING OF PUBLIC OPINION IN THE POST-SOVIET COUNTRIES)

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Abstract:

Trends of globalization and financial crisis demand scientific reconsideration of achievements of world and national systems, definition of objectives and development prospects. This is an article about international relationships and how to manage emerging confrontation well.

Fortunately, the chain of confrontations – from misunderstanding to military face-off – is not an uncontrolled chain reaction. Historic trends demonstrate that the number of intermediate links in this chain keeps growing.

The author of this paper suggests to analyze all links of the confrontation' chain consisted of: misunderstanding – dispute – contradiction – face-off – conflict – warfare. The author advocates the “evolutionary socio-economic theory” and advances arguments that systematic and timely identification current situation in confrontation, record and analysis of particular causes, gives additional opportunity (chance) for the harmonization of international relations.

KEYWORDS:

disintegration , Monitoring , post-soviet countries , Integration , globalization.

INTRODUCTION:

NATIONAL INTERESTS AND CONFRONTATION

In a global and integrated world, the national interests of the countries inhabited by various peoples and ethnic groups do not need to spend time looking for points of mutual understanding. All of them are about simple and generally comprehensible facts: peace, accord, prosperity and security.

In his day, Hans Morgenthau (1904—1982), the American political classic in the area of international relations, used the term “national interests” as an alternative to “public interests” meaning a system of relationships with other countries most favorable for a nation.

This is why at meetings and forums every single representative from different countries choruses the will for peaceful settlement of economic disputes and territorial claims, collaboration, etc. Who would oppose that, and why is there so much preaching but so little practicing?

It looks like those who oppose are the ones who mix the concepts of “national interests” and “politics” in the area of foreign relations as their original uniformity has long ago been shattered radically. This Gordian knot of terms must be cut to eliminate some misunderstanding and disputes which serve as a basis for confrontations (antagonism, collisions and warfare).

Either way, confrontations are concentrated around problems of power and its distribution in a

society.

“A riot will never begin from below – all chroniclers of sense see eye to eye with each other. A riot will always go downward; when Dicks, Toms and Harrys grab their battle axes, look carefully to see which lord will benefit from that”[1].

This makes the availability of instruments implementing an effective power control even more important – meaning mostly the opportunity to infect the society with negative programs of disintegration, occupations, warfare (with mottoes and causes of any types), etc. Unfortunately, we have to acknowledge the lack of such instruments. To date, all the current models of democratic systems and institutions (even international ones) cannot boast their ability to adequately and promptly respond to conflicts which have the risk of open warfare.

Fortunately, the chain of confrontations – from misunderstanding to military face-off – is not an uncontrolled chain reaction. Historic trends demonstrate that the number of intermediate links in this chain (misunderstanding – dispute – contradiction – face-off – conflict – warfare) keeps growing.

At the dawn of human society, any washy signal from other tribes or people, or their uncertain actions were viewed as hostile and caused direct aggressive response without trying to find any circumstances. If a different interpretation of religious creeds promptly resulted in civil wars, etc., the long-standing practice of co-existence resulted in a significant growth of links on the way between identifying disputes and use of military force. This is an optimistic trend. (According to the Hamburg-based Modern War and Conflict Center (AKUF), the number of wars has reduced [2]).

However, the ongoing series of violent conflicts while not yet crossing the war threshold are still the cause of distress and disaster. According to the Heidelberg “barometer of conflicts”, heir is a serious risk of their further escalation to the war level (see The Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research [3]).

Confrontation Matrix

Confrontation Level	B6						War (military hostilities using mass destruction weapons)
	B5					Conflict (information war and other means of pressure)	
	B4				Face-off		
	B3			Controversy			
	B2		Dispute				
	B1	Misunderstanding (deception)					
		A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6
Confrontation Phases							

The Confrontation Matrix: misunderstanding (deception) in Cell A1B1 –dispute A2B2 –controversy A3B3 –face-off A4B4 -conflict A5B5 – war A6B6:

1)the misunderstanding (deception) phase – the causes are often hidden under the rubble of historic and cultural myths and behavior stereotypes, wrong interpretations of expressions, semantic distortions and

communication errors;

2) the dispute phase is characterized by focusing and allocation of accents and is a stage of wording, substantiations and positioning of the parties to the dispute,

3) the controversy phase is a stage of active dissociation and polarization of the parties;

3) the face-off phase is a stage of forming the “enemy/adversary” image, organization and implementation of systematic propaganda attacks;

4) the conflict phase – this stage is characterized by political information wars and use of versatile means from the pressure arsenal: economic and political sanctions, etc.;

6) warfare (armed conflict) – hostilities using weapons of mass physical destruction of the enemy.

Observers more or less interested in the result may play (and as a rule, do) a special role in the scenario development of events. At a certain stage during any of the phases above, the role of an observer may turn into the role of a direct participant.

Chaos, viewed as a specific/special order, meaning goal-setting and management consciousness (during specific phases of the process), increases as new participants join in.

Confrontation tends to be emotionally charged with negative energy. Emotions dominate the reason and thinking, and during escalation, the parties become less reconcilable. Communication between the parties deteriorates. The parties cease to interact with those in disagreement, and tend to interact more with those who agree with them. The interaction or communication between the conflicting parties that is still in place usually includes attempts to defeat, disclose and deflate the other party's positions, or make own arguments more weighty. Main issues of the dispute become more obscure and vague. Generalizations enter the stage, and new disputable issues come to the forefront. The parties to the confrontation are unaware of what had caused the problem, or what it really is about, or what would help settle it.

Confrontation shapes out rigid preferences (clinging to one's own positions). Participants become victims of their own positions. Challenged by the other party, they cling more to their viewpoint and tend to be less concessive. Thinking processes become more rigid and simplistic (the “black-and-white” thinking phenomenon, “either-or”).

Confrontation causes exaggeration of differences and minimizes similarities. As the parties become victims of their own positions, they tend to view each other and their own positions as absolutely oppositional. All factors that separate them begin to be exaggerated and come to the forefront, whereas their similarities begin to be underestimated and minimized. As a result, the parties begin to concentrate their efforts to defeat the other party in the conflict.

The processes above result in dehumanization and will to pressure each other, state their positions, increase their resources to win, and become more insistent. Each party is confident that by increasing pressure (resources, insistence, perseverance, energy, etc.), it can make the other party capitulate. However, escalation of confrontation leads to its intensification, and the parties lose their ability to interact with each other in order to settle the dispute.

To achieve their unscrupulous goals, leaders skillfully use various techniques of manipulating mass psychology at all confrontation phases.

“A riot will never begin from below...”[1].

Communities with a high conflict rate are characterized by irrationality and spontaneous selection of the development course. This is when (at the moment of stress, fear or aggression) the community and individuals lose their ability to analyze the lessons learned and opt for a development model that had proven negative. With social tension, totalitarian regimes begin to look attractive and, paradoxically, capable of “putting things in order”.

In his book *The Man in the Mirror of the Economic Theory (A Historic Outline of the Western Economic Thought)*, V.S. Avtonomov provides results of studies carried out by the Swiss economist W.A. Johr. Studying multiple factors of behavior, Johr introduced the concept of social and psychological infection. Once up, the process of social and psychological infection, according to Johr, can affect the whole economy and turn economic subjects in one direction – even before objective conditions for that occur [4].

From Who is to Blame to What Is to Be Done

The postulate of unity of national interests of countries and communities states that the method not infringing the parties' interests is the most efficient and socially effective way to settle emerging controversies. Is it really?

In their book *Anyone Can Win*, H. Cornelius and S. Fair emphasize a principal moment, a cornerstone of conflict management: for many, the winner automatically suggests there is a loser. However,

this is only true for sport events.

The advantage of the win/win approach is that there are ways to resolve that allow to strengthen and improve not only a party's position but also its adversary's position. When both parties win they will be more lenient in supporting a decision that had been made [5].

Authors of the strategy offer the following win/win algorithm to find solutions:

1. Identify current and future goals/needs of all participants.
2. Focus each participant/agent on implementation of adversaries' goals and needs.
3. Recognize values of others as their own ones.
4. Consider common benefits of cooperation upon efficiency evaluation.

Let's dwell on the win/win concept in relation to the problem.

Every follow-up phase of confrontation between countries requires a special arsenal of technologies and techniques of "withdrawal" and "rehabilitation".

Let's list just the main common steps towards it.

1. Clearly identify the parties' positions (exchange, comparative analysis, adjustment of positions).
2. Withdraw "hot" spots of disputes to the "neutral/buffer zone".
3. Secure and expand the so called "good neighbor belt" - points of accord, e.g., points of growing joint projects (humanitarian, environmental, etc.)
4. The "adequate power" policy (individual, modular, cluster).

Integration or Disintegration: Monitoring of Public Opinion

Public opinion polls are one of the tools to be professionally used in order to make adequate managerial solutions.

The EBD Integration Barometer project aims to regularly conduct research focusing on evaluation of foreign policy, foreign trade and other integration preferences of a region's citizens.

The authors underline that "...in the post-Soviet countries, foreign policy is not free from public evaluation, and any integration/disintegration efforts cannot ignore the factor of mass consciousness and mass disposition".

Anyway, what do "mass consciousness" and "mass disposition" mean? Undoubtedly, it is not just purely mathematical discharge of individual polls of respondents. Mass consciousness is mostly formed by various means of direct and indirect impact via broadcasting and comments on a country's government official position in mass media, statements from top political circles, organized and unorganized opposition, debates between specialists, informal forums, exchanges of individual opinions, etc.

It is worth paying attention to the fact that the blanket poll does not specify respondents' business or education areas (over 13,000 people were polled (950 to 2,000 in each country). As a result, we see a tracing-paper view of the current political situation and government preferences in the post-Soviet countries.

Formation of integration associations receives positive perception – first of all, in the countries which participate in such associations, as well states officially articulating their will to join them.

Table 1
Respondents' Attitude to Economic Integration in the Post-Soviet Countries [6]

What is your view on the fact that the economies of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia joined in the Customs Union (which relieved trade from duties between the three countries)?	Russia	Kazakhstan	Azerbaijan	Armenia	Belarus	Georgia	Kyrgyzstan	Moldova	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan	Ukraine
Positive	72	80	38	61	60	30	67	65	76	68	57
Negative	5	5	11	3	6	6	9	7	1	1	5
No response	6	6	4	10	6	24	9	7	6	18	6
Indifferent	17	10	46	26	28	39	15	20	17	14	31

What is your view on the fact that in addition to the Customs Union, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia set up the Common Economic Space?	Russia	Kazakhstan	Azerbaijan	Armenia	Belarus	Georgia	Kyrgyzstan	Moldova	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan	Ukraine
Positive	69	76	38	62	62	27	63	62	72	68	56
Negative	4	6	12	2	6	7	9	8	2	1	6
Indifferent	17	10	45	27	27	39	16	20	20	13	31
No response	8	9	5	10	6	27	12	9	6	19	7

1

This situation may illustrate the process of an expedient formation of public/mass consciousness.

Yet, the data suggest a relatively high share of respondents who opted for “indifferent” or “no response” – even in the countries participating in integration associations (the Customs Union: Russia – 23%, Kazakhstan -16%, Belarus – 34%; the Common Economic Space: Russia – 25%, Kazakhstan -19%, Belarus – 33%).

In our view, it is this part of the community that deserves special attention and monitoring as it reflects the trends in public/mass consciousness. It should stay in the focus, without manipulating any loud calls or statements but rather propagating scientific and theoretical substantiations for integration processes and an effective practical work thus proving the advantages of partnership and collaboration synergy. Until now, researchers lack the answer to the question: what factors determine the choice of the trend in the oncoming development of the social medium?

L.I. Abalkin underlined that with all options for the future of the mankind, it is the people (scientific elite and communities) rather than any “superior forces” that are responsible for choosing the way of future development. Scientific elite and communities are responsible for choosing either of those options – whether the world will be dominated by one superpower over the rest of the colonial world, or it is going to be an interaction based on mutual understanding and considering traditions and cultures of the civilization... [7].

On the Theory of Systems and Concordance

The global world model considers the evolutionary trends (with all significant deviations), humanization and openness of the system. This openness means not only symptoms to be wielded by the “powerful” ones (the freedom of capital, goods, brain flows, etc.). This openness is the implementation and co-existence of versatile models of social and economic development, and mutual enrichment. Not unification or standardization but rather cultivation of uniqueness of systems making up the global world.

Today, a lot of natural scientists, social psychologists and economists prove the social development trend focused on higher concordance and integration.

Ilya Prigogine (1977 Nobel Prize winner for physical chemistry) showed from the mathematical point of view that complex structures – such as our current humankind – are more likely to dissipate to higher integration rather than self-destruction [8].

Quantum psychology offers additional arguments in favor of the paradoxical statement that different (or even opposite) positions of individuals have much more of Unity than Difference. This conclusion is based on the multiplicity of reference systems (coordinates) where individuals identify themselves. Advocates of this school of psychology see the ability to make wealth as the decisive factor of evolution, thanks to higher integration [9].

Recently a team of researcher from Cornell University (U.S.A.) led by Dr. Hod Lipson, suggested an original hypothesis to explain formation of the modular (cluster, integrated) organization of living systems. The scientists suggested that the modularity was developing not because it expanded the evolution but rather as a side product in reducing the cost to get connected to the network [10].

CLOSED AND OPEN SYSTEMS

Note that if countries are viewed as closed systems (or oriented towards being closed), their national interests do not coincide either in the form or content with the interests of other nations represented within specific administrative borders). In other words, confrontation is more or less integrated within the scenario of co-existence of closed social systems.

Open systems – and today's world is represented by them – are driven by the butterfly effect. National interests of an individual state – and consequently, its security and social and economic well-being – intertwine with the neighbors, both in the proximity and far away. Even a “neutral-positive” post-Soviet Caspian country such as Turkmenistan definitely realizes that its peace and well-being depends on the overall situation in the Central Asian region, on the “Afghan question”, on good neighbors in the Caspian region, etc.

CONCLUSION

The world economic crisis and the logics of building new market-based relations in Central Asia show that economic development of a country towards exclusive autonomy and closedness cannot be expedient at all.

Systematic and timely identification and record of confrontations, an analysis of causes, development of programs to settle them are all the way to harmonize the international community and form absolutely essential conditions/prerequisites for a rational choice of the development trends and models.

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