

# NATIONAL MOVEMENTS IN RUSSIA: IMPACT ON THE DOMESTIC SITUATION AND THE WAR AGAINST UKRAINE



# **National Movements in Russia: Impact on the Domestic Situation and the War against Ukraine**

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This paper is devoted to the factor of national liberation movements of the indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation, describing the influence of these movements on the domestic and foreign policy of the Kremlin regime as well as on the stability of the Russian state and its ability to wage an aggressive war. The authors of the study offer situation forecasts and give recommendations for government agencies of Ukraine.

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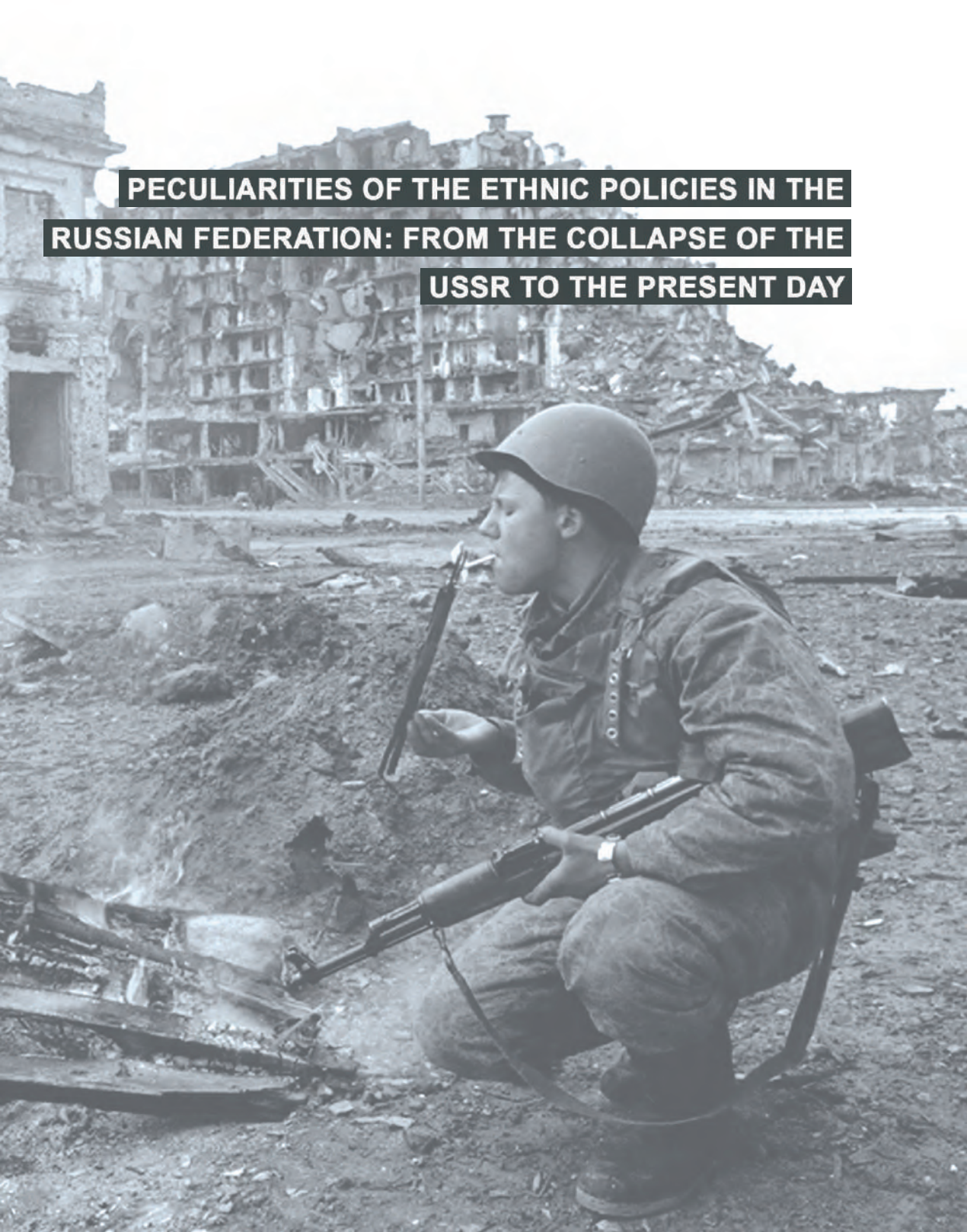
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**PECULIARITIES OF THE ETHNIC POLICIES IN THE  
RUSSIAN FEDERATION: FROM THE COLLAPSE OF THE  
USSR TO THE PRESENT DAY**



The administrative structure of the USSR was formally based on the ethno-federal principle. As of January 1990, its constituent entities were 15 union republics (Soviet Socialist Republics or SSR), representing the matching number of titular peoples and nations. At the same time, in the Russian, Georgian, Azerbaijani, Uzbek, and Tajik republics, in addition to ordinary constituent regions, there were also ethnic entities of different levels: autonomous republics (Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics, ASSR), autonomous oblasts (AO) and autonomous okrugs (districts).

Due to the large number of such autonomies within the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic (RSFSR), its name even specifically contained the word "Federal". However, this was rather a relic from the early Soviet period, from the period when the vector of the Bolshevik state had not yet been determined. The USSR was formally a symmetrical federation of 15 "equal" republics, with a constitutionally granted right to withdrawal from the union state, and the RSFSR within it was asymmetrical, with ethnic entities standing out against the "ordinary" oblasts and krajs.

During the "parade of sovereignties" of 1990, the majority of ethnic autonomies of the RSFSR declared upgrades of their status up to the level of union republics and claimed to enter in an updated union treaty according to Gorbachev's template on an equal basis with the "legacy" Soviet Union constituents. In fact, this process led to the equalization of the status of most autonomous oblasts (except for the Jewish AO) and the ASSRs, whereas two autonomous republics (Chechnya and Tatarstan) even claimed independence from Russia.

The modern Russian Federation was formed on the territorial basis of the RSFSR. It was reorganized by the Federal Treaty of March 31, 1992, with the constituents being both ethnic autonomies and, until that moment, "ordinary" oblasts, krajs, and cities of federal significance. Thus, the Russian Federation became de jure a symmetrical federation where the status of state republics was passed down to the level of oblasts and krajs.

In May 2000, Vladimir Putin introduced the federal districts by one of his first presidential decrees. Those were territorial associations of several federal constituent subjects headed by a plenipotentiary representative of the President.

Formally, federal districts are not administrative units, but in practice, their "coordinating role" directly encroaches on the rights and competencies of individual federation constituents.

For most of its existence, the Russian Federation, like the USSR before it, was not a real federation, and the right to self-determination of its peoples remained declarative. Moscow maintained tight centralized control over all regional processes. The modern Russian political class often complains even about this formal federalism as a kind of "toxic legacy" inherited from their Soviet predecessors, which led the USSR to its demise.

Fearing a new collapse, the Kremlin is gradually eroding the federal form of government in the Russian Federation, and is also increasing assimilation pressure on non-Russian ethnic groups in order to subsequently eliminate distinctive ethnic identities as the very basis for ethno-federalism.

At the same time, the enforcement of this policy cannot be either too quick or too straightforward. Like the USSR, the Russian Federation remains vulnerable to outbreaks of radical national resistance, and some indigenous peoples are still poorly integrated into the Russian political nation. Therefore, Russification and flirting with the national feelings of non-Russian ethnic groups often alternate or occur in parallel. In some cases (for example, in Chechnya) this ambiguity is a part of the "social contract of loyalty" to the Kremlin. As national and local patriotism rises in times of crisis so, in the national republics, recruiting men for the war with Ukraine goes smoother under the brand of "national battalions."

Parallel to Russification, attempts to construct a multi-ethnic Russian political nation are built primarily on the image of the Russian Federation as a "common home," a "fair arbiter," a guardian and protector, also from "external threats." The elements of the supranational unifying mythology are the cult of victory in World War II, the "greatness" of the largest country in the world, and traditionalism as opposed to "Western values".

The interaction between the federal center and the national constituent subjects of the federation is in essence the relationship of the metropolis with its colonies. Moscow or St. Petersburg have never treated the lands of the North Caucasus, Idel-Ural (Volga region), or Siberia as equal states, or co-founders of the federation.

The USSR, in the last decades of its existence, proclaimed the final elimination of ethnic conflicts and contradictions following the construction of a new entity — the Soviet people. In a state that denied the existence of national interests among individual nations and ethnic groups, there could be no ethnic conflicts, as there were no subjects of relations. The state propaganda also claimed that religious or sectarian conflicts were finally eliminated, since religion did not play any significant role in social relations and was branded as a relic of the pre-Soviet past.

The collapse of the USSR instantly exposed the complex array of interethnic and ethno-confessional problems both in the former Soviet republics and in the RSFSR itself. The parade of sovereignties lent a real relevance to the sham borders within the RSFSR, and they became the focus of heated political struggles, which in some places escalated to armed confrontations involving activists, police, special forces, and regular troops.

Local armed conflicts flared up: not for independence and secession from the Russian Federation, but for the administrative borders between constituent subjects of the federation (the most striking example: Ossetian-Ingush conflict in autumn 1992).

Under these circumstances, Moscow began to use any conflicts and even competition between federal constituent subjects as an excuse for curtailing federalism, limiting the sovereignty of national constituents, and launching sweeping repressions designed to "resist separatism."

The First Russo-Chechen War, unleashed by Boris Yeltsin, in addition to the proclaimed goal of "restoring territorial integrity," also had many hidden goals. For ethnic Russians, this was a demonstration of the threats and challenges of separatism, in the face of which Russian society must unite and support the government and the federal center. As an alternative, Moscow painted pictures of chaos, the collapse of the state, and a protracted civil war. And for representatives of indigenous peoples (primarily residents of the North Caucasus republics, Tatarstan, and Bashkortostan), this was a stern warning not to even think about separatism.

In this atmosphere, not only was there an encroachment on the sovereignty of the national republics, but a state policy was introduced to promote Russification as a safeguard for the foundations of statehood, and as support for the Russian language. The education in the languages of the national republics was curtailed. Numerous bans and restrictions were imposed on the activities of national political parties and public associations. Strict censorship was introduced in the media, whereas the life of national and religious communities was put under total surveillance.

In everyday life, this policy found its expression in a dismissive and suspicious attitude towards non-Russian peoples; fear of separatism and irredentism; growing xenophobia and racism.

**ETHNIC, RELIGIOUS, TERRITORIAL, AND OTHER  
CONFLICTS ON THE TERRITORY OF THE RUSSIAN  
FEDERATION AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE STABILITY  
OF THE REGIME**

**БӘЙСӘЗЛЕК!**

458ел безнең, хал-  
кыбыз урыс империя  
сенең, колы.  
**Бетсен ГЕНОЦИД!**  
Империяне-Халықара  
Трибуналга!



In the modern Russian Federation, there are 21 national (or multinational) republics, 4 autonomous okrugs (territories), and 1 autonomous oblast, as well as 46 oblasts, 9 krais, and 2 cities of federal significance (excluding the illegally annexed territories of Ukraine). Despite the fact that the territories of national constituents occupy a significant share of the Russian Federation (more than 40%), their mostly landlocked location makes secession problematic without changing existing borders.

Already under Putin's regime, six autonomous districts ceased to be constituent subjects of the federation. Between 2003 and 2008, the Komi-Permyak, Taimyr (Dolgano-Nenets), Evenk, Koryak, Ust-Orda Buryat, and Agin-Buryat Autonomous Okrugs were annexed to neighboring regions that did not have the status of national entities. In the public space, there is an ongoing discussion about the advisability of liquidating several other national autonomies.

The national constituent subjects of the federation are concentrated in the North Caucasus (7 republics), in Idel-Ural (6 republics), in Siberia and the Far East (5 republics and 1 autonomous okrug), in the North (2 republics and 3 autonomous okrugs). Since Soviet times, the Jewish Autonomous Oblast has been national only nominally: according to official data from the 2021 census, the share of Jews in its population was only 0.6%.
















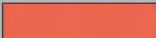
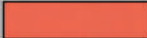












The population of the federal constituent subjects is predominantly ethnically diverse, with the presence of large Russian ethnic communities. At the same time, many representatives of the titular ethnic groups live in the Russian Federation outside of their republics. According to official statistics, ethnic non-Russians make up about 28% of the population of the Russian Federation (in the late Soviet era the share was about 50%).

Non-Russian indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation are representatives of several main linguistic communities: Turkic peoples (Tatars, Bashkirs, Chuvash, Kumiks, Yakuts, etc.), Vainakh-Daghestani and Adyghe peoples of the Caucasus (Chechens, Avars, Circassians, etc.), Finno-Ugrian peoples (Erzya, Mari, Udmurts, Komi, Karelians, etc.), Mongolic peoples (Buryats, Kalmyks). The most numerous indigenous peoples are: Tatars, Chechens, Bashkirs, Chuvashes, and Avars (all of the above totaling over 1 million representatives). The peoples of the Russian Federation are unequally integrated into Russian society and have different abilities to resist assimilation. The religious factor plays a major role. Muslim believers generally tend to better preserve their national identities. Race is also a certain obstacle to Russification and assimilation, e.g. the distinctly different appearance of the Mongoloids making them less accepted.

The ethno-demographic situation in the Russian Federation is dynamic: some peoples are rapidly declining due to Russification and depopulation, while others, on the contrary, are striving due to high birth rates. The domestic labor migration is high. Ethnic and ethno-religious communities (domestic diasporas) have formed and are growing in large cities. Many Russian citizens who come from ethnically mixed or previously assimilated families may be inclined to naturalize among indigenous peoples under the influence of political processes (as was the case in the newly independent states after the collapse of the USSR).

The military and political leadership of the Russian Federation views disintegration or the loss of individual territories as a real threat, which only increases as the so-called "Special Military Operation" drags on. Despite Moscow's significant successes in the assimilation of non-Russian peoples, even with such closed ethno-religious communities as the mountain peoples of Dagestan, the national question in the Russian Federation has not been finally resolved, and the war is only exacerbating the existing rifts.

Outbreaks of casual xenophobia in large cities directed not only at Muslims but also at Buryats, Kalmyks, Yakuts, Tuvans, often condoned by the authorities, demonstrate the atomization of Russian society, deep ethnic and religious rifts, and mutual distrust. The current regime is trying to hide these ills of the Russian society under the guise of unity and cohesion.

POPULATION ACCORDING TO 2021 CENSUS		PERCENTAGE DEVIATION BETWEEN 2010 AND 2021 CENSUSES	
<b>CIRCASSIANS</b>	<b>114 697</b>	<b>+ 56,72%</b>	
<b>CHECHENS</b>	<b>1 456 792</b>	<b>+ 17,2%</b>	
<b>INGUSH</b>	<b>517 186</b>	<b>+ 16,27%</b>	
<b>KUMYKS</b>	<b>565 830</b>	<b>+ 12,48%</b>	
<b>TUVANS</b>	<b>295 384</b>	<b>+ 11,92%</b>	
<b>AVARS</b>	<b>1 012 074</b>	<b>+ 10,96%</b>	
<b>BALKARS</b>	<b>125 044</b>	<b>+ 10,73%</b>	
<b>DARGINS</b>	<b>626 601</b>	<b>+ 6,31%</b>	
<b>NOGAIS</b>	<b>109 042</b>	<b>+ 5,19%</b>	
<b>KARACHAYS</b>	<b>226 271</b>	<b>+ 3,6%</b>	
<b>TABASARANS</b>	<b>151 466</b>	<b>+ 3,49%</b>	
<b>LEZGINS</b>	<b>488 608</b>	<b>+ 3,14%</b>	
<b>KABARDIANS</b>	<b>523 404</b>	<b>+ 1,27%</b>	
<b>KOMI</b>	<b>143 516</b>	<b>- 37,12%</b>	
<b>MORDVINS*</b>	<b>484 450</b>	<b>- 34,91%</b>	
<b>UDMURTS</b>	<b>386 465</b>	<b>- 30,03%</b>	
<b>CHUVASHES</b>	<b>1 067 139</b>	<b>- 25,68%</b>	
<b>MARI</b>	<b>423 803</b>	<b>- 22,61%</b>	
<b>TATARS</b>	<b>4 713 669</b>	<b>- 11,24%</b>	
<b>ADYGHE</b>	<b>111 471</b>	<b>- 10,71%</b>	
<b>OSSETIANS</b>	<b>485 646</b>	<b>- 8,11%</b>	
<b>RUSSIANS</b>	<b>105 579 179</b>	<b>- 4,9%</b>	
<b>LAKS</b>	<b>173 416</b>	<b>- 2,92%</b>	
<b>KALMYKS</b>	<b>179 547</b>	<b>- 2,09%</b>	
<b>BASHKIRS</b>	<b>1 571 879</b>	<b>- 0,8%</b>	
<b>BURYATS</b>	<b>460 053</b>	<b>- 0,29%</b>	
<b>YAKUTS</b>	<b>478 409</b>	<b>- 0,07%</b>	

\* Russian exonym for Erzya and Moksha

One of the key mythologems used by the Kremlin to mobilize the popular support is the threat emanating from the "aggressive and anti-Russian" West. According to Moscow's thinking, the active involvement of indigenous peoples in new colonial wars outside of the Russian Federation, among other things, should push aside historical traumas such as the massacre of Kazan (1552), the Circassian genocide (1763-1864), or the two Russo-Chechen wars.

Ethnic, religious, territorial and other conflicts between the constituent subjects and peoples of the Russian Federation remain the Achilles' heel of the regime and demonstrate the contrived and deceptive nature of the "unity" of the ruling regime with the people, and of the Federal Center with the regions.

In the current situation, Moscow has both domestic and external challenges in the context of countering the threat of disintegration.

## **Domestic:**

**Balancing between non-Russian ethnicities on one side and imperialists / Russian nationalists on the other.** The Kremlin needs the loyalty and support of the indigenous peoples (and not just the ruling elites) in the North Caucasus, Idel-Ural, and Siberia as an important mobilization base. This loyalty is used primarily to recruit people for contract military service in the socio-economically disadvantaged regions: Dagestan, Ingushetia, Chechnya, North Ossetia-Alania, Buryatia, Tuva. In such republics as Dagestan, Chechnya, and Ingushetia it is achieved, among other policies, through acquiescing to the partial or complete withdrawal of these territories from the Russian legal framework and the legitimization by local elites of the institutions of adat (customary law), and sometimes sharia (Muslim law).

On the other hand, the regime must take into account the sentiments of Russian nationalists and imperialists, who see the very existence of national republics, distinct languages, cultures, and religions of indigenous peoples as a threat to the existence of the state as such.

For Moscow, the difficulty of the situation is that being a centralized autarky, it applies a uniform national policy and common methods to all national entities. It is difficult for the current regime to be flexible and quickly adapt to different situations and different regional contexts. At present, the state policy of the Russian Federation in relation to its internal colonies looks like assimilation through dismantling the education system in national languages, Russification and rejection of national identity as a prerequisite for social mobility, forced transformation of donor constituent subjects of the federation into subsidized

regions, and making the regions dependent on the federal budget, marginalization of national elites, corrupting of republics' elites through graft, the destruction of republics' political institutions, and, as a consequence, the encouragement of the indigenous population to migrate within the Russian Federation, as well as to take up contract military service.

However, this model has significant weaknesses. If encouraging the Erzya, Moksha, Komi, Mari, Udmurts, Chuvashes, and other Uralic indigenous peoples to migrate beyond their national republics inevitably leads to assimilation and complete dissolution in large Russian cities with populations of over a million, then the situation with the peoples of the North Caucasus and even some peoples of Siberia looks completely different. Representatives of the Caucasian peoples (primarily from the eastern part of the North Caucasus), finding themselves in Moscow, St. Petersburg, or Yekaterinburg, retain their own identities and bring with them their customary social behaviors based on adat, and their own understanding of good, evil and the distribution of social roles. To a certain extent, a similar situation is observed in the Khanty-Mansi and Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrugs, which are rapidly changing their ethno-confessional map not only due to migrants from the republics of the North Caucasus, but also Muslims from Stavropol Krai and even Bashkortostan, who come for rotational work and have no obvious incentives for integration.

Forced migration, which has become a widespread social phenomenon in the Muslim regions of the Russian Federation, has led to another interesting effect—the strengthening Islamic cohesion in large Russian cities. In other words, the Tatars in Kazan the Bashkirs in Ufa, the Kumyks in Makhachkala, or the Chechens in Urus-Martan do not easily integrate migrants from the Central Asian republics into their communities. When it comes to attitudes towards ethnically related people (e.g., towards Muslim Turkic people in Tatarstan), casual chauvinism is fairly common.

However, when a Chechen and a Bashkir arrive in Moscow, along with interethnic competition, there are powerful pan-Muslim manifestations of solidarity going far beyond the framework of the all-Russian Ummah. Thus, the arrests of Uzbek migrants during Friday prayers inevitably cause strong outrage among both Chechens and Avars in Moscow.

**Loyalty and clientelism of regional elites.** The Kremlin still views the national republics as a weak link in the pseudo-federation. This factor leads to political pressure from the federal center on the leadership of the national republics, tight control over the security bloc, and the extraterritorial staffing principle (e.g. when natives of Kaliningrad serve in Yakutia, and Yakuts serve in the Voronezh region, etc).

Another dimension of this factor is a strengthened counterintelligence regime, e.g. personnel numbers of the FSB, Russian Guard and other military formations in Ingushetia are several times greater, than the contingent in the Tver Oblast, which is double in terms of population and 20 times larger in area than Ingushetia. Consequently, the leaders of the national republics, unlike the governors of oblasts and krajs, are forced to constantly prove not only their personal loyalty to Putin, but also the devotion of their republics to the indivisibility of Russia. This drives some republic leaders to unhealthy excesses, for example, in Bashkortostan, on the initiative of Radiy Khabirov, a new national battalion is formed every 2 months and sent to the front with minimal combat training and equipment. As a result, Bashkortostan consistently ranks first in the Volga Federal District in terms of combat casualties.

**Control over religious communities.** In the regions remote from the capital, especially in the national republics, there is a high unmet public demand for justice. Young people often find the answer in religion. In the predominantly Muslim republics, justice is offered by various kinds of Salafi groups—Hizb ut-Tahrir, Caucasus Emirate, and even Daesh (followers of ISIL). Since 2014, religious life has been under total state control. All Salafi mosques have been taken away from their respective communities, the khutbah (sermon at the Friday prayer) is delivered under the strict control of the official Muslim religious boards, whereas security services monitor the arrival of new believers in mosques and prayer houses (with compulsory CCTV cameras). The situation is similar with other religions. Under such pressure, religious life does not cease but goes underground. Communities operate without registration, and their members are becoming marginalized and radicalized. The Russian Orthodox Church and the Muslim religious boards are rapidly losing the last vestiges of their authority among young people.

## **External:**

**Chaos and nuclear war.** To discredit the idea of decolonization of the Russian Federation, the Kremlin uses a set of talking points aimed at foreign audiences. Moscow is arguing that any disintegration of the Russian Federation will inevitably go along the "Yugoslav" scenario, only with the use of nuclear weapons. However, not all national republics and regions have nuclear weapons in their territories. At the same time, all national movements declare their readiness to unconditionally renounce nuclear weapons and to join international agreements on the reduction of weapons of mass destruction. At the same time, the current military and political leadership of the Russian Federation constantly threatens to use nuclear weapons not only against Ukraine, but also against NATO member states.

In addition, without national republics and regions, Russia will not be able to service its existing nuclear weapons due to the inaccessibility of beryllium deposits, which are mined only in Buryatia and in an area in the Sverdlovsk Oblast inhabited by a distinct ethnic community.

**The rise of China.** Moscow has skillfully exploited the phobias of Western societies until recently supporting the illusion that Russia is a kind of buffer between China and Europe, a counterweight to China's dominance in the Eurasian region.

At the same time, the populations not only in the national republics of the Russian Federation, but also in many ethnic regions of the Russian Federation, harbor a clear anti-Chinese sentiment. There is strong disapproval of China's expansion, which is being indulged by the federal authorities. With the encouragement, and sometimes under pressure, of Moscow, 38 cooperation agreements have been signed at the regional level between Russia's constituent subjects and provinces of the PRC. Projects such as the Belt and Road Initiative, special investment conditions and deals for Chinese partners (Sichuan-Chuvashia, Sichuan Investment Railway Corporation, strengthening Chinese presence in the special economic zones of Togliatti and Alabuga, etc.) have caused a wave of Sinophobia far from the Russian-Chinese state border. Beijing's genocide of the Uyghurs in East Turkestan along with the persecution of other Turkic Muslims in the region, including the Tatars, have continually fueled widespread hatred toward China among Muslims in the Volga region and the North Caucasus.

In this situation, a proactive position of the West, as well as of regional players such as Japan, Korea, and Taiwan, could win the support of national and regionalist movements in Russia by showing interest in containing Chinese expansion and criticizing the Kremlin that indulges it.

**Scaremongering through conflict moderation.** There are many rifts on ethnic lines that could lead to potential conflicts both between nations and between constituent subjects of the Russian Federation. For example, the Ossetian-Ingush, Ingush-Chechen, Chechen-Dagestani, Kabardino-Balkarian, Tatar-Bashkir territorial conflicts; Kumyk-Avar, Kumyk-Dargin, and other ethnic confrontations, etc. The Kremlin traditionally acts as an arbitrator and mediator in these conflicts, at the same time quietly fanning and provoking them. Using this colonial technique, Moscow is frightening the international community with "unchecked carnage" that will inevitably ensue after the collapse of the Russian Federation.

**CURRENT STATE OF NATIONAL MOVEMENTS  
WITHIN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION.  
POSITIONING IN THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR**





Moscow is exerting systemic pressure on the national movements of indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation with the aim of their final liquidation. Those national movements that, after the collapse of the USSR, could turn their republics towards state independence or the acquisition of real sovereignty were hit the hardest by repressions: Chechnya, Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Sakha-Yakutia.

During 2001-2023, the Kremlin, through pressure and criminal prosecution of regional elites, achieved a significant limitation of the sovereign rights and powers of the national republics by amending federal laws and further "aligning legislation of the republics with the federal law."

At the same time, all national political parties and national representative bodies, as well as a significant part of public organizations of indigenous peoples were banned. Systematic discrediting campaigns were launched against their leaders; there were kidnappings, torture, inhuman treatment, political killings, and other serious human rights violations in the territories of all indigenous peoples. Russian security agencies and secret services use predominantly repressive methods to counteract the national liberation movements of peoples enslaved by Moscow. Within the Russian Federation, they liquidated the organizational structures and institutions of all movements, whose representative bodies were actively working to protect the rights of their communities or advocating for more independence from the federal center.

Nevertheless, the Kremlin's repressive efforts did not eliminate the national question. The colonial nature of governance in national republics, unfair distribution of resources, damage to the environment, growing tax burden on donor constituent subjects, privileged status of the Russian language, culture, and church cause discontent among indigenous peoples and set the moods in the regions against the federal center. In other words, there are objective preconditions for the strengthening of anti-federal sentiments in Russia, distancing from Moscow, and the development of powerful disintegration processes that could lead to the demise of the territorial structure and political system of Russia.

National movements gained their greatest socio-political momentum in the late 1980s and early 1990s on the back of the weakening repressive function of the union/federal center. This was primarily public activity: founding of parties and movements, holding mass political events, and pushing to enhance the status of national autonomous entities. During 1991-1994 and 1996-1999, Chechnya was de facto independent. Tatarstan also proclaimed (but did not achieve) independence.

The second Russian-Chechen war brought about pockets of armed anti-Russian resistance in the national republics under Islamist (Salafi) slogans.

Salafi proselytism has helped recruit representatives of both traditionally predominantly Muslim ethnic groups and Muslim neophytes, including some ethnic Russians. The underground guerrilla movement began in the North Caucasus (under the political brand of the Caucasus Emirate), whereas some of its spin-offs also operated in Idel-Ural. The most active phase lasted during the decade from 2005 to 2015. At present, the centers of Islamist armed resistance have been finally defeated by the security agencies of the Russian Federation.

The national representative bodies and organizations of indigenous peoples spoke out in defense of the rights of national republics and autonomous districts, namely: Komi organizations Tom Izvatas and Komi Voityr in the former Komi-Permyak Autonomous District; the Circassian Congress and Adyge Khase movement in the Republic of Adygea; the Council of Teips of Ingushetia and the Committee of Ingush Independence in the Republic of Ingushetia; the Congress of the Buryat People, Erkhe and Oborona organizations, the Buryat Regional Organization of Young Scientists in the former Aginsk and Ust-Orda Autonomous Districts. They organized mass protest rallies of Circassians in 2005-2006 and Buryats in the spring of 2007.

Strong anti-government sentiment among the Circassians escalated into clashes with security forces. The Kremlin managed to restore balance only by appointing a Circassian prime minister in Karachay-Cherkessian Republic (KCR). Later, protests were held in defense of the Bashkir language in the school education system (Ufa, Bashkortostan, 2017); in support of Ukraine (Kazan, Republic of Tatarstan, 2014); against Russian colonialism and in support of the separation of Tatarstan from the Russian Federation (Kazan, Republic of Tatarstan, 2019); against the deforestation in Buryatia (Ulan-Ude, Republic of Buryatia, 2018); against the police obstruction of a rally of the indigenous Shors people, who demanded the resignation of the speaker of the regional parliament (Kemerovo, Kemerovo Oblast, 2018), against the arbitrary repositioning of the Chechen-Ingush border (Magas, Ingushetia, 2018), in order to stop the construction of a hazardous waste processing plant (Udmurtia and Bashkortostan, 2020), against setting up a solid waste disposal landfill (Komi Republic and Arkhangelsk Oblast, 2020-2021).

In 2019, the Udmurt scientist Albert Razin committed an act of public self-immolation in front of the parliament of Udmurtia in protest against the oppression of the Udmurt people.

In addition to mass protests and official appeals to regional and federal authorities, national movements have taken up international campaigns against the violation of their right to self-determination, which is being carried out by Moscow through the abolition of national territorial entities.

Thus, the Buryat intelligentsia turned to Mongolia and the Buddhist clergy for support; and in 2008 the Circassians convened a national congress in Cherkessk, where they adopted a number of ultimatum-like declarations seriously frightening the Kremlin. In many countries, from Australia to Turkey, there were mass demonstrations by the Circassian diaspora against the holding of the 2014 Olympics in Sochi on the ethnic lands of the Ubykh people, one of the sub-ethnic groups of the Circassian nation.

Protest activity by the indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation intensified to a degree after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. The first anti-war event was an attempt by women from Karachay-Cherkessia on March 20, 2022, to block the bridge over the Khusa River near the village of Zelenchutskaya, demanding truthful information about their men who were sent to war in Ukraine. After the announcement of mobilization in the Russian Federation in September 2022, mass women's rallies took place in Buryatia, Sakha-Yakutia, and Tuva. The most powerful protests broke out in Dagestan, in the areas of the compact settlement of Kumyks, and in multinational Makhachkala. Anti-war protests in Endirey and Babayurt were accompanied by the blocking of highways, clashes with the police, and the involvement of Russian National Guard troops who were forced to open warning fire to pacify the crowd.

After the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation have become especially vulnerable. From the very first months, the statistics of Russian casualties showed a disproportionately high share of certain indigenous peoples of Dagestan, the Buryats, and then the Bashkirs among the killed in action. This is connected both with the high representation of ethnic non-Russians in military service (which in most cases is the only social elevator available to them), and with the deliberate policy of ethnocide on the part of Moscow (i.e. through a tacit policy protecting urbanized ethnic Russians, and sending people from ethnic minorities to die).

In the spring of 2022, the national representative bodies of the Kalmyks, Tatars, Bashkirs, and Erzya publicly condemned the Russian aggression.

From public interviews and statements by leaders of the Tatar (Rafis Kashapov), Bashkir (Ruslan Gabbasov), and Erzya (Syres Bolyaen) national movements, it is known that national activists carried out a series of arson attacks on military enlistment centers and offices of Russian political parties in Bashkortostan, and industrial facilities in Tatarstan. They held a number of anti-war events, destroying visual military propaganda calling for mobilization, and pasting anti-war leaflets in Russian and national languages. In late April 2023, resistance fighters in Ingushetia engaged in several armed confrontations with Russian security forces, inflicting casualties on them.

As a result, the Russian Armed Forces, the FSB, the Russian National Guard, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs have to keep significant forces and assets on the territory of Ingushetia, the smallest constituent subject of the Russian Federation in terms of area.

The national movements of Chechens and Circassians have formed their own national units within the Armed Forces of Ukraine, which are fighting on the side of Ukraine against the Russian occupiers. Representative bodies in exile of the peoples of Dagestan and Ingushetia are working to form such units. Similar aspirations are actively expressed by Kalmyks, Bashkirs, Yakuts, etc.

In order to suppress any protest movements in Russia, the Putin regime has adopted a number of repressive laws and decrees, enabling administrative and law enforcement agencies to ban representative organizations of indigenous peoples, exert systemic pressure on their activists, deny the right to peaceful protest and to a fair and transparent investigation of abductions, murders, and attacks on those who defend the civil and political rights of indigenous peoples in the Russian Federation.

Since activists of national movements are usually less known to the media in the West and often have a reputation of "radical separatists," rather than "democrats," they do not enjoy such powerful moral and political support from the international community as Navalny, Khodorkovsky or Kasparov. This gives the Russian repressive system a free hand to use harsher methods of suppression against national movements than against the liberal Russian opposition. As a result of the repressive policy, the national representative bodies of the Avars, Lezgins, Ingush, Circassians, Kumyks, Balkars, Karachays, Mari, Karelians, Kalmyks, Buryats and a number of other peoples ceased their activity or moved into exile.


In 2008, the Milli Majlis formed a government of Tatar politicians in exile to represent the interests of the Tatar people in the international arena. This government is still functioning; its current prime minister is Rafis Kashapov.

The following national movements also formed their representative structures in exile: the Chechens in Great Britain, France, Turkey, Poland, and Sweden; the Ingush in Turkey and France; the Tatars in Great Britain, Turkey, Finland, and the USA; the Bashkirs in Lithuania and the USA; the Buryats and Kalmyks in the USA and Mongolia; the Erzya in Ukraine and the USA. These movements enjoy varying degrees of influence on their compatriots in the Russian Federation, as well as have varying intensity of ties with the homeland. The activities of these movements have noticeably intensified following the wave of emigration triggered by the mobilization announced in the Russian Federation in September 2022.

Almost all of them have set up special local advisory councils abroad, which, under the guise of consultations and guardianship, began agitation and recruitment of newly arrived emigrants into their ranks. Some of the emigrants, faced with financial and social hardship in emigration, are going back to the Russian Federation to their national republics, maintaining contacts with ethnic emigration centers. The so-called "returnism" is becoming increasingly widespread and is seen by national movements as an important tool for strengthening their positions in their homeland.

Founded in the spring of 2022, the League of Free Nations united the leaders of 12 national movements of indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation. The organization is focused on working with newly arrived emigrants, conducting socio-political education courses for activists, organizing rallies and demonstrations in Europe and the United States, seeking to draw the attention of the international community to the violation of the rights of indigenous peoples in the Russian Federation. The League of Free Nations, like the movements of New Tuva (a Tuvan socio-political movement that emerged in 2022), Asians of Russia (a human rights movement of the Buryat, Yakut, Chukchi, Tuvan, and Kalmyk peoples that emerged in 2022), etc. have undergone a rapid evolution from federalist aspirations to calls for the formation of new national states. Former ministers, members of regional parliaments, and representatives of top management of state mining companies found themselves in leadership positions in the Buryat, Kalmyk, and Tuvan national movements. They are known in the national communities of indigenous peoples and enjoy a degree of influence on the socio-political sentiments in the republican elites and among the public. In 2022-2023, a number of national movements (Kalmyks, Tatars, Bashkirs, Erzyans, Ingush, Buryats) adopted declarations showing independence aspirations. In April 2023, the Ingush Independence Committee convened in Turkey and proclaimed the formation of the Ingush Liberation Army.

The activity of national representative bodies gaining momentum outside the Russian Federation is a challenge both for the Putin regime and for the émigré political organizations of the Russian opposition, which are striving to become the new government in Moscow in the future. National movements disagree with the concept of a simple regime change in the Russian Federation and demand recognition of the republics' right to independence. This is the reason for the tension between the Russian politicians in exile and representatives of indigenous nationalities. The ambitions of national movements are gradually growing, and the space for compromise is shrinking.



## TRENDS AND POSSIBLE SCENARIOS

As of the summer of 2023, all organized structures of national movements of indigenous peoples or regionalist movements within the Russian Federation have been destroyed. As described in the previous chapter, national representative bodies, national leaders of indigenous peoples are in exile, physically liquidated or neutralized through pressure or imprisonment. At the same time, the set of problems and fundamental contradictions in the Russian Federation have not been eliminated, as described here in the section about ethnic, religious, sectarian, territorial, and other conflicts.

The prospects for the disintegration of the Russian Federation directly depend on the outcome of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Serious victories and territorial gains by the Russian Federation in Ukraine will most probably complete the process of transition from authoritarianism to totalitarianism, and vice versa—the fiasco in Ukraine will pose a challenge to both the current regime and to the Russian state as such.

**Russian victory scenarios.** In the event of victory or significant military and political successes of the Russian Federation in the confrontation with Ukraine and the West, the Putin regime will delay the collapse of the state, but will not prevent it. The Kremlin will face serious challenges going beyond economic stagnation and consistent sanctions pressure. In fact, postponing the collapse will also mean postponing modernization, increasing the indoctrination in all spheres of public life, including education, science, business, religion, and culture, which, in turn, will only deepen the degradation of state institutions.

Demographic problems caused by the emigration, low birth rates, and high mortality rates among ethnic Russians will remain unresolved. Unlike Ukraine or other European countries facing similar problems, the population dip in Russia is a challenge to the very existence of the federation, because an entire generation of Russians was brought up on the ideas of isolationism, extremely aggressive rejection of any migrants, and even hatred. New mass raids against Muslim migrants carried out by Russian security forces in large cities, forced recruitment of illegals to fight in Ukraine, anti-Islamic campaigns in Moscow — all this only increases the atomization, incites ethnic tension and mutual distrust in society. In the event of victory (or what Moscow would declare as a victory to its population), its main beneficiaries will be ethnic Russians. Most or all national autonomies will be promptly liquidated as a threat to the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation. Moreover, this threat is becoming ever more pressing with the ongoing refusal of the international community to recognize Russia's so-called "new territories."

Moreover, the Kremlin has already become a hostage to its own domestic chauvinist propaganda. It will not be able to reverse the state policy in the area of migration, nationalities, and religions (e.g. fully opening the doors to the migrants from Asia, the only viable source of labor), because such revisionism will be taken extremely negatively by its core electoral base. At the same time, demographic changes are irreversible, and they concern not only metropolitan cities such as Moscow or St. Petersburg.

In parallel with the rapid growth of the Muslim community, fundamental changes are taking place in the population structure of many national republics. In most of the republics of the North Caucasus, Tuva, and Yakutia, the number of ethnic Russians is constantly declining, and the ties of these federal constituents with the rest of Russia continue to weaken. These trends will persist in the coming decade.

The economic and demographic disproportion between European-side Russia and Moscow-controlled Siberia, the Arctic, and the Far East is increasing, and the level of return migration of Russians from other countries is decreasing. In the event of further isolation and border closure, the return of Russians to their historical homeland will stop completely. Moscow is trying to solve these problems through several methods, e.g. by deporting Ukrainians to Russia and kidnapping Ukrainian children, but the scale of demographic challenges far outweigh the chosen methods, which therefore produce a short-lived and very limited effect.

Victorious scenarios for Russia would also mean further rapprochement with China, Iran, North Korea, and the need to balance between Delhi and Beijing. Each of these vectors will contribute to the alienation of Russian Muslims and their gravitation towards the states with friendly policies towards Sunnis. This, in turn, will fuel Moscow's phobias about an imagined or real strengthening of the Turkish presence in regions such as the North Caucasus. These fears are already evident in the staffing policies in Dagestan, in particular with the deliberate appointment of non-Muslims to senior administration positions.

The victory scenario tree can have a number of branches. In one of them, Putin's rule continues, accompanied by the degradation of state institutions, further restrictions on freedoms and a slide into totalitarianism, gradual economic decline, and depopulation of Siberia and the Far East. Another branch of this scenario is the transfer of power to a successor, adjustment of the domestic and foreign policies with the aim of easing the pressure of sanctions and preserving the state apparatus and the state as such.



A possible variation in these scenarios is a conspiracy to remove Putin from power, which in turn will also have a number of possible branching outcomes: from attempts at rapprochement with the West to further isolation and attempts to start new wars of conquest (primarily in Kazakhstan) or to restart frozen conflicts (in Georgia, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan).

This variability of victory scenarios will not lead to increased Russian influence in the regions of Central Asia, the South Caucasus, the African continent, and the Middle East. On the contrary, it will push Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, and Turkmenistan to develop multi-vector policies.

Moreover, China will strengthen its position in Central Asia and Africa, Iran, and Turkey—in Syria and Iraq, whereas Turkey will gain profile in the South Caucasus. The military campaign of the Russian Armed Forces in Ukraine, with its obvious failures, and regardless of its future course, is already prompting the current political regimes in Central Asia to develop plans in case of aggression from the Russian Federation (which now does not look unthinkable anymore). They are also looking for more reliable international partners than Russia, capable of ensuring stable and predictable cooperation in the areas of security, defense, trade, etc.

In addition, it should be remembered that even in the most favorable scenario, Russia itself will emerge from the war weaker than it was before it began. Its economic and military potential, and its human capital will be weakened. Russia will not be able to quickly enter new wars, rearm, and modernize its army, whereas international isolation will limit its diplomatic capabilities. This, in turn, will also contribute to the redistribution of influence in the regions of Central Asia and the South Caucasus. With the growing role of Turkey in international politics and the loss of Russia's position as the sole arbitrator and mediator in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, the contradictions between Ankara and Moscow will intensify, and at the same time, the number of Moscow's allies in Armenia will decrease.

**Russian defeat scenarios.** These scenarios do not simply mean the loss of control over the occupied territories of Ukraine (all or part of them) by the Russian armed forces, but rather the loss of combat capability, controllability, and subordination of Russian armed formations to Moscow, that is the impossibility of conducting further military operations due to a combination of technical, mobilization, socio-economic, personnel and other factors.

These scenarios will lead not only to a significant reduction in the combat capability of the regular Russian army, but also to a weakening of the entire security bloc, which also includes Russian National Guard, FSB, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

This will lead to a decline in the authority of the federal center. This scenario tree can evolve quickly or slowly, over months or decades.

The following events are to be expected in the described scenario branch: strengthening role of regional elites, in particular, due to the desire to stay in power and establish control over local natural resources; weakening effect of the federal law; strengthening influence of clans (primarily in the North Caucasus, especially in Dagestan, where the first contenders for the recovery of their positions will be the clans of the Umakhanovs, Shikhsaidovs, and Aliyevs), taking over control of the security apparatus in the regions or setting up of private armies (PMCs); a crisis of all-Russian national identity and the rise of re-identification (both in the national republics and in the regions); strengthening of horizontal ties between the subjects of the federation and between individual subjects and neighboring countries, a surge in national revival and resumption of activities of the banned and oppressed religious organizations and movements.

*What does it mean in practical terms?*

The growing budget deficit and worsening economic situation will force Moscow to make a difficult choice: either cut social spending or defense and security budgets. Most likely, the current regime will prioritize the security bloc as its pillar and source of power in the Russian Federation. At the same time, the reduction of expenditures on salaries, pensions, and various types of material benefits will increase discontent in the society and escalate social tensions, which, combined with the failures of the military campaign in Ukraine, could pose a real threat to the regime. Recognizing these challenges, the Kremlin will resort to a set of measures: increase the tax burden on donor regions, request material and technical assistance from China, deepen military-industrial cooperation with Iran and North Korea, increase hydrocarbon exports to India, step up nuclear blackmail of the West to get immediate concessions, and increase repression within Russia.

The loss of balance by the regime will have some common repercussions for all regions: loss of influence of the federal authorities; growing discontent and aggression of the local population pushing local authorities to increasingly look to local clans and groups of influence rather than to Moscow to quell these sentiments; emergence of power structures parallel to the federal ones, splitting of loyalty among existing power structures (both to the federal center and to local elites).

However, there will also be significant regional differences in the development of disintegration processes in different territories of the Russian Federation.

## **Probable disintegration scenarios in the North Caucasus**

Moscow will strive to maintain the strongest counterintelligence regime in the east of the North Caucasus (Dagestan, Chechnya, and Ingushetia), the area with the highest risks in terms of disintegration.

These republics enjoy special rights within the Russian Federation, they managed to build an autonomous legal system, integrate the norms of adat and sharia into it. The Chechens, Ingush, Avars, Dargins, Kumyks have something that other indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation do not have—numerous unassimilated diasporas within the Russian Federation, as well as in the EU and Turkey. With the weakening of the counterintelligence regime in the North Caucasus, accompanied by a surge of nationalism (an exacerbation of ethnic conflicts) and the resurgence of Salafism, the most active and charismatic muhajirs (resettlers returning from non-Muslim countries) and political emigrants will return to the republics.

However, even here, an identical trajectory for the three republics is extremely unlikely. Whereas in Chechnya, there are preconditions for Kadyrov and his entourage to retain power, in Dagestan and Ingushetia, the current heads of the republics and their entourage in leadership positions will most likely lose their power.

Consequently, in the event of a significant weakening of the federal center, the following factors will signal to Ramzan Kadyrov the need to distance himself from Russia: a) Moscow's inability to protect his regime and ensure the security of his clan; b) a significant reduction in subsidies from the federal budget; c) an attempt by the federal center or its individual actors to bring new people/clan to power in the republic. As a result, depending on how quickly the situation unfolds (these factors can develop separately or simultaneously), Kadyrov may resort to the following actions:

- Restrict the application of federal laws on the territory of Chechnya under the vague slogans of "defending the fatherland and order."
- Bring to his side (through bribery, promises of power and influence) or eliminate (disarm or force them to leave the territory of Chechnya) those military units that are not under Kadyrov's personal control (e.g. units of the 42nd Motorized Rifle Division, the FSB).

- **Make a more rapid and radical Islamization of the republic, to the point of overtures and obvious concessions to the Salafis with the aim of reducing the latter's social base. The following steps could be taken: permissions to open Salafi mosques, inviting Salafi alims (scholars) from Saudi Arabia and Egypt to Chechnya, a "publicity tour" of one of the "disgraced" preachers enjoying widespread popularity in Chechnya and the North Caucasus (e.g. Abu Umar Sasitlinsky or Abdullah Kosteksky).**
- **Seek reconciliation with the representatives of the pro-independence Ichkeria movement: negotiate with all or one of the factions, hold a joint congress in the homeland, grant government positions to significant figures of the Chechen emigration, induct Dzhokhar Dudayev in the pantheon of national heroes on an equal footing with Akhmat Kadyrov.**
- **Apportion blame to those responsible for rampant corruption, repression and persecution, and make their exemplary punishment.**
- **Put forward territorial claims to Dagestan for the Aukh area (primarily for the Novolaksky, Kazbekovsky, and possibly also Khasavyurtovsky districts), "restore historical justice" by establishing checkpoints and unilaterally demarcating the border.**

These steps could significantly boost Ramzan Kadyrov's image in the eyes of ordinary Chechens, at the same time splitting and completely sidelining the Ichkerian opposition, and drawing even the most hard-line supporters of the Caucasus Emirate to the side of the regime. These measures could ease the transition turbulence in Chechnya, which will be accompanied by a significant deterioration in the economic situation.

Kadyrov and his entourage can use the listed measures selectively, adjusting the depth of certain "reforms," alternating them with targeted repressions against opponents of the regime. At the same time, the turn in domestic and foreign policy will be carried out in such a way as to keep the connection with Russia alive. That is, Kadyrov can claim that he carried out all of the above-mentioned transformations "in the interests of the Chechen people," and should the Federal Center regain its position, declare himself the only leader of the North Caucasian republics who "has kept chaos in check and preserved the republic until the restoration of the Russian Constitution in all of its territories."

However, Ramzan Kadyrov's retention of power after the disintegration of the Russian Federation is not the only possible scenario.

A number of circumstances, such as loss of control over the security agencies; the emergence of political competitors supported and funded from outside of the republic; deterioration of Kadyrov's own health; betrayal of his inner circle, etc., could push him into exile, most likely to one of the Islamic monarchies of the Persian Gulf.

The situation in neighboring Dagestan is significantly different from Chechnya. After the liquidation of the institution of the presidency and the removal of Ramazan Abdulatipov, an ethnic Avar, from power, all subsequent leaders had extremely limited powers and owed their appointment and influence exclusively to Moscow. In 2014–2017, the key Dagestani clans were defeated, the role of parliament was curtailed, and the establishment of full control of the FSB over the republic's religious life was completed.

Due to the steady phobia of "Turkic expansion" (especially after Azerbaijan's successes in the Karabakh war) and the "spread of Salafism," which is causing concern in Moscow, the latest appointments to Dagestan had a revolutionary character. Since 2017, the republic has been led by non-Muslims, an unprecedented practice since the collapse of the USSR. That is, Moscow is losing trust even in the Avars, who have traditionally been loyal supporters of the federal center in the complex system of the region's ethnic balance. Dagestan is a completely Muslim republic, with a strong Salafist influence among the youth.

The head of the Republic, Sergei Melikov, has neither authority nor support among the population, one of his common nicknames is a direct derogatory reference to a half-breed Lak, a foreigner or a renegade Muslim. In addition, Melikov has very weak family, property, and clan ties with the republic. Consequently, in the event of a disintegration scenario unfolding, the likelihood that Melikov will be able to remain at the controls of Dagestan is practically zero.

The weakness of republican authorities in Dagestan, combined with the consensus in the Chechen society (not only Kadyrov's supporters, but also the emigration) regarding the return of Aukh, significantly reduce the chances of Dagestan to maintain its territorial integrity in the event of the disintegration of the Russian Federation. This means that:

- Dagestan, despite the establishment of a powerful counterintelligence regime by the Russians on the territory of the republic, is one of the key candidates for secession from the Russian Federation.
- The basic principle of ethnic balance has been upset in the republic and the system of checks and balances has been destroyed, which will inevitably lead to a radical redistribution of power.

- There is a high probability of the collapse of the republic: Aukh will go to Chechnya; the Avars, Dargins, Tabassarans, and Laks will try to keep the rest of the territory under their control. The Turkic ethnic groups will try to eliminate the kutans (highlander settlements on the plains that arose in Soviet times when the government encouraged transhumance) in their territories and restore key positions in municipal government. If these claims fail, Kumyks and Nogais are likely to try to form their own state.
- Azerbaijan, supported by Turkey, fearing Lezgin irredentism and seeking to prevent the formation of Lezgistan on its northern borders (that is getting the same problem in the north of Azerbaijan that Turkey has in the southeast with Iraqi Kurdistan), can strengthen its presence in the region, support Dagestani Azeris (maybe deploying a limited military contingent to protect the Azeri population) or promote an alliance of local Azeris with the Kumyks and Nogais.

Weakening Russian presence in the region, the reduction or withdrawal of the 58th Combined Arms Army from Vladikavkaz will almost certainly lead to a resumption of the Ossetian-Ingush conflict. Both the Kadyrov regime and Salafist groups could take advantage of the situation to strengthen their positions by offering assistance to the Ingush. This move by Ramzan Kadyrov could serve several purposes at once: strengthen his authority among the Nakhs (an ethnic community of Chechens and Ingush), marginalize critics and opponents, and improve relations with the Ingush teips after the dispute over significant territories of the Sunzhensky District with Ingushetia.

North Ossetia-Alania will seek support among Russian influence groups, since it will not be able to count on either the favor of Chechnya or the support of Georgia (which, under certain conditions, the Ingush can count on).

Disintegration processes in Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, Adygea, Krasnodar, and Stavropol Krajs will develop much more slowly than in the east of the North Caucasus. In all likelihood, local elites will be able to retain leadership positions and will transition from real autonomy within the Russian Federation to independence and the formation of a Caucasian federation or confederation.

Moscow is keeping tight control over any investment projects in the region, whereas subsidies and grants are made directly dependent on the political loyalty of the republics' leaders and their ability to meet the expectations of the federal center. Federal transfers account for 80% of all revenues and are used as corruptive instruments to ensure the loyalty of local elites.

**Disintegration scenarios in Idel-Ural.** Another region with high off-center potential is Idel-Ural: Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Chuvashia, Mari El, Udmurtia and Mordovia. Here, Bashkortostan and Tatarstan have the greatest potential for independence. However, as in the case of Dagestan and Chechnya, these republics have different structures of power and elites, and some differences in the social fabric. Tatarstan has a clan governance system. Changes of ruling elites in the republic traditionally took place through agreement on the transfer of power from one powerful clan to another (e.g. from the Shaimiyevs to the Minnikhanovs) with the blessing and under the supervision of Moscow.

Despite the significant weakening of the republic's institutions (2014–2023) and the attempt to curtail the power of the Minnikhanovs and Shaimiyevs, their influence on politics in the republic, including personnel appointments, remains significant. Clans in Tatarstan, unlike in Bashkortostan, continue to retain control and have a significant share in the mining and processing companies. In the event of either gradual or sudden weakening of the federal center, the likelihood of a new pro-independence leader emerging in Tatarstan is extremely low.

The likelihood of power takeover in post-Russian Tatarstan by emigre communities, such as the Government of Independent Tatarstan in Exile (led by Rafis Kashapov), is practically zero. At the same time, the weakening of the Federal Center, together with its repressive and censorship apparatus, would pave the way to the revival of the political life in the republic. Here, old political forces (e.g. Ittifaq, Vatan) will certainly resume their activities, also new players will emerge (from pro-European Tatars to pro-Russian liberals, from secular pan-Turkists to Salafis), and emigration communities will influence a rather limited, but important target audience (primarily the national intelligentsia).

The decline in oil prices in 2020 and 2023 had a significant impact on the republican budgets of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, which faced a significant deficit. The Tatarstan Parliament increased the expected budget deficit for 2023 to 45.4 billion rubles. For comparison, in 2022 this amount was 27.1 billion rubles. In order to stabilize the economic situation, the parliament is forced to take unpopular measures, including an increase in the profit tax.

Bashkortostan faced even greater economic difficulties. Although official statistics show consistently low unemployment rates, there is a lack of stable decently paid jobs in the republic driving men from Bashkortostan to increasingly take up work on a rotational basis in the North. According to official statistics, in Bashkortostan, rotational work is chosen 5 times more often than in neighboring Tatarstan.

In the eastern parts of the republic, the local population is growing increasingly angry with the illegal and predatory mining of minerals and precious metals. The Bashkir rural populations living in areas with rich deposits of precious metals suffer from constant intimidation by illegal miners or outside mining companies, which leave behind a wasteland of destroyed forests and fields, drained reservoirs, and poisoned groundwater.

The Bashkir rural population is forced to move, having no benefit from the natural resources of their native lands and under pressure from the republican authorities who often act in collusion with mining companies. This policy has repeatedly caused public outrage and mass protests. Mining companies and illegal miners on the one side and the local Bashkir population on the other are in a state of constant conflict, which has repeatedly turned violent. The republican authorities manage to keep the violence in check only through force and threats of legal prosecution. Tens of thousands of peasants (primarily ethnic Bashkirs) feel deceived and angry. These problems which have not been systematically addressed in Bashkortostan will make the position of both municipal and republican authorities, in the event of a weakening of the federal center, extremely precarious and uncertain.

Depending on the intensity of disintegration processes, events in Tatarstan may develop according to different scenarios:

- 1 Local elites could initiate the conclusion of a new federal treaty with Moscow and bargain for a place in the renewed Russia.
- 2 The republic could drift away from Moscow (gradually or rapidly) under pressure from public sentiment, which, as in the early 1990s, could be fanned by the republic's authorities.
- 3 There could be a transfer of power to new political actors, with the consent of the Shaimiyev and Minnikhanov clans, due to the need for a makeover in order to preserve the integrity of the political system and prevent mass unrest.

If in the event of a weakening of the federal center, Tatarstan elites could continue to benefit from the republic being part of the Russian Federation, they will seek an opportunity to prolong their membership in the federation.

These are the most likely scenarios for Tatarstan. The likelihood that Kazan will take the lead in the parade of sovereignties or become a battering ram for the government system in the Russian Federation, is extremely low due to the high degree of integration of Tatarstan elites into federal authorities, the system of government contracts, etc.



The situation in Bashkortostan is noticeably different from that in Tatarstan. Neither the Rakhimov nor Khamitov clan, have any real political, financial, economic, or even symbolic weight in the republic. The first president of Bashkortostan, Murtaza Rakhimov, had a certain clout among the Bashkir part of the population, but after his death, his children did not inherit this authority and moral influence. Millionaire Ural Rakhimov, Murtaza's son, is in exile in Austria, harbors resentment towards Moscow, but has no real standing or supporters in his homeland.

The current head of the Republic of Bashkortostan, Radiy Khabirov, has incomparably less weight among the Bashkirs than Rustam Minnikhanov among the Tatars. Taking into account that ethnic Bashkirs make up only 1/3 of the population of Bashkortostan, the real support of Khabirov by the population of the republic is insignificant. He realizes that he cannot rely on the local population or officials and that his only safeguard is the federal center and a group of carpetbagger bureaucrats that he brought with him from Moscow to Ufa. In the event of a weakening of the federal center, Khabirov will be the first to face resistance from the Bashkir population, which sees him (and not even ethnic Russians) as the main threat to their well-being, security, Bashkir identity and the republic as a whole. Consequently, the chances for Radiy Khabirov to remain in power, in the event of a significant weakening of the Federal Center are minimal.

A more likely scenario is a surge of Bashkir nationalism and a tacit alliance of popular leaders such as Fayil Alsinov and Airat Dilmukhametov with representatives of the republic's SMEs with the goal of returning control over key sectors of the republic's economy to the Bashkir clans, which since the time of Rustem Khamitov has come under the control of the "Russian carpetbaggers".

Since both Bashkortostan and Tatarstan are of exceptional importance for the Russian economy, it is possible that in the event of a federal crisis and the surge of separatist sentiment in Kazan and Ufa, Moscow will incite a Tatar-Bashkir conflict over the northwestern areas of Bashkortostan, home to compact settlement of ethnic Tatars. Moscow would position itself as a conflict mediator, without whose help both Turkic peoples will plunge into a bloody confrontation. This could help the Kremlin keep Tatarstan and Bashkortostan within the Russian Federation, but with some special rights.

If Moscow succeeds in provoking a violent conflict, this could be used as a reason for introducing a state of emergency or martial law in the republics and canceling elections. These measures will allow the Kremlin to seize the initiative from local elites, clans and members of the public and force them to play by the rules set by the weakened federal center.

Other national republics of the region will be more inert, will watch the situation in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, and without their successful separation will not dare to openly confront Moscow.

The Kremlin will invest in popularizing phobias associated with Tatar imperialism in Chuvashia, Udmurtia, Mari El, and Mordovia. During the most unfavorable periods for Moscow, Russian agents in Kazan become more active, both among recruited secular Tatar politicians and among Sufis and Salafis, who publicly strive to defend the interests of Tatars/Muslims in neighboring republics.

**Disintegration scenarios in Siberia and the Far East.** Regions with the potential for separation from the Russian Federation are Sakha-Yakutia, Tuva, Buryatia, and the Irkutsk region, Khabarovsk Krai. The social, economic, cultural, and administrative ties of these territories with core Russia continue to weaken due to the growing demographic imbalance, the reduction in the number of large enterprises and the shrinking labor market, underdeveloped social infrastructure, and, along with this, the outflow of ethnic Russians. Harsh climatic conditions in Sakha-Yakutia or the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug also significantly complicate the immigration of ethnic Russians. Moreover, unlike the inhabitants of the Volga national republics, the Tuvans, Yakuts, Buryats, and smaller indigenous peoples living in Siberia and the Far East still face racism and casual xenophobia, which significantly hinder their social mobility and complicate the migration of autochthones to the capital and large cities in the European part of Russia, and as a result, serves as a deterrent in the process of assimilation of the non-Russian population.

Tuva remains one of the poorest regions of the Russian Federation. More than 40% of the population is on the verge of poverty, almost 20% of the working population does not have permanent employment. At the same time, the republic ranks 3rd in the Russian Federation in terms of birth rate. The population of Tuva is steadily increasing due to the population growth among ethnic Tuvans. With the constant outflow of ethnic Russians, the republic is turning into a mono-ethnic region, where the share of the autochthonous population approaches 90%. Opportunities for labor migration or education outside the republic for the Tuvan population are extremely scarce. Tuvan society is rather self-contained, with strong manifestations of casual chauvinism towards ethnic Russians. The Tuvan language and culture hold a fairly strong position, unlike in the neighboring Buryatia, and the Russification policies in the region are ineffective.

The republic remains economically underdeveloped, with a strong dominance of agriculture in the local economy, with weak ties not only with the federal center, but even with neighboring large cities populated by ethnic Russians: Krasnoyarsk, Tomsk, Novosibirsk. Tuva has a clan-based governance structure.

The general level of education is low. The network of public organizations is very weak and is developing very slowly. Membership in all-Russian political parties has no real or nominal meaning here. The staffing of government bodies, police, and public institutions occurs primarily on the clan principle. Although Tuva differs sharply from the rest of Russia, as well as from neighboring regions, the republic's exit from the Russian Federation is possible only in the event of a systemic and deep crisis of the state and development of sovereignty processes in neighboring regions, in particular, Buryatia.

Neighboring Buryatia differs significantly from Tuva in terms of demographic and ethnic composition, social mobility, etc. Only a third of the republic's residents are Buryats. However, the proportion of ethnic Russians has been steadily declining over the past 30 years, while Buryats are playing an increasingly prominent role in the republic. The Buryats, compared to the Tuvans, have a higher level of education and a significantly more powerful layer of intellectuals—scientific and creative. However, the Buryat language is experiencing a deep crisis, and its prospects compared to Tuvan are very bleak. At the same time, Buryat identity remains strong, the percentage of mixed marriages is insignificant, and Buddhism plays an important role in public life. Buryatia has a clan-based society. Depending on the clout of a given clan, its members receive positions in the local government or republican government bodies. Clans can form alliances to claim effective control over certain sectors of the economy or spheres of public life. The head of the republic, Alexei Tsydenov, serves as a moderator appointed by Moscow. The clan leaders know that it is Tsydenov who ensures the functioning of the system of checks and balances. However, the head of the republic himself is not the leader of a clan and does not have any real influence on the redistribution of spheres of influence, the liquidation, or merger of clans. The authority of the moderator is underpinned only by the uniformed agencies provided by Moscow.

The Buryats and Tuvans have long-standing and close relations with neighboring Mongolia, which has provided asylum to tens of thousands of people fleeing from mobilization to the Russian Armed Forces in 2022. Moreover, successful economic transformations and a series of reforms carried out by the government over the past 10 years have turned Mongolia into an attractive model for all Mongolic peoples — the Buryats, Kalmyks, and Tuvans.

Although Mongolia remains a fairly closed country for mass migration, Moscow is still seriously concerned about the growing clout of Ulaanbaatar among the Mongolic peoples of the Russian Federation. The refusal of the Mongolian immigration service in 2023 to extradite back to Russia the famous Kalmyk fighter for independence Batyr Boromongnayev, who sought political asylum in Mongolia, and his subsequent flight to the United States with the consent of the Mongolian authorities, stirred a wide discussion in the Mongolian and Russian media.

Despite pressure from the Kremlin, Mongolia seeks to retain influence over the Buryat, Kalmyk, and Tuvan communities and continues to position itself as the guardian of the Mongolic peoples.

Although Buryats are often viewed from the outside as primitive and willing to die for a bowl of soup in the interests of the Russians, many representatives of this indigenous people (among whom military service is traditionally held in high prestige) feel deceived, and regard the actions of the military leadership as incompetent and criminal. Over the past year and a half, the numbers of Buryat emigration have increased significantly, primarily to Mongolia, the Republic of Korea, and the United States. The diaspora is growing, together with its influence on Buryat society in its homeland.

Disintegration scenarios will expose the fragility of the governance system in Buryatia, in the spheres of administration, security, and defense. The current clan model of society and the exclusive enrichment system benefiting a very limited number of people from individual clans will not allow Tsidenov to rely even on the Buryat security forces at a critical moment.

Sakha-Yakutia is very different from both Buryatia and Tuva. It is a republic rich in natural resources, with a very strong national identity of its indigenous population. The main sector of the local economy is mining for minerals, gems, and precious metals. For decades, the republic's leadership has actively supported national education and culture, in particular the cinema in the Yakut language. Sakha is one of the few regions where the indigenous language is actively used in government, administration, business, and public communications making a real competition to the Russian language.

Over the past 30 years, the share of Russians in the population structure of Sakha-Yakutia has been consistently declining, while the share of Yakuts, on the contrary, has been growing. The 2020 census found that Yakuts made up more than half of its population for the first time since the end of World War II (which killed many Yakuts who were replaced by resettled ethnic Russians).

The trend towards an increase in the proportion of Yakuts and a decrease in the proportion of ethnic Russians in the republic's ethnic mix continues. All residents of Sakha-Yakutia, regardless of their ethnic origin resent the unfair revenue distribution between the republic and the federal center. In the event of any disintegration processes in the Russian Federation, events in Sakha-Yakutia are very likely to develop along the model of 1991—the proclamation of sovereignty and distancing from Moscow will be carried out by the republic's leadership and local civil servants motivated by the pressure from the public and the drive to concentrate the national wealth of the republic in their own hands.

In general, the disintegration of the Russian Federation is likely to differ greatly from the processes of the collapse of the USSR, when 15 union republics gained independence practically simultaneously and almost by default. This disintegration model most probably will not apply to the Russian Federation.

Its disintegration will be an extended and chaotic non-linear process accompanied by numerous conflicts, both territorial and ethnic. While some subjects of the Russian Federation may promptly and decisively declare their intentions to leave the Russian Federation, others will wish to preserve or re-establish the federation or will go through a long ideology transformation—from vying for real autonomy to state independence aspirations. Moreover, the first two or three decades after the start of the eventual disintegration of the Russian Federation will be marked by the formation and disappearance of new federal and confederate formations, trade, and defense unions. It is likely that not all new states will emerge within existing administrative boundaries, and not all will be able to maintain control over the proclaimed boundaries. After all, the existing borders are perceived quite differently in different constituent subjects of the federation. Whereas for Bashkortostan the current borders of the republic are highly relevant, for Ingushetia they would mean a national catastrophe, which can only be prevented by reclaiming the lost territories.

The course of disintegration processes will depend on many factors influencing the overall situation at the moment when off-center movements would be set in motion. These factors can be both internal (e.g. the level of national/regional consciousness of the local population, the ethnic mix, access to external borders, the presence of national representative bodies, organizations, movements, and prominent national leaders, economic self-sufficiency) and external (e.g. support from allies, the presence of related peoples in neighboring territories, an influential diaspora). The position of the international community and Ukraine, in particular, or the lack thereof will play a role in the disintegration processes of the Russian Federation.

# RECOMMENDATIONS



Before moving on to examining specific instruments that can be used in the sphere of supporting off-center movements in the Russian Federation, it is necessary to at least briefly consider the issues of the Ukrainian and international view of the post-war development of Northern Eurasia.

Ukraine's key international partners, in particular NATO member states, pledge their unwavering support for Ukraine. The declared goal of such support is the restoration of the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

The West also broadly rejects the idea of Russia's collapse. If there is a choice between uncertainty and probable chaos in the disintegrating Russian Federation on the one hand, and a long war of attrition that would lead Ukraine to a delayed victory at the catastrophic cost of demographic losses and the depopulation of significant territories on the other, the West would most likely opt for the second scenario.

At the same time, for the security of Ukraine and Europe as a whole, it is necessary not just for Ukrainian troops to reach the state borders, but to ensure sustainable and long-term peace in Europe while preserving the most valuable resource—the people (both military men and civilians). It is obvious that when the Ukrainian Armed Forces secure the state borders, this will not end the war and will not ensure sustainable peace, but would mean that the hostilities in Ukraine would go on in the shape of rocket and drone strikes, artillery shelling, sabotage raids on Ukrainian territory, blocking of Ukrainian ports, etc. At the same time, a hybrid war against the West with aggressive propaganda, interference in elections, sabotage, etc. would also go on. That is, control of the state border of Ukraine is not equivalent to security for either Ukraine or Europe.

Sustainable and long-term peace is possible only if the Russian state ceases to exist in its current form, since it poses an existential threat to Ukraine and a significant one to Europe. A number of new states with significantly smaller military, mobilization, economic and other resources should emerge on the territory of the Russian Federation.

Decolonization of the Russian Federation does not mean the interference of one state in the internal affairs of another in order to dismember it. This is a form of accountability of the state of the Russian Federation for gross violation of international law. The Russian Federation must be held responsible for committing the crime of armed aggression and an act of genocide against the people of Ukraine, for using war as a tool to change the ethnic mix of not only the occupied territories but also its own constituent subjects (through disproportionate involvement of indigenous peoples in the aggressive war). Decolonization and nuclear disarmament are effective forms of enforcement for this responsibility.

There could be two practical implementation avenues of a relevant foreign policy:

- A) International: foster a consensus among Western policymakers regarding the inevitability of the reformatting of the Russian Federation, and, consequently, the need to control this process instead of ignoring and shying away from it.
- B) Decolonizational: support and encouragement for the off-center movements within the Russian Federation.

**Key points for the international avenue:**

- The preservation of the Russian Federation in its current form poses a number of permanent threats: risk for the use of nuclear weapons, formation of an aggressive Russian-Chinese military alliance, the establishment of the military-technical, and, in the future, nuclear cooperation between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes.
- On the other hand, a sustainable democracy in Russia in its current size and shape is impossible, as has been many times proven by history. A highly centralized, aggressive, and despotic empire is the natural and the only possible state in which Russia is capable of existing as an integral state of its current size.
- The denial by the international community of the right of peoples enslaved by Moscow to self-determination, as well as ignoring the fact that indigenous peoples in the Russian Federation have their own interests, problems, and goals that differ from those of the current Russian state, will lead to the disintegration of the Russian Federation going along the least predictable and, most likely, the least favorable path for the world.
- Proactive moderation of the reformatting processes in the political space of Northern Eurasia is a long-term investment in stability and regional security in the coming decades.
- The only result that the West is already achieving by avoiding direct dialog, public contact, and communication with the nationalists and independence supporters from among the peoples of the North Caucasus, Tatarstan and Bashkortostan is strengthening the position of the Salafis both in the North Caucasus and in Idel-Ural.
- By ignoring the nationalists, the West will not turn them into supporters of the liberal Russian opposition. This is the shortest way to push the Muslim youth of the Russian Federation into the arms of Salafists, giving the latter strong



arguments for their propaganda: "The West doesn't need you even with your secular views. Your place is among us. The West is the enemy, just like Russia."

- Russia does not honor its commitments with respect to indigenous peoples according to the UN Charter and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as its own Constitution.
- There is no real electoral democracy in the Russian Federation, the authorities in the constituent subjects do not represent the residents of the regions, and are compelled to ensure the interests of the federal center.
- The Russian liberal opposition, whose leaders are in exile, mostly represents the interests of ethnic Russians, residents of several large Russian cities. Among its leaders there is not a single representative of the indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation, whereas such figures as Navalnaya, Sobol, Khodorkovsky, Milov, Kasparov, etc. are not and have never been representatives of the interests of the regions and national republics.
- Meetings between Western politicians and Russian oppositionists are perceived in the national republics and regions as distant events that have no relevance whatsoever to the North Caucasus, Idel-Ural, Siberia, or the Far East.
- Pretending that a dialog with Sobol, Gudkov, Milov, Kasparov, or Khodorkovsky is also a dialog with Sakha-Yakutia, Buryatia, Tuva, Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, Tatarstan and Bashkortostan is a self-deception that will lead to false conclusions and development of policies that are not rooted in realities of the Russian Federation.
- Cooperation between the West and representatives of national republics and regions is important both for a realistic assessment of the situation in the Russian Federation and for preventing a Balkanization scenario in Russia.
- Replacing the dialog with real representatives of national republics and regions with giving the stage to ethnic intellectuals living abroad (the likes of Alexandra Garmazhapova), involved by the Russian opposition leaders to strengthen their own negotiating positions in the West, is a path to polarization of the situation in the ethnic environments. Using the case of Buryatia, we can see that this approach has led to a split in the Buryat opposition (resulting in separatists holding a congress of their own), its radicalization (discussion of armed struggle options), and a deepening of the confrontation between federalists and independence supporters.

## **Key positions and points for the decolonization avenue**

The general concept of this avenue is to strengthen the positions of national representative bodies, governments in exile, and indigenous peoples' movements by involving them in the discussion of the future of the post-war territories of the Russian Federation. It is necessary to insist that in a state where there is no real representative democracy, grass-roots representative bodies (kurultais, mejlises, congresses, councils of elders, etc.) become a voice that cannot be neglected in the international arena.

- It is important to emphasize that discussing the future of the Russian Federation without the participation of national movements is a mistaken approach. Insist on the need to invite representatives of national movements to international events/discussions attended by representatives of the Russian opposition along with diplomats.
- Refer to existing ethnic representative bodies and structures of national movements of Buryats, Oirat-Kalmyks, Tatars, Bashkirs, Erzya, etc. as to the voice of the civil society in specific republics/regions, questioning the legitimacy of the heads of republics and governors appointed by Moscow.
- Use public diplomacy tools to recognize the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (CRI) as an occupied territory, i.e. on political maps of Russia, Eurasia or the Caucasus region, designate the CRI as a territory with a separate status; in statements on the Chechen Republic, use the wording "so-called" when referring to the head or the parliament of the republic; emphasize that any decisions and actions of the Russian authorities on the territory of the CRI are illegitimate. At the same time, avoid singling out one of the Chechen emigration factions as the only representatives of the legitimate authorities of the CRI.
- Use the official communication channels: websites, and social media accounts to support the aspiration of indigenous peoples in the Russian Federation. In particular, publish tweets, short statements, and comments on notable dates (The calendar of dates is in the appendix).
- Voice out loud the problems and challenges that cannot be discussed inside the national republics and regions. Point out that the source of these problems and disasters is the imperial policy of the Russian state.
- Quote statements and resolutions of ethnic representative bodies and leaders of enslaved peoples. It should be noted that Tatars, Bashkirs, Chechens, Circassians, Buryats, Kalmyks, Erzyans, and Mokshas condemned the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, and many activists were persecuted for it in their homeland.

- It is necessary to communicate with specific target groups with the greatest off-center potential. A vivid example are the Kumyks of Dagestan:
  - The words “Kumyks” and “Kumykia” should be used when addressing the Kumyk audiences. A part of communications/comments should be posted in the Kumyk language.
  - In statements, comments, and documents regarding the Kumyks, it should be emphasized that Moscow’s policy has been aimed at stripping the Kumyks of their ethnic space, their lands. This is why Moscow has consistently encouraged the migration of other peoples into the Kumyk lands.
  - The Kumyks were punished by Moscow for successfully promoting their culture. After all, their language was the language of interethnic communication throughout the North Caucasus. Russia displaced the Kumyk language, relegating it to the local villages.
  - All the cities of Dagestan, with the exception of Derbent, are located in Kumykia, but the mayors of all these cities are not Kumyks, and this is no coincidence. Russia's policy in the east of the North Caucasus has been aimed at disrupting the Turkic belt, since the Kumyks and Nogais territorially connect the Oghuz and Kipchaks. This is precisely why Moscow has consistently oppressed the Kumyks, fearing the loss of control over Dagestan and their rapprochement with the Turks and Azerbaijanis.
  - Djelal ed-Din Korkmasov, the last Kumyk leader of Dagestan was the founder of the modern Republic of Dagestan. Under him, Dagestan strove to become a union republic within the USSR, the only state language was Kumyk, the republic underwent important economic reforms and was economically developed. Stalin drew his conclusions and not only physically eliminated Korkmasov, but also permanently barred the Kumyks from the leadership positions of Dagestan. This policy has not changed under the Russian Federation.
  - Today, by sending a disproportionate number of Kumyks to war, Russia is pursuing several genocidal goals: it is exterminating their gene pool and weakening the Kumyk presence in Dagestan, primarily in Northern Kumykia, the focal point of Dagestani protests.
- Messages or statements must be targeted to a specific national movement or ethnic group. Messages without an addressee will not be heard.

**APPENDIXES**



## ACTIVISTS OF NATIONAL MOVEMENTS AS POLITICAL PRISONERS IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

### REPUBLIC OF BASHKORTOSTAN



**Alsinov Fayil.** One of the leaders of the Bashkir national movement, environmental activist, father of four. He worked as a foreman in a construction company and lived in Ufa. Convicted on false charges of "inciting hatred". The reason for the denunciation written by the head of the republic (and the subsequent initiation of a criminal case) was Alsinov's speech at a rally in the village of Ishmurzino in the Baimaksky district of Bashkortostan on April 28, 2023. The protest was directed against plans to mine gold in the area. Another 82 Bashkirs were detained for long periods for participating in protests against Fayil's persecution; many of them were tortured, and two were killed by Russian security forces.



**Galim (Saitova) Ramilya.** Entrepreneur, and public activist of the Bashkir national movement. She was repeatedly convicted for public speaking and political activities. Ramilya Galim was detained by the police and the FSB near her home on May 16, 2023. The next day, Judge Artur Suleiman of the Kirov District Court of Ufa, at the request of the investigation, arrested the activist for two months in a criminal case about a video posted on YouTube in November 2022. In it, the activist addressed those mobilized from Bashkortostan, calling on them to renounce the killing of Ukrainians and return home: "The truest valor of a batyr today is to say: I do not agree to kill." On December 22, 2023, she was sentenced to 5 years in a medium-security penal colony and barred from administering websites on the Internet for 4 years.



**Davletbayev Gaziz.** A resident of Magnitogorsk, he worked as a loader and practiced singing. In December 2023, it became known that Gaziz had been detained and placed in a pre-trial detention facility. A criminal case for public justification of terrorism was initiated against him in September of that year due to a comment on a Telegram channel about the case of Alexei Nuriyev and Roman Nasryeyev, who were sentenced to 19 years in prison in April 2023 for attempting to set fire to a military registration office in the administration building of the city of Bakal in the Chelyabinsk region. According to security officials, Gaziz Davletbaev left the following comment under the news story: "Men with a capital M. Russia will be free. In the new Russia, they will be real heroes." Sentenced to 2 years in a medium-security penal colony.



**Dilmukhametov Airat.** Opposition publicist, a prominent member of the Bashkir statehood movement. He was sentenced to 9 years in a high-security prison for his public activity on social media, criticism of the government, and human rights advocacy for the Bashkir people. Prior to this sentence, Dilmukhametov had been sentenced to 3 years in a high-security penal colony with a ban on engaging in journalistic activity for 2 years for an article where he condemned the political regime in Russia and the colonial position of Bashkortostan. Relatives and friends of the political prisoner report that since his arrival at the colony he has been kept almost constantly in an isolation cell or in solitary confinement. According to his lawyers, Dilmukhametov has spent about 10 years of his life in Russian prisons on political charges.



**Fararitdinov Rustam.** Father of three young children, brother of Bashkir politician and political emigrant Ruslan Gabbasov. Charged with "facilitating terrorist activity," and the next day placed under arrest by the Kirov District Court of Ufa at the request of the investigation. As Rustam was detained, security officers told him that he would be doing time for his brother. During interrogations, Rustam admitted his guilt; investigators told Fararitdinov that he could avoid criminal prosecution if he convinced his brother to return to Russia from emigration.

## BURYATIA



**Filonova Natalia.** Co-chair of the Transbaikal regional branch of the Solidarity movement, journalist, human rights activist, editor of the independent newspaper *Against All Odds*. She took custody of an orphaned baby with a disability. Since November 17, 2022, Filonova has been held in pretrial detention center No. 1 in Ulan-Ude on charges of "violence against representatives of the authorities" (according to the police, she attacked a group of police officers who detained her during a human rights protest). Due to her detention in a pretrial detention facility, the disabled child under her care was sent to an orphanage, to significantly worse living conditions.

## DAGESTAN



**Alibekov Askhabali.** Video blogger, sports coach, former contract soldier of the Russian army, father of four. At the beginning of the Second Russo-Chechen War, Alibekov served in a reconnaissance unit of the Internal Troops; he had a combat deployment of nine months. Then he served in Stavropol and Novorossiysk. On February 11, 2018, Alibekov posted a video on his *Wild Paratrooper* YouTube channel with an appeal to "brother paratroopers", calling for a boycott of the presidential elections in Russia. The blogger accused Putin of lying in response to claims about the absence of Russian troops in Ukraine and of "pitting the Russian army against the brotherly Ukrainian people." Soon after, Alibekov was dismissed from the army. From May 1 to May 11 of the same year, Alibekov posted four more videos on YouTube with accusations against the Russian president and calls to resign. He has been convicted multiple times for social and political activities and covering protests. In 2024, he publicly condemned the Russian army's invasion of Ukraine. Detained on May 4, 2024.



**Gadzhiyev Abdulmumin.** Editor of the religion department of the opposition newspaper Chernovik. Father of 4 minor children. Security officials said they suspect Gadzhiyev of transferring donations to the accounts of charitable foundations of Abu Umar Sasitlinsky (Israil Akhmednabiyev). The investigation believes that this Dagestani Islamic preacher is running terrorist funding schemes through charity foundations under the guise of building Islamic religious facilities and helping poor Muslims. Sasitlinsky denied these allegations. During the trial, the prosecution did not provide any evidence of Gadzhiyev's connection with terrorists. In custody since June 14, 2019.



**Magdiyev Shamil.** A resident of the village of Tidib, Shamil district, Dagestan. Detained on charges of "Public dissemination of knowingly false information about the use of the Russian Armed Forces" and subjected to compulsory psychiatric treatment. The sentence was handed down on July 23, 2023. He was also subjected to compulsory treatment on charges of "illegal possession of weapons".

## INGUSHETIA



**Barakhoyev Akhmed.** Born in the village of Novy Redant, Malgobeksky district, Ingushetia, member of the Ingush Committee of National Unity and the Council of Teips of the Ingush people. He is married. Retired. Sentenced to 9 years in a medium-security penal colony for "Organizing violence dangerous to the life or health of government officials in connection with the performance of their official duties," "Formation of an extremist community," and "Participating in a non-profit organization encouraging citizens to refuse to perform their civic duties or to commit other illegal acts." Detained on April 3, 2019





**Malsagov Musa.** Chairman of the Ingush Committee of National Unity, co-chairman of the World Congress of the Ingush People, chairman of the Ingush branch of the Russian Red Cross, former member of the Ingushetian parliament from United Russia political party. Father of four minor children. Sentenced to 9 years in a medium-security penal colony for "Organizing violence dangerous to the life or health of government officials in connection with the performance of their official duties" and "Formation of an extremist community." Has been in prison since April 3, 2019.



**Nalgiyev Ismail.** Member of the regional public organization Choice of Ingushetia and the Ingush Committee of National Unity. Sentenced to 8 years in a medium-security penal colony for "Organizing violence dangerous to the life or health of government officials in connection with the performance of their official duties" and "Participation in an extremist community." The appellate court upheld the verdict. In custody since May 8, 2019.



**Pogorov Akhmed.** Co-chairman of the Ingush National Congress, former Minister of Internal Affairs of Ingushetia (2002-2003). He is accused of "Organizing violence that is dangerous to the life or health of government officials in connection with the performance of their official duties" and "Participation in an extremist community." He was wanted for almost 2 years, was detained in the city of Karabulak on February 26, 2021, and on May 25 was placed under house arrest, and the next day was sent back to the pre-trial detention center.



**Uzhakhov Malsag.** Chairman of the Council of Teips of the Ingush People, presidium member of the World Congress of the Ingush People. He is married. Sentenced to 9 years in a medium-security penal colony for "Organizing violence dangerous to the life or health of government officials in connection with the performance of their official duties," "Managing a non-profit organization encouraging citizens to refuse to perform their civic duties or to commit other illegal acts," and for "Formation of an extremist community." The appellate court upheld the verdict. In prison since April 19, 2019.



**Khautiyev Bagaudin.** Chairman of the Council of Youth Organizations of Ingushetia, member of the Ingush Committee of National Unity. Father of four minor children. In January 2020, he was charged with "Organizing violence dangerous to the life or health of government officials in connection with the performance of their official duties" and "Participation in an extremist community." Sentenced to 8 years in a medium-security penal colony. In prison since April 3, 2019.



**Chemurziyev Barakh.** Chairman of the Ingushetia Resistance movement, member of the Ingush Committee of National Unity, presidium member of the World Congress of the Ingush People. Married, father of three children, one of whom has been diagnosed with cerebral palsy. Sentenced to 8 years in a medium-security penal colony for "Organizing violence dangerous to the life or health of government officials in connection with the performance of their official duties" and "Participation in an extremist community." The appellate court upheld the sentence. Barakh has been in prison since April 3, 2019.

## KABARDINO-BALKARIA



**Kudayev Rasul.** Rasul Lived in the village of Khasanya near the city of Nalchik. Charged with murder, illegal seizure of vehicles, terrorist act, participation in a gang and criminal community, illegal arms trafficking, theft of weapons and ammunition, participation in an armed rebellion, and attempt on the lives of law enforcement officers. On December 23, 2014, he was given a life sentence in a heightened security penal colony. Has been in prison since October 23, 2005, on charges of attacking Nalchik on October 13, 2005. He is recognized as a political prisoner because the criminal prosecution is based on charges of an offense committed by another person, in violation of the right to a fair trial.

## KALMYKIA



**Ochirov Altan.** City administration employee, father of two minor children. He was sentenced to 5 years in a medium-security penal colony with an additional ban on holding state and municipal positions for a period of 3 years for "Public dissemination of knowingly false information about the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, and the exercise of powers by state bodies of the Russian Federation committed by a group of persons motivated by political, ideological, racial, national, or religious hatred, or enmity". He has been in prison since April 12, 2022.



**Ivashev Andrey.** Social activist, public defender, retiree. Charged under the following articles of the Russian Criminal Code: "Public calls for terrorist activity, public justification of terrorism or propaganda of terrorism, committed using the media, in particular the Internet", "Public calls for extremist activity using the Internet", "Spreading of hatred or enmity, as well as humiliation of human dignity based on gender, race, nationality, in particular, using the Internet; repetitive offense following administrative sanctions for a similar act within a year", "Contempt of court expressed in insulting a judge". Sentenced to 6 years in a medium-security penal colony. He was detained from December 1 to 4, 2021, then received a civil disability until March 19, 2022, and then he was taken into custody again. From December 30, 2022, until the verdict on May 24, 2023, he was under house arrest, then in custody until the appeal of the verdict on October 26, 2023. Currently, he is in custody.



**Kraval Vladislav.** Environmental and social activist, father of two minor children, works in construction. On July 6, 2023, he was charged with "Vandalism motivated by political, ideological hatred" and "Knowingly false reporting of an act of terrorism with the aim of destabilizing the activities of governmental bodies," sentenced to 6 years and 3 months in a medium-security penal colony. Imprisoned on September 27, 2022.



**Tushkanov Nikita.** A historian by profession, worked as a school teacher. Tushkanov went on a single-person picket in defense of freedom of speech in the winter of 2021, he was fired for it, thereafter he earned his living by giving private lessons. He was sentenced to 5.5 years in a medium-security penal colony on charges of "Public justification or propaganda of terrorism using the Internet" and "Discrediting the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation." The appellate court changed the sentence to 5 years of imprisonment in a medium-security penal colony with a fine of 150,000 rubles. On March 12, 2024, the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation upheld the sentence. He was held in custody from December 7, 2022 to September 25, 2023. Currently in custody.



**Farafonov Nikolay.** Blogger, anti-fascist, anti-war activist. On March 27, 2024, he was sentenced to 6 years in a medium-security penal colony for "Public calls for terrorist activity, public justification of terrorism, carried out using information and telecommunications networks, including the Internet." In custody since September 20, 2023.

## MARI EL



**Pekpaev Pavel.** A resident of the city of Yoshkar-Ola, a blogger, had a previous conviction. On August 4, 2023, he was sentenced to 5 years and 6 months in prison for "Public dissemination, under the guise of reliable reports, of knowingly false information... on the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation... motivated by political hatred." On October 9, 2023, the appellate court upheld the verdict.

## MORDOVIA



**Akimov Kirill.** A resident of the village of Krasnopolye, a farmer. On April 12, 2023, on charges of "Public calls for terrorism and its justification using information and telecommunications networks", Akimov was sentenced by the Central District Military Court to 6 years in a medium-security penal colony with subsequent prohibition to engage in amateur radio communications for a period of 3 years. In custody since June 16, 2022.

## SAKHA (YAKUTIA)



**Baryshev Pavel.** Resident of Megino-Kangalashsky district of Yakutia. On April 21, 2023, Baryshev was charged with "Public actions aimed at discrediting the use of the Russian Armed Forces and government agencies; repetitive offense following administrative sanctions for a similar act within a year", and sentenced to 1.5 years in a medium-security penal colony. On June 15, 2023, the appellate court upheld the sentence. Baryshev is in prison at the time of writing.



**Gabyshev Alexander.** A civil activist and shaman who called on his people to live in harmony with nature and the environment, and to abandon the predatory exploitation of Yakut resources in the interests of the Russian parent state. In 2019, he organized a high-profile protest against Putin—a walk from Yakutsk to Moscow. The authorities placed him in a mental hospital, where Gabyshev was isolated and probably tortured. After his release on January 27, 2021, he was again placed in a mental hospital. In February 2021, another criminal case was initiated against Gabyshev for "Use of violence dangerous to life or health of a government official."



**Abuzarova Parvina.** Mother of two, blogger, designer of clothes for Muslim women. Abuzarova condemned the war on social media, for which she was promptly charged with "actions against the security of the Russian Federation." FSB officers came to search her home at 7 a.m. on February 14, 2023. According to Abuzarova, about 10 people of the opposite sex broke into her apartment without showing any identification, gave her a document about a criminal case instituted against her, and took her for questioning in her pajamas, not even letting her change. Abuzarova was sentenced to 3 years in a medium-security penal colony. The appellate court increased the sentence by adding a one-year prohibition to administer electronic and information networks.



**Boyarshinov Andrey.** A PhD in biology, a social activist, earned his living by giving private lessons. On May 7, 2024, Boyarshinov was sentenced to 5 years in a medium-security penal colony on charges of "Public calls for terrorist activity, public justification of terrorism, or propaganda of terrorism, committed using the media, in particular the Internet." In custody since May 17, 2022.



**Glebov Arseniy.** Convicted on charges of "Public dissemination of knowingly false information about the use of the Russian Armed Forces motivated by political hatred and enmity" and "Attempt to participate in an illegal armed group on the territory of a foreign state, for purposes contrary to the interests of the Russian Federation." Detained at the airport while trying to leave the country.



**Dmitriyev Oleg.** Dmitriyev, a construction worker, was sentenced to 8 years in a maximum security penal colony and 1 year of custodial restraint on charges of "Conspiring to commit a terrorist act by a group of persons." In custody since November 2, 2017.



**Ivanov Oleg.** An electrician by profession, resident of the city of Almetyevsk. Convicted on charges of "Conspiring to commit a terrorist act by a group of persons." Sentenced to 7 years in a maximum security penal colony and 1 year of custodial restraint. In custody since November 2, 2017.



**Miftakhov Azat.** A postgraduate student at the Faculty of Mechanics and Mathematics of Moscow State University, an anarchist. Miftakhov was sentenced on January 18, 2021, to 6 years in a medium-security penal colony for "Hooliganism by a group of persons committed by prior conspiracy." On September 4, 2023, he was released after serving his sentence. However, upon leaving the colony he was detained and sent back into custody on a new charge. On March 28, 2024, he was sentenced again to 4 years of imprisonment, with the first 2 years and 6 months to be served in prison. In custody since February 1, 2019.

## UDMURTIA



**Perevozchikov Artemiy.** Student, resident of Debesy village. Charged with "Participation in an extremist community" and "Vandalism motivated by political hatred." In custody since March 23, 2023, still in pretrial detention.





**Talantov Dmitry.** Lawyer, President of the Bar Association of the Udmurt Republic. Charged with "Public dissemination of knowingly false information about the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, the exercise of powers by state bodies of the Russian Federation based on political hatred." Since Talantov is an active lawyer, a special criminal trial procedure was applied. In custody since June 28, 2022.

## KHAKASSIA



**Afanasyev Mikhail.** Father of five minor children, editor-in-chief of the Khakassian publication Novy Fokus. He is a two-time winner of the Andrei Sakharov Prize For Journalism as an Act and the first foreign laureate of the Swedish Publicists' Club Prize. Charged with "public dissemination of knowingly false information about the use of the Russian Armed Forces by a group of individuals using their official position," he was sentenced to 5.5 years in a medium-security penal colony. In custody since April 13, 2022.

## CHECHNYA



**Dzhumayev Said-Mukhamad.** A student at Moscow State University, on January 23, 2021 took part in an "unauthorized" mass opposition rally in Moscow as part of the all-Russian "Freedom for Navalny!" protests. That day, during the dispersal of the demonstration in Moscow, according to the Human Rights Commissioner, about two thousand people were detained. Dzhumayev was sentenced to 5 years in a medium-security penal colony and has been in prison since January 28, 2021.



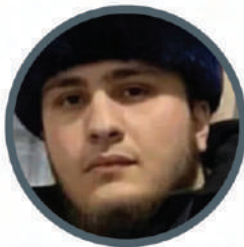
**Isayev Ismail.** Ismail Lived with his family in Grozny, member of the opposition Telegram chat Osal Nakh 95. At the time of his arrest, he was in Nizhny Novgorod. On charges of "Assistance in participation in an illegal armed formation," he was sentenced to 6 years in a medium-security penal colony. In custody since his arrest on February 4, 2021.



**Magamadov Saleh.** A resident of the city of Grozny, a member of the opposition Telegram chat Osal Nakh 95, was in Nizhny Novgorod at the time of his arrest. On charges of "Assistance in participation in an illegal armed formation" he was sentenced to 8 years of imprisonment, of which he must spend 1 year in prison and 7 years in a high-security penal colony. Held in custody since his arrest on February 4, 2021.



**Musayeva Zarema.** The wife of retired federal judge Saydi Yangulbaev. Suffers from type II diabetes, insulin-dependent. She was kidnapped by Chechens on orders from Ramzan Kadyrov, who was persecuting the Yangulbaev family for their opposition activities. Chechen officials publicly called for the Yangulbaevs' heads to be cut off. Musayeva is held hostage to force her sons abroad to stop blogging. She is accused of "Use of violence dangerous to the life or health of a government official", "Fraud committed in official capacity, including on a large scale" and was sentenced to 5.5 years in a medium-security penal colony. The appellate court reduced the sentence to 5 years in a penal colony, and the court of cassation reduced it to 4 years and 9 months in a penal colony. In custody since January 21, 2022.



**Khalidov Yasin.** A resident of the city of Shali, former policeman in the Chechen Republic. In custody since May 20, 2023. He tried to leave Russia due to fear of revenge from former colleagues but was detained while crossing the Russian-Kazakh border at the Isilkul highway border crossing point in Omsk Oblast. Taken to Chechnya. Current whereabouts unknown. The official reasons for his detention have not been announced.

## KALININGRAD OBLAST



**Feldman Mikhail.** Resident of Kaliningrad, married, journalist, public activist. On June 17, 2015, Feldman was sentenced to 1 year, 1 month and 23 days in a medium-security penal colony on charges of "Hooliganism motivated by political hatred or enmity by a group of persons by prior conspiracy" and "Illegal storage of explosives." In custody from March 11, 2014 to June 17, 2015, released in the courtroom. In 2020-2021, he was convicted twice under the article "Desecration of the flag of the Russian Federation." On May 8, 2023, he was involved in a new criminal case; on March 28, 2024, charged with "Public discrediting of the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation", and sentenced to 2 years in a medium-security penal colony. In custody since March 7, 2024.

## **DATES RELATED TO NATIONAL MOVEMENTS OF THE ETHNIC GROUPS IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

### **JANUARY**

**17**

The beginning of the Baimak protests of Bashkir activists against the arrest and conviction of Fayil Alsinov in 2024.

**24**

Day of Remembrance and Mourning for the Victims of the Seyantus Tragedy—the massacre of the Seyantus village Bashkir inhabitants by the tsarist troops in 1736.

Remembrance Day for the Victims of the Cossacks Genocide—on the occasion of the Bolshevik circular of 1919 On the Attitude Towards the Cossacks.

### **FEBRUARY**

**1**

Anniversary of the First Kurultai of the Tatar people in 1992.

**4**

Memorial Day commemorating Imam Shamil (1797-1871). It is marked primarily in Dagestan.

**5**

The bloody purge of the Chechen village of Novye Aldy by Russian riot police in 2000.

**7**

Day of the Northern Territories of Japan (the Russian-occupied part of the Kuril archipelago).

- 10**  
The day of the beginning of Zur Aslyk (Great Hunger) on the territory of Lesser Bashkiria in 1921 which took the lives of about 700 thousand people.
- 13**  
Day of the native Yakut language and writing — on the occasion of the birth date of the national educator Semyon Novgorodov (1892-1924).
- 21**  
International Mother Language Day.
- 23**  
Remembrance Day for the Victims of the Deportation of the Chechens and Ingush in 1944.
- 27**  
Mass murder of Chechens in the mountain village of Khaibakh during the deportation of the Chechens in 1944.

## MARCH

- 4**  
Erzya Mastor Defender's Day in honor of the victory of the Erzya army over the army of the Russian prince Yaroslav in 1103.
- 8**  
Remembrance Day for the Victims of the Deportation of the Balkar People in 1944.  
  
Death of the President of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria Aslan Maskhadov (1951-2005).
- 14**  
Outstanding victories of the Chukchi over Russian troops on the Yegach River (1730) and the Orlova River (1747).  
  
Day of the Adyghe (Circassian) Language and Writing—on the occasion of the release of the first alphabet book of the Circassian people in 1853.

- 20** Founding of the Autonomous Bashkir Soviet Republic (Second Bashkir Republic) in 1919.
- 21** The referendum on the sovereignty of Tatarstan in 1992, it was supported by 61.39% of participants.
- 28** Revival Day of the Balkar People—on the occasion of their return from deportation in 1957.

## APRIL

- 7** The bloody purge of the Chechen village of Samashki by Russian riot police in 1995.
- 12** Deportation of the Tarki communities in 1944 (a tragic date in the history of the Kumyks).
- 13** Death of Sheikh Mansur (1760-1794), the first imam of the Caucasus, and the leader of the anti-colonialist struggle of the highlanders against Russia.
- 16** Erzya Language Day—on the occasion of the birth date of the national educator Anatoly Ryabov (1894-1938).
- 20** Day of Karelian and Vepsian Writing—on the occasion of the approval of the Karelian and Vepsian language alphabets in 1989.
- 21** Death of Dzhokhar Dudayev (1944-1996), the President of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria.

**25**

Proclamation of the state of Buryat-Mongolia at the First All-Buryat Congress in 1917.

Referendum on economic independence and treaty between Bashkortostan and the Russian Federation in 1993.

Chuvash Language Day — on the occasion of the birth date of the national educator Ivan Yakovlev (1848-1930).

**26**

Day of the Native Tatar Language—on the occasion of the birth date of the national poet Gabdulla Tukay (1886-1913).

**27**

Day of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)—on the occasion of the formation of the Yakut Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in 1922.

**30**

The execution (burning) in Yekaterinburg of the forcibly baptized Bashkir woman Kisyabika Bairasova in 1739 for returning to the Muslim faith.

## MAY

**3**

Revival Day of the Karachay People—on the occasion of their return from deportation in 1957.

**11**

Independence Day of the North Caucasus—in honor of the proclamation of the Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus in 1918.

**13**

Proclamation of the Resolution on the state status of Dagestan in 1990.

**15**

Ossetian Language and Literature Day—on the occasion of the publication of the book of verses *Ossetian Lyre* by Kosta Khetagurov in 1899.

**21**

Remembrance Day for the Victims of the Circassian Genocide in 1864 (a tragic date in the history of the Kabardians, Circassians, Adyghe, and Shapsugs).

**22**

The adoption of a state sovereignty resolution of Tatarstan in 1992.

The execution of residents of the Bashkir village of Khunarsy by Russian colonizers in 1736 during the Orenburg expedition.

**30**

Republic of Buryatia Day—on the occasion of the formation of the Buryat-Mongolian ASSR in 1923.

### **Third Sunday in May**

Komi Language and Writing Day—on the occasion of the creation of the Old Permian script by Stefan of Perm in 1372.

## **JUNE**

**8**

Republic of Karelia Day—on the occasion of the Karelian Labor Commune formation in 1920.

Withdrawal of Russian troops from Chechnya in 1992.

**16**

Birthday of Salawat Yulaev (1754-1800), national hero of the Bashkir people.



- 20**  
Declaration on the Formation of the Ingush Republic in 1991.
- 23**  
The execution by the NKVD of Elbek-Dorzhi Rinchino (1888-1938), one of the leaders of the Buryat national movement, Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council of the Mongolian People's Army.
- 24**  
Chuvash Republic Day—on the occasion of the founding of the Chuvash Autonomous Region in 1920.
- 26**  
International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.

## JULY

- 3**  
Altai Republic Day—in honor of the Gorno-Altai Republic formation in 1991.  
  
Republic of Khakassia Day (Khakas Chiri)—in honor of the formation of the republic in 1991.
- 7**  
Ingush Statehood Day—in honor of the formation of the Ingush Autonomous Region in 1924.
- 9**  
Erzya Flag Day.  
  
Proclamation of the Republic of North Ingria in 1919.
- 10**  
The execution of 44 prominent Bashkir politicians and artists by the NKVD in 1938.

- 16** Liquidation of the Karelo-Finnish SSR—downgrading its status from a union republic to an autonomous republic within Soviet Russia in 1956.
- 20** Proclamation of state sovereignty of North Ossetia in 1990.

## AUGUST

- 3** Signing of the Treaty on the delimitation of powers and mutual delegation of powers between the authorities of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Bashkortostan in 1994. The republic's autonomy rights under this treaty were revoked by Moscow in 2005.
- 6** Victory Day of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria—on the occasion of Operation Jihad and the liberation of Grozny in 1996.
- 9** Proclamation of state sovereignty of Karelia in 1990.
- International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples.
- 15** Republic of Tuva Day—in honor of the independence proclamation of the Tuvan People's Republic in 1921.
- 16** Victory of Bashkir environmental activists, defenders of the Kushtau Shikhan mountain over the security forces in 2020.
- 22** Komi Republic Day—in honor of the formation of the Komi-Zyryan Autonomous Oblast in 1921.

- 29** Proclamation of state sovereignty of Komi in 1990.
- 30** Tatarstan Independence Day (Republic Day)—on the occasion of the state sovereignty proclamation in 1990.
- 31** The signing of the Khasavyurt Accords in 1996 marking the defeat of the Russian Federation in the First Russian-Chechen War (1994–1996).

## SEPTEMBER

- 4** Khakass Language Day—on the occasion of the Commission for the Development of the Khakass alphabet formation in 1924.
- 6** Independence Day of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (1991).
- 10** Self-immolation of Udmurt scientist Albert Razin (1940-2019).  
Day of Ingush Language and Literature.
- 20** Proclamation of state sovereignty of Udmurtia in 1990.
- 26** The partition of the united Buryat-Mongolian ASSR into 5 parts in 1937.
- 29** Proclamation of state sovereignty of Sakha (Yakutia) in 1990.
- 30** The beginning of the Second Russo-Chechen War in 1999.

## OCTOBER

- 1** Remembrance Day for the Victims of the Nogai Genocide in 1783.
- 5** Adygea Republic Day—in honor of the republic formation in 1990.
- 8** Proclamation of the state sovereignty of Buryatia in 1990.
- 11** Bashkortostan Republic Day (Third Bashkir Republic)—in honor of the proclamation of state sovereignty in 1990.
- 14** The de facto annexation of Tannu-Tuva by Russia (USSR) in 1944.
- 15** Defenders of Kazan Remembrance Day marked by the Volga Tatars in commemorating the siege of Kazan of 1552.
- 18** Proclamation of state sovereignty of Kalmykia in 1990.
- 19** Liquidation of the Kalmyk Khanate by decree of Catherine II in 1771.
- 20** Altai Language Day—on the occasion of the birth of the national poet and writer Lazar Kokishev (1933-1975).
- 22** Proclamation of state sovereignty of Mari El in 1990.
- 24** Proclamation of state sovereignty of Chuvashia in 1990.
- Resolution On the Act of State Independence of the Republic of Tatarstan in 1991.

**25**

Proclamation of state sovereignty of Altai in 1990.

**27**

Proclamation of the Republic of Circassia in 1991 (the project was not implemented).

Buryat Language Day.

**30**

Remembrance Day for the Ingush victims during the Conflict for the Prigorodny District in 1992.

## NOVEMBER

**1**

Adoption of the decree of President Dzhokhar Dudayev On the State Sovereignty of the Chechen Republic in 1991.

Tuvan Language Day.

**2**

Remembrance Day for the Victims of the Deportation of the Karachay People in 1943.

**4**

Statehood Day of the Udmurt Republic—in honor of the formation of the Votsk Autonomous Oblast in 1920.

Mari El Republic Day—in honor of the formation of the Mari Autonomous Oblast in 1920.

**6**

Constitution Day of Tatarstan on the occasion of the sovereign democratic constitution adopted in 1992.

- 9** Proclamation of the Kumyk Republic in 1990 (the project was not implemented).
- 17** Proclamation of the Republic of Balkaria in 1991 (the project was not implemented).
- 18** Proclamation of the Karachay Republic in 1990 (the project was not implemented).
- 22** Remembrance Day for the Victims of the Massacre of Balkars in the Cherek Gorge in 1942.
- 27** Proclamation of state sovereignty of Checheno-Ingushetia in 1990.  
Udmurt Language Day.
- 29** The foundation of the First Bashkir Republic on the occasion of the resolution of the Bashkir Central Shuro on the autonomy of Bashkurdistan in 1917.

## DECEMBER

- 7** Proclamation of the Declaration on the State and Legal Status of Mordovia in 1990.
- 10** Birthday of Akhmet-Zaki Validi (1890–1970), the national hero of the Bashkir people.  
Mari Literature Day commemorates the first Mari grammar which went on sale in 1775.

- 11** The beginning of the First Russo-Chechen War (1994–1996).
- 12** Proclamation of state sovereignty of Tuva in 1990.
- 14** Bashkir Language Day—on the occasion of the birth of the national poet Akmulla (1831-1895).
- 21** Day of the Erzya epic Mastorava.
- 28** Remembrance Day for the Victims of the Deportation of the Kalmyk People in 1943.

## Security Environment Research Center "Prometheus"

Prometheus Center is a Ukrainian non-governmental organization registered in December 2015 which brought together a team of experts, journalists, and volunteers studying different aspects of the war waged by the Russian Federation against Ukraine.

Our goal is to create the prerequisites for peace, restore the effect of international law, and strengthen security guarantees both for individuals and the society as a whole. The Center's attention is focused on Ukraine and its geopolitical neighborhood, especially on regions with challenging security environment: Eastern Europe and Northern Eurasia.

We conduct fundamental and applied research, monitoring, and investigations based on open source intelligence methodologies. Prometheus prepares analytical papers for experts, as well as information materials for the civil society. We are open to cooperation with colleagues—NGOs, volunteers, journalists, Ukrainian government bodies, international and foreign organizations.

Just like the mythical titan Prometheus, who gave people fire as a means of protection and knowledge, we seek to equip modern society with the ability to understand and improve the security environment.

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## **Following photos and images are used in this paper:**

Inyazor of the Erzya people Syres' Boliyaen', summer 2024. Photo from the private archive of Syres' Boliyaen' (cover photo).

A Russian soldier lights a cigarette against the backdrop of the Grozny city ruins, March 19, 1995. Photo by Associated Press (page 2).

Procession on the Remembrance Day of of the Tatar People in Kazan, October 15, 2010. Photo by Azatliq Radiosi - RFE/RL (page 6).

Nikita Tushkanov in the courtroom listening to his verdict in the case of "public justification of terrorism and public actions aimed at discrediting the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation", Syktyvkar (Komi Republic), May 11, 2023. Photo by Komiinform Information Agency (page 14).

Bashkir environmental activists protecting the Kushtau Shikhan mountain from riot police and private security company employees, August 15, 2020. Photo by Riyaz Iskhakov (page 20).

A soldier of the Dzhokhar Dudayev International Peacekeeping Battalion with the flag of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria during the battles for the liberation of Izyum city from Russian occupiers, September 2022. Photo by 1ADAT (page 36).

Map of the Idel-Ural republics. Compiled by the Public Movement Free Idel-Ural, available here: <https://goo.gl/5PZuvT> (page 42)

