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Article



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ON THE IMPORTANCE OF ETHNIC TOLERANCE FOR MODERN RUSSIAN SOCIETY

Abstract: *in the article the authors explore ethnic tolerance in modern Russian society. In conditions when the total fertility rate in Russia dropped below the level of simple population replacement about half a century ago and, at the same time, a number of the titular peoples of Russia have not yet completed the demographic transition, the relevance of such an article is beyond doubt. The authors enter into the related field of demography and ethnology in their article, which complicates their task. They consider the problem at the global, national and regional levels, especially focusing on a retrospective description of the ethnic and demographic processes under study. The importance of their spatial characteristics at the level of the post-Soviet space, Russia and its regions is explored and demonstrated. The combination of the "language of numbers" widely used in the text - an abundance of statistical material - with an emotionally charged assessment of the demographic and ethnic processes being studied enlivens the work and cannot leave the reader indifferent. The article poses important scientific questions to the reader, but, unfortunately, provides fewer answers.*

Key words: *depopulation, migration, ethnic balance, colonization, assimilation, population census, repatriation, ethnicity, primordialism, essentialism, original.*

Language: English

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Introduction

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The ethnopolitical processes of the late 80s - mid-90s of the last century in the Russian Federation and other republics of the former USSR increased social tension, the most acute form of which was interethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts, which resulted in open armed clashes in a number of regions. At the same time, regardless of the reasons underlying interethnic conflicts and the parties involved/participating in them, the migration mobility of the population of non-titular ethnic groups, primarily Russians, in the direction of their historical homeland has sharply increased. In parallel, the process of re-emigration of the population of some titular ethnic groups of the republics of the Russian Federation, who previously lived outside their national-state formations, began. The most significant migration processes in the post-Soviet period occurred and are occurring in the republics of the North Caucasus. Representatives of all ethnic groups living in the region are equally involved in this process. The only difference is that the population of the titular ethnic groups of these republics is characterized by a significant migration increase, and the non-titular population in general and Russians in particular are characterized by a migration outflow. The migration outflow of the Russian population was especially significant during the period under review. It should be noted that it continues today and is more intense than analysts predicted. In the post-Soviet period, which practically coincided in time with the intercensus period 2002 - 2020, the balance of migration of the population of titular ethnic groups in the North Caucasian republics as a whole amounted, according to official data, to 974 thousand people, including more than 900 in "their" republics thousand people. During the same period, the balance of migration of the non-title population in these republics amounted to 384 thousand people, including Russians - 279 thousand, or 73%. Let us clarify that 279 thousand people are official data. In reality, the migration

outflow of the Russian population from the republics of the North Caucasus during this period was much greater. This is confirmed by the fact that about 10-12 thousand Ukrainians and Belarusians living in the republics of the region recorded themselves as Russians during the 2020 All-Russian Population Census, as well as the gender and age structure of the Russian population of a number of republics in the region - Chechnya, North Ossetia, Dagestan and Ingushetia. As, in particular, data from the latest census of various nationalities testifies, the census of the Russian population of these republics includes about 39-42 thousand Russian military personnel (in Chechnya - 22-23 thousand, in North Ossetia and Dagestan - 11-12 thousand, respectively and 5-6 thousand, in Ingushetia – about 1 thousand people). From the given indicators and expert estimates based on the analysis of data from annual records of natural and migration movements of the population in 2002–2020, it follows that the balance of migration of the Russian population in the North Caucasus republics amounted to about 330–335 thousand people.

The migration outflow of the Russian population from the republics of the North Caucasus (especially significant for Chechnya - about 250 thousand people) and its minus natural increase significantly reduced the number of Russians in the republics of the region during the period under review: according to official data, by 364 thousand people, or by 27%, – from 1360 thousand to 996 thousand people; according to annual records of natural and migration movements of the population, in 2002 – 2020, by 415–420 thousand, or by 31%, from 1360 thousand to 940–945 thousand. The size of the total Slavic population in the republics of the North Caucasus for the period 2002–2020. decreased, according to official data, by 405 thousand, or 28%, from 1435 thousand to 1030 thousand people. According to annual records of natural and migration movements of the population, the reduction in the size of the Slavic population in the republics of the region amounted to about 445–450 thousand people.

Table 1. Population dynamics of the republics of the North Caucasus (2002 – 2020), thousand people

	1989 census	Population growth 2002–2020			2002 census	2002 in the census	Population share, %	
		surge arrester*	including:				2002	2020
			EPN*	MPN*				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
All republics: titular population	5305	1340	750	590	6645	125	100	100
Russians other nationalities	3516	1784	810	974	5300	151	66	80
	1360	-364	-85	-279	996	73	26	15
	429	-80	25	-105	349	81	8	5

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Adygea: Adygeans	432 95	15	-17 5	32 8	447	103	100	100
Russian other nationalities	294	13	-19	14	108	114 98	22	24
	43	-5	-3	10	289	116	68	65
		7			50.0		10	11
Dagestan: titular population	1802	774	415	359	2576	143	100	100
Russians, other nationalities	1444	785	385	400	2229	154 73	80 9	86
	166	-45	-10	-35	121	118	11	5
	192	34	40	-6	226			9
Ingushetia: Ingush	187	281	83	198	468	250	100	100
Russian	139	223	70	153	362	260 24	75	78 1
Chechens other nationalities	25	-19	-2	-17	6	500	13	20
	19	76	14	62	95	125	10	1
	4	1	1	0	5		2	
KabardinoBalkaria: titular population	753	148	51	97	901	120	100	100
Russians, other nationalities	434	169	64	105 -2	603	139	58	67
	241	-14	-12	-6	227	94	32	25
	78	-7	-1		71	91	10	8
Karachay-Cherkessia: titular population	415	24	20	4.0	439	106	100	100
Russians, other nationalities	170	49	24	25	219	129 84	41	50
	176	-28	-10	-18	148	104	42	34
	69	3	6	-3	72		17	16
North Ossetia: Ossetians	632	78	13	65	710	112	100	100
Russians other nationalities	335	110	19	91	445	133	53	63
	189	-24	12	-12	165	87	30	23
	108	-8	6	-14	100	93	17	14
Chechnya: Russian	1084	20	185	-165	1104	102	100	100
Chechens of other nationalities	716	316	195	121	1032	144	66	93
	269	-229	-20	-209	40	15	25	4
	99	-67	10	-77.0	32	32	9	3

Speaking about the reduction in the size of the Russian urban population of the North Caucasian republics, it should be noted that most of all it is happening in the capital cities. For example, for the period we studied, 2002–2020. The Russian population of Makhachkala decreased by 38%, or by more than 26 thousand people (from 77 thousand to 44 thousand), Vladikavkaz - by 19%, or by almost 22 thousand people (from 112 thousand to 90 thousand). The main component of such a significant reduction in the number of Russians in the cities of the North Caucasian republics was their migration outflow, primarily from the capitals of these republics. The size of the Russian rural population in these republics in the intercensal period 2002–2020, decreased overall by 5.6%, or by 19 thousand people (from 342 thousand to 323 thousand). At the same time, it should be noted that the reduction in the Russian rural population took place only in Chechnya, Ingushetia and, to a small extent, in Dagestan. In Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachay-Cherkessia, on the contrary,

there was a slight increase in the Russian rural population - a total of almost 8.5 thousand people; The growth of the Russian rural population in these republics occurred only due to the migration influx. In Adygea and North Ossetia-Alania, the number of Russian rural population remained practically unchanged during the inter-census period.

The significant migration outflow of the Russian population from the republics of the North Caucasus and the minus rate of its natural growth reduced the share of Russians in the urban population of these republics by almost 1.8 times (from 39% in 2002 to 22% in 2020) and by more than 1.4 times – in the rural population (from 13 to 9%). The bulk of Russians and the population of other nationalities leaving the North Caucasian republics choose the neighboring “Russian” subjects of the North Caucasus – the Stavropol and Krasnodar territories and the Rostov region – as their new place of residence (sometimes as a transit territory). For example, the migration outflow of the population from North Ossetia-Alania and Kabardino-

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Balkaria to these regions in the period 1989–2020 amounted to, respectively, 64 and 84% of the total migration outflow of the population of these republics to other constituent entities of Russia. The majority of those leaving Dagestan also choose the Stavropol and Krasnodar territories and the Rostov region as their new place of residence. A significant part of the Russian population, who left Chechnya and Ingushetia during this period, also left for these subjects of the region. The next most attractive region for the Russian population leaving the North Caucasus republics is the Central Federal District, in particular Moscow and the Moscow region. The migration outflow of the population of the republics of the region to the indicated constituent entities of the country amounted to in 2002–2020, about 25–28% of the total migration outflow of the population from these republics. Despite the migration outflow of the Russian population from the republics of the North Caucasus, Russians continue to remain the main productive force in the economy of these republics, primarily in their industrial sectors. For example, the index of representation (RI) of Russians in the number of people employed in the economy of Chechnya and Ingushetia was, according to the 2002 All-Russian Population Census, 5.54 and 3.83, respectively, while the PI of Chechens and Ingush was 0.80 and 1.10. The IP of Russians in the employed population of Dagestan in this year was 1.85, the IP of Dagestan peoples was 0.97. In other North Caucasian republics, the IP of Russians in the population employed in the economy of the republics ranged from 1.36 to 1.05, the IP of the titular population of these republics ranged from 0.76 to 1.09. Even more significant are the differences in the individual entrepreneurs of Russians and the population of titular nationalities in the industrial sectors of the economy of the republics of the region. Among the main reasons for the departure of the Russian population from the republics of the North Caucasus, the population surveyed indicated the following, namely:

- lack of work, especially for young people - 34% of respondents in all republics in 2010, 41% of respondents in 2020;
- nationalism, interethnic relations – 23 and 21%, respectively;
- economic situation (low wages, low standard of living) – 22 and 29%;
- ongoing counter-terrorism operation in Chechnya, threat of terrorist attacks (2010 survey) and threat of terrorist attacks (2020 survey) – 15 and 12%;
- lack of future prospects for themselves and their children – 9 and 14%.

The inability, for a number of reasons, to compete with the titular ethnic groups in the conditions of new, market relations, weak representation in government structures and prestigious areas of employment, lack of prospects for

social growth and improvement of material well-being, complete vulnerability to criminal structures, and often open threats against Russians are forced by almost the entire Russian population of the republics to look into the future with great pessimism. These circumstances force Russians to leave the republics of the North Caucasus, which are the homeland of more than one generation of Russian population who have lived and are still living in them. First of all, the most qualified part of the Russian and Russian-speaking population, which has more real chances - intellectual and material - for more or less successful settlement in a new place, left and continues to leave. The main reason for the mass migrations that covered the entire vast political space of the former USSR, as V. Tishkov correctly notes, “is the result of organized campaigns, actions, appeals or outright connivance on the part of those who are in power on the basis of legal procedures or have usurped this power. .. By the nature of migration processes one can judge the degree of openness and democracy of society, the state of interethnic relations, and brewing or already obvious ethnic conflicts.”

The main problem for the majority of the Russian population living in the republics of the North Caucasus is: “How to leave the republics that have no prospects for them and their children?” Many Russians, especially in Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia, see the main task of the Government of the Russian Federation and the leadership of the North Caucasian republics in resolving the “Russian question” as one thing - to help all Russians who want to leave these republics.

The situation of the Russian population in Chechnya continues to be especially difficult. Despite the emerging positive changes in the socio-economic situation of the republic, the outflow from the Naursky and Shelkovsky districts, the only regions of the republic where the Russian population still remains, continues. Many of the Russians who still live in these areas have firm plans to leave the republic. They are ready to leave “for Russia” today, subject to certain assistance from the federal authorities. Speaking about the situation of the Russian population, both remaining in Chechnya and those who left it, respondents noted with great resentment that none of the numerous decrees of the President and resolutions of the Government of the Russian Federation on Chechnya contained mechanisms for protecting the Russian population and solving it no less more complex problems than the Chechens. Many Russians believe that the federal center should provide Russians and representatives of other nationalities who left Chechnya with the opportunity to settle in a new place, and not create conditions for their return to the republic. The same must be done for those wishing to leave the republic. The political reality is that, despite certain efforts of the republican authorities, the Russian population still remaining in Chechnya will

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most likely gradually leave the republic, and the further outflow of Russians from other North Caucasian republics will continue. Let us highlight and characterize the main factors determining the migration outflow of the Russian population from the republics of the North Caucasus, namely:

1. The process of “sovereignization” that began in the late 80s and early 90s. It increased interethnic tension both between the titular nationalities of the region and between them and the Russians. The process of “sovereignization” of the republics of the North Caucasus, especially its initial period, took place in some republics in a state of a certain euphoria of local national radicals and was accompanied by an exaggerated growth of ethnic self-awareness. Nationalism, separatism and Russophobia in one form or another appeared in the first half of the 90s of the last century in almost all North Caucasian republics.

2. The reasons are socio-economic and ethnopolitical in nature. The reasons of a socio-economic nature must include, first of all, the fact that by the end of the 60s - early 70s of the XX century, the material and technical base of the North Caucasian republics was created, for the construction and operation of which specialists and skilled workers from the “Russian” regions of Russia were attracted in the pre- and post-war years. At the same time, the training of qualified workers and specialists from among the titular nationalities was underway. On the one hand, this removed, to a certain extent, the need of the North Caucasus republics to attract qualified labor from the “Russian” regions of the country, on the other hand, it led to competition in the labor market, especially in prestigious areas of employment. Naturally, national personnel “began to win” in this competition. In labor surplus republics, such as the North Caucasus republics were and remain, this has become a widespread phenomenon not only in the labor market, but also in the field of higher and secondary specialized education. The reasons causing the outflow of the non-titular population from the republics of the North Caucasus must also include the extremely low level of socio-economic development of these republics, compared to the “Russian” subjects of the region. The reasons are of an ethnopolitical nature: the territory of the republics of the North Caucasus, despite the efforts of the federal center, continues to remain not just a restless, but an explosive region. And against this background, all attempts by the leaders of individual North Caucasian republics to present the return of several Russian families as proof of the political stability and economic well-being of “their” republics look like nothing more than a political farce.

3. Re-emigration to the republics of the North Caucasus of a significant number of representatives of the titular ethnic groups. Let us recall that during the last inter-census period, the balance of migration of the population of titular nationalities in the North

Caucasian republics amounted to a total of about 975 thousand people. This process has complicated already complex interethnic relations in the labor market and in the field of higher and secondary specialized education. This is most clearly manifested in Dagestan and North Ossetia. In North Ossetia, the situation is complicated by the presence of internally displaced persons and Ossetian refugees from South Ossetia and the interior regions of Georgia (today there are about 13 thousand of them in the republic).

4. Changing ethnic proportions. In the North Caucasian republics there are significant changes in the proportions of the ethnic structure of the population, especially in cities, in favor of the titular ethnic groups. The population of the titular nationalities in the republics of the region increased over the last inter-census period by 1 million 784 thousand people, while the number of the rest of the population, on the contrary, decreased by 444 thousand people. At the same time, the share of the population of titular nationalities increased from 66 to 80%, the share of the rest of the population decreased from 34 to 20%. This has led to significant changes in the political, economic and cultural space, in which representatives of non-titular ethnic groups are beginning to feel increasing discomfort.

5. The absence in most of the republics of the North Caucasus of programs to reduce the migration outflow of the Russian-speaking population. One of the formal exceptions to this are Ingushetia and Chechnya. In Ingushetia, since April 2015, the Republican target program “Return and settlement of the Russian-speaking population who previously lived in the Republic of Ingushetia until 2020” has been implemented. It provides for the acceptance and settlement of 1,050 people in the republic. As evidenced by the federal media and the media of Ingushetia, by mid-2017, according to various sources, from 500 people to 400 families returned to the republic as part of the implementation of this program. Also, “235 families of the Russian-speaking population expressed a desire to return and stand in line for housing.” Let us note that more than two years ago, according to the President of Ingushetia, about 600 people returned to the republic and “from different regions of Russia... more than 3 thousand applications were received from Russians wishing to return to Ingushetia.” According to the Deputy Permanent Representative of Ingushetia to the President of the Russian Federation, at the beginning of November 2021, more than 500 families of the Russian-speaking (read: Russian) population returned to Ingushetia, according to the head, at the end of 2021, 600 people returned to the republic.

As follows from the above figures, too different information on the size of the Russian population who returned to Ingushetia does not give a real idea of the process of implementing the republican target program “Return and settlement of the Russian-

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speaking population who previously lived in the Republic of Ingushetia until 2010.” At the same time, we note that, citing various figures of the Russian-speaking population who returned to Ingushetia, for some reason the number of this population who left Ingushetia in recent years is not announced anywhere. It is possible that this figure is much higher than the returning population. Ingushetia, like Chechnya, where a program has been developed to return the Russian-speaking population to the republic, is no exception from the North Caucasus republics, from which the outflow of Russians and the population of other non-titular nationalities continues. The high-profile murders of the families of Russian teachers, a Russian female doctor, a Russian family in the summer and autumn of this year and other murders of the Russian-speaking population in Ingushetia cast serious doubt on the possibility of implementing this program. And in this regard, the words of the leaders of Ingushetia that “the latest tragic events in Art. Ordzhonikidze and the city of Karabulak will not significantly affect the return of Russian-speaking families.” Also doubtful are the assurances that “the program for the return and settlement of the Russian-speaking population will continue to be implemented,” that Russian families continue to return to Ingushetia. The Russian population of Ingushetia and neighboring republics of the region views the above terrorist attacks as acts of intimidation against Russians, aimed at squeezing the Russian population out of a number of North Caucasian republics. Unlike the leadership of Ingushetia, which does not connect the program for the return of the Russian-speaking population and the facts of murders of Russians in the republic, the plenipotentiary representative of the President of the Russian Federation in the Southern Federal District believes that the murders of Russian teachers and doctors in Ingushetia were committed for political reasons. “It is obvious that in such a stupid and inhumane way they are trying to prevent the program for the return of the Russian-speaking population to the republic... The killings of civilians are of a national nature, these crimes are political and aimed at specific goals,” he said at a meeting of the security forces of Ingushetia. The program for the return of the Russian-speaking population to Chechnya, the project of which was developed back in early 2016, can also be attributed to the area of high politics. The letter of the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation to the Plenipotentiary Representative of the President of the Russian Federation in the Southern Federal District with a demand to solve how possible the faster question is the return of Russians to the republic, making the city of Grozny the cultural center of Russia in the North Caucasus, populating the republic with Russian-speaking specialists.

We especially note that one of the main factors, which, in the opinion of the leadership of a number of

North Caucasian republics and the leadership of the Stavropol and Vladikavkaz diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church, will contribute not only to reducing the outflow of Russians from these republics, but also to the return of the Russian population to them, is the construction and restoration in these republics there are Orthodox churches. Time will tell how true this opinion turns out to be, but today this is only a declaration of some leaders of the North Caucasus republics. At the same time, it should be noted the growing authority in the region of the Russian Orthodox Church and personally of Archbishop Feofan. Many Russians living in the North Caucasus republics believe that the federal center should not create conditions for the consolidation of the Russian population in their current places of residence and not develop extremely unrealistic programs for the return of Russians, but provide them and representatives of other nationalities who wish to leave the republics of the North Caucasus with the opportunity to settle in a new place.

6. Activities of some public organizations of titular nationalities and the media of the North Caucasus republics. Some public organizations of titular nationalities continue to profess the ideas of ethnocentrism, national exclusivity and put forward slogans of priority for the political and cultural interests of titular nationalities over others. Of great importance in these ideological trends are memories of ethnic traumas: the Caucasian War of the 19th century, the exodus of a significant part of the Adyghe peoples to Turkey, Stalin’s deportations of peoples in 1943–1944. From time to time you can hear demands for Russia to recognize the genocide of the Circassians, accusations of Sovietization and assimilation of the North Caucasian peoples, etc. Some republican media publish materials about the “ethnocide of the North Caucasian peoples”, started by the Russian Empire during the Caucasian War and continued by the Bolsheviks until the early 90s XX century. The authors of these publications, serving local national radicals, blame Russia and the Russians for all the troubles experienced by the peoples of the North Caucasus since their “forced” annexation to Russia. The “red thread” in these publications is the idea of the “golden age” in which the peoples of the North Caucasus lived on the eve of their “conquest by the Russian Empire”, about the enormous guilt of Russia and the Russians before the peoples of the North Caucasus. There is even some kind of competition between some scientists of the North Caucasus republics in an attempt to prove that it was their people who suffered the most, first from the Russian Empire, and then from Soviet power. “Russia should not forget how guilty it was in the 19th century. before the North Caucasian peoples”; “The peoples of Adyghea, Circassia, Dagestan and Chechnya found themselves set back in their development for decades”; “Kabardians were taught to read and write

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so that they would hate their ancient culture and enthusiastically sacrifice it to an alien social mythology... The “cultural” revolution essentially came down to the destruction of the Adyghe traditional culture”; “Ossetians are the first to fall under the Bolshevik guillotine and become victims of the collapse of the Russian Empire... The education system is considered Soviet - therefore, anti-Ossetian... In many respects, we have sunk to the very bottom”; “Russians, sharing the main responsibility for the crimes of the totalitarian system, ... must repent before the other peoples of the Russian Federation and actively contribute to their formation and cultural revival”; “The Russian people do not and will not have any downtrodden “younger brothers” to whom you can let whatever you want out of Belokamennaya without caring about their feelings and without asking their opinion”; “Enough! The period of slavish humiliation of indigenous peoples and elitism of people of Slavic origin in the republic has ended!” The above and similar statements cannot but cause a negative reaction towards Russians among part of the population of the titular ethnic groups of the republics of the North Caucasus.

7. The problem of obtaining higher education by the Russian population of the republics of the region. As evidenced by the results of these surveys and data on the national composition of students in higher educational institutions of the republics of the North Caucasus, this problem is very significant for Russians and largely determines the migration attitudes of Russian youth. For example, in Karachay-Cherkessia, the index of representation (RI) of Russians in the number of graduates of higher educational institutions of the republic in 2016 was 2.3 times lower than the PI of Karachais and Circassians combined - 0.55 and 1.26, respectively. In the same year, the IP of Russians in the number of graduates of the Kabardino-Balkarian State University was almost 2.1 times lower than the IP of Kabardians and Balkars combined – 0.62 and 1.28, respectively. IP of Russians and other non-titular ethnic groups is extremely insignificant among students of state higher educational institutions of North Ossetia-Alania. In the leading higher educational institution of the republic - the state university - Russian IP among students in the 2015/2016 academic year. was 4.6 times lower than the PI of Ossetians (0.30 and 1.39, respectively). Significantly lower than that of Ossetians, individual entrepreneurs and other non-titular ethnic groups among the students of this university - 3.5 times (0.40 and 1.39). Almost the same situation is in two other state higher educational institutions of North Ossetia - the Medical Academy and the Agrarian University. In the Medical Academy, the IP of Russians is lower than the IP of Ossetians by 3.7 (0.36 and 1.32), at the Agrarian University - by 5.5 times (0.26 and 1.44). The picture is somewhat different at the North Caucasus Mining and

Metallurgical Institute, traditionally considered a “Russian” university in the republic. Here, the IP of Russians among students is significantly higher - 1.6 times - than the IP of Ossetians: 1.46 and 0.91, respectively. It can be assumed with a high degree of confidence that a similar situation is typical for other higher educational institutions in the republics of the North Caucasus. Let us immediately note that the reason for the weak representation of Russians in the number of students in the republics of the North Caucasus (as, indeed, in the power structures of these republics) does not lie in a conscious policy of discrimination against Russians in the field of higher education. The main reason for this is the poverty of the bulk of the Russian population, which is also a factor of an ethnopolitical nature. In the current conditions of commercialization of the system of higher professional education, when state higher educational institutions in the region are more commercial than non-state, the majority of the Russian population does not have sufficient funds to pay (legal and illegal) for the admission of their children to institutes and universities, much less to prestigious faculties. As one of the surveys conducted in 2020 by the North Ossetian Institute of Humanitarian and Social Research showed, 62% of the Russian population surveyed consider it unaffordable to pay for admission and education of their children at a medical institute and at prestigious faculties of other higher educational institutions of the republic; among the Ossetian population surveyed, this figure was 39%. The reasons for the current poverty of the Russian population in comparison with the population of the titular nationalities of the republics of the North Caucasus are due to a number of factors of a socio-economic and ethno-demographic nature.

8. Pronounced ethnic orientation of personnel policy. The ethnicization of the executive, legislative and judicial authorities in the republics of the North Caucasus, which occurred in the early 90s of the last century, is a well-known fact. Objective data indicate an extremely low level of representation of Russians in the executive, legislative, and judicial authorities, in law enforcement structures of the republics of the North Caucasus, as well as in all the most prestigious areas of employment. Despite the declarative statements of the leadership of the North Caucasian republics, there are no truly democratic principles for the selection of management personnel in the multi-ethnic composition of the population. Some exception to the above is Kabardino-Balkaria. Its president, A. Kanokov, more than any of the leaders of the North Caucasian republics, in our opinion, understands the urgency of this problem and tries to comply with the principle of proportional representation of the main ethnic groups in power structures at all levels. The outflow of Russians and the population of other non-titular ethnic groups from the republics of the North

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Caucasus indicates much more negative processes in the sphere of interethnic relations in the republics of the region than many people imagine, and, accordingly, the level of democratic reforms in these subjects of the Federation. As follows from media materials, the leaders of the North Caucasus republics, constantly emphasizing the internationalism of the Adyghe / Ingush / Ossetian / Chechen and other titular peoples and speaking about interethnic harmony in their republics, try not to see negative processes in the sphere of interethnic relations in the republics, and the ongoing outflow of non-titular population is explained solely by economic reasons, which, of course, is far from the case. The negative processes in the sphere of interethnic relations existing in the republics of the North Caucasus require not attempts to justify them, but serious scientific analysis and the development of appropriate mechanisms for resolving them, including reducing the scale of population migration from these republics. It should be noted that at the end of 2016, the federal authorities finally paid attention to the significant outflow of the non-title, primarily Russian, population from the republics of the North Caucasus. Since November 2016, by order of the Russian government, work began in all republics of the region to develop proposals aimed at reducing the scale of the outflow of the Russian-speaking population, and to develop mechanisms for their implementation. For example, at the end of November last year, in pursuance of the indicated order of the Russian government, the Ministry of National Affairs of North Ossetia-Alania held an extended meeting with the participation of a wide range of representatives of government structures at the republican, city and district levels, the public and specialists in the field of interethnic and migration processes. As the meeting showed, the republican authorities do not see a problem in the migration outflow of the population, and therefore I'm not ready to seriously deal with this problem. The leadership of North Ossetia-Alania, like the leadership of other North Caucasian republics, either really does not see or deliberately does not notice all the reasons for the migration outflow of Russians and the population of other non-titular nationalities, explaining the increasing migration only by economic reasons. These reasons, of course, are present in the migration attitudes of the Russian and other non-titular population of the republics of the North Caucasus, but they are not the only ones that are decisive in making the decision to move to the "Russian" subjects of Russia. As the data from the above-mentioned surveys of the Russian population of the North Caucasian republics showed, economic factors are not the only, but one of the main reasons for the migration outflow of the Russian population. They were named by 34% of respondents in 2010 and 41% in 2020. The second of the main reasons for the migration outflow of Russians from the republics of the region, respondents named factors of an ethnic

nature - nationalism, the nature of interethnic relations, 23% of respondents in 2010 and 21% in 2020 think so.

It should be especially noted that, despite certain successes of the leadership of the North Caucasian republics in improving the socio-economic and ethnopolitical situations, these republics have ceased to be attractive not only for the non-titular, but also for the titular population, especially its youth. Having left to study outside the republics of the North Caucasus, as a rule, to Moscow and St. Petersburg, North Caucasian youth in most cases never return to their republics. The most promising part of young people who graduated from higher educational institutions in their homeland also leaves the North Caucasian republics in search of the most acceptable working conditions. A similar situation is observed today in the "Russian" regions of the North Caucasus.

9. Weak work of public organizations of the Russian population of the republics of the North Caucasus to protect their interests. Created in a number of republics in the region on the initiative of the authorities, these public organizations are called upon to "demonstrate" interethnic harmony and peace in these republics. The "ceremonial", decorative nature of most of these societies reduces all their activities, as a rule, to holding festivals of national dance, song, cuisine, etc. The exception is the "Union of Slavs of Adyghea", which is a noticeable social movement in the republic, since it not only works truly in the interests of the Russian population of the republic, but also takes an active part in the socio-political life of Adyghea. In the course of these surveys, the role of public organizations of the Russian people in the republics of the North Caucasus in solving the problems of Russians was generally considered insignificant: 38% of respondents in 2010 and the same number in 2020 thought so. In general, the role of their public organizations in solving the problem was considered significant problems of the Russian population, only 19% of those surveyed in 2010 and 13% in 2020. The rest of the surveyed population, knowing nothing about the activities of Russian public organizations in their republics, found it difficult to give them any assessment. A consequence of the insignificant role of their public organizations in the life of the Russian population of the North Caucasus republics, on the one hand, and, no less, the low level of self-organization and consolidation of Russians, on the other hand, is the extremely low proportion of members of these public organizations among the surveyed population - 6% in 2010 and 5% in 2020.

10. Lack of regional policy that takes into account the interests of the Russian population, lack of dialogue between public organizations of the Russian population and government structures. The majority of the Russian population is deeply convinced that neither the republican nor the federal authorities care about their problems. So, for example,

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speaking about the situation of Russians and other non-titular population in Chechnya, we note that at none of the meetings to resolve the situation in Chechnya was their fate discussed. Not a single decision was made to protect the Russian population in Chechnya or to protect the rights of Russians and the Russian-speaking population in the republics of the North Caucasus. Not a single parliamentary hearing was held in the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on the problems of the Russian population of the North Caucasus, despite repeated appeals from representatives of the Terek Cossacks and Russian communities in the region. Despite repeated statements by the leadership of Chechnya about their readiness to solve the problems of the non-titular population of the republic and certain steps in this direction, the exodus of the Russian population from Chechnya today looks irreversible. Just as the outflow of the Russian and non-titular population from other republics of the

region will not be stopped in the near future, no matter what programs are adopted to consolidate them in the republics. The main activity of the leadership of the North Caucasian republics, related to solving the problems of the Russian population, comes down, as a rule, to the restoration and construction of Orthodox churches, while other, no less pressing problems of Russians in these republics are simply not noticed or are hushed up. Determining an effective national and migration policy that can, if not stop, then at least reduce the scale of forced migration of Russians from the republics of the North Caucasus and thereby eliminate the likelihood of its negative consequences, is impossible without close attention to it by the entire management system - from the federal government to local governments. What is needed is not declarative statements and one-time campaigns; what is needed is the development of a special comprehensive program aimed at improving interethnic relations, and through it, stabilizing the ethnopolitical situation in the region.

Table 2. Population dynamics of the republics of the North Caucasus based on the census data of 1989 and 2002, 2006, 2010 and 2020, thousand people

	1989		2002		2006		2010		2020	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
All republics:	3252	100	4365	100	4813	100	5305	100	6645	100
titular population		50								
Russians	1625	40								
other nationalities	1288	10	2478	57	2905	61	3516	66	5300	80
	339		1437	33	1413	29	1360	26	996	15
			450	10	495	10	429	8	349	5
Adygea:	32466	100	38681	100	40486	100	43295	100	447	100
Adygehe										
Russians	236	20	277	21	286	21	294	22	108	24
other nationalities	22	73	28	72	32	71	43	68	289	65
		7		7		8		10	50	11
Dagestan:	1062	100	1429	100	1628	100	1802	100	2576	100
titular population										
Russians	736	69	1061	74	1267	78	1444	80	2229	86
other nationalities	214	20	210	15	190	12	166	11	121	5
	112	11	158	11	171	10	192		226	9
Kabardino-Balkaria:	420	100	588	100	666	100	753	100	901	100
titular population										
Russians	224	53	316	54	363	55	434	58	603	67
other nationalities	163	39	219	37	234	35	241	32	227	25
	33	8	53	9	69	10	78	10	71	8
Karachaevo - Cherkessia:	285	100	345	100	367	100	415	100	439	100
titular population										
Russians	92	32	128	37	144	39	170	41	219	50
other nationalities	148	52	162	47	166	45	176	42	148	34
	45	16	55	16	57	16	69	17	72	16

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North											
Ossetia: Ossetians	451	100	553	100	592	100	632	100	710	100	
Russians other nationalities	215	48	269	49	299	50	335	53	445	63	
	179	39	202	37	201	34	189	30	165	23	
	57	13	82	14	92	16	108	17	100	14	
Checheno											
Ingushetia:	710	100	1064	100	1156	100	1270	100	1572	100	
Chechens Ingush	244	48	34	509	48	611	53	734	58	1127	72
Russians other nationalities	348	7	114	11	135	12	164	13	364	23	
	70	49	367	34	336	29	294	23	46	3	
		10	74	7	74	6	78	6	34	2	

Main part

In conditions when the total fertility rate in Russia fell below the level of simple population replacement about half a century ago and at the same time a number of the titular peoples of Russia have not yet completed the demographic transition, the relevance of such an article is beyond doubt.

The authors consider the problem at the global, state and regional levels, especially focusing on a retrospective description of the ethnic and demographic processes being studied. No less important than the dynamics of the above processes, the importance of their spatial characteristics at the level of the post-Soviet space, Russia and its regions is explored and demonstrated. The combination of the “language of numbers” widely used in the text - an abundance of statistical material - with an emotionally charged assessment of the demographic and ethnic processes being studied enlivens the work and cannot leave the reader indifferent.

The question of what depopulation is can be considered from different points of view. We can talk here either exclusively about the natural movement of the population, or about the general dynamics, including the results of migration. In turn, the beginning of population decline can be detected both at the moment of transition of the birth rate beyond the limit of simple reproduction of generations when it decreases, and when the number of deaths exceeds the number of births. In the latter case, the time frame of depopulation can be greatly distorted by the age structure of the population and short-term phenomena (for example, crisis events for society), for example, choosing as the time limits of depopulation the years when the number of deaths exceeds the number of births, as evidenced by the indicated end date of depopulation - "until 2013". The overall population growth in Russia became positive back in 2009 due to migration. At the same time, the total fertility rate already in the mid-1960s dropped below the level of simple population replacement (with a short-term achievement in the 1980s). In addition, according to the results of the 2010 All-Russian Population Census, in all generations of Russian women born after 1940, the average number of children born per woman is less than two. Based on this, it seems fair to us to look for

the roots of depopulation in more distant years than the early 1990s. Considering the global aspect of Russian depopulation, the authors provide the following data: “Russia, having ranked fourth in the world in terms of population in the early 1990s, has moved to ninth in the new millennium.” Unfortunately, the given data is not entirely correct: the last time Russia (within modern borders) was in fourth place in terms of population was only in the 1970s, after which it was supplanted by Indonesia. By the beginning of the 1990s, Russia was already sixth, having also passed Brazil ahead. Currently, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nigeria also have larger populations than Russia. It is quite possible that the article on the fourth most populous place in the world by the early 1990s refers to the entire Soviet Union, which is certainly true. But in this case, Russia’s loss of its leading position is caused not so much by depopulation as by the collapse of the USSR.

The authors rightly note that “due to natural decline,” “the decline in Russia’s share of the world population has accelerated.” Here we would like to fantasize a little about how events could have developed in the absence of natural decline during the period described. In this case (assuming the existing migration growth rates and zero natural growth were maintained), Russia’s population would now be approximately 156 million people instead of the actual (rounded) 147 million. From 2002 to 2020, Russia’s share in the world population decreased from almost 2.8 up to 2%. And if a hypothetical scenario of no natural decline were implemented, the share of Russians would decrease from the same 2.8 to 2.15%. Thus, the global demographic loss of Russia's geopolitical status due to depopulation amounted to 0.15 percentage points. This value can hardly be called significant. To be fair, it is worth noting that the share of the world population accounted for by the demographically prosperous (by the standards of developed countries) United States is also steadily declining. It is also appropriate to remember more distant years. By the beginning of the 20th century, about 2% (an amazing coincidence) of the total population of the planet lived on the island of Great Britain. And these 2% actually owned 20 percent of the world population, which at that time lived in their

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colonies. The fact that the current 2% of the world population, represented by Russians, have not established control over a fifth of humanity hardly indicates only a lack of demographic potential in Russia. Among the consequences of depopulation, in addition to the reduction of difficult-to-define “geopolitical status” and “political influence,” the authors of the article also include “a reduction in its (the state’s) economic and defense potential.”

A fairly simple and at the same time accessible indicator of the economic potential of countries - gross domestic product - will help shed light on the connection between depopulation and economic development. During depopulation (2002 – 2020 according to the authors of the article), the gross domestic product, calculated at purchasing power parity, in the Russian economy increased from 1 to 3.7 trillion. US dollars. A similar situation is also observed in many other depopulating developed countries.

Comparing the defense capabilities of countries in the current relatively peaceful environment is more difficult. However, the armed forces require funding, and the amount provided can provide a good basis for comparison. Thus, according to the Stockholm Peace Research Institute, in 2020, depopulated Russia was in third place in the world in military spending, behind China and the United States. At the same time, Saudi Arabia, which with its population is barely noticeable at the global demographic level, is breathing down our backs. But the Russian warrior is also strong in his ingenuity and fighting spirit, which, as we know, cannot be bought. Not to mention the engineering and scientific genius of the creators of Russian weapons. The compilers of the Global Military Power rating annually analyze the volume and quality of weapons of the countries of the world, excluding nuclear potential from the analysis. But even without warheads, Russia consistently holds second place in this ranking, leaving far behind the most populated countries in the world - China and India. However, this is not so interesting as, for example, the fact that tiny Israel, with a population of only about 8 million people, is included in almost the top ten countries with the most powerful armies in the world (11th place). The small demographic potential of this country has allowed it not only to create a thriving economy, but also a defense potential that is significantly greater than, for example, that of the fourth most populous country in the world - Indonesia, the second by territory - Canada and the seventh largest economy - Brazil. Probably, in military conflicts of the 21st century, the strategy of throwing the corpses of one’s own soldiers at the enemy no longer works. All this shows that gigantomania, even demographic, does not guarantee the ability to overcome the economic, military, and political challenges facing states. Moving from the global to the all-Russian level of description of the problem, the authors notice the

underestimation of the spatial scale of depopulation by public (scientific and political) opinion due to its excessive focus on the depopulation of the exclusively Asian part of Russia. In reality, depopulation, according to the article, is observed in 80% of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation. Therefore, the authors recommend that the state focus its efforts primarily on solving the problems of population resettlement, and only secondarily on the problems of its dynamics.

According to Rosstat, in 2020 the total population decreased in 61% of all subjects of the Russian Federation, natural decline in 2020 (the most current published data) was observed in 49% of all subjects. It should be noted that in the 1990s and 2000s the number of problem regions was much larger, although this small inaccuracy does not in any way detract from the severity of the problems of population resettlement in Russia.

The authors introduce the term “ethnic balance”, but do not reveal its essence. A similar term was coined by anthropologist and ethnographer Sergei Shirokogorov during his research in Manchuria and related more to population ecology than to ethnic aspects of demography. This article only states that ethnic balance “was created in the process of the long formation of a unified Russian state.” Towards the end of the Soviet era, some ethnic balance was indeed achieved. Namely: according to the 2002 population census, the share of the leading ethnic group - Russians - in the entire population of the USSR decreased compared to the previous census and reached 51%. Thus, a balance was practically achieved in the number of Russians and all other ethnic groups of the USSR combined. However, in the future, the authors point out that the decrease in the share of Russians in modern Russia (80% according to the 2010 census and 78% according to the 2020 census) is precisely a violation of the ethnic balance. Consequently, “equilibrium” requires at least maintaining the share of the largest ethnic group in the population structure. The repeated mention of the “peaceful” coexistence of Russians with some other peoples for many centuries, as well as the “peaceful” annexation of some peoples and territories, gives reason to assume that ethnic balance means the peaceful and relatively conflict-free coexistence of different ethnic groups within Russia, which has been disrupted depopulation, first of all, of the “state of the forming ethnic group” - Russians. The premises of this approach do not quite correspond to the harsh reality of the former colonization of the ethnic borderlands of Russia. Thus, five centuries of truly peaceful coexistence between Russians and Mordovians was preceded by hundreds of years of regular wars. The colonization of Siberia was also so “peaceful” and voluntary that in the folklore of the peoples of the North, Russians still have negative characteristics. For example, during ritual dances, indigenous people put

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on masks and explain to the spirit of a dead beast that it was killed by the Russians, against whom the spirit must take revenge. At the same time, it would be wrong to say that only Russian colonialists were brutal murderers. In reality, violence between different ethnic groups was absolutely normal at that time. Colonized peoples waged wars with their neighbors in the same way. Colonization, forced and non-violent assimilation are justified and explained in the article as follows: “the Slavs, being at a higher level of social development than the aborigines...”; “... (Latvia and Estonia) did not have their own statehood at all... These countries were not captured by Russia, but conquered by it”; “These countries... were at a lower level of social development and were weak due to their small size... (also) focused on themselves the geopolitical interests of (other) major powers.” A worthy illustration of the “low level” of development is, for example, the fact that the most ancient cities on the territory of the Russian Empire and the USSR were not built at all by the hands of the Slavs and not on Slavic lands. Another interesting fact: in the 17th century, the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia (modern western and central Latvia), which “did not have its own statehood,” owned its own colonies in Africa (modern Gambia) and America (Tobago Island in the Caribbean).

But not only the history of achieving “ethnic balance” is described in the article “Depopulation and its ethnic aspects in Russia.” The interpenetration of peoples within the Union republics of the USSR is noted in a positive way thanks to a single migration space. The importance of the peace-loving national ideology of the Soviet state is also mentioned. At the same time, we find data on the exodus of the Russian population from the ethnic outskirts of the USSR from 1959 to 1989 in Transcaucasia and from 1979 to 1989 in Central Asia. This, coupled with the notoriously bloody ethnic conflicts in these regions in the late 1980s, suggests that Soviet ideology was not all that effective. It is obvious that interethnic tension was not resolved through ideology, but only accumulated.

State pressure made it possible for the time being to keep ethnic conflicts in a latent state, giving them the so-called “compressed spring effect.” Speaking about the role of ideology in interethnic relations, we can also recall how the Soviet state helped not only ordinary people, but even scientific historians to “forget” the insufficiently peaceful pages of relations between the Russian ethnic group and the peoples of the colonized territories. Research notes the important role in the USSR of “one for countries of the Russian language.” We see the inaccessibility of education (especially professional education) in our native language as one of the main tools for the assimilation of Russian ethnic groups and the marginalization of their remnants. However, the process of colonization and assimilation of the peoples of Russia is described in the article as rather useful for establishing “ethnic balance.” Consequently, the state’s continuation of discriminatory language policies against ethnic minorities according to this logic helps “neutralize the negative consequences of ongoing ethnic ... processes.”

Fully sharing the authors’ position on the importance of the Russian language as a language of interethnic communication, uniting the peoples of Russia (and first the peoples of the USSR), we still believe that they exaggerate the severity of the consequences of the exodus of the Russian population from the national republics. The studies describe the threatening process of “systematic squeezing out the state-forming people of Russia from the national republics.” This part clearly demonstrates a noticeable reduction in the share of Russians in the population of a number of constituent entities of the Russian Federation between census periods. The most frightening picture has developed in Yakutia, Tyva and all the North Caucasus republics, except Adygea. But is Russia really losing these national outskirts? We analyzed the results of the 2010 and 2020 population censuses in the indicated regions (Table 3).

**Table 3. Share of the population speaking Russian in certain regions
Russia according to population censuses 2010 and 2020, %**

The subject of the Russian Federation	Share of the population speaking Russian		
	2010	2020	change in share, p.p.
Chechen Republic	81.4	91.8	10.4
The Republic of Dagestan	88.2	90.5	2.3
The Republic of Ingushetia	86.6	88.4	1.8
Republic of North Ossetia	96.3	97.0	0.7
Kabardino-Balkarian Republic	95.1	95.6	0.5
Karachay-Cherkess Republic	96.3	96.3	0
The Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)	93.3	92.3	-1.0
Republic of Kalmykia	99.3	97.6	-1.7
Tyva Republic	87.8	84.7	-3.1

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Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia together	86.2	90.7	4.5
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As can be seen from Table 2, proficiency in the “unified for the country” Russian language in these republics is not only at a high level, but is even growing in most of them. Following the authors’ instructions “special mention must be made of the three North Caucasian republics,” we also calculated this indicator for them together. Thus, despite the reduction in the share of the Russian population in the republics, the spread and influence of the Russian language in them is only growing. Perhaps this instrument of interethnic communication will have a greater impact on peace and stability than the presence of hundreds of thousands of Russian residents had during the Soviet years. When describing the ethnic dynamics of the population of the Caucasus using census data, it is necessary to raise the question of their quality. The results of the 2010 and 2020 population censuses (primarily in the republics of the North Caucasus, but also in Moscow and Bashkortostan) have been repeatedly subjected to justified criticism. Among their shortcomings one can name, for example, the possible double counting of

the population that left the regions. Direct falsifications aimed at artificially inflating the population of the region cannot be ruled out. In addition, in some regions, local authorities may have tried to influence the census results regarding responses to nationality. Thus, taking into account the linguistic situation, the imbalance of the “ethnic balance” in the North Caucasus may not be as catastrophic as the authors of the article describe.

Analyzing the results of the 2020 population census, “the acceleration of the rate of decline ... in the share of the main ethnic group in the population of Russia” compared to the results of the 2010 census. In particular, the authors report that “over 8 years, the share of Russians has decreased by almost 4.9 million. Human”. Even if we get past the unusual measurement of share per million people, this reading of the census results seems a little superficial. As we have already noted above, the quality of the censuses left much to be desired. This is especially true for the 2020 census. In Table 4 we have provided data from both censuses for further analysis.

Table 4. Some data from the Russian population censuses of 2010 and 2020 by national composition of the population, thousand people.

	2010	2020
Whole population	145 167	142,857
including Russians	115 889	111 017
nationality not specified	1 461	5 629
including refusal to answer	n.d.	584

As can be seen from Table 4, the proportion of Russian residents whose ethnic (“national” in census terms) affiliation is not indicated at all has increased significantly. If in 2010 such residents amounted to 1%, then in 2020 it is already 3.9%. Despite the reduction in the absolute number of Russians during the inter-census period, their share of the total population who indicated their nationality increased slightly from 80.64 to 80.9%. But according to research, “the decrease of almost 9 million people ... of the Russian people” “represents a breeding ground for ... nationalism.” Consequently, fearing Russian nationalism, numerous representatives of ethnic minorities, “systematically squeezing out” Russians, could refuse to report their nationality to the census taker. This is precisely what, it would seem, could explain such an increase in the proportion of the population enumerated without indicating ethnicity. But in reality, for about 90% of this population, the question of nationality was not asked at all in 2020, since many residents were enumerated using administrative sources that do not contain such information. This means that the number of representatives of ethnic minorities hiding their

nationality, even in the worst case, did not exceed 584 thousand people. Based on this and on the reasonable assumption that the residents of Russia enumerated in absentia by nationality are distributed similarly to those who indicated their ethnicity, we calculated the approximate total number of Russians according to the 2010 and 2020 censuses. It amounted to 117.1 million people in 2010 and 115, 1 million in 2020. Thus, it is most likely that the number of Russians during this inter-census period decreased by 2 million people or almost 1.7%, while the entire population of the country decreased by 2.3 million people or by 1.6%. These results contradict the already mentioned conclusions of the authors, according to which between the 2010 and 2020 censuses. “The share of Russians decreased by almost 4.9 million people.”

Studies repeatedly indicate the important role of migration in establishing or disrupting “ethnic balance.” By and large, we are talking about the repatriation (hereinafter we use this term conditionally, meaning only the increase in the Russian population of Russia in international migration exchange) of Russians from the former republics of the USSR. Despite this importance, in

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Russia “since 2020, the recording of the national composition of migrants has ceased.” Therefore, the authors are forced to only approximately inform readers of the number of Russians who arrived for permanent residence between population censuses - “70–80 thousand people.” This assessment seems strange. The authors are right that the recording of the national composition of migrants was stopped in 2020, but before that it was carried out. In such an accessible source as the “Demographic Yearbook of Russia” for 2020, you can easily find information according to which the migration increase of Russians only for 2010–2020. amounted to 242 thousand people, and it probably did not stop after that. If we assume that its value over the three years before the population census at the end of 2010 was equal to the annual average for 2003–2010, then for the entire intercensus period it should have amounted to 387 thousand people.

To a certain extent, these data can be controlled due to the fact that, fortunately, there is at least one other large post-Soviet state that is very responsible about the ethnicity of its residents - Kazakhstan. We took the liberty of using statistical data from this country (and other countries of the post-Soviet space), which is a major migration partner of Russia, and also tried to make rough estimates of Russian repatriates during the specified period. The Statistics Committee of the Ministry of National Economy of Kazakhstan publishes data on the national (ethnic) composition of

migrants, including for individual countries, including Russia. Analysis of these data showed that from 2003 to 2010, Kazakhstan lost a total of 156.3 thousand Russians in migration turnover with Russia. It should be added that, regardless of the quality of migration accounting, departures are recorded worse than arrivals, which means that this number should be even higher. As you can see, Kazakh Russian repatriates alone more than exceed the authors’ estimates. We went further and calculated what the migration loss of the Russian population in the CIS countries in exchange with Russia could be, based on the size of the Russian diaspora in these countries in the early 2000s, Kazakhstan data and the assumption that the exodus of Russians to their historical homeland from other CIS countries had approximately the same intensity as in Kazakhstan. To do this, we collected data on the national composition of the population from the population censuses closest to 2010 in a number of countries. Based on the 1999 Kazakhstan census data and the above current accounting data, migration losses of the Russian diaspora in Kazakhstan amounted to approximately 3.5% of its number at the beginning of the 2000s. Population censuses have not been conducted in Uzbekistan for a long time, so the estimated size of the Russian population at the beginning of the 2000s is given for it. General data on the Russian diaspora in the CIS are given in Table 5.

Table 5. The size of the Russian population of individual countries according to population census data, million people

A country	Census year	Number of Russians
Ukraine	2010	8.3
Kazakhstan	2009	4.5
Belarus	2009	1.1
Kyrgyzstan	2010	0.6
Moldova (including Transnistria)	2004	0.37
Turkmenistan	2005	0.3
Azerbaijan (without Nagorno-Karabakh)	2009	0.14
Georgia (without Abkhazia and South Ossetia)	2012	0.07
Tajikistan	2010	0.07
Armenia	2011	0.015
Uzbekistan		OK. 1
Total		OK. 16.5

The migration increase of the Russian population of Russia in exchange with the CIS countries for 2002–2010, calculated in this way. could exceed 500 thousand people. But the Russian people are not filled with Kazakhstan alone. Therefore, we have found another way to roughly estimate this repatriation flow. The database of non-personalized microdata from the Russian population census of 2010 allows us to identify residents who participated in the census, who

called themselves Russian and indicated their place of residence a year before the census in other countries. There were 72,081 such Russian immigrants who arrived in just one year. Add to them 3.5% of people who were enumerated, probably in absentia, without indicating their ethnicity, and we get at least 75 thousand Russian immigrants. The above-mentioned statistical data from Kazakhstan show that in this intercensal period, the flow of Russian emigrants was

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rapidly decreasing. Consequently, we can assume in these years Russian immigration in a volume greater than 600 thousand people. There was, of course, Russian emigration. But in the context of the ongoing repatriation of Germans, Jews and titular peoples of post-Soviet countries, its volume probably did not exceed 300 thousand people, based on Rosstat data on international migration, showing a total of about 450 thousand people who left in 2003-2010. Thus, we can estimate the migration growth of the Russian population of Russia between the 2002 and 2010 censuses at least in the range of 300–500 thousand people, which is in good agreement with the data of the Demographic Yearbook of Russia, but is significantly greater than the estimate of the author of the article. Of course, in addition to the Russians, other titular peoples of Russia (Tatars, Bashkirs, Chuvash, Mordovians, etc.) are widely dispersed throughout the fragments of the empire and are also partially resettled in their historical homeland. But we did not take them into account, since by their appearance on Russian soil, as should follow from the logic of the article, they only aggravate the violation of “ethnic balance.” The author of the article himself points out the importance of the repatriation flow: “3 million (Russian) people arrived in Russia from the new abroad.” But he does this only for the period between the 2010 and 2020 censuses. We are convinced that the migration of Russians to Russia in the 2000s, despite the drop in intensity, remained a major source of replenishment of their numbers.

The most detailed dynamics of the number and share of almost all major peoples of Russia was obtained between the censuses of 2002, 2010 and 2020. Returning to the authors’ statement: “such dynamics (decrease by 7.4% between 2002 and 2010) of the Russian people represents a breeding ground for manifestations of various forms of nationalism,” I would like to provide quotes from the article that illustrate this dynamic among other nations. “Besides the Russians, the number and share that have been

most severely reduced are... the Karelians, Komi-Permyaks and Komi, Mari, Mordovians, Udmurts and Chuvashs. The number of these peoples from 2002 to 2010 decreased by almost 1.1 million people, and their share in the Russian population decreased from 2.87 to 2.39%, or by 16.7%.” Based on the author’s logic that “such dynamics” among Russians is “a breeding ground for ... nationalism,” we assume that among the above-mentioned peoples, who are depopulating much faster than Russians, the environment for regional ethnic nationalism (and, as a consequence, separatism in national republics) is much more more nutritious. It must be especially fueled by the fact that the depopulation of these peoples reaches such proportions due to assimilation (otherwise, in the absence of wars and genocide, it would be problematic for these peoples with a relatively high average birth rate to decrease so much). As confirmation, we provide data from the 2020 population census on the average number of children born per woman of the named nationalities at the ages of 30–44 years, i.e. those women whose fertility peak occurred during the described period of depopulation (Figure 1).

Following further the logic of the article on breeding grounds for nationalism by analogy with the fact that correcting the dynamics of the Russian people in Russia should make the environment of nationalism less nutritious, we inevitably come to the conclusion that the way to minimize the risk of nationalism and separatism in national republics is to improve the dynamics of the numbers of the corresponding titular peoples in their regions. Consequently, representatives of these peoples in their republics need to make every effort to “systematically squeeze out the state-forming people,” that is, Russians (as well as all other non-titular people), thus nipping nationalism in the bud. As a result, we came to contradictory conclusions about who should be squeezed out from where in order to preserve peace, harmony, territorial integrity and “ethnic balance.”

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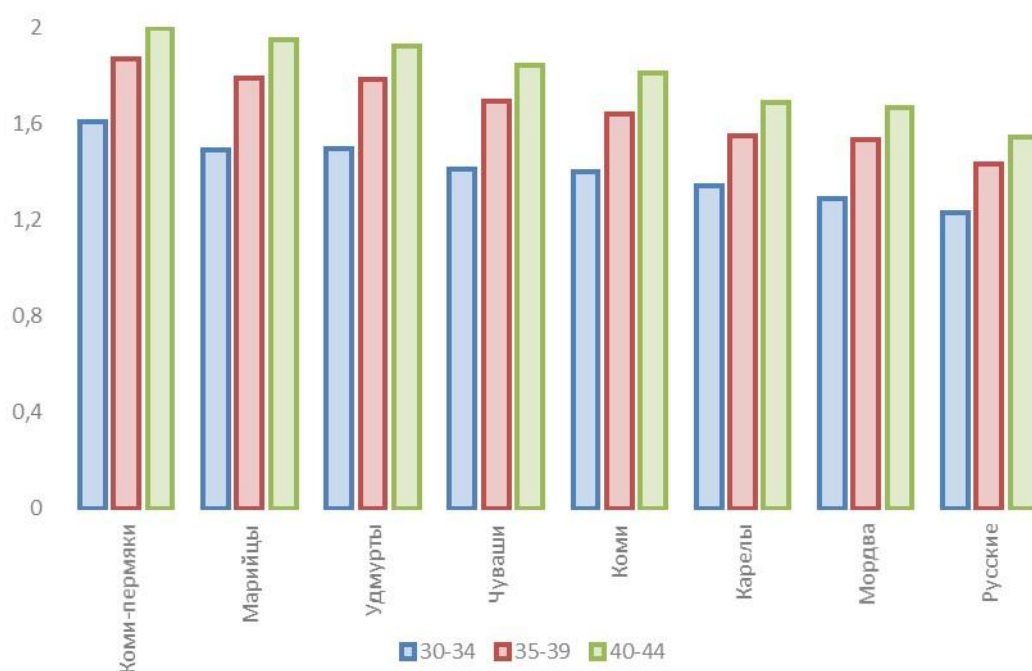


Figure 1. Average number of children born per woman of the corresponding age by individual ethnic groups according to the 2020 Russian Population Census.

According to the authors, in most Russian republics there is a “systematic squeezing out” of Russians. The only exceptions were Karelia, Komi and Udmurtia, where the share of Russians increased, as well as Mari-El and Chuvashia, where their share was stable. Unfortunately, the authors do not delve into the indicators of “squeezing out” Russians from the republics, although it would be very interesting to separate the contribution of “natural” reasons for the reduction in the share of the Russian population (the difference with the titular peoples in fertility, mortality, age structure) and migration. Thus, it would be possible to divide regions into those from which Russians are actually being squeezed out by some factors, and those in which the Russian population is rather “squeezing” itself into another world than into other regions.

The authors’ studies repeatedly mention the impact on the ethnic structure of the population of voluntary changes in their ethnicity by residents of Russia. Such facts, as stated, occurred en masse during the 1926 census, passportization of the population, the 1939 census, between the 2010 and 2020 censuses. We must not forget about the concealment of their nationality by many representatives of discriminated ethnic groups in the USSR, which could artificially inflate share of Russians. Let us also recall that population census programs in Russia do not allow the indication of multiple ethnic (national) affiliations. It is quite possible that a significant part of the Russian residents mentioned above, who refused to tell their nationality to the census taker, are at least bi-ethnic and simply could not make their choice. The question

arises: does the state (which in one way or another influences the census program) have the moral right to exert such indirect pressure on residents in matters of ethnic identity? In our opinion, this is not only unethical, but also does not fully correspond to the spirit of paragraph 1 of Article 26 of the Russian Constitution, which states: “Everyone has the right to determine and indicate his nationality. No one can be forced to determine and indicate their nationality.” How reasonable is it in general from the standpoint of striving for interethnic harmony and “ethnic balance” to somehow force people to choose ethnicity in cases where it is multiple? After all, demonstrating the place of interethnic family unions and their children in the population of Russia could become a much more effective confirmation of the fraternal friendship of peoples than the formalist achievement and preservation of the ratio of different ethnic groups in the population desired by the state.

Returning to the mention of nationalism, I would like to note the following thought of the authors: “the fact that there is a problem of the Russian ethnic group cannot be denied.” It is surprising that the leaders of the countries show no concern for the problems of other ethnic groups in multinational Russia. As the authors themselves pointed out, there are peoples in the country that are depopulating much faster than the Russians. These peoples are also rapidly assimilating. It’s a sin to complain to Russians here - no one in Russia is capable of assimilating them. If the idea that only the problem of the “state-forming” ethnic group deserves a priority solution captures the minds of representatives of less successful peoples, won’t this

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lead to a desire to also become a “state-forming” ethnic group and another wave of separatism? After all, apparently, it is separatism that the authors of the article fear, reminding us of the “squeezing out” of Russians from the republics of the USSR shortly before its collapse and immediately pointing to the repetition of this “squeezing out” in the national republics inside Russia at the present time. We can also consider important components of the demographic problems of ethnic groups: fertility and mortality. A number of Russian peoples today have almost African life expectancy, because Russians are not the leaders in mortality in our country. Does this fact really not deserve equal, with the much lower mortality rate among the Russian population, the attention of researchers and the state? It is necessary to focus on the problems of a number of republics whose titular population still has a relatively high birth rate. This high birth rate, coupled with the presence of insurmountable barriers to interregional mobility, greatly contributes to the current deplorable socio-economic situation in these regions. And it was in these regions that the authors of the article found the strongest decline in the share of the Russian population. Probably, solving the demographic problems of these ethnic groups would not only help them themselves, but would preserve part of that same “ethnic balance” in the republics.

Theoretical approaches to the problem field of research “Depopulation and its ethnic aspects in Russia” lie, in addition to demographic science, in the field of ethnology. Recognizing our lack of awareness in this area, we still believe that the bulk of the authors’ ideas and conclusions are based on a primordialist approach to the definition and study of ethnicity, which asserts at a first approximation that ethnic groups are indivisible close-knit communities of people, united by a number of unique ones, including biological signs. But within the framework of such a paradigm, it seems to us that the authors underestimate the role of the Russian language in modern interethnic relations in Russia, while noting its extremely high importance during the times of the USSR. At the same time, the attitude towards the problems themselves raised by the authors, in our opinion, can be reduced to the well-known dilemma “A person for the state or a state for a person.” Probably, the authors were closer to the “Man for the State” position. This is confirmed, for example, by their concern about the ranking position of Russia among the countries of the world in terms of population, the geopolitical status of the country, its political influence, defense and economic potential. It is unlikely that residents of prosperous but little-noticed countries in global politics suffer greatly from the fact that their state cannot veto decisions of the UN Security Council, as well as from its inability, for example, to “turn the United States into radioactive ash.” Developing the well-known idea of “small is

beautiful” in this aspect, I would like to give another interesting international rating. The Center for Peace and Conflict Research at the University of Sydney has developed and compiled the Global Peace Index. In the latest such ranking (for 2021), among the leaders there is only one country with a relatively large population - Japan (in 8th place). The first among countries with nuclear weapons is Great Britain, in 39th place. At the same time, in the top ten of the ranking are such countries known for their multinationality and tolerance as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Russia, on the other hand, was in 152nd place in this ranking, and only residents of North Korea, Pakistan and a number of countries with permanent civil wars can envy our love of peace.

At the same time, we do not claim to be absolutely right in this matter. It is obvious that the interests of the state in the formation of demographic and ethnic policies are also important, and sometimes they can even coincide with the interests of individuals living under its control and tutelage.

It cannot be argued that in matters of national (ethnic) politics in Russia the state has withdrawn itself and is inactive. At the same time, government actions in this area may cause reasonable concern. We doubt that Russians who are concerned about the violation of the “ethnic balance” should be satisfied with the current nationality policy of Russia, within the framework of which the federal center turns a blind eye to corruption, the selection of civil servants on ethnic (or even related) grounds, the actual introduction of certain religious norms as mandatory for all residents of the law in a number of subjects under the pretext of supposedly “national traditions” of such republics.

In conclusion, the authors agree with the opinion of researchers about the “time bomb” - the strengthening of the localization of the peoples of Russia in their national “apartments” - the titular regions - with the simultaneous exodus of the Russian population from there. In this regard, it seems to us that ensuring real equality of citizens, regardless of their ethnicity, would help to “defuse” at least part of the problems of the Russian and other ethnic groups in Russia.

Conclusion

We are glad that we have provided a large-scale detailed analysis of mainly census data on ethnic dynamics. Some conclusions raise gloomy fears about the fate of Russia and the Russian people. Because of all this, it is expected that the authors want to make life-saving recommendations for restoring “ethnic balance.” But, unfortunately, we had to complete the research with only general, albeit correct, formulations and good wishes: “we need a thoughtful, mutually coordinated national and demographic policy that could neutralize the negative consequences of the ongoing ethnic and demographic processes.” At

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the same time, it is not indicated what exactly such a policy should consist of; only important research questions are posed to the reader. But, unfortunately, it gives much fewer answers. In conclusion, I would like to express the hope that in a bright future in

Russian society, ethnicity will become so insignificant against the background of the prevailing civic identity that the problem of violating the “ethnic balance” will become irrelevant - I really want to believe in this.

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