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Article



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WHAT PREVENTS YOU FROM TRUSTING THE NORTH CAUCASUS REGIONAL ELITES TO PERCEIVE PEOPLE FROM THE REPUBLICS OF THE TURBULENT REGION AS FELLOW CITIZENS AND NOT STRANGERS?

Abstract: *in the article, the authors analyze the causes of intolerance, religious extremism, terrorism, radicalism among youth, problems in interethnic relations. Factors of interethnic tension that have regional specificity, in contrast to continental Russia, are considered. Particular tension in interethnic relations is caused by territorial disputes, the solution of which, even in the legal field, carries the danger of interethnic split, especially in such multi-ethnic entities as the Republics of Dagestan, Ingushetia, Adygea, Chechnya and the southern regions of the Stavropol Territory. The authors believe that the reason for this situation in the southern regions of the Russian Federation is the unovercome consequences of the political and economic crisis in the North Caucasus.*

Key words: *extremism, radicalism, interethnic schism, North Caucasian republics, polyethnicity, outflow of the Russian population, identity, restoration of ethnic business, modernization, development of the regions of the North Caucasus Federal District, people's rights, migration problems, Russian Federation.*

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Introduction

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Over the past few decades, the ethnic composition of the Caucasian republics that are part of the Russian Federation has undergone significant changes. Despite the fact that historically these lands were the territories of non-Slavic mountain peoples, during the USSR a course was set for the active development of the Caucasus, as a result of which a huge number of Russian specialists, along with their families, moved to the mountain republics.

After the collapse of the USSR, a period of mass migration of the Russian population from the Caucasus began, as a result of which there are

currently almost no Russians left in many Caucasian republics...

In order not to beat around the bush, I propose to immediately consider the statistics, which will clearly show us what a huge outflow of the Russian population from the Caucasus has occurred in recent decades.

Chechnya is obviously a record holder; the number of Russians in this republic has decreased by 16 times (!) over the past few decades. Military actions, ethnic cleansing, as well as the complete decline of the economy in the 90s led to mass emigration of the Russian population from Chechnya (Table 1).

Table 1. Change in the share of Russian population in the republics of the North Caucasus (1989-2020)

Republic	1989	2002	2010	2020
Adygea	71	68	65	64
Karachay-Cherkessia	45	42	34	32
Kabardino-Balkaria	35	32	25	23
North Ossetia	34	30	23	21
Dagestan	12	9.2	4.7	3.6
Chechnya	32	25	3.7	1.9
Ingushetia	13	13	1.2	0.8

But the fact is that we also see many other North Caucasian republics, where there was no war, but still there was a massive outflow of the Russian population. At the moment, these republics, for the most part, have become deeply mono-ethnic, as a result of which we can now observe a large number of problems that have worsened in these territories.

The main reason why Russians were in the Caucasus during the Soviet period can be called a certain "mission" for the development of this region, which the party set for itself. The Soviet political elite realized the importance of urbanization, development of production and improvement of the economic climate in the mountain republics. The indigenous population of the North Caucasian republics led an extremely traditional way of life, as a result of which there was a huge shortage of highly qualified personnel, as well as simply educated workers capable of working for the benefit of the region.

Therefore, Russian specialists were sent en masse to the Caucasus to help the local population with economic and social development. Tens of thousands of Russian engineers, architects, teachers and simply skilled laborers came to these republics and worked to develop local cities.

Now, when there is no government request to maintain economic and political stability in this region, the North Caucasus republics, as we can see, are experiencing many serious problems. The growing influence of local ethnocracies, incredible levels of

corruption and nepotism, the lack of functioning democratic institutions, as well as enormous economic backwardness combined with high levels of poverty - all this is happening in these territories.

And the main thing worth mentioning is, of course, the lack of implementation of Russian laws. Despite the fact that the North Caucasus republics are part of Russia and in fact are obliged to obey the federal laws in force in our country, sometimes one gets the feeling that these republics have some kind of their own legal norms. The creation of a de facto special legal field in the Caucasus, based on local traditions and religious values, is an extremely dangerous phenomenon, the consequences of which can be very disastrous for the whole of Russia.

Russian refugees from the Caucasian republics are a common thing. But now citizens are fleeing ethnic strife from the only Russian region of the North Caucasus Federal District - from Stavropol. Other Stavropol residents, on the contrary, write in open letters to the president that they will not go anywhere and demand "to stop the policy of squeezing out Russians." The topic began to leak onto federal TV - silence is no longer considered an indisputable panacea for interethnic tension.

On February 16, unregistered (free) Cossacks will hold a Great Cossack Circle in Vladikavkaz. The agenda of the congress can be summed up in one word - survival.

Cossacks without whips

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It is not surprising that the main spokesman for Russian discontent in the Stavropol region, as is generally the case in the south of Russia, is the Cossacks. It was the Cossacks who were appointed in the Russian Empire as the regulator of interethnic relations in the Caucasus.

“General Ermolov understood: the annexed people cannot be influenced by the army, they can only be influenced by another people, more organized. In 1864, the fate of the Caucasian War, which lasted a hundred years, was entrusted to the hands of the Cossacks, and already in 1867 it stopped, says Yuri Churekov, ataman of the Caucasian Cossack Line (KKL). – To be honest, some Cossacks may stoop to accepting a bribe from a Russian. But a hereditary Cossack will never accept a bribe from a Caucasian, under any circumstances.”

In the “dashing 90s”, due to the general chaos, the Cossacks of Stavropol regained some of their special pre-revolutionary powers and treated visitors as they wanted. It reached the point of blatant lawlessness: frisky boys used swords to chop up the goods of visiting traders on market stalls, tore their passports to shreds, and publicly flogged the guests themselves. By the 2000s, such amateur activities had faded away. State order has strengthened, but... with an overlap in the other direction.

“85% of the population of Stavropol are Russians. At the same time, the share of Russians in local security forces is 50% (20 years ago it was almost 100%). We can talk about purposeful discrimination against Russians based on ethnicity,” continues Ataman Churekov. – Most interethnic conflicts in the region are resolved by the state in favor of the guests, and it does not matter who the instigator was. They are punished especially severely for fighting with them, and they also add a sentence for inciting ethnic hatred. And the guests themselves are either released to go home, or (if the Russians begin to actively rally) imprisoned, so that after a while they can be sent to serve their sentence in their native republic, where they will soon be released.”

When asked to remember some high-profile incident, the ataman reacts emotionally: “What kind of incident do you want? A stabbing? Murder? Rape? Trade [weapons](#)? Kidnapping? Here it’s all like “hello.” One continuous case - every day in all points of the region. Tomorrow at half past eight in the morning we will hold a rally: the Cossacks are once again being tried for repelling the visiting thugs. When someone says that the Cossacks are patrolling together with the police, keep in mind: this is chatter. We are talking about registered - mummies - Cossacks who simply perform the function of witnesses. Three cops are coming - one Russian and two non-Russians, and with them two mummies, so that at least the appearance of national equality is respected. In personal conversations, police chiefs tell us: guests have problems with integration into our legal field,

and if they are punished, then eight out of ten guests will have to be punished, but we cannot do that. Traffic cops are generally afraid to slow down violating guests - they immediately wave their weapons: “Which particular barrel do you want a fine from?”

Another claim of Stavropol residents to their neighbors is economic. Using the power resource, visitors buy land and all kinds of businesses in the region. They pay taxes in bad faith and do not leave the proceeds in the region. “I’m not offended by my neighbors. They behave as their owners allow them,” comments Stavropol resident Sergei Popov, coordinator of the public movement “Russian Unity of the Caucasus.” – Stavropol has been assigned the role of a donor for the ailing economy of the North Caucasus republics. Our region supplies them with electricity cheaper than the Stavropol residents themselves. The conditions for doing business also turn out to be more favorable for guests (and if a Russian opens a company in Chechnya, it will last for a week and a half). Plenipotentiary Representative A. Khloponin is interested in the outflow of the Russian population from the region. The logic is simple: let the North Caucasians come here, not to Moscow.”

It was social activists, and not officials or deputies, who for two years sought the inclusion of Stavropol in the target program “South of Russia”, in which all the North Caucasus republics, as well as Kalmykia and Adygea, participate. This is an urgent need for the Stavropol region, since there are no serious investors willing to invest in the region’s economy (and no wonder: they shoot here). Khloponin finally promised to include the region in the program, but social activists are in no hurry to celebrate the victory: the conditions for participation are not clear. The desire of the plenipotentiary to transfer the state Stavropol resort-agglomeration Caucasian Mineralnye Vody into the ownership of the state company “Resorts of the North Caucasus” is known. If this becomes a condition, then it is better to do without the program, Stavropol residents believe.

“Khloponin wrote in his strategy that it is necessary to support the Russian population. But how? Russians are not mentioned in government regulations. If you ask the Ministry of Economic Development for money to support Russians, they say: who are these Russians? They know the Chechen Republic, Dagestan, Ingush, but the word “Russian” is not on the map of the country, notes S. Popov. – Within the North Caucasian Federal District, only the Russian region – Stavropol Territory – does not have republican status. The republics are considered the territories of constituent peoples, and the Stavropol region is considered a common land, a no-man’s land. We do not demand to be taken out of the North Caucasus Federal District, we do not want to run away anywhere. The solution to the problem lies in equalizing rights - in declaring the region the

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Stavropol Russian Republic. Then the regional authorities will not hesitate to talk about Russian interests, just as Chechen leaders talk about Chechen interests, and Dagestan leaders talk about Dagestan ones. Our neighbors will respect us, because in the Caucasus they understand very well what their own land, their home means.”

S. Popov is confident that such a formulation of the problem will not aggravate the national issue, and as an argument he cites his own many years of experience working in the Stavropol Committee on Nationalities Affairs and in the embassy (after a month of working with Khloponin, he retired). “When the war began in Chechnya, it was thanks to our relations with our neighbors that there was no fire around us,” says Popov. – There was not a single clash with Chechnya along the entire border, because we supported the zealous guys on both sides. After the militants’ attack on Budennovsk, about five thousand Cossacks were ready to begin expelling all Chechens from the region. We didn’t let them do this. With a competent national policy, the Stavropol region will be able to single-handedly improve relations between the entire country and the Caucasus. Can we negotiate with each other? After some time, it will be too late to declare the region the Stavropol Russian Republic: it will gradually cease to be Russian. Increasingly, “for sale” signs are appearing on houses. In the east of the region, enclavization is taking place, especially in the Kursk and Neftekumsk regions. The once Russian villages are now entirely populated by visitors. Conflicts no longer arise between the indigenous population and the newcomers - representatives of different nationalities of Dagestan conflict with each other, transferring the civil war from their republic to the region. In addition, the region has become a new springboard for terrorism: at the end of last year, the FSB discovered a suicide training center in the city of Stavropol, which was attended by 30 to 40 girls.

Political scientist Konstantin Krylov calls what is happening in the Stavropol region politically correct - “unfriendly colonization.” “The need for colonization is clear: the republics, thanks to federal subsidies, demonstrate record birth rates and, accordingly, an abundance of active youth. After the Stavropol region was officially declared part of the North Caucasus, this colonization received quasi-legal grounds, says Krylov. – Even the most beautiful person begins to commit lawlessness, feeling permissiveness. We must understand: this is not about the fact that Cossacks and other Russians cannot repel visiting hooligans. They can. But their native state is actively preventing them from defending themselves - for the sake of pacifying the North Caucasus in exchange for loyalty. The Kremlin is not interested in Russian loyalty, since Russians are basically harmless. When any noticeable Russian indignation with a force component arises, the authorities begin to behave somewhat differently - remember Biryulyovo.

Such a policy will cost Russia very dearly. If everything continues as it is, the exodus of the Russian population from Stavropol is inevitable (look at the North Caucasus republics, where the Russians have already left).”

The political scientist's frightening forecast is not the most pessimistic. It can be assumed that the matter will not end with Stavropol, and it will be followed by the Krasnodar Territory, Rostov, Volgograd regions... But there is also an optimistic forecast: after the Olympic Games, the policy of pacification of the Caucasus will be adjusted. In this case, the 2014 Olympics really turned out to be a Russian milestone [stories](#).

What is Stavropol region for Russia?

- about 1 million tons of oil per year;
- about 100 million cubic meters of associated gas per year;
- about 300 million cubic meters of natural gas per year;
- about 6 million tons of grain per year (the best granary, the calling card of Russia in the world agricultural arena);
- seven power plants with a total energy production of about 18 billion kWh per year;
- two airports;
- the largest resort region of the country – Caucasian Mineral Waters, which has no analogues in all of Eurasia in terms of quantity, variety and value of mineral waters;
- 10 universities, three scientific institutes, one philharmonic society;
- objects of mechanical engineering, chemical, food, light, glass, microbiological industries.

The process, which in the 90s was declared the revival of the Cossacks, is today perceived by many Cossacks as a farce. Registered - that is, entered into the state register - Cossack troops have the status of non-profit organizations, while for some reason their leadership is approved by the Ministry of Regional Development. The ranks and shoulder straps in these troops are supposedly recognized by the state: the legislation specifically stipulates that the ranks of unregistered Cossacks cannot be equated to similar ranks of registered Cossacks. Participants register as special Cossacks at the military registration and enlistment office, but in reality the registered troops do not perform any “state service.” They would be happy, but the state does not give them such an opportunity.

The registered Terek Cossack Army officially numbers about 30 thousand Cossacks of the North Caucasus Federal District. Of these, only a few dozen are engaged in patrolling on a professional basis and receive salaries from the state for this. Last summer, the newly elected ataman of the army, Sergei Klimenko, wrote an open letter to the president and posed the question bluntly: if the duties of law enforcement assigned by the state to the Cossacks are

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not an empty formality, then to fulfill them the Cossacks need powers, as well as a means of subsistence.

The ataman did not directly ask for money - only resources for military self-sufficiency. Namely: to transfer to the operational control of the troops the state block of shares of JSC Kavminkurortresursy and the state Kizlyar Brandy Factory, since these objects in the Russian Empire were created by more than one generation of Cossacks; allocate a building for the army headquarters with the subsequent construction of a military temple on this territory; give the army 100 thousand hectares of agricultural land; provide the army with quotas for seafood fishing in the Caspian Sea, production and sale of alcoholic beverages; open Cossack youth centers with technical equipment in all subjects of the North Caucasus Federal District. In order for the Cossacks to have any real powers to create in the republics state-owned institutions "Republican Cossack Center" with a staff of at least 10 people, which would be subordinate not to local authorities, but to state ones; in places of compact residence of Cossacks, introduce the position of deputy head of administration for the elected chieftain of the local Cossack community.

In response to Klimenko's requests, the authorities voiced their request to him - to leave his post, which the ataman did. The former ataman returned to his place - Vasily Bondarev, a big man, formerly the first secretary of the local city committee of the CPSU. His authority in the army was not recognized by everyone, since Bondarev held the Cossack circle for his election behind closed doors, and even set the police on those Cossacks who obstructed him (an unprecedented case).

Dissatisfaction with Bondarev in the army and outside the army has been evident for a long time, and now it is growing with particular force. During the 12 years of his atamanship, a tradition developed in the Stavropol region: under his patronage, atamans of local communities received hundreds of hectares of land from the state for the Cossacks, and used them at their own discretion.

"Whoever has stuck to the Cossacks for mercantile reasons: thieves, security forces, and party workers. We, free Cossacks, are between mummies and thieves," says Yu. Churekov, ataman of the Caucasian Cossack line. - The authorities pretend that they have rehabilitated the Cossack people subjected to genocide, and the "professional Cossacks" pretend that they are performing "state service." It's like rocking a motionless train and saying it's moving. If this continues, then only the atamans fed by the authorities will remain on the register. We want to truly serve Russia and protect our people, and not stage a masquerade like the American Indians."

Now the KKL is actively working to unite the free Cossacks of the entire country. The organization's

membership has currently reached 17 thousand people.

The Russian Church about Russian problems

The Russian Orthodox Church also began to talk about the oppression of Russians in the south of Russia. Metropolitan Kirill (Pokrovsky) of Stavropol and Nevinnomyssk said: "We are accustomed to thinking that only small nations need protection. This is wrong. In many republics, the Russian population is a minority, often oppressed on ethnic and religious grounds."

Separately, the Metropolitan touched upon the topic of Stavropol: "Uncontrolled migration processes, interethnic conflicts, which are often artificially given the status of domestic quarrels, lack of jobs, low quality of education and healthcare force the Russian-speaking population to leave their homes and move to other regions."

According to the bishop, interethnic conflicts will stop "if residents of neighboring republics who come here are firmly convinced that in the event of a crime being committed, they will not only not receive the protection and patronage of the diaspora, but will also have problems in their small homeland."

Bloody everyday life

One of the most notable incidents of the past year in the city of Stavropol was a fight involving the 24-year-old Deputy Minister of Communications of Ingushetia and two other residents of the republic. The Cossack was made disabled by stabbing him in the stomach with a knife. A wave of popular indignation followed. The one who directly struck the blow was given 10 years in prison. The other two, including the deputy minister, are 6 years old. "It's good that at least ministers from the republics don't come to fight," says the coordinator of the public movement "Russian Unity of the Caucasus." S. Popov. "President Yevkurov behaved like a real man: he visited our region three times, visited fellow countrymen and students, and talked with families." But the most high-profile conflict in the region in recent years is considered to be the murder of pilot Nikolai Naumenko in Nevinnomyssk. "Chechnya handed over the brother of the killer who was standing next to him; he is given a suspended sentence. And look for the killer himself. Chechnya does not extradite murderers. Even if our authorities wanted to demand it, they could not. I worked in a group for the release of hostages and I know very well what it's like to search for people in Chechnya," says S. Popov.

It is significant that during the rally regarding the murder of Naumenko, the police detained 141 people. About 400 people were detained in Biryulyovo. It is enough to compare the population of Moscow with a population of millions and Nevinnomyssk with a population of one hundred thousand to understand the scale of the problem in the region.

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Main part

The situation in the North Caucasus remains one of the most hotly debated in the Russian expert community and among foreign authors. At the same time, in recent years there have been serious shifts in determining priorities for discussion. If earlier what was happening was considered primarily in the context of inter-ethnic relations and regional politics, today this topic has turned into a plot of an all-Russian scale. It is not Chechnya, Ingushetia or Dagestan themselves that come to the fore, but their perception by the “core of Russia.”

What is the price of the North Caucasus for the Russian Federation? Not only and not so much material, but also political. Does this problematic region strengthen or weaken the country? Does the North Caucasus expand Russia's opportunities in international politics? To what extent can the North Caucasian regional elites be trusted and are residents of Moscow and other central territories ready to perceive people from the republics of the turbulent region as fellow citizens and not “outsiders”? Is it necessary to “feed the Caucasus” by supporting subsidized subjects of the South of Russia? And not only feed, but also recruit soldiers from there into the Armed Forces, attract managerial and scientific personnel, students and graduate students, and interact with local businesses? This is the range of issues that are the focus of the North Caucasus agenda.

All these problems did not arise today. They were formed from the moment when the new Russia, having barely repelled attempts to take revenge by supporters of the Soviet project, was faced with a separatist challenge in Chechnya, and then with numerous ethnopolitical and religious problems in the southern part of the country. And in the two decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, references to North Caucasian subjects over and over again occurred not only in the current political context, but also in the historical context. Consider the “Circassian problem” alone, which became especially relevant during the preparation for the XXII Winter Olympic Games in Sochi. And all this, not to mention the numerous “wars” of historical memory and monuments, in which Generals Ermolov, Zass, Admiral Lazarev and Imam Shamil turn from idols and anti-heroes of the past into participants in modern socio-political discussion. Only in the fall of 2013, two characteristic events came to the attention of the media and experts. The first is the opening of the reconstructed Dadi-Yurt memorial in Chechnya in memory of the victims of one of the episodes of the Caucasian War (1819). In response to this action, which was fully supported by Ramzan Kadyrov, activists of the “Officers of Russia” organization proposed that President Vladimir Putin erect a monument to the famous general of Imperial Russia Alexei Ermolov. The second is a critical statement by the head of Dagestan Ramazan Abdulatipov regarding

the anthem of the Krasnodar region, which, in his opinion, contains signs of interethnic hatred (the text contains the words: “we are going to fight to the death against the enemy, against the infidel”).

Today, the urgency of the situation is added by the almost universal growth of ideas of separatism, in which not only the outskirts, but also the center are calculating the possible costs and benefits of living together. Meanwhile, finding adequate answers to the questions outlined above goes far beyond the scope of North Caucasian geography. In many ways, this is the definition of Russian civil and political identity, the active phase of its formation has not yet ended. Resolving the Caucasian puzzles is not least a contribution to the future Russian state project. Both in domestic and foreign policy.

It has already become a truism to talk about the great strategic value of the North Caucasus for Russia and Eurasia. According to the fair remark of academician Yuri Polyakov, “The Caucasus is not a gate that can be opened and closed.” This is primarily a territory of ethnopolitical and religious interaction. Under certain circumstances, it can play a role in strengthening Russia and its position in the world. But the North Caucasus has a chance to turn into a dangerous frontier. Over the past 20 years, a lot has already been done towards the implementation of the “frontline” scenario. However, the situation has not yet become irreversible. And in order to stop the growth of negative trends, a meaningful conversation is required about the North Caucasus dimension of modern Russian statehood.

Sociological research in recent years leads to disappointing conclusions. In Russian society, a negative perception (up to complete rejection) of the North Caucasus is growing. Its presence as part of Russia is not perceived or is not considered as a value. The introduction of de facto apartheid is proposed as the price for preserving Russian unity. As a rule, sharp outbursts of negativity occur after high-profile terrorist attacks, such as the terrorist attack at Moscow Domodedovo Airport on January 24, 2011 (the largest attack at airports in the world in terms of the number of victims - 37 killed). According to a Levada Center study conducted in hot pursuit of the tragic event (February 2011), 24% of respondents said they supported the idea of closing the administrative borders between the republics of the North Caucasus and the rest of Russia. Answering the question about what tools should be used to implement policies in the North Caucasus, 36% of respondents said that it is necessary to tighten control over internal migration, and 18% supported the secession of the North Caucasus. But even outside of connection with one or another terrorist attack, the reaction of respondents to “North Caucasus issues” is usually harsh. According to a Levada Center study specifically devoted to “imaginary enemies” (December 2012), “Chechen separatists” and “Islamic fundamentalists” took

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second and fifth place, respectively, with 39 and 20% (while the United States, NATO and "Western forces" received the first, third and fifth). According to the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences (2012), about 10–15% of respondents supported the slogan "Russia for Russians," and about 30% were in favor of granting political and legal privileges to the largest ethnic group. In a Levada Center survey (October 2013), conducted in 130 settlements in 45 regions, 71% of respondents supported the idea of "Stop feeding the Caucasus"; 63% were in favor of tightening registration rules for visitors, as well as movement around the country as a whole. When asked about when respondents experience rejection and fear (according to statements - 61.5%), this happens when meeting with people from the North Caucasus regions and migrants from the Central Asian republics. Between these two categories (one of which represents Russian citizens and the other foreigners), respondents do not see a significant difference.

One of the main theorists of post-Soviet transit, Dmitry Furman, described this phenomenon as follows: "We have achieved pure formality in the Caucasus. In the lower Russian mass consciousness there is an understanding that the North Caucasus is not Russia. Surveys show that the people of the North Caucasus are more alien to ordinary Russians than, say, Ukrainians or Belarusians. Any ideas to limit migration apply to Asians, representatives of Asian and Caucasian republics, and to our North Caucasus too."

A request for the political and legal isolation of the North Caucasus or the introduction of apartheid norms in relation to this part of Russia exists among certain social movements and in government structures. In recent years, a socio-political trend has formed in Russia, which can be defined as "new Russian nationalism" or "Russian separatism" ("Russian Civil Union", "Russian Social Movement", "Russian Platform", "New Force" party). It has not yet become fully institutionalized, although some steps have been taken. Unlike previous politicians who spoke under the slogans of protecting the Russian people and providing them with preferences, the "new nationalists" do not deny either democracy or federalism. There is also room for human rights rhetoric in the speeches of their representatives and ideologists. Recently, the New Force party has been most active. She is responsible for the "Stop Migration" campaign and the "Stavropol Region is not the Caucasus" campaign. In 2010, an online survey was conducted regarding the transition of Stavropol to the Southern Federal District (SFD). Then the number of supporters of this idea reached 10.5 thousand people. It was voiced by various public organizations of the region. It was also presented during the traditional November "Russian March" in the same 2010. It was even proposed to rename the region into

the Stavropol Russian Republic. The 2013 campaign organized by New Force ended after several attempts to turn it into a national event. The thematic mass action in Nevinnomyssk on January 26, 2013, when law enforcement agencies detained 139 participants in an unauthorized meeting, became especially resonant.

A number of ideas actively defended by the "new nationalists" are being introduced into public circulation by both representatives of the executive branch and "systemic" politicians representing the Russian parliamentary corps. The separation of Stavropol from the North Caucasus was supported by Ilya Drozdov, a member of the State Duma of the Russian Federation from the LDPR, a member of the commission on CIS affairs. On August 2, 2012, the governor of the Krasnodar Territory, Alexander Tkachev, took the initiative to create a "Cossack police" on the territory of Kuban. At an extended meeting of the board of the regional administration of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Tkachev explained that the police Cossacks must prevent the mass relocation of representatives of the North Caucasus republics to the region under his jurisdiction. With his most important task, the Kuban governor outlined the transformation of the region into a kind of "migration filter", since, from his point of view, the neighboring Stavropol region cannot cope with this role. "Here are Kuban people, here they have their own laws, here they are quite tough guys," summed up the head of the region.

The Krasnodar region will host the Winter Olympics in Sochi in 2014. And this event, in its significance, has already gone far beyond the scope of just another international sports forum. The Sochi Games have an important symbolic meaning. They are intended to confirm Russia's return to the "major league" of international politics. The strategic importance of Kuban as a whole is also extremely important - it is the third largest population after Moscow and the Moscow region (about 5.5 million people). The region includes the territory of the Black Sea coast that remained in Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and Novorossiysk and Tuapse ports rank first and third in the country in terms of cargo turnover.

Everyone has already gotten used to the extravagant statements of the Vice-Speaker of the State Duma and long-time leader of the Liberal Democratic Party, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. However, his calls for limiting the birth rate in the republics of the North Caucasus (by introducing a fine for the third child) and fencing the region with "barbed wire", expressed during Vladimir Solov'yov's television show "Duel" (October 26, 2013), caused a wide socio-political resonance and discontent among both North Caucasian elites and human rights activists. Thus, the idea of secession or at least isolation of the North Caucasus is beginning to be considered by "systemic"

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politicians as potentially attractive in working with the electorate.

Quite often, representatives of the Russian bureaucracy and the parliamentary corps use the term “diaspora” in relation to the residents of the North Caucasian republics, although this is the name given to the community of citizens of one state on the territory of another.

Against this background, the highest Russian authorities consistently defend the political unity of citizens and the territorial integrity of the country. This was reflected in the creation of the Council under the President of the Russian Federation on Interethnic Relations (its first meeting was held on August 24, 2012), and in the approval of the State Ethnic Policy Strategy until 2025 (December 19, 2012). This document identifies as the main priority the need to strengthen “all-Russian civic consciousness and the spiritual community of the multinational people of Russia (Russian nation).” The same speech by Zhirinovskiy did not go unnoticed by the president. On November 6, 2013, Vladimir Putin, at a meeting with the leader of the LDPR, unequivocally told his interlocutor: “You have a stable electorate, and there is no need to turn to part of your electorate in order to strengthen your positions to the detriment of the fundamental interests of the country.” However, while consistently defending the principles of a single civil nation and rejecting xenophobia, top officials in some speeches introduced certain elements of contrasting the North Caucasus with the rest of Russia. Thus, on December 21, 2010, after a resonant action on Manezhnaya Square, Vladimir Putin (at that time the head of government) said: “Everyone has a small homeland, we are proud of it. But I won’t give 10 kopecks for the health of a person who, having come from central Russia to the republics of the North Caucasus, treats the Koran impolitely there.” He called for stricter registration rules for visitors in large cities if they violate “local customs and laws.” Speaking at the Mashuk-2013 forum (August 2013), Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev spoke of the need for a “transition period” before introducing direct elections of regional heads in cases “when the political culture is still somewhat different.”

Not only xenophobia

In speeches by human rights activists and representatives of the American-European expert community, the growing opposition between the North Caucasus and the rest of Russia is explained by the strengthening of xenophobic sentiments in the central part of the country. This is often seen as a legacy of the “imperial tradition” or a manifestation of “great power chauvinism.” There is no doubt that xenophobia and Russian ethnic nationalism play a role in this process. However, it would be extremely simplistic to limit the analysis only to such subjects, namely:

firstly, the North Caucasus is perceived as a region fraught with danger and political instability. And there are serious reasons for such conclusions. Suffice it to say that in the “Unified Federal List of Organizations Recognized as Terrorist by the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation,” among 19 structures, three are associated with the North Caucasus (the remaining 16 are of foreign origin, mainly from the countries of the Middle East, Afghanistan, and Pakistan). At the same time, the “Caucasian Emirate” (“Caucasus Emirate”) became the only structure operating on Russian territory that was included in the “terrorist lists” of the American State Department, and the actions of the leader of the “Emirate” Doku Umarov were declared a threat to the interests of not only Russia, but also USA. In 2012, 1,225 people became victims of armed violence in the North Caucasus (700 killed and 525 injured). Today’s North Caucasus exports instability far beyond the region itself. Terrorist attacks by North Caucasian jihadists took place on the railway (Nevsky Express train between Moscow and St. Petersburg in 2009), in Moscow (Moscow metro in 2010, Domodedovo airport in 2011), in Volgograd (bus bombing in 2013). Jihadists in the North Caucasus also announced the spread of activity to the territory of the Volga Federal District. In the last few years, Islamist groups, including radicals, have become a much more significant factor in the socio-political life of the Volga-Ural region;

secondly, during the period between the last All-Union (1989) and the second All-Russian population census (2010), there was a sharp change in the ethno-demographic balance in the republics of the North Caucasus. Some authors talk about its “derussification” and even define it as “Russia’s internal abroad.” Be that as it may, many connecting threads between the Russian ethnic majority and the North Caucasian world (in a broad cultural sense) were cut off. Of the seven republics of the North Caucasus, only small Adygea (surrounded by the Krasnodar Territory) did not experience a sharp decline in the share of Russians in the total population. This trend began to emerge during the Soviet period (as evidenced by census data from 1959–1989). However, in the last two and a half decades it has acquired a qualitatively different scale. Thus, in Dagestan, the share of the Russian population decreased from 9 to 3.5%, in Kabardino-Balkaria - from 31.95 to 22.55%, in Karachay-Cherkessia - from 45 to 31.4% (while from the first largest Russian groups in the Karachay-Cherkess Republic became the second).

A separate line is the situation in Chechnya and Ingushetia. In 1989, Russians made up more than 24% of the population of the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. According to the 2010 All-Russian Census, 1.92% of Russians remained in Chechnya, and 0.78% in Ingushetia. At the same time,

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the expulsion of the Russian population from Chechnya was accompanied by massive excesses that did not come to the attention of either domestic or Western human rights activists. In one of her interviews, the chairman of the Forum of Resettlement Organizations, Lidiya Grafova, made a very difficult admission: “We are to blame for the Russian refugees from Chechnya. We are, in general, a human rights movement. It was at our instigation that public compassion focused only on the Chechens. This is probably an overshoot of democracy – supporting the minority even at the cost of discriminating against the majority.”

Concerns have grown about internal migration of people from the region to various parts of greater Russia. This is far from the only, but one of the reasons that resettlement programs to attract people from labor-abundant Dagestan and Ingushetia to regions that have a shortage of labor resources (in one of the districts of the Tver region - Narovchatovsky - between 2002 and 2010 the population decreased by 13, 4%) never earned even a partial amount. In 2010 and 2011 managed to organize the resettlement of 150 people from Dagestan and Ingushetia to the Penza region. However, the project of the presidential envoy to the North Caucasus Federal District Alexander Khloponin (2010) to resettle labor migrants from Ingushetia to the Sverdlovsk region was not successful;

thirdly, the North Caucasian republics are unfavorable from an economic and social point of view. The economic development indicators of these entities are the lowest in Russia (with the exception of some types of agricultural products). Former large heavy industry enterprises are either closed (Tyrnauz Mining and Processing Plant in Kabardino-Balkaria) or are barely surviving, having sharply reduced production volumes (Electrozinc in North Ossetia, the Caspian Plant in Dagestan, which produces military-industrial complex products). It is symbolic that in October 2010, in one of the abandoned mines of the Tyrnauz plant, special forces of the FSB and the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs carried out a special operation to eliminate the militants who had settled there. The North Caucasus republics also retain their top positions in the unemployment rate rankings. The North Caucasian Federal District as a whole took first place in 2012 in terms of the number of unemployed (14.6%). The unemployment rate among young people is especially high. All this requires the attention of the federal government, which, against the backdrop of difficulties in neighboring regions (Stavropol Territory) or in the center of the country, is perceived as giving priority to the Caucasus to the detriment of the rest of Russia;

fourthly, in the last two decades the level of participation of the North Caucasus republics in all-Russian processes has critically decreased. The most striking indicator is military service. During the entire

period after the collapse of the USSR, the problem of conscription from this region into the ranks of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation was never resolved. Yavnus Dzhambalayev, who heads the conscription department of the Dagestan recruiting station (the largest federal subject in the North Caucasus), believes that by December 31, 2013, 1,335 people should be drafted into the Russian army. This is twice as much as called for in the spring. However, plans are plans, and in November two groups were sent to their duty stations (170 and 149 conscripts, respectively). And this despite the fact that Dagestan is considered one of the “youngest” subjects of the Russian Federation. Thus, the “successes” in the quantitative increase in conscription can be considered more than modest. In July 2012, for the first time in many years, 150 Chechens were called up for military service in the 249th Special Motorized Battalion of the Russian Internal Troops. This unit is stationed in Chechnya on a permanent basis. Then the news from the Chechen Republic was viewed almost as a sensation, despite the fact that, according to the republican military registration and enlistment office, the number of citizens of military age in the territory under its jurisdiction was about 80 thousand people;

fifthly, the Russian government itself encourages managerial particularism in the North Caucasus, which, on the one hand, helps solve a number of tactical problems, but does not help the comprehensive integration of the region into the all-Russian political, legal and cultural space. Today, the issue of Chechnya's secession from Russia has ceased to be politically relevant. Chechnya is the only one of the unrecognized republics that broke away from the newly independent post-Soviet states that was returned to the control of the central authorities. And not just returned, but turned into a showcase of exemplary loyalty to the center. Political stability is credited to Kadyrov both by the federal government and the expert community. In 2009, the CTO (counter-terrorist operation) regime of republican significance was abolished in Chechnya. The number of terrorist attacks, although still ongoing, is decreasing. In 2012, 174 people suffered from them (82 killed), which is slightly less than in 2011 (186 victims, 92 killed). For comparison, in neighboring Dagestan in 2012, 695 people became victims of terrorist attacks (405 killed). In the fall of 2011, it was announced that Kadyrov had finally eradicated blood feud - a centuries-old institution that neither the tsarist nor the Soviet authorities had been able to overcome. Within a year, Kadyrov had reconciled 450 families and had already dissolved the special reconciliation commission he created as unnecessary. Thanks to large-scale federal transfers, the republic has become a regional investment leader.

However, there is a downside to this shiny sign. First of all, we should talk about the cost of incorporating Chechnya into Russia. A special

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political regime has been established de facto in the republic. On its territory, the laws of the Russian Federation are far from being in full effect (the constitutional principle of the separation of religion from the state and education, gender equality is actually ignored). Moreover, the federal authorities (courts, prosecutor's office and military units on the territory of Chechnya) can perform their direct functions only to a certain extent. Today, the law enforcement agencies of Chechnya are de facto subordinate to the head of the republic. Campaigns to combat the radical underground are carried out by the republican government itself. At the same time, thanks to the "Kadyrov effect," militant groups are simply redeployed to other republics of the North Caucasus (Ingushetia, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria) and outside Russia. Certain categories of crimes in Chechnya cannot be investigated by Russian investigative agencies located in Chechnya (murders, kidnappings), and sentences for natives of the republic are served only in correctional institutions on the territory of Chechnya (if they are detained outside the republic, they must be transported to their historical homeland). Chechen conscripts do not undergo active military service outside of it in other constituent entities of the Russian Federation, and the conscription itself covers only a small circle of conscript youth. The special informal status of Chechnya also contributes to strengthening the perception of the North Caucasus as a state within a state.

Without a doubt, one of the main events of 2013 was the arrest of the former mayor of Makhachkala, Said Amirov, who for many years was one of the central characters in the Dagestan elite. He had direct access to the top political leadership and big business in Moscow, bypassing the republican authorities. He also had his say in making the most important management decisions not only in the area of his direct competence. And their "power resources" (in addition to administrative influence). Thus, in 1999, during the raid of Shamil Basayev and Khattab on Dagestan, Amirov sent his own detachment in support of the federal center. And this support, as well as similar assistance from other regional "barons," was a significant factor that ensured Russia's success in the fight against the spread of separatist metastases throughout the North Caucasus. Amirov not only held his post for many years, but also received high government awards, as well as public support from above. His arrest, judging by the first months after this action, did not mark the beginning of systemic changes in the approaches of the federal center to the organization of power and governance in the North Caucasus.

Figures like Amirov did not arise in a vacuum. They turned out to be in demand when the largest North Caucasian republic was left to its own devices and developed, having separatist Ichkeria in its

neighbourhood, and was also forced to resolve the difficult "Lezgin issue" with the newly independent Azerbaijan and resolve the situation with the resettlement of Kvareli Avars from Georgia. Not to mention the problems of privatization and the transition from the planned Soviet system to new forms of economic management;

sixth, the growing isolation of the North Caucasus (accompanied by the growth of ethnic nationalism in the 1990s and Islamization in the early 2000s) is associated not so much with the efforts of local or foreign preachers, but with the collapse of the secular system of regulation of various spheres of life. In this context, land scarcity and ongoing urbanization are particularly noteworthy. Rural communities are emptying out due to lack of work. Traditional ethnic areas are being eroded, and the principles of private property come into conflict with ideas about ethnic property, when representatives of "their people" may have preferences in access to property and power resources in a particular territory. And all this against the backdrop of an ineffective judicial and administrative system. Hence the appeal to mosques, sheikhs or Salafi groups as possible arbiters. As a result, such "competition of jurisdictions" leads to both conflicts and violence, because there are problems with recognizing one or another religious authority as the only legitimate one.

The problem of preserving the North Caucasus as a full-fledged part of Russia is obvious. But in solving it it is extremely important to avoid simplifications. The idea of "separating the Caucasus" by a strong-willed decision of the center or creating certain "special conditions" for it (de facto apartheid), which has become popular in the blogosphere, does not stand up to criticism upon closer acquaintance with the specifics, namely:

firstly, secession will not stop ethnic migration (the main phobia of Muscovites and residents of large central cities in Russia). The region is not homogeneous, and contrary to some persistent media cliches, it is not united by some common idea of opposition to Moscow. Consequently, in the event of a hypothetical separation, the question of borders, the number of possible states and de facto entities will inevitably arise. In a "separated Caucasus", a strong statehood will not appear, but a "war of all against all" is likely (Sufis against Salafis, Islamists against secular nationalists, not to mention confrontation between different national projects). The Russian Caucasus in "free floating" is not Algeria in the early sixties. Here the Russian state simply will have no one to negotiate with. Or you will have to negotiate with every more or less significant field commander;

secondly, the question arises about Russians still living in Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, Adygea and in small numbers in Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia, as well as about representatives of the

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peoples of the Caucasus located in the rest of the Russian Federation from Stavropol to Vladivostok ;

thirdly, the military infrastructure is important (parts of the Caspian flotilla, border outposts, units of the Ministry of Defense). This question refutes the opinion of supporters of “financial savings” for Russia by stopping funding for the North Caucasus. The problem of “enough to feed” will only be transformed into other priority expenditure items (construction of barracks, allocation of apartments for military personnel and their families, arrangement of a potential state border and ensuring its functioning). At the same time, supporters of the idea of separating the Caucasus forget that in the region itself there are a significant number of people interested in maintaining Russian jurisdiction. Among them are those who fought in the 1990s. on the side of Russia in Chechnya, and in 1999 in Dagestan, not to mention representatives of government agencies, police, business, and ordinary people;

fourthly, the loss of the Caucasus will inevitably exacerbate issues that previously remained in the shadows. In a “reduced” Russia, the problems of other national-state formations will come to the fore - Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Tuva, Yakutia... Even among the leaders of the neo-Cossack movement there are those who do not consider themselves Russians, and consider the Cossacks as a unique people. Consequently, the “separation” of the Caucasus will be perceived as a precedent. And not at all abstractly, as in the case of Kosovo, Abkhazia or South Ossetia;

fifthly, the loss of the North Caucasus is fraught with serious costs for Russian foreign policy. The presence of the North Caucasus republics with a Muslim population within Russia gave and continues to give Moscow the opportunity to play on many geopolitical boards and have influence not only in the West, but also in the Islamic world. Considering the growing role of the Middle East and Southeast Asia in world politics, it would be strange to refuse such an instrument. And even more so, build your positioning in opposition to Islam and its adherents.

And the last one is sixth (in order, but not in importance). It should be noted that the implementation of apartheid practices in modern conditions is unrealistic. And not only for moral or ethical reasons. The racial segregation of the past in the USA, Australia or South Africa could work under one condition - a gigantic educational gap between the white and “colored” population. Note that as soon as the level of education among the latter increased, the movement for equal civil rights and the abolition of apartheid began.

The ideas of a “special” or “closed” status of the Caucasus are based on inadequate ideas about the supposedly immanent “traditionalism” of this region and the predominance of consanguineous relations there. In reality, the traditional social structures of the Caucasian peoples are experiencing a serious crisis

and transformation. The same Chechen teip no longer lives compactly and does not own common land. The institution of elders is degenerating, having been undermined by armed conflicts, when the possession of weapons became more important than age. The process of Islamic revival is accompanied by a conflict of generations. And for Salafi youth, the older generation of “wrong”, “superficial” Muslims is not an authority. Apparently, Russian Islamic scholar Vladimir Bobrovnikov is right when he asserts: “The pre-revolutionary Muslim identity of the Caucasian highlanders changed sharply and irreversibly during first the pre-revolutionary Russian reforms of the second half of the 19th century, and then collectivization and Soviet national-linguistic transformations of the 1920s–1950s. The “mountain people” themselves, for the most part, are no longer mountain people, but distant descendants of people who once lived in the mountains.”

Moreover, at the beginning of the 21st century we have a fairly educated society in various regions of Russia, regardless of ethnic origin. Let's add to this their inclusion in the national and global information space. In this regard, any attempt to de facto abolish equal citizenship in Russia and introduce apartheid will cause a response and provoke a ninth wave of separatism and multidirectional, but equally destructive to the unity of the country, ethnic nationalism. Who, in fact, will voluntarily agree with the introduction of “migration filters” for residents of the North Caucasus, if they are officially installed in the Stavropol region, Kuban or Moscow? A rhetorical question.

It will not be possible to isolate yourself from the migration of “outsiders” for other reasons. The objective laws of economics, geography and demography work against this. If the population of the North Caucasus republics is increasing, land resources in Chechnya, Dagestan or Ingushetia are physically insufficient, and the unemployment rate (especially among young people) is high, then the departure of the surplus population cannot be stopped by any cordons. Moreover, it is desirable as social prevention: without internal migration, the Caucasian “cauldron” has a much greater chance of exploding.

Squeezing Russians out of the national republics of the Russian Federation Lately there has been a lot of talk about improving the demographic situation in Russia. The country's population is supposedly constantly growing, and the authorities are often credited for this. But they are silent about who it is growing at the expense of. In 2002, there were 115 million Russians in Russia, but in 2010 there were only 111 million. The largest population growth is in Chechnya, Ingushetia and the Republic of Tyva. Meanwhile, the number of Russian people in the national republics (and not only in them) of the Russian Federation is falling at an impressive pace, and the ethnic composition of individual territories is

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rapidly changing. In some places this is caused by economic and demographic problems, and in others by direct squeezing out by local ethnic elites. Settlement of Russians in Russia A decrease in the number of state-forming people in the regions in the event of any future political crisis or instability may lead to an increase in separatism in those regions where there will be few Russians. The central authorities, often verbally declaring that the Russian people are “the foundation of Russian statehood,” for some reason do not actually support this foundation and do not particularly strive to increase and strengthen it. At least this is not visible from the statistics. Let's turn to the impartial official figures from the population censuses of Russia (and the USSR) to see where the situation requires immediate intervention, and also try to understand how we can find ways out of the current difficult situation. South of Russia The Russian population was rapidly leaving the regions of the North Caucasus due to hostilities, fearing that the conflict could spread to other republics. Here the situation is most deplorable. Due to the abolition of the Terek Cossack formations by the communists, inter-ethnic clashes in 1958, and after that - ethnic cleansing and genocide in the 1990s during the wars in Chechnya, there were practically no previously numerous Russians left there. According to the 1989 census, the number of Russian people was 269,130 people in the entire Checheno-Ingushetia (or 24.8% of the total population), and in 2010 there were 24,382 Russians or 1.9% in Chechnya. The situation is similar in Ingushetia (2002 - 1.2%, 2010 - 0.8%) and Dagestan (1959 - 213 thousand, 2010 - 100 thousand). In Ingushetia, crimes against Russians continued after the Chechen wars. In 2006, in the village of Ordzhonikidzevskaya, the deputy head of the Sunzhensky district administration, who oversaw the program for the return of the Russian-speaking population to Ingushetia, was shot dead, and in 2007, the family of a Russian teacher was killed in the republic. In Dagestan, Russian flight began even in the Kizlyar region and the city of Kizlyar, where Russians historically were the majority (the number of Russians in the city decreased from 83.0% (1959) to 40.49% (2010). Changes in the national composition of the North Caucasus since the time of the Russian Empire and to the modern Russian Federation. In other subjects of the North Caucasus District, the process of decreasing the number of Russians is also underway, but not at such a fast pace. In Kabardino-Balkaria, the percentage of the Russian population decreased from 240,750 (31.9%) in 1989 to 193,155 (22.5%) in 2010. In areas with a traditional Russian majority - Maïsky and Prokhladnensky - there is an increase in non-Slavic ethnic groups. The number of Russians in Karachay-Cherkessia even increased slightly - 150,025 people in 2010 versus 147,878 people in 2002. But in percentage terms it is still decreasing due to the higher birth rate among the Caucasian peoples.

In North Ossetia, the percentage of Russians decreased from 40% in 1959 to 23% in 2010. The percentage of non-Slavic peoples in the Mozdok region, the original Russian Cossack land, is increasing. It should be said that the Russian population of the republics tried to fight for their national rights to the best of their ability. Since the late 1980s, the idea of annexing (returning) the Cossack regions of northern Chechnya (which were given to the communists) to the Stavropol Territory has been popular. Attempts were made to create a Russian Cossack autonomy on the left bank of the Terek, as well as other autonomies for Russian-speaking citizens with different names and in different republics. However, projects of such autonomous entities did not receive approval from regional and federal authorities. Visually The Stavropol Territory should be mentioned separately. The inclusion of the region in the North Caucasus Federal District began to change the ethnic map of the region even faster, heating up already tense interethnic relations. If we compare the population censuses of 2002 and 2010, we can state that the number of Armenians increased by 12 thousand, Dargins by 10 thousand; The number of Dagestan peoples (especially in areas bordering Dagestan), Turkmen and others increased significantly. It is also worth noting that the Russian population is declining, including due to numerous interethnic marriages of Russian women with representatives of the Caucasian peoples; Children from such unions for the most part do not feel the ethnic identification of their mother and bear non-Russian names and surnames. However, in addition to the assimilation of Russians by Caucasians, there is also the usual flight of the Russian population from Stavropol. In the Southern Federal District, Kalmykia deserves special attention, where the number of Russians has decreased from 120 to 85 thousand people. In the Gorodovikovsky and Yashaltinsky districts - traditional places of residence of Russians - the process of settling Meskhetian Turks is underway, where they already make up up to 15% of the total population. In the Rostov region, the number of Meskhetian Turks increased from 28 thousand in 2002 to 36 thousand in 2010. Due to the migration of Dagestani peoples, higher birth rates among Kazakhs, Tatars, and Nogais, the number of Russians in the Astrakhan region is decreasing (67% as of 2010) and the ethnographic map of the region is changing. And if in the Rostov and Astrakhan regions the matter is mainly in demographic problems, then in Kalmykia, in addition to them, there is a process of soft squeezing out Russian-speaking residents and replacing them in all spheres with Kalmyks. Siberian subjects The main Russophobic region of the Russian Federation in Siberia is rightfully considered the Republic of Tyva, from where the Russian population has fled since the early 1990s - almost the same as from the North Caucasus regions. In 1992–1993 alone, more than 20

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thousand Russians left there, and the organization Khostug Tyva (Free Tuva) called for independence from Russia. In 1959, Russians numbered 40% there, and in 2010 - only 16%, which is explained not only by the squeezing out of Russian speakers, but also by the high birth rate among Tuvans. Since the late 80s of the 20th century, separatist sentiments have been popular in Tyva; there have even been attacks on the Slavic population; there have been serious ethnic unrest, which miraculously did not escalate into armed clashes. Thus, in the village of Elegest, an attempt was made at a large-scale Russian pogrom. 15 Russian houses were attacked, three of them were set on fire. After this, a stream of Russian refugees began to flow from Tyva. Russophobia is still evident at the everyday level in the republic. For example, on social networks in groups of Tuvans you can see anti-Russian slogans. Tuvan lands were part of the Chinese Empire until 1912. Yakutia did not lag behind. High-ranking officials of the republic at one time even made clearly xenophobic statements, according to which, for example, the Yakuts should have "priority in medical care." The Yakut radicals did not particularly hide the fact that they were just waiting for Russia to weaken in order to try to gain real independence. In turn, the Russians did not like the Yakut language lessons in schools, the inability of the Slavs to get good, well-paid jobs, to enter universities on a budget, as well as the predominant broadcasting on Yakut local television. Added to all this was the economic crisis in the 1990s, when many large industrial productions, the main places of work for Russians, uniting cities around them, were closed. As a result, the Russian population in Yakutia decreased from 50% to 37% by 2010. And this is in an area that is of strategic importance for the country due to its huge reserves of resources. True, it is worth saying that in connection with the revival of many enterprises in recent years, a stream of people from all over the country and the CIS has again poured into Yakutia, but not so en masse. Similar processes, but to a lesser extent, occurred in the Altai Republic and Buryatia. A striking example of the imbalance in the interethnic politics of Yakutia is the republic's television channels. Federal division of the state The very fact of the existence in Russia of regions in which Russophobia is felt to this day and from where Russians are forced to leave speaks of serious problems in national politics. When officials in Russia speak out against the infringement of the rights of Russian speakers somewhere in Europe - for example, in Latvia (which is also very important), I would like to draw their attention to non-Russian regions within the country, where discrimination against the Russian people still exists. After all, there can be no doubt that the uniform distribution and increase of the Russian population throughout the country is the key to the stability of the state, protection from possible separatism, etc. "Kosovo scenario". In addition, many

researchers agree that the modern administrative-territorial division of Russia has long outlived its usefulness. The communists at one time not only gave the lands conquered by the Russian Empire to national minorities, but also in the RSFSR itself they crumbled artificial national formations, which today no longer reflect the real correlation of ethnic groups in them. For example, Jews in the Jewish Autonomous Region, allocated by the Bolsheviks, are less than 1% (!), Karelians in Karelia - 7.4%, Khakass in Khakassia - 12%, and so on. Isn't it time to carry out a thoughtful and thorough reform of the national republics? The territory of the RSFSR in 1926 and 1956. As a result, due to the international policy of the USSR, there are regions in modern Russia from which the Russian population is leaving. This is most noticeable in the example of the republics of the North Caucasus. And although the official authorities of these republics themselves want the Slavs to return, Russian speakers have no great desire to go back. Mainly because people are afraid of new attacks on ethnic grounds, the growth of Islamism, and destabilization. It can be stated that for demographic reasons, as well as due to the lack of political will of the state leadership, the Russian territories of the eastern republics of the North Caucasus (Chechnya, Ingushetia, Dagestan) were lost to the Slavic population, the ethnic cleansing of the region was almost completely completed. Expansion is now aimed at the Stavropol Territory and other areas of historical residence of Russians, as can be seen from the official census figures, which are difficult to argue with. The situation in Yakutia and Tuva, where xenophobia towards Russians and their mass exodus were also observed, requires deep understanding by the state leadership. The development of industry, the attraction and distribution of the Russian majority among these regions is the key to the strength of the regions. Today, if the population of Russia increases, it is at the expense of other peoples; the number of Russians themselves continues to decline. We need a completely new state policy, which will be aimed at popularizing Russian national identity, as well as assimilation into the Russian cultural and political environment. It is these measures, together with an urgent program to attract the remaining compatriots from the CIS, that can become the very bonds that will prevent non-Russian separatism from growing in any crisis and upheaval. but even in the RSFSR itself, artificial national formations were crumbled, which today no longer reflect the real correlation of ethnic groups in them. For example, Jews in the Jewish Autonomous Region, allocated by the Bolsheviks, are less than 1% (!), Karelians in Karelia - 7.4%, Khakass in Khakassia - 12%, and so on. Isn't it time to carry out a thoughtful and thorough reform of the national republics? The territory of the RSFSR in 1926 and 1956. As a result, due to the international policy of the USSR, there are regions in modern Russia from which

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among these regions is the key to the strength of the regions. Today, if the population of Russia increases, it is at the expense of other peoples; the number of Russians themselves continues to decline. We need a completely new state policy, which will be aimed at popularizing Russian national identity, as well as assimilation into the Russian cultural and political environment. It is these measures, together with an urgent program to attract the remaining compatriots from the CIS, that can become the very bonds that will prevent non-Russian separatism from growing in any crisis and upheaval.

Conclusion

Thus, the ideas of “Russian separatism” or the introduction of apartheid will not solve any of the pressing problems of the complex region and Russia as a whole. On the contrary, their practical implementation can provoke new conflicts, spur the isolation of various parts and ethnic groups of Russia, as well as the fragmentation of the country as a whole. However, the statement of this thesis does not mean at all that the authorities defending the current status quo can limit themselves to just routine criticism of extremists. The idea of “escape from the Caucasus” is fueled not only by catchy populist slogans, but also by the inaction of those who, by their status and position, should be involved in the prevention of ethnic and religious excesses, and the legal resolution of property, household and other disputes.

Consequently, the main task of today remains the real, and not the formal, arrival of the Russian state in the North Caucasus. In the form of an integrating

force, a fair arbiter and a guarantor of security. Take, for example, such a story as the conscription of young men from the North Caucasus republics into the Russian army. In a multi-ethnic state, the conscript army becomes not just a power structure, but the most important tool for the integration of different segments of society. For the overpopulated and labor-abundant Caucasus, with its high unemployment rate and average age of 26–28 years, the army can become a good social elevator and a real alternative to the underground and criminal business. Speaking about the socio-economic development of the region, we should focus primarily not on the interests of large metropolitan businessmen, but on projects that will provide opportunities to the local population (jobs, involvement of small businesses), which in turn will create additional “anchors” for loyalty. And, of course, with the help of effective internal migration programs, the state will solve several problems at once (development of neglected and sparsely populated regions, reducing the demographic burden on the Caucasus, involving its residents in all-Russian processes). State support for civil society institutions in the Caucasian republics could create mass support for countering clanism and corruption. However, when discussing these measures, one should keep in mind: outside the all-Russian context, changes in the North Caucasus will not happen. Without qualitative changes in the entire state mechanism and a radical reform of national policy, transforming it from a complex of folklore and ethnographic holidays into a strategy for the formation of a Russian citizen, an oasis of prosperity cannot be created.

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