

SCTCMG 2022
International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the Context of
Modern Globalism»

DISINTEGRATION PROCESSES IN NORTH CAUCASUS ON EVE
AND AFTER USSR COLLAPSE

Tamara Umarovna Elbuzdukaeva (a)*, Sotsita Abuevna Gaitamirova (b)

*Corresponding author

(a) Chechen State Pedagogical University, Academy of Sciences of the Chechen Republic, 33, Kievskaya str.,
Grozny, Chechen Republic, 364037, Russia, telbuzdukaeva@mail.ru

(b) Kadyrov Chechen State University, 32, Sheripova str., Grozny, Chechen Republic, 364024, Russia,
gsocita@mail.ru

Abstract

With the USSR collapse, the North Caucasian region became a polygon, where Russian national policy was tested for strength. In the early 1990s, ethno-territorial and ethno-status contradictions, which were defined as a number of “problem issues”, escalated in the North Caucasus: the “Shapsut question”; movement for a separate Karachay autonomy; the question of dividing Kabardino-Balkaria by ethnic lines; creation of a separate Ingush autonomy; the question of the Nogai autonomy formation; creation of “national-state self-determination of the Kumyk people within their historical territories”; restoration of the Aukhovsky (Chechen) region within the boundaries of 1944; proclamation of the Lezgi national autonomy within Dagestan. The systemic transformation of the Soviet system was especially acute in the Chechen Republic, which in the 1990s turned into a springboard for separatism and international terrorism, becoming a zone of religious and political extremism. The formation of new models of the republican state structure is connected both with the general political situation in the country and with specific regional features. The trend links the origins of inter-ethnic tension in the North Caucasus with the political and legal archaization of the region, with the revival of traditional practices in a deformed form that impede economic modernization and integration of the Caucasian peoples into Russian society. At the beginning of the 21st century, the political and administrative map of the North Caucasus stabilized.

2357-1330 © 2022 Published by European Publisher.

Keywords: Disintegration, federalism, inter-ethnic tension, regional national policy, Russian identity, sovereignty

1. Introduction

The issue of defining the essence of Russian federalism and its influence on the constituent entities of the Russian Federation acquired special significance with the USSR collapse and the emergence of sovereign nation-states within the Russian Federation. “Ethnic federalism” occupies a prominent place among the factors influencing the development of statehood in the Russian Federation. The principles of ethno-political management in modern Russia consist of an integrated approach to the management of ethno-national processes in connection with economic, social, and other aspects. Much depends on the political will of the Center and the regions, and the national policy institutionalization. The driving forces of socio-political shifts are the ruling elite and the bureaucracy adjacent to it, as well as socially mature, capable and active representatives of mass social groups. Political and economic issues that have accumulated in the relationship between the center and the republic, gaps in legislation and law enforcement practice combined with national characteristics and traditions, historical events and practices, have determined the scale of the systemic crisis, and its consequences.

2. Problem Statement

In conditions of interethnic tension, the natural result is a general decrease in tolerance and an increase in aggressiveness. Old conflicts have aggravated and new conflicts have appeared along with the growth of ethno-cultural and religious self-consciousness against the backdrop of a deep economic, political and moral crisis, accompanied by power weakening and the society criminalization. The problem of studying the main disintegration and integration processes in the North Caucasus on the eve and after the USSR collapse involves an analysis of causes and consequences of the socio-political and military crisis in the Chechen Republic in the 90th of the 20th century, as well as the processes of institutions’ formation of political power and the foundations of civil society in the context of political stabilization, and a new system of federal relations in the post-Soviet period.

3. Research Questions

The object of the study is the federalism of the Russian Federation on the eve and after the USSR collapse, which is considered as an institutional, political and geopolitical aspect.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the paper is to study the main disintegration and integration processes in the North Caucasus on the eve and after the USSR collapse.

5. Research Methods

The basis of the study is the theoretical comprehension and practical processing of regional material in the context of recent history of the Russian Federation. The author of the paper uses the principles of objectivity in the analysis of the North Caucasus on the eve and after the USSR collapse.

The comparative historical method and the principle of historicism are applied in the paper. Particular attention is drawn to the problem-chronological, retrospective, historical-comparative, and historical-typological approaches allowing the author to explore the problem.

6. Findings

The Russian state policy in the national question sphere of the late 1980s was oriented towards the search for a fundamental national idea. Strengthening the vertical state power in the Russian Federation at the beginning of the 21st century contributed to the emergence of works in which federalism was analyzed from the point of new approaches. In the works of Abdulatipov (1993), Abdulatipov (1999), Galazov (2006), Malashenko and Trenin (2002), Mamsurov (2001), Pain (2004) ethno-federalism is seen as complementary to “strategic centralism”.

Political regionalism has been developed in foreign literature (Stoner-Weiss, 1999). The influence of ethnic communities and nations on the political process is also considered in the works of Van den Berghe (1999), Lane and Ross (1998), Sakwa (2011).

Ethno-territorial and ethno-status contradictions escalated in the early 1990s in the North Caucasus. They combined in a number of “problem issues”: the “Shapsut question” consisted of the attempts of the public parliament of Adyghe Khase to restore the Shapsug national region that existed in 1924–1945. The limits of “Shapsugia”, according to the politicians, were supposed to cover the territory where the Adyghe/Shapsug population is a minority. The given territories are located in the resort zone of federal significance, in areas predominantly populated by the Russian population.

The conflict situation in Karachay-Cherkessia developed around the political and legal status of representation in power of the five main ethnic groups inhabiting the autonomy. In the early 1990s, the Karachay socio-political movement Jamagat demanded the restoration of a separate Karachay autonomy/republic within the limits of 1943, including the lands of the Cossack villages. Cossack organizations declared their “territorial self-determination” of Russian autonomies (Batalpashinskaya and Zelenchuksko-Urupskaya republics) or annex the village areas to the Krasnodar or Stavropol Territory.

Circassian/Adyghe political groups were aimed at raising the titular status of the Circassians and creating/restoring an autonomy separate from Karachay. Abazins and Nogais put forward demands for the creation of own national-territorial formations. The growth of internal ethnic self-determination was partly halted by a republican referendum in 1992, during which 76% of those who voted were in favor of maintaining a single KChR.

The issue of dividing Kabardino-Balkaria along ethnic lines began in 1990–1992. The establishment of a conditional border between the mountainous Balkaria and the foothill-plain Kabarda became the object of the “historical and ideological” rivalry of socio-political organizations – the Congress of the Kabardian people and the National Council of the Balkar people and the Tere. With the threat of the division of the republic, the Cossack population of the Prokhladnensky and, partially, Maysky district put forward demands to transfer the territories to the Stavropol Territory. Since the mid-1990s, the projects of the movement for Adyghea sovereignty beyond the framework of Russian nation-state building have come to naught.

In the early 1990s, the Ingush socio-political movement unfolded, which was aimed at restoring/creating a separate Ingush autonomy/republic. Demands were put forward to include part of the Prigorodny and Mozdok regions of North Ossetia, which were part of the Ingush AD/Chechen-Ingush ASSR in 1924–1944, and the right-bank half of Vladikavkaz. Ethno-territorial disputes between North Ossetia and the Ingush Republic, formed in the summer of 1992, reached their climax in an armed conflict in the autumn of the same year.

The issue of establishing the Nogai autonomy arose on the political agenda in the early 1990s. Autonomy would include the entire Nogai steppe, divided since 1957 between the Stavropol Territory, Dagestan and the former Chechen-Ingushetia.

The moderate project envisaged the creation of a national autonomy on the basis of the Nogai region of Dagestan and the adjacent part of the Stavropol Territory (the former Kayasulinsky region). It was a more radical option, namely, the return of the territory of the former Kizlyar District to the Stavropol Territory.

In the late 80s of the 20th century, Dagestan was a self-sufficient region. After the USSR collapse, the deficit-free budget of Dagestan began to be provided with own income by only 15% with the start of market reforms. During these years, an unjustified increase in the cost of law enforcement agencies occurred in the republic, which turned out to be borderline with five states; completion of the construction of the Irganai hydroelectric power station, associated with the resettlement of people by flooding gardens; reception and accommodation of thousands of refugees' families from Chechnya (result of the first Chechen campaign); problems of the Caspian related to the relocation of people from flooded territories, the protection of factories, the port reconstruction, etc.

Projects for the reconstruction of the entire national-state system of the Republic of Dagestan appeared at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s. Thus, in 1990, the Kumyk national movement Tenglik proclaimed the creation of “national-state self-determination of the Kumyk people within its historical territories” – Babayurt, Buynaksky, Karabudakhkent, Kayakent, Kizilyurt, Khasavyurt regions, and Makhachkala (more than a quarter of Dagestan entire territory). The territory of a hypothetical Kumyk autonomy is a mosaic consisting of Kumyk, Avar, Dargin, Chechen, Nogai, Lak villages and isolated settlements. The articulation of these villages into ethnically homogeneous and compact formations is a deliberately catastrophic undertaking in its consequences. The striped settlement of the main ethnic groups in the plain and coastal parts of the republic and the multinational composition of the urban population is a significant compositional factor in the unity of the Republic of Dagestan.

The “Aukh issue” is another ethno-political question of Dagestan, which aggravated in the 90s of the 20th century. The Chechens-Akkins/Aukhs put forward a demand for the restoration of the Aukh (Chechen) region within the boundaries of 1944, when the region was abolished and the Chechen population was deported.

The radical version of the issue was the demand to transfer it to the Chechen Republic. In 1992, the Dagestan government decided to gradually restore the Chechen region as part of Dagestan and resettle the Laks to specially designated territories. The given project was not implemented due to financial problems, and due to the events of August-September 1999 – the Wahhabi rebellion in the Tsumadinsky and Botlikh regions and the subsequent intervention in the Novolaksky region carried out by Sh. Basaev.

In the early 1990s, the Lezgi Sadval tried to challenge the established political map of the region with the goal of declaring Lezgi national autonomy within Dagestan. The “Lezgi issue” reflected the ethno-political problem in the Caucasus, which went beyond the boundaries of individual states.

The Republic of Dagestan, after the USSR collapse, barely made ends meet, owing to infusions from the federal budget. The investment attractiveness of the republic had not reached such a level that one could hope to attract essential non-state investments, both Russian and foreign, into the economy real sector (Dalgatov, 2004).

As a result of the Soviet state crisis, in the autumn of 1991, the Chechen “ethnic revolution” took place, which was led by the United Congress of the Chechen People under the slogans of national sovereignty separation from Russia, with the subsequent construction of an Islamic state.

In the early 1990s, the Popular Front, which united the poorest segments of the population, became an influential opposition force in Checheno-Ingushetia.

On September 9–10, 1989, Ingush nationalists from the Niyskho movement at the II Congress of the Ingush people put forward the idea of creating the Republic of Ingushetia. The Congress took the initiative to divide the CHIASSR and create two entities instead of it – the Chechen Republic and the Republic of Ingushetia, guided by the Ingush people interests, and demanded the return of the Prigorodny region under the jurisdiction of the “future” Republic of Ingushetia from the jurisdiction of North Ossetia. Ambitious aspirations of the nationalists aggravated the situation on the border with neighboring republics – Dagestan, North Ossetia and the Stavropol Territory. The leaders of the “Niiskho” party urged the Ingush “to go a peaceful way against Vladikavkaz.” The action did not take place, but the Ossetian-Ingush relations became even more aggravated. A state of emergency was introduced in the Prigorodny region and Vladikavkaz (Gakaev, 1997).

Chechnya was in the center of attention of the world community for many years and remained a pain point for Russia. Political and economic issues that had accumulated in the relationship between the center and the republic, gaps in legislation and law enforcement practice, combined with national characteristics and traditions, historical events and practices, determined the scale of the systemic crisis, and its consequences. A rapid decline in production characterized the economy of Checheno-Ingushetia during the “shock therapy.” In 1991, the number of “surplus rural population” in the CHIASSR exceeded 100 thousand people (according to unofficial data, about 200 thousand), which was approximately 20 % (according to unofficial data, about 30 %) of the employable population. People hoped for social renewal, and became the main striking force of the unfolding movement (Lipina, 2010).

From the spring of 1991, the Executive Committee of the NCCHP began to gain political strength, headed by Chairman Dzhokhar Dudayev, who headed for an open confrontation with the authorities. This confrontation with the authorities soon heated up the situation in the republic, which led to a mass exodus of the Russian-speaking population. At the beginning, the VDP leaders used democratic rhetoric, promoting democratic principles and values, such as “to help raise the status of CHIASSR as an equal subject of the renewed USSR”, “to develop the traditional culture of the Chechen and Ingush peoples.” Meanwhile, the Vainakh Democratic Party moved to the position of “extremist” (Muzaev & Todua, 1992). This was confirmed by the events that took place later - the election at the first congress of the Chechen people (November 23–25, 1990) of the Executive Committee of the National Congress of the

Chechen People (EC NCCHP) headed by D.M. Dudayev, namely, the proclamation of the state sovereignty of the Chechen Republic “Nokhchi-Cho’.” At the second National Congress of the Chechen People (NCCHP), held on June 8–9, 1991, the creation of a sovereign independent state - the Chechen Republic (Nokhchi-Choi), was officially announced, with own flag and coat of arms.

The congress deposed the powers of the Supreme Council of the CHIR; invalidated all decrees and laws of CHIASSR SC from November 28, 1990 throughout the entire territory of Chechnya. As an alternative, the NCCHP proposed to revive the archaic institution “Mehk Khel”, (MK) – “State Council.”

An analysis of the events that took place in Checheno-Ingushetia since 1991 revealed that an armed coup took place in the republic, which led to the formation of an aggressive enclave with the goal of tearing itself away from Russia.

On September 10, 1991, a delegation of Russian politicians that arrived in Grozny, in the absence of a quorum, forced the CHIR Supreme Council to decide on self-dissolution and form the Provisional Supreme Council (PSC) of the CHIR, consisting of 32 deputies. The powers of the Provisional Supreme Council of the CHIR were to be extended until the general elections to the power structures scheduled for November 17, 1991.

On October 10, 1991, an open civil confrontation began. Supporters of the Executive Committee of NCCHP organized a rally on the square in front of the republican regional committee of the CPSU. The protesters called for an armed struggle with Russia, the transfer of power to the leaders of the Executive Committee of the NCCHP and the holding of elections on October 27th. Proponents of reasonable reforms gathered at Sheikh Mansour Square. They demanded to stop the "provocative activities" of the Executive Committee of NCCHP, disband the armed groups, return the power of the Air Force and hold elections on November 17, 1991.

The collapse of the state “vertical” in the Chechen-Ingush Republic in the period 1990–1991 occurred with the connivance of the federal center, which did not consider it necessary to respond to the threats having arisen from separatists. The highest state authorities of the Russian Federation, which were in a state of intense competition, did not notice the systemic crisis in the Chechen Republic (Matishov, 2011). The Russian leadership limited itself up to demands for a political settlement of the conflict. The last political attempt to return the Chechen Republic to the political and legal jurisdiction of the Russian Federation was the Order of the President of the Russian Federation B.N. Yeltsin on the draft agreement on the mutual delegation of powers and the delimitation of jurisdiction subjects between federal state authorities and state authorities of the Chechen Republic (President of the Russian Federation, 1994).

In the 90s of the 20th century, two attempts to create an independent state, both a secular state and a state based on the ideology of “Wahhabism”, completely failed in Chechnya.

In 2000, the Chechen Republic had a pessimistic economic outlook and a full set of characteristic features of an underdeveloped region: with a low level of industrial growth; insufficient diversification of the economy; mass unemployment; and poor infrastructure and security of the territory.

The escalation of tension led to a military confrontation between Moscow and Grozny in 1994–1996 and 1999–2000. Having destroyed D. Dudayev and his successor A. Maskhadov, as well as the most influential field commanders, Russia undermined the forces of Chechen gangs. The continuation of the positive nation-building, initiated by the March 2003 referendum, was the election of the President of the

Chechen Republic on October 5, 2003. In a short time, Kadyrov managed to do a lot to return Chechnya to the legal field of the Russian Federation, the beginning of the economy restoration and social sphere of Chechnya. In cooperation with the federal center, he solved the problem of returning over 200 thousand refugees from temporary accommodation camps in Ingushetia to their homeland.

7. Conclusion

The transformations of the late 1980s and early 1990s affected all levels of the state vertical: federal, regional, sub-regional, local-group, individual, and prompted the search for new types of institutionalization.

The transit from the Soviet system to the liberal-democratic norms of the new Russia passed through the stage of republics sovereignization. At the beginning of the 21st century, the political and administrative map of the North Caucasus stabilized. The action of the vertical of power was restored, an increase in the economy and the influence of the new Russian national-state project, which suspended centrifugal processes, was observed.

The threat of separatism was eliminated in the North Caucasus, the general federal principles of control of regional elites were worked out, and their loyalty and the “intra-systemic” nature of the political and cultural strategy were ensured.

References

- Abdulatipov, R. (1993). Federal treaty and prospects for the development of interethnic relations. *Ethnopolis, 1*, 8–19.
- Abdulatipov, R. G. (1999). *Nation and nationalism: good and evil in the national issue*. Slavic Dialogue.
- Dalgatov, I. G. (2004). *Republics of the North Caucasus in the federal space of Russia* [Doct. dissertation thesis]. Makhachkala.
- Gakaev, D. D. (1997). *Essays on the political history of Chechnya (20th century)*. 2nd ed. Chech. Cult. Center. CHCC.
- Galazov, A. H. (2006). *Russia and the Caucasus at the turn of centuries*. Politizdat.
- Lane, D., & Ross, C. (1998). Russian Political Elites, 1991–1995: Recruitment and Renewal. In J. Higley, J. Pakulski & W. Wesoowski (Eds). *Postcommunist Elites and Democracy in Eastern Europe*. Macmillan.
- Lipina, S. A. (2010). *Strategic priorities for the socio-economic development of the republics of the North Caucasus: ways and methods to achieve them*. UASS.
- Malashenko, A., & Trenin, D. (2002). *Times of the South. Russia in Chechnya, Chechnya in Russia*. Gendalf.
- Mamsurov, T. D. (2001). *Russian federalism national-ethnic context*. Publishing house “Variant”.
- Matishov, G. G. (2011). The systemic crisis in the North Caucasus and the state strategy for the development of the macroregion. *Proceedings of the All-Russian Scientific Conference* (September 13–15, 2011). Publishing house of SSC RAS.
- Muzaev, T., & Todua Z. (1992). *New Checheno-Ingushetia*. No ed.
- Pain, E. A. (2004). *Between empire and nation. Modernist project and its traditionalist alternative in the national policy of Russia*. 2nd ed., add. New Publishing House.
- President of the Russian Federation (1994). Order of the President of the Russian Federation B.N. Yeltsin, no. 189-rp, dated April 15, 1994. “On the preparation of a draft Treaty on the delimitation of subjects of jurisdiction between the federal state authorities and the state authorities of the Chechen Republic and the mutual delegation of powers”. (1994). *Collection of acts of the President and the Government of the Russian Federation*, no. 16. Art. 1380.

- Sakwa, R. (2011). *The Crisis of Russian Democracy: The Dual State, Factionalism, and the Medvedev Succesion*. XVIII. Univ. Press.
- Stoner-Weiss, K. (1999). Central Weakness and Provincial Autonomy: observations on the Devolution Process in Russia. *PostSoviet Affairs*, 15(1).
- Van den Berghe, P. L. (1999). From the Popocatepetl to the Limpopo. *Authors of Their Own Lives: Intellectual Autobiographies by Twenty American Sociologists* (pp. 410–431). Berkeley.