

# A b s t r a c t s

## Soil Sample

### The War, the State and the Peoples of Russia

**Andreas Kappeler**

**Multi-Ethnic Russia**

**Historical Conditions in the Tsarist Empire**

Russia's external and internal borders are a product of Soviet nationality policy. Its polyethnic character goes back to the pre-revolutionary Tsarist Empire. For the most part, the federation consists of the territory of Muscovy, which was settled by a majority of Russians, but also other ethnic groups. The areas with non-Russian populations were annexed through military conquest, economic development, agreements on loose sovereignty of the tsar, and voluntary subordination. Most ethnic groups were able to retain their identity for centuries. The constant territorial expansion offered settlers new arable land and ethnic minorities refuge. The centre pursued a cautious mission policy: religious or linguistic unification was not a primary goal.

**Egbert Jahn**

**The National Question and National Movements**

**The Positive Side of Soviet Federalism**

The dissolution of the Soviet Union was preceded by the collapse of communist party rule. It was initiated by efforts of the party leadership under Mikhail S. Gorbachev to fundamentally reform the Soviet system. The liberalisation and democratisation of communist party rule unintentionally gave rise to strong national movements. These at first demanded only a reform of the Soviet federation, then national independence. They were largely successful. Without Soviet nationalities policy, which structured the ethnonational state and legal institutions for decades, the dissolution of the Soviet Union would not have been so peaceful, unlike the extremely bloody destruction of the centralized tsarist empire from 1917–1922.

**Pavel Polian**

**“Punished Peoples”**

**Deportations under Stalinism**

In the Soviet Union, deportations were a collective coercive measure. This instrument of power was used for political, economic, and, more broadly, military purposes. Various social, religious, and ethnic groups were affected. Most deportations were ethnically motivated. Around twelve million people were

involved. After Stalin's death, the practice of mass forced migration came to an end. Public discussion and scientific analysis of the topic began to emerge only at the end of the 1980s.

**Ernst Kausen**  
**The Languages and Peoples of Russia**  
**The Disappearance of a Wealth**

In Russia, over 120 other languages from 11 language families are spoken alongside the state language, Russian. However, the majority of these languages are endangered or moribund. Even languages spoken by tens of thousands of people are being displaced by Russian and other major languages. Only a few languages, such as Tatar, Chechen, and Bashkir, are stable. With the extinction of each language, humanity loses part of its cultural heritage, which is preserved in stories, verses, epics, and creation myths that for the most part have been passed down orally. Specific ways of talking about the world and human experience are disappearing. This current linguistic overview gives an impression of the diversity of the Russian world of languages, but also of the dimension of the loss.

**Andreas Heinemann-Grüder**  
**Russia's Internal Empire**  
**Center versus Regions**

According to its constitution, Russia has a federal state structure. 25 of the more than 80 regions are national republics or autonomous districts, the rest are self-governing regions that were not constituted according to ethnic criteria. In terms of area, population, and economic structure, the regions are extremely heterogeneous. In the early 1990s, strong republics were particularly able to develop their formal rights of autonomy and the right to have a say at the centre. But from the second half of the 1990s on, there was a reversal. One of the catalysts was the military response to separatist efforts in Chechnya, which Moscow crushed in two ruthless wars. The model developed in Chechnya, the integration of loyal regional leaders into a centralized power vertical, was transferred to all regions in the 2000s. Almost all sources of autonomous power were eliminated. Russia's war against Ukraine has further strengthened centralism. But at the same time, it has exposed the breaking points of the heterogeneous structure that is Russia.

**Roland Götz**  
**Below Average**  
**The National Territories of Russia**

The Russian Federation is divided into national territories and non-nationally defined federal subjects. The titular nation represents an absolute majority of the population in only ten of the 27 territories. The peripheral location of many na-

tional territories as well as difficult physiographic and transport-geographical conditions mean that many of the inhabitants there are significantly poorer than average among Russia's population. Apart from the regions rich in raw materials, most national territories run a budget deficit. They therefore receive considerable financial allocations from Moscow. The social situation, and not ethnicity, explains why in some national republics willingness to serve in the military is greater than the national average - and with that the casualty rate in the war against Ukraine.

**Nikolay Mitrokhin**  
**Ethnic, Racist, Imperial**  
**Manifestations of Russian Nationalism**

Russian nationalism comes in three forms. The ideologues of white racism incite hatred against migrants from Central Asia and against citizens of their own country from the North Caucasus. Russian ethnonationalists are concerned with language, culture, and religion. The concept of the "Russian world" originates in their circles. But this has long been obsolete. Neither the creation of a Russian nation state, nor a union of Eastern Slavic "fraternal nations" are on the state's agenda. A militant imperial nationalism has prevailed. It is concerned with borders and territories, not language and religion. Its ideology is "Russia – a multi-ethnic empire". This imperial nationalism has been deeply rooted in the violent apparatuses of the Moscow-ruled state since Soviet times.

**Uwe Halbach**  
**The Extreme Case**  
**Chechnya in the Multi-Ethnic State of Russia**

Chechens were involved in the fight against the Tsarist Empire's expansion into the Caucasus in the 19th century. However, the centre of resistance was in Dagestan, and the Circassians fought longer than they did. Even under Soviet rule, when Stalin had entire ethnic groups deported, the suffering of the Chechens did not exceed that of the other peoples who also suffered this trauma. The special case refers to the massive experience of violence and extermination that the Chechens experienced in two wars against Russian troops after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, to the character of the political order that emerged after the ceasefire between Moscow and Grozny, and to Chechnya's position in the federation. Chechnya under Ramzan Kadyrov has become a "private state" that, although committed to Russia, claims a degree of autonomy and dynastic rule that is at odds with Putin's "power vertical".

**"The Open Wound of Chechnya"**  
**Lana Estemirova in Conversation with Sergei Lebedev**

The daughter of Chechen human rights activist Natal'ia Estemirova, who was murdered in July 2009, looks back on Russia's wars against Chechnya, draws a

link to the war against Ukraine, explains the psychological mechanisms behind the widespread denial of responsibility in Russia for the massacres in Chechnya and Ukraine, identifies the blind spots in Russia's coming to terms with the past, takes a hard line against Ramzan Kadyrov's despotic and criminal regime, and dreams that after the demise of the Putin regime, a democratic Russia will recognize its responsibility for the crimes committed in the Caucasus, the war criminals will be punished, and the murder of her mother will be solved.

**Johannes Rohr**  
**Colonised**  
**The Indigenous Peoples of Russia**

Indigenous peoples have inalienable rights, particularly the right to collective self-determination. Among the indigenous peoples of Russia, such as the Nenets and Khanty, both collective self-consciousness and awareness of such rights are poorly developed. Commodity companies, with the support of the state, are destroying their land and depriving them of the possibility of continuing their traditional way of life. But the indigenous communities are atomized. The violence of collectivisation, the murder of their leaders, and forced assimilation have deprived these peoples of a distinct sense of self and turned the people into subjects of the state. Russia's war against Ukraine has made the situation even worse. However, members of these peoples now living in exile are developing an awareness that their communities have been victims of colonisation ever since the conquest of Siberia.

**"We Are the People"**  
**Protest and Repression in Bashkortostan**

In January 2024, in Bashkortostan, a part of Russia's Volga Federal District, a leading member of the banned Bashkir national movement Bashkort received a sentence of four years in a penal colony. Several thousand people protested against the sentence in front of the court building. A wave of arrests began immediately afterwards. The trial has revealed: In Russia's most populous republic, outrage over the environmental destruction caused by mining is linked to the question of rights of national self-determination. The republic's leadership is weak and serves the central authorities in Moscow by conducting especially repressive measures. Critics are stigmatized as "extremists" and "agents of foreign secret services". The war against Ukraine has inflamed the mood. A report from the day of the verdict was announced.

**Darja Kostromina**  
**Expanding the Zone of Repression**  
**The Persecution of Hizb-ut-Tahrir Supporters in Russia**

In Russia, almost 300 people have been sentenced to long prison terms as supporters of the Islamist movement Hizb-ut-Tahrir. Since 2003, this movement has been classified as a terrorist organisation. Those who have been convicted are Tatars and Bashkirs, Crimean Tatars from the occupied peninsula, and migrants from Central Asia. The trials show all the hallmarks of political persecution. The courts are controlled by the FSB (the secret police), and convictions do not require any proof that a defendant committed or planned a terrorist attack or anything of the sort. Acquittals are almost impossible. Institutions of repression have used the terrorism paragraph to expand their power more and more. In the meantime, supporters have come to those who have been prosecuted as victims of repression on the basis of religious and nationality.

**Alexey Golubev, Gleb Yarovoy**  
**No longer a Case for a Nation**  
**Karelia – History, Language, Politics**

Karelia is one of Russia's 21 national republics. But this designation is misleading. Created in the 1920s, the Autonomous Soviet Republic was not the result of a strong national movement, but of geopolitical decisions. Karelians were always in the minority there. During the Soviet era, the second language after Russian was Finnish. A national movement emerged during the perestroika period, but it was so weak that it did not even manage to establish Karelian as an official language. The Karelians are also not named as a titular nation in the republic's constitution. Since mid-2014, the state has suppressed any social movement with political ambitions, and in 2022, repression increased yet again. The state tolerates and promotes only the preservation of the Karelian and Vepsian languages. However, as these languages play no role in politics or the economy, they have an uncertain future.

**Monika Wingender**  
**In the Example of Tatarstans**  
**Language Policy in the Russian Federation**

Over 150 languages are spoken in the Russian Federation. However, they enjoy very different kinds of status. Russian is the national state language, and in the federation's 21 national republics, this also applies to the language of the titular nation. But even the importance of these major languages is declining. This is seen by the example of Tatarstan, where Tatar is well established. Until 2018, children from Russian-speaking families had to learn Tatar at school. This requirement was effectively abolished in accordance with the language ideology centred around the "great and mighty Russian language". Russian increasingly dominates the public sphere.

**Artem Malych**  
**How Languages Die**  
**The Example of Udmurt**

Udmurt is one of over 155 languages spoken in Russia. Measured by the number of speakers, it is one of the larger languages in the country. In the Republic of Udmurtia, the Udmurts are the titular nation, and their Finno-Ugric idiom has the status of state language. Nonetheless, Udmurt is under serious threat. The decisive factor is the integration of the Udmurts into the urban working world, which is dominated by Russian. Only in rural areas is the language still passed on from parents to children. Added to this is the toothless language policy of the republican authorities, who have been politically incapacitated by Moscow. A prerequisite for the survival of Udmurt is overcoming Russia's authoritarian centralism.

**Mikhail Bogdanov**  
**The War in Ukraine as Midwife**  
**The Renaissance of the Buriat National Movement**

Russia's war against Ukraine is having various consequences in Buriatia. Numerous Buriats are fighting in Russia's army. Others refuse to involve themselves in this crime. The war is prompting Buriats to think of Russia as an empire and a colonial power. It is promoting the re-emergence of a Buryat national movement.

**Olaf Leiße**  
**Firmly in Putin's Grip**  
**Politics and Society in Buriatia**

Only a third of Buriatia's population belongs to the titular nation. The collectivisation of agriculture and industrialisation under Soviet rule have left their mark. Since Perestroika, a renaissance of the Buddhist faith has been observed. The desire for a merger with Buriat-populated territories, which arose in Buriatia in the early 2000s, remained unfulfilled. The Putin regime has curtailed the rights of national republics and exercises strict control over their political decision-makers. Support for the war against Ukraine is strong in Buriatia.