

ISSN 2532-845X



GEOPOLITICAL REPORT

VOLUME 4

YEAR 2023

Geopolitical Report

Publisher: **SpecialEurasia**

Website: www.specialeurasia.com

Email: info@specialeurasia.com

Online ISSN: **2532-845X**

Date: **December 2023**

Publisher: **SpecialEurasia**

Editors: **Silvia Boltuc, Giuliano Bifulchi**

Country: **Italy**

City: **Rome**

Address: **Via Torrenova, 407**

Language: **Italian, German, English**

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Geopolitics of the North Caucasus: An Analysis of Local Ethnic Minorities and Indigenous Peoples

Giuliano Bifulchi*

Abstract in English

This paper critically examines the intricate dynamics between the Kremlin's internal stabilisation strategy and the diverse ethnic landscape of the North Caucasus, a region of paramount geopolitical significance in the Russian Federation. Against the backdrop of heightened Western pressure following the beginning of the Ukraine conflict, the Kremlin faces the imperative to uphold national internal stability and cohesion. Within this context, the paper delves into the multifaceted approach undertaken by the Russian government in managing the diverse ethnic groups and indigenous populations residing in the North Caucasus. Indeed, the region, situated at the southern periphery of Russia and acting as a vital link between Europe and Asia, emerges as a focal point in Moscow's domestic and foreign policy calculus. This study scrutinises the strategic importance of the region and the Kremlin's concerted efforts to stabilise it, recognising the region's pivotal role in shaping both regional and international dynamics. Furthermore, the study aims to elucidate the extent to which cooperation with local communities aligns with the Kremlin's overarching goals and contributes to the realisation of its strategic objectives.

Keywords: North Caucasus, ethnic minorities, indigenous people, Russia, geopolitics.

Abstract in Italiano

Questo paper si pone come obiettivo quello di esaminare criticamente le intricate dinamiche tra la strategia di stabilizzazione interna del Cremlino e il variegato panorama etnico del Caucaso settentrionale, una regione di fondamentale importanza geopolitica nella Federazione Russa. Sullo sfondo dell'accresciuta pressione occidentale in seguito all'inizio del conflitto in Ucraina, il Cremlino si trova di fronte all'imperativo di sostenere la stabilità interna e la coesione nazionale. In questo contesto, tale ricerca approfondisce l'approccio multiforme intrapreso dal governo russo nella gestione dei diversi gruppi etnici e delle popolazioni indigene residenti nel Caucaso del Nord. In effetti, la regione, situata nella periferia meridionale della Russia e che funge da collegamento vitale tra Europa e Asia, emerge come un punto focale nei calcoli di politica interna ed estera di Mosca. Questo studio esamina l'importanza strategica della regione e gli sforzi concertati del Cremlino per stabilizzarla, riconoscendo il ruolo centrale della regione nel plasmare le dinamiche sia regionali che internazionali. Inoltre, tale paper mira a chiarire in che misura la cooperazione con le comunità locali è in linea con gli obiettivi generali del Cremlino e contribuisce alla realizzazione dei suoi obiettivi strategici.

Parole chiave: Caucaso del Nord, minoranze etniche, popolazioni indigene, Russia, geopolitica.

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Introduction

With over 160 officially recognised ethnic groups, Russia's population is extremely multi-ethnic. Although the main ethnicity remains that of Russians, academic researchers underlined a decrease in the ethnic Russian population since the collapse of the Soviet Union and a significant increase in the number of ethnic minorities, especially those of the Muslim faith.¹

Recent statistics show ethnic Russians account for just over 77% of the total population, followed by Tatars (3.72%), Ukrainians (1.35%), Bashkirs (1.11%), Chuvash (1.01%), Chechens (1%), Armenians (0.83%) and other ethnic groups.² In addition, the Russian Government officially recognises 40 indigenous peoples who live inside the territory of the Russian Federation. The indigenous people are minority groups that exhibit significant diversity, despite some of them sharing common characteristics like the practice of animism and lifestyles centred around hunting, gathering, fishing, and herding. For instance, indigenous peoples with the fewest members include the Enet (350 people) and the Orok (450 people), while the largest are the Nenets and the Evenki, both of which have nearly 30,000 members.

Although the Russian legislation does not recognise indigenous peoples as such, Article 67 of the Russian Constitution guarantees the rights of "small-scale indigenous peoples".³ The 1999 Federal Law "On the Guarantee of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples with a Low Number of Inhabitants of the Russian Federation" specifies that such peoples are groups of less than 50,000 members who preserve some of their traditional ways of life.⁴

¹ Foxall, *Ethnic Relations in Post-Soviet Russia: Russians and Non-Russians in the North Caucasus*, London and New York, Routledge, 2015, <https://www.routledge.com/Ethnic-Relations-in-Post-Soviet-Russia-Russians-and-Non-Russians-in-the/Foxall/p/book/9781138576971>.

² «Nacional'nyj sostav Rossii 2023 (perepis' 2020)», *statdata.ru*, 2023, <https://www.statdata.ru/nacionalnyj-sostav-rossii>.

³ Stat'ja 67, 'Konstitucija Rossijskoj Federacii' (prinjata vsenarodnym golosovaniem 12.12.1993 s izmenenijami, odobrennymi v hode obshherossijskogo golosovanija 01.07.2020), 1993, https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_28399/8c6502533e28841baf74c1068f88b162a5e9b4ea/.

⁴ *Federalny zakon «O garantijah prav korennyh malochislennyh narodov Rossijskoj Federacii»*, vol. N 82-F3, 1999, https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_22928/.

The presence of diverse ethnicities in Russia has resulted in a culturally diverse fusion, where influences intermingle and blend. Metropolises like Moscow and Saint Petersburg are frequently regarded as symbols of multiculturalism, featuring communities that mirror the ethnic diversity of the nation. National holidays are frequently observed in an all-encompassing manner, integrating customs from diverse communities, aiming to foster a sense of national unity while honouring the unique characteristics of each ethnic group and indigenous population.

However, despite this cultural richness, Russia has also faced challenges related to managing diversity. The nation persistently endeavours to uphold equality and reverence for all of its ethnicities, striving to foster integration and comprehension among the diverse groups comprising its multi-ethnic and multi-faith populace. For instance, several Western studies highlighted that the Russian Federation has not been immune to phenomena such as xenophobia, racism, and Islamophobia, especially directed towards the North Caucasian ethnic groups.⁵ By contrast, Russian scientific literature and official statements from Moscow draw attention to the divergence in Western views on the North Caucasus and the allegations of xenophobia and Islamophobia within the country. From the Russian standpoint, these studies merely signify an attempt to undermine the Russian national model and propagate internal turmoil.⁶

In this context, this research focuses the attention on the ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples of the North Caucasus since the strategic importance of this region. Indeed, this area occupies a pivotal position on the Eurasian geopolitical chessboard, embodying a complex amalgamation of roles that define its significance. Functioning as a 'bridge' connecting Europe and Asia, the region serves as a critical junction for cultural, economic, and geopolitical exchanges. Simultaneously, it operates as a 'frontier' delineating the boundaries between the Muslim and Christian worlds, contributing to the intricate interplay of diverse ethnicities

⁵ International Crisis Group, *The North Caucasus_ the Challenge of Integration (II) Islam, the Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency*, Europe Report N. 221, Bruxelles, ottobre 19, 2012, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/caucasus/russianorth-caucasus/north-caucasus-challenges-integration-ii-islam-insurgency-and-counter-insurgency>; Foxall, *op.cit.*; Iskander Abbasi, «Russian Islamophobia: From Medieval Tsardom to the Post-Soviet Man», *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, vol. 8, settembre 2023, pp. 141–158; Sahar F. Aziz, Sarah Calderone, «Islamophobia in Russia: Ethnicity, Migration, and National Security», SSRN Scholarly Paper, Rochester, NY, aprile 17, 2023, <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=4421692>.

⁶ Madomed-emi Shamsuev, «Informazionnaya Bezopasnost' Rossiy na Severnom Kavkaze: Problemy i Mekanizmy Resheniya», *Zentral'naya Aziya i Kavkaz*, vol. 15, fasc. 4, 2012, pp. 108–121; Vladimir Kolosov, Alexander Sebentsov, «Severniy Kavkaz v Rossiyskom Geopoliticheskom Diskurse», *Polis. Politicheskie Issledovaniya*, fasc. 2, 2014, pp. 146–163; Giuliano Bifulchi, «The North Caucasus in the Russian political discourse», Dejana M Vukasović, Petar Matic (a cura di), *DISKURS i politika [Elektronski izvor] = Discourse and Politics*, International Thematic Collection Papers 8, Belgrade, Institute for Political Studies, 2019, pp. 337–350.

and religions.⁷ Moscow strategically regards the North Caucasus as a 'buffer zone' in the south, playing a crucial role in extending Russian influence over the South Caucasus, the Caspian Sea area, the Black Sea, Central Asia, and the Middle East. This dual nature of the North Caucasus underscores its strategic importance in shaping Russia's domestic stability and its broader geopolitical manoeuvres.⁸

In the early 21st century, academic scholars and international media's focus on the North Caucasus primarily centred around its perceived instability and the looming terrorist threat.⁹ Some scholars defined the region as Kremlin's 'inner abroad', describing the North Caucasus as a foreign entity inside the territory of the Russian Federation. If the post-Soviet space is Russia's *blizhnee zarubezhe* (near abroad),¹⁰ the definition of the North Caucasus as the *inner abroad* underlined the vast difference between Russia and ethnic-Russians with North Caucasian people and local dynamics.¹¹

However, at the present time, the region exhibits a state of relative stability that has facilitated the emergence of greater economic possibilities, thanks to implementing the Strategy 2025 based on substantial financial support from Moscow to local governments and several counter-terrorism operations towards local militancy and terrorist groups.¹² The North Cau-

⁷ Abdurachman G. Avtorchanov, Marie Bennigsen Broxup, Marie B. Broxup (a cura di), *The North Caucasus barrier: the Russian advance towards the Muslim world*, London, Hurst, 1996.

⁸ Giuliano Bifolchi, «Panorama Geopolitico del Mundo Actual: Geopolítica del Cáucaso del Norte en clave rusa», *Didácticas Específicas*, vol. 19, 2018, pp. 112–119; Giuliano Bifolchi, *Geopolítica del Cáucaso ruso. Gli interessi e l'influenza del Cremlino e degli attori stranieri nelle dinamiche locali nord caucasiche*, Roma, Sandro Teti Editore, 2020.

⁹ Valery Dzutsati, «Seven Years After Attack on Nalchik, Trial of Alleged Perpetrators Grinds On», *North Caucasus Weekly*, vol. 13, fasc. 20, ottobre 2012, <https://jamestown.org/program/seven-years-after-attack-on-nalchik-trial-of-alleged-perpetrators-grinds-on/>; Elena Pokalova, *Chechnya's terrorist network: the evolution of terrorism in Russia's North Caucasus*, Praeger security international, Santa Barbara, Praeger, 2015.

¹⁰ Xuashen Zhao, «Rossija i ejo blizhnee zarubezh'e: vyzovy i perspektivy», *Rossija v global'noj politike*, s.d., <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/rossiya-i-blizhnee-zarubezhe/>.

¹¹ Fiona Hill, «"Russia's Tinderbox". Conflict in the North Caucasus And its Implications for The Future of the Russian Federation», Cambridge, Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government, 1995, https://ia801508.us.archive.org/2/items/DTIC_ADA301536/DTIC_ADA301536.pdf; Anna Matveeva, «The North Caucasus: The Russian Inner Abroad», in N. Petrov, *Bordeland in Transition*, Moscow, Moscow Carnegie Centre, 2000; Alexey Malashenko, *The North Caucasus: Russia's Internal Abroad?*, Briefing Vol. 13 (3), Moscow, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, novembre 2011, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/MalashenkoBriefing_November2011_ENG_web.pdf; International Crisis Group, *The North Caucasus: The Challenge of Integration (I) Ethnicity and Conflict*, Europe Report N. 220, Brussels, Belgium, International Crisis Group, ottobre 19, 2012, <https://d2071andvipowj.cloudfront.net/220-the-north-caucasus-the-challenges-of-integration-i-ethnicity-and-conflict.pdf>; Janusz Bugajski, *Conflict zones: North Caucasus and Western Balkans compared*, Washington, D. C, The Jamestown Foundation, 2014.

¹² «Strategija SKFO do 2025 goda», *Northern Caucasus Resort*, 2010, <http://krskfo.ru/44>; Vladimir Kolosov et al., *Local Modernisation Initiatives in the North Caucasus*, Institute of Geography RAS, 2016, <http://www.cascade-caucasus.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/D4.2-Local-Modernisation-Initiatives-in-the-Caucasus.pdf>; Alexey Gunya, *Building the Institutional Capacity of Local Communities in the Northern Caucasus: Opportunities to Improve "Good" Communal Governance*, ISSICEU Policy Brief 2016, aprile 23,

casus Federal District has witnessed a noteworthy improvement in its economic performance, marking a departure from the volatility that once defined the region. This positive trend resulted also into a substantial reduction in violent attacks against both civilian and military personnel, underscoring the developing dynamics in the North Caucasus.¹³

This research adopts a comprehensive and multidimensional method to investigate the intricate dynamics between the Kremlin's internal stabilisation strategy and the diverse ethnic landscape of the North Caucasus. The foundation of this study lies in a literature review, encompassing academic works, government publications, and expert analyses, to establish a robust understanding of the geopolitical context of the North Caucasus.

In a unique approach, this paper integrates findings from both open sources and the researcher's direct experience in the North Caucasus. The author draws upon their extensive expertise in geopolitics and a recent field visit to the city of Cherkessk in Karachay-Cherkessia, conducted in July 2023, during the Forum of the Indigenous People of the Russian Federation. This visit provided invaluable first-hand insights into the ground realities of the region, allowing for a nuanced analysis that complements and enriches information gathered from open sources. By amalgamating data from scholarly literature, government documents, and on-the-ground observations, this research aims to present an examination of the role that ethnic minorities and indigenous people have in the region, capturing both the theoretical underpinnings and the practical implications of the Kremlin's stabilisation efforts.

The Forum of the Indigenous People and the role of North Caucasian ethnic minorities

Last July 2023, the city of Cherkessk in the Republic of Karachay-Cherkessia hosted the Forum of the Indigenous Peoples of the Russian Federation. The Ekzekov Foundation, the International Association for the Promotion of the Development of the Abaza-Abkhaz Ethnic Nation "Alashara", the St. Petersburg Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Kunstkamera), as well as by the local government organised

2016, http://www.issiceu.eu/files/assets/research_and_publications/ISSICEU%20Policy%20Brief%20D1.5.pdf, pp. 1–8.

¹³ Kavkaz Uzel, «V I kvartale 2023 goda v hode vooruzhennogo konflikta na Severnom Kavkaze pogibli 7 chelovek», *Kavkaz Uzel*, aprile 5, 2023, <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/387466>; Kavkaz Uzel, «V hode vooruzhennogo konflikta na Severnom Kavkaze vo II kvartale 2023 goda ubito 6 chelovek», *Kavkaz Uzel*, giugno 5, 2023, <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/390298>; Kavkaz Uzel, «V III kvartale 2023 goda v hode vooruzhennogo konflikta na Severnom Kavkaze zhertv zafiksirovano ne bylo», *Кавказский Узел*, ottobre 4, 2023, <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/393113>.

the event which gathered experts and media representatives. The forum emphasised the importance of recognising the role played by both indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities in contemporary Russia, given their significant contributions to politics, economics, society, and the military.¹⁴

Organising such event in the city of Cherkessk was functional to the forum's goals. Indeed, the Republic of Karachay-Cherkessia serves as the most accurate reflection of the demographic and ethnic landscape within the Russian Federation. Its population is highly diverse, comprising Russians (33.6%), Circassians (11.3%), Abazins (7.4%), Nogai (3.4%), as well as Ossetians, Ukrainians, Armenians, Tatars, Chechens, Greeks, and Azerbaijanis.¹⁵

The participants highlighted the importance of the central government prioritising the preservation of indigenous peoples and their traditions. They contended these communities are integral to the history and socio-cultural evolution of the Russian Federation. Their presence reinforces the country's multicultural and multi-confessional essence, qualities that Moscow consistently stresses as a testament to successfully managing a heterogeneous nation, unlike the recent difficulties experienced in Europe.

Within this specific socio-cultural context, it is pertinent to draw attention to the establishment of federal national-cultural autonomy. This concept underscores the cultural and political autonomy of diverse national or ethnic groups within the Russian state. With the support of government funding, thanks to the federal national-cultural autonomy, these groups can operate their cultural and educational institutions independently, to a certain extent. As stated by Mussa Khabalevich Ekzekov, Deputy Chairman of the People's Assembly (Parliament) of the Republic of Karachay-Cherkessia, Chairman of the Higher Council of the Abaza-Abkhazian World Congress and President of "Alashara", in the North Caucasus, the Abazins or Abaza are registering a federal national-cultural autonomy and are engaged in systematic work to preserve local traditions, culture and language.¹⁶

These words hold significance when compared to the geopolitical context of North Caucasus, as previously described. Since the 1990s, the region has witnessed its initial regional crises, as well as the confrontation between the Russian central authority and local autonomies,

¹⁴ SpecialEurasia, «SpecialEurasia Visits the Republic of Karachay-Cherkessia», *SpecialEurasia*, July 21, 2023, <https://www.specialeurasia.com/2023/07/21/visits-karachay-cherkessia/>.

¹⁵ 'Karachaevo-Cherkesskaya Respublika', *Oficial'nyj sajt polnomochnogo predstavitelja Prezidenta Rossijskoj Federacii v Severo-Kavkazskom federal'nom okruge*, s.d., <http://skfo.gov.ru/district/kchr/>.

¹⁶ Giuliano Bifulchi, «North Caucasus Today: an Interview with Mussa Ekzekov», *Kavkaz Files ISSN 2975-0474*, vol. 20, fasc. 2, November 2023, <https://www.specialeurasia.com/2023/11/10/north-caucasus-mussa-ekzekov/>.

which culminated in the First Chechen War (1994-1996) and the Second Chechen War (1999-2009).¹⁷ Consequently, the initial state of local instability progressed into the emergence of armed militancy and local terrorism exemplified by *Imarat Kavkaz* (Caucasus Emirate) and *Vilayat Kavkaz* (Caucasus province) of the Islamic State.¹⁸

However, in recent years, there has been a discernible positive shift in the North Caucasus, marked by improvements in both local security and socio-economic development. This transformation represents a significant departure from the security challenges that characterised the region in the early 21st century, as well as in 2010 when the Kremlin established the North Caucasus Federal District (DFCN), distinct from the Russian Southern District (DMS). Notably, this district restructuring coincided with the hosting of the Winter Olympics in Sochi in 2014, underlining the Kremlin's commitment to addressing and managing the challenges prevalent in the North Caucasus.¹⁹

We can ascribe the significant enhancement in the region to Moscow's regional strategy, which integrates Russian and local special forces operations with extensive infrastructural and socio-economic development initiatives. A flagship initiative is the *Kurorti Severnogo Kavkaza* project, focusing on the development of tourist resorts in the North Caucasus. This project shows Moscow's effective governance of a region characterised by ethnic diversity, indigenous populations, and various religious denominations. Throughout history, these factors have led to challenges like the emergence of political Islam, ethnonationalist movements, and economic underperformance compared to national norms.²⁰

¹⁷ Ekaterina Sokirianskaya, «Ideology and conflict: Chechen political nationalism prior to, and during, ten years of war», Moshe Gammer (a cura di), *Ethno-nationalism, Islam and the state in the Caucasus: post-Soviet disorder*, London ; New York, Routledge, 2008, pp. 111–124; Aristidis Tsatsos, *Second Chechen War: Causes, Dynamics and Termination - A Civil War between Risk and Opportunity?*, SSRN Scholarly Paper, Rochester, NY, Social Science Research Network, novembre 3, 2014, <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2518687>; E. Pokalova, Chechnya's terrorist networkcit.

¹⁸ Alexander Knysh, «Islam and Arabic as the Rhetoric of Insurgency: The Case of the Caucasus Emirate», *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, vol. 35, aprile 2012, pp. 315–337; Elena Pokalova, «The North Caucasus: from mass mobilization to international terrorism», *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, vol. 28, fasc. 3, maggio 2017, pp. 609–628.

¹⁹ International Crisis Group, *Too Far, Too Fast: Sochi, Tourism and Conflict in the Caucasus*, Bruxelles, International Crisis Group, gennaio 30, 2014, https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1317686/1002_1391196745_228-too-far-too-fast-sochi-tourism-and-conflict-in-the-caucasus.pdf; Michael A. Reynolds, «The Geopolitics of Sochi», Foreign Policy Research Institute, gennaio 2014, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2014/01/the-geopolitics-of-sochi/>.

²⁰ Giuliano Bifulchi, «Tourism and counterterrorism in Russia: the case of Kurorti Severnovo Kavkaza», presentato al International Symposium of Advancements in Tourism, Recreation and Sport Sciences, Podgorica, 2018, pp. 27–37.

Conclusion

Looking at the North Caucasus, it is necessary to relate this region to the events in Ukraine. Since the onset of the Ukrainian crisis in 2014, and particularly following the eruption of the conflict in February 2022, the presence and growth of North Caucasian combatants within Kiev's volunteer battalions and the International Legion has been notable.²¹

Considering the international pressure against the Russian Federation represented by both economic sanctions and cultural events that aim to influence the internal Russian population, such as the Forum of Free Nations in PostRussia whose purpose is the discussion of how to promote the disintegration of the Russian state and the creation of several independent states ethnically,²² in the Russian geopolitical framework, both indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities become fundamental. Moscow must strive to achieve the dual objectives of safeguarding the autonomy and cultural preservation of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities, while also preventing the proliferation of ethnonationalism and the ideology of self-determination.

In the intricate interplay of the Eurasian geopolitical chessboard and regional security, it becomes imperative to closely monitor the activities of both Russia and external actors seeking to influence North Caucasian ethnic minorities and indigenous populations. The Kremlin, cognisant of the region's significance, has adopted measures such as organising events like the Forum of Indigenous People and establishing federal national-cultural autonomy. These initiatives are strategically designed to enhance relations with local populations in the North Caucasus, fostering a sense of connection to the central government. This approach reflects Moscow's commitment to mitigating historical challenges and integrating the diverse ethnic and indigenous communities into the broader fabric of the Russian Federation. Conversely, foreign entities, by supporting ethnonationalism and promoting events that advocate for self-determination within Russian territory, can exert pressure on Moscow and potentially contribute to internal instability. The spectre of disintegration, reminiscent of the events of 1991 that led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, looms as a potential consequence. The external promotion of ethnonationalist sentiments in the North Caucasus poses a risk of exacerbating existing tensions and could lead to a fracturing of the Russian

²¹ Giuliano Bifulchi, "Ukraine: foreign fighters and terrorist threat", *Geopolitical Report* ISSN 2785-2598, vol. 28, fasc. 1, February 2023, <https://www.specialeurasia.com/2023/02/05/ucraina-foreign-fighters/>; Giuliano Bifulchi, «Dagestan National Centre and the Battalion 'Imam Shamil'», *Kavkaz Files* ISSN 2975-0474, vol. 18, fasc. 5, September 2023, <https://www.specialeurasia.com/2023/09/19/dagestan-national-centre/>.

²² Free Nations of Postrussia Forum, s.d., <https://www.freenationsrf.org/>.

Federation. This duality underscores the delicate balance between internal cohesion and external influence, with the North Caucasus positioned as a focal point where these dynamics unfold.

In the current geopolitical landscape, a thorough and vigilant examination of the strategies employed by both the Kremlin and external actors becomes of paramount importance. This analytical scrutiny is crucial for comprehending the multifaceted impact of events like the Forum of Indigenous People and initiatives promoting self-determination, thereby providing nuanced insights into the evolving dynamics within the North Caucasus. This process causes a meticulous exploration of the potential consequences associated with these strategies, ranging from the prospect of reinforced integration into the Russian Federation to the potential emergence of destabilising forces that could pose a challenge to the territorial integrity of the nation. The intricate interplay of these factors underscores the need for a comprehensive understanding of the delicate balance between internal cohesion and external influences in the region.

Within this intricate regional context, it is imperative to delve into prospective developments, considering that a potential dissolution of the Russian Federation could give rise to many independent state entities. This scenario poses significant challenges, particularly as entities that once relied on Moscow's financial support must grapple with economic, geographical, and natural resource constraints in the absence of such help. The historical precedent set by the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, where a failed state experience led to popular discontent, civil unrest, and the propagation of criminal activities and jihadist propaganda, particularly in Muslim-majority regions like the North Caucasus, serves as a cautionary tale. Hence, a comprehensive understanding of potential future trajectories is indispensable for anticipating and mitigating the repercussions of such geopolitical shifts.

Furthermore, an exploration of the Russian model and initiatives such as Alashara or the Abaza-Abkhazian World Congress becomes essential in understanding efforts aimed at preserving the historical and cultural peculiarities of indigenous peoples or ethnic minorities within the structured state system of Russia. The possible success of this model not only holds the promise of ensuring greater stability within Russia but also emerges as a potential key in Moscow's cultural diplomacy in Europe. Particularly in those European countries grappling with challenges related to the coexistence of diverse ethnic and religious groups, the Russian model could offer insights and strategies for fostering harmony and integration.

This underscores the broader significance of studying these initiatives in the context of global cultural and diplomatic relations.



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