Policy Paper 2/2025

ETHNIC MINORITIES IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AFTER 2022

Navigating Kremlin Pressure, Diaspora Politics, and EU Legal Frameworks

Mira SEALES, Independent Researcher
Kélian SANZ PASCUAL, Head of Russian Affairs at Cassini

Eastern Academic Alliance

PROJECT 2022

Funded by the European Union

Project 2022 – Rebuilding Futures in Times of War and Repression

Project 2022 examines the consequences of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine for knowledge communities across Europe. As part of the Eastern Academic Alliance, funded by the EU, we work together with academics, students, activists, archivists, and educators from different disciplinary and cultural backgrounds. Our aim is to document and analyse the experiences and challenges faced by educators, students, and cultural workers in the contexts of war, violence, and political repression. These challenges include forced migration, interrupted careers and study paths, censorship, social and intellectual isolation, and jeopardized individual and social well-being. Our activities comprise research, mentoring, policy recommendations, and the development of innovative educational and research resources.

Principal Investigators

Dr Dina Gusejnova (London School of Economics and Political Science, UK), d.gusejnova@lse.ac.uk

Dr Dorine Schellens (Leiden University, the Netherlands), d.e.a.schellens@hum.leidenuniv.nl

Overview

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has profoundly impacted the experiences and political trajectories of ethnic minority communities in Russia. Disproportionate military conscription, suppression of cultural expression, securitisation of Muslim communities, and the racial profiling of Central Asian migrants exemplify how state violence and social exclusion of minorities converge in the post-2022 landscape. While official discourse continues to frame Russia as a multi-ethnic federation, minority rights and regional autonomy have been systematically eroded.

Yet this moment has also catalysed new forms of agency, particularly among diasporic and digitally connected activists. Emerging decolonial movements build upon, but also diverge from, earlier minority rights frameworks – interweaving demands for cultural preservation, environmental justice, gender equity, and sovereignty. Telegram channels, diasporic networks, and local protests – from Bashkortostan to Buryatia – have carved out spaces of resistance despite state repression.

For European states, engaging with these developments is not only a humanitarian imperative but a strategic opportunity to support anti-authoritarian and post-imperial futures. Such engagement must account for internal hierarchies within the Russian-speaking diaspora and remain attuned to the intersectional exclusions faced by non-Russian minorities – both within and beyond the borders of the Russian Federation.

Überblick

Russlands groß angelegter Angriffskrieg gegen die Ukraine seit 2022 hat die Erfahrungen und politischen Entwicklungen ethnischer Minderheiten in Russland tiefgreifend verändert. Die überproportoniale militärische Einberufung, die Unterdrückung kultureller Ausdrucksformen, die securitisation muslimischer Gemeinschaften sowie das Racial Profiling zentralasiatischer Migrant*innen zeigen, wie staatliche Gewalt und soziale Ausgrenzung von Minderheiten seit 2022 ineinandergreifen. Während der offizielle Diskus Russland weiterhin als multiethnische Föderation dargestellt, werden Rechte von Minderheiten und regionale Autonomie systematisch ausgehöhlt.

Gleichzeitig hat dieser Moment auch neue Formen von Handlungsfähigkeit hervorgebracht, insbesondere unter Aktivist*innen in der Diaspora und in digitalen Netzwerken. Aufkommende dekoloniale Bewegungen bauen auf existierenden Systemen für Minderheitenrechte auf, aber weichen auch davon ab, wobei sie Forderungen nach kultureller Bewahrung, ökologischer Gerechtigkeit, Gendergerechtigkeit und Souveränität miteinander verbinden. Telegram-Kanäle, Diaspora-Netzwerke und lokale Proteste – von Baschkortostan bis Burjatien – haben trotz staatlicher Repressionen Widerstandsräume geschaffen.

Für europäische Staaten ist die Auseinandersetzung mit diesen Entwicklungen nicht nur eine humanitäre Verpflichtung, sondern auch eine strategische Chance, eine antiautoritäre und postimperiale Zukunft zu unterstützen. Eine solche Auseinandersetzung müsste die internen Hiearchien innerhalb der russischsprachigen Diaspora berücksichtigen und sich der intersektionalen Ausgrenzungen bewusst sein, mit denen nicht-russische Minderheiten sowohl innerhalb als außerhalb der Russischen Föderation konfrontiert sind.

Contents

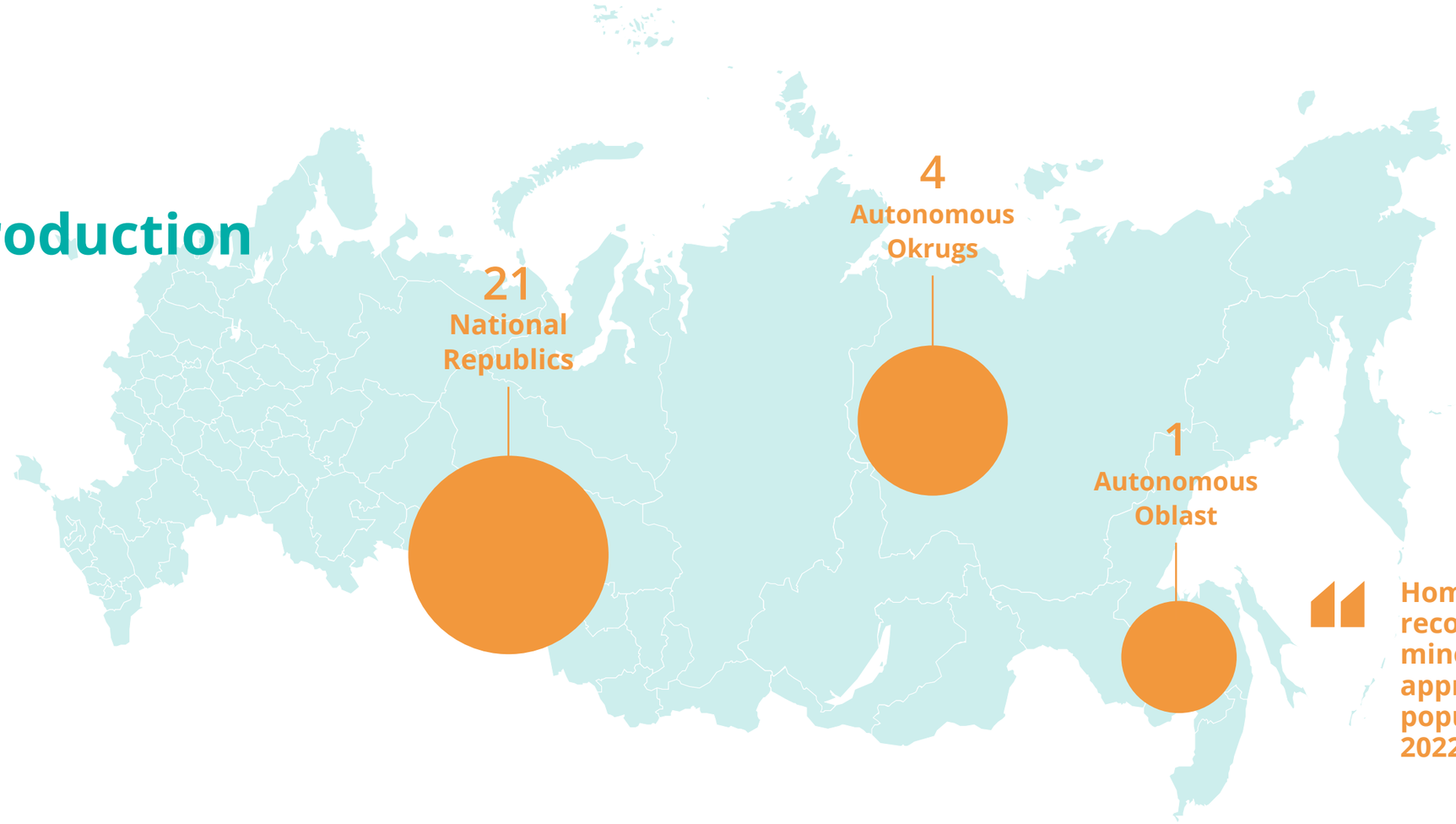
Overview 3
Überblick 4
Introduction 6
Historical Background: Imperial and Soviet Legacies 8
Ethnic Minority Identity as Intersectional Identity 12
- Class 13
- Religion 14
- Citizenship and Migration Background 16
- Conceptual Challenges 17

Post-2022: New-Old Forms of Activism 20
- Local Activism in Russia 21
- Digital Networks 22
- Decolonial Activism 24

Place Within Broader Russian-Speaking Diaspora in the EU 26
- Securitisation of Russian-Speaking Diaspora 27
- Internal Tensions 28

New Global Challenges since 2025 29
Conclusion 30
Policy Recommendations 32
References 34

Introduction



Home to over 160 officially recognised ethnic groups, minorities accounted for approximately 19% of Russia's population according to the 2022 census.

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 marked a profound rupture in the internal dynamics of Russian society. While a growing body of research – working within the constraints of limited and often unreliable data – has sought to assess the war's impact on the Russian population at large,[1] significantly less attention has been paid to how its burdens have been unevenly distributed across different communities within the Russian Federation.

As a federation, Russia includes 21 national republics, 4 autonomous okrugs, and 1 autonomous oblast – territorial units that host significant populations belonging to one or more ethnic minority groups. Home to over 160 officially recognised ethnic groups, minorities accounted for approximately 19% of the population according to the 2022 census, although the reliability of this data should be treated with caution due to methodological limitations and political sensitivities surrounding ethnic self-identification (Goble 2023).

The category of 'Russian' – referring both to citizenship (i.e. Russian passport holders, '*rossiiskii*') and to ethnicity (i.e. ethnic Russians, '*russkii*') – often obscures the country's considerable ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity. Crucially, it fails to capture the intersecting forms of marginalisation experienced by non-Russian ethnic minority communities, whose distinct historical trajectories and social positions shape their specific vulnerabilities. These include legacies of Soviet nationalities policy, evolving political identities, and overlapping experiences of discrimination – both within Russia and in exile.

In the coming years, these dynamics will become increasingly relevant for European policymakers. Russia was a member of the Council of Europe from 1996 and ratified key human rights instruments such as the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM). While Russia signed the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in 2001, it never ratified it (Prina 2014, 7). Following Russia's growing disregard for international norms in the last decade, these frameworks lost traction, culminating in Russia's formal withdrawal from the FCNM in 2024 (Council of Europe 2024). This has left ethnic minority communities within Russia with fewer international protections and recourse.

1. See, e.g., publications in the series Public Sociology Laboratory, "Russian Society in the Wartime," accessed July 21, 2025, https://publicsociologylab.com/en/projects/war-perception.html.

1 Historical Background: Imperial and Soviet Legacies

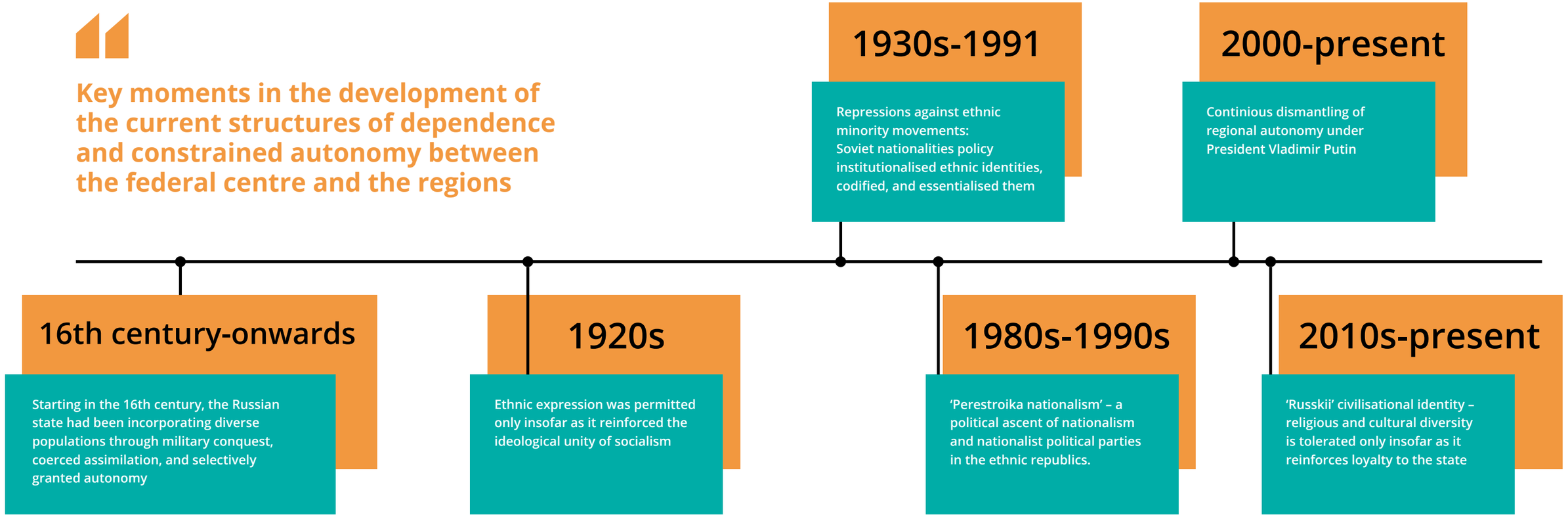
Understanding the present situation requires placing Russia's ethnic minorities – however broadly, given the limits of this report – within the *longue durée* of imperial governance, Soviet nationalities policy, and post-Soviet centralisation. Providing this historical context is important not only for tracing the structural and historically embedded patterns of state-minority relations, but also for understanding how these legacies continue to shape contemporary inequalities. Emphasis on imperial legacies – whether those of the Romanov Empire, the Soviet Union, or the more recent "neo-colonial" (Eymond-Laritaz) impulses of the current Russian regime – has become a central discursive framework for both Russian anti-establishment actors and foreign observers after 2022 (Lenton et al. 2025).

This framing, which resonates with global postcolonial debates and has been reinforced by Ukraine's strategic embrace of decolonial rhetoric (Ruyters 2024), offers an alternative to older narratives focused on post-Soviet transition or democratisation. It provides **a new lens** through which to understand the history of state violence, cultural erasure, and the contested politics of territorial control in the Russian Federation today.

The current structures of dependence and constrained autonomy between the federal centre and the regions are rooted in the expansion of the Russian Empire, which, from at least the sixteenth century, incorporated diverse populations through military conquest, coerced assimilation, and selectively granted autonomy. The ethnic and religious heterogeneity of these colonised peoples compelled the Russian state from early on to develop strategies that combined political control, cultural integration, and loyalty cultivation – sometimes coercively, sometimes through more subtle means, such as cooperation and co-governance. These historical practices continue to shape both structures of minority communities and their relationship with the federal centre (Kappeler 2014; Morrison 2016). A good example of such continuity is the enduring Muftiate structure, established in 1788 to oversee Russia's minority Muslim population.

Under the Soviet Union, the state rhetorically celebrated national diversity and institutionalised it through a system of republics and autonomous regions, granting selective rights – such as minority language education and cultural promotion – to the largest ethnic minority groups. Yet this model of "affirmative action" (Martin 2001b; Hirsch 2005) was tightly controlled. It was orchestrated in such a way that ethnic expression was permitted only insofar as it reinforced the ideological unity of socialism: "national in form, socialist in content." The *korenizatsiya* (indigenisation) policy of the 1920s and its successors empowered minority elites in different periods of the USSR's existence, but it was also just as sharply reversed in times of strategic necessity. Most famously this happened under Stalin, who deported entire

Key moments in the development of the current structures of dependence and constrained autonomy between the federal centre and the regions



ethnic groups on presumptions of collective disloyalty in response to the German attack on the USSR in June 1941 (Martin 2001a). Later periods also saw repressions against ethnic minority movements. More broadly, Soviet nationalities policy not only institutionalised ethnic identities but also codified and, to an important degree, essentialised them – producing durable frameworks that continue to shape both how minorities perceive themselves and how the state classifies and engages with them (Suny 2001; Weitz 2002).

The Perestroika era and the post-Soviet 1990s witnessed a brief resurgence of regional autonomy. Often described as 'Perestroika nationalism' (e.g., Giuliano and Gorenburg 2012), it was also the product of growing federalist movements embodied in the Congress of People's Deputies and other new political movements. During Boris Yeltsin's presidency, regions were famously encouraged to "take as much sovereignty as you can swallow" (Gabidullin and Edwards 2014). This period saw increased autonomy for some republics – Tatarstan, for example, negotiated its own constitution and established a presidency – while others, such as Chechnya, encountered the violent limits of this autonomy, leading to two devastating wars. At the same time, many regions – particularly in the Far East and the North – experienced little meaningful change in their status. They continued to function primarily as resource extraction zones, with limited political leverage or investment in local governance (Lenton 2023).

Since the early 2000s, President Vladimir Putin has systematically dismantled regional autonomy. The construction of a centralised "vertical of power" (Busygina 2024), marked by the abolition of gubernatorial elections and the erosion of regional legislatures, culminated in 2022 with the elimination of the last remaining 'presidential' titles in ethnic republics (Coalson 2021). This process – gradual, sporadically contested, yet largely unopposed, with the exception of some regions such as Siberia – has significantly weakened the mechanisms of regional self-governance, suppressed minority nationalist activism, and facilitated the passage of legislation that further restricts the rights of ethnic minorities. Non-Russian languages, along with grassroots efforts to critically reassess imperial and Soviet legacies, have been increasingly sidelined in education, media, and public discourse (Prina 2015).

The 2011–2013 Bolotnaya protests, which contested Vladimir Putin's return to the presidency, marked a turning point in the Kremlin's political trajectory. In their aftermath, the state escalated its repression of dissent, expanded the security apparatus, and initiated a broader ideological shift toward neoconservatism (Laruelle 2013; 2025). This shift entailed a gradual departure from the earlier – albeit already largely rhetorical – framing of Russia as a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional federation. In its place, the regime began promoting a more homogenising '*Russkii*' civilisational identity (Blakkisrud 2023; Laruelle 2016). Within this framework, religious and cultural diversity is tolerated only insofar as it reinforces loyalty to the state, conforms to a conservative moral order, and contributes to the struggle against perceived threats, ranging from domestic liberal opposition to the geopolitical and ideological influence of the 'West.'

2 Ethnic Minority Identity as Intersectional Identity

Photo: © Vladislav Efremov (2010)

The war in Ukraine has brought into sharp light the multiple, intersecting dimensions of identity among Russia's ethnic minorities. While often framed in terms of language, heritage, or political autonomy, the categories of ethnicity alone fail to capture how minority communities in Russia experience marginalisation today. Ethnicity frequently intersects with class, religion, and citizenship status – dimensions that are shaped by, but not reducible to, ethnic belonging.

Class

Members of certain ethnic minority groups in Russia are often concentrated in rural areas or regions distant from major urban centres. These communities tend to have lower incomes and limited economic mobility – structural disadvantages that mirror those experienced by many small-town and rural populations across the country, including predominantly ethnic Russian communities.

In other words, economic deprivation in Russia is not strictly correlated with ethnicity. Economically depressed regions, which depend on state funding for their survival, include both regions with sizable ethnic minority populations – such as Tuva, Chuvashia, and Karelia – and majority-Russian regions like Kurganskaia and Pskovskaia Oblasts.

Beyond these clearly disadvantaged areas lies a broader structural challenge: nearly two-thirds of Russia's federal subjects fall into a 'middle tier' of regions with no clear competitive advantages. These regions are marked by economic stagnation, low levels of investment, and minimal integration into global markets. The regional inequality that became entrenched by the late 1990s has remained remarkably persistent over the past three decades. At the opposite end of the spectrum is a relatively small group of economically advanced regions, including some ethnic minority territories, such as Tatarstan and Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug, that benefit from access to globally demanded resources like oil and gas or from the production of high-value semi-processed goods such as metals, petrochemicals, and fertilisers (Zubarevich 2022).

This structural landscape complicates claims that the Kremlin is deliberately using the war in Ukraine to target ethnic minorities for eradication. Research on disproportionately high conscription rates among ethnic minority communities since 2022 has consistently shown that these patterns are shaped less by ethnicity alone and more by intersecting factors such as poverty, limited employment options, and

rural isolation (Lenton 2022; Chernyshov 2025). In economically depressed regions, conscription is often driven by the lack of alternatives; in wealthier regions, it is incentivised by financial bonuses for signing military contracts (The Bell 2024).

Nonetheless, class-based disadvantages tend to manifest with particular intensity among ethnic minorities due to their historical and geographic marginalisation. First, the likelihood of conscription increases with distance from major urban centers – not only because of scarce employment opportunities, but also because remote areas are often assigned disproportionately high quotas for so-called 'voluntary' military contracts. Second, social control is more pervasive in smaller communities, where local representatives of state authority have greater capacity to monitor, pressure, and mobilise residents. As Yusupova's research demonstrates, these factors facilitate the enforcement of state agendas, including military recruitment (Yusupova 2025). Finally, belonging to an ethnic minority group also reduces prospects for career advancement within the armed forces, further compounding the likelihood of being assigned to frontline combat roles, and, by extension, increasing the risk of death (Driscoll et al. 2025).

Religion

Many members of ethnic minority groups in Russia also belong to **minority religious communities**. While Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism are officially recognised as "traditional religions," they remain subordinate to Russian Orthodoxy, which is framed as the spiritual foundation of the Russian state (Stoeckl 2020). Within this hierarchy, loyalty to the state has become a prerequisite for religious legitimacy. Religious difference is increasingly absorbed into a homogenising "traditional values" framework (Sibgatullina 2023b), under which all officially recognised denominations are expected to endorse conservative moral norms – and, since 2022, also the legitimacy of the war in Ukraine. In line with this expectation, many official leaders of minority religious communities in Russia have sought to justify the war by invoking theological narratives compatible with state ideology (Voloshinov 2024; Sibgatullina 2022).

Islam, in particular, has long occupied an ambivalent place within the Russian political order. During the 1990s and early 2000s, the North Caucasus experienced some of the most violent conflicts in its post-Soviet history - the so-called "Chechen Wars". During this period, Russian Federation forces fought the breakaway Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, which ended when Russia established control over the territory with a pro-Russian Chechen government. In October 1991, a few months before the official dissolution of the USSR, a referendum was held in Chechnya, with 90% of voters approving independence. In November 1991, Dzhokhar Dudayev, then head of the Executive Committee of the unofficial opposition All-National Congress of the Chechen People, proclaimed the Chechen Republic as independent. The First Russian-Chechen War (1994) began as a series of interventions against what the Russian government under Yeltsin saw as a secessionist regime. This was followed by the Second Russian-Chechen War (1999-2000), which was framed as a "counterterrorism operation," signalling a shift in state discourse from combatting nationalist separatism to fighting Islamic extremism. The legacies of these wars continue to shape Russia's securitisation and surveillance mechanisms applied to Muslim communities (Dannreuther and March 2010).

In the post-2022 context, the Muslim-majority republic of Chechnya – today governed by strongman Ramzan Kadyrov through a repressive, highly personalised regime closely allied with Moscow – illustrates the entanglement of religion, political loyalty, and militarisation. High male youth unemployment and a lack of civilian career opportunities have made military service one of the few viable paths for social mobility in the republic. This has contributed to the emergence and glorification of the so-called *Kadyrovtsy* special battalions, whose members are celebrated as loyal enforcers of both regional and federal power during the Russia-Ukraine war (Laruelle 2023, 7; Ratelle 2022).

Following the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the Kremlin identified a new-old internal enemy in **the Crimean Tatars** – a Turkic, Muslim ethnic group with a long history of persecution and displacement. Accusations of extremism have been used to justify intensified surveillance, arbitrary arrests, and broad restrictions on Crimean Tatar cultural and religious life after 2014. These measures have been reinforced through legislation banning certain religious groups, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, which has gained popularity among some Crimean Tatars and, while non-violent, is designated as a terrorist organisation in Russia (Radio Free Europe 2021).

The terrorist attack at Crocus City Hall in March 2024 in Moscow further intensified xenophobic and Islamophobic entiment in the country, particularly targeting Central Asian migrants, many of whom are Muslim. The state's response, marked by sweeping raids, detentions, and media scapegoating, has deepened the already-precarious position of Muslim migrant communities, blurring the line between counterterrorism and racialised policing (Human Rights Watch 2025).

Despite the state pressure, Muslim communities – like other segments of Russian society – have been deeply polarised by the war in Ukraine. While a significant portion appears to have remained silent or aligned with the state's rhetoric, embracing anti-Western narratives and even enlisting in the armed forces, others have voiced resistance. Some Muslim leaders and activists have framed the war as a conflict between Slavic-Christian nations in which Muslims have no stake (Laruelle 2023, 12). Similar divisions are evident among Russia's other religious minorities. In the Buddhist community, dissent has come at a high cost: a prominent

Buddhist leader was sentenced to eight years in prison for publicly condemning the war (Latypova 2025a). In the Jewish community, Moscow's Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt fled the country just two weeks after the invasion, following pressure from authorities to publicly support the war (Khanin 2023).

Citizenship and Migration Background

The war has also underscored the precariousness of citizenship for ethnic minorities with recent migration backgrounds. Individuals of Central Asian heritage – whether Russian citizens or not – are increasingly subject to racial profiling, arbitrary detention, and coercive pressure to enlist. These dynamics blur the line between internal and external 'others,' as the state's logic of suspicion and control targets racialised bodies irrespective of legal status (Human Rights Watch 2025).

As part of the broader war effort, Central Asian migrants and naturalised Russian citizens of Central Asian origin have become a focus of military recruitment campaigns. Authorities have reportedly used threats of deportation, revocation of residency status, and fabricated charges to compel individuals to sign military contracts. These practices further reveal the fragility of legal protections: ethnic minority representatives legally residing in Russia are subjected to marginalisation (Belyayev 2024; Tahir 2025), even as Moscow pursues an aggressive strategy of defending the rights of Russian-speakers and 'compatriots' abroad (see Section 4), by providing them with a simplified path to citizenship.

Photo: © Vladislav Efremov (2010)

Conceptual Challenges

Given the intersectional experiences of exclusion and marginalisation, many of the established terms used to describe Russia's ethnic minorities are increasingly being questioned. While often intended to expose inequality, several widely used concepts risk obscuring more than they reveal – flattening distinctions and masking power dynamics. As a result, experts, activists, and academics alike are seeking new vocabularies to better capture shared experiences and illuminate persistent hierarchies.

Ethnic minority: While certain patterns of marginalisation recur across Russia's many ethnic groups, their experiences of oppression, autonomy, and political visibility vary significantly. The term 'ethnic minority' as a catch-all category risks flattening these differences, obscuring the uneven impacts of state policy, and masking underlying economic, class-based, and geographic disparities.

Soviet and post-Soviet governance have produced hierarchical systems of recognition that further complicate this category. The term *korennye (malochislennye) narody* ("indigenous [small-numbered] peoples") is officially applied to small, often semi-nomadic communities in Siberia and the Far North, and is contingent on a population threshold of under 50,000 (Donahoe et al. 2008). In contrast, *titular nations* – ethnic groups granted republic status under the Soviet federal structure – occupy a more ambiguous position. While formally recognised as historically rooted nations with territorial claims, they are frequently marginalised at both federal and local levels. In many ethnic republics, ethnic Russians remain demographically dominant, weakening the political leverage of titular groups. Within these republics, *non-titular* minorities often face compounded exclusion, lacking both symbolic recognition and institutional protections. These layered hierarchies are further intensified by internal migration and the racialised dynamics of major urban centres like Moscow and St. Petersburg, where individuals from the North Caucasus, Siberia, or the Far East (North Asia) are routinely profiled and conflated with migrant labourers from Central Asia. In such contexts, formal citizenship offers limited protection against racialisation, everyday discrimination, and bureaucratic violence (Agadjanian et al. 2017; Roman 2002).

> **Finally, many of these terms rely on rigid classificatory criteria – such as language, appearance, place of birth, or ancestry – which risk excluding individuals with hybrid identities, including children of mixed marriages or those with urbanised, multi-ethnic backgrounds.**

The use of the term ‘ethnic minority’ and its derivatives is often, however, unavoidable – as reflected in this report – given the salience of ethnic categories in the Russian-speaking sphere for denoting inequalities linked to ethnic status, the prevalence of activist voices unable or unwilling to move beyond the ethnicity-based epistemology, and the international attention to ethnic minority mobilisation as a potential vulnerability of the current regime in Russia. Its use has never been neutral, and further discussion of possible alternative conceptualisations is needed.

Non-Russian or ***non-Slavic*** terms highlight the structural hierarchies that privilege the ethnic Russian majority. *Non-Slavic*, in particular, has become a potent lens through which to analyse increasingly racialised patterns of exclusion. Yet this framing is problematic in two ways: first, it defines minority identities solely in opposition to the dominant group, reinforcing binary thinking of ‘us’ and ‘them.’ Second, it homogenises ‘Russians’ into a monolithic and, importantly, an antagonistic bloc. This undermines the potential for horizontal alliances, for instance, across anti-war solidarities or advocacy for sexual and gender minorities, and shared political projects between minority and majority activist communities.

Colonised: While analytically powerful in foregrounding imperial continuities and structural domination in Russia, the term risks flattening the diverse and historically specific forms of colonisation that have shaped the Russian Empire and its successor regimes. When used in the grammatically passive voice, it can also strip communities of historical agency, obscuring moments of negotiation, resistance, and strategic accommodation between the coloniser and the colonised. Moreover, while invoking the global decolonial discourse enables valuable transnational comparisons between experiences of Russia’s ethnic minorities and communities elsewhere, it may simultaneously obscure regional particularities and locally embedded histories of struggles for equality and recognition.

These limitations underscore the need for more inclusive and relational terminology – language that centres shared experiences of marginalisation across diverse communities in Russia, while also gesturing toward solidarity, care, and political imagination beyond binary or oppositional frameworks. Depending on the context and intended goals, different terms – or combinations thereof – may be more appropriate, ideally guided by the self-descriptions preferred by the communities themselves.

3 Post-2022: New-Old Forms of Activism

Photo: © A.Savin, Wikipedia

In the aftermath of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine ethnic minority activism has taken on new forms, both within Russia's constrained civic space and across diasporic communities in Europe.

Local Activism in Russia

Despite the severe crackdown on civic activism, particularly since 2022, a range of local initiatives continue to operate within Russia. These efforts are rarely confined to ethnic minority identity-based advocacy alone. Instead, they frequently intersect with other spheres of civil society mobilisation, including environmental protection, legal assistance for detainees, and solidarity with displaced Ukrainians. In this context, the struggle for ethnic minority and language rights becomes intertwined with broader demands for justice, ecological sustainability, and anti-war resistance – reflecting the complex, multi-issue nature of contemporary local activism under authoritarian conditions (Chulmani and Darieva 2025; Terekhov 2023). As prior to 2022, minority actors' positioning within these social fields is shaped by a combination of structural constraints and personal inclinations. They may mobilise along ethnic or cultural lines when doing so provides access to material or symbolic resources, such as recognition, visibility, or community support, but often engage in cross-cutting coalitions when broader alliances appear more effective or politically viable (Prina 2024).

One of the most visible examples of this dynamic has emerged in the Republic of Bashkortostan. Over the past six years, the region has arguably experienced more sustained protest activity – and more intense repression – than any other part of the Russian Federation. While many recent protests have focused on defending local lands from mining and ecological degradation, the boundaries between environmental, regional autonomy, and broader political rights struggles are often blurred. In 2024, a new wave of demonstrations was sparked by the criminal prosecution of Bashkir environmental activist Fail Alsynov, who was subsequently sentenced to four years in prison (Shkel et al. 2024).

Ethnic minority activism in the post-2022 period has been met with increasingly harsh repression. Calls have circulated in official discourse for the creation of a dedicated "anti-separatism agency" tasked with identifying and suppressing minority rights demands (Shabashewitz 2024). The recent designation of certain ethnic

minority organizations as “extremist” and “terrorist” has dealt a serious blow to domestic grassroots networks and disrupted transnational ties between diaspora communities and those still residing in Russia (Moscow Times 2024).[2]

Despite its persistence under the authoritarian rule, regional activism within minority republics has attracted relatively little attention in international media and policy discussions. This is partly due to the inequality in media coverage (Latypova 2025b) and framing of such movements: protests organised in defence of land, language, or the environment are often dismissed as local, rather than recognised as forms of resistance to central authority. Moreover, the demographic reality that ethnic Russians often outnumber titular minorities even within their own republics contributes to the perception that these movements lack political traction (see further discussion in Section 4).

Digital Networks

The digital sphere has long been a critical arena for political mobilisation in Russia, used by both state actors and anti-establishment movements – particularly since the protest wave of 2011–2013 (Glazunova 2022).

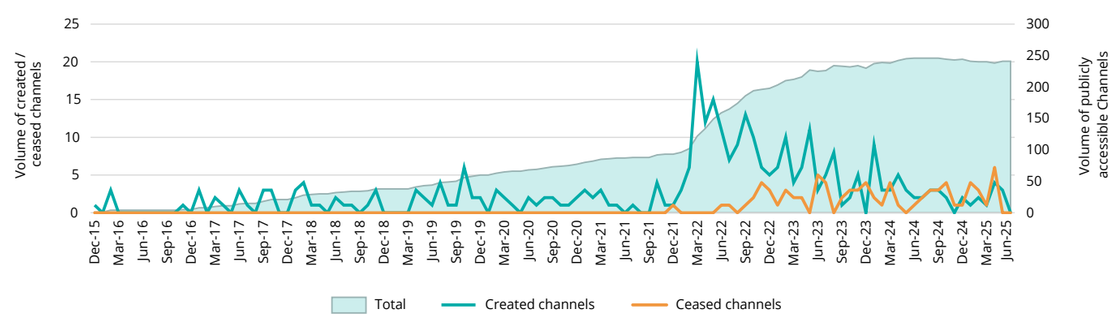
Unsurprisingly, the 2022 invasion of Ukraine has injected new momentum into digital activism. For ethnic minority communities, platforms like Telegram, Instagram, and, to a lesser extent, YouTube have become key tools for connecting geographically dispersed activists, coordinating strategies, and engaging in international advocacy. Social media channels, independent online publications, and informal networks have enabled diaspora actors to construct new discursive spaces for political critique – often in real-time dialogue with unfolding events inside Russia and across the post-Soviet region.[3] Since 2022, there has been a notable rise in digital platforms explicitly addressing the concerns of ethnic and racialised minorities.

2. The list of designated entities includes prominent activist organisations, such as “New Tuva,” “League of Free Nations,” “Association of Indigenous Peoples of the Russian Federation,” “Free Idel-Ural,” “Free Bashkortostan,” “Congress of Peoples of the North Caucasus,” “TatPolit,” “Irekle Chavash En,” “All-Tatar Public Center,” “For the Independence of the Republic of Mari El,” “Karelian National Movement,” and other associations.

3. See, for instance, online publication platforms like “Feminist Translocalities” (https://feminisms.co/ru/about) and “Beda Media” (https://beda.media/about).

Figure 1 below[4] illustrates these trends, focusing in particular on the proliferation of Telegram content organised around the notion of ‘decolonisation’ – a term that has increasingly come to serve as an umbrella framework for articulating intersectional minority rights activism (see next subsection).

Figure 1. Evolution of Russian Telegram channels promoting decolonisation of Russia



Several trends stand out:

2016–early 2022: Telegram channels promoting decolonisation grew slowly but steadily, indicating that such activism predates the full-scale invasion. Occasional spikes – e.g., around 2019–2020 – likely correspond to specific regional political events, such as protests in Khabarovsk (Golova 2021), Arkhangelsk (Radio Free Europe 2019), and Moscow (Oliynyk 2019). Channel closures (orange line) remained minimal, suggesting relatively stable activity and limited state interference.

Post-invasion surge (March–September 2022): A sharp increase in new channels is evident following Russia’s February 2022 full-scale invasion. The first spike in March coincides with the adoption of laws penalising the “discrediting” of the Russian Armed Forces (Al Jazeera 2022), which delivered a severe blow to the freedom of speech in the country. A second surge follows the September announcement of “partial mobilisation” (Picheta 2022), which affected many people in ethnic minority republics. The steep rise

4. Data for this study were compiled through a multi-step process aimed at identifying Telegram channels promoting decolonisation, primarily in the sense of defederalisation. The process included: (1) initial identification of channels referencing the “Free Nations of Russia” network via TGStat, with manual selection limited to those explicitly supporting separatism; (2) activity verification using public data, TGStat, and Telemetr.io, marking channels as “ceased” if deleted, inaccessible, or inactive; (3) cross-referencing with a broader dataset of 5,600 channels collected through the Turquoise tool, developed by the GEODE center, focusing on the top 10% most active due to API constraints; and (4) network expansion by analysing inter-channel promotion and alliance references. This yielded approximately 320 active or traceable channels. At least five could no longer be located and an unknown number were reportedly banned or shut down by Telegram or Russian authorities.

in total channels (green area) reflects both the entry of new actors and the rapid consolidation of decolonial discourse. While closures rose modestly, they were far outweighed by new channel creation – indicating strong momentum.

Mid–2023 onward: The number of channels plateaus at around 250. New channel creation slows (smaller green peaks) and largely responds to shutdowns of existing channels by Russian authorities, often on charges of sharing "extremist" or "terrorist" content. Other closures stem from moderation burnout or migration to other platforms. This phase reflects both the consolidation of the digital activist ecosystem and the mounting challenges of sustaining momentum under intensified surveillance, repression, and digital fatigue.

Decolonial Activism

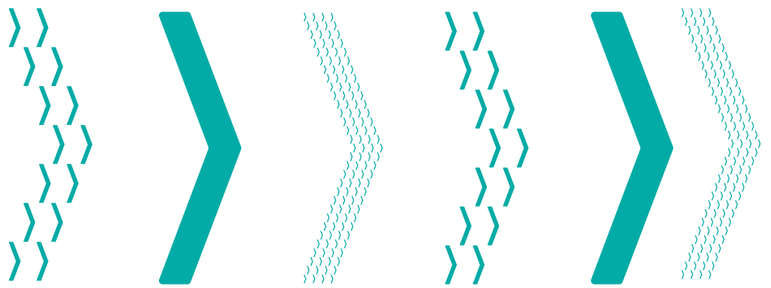
Since 2022, the decolonisation framework has emerged as a powerful language of solidarity (Lenton et al. 2025), linking groups across the Russian Federation with counterparts in former Soviet regions such as Central Asia and Ukraine. However, it is crucial to understand decolonisation not as a unified ideology, but as **an umbrella framework** that encompasses a broad spectrum of political goals and divergent interpretations of history, identity, and justice.

For geopolitical reasons,[5] international discussions have focused primarily on the understanding of decolonisation as de-federalisation (Byk 2023; Etkind 2022; also Shtepa 2024): the possible collapse of the Russian Federation along the borders of its existing federal subjects. However, even a cursory examination of digital rhetoric around the specific definition of decolonisation reveals important differences. While many channels, analysed in the previous section, speak openly in favour of independence along current administrative lines (e.g., Bashkortostan, Tatarstan), others seek to revive historical formations, such as Ingria (including Saint Petersburg and parts of Leningrad Oblast; Shtepa 2023), the Nogay Republic (Astrakhan region), or the Merya territories (linked to ancient Finnic peoples of the Upper Volga). Relations between these communities are equally diverse.

Some communities actively promote inter-regional alliances, while others endorse cooperation within broader frameworks such as "Post-Russia" (e.g., the Free Nations of PostRussia Forum or Anti-imperial Block of Nations)[6] or regional federations – particularly in Siberia, where confederative models are favoured over a patchwork of independent republics.

In this evolving landscape, the decolonial framework, thus, has not only partially replaced but also expanded earlier forms of minority rights advocacy that were prominent before 2022. These included post-Perestroika ethnic nationalism (e.g., in Tatarstan or Sakha during the 1990s), campaigns for minority language rights (such as opposition to the 2018 language law; Jankiewicz et al. 2020), anti-Islamophobia and anti-racism activism (especially in urban contexts), and civil society efforts to confront Soviet and – less frequently – Russian imperial state violence (Grigoryev 2024; Allemann 2017; Rebrova 2020).

Today, decolonisation refers to a diverse range of efforts to 'undo colonisation' – whether through political, cultural, or epistemic means. These initiatives span constitutional reform and calls for greater autonomy within the Russian Federation; full independence for certain ethnic republics; campaigns against ethnic and racial discrimination; projects to revive endangered languages, indigenous spiritualities, or artisanal traditions; the collection of oral histories and the processing of intergenerational trauma; and the development of care infrastructures in diaspora, including efforts that foreground gender, sexuality, and queerness within racialised minority communities.



5. For the discussion, see Chapter 4 in Lenton et al. (2025).

6. The "Free Nations of PostRussia Forum" and the "Anti-Imperial Bloc of Nations" are among the most well-known networks claiming to represent multiple minority communities in Russia. These platforms have received considerable public attention and have been featured in cooperation with EU and US institutions. However, their legitimacy has been contested by many ethnic minority activists. In particular, their advocacy for the defederation of Russia along the existing federal subject lines does not enjoy unanimous support among the communities they claim to represent.

4 Place Within Broader Russian-Speaking Diaspora in the EU

Photo: © t.me/activatica/46797

Securitisation of Russian-Speaking Diaspora

In the European Union, there is a marked tendency to homogenise Russian-speaking migrant populations under the broad label of 'Russophones.' This categorisation often subsumes diverse ethnic minority communities – such as ethnic Russians, Buryats, Kalmyks, Tatars, and Chechens, and even Russian-speaking Ukrainians – into an undifferentiated cultural bloc, erasing distinctions in identity, language, religion, and political positioning. The resulting lack of nuance has created tensions in countries like Germany, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, where historical experiences with Soviet rule and the presence of long-established Russian-speaking populations have heightened concerns over Russian influence and pro-Kremlin sentiment. These concerns are not unfounded: some migrants from earlier waves – particularly those who arrived during the Soviet era or in the 1990s – continue to follow Russian state media and may express nationalist or conservative views aligned with Kremlin narratives (Suslov 2018; Golova and Sablina 2024). Throughout Putin's rule, interaction with Russian diasporas abroad, i.e. 'compatriots,' has been an important part of the Kremlin's foreign policy strategy (Molodikova 2017; Fishman 2022).

At the same time, the post-2022 wave of political exiles includes individuals and groups who have faced persecution, imprisonment, or censorship for opposing the war in Ukraine and the Russian regime more broadly. However, the merging of these disparate migration trajectories has led to blurred public and policy perceptions. In some cases, this has resulted in restrictive asylum policies – such as the Baltic states' decision to suspend or deny asylum to Russian nationals – while other EU countries, including Spain, France, and Italy, continue to issue tourist and short-term visas to Russian citizens, regardless of their political stance.

This fragmented response reflects a broader failure to distinguish between different political profiles, ethnic backgrounds, and migration motives within the Russian-speaking diaspora – undermining both protection efforts and targeted engagement with opposition groups, particularly those from marginalised minority communities. Because humanitarian visa regimes vary across member states and are not centrally tracked like asylum applications, there is no accurate or comprehensive dataset reflecting the full scale of politically motivated migration from Russia to the EU (Shamiev and Luchenko 2024). National approaches also vary widely with regards to storing data on race and ethnicity (Farkas 2017), which further prevents shaping effective policies that address the needs of Russia's ethnic minorities in exile.

Internal Tensions

The Russian opposition and anti-war movement itself has never been a coherent or unified entity. Today, it comprises a wide range of actors and organisations, often divided by both moral-ethical disagreements and strategic differences. Contentious issues include debates over collective guilt, the extent to which sympathy should be extended to ordinary Russians affected by the war, the legitimacy of various means of resistance, and visions for Russia's future political order.

The post-invasion wave of emigration has brought together groups that – under more stable conditions – may not have chosen to collaborate or share platforms. This includes liberals, leftist activists, former government officials, civil society leaders, and newly politicised citizens. Yet for many exile-based organisations – whether led by ethnic Russians or minority activists – a common challenge lies in maintaining legitimacy among the domestic constituencies they claim to represent. This is particularly difficult amid ongoing state repression and severely limited channels of communication with audiences inside Russia (Sibgatullina 2023a). At the same time, all of these groups remain vulnerable to the 'long hand of the Kremlin,' continuing to face surveillance, intimidation, and attempts at silencing – even while operating from abroad (Kłyszcz 2025).

> **Prominent Russian opposition leaders have often failed to engage meaningfully with representatives of Russia's ethnic minorities. From the early days of the full-scale invasion, ethnic minorities have been sidelined and at times even been portrayed – explicitly or implicitly – as the primary perpetrators of frontline brutality (Gomboeva 2023).**

By 2025, little progress had been made in bridging the divide between Russia's liberal opposition and minority rights activists. Leading opposition figures such as Yulia Navalnaya (widow of Alexei Navalny) and Ilya Yashin (released from prison as part of a historic prisoner swap between Russia and Western countries) have been openly critical of the decolonial framework – despite its emergence, as noted above, as the primary discursive umbrella for advocating minority rights. They argue that such rhetoric artificially divides people who share a "common background and cultural context," and warn that calls for the dissolution of the Russian Federation "play into the hands of Putin's propaganda" by fuelling fears of national fragmentation (Idel. Realii 2024; Medunytsia 2024). As a result, many ethnic minority activists remain wary of what they perceive as lingering 'imperialist sentiment' within the liberal opposition. In response, they continue to develop and rely on their own support and mobilisation networks. While this does not exclude the possibility of individual alliances or cooperation with broader opposition circles, there is a clear preference for autonomous organising rooted in their own historical experiences, political priorities, and community needs.

Even within groups and networks that claim to represent the interests of ethnic minorities, there is no consensus on the means, steps, or forms of achieving minority rights. For example, the Free Buryatia Foundation – one of the first and most vocal

organisations to emerge in the months following the invasion – has focused on documenting the war toll among Buryats, providing legal aid to soldiers seeking to avoid conscription, and advocating for greater autonomy for Buryatia, understood as increased control over monetary and natural resources. By contrast, the Free Nations League, which also claims to represent Buryats alongside other ethnic groups, calls for the "genuine sovereignty of peoples and territories within Russia" (FNL 2025) – meaning full secession and the denuclearisation of the newly independent states.

New Global Challenges since 2025

In this fragmented landscape, the absence of a shared platform significantly weakens the Russian anti-war movement's ability to communicate effectively with Western donors. This challenge is compounded by shrinking resources. During Donald Trump's second term, budget cuts to US democracy-promotion institutions – such as USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy – have curtailed support for grassroots engagement, especially for groups working in exile.

The potential shutdown of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), announced by the Trump administration in March 2025, poses a further threat to the visibility of Russia's ethnic minority communities. RFE/RL's region-specific programs – *Sibir. Realii* (Siberia), *Sever.Realii* (the Far North), *Idel.Realii* (the Volga-Ural region), and *Kavkaz.Realii* (the Caucasus) – have provided critical platforms for voices from marginalised and underrepresented regions. These services, which broadcast in both Russian and local languages, have been vital for documenting regional perspectives, human rights violations, and indigenous cultural initiatives. Although EU funding has temporarily prevented their closure (Folkenflik 2025), the long-term sustainability of these programs remains uncertain.

5 Conclusion

Ethnic minority identity in Russia cannot be understood through a single lens – whether ethnic, religious, geographic, or political. It instead emerges at the intersection of imperial legacies, structural inequalities, and evolving forms of agency and resistance. The global ruptures of 2022–2025 and their effects on Russia's minority groups demand a deeper understanding from policy-makers and observers alike.

First of all, historical frameworks – shaped by the cumulative effects of Tsarist-era imperialism, Soviet nationalities policy, and post-Soviet centralisation – continue to define the boundaries of visibility and legitimacy. These legacies endure in the institutional hierarchies of the Russian Federation, the securitisation of Muslim and Jewish populations, the marginalisation of non-Russian languages, and the racialised policing of migrants.

Secondly, the war has sharpened the contradictions within Russia's multi-ethnic self-image. While official narratives continue to celebrate diversity rhetorically, federal policies simultaneously dismantle minority rights infrastructures and criminalise dissent. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine has acted both as a rupture and an accelerant: it has exacerbated existing asymmetries of power while galvanising new forms of political expression. Yet these emergent initiatives face mounting threats – not only from domestic repression, but also from shrinking international support for democracy-promotion programmes (including cuts under the Trump administration) and the rise of ethnonationalist tendencies, reflected in the growing influence of the political extreme right in the Western core.

Finally, in reaction to these developments, new diasporic and digital spaces have opened avenues for (decolonial) critique, enabling transregional connections between Buryats, Bashkirs, Chechens, Crimean Tatars, and others – and linking them to broader struggles in Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Ukraine. What is emerging is not a coherent movement, but a heterogeneous ecosystem of activism and resistance. It encompasses local protest, cultural revitalisation, online activism, diasporic organising, and calls for sovereignty or structural reform. To understand these developments, scholars, policymakers, and international observers must move beyond static conceptions of ethnicity and simplistic binaries of loyalty or opposition.

Policy Recommendations

For EU countries hosting members of Russia's ethnic minority communities, the post-2022 context presents both significant challenges and important opportunities. Thoughtful engagement can help strengthen democratic values, uphold human rights, and build resilience against transnational authoritarian influence. Targeted, inclusive, and sensitive policy responses are therefore urgently needed. For the EU, it is equally important to develop a comprehensive understanding of how global challenges affect different population groups originating from the former USSR and the Russian Federation.

1. Recognition and Visibility

- Promote research and data collection that complies with national regulations on the collection of sensitive data (such as ethnicity, religion, and political views), with a focus on disaggregating the Russian-speaking diaspora by ethnic background, religious affiliation, and regional origin. This approach would help avoid the homogenisation of migrants under the broad 'Russian' label and enable more targeted, inclusive policies.
- Ensure that asylum and refugee procedures are sensitive to the specific vulnerabilities of ethnic minority applicants, including experiences of racial profiling, religious persecution, and structural inequality. Advocate for the development of a harmonised EU framework for humanitarian visas to provide clearer and more equitable access pathways for those fleeing political repression.
- The EU and its member states should place greater emphasis on the personal safety of political migrants facing threats from the Russian state and provide support to help them safeguard against surveillance, intimidation, and subversion by Kremlin-linked actors.

2. Community and Cultural Support

- Provide funding and institutional support for initiatives aimed at preserving endangered minority languages, cultural practices, and historical memory – especially among younger generations in exile.
- Support diaspora organisations that encourage interethnic solidarity, civic participation, and community-based care, especially in contexts of displacement and trauma.

3. Strategic Partnerships

- Engage a variety of minority diaspora networks as partners in civil society programming, human rights monitoring, and anti-authoritarian advocacy.
- Facilitate platforms for dialogue and collaboration between ethnic minority groups, Central Asian diasporas, Ukrainian communities, and European institutions – recognising overlapping experiences of displacement, racialisation, and resistance.

References

Agadjanian, Victor, Cecilia Menjívar, and Natalya Zotova. 2017. "Legality, Racialization, and Immigrants' Experience of Ethnoracial Harassment in Russia." *Social Problems* 64, no. 4: 558–76. https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spw042.

Al Jazeera. 2022. "Russia's Parliament Approves Jail for 'Fake' War Reports." *Al Jazeera*, March 4. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/3/4/russia-prison-media-law-fake-reports-ukraine-war.

Allemann, Lukas. 2017. "Yesterday's Memories, Today's Discourses: The Struggle of the Russian Sámi to Construct a Meaningful Past." Arctic Anthropology 54, no. 1: 1–21. https://doi.org/10.3368/aa.54.1.1.

Belyayev, Dmitri. 2024. "War for Citizenship: Why Uzbeks Fight for Russia." *Eurasianet*, November 14. https://eurasianet.org/war-for-citizenship-why-uzbeks-fight-for-russia.

Blakkisrud, Helge. 2023. "Russkii as the New Rossiiskii? Nation-Building in Russia After 1991." *Nationalities Papers* 51, no. 1: 64–79. https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2022.11.

Busygina, Irina. 2024. "The Sources of Territorial Resilience in Putin's Russia." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 40, no. 4: 250–61. https://doi.org/10.1080/1060586X.2024.2351781.

Byk, Taras. 2023. "Is Putin's Russia Heading for Collapse like Its Czarist and Soviet Predecessors?" *Atlantic Council*, February 9. https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/is-putins-russia-heading-for-collapse-like-its-czarist-and-soviet-predecessors/.

Chernyshov, Sergey. 2025. "What the Data Says About Claims of Kremlin Targeting Ethnic Minorities." *Russia.Post*, May 23. https://russiapost.info/society/targeting_ethnic_minorities.

Chulmani, Yasin, and Tsypylma Darieva. 2025. "Russia's Ethnic Minorities and the Shrinking Scope for Activism." *Centre for East European and International Studies (ZOiS)*, February 26. https://www.zois-berlin.de/en/publications/zois-spotlight/russias-ethnic-minorities-and-the-shrinking-scope-for-activism.

Coalson, Robert. 2021. "Putin's Power Play? Tatarstan Activists Say Loss of 'President' Title Would Be an Existential Blow." *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, October 19. https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-tatarstan-president-federalism/31519341.html.

Council of Europe. 2024. "Council of Europe Body Regrets Russia's Withdrawal from the National Minorities' Convention: Millions Left Without Protection." *Council of Europe*, January 12. https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/council-of-europe-body-regrets-russia-s-withdrawal-from-the-national-minorities-convention-millions-left-without-protection.

Dannreuther, Roland, and Luke March, eds. 2010. *Russia and Islam: State, Society and Radicalism*. Routledge.

Donahoe, Brian, Joachim Otto Habeck, Agnieszka Halemba, and István Sántha. 2008. "Size and Place in the Construction of Indigeneity in the Russian Federation." *Current Anthropology* 49 (6): 993–1020. https://doi.org/10.1086/593014.

Driscoll, Jesse, David Sichinava, and Christofer Berglund. 2025. "Ethnic Stacking in the Russian Armed Forces? Findings from a Leaked Dataset." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 41 (3): 199–218. https://doi.org/10.1080/1060586X.2025.2484150.

Etkind, Alexander. 2022. "The Future Defederation of Russia." *The Moscow Times*, June 8. https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/06/08/the-future-defederation-of-russia-a77934.

Eymond-Laritaz, Thomas. n.d. "Russia's Invasion of Ukraine and the Worrying Neo-Colonial Paradox." *Diplomat Magazine*. https://features.diplomatmagazine.com/russia-s-invasion-of-ukraine-and-the-worrying-neo-colonial-paradox/.

Farkas, Lila. 2017. "Analysis and Comparative Review of Equality Data Collection Practices in the European Union: Data Collection in the Field of Ethnicity." *European Commission*. https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2838/447194.

Fishman, Diana. 2022. "Compatriots: How the Russian Diaspora Serves the Kremlin in the U.S." *The Insider*, November 9. https://theins.ru/en/politics/256825.

FNL. 2025. "Free Nations League", official page. Last visited July 31. https://freenationsleague.org/.

Folkenflik, David. 2025. "Trump Tried to Shutter Radio Free Europe. The EU Threw It a Lifeline." *World. NPR*, May 22. https://www.npr.org/2025/05/21/g-s1-68363/trump-tried-to-shutter-radio-free-europe-the-eu-threw-it-a-lifeline.

Gabidullin, Ildar, and Maxim Edwards. 2014. "Remembering Referendums: Tatarstan and Crimea." *Al Jazeera*, April 20. https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2014/4/20/remembering-referendums-tatarstan-and-crimea.

Giuliano, Elise, and Dmitry Gorenburg. 2012. "The Unexpectedly Underwhelming Role of Ethnicity in Russian Politics, 1991–2011." *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 20 (2): 175–88.

Glazunova, Sofya. 2022. *Digital Activism in Russia: The Communication Tactics of Political Outsiders*. Springer International Publishing.

Goble, Paul. 2023. "5 Million Fewer Than in 2010, Ethnic Russians Make Up Only 72 Percent of Russia's Population." *Jamestown*, January 10. https://web.archive.org/web/20230225214004/https://jamestown.org/program/5-million-fewer-than-in-2010-ethnic-russians-make-up-only-72-percent-of-russias-population/.

Golova, Tatiana, and Liliia Sablina. 2024. "Contested Diasporization in Wartime: Illiberal Mobilization of Russian-Speaking Migrants in Germany." *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 32 (4): 413–39.

Golova, Tatiana. 2021. "Mobilising for Regional Protest on Russian Social Media: The Case of Khabarovsk." *Centre for East European and International Studies (ZOiS)*, June 23. https://www.zois-berlin.de/en/publications/mobilising-for-regional-protests-on-russian-social-media-the-case-of-khabarovsk.

Gomboeva, Anna. 2023. "Russian Liberals and the Kremlin: Racism and Colonialism as Common Ground, Part II." *Jordan Russia Center*, December 22. https://jordanrussiacenter.org/blog/russian-liberals-and-the-kremlin-racism-and-colonialism-as-common-ground-part-ii.

Grigoryev, Grigory. 2024. “Collective Memory of Modern Dagestanis about the Local Heroes of the Russian Civil War: Heroic Narratives and Ethnic Identity.” PhD thesis, University of Helsinki.

Hirsch, Francine. 2005. *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*. Cornell University Press.

Human Rights Watch. 2025. “Russia: Xenophobic Crackdown on Central Asian Migrants.” March 17. https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/03/17/russia-xenophobic-crackdown-central-asian-migrants.

Idel.Realii. 2024. “Regional’nye dekolonial’nye aktivisty rasskazali, pochemu oni ne solidarny c rossiiskoi oppozitsiei.” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, September 4. https://www.idelreal.org/a/regionalnye-dekolonialnye-aktivisty-rasskazali-pochemu-oni-ne-solidarny-rossiyskoy-oppozitsiey-/33105626.html.

Jankiewicz, Szymon, Nadezhda Knyaginina, and Federica Prina. 2020. “Linguistic Rights and Education in the Republics of the Russian Federation: Towards Unity through Uniformity.” *Review of Central and East European Law* 45 (1): 59–91. https://doi.org/10.1163/15730352-bja10003.

Kappeler, Andreas. 2014. *The Russian Empire: A Multi-Ethnic History.* Routledge.

Khanin, Vladimir. 2023. “The Russian-Speaking Jewish Diaspora and the War in Ukraine.” *Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies*, July 11. https://besacenter.org/the-russian-speaking-jewish-diaspora-and-the-war-in-ukraine/.

Kłyszcz, Ivan U. 2025. “Distance Is Not a Shield. Russia’s Transnational Repression in Wartime.” *ICDS*, May 6. https://icds.ee/en/distance-is-not-a-shield-russias-transnational-repression-in-wartime/.

Laruelle, Marlene. 2025. *Ideology and Meaning-Making under the Putin Regime*. Stanford University Press.

Laruelle, Marlene. 2023. “Russia at War and the Islamic World.” *IFRI*, January 30. https://www.ifri.org/en/papers/russia-war-and-islamic-world.

Laruelle, Marlene. 2016. “Misinterpreting Nationalism: Why *Russkii* Is Not a Sign of Ethnonationalism.” *PONARS*, April 13. http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/PONARS-Eurasia/Misinterpreting-Nationalism-Why-Russkii-is-Not-a-Sign-of-Ethnonationalism-18105.

Laruelle, Marlene. 2013. “Conservatism as the Kremlin’s New Toolkit: An Ideology at the Lowest Cost.” *Russian Analytical Digest* 138 (8): 2–4.

Latypova, Leyla. 2025a. “Full Support or Quiet Resistance: Ukraine War Splits Russia’s Buddhists.” *The Moscow Times*, January 13. https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/01/13/full-support-or-quiet-resistance-ukraine-war-splits-russias-buddhists-a87585.

Latypova, Leyla. 2025b. “Pro-Democracy Resistance Is All Over Russia. You Are Made Not to Notice It.” *LSE Blog*, 31 July. https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/crp/2025/07/31/pro-democracy-resistance-is-all-over-russia-you-are-made-not-to-notice-it/

Lenton, Adam et al. 2025. *Decolonizing Russia? Disentangling Debates*. Cambridge University Press.

Lenton, Adam. 2023. “Echoes of Empire: Subnationalism and Political Development in the Russian Federation.” PhD thesis, George Washington University.

Lenton, Adam. 2022. “Who Is Dying for the ‘Russian World’?” *Riddle Russia*, April 26. https://ridl.io/who-is-dying-for-the-russian-world/.

Martin, Terry. 2001a. “Stalinist Forced Relocation Policies: Patterns, Causes, Consequences.” In *Demography and National Security*, edited by Myron Weiner and Sharon Stanton Russell, 305–339. Berghahn Books.

Martin, Terry. 2001b. *The Affirmative Action Empire Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939.* Cornell University Press.

Medunytsia, Oleh. 2024. “Il’ia Iashin, kak lider rossiiskoi oppozitsii, zaiavil o ‘vrednosti’ dekolonizatsii Rossii.” *Antiimperskii Blok Narodov*, September 24. https://abn.org.ua/ru/analytyka/ilya-yashin-kak-lider-rossijskoj-oppoziczii-zayavil-o-vrednosti-dekolonizaczii-rossii/.

Molodikova, Irina. 2017. “Russian Policy Towards Compatriots: Global, Regional and Local Approaches.” In *Post-Soviet Migration and Diasporas: From Global Perspectives to Everyday Practices*, edited by Milana V. Nikolko and David Carment, 143–161. Springer International Publishing.

Morrison, Alexander. 2016. “Russian Settler Colonialism.” In *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism*, edited by Lorenzo Veracini and Ed Cavanagh, 313–326. Routledge.

Moscow Times. 2024. “Russia Labels 172 Indigenous Groups as ‘Terrorist’ Organizations.” *The Moscow Times*, November 22. https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/11/22/russia-labels-172-indigenous-groups-as-terrorist-organizations-a87106.

Oliynyk, Kateryna. 2019. “Blood, Broken Legs, and Mass Detentions: 2019’s Moscow Protests.” *Russia. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, December 23. https://www.rferl.org/a/moscow-protests-2019-photos-detentions-blood-broken-legs/30330552.html.

Picheta, Simone, and Rob McCarthy. 2022. “Russia Announces Immediate ‘Partial Mobilization’ of Citizens, Escalating Its Invasion of Ukraine.” *CNN*, September 21. https://www.cnn.com/2022/09/21/europe/ukraine-russian-referendums-intl-hnk.

Prina, Federica. 2024. “Russia’s Minority Institutions, Ethnic Boundaries, and Social-Humanitarian Work: A Case of Collective Responsibility?” *Problems of Post-Communism* 71 (6): 531–43. https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2024.2304247.

Prina, Federica. 2015. *National Minorities in Putin’s Russia: Diversity and Assimilation*. Routledge.

Prina. 2014. “Protecting the Rights of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples in the Russian Federation: Challenges and Ways Forward.” *Minority Rights Group Europe*. https://primarysources.brillonline.com/browse/human-rights-documents-online/protecting-the-rights-of-minorities-and-indigenous-peoples-in-the-russian-federation-challenges-and-ways-forward;hrdhrd02092014003.

Radio Free Europe. 2021. “Russia Gives Four Crimean Tatars Stiff Prison Sentences in Hizb Ut-Tahrir Case.” *Ukraine. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, October 29. https://www.rferl.org/a/31535669.html.

Radio Free Europe. 2019. “Activists Detained in Russia’s Arkhangelsk After Landfill Protest.” *Russia. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, April 8. https://www.rferl.org/a/activists-detained-in-russia-s-arkhangelsk-after-landfill-protest/29868448.html.

Ratelle, Jean-François. 2022. “The North Caucasus and the Russian War in Ukraine.” *PONARS Eurasia*, October 13. https://www.ponarseurasia.org/the-north-caucasus-and-the-russian-war-in-ukraine/.

Rebrova, Irina. 2020. *Re-Constructing Grassroots Holocaust Memory: The Case of the North Caucasus*. De Gruyter.

Roman, M.L. 2002. “Making Caucasians Black: Moscow Since the Fall of Communism and the Racialization of Non-Russians.” *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 18 (2): 1–27. https://doi.org/10.1080/714003604.

Ruyters, Domeniek. 2024. “The Decolonial Glossary: A Platform for Critical Discourse on Decolonial Theory in Ukraine.” *Metropolis M*, June 4. https://metropolism.com/nl/feature/the-decolonial-glossary-a-platform-for-critical-discourse-on-decolonial-theory-in-ukraine/.

Shabashewitz, Dor. 2024. “Is Fighting Ethnic Activism the New Big Trend for Russia’s Authorities?” *New Eastern Europe*, January 31. https://neweasterneurope.eu/2024/01/31/is-fighting-ethnic-activism-the-new-big-trend-for-russias-authorities/.

Shamiev, Kirill, and Ksenia Luchenko. 2024. “Life in Exile: A New Approach to Russian Democrats in Europe.” *ECFR*, March 14. https://ecfr.eu/publication/life-in-exile-a-new-approach-to-russian-democrats-in-europe/.

Shkel, Stanislav, Anna A. Dekalchuk, Ivan S. Grigoriev, and Regina Smyth. 2024. “The Roots of Spontaneous Protest in Bashkortostan.” *PONARS Eurasia*, April 4. https://www.ponarseurasia.org/the-roots-of-spontaneous-protest-in-bashkortostan/.

Shtepa, Vadim. 2024. “OSCE Declares ‘Decolonization of Russia’ as Necessary for Peace.” *Jamestown Foundation*, July 17. https://jamestown.org/program/osce-declares-decolonization-of-russia-as-necessary-for-peace/.

Shtepa, Vadim. 2023. “Free Ingria Supporters Fight Against Moscow’s Imperial Ideology.” *The Jamestown Foundation*, November 29. https://jamestown.org/program/free-ingria-supporters-fight-against-moscows-imperial-ideology/

Sibgatullina, Gulnaz. 2023a. “Russian Political Exiles: The Challenges of Forging an Anti-War Movement.” *PONARS Eurasia*, January 5. https://www.ponarseurasia.org/russian-political-exiles-the-challenges-of-forging-an-anti-war-movement/.

Sibgatullina, Gulnaz. 2023b. “The Muftis and the Myths: Constructing the Russian ‘Church for Islam’.” *Problems of Post-Communism*, March 22, 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2023.2185899.

Sibgatullina, Gulnaz. 2022. “Russia’s Muslim Leaders on the Invasion of Ukraine: United in a Display of Loyalty, Divided in Competition for Power.” *PONARS Eurasia*, April 7. https://www.ponarseurasia.org/russias-muslim-leaders-on-the-invasion-of-ukraine-united-in-a-display-of-loyalty-divided-in-competition-for-power/.

Stoeckl, Kristina. 2020. “Russian Orthodoxy and Secularism.” *Brill Research Perspectives in Religion and Politics* 1 (2): 1–75. https://doi.org/10.1163/25895850-12340002.

Suny, Ronald Grigor. 2001. “Constructing Primordialism: Old Histories for New Nations.” *The Journal of Modern History* 73 (4): 862–96. https://doi.org/10.1086/340148.

Suslov, Mikhail. 2018. “Geopolitization of the Post-Soviet Diaspora in the Baltic Sea Region.” *Global Affairs* 4 (4–5): 521–35. https://doi.org/10.1080/23340460.2018.1535255.

Tahir, Muhammad. 2025. “Russia’s Shadow Army: Central Asian Migrants Are Dying in Ukraine.” *Atlantic Council*, June 20. https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/russias-shadow-army-central-asian-migrants-are-dying-in-ukraine/.

Terekhov, Yuri. 2023. “Kennan Cable No. 84: A Survey of Russian Grassroots Anti-War Resistance.” *Wilson Center*, October 25. https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/kennan-cable-no-84-survey-russian-grassroots-anti-war-resistance.

The Bell. 2024. “Russia Boosts Army Sign-up Bonuses amid Escalating Frontline Losses.” *The Bell*, October 16. https://en.thebell.io/russia-boosts-army-sign-up-bonuses-amid-escalating-frontline-losses/.

Voloshinov, Alexey. 2024. “Buddha Is with Us! How the War in Ukraine Has Changed Russian Buddhism.” *Global Voices*, August 21. https://globalvoices.org/2024/08/21/buddha-is-with-us-how-the-war-in-ukraine-has-changed-russian-buddhism/.

Weitz, Eric D. 2002. “Racial Politics Without the Concept of Race: Reevaluating Soviet Ethnic and National Purges.” *Slavic Review* 61 (1): 1–29. https://doi.org/10.2307/2696978.

Yusupova, Guzel. 2025. “The Mechanisms of Forced Military Enlistment amid the Intersections of Ethnicity, Rurality and Spatial Mobility in Russia.” *Mobilities*, 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2025.2512375.

Zubarevich, Natal’ia. 2022. “Regional’noe neravenstvo v Rossii.” *Econs.online*, January 25. https://econs.online/articles/ekonomika/regionalnoe-neravenstvo-v-rossii/.