

## **INSTABILITY RISK OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

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The Russian Federation is made up of 85 federal subjects: 9 krais (provinces), 46 oblasts (subnational entity), 3 federal cities, 1 autonomous oblast, 4 autonomous okrugs and 22 republics. All these federal subjects are included in 8 federal districts. As for the republics, they were national entities prior to being absorbed into the Russian Empire over the centuries. The Russian Federation replaced the Soviet Union, which in turn replaced the Tsarist Empire. They are thus national entities that have maintained a relative autonomy within the framework of Russia. These republics have their own constitution, flag, official language, and predominant religion, but have limited political sovereignty. The 22 republics have a total population of 26,343,950 inhabitants, which represents 18.11% of the total population of Russia. The failed secessionist attempt of the Chechen Republic, which led to two multi-year wars between it and the Federation, showed the geopolitical importance of these entities. Putin's perseverance in this internal war was due to the perception that the secession of one of the republics could drag others, putting at risk the unity not only of the USSR, dismantled in 1991 with the independence of the 14 Soviet republics, but with the emergence of a similar process within the Russian territory itself.

The complexity of the framework is evident in the religious diversity that exists among the republics. Eight are definitely Russian Orthodox Christian: those of Karelia (622,484 inhabitants, hereinafter only the number will be mentioned), Xiomí (840,873), Mari-El (682,333), Mordovia (805,056), North Ossetia-Alania (701,765), Udmurtia (1,513,044), Khakassia (537,513), and Chuvashia (1,231,117). Those that have Christianity and other traditional religions join the list: Altai (218,063) and Sajá (964,330). Those of Christian religion with a Muslim minority are Adygea (453,376) and Crimea (1,913,731), and of Christian and Buddhist religion, Buryatia (984,511). But the Muslim and Buddhist religions predominate in nine other republics. Those of a Muslim majority include Dagestan (3,063,885), Inguetia (488,043), Karachayev-Cherkesia (466,305), Tatarstan (3,894,284) and Chechnya (1,436,981). Those of Muslim religion with a Christian minority are Bashkortostan (4,063,293) and Kabardia-Balkaria (865,828). While the two predominantly Buddhist are

Kalmykia (275,413) and Tuva (321,722). In turn, the 22 republics belong to six of the eight federal districts, a greater political division. Six belong to the North Caucasus (172,360 square kilometers): North Ossetia-Alania (8,000 km), Kabardia-Balkaria (12,500 km), Ingushetia (3,000 km), Karachayevo-Cherkesia (14,100), Dagestan (50,300) and Chechnya (17,300). The district of the Far East (6,215,900) control Buryatia (351,300) and Sakha (3,083,523). In the Northwest (1,677,900) are Karelia (172,400) and Komi (415,900). In Siberia (5,114,800), a federal district bordering to the east with the Far West and to the west with the Ural, the republics of Tuva (170,500), Altai (92,600) and Khakassia (61,900). In the southern federal district (416,840) another three stand out: Kalmykia (76,100), Adygea (7,600) and Crimea (26,100).

To the Volga district (1,038,000) belong the last six: Mari-El (23,200), Mordovia (26,200), Udmurtia (42,100), Chuvashia (18,300), Bashkortostan (143,600) and Tatarstan (68,500). The two federal districts that do not contain republics are the Ural (1,788,900), which borders Siberia to the east and Northwest and Volga to the west, and the Central (652,800), where Moscow is located. Regarding the population density of each federal district, the largest is the Central (59.3 inhabitants per square kilometer), followed by North Caucasus (55.4), South (33.4), Volga (28.7), Northwest (8.2), Ural (6.8), Siberia (3.8), and Far East (1.0). Regarding its administration, each of these federal districts is governed by a representative appointed directly by the President of Russia. The complexity of the Russian political-institutional structure opens the possibility of generating a crisis of the national state of the Federation, in case of a defeat against Ukraine and NATO. Added to the federal districts to which the republics belong are the autonomous oblasts, krajs, autonomous okrugs and federal cities, which further complicate the political-institutional structure of the Russian Federation. The war in Chechnya showed the political and military impact generated by the attempted secession of a republic with 1,436,981 inhabitants, which is only 1% of the population of the Federation.

If autonomous and secessionist movements arose in this complex political-institutional system, created by the gradual expansion of the Tsarist Empire over the centuries, the consequences could be unpredictable. Perhaps this is the scenario that Putin considers the "risk to the existence of the Russian state." In the event of a NATO victory, the idea of demilitarizing Russia exists in planning cabinets. The experiences of Germany are clear: the partial

demilitarization after the First World War led to the Second World War, instead, the demilitarization and the division of the German state in two, one under US control and one under the Soviet, led to a stable solution, at least until today, three decades after the reunification of this country. The experience of Japan's post-World War II demilitarization has also left a positive outcome for peace. However, the situation in Russia today, in the event of a defeat, is perhaps more similar to that which took place after its defeat in the First World War: the fall of the Tsarist regime, the rise of the Soviets as a new political regime, and several years of civil war between the red and the white. The point is that a situation of anarchy in Russia today, with more than 6,000 nuclear weapons, raises serious questions for world peace.

In conclusion: Russia has a complex political-institutional organization, made up of 9 kraia, 46 oblasts, 3 federal cities, 1 autonomous oblast, 4 autonomous okrugs and 22 republics, within 8 federal districts; perhaps the republics are the entities that may be more prone to secession, as the Chechen war showed. The diversity of the republics is evident in that out of the 22, 8 are Orthodox Christian, 5 are Muslim, 2 are Buddhist and the other 7 show a more heterogeneous religiosity. Lastly, the demilitarization of Russia that NATO would impose in the event of a defeat, can lead to situations of instability, with a risk to world peace due to its large nuclear arsenal.