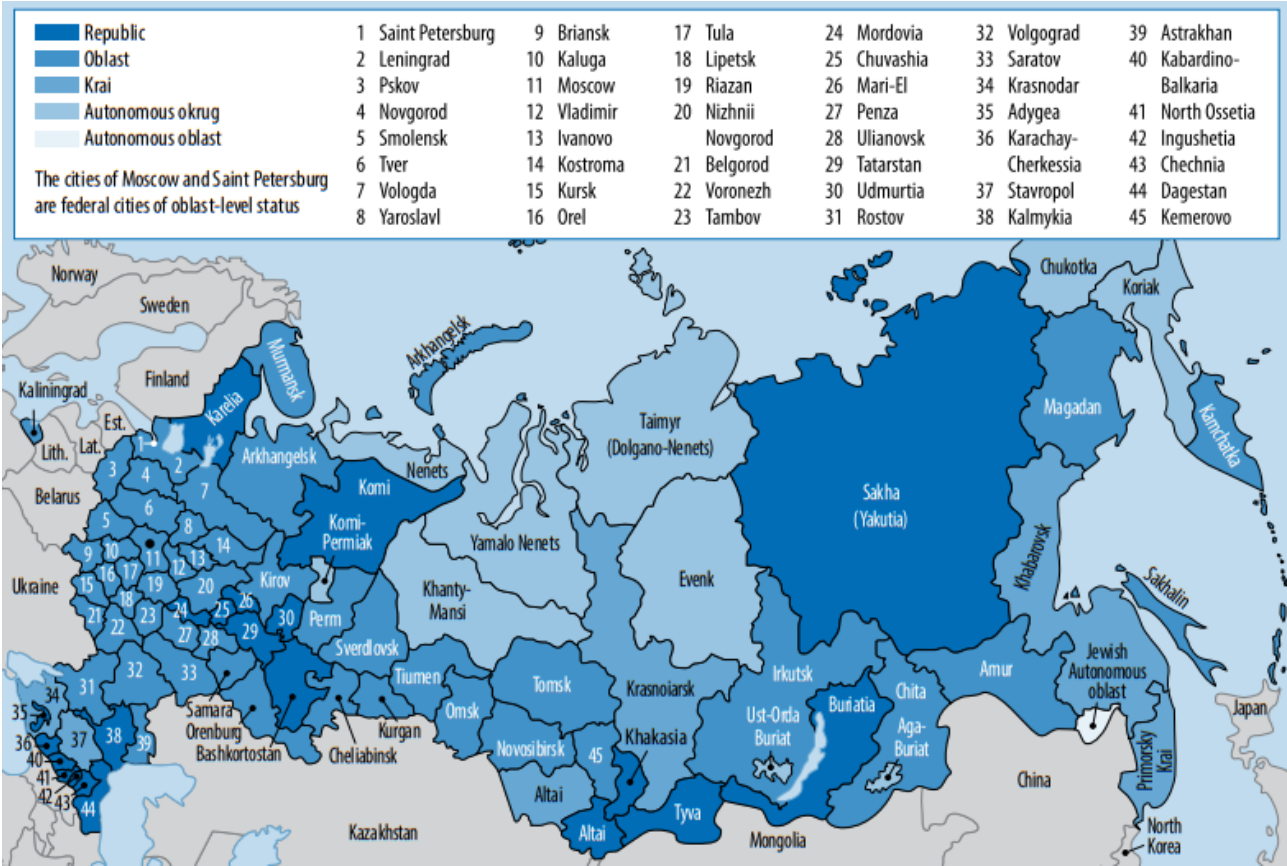


Monitoring of Regional Processes in the Russian Federation / June-August 2024

The non-governmental analytical center "Ukrainian Studies of Strategic Disquisitions" continues its long-term project of Monitoring Regional Processes in the Russian Federation.



The purpose of the study is to record and determine the dynamics of conflict-generating and disintegration factors that will contribute to the deconstruction of the Russian Federation and its disappearance as a geopolitical reality.

The object of monitoring is the information field of the Russian Federation. The analysis focuses on the most popular news stories from various regions of Russia each month, providing a clearer understanding of the internal processes occurring in the aggressor state and allowing for monitoring of conflict-generating regional processes.

Monitoring of Regional Processes in the Russian Federation June-August 2024

The situation in Russia continues to gradually deteriorate, with the central government losing control over events while maintaining information censorship. A defining feature of this period has been large-scale environmental disasters in the Republic of Karelia and military activities in the Kursk region, which have significantly weakened Russia's control over the area. Propaganda continues to operate actively, attempting to create a positive portrayal of the situation in the region.

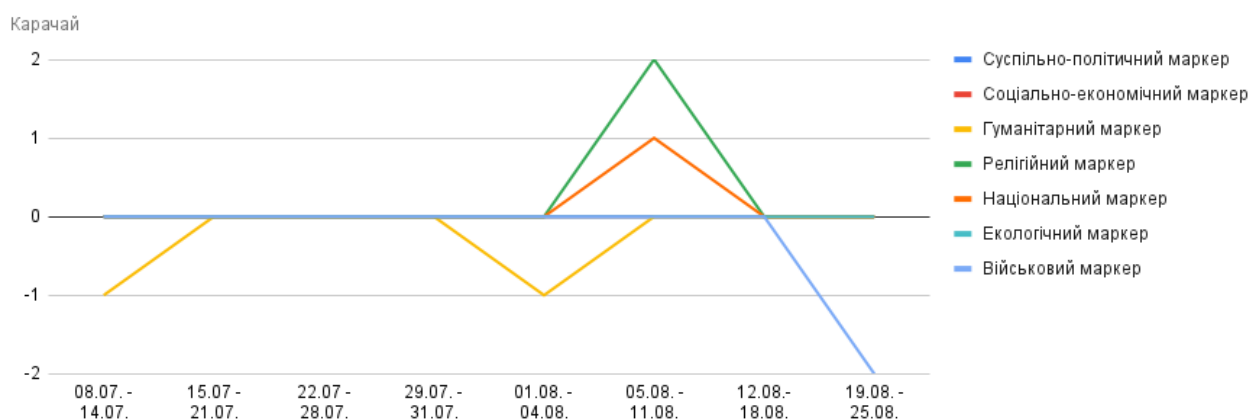
The official authorities are unable to cope with the influence of radical religious protest movements.

Before and after the armed actions of the Dagestani insurgents, meetings were held under the chairmanship of the presidential envoy, but their promises to improve the situation remain mere formalities. Real methods to counter the resistance movements are not demonstrated, as their development is a response to regional problems that Moscow fails to address and sometimes even exacerbates. Clan-based governance, corruption, economic underdevelopment, and a lack of prospects for the youth drive representatives of the oppressed peoples to seek solace in radical Islam and paths that lead away from the Russian Empire. The Russian-Ukrainian war only accelerates these processes.

The "Special Military Operation" (SMO) replenishes the "pantheon of heroes" **of the Karachay-Balkar** people, who have died for Moscow's interests.

The main "face" of this process is Karachay native Kanamat Botashev, a 63-year-old retired major general of the Russian Air Force and mercenary with the Wagner Group. His plane was shot down on May 22, 2022, over the Luhansk region. Afterward, Putin posthumously awarded the pilot the title of "Hero of Russia." The authorities of Karachay-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkaria actively use the "success story" of the dead mercenary to motivate residents of the republics to participate in the SMO.

Karachays are actively using ethnic festivals to solidify their dominant status in **Karachay-Cherkessia**.

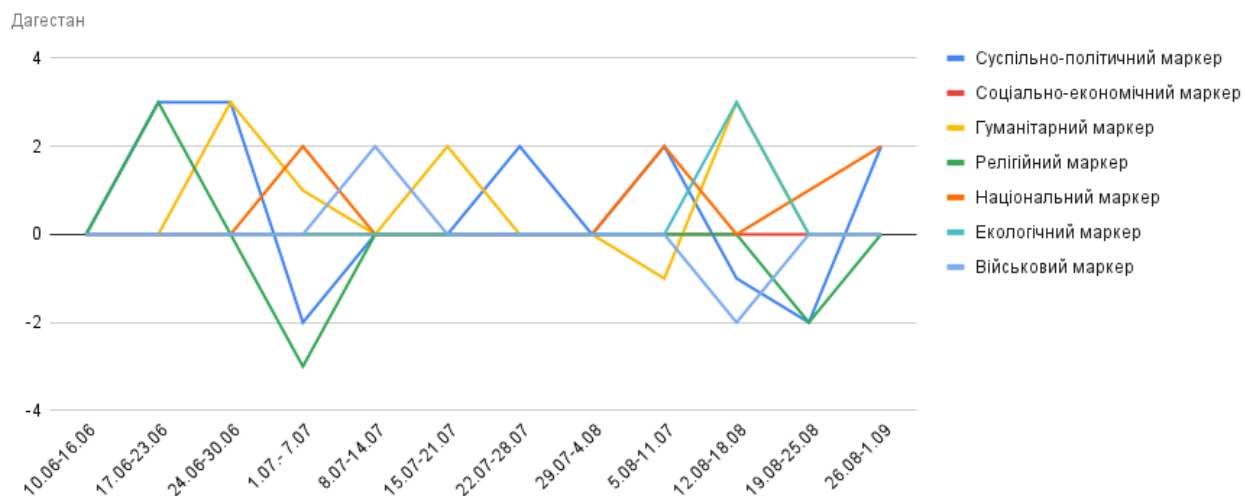


Ethnic festivals in Karachay-Cherkessia highlight the shift in the ethnic, and consequently political and economic, balance in the republic in favor of the Karachays, while other ethnic groups show little interest in participating in them.

The most influential religious figure in the North Caucasus, Karachay native Ismail-Haji Berdiev, has passed away. The official cause of death is complications from COVID-19 (did "SPUTNIK" not save him?). Berdiev was among the top 20 most influential Muslims in Russia and was arguably the most influential Karachay in the Russian Federation. Berdiev was an important agent of the colonial administration in the North Caucasus, a region where religious disputes between official pro-Kremlin Islam and the "grassroots" Wahhabi teachings are intensifying. The root of the issue is not theological differences but

rather the latter's opposition to Moscow, which risks erupting into a mass armed uprising of Caucasians against Kremlin power.

Dagestan



On July 17, power outages occurred in several districts of the Republic of Dagestan due to a failure at a nuclear power plant in the Rostov region.

On August 14, an explosion at a gas station in Makhachkala killed 35 people.

On August 13, heavy rains blocked three local roads in the Tsuntinsky district of the republic, and one temporary bridge was destroyed. As a result, residents of nine highland villages were left without transportation links, although the republic's government reports only five isolated settlements.

Southern and North Caucasian regions are among the subjects offering the largest one-time recruitment payments for the war against Ukraine. In Dagestan, the regional payment has increased fivefold, from 100,000 to 500,000 rubles. The governments of the North Caucasus republics report sending humanitarian aid to the residents of the Kursk region, where the Ukrainian army's offensive continues. In Dagestan and Karachay-Cherkessia, funds for assistance are collected directly from local residents.

On June 3, military attacks on Orthodox churches occurred in Dagestan, particularly in Derbent and Makhachkala, resulting in the death of the priest in Derbent. An attack on a synagogue caused a large fire, which was only extinguished at night, and the deaths of police officers and guards. There were no casualties at the synagogue in Makhachkala. Another shooting occurred near the Cathedral of the Assumption. The church's guard was killed. A shooting was also recorded in the village of Sergokala, located 65 km south of Makhachkala, where a police car was attacked.

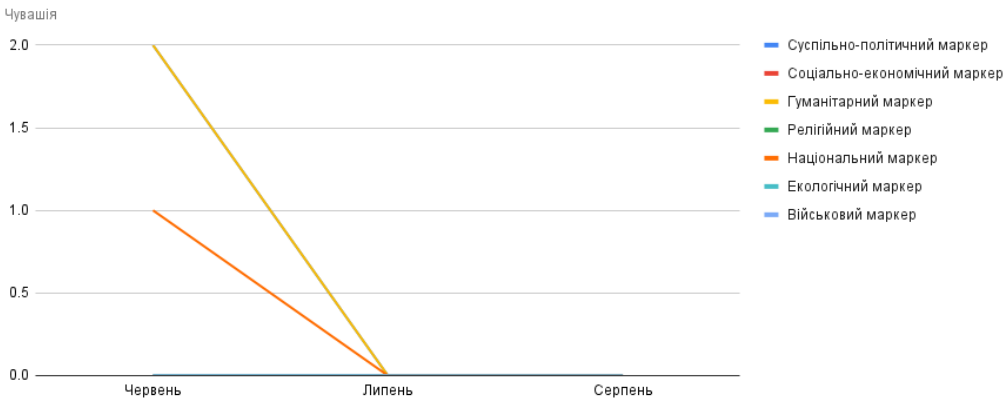
Five attackers were shot dead, including the sons of the head of the Sergokalinsky district of Dagestan, Magomed Omarov, who, along with their father, were members of the "Fair Russia" party.

On July 25, in Kaspiysk, three people barricaded themselves in an apartment, threatening an explosion, and were detained during a special operation. They claimed to have planned to act similarly to the June attackers, and the investigation believes they are connected to the

"Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamaah" religious movement. On August 12, three more people related to the incident were arrested, including Huseyn Abdulaev, Magomed Ramazanov, and Rashid Karibov, who all worked for the same transport company.

At the end of August, FSB Director Alexander Bortnikov stated that the terrorist attacks in Makhachkala and Derbent were carried out by radical Salafists. Presidential envoy to the North Caucasian Federal District Yuri Chaika also blamed Salafists for preparing an attack in Karabulak. Dagestan police are conducting arrests, with detainees pointing to the influence of emigrant preachers, although they cannot name them. This may be an attempt by Dagestani collaborators to preserve their status and avoid being sent to war in Ukraine.

Chuvashia



There have been no major changes in the region during this period. The illusion of an "active fight against corruption" continues to be maintained. Official news focuses heavily on ecology and tourism. Projects to improve and create new recreational zones are being developed, with significant attention given to the companies involved and their owners.

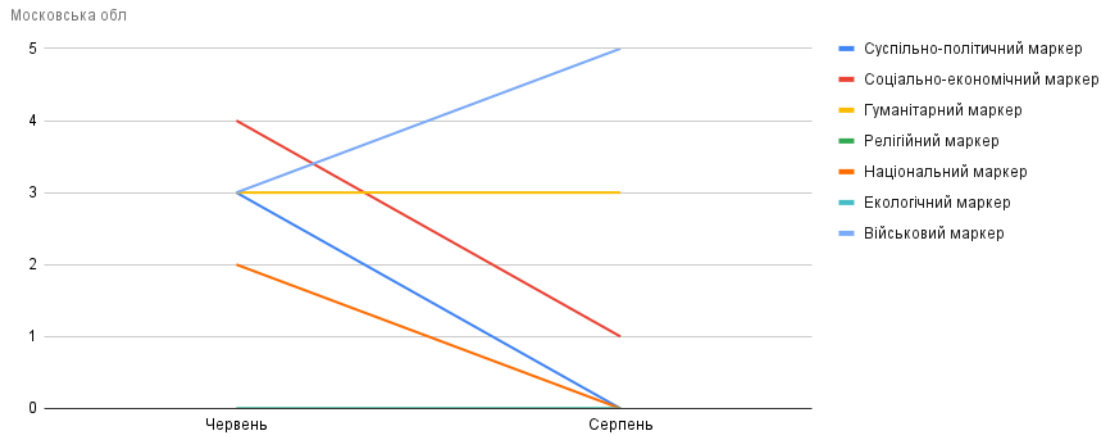
At first glance, Chuvashia seems to be doing fairly well, with developments in various sectors and efforts against corruption and misconduct. However, looking at unofficial news sources, particularly Telegram channels, one can observe rising public negativity and panic regarding the so-called Special Military Operation (SVO) and its participants. There are many reports about crimes committed by participants of the SVO upon returning home.

The opposition minority is also vocal against mobilization, with widespread condemnation of military recruitment efforts. Telegram channels are rife with messages like, "No amount of money is worth being killed for. Don't sign the contract." While these negative sentiments have not yet led to more decisive actions, they are unsettling the public.

If in the previous few months (May–July) there was an illusion of an active fight against corruption in Chuvashia, now there is an increasing focus on combating cybercrime. Much attention is being paid to schemes that defraud gullible citizens.

Both official and unofficial news sources frequently report on military actions in the Kursk region, particularly about humanitarian aid from Chuvashia's residents for refugees from Kursk. There is a noticeable rise in negative sentiments about mobilization and the state of the country.

Moscow Region



Throughout the summer, Moscow, Yaroslavl, Ivanovo, and neighboring regions began to suffer from the effects of anti-migrant riots. Certain types of goods started disappearing from stores and popular supermarket chains due to the exodus of cheap labor.

Another problem for Russia arose from the Kremlin's adventure in blocking or stalling Google and YouTube services. This led to widespread disruptions in Moscow court websites, banks, and Russian social networks and video-hosting platforms, which were supposed to replace the blocked services. Predictably, even those loyal to Moscow started to become outraged, and this became a conflict-prone process.

The situation with the persecution of dissent in Russia remains unchanged. Under the pretext of fighting foreign influence, the Kremlin not only arrests opposition figures but also discredits them in the eyes of the Russian public.

A significant event was the August exchange of political prisoners. Among those pardoned were Ilya Yashin, Vladimir Kara-Murza, Oleg Orlov, Ksenia Fadeeva, and Demuri Voronin. For the Kremlin, there were three notable wins from the largest prisoner exchange since the Cold War:

1. Genuine spies and murderers loyal to Moscow were released by Western countries.
2. It showcased Moscow's "goodwill" and alleged readiness for peaceful relations with the West to the Global South.
3. Some released and pardoned political prisoners are opponents of sanctions, loyal to Russia's territorial integrity, and advocates of non-violent opposition to the Kremlin.

The latter point reflects the increasingly active "witch hunt" in Russia. The Kremlin equates dissent with terrorism and extremism, making the victims themselves believe it, instilling a sense of guilt towards the people and their country.

The Kremlin acknowledges problems in education and science, particularly the ideological influence on the educational system, which leads to the marginalization of the youth. Key elements of the new Russian education system include war propaganda, trips to North Korea, and a focus on traditional family values. In science, there is a shortage of personnel

and dependency on the West, forcing Putin to order the recruitment of scientists abroad. This has already led to a decline in Moscow universities' international rankings.

Russia experienced the largest tax hike in its history. Driven by export issues, workforce shortages, and the impact of sanctions, this could have serious and destructive consequences. The populist element of this reform is an increasing tax, supposedly only for business representatives or Russians with very high incomes.

The disconnection of the Moscow Exchange from the dollar and euro caused a severe collapse in Chinese-Russian financial cooperation. The Chinese yuan was unable to meet demand, forcing Chinese state banks to distance themselves from Moscow, followed by banks and exchanges in Kazakhstan. To protect cross-border transactions, the Russian Central Bank began lobbying for legislative changes to allow international payments in cryptocurrency, indicating the critical state of Russia's financial system.

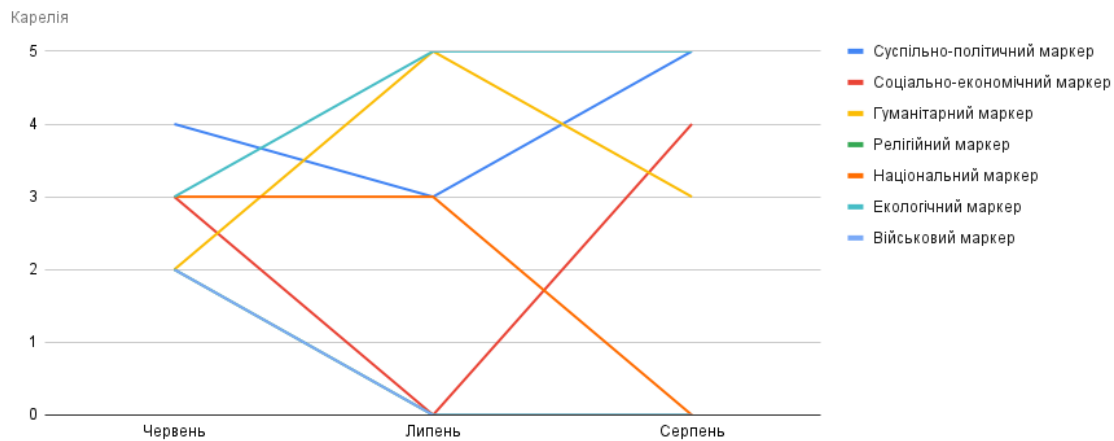
Russian investigative bodies and special services continue to purge the military, reflecting the erosion of the security structures that the Kremlin relies on. The resignation of the head of the FSB's Fifth Department and a corruption scandal involving the head of the First Department, along with the arrests of high-ranking officials, suggest that Moscow may be attempting to punish military officials linked to Shoigu for the Russian army's failures in Ukraine.

Overall, the picture demonstrates deep destructive processes eroding Russia from within, although the scale of these processes remains relatively small for now. However, considering the impact of sanctions and battlefield losses, these processes could become more comprehensive and damaging to Russian statehood.

The most important event in June was undoubtedly the lawsuit filed in St. Petersburg demanding compensation from Finland for the "genocide" against the Soviet people during World War II. This lawsuit is part of another complex geopolitical game by the Russian Federation. At the same time, Russia's Deputy Chairman of the Security Council, General Rashid Nurgaliyev, made broader accusations against Finland in the present, accusing the current Finnish authorities of intending to repeat the events of World War II. According to the Russian narrative, this refers to "aggression" and "genocide." Karelia, supposedly the site of camps where thousands of Soviet citizens died during the war, became the center of this latest pseudo-historical spectacle by the Moscow authorities.

The pseudo-judicial process aimed at condemning Finland for war crimes during World War II gained momentum throughout the summer. Karelia was the epicenter of Finnish occupation during the period in question.

Karelia

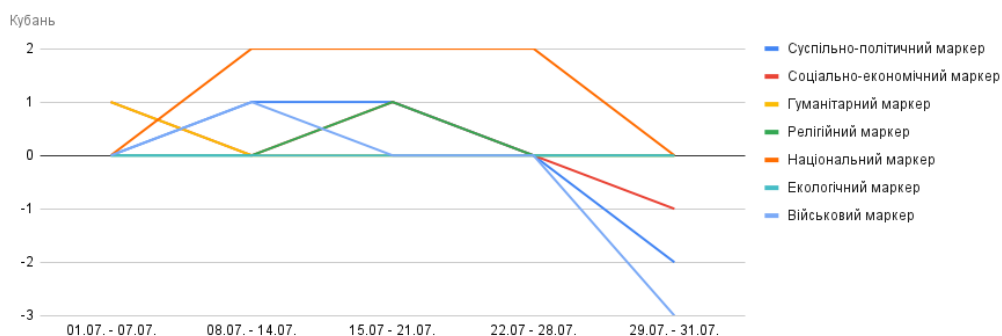


Russia's economic situation continues to deteriorate, including in Karelia. Amidst a growing budget deficit in the republic, dissatisfaction is rising over the region's "patronage" of occupied territories in Ukraine. The region is also experiencing trials for "discrediting the Russian army," yet this has not stopped the growing discontent with Moscow's aggressive war against Ukraine. Increasingly, there are calls to bring the mobilized soldiers back home, albeit under the guise of "protecting the borders from potential NATO aggression."

There are also religious persecutions in the republic, particularly targeting Jehovah's Witnesses. Environmental problems remain a major factor of public concern. On July 29, a temporary dam between the 10th and 11th locks of the Belomorkanal was washed away. As of the morning of July 30, a state of emergency was declared in the area. Nine people were injured in the accident, and a temporary shelter was opened for the victims in a local school.

The issue of drinking water quality remains. In Karelia, a concerning trend has been observed in the drinking water supply system. According to a recent report by Rospotrebnadzor, 78.9% of centralized water supply sources do not meet sanitary and epidemiological standards. However, local authorities have not responded to the problem.

Karelia is also home to Sandarmokh, a site of execution and burial of political repression victims. A few years ago, a military-historical society set out to prove that the people buried there were actually Red Army soldiers executed by Finns. The local court is now attempting to convict the Finns for these events again (some individuals were convicted of war crimes right after the war), and even renamed a holiday in honor of "liberating Karelia from occupation," adding a reference to the Finns in its name.



Slobozhanshchyna

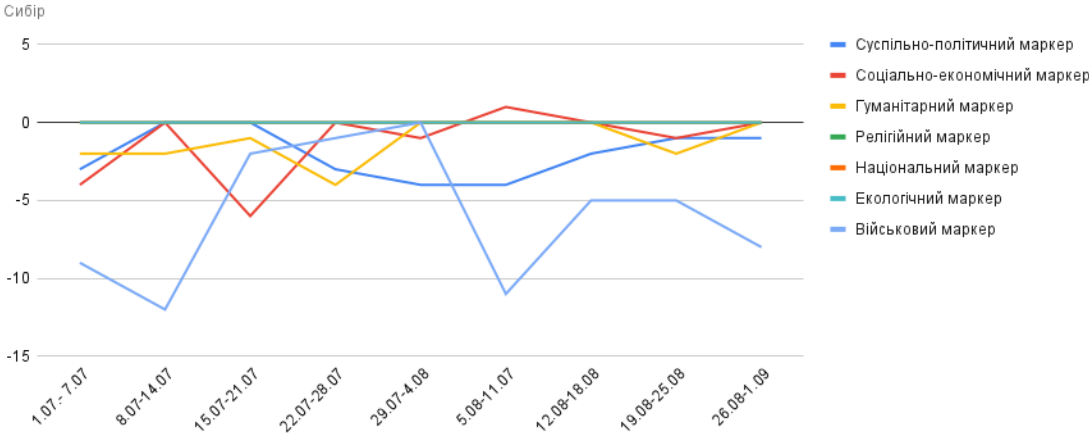
The combat operations and the recently launched offensive by the Ukrainian Armed Forces (UAF) in the Kursk region have noticeably shaken Russia's control over the area. The Kremlin shifts the blame for poor civilian evacuation preparedness and the worsening humanitarian situation onto local authorities.

There are reports of alleged annexation of border areas by Ukraine, which has been denied by the official authorities in the Sumy region. The local population does not support the UAF, but no public protests are observed. Frustration is growing regarding the inaction of the central government in Moscow, particularly the lack of troops, incompetent leadership, and the deteriorating humanitarian situation in border areas.

Propaganda attempts to create a positive image of the region's situation, frequently changing narratives—from initially claiming there were a hundred Ukrainian saboteurs, to later mentioning "300 militants," and now increasing the figure to a thousand.

The Russian army uses civilian vehicles, putting civilians at risk. VGTRK propagandist Yevgeny Poddubny was severely injured and is now receiving treatment in Moscow. Due to his film crew's escape, he was mistakenly reported dead. The exact extent of the UAF's advancement and successes is currently unclear. Sudzha and at least 11 other settlements are under UAF control. The number of prisoners is growing, with some sources reporting up to 300 Russian servicemen captured.

Siberia and the Far East



Martial law in Russia, even in remote areas like Siberia, is evident through the active involvement of local organizations. In July, the "People's Front" in Irkutsk collected hunting rifles for the Ministry of Defense, although their effectiveness against Ukrainian drones is questionable. Acts of sabotage have also been recorded, including the arson of relay cabinets and attempts to poison water for mobilized troops. Two teenagers were sentenced for attempted sabotage, one of which involved arson of relay cabinets. Another railway arson case is linked to the "Freedom of Russia" Legion, which also distributed leaflets in Krasnoyarsk.

This month, news surfaced about the opposition community "Omsk Civic Association," founded by Konstantin Borovoy and Mikhail Kozyrev. It was revealed that their internal passports had been annulled a year ago.

In June 2024, a court declared the organization extremist and banned its activities. In July, numerous cases of free speech suppression were documented in Russia. In Omsk, a city council deputy was sentenced to seven years in prison for Telegram posts about the destruction of Mariupol by the Russian army. Criminal proceedings were also initiated against 17-year-old Mikhail Petrov for a comment containing calls for terrorism. Another Omsk resident was sentenced to 5.5 years in prison for comments inciting violence against government officials. Denis Trufanov from Krasnoyarsk received five years for spreading false information, and Roman Tyurin was accused of repeated discreditation.

The lack of freedom of speech negatively impacts the creative community. Playwright Svetlana Petriyuchuk and director Zhenya Berkovich were sentenced to six years in prison for "justifying terrorism" through a play about Russian women who married Islamists. A concert by Slimus in Novosibirsk was canceled after a complaint by Mizulina regarding the group's negative statements about the war with Ukraine. An unknown group also disrupted a performance by rapper Kishlak in Omsk, though the reasons for the incident are unclear.

Russians facing imprisonment for crimes are still offered the option to go to war: in Priangarye, on July 30, Sergey Chonsky, accused of bribery, was released for this purpose; two similar offers were made to 62-year-old Olympic champion Andrey Perlov.

During the month, in addition to military events, several criminal incidents were recorded, including the beating of girls, kidnappings, murders, rapes, and serious offenses by officials. These include the murder of a six-year-old girl, an attempted murder of an infant, serial pedophilia, and rape among minors. A protest took place in Novosibirsk demanding an investigation into the abduction of a Chechen woman. Additionally, individuals were convicted for murder, bribery, and abuse of power, including the deputy head of the police security service and the former rector of a polytechnic university.

Environmental activism is growing in Siberian regions, with protests and petitions against harmful projects. Residents of Iskitim gathered over 6,000 signatures against the construction of a metal rolling plant due to concerns over increased emissions. In July, the State Duma considered a bill allowing clearcutting in the Baikal ecological zone, which was opposed by over 120 scientists and environmentalists urging its rejection. Residents of the village of Sheregesh also protested against deforestation, collecting over 600 signatures.

In July 2023, it became known that 52% of coal enterprises in Russia had become unprofitable, and coal production in the Kemerovo region fell by 5%. Minister of Natural Resources Alexander Kozlov reported that 85% of fires in Russia this year occurred in four Siberian regions. Employees of the company "Norilsk Nickel" were also accused of soil pollution amounting to 320 million rubles. One of the major global events in August was the prisoner exchange on August 1, 2024, involving seven countries. As a result of the exchange, 26 people were released, including former coordinator of Alexei Navalny's headquarters Ksenia Fadeeva and politician Vladimir Kara-Murza.

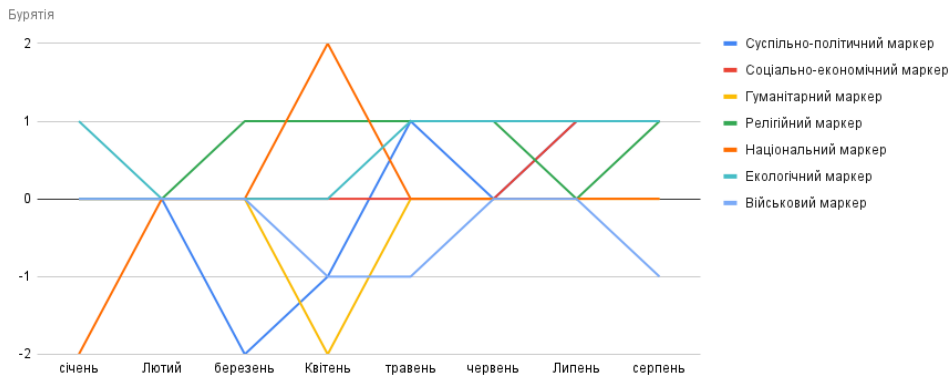
In January, news emerged about the military situation in Russia. Olga Romanova reported that over 40% of prisoners from Omsk colonies went to war with Ukraine, leading to a shortage of prisoners to send to the front. The Minister of Regional Policy of Novosibirsk proposed involving migrant children in the Yunarmiya for patriotic education. Payments for participation in the war in Siberia were significantly increased, and conscripts from the

Irkutsk region are being prepared for deployment to the Kursk region. In the Krasnoyarsk region, a monument to Stalin was unveiled, while a memorial to the founders of the Wagner Group appeared in Novosibirsk. As before, freedom of speech remains under threat. The desire to express dissent among Siberian residents manifests in various ways. For instance, in Zheleznogorsk, a man was detained for destroying posters advertising military service, and in Tomsk, an assistant to a deputy and his acquaintance were convicted for defacing banners. In Omsk, a court sentenced a man to six years in prison for "fakes" about the war, and a pensioner received a 1.5-year suspended sentence for anti-war comments. In Khakassia, a social worker was accused of anti-war posts on social media. These cases indicate repression against those who disagree with the official stance.

In addition to expressions of free speech, some residents have taken or planned actions against the Russian regime. A man from Irkutsk was sentenced to six years for planning to use money for "equipping the UAF." The Supreme Court of Crimea sentenced a man from the Tomsk region to 13 years and two months in prison for allegedly gathering and passing information to foreign intelligence services.

The FSB detained another man for collecting photos and videos of the work of one of the defense enterprises in the Omsk region to transfer them to Ukrainian intelligence. In Novosibirsk, a military officer was sentenced to seven years for confidential cooperation with a foreign state, without further details provided. At the beginning of August, an emergency was declared in 11 districts of Zabaikalye due to drought and crop failure amid high temperatures. This was followed by flooding in the region, which led to the evacuation of more than 100 residents. At the end of the month, massive wildfires broke out in Siberia, affecting about 200,000 hectares of forests, including 118,000 hectares in Zabaikalye. In August, numerous cases of corruption among officials were recorded. An FSB officer was sentenced to 11 years for bribery in Tomsk, and a judge from the same city received a suspended sentence. In Krasnoyarsk, the deputy head of "Krasnoyarsk Railways" was detained, and a former city council deputy was sentenced to 11 years for losses exceeding 600 million rubles. The head of the transport security department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs was arrested for fraud, and a district police officer from Uyar was found guilty of official forgery. The deputy general director of "Rosseti Siberia" was also arrested for accepting a 1.5 million ruble bribe.

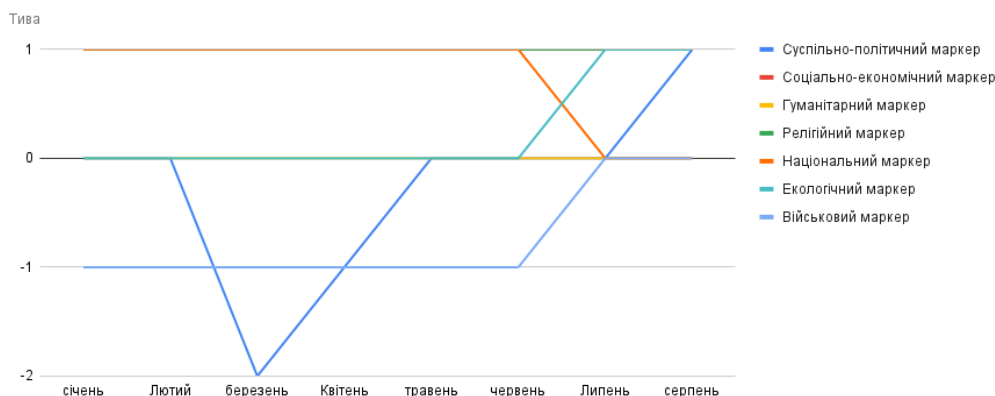
Buryatia



In the reporting period, Buryatia remains one of the most economically underdeveloped regions of the Russian Federation, with the regional budget debt increasing to 30 billion rubles and declining revenues. Republic head Alexey Tsydenov is managing the situation, but the main issue has been massive wildfires affecting hundreds of thousands of hectares, accompanied by forest visitation bans and a shortage of resources for their containment. In July, several significant events occurred in Buryatia. On July 16, an explosion at the Gusinozerskaya Power Plant left 115,000 consumers without electricity. Also, in July, a bridge over the Selenga River collapsed, worsening the condition of the bypass road. Residents of the villages of Enkhor, Bocy, and Tsagan-Usun appealed to the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation due to the inaction of the authorities, leading to an investigation being launched.

Spring-summer floods in the region destroyed 18 bridges, and their restoration could take up to a year and a half. As of August 7, contractor payments in Buryatia amount to 1 million rubles. The local one-time payment increased by 2.5 times. Every 13th man from Buryatia is already at war, with over 4,500 men sent as reinforcements to Kursk and Belgorod regions. Those who have returned from the frontlines are offered psychological support, which most of them refuse. The Ministry of Finance also denied Tsydenov's request for aid from the federal budget due to insufficient funds.

Republic of Tuva



Tuva is a region in Russia with low socio-economic development, a high crime rate, and significant male participation in the war with Ukraine. According to RIA "Rating," 17% of the population is on the verge of poverty. After the resignation of former Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu, a power struggle intensified in the republic between the clans of Vladislav

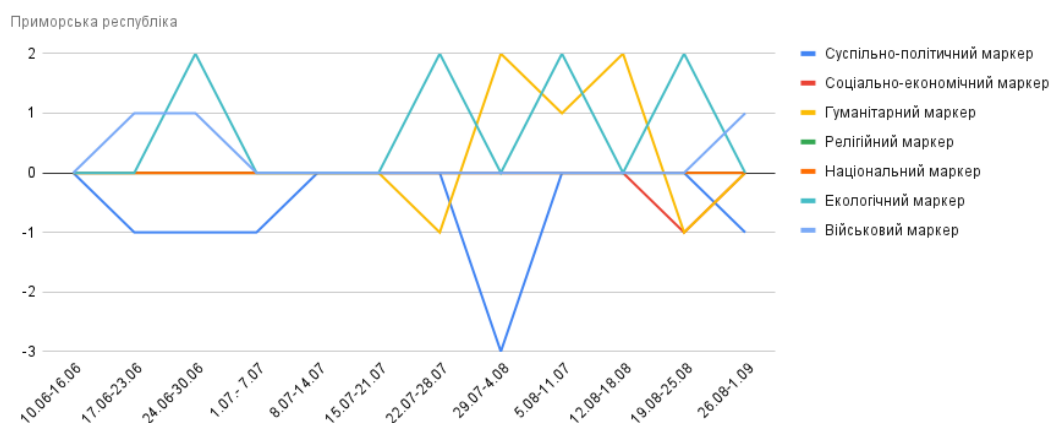
Khovalyg and Sholban Kara-ool, with Khovalyg consolidating his position. In July, several incidents occurred in Tuva: the poisoning of 19 children in a summer camp, the blocking of a bridge by residents of the village of Saylyg due to water problems, and the introduction of a state of emergency due to 32 forest fires in 11 districts.

Kalmykia



Kalmykia, a Buddhist region in the Volga region, faces severe socio-economic issues. Inflation rose to 9.38% in August, and the state debt reached 8.38 billion rubles. Utility rates and land prices have also increased. The authorities are dealing with massive power outages, and 90% of the water supply systems require repairs, leading to a shortage of drinking water. In July, 103 fires were recorded, and the region is one of the leaders in the number of road accidents. The head of the republic, Batu Khasikov, is attempting to be re-nominated for the position.

Primorsky Republic



In Khabarovsk, repressions against individuals accused of terrorism and treason continue. On June 17, a military court sentenced a 58-year-old man to 8 years in a penal colony for inciting violence against state authorities. On June 28, a worker in Blagoveshchensk was convicted for intending to go to Ukraine and join the RDK. On July 30, a case was initiated against a 48-year-old disabled man for justifying terrorism through comments about the Crimean Bridge explosion. Particularly troubling is the case of a 15-year-old student sentenced to 4.5 years in a juvenile colony for participating in a "terrorist organization" due

to videos involving arson. These events indicate an increase in the intensity of repressions in the region. In Primorsky Krai, a severe flooding problem arose during the summer, affecting 160 private homes and 918 adjacent properties in seven districts. On July 24, a state of emergency was declared due to heavy rains. On August 6, a dam burst in Dalnerechensk, cutting off transportation to five settlements for a week after August 12.

Issues with "SVO" Veterans

On September 1, 21-year-old former soldier Nikita Nosov, who lost his arm in the war with Ukraine, attempted suicide due to harassment by extortionists and lack of police assistance. Following his video appeal, the head of the Investigative Committee, Alexander Bastrykin, launched an investigation. In response to the situation in Primorsky Krai, local authorities began forming security squads from veterans, including the "Tiger-Law and Order" squad in Vladivostok, which is intended to maintain order alongside the police and the Russian Guard. This initiative aims to socialize veterans and regulate the behavior of migrant workers. Despite the low intensity of political struggles during the summer season, the repression system is gaining momentum, with frequent accusations of cooperation with Ukraine. At the same time, a key factor in public distrust remains the environmental situation and the authorities' inability to respond swiftly to floods.

List of Authors

Yuriy Syrotyuk
Yuriy Oliylyuk
Mykhailo Kubliy
Ivan Yaniuk
Oleksandr Chupak
Mykola Volhov
Olena Makovetska
Marta Kolesnik
Andriy Mykhailichenko
Yuliya Hryshyna
Anna Nedashkivska
Daria Shapoval
Mykhailo Tsyurulnyk