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**MIGRATION PROCESSES IN THE CHECHEN REPUBLIC AT  
THE TURN OF XX CENTURY**

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*Abstract*

In the 1990s and first decade of the twenty-first century, Chechens and other peoples left the republic for other Russian regions and foreign countries. Before, the main factors of migration were labor redundancy and lack of land resources. In the twentieth century, the large-scale and intensive migration was caused by stress factors: political instability, military actions, struggle of the federal government against separatism and counter-terrorism, economic decline, etc. Counter-terrorist activities which began in 1999 brought an end to ethnic cleansing of the republic – different peoples left the republic, and only Chechens returned. Even the Ingush did not really want to return and settled in Ingushetia. By this time, large-scale mono-ethnicization of Chechnya had been completed. It is crucial for successful adaptation of migrants to determine the social situation for themselves in their adaptive region or country. Having been granted a refugee status in Europe, being under the protection of European laws, Chechens do not forget their traditions and culture. Chechens consider numerous foreign diasporas as a threat to the Chechen nation or as a unique tool for integrating the Chechen Republic into the outside world, a factor of globalization.

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**Keywords:** Migration, internal repatriation, Chechen diaspora, adaptation, multiculturalism, revival of polyethnicity.



## 1. Introduction

Transformation of the Soviet system was particularly acute in the Chechen Republic. In the 1990s, it turned into a bridgehead against separatism and international terrorism. The ethnosocial and demographic picture of modern Chechnya has resulted from these events. Degradation of the social sphere, decrease in income and living standards in the early 1990s caused inter-ethnic tensions and outflow of the Russian-speaking population. Military operations made thousands of people leave the Chechen Republic.

**Table 01.** Ethnic population structure of the Chechen Republic in 2002-2010 (All-Russian census data)

Ethnos	2002		2010	
	Population number, 100 K people	Population number, %	Population number, 100 K people	Population number, %
Chechens	1031	93.5	1206.6	95.3
Russians	40.6	3.9	24.4	1.9
Kumyks	8.9	0.9	12.2	1.0
Avars	4.1	0.4	4.86	0.4
Nogais	3.6	0.3	3.44	0.3
Tabasarans	–	–	1.65	0.1
Tatars	2.1	0.2	1.47	0.1
Turks	1.7	0.09	1.48	0.1
Ingush	2.9	0.3	1.29	0.1
Other	–	–	9.1	0.7

## 2. Problem Statement

It is necessary to study ethnosocial processes in the Chechen Republic in the 1990s and first decade of the 2000s. Social interactions of migrants and host societies as well as the problem of integration of migrants into the cultural and legal field of countries and recipient regions are of great interest.

## 3. Research Questions

Ethnopolitical development of Chechnya, formation of numerous Chechen diasporas in Western Europe, mass migrations due to military campaigns and tensions in the labor market require systematic analysis. Some aspects of this issue were studied by Osmayev (2008), and Akayeva (2008). The system and sociocultural aspects of the diaspora were studied by Levin (2001). The authors referred to foreign researches dedicated to political processes in the post-Soviet space and policies carried out by the administration of V.V. Putin in the Chechen Republic (Regional politics in Russia, 2002; Russian politics, 2004; Kahn, 2002).

## 4. Purpose of the Study

The paper aims to analyze migration processes in the Chechen Republic at the end of the 20th and in the first decade of the 21st centuries.

## 5. Research Methods

Special historic and general scientific methods were used to analyze migration processes in the Chechen Republic at the end of the 20th and in the first decade of the 21st centuries in the context of political events in the Russian Federation (Soderlund, 2006). Historicism contributes to the study of facts and events in the Chechen Republic, a logical sequence of historical events.

The principles of logical selection of empirical material and methods of historical description and actualization were used. Researches on history, political science, philosophy, economics, and law helped present the picture of migration transformations in the Chechen Republic.

## 6. Findings

According to the 1989 census, about 1270.500 people lived in Checheno-Ingushetia. They were representatives of 61 nationalities, including: Chechens – 734500, Russians – 293770, the Ingush – 163760, Armenians – 14800, Ukrainians – 12600, Kumyks – 9850, the Nogai – 2650, Belarusians – 2570, Ossetians – 1800, the Azerbaijanis – 1100, the Mountain Jews – 960, Germans – 700, Koreans – 600 persons, etc. (Labutova, 1990). The multiethnic environment has a positive effect on the development of tolerant consciousness and affection to "alien" customs, traditions, and beliefs.

Most migrants were Russians. As a result of two Chechen wars, the republic became an ethnically homogeneous region – 293.8 thousand people left it. Similar data were provided by Edward Popov, a director of the southern branch of RISI, who referred to the 2002 census data: for 2002, 20000 people lived in Chechnya (excluding the federal group). Mostly, representatives of the older generation did not leave the republic because they had no one to go to (Russian Migration, 2013).

In the 1990s and first decade of the twenty-first century, Chechens continued to leave the republic for other regions of the Russian Federation and foreign countries. Migration facts caused by political instability, military operations and other reasons can be categorized into three groups: 1. Internal repatriation of the population forced to leave the republic because of military operations. In 1999–2002, according to the state registration, 568.7 thousand people left their places of residence in the Chechen Republic, 308.9 thousand people, mostly Chechens, left the region for Ingushetia. 2. A number of other factors, including the rapid population growth in the Chechen Republic, internal Russian migration (stationary, temporary, labor) of Chechens to other regions of the Russian Federation, especially to adjacent territories (Krasnodar and Stavropol krajs, Astrakhan, Volgograd and Rostov oblasts) (Levin, 2001).

During the first months of the second Chechen war, up to 350 thousand out of approximately 800 thousand inhabitants left the Chechen Republic. The rest moved within the region: first, from the northern and eastern parts, then from Grozny and mountain areas. Everyone who was able to leave the fighting zones did it. After the military operations had been completed, the resettlement structure in Chechnya changed little compared with the prewar period. There are two significant anomalies: a significant reduction of the population of Grozny and accelerated depopulation of mountain regions (Cherkasov 2004).

In the first decade of the XXI century, interregional migration from the Chechen Republic was even more intensive and diverse. According to the data collected by the representatives of the President of the Chechen Republic and public organizations and fraternities, as of September 1, 2010 the approximate number of Chechens living in the Russian regions was 400810 people. 21170 people were permanent

residents, 101073 people were temporary residents, 16181 people were university students. 81692 Chechens were permanent residents of the administrative territories of the Southern Federal District. At the same time, resettlement of the Chechen population was dense (Kurbanov, 2013).

Chechens tried to leave for Europe. Practically each Chechen family has relatives abroad, mainly in European countries. Many Chechens adapted to new places, learned European languages. They speak Chechen only at home and with family members (Akayev, 2008).

According to the data of the European Parliament, UN HCR and representatives of the Chechen diasporas living abroad, the total number of Chechens living outside the Russian Federation is 266352 people. Of these, 90132 people live in the CIS countries. The total number of Chechens who live in European countries is 110220, in North America – 1500, in Asian countries – 154432, in Australia – 200. The representatives of the Chechen ethnos formed significant (more than 10 thousand people) diasporas in many countries of Western Europe (Austria – 17000, Belgium – 12000, Germany – 14000, Norway – 15000, Poland – 13000, France – 15000) (Kurbanov, 2013).

According to Ramzan Ampukayev (2008), one of the leaders of the Chechen diaspora abroad, more than 100000 Chechens live in Europe, apart from the CIS countries. These people have already had children there. The largest number of Chechen refugees live in Austria. According to official data, in 2007 more than 16000 Chechen refugees lived in Austria. The number of Chechens living in France, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark is similar. The smallest number of Chechen refugees live in Mallorca (12 people). In Belgium, France, Norway and other Western European countries, living conditions of Chechen refugees are identical. They are rather good. In Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, living conditions are worse. The situation is similar in Spain, because there are no social assistance programs. Almost every third Chechen refugee carved out a niche for him/herself. They work and study. However, in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Spain, and the Baltic countries, most Chechen refugees have no refugee status.

The Chechen diaspora in Belgium has become an inseparable part of the multi-ethnic family of its country of residence. About 80 percent of refugees received a refugee status or a permanent residence permit. The society has learned to respond to the actions of people who discredit the diaspora. In 2007, in Belgium, there were several real-life programs for refugees who received a status and a permanent residence permit: integration – training in the labor exchange system, job search (coordinated by S. Khalikov), culture – children's dance schools, music, theater (coordinated by E. Sheripov), school of the Chechen language (coordinated by professor D. Baysultanov) and sport (coordinated by M. Dzeitov) (Umarov, 2007).

The crucial importance for successful adaptation of migrants is their ability to determine the social situation in their adoptive country. The foreign cultural environment is not hostile to them; adaptive processes are successful. At the same time, adaptation and integration of Chechen immigrants is painful, with a number of challenges which they have to overcome. They cause nostalgia, dissatisfaction, mental desire to return to their historical homeland (Stefanenko, 1999).

Chechens have two points of view on the formation of numerous foreign diasporas. Some people believe the diaspora is a threat to the Chechen nation, others consider it as a factor of globalization. Euro-Chechens are a new social phenomenon. The Chechen government wants Chechens living abroad to return to their homeland. However, despite the desire of many Chechens to live in their homeland, they are afraid of social problems (lack of social assistance, corruption, unemployment, etc.).

As of January 1, 2010, the population of the republic was 1 million 267.7 thousand people. At the same time, 35.3% lived in cities, 64.7% lived in rural areas. The age structure of the population in 2010 was as follows: people of working age – 57%, younger people – 35%, pensioners and the elderly – 8%. (Rosstat, 2010). The Chechen society has features which are typical of traditional (pre-industrial) societies: predominance of the rural population, pronounced agrarian overpopulation, high birth rates, a relatively low level of education, an undeveloped social and professional structure of society with a large number of workers employed in agriculture (Baskhanova, 2004).

In the period between the 2002-2010 censuses, the proportion of Chechens in the total population increased from 93.5 to 95.3%. The number of Kumyks significantly increased: from 8.9 thousand people to 12.2 thousand people. Kumyks, Nogais, Avars, Meskhetian Turks and Tatars live in different parts of the Chechen Republic. Cossacks live in Dubovskaya, Chervlennaya and Novoshchedrinskaya. More than thirty nations live in Shelkovsky district. More than 10 national-cultural societies (Russian, Nogai, Tatar, Kumyk, etc.) were created in Chechnya.

The Russian population in Chechnya had a positive effect on interethnic relations. Russians were a backbone of the federal government. They stabilized the political situation, being a source of highly qualified workers for ensuring sustainable development of the region. Currently, the share of Russians has declined even more, from 3.9% to 1.9%. Their number decreased twice: from 40400 people to 24400 people (Kosikov, 2012). In the 1900s, Russians left Chechnya because of physical oppression. In the early 2000s, they did it because of economic instability (North Caucasus: Russian factor 2010).

The problem of the Russian population in the republic deals with demographic and migration issues and complex issues for ensuring interethnic harmony and prospects for future development of the region. The national policy in the Chechen Republic is implemented by the Ministry for national policy, press and information. The Ministry is responsible for implementation of governmental functions of national development, interethnic and interfaith cooperation.

In April 2007, R. Kadyrov, the Head of the Chechen Republic, approved the Program of the National Policy of the Chechen Republic. Its main principles are as follows: adherence to the integrity of the Russian Federation, preservation of the territory and integrity of the Chechen Republic, contribution to the revival of full-blooded polyethnicity of the Chechen Republic, preservation and development of languages and cultures of Chechens, all ethnic groups, objective coverage of their history, etc. (The concept of the state national policy of the Chechen Republic, 2007). Based on the Program, republican target programs were developed: "National development and interethnic cooperation in the Chechen Republic for 2011-2013. ", "Return and improvement of the Russian and Russian-speaking population who previously lived in the Chechen Republic (2008-2010) " and "Return of the Russian and Russian-speaking population to the Chechen Republic for 2011-2013. " The Projects of these programs approved by the decrees of the Government of the Chechen Republic were sent to the Ministry for Regional Development of the Russian Federation. They were included in the draft comprehensive strategy of social and economic development of the North Caucasus Federal District. The federal government provided federal funds for their implementation.

According to the drafters, solution of the problems identified in the program will increase the level of education and health care, revive polyethnicity, reduce social tensions, harmonize interethnic relations,

improve the level of education tolerance. This program will improve the quality and structure of the work force potential and create conditions contributing to formation of a civil patriotic attitude, fostering respect for history, culture and traditions of Chechen and other nations. To stabilize the position of the Russian population in the republic, it is necessary to use resources of the federal property as a factor of the targeted modernization of the Chechen Republic in the market economy.

## 7. Conclusion

Having received a refugee status in Europe, Chechens learn languages, laws, culture and traditions of the country where they live. At the same time, they try not to forget the language and culture of their homeland.

The current ratio of Chechens and other ethnic groups in the republican authorities reflects the mono-ethnic structure of the population of the Chechen Republic. The analysis shows that it is impossible to return Russians to the Chechen Republic and North Caucasus using the resources of the republic. It is necessary to develop federal and regional programs which have to be comprehensive, involve political, social and economic and other areas. It is important to restore high-tech industries where traditionally work Russian people; to resist negative effects of ethnocentric principles in the HR policy of the republic; to neutralize manifestations of de-Russification.

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