Tomorrow's Affairs
Analysis of today
Assessment of tomorrow

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The day after Kadyrov – can Putin withstand the departure of his infantryman?

It is hard to overstate Ramzan Kadyrov's significance in Putin's internal repressive organisational apparatus. Kadyrov's departure from the scene will have a devastating impact, not only on Chechnya, but also on the other Northern Caucasus republics. Kadyrov was Putin's guard dog in the North Caucasus and his personal guardsman and hitman in Russia and abroad. Even though Kadyrov has been leading a Russian Republic several times smaller than the city of Moscow alone, he is one of the principal people in Putin's Russia by far exceeding in influence and significance than many leading Russian politicians, including the leaders of 4 major Russian political parties. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Ramzan Kadyrov is far more powerful and influential than Dmitry Medvedev, former president and prime minister.

Chechnya and other Northern Caucasus republics are a combination of many different tribes and micro-ethnic groups, most of whom had been fighting one another for centuries and stopped doing so when Tsarist Russia and then new Russia attacked them, and subverted and dominated people there. Ramzan Kadyrov's father, Akhmad Kadyrov, betrayed the Chechen people during the war against Russia in the 1990s. That war was an attempt to liberate Chechnya from Russia. As a result of that betrayal by Akhmad Kadyrov, the Chechen people were crushed, and Akhmad Kadyrov became the Chechen president. After Akhmad Kadyrov's assassination during the Victory Day celebration on May 9, 2004, the Kremlin used that opportunity to substitute him - the shrewd, and to a degree independent from Moscow's will Akhmad Kadyrov - with the immoral, corrupt and power-hungry Ramzan Kadyrov, who apparently was willing to exercise slavish loyalty to Putin.

Kadyrov dynasty

That is how an unpolished provincial who spoke the Russian language like a fifth-grader and wore cheap tracksuits, in the course of clever manipulations and polishing preparations performed by the Kremlin, became a heavyweight player in Russian domestic politics, leading a life similar to that of a Dubai sheikh. Putin granted Kadyrov a license to kill and do anything he wanted to as long as he was willing to persecute and destroy those Putin wanted to intimidate. His influence was not limited to Chechnya, but also spread to other republics of the Northern Caucasus and even to Moscow. To have that executioner in the region, Putin took advantage of Akhmad Kadyrov's murder to substitute him with his son, Ramzan Kadyrov. The Chechen Republic, and thus Ramzan Kadyrov, was the only republic in the Northern Caucasus region allowed to have its own army. His army helped Putin subvert and maintain a sense of fear in all other Northern Caucasus republics similar to Chechnya in the 1990s, which had been considering freeing themselves from Moscow and possibly merging with places culturally and religiously similar to them, for example, Turkey.

Putin's infantryman

Ramzan Kadyrov used to identify himself as Putin's infantryman. This classification was probably diminishing Kadyrov's true identity. Kadyrov's principal duty, apart from being a private Putin's domestic aggressor, was to prevent separatist sentiments in the North Caucasus. To achieve that, Kadyrov had been granted permission by the Kremlin to commit horrific atrocities in Chechnya, the region devoted to breaking away from colonial Russia. Many are convinced that Kadyrov's people killed Boris Nemtsov in the centre of Moscow, just meters away from the Kremlin.

After Kadyrov - separatism

If speculations on Kadyrov's possible demise are true, no one should doubt that his removal from Putin's palette will unleash a genie of separatism. This could have apocalyptic consequences - not only on Chechnya but also on the Russian empire in general. A breakaway of Chechnya would immediately have a

domino effect on the republics of the Northern Caucasus, but also on many other ethnic republics and regions, and those republics and ethnic groups which have severely suffered from mobilisation and Russia's war in Ukraine. Even before the war in Ukraine, separatist sentiments were smouldering in many ethnic regions of the Russian Federation, but people were subverted, they submitted, and were thus scared. The fear of opposing Moscow's rule could vanish, because remaining at the disposal of the bloodthirsty mother Russia to those ethnic groups currently living in the Russian Federation automatically suggests that their sons will be dispatched to the Ukrainian inferno.

Loyalty in Ukraine

Because of the genuine peculiarities of the Northern Caucasus micro-ethnical group, Putin has historically used Kadyrov's people and his army as mercenaries without compassion or feelings towards not only all other ethnic groups in Russia, but also towards their own Chechen people. Similarly, Kadyrov's army was in Ukraine, taking part in the war, but had been spared from being in the front line of attack. Instead, Kadyrov's army was the detachment holding the front from behind, not allowing Russian mobilised soldiers to run or retreat. Kadyrov has been living the life of a top Russian oligarch with palaces, jets, and unbelievable luxury in return for his loyalty and attempts to maintain a firm grip on the entire Northern Caucasus. On top of that, he was allowed to deviate from Russian standard law and was granted some indulgences for the privileged Chechen people, including permission to have many wives in accordance with Sharia law.

The struggle for supremacy

If Kadyrov is gone, there will be a power fight among Kadyrov's people because of his order of command. The difference between the first and the second is like the difference between the first and the last. Many powerful Chechen people will attempt to secure control over Chechnya. While Kadyrov's army generals will be busy dividing his army into several smaller brigades, each taking the side of someone aiming to be his successor, overall, Chechnya's grip on the North Caucasus region will loosen. That would enable other ethnic groups, many of which have their representatives on the Russian Forbes list, to begin exploring their opportunities regarding gaining freedom from Moscow. On top of that, we should consider thousands of Chechen fighters who were forced to leave Chechnya because of their refusal to obey Kadyrov and, thus, Putin. Many of them are currently helping to defend Ukraine. On a smaller scale, removing Ramzan Kadyrov from the Chechnya power play could be compared with what happened to Gaddafi in Libya.

This could end up causing a fight of everyone against everyone, not only in Chechnya, but also in the other republics of Northern Caucasus, simply because Kadyrov's bestial and savage grip has kept those nearby republics in slavish submission to Moscow, particularly when Moscow started sending young men from those ethnic republics to die in the war Moscow started against Ukraine. Kadyrov's death could easily upset Putin himself, because he could lose control over the Northern Caucasus and separatist sentiments, which Kadyrov has been helping Putin crush in the region.