

# Russia's Tatarstan to Rename Regional Presidency

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Tatarstan President Rustam Minnikhanov. [president.tatarstan.ru](http://president.tatarstan.ru)

The head of Russia's republic of Tatarstan will lose the title of "president," the last remaining symbol of Russian federalism following the Kremlin's decades-long centralization of power.

Tatarstan's president will instead hold the title "Rais," an Arabic term meaning "leader," according to the publication.

Lawmakers in the majority Muslim region introduced a new bill to change the Tatarstan leader's title a day after a large majority [voted down](#) a previous set of amendments that demoted Tatarstan's presidency.

Tatarstan's legislative assembly voted to approve the changes in their final reading Friday, news agencies [reported](#).

Lawmakers are expected to adopt the new amendments to Tatarstan's constitution by year's end to bring it in line with Russia's 2020 Constitution and a 2021 law abolishing regional

presidencies.

Current Tatarstan President Rustam Minnikhanov, however, will retain the title “president” until his term expires in September 2025, they added.

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Explaining the drawn-out process, political analysts Mikhail Vinogradov and Vitaly Ivanov [told](#) Vedomosti that regional authorities simultaneously sought to show their opposition to Moscow and to prevent public protests amid New Year’s preparations.

“This was the last attribute of Tatarstan’s sovereignty after many had been abolished earlier,” political scientist Alexei Makarkin was quoted as saying Thursday.

“It’s a symbolic moment,” Makarkin, deputy head of the Moscow-based Center for Political Technologies, said.

Asked about what tangible benefits the title change would mean for President Vladimir Putin, he said: “There may only be one president. It’s a principle for the center [of power].”

Tatarstan — which voted to secede from Russia in 1992 but remained within the Russian Federation after agreeing a power-sharing treaty with Moscow — was long hailed by observers as the last bastion of Russia’s federalism.

While 12 Russian regions were bestowed with local presidencies in the 1990s, they were gradually dissolved under pressure from Moscow. Tatarstan was the only one to retain the title after neighboring Bashkortostan gave it up in 2015.

The loss of the presidency was preceded by a series of other limits imposed on regional autonomy. Tatarstan was forced in 2017 to abandon mandatory school teaching of Tatar, its second official language — a major blow to the preservation of the region’s identity.

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