

# Conference Paper

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**Searching for Peace in Chechnya –  
Swiss Initiatives and Experiences**  
swisspeace Annual Conference 2005

**Rita Grünenfelder and Heinz Kruppenbacher (Eds.)**

# swisspeace

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# Table of Contents

<b>Abstract/Zusammenfassung/Résumé</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1 Introduction: Searching for Peace in Chechnya – Swiss Initiatives and Experiences</b>	<b>2</b>
Fritz R. Staehelin and Heinz Kruppenacher	
<b>2 Prospects for Peace in Chechnya?</b>	<b>4</b>
Märta-Lisa Magnusson	
2.1 The Nature of the Conflict	4
2.2 Historic Grievances	6
2.3 The Role of Religion	7
2.4 The Memory of the Deportations	10
2.5 Conclusion	12
<b>3 Actors Network Analysis on Chechnya</b>	<b>14</b>
August Hämmerli, Regula Gattiker, Reto Weyermann	
3.1 Introduction	14
3.2 Methods	14
3.3 Results	15
<b>4 The International Committee of the Red Cross in Chechnya</b>	<b>18</b>
International Committee of the Red Cross	
4.1 Humanitarian Action	18
4.2 Promotion of International Humanitarian Law (IHL)	19
<b>5 The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in Chechnya</b>	<b>21</b>
Matthias Buess	
5.1 Activities of Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) in the Region	21
5.2 Description of the SDC Programs	21
<b>6 The Activity of Political Affairs Division IV of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in the North Caucasus</b>	<b>24</b>
Jürg Aeberhard	
<b>7 The Potential Role of External Actors – a Chechen Perspective</b>	<b>27</b>
Larissa Bitkaeva	

<b>8</b>	<b>International Actors and the Conflict in Chechnya _____</b>	<b>30</b>
	Anna Matveeva	
8.1	New Trends in the Conflict	30
8.2	Rise of Jihadism	30
8.3	Waging the War in the North Caucasus	30
8.4	Rejection of the 'Western System'	31
8.5	Reasoning Behind the Russian position	31
8.6	International Actors	32
8.7	Political Dialogue	32
8.8	Human Rights	33
8.9	Disconnection Between the Sides	33
8.10	Humanitarian Engagement	34
8.11	Future Agenda	34
<b>9</b>	<b>The North Caucasus: No Great Surprises on the Horizon _</b>	<b>36</b>
	Aleksei Malashenko	

## Abstract/Zusammenfassung/Résumé

The Chechen conflict has slowly disappeared from the international media and thus from public awareness. The conflict itself, however, continues despite a recent ease in tensions. Together with the fact that the reconstruction of the heavily destroyed republic poses an immense challenge, the presence of international actors remains essential. In spite of serious obstacles, numerous international actors – among them several Swiss representatives – have been and are continuing to work for a better future. What is the main emphasis of their work? What can they contribute to a peaceful future? What are the main challenges? And what is the locals' perception of Swiss initiatives? At swisspeace's 2005 annual conference a group of international experts offered their thoughts on these questions. This Conference Paper features their revised and updated contributions.

Der Konflikt in Tschetschenien ist weitgehend aus den Medien verschwunden. Vor Ort gehen die Auseinandersetzungen jedoch trotz einer langsamen Beruhigung weiter. Dies sowie die Tatsache, dass der Wiederaufbau der vom jahrelangen Krieg stark zerstörten Region eine riesige Herausforderung darstellt, machen die Präsenz von internationalen Akteuren nach wie vor unabdingbar. Trotz schwierigsten Bedingungen setzen sich verschiedenste Akteure seit langer Zeit vor Ort für eine bessere Zukunft Tschetscheniens ein. Auch Schweizer Vertreter engagieren sich im Nordkaukasus. In welchen Bereichen sehen sie Möglichkeiten für ihre Einsätze? Welchen Beitrag können sie an eine friedliche Zukunft leisten? Welches sind die grössten Herausforderungen in ihrer Arbeit? Und was denken lokale Akteure vom Schweizer Engagement? Diesen Fragen widmeten sich internationale Expertinnen und Experten an der Jahreskonferenz 2005 von swisspeace. Im vorliegenden Conference Paper werden die nach der Konferenz überarbeiteten und aktualisierten Beiträge vorgestellt.

Peu à peu, la guerre en Tchétchénie disparaît des médias. Pourtant, bien que l'on puisse observer un certain apaisement des tensions, le conflit n'est de loin pas terminé. La présence d'acteurs internationaux sur place est donc indispensable, d'autant plus que la reconstruction d'une région ravagée par de longues années de guerre représente un défi immense. Sur place, malgré des conditions extrêmement difficiles, des acteurs d'horizons très divers, dont des Suisses, s'engagent depuis longtemps pour l'avenir de la Tchétchénie. Dans quel domaine voient-ils les meilleures perspectives pour leurs efforts ? De quelle manière peuvent-ils contribuer à la paix ? Quels sont les défis les plus difficiles qu'ils doivent relever dans leur travail ? Et que pensent les acteurs locaux de l'engagement suisse ? A la conférence annuelle de swisspeace en 2005, un groupe d'experts internationaux s'est penché sur ces questions. Cet ouvrage regroupe des versions revues et corrigées des papiers qu'ils y ont présentés.

# 1 Introduction: Searching for Peace in Chechnya – Swiss Initiatives and Experiences

**Fritz R. Staehelin and Heinz Krummenacher**

The swisspeace annual conference of 2005 was certainly a most special, challenging and demanding event. While earlier conferences discussed topics related to peace and security, where instruments, tools, and strategies of peacebuilding were highlighted, they always remained on a rather abstract level. This time it was different. The violent conflict in Chechnya – one affecting not only this republic but posing a threat to the entire Caucasus, Russia and beyond – cannot be dealt with on a purely abstract and theoretical level. Of course, theoretical elaborations should and must be made when analyzing the Chechen conflict. It can be outlined as a liberation war that started with Iman Mansur and Iman Shamil 200 years ago; it can be put in the context of the international war against terrorism; or we can find social and economic explanations for what has happened and is happening not only in Chechnya but in the Caucasus as a whole. But whatever theoretical framework one applies, one can never delete the real pictures which the two wars in Chechnya have carved into our memories: pictures of women and children lying dead on the streets of devastated Grozny, the horrified faces of mothers and fathers whose children were taken hostage in the school of Beslan; and some showing rows of dead bodies in the North-East theatre in Moscow. The Chechen conflict is an unsettling reality that confronts us even though other violent conflicts and environmental disasters have squeezed it out of newspaper headlines. It is this reality that prevents us from thinking about Chechnya in purely theoretical terms.

Against the background of despair and hopelessness, it is indeed challenging to discuss the Chechen conflict and ways to resolve it. On the one hand, we must not forget the horror, and on the other we have to forget it – at least temporarily – if we want to come up with viable strategies to put an end to the decade-old conflict. Of course, we are all aware of the fact that a political resolution of the Chechen crisis ultimately rests with the warring factions. However, we should ask ourselves whether our approaches to help them find ways to overcome the obstacles to peace are adequate and efficient. We should also look back critically on the past and develop strategies for the future.

The swisspeace annual conference of 2005 raised these questions. Various Swiss as well as international contributors shared their insights with us and tried to identify some answers. This conference paper is a collection of the speakers' revised presentations. Thanks go to all those who contributed to the conference and to this conference paper.

The first part of this paper reflects on the conflict and its dynamics. In her text on the prospects for peace in Chechnya, Märta-Lisa Magnusson looks back on how determining factors of the present conflict situation developed. She puts special emphasis on historic grievances, namely the century-old anti-colonial struggle and Stalin's deportation of almost the entire Chechen population to Central Asia. Although acknowledging the role of religion, she argues that it is not the main contentious issue. Instead, religion was (ab-)used as a tool in the power struggles within the elite. Together with Putin's attempts to "internalize" the conflict, she concludes, this has led to a "horizontalization" of the conflict. A different perspective is offered by the contribution of August Hämmerli, Regula Gattiker and Reto Weyermann. By constructing and analyzing event data-based actor networks through event data collected by swisspeace' early warning program FAST, they elaborate on the role of different parties in the contemporary conflict.

Following these general examinations, the second part focuses on experiences of Swiss actors in Chechnya. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRR) has been working in the Northern Caucasus since 1993 and relies on a two-pillar structure that focuses on humanitarian actions and the promotion of international humanitarian law. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation focuses on the most vulnerable populations affected by conflicts and natural disasters by supporting schools and by implementing medical programs and special provisions for women. Its two key instruments are coordination with international organizations and bilateral aid accompanied with on-site presence. The focus on vulnerable groups is also reflected in the Political Division IV's



programs. Together with the Swedish Foreign Ministry, this division, a centre of competence for peace promotion in the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, created a humanitarian dialogue that aims at improving the protection of the civilian population with the collaboration of local authorities.

In the third part, two analysts from Russia elaborate on potential contributions by external actors to improve the situation in Chechnya. In a very personal essay, Larissa Bitkaeva highlights areas where external actors can have significant influence. While pointing to well-known issues such as reconstruction and support of local actors, she lays special emphasis on ecological rehabilitation. London-based Anna Matveeva, on the other hand, points to the fact that human rights issues link international actors to the conflict. Despite some criticism, she also underlines the fact that a durable solution can only be reached by taking Russian worries seriously.

In the conference paper's last contribution, Aleksei Malashenko reviews the regional situation. Pointing to destabilizing as well as stabilizing trends, he concludes that Chechnya is in a state of fragile stability. Although he does not expect a major escalation of the situation, he points to the importance of the need for Russia to develop a coherent strategy instead of reacting *ad hoc*, especially in consideration of the approaching presidential elections.

Both the conference paper and the conference itself highlight again and again the complexity of the present situation in Chechnya. The suggested ways forward, however, are equally complex. But acknowledging the lack of a "quick fix" does not imply abandonment. All involved actors assure their continued commitment. And, even though drowned out by the opponent's respective accusations, suggestions to improve the situation do exist. This is where all conference participants ultimately agree: doing nothing is the worst solution.

## 2 Prospects for Peace in Chechnya?

**Märta-Lisa Magnusson**

What are the prospects for peace in Chechnya? Conflict dynamics suggest they are dim. While in official Russian discourse the situation in the war-torn republic is “normalizing”, realities on the ground suggest otherwise. Continued violations of human rights, well documented in reports by intergovernmental institutions such as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, respected non-governmental organizations such as Human Rights Watch, the Russian “Memorial” and others, nourish growing fear and distrust towards Russia and its proxies. The social fabric of the Chechen society is disintegrating and the economic infrastructure of the republic is in ruins. A new generation of Chechen youth, which has experienced nothing but war and devastation, has emerged. Terrorism is proliferating and evidence suggests that the conflict is spreading outside Chechnya proper.

Compared to the previous period of violent confrontation the configuration of parties today is more complex. Since the termination of the previous war in 1996, the internal coherence within the leadership of independence-seeking Chechnya, also called Ichkeriya, has eroded. Popular support for the Ichkeriya leaders is eroding as well. This has allowed the Russian side to pursue a strategy aimed at “internalizing” the conflict. While successful in terms of changing the power structures of the Chechen republic – and thereby its relationship to Russia – the “chechenization” strategy has undermined the possibilities for achieving a lasting peace. The strategy reflects an instrumentalist approach to the conflict relying on elite manipulation and co-optation as a means to establish peace. Peace in Chechnya, however, can only be obtained through negotiations involving the Russian Federation and representatives of the Chechen population endowed with political legitimacy.

### 2.1 The Nature of the Conflict

Fundamentally the conflict is not horizontal but vertical. It is a conflict involving the right to rule not only within but also over a contested territory. Essentially, there are two conflict parties. On the one side, there is the Chechen population claiming the right to self-determination, including in its most radical form: independence. On the other side, there is the Russian Federation, which considers itself as legitimate territorial polity and opposes groups seeking independence for territories under its jurisdiction. Dependent of the angle of approach the conflict may be termed secessionist or a national liberation conflict. The Chechen side supports its claim by referring to the internationally protected principle of peoples right to self-determination. Russia invokes the principle of territorial integrity of a state. The latter principle is supported by the international community and confirmed in most international documents related to the conflict.

Since the beginning of the 1920's Chechnya enjoyed varying degrees of autonomy within the Russian Federation (RSFSR). At the end of Gorbachev's “perestroika”, which triggered a proliferation of national movements all over the Soviet Union, Chechens claimed right to independence on the plea that their land had been colonized and subjected to foreign rule, first by the Russian Empire and then the Soviet Union. References to the forced annexation into the Russian Empire and its successor, USSR, were replete in the discourse of Chechen national leaders, emerging on the political scene at this time. The speeches of Djokar Dudayev, chairman of the National Chechen Congress and, in October 1991, elected as ‘independent’ Chechnya's first president, were abundant with anti-imperial phraseology: “In the Caucasus war, tsarism set as its goal the subjugation of the Chechen people”. “Tsarism ... paved the way for an even more bloody empire –

the Soviet empire of Lenin and Stalin". "The Chechen people never recognized itself as a part neither of the Russian, nor the Soviet Empire."<sup>1</sup>

Chechnya de facto seceded from the Russian Federation on 1 November 1991 when newly elected president Dudayev issued a decree proclaiming "state sovereignty for the Chechen Republic."<sup>2</sup>

After an abortive effort to quell the Chechen bid for independence and "re-establish the constitutional order in the Checheno-Ingush Republic,"<sup>3</sup> the federal authorities in Moscow, entangled in internal power struggles, left Chechnya on its own until fall 1994. By then the configuration of political power in Moscow had changed, involving marginalization of liberal forces and a growing influence of "Greater Russia" nationalists, empire restorers and advocates of a reintegration of the former Soviet republics under Russian leadership.<sup>4</sup> Yielding to these forces Yeltsin chose a strategy aimed at removing Dudayev by arming his opposition. As this strategy failed Russian military forces were sent on 11 December 1994 to Chechnya to effectuate President Yeltsin's decree to "re-establish Constitutional order in the Chechen Republic by all available means". Provisional organs of power were established by decree of President Yeltsin and staffed with pro-Russian Chechen opponents to Dudayev. These structures, however, remained politically weak and never managed to challenge the de facto power of the "separatist" leaders.<sup>5</sup>

In the discourse of Russian officials the Chechen leaders were "criminals" and political entrepreneurs using the nationalist card to promote selfish goals. In his address to the nation on the situation in Chechnya on 27 December 1994, president Yeltsin stated:

"The regime in Grozny is unlawful and it has violated the fundamental requirements of the constitution of the Russian Federation... The Grozny regime has used force to drive Chechen society down the path of crime... By deceit, by playing on patriotic and religious feelings, by bribery and by threats these forces have succeeded in drawing some of the local people into the fight...The destiny of the Chechen people must be determined not by the leaders of the criminal world, as has been the case for the past three years."<sup>6</sup>

The war terminated in August 1996 when an agreement "On the basis for mutual relations between the Russian Federation and the Chechen Republic" was signed in Khasavjurt, Dagestan by Chechen Chief of Staff, Aslan Maskhadov and the Secretary of the Russian Security Council, General Alexander Lebed. The Khasavjurt document stipulated that "An agreement on the mutual relations between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Chechnya" in accordance with the universal principles of international law, shall be reached before October 31, 2001."<sup>7</sup>

In May 1997 an "Agreement on Peace and the Principles of Mutual Relations between the Russian Federation and the Chechen Republic Ichkeria" was signed in Moscow by President Boris Yeltsin and Aslan Maskhadov, now President of Chechnya. In this document, which was written in the language of an inter-state agreement, the parties agreed to "renounce the use of and threat of using violence

<sup>1</sup> Ternisty put k svobode, 1992: pp. 16, 21,67; D. Dudayev & E. Shepirova, (1997), "Kontseptsiya natsionalno-gosudarstvennoy politiki Chechenskoy Respubliki Ichkeriya", Rossiya i Chechnya 1990-1997 gg. Dokumenty svidetelstvujut, Moskva, p. 223 (my transl.).

<sup>2</sup> Ternisty put k svobode 1992: 3.

<sup>3</sup> Postanovlenie... Rossiya i Chechnya, 1997: p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Gail Lapidus, (1998), "Contested Sovereignty", International Security 23 (1).

<sup>5</sup> Märta-Lisa Magnusson, (1998a), "The Negotiation Process between Russia and Chechnya – Strategies, Achievements and Future Problems", in: Ole Høiris & Martin Yürükel Sefa (eds.), Contrasts and Solutions in the Caucasus, Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.

<sup>6</sup> Yeltsin addresses Chechens, say there will be no deportations" (1994), SWB BBC, SU/2186 B/5, 23 December.

<sup>7</sup> SWB/BBC SU/2707, 3 Sept. 96:B/2.

in solving any contested issues.”<sup>8</sup>While the officially declared goal of the 1994 military intervention was to “re-establish Constitutional order” in Chechnya, the military intervention launched on 1 October 1999 was cast as an “anti-terrorist operation.”<sup>9</sup> Shortly before the operation was initiated, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin abrogated the Khasavjurt agreement and de-legitimated the Chechen

president Aslan Maskhadov. These moves suggested that the “anti-terror operation” had an additional goal, similar to the one in 1994: to re-establish federal control over Chechnya.<sup>10</sup>

## 2.2 Historic Grievances

The territory of what today is the Chechen republic was, together with other parts of the North Caucasus, conquered by Tsarist forces and forcibly incorporated into the Russian Empire in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It took the imperial forces more than 30 years to defeat fierce resistance from Chechen tribes, fighting alone or in alliance with other North Caucasus peoples, notably Avars in neighbouring Dagestan.<sup>11</sup>

The anti-colonial struggle, which started already in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, consolidated the non-state organized Chechen clans, which were welded together by Sufi brotherhoods, combining religious devotion with military discipline.

After the forced annexation by the Russian Empire, groups of Chechens continued the resistance for several years. Uprisings erupted regularly throughout the remainder of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and continued after Chechnya’s forced incorporation into the USSR in the early 1920’s.<sup>12</sup>

The memory of the conquest, fierce resistance and regularly uprisings nourished the construction of a collective identity among the Chechens, centered on ethnic survival, elaboration of strong cultural boundaries and non-adaptation to alien Soviet/Russian rule.

In late September 1992, I participated in an International Alert fact-finding mission to Chechnya. Past injustices and sufferings under Tsarist and Soviet rule featured prominently in the narratives of almost all Chechens we talked to:

“Any conversation of more than 15 minutes with a Chechen touches on the humiliation they suffered at the hands of successive Russian governments, starting with the period of Tsarist expansion into Chechen lands in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, continuing through the deportation to Central Asia in February 1944, and cumulating in the failure of the Soviet state to return property to them when they were allowed to return in the late 1950s, or compensation for losses and sufferings during their Central Asian exile.”<sup>13</sup>

When the new democratic leadership in Moscow, initially supporting Dudayev (against the local Soviet leaders) but alarmed by his coming to power, sent Interior Ministry troops to Grozny in November 1991, it was interpreted by Dudayev and the new Chechen parliament as an act of

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<sup>8</sup> Rossiya i Chechnya 1990-1997 gg. Dokumenty svidetelstvujut. Moskva, 1997.

<sup>9</sup> Vladimir Putin, (1999), “Why Moscow has No Choice but to Clamp Down in Chechnya”, International Herald Tribune, 15 November.

<sup>10</sup> Märta-Lisa Magnusson & Ib Faurby, (1999), “Endlösung i Tjetjenien?”, Udenrigs 4.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Conquest, The Nation Killers, (1970), “The Soviet Deportation of Nationalities”, Glasgow; Marie Broxup (ed.), (1992), “The North Caucasus Barrier. The Russian Advance toward the Muslim World”, London.

<sup>12</sup> Marie Bennigsen, (1999), “Chechnya: political developments and the strategic implications for the North Caucasus”, Central Asian Survey 18 (4).

<sup>13</sup> International Alert, 1992, p.16.

imperial aggression.<sup>14</sup> A substantial part of the Chechen population obviously shared this interpretation of events. Huge demonstrations in Grozny, including also Dudayev's opposition, rallied around him<sup>15</sup> as was the case one year later, when Russian troops, deployed for a peace-keeping mission to the contested Prigorodny region in North Ossetia, crossed the Chechen border from neighboring Ingushetiya.<sup>16</sup>

During my second visit to Chechnya in late 1993, I found that while being highly critical of Dudayev, and in some cases even demanding his resignation, spokesmen of the opposition unambiguously supported the idea of Chechen independence. Only one opposition leader, the mayor of the Nadterechny district, Umar Avtorkhanov, advocated reintegration into Russia<sup>17</sup>.

By the time Russia launched its military intervention in December 1994 Dudayev was widely unpopular, not least because of his mismanagement of the Chechen economy.<sup>18</sup> Still, the majority of the Chechen population, including the non-Russian financed opposition, rallied around him. This indicated that while unsympathetic to Dudayev's regime, only few Chechens were prepared to translate this aversion into support of Russian "re-conquest".

The most significant evidence for the popular attitude towards independence is the January 1997 presidential elections in Chechnya. While the legal foundation of the elections propelling Dudayev to power in October 1991 may be questioned, the legality of the January 1997 elections may not. They were organized with the assistance of the OSCE and confirmed as "free and fair" by approximately 200 international observers. 59% of those participating in the election cast their vote on Aslan Maskhadov, who had led the military resistance against the Russian attempt to restore federal power and unequivocally stood for Chechen independence.

One week before he was elected Maskhadov formulated his position on Chechnya's relationship to Russia in the following words: "Chechnya is an independent state. Our status we defined already in 1991. We are talking and will continue to negotiate on the mutual relation between two independent states, the Russian Federation and the Chechen Republic, based on international law, as is stated in the Khasavjurt agreement."<sup>19</sup>

However, less than two years later, when Russian forces again crossed the Chechen borders, there were no "demonstrative" manifestations of support for the Chechen president comparable to those, witnessed during earlier intervention attempts. This may be explained by several factors but the main explanation can be found in internal dynamics in Chechnya in the inter-war period.

## 2.3 The Role of Religion

The conflict has a religious dimension. Chechens are Sunni Muslims (Sufist) and the Russians are

<sup>14</sup> Ternistyj put k svobode, 1992, p. 22; Rossiya i Chechnya, 1997, p. 31.

<sup>15</sup> E. Pain & A. Popov, (1995), "Chechensaya politika Rossii s 1991 po 1994 gg.. Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodnykh othoshenii, No. 5.

<sup>16</sup> Märta-Lisa Magnusson, (1998a), "The Negotiation Process between Russia and Chechnya – Strategies, Achievements and Future Problems", in: Ole Høiris & Martin Yürükel Sefa (eds.), *Contrasts and Solutions in the Caucasus*, Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.

<sup>17</sup> It was him the Russian government selected as its ally and provided with arms prior to the military intervention December 1994. See Märta-Lisa Magnusson, (1998a), "The Negotiation Process between Russia and Chechnya – Strategies, Achievements and Future Problems", in: Ole Høiris & Martin Yürükel Sefa (eds.), *Contrasts and Solutions in the Caucasus*, Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.

<sup>18</sup> Charlotta Gall & Thomas De Wall, (1997), "Chechnya. A Small Victorious War", London.

<sup>19</sup> Nezavisimaya gazeta, 18.01.97.

(mainly) orthodox Christians. But faith is not *the* contentious issue. The main objective of Chechnya's first president, Djokar Dudayev, his successor Selimkhan Yandarbiyev and recently assassinated Aslan Maskhadov, was not to consolidate Islam on the territory of the Chechen Republic or beyond its border. The main goal was, and remains, political, not religious, control over Chechnya. The task

of the federal forces in the 1994-96 war was not to combat Islam but to restore Russian state-power in the breakaway republic. The declared aim of the 1999 military operation in Chechnya was to combat "international terrorism" (and Chechen separatism), not Islam.

In the official Russian discourse links were established between radical Chechen warlords and international terrorist leaders, such as Shamil Basayev and Osama Bin Laden, the latter also representing militant Islam.<sup>20</sup> But Putin refrained – and still does – from linking Islam as such, including the branch of Islam (Sufism) that prevails in Chechnya, to international terrorism. Shortly after he was elected president in March 2000, Putin appointed a former Chechen mufti (and leader of the Sufi tarikat Quadiya) as leader of Chechnya. This was Akhmad Kadyrov, later to be "elected" president of Chechnya (on 5 October 2003).

On both sides, however, political leaders have used the religious factor as a means to promote other objectives:

Appointing mufti Ahmed Kadyrov as new Chechen leader, president Putin sought to utilize the respect Kadyrov had enjoyed, both as a religious leader and as Chechen field commander in the 1994-96 war. Putin established contacts to Kadyrov already in fall 1999, utilizing an incipient dispute between the mufti and Chechen president Maskhadov. The co-optation of Kadyrov weakened the resistance capability of the Chechen side. Contrary to the pro-Russian authorities installed in the previous war, Akhmed Kadyrov was allowed to establish a military force of his own. Many of those recruited to this force reportedly were former Ichkeria fighters.<sup>21</sup>

While not a primary issue in the conflict, Islam accrued in significance. Firstly, radical Islam has proliferated in recent years.<sup>22</sup> Secondly, linked to this dynamic, traditional Islam (sufism) has also obtained a new significance. The proliferation of radical Islam, however, is not a cause but an effect of the previous and the current wars.<sup>23</sup>

In 1992 the "International Alert" mission also investigated the role of Islam at that time. Our impressions are expressed in the mission Report:

"We found little to justify Russian fears (or the threats of some Chechen leaders) that Chechnya could easily slip into the control of Islamic fundamentalists"[...]. On the whole, the Chechen approach to politics and religion impressed us as closest to the modern, moderate Turkish pattern.... Chechens are Sunnis. Islam is an important part of their identity but, only a part". Historical traditions and customs – *adaat* – are at least as important."<sup>24</sup>

The opening phrase of the Chechen constitution, adopted on 17 March 1992, notes: "By the will of the Almighty the people of the Chechen Republic..." But, "There is no mention of Islam or Allah. The

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<sup>20</sup> Vladimir Putin, (1999), "Why Moscow has No Choice but to Clamp Down in Chechnya", International Herald Tribune, 15 November.

<sup>21</sup> Vibeke Sperling, (2004), "Åh Tjetjenien. Den uendelige krig i Europa", Copenhagen: Gyldendal.

<sup>22</sup> V. Kh. Akayev, (1999), "Sufism i Vakhabizm na Severnom Kavkaze. Issledovaniya po prikladnoy i neotlozhnoy etnologii", No. 127, Moskva: Rossiyskaya Akademiya Nauk.

<sup>23</sup> Märta-Lisa Magnusson & Ib Faurby, (1999), "Endlösung i Tjetjenien?", Udenrigs 4; Vibeke Sperling, (2004), „Åh Tjetjenien. Den uendelige krig i Europa", Copenhagen: Gyldendal.

<sup>24</sup> International Alert, 1992: v, p.20.

constitution establishes a secular state and recognizes religious diversity and religious freedom for all citizens. Citizens are not ethnically or religiously differentiated.<sup>25</sup>

In the amended 1997 Chechen constitution, however, Islam is state religion, but religious diversity and religious freedom is recognized.<sup>26</sup>

Radical Islam, in the form of Vakhabbism (originating in Saudi Arabia), emerged as a mobilizing force in the 1994-96 war. It was mediated by Muslim fighters from abroad joining the Chechen resistance.<sup>27</sup> But it was first in the post-war period that Vakhabbism obtained a broader support,

mainly from young, then unemployed men, who fought in the war. Vakhabbism was not, however, welcomed by the majority of the Chechen population as it contradicts local Sufi and clan traditions and is considered inconsistent with national Chechen values.<sup>28</sup> The victory of the secularly oriented Aslan Maskhadov over candidates proposing Islamist programs in the 1997 presidential elections also indicates that radical Islam had no broader popular support at this time.<sup>29</sup>

In the post-election period, however, Vakhabbism obtained increased significance as a tool in inter-elite power struggles. Former field commanders who obtained posts in president Maskhadov's government utilized Vakhabbism to promote their objectives. Among these were acting Prime Minister, Shamil Basayev and Foreign Minister Movladi Udugov. Both opposed Maskhadov's moderate position in relation to Russia and both agitated for the establishment of an Islamic Chechen-Dagestani State. In Spring 1998 they resigned and openly challenged Maskhadov's authority by creating parallel power structures in Chechnya. One year later Shamil Basayev led a group of Chechen religious extremists who meddled in Vakhabbist-inspired riots in south-western Dagestan. They gave Putin a pretext for renewed military operations on the territory of Chechnya.<sup>30</sup>

Maskhadov dissociated himself from Basayev as well as from Vakhabbism. However, he never managed to neutralize either. With the advent of the new Russian intervention, Maskhadov again cooperated with Basayev for tactical reasons. It was after this decision that mufti Akhmed Kadyrov defected to the Russian side. As a Sufi leader he was an ardent adversary of Vakhabbism and he accused Maskhadov for being too compliant both with Vakhabbism and Basayev.<sup>31</sup>

The liaison of some of its leaders with Vakhabbism has been detrimental for the independence seeking Chechnya-Ichkeria. Associating themselves with Vakhabbism these leaders welled up a horizontal intra-Chechen conflict on religious grounds. It is reasonable to assume that the liaison between some Ichkeria leaders and Vakhabbism even softened the popular resistance to Russian rule. In a recently published book, Danish journalist and specialist on Chechnya, Vibeke Sperling, concludes:

<sup>25</sup> International Alert 1992, p. 19.

<sup>26</sup> Konstitutsiya Chechenskoy Respubliki (1997) p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> V. Kh. Akayev, (1999), "Sufism i Vakhabbizm na Severnom Kavkaze. Issledovaniya po prikladnoy i neotlozhnoy etnologii", No. 127, Moskva: Rossiyskaya Akademiya Nauk.

<sup>28</sup> V. Kh. Akayev, (1999), "Sufism i Vakhabbizm na Severnom Kavkaze. Issledovaniya po prikladnoy i neotlozhnoy etnologii", No. 127, Moskva: Rossiyskaya Akademiya Nauk; Marie Bennigsen, (1999), "Chechnya: political developments and the strategic implications for the North Caucasus", *Central Asian Survey* 18 (4).

<sup>29</sup> Vibeke Sperling, (2004), "Åh Tjetjenien. Den uendelige krig i Europa", Copenhagen: Gyldendal.

<sup>30</sup> Märta-Lisa Magnusson & Ib Faurby, (1999), "Endlösning i Tjetjenien?", *Udenrigs* 4. Vibeke Sperling, (2004), "Åh Tjetjenien. Den uendelige krig i Europa", Copenhagen: Gyldendal; Ib Faurby, (2002), "International Law, Human Rights and the Wars in Chechnya", *Baltic Defence Review* 7; Svante E. Cornell, (2001), "Small Nations and Great Powers. A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus", Curzon.

<sup>31</sup> Timur Muzaev, "Perspektivy "mirnoj" okkupatsii", *Russkaya mysl*, (1999) No. 4294; V. Kh. Akayev, (1999), "Sufism i Vakhabbizm na Severnom Kavkaze. Issledovaniya po prikladnoy i neotlozhnoy etnologii", No. 127, Moskva: Rossiyskaya Akademiya Nauk.

“Maskhadov could not as (he had) promised control the extremist and terrorist forces. He also did not manage to maintain his secular policy, when he came under pressure from fundamentalist warlords demanding the introduction of sharia laws... It turned out that in peace time he did not manage to be the unifying figure, he had been in the time of war. The Chechen clan society with all its internal quarrels again became the ruling factor, and the hate against the Russians lost the unifying force it had had during the war.”<sup>32</sup>

In May 2004, half a year after he was elected president, Kadyrov was assassinated and a new president, Alu Alkhanov, nominated by Moscow and reportedly a fighter on the Russian side in the previous war,<sup>33</sup> was “elected” (on 29 August 2004). Kadyrov's private army, however, remained under the control of Kadyrov's son, Ramzan, currently acting Prime Minister of Chechnya. According to one of my Chechen sources, despite being widely hated for the brutality of his forces, Ramzan Kadyrov was regarded by a substantial number of ordinary Chechens to be the only force capable of curtailing the Vakhabbits.

The brutal terrorist attacks on the Dubrovka theater in Moscow in October 2002 and School Nr. 1 in Beslan, September 2003, both led by Basayev, further alienated ordinary Chechens from the “Ichkeriya” leadership. After the terrorist attack in Beslan, Maskhadov dismissed Basayev. However, after the assassination of Maskhadov at the beginning of March this year, acting president A-H Sajdullaev re-admitted Basayev into the Ichkeria government.

The growing intra-Chechen rivalries and the upwelling of horizontal conflict lines does not, however, alter the fundamental vertical character of the conflict. To understand why this is so it is necessary to include yet another factor in the analysis.

## 2.4 The Memory of the Deportations

This factor is the deportation of almost the entire Chechen population, and their ethnic twins, the Ingush (approximately 425,000 persons) to Central Asia and Siberia in 1944, allegedly for collaboration with the German invaders.<sup>34</sup>

This was a full-scale ethnic cleansing operation, which almost any Chechen conceives as genocide. In 1957 the Chechens were rehabilitated and those who had survived were allowed to return to the re-established Checheno-Ingush Autonomous republic, only to find that Russians, Ukrainians and other peoples had moved in and taken over their land and homes.<sup>35</sup>

Almost all elder Chechens have personal memories of the deportation. Parents and grandparents have transferred their horrible experiences to the young, and the deportation period is a central topic in the narratives of ordinary Chechens (cf. quotation from *International Alert* above). References to the deportation also abound in the political discourse of Chechen officials. Dudayev, Maskhadov and several other Chechen leaders were born or grew up in the exile.

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<sup>32</sup> Vibeke Sperling, (2004), “Åh Tjetjenien. Den uendelige krig i Europa”, Copenhagen: Gyldendal (My transl.).

<sup>33</sup> Vibeke Sperling, (2004), “Åh Tjetjenien. Den uendelige krig i Europa”, Copenhagen: Gyldendal.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Conquest, *The Nation Killers*, (1970), “The Soviet Deportation of Nationalities”, Glasgow.

<sup>35</sup> *International Alert*, 1992, p.11.



When federal forces crossed into Chechnya in December 1994 the collective memory of the deportation was activated and contributed to the popular resistance. Fears of a new deportation were apparently so widespread that Yeltsin found it necessary to officially assert that "the deportation of the Chechen people will never be repeated under any circumstances."<sup>36</sup>

According to Marie Bennigsen, who did field work in Chechnya in 1995-1996:

"Those who advocated non-resistance to Russia were sidelined after the massacres of Samashki (May 1995) ... from then on the Chechen peoples became convinced that 'pacification' by the Russian armed forces and the offers of amnesty by Boris Yeltsin were aimed at their annihilation or a second deportation. Villages which until then had remained neutral joined the resistance."<sup>37</sup>

When president Maskhadov swore his oath as president in February 1997 he invoked the memory of the deportation:

"For hundreds of years they (Russians) prevented our peoples from living in freedom and governing their country. When it pleased them they killed us, when it pleased them they burnt us out, when it pleased them they branded us bandits and exiled us."<sup>38</sup>

Chechen leaders surely have used the history of Chechen resistance, instrumentalized the sufferings of this "punished people" and frequently invented external threats. But all these efforts would have been in vein had they not accorded with prevailing socio-psychological sentiments among the broad Chechen population. Chechens interpret events in the prism of historic experience. This experience is lived, not "constructed" by "ethnic entrepreneurs."

In the first war Yeltsin differentiated between "bandits" and the ordinary Chechen population. Accordingly, the Chechen people were not considered a party to the conflict, only its "criminal" leaders.

Putin too, asserted that the military operations he initiated had "the immediate aim to rid Chechnya of those who threaten the safety of Chechens and Russians."<sup>39</sup> However, by de-legitimizing president Maskhadov, Putin not only dismissed the will of the Chechen people, expressed in free and fair elections. Equalizing Maskhadov with terrorists Putin also legalized encroachments on ordinary Chechens, who had committed no other "crime" than pursuing their democratic right to be governed by consent.

The current war has added yet another layer to the Chechen martyrology created by the deportation and reinforced by the previous war. The atrocities committed by the federal forces and their local puppets in the actual war have only reinforced the vertical character of the conflict.

At the beginning of the 1999 military intervention I heard from non-independence minded Chechen friends that a new deportation was underway, disguised as evacuation of Chechen refugees to remote places in Russia, and that the purpose of Putin's "anti-terrorist" operation was to "cleanse Chechnya from Chechens".

<sup>36</sup> SWB BBC, SU/2186 B/5, 23 December 1994.

<sup>37</sup> Marie Bennigsen, (1999), "Chechnya: political developments and the strategic implications for the North Caucasus", Central Asian Survey, Vol. 18, No. 4, December.

<sup>38</sup> Quoted from Marie Bennigsen, (1999), "Chechnya: political developments and the strategic implications for the North Caucasus", Central Asian Survey, Vol. 18, No. 4, December.

<sup>39</sup> Vladimir Putin, (1999), "Why Moscow has No Choice but to Clamp Down in Chechnya", International Herald Tribune, 15 November.

## 2.5 Conclusion

The dynamics of the Russian Chechen conflict suggests that it is now less “vertical” than it was in 1994-96. A horizontal conflict line – or more correctly lines – have emerged. This is partly due to president Putin’s attempts to “internalize” the conflict by co-opting and empowering former fighters and respected leaders on the Ichkeria side. But the “horizontalization” of the conflict is also due to the proliferation of radical Islam, a process that has alienated ordinary Chechens from the “Ichkeria” leadership, believed to be compliant and even sympathetic to Vakhabbism.

A settlement of the conflict, understood as a negotiated agreement between Russia and a “unitary”, coherent Chechen leadership is not possible today. On the other side a negotiated settlement would not be of much worth without the participation of representatives of the “Ichkeria” side. The incumbent, Russia-installed Chechen leaders, are not legitimate and lack a mandate to negotiate on the status of Chechnya on behalf of the Chechen nation.

Certainly many ordinary Chechens were tired of the proliferating disorder in the interwar period. But that does not mean that they approve the new Chechen leaders, appointed by Putin and – according to official Russian sources – widely supported in popular elections. Media reported comprehensive riggings in these elections.<sup>40</sup>

This factor must be taken into consideration in any attempt to work out a comprehensive solution to the Russian-Chechen conflict. While President Yeltsin was reluctant to negotiate directly with Dudayev, he agreed to negotiations at least at an informal level and eventually held face-to-face talks at an official level with Maskhadov.

President Putin has hitherto rejected any proposals to negotiate with representatives of “separatist” Chechnya. This position has become even harder to soften up after the re-entry of the terrorist leader Shamil Basayev into the Ichkeria government. But representatives of this side must be included in any peace negotiations in order to be meaningful.

It is not possible to assess to what extent the current acting president of “independent” Chechnya, Sajdullaev, is supported by the Chechen population. However, it is probably safe to assume that, regardless of his anonymity and uncertainty concerning his dependence on the terrorist Basayev, he has been endowed with a symbolic meaning, representing the unbroken line of authority from the hitherto only legitimate president of “independent” Chechnya. Any political leader which can confirm a legitimate legacy from the first freely elected Chechen president, will be in possession of a political capital more valuable than that possessed by political actors who are not anchored within the legal space of “independent” Chechnya.

In any case, the assassination of President Maskhadov has the potential to become a symbol of independence around which future generation of independence minded Chechen might rally.

A “primordialist” solution to the conflict would be to separate Chechnya from Russia. This would be congruent with the aspirations of the Ichkeria leadership. However, while this solution – in my opinion – would have been realistic at the beginning of the 1990’s and possibly also immediately after the previous war, full independence (i.e. separation from Russia) would create even greater problems than those it would solve.

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<sup>40</sup> Vibeke Sperling, (2004), “Åh Tjetjenien. Den uendelige krig i Europa”, Gyldendal. (Copenhagen).

Like his predecessors, Dudayev and Yandarbiyev, Maskhadov never withdraw from the goal of full independence. However, he was prepared to discuss a looser, con-federal union with Russia. The proposal is still valid.<sup>41</sup> This is still far from what Russia would be prepared to even consider. But for those offering to assist in finding a peaceful solution to the conflict, it could be a point of departure for further elaborations.

A model combining “primordialist” separation and instrumentalist ‘power-sharing’ (such as confederation) is thinkable. This, however, requires that the leaders of Ichkeria as well as in the Kremlin deconstruct their view of the conflict. International mediators may assist in this process. However instruments available for international mediation in secessionist conflicts are weak – especially if one of the parties is a great power.

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<sup>41</sup> Interview with Foreign Minister of Chechnya Ichkeria, Usman Fersauli, 31 Okt. 2004 and 1. Nov. 2005.

## 3 Actors Network Analysis on Chechnya<sup>42</sup>

August Hämmerli, Regula Gattiker, Reto Weyermann

### 3.1 Introduction

The conflict in Chechnya is characterized by a high degree of complexity. The tug of war between forces favoring and opposing independence calls for further differentiation, as many political actors operate on different levels. To capture this complexity, this paper presents an actors network analysis drawing on a large independent event data bases. The data used is collected through a local network that assures a continuous flow of information down to the level of single events, largely independent of global news wire sources and of governmental institutions. By means of the actors network analysis, we found civilians to be the most important actors, closely followed by the Russian military, the Chechen fighters and the Chechen government. The importance of religious leaders and the Russian president in the network was surprisingly small. The Russian military appeared to be the main cause for property damage in Chechnya, while the main initiator of cooperative events towards civilians - possibly as an effort to gain popularity – was the Chechen government. These results are discussed in the light of the current situation in Chechnya with reference to chances and limitations of the network approach with event data.

### 3.2 Methods

In general, a network is characterized by a set of nodes (actors) and by connections between these nodes (interactions).<sup>43</sup> Political network analysis begins with the assumption that the most important elements of political systems are the relationships of influence and domination among social actors.<sup>44</sup> However, data on political actors is generally scarce, specialized or its access is limited to governmental institutions. To circumvent this problem, Gerner and Schrodt et al.<sup>45</sup> and Schrodt and Gerner<sup>46</sup> have developed linguistic parsing and pattern recognition methods to tap global news wire sources such as REUTERS. The parser identifies "initiator", "recipient" and "issue of each event" and allocates the event according to one of the types defined in the IDEA (Integrated Data for Event Analysis) framework.<sup>47</sup> IDEA is a hierarchically structured classification system of political event forms. While this method is fast, cheap and highly reproducible, the collected data suffers bias from media fatigue. In a case study on the first three years of the Palestinian Intifada Gerner and Schrodt<sup>48</sup> could show that the number of reported events from computer parsed data declined with time compared to data from independent and/or local information sources.

<sup>42</sup> This paper is a condensation of an article published in the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 50, No. 2, April 2006 159-175. It presents an actors network analysis for the conflict in Chechnya drawing on one of the largest independent databases of political event data available to day. The network was originally produced as a basis for discussions for a roundtable meeting in Spiez (Switzerland) in September 2004, with representatives and leaders from different Russian regions, including Chechnya, and various European countries. The main goal of the roundtable was to discuss ways on how the security of civilians in Chechnya could be improved. For more details: FEWER-Eurasia, F. f. E. W. a. E. R. (2004). Concluding document. Ways to peace in Chechnya: upholding human security through humanitarian dialogue. Spiez, Switzerland.

<sup>43</sup> J. Scott, (2000). *Social network analysis*. London, SAGE Publications Ltd.

<sup>44</sup> D. Knoke, (1990). *Political networks*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

<sup>45</sup> D. Gerner, P. Schrodt, et al. (1994). "Machine coding of event data using regional and international sources." *International Studies Quarterly* 38: 91 - 119.

<sup>46</sup> P. A. Schrodt, and D. J. Gerner (1994). "Validity assessment of a machine-coded event data set for the Middle East, 1982 - 192." *American Journal of Political Science* 38: 825 - 854.

<sup>47</sup> D. Bond, J. Bond, et al. (2003). "Integrated data for events analysis (IDEA): An event typology for automated events data development." *Journal of Peace Research* 40(6): 733 - 745.

<sup>48</sup> D. Gerner, P. Schrodt, et al. (1994). "Machine coding of event data using regional and international sources." *International Studies Quarterly* 38: 91 - 119.

Until now, most studies of political networks either relied on specialized survey data or on data collected by governmental institutions. An alternative is to use data collected through a local network that assures a continuous flow of information down to the level of single events, largely independent of global news wire sources and of governmental institutions.<sup>49</sup> This is realized in the FAST (German acronym for early recognition and fact finding) data base and data collection network. FAST is a project of the Swiss Peace Foundation (swisspeace). The objective of FAST is to enhance decision makers' ability to identify critical developments in time to facilitate preventive actions.<sup>50</sup> FAST is currently collecting data from 23 countries around the world. The FAST data is also allocated to the IDEA event categories mentioned earlier. The IDEA event categories are assigned an IDEA index. Positive values stand for cooperative event types, negative values for conflictive event types. This index is based on and an extension of the widely used Goldstein Index.<sup>51</sup> Widmer and Tröger<sup>52</sup> have developed a framework for event data based network analysis (EDNA) with the FAST data, and thus paved the way for further work connecting event data with network analysis. Their analysis was focusing on early warning by means of degree centrality and network regression across time.

The aim of the present study was to use the FAST data on the Chechen conflict in a network analysis: (i) to identify the main actors involved in the conflict, (ii) to track down the most important conflictive and cooperative ties between actors by using the IDEA event index frame work, and (iii) to compare the quality and intensity of interactions among actor groups by means of a set of network characteristics. Both the time span and the number of events included in the analysis were extensive. In total 1873 reported events between 2002 and 2004 could be included in the network. Since the FAST data base is built on a clear separation between actors and reporters and a network of local reporters assures the continuous flow of information independent of the global news services, we consider our network to be representative of the real set of actors and their interactions in the conflict in Chechnya.

Measures of centrality and power and a combination of principal component- and cluster analysis were used to produce graphs of the network.<sup>53</sup>

### 3.3 Results

One of the most striking results from the networks analysis on Chechnya is the central position of the civilians. They have the highest degree centrality overall, the highest in-degree and the highest betweenness centrality. The high in-degree already indicates what becomes clear when looking at the Bonacich power index. Namely, that the civilians play an important passive role as recipients (high in-degree), yet their neighboring actors (e.g. Russian military, Chechen government, criminals etc.) are much better connected among themselves. This in turn leads to the very low power of civilians (e.g. a ten fold backlog to the Russian military and a twenty fold backlog to the Chechen fighters). Betweenness centrality indicates to what extent other actors have to use a focal node to interact with others. The relatively high value for betweenness centrality indicates that civilians seem to be an important stepping-stone for interactions among their more powerful neighbors. Together, centrality, power and betweenness imply that even though civilians do not have a strong influence

<sup>49</sup> P. A. Schrodt, D. J. Gerner, et al. (forthcoming). "Using event data to monitor contemporary conflict in the Israel-Palestine dyad." *International Studies Perspectives*.

<sup>50</sup> H. Krummenacher, S. Schmeidl (1999). "FAST: An integrated and interactive early warning system: the example of central asia." *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 24(3): 147 – 161.

<sup>51</sup> J. S. Goldstein, (1992). "A conflict-cooperation scale for WEIS events data." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 36(3): 369 - 385.

<sup>52</sup> T. Widmer, and V. Tröger (2004). Event data based network analysis (EDNA). 45th Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, Québec, Canada.

<sup>53</sup> For a more detailed description of the methods used please see the aforementioned article in the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*.

on the course of events, they are the most important operational actor in the Chechnya network. Civilians have played instrumental key components in many other violent conflicts as well, e.g. East Timor, Kosovo, Colombia<sup>54</sup> etc. In Chechnya, civilians are believed to be the chief victims for much of the past decade and the war itself has had a devastating effect on Chechen society.<sup>55</sup> The present study shows clearly that this is not a matter of interpretation gathered from the western media. It is a matter of records as it comes out naturally from the FAST data base through a network analysis.

Rather unexpected was the relative weakness of religious leaders in the network. On one hand, this might be due to the circumstance that the Chechen fighters and other Chechen pro-independence forces do not fully trust the religious leaders, as these are accepted by the Russian authorities.<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, the Russian authorities do not fully trust the religious leaders, because they want to preserve Chechen traditions, above all the moderate Chechen Islam.<sup>57</sup> The role of the religious leaders could be a connecting one, as they do not fully support either side. They could serve as intermediators, but as they do not enjoy the confidence of either side, this option remains questionable.

With respect to network centrality, civilians are closely followed by the Russian military, the Chechen fighters and the Chechen government. The Russian military stands out with the highest out-degree, making them the most important initiator of events in the network. The latter can only be understood in the context of conflictive interactions. As expected, the great majority of conflictive events take place between the Russian military and the Chechen fighters. More surprising is the clear connection between the Russian military and property. "Property" is obviously a passive component of the network. This means that a great portion of property damage in Chechnya has been caused by the military – a circumstance that has often been downplayed by the western media and the Russian forces (e.g. for Grozny<sup>58</sup>).

Only 35.5 % of all events included in the analysis were cooperative events. By far the highest number of cooperative ties can be found between the Chechen government and civilians. In fact, civilians also have the highest degree centrality for cooperative interactions. The Chechen government is highly influenced by the Russian President and his government in Moscow and thus, there is ample room for mistrust from the civilians in Chechnya. How can this high intensity of cooperative ties be explained? There must be a strong effort by the Chechen government to win over the Chechen civilians. Once again, civilians play the role of recipients, only this time for positive signals from a political, powerful actor. Such positive signals were for example the opening of an orthopedic hospital with modern equipment, 25 specialists and space for more than 1000 patients in Grozny in 2003 by the Chechen health ministry, or a 12 million rubles support for an education and job placement program called 'Chechen Youth' by the Chechen government, as reported to the FAST data base. This is a paradox situation because the Russian government is involved in military operations in Chechnya and at the same time maintains a government that is trying to win the popularity of the civilians that suffer most from this conflict.

The influence of the Russian President in the network is surprisingly low. He belongs to the second, less important cluster of actors even though his Bonacich power values are comparable to the one of the Russian military, which belongs to the first cluster. Only in the context of conflictive events does he gain some importance as a cut-point in the network (dividing the network into unconnected sub-

<sup>54</sup> Red Cross, C.-I. (1996). "War victims and respect for international humanitarian law." *International Review of the Red Cross*(310): 36 - 42. And: J. Bowman, (2002). *Escalation violence in Colombia, civilians are war's main victims*, Reliefweb.

<sup>55</sup> Washington Post (2004). *Tragedy in Russia*. The Washington Post. Washington D.C.: 6.

<sup>56</sup> S. L. Myers, (2004). *For Russia, a setback in Chechnya*. New York Times. New York: 4.2.

<sup>57</sup> BBC (2004). *Religious leaders in Russia, Chechnya condemn Grozny blast*. BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union. London: 1.

<sup>58</sup> For an overview to the consequences of the last war, see D. Williams, (2000). *Grozny is fallen to the ground; Chechens returning home find rubble, red tape -- and little relief in sight*. The Washington Post. Washington D.C.: 25.

groups) This relative unimportance may be due to fact that the current President Putin, strongly operates indirectly through the Russian government, namely through his plenipotentiary in the South Federal District. In other words, if Putin delegates most of his task to the plenipotentiary, who, as part of the Russian government, belongs to the fifth most important actors in Chechnya, then the influence of president Putin on the Chechen conflict is masked by the Russian government. This points to an inherent problem of the social network approach in a political context: the quality and interpretability of a network depends crucially on the quality of the chosen bins to which actors are assigned. For example 'refugees' are contained in the bin 'civilians'. However, refugees are much more likely to appear in the context of conflictive events and hence contribute a great proportion of conflictive events to the bin of 'civilians'. Such hidden properties of bins have to be considered when interpreting the data. In order to draw and evaluate a network, a set of actors has to be identified *a priori*, an information which entails network analysis etc. One way out of this circular argument would be to start with a first set of actors and then reassign actors to bins according to new insights from the network. In this way the 'optimal' set of bins could be found iteratively. While we have to live with this limitation for the present network, future networks on actors in Chechnya could benefit from the set of actors identified and evaluated in the current study.

Like most social networks, the Chechnya network of this study belongs to the group of scale free networks. Scale free networks are characterized by redundant wiring (a few actors share most interactions) and as a consequence they show great robustness against random failure and at the same time high vulnerability to attacks.<sup>59</sup> This property may have implications also for a political network. The network for conflictive interactions, civilians, the Chechen fighters and the Russian President were identified as cut-points. Cut-points are dividing a network into unconnected substructures, if their connections are removed. This may explain why there is so much pressure on the least powerful cut-point, the civilians. The atrocious logic behind this mechanism is obviously, that without civilians the conflict would disappear as well. This of course is a devastating misapprehension, because civilians are at the centre of the network regardless of the quality of interactions, be it cooperative or the sum of all.

While the latter is an example where network topology may help us to understand a political mechanism, other results of the network analysis are not new (most conflictive actions were found between Chechen fighters and the Russian military), nor are they surprising (for instance that civilians are the main victims). Is the network approach therefore largely obsolete? We do not think so. Political scenarios drawn and interpreted solemnly on the basis of global news services and/or political expertise may or may not lead to the same conclusion as a network analysis. Yet unlike the network approach, they will always be more vulnerable to investigators bias, to media fatigue and to arbitrary interpretation. The strength of the network approach with event data such as the one from FAST is its wide independence from public sources and opinion. Together with country expertise, it can be a powerful first step towards unprejudiced discussions among actors in a political conflict. In the future, as more data becomes available, it will be possible to look at the dynamics of political networks such as the one in Chechnya. The correct implementation of a dynamic approach will also require more effort in the development of unbiased estimators for covariance between points in time to deal with the problem of repeated measurements.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup> R. Albert, H. Jeong, et al. (2000). "Error and attack tolerance of complex networks." *Nature* 406: 378 - 382.

<sup>60</sup> T. Widmer, and V. Tröger (2004). *Event data based network analysis (EDNA)*. 45th Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, Québec, Canada.

## 4 The International Committee of the Red Cross in Chechnya

### International Committee of the Red Cross<sup>61</sup>

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been working in the Russian Federation since 1992. As soon as in 1993, the ICRC opened its first office in the Northern Caucasus, namely in Nalchik, the capital of Kabardino-Balkaria. The ICRC's engagement since then reflects the region's troublesome history. Two incidents, in particular, have shaped the present situation: In the early hours of 17 December, 1996, six members of a Red Cross team working at the ICRC hospital in Novye Atagi, Chechnya, were murdered while asleep by a group of masked men using weapons fitted with silencers. A seventh delegate was wounded but managed to escape.<sup>62</sup> The second incident took place during the night of 2 August, 2003. Usman Saidaliev, a local ICRC employee, was abducted from his home in the village of Novy-Engenoy by unidentified armed men. Since then neither Usman's family nor the ICRC have had any news of his whereabouts.<sup>63</sup> First and foremost, these incidents are human tragedies. But they have also influenced the ICRC's work. In particular, the consequences have been twofold. First, during the second Chechen war the ICRC relied, for security reasons, on a remote control approach. Having no local office in Chechnya itself, the ICRC controlled all Chechen activities from the Nalchik office. The Chechen office was re-opened in autumn 2000. Today, more than 80 ICRC employees work in Grozny. Second, due to the risk of kidnapping, since 1999 the ICRC makes use of armed escorts all over the Northern Caucasus.

Despite these security problems, the ICRC runs a major humanitarian operation consisting of two pillars. The first is its humanitarian program, including protection and assistance activities for the vulnerable population affected by the conflict in Chechnya. The second aims at the promotion of international humanitarian law (IHL). In order to complete its programs in the Northern Caucasus the ICRC needs US\$ 22 million, constituting thereby the committee's sixth largest budget worldwide. Concerning personnel, the activities are conducted by ten to twenty delegates based in Nalchik and Moscow respectively, supported by 360 local employees.

### 4.1 Humanitarian Action

Special priority is given to protection activities, with a main focus on visiting people detained in relation to the conflict in Chechnya. Detention visits were suspended in September 2004 as it was not possible to follow the ICRC's standard criteria. The ICRC is still discussing that matter with the competent authorities and remains hopeful that visits can be resumed. In the meantime, the ICRC has been trying to establish and maintain links between detainees and their families by providing families with information on the whereabouts of their relatives in detention and by transmitting messages. Also, the ICRC remains active on the issue of missing persons by strengthening the dialogue with the relevant authorities and promoting respect for the civilian population in the Northern Caucasus.

In 2005, the ICRC carried out an assessment in Chechnya to determine the economic needs of the vulnerable populations affected by the conflict. Ongoing violence and armed confrontations are preventing people from resuming normal lives. Unemployment remains very high across the whole republic, affecting in particular people living in urban centers. Overall social and economic conditions are poor and humanitarian assistance remains essential for large parts of the population. Therefore, in 2006, the ICRC will continue to distribute essential household items to the most

<sup>61</sup> This paper is a synthesis of the comments of Galina Drozhzhina (ICRC), of the presentation by Daniel Schriber (ICRC), and of the ICRC Plan of Action 2006 Russian Federation, and was compiled by Rita Grünenfelder (swisspeace)

<sup>62</sup> [<http://www.icrc.org/Web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/iwplList161/0A524436C88BA41DC1256B66005AA7D6>] (04.04.06)

<sup>63</sup> [<http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/iwplList581/F9EDD9BF52EB274AC1257051003761CD>] (04.04.06)



vulnerable groups of the population. In order to decrease dependence on humanitarian assistance, households will be offered support in starting small family businesses.

Furthermore, special emphasis is given to the needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Chechnya, residing to large parts in Ingushetia and Daghestan. Although the above-mentioned assessment showed some improvement in recent years, overall social and economic conditions remained poor and employment opportunities are very limited. Therefore, many of the IDPs in both republics are largely dependent on humanitarian assistance. It is, however, also the ICRC's concern to address questions of settlement. The ICRC maintains the dialogue with the relevant authorities to advocate that any returns to Chechnya take place on a voluntary base and only if security and shelter options permit.

Infrastructure forms another important aspect of the ICRC's activities in the Northern Caucasus. Some 20,000 residents reside in temporary accommodation centers in major towns of Chechnya, where access to water and sanitary conditions are often poor. Essential infrastructure in other towns of Chechnya also requires improvement. Hospitals, schools, social institutions and community centers are in need of reconstruction. The ICRC's measures entail such diverse activities as supporting the local water authority, maintaining public shower/laundry points, performing structural renovation work and much more.

Furthermore, the ICRC aims at clear improvements in medical assistance and health structures. The difficult situation in the Northern Caucasus affects the health system in the region and access to basic health care for the population. There is a lack of medical materials and life-saving equipment. Aside from the support for the Central Blood Bank and orthopedic institutions, the ICRC lays special emphasis on collaboration with 13 local hospitals by equipping them with necessary material and by giving them access to training.

A last field of activity is mine-risk education. Widespread mines and unexploded ordnance continue to kill and injure civilians. To avoid accidents, the population must receive adequate information about the dangers of mines and how to act accordingly. Two measures in particular are taken: First, the ICRC tries to install self-sustaining mine-risk education programs. Secondly, to reduce accidents involving children, the ICRC is constructing 35 safe play areas in mine-affected communities.

## **4.2 Promotion of International Humanitarian Law (IHL)**

The promotion of international humanitarian law forms the second major pillar of ICRC activities in the Northern Caucasus. It is thus crucially important to address all relevant actors: authorities, armed and security forces and civil society.

To promote adherence to IHL, the ICRC has worked closely with the Commonwealth of Independent States Interparliamentary Assembly since 1997 and signed a cooperation agreement in 2004.

Of major importance in the Chechen context is the collaboration with armed and security forces. Since the ICRC started its program to promote IHL among the armed forces in 1994, significant progress has been achieved. The Russian ministry of defense adopted Order No. 360 on measures to ensure respect for IHL by the armed forces, regulations requiring compliance with IHL provisions, and their integration into manuals. In addition, the ministry of defense formed an interdepartmental working group on IHL integration. A training center has been set up and offers two-week courses for high-ranking officers. There have also been some encouraging developments in collaboration with

the ministry of the interior, such as the establishment of four centers in charge of devising programs on police activities and relations with the population, as well as the adoption of Order No. 220 on measures to ensure respect for IHL by the Interior troops. Significant progress nevertheless remains to be made by the armed and security forces to implement achievements in terms of knowledge of IHL at the level of field operations.

Concerning civil society, the ICRC collaborates with media, think tanks, humanitarian organizations, schools and universities. Improved contacts with these actors can help to shape the debate on IHL and bring other humanitarian issues to the fore. Collaboration with schools has so far been very successful in the Russian Federation as a whole. In September 2005, the program to make young people aware of the basic principles of IHL was introduced in selected pilot schools of Grozny and received the support of the ministry of education of Chechnya and teachers. In 2006, the program will be extended to 15 more schools in Grozny. For the time being, teacher training remains the key activity. Also the university program, underway since 1995, can be regarded a success, as IHL is now included as an obligatory subject in the federal standard curriculum for law studies.

The Northern Caucasus in general and Chechnya in particular pose a constant challenge to the ICRC. All the more important is therefore the close cooperation with the Russian Red Cross (RRC). The ICRC supports the RRC's organizational development in the region, in cooperation with the International Federation, and lends support to the branches' activities. These activities are numerous and valuable, including homecare for over 2,400 elderly people, first-aid assistance, psychological assistance to IDPs and residents, playrooms for IDP children, recreation centers for up to 1,600 teenagers, and school meals three times a week to 500 children.

The ICRC's activities are manifold, but much still needs to be done. Therefore, the ICRC will remain fully committed to bringing a better future to Chechnya.

## 5 The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in Chechnya

Matthias Buess<sup>64</sup>

### 5.1 Activities of Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) in the Region

Swiss development cooperation activities have been under way in the Russian Federation since 1993. At the moment, the Swiss government is the only bilateral donor in Chechnya. While the SDC's Department for Cooperation with Eastern Europe and the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) prioritizes the improvement of relations with citizens of Russia, promoting the private sector, improving the infrastructure and the sustainable use of resources in other regions of the Russian Federation, the Humanitarian Aid Department of the SDC focuses in general on emergency aid, prevention, rehabilitation, reconstruction and advocacy through protection and assistance for the most vulnerable and hardship cases. Ever since the outbreak of the second conflict in Chechnya in 1999, humanitarian aid has been earmarked for support of the victims in the North Caucasus. The annual budget is used for multilateral (support of ICRC, UNHCR, WFP, OCHA) and bilateral programs in North Ossetia, Ingushetia and Chechnya. In order to strengthen the efforts in the region, SDC opened two offices in Vladikavkaz (North Ossetia) and Nazran (Ingushetia) in 2000. Since then the overall objective of SDC activities in the North Caucasus is to alleviate poverty and improve integration and living conditions for the most vulnerable populations affected by conflicts and natural disasters. Moreover, humanitarian aid is concentrated on supporting emergency activities of international organizations and increasing the protection of the civil population. SDC programs focus on the integration of IDPs and refugees with durable housing solutions, health and prevention of infectious diseases (in particular HIV/AIDS, TB and other sexually transmitted diseases) emergency assistance, and for most vulnerable groups, psycho-social support and prevention of natural hazards.

The distressing security situation in Chechnya as well as in the neighboring Republics and the fact that a great part of the infrastructure has been damaged or even destroyed exacerbate the activities and the implementation of the various programs. As a result access to vulnerable people is often difficult.

### 5.2 Description of the SDC Programs

#### Rehabilitation of Schools and Educational Facilities in Chechnya

During the hostilities that took place in Chechnya in the period of 1994-1996 and 1999-2002, almost all educational institutions were completely or partially destroyed. Some organizations such as UNICEF, SDC, some NGOs as well as the Chechen ministry of education implemented a number of programs that had the purpose of rehabilitating educational facilities, and establishing a normal educational process in the Republic of Chechnya. However, there are still a lot of schools, especially in the rural parts of Chechnya, which are not properly functioning or not working to full capacity and thus need to be rehabilitated. It is a fact that one basis to guarantee peace and development of any society is education. Therefore the organization of a proper educational process is very important in today's Chechnya. The overall project goal is to provide school age children the possibility to attend school classes, to study and to develop themselves. Without primary education, children will be unable to enter institutions of higher education or to receive proper professional education. SDC encourages these objectives by contributing to the rehabilitation of damaged schools and educational facilities in Chechnya. The implementation of this project is under the responsibility of a local NGO in coordination with the ministry of education. Aside from helping children in the districts

<sup>64</sup> The author wrote this paper based on a presentation at the annual conference by Cristina Hoyos, SDC.

with rehabilitated schools, it provides a number of local teachers with employment opportunities as well. As a result, the rehabilitated schools will be able to offer more children the opportunity to receive a proper education. This project began in 2000 and will last until 2007.

### **Medical Programs in Chechnya, North Ossetia and Ingushetia**

As much as education, health is an important basis for the development of a country. The medical program of SDC in the Northern Caucasus was initiated in September 2001 in the Republic of North Ossetia. Since the beginning in 2004, the activities were extended to the republics of Chechnya and Ingushetia in partnership with the local ministries of health. The overall goal of the program is to reduce morbidity and mortality from infectious diseases, especially tuberculosis and AIDS, viral hepatitis B and C, STD, and to increase the preparedness of local health structures to deal with potential future epidemics. The objectives of this program are the improvement of laboratory diagnoses procedures, medical professional skills through the training of community health networks, and to carry out information campaigns about AIDS. The improvement of diagnostic procedures is realized through the delivery of high quality medical and laboratory equipment. Over the last three years numerous activities were implemented in order to increase knowledge and awareness about HIV/AIDS among teenagers and the population in general. One example is the distribution of a brochure dealing with the "15 most frequently asked questions and replies" concerning HIV/AIDS. Moreover, each year a new poster and leaflets about transmission and prevention of HIV/AIDS are designed and widely distributed in the three republics for the World AIDS Day in cooperation with the Ministries of Health. The improvement of the capacity of diagnoses has been realized through several training courses focusing on laboratory diagnoses, quality control, and therapy with the participation of clinical staff working at the central and regional level and with specialized Russian medical institutions. In 2005, the joint SDC-WHO surveys on HIV/AIDS knowledge, attitude and practice were started. The results of these studies and an external review of our medical program 2001-2004 by the Swiss Centre for International Health are useful in the planning of a new health program in the three republics.

### **Consulting Centers for Women in Chechnya**

The situation inside Chechnya is still unstable, violence and continued lawlessness make protection of civilians in the Republic a priority. The basis to guarantee freedom, justice and peace is the acknowledgement of every individual's dignity, and of equal integral rights of all members of a society. It is a matter of fact, that during conflicts the most vulnerable groups of the civil population – children and women – suffer most. It is very important that women know the rights they have, the workings of the legal system, and what kind of social protection, support and benefits they can get. However, until SDC opened two counseling centers in Grozny and Argun there was no centre specialized on legal counseling for women. SDC thinks that this gap needs to be filled in today's Chechnya. The overall project goal is to provide a wide range of legal counseling services for all women who need legal advice. The focus is thereby on single women, widows, disabled women and those having many children. The services allow them to have not only a better knowledge of their rights and the different legal procedures but also effective access to legal remedies. Another important aim is to decrease the legal vulnerability of women. The implementation of the project is under the responsibility of the local NGO "Agency for Rehabilitation and Development" (ARD). The two counseling centers, which have been selected for being easily accessible for people residing in urban and rural areas and because they are located in the most densely populated regions, are open five days a week and employ two experienced legal experts and assistants who consult women in need of help on a variety of issues. This includes for instance pension matters, issues of heritage, loss and restoration of various papers and preparation and registration of documents for receiving allowances and compensation payments.

In addition to the programs mentioned above, SDC supports further activities in neighboring regions: In 2003, SDC started to implement, in close cooperation with the authorities of Ingushetia, an integration program for individuals who are not planning to return to Chechnya until after the violence has subsided. The overall goal of this program is to provide durable housing solutions to the

most vulnerable people who currently reside in shelters and other temporary accommodation facilities. This implies also the construction of houses and infrastructure, or technical assistance for community development and social institutions. Moreover, in the aftermath of the hostage taking in Beslan (North Ossetia) in 2004, SDC decided to launch a psychological support program which focuses on psychosocial rehabilitation, physical activation, recreation and education for the children, and which is implemented by local therapists.

The challenge for SDC is not only the delivery of humanitarian aid in a difficult political context but also the maintaining of a humanitarian space, which means to remain impartial.

## 6 The Activity of Political Affairs Division IV of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in the North Caucasus

Jürg Aeberhard

It is part of Switzerland's humanitarian tradition to show solidarity with peoples that are in distress as a result of conflicts or disasters. In the case of conflicts, the civilian population is particularly deserving of our sympathy because it often suffers greatly. It is therefore quite logical that the latest foreign policy report by the Swiss government in the year 2000 defines the preservation and promotion of security and peace as one of the fundamental principles of Swiss foreign policy.

However, while the definition of foreign policy principles is one thing, the provision of instruments and financial means to implement them is quite another.

As for instruments, it should be noted that the majority of conflicts have now radically changed in nature. In the past, conflicts were usually between states, whereas today most conflicts are internal conflicts between representatives of the state and armed opposition groups. The overlapping of historical, ethnic, religious, economic and other factors further complicate the situation. In common with other countries, Switzerland recognized that only the professionalization of conflict analysis and management could lead to the desired implementation of the principle of peace promotion. This is why two years ago the Swiss parliament approved a budget line enabling the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs to build up a centre of competence in this field – Political Affairs Division IV – and to finance its activities.

It is not possible to list all areas in which Political Affairs Division IV operates. However, I would like to give a few examples: We support a peace policy initiative in Sri Lanka, a number of human security initiatives, de-mining in Angola, and human rights dialogues in various states, including Iran and China. We are also deploying experts to conflict areas, for instance to the International Tribunal in Sierra Leone. In addition, Political Affairs Division IV advises state bodies on questions of minority protection and on closely related constitutional issues, such as in the case of Macedonia.

For several years now, Political Affairs Division IV has been closely monitoring developments in the North Caucasus, particularly the conflict in Chechnya. We were and we are concerned about the situation of the civilian population, but at the same time we are aware of the geo-strategic importance of the Caucasus. The energy policy aspects and the region's position on the borders of the Near East, one of the most contentious areas in the world, are crucial factors. In addition to the Chechen conflict, there are various unresolved conflicts in the South Caucasus that make the Caucasus as a whole a most fragile region in security policy terms. The stabilization of the region should therefore be one of Europe's key interests.

We have always been aware of the fact that Russia will not permit any intervention in Chechnya. In meetings at the highest level, Switzerland nevertheless repeatedly expressed its concern about the humanitarian situation in Chechnya and emphasized the need for a political settlement of the conflict. At the same time, Political Affairs Division IV has discussed the possibility of a humanitarian

initiative on behalf of the suffering civilian population in Chechnya. In several conflicts it has proved possible to negotiate agreements with the conflicting parties within the framework of what we term a humanitarian dialogue aimed at keeping the civilian population out of conflicts as far as possible. Such agreements were reached in cases where the number of conflicting parties was small and the parties were also tightly organized. This meant that agreements negotiated by their leaders could more or less be implemented.

In the Chechen conflict the case is different. There have always been many small groups in the armed resistance and it has not always been clear to what extent these groups were controlled by

the more well-known rebel leaders. As a result of the war, Chechen society has fallen apart into a number of interest groups. These groups are often involved in "private" conflicts in which vendettas may also play a decisive role. On the government side there are also several actors who are not always pursuing the same goals. This fact needs to be kept in mind in any humanitarian initiative. The dangerous security situation presents a further difficulty, especially the persistent practice of kidnapping in order to obtain ransoms. This makes travel by foreigners in the conflict area almost impossible. Any form of direct contact with the conflict actors has therefore been out of the question.

We discussed these problems with the Russian NGO Fewer Eurasia (Fewer: Forum on Early Warning and Early Response) and with swisspeace, which is monitoring the security situation in the North Caucasus. Fewer also had contacts with the Russian NGO "Peace Mission of General Lebed", which has successfully conducted peace projects in Chechnya for several years and therefore had good contacts both with federal and local authorities. The discussions always focused on improving the protection of the population, specifically on the problem of illegal detentions and the disappearance of civilians. These phenomena alone show that the security situation is still precarious, which in turn seriously hinders reconstruction and economic development. As no progress can be achieved in this area without the support of local and federal authorities, we hoped that they would be interested in supporting the idea of a humanitarian dialogue for the protection of the civilian population. Within the framework of two round-table discussions in Bern and Moscow, organized by Fewer and swisspeace and financed by the Swedish development agency SIDA and Political Affairs Division IV, representatives of federal and local authorities as well as the civil society were informed about the idea of humanitarian dialogue. It was encouraging that most participants indicated their interest and their willingness to support such a project.

In order to avoid merely abstract discussions on how to improve the protection of the civilian population, we proposed that Fewer, swisspeace and the Political Affairs Division IV would develop a specific pilot project in a certain region of Chechnya. The reasons for choosing a pilot project were the following: First, the conditions for implementing any kind of project at all in Chechnya are very unfavorable. The likelihood of failure is therefore considerably high. Second, the idea of establishing a humanitarian dialogue in Chechnya meant that we were entering new territory. It was very difficult to assess the effectiveness of this method under the prevailing circumstances. Third, such a project comes with considerable political risks, which we wanted to minimize by proceeding cautiously. For these reasons it seemed appropriate to test the feasibility and the effect of a humanitarian dialogue in an experimental phase in a limited location and for a limited time. A pilot project was subsequently implemented in the Achkhoy-Martan region in the west of Chechnya. Moreover, we met with representatives of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to join us in this initiative. Their response was positive. As a neutral state with a great humanitarian tradition, Sweden is an excellent partner for us in the highly sensitive North Caucasus region. The first result of our cooperation was the joint launch of the pilot project in Achkhoy-Martan in May 2005.

The aim of the project is to improve the protection of the civilian population of Achkhoy-Martan against illegal arrests and kidnappings and, when such events take place, to support the victims and their relatives. With these aims in mind, our Russian project partners Fewer and Peace Mission of General Lebed have been holding talks with representatives of the state in Moscow and in the region. The aim of the talks is to reach an agreement between federal and local authorities to define a co-operation mechanism on how to involve those affected and their relatives in cases of illegal arrest and kidnapping. The main objective is to ensure that laws are known and applied so that the victims and their relatives can obtain legal redress. The issues of "reintegration of amnestied former

fighters” and “improvement of the economic situation” were also included in the humanitarian dialogue. It is a fact that amnestied former fighters are often the victims of illegal arrests and kidnappings. Moreover, for a long time, it has been obvious that the hopeless economic situation prompts many young men into joining the armed resistance and militant religious movements. This explains why it makes sense to include these problems in the humanitarian dialogue, as they are linked to the issue of security for the civil population.

We are convinced that in the long run there is no alternative to dialogue if the situation of the civilian population is to be improved meaningfully and in a sustained manner.



## 7 The Potential Role of External Actors – a Chechen Perspective

**Larissa Bitkaeva**

The war in Chechnya affects the lives of us, the Chechens, on a day-to-day basis. Virtually every family has lost some of its relatives. The war has deprived people of households, jobs, and means of subsistence. The horrors of war have become everyone's personal story. In offering an appraisal of the situation I am bound to my own experiences with this war. In large part, therefore, this is a personal account. The aim of this short overview is to point to areas where external actors can have significant positive influence. After some general thoughts, I will point to specific fields of action.

The years of war have left Chechnya shattered. In these circumstances, help provided by the world community in general and the Swiss government in particular is of invaluable worth. Aid from the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Médecins sans Frontières, Médecins du Monde, the Danish Refugee Council, the International Rescue Committee, World Vision, People in Need Foundation, and Polish Humanitarian Action has been preventing families from starvation and disease. For this, I want to express my gratitude.

Help, though, is not only needed in Chechnya itself. It is important to draw attention to the important role of countries receiving Chechen refugees. By giving shelter to Chechen immigrants, these countries contribute to giving a better future to a region traumatized by war. One of my colleagues lost two babies during a bombing of Grozny. Her main concern now is her sister, whose husband was killed during military operations in Chechnya. Together, these two women try to arrange a better future for the sister's children, to save their lives and provide them with a proper education. In spite of serious obstacles they managed to send the children to a European country. This is not an isolated case. A thorough investigation would show that mothers and children form the majority of emigrants from Chechnya. Sincere thanks to the countries, that give comfort and help to these refugees. Chechens are known for their diligence, they are willing and able to work. It is neither in the receiving countries' nor in the refugees' interest to treat the Chechens as beggars. Help is being given to refugees who had to escape their native land for the sake and salvation of their children. The cost of maintaining the refugees' camps could be decreased to a great extent, if they would be given the permission to work. This way, the Chechen immigrants could avoid being considered a burden on receiving countries.

Media and public consciousness are just as important to mention. Members of different organizations, among them the United Nations, the European Community, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, are risking their lives in collecting information and reporting on the real situation in Chechnya. This keeps the Chechen conflict in the media and helps it from being forgotten. Furthermore, Russian and Chechen authorities, from time to time, are obliged to answer inconvenient questions. No matter if these questions come from journalists or from heads of states, important is that people keep asking.

After elaborating on these general points, I would like to list seven areas, where external actors can be active. They include ecology, education, economic cooperation, reconstruction, judiciary, compensation payments and cooperation with local actors. In my opinion, these are the most promising areas for actors wishing to work in Chechnya.

### **Ecology**

Questions of ecology should be granted more attention immediately. It is my opinion that the state of affairs in the Chechen Republic needs to be looked at differently. The bombing of villages and cities has stopped for the moment, bringing relief to the inhabitants. The bombing of mountainous regions, however, goes on. This increasingly worsens the ecological balance. The groundwork for most ecological problems was laid in the Soviet period. The wars have aggravated these problems and given birth to new ones. Together, they put the Chechen people and the whole ecosystem on the brink of extinction. Whole landscapes have been annihilated. Wood, atmosphere, soil and water are crisis-ridden. Unique woods of beech-trees are being cut down. Erosion of mountainous soil has intensified. Pollution with oil, domestic waste, heavy metals, etc. are accumulating. Altogether, this increasingly affects human health. An unambiguous indicator is the high maternal and infant mortality rate in the republic. While the average index of infant mortality for Russia in 1989 was 17.8%, in Chechnya it amounted 39.3% – the highest index in the Soviet Union. In 2004, eight out of twelve pregnant women in hospital nr. 9 in Grozny lost their babies and four were under observation during pregnancy. Neither the best doctors nor the best intentions can compensate for the bad conditions Chechen doctors have to work in. There are other widespread health problems. The number of patients ill from tuberculosis, hepatitis, cancer, and hematological diseases has increased enormously. Practically everyone suffers from short-term memory loss. Infants struggle with weak immune systems, while teenagers have high blood pressure. These health problems have to be seen in relation to the ecosystem as a whole. To tackle them means to start ecological projects such as de-mining, research of post-war landscapes and their impact on public health, and psychological rehabilitation programs.

### **Education**

Attempts to reconstruct the educational system are currently being made in the republic. Different projects undertaken by UNESCO are worth mentioning in particular. Yet, they are not sufficient. The education that today's students and pupils receive is, to put it mildly, of low quality. This problem, again, is rooted in the Soviet past. Already then, the Chechens were 6<sup>th</sup> with regard to population size in the Soviet Union, but they were only 37<sup>th</sup> when it came to the number of people with higher education. The wars have done further damage, leaving one whole generation with practically no education. Educational projects and projects raising the level of skills could therefore have a wide impact. Training of Chechen students abroad, for instance, could serve not only to enhance the students' linguistic competences but also to provide for cultural exchange, giving students an idea of democratic values and the conduction of scientific work.

### **Economic cooperation**

Collaboration in the economic sphere could turn out to be, in a way, a guarantor for peace by bringing financial means into the country. This would have the double effect of creating working places and enhancing the status of Chechnya in the world. Against all odds, Chechnya has a lot to offer in fields such as culture, science, agriculture, and tourism. For example, Chechnya has a potential for recreational activities, being equipped both with mineral waters and wonderful scenery.

### **Reconstruction**

Assistance with the reconstruction of cities and villages destroyed by the conflict is desperately needed. Officially, the war has been finished five years ago, but Chechnya and especially Grozny still lie in ruins. The Russian federal authorities declare to be spending ever-growing funds for state stabilization, but the means actually spent on reconstruction are scanty. To put it into perspective: Whereas Chechnya was to receive 5.82 billion rubles in 2005, Tatarstan got 9.982 billions, Bashkortostan 6.624 billions. Or to make another comparison: While Russia, during the years 2002 to 2004, paid only 12.9 billion rubles to Chechnya, it spent 40 and 60 billion rubles respectively for the festivities related to the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Saint-Petersburg and the 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Kazan. A direct consequence of the lack of reconstruction is the high unemployment rate. The Chechen Republic occupies the leading position when it comes to levels of unemployment; 62% of all unemployed people in the Southern Federal District are Chechens. Construction work would

create thousands of jobs and would contribute to regenerating diverse branches of industry, in turn giving job opportunities to many highly qualified specialists. More investment in reconstruction could thus stimulate professional education and lower unemployment rates. This, in turn, could contribute to a decrease in crime levels – another area where Chechnya sets disreputable records in the Russian Federation. Ultimately, all these changes, and this is the most important thing, could help people develop prospects for the future. Just this – trust in the future – is hard to develop while looking at ruins every day.

### **Judiciary**

Living in Chechnya, it is hard to get rid of the impression that a huge number of Chechens are condemned unfairly, while an equally huge number of Russian soldiers who kill peaceful citizens are not held responsible. Numerous Chechens are convicted without evidence. At the same time, only few Russian servicemen are being accused, even if their guilt was obvious. The Chechens suffer from this situation. The restoration of justice and equal rights for Chechens and Russians could help the Chechen population gain more trust in the government.

### **Compensation payments**

Chechens can apply for compensation payments for households and properties destroyed by military actions. However, the sum of 350 thousand rubles, allocated in 2003, by no means indemnifies the people for their losses. Furthermore, 14% of this sum was lost due to inflation caused by enormously increased costs for building materials. Finally and most importantly, the issue of moral damage compensation has so far largely been ignored. Not only do the Chechens feel deprived of moral damage compensations for the two Chechen wars, there is also another issue lingering. In 1944, several nationalities, among them the Chechens, were expatriated by Stalin under the accusation of treachery. 400,478 Chechens and Ingushes were deported, 192,000 of them were children. Half of those deported never came back, most of them died from famine or homesickness on the way to Kazakhstan, Siberia and Central Asia or in the new settlements. Only in 1957 were the Chechens allowed to return to their home region. The compensation sum for the 13 years in exile and for the following attempts to readjust to a normal life was estimated at 10,000 rubles. Representatives of other nationalities received much bigger compensations. Chechens consider the 10,000 rubles as a cruel joke.

### **Cooperation with local actors**

Local NGOs are eager to contribute to the reconstruction of Chechnya. Yet, they are dependent on external assistance. Here, more cooperation with external actors could definitely improve their efficiency. Invitations to conferences, training, or participation in various international forums on human rights would provide local NGOs with the opportunity to discover modern forms and methods of human rights defense.

It is my strong opinion, that external actors can have a significant positive impact, contributing to the social, economic, and political stabilization of the Northern Caucasus. My short essay highlights areas, where these external interventions, in my opinion, promise the most sustainable and reasonable results.

## 8 International Actors and the Conflict in Chechnya

**Anna Matveeva**

International attention to the conflict in Chechnya has gone down considerably compared to the period when Vladimir Putin was coming to power in Russia in 1999. The focus of media and the donor community has turned elsewhere, although the needs in Chechnya remain. Furthermore, the Russian authorities have grown disinclined to accommodate the work of internationals in Chechnya, thus restricting the space for engagement. The donor community has yet to adapt to this evolving context.

This essay contains four sections. In the first one, I will highlight some recent developments of the Chechen conflicts. To give more background, I will also comment on the Russian position in a separate section. The third section elaborates on the roles that international actors can play in Chechnya. The essay concludes with a brief outlook.

### 8.1 New Trends in the Conflict

The situation in Chechnya begins to acquire the features of a long-term protracted conflict, as violence has been unfolding for over a decade. With the passage of time, however, the course of the conflict has changed its momentum. The war's by-products have become more prominent than its original causes. This new dynamic implies a transformation of the conflict from an anti-colonial war for control over territory into a prominent battleground of the *international jihad*.

### 8.2 Rise of Jihadism

Broadly speaking, there are three types of fighters engaged on the Chechen militants' side: those motivated by personal and local causes, be it revenge, rivalries with local power-holders, criminal pursuits and the like; those who fight for the national liberation of Chechnya from Russian colonial domination; and those who want to bring about an Islamic state and establish a caliphate in the North Caucasus.<sup>65</sup> It is hard to draw firm conclusions about the relative strengths of the groups, but it is apparent that 'national liberationists' more and more give way to *jihadis* especially since the assassination of Aslan Maskhadov, president of the self proclaimed Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, in March 2005. His successor, Abdul-Khalim Sadulayev, has taken up a considerably more Islamist stance.

*Jihadism* emerged as one of the strands in the resistance cause, when foreign fighters came to Chechnya during the first war of 1994-96 and introduced a new ideology, backed by money and weapons. It took time before the ideology spread in Chechnya and among other North Caucasian groups, and before it had become a powerful war factor. However, since the late 1990s, the most spectacular acts of violence – bomb blasts in public places and large-scale hostage-takings – have been results of *jihadi* operations.

### 8.3 Waging the War in the North Caucasus

The second important development has been the spread of war throughout the entire North Caucasus, long promised by Shamil Basayev and put into action with the intervention in Dagestan in 1999. This spread is connected to *jihadi* actions and ideology, which are increasingly attractive to the younger generation. The attacks in Dagestan, North Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Stavropol krai have mostly been perpetrated by representatives of other North Caucasian groups rather than Chechens. The North Caucasian republics, which a few years ago were relatively calm apart from

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<sup>65</sup> Konstantin Novikov quoted in RFE/RL Caucasus Report, 20 January 2006, Volume 9, Number 2.

occasional 'business/mafioso' shoot-outs, became turbulent places where large-scale destabilization became possible. In this sense the *jihadi* cause has been successful in taking the war to a new level.

As mentioned before, Maskhadov's successor in the office, Abdul-Khalim Sadulayev, is ideologically much closer to *jihadism* than exiled and demoted Ahmed Zakayev, Deputy Prime Minister of the late Aslan Maskhadov government and his envoy to Europe, who enjoys political asylum in the UK. In May 2005 Sadulayev signaled the end of the policy of seeking peace talks with Moscow and decreed the organization of a Caucasus Front to widen the conflict with Russia beyond the borders of Chechnya. One of his recent statements says that "fulfilling their sacred duty before Allah, the Muslims of the Caucasus are uniting around the leadership of the ChRI [Chechen Republic of Icherkia] and waging a national-liberation struggle to de-colonize the entire Caucasus."<sup>66</sup> Politically, Sadulayev regards himself as the Imam of the Caucasus rather than as the president of a nation-state. He proves this with the creation of a Council of Alims of Peoples of the Caucasus in January 2006, which provides him with advice based on the Koran and the Sunna.

## 8.4 Rejection of the 'Western System'

Unlike 'anti-colonialists', *jihadis* are not motivated by the notion of a nation-state, based on the democratic will of the people. Nor are they inspired by the desire to obtain a seat in the UN and become a part of the international system of states which, in their view, reflects the Western domination over the Muslim world. Such a system is the creation of Men to serve a certain political agenda, while only a system designed by God is the true one. In the Western system Muslims always appear to be on the losing side and it never works in their favor. The *jihadis* main ideological pillars are as follows:

Rejection of the Western system of states, of international organizations and of the principles of international law because they are based on alien political notions disguised as universal; Battle for 'hearts and minds': opposition to Western / Godless domination over consciousness of Muslims; ideological battle against false ideas such as Western-designed ideas of 'freedom' or 'national sovereignty'; Rejection of democracy and constitutionalism as foundations of a state organization, since the state should be based on the Koran and the Sunna.

In the words of Shamil Basayev, "as we depart further from Islamic ideology, we try to find a way out in this system of false goalposts. For us Muslims, an exit from this labyrinth is simply not envisaged. The system is specially constructed in a way as to trick a 'Muslim simpleton'." Examples of Iraq, Kashmir, and Palestine are cited to justify the rejection of the system in which Muslims cannot win. These beliefs are attractive to the young and to the underclass, who have little in their education and experience to counterbalance such views. Moreover, the brutalization of the two wars made violence not only a morally justifiable, but also a glorious option, with respect and admiration on earth and the promise of heavenly rewards in the afterlife.

## 8.5 Reasoning Behind the Russian position

The trends in Russia have also changed compared to the chaos of the 1990s, when it was unclear what Russia was fighting for in Chechnya: is it a threat to the territorial integrity of the Federation, an anti-crime operation, is it about control over oil or about humiliated pride? Increasingly, safety and security for the rest of the Federation have become top priority. However, Dubrovka, Beslan, and

<sup>66</sup> www.kavkazcenter.com provides polemics between those who are active in Chechnya, such as Movladi Udugov and Sadulayev on the one hand, and Ahmed Zakaev on the other hand.  
<http://www.kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2005/09/29/38114.shtml>

most recently Nalchik showed that this goal is further away than ever. The key questions are: What is most likely to bring about safety? And would the granting of independence to Chechnya stop terrorism in the rest of the Federation? If the answer to the latter question is 'yes', then Moscow can be persuaded that it is worth letting go of a small piece of territory in exchange for the safety of the rest.

At present, such a scenario does not appear plausible in Moscow's eyes. Leaving Chechnya is not an option, since it is likely to become a second Afghanistan on Russia's borders. There, after the Soviet withdrawal, no alternative force has taken up responsibility for law and order and a dangerous vacuum has been created. This allowed for the rise of the Taliban and made the region a base for Al-Qaeda to emerge. Whether the granting of independence to Chechnya back in 1994 would have prevented such a scenario is now irrelevant. The way events have evolved led to a situation, where Chechnya as it is now, left to its own devices, is most likely to be a threat to itself and to its neighbors. Before future options can be considered, the issue is how to stabilize the situation. Thus, a policy including the creation of Chechen armed forces, the establishment of an indigenous administration, and the granting of development assistance has been adopted. Even if these undertakings are not very efficient, it is hard to see viable alternatives that would bring peace.<sup>67</sup>

## 8.6 International Actors

The Chechen conflict has been a focus of attention for external actors of various kinds, from Western governments and international organizations to global Islamist networks and *jihadi* linkages. The latter dimension became prominent in cooperation between the Russian and Western intelligence agencies that followed the 9/11 attacks and the US-led War on Terror.

## 8.7 Political Dialogue

The engagement of organizations such as the Council of Europe has been important in keeping the issue of the conflict in Chechnya on the international agenda when the focus began to shift towards high-profile operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Its urge for finding a political solution has created opportunities to continue the dialogue with the Russian authorities and has kept the channels of communication open. Despite the limitations of such an engagement, it is still preferable to a complete blockage where the opposing sides only exchange statements about differences in their values. But Moscow continuously suspects Western organizations of undermining Russia's territorial integrity, giving rise to fears and obstacles. Although the idea of Chechen independence was never supported by Western governments, it was nevertheless often raised in the media and in academic discourses, thus provoking Russian concerns.

Although the Western donor community has been engaged with the Russian government and Russian NGOs, its record with the Chechen resistance side, however, has rapidly diminished since 1998, when security concerns started to constitute grave obstacles to the presence of Westerners in and around Chechnya. As the resistance camp grew increasingly Islamist, the tools for engagement of western actors became scarcer. Contacts have been maintained with figures such as Ahmed Zakayev, but after Maskhadov's death the remit of such people has been uncertain and their influence on those behind the terror attacks deficient.

At present, the ability of Western actors to facilitate the political dialogue between the two sides, as the OSCE did in 1995-96, is very limited, as they have no outreach to the militants. Moreover, the

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<sup>67</sup> There have been some positive moves in policies and dialogue with young people recently in Kabardino-Balkaria, initiated by the new president Arsen Kanokov, - see RFE/RL Caucasus Report, 13 January 2006, Volume 9, Number 1.

exclusive focus on Chechnya has led to a situation where developments in the wider North Caucasus, such as in Dagestan, have been overlooked, and little capacity to influence them has been built in the meantime.

## 8.8 Human Rights

One remaining domain is the sphere of human rights in which the Russian record has been extremely poor. Criticism of human rights abuses and efforts to influence the performance of security agencies became the predominant component of the dialogue between Russia and the West.<sup>68</sup> Typically, the Russian response has been disgruntled, as Russian officials do not respond well to public criticism.<sup>69</sup> The discourse is often seen as Westerners telling off Russians for their failings.<sup>70</sup> Sometimes, such exchanges nearly develop into duels: in February, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe delivered a stern rebuke to Russia for continued human rights abuses in Chechnya, while the Russian parliamentarians resisted large parts of the resolution and brushed off its significance.<sup>71</sup> The unfortunate by-product of this animosity is that Russian human rights NGOs, which receive foreign funding, have come to be seen as agents of Western imperialism rather than as a constituency driven by humanitarian considerations.

## 8.9 Disconnection Between the Sides

There appears to be a lack of agreement between Russia and the West about what Chechnya has become: a humanitarian disaster or a haven for international terrorism. Apparently, the two sides have no meeting ground. The Kremlin concentrates on Islamism as the major security threat to the North Caucasus, rather than seeing the main problem as an ethno-territorial dispute in Chechnya. The Russian side thus emphasizes external penetration of Islamist ideologues and outside influences in the proliferation of *jihadism* that emanated from Pakistan and Arab countries in the 1990s. On the other side, many among the Western community see the causes for resistance as entirely motivated by repressive actions of the Russian military and its Chechen collaborators. Western liberals show little capacity to recognize the absolute certainties of hard line religious faith and to understand that not everyone shares their relativism and tolerance. Russia, in turn, reads in this a tacit approval of religious radicalism and equates such attitudes with a Western-style 'democracy', i.e. covert attempts to undermine Russia's standing in the world. All in all, there has been little effort to reflect jointly on what drives Islamism in the North Caucasus, why it becomes attractive and how its recruitment base can be influenced.

<sup>68</sup> For example, EU External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner speaking during a European Parliament debate in Strasbourg on 18 January 2006: 'In Chechnya, a culture of impunity remains. Reported cases of disappearances and torture should be fully investigated and the perpetrators, including members of law-enforcement authorities, should be brought to justice.'

<sup>69</sup> The most recent example was the visit of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour to the North Caucasus, - RFE/RL Newswire, 22 February 2006.

<sup>70</sup> Russians insist that, in the words of a Russian delegate Valery Grebennikov, they want to be treated 'not as a boy to be beaten but as an equal partner'.

<sup>71</sup> Chechnya: Europe Lashes Moscow, by Tanya Lokshina in Strasbourg (CRS No. 325, 02-Feb-06), IWPR.

## 8.10 Humanitarian Engagement

Beside these problems on the political front, humanitarian efforts and engagement with civil society in Chechnya and Ingushetia have been relatively successful – despite their modest scale. Efforts led by UNHCR and UNICEF to alleviate the plight of internally displaced persons (IDPs) have allowed many to survive and have precluded premature returns from camps in Ingushetia back to Chechnya. Chechen refugees in Georgia's Akhmeta district likewise have enjoyed UNHCR protection and have successfully resisted a semi-voluntary repatriation in 2003.

There are approximately 20 humanitarian organizations working in Chechnya today, with the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) being among the most active. In partnership with the UN it runs a series of humanitarian programs to provide for food, healthcare, education and reconstruction in Chechnya. However, some of the aid it distributes has been found in rebel training camps.<sup>72</sup> Other projects include the *Humanitarian Dialogue on Strengthening Human Security* by the FEWER Eurasia Foundation, the Peace Mission of General Lebed, and Swisspeace, funded by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. A program of crisis and counseling centers and a dining hall in Grozny of Caritas Czech is supported by Cordaid, a Dutch NGO. However, the price for the continuation of such activities is an apolitical stance of these projects and the abstention from public criticism of human rights abuses.

Despite the fact that the activities of international organizations and Western NGOs have been an irritant for the authorities, it is still preferred to allow them to operate than to ban them altogether. The reasons appear to be the following: First, banning foreign aid would create an uproar and would further damage Russia's international reputation. Secondly, aid agencies are instrumental in service delivery, are more efficient with the provision of assistance, and have better standards of accountability. Thirdly, this can be used as a way to counterbalance the Chechen administration when it goes too far. For instance, in February 2006 Ramzan Kadyrov, Chechen Prime Minister in the Moscow-backed administration, banned the activities of the DRC in Chechnya following the Danish cartoon row. This decision was challenged by Dmitrii Kozak, presidential envoy for the Southern Federal District, who questioned the legality of the ban Kadyrov had imposed.

Security guarantees for international organizations, Western NGOs and their local staff have been the bone of contention between them and the Russian government. On the one hand, the security situation remains precarious and this necessitates escorts provided by the interior ministry. On the other hand, this implies that the freedom of movement is inevitably restricted, that all contacts are known, and that background security checks on staff and partners are extensive. While such checks may be necessary, there are concerns about how this information may be used.

## 8.11 Future Agenda

The current engagement is necessary but not sufficient to move the agenda forward. If the West has constructive ideas on Islamism, this is the time to make them available and subject them to an open discourse. It is too simplistic to explain away militant *jihadism*, including suicide attacks, as motivated by poor economic conditions, lack of investment and no jobs for young men. The moral vacuum, the romantic culture and imagery of *jihadism*, networks of Islamist solidarity, and the psychological brutalization suffered by the war generation play no less a role, especially for the young people who did not grow up under conditions of Soviet secularism.

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<sup>72</sup> 'Chechnya: Danish Ban Angers Locals Consternation at Grozny government decision to stop work of Danish Refugee Council in Chechnya', by Luiza Zamayeva, IWPR, February 2006.



A better understanding of the nature of the problem needs to be achieved before Russia and the West can argue about solutions. The quality of the political discourse needs to be improved. Western organizations and intellectuals should not simply stick to a moralistic tone while speaking with Russia about Chechnya. Instead, they have to reflect seriously and creatively about what the ideology of *jihadism* is, and to talk with Russia about what, apart from human rights' improvements, can be done to counterbalance it. Both sides need to envisage that the conflict in Chechnya – and its resolution – will be a long haul. Living with a constant security threat on its territory will inevitably shape Russian politics and the Russian society. The West's ability to influence this transformation will be extremely limited, unless it finds ways of helping Russia to address its security problems in a constructive way.

## 9 The North Caucasus: No Great Surprises on the Horizon

Aleksei Malashenko<sup>73</sup>

Traditional forecasting is built on three alternative scenarios: the best, worst, and most probable case scenario. Our forecasting period is limited by the 2008 Presidential elections or, in other words, by the second term of Vladimir Putin.

In developing these scenarios, we relied on two main factors: first, the general policy of the Russian leadership; and secondly, the factors determining the present-day situation in the North Caucasus. The general trend of authoritarianism will intensify in such a way that, on the one hand, it will lead to greater pressure on local elites and society. On the other hand, however, given the weakness of vertical power, it will contribute to generate a compromise between the central government in Moscow and the unpopular, incapable, inefficient regional administrations.

The policy of the federal center is extrapolated by the situation in the region, which is manipulated by local elites who govern according to their own aspirations and who influence the decision-making process in Moscow. Thus, a vicious circle takes shape. A classical example is the Chechen conflict, which was initially instigated by the center, but afterwards began to constrain the Kremlin's policies.

So then, what is the probable path of current trends that determine the situation in the North Caucasus? The following ten points should be noted.

First, no appreciable changes will occur in the economic sphere. On the one hand, inflationary growth will be felt and be more noticeable here than in the rest of Russia. Unemployment will increase as well. On the other hand, it becomes more evident that speculations about total poverty in the North Caucasus are evidently exaggerated: there is a rapid pace of private house-building throughout the region; the city streets are full of cars, including foreign vehicles; and people fill up restaurants and cafes. In the North Caucasus small and medium-sized businesses are developing. Clearly, the main problem is not absolute impoverishment but the severe social stratification of people, which is not counter-balanced by such traditional mechanisms of the North Caucasian society as mutual assistance and internal solidarity within families and clans.

The republics of the North Caucasus will continue to receive 79,4%, in Kabardino-Balkaria 73,4%, and in Karachay-Cherkessia 62,5%.<sup>74</sup> Moscow is well aware that the means allocated to the region are wasted on undesignated purposes. It is well known that the salary of local officials who are paid from regional budgets is several times higher than the salary of federal officials, who receive their money from the federal budget. Significant parts of the state subsidies are stolen.

Dmitry Cozak, the Plenipotentiary Representative of the President of the Russian Federation in the South Federal District (SFD), suggested creating a system of "external control", which would at least exert some degree of oversight over funds received from the federal budget. His proposal was strongly criticized by local leaders who were afraid of losing total control over cash flows from the center. Even Murad Zyazikov, the President of Ingushetia, who consistently supports any initiatives from the top, opposed this proposal. The North Caucasus is the only region with a separate federal recipient-oriented investment program ("South of Russia") with an estimated value of 25 billion rubles.<sup>75</sup> However, according to Cozak, these funds are distributed without transparency<sup>76</sup>, thereby resulting in their inefficient disbursement.

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<sup>73</sup> Translation by Andrei Ivanov

<sup>74</sup> 'KOZAK's captive'. Nezavisimaya Gazeta. 6.10.2005.

<sup>75</sup> Around 877 million US-Dollars as of 1 October 2005.

Second, economic challenges, unemployment, "privatization of the economy" by the ruling families, and corruption – all these factors will contribute to political tensions. Moreover, the situation is aggravated by the unpopularity and weakness of local elites, whose administrations are almost completely provided for with Moscow's support. Conflicts in Ingushetia, North Ossetia and Karachay-Cherkessia, and the tumultuous situation in Kabardino-Balkaria are evidence of the irreversibility of the lost prestige of regional authorities.

Moscow considered replacing some local leaders. In 2004, Arsen Kanokov came to power in Kabardino-Balkaria to succeed the deceased former president Valery Kokov; in 2005, soon after the events of Beslan, Alexandr Dzasokhov resigned as the president of North Ossetia and was succeeded by Teymuraz Mamsurov. In 2006, Mahomed-Ali Magomedov, the President of Dagestan since 1994, was replaced by Mukhu Aliev. These movements were not accompanied by conflicts; however, the North Ossetian opposition held some demonstrations. The change of leadership was serene in Dagestan where the representative of the most numerous ethnic group – avars (740,000 people) – came to power after a 22-year interval. According to experts, there is a consensus between the main ethnic groups of Dagestan and thus ethnic destabilization is unlikely in this region.

An extremely important question concerns the extent to which redistribution of assets after the change of leadership can lead to different excesses. The events in Karachay-Cherkessia (autumn 2004) are an example of such a process. At present, however, the situation in these republics is stable. The president of North Ossetia, T. Mamsurov, has close relations with Dzasokhov, the former head of the republic; Kabardian Kanokov has his own business outside Kabardino-Balkaria and does not intervene in local business activities. There are no reasons to expect any significant changes in Dagestan where the son of the former leader of the republic became speaker of the Parliament. Arsen Kanokov was unable to change the federal subsidies. The share of federal transfers in the budget of Ingushetia is 88,3%, in Dagestan 81,3%, in Chechnya structure of the ruling group, even while groups in Kabardino-Balkarskom society hoped that he would successfully compel the odious minister of internal affairs, Shogenov, to resign.

In spite of the formal renovation in the North Caucasus the elites have not blocked any attempts to reform the situation. It means that the Kremlin de facto is unwilling to implement any real reforms. Moreover, each time that possible measures are considered (for example, introduction of the "external control" system), local leaders begin to blackmail Moscow by threatening destabilization and a breakdown of the internal consensus in the region. As well the reform of local self-governance is stagnating, which increases inter-ethnic tensions.

Third, the current situation in the North Caucasus can be defined as "fragile stability". Undoubtedly, in 2005-2006 the situation had improved compared to previous years. First, since December 2004 no large-scale terrorist attacks were committed either in the region or in Russia as a whole. Secondly, law-enforcement structures were able to stifle many centers of Islamist ("Wahhabist") opposition and to eliminate or capture many warlords. Thirdly, the situation in Chechnya has stabilized.

In this context it is worth elaborating on the situation in Chechnya. The strategy of "Chechenization", implemented by Vladimir Putin, has not been fruitful and seems to be a complete failure. Particularly the assassination of Akhmad Kadyrov, the president of Chechnya, on 9 May 2004 in Grozny could have put an end to this strategy. However, Moscow was able to initiate the election of a new president, supporting Ramzan Kadyrov, the son of Akhmad-Khadzhi and unofficial leader of the Chechen Republic.

<sup>76</sup> Emerging Markets. Regional Budgets. Publication: Foreign Trade News.

Being extravagant, self-conceived and cruel (even compared to the realities of Chechen war), Kadyrov Jr. kept his word to the President of Russia that "Russian soldiers would not die in Chechnya", and that the process of reconciliation of the combatants and reintegration into the political life of the republic would continue. First and very modest signs of the reconstruction of Chechnya appeared under Kadyrov Jr. In spring 2006 he became the head of the government of Chechnya and declared the war in Chechnya as over.

At the same time, Magomed Hambiev, the former minister of defense of Ichkeria Republic, came to power. A former brigadier general and member of Kadyrov's clan, Hambiev was elected to the Parliament. Moreover, Putin's answer to demands from Europe and the US to begin negotiations with separatists was to recruit former combatants for the law-enforcement structures of Chechnya. Moscow successfully carries out such negotiations on behalf of Akhmad and Ramzan Kadyrov.

The price of "fragile stability" is very high. Ramzan Kadyrov has been trying to play the role of an absolute all-powerful ruler. After his father's death he demonstrated the paternalistic nature of his relations with the President of Russia by laying emphasis on the personal character of these relations. He suppressed any opposition. All real candidates during the parliamentary elections in November 2005 had to receive his agreement to participate in the election campaign. He demanded again to increase the level of federal subsidies to the republic one hundred-fold, to transfer the companies Groznetgaz and Chechneftehimprom into Chechnyan hands, and he continued to insist on the withdrawal of federal troops from the republic. He proposed a new version of the Federal Agreement with the central government, causing some observers in Moscow and Chechnya to compare him with Dzhokhar Dudaev, the President of separatist Ichkeria.

Kadyrov Jr. maneuvered himself into opposition to a significant, maybe the most, part of the Chechen society (it is impossible to determine a figure of disappointed people due to the falsification of elections). Those Chechens who have rejected separatism are now annoyed by the fact that political power is in the hands of former combatants.

In this situation Moscow had to limit the ambitions of its protégé. These measures were very careful, yet visible. In November 2005 the parliamentary elections were held in Chechnya. The new deputies who are loyal to Kadyrov are also members of the federal parties, including the pro-governmental United Russia Party. Soon after the elections, Putin visited Chechnya where he emphasized that he had come to meet with the members of the Parliament. During this meeting the President of Russia pointed at cases of abuses committed by Kadyrov's militia. In the winter of 2005-06 Moscow disavowed Ramzan's decision to ban the activities of Danish humanitarian organizations in Chechnya (after the "cartoon scandal"). It is interesting that Kadyrov is sensitive to criticism from the center. Some political circles in Moscow believe he "is taught," thereby making it easy to achieve the strategic aim of the Kremlin to turn Chechnya into "a normal subject of the Federation."

Fourth, from my point of view, we should not expect any cataclysms in the North Caucasus, including a sudden aggravation of the Chechen conflict ("Third Chechen war"), large-scale social unrests or the so-called "Green Revolution" of Islamist movements, which is of concern to some political analysts. The stagnation of regional economy will continue and old and new elites will not be able to overcome the inertness of the first post-Soviet decade.

Fifth, the North Caucasus can face serious shocks after the Presidential elections in 2008. Despite the fact that there were no serious terrorist attacks in 2005, events in Nazran (July 2004), Beslan (September 2004) and Cherkessk (December 2004) as well as persistent operations of security forces and militia against Islamist combatants, show that the possibility of a "big bang" is still very real.

It should be noted here that there are three scenarios of a "big bang." The first one can be triggered by a serious terrorist attack or by a large-scale military operation in response to, and supported by, the local groups of Islamist radicals. The second scenario envisages an aggravation of the crisis in one of the republics with subsequent violent suppression by the federal military forces. These measures would likely trigger a chain reaction in neighboring regions. The third scenario provides for a spontaneous or almost spontaneous initiation of several conflicts at once, which would then interact with each other similar to the principle of communicating vessels.

The last two scenarios seem to be more likely. Each of them implies that the North Caucasus region will spin out of control, causing general destabilization in the south of Russia.

Sixth, this course of events is optimal for Islamist radicals who are able to act independently and who support one of the conflict parties (while this support will be met with gratitude because Islam has long been used in the North Caucasus as protest ideology). "Wahhabism" will continue to be a political factor.

Seventh, terrorism will continue to be an important factor of political struggle and will be interpreted by its followers as Islamist Jihad. Causes of terror will be determined by internal factors; religious extremism will continue to be a marginal form of social protest, an instrument of struggle between clans and revenge for the actions of law-enforcement structures.

At the same time, we should consider that the idea of "global Jihad" against the West, with Russia being perceived to be part of, becomes increasingly popular among "Wahhabists" in the Northern Caucasus. Such an ideology will continue to spread due to the regular contact of Islamists from the North Caucasus with their counterparts in the Middle East. In the coming years, it is likely that natives of the North Caucasus will appear more frequently in different crisis regions of the world, including Europe.

Eighth, will the Kremlin administration continue using terror as a political tool for tightening control over its society in the near future? It is possible that such attempts will be made, but they are unlikely to be as systematic as before. First, the Kremlin seems to stop the justification of unpopular measures. Secondly, the general public does not give credence to authorities that correlate the tightening of policy with the Chechen war and terrorism. Finally, constantly using the fight with terror as a political tool for strengthening control over the state and society, the Russian authorities acknowledge their own incompetence and inability to resolve crucial security problems.

Ninth, Putin's or a post-Putin administration will have to intensify efforts to improve the situation in the region. At any rate, *ad hoc* reaction will be not enough. It is necessary to develop a realistic and efficient program and coherent strategy, which would in turn be implemented as soon as possible.

The North Caucasus needs "a strong man" who is able to act independently in crisis situations without any hesitation and long consultations with the Kremlin. Is Dmitry Kozak able to be this "strong man?" Probably. He is more capable than his predecessors of playing this role. Putin should retain him as Plenipotentiary Representative of the President of Russia – if for no other reason than because frequently changing heads of SFD administrations ultimately discredit the federal Center in the Caucasian peoples' opinion.

Tenth, the idea of creating a "Mountain Republic" (i.e. integration of North Caucasian territories into a Federation or uniting Chechnya and Ingushetia) seems unrealistic for during the coming years. Preparations for this project (that is too risky from our point of view) demand long-term and substantial political, economic and even psychological efforts. The administration has insufficient resources and political intelligence for solving this task. On the other hand, spontaneous decisions on this issue can significantly aggravate the situation and trigger a "big bang".

Thus, we should not await any unexpected developments in the North Caucasus. Events will revolve around established axes. The possibility of serious changes is very low because even officially announced reforms could trigger social instability and a redistribution of economic and political influence.

Still, this fragile stability will periodically be shaken by terrorist attacks, clashes with Islamists, and local fights. And the "big bang" that is possible in the future can be presented by official propaganda as the result of misunderstandings and intrigues of enemies.

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