

THE RUSSO-CHECHEN PROBLEM: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The Chechens are Caucasian people whose distinct identity was noted as early as the Seventh Century. Like other peoples of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, they became subjects of different empires, before they embraced Islam in the Sixteenth Century. As the modern age dawned, the Chechens were subdued by the Tsarist Empire after which generations passed in tribulation. War after war followed. The Chechens were Sufis, however, the orders they followed were not monastic but militant. The Bolshevik Revolution 1917 provided, so they thought, an opportunity to break off the shackles of centuries, but this phase lasted only from 1919 to 1921, thereafter Chechnya became a part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, along with other nations of Caucasia and Central Asia. At long last when the U.S.S.R. disintegrated, and other neighboring states like Georgia and other Central Asian states gained independence as detailed below, the Chechens waged a war and expelled Russian troops from their territory. Chechnya also refused to join the Commonwealth of Independent States, a regional arrangement by which Russia sought to regain some influence in lost territories. This phase lasted from 1994 to 1996. Since during its period of independence, Chechnya could not establish an effective central authority, and was divided between factional war lords, Russia was able to re-impose its rule in Chechnya. The war against terror did not end, and only in 2009, did the Russian Federation announced its success against “terrorists”. There are parallels between Chechnya and Afghanistan. Both had a period of independence in which they were unable to overcome factional war lords, but while Russia was able to re-occupy Chechnya, it was not able to re-occupy Afghanistan. In this paper an attempt has been made to study a significant variable in what is sometimes termed as Historical Determinism.

Key Words: Russian Federation, Commonwealth of Independent States, Naqshbandi, Terror, Chechnya, Pakistan

Introduction

Chechnya, a territory today of the Russian Federation, is located at the southernmost of the Eastern Europe in the Caucasus region with Grozny as its capital city. Its frontiers include Dagestan in the east and south-east, to the south-west by Georgia and to the west by North Ossetia. It's reserves of oil and gas, is purportedly a factor that Chechnya had been under constant occupation, however, the neighbouring Central Asian states are also rich in oil and gas hence it cannot be considered as the sole factor.¹ It presents a variable in history. It has a parallel with Afghanistan, from where Russian troops retreated after ten years of occupation, leaving the country in anarchy, at the mercy of the warlords who had come up during the resistance struggle. In Chechnya the termination of the first Russo-Chechen war was signaled by the Khasav-Yurt accord of August 1996 and Russian troops had withdrawn after the signing of a Provisional Agreement on 23 November 1996. Following bombing incidents in Moscow and other Russian cities, Yeltsin's government ordered a second invasion in Chechnya on 12 October 1999. Although, as Walter Laquer says:

The operation was envisaged, not as a war, but as a anti-terrorist operation which lasted on and off until 2009.²

At this point, we need to inquire, why after being reconciled to the independence of other Muslim Central Asian countries, Russia is adamant about holding on to Chechnya even against international condemnation. To this end, we need to go back in history, to understand what forces have been at play.

Historical Background

Like most nations of Caucasia, the racial origins of the Chechen people are obscure. It is however, not contested that they are indigenous to Central Asia: "They are mentioned in an Armenian source of the seventh century and also in early Georgian chronicles"³. The ruins or remains of churches indicate that some at least of the Chechen people converted to Christianity in the eighth century (probably due to Georgian influence). During the sixteenth century, Islam was spread among the Chechens by the Avars and Kumyks.⁴ Their name is derived from *Bol'shoj Chechen*. Thus for a better understanding of the emergence of Chechen issue and the factors that contributed towards generating the issue, it is imperative to trace out important historical developments pertaining to the present study. Although there is no one exact incident

that could be held responsible for the rise of tensions in the Eastern European region in which Chechnya is situated, but a sequence of instances needs to be taken into consideration to draw parallels. Chechnya is located within a distance of 100 kilometers from the Caspian Sea,⁵ and thus holds significant strategic importance since the beginning of Russian Empire by Peter Alekseyevich in 1721 and even before, to some extent. Peter the Great, as he is known ruled from 1682-1725 during which he managed to maximize Russia's influence in the political realm across the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus.⁶

Strategic Importance of the Region and its Conquest

The North Caucasus where Chechnya lies spans the important trade and communication route from Russia to the Middle East and the region has always been fought over by the historical powers since centuries.

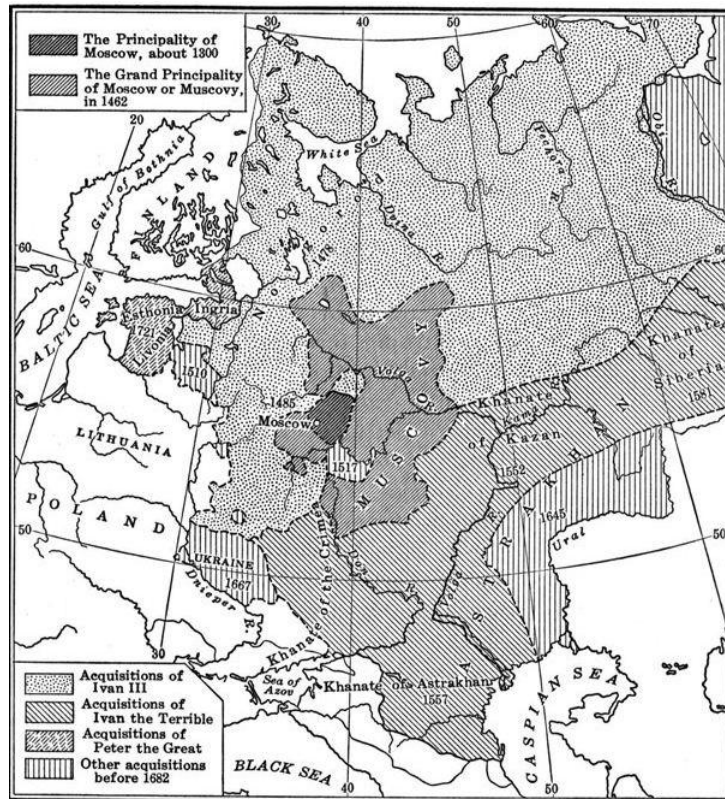


Figure 1: Source: Annenberg Learner, 2017⁷

Located on the Volga River, Khanate of Kazan and Astrakhan Khanate were liquidated and annexed into Russian state by Ivan the Terrible in 1552 and 1556 respectively. This sparked a struggle among the major powers including the Ottoman Empire, the Safavid Empire and the Crimean Khanate to take control of the Northern Caucasus region. Ivan started to settle Russian Cossacks in the lowlands where occasional clashes with the Chechen population started. A wooden fortress was extended on Volga River's left bank. These conquests helped Russia to expand and incorporate a predominantly Islamic region that also included in itself parts of what presently is known as Dagestan, another Federal Subject of the Russian Federation.⁸

Since the river flows through the Central Russia and falls into the Caspian Sea, it paved the way for Russia to have a port on Caspian Sea while linking it to Central Russia. Cities namely Samara, Tsaritsyn and Saratov came up in 1586, 1589 and 1590 respectively on the lower Volga. In this way, Astrakhan was serving the Russian state as a base through which the raiding of the south shore of the Caspian Sea was made possible, where rival Safavid Iran's silk industry was located. Russia subsequently held such a position where she could make a military advancement down into the coastal plains of Āzarbāyjān, presently renamed as Azerbaijan.⁹

The Russo-Persian War fought during 1722-23 is considered by scholars to be the first encounter that took place between the Russian Empire and the Vainakh, the population speaking Vainakh language in the North Caucasus and neighboring region including Ingush, Chechens and Kists groups.¹⁰ Russian also took control of the Persian-ruled Dagestan among other territories on way to Caspian corridor. At this point, Peter's cavalry reached the mountainous tribes specially the Chechens who routed Peter's forces. Following the treaty of Resht, Russia agreed to waive all her claims on the territories lying to the south of Kura River and thus many of the Caucasian lands were ceded back to Safavid Persia. The clash of Russian forces took place once again with the Chechens along the Argun River in the Chechen-aul, village in which Russians faced another defeat. Peter's subsequent taking into his occupation huge Iranian coastline of the Caspian Sea caused overstretching of Russian resources that could bring nothing advantageous to the Federation and was subsequently retrenched by Peter's successors at an opportune time.¹¹

During the second half of the 18th century, Russia viewed Caucasia as an area of political vacuum between Russia standing in the

North and Iranians and Ottomans standing at the South of it. The control over Ossetia was also taken from the Ottomans in 1774 and thus the strategically significant Darial pass was also covered. In 1762, two of the Eastern Georgian Kingdoms, Kartli and Kakheti, earlier ruled under Iran since 1555, were unified into Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti. This Kingdom under Erekle II signed Treaty of Georgievsk in 1783 with the Russian Empire, as a result of which the unified kingdoms of Georgia abjured any alliance with Iran and turned to Russia, making Georgia a protectorate of Russia. This treaty was signed with the view to maximize Russian influence and advancement of her communication in the region of Transcaucasia, a move to keep safe havens during the course of wars with Turkey and Persia. Construction of the Georgian Military Road was also carried out via Darial Pass staging numerous military forts to secure the route, notwithstanding growing Chechen concerns, who considered it as a potential threat.¹² With the Treaty of Vienna of 1815, Russia had made major territorial gains and even received parts of Poland in Europe. The map below shows how far and to what extent Russian Empire had grown by the early nineteenth century.



Figure 2: Source: Annenberg Learner, 2017¹³

Rebellion in Northern Caucasus

With the aim of spreading Islam in the Northern Caucasus campaign to conquer North Caucasus Mountains was initiated. It was a rebellion movement that was led by Mansur Ushurma, a politico-religious person with charisma and ideology of Sufism, of a militant brand. The rebellion sought military support from other mountainous tribes in the northern Caucasus. Mansur's ambition to create a Trans-Caucasian Islamic state bound by Law of Shari'ah however could not materialize, since he was captured by the Russians in 1791 and was executed in 1794.¹⁴

The Russo-Persian war (1804-13) resulted in the forced ceding of many territories of current Dagestan, Georgia and most of Azerbaijan from Persia to Russia. The Treaty of Gulestan was concluded, that further enabled Russia to expand its physical and political presence in Caucasus at Persia's expense.¹⁵

The resistance in North Caucasus is sometimes viewed as parallels to the clash of Civilizations of Islamic and the Christian worlds. The Sufism that embedded and took its roots in Chechen society during the colonization and socio-political unrests during nineteenth century was confronting the interests of Colonial powers particularly Russia, and characterized the struggle as the 'Holy War' against infidels. Thus following the end of Sheikh Mansur's rebellion, the Caucasus War of 1817-64 and revolt under Avar Shamil during 1840s were upfront. The next Russo-Persian war waged during 1826-28 was concluded with the Treaty of Turkmenchay in addition to the victory in a war with Ottoman Empire in the same year which enabled Russia to occupy many lands in South Caucasus. This series of incidents paved the way for Russia to expand its power across the Caucasus and a large contingent of the Russian military was assigned to subdue the natives of North Caucasus region. The resistance of Nakh tribes grew and brought yet another Muslim commander, Imam Shamil to the front.¹⁶

Caucasian War (1817-64)

With gradual conflicts between highlanders of Chechnya and Dagestan with the Russian Empire, the Caucasian war started in 1817. Since 1834, Imam Shamil, the third Imam of Caucasian Imamate, managed to unify various tribes of highlanders from Dagestan and Chechnya under his command and in 1840s, he led a revolt against the Russian army.¹⁷ Tsar Alexander I nominated General Aleksey Petrovich

Yermolov for the conquest of the Caucasus region with his forces. The brutality of the General's tactics was found to be counter-productive and resulted in a complete removal of Russian influence from Chechen society and also earned the lasting enmity of the Chechen people. Thus, as the 19th century approached, Chechens were commonly reputed to be un-subdued and militant people. Tsars applied mutual guarantee principle on them that maintained punishing the entire community for the mistake of a single person from the community, further adding to the resentment and fury of the Chechen and Ingush people. Another movement 'Muridism' was begun in 1823 introducing Imamate in highlands of Dagestan and Chechnya under which Shamil was chosen to be the Imam. To carry out the security functions of Imamate offered military resistance to the powerful Russian Empire, every male member had to compulsorily render military service provided that he was able to carry arms. Exceptions were made for those who were producers of cold steel, firearms and gunpowder etc.¹⁸

Ghazawat, also the Holy War, [a term denoting recalling the battles in the life time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)] was invoked to depict the struggle of mountaineers against Russian expansionism in the Caucasus region and their independence became a popular cry in Caucasian society. These battles were led by Imams to which Russia's response was violent and ruthless. Destruction of villages, military suppression and policy of scorched earth all were applied against the resistance fighters of the Caucasus along with ethnic cleansing and displacement of Muslims to the Ottoman Empire¹⁹. During 1839, a double attack was made on rock-fortress of Ahulgo, Dagestan over Tsarist command to put an end to Imamate, center of Muridism at that time. Imam Shamil was wounded but survived and together with other comrade-in-arms sought to hide in Chechnya. In a counterattack, Russian soldiers were banished from a huge part of highlands of Dagestan. After attack on Ahulgo and its destruction, Chechnya was chosen to be the political centre of the Imamate²⁰. The resistance movement lasted for about a half century with heavy material loss to the Russian Empire. Simultaneously, the rebels also suffered shortage of ammunition and other resources to combat Russian forces, and started to lose their control over the highlands. Subsequently, Imam Shamil surrendered in 1859 putting an end to the Caucasian war in 1862. With the decline of Shamil's leadership and exhaustion of resistance, Qadiriya order, the more spiritual ones started to become popular in highlands of Chechnya in particular²¹.

It needs to be explained that in Central Asia where the Naqshbandiya prevailed, Sufi orders were not a monastic but militant

order. Naqshbandiya had been traced back with a tradition of Holy Wars historically and also found to have participated in North Caucasus' anti-Soviet movements including the 1941-1942 unrest in Chechnya²².

Though Chechnya and other ethnic groups of Caucasus were promised autonomy, they remained under the Russian Empire as Terek Oblast until 1920. Both Chechnya and Dagestan remained the most unstable and least developed parts of the Russian Empire²³.

Russian Revolution of 1917 and Following Developments

Till the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, Chechens became generally pacified owing to the social pressures they had been through, by the end of 19th century; notwithstanding, the social cleavage was quite visible. The migration of Russian peasants to the Caucasus highlands and the subsequent modernization began in order to fulfill the needs of Russian peasants coming for plain farming. It marked the beginning of social divisions by spread of secularization and modernization. The pattern formed was such of north versus south, secular versus religious, lowlands versus highlands, Russified versus indigenous to mention a few. With the collapse of the Tzarist regime and coming into power of the Bolsheviks, a new era was begun that changed the cultural, economic and political grounds of Russia for a long time to follow. Consequently, some of the national regions' forces also sought their right of self-determination as entitled by the revolution of 1917. First Highland Congress took place in Vladikavkaz and led to the formation of "The Union of United Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus", a multinational organization. The central committee of this organization was elected by the Autonomous North Caucasian Independent State's temporal government or Soviet Mountain Republic, as declared by November 1917. After the initiation of civil war in Russia, Mountain Republic seceded from Russia to declare full independence on 11 May 1918²⁴. Mountain Republic or North Caucasus Republic embraced the entire territory of North Caucasus with Vladikavkaz being the capital. The Autonomous Mountain Republic included Muslim nationalities from the Black Sea to Dagestan. Following that, Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan formed United Mountain Dwellers of the North Caucasus, an independent state with headquarter based in Temir-Khan-Shura, Dagestan. The state received recognitions from major powers of the world²⁵. The Republic however proved to be short-lived and at the end of the Russian Civil War and as soon as the Chechen/Dagestan uprising came to an end in 1921, the Soviet Union began dismantling it. The Soviet Union once again absorbed it, now known as Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic or

Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR). This was an autonomous republic within the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. In 1921, after the Soviet Union had established Chechen-Ingush ASSR consisting of the territories of Chechnya, Balkaria, Kabardia, Karachai, Ossetia and Ingushetia, Moscow classified each of them as an Okrug except Chechnya that was classified as Oblast. This classification made Chechnya more autonomous than other Okrugs. Chechnya and Ingushetia were however merged together to form Chechen-Ingush Republic, still far from reaching a union-level status. On 5th December 1936 by joining the two regions, Autonomous Republics of the Chechens and Ingush was formed²⁶.

The Second World War and Deportation of Chechen People

Another blow to Chechen nationalism was given and a wave of strong opposition against Russian colonization was seen at a time when Chechens were accused of collaboration with the German forces against the Soviet forces. They were alleged to have joined the Wehrmacht unified armed forces of Nazis during the Second World War. The allegations caused the Chechen population to be deported from their land, marking a bloody phase of Chechen genocidal deportation in February 1944. Out of an estimated 600,000 people deported from the North Caucasus, 400,000 were reported to be Chechens, were forced to live in Kazakhstan and Kirghizia. The episode also witnessed huge death toll of people of North Caucasus including Chechens that is estimated to be 100,000²⁷. There is evidence that, during the deportation, around 100,000 troops of Narodniy Komissari Vnutrennikh Del (NKVD), also known as People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs were deployed. In addition, 19,000 special workers of NKVD, the Narodniy Komissariat Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti (NKGB) and Smert Shopionam (SMERSH), (also known as People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs and Death to Spies, respectively) were assigned into the Republic to monitor the process of deportation²⁸. This course of events further reinforced Chechen identity among their people and Chechen nationalism was even more mobilized with growing resistance. During the period of Nikita Khrushchev when de-Stalinization campaign was initiated, the deportees were allowed to return to their lands in 1957. The returning Chechen people had a sharpened sense of identity and demanded autonomy consequently the Autonomous Republic of Chechno-Ingushetia was reinstated²⁹; although some of its parts were not returned to the Republic. Many of the returning people were not given back their homes and villages; instead they were supposed to settle where authorities advised them to reside. Prigorodnoye district was also

remained ASSR of North Ossetia and the entry of its former Ingush inhabitants was not allowed, subsequently generating a conflict between Ingush and people of Ossetia in the 1990s³⁰.

Soviet Disintegration and Following Developments

During the second half of 1980s, social reforms under Perestroika and Glasnost caused further weakening of the Soviet system and generated a wave of protest in the Chechen-Ingush region initially against the *distortion of historical facts* and for protection of environment. Gradually, the movement turned into political demonstration. The Chechen National Meeting first took place in Grozny in 1990 for putting forward their demands for an independent state. They subsequently formed the Executive Committee of All-National Congress of Chechen people, also known as N.C.Ch.P.³¹ or ANCCP³², and formally started their political movement for an independent Chechnya. It was the same time when Ingush people were also demanding autonomy and a separate national territory for themselves. The movement of NCChP caused anxiety to the Russian-speaking Cossacks in the region and the creation of Cossack Organization took place. This organization headed by Atamans, demanded to draw and define Cossack region in the Chechen-Ingush republic. Such developments consequently intensified the tension between Vainakhs and Cossacks. In April 1991, Cossack leader Ataman was killed leading to an armed conflict between the two hostile groups. This led to the withdrawal of Russian-speaking population from the Chechen-Ingush region, particularly the Sunzhen region. The coup-attempt of August 1991 in the USSR catalyzed the political movement in Chechen-Ingush region and in the same month, supporters of ANCCP seized the television (TV) centre. Dudayev presented the demands of opposition group ANCCP in his speech on TV. The government of Chechen-Ingush region with Zavgaev as President tried to control the opposition's information onslaught but with minimal success. By September 1991, the National Guard, formed by ANCCP took control of most parts of Grozny and in such a situation when the Center showed no support, the Soviet-Party leadership was left demoralized³³.

Dissolution of Chechen-Ingush ASSR and Formation of Chechen Republic of Ichkeria

Just before the formal disintegration of the Soviet Union, the government of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR resigned under pressure of pro-independence NCCh Prunning under the leadership of Dzhokhar Dudayev. Although Dudayev was a former Soviet Air Force General, he

later joined Chechen politics and was elected as Head of Executive Committee of NCChP. Presidential and parliamentary election took place in Chechnya and Dudayev enjoyed overwhelming support thus proclaiming himself to be President of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, a unilaterally declared independent state. Boris Yeltsin, then President of Russian SFSR before the Soviet Union's disintegration, declared an emergency in Chechnya and sent military troops to the Chechen capital Grozny. This backfired since Dudayev's forces did not allow Yeltsin's troops to come out of Grozny's airport, forcing them to return. Following this event, Mikhail Gorbachev who still held his position as President of the USSR, invalidated the state of emergency from Chechnya in November 1991. All the former Soviet troops left Chechnya by mid-1992 leaving significant number of their arsenals and weaponry behind in Chechnya³⁴.

After the Soviet Union disintegrated in the year 1991, there was a great pressure over Russian Federation demanding further disintegration. On 6 June 1990, there were ethnic clashes in Soviet Kirghizia which claimed 50 lives. On 20 June 1990, Uzbekistan declared independence. On 9 September 1991, Tajikistan declared independence followed by Kazakhstan on 16 December 1991. Baltic states had also at the same time become free. In order to make settlements with its constituent republics, Federation Treaty was signed in 1992. The purpose of this treaty was to secure the constituent republics of Russian Federation demanding complete independence, by defining the jurisdiction of central and regional governments and to determine the extent to which the central government of Russian Federation could hold her claims over given territories, with mutual consensus. All of the constituent republics signed the treaty, except Chechnya and Tatarstan. It is noted that Tatarstan posed a greater political challenge to the unity of Russian Federation than Chechnya. With this realization, President Yeltsin opted to sign with the President of Tatarstan a special political accord for granting greater autonomy to the republic, thus addressing their grievances. On the contrary, Chechnya was left unattended and so the political and social conditions worsened even more, so that in 1994, a full-scale war in Chechnya erupted³⁵. It is also mentioned in various other studies that Moscow extended her offer to the Chechen Republic to enter into the Federation Treaty with a special status providing even more power than the Tatar Republic, but the offer did not receive any support from the Chechen Parliament³⁶.

It is argued that this Tatarstan treaty proved to be pivotal in accentuation of distrust between Russo-Chechen Government since similar proposal could be placed for Chechnya as well. A number of

reasons were advanced to explain the absence of any such proposal for Chechnya. Firstly, there seemed to be a personality clash between President Yeltsin and President Dudayev that obstructed an agreement. Another major concern was territorial integrity. Since Russia demanded Chechnya to remain a part of the Russian Federation. Notwithstanding, Chechen leadership declared that the sovereignty of Chechnya was non-negotiable. Dudayev's uncompromising position was gravely criticized whereas the intention of Boris Yeltsin to maintain a political solution was also questioned³⁷.

Chechen Wars, Transition from National Movement towards Fundamentalism

The first decade after the dissolution of the Soviet Union has been most decisive in the Chechen political movement. There has been evident shift in the leading personalities since many of the charismatic leaders ruled the *de facto* Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, each with a distinct background, ideology and affiliations. This section focuses on various socio-political dimensions of the Republic and the constant struggle Chechnya had been through to preserve its integrity and independence.

Even before the decline of the Soviet Union, the corruption prevailing in the ruling elites and failures of socio-economic models especially in the collapsing U.S.S.R. raised questions about the liberal democratic and development models of the Russian system. In this context, it was also unimaginable for the Union to cater to the region's needs, particularly with respect to the multi-ethnic North Caucasus region. This predicament caused many of the people of North Caucasus to turn to the tenets of religion to derive a solution. This proved to be conducive for the spread of a more radical form of Islam with the followers of Salafist Jihadist ideology since the beginning of 1990s towards which many of the Muslim youth was attracted. These groups were already present even before, where it is seen that during 1970s, a group of people having Salafi ideology grouped together to spread the tenets of Islam in Dagestan. In Chechnya however, the concept of purifying religion, from Sufism, to Salafist ideology was introduced in late 1980s. The wider spread of Salafism, also known as Wahabism, in North Caucasus region is seen in 1990s when after the Soviet disintegration, Muslims started their movements in other Muslim parts of the world especially on the occasion of the Hajj pilgrimage. Mostly influenced were the young Muslims who were inclined towards the fundamentals of religion and many of them even chose to travel to various other Muslim countries' institutions and universities to study religion,

especially to the Middle East. In addition, the introduction of Salafist ideology was carried forward with the flow of American funding of Islamic fundamentalist groups who also opened up their offices in the region. These groups monitored operations of constructing new mosques, schools for Islamic learning and publication of literature of Islamic teachings mostly with their leaning towards Salafism or Wahabism. These organizations³⁸ particularly facilitated the local Salafi groups spreading their networks and support in Chechnya and Dagestan. These groups were typically opposed to the social stratification of the Republics based on ethnicity and wanted a more inclusive society based on Islamic ideology. In the beginning of the 1990s, this ideology was sought to be practicing a purer form of Islam that in the beginning rejected any form of violence, thus gained support from the socially and morally disappointed youth of the North Caucasus. The prominent leaders like Akhmed-Kadi and Musa Mukozhev from Dagestan and Chechnya respectively, largely influenced their societies and stressed upon the re-Islamization of society, a pre-condition for the ultimate Islamization at the state level. Among Salafis were also such groups which had inclinations towards a more radical approach and totally rejected the secular system of government by considering it to be infidelity (Kufr). In this view, the immediate abandonment of this state system, illegitimate in their view, and installation of Shari'ah Law was demanded, in view of uniting the Muslims of Caucasus under one Islamic rule, a path towards creation of Muslim Umma. To achieve this, the statehood model of Sudan and Afghanistan was followed. Such groups were convinced that the highest Jihad is to spread Islam to nooks and corners of the world and while doing this, the spiritual development of people could be replaced with the use of force, contrary to what Sufism believes. Numerous military Islamic communities were setup by radical Salafis in the second half of 1990s in Dagestan, who were even against their own Government and an 'Islamic State' was proclaimed in Buynakskii district's four mountainous villages with the declaration of Shari'ah law in 1998.

In Chechnya, radical Wahabism held the ground as a consequence of Chechen's war with Russia where Wahabism became very popular among the Chechen rebel groups. Such Salafist communities also started emerging in other neighboring Northern Caucasus republics including Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachaevo-Cherkessia in the latter 1990's. All of these communities had close ties with each other and some of them also took trainings from the military camps installed by Chechen Salafis. These groups, though restricted in their activities in the first half of the 1990s, managed to regain strength

and maximize their hold and influence in the late 1990s, many of whom took up arms in the wake of Second Chechen War against Russia³⁹.

First Chechen War 1994

Among the authorities, a few personnel having disagreement with Dudayev started to form opposition in the Chechen Republic. With the support of Russia in terms of arms and finances, Avturkhanov, the commander of anti-Dudayev forces based headquarter in Znamenskoe's settlements which was in the North-West of Chechnya. It worked as an important military base of Russia in the region. In December 1994, Chechnya attempted to break away from the Commonwealth of Independent States in response to which Russian forces entered Chechen territory⁴⁰. The Council members of Russian Federation's Security Council passed a resolution for the return of Chechnya into the jurisdiction of Russian Federation, with the use of force; terming it to be the restoration of Constitutional Order in Chechnya. A large-scale military operation was initiated thus marking the beginning of the first Chechen War. At this point, Russian sources maintained that the military formation of Chechen Republic was thirteen thousand soldiers with 50 armored vehicles, 40 tanks, and 100 guns among others. Although it was not sufficient to wage war but they were well-organized. On the other side, Russia was having military superiority in every way with 23 thousand strong armed personnel in addition to 182 guns and mortars, 80 tanks and 208 armored cars that were increased in number afterwards. Besides, strong aviation fleet was setup to provide aerial support to the land forces. Although Chechen Republic had its aircrafts ready to be used, most of them were destroyed by the Russian Air Force in the initial days of the war. This military superiority instilled confidence among Russians that the organized opposition of the Chechens would be broken down soon. However, the historical antipathy, brutal conflicts and genocide during the Stalin era had taught the Chechens how to engage their traditional enemy and lead them towards a trap. At a time when Russian armed forces started to move towards Grozny for the reinstallation of Constitutional Order and started to shatter peaceful settlements, ordinary Chechen people took-up arms. The Chechen irregulars, distinct from the regular military, combined their tactics with the military methods making it difficult for Russian soldiers to combat and control fully the form of actions posed to them. By June 1995, various other settlements and important centers of Chechens were also occupied by Russians. Consequently, Chechen armed forces retreated into the mountains and continued their struggle from there. Russians responded with landing helicopters in the mountains to the rear of Chechen formations. The war

spread everywhere in Chechnya including devastations of the residential areas. According to estimates, 95% of the total people killed during the first Chechen War were peaceful settlers. This was probably the culminating point of Russian aggression on the land of Chechen Republic that resulted in a raid by the Chechen irregulars under Shamil Basayev. The raid took place in Budionovsk town which was a territory of Stavropol in Russia and captured a hospital with around 500 people including patients. It was maintained by Shamil that the purpose of the attack was to capture attention of the media towards the deteriorating conditions Chechen people were going through. Prime Minister of Russia Viktor Chernomyrdin then offered negotiations to Basayev and allowed him to go back to the Chechen Republic. The siege ended leaving 28 people dead and 65 injured, although the number could have gone higher had the negotiations not taken place. The realization on part of the Russian side that the warfare could be spread further inside the Russian Federation prompted the negotiations. An Agreement was concluded in September 1995 and Russian troops started to partly withdraw from the Chechen territories. However, with General Romanov being seriously hit in Grozny, warfare in Chechnya recommenced and the withdrawal of Russian troops was halted. The resistance of the Chechen people increased considerably and so did the number of Russian soldiers sent to the Chechen territory to deal with them. As stated by Doku Zavgayev, around 462,000 Federal soldiers were present at that time on Chechen Republic's territory. In April 1996, President Dudayev was hit by a direct rocket attack and killed. However his death could not dissuade the Chechen people from their resistance. Zelim Khan Yandarbiev, then Vice-President was made the next President of Republic while Aslan Maskhadov directed the military actions assuming the role of Chief of Staff⁴¹. Another source suggests that after the death of Dudayev, the fragmentation between leadership became evident where then Vice President Zelim Khan Yandarbiyev v/s Beslam Gantemirov and Aslan Maskhadovv/s Shamil Basaev stage was formed, each with their competing strategies. Notwithstanding the presentation of provisional Peace Plan, Maskhadov kept conducting military operations inside and outside Grozny. Shamil Basaev, who had been involved in various attacks including the Budennovsk hostage crisis of 1995, entered Grozny's center with an estimated 600 men that eventually became 3000-4000 in number when Grozny's fighters joined them where they successfully captured three main avenues in Grozny⁴². As planned, in August 1996, a part of Chechen formations passing through the federal's blockade zone entered the city and took over control. At this point, various parts of Russia's garrison in Grozny were blockaded, to the surprise of the Russian Command. Although, devastation in Grozny was quite visible and there

were reports about the favourable circumstances for Russian soldiers, the fact cannot be denied that the destructions in Grozny did not spare even Russian troops as well.

Negotiations were once again initiated in Khasavurta, a town in Daghestan in August 1996 between General Alexander Lebed of Russia and Aslan Maskhadov as Chechen representative. In August 1996, Khasav-Yurt Accord was signed between Maskhadov and Lebed that marked the termination of the First Chechen War⁴³. With the success of negotiations, the principles of relation between Russian Federation and Chechen Republic were established. With the signing of Provisional Agreement⁴⁴ on November 23, 1996 at the time of meeting of Maskhadov and Chernomirdin, the declared principles were formalized. With this, Russia had to agree to the independent existence of Chechen Republic although she did not accept Chechnya's *de jure* independence. It was provided that the final status of Chechen Republic was to be determined in next 5 years. It is important to mention here that in spite of all the developments, Russian forces had left the Chechen territory without signing the final agreement. With the meeting of Maskhadov as newly elected President of Chechen Republic, with Yeltsin later in January 1997, a Peace Treaty⁴⁵ was signed. In this treaty, both sides agreed not to use force for conflict resolution and determined the terms upon which Russia and Chechnya would establish their relations then onwards, based upon International Law⁴⁶. Consequently, the treaty also removed from Chechnya all the Russian troops. This victory was largely celebrated in Chechnya and people were happy to see the end of war, however the period of peace was short-lived until the beginning of Second Chechen War in 1999⁴⁷.

Interwar Period and Transforming the Nature of the Movement

With the signing of Khasav-yurt Accord in 1996, the First Chechen War ended but Chechnya still failed to be recognized as an independent state. It is moreover needs to be mentioned that the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria was also never recognized by any country except by Taliban-led-Afghanistan in the beginning of 1990s⁴⁸. The larger game of conflict was left behind and the newly declared Chechen Republic was still going through a rather difficult situation. The economy was destroyed and unemployment reached an alarming level where around 4 lac people, mostly youth, were left unemployed. Thousands of people were among the ones who were either ill or invalid and needed long-term medical treatment. This further contributed towards deteriorating social condition and declining living standards of the people. Resultant was the

rise of criminal activities, kidnappings, robberies and drug trafficking, whereas the influential people were flourishing with illegal businesses of oil, thus further destroying the socio-economic fabric of the Chechen Republic. Many of the representatives of “Doctors without Borders” an international humanitarian organization, were killed, thus putting an end to the humanitarian services in Chechen Republic⁴⁹.

Maskhadov had already built good relations with war-lords from the time of Dudayev and often sought their help especially during the invasion of Grozny in 1996. These warlords however turned out to be problematic rather than solution providers to halt the socio-economic deterioration of Chechen society. Notwithstanding the Peace Treaty being concluded and signed, it could not prevent the warlords from launching assaults on Russia. Moreover, it also added to the political weakness of Maskhadov that he adopted political flexibility and made many compromises on what were prime national interests. During Dudayev’s period, Maskhadov had his associates in both the camps, one for the Dudayev and other for Dudayev’s opposition. At this point, Chechnya was facing severe socio-economic crises mostly due to the exploitation of power by the warlords. Maskhadov aspired for a political system where Shari‘ah would be a cohesive and central force and president was supposed to serve as an advocate, guarantor and protector of Islamic laws. However, Maskhadov was not convinced with the interpretation of Islam by these extremist warlords, notably Umarov and Udugov, who tended to propagate their version of Islam, directed by western force via Saudi Arabia and was aimed at disuniting Chechen Muslims⁵⁰.

Under Dudayev, it was a secular hierarchy applied on statehood that provided less centralized control to any extremist forces; however this was not the case after Maskhadov came to power. The compromising nature of Maskhadov towards the extremist tendency emerging in society in form of foreign militant Islamic organizations facilitated the growth of fundamentalism in the Republic more than ever before. Shari‘ah Law was declared in 1999 to be the legal code of Chechnya which was a source of confusion. This is because of the indeterminate nature of statehood that was officially a secular state but then came enforcement of Shari‘ah as the legal code⁵¹. Meanwhile, warlords acting independently started receiving aid from many of militant Islamic organizations working from the foreign countries. All of these developments generated an impression outside Chechnya in Russia and internationally that Chechnya had become a lawless state where international terrorism was taking roots and being nurtured in the society. Maskhadov, caving into the pressure of opposition, also issued decree to dissolve parliament and abolished post

of Vice-President held by Vakha Arsanov, deeming it necessary to avoid duplication in leading positions and to ensure the leadership conforms to the principles of Islam⁵².

Moreover, it was also maintained that only Shari‘ah law in Chechnya can resolve and address issues of Chechen people and represent their interests. Jihad was declared against everyone involved in the instigation of kidnapping and killing in Chechen society. The overall development however, in views of foreign analysts and Russian politicians, was aimed at expansion of a ‘Jihad front’ in the region⁵³. In this situation it became obvious that Maskhadov was incapable of supervising his field commanders as such, the situation in Republic could only deteriorate. When in August 1999, Shamil Basayev invaded Dagestan, the then newly elected Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin obtained resounding domestic support, around 75% of Russians, to launch another military intervention in Chechen Republic and renew war with the public⁵⁴.

It was a failure to bring stability and uniformity in the independent republic of Chechnya that caused freedom to be ephemeral. Yet the question remains that the period between the Russian and American invasion, was also a period of turmoil and anarchy in Afghanistan; why then did not the Russian federation return to Afghanistan? The reason is that Afghanistan historically had never been a part of Russia, geographically, as against Chechnya. Additionally, Afghan warlords prevented the reoccupation by Russian forces. The Pakhtun element was the largest in population, but the Tajik and Uzbek components, due to cross border affinity proved to be unruly. The anarchy in Afghanistan affected the entire world, symbolized by the 9/11 event. In that event Saudi and Yemeni nationals were directly involved, yet the United States pinned the blame on Afghanistan. The instability in Chechnya affected only Russia, therefore despite the posturing, no country was willing for Chechnya to enter another period of anarchy. As declared by the Russian Foreign Ministry in one of their statements that if Islamophobia was to grow in Russia, it would have proved to be fatal for the reputation of Russian Federation in terms of their integrity and tolerance’s repute. It is in this light hence argued that the prime concern of Russia was that the instance might have led the Federation to miss the political opportunities and options in the Muslim world. This was however prevented with the intervention of America into Afghanistan⁵⁵.

Second Chechen War, Evidences of Global Linkages of Terrorism

The invasion of Basayev into Dagestan was primarily driven to take back the Chechen ethnic territory and to install a re-united Islamic State. This marks the phase where sequential bombing in various parts of Caucasian Republics as well as in Russia, started taking place. Although the Khasav-yurt Accords restricted Moscow from sending troops into Chechnya, Putin justified military intervention on the following grounds. Firstly, Basayev himself breached the accord by invading Dagestan. Secondly, this invasion was caused by trans-national and lawless Islamic militants who were living in Chechnya. Last and the most important justification was the threat emanating from Chechnya to the internal security of Russia, since President Maskhadov could no longer control the situation in Chechnya. While 70 per cent of Russians called the first Chechen war a tragic event, 70 per cent approved of the second war⁵⁶. In one of the interviews from his biography, Putin expressed his concerns about the situation in 1999 after the invasion of Dagestan. He maintained that if the situation was not taken under control on an urgent basis, Russia could have lost its existence in its current form. Chechnya would not have stopped at independence but could have been used as a base to launch attacks on Russia in future⁵⁷. As a consequence of Russian army's re-entry into Chechnya in October 1999, groups of Chechen insurgents were also mobilized resulting in numerous brutal and devastating urban battles. Although the direct assaults by insurgents were abandoned the next year, in spring 2000, peace was not restored for several years to come⁵⁸.

The Second Chechen War is roughly categorized into two phases:

- Battle phase
- Insurgency phase

The Battle Phase

Air strike operations began by the Russian Forces in August 1999, like they did in the First Chechen War. During October till February of the year that followed, Russian forces gave ultimatum to the people residing in the cities and towns where insurgents were suspected to be hiding. This was followed by bombing raids and huge demolition of those towns where ground forces stepped in to leave contingency units to secure the territories, as the Russian forces progressed. In addition, a force of 100,000 soldiers was deployed by Moscow and was sent against Chechen force that was estimated to be not more than 2,500 weapons and vehicles. Marking the end of the war is more difficult than its beginning, since many of the observers considered it to be continuing for several

years. By October 1999, Maskhadov's Presidency practically ended. In June, Akhmad Kadyrov was placed as acting-Head of Government by Vladimir Putin and with this development, Vladimir Putin declared that Grozny's seizure by Russia was over⁵⁹.

Insurgency Phase

Although the siege of Grozny was over, a guerrilla insurgency continued against Russian occupation throughout Chechnya and the neighboring areas, whereas, Basayev among other warlords kept going with their tactics from outside Grozny. After being deposed from the Presidency, Maskhadov also fled Grozny to unite with the warlords in their guerrilla warfare. Nonetheless, a series of devastating acts of terrorism had already begun with the Apartment bombing in major cities of Russia in September 1999, leaving more than 300 dead and around 1000 injured. Although Putin held Chechen terrorists responsible for this act, opponents of Kremlin question the involvement of Chechen terrorists in such bombing incidents⁶⁰. Many reports indicated involvement of FSB⁶¹ run under Putin by that time, into the conflict and attacks. It is argued that terror was played up to enrage the sentiments of Russian people and to play this card in the upcoming Russian Parliamentary elections of December 1999. Yet it is undeniable that bombings were the decisive events that brought Vladimir Putin to power and to justify Russia's invasion of Chechnya⁶².

Out of various bombing incidents, one was aimed at targeting military housing in Dagestan and two hit the civilian apartments in Moscow that accounted for civilian as well as military casualties simultaneously. Looking at the initial five years of Second Chechen War, some interesting facts are observed about the nature of Chechen terrorism that are discussed here.

In Chechnya, both male and female suicide bombers are seen participating as noted in the June 2000 attack on one of the Chechnya's military bases. These two hit the explosive-laden truck driven by the two female terrorists Khava Barayeva and Luisa Magomadova. Since then, twenty-eight terrorist incidents had been reported by 2005 conducted by Chechen terror groups in Chechnya itself and Moscow, among other sites of the Russian territories. These incidents accounted for the loss of 939 lives leaving 2913 other wounded and 2043 people were taken under hostages. Out of 113 terrorists, 49 were women, rest of the 64 terrorists were men giving the ratio of approximately 43:57. Here is the tabular illustration:

Summary of Total Number of Suicide Terror Acts Attributed To Chechens to Date

<u>S. #</u>	<u>Date of terrorist act</u>	<u>Place of terrorist act</u>	<u>Total Terrorists</u>	<u>Women terrorists</u>	<u>Men terrorists</u>	<u>Killed victims</u>	<u>Injured victims</u>	<u>Hostages</u>	<u>Terrorists death</u>
1	07 June 2000	Chechnya, Alkhan-Yurt Military base (KhavaBaraeva, Luiza Magomadova)	2	2	0	2	5	0	Dead
2	June, 2000	Chechnya, Military checkpoint	1	0	1	?	?	0	Dead
3	02 July 2000	Chechnya, Military base (Movladi)	1	0	1	33	81	0	Dead
4	December, 2000	Chechnya, MVD building (MaretaDuduyeva)	1	1	0	?	?	0	Wounded later Dead
5	29 November 2011	Chechnya, Urus-Martan, Military office (Elza Gazueva)	1	1	0	1	3	0	Dead
6	05 February 2002	Chechnya, Grozny, Zavodskoy ROVD (Zarema Inarkaeva)	1	1	0	23	17	0	Wounded
7	23-26 October, 2002	Moscow theatre	40	19	21	129	644	<800	Dead
8	27 December 2002	Chechnya, Grozny, Governmental complex (Tumrievs family)	3	1	2	83	< 200	0	Dead
9	12 May 2003	Chechnya, Znamenskaya, Governmental complex	3	1	2	59	111	0	Dead
10	14 May 2003	Chechnya, Iliskhan-Yurt, Religion festival (Shahidat Shahbulatova,	2	2	0	18	145	0	Dead

		Zulay Abdurzakova)							
11	05 June 2003	North Osetia, Mozdok Military base (Lida Khildehoroeva)	1	1	0	17	16	0	Dead
12	20 June 2003	Chechnya, Grozny, Governmental complex (Zakir Abdulazimov)	2	1	1	6	38	0	Dead
13	05 July 2003	Moscow, Rock festival (Zulikhan Elihadjieva, Mariam Sharapova)	2	2	0	14	60	0	Dead
14	11 July 2003	Moscow, Twerskaya str. (Zarema Mujikhoeva)	1	1	0	1	0	0	Lived
15	27 July 2003	Chechnya, Grozny, Military building (Mariam Tashukhadjieva)	1	1	0	?	?	0	Dead
16	01 August 2003	North Osetia, Military hospital	1	0	1	35	300	0	Dead
17	05 December 2003	Southern Russian near Yessentuki, train (KhadijatMange rieva)	4	3	1	41	< 150	0	Dead
18	15 September 2003	Ingushetia, FSB office	2	1	1	2	31	0	Dead
19	09 December 2003	Moscow, National Hotel near Duma	1	1	0	6	14	0	Dead
20	06 February 2004	Moscow subway station Avtozavodskaya	1	0	1	41	< 130	0	Dead
21	06 April 2004	Ingushetia, president's car	1	0	1	2	25	0	Dead
22	25 August 2004	Airplane TU-134 Moscow-Volgograd	1	1	0	43	0	0	Dead

		(Sazita Jebirhanova)							
23	25 August 2004	Airplane TU-154 Moscow-Sochi (AminatNogaeva)	1	1	0	42	0	0	Dead
24	31 August 2004	Moscow, subway station Rijskaya	1	1	0	10	33	0	Dead
25	01-03 September 2004	North Osetia, Beslan school (RozaNogaeva, Mariam Tuburova)	32	2	30	330	470	1120	Dead
26	May, 2005	Chechnya, Grozny	1	1	0	0	0	0	Dead
27	May, 2005	Chechnya, Assinovskaya	2	2	0	0	0	0	Dead
28	July, 2005	Chechnya, Grozny	1	0	1	0	0	0	Dead
-	-	Total:	111	47	64	938	2913	2043	-
-	-	Percentage:	100%	42%	58%	-	-	-	-

Table 1

Source: Anne Speckhard and Khapta Ahkmedova, 2006

Out of 28 incidents, most of the targets were civilians that accounted for 48%. Military bases were target in 39% of cases and government properties targeted were 15%, again involving mostly the civilians. Moreover, if we exclude attacks outside of Chechen territory and take the figures of attack inside Chechnya, 57% of targets were reported at military bases of Russian forces. Here is the tabular illustration of the data⁶³.

Type of Target	Chechnya	Southern Russian region	Moscow	Total
Military bases	8	3	0	11 (39 %)
Governmental places	3	1	0	4 (14 %)
Civilian places	3	2	8	13 (46 %)
Total	14 (50 %)	6 (21 %)	8 (29 %)	28 (100 %)

Table 2

Source: Anne Speckhard and Khapta Ahkmedova, 2006

According to the reports by Doctors without Borders Organization/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in French, in 2002, the indiscriminate violence and insecure circumstances in Chechnya drove large number of Chechens away from their republic only to seek refuge in the neighboring republics. Yet, they found it difficult to get themselves registered and to receive humanitarian assistance adequately⁶⁴.

Another evident trend is seen while looking at the Chechen rebellion and the level of support they receive from their society. Attendant literature highlights that in Chechen society, there were no positive sentiments or any sort of encouragement of suicide terrorism. The community neither justifies the act of terrorism either as a religious expression or as a political tactic to resolve issues. No suicide attack had ever been celebrated in Chechnya by the public neither the suicide attackers were ever considered to be religious or national heroes. Here at this point, it needs attention why then there was a need by suicide bombers to record and air the pre-event video declaring themselves as martyrs in the way of Allah as they did in Dubrovka theatre attack of October 2002 and Beslan school attack of September 2004. It is highlighted by scholars that the videos' target audience was foreign funders and not the local Chechens were addressed. Another instance to gauge the global linkages of terrorism in 21st century is the Casa Blanca Bombings. One scholar⁶⁵ who personally interviewed close associates of suicide bombers of Casa Blanca, found that groups like Al-Qaeda used such videos to show to the new recruits from around the world. During their Jihad campaign, such groups persuaded the new recruits to fight in the name of Islam in Chechnya. This makes a quite tenable connection between terrorism in Chechnya and its global linkages to foreign terror groups operating internationally⁶⁶.

Conclusion

From differing results it can be concluded that even suffering nations have a moral attitude towards terrorism. Terror in Afghanistan, which was deadly, was capable of being reconciled to the occupation and conquest of their country by Russia and America in turn. The Taliban destruction of the Bamyán Buddhas, so abhorrent to the outside world would not be so abhorrent to the Jihadis. On the other hand the Beslan School massacre of May 2004, in which 330 people mostly innocent children were brutally killed, lost the militants even local support. Such terror could not be reconciled with core Islamic precepts.

A period of foreign occupation followed by anarchy was common both to Afghanistan and Chechnya. However, in the former, Russia did not re-occupy because of pre-emption by the United States; but it re-occupied Chechnya, because of its proximity to the Russian Federation, the power it exercised over Chechnya being an autonomous republic of the Russian empire, and perhaps because strategic access to Chechnya was difficult for hostile powers. In case of Afghanistan, as discussed above, Russian empire did neither enjoy any direct rule nor Afghanistan had ever been its territory and both countries are geographically apart, hence reoccupation is a challenge. The considerations troubling the Russians have been speculated upon by Walter Laquer, where he suggested that upon the growth of Islamophobia in Russia, it could have accompanied the tarnishing the Russian image of tolerance and integrity, thus challenging Russia's position in the Muslim world. This was however prevented by the American occupation of Afghanistan. Walter Laquer's comment shows how Russia's involvement, became a much commented upon, but a contained crisis, which Russia is capable of fending off, especially the Crimean and Ukrainian crises have caught the western world's attention. President Donald Trump's demand that NATO countries pay for their own defense have consigned Chechnya further from centre-stage.

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⁶⁶ Anne Speckhard and Khapta Ahkmedova, *The Making of a Martyr: Chechen Suicide Terrorism*, vol. 29(5), Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, 2006, p. 11.