

The battle for Chechnia: Russia confronts Chechen secessionism (1989-1999)*

Oktaf F. Tanrısever

Department of International Relations, Middle East Technical University, 06531 Ankara Turkey

Abstract

The aim of this article is to examine the struggle between Moscow and the post-Soviet Chechen secessionist movement over the control of Chechnia. It is argued that the development of the Chechen conflict has been considerably affected by the post-Soviet transition process in Russia that weakened the federal centre militarily while shaping developments in its periphery. Instead of attempting to use political instruments to divide Chechen ethnic nationalists, the federal leadership relied on military instruments, which proved ineffective against Chechen guerrilla tactics, whereas Chechen secessionists have used ethnic nationalism effectively to unite the majority of the Chechen people against Moscow until the end of the Chechen war of 1994-1996. The article explores the socio-historical background of the conflict, and discusses the strategies used by federal authorities and secessionist Chechen leaders during and in the aftermath of the war. The article concludes by pointing out the role of post-war instability in Chechnia upon resumption of war in 1999.

1. Introduction

The relationship between the Russian state, whether Tsarist, Soviet or post-Soviet, and the Chechen people has generally been problematic. Ever since Russia conquered Chechnia in 1859, the Chechen people have periodically staged unsuccessful attempts to retake Chechnia. In return for their battle for Chechnia, the Chechens have suffered huge human losses, forced exile, internal deportation and the destruction of their homeland. Following the failure of the August putsch in 1991, the Checheno-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) declared its independence from the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR), of which it had been a part. Neither the RSFSR nor its successor, the Russian

* In the transliteration of non-English words, the rules pertaining to the Library of Congress transliteration system is followed throughout. Although Chechnia was created in 1992 as a political entity in the Russian Federation, the term 'Chechnia' is used to refer the districts now considered as part of Chechnia during the Tsarist and Soviet periods. Checheno-Ingushetia is used only to refer the formal status of the republic during the Soviet period.

Federation, recognised the independence of Chechnia. The Russian leadership expected that, as in the case of Tatarstan, granting some degree of autonomy to Chechnia could secure Chechen loyalty to Moscow (Szporluk, 1994). However, the Chechen secessionist leadership refused not only to sign the Federation Treaty in March 1992 but also to hold the referendum on the Russian constitution in December 1993. In response to the Chechen challenge, Moscow sent Russian troops, instead of a negotiating team, to Chechnia on 11 December 1994.

The struggle between Moscow and the post-Soviet Chechen secessionist movement over the control of Chechnia constitutes the topic of this article. There are several studies that analysed the relations between the federal centre and Chechen secessionists. In this literature, there is a tendency to explain the conflict in terms of the inherited ethnic characteristics of the Chechens (e.g. Korotkov, 1994; Shah-Kazemi, 1995). This approach assumes that ethnic attachments can be suppressed by political institutions, but not eliminated. Thus, according to this line of thinking, when dominant political institutions experience a structural crisis, ethnic communities awaken their members to achieve ethnic mobilisation. This argument is too deterministic. Even if ethnic communities have strong group solidarity, this does not mean that they would listen to all calls for 'awakening'. Moreover, not all members of Russian and Chechen elites have been committed ethnic nationalists. In fact, in the late eighties a significant number of each nationality took a critical view of ethnic nationalism.

This ethnocentric tendency distorts the political nature of the problem, as it pathologises the Chechens *en masse*. Relying on methodological individualism and their personal convictions, most researchers tend to blame (e.g. Gorlov, 1995) or to glorify (e.g. Bennett, 1998) the Chechens for their ethnic nationalism. A prominent Russian scholar, head of the Russian Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology and former Minister for Nationalities, Valerii Tishkov, radicalised this tendency when he attempted to explain the escalation of the conflict even through the personal antipathy between Russian president Boris El'tsin and Chechen president Dzhokhar Dudaev. Tishkov argued that if El'tsin had picked the phone up and invited Dudaev to the Kremlin, then it would be almost certain that Chechnia would have settled for a Tatarstan-like autonomy (Tishkov, 1997: xii).¹

This article argues that the development of the Chechen conflict has been considerably affected by Russia's post-Soviet transition process that weakened the federal centre militarily in shaping developments in its

¹ On 15 February 1994 Moscow signed a power sharing treaty with Tatarstan that granted a broad range of autonomy to the Republic.

periphery. Taking the control of the Republic through an anti-Russian ethnic nationalist movement in 1991, the Chechen separatists used ethnic nationalism for uniting the Chechen masses against Moscow. After three years of tolerating the separatist rule in Chechnia, the federal centre sought to regain the control of the Republic through a strategy that relied mainly on military rather than political instruments. However, the Russian army's inability in coping with guerrilla warfare forced the federal authorities to concede the Russian military defeat in 1996. In the aftermath of the first Chechen war, the federal authorities and the radical Chechen opposition prevented the Chechen administration from stabilising the political situation in the Republic. Consequently, the endemic instability led to the resumption of war in 1999.

This article starts with a discussion of the historical background of the conflict and the roots of Chechen nationalism under the Soviet rule. Afterwards, it will examine the formation of the Chechen national movement and the outbreak of the 'Chechen revolution' in 1991. This will be followed by a discussion of the war and Moscow's search for a political settlement. The article concludes with an analysis of the postwar instability in Chechnia and its role in the resumption of war in 1999.

2. Historical background

The historical evolution of the relationship between the Chechen people and the Russian state has contributed to the symbolic framework within which people make sense of the post-Soviet Russo-Chechen conflict. Before tracing the historical background of the conflict, it is useful to introduce the Chechens, who are a people indigenous to the North Caucasus. The first written mention of Chechens dates from the seventh century. When the Mongols invaded the North Caucasus during the tenth century, the Chechens escaped to the mountains. They began to settle in the lowlands only in the sixteenth century. Their sedentarisation went hand in hand with the process of Islamisation under the influence of Kumyk and Avar missionaries since the seventeenth century (Aidaev, 1996).

The Russian penetration into the North Caucasus started after the annexation of the Crimean Khanate in the eighteenth century. At this time, Sheikh Mansur declared himself the Imam of all mountain peoples, and united much of the North Caucasus against Russian expansionism. Inspired by Sheikh Mansur's victory against the Russians in 1785, Sheikh Shamil assumed the role of organising the North Caucasian resistance in 1824 (Gammer, 1992: 57-58).

The North Caucasian resistance was quelled when the Russian army took effective control of Chechnia in 1859. However, the subsequent massive migration of Chechens to the Ottoman Empire did not prevent the outbreak of a great rebellion under the leadership of Sheikh Najmuddin in Chechnia and Dagestan in 1877. This time, thousands of Chechen fighters were deported to Siberia. Afterwards, *abreks* (outlaws living in the mountains) continued to carry out the acts of resistance by attacking Russian officers and the pro-Russian Chechens. The *abreks* formed the backbone of Sheikh Uzun Haji's army, which defeated Denikin's White forces in the autumn of 1919. Sheikh Uzun Haji later proclaimed Chechnia and North-western Dagestan to be the 'North Caucasian Emirate' (Bennigsen-Broxup, 1992a: 114-117).

In order to establish the Bolshevik rule in the North Caucasus, the Bolsheviks initially sided with the Chechen nationalists against the *Cossacks*, who had supported the Whites. Therefore, the large majority of Ingush and Chechen peoples supported the Terek Soviet of Vladikavkaz in their fight against the *Cossacks*. Their fight was over the ownership of lands, which had been taken forcibly from the Ingush and Chechens under the imperial Russian rule (Jabagi, 1991: 120-122). Following the Bolshevik victory in 1920, a large part of the North Caucasus was unified into the Mountain Autonomous Republic in 1921. The Mountain Autonomous Republic was divided into Kabardino-Balkar, Ingush and Chechen Autonomous Regions in 1922. Later, the Ingush and Chechen Autonomous Regions were united in 1934. The status of this autonomous region was upgraded to Autonomous Republic in 1936 (Blank, 1993: 25-26).

Although the Chechens reacted to the Stalinist policy of collectivisation in rural areas, the purges between 1936 and 1938 undermined the basis for traditional nationalism. The remaining anti-Soviet Chechen opposition was quelled when the Chechens were deported to Central Asia in 1944. At this time, the Checheno-Ingush ASSR was abolished, and divided between Georgia, Ossetia and Dagestan, using the excuse of their so-called collaboration with the Nazis.² The Checheno-Ingush ASSR was reconstituted and the ban on the return of Chechens and Ingush to their homelands was cancelled following a decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet adopted on 8 January 1957. However, the Checheno-Ingush ASSR was not completely restored to its former borders, since the Prigorodnyi district remained a part of the North Ossetian ASSR (Avtorkhanov, 1992: 165-168).

² In fact, during the Second World War not one single German soldier ever appeared in Checheno-Ingushetia, with the exception of a brief occupation of the frontier region of Malgobek, where the population was predominantly Russian.

3. Roots of Chechen nationalism

The post-1957 Soviet rule in Chechnia had not been successful in rooting out the social bases of contemporary Chechen nationalism. The survival of Chechen nationalism under the Soviet Union can be explained by analysing institutional, demographic, socio-economic, cultural and ideological factors.

Institutionally, the Checheno-Ingush ASSR was an autonomous republic, rather than a Union republic. The second-class status of the Republic intensified the feelings of discrimination on the part of the Chechens. The poor representation of the Chechens in the state institutions of Checheno-Ingush ASSR had made the Republic one of the weakest links within the Soviet Union. The discussions over reforming the institutional structure of the Soviet federal system, especially during the perestroika years, provided the Chechens with unique opportunities to upgrade the status of their Republic to the level of a Union Republic. Since the institutional debate was devoid of any ideological content, the Chechen nationalists were able to use Soviet institutions to air their grievances without facing the Communist Party discipline (Iasnyi. and Zisserman, 1998: 210).

Demographically, the size of the ethnic Chechen population and its degree of territorial concentration in the Checheno-Ingush ASSR have played a significant role as a social base for Chechen nationalism. The Chechens had one of the highest population growth rates among the peoples of the Soviet Union. Their population rose from 419,000 in 1959 to 957,000 in 1989. The high population growth rate secured the demographic dominance of Chechens over other ethnic groups in Checheno-Ingushetia. According to the 1989 census, the districts now considered as part of Chechnia had 1,084,000 inhabitants, of whom 715,000 were Chechens, 269,000 were Russians and 25,000 were Ingush. The Chechen Diaspora numbering 242,000 in 1989 was not larger than the number of Chechens in the Republic (Henze, 1991: 160).

The socio-economic underdevelopment of Checheno-Ingushetia is an important factor in the reproduction of the social bases for Chechen nationalism. Of the 73 Autonomous and Union republics of the USSR, Checheno-Ingushetia was the most underdeveloped republic in terms of socio-economic criteria. This was partly because of the fact that only about 0.2 percent of the oil produced in the Republic was left for the needs of the local population (Perepelkin, 1994: 6). Furthermore, there had taken place a kind of division of the economy into two sectors: a 'Russian' one, which controlled the industrial enterprises, including the oil extracting

industry, and a 'national' economy, which controlled the agricultural sector, including small village production and seasonal work. The Chechen national movement had gained a significant social basis especially when young people of working age were denied access to industry (Tishkov *et al.*, 1995: 16).

The linguistic and cultural distinctiveness of the Chechens has also provided a base for Chechen nationalism. The Chechen language is not related at all to Russian or to any Indo-European language. Although the name 'Chechen' was coined by the Russians in the 16th century from the name of a Chechen village (Chechen-aul), the Chechens call themselves *Nuokhchuo* (its plural is *Nuokhchi*). In fact, the Chechens are closely related, linguistically and culturally, to the Ingush people. Together they belong to the *Vainakh* linguistic family. The fluent knowledge of Russian is widespread amongst the Chechens. In 1989 about 78 percent of the population professed to have a good command of Russian. This is not surprising, since Chechen was reintroduced in schools in 1957 merely as a subject, but not as a medium of communication. Despite the popularity of the Russian language, native language retention was very high among the Chechens. Some 98 percent of them indicated in 1989 that they considered Chechen to be their first language (Soldatova, 1996: 220-224).

Ideologically, the erosion of the Communist Party's monopoly of power in the Soviet political system in 1988 freed Chechen nationalism from the Soviet ideological discipline. Chechen nationalism relied heavily on a militant version of Islam. *Muridism*, loyalty to Islamic Sufi orders, provided the religious content of the Chechen resistance to Russian rule (Rywkin, 1991: 134-135). The Sufi orders were active especially in Gudermes, Noghai-yurt and Shali. Having Sheikh Shamil as a role model, leaders of the Sufi orders propagated the ideological 'necessity' of forming an anti-Soviet and anti-Russian resistance movement (Shah-Kazemi, 1995: 47-50).

The potential availability of institutional, demographic, socio-economic, cultural and ideological bases for Chechen nationalism were not sufficient for translating ethnic grievances into an effective political action. An effective political organisation was a prerequisite for the realisation of Chechen ethnic mobilisation.

4. The organisation of the Chechen national movement

The political organisation of post-Soviet Chechen nationalism took shape in the struggle between ethnic and civic Chechen nationalists. It would be useful here to define what is meant by ethnic and civic forms of nationalism. Ethnic nationalism defines nationhood through myths of

shared physical characteristics, culture, religion, language and common ancestry. Whereas, civic nationalism defines nationhood with citizenship and political participation. It seeks to promote social cohesion and political equality in ethnically heterogeneous political communities. Thus, civic nationalism is at least in principle open to multicultural diversity. By contrast, ethnic nationalism has nothing to do with individual will, but derives from cultural values. Thus, ethnic nationalism is, by definition, collectivist and closed to multicultural diversity (Brubaker, 1992: 1-17).

Compared to other nationalist movements in the Soviet Union, the emergence of Chechen ethnic mobilisation came rather late. Even their fellow Ingush people formed a popular front in 1988, earlier than the Chechens. The Chechen national movement, which came into existence in 1989, was composed of three factions. The first group consisted of the official Chechen leaders who were happy with the existing level of relations between Moscow and Chechnia. The second group included Chechen civic nationalists who sought a negotiated settlement to obtain sovereign status for Chechnia within the Russian federal framework. The last group included Chechen ethnic nationalists who urged the unilateral secession of Chechnia from Russia.

The official Chechen leadership had very weak institutional power. Following the persecution of a significant part of the Chechen elite during the 1944 deportations and the restoration of the Republic in 1957, non-Chechen -mainly Russian- administrators had run the Republic. When Vladimir Fotaev, the First Communist Party Secretary of the Republic, was abruptly removed from his post in the spring of 1989, a competition for his replacement took place between a Chechen Second Communist Party Secretary of the Republic, Doku Zavgaev, and an ethnic Russian the First Secretary of the Groznyi City Party Committee, Nikolai Semenov (Muzaev, 1995: 158-159). Zavgaev's election for this post in June 1989 marked the beginning of 'Chechenisation' of the Republic.

Given the fact that Chechen state structures were underdeveloped and heavily dependent upon the federal centre, Zavgaev and his followers could not develop a civic Chechen national movement, as Zavgaev's authority became challenged by ethnic nationalists for being a pro-Soviet and pro-Russian administrator. Moscow's support for Zavgaev became evident when he was also elected as the Chairman of the Checheno-Ingush Supreme Soviet, in addition to his Communist Party leadership.

Although the majority of Chechens demanded sovereignty, there was no consensus on the form of sovereignty and the method by which sovereignty would be realised. Initially, the dominant view was in favour of a political settlement with the federal centre. The civic nationalist position was popular amongst the Chechens who were living mainly in the

northern parts of Checheno-Ingushetia, and amongst the Chechen diaspora, especially those living in Moscow. This group was represented by the former USSR minister for the petrochemical industry, Salambek Khadzhiev, and the former speaker of the Russian parliament, Ruslan Khasbulatov.

Despite the fact that civic Chechen nationalists enjoyed the largest support in the Republic, they lacked a party of their own, and were scattered over various so-called informal organisations, such as the 'Union for the Assistance of Perestroika' and the 'Popular Front of Checheno-Ingushetia'. These organisations were established after the lifting of rigid controls over the North Caucasus in 1988. In 1989, a scholarly society called *Kavkaz* (the Caucasus) emerged with the participation of moderate Chechen intellectuals such as writer Abuzar Aidamirov and historian Yavus Akhmadov (Dunlop, 1997: 88-89).

The first nationalist party of the Republic, *Bart* (Unity), was established in July 1989. The founders of this party, including Zelimkhan Iandarbiev, a writer, argued that the Popular Front of Checheno-Ingushetia 'had become submissive to the policies of Gorbachev, and failed to represent Chechen national interests' (Iandarbiev, 1996: 170-172). In February 1990, the *Bart* party was transformed into *the Vainakh Democratic Party* under the leadership of Iandarbiev. This party played a key role in Chechen ethnic mobilisation, as it provided Chechens with an organisational infrastructure to set up networks inside and outside the Republic.

The Vainakh Democratic Party emerged as a platform for radical Chechen nationalists in spring 1990. Its members began to speak out actively on the need to create a sovereign 'Vainakh Republic.' Their demands from the Soviet leadership included the cessation of religious persecution and the re-establishment of traditional national institutions, such as the *Mekh khel* (Council of Elders). They also advocated the restoration of a demographic balance in the Republic through the control of migration in and out of the Republic (Korotkov, 1994: 108). The Chechen nationalists had also begun to distance themselves from the Ingush people who were traditionally less anti-Russian. This helped radical Chechen nationalists to consolidate their position in the Chechen nationalist movement.

5. The road to the 'Chechen revolution'

The developments leading to the 'Chechen revolution' started in July 1990 when influential Chechen intellectuals started a campaign to hold a Congress of the Chechen People (*Kongress Chechenskogo Naroda* -

KChN). Subsequently, the KChN was convened with the consent and participation of the Republican leadership in November 1990. The three factions were represented at this Congress: the official party leadership, a civic nationalist faction, and an ethnic nationalist faction. All the factions, however, agreed that Checheno-Ingushetia should be granted 'full sovereignty' (Dunlop, 1997: 92).

During the November 1990 meeting of the KChN, Dzhokhar Dudaev was elected as the chairman of the Executive Committee (*ispolkom*) of the KChN on 1 December 1990.³ As a person without ties to the competing Chechen tribes, he managed to gain overwhelming support in the Congress (Dunlop, 1997: 93-95). The Congress also passed a resolution calling for the 'sovereignty' of the Chechen-Ingush Republic on 26 November 1990. The Supreme Soviet of the Checheno-Ingush ASSR officially adopted the 'Declaration on the State Sovereignty of the Chechen-Ingush Republic' on the following day. According to this document, 'the sovereign Republic of Checheno-Ingushetia would sign treaties on equal terms with the union republics' (Eremenko and Novikov, 1997: 7-10). This declaration did not cause particular concern in Moscow, since at that time other autonomous republics in the RSFSR had also proclaimed themselves 'sovereign'.

In the Soviet era, the anti-Soviet position of the Chechen nationalist movement coincided with the policies of Russian reformers. Following the March 1990 elections for the Russian parliament, the majority of elected Chechen deputies supported the Democratic Russia movement. During the March 1991 referendum in Checheno-Ingushetia on the preservation of the USSR, 75.9 % of total voters supported the unity of the USSR. Nevertheless, the low turnout, which was 44.6 %, showed the passive resistance of Chechens to Moscow (*Pravda*, 27 March 1991).

The compatibility of Russian reformist and Chechen nationalist positions came to an end when the Chechen ethnic nationalists replaced civic nationalists as the dominant power in the Republic in the 8-9 June 1991 meeting of the KChN. In this meeting, the KChN was renamed the 'National Congress of the Chechen People' (OKChN) (Eremenko and Novikov, 1997: 15-17). In a speech to the OKChN, Dudaev, chairman of the OKChN, declared that the Soviet Union and its instruments of 'colonial oppression' (the Communist Party and the KGB) had robbed the Chechen nation of its 'religion, language, culture, natural resources, and its right to freedom.' At this meeting, Dudaev stated his intention to create a Caucasian army. The OKChN concluded its gathering by calling for early parliamentary and presidential elections, the adoption of a new

³ At this time, Dudaev was still serving as the commander of the Soviet military garrison in Tartu, Estonia.

constitution and a referendum on the status of Checheno-Ingushetia (Dunlop, 1997: 97-99).

When the State Committee for the Extraordinary Situation (GKChP) assumed power during the 19-21 August Putsch in Moscow, the OKChN decided to resist the coup. At the time of the coup, Zavgaev was in Moscow trying to gain support from the coup leaders to disarm ethnic nationalists. Zavgaev might have gained the upper hand if the coup had been successful, since almost 80 % of the total population had not supported Chechen ethnic nationalism (Pain and Popov, 1995: 1, 4). Nevertheless, Ruslan Khasbulatov warned Zavgaev not to use force against the ethnic nationalists. After the failure of the August coup, Dudaev was praised by El'tsin and Khasbulatov as a democrat, and Zavgaev was condemned as conservative (Dunlop, 1997: 100-102).

The 'Chechen revolution' started when the Executive Committee of the OKChN demanded on 22 August 1991 that all branches of state power should resign due to their passivity during the August coup (Bennigsen-Broxup, 1992b: 221). Following the refusal of the Supreme Soviet to obey this call, Dudaev's 15000 active supporters stormed the local KGB offices, and killed Groznyi Communist Party First Secretary Vitalii Kutsenko. In response to the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet's condemnation of the OKChN for illegally appropriating power in Checheno-Ingushetia on 8 October 1991, the Executive Committee of the OKChN called for a general mobilisation of Chechens. With the participation of two hundred prisoners released from the local prison, the OKChN's National Guard took effective control of Groznyi on 10 October 1991 (Spirdsboel-Hanson, 1994: 396-402; Sarmatin, 1993: 170-171).

The ethnic nationalists decided to hold presidential elections as quickly as possible so as not to give Moscow the chance to interfere with their attempts to declare the independence of Chechnia. The elections, for which the turnout was 77 %, were held on 27 October 1991 under the strict control of pro-Dudaev forces. According to the election results, Dudaev was voted for President by 85 % of the total 490000 votes (Smeets and Wesselink, 1995: 27). Strengthened by this election, the Interim Supreme Soviet declared Chechen independence on 1 November 1991. El'tsin's threat to invade Chechnia unless the declaration of independence was rescinded militarised the conflict for the first time. However, the Chechen forces captured the Russian Ministry of Interior (MVD) forces on their arrival at Khankala airport on 9 November 1991 (Iandarbiev, 1996: 99).

The Assembly of Ingush Deputies responded to the Chechen declaration of independence by adopting a resolution that called for the formation of an 'Ingush Autonomous Republic within the RSFSR' on 15

September 1991. A referendum, which was conducted between 30 November and 1 December 1991 in three predominantly Ingush districts, approved the proposed separation from Chechnia.⁴ The main reason behind the Ingush refusal to side with the Chechens was that the Ingush claims over the Prigorodnyi district of the North Ossetia could best be achieved by remaining within the Russian Federation (Dunlop, 1997: 108).

When the 'independent' Chechnia's leaders started to use ethnic nationalism against Moscow, the state became increasingly ethnocratic, and Russians were systematically forced to leave the Republic (Gorlov, 1995: 43-44).⁵ Traditional Chechen institutions such as the Councils of Elders and the Councils of the Muslim Clergy gained political influence as Dudaev began playing off the 'purer' mountain clans and the 'less pure' lowland clans against each other (Goldenberg, 1994: 188). Consequently, Dudaev faced growing local opposition, which mainly criticised Dudaev's authoritarian behaviour, the severe economic stagnation and the increasing rate of crime and corruption. In fact, Dudaev's failure to pursue sound economic policy along with the emigration of Russians resulted in a reduction in oil production (Smeets and Wesselink, 1995: 35). As Dudaev's former allies started to join the opposition, Dudaev focused on a potential military confrontation with the Russian army. Dudaev pictured his political rivals as pawns of Moscow, and dissolved the Parliament, the City Council and the Constitutional Court on 4 June 1993. Consequently, the Chechen society was polarised between two power centres; pro-independence Dudaev forces and pro-Moscow groups (Usmanov, 1997: 226-254)

When Ramazan Abdulatipov, Speaker of the Council of Nationalities of the Russian Supreme Soviet, and Sergei Shakhrai, Deputy Prime Minister, visited the Chechen parliament in January 1993, they signed a protocol with the Chechen authorities for preparing a treaty on the status of Chechnia (Eremenko and Novikov, 1997: 52-53). At this time, Dudaev set the recognition of Chechnia's independence by the Russian Federation as a condition for entering negotiations (Muzaev, 1993: 1). The federal authorities were not conciliatory either. The Federal Security Service (FSB) had made several attempts on Dudaev's life. It was clear that the federal centre was reluctant to reach an agreement with Dudaev (Iushenkov, 1995: 8).

6. The war

⁴ The Russian Supreme Soviet confirmed this referendum on 4 June 1992 by adopting a law on the creation of the Ingush Republic. By this act, the Russian leadership aimed to contain Chechen secessionism by splitting the Checheno-Ingush Republic.

⁵ About 100,000 Russians emigrated from Chechnia to Russia proper in the post-Soviet period.

The process of post-Soviet transition in Russia played a crucial role in the development of the Chechen conflict, as it changed the type of political regime in Moscow and the relations between Moscow and the regions. The federal centre reassessed its policy of avoiding direct confrontation with the rebel Chechen authorities in spring 1994. The dominance of the nationalist perspective in Moscow following the storming of the Russian parliament in October 1993, the adoption of a less federalist constitution and the election of a predominantly nationalist Russian parliament in December 1993 were crucial in this reassessment. This political atmosphere marginalised the liberal calls for a peaceful settlement of the dispute (Solovei, 1995: 41). The mass media called for an end to the mistreatment of local Russians by Chechens and Mafia activities in Chechnia. Moreover, the signing of a Power-Sharing Treaty with Tatarstan on 15 February 1994 affirmed the authority of the federal centre over non-Russian republics, other than Chechnia (Lysenko, 1995: 165). Geopolitically, it was very important to keep Chechnia within the Russian Federation, as Chechnia was a key junction for transporting Caspian and Central Asian gas and oil. Two alternative routes for transporting Caspian Sea oil have dominated the geopolitical calculations: one from Baku, across Chechen territory, to Russia's Black Sea port at Novorossiisk (the northern route), and the other from Baku, through Georgia, to Turkey's Mediterranean port at Ceyhan (the western route) (Shakhbiev, 1996: 170). If Chechnia remained under the control of Chechen secessionists, then Russia's influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia will diminish significantly, and the Western route would become a more attractive alternative (Roberts, 1996).

The institutional interests of the Federal Counter-Intelligence Service (FSK) and the Russian Ministries of Defence, Interior and Nationalities played an important role in the decision to invade Chechnia (Tishkov, 1995:19-28). Sergei Stepashin, head of the FSK, was committed to improving the image of his department that had failed to overthrow the Dudaev regime. Pavel Grachev, the Defence Minister, needed more financial resources to modernise the combat capacity of the Army. Viktor Erin, the Minister of the Interior, sought to put an end to organised crime. Nikolai Egorov, the minister for nationalities and the former governor of Krasnodar territory, pointed to the negative implications of the Chechen example for the rest of the North Caucasus (Dunlop, 1996: 29-34). Sergei Shakrai, the deputy Prime Minister responsible for the policy towards Chechnia, supported the FSK's policy of overthrowing Dudaev. Contrary to reports that he was 'a long standing supporter of negotiations with Dudaev', Shakrai was quoted as saying that 'Dudaev must go' (*Moscow News*, 12 August 1994).

The actual decision to invade Chechnia was taken at a Security Council meeting on 29 November 1994 (Eremenko and Novikov, 1997: 78). President El'tsin authorised the military intervention on 11 December 1994. The invasion of Chechnia was illegal even by Russian standards (Mizulina, 1995: 29). For example, the Federation Treaty of 1992, which Chechnia refused to sign, stipulates that a state of emergency may be declared in a republic only with the local government's agreement. The 1993 Russian constitution states that the President may impose a state of emergency on his own for three days, if he immediately notifies the Federation Council and State Duma. However, El'tsin neither declared any state of emergency before the invasion nor communicated with the Parliament's two houses (Nysten-Haarala, 1995: 311-317).

The Russian strategy of invasion was guided by Soviet-style interventionism, whereby the deployment of military forces followed staging a pro-Moscow coup by local leaders as in the Afghan case (van Dyke, 1996: 689-705). In line with this strategy, Moscow provided military and financial support to the Chechen opposition in 1994. The Moscow-backed opposition leaders divided Chechnia into three spheres of influence. Umar Avtorkhanov established the Provisional Council of the United Opposition (PCUO) at Znamenskoe. Beslan Gantemirov controlled Urus-Martan with 800 men. Ruslan Labazanov based 200 men in Argun (Dunlop, 1997: 154-163). However, the defeat of the Chechen opposition groups by Dudaev's forces changed the original Russian strategy that relied on a pro-Moscow coup by local leaders.

The main weakness of the opposition was its disunity. Among the opposition leaders only Avtorkhanov was ready to sign a Federation Treaty with Moscow. Gantemirov and Labazanov's opposition stemmed from their blood feuds against Dudaev. The return of Ruslan Khasbulatov, former Speaker of the Russian Parliament, to his hometown, Tolstoi-Yurt, in February 1994 further divided the opposition. The opposition leaders suspected that Khasbulatov might use his charisma to take control of the Chechen opposition, and re-emerge as a power-broker of Russian politics (Khasbulatov, 1995: 25).⁶

The most serious challenge to Kremlin's policy was the lack of consensus over the operation's objectives. This led to the emergence of fractures within the Russian military command structure. Colonel-General Boris Gromov and Lieutenant-General Aleksandr Lebed criticised the use of the regular army in low intensity operations. The Far Eastern and the North Caucasian Military Districts refused to join the operation. Soldiers were, therefore, brought from the Urals and Siberia. There was almost no

⁶ Khasbulatov was imprisoned by pro-El'tsin forces in October 1993 until his amnesty in February 1994.

co-ordination amongst the Ministry of Interior (MVD), Regular Army, Border Guards and the Federal Security Service (FSB) forces, which acted independently. Although Defence Minister Pavel Grachev and First Deputy Prime Minister Oleg Soskovets were responsible for the operation, a meaningful co-ordination of forces was achieved only after August 1995 when Oleg Lobov, Secretary of the Security Council, was given responsibility for federal policy towards Chechnia (Allison, 1998: 248-249).

In the first phase of the war, special police forces (OMON) were recruited from the MVD units, while the entire air strike capability and heavy equipment of Dudaev forces were destroyed. Taking control of main urban centres, such as Grozny, Gudermes, Shali and Argun by the end of March 1995, Russian tactics focused upon driving the pro-Dudaev forces into the highlands, but Russian attempts to advance on the foothill villages met with fierce Chechen resistance (Smeets and Wesselink, 1995: 40-55). The strength of Chechen resistance demonstrated the Russian Army's lack of preparation for guerrilla wars in which guerrillas are more successful in hit-and-run tactics than regular armies (Novichkov *et al.*, 1995: 13-15). In this war, Russian forces failed to differentiate guerrillas from civilians, (Blinushov *et al.*, 1995; Dragadze, 1995: 467-469).

The Russian military failure in Chechnia cannot be explained solely by the unconventional nature of the Chechen war. Russian regular army was ineffective also in conventional warfare. As Anatol Lieven rightly argues, Chechnia cannot be portrayed as an ideal place for guerrilla warfare, since only the southern third is mountainous. The rest of Chechnia is open plain territory, which is ideal for conventional forces. Nevertheless the Russian army was unable to surrender Chechen military units operating in the plains of Chechnia. Russian air forces were not doing their jobs well either. As an eyewitness of the war, Lieven reports that combat pilots, who were getting only ten hours flying time a year, missed their targets frequently (Lieven, 1998: 128-134). Consequently, many of the atrocities committed during the war stemmed from Russian reliance on indiscriminate air bombardment.

7. The search for a political settlement

After gaining military control of large parts of Chechnia in the spring of 1995, the Russian government sought to translate its 'military success' into 'political success' by installing Doku Zavgaev again as the head of the pro-Russian Chechen administration. It was hoped that Zavgaev would build a coalition of forces strong enough to challenge the separatists' hold on the population. Taking advantage of the absence of pro-Dudaev forces,

the Secretary of the Russian Security Council, Oleg Lobov, and Zavgaev signed a framework agreement that covered most of the privileges granted to Tatarstan on 8 December 1995. In order to engineer political legitimacy for this agreement and Zavgaev's rule, presidential and parliamentary elections were held in Chechnia between 14 and 17 December 1995.⁷ Although pro-Dudaev forces succeeded in closing most of the polling stations, Zavgaev claimed that the turnout was 64.5 %, and 93 % of voters supported his presidency (Bennett, 1998).⁸

As the cost of the Chechen War reached some 10 billion dollars, the El'tsin leadership had to bow to international pressure to end the conflict. Consequently, a fact-finding mission, led by Istvan Gyarmati, Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, was dispatched to Moscow and Chechnia on 23 January 1995. The OSCE established a permanent mission in Chechnia in April 1995 for the purpose of monitoring the situation and helping peace negotiations. Under intensifying international pressure Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin took a conciliatory position towards Dudaev, and called for peace talks with the participation of the Chechen Committee of National Accord (formerly the PCUO), the pro-Dudaev forces and the federal authorities. However, negotiations, which started under OSCE auspices in May 1995, were short-lived because the Russian side accused the pro-Dudaev forces of staging terrorist attacks against the Russian positions in Chechnia.

Hostage-taking activities played a crucial role in ending the war. In order to force the Russian side to enter into negotiations, a group of Chechen fighters led by Shamil Basaev took 1500 people hostage in a hospital in the Dagestani town of Budennovsk on 14 June 1995. This hostage crisis, which led to 120 casualties, proved to be the turning point in the course of Chechen war, since Chernomyrdin on his own personal initiative accepted to sign a cease-fire agreement on 3 July 1995 (Bennett, 1998).⁹ Just six months after Basaev's hostage-taking, Salman Raduev attacked Kyzylar and took 2000 hostages from a hospital on 9 January 1996. In order to protest the Russian storming of Raduev's forces in Pervomaiskoe village, some radical ethnic nationalists in Turkey hijacked

⁷ In fact, Zavgaev's claims for being a legitimate representative of the Chechen nation were undermined by the fact that he collaborated with Moscow at a time when Russian forces were using indiscriminate force against Chechens.

⁸ These figures seem to be unreliable, since even El'tsin was worried about low turnout that might have invalidated these elections. Thus, he declared that 25 % turnout should be considered acceptable, and 300,000 Russian soldiers were able to vote in these elections.

⁹ At this time El'tsin was attending the G-7 Summit in Halifax, Canada.

a boat called *Avrasya* in Trabzon on 16 January (Blandy, 1996).¹⁰ These developments turned the Russian public opinion not only against the Chechens for their terrorist acts, but also against the federal authorities for their ineffectiveness in putting an end to Russian human and material losses (Kagarlitskii, 1997: 33-44).

Anxious to win the approaching 1996 presidential elections, El'tsin publicised his own peace plan which involved a gradual withdrawal of troops, free and democratic elections for a new Chechen parliament and a power-sharing treaty between Moscow and Chechnia (Eremenko and Novikov, 1997: 152-164). In response, Dudaev declared his readiness for talks with El'tsin on 11 April 1996. Since Dudaev was announced to be killed ten days later, Chernomyrdin and Zavgaev signed the agreement on resuming negotiations with Dudaev's successor, acting President Zelimkhan Iandarbiev on 27 May 1996 (Eismont, 1996: 1). Following the OSCE-brokered cease-fire agreement, signed at Nazran, Ingushetia on 10 June 1996, El'tsin ordered a phased withdrawal of troops on 25 June 1996 (Eremenko and Novikov, 1997: 180-182). Facing no significant resistance from the Russian forces, the separatist Chechen forces gained effective control of Chechnia by 9 August 1996. The tragic end of the Russian adventure in Chechnia was described by two journalists as 'a small Chechen guerrilla army that had been dismissed as 'bandit groups' brought the Russian army to its knees and forced it to withdraw' (Gall and De Wall, 1997).

Aleksandr Lebed, who became El'tsin's special envoy responsible for federal policy towards Chechnia, put officially an end to the Chechen war. In the presence of the OSCE Ambassador, Tim Guldemann, Lebed and Chechen Chief-of-Staff Aslan Maskhadov signed an agreement on 'the Principles for Determining the Bases of Mutual Relations between the Russian Federation and the Chechen Republic' in Khasavyurt, Dagestan, on 31 August 1996. According to this agreement, the political status of Chechnia would be settled in accordance with the principles and norms of international law by 31 December 2001. Moreover, a joint commission was established in order to monitor the withdrawal of forces, combat crime and ethno-religious strife, and to prepare a social and economic programme for Chechnia.¹¹ It was also agreed that Chechnia's legislation would be based upon the principle of respect for human rights (including the right of self-determination) (Eremenko and Novikov, 1997: 180-182).

¹⁰ The boat was hijacked when it was *en route* to the Russian port Sochi. The hijackers surrendered after holding a press conference in Istanbul.

¹¹ In accordance with the Khasavyurt agreements, the Russian Interior Ministry's 101st Brigade and the Defence Ministry's 205th Motor Rifle Brigade were withdrawn from Chechnia to other parts of the North Caucasus in late 1996.

The elections of 27 January 1997 established the political legitimacy of the new Chechen administration. There were 11 candidates running for the presidency, and another 900 were competing for the 63 seats in parliament. Aslan Maskhadov became President with 59.3 % of the vote ahead of field commander Shamil Basaev with 23.5 %.¹² Although Maskhadov argued, like other candidates, that 'the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria will remain an independent state' his success was due to his moderate stance towards Moscow which motivated pro-Moscow voters to vote for him (Feldbrugge, 1997: 1-7).

The Russian and Chechen presidents, El'tsin and Maskhadov, signed the 'Treaty on Peace and Principles of Mutual Relations between the Russian Federation and the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria' on 12 May 1997 (Eremenko and Novikov, 1997: 5). This treaty did not establish a legal basis for federal relations since it made no reference to the constitution of the Russian Federation. Referring Chechnia as 'the *Chechen* Republic of Ichkeria' instead of 'the *Russian* Republic of Chechnia', the title symbolically, but not formally, admitted that Chechnia exists outside the Russian sphere of control. Moreover, this treaty accepted that the Russian Federation's relations with Chechnia would be based on the principles and norms of international law, which call for refraining from the threat or use of force. In essence, this treaty put Chechnia on an equal footing with the Russian Federation under international law (Goble, 1998).

8. The post-war instability and the resumption of war

After the signing of the Peace Treaty of 1997, the Russian and Chechen officials were hoping for a permanent settlement of the conflict on their own terms. However, the result was a socio-political instability leading to the resumption of war in 1999. When Russian Security Council Secretary Ivan Rybkin offered associate state status to Chechnia in January 1998, Maskhadov flatly refused the idea that Chechnia would settle for any formula short of full independence. Once the federal leadership realised that Mashkadov would not settle for a power-sharing treaty, Moscow's policy started to focus both on destabilising Chechnia and preventing its diplomatic recognition. Once the 'freedom-loving Chechens' became 'criminals, kidnappers and bandits', then the Chechens could be isolated from the world public opinion (Clogg, 1997: 425-430).¹³

¹² The elected Chechen president Maskhadov, who was also acting Prime Minister, formed a broad national consensus government composed of pro-Moscow and secessionist Chechen representatives on 20 February 1997.

¹³ In fact, the international community was quite willing to ignore Chechnia given the fact that Russia is a nuclear power having a veto power at the United Nations Security

The Russian decision to leave Chechnia's status in limbo has been a great hindrance to the reconstruction of Chechnia. Although the 12 May 1997 Accords entitled all Chechens who lost their homes to compensation from the Russian government, Moscow has made no start on this reconstruction programme, as the Russian State Duma made any federal economic aid to Chechnia conditional upon Chechnia remaining within the Federation. On 1 August 1998 Russian Prime Minister Sergei Kirienko offered to declare Chechnia a free economic zone in order to encourage the inflow of investment. However, this would have no real positive impact on Chechen foreign trade, which has been conducted beyond the reach of federal customs inspectors since 1991 (*Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 3 August 1998).

Post-war Chechnia suffered also from the lack of social integration in that the clan system played a significant role.¹⁴ The egalitarian organisation of clans not only helped the Chechens to preserve their *Adat* (national customs), but also reinforced the internal divisions of Chechen society. The resulting social instability coincided with the politicisation of Islam. In the absence of an agreement on Chechnia's status, the Islamic fundamentalists enhanced their power bases by manipulating Chechnia's problems with Moscow. Defying the Chechen constitution that adopted secularism as a basic principle of the State (1992: articles 4, 43), Mavladi Udugov's Islamic Way Party (*Islamskii put'*) and a Jordanian Chechen commander Khattab's Wahhabi detachments promoted Islamic fundamentalism (Ignatenko, 1997).

In a desperate attempt to impose his authority throughout Chechnia, Maskhadov sought to create a standing army. This was a very demanding task, since Chechnia had been divided into spheres of influence by various field commanders, who also took control of the oil industry through setting up various underground oil companies to produce home-made gasoline. The anti-Maskhadov field commanders were organised into the Special Purpose Islamic Regiment and the Sharia Guard. These opposition military units even took part in a fight against the government forces on 21 June 1998 (*Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 23 June 1998).¹⁵

Although Maskhadov declared Shamil Basaev Prime Minister as an attempt to appease the field commanders in October 1997, Basaev was

Council.

¹⁴ In Chechnia there are nine Chechen tribes (*tukhumi*) which are sub-divided into 135 clans (*taipy*). A clan is composed of two or three villages claiming descent from a common ancestor. The Councils of Elders (*Mekh kel*) was composed of respected elders of major Chechen clans (Mamakaev, 1973).

¹⁵ In this fighting, Vakha Djafarov, the deputy commander of Salman Raduev's 'Army of General Dudaev' and Lecha Khultygov, the head of the Chechen national security service, were killed.

forced to resign six months later because of his failure 'to foster economic recovery'. The move led to the radicalisation of Basaev's opposition, since he became free of his government responsibilities. Under the pressure from Basaev and other radical field commanders, Maskhadov introduced a State Council (*shura*) composed of 20 prominent Chechen leaders on 3 February 1999 (*Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 6 February 1999).¹⁶

The transport of Azeri oil through the Chechen territory played a critical role in the resumption of war in 1999. The transport of Azeri oil was agreed on the basis of a trilateral agreement amongst the Azeri, Russian and Chechen delegations in Baku on 12 July 1998. The agreement was contrary to Russia's strategic interests since Chechnia's independent partner status in the agreement undermined the Russian claims that Chechnia is 'a subject of the Russian Federation'. Moreover, the transport of Azeri oil was to strengthen the economic basis of the Chechen secessionist government, as the Chechens were to gain 2.70 dollars per barrel (Rotar, 1997: 1). In order to decrease the bargaining power of the Chechens, the Russian First Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov revived a plan to build an alternative pipeline that would bypass Chechnia through Dagestan (*Vremia*, 9 July 1999).¹⁷

Developments in Dagestan formed the immediate cause of the resumption of war in 1999. On 8 August 1999, Basayev's forces invaded Dagestan to the east of Chechnia.¹⁸ On the following day, Vladimir Putin, head of FSB, replaced Sergei Stepashin as prime minister. Russian public opinion was mobilised against the Chechens when four massive bombs exploded in Russia in September: one at a military housing complex at Buinaksk in Dagestan, the next two in south Moscow and the last one in Volgograd. It was the wave of anger amongst Russians that gave Putin the backing he needed to invade Chechnia on 1 October 1999.

Two confessions contradicted the official Russian claims that it was only as a result of terrorist attacks that Russia invaded Chechnia. A Russian Military Intelligence (GRU) officer, Aleksei Galtin, said that 'I know who is responsible for the bombings in Moscow. It is the FSB (Russian Security Service), in co-operation with the GRU, that is responsible for the explosions in Volgograd and Moscow' (*The*

¹⁶ Although Basaev sought to make the State Council the highest authority in Chechnia, Maskhadov granted it only advisory powers.

¹⁷ This pipeline project was first proposed in 1993. The new route is not safer than the older route, as it would cross the Khasavyurt District, which borders Chechnia and is populated predominantly by Akkin Chechens. In order to prevent the construction of this alternative pipeline, the Chechen radicals staged several attacks against the Russian forces in Dagestan in 1999.

¹⁸ Basaev's intention to unite Chechnia and Dagestan took a concrete form with the establishment of the 'Congress of Peoples of Chechnia and Dagestan' in 1998.

Independent, 6 January 2000). Moreover, Sergei Stepashin, Russian Interior and Prime Minister during 1999, said the plan to send the Russian army into Chechnia 'had been worked out in March 1999.' Stepashin said that he played a central role in organising the military build up before the invasion, which 'had to happen in August or September 1999 even if there were no explosions in Moscow' (*Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 14 January 2000).

The motive for resuming the war could be the need for the Kremlin to control the succession to President Boris El'tsin, who was deeply unpopular. In fact, El'tsin's family and associates feared for their fortunes if a president hostile to their interests was elected in the upcoming elections. Under these conditions, Putin's war in Chechnia was an effective instrument for the consolidation of the post-Soviet Russian regime. The popularity of the Chechen war helped Putin's party *Medved* (Unity) in getting a significant number of votes during the 1999 Duma elections. Moreover, Putin's overwhelming success in the 26 March 2000 presidential elections is mainly related to his image as the hero of the Chechen War, and El'tsin resignation in favour of him on 31 December 1999 when the Chechen war increased Putin's popularity (Cockburn, 2000).

9. Conclusion

In this article, it has been argued that Chechnia's relations with the federal centre have been adversely affected by post-Soviet changes. In fact, the Chechen conflict took place when the federal centre was politically and militarily weak in shaping the developments in its periphery. Between the introduction of the *perestroika* reforms in 1988 and the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, Zavgayev's leadership was unprepared to the necessities of post-Soviet transition and failed to adopt a civic nationalist position. This made the ethnic nationalists a credible alternative. In the post-Soviet era, the Dudaev leadership enhanced its position in Chechnia by promoting an ethnic strategy of Chechen nation-building. The Russian use of military force in 1994 simply complicated the problem, and empowered ethnic nationalists. Despite the obvious Chechen victory in the Chechen war of 1994-1996, the cost of the victory was incredibly high. Almost 80000 people were killed in the war and the Chechen economy and infrastructure were almost totally destroyed. Moreover, the war created generations of fighters and total unemployment that nourished instability in Chechnia. Consequently, the chronic instability played a crucial role in the resumption of war whose impact on the status of Chechnia remains to be seen.

It is not possible to explain the Russian military intervention from a purely economic perspective. Although the control of Caspian oil and pipelines constitutes the main Russian economic interest, Russia could have given broad economic autonomy to Chechnia, as it gave to the other oil-rich republic, Tatarstan. From a political perspective, Russia could have waited for Dudaev to lose support against the Chechen opposition. The intervention could be linked to the struggle of power in Moscow, since the federal leadership hoped to use the intervention to unite the Russian public behind its nationalist rhetoric. In this respect, the ruling elite sought to demonstrate their 'capacity' to re-establish Russia as a great power by staging 'a small victorious war'. Contrary to El'tsin's initial hope, the Chechen adventure did not increase his popularity in the 1996 elections, but damaged his civic credentials in the eyes of Russian people. At the institutional level, this war empowered the power ministries, such as the MVD and FSB. Even Prime Minister Chernomyrdin was unable to get these ministries under his control (with the exception of the Budennovsk crisis, where he renewed negotiations).

Although Chechen ethnic nationalism was functional in uniting Chechens against Moscow in the short term, it is a destabilising factor in the long run. In fact, the Russian defeat in Chechnia does not have much to do with the strength of the Chechen ethnic identity. It has a lot to do with the political and military weakness of the Russian state and the unwillingness of Russian society to sustain the kind of necessary involvement to suppress the Chechen ethnic nationalists. From this point of view Moscow could prevent similar 'Chechen revolutions' in other republics of the North Caucasus by creating effective federal and regional state institutions capable of controlling both Russian and non-Russian ethnic nationalists. It is crystal clear that Russian ethnic nationalism is as destabilising as Chechen ethnic nationalism. Both nationalisms reject to come to terms with Russia's multiethnic reality, which is a prerequisite for federal stability.

Chechnia's status, which should be agreed before 31 December 2001 according to the Khasavyurt accords, is likely to remain unclear in the foreseeable future. A power-sharing treaty is not acceptable to the majority of the Chechens, since they have resisted militarily the Russian rule for nearly a decade. If the Chechen elites co-operated with the Russian government, then they would be accused of bringing Chechnia back into the imperial fold. Realistically, Russian leaders cannot be expected to commit themselves officially to Chechen independence, especially when there is no international pressure on this matter. Chechnia's future status depends to a large extent on Vladimir Putin's vision of Russia, which remained unclear by the end of 2000. While a

democratic vision of Russia based on civic national values could accommodate the Chechens considerably, an authoritarian vision of Russia relying on nationalist slogans is not likely to find an effective solution to the conflict.

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Özet

Çeçenya Savaşı: Rusya'nın Çeçen ayrılıkçılığı ile mücadelesi (1989-1999)

Bu makalenin amacı Moskova ile Sovyet-sonrası Çeçen ayrılıkçı hareketi arasında Çeçenya'nın kontrolü için yapılan mücadeleyi incelemektir. Makale Çeçenya sorununun gelişiminin Rusya'nın Sovyet-sonrası geçiş sürecinden önemli bir şekilde etkilendiğini öne sürmektedir. Çünkü, bu geçiş süreci federal merkezin kendi çevresindeki gelişmeleri askeri olarak şekillendirme yeteneğini zayıflatmıştır. Siyasal araçları kullanarak Çeçen etnik milliyetçilerini bölmeye çalışmak yerine, federal yönetim Çeçenlerin gerilla taktiklerine karşı etkisiz kalan askeri araçları kullanmıştır. Oysa Çeçen ayrılıkçılar etnik milliyetçisi Çeçenlerin çoğunu Moskova'ya karşı birleştirmede 1994-1996 Çeçen savaşının sonuna kadar etkili bir şekilde kullanmışlardır. Makale sorunun sosyo-tarihsel arkaplanını incelemekte ve federal otoriteler ile ayrılıkçı Çeçen liderlerin savaş sırasında ve sonrasında izledikleri stratejileri tartışmaktadır. Makale Çeçenya'daki savaş-sonrası istikrarsızlığın savaşın 1999'da tekrar başlamasındaki rolüne işaret ederek sona ermektedir.